

INFLUENCE OF PERSECUTORY IDEATION ON COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

Grace I. Jibrin, Akeem A. Kenku PhD and Monday Akawu PhD
Department of Psychology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.

akeemkenku@nsuk.edu.ng.

Tel: +234-8061508086

Abstract

This study examined the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in selected Nigerian public organisations. Specifically, it investigated the extent to which dimensions of persecutory ideation—ideas of reference, persecution/threat, mistrust/conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance/safety behaviours—predict CWB. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 238 employees drawn from selected public organisations in Abuja, Nigeria using stratified random sampling. Standardised instruments, including the Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C) and the Green et al. Paranoid Thoughts Scale (GPTS), were used for data collection. Data were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance. Results indicated that persecutory ideation significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour among employees, accounting for 21.7% of the variance in CWB ($R^2 = .217$, $F = 67.247$, $p < .001$). At the dimensional level, ideas of reference emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of CWB across all models ($\beta = .326-.436$, $p < .001$), followed by persecution/threat ($\beta = .158-.223$, $p < .05$). Mistrust/conspiracy beliefs demonstrated a weak and inconsistent effect, becoming a significant negative predictor only at the final stage ($\beta = -.212$, $p < .05$), while hypervigilance/safety behaviours did not significantly predict CWB ($\beta = .162$, $p > .05$). The findings suggest that employees' suspicious cognitive interpretations of workplace interactions significantly increase the likelihood of deviant behavioural responses. The study concludes that persecutory ideation is an important psychological determinant of counterproductive work behaviour in Nigerian public organisations. It recommends the implementation of employee assistance programmes, stress management interventions, and fair organisational practices to reduce workplace deviance and improve employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

Keywords: counterproductive work behaviour, persecutory ideation, workplace deviance, Nigerian public organisations

Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) has emerged as a major challenge confronting contemporary organisations due to its adverse effects on organisational productivity, employee well-being, and institutional effectiveness. Organisations, whether public or private, rely heavily on employees' commitment, cooperation, and adherence to organisational norms to achieve their goals. However, employees sometimes engage in behaviours that violate organisational standards and negatively affect workplace functioning. Counterproductive work behaviour refers to intentional actions carried out by employees that harm organisations or individuals within the workplace (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). These behaviours may include absenteeism, workplace aggression, theft, sabotage, harassment, deliberate work slowdowns, and misuse of organisational resources. Such actions reduce organisational efficiency, increase operational costs, and weaken interpersonal relationships among employees. Beyond financial losses, CWB contributes to reduced morale, low trust, and poor service delivery, particularly within public institutions where accountability and efficiency are essential for societal development.

Globally, studies have shown that employee misconduct represents a significant organisational concern because of its impact on productivity and institutional stability. In Nigeria, the prevalence of corruption-related practices, absenteeism, abuse of office, and misuse of public resources continues to undermine the effectiveness of many public organisations (ICPC, 2023; NBS, 2023). These behaviours often create hostile work environments and diminish public confidence in governmental institutions. Consequently, researchers in organisational behaviour and industrial psychology have increasingly focused on identifying the psychological and organisational factors that contribute to counterproductive work behaviour.

Among the factors receiving increasing scholarly attention is persecutory ideation. This phenomenon has gained attention as a psychological factor that may shape employees' workplace behaviours. Persecutory ideation refers to suspicious beliefs or thoughts that others intend to harm, deceive, exclude, or undermine an individual (Freeman & Garety, 2014). Although commonly studied within clinical psychology, recent studies suggest that milder forms of suspicious thinking can occur in everyday organisational settings. Employees experiencing persecutory ideation may misinterpret neutral workplace interactions, managerial decisions, or feedback as deliberate attempts to victimise or marginalise them. Such cognitive tendencies may foster mistrust, hostility, defensiveness, and social withdrawal within the workplace. As a result, employees may respond through behaviours that are harmful to coworkers or the organisation.

Although previous studies have examined some predictors of counterproductive work behaviour, limited empirical attention has been given to the combined influence of persecutory ideation on CWB within Nigerian public organisations. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organisations.

Statement of the problem

Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) has become a major challenge confronting organisations worldwide because of its harmful effects on productivity, employee well-being, and organisational effectiveness. CWB involves deliberate actions that violate organisational norms and negatively affect the organisation or its members, including absenteeism, theft, sabotage, workplace aggression, and withdrawal behaviours (Spector et al., 2006). Research indicates that a significant proportion of employees globally engage in one form of workplace deviance or another, thereby undermining organisational performance, workplace harmony, and employee morale. The financial implications are equally severe, as organisations lose substantial resources annually due to employee misconduct and occupational fraud. According to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE, 2024), organisations lose approximately 5% of their annual revenue to workplace misconduct, highlighting the seriousness of the problem.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, workplace deviance is further intensified by weak institutional structures, inadequate supervision, corruption, and poor accountability systems. Nigerian public organisations continue to experience persistent problems such as absenteeism, abuse of office, misuse of public resources, bribery, and poor adherence to organisational rules. Reports by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC, 2023) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) indicate that these unethical practices have negatively affected transparency, organisational efficiency, and public trust in government institutions. Empirical studies within Nigeria have also shown that workplace aggression, rule violations, and misuse of organisational property are common within public institutions, thereby reducing employee motivation and institutional productivity (Akinwale & George, 2020; Ojedokun et al., 2021).

Despite increasing scholarly attention to workplace deviance, limited studies have examined the psychological factors associated with CWB in Nigerian public organisations. Specifically, there is insufficient empirical evidence on the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organisations.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research question:

To what extent do the dimensions of persecutory ideation (ideas of reference, persecution/threat, mistrust/conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance/safety behaviours) predict counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations?

Objective of the study

The following is the objective of this study

Determine the influence of the dimensions of persecutory ideation (ideas of reference, persecution/threat, mistrust/conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance/safety behaviours) on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations.

Statement of the Hypotheses

To achieve the objective of this study, the following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

The dimensions of persecutory ideation (ideas of reference, persecution/threat, mistrust/conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance/safety behaviours) will significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to several stakeholders, including employees, organizational managers, policymakers, researchers, and the broader field of industrial and organizational psychology.

First and foremost, the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in industrial and organizational psychology by expanding the understanding of how psychological factors such as persecutory ideation influence workplace behaviour. While previous studies have examined personality traits and organizational climate as predictors of counterproductive work behaviour, limited attention has been given to persecutory ideation as a cognitive factor influencing workplace deviance. By examining this variable, the study enriches theoretical discussions on the psychological antecedents of counterproductive work behaviour.

The findings may stimulate further empirical research on the psychological and organizational determinants of counterproductive work behaviour in Nigeria and other developing countries.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations.

Geographically, this study is limited to employees working in selected public organizations located in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. The organizations include the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC), National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). These agencies were selected because they play important roles in governance, policy implementation, regulation, and public service delivery in Nigeria. The study focuses on employees who are actively engaged in organizational activities and capable of providing reliable information regarding workplace behaviour and organisational conditions.

Empirical Review of Literature

This section reviews empirical (quantitative) studies that are directly relevant to the present study, particularly studies linking persecutory ideation (paranoid/suspicious cognition), with counterproductive work behaviour (CWB)/workplace deviance.

Persecutory ideation refers to suspicious cognitive patterns characterized by beliefs that others intend to harm, deceive, or undermine an individual (Freeman & Garety, 2014). In workplace settings, such cognitive tendencies may manifest as ideas of reference, perceived persecution or threat, mistrust or conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance toward potential threats. These perceptions can shape employees' interpretations of workplace interactions and influence their behavioural responses. Scholars in organizational psychology suggest that employees who perceive interpersonal hostility or threat within the workplace may respond defensively or retaliate through deviant workplace behaviours, including counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) (Marcus et al., 2016).

Quantitative studies examining suspicious cognitive tendencies and workplace behaviour provide empirical support for this relationship. For example, Marcus et al. (2016) conducted a structural meta-analysis of counterproductive work behaviour involving 25 independent samples and over 8,000 employees and found that hostile attribution tendencies and mistrust-related personality factors were significantly associated with counterproductive behaviours, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .20$ to $r = .33$ across different samples. These findings indicate that individuals who interpret workplace interactions as hostile are more likely to engage in deviant behaviours directed toward the organization or coworkers.

Similarly, Bentall et al. (2001) reported that persecutory beliefs are strongly associated with hostile attribution biases and defensive behavioural reactions. Their quantitative analysis showed that individuals with higher levels of paranoid ideation were significantly more likely to interpret ambiguous social cues as deliberate threats, with effect sizes ranging between $r = .30$ and $r = .45$. Such biased interpretations can increase interpersonal conflict and retaliatory behaviours within social and organizational environments.

Further quantitative evidence is provided by Freeman et al. (2013), who examined paranoid thinking and social interaction patterns using experimental and survey data. Their findings indicated that individuals with elevated persecutory ideation scores reported significantly higher levels of interpersonal mistrust and defensive behavioural responses ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$). In workplace contexts, such mistrust may translate into deviant behaviours toward colleagues or supervisors, particularly when employees perceive organizational actions as threatening or unfair.

Research in organizational behaviour also shows that perceived interpersonal mistreatment or hostility is strongly associated with workplace deviance. For instance, Aquino and Douglas (2003) conducted a quantitative study involving 437 employees across several organizations and found that perceived identity threats and hostile interpersonal treatment significantly predicted deviant workplace behaviour, with regression coefficients of $\beta = .31$ ($p < .01$) for interpersonal deviance and $\beta = .27$ ($p < .05$) for organizational deviance. These findings suggest that employees who perceive hostility or threat from others may respond with behaviours that harm the organization or coworkers.

Similarly, Spector and Fox (2010) argued that employees' perceptions of hostility and negative treatment are important predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. Their empirical findings showed that workplace stressors and perceived interpersonal mistreatment were positively associated with deviant behaviours, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .25$ to $r = .40$ across different occupational samples. These results suggest that negative cognitive interpretations of workplace interactions may significantly influence employees' engagement in counterproductive behaviours.

Methods

This section of the report provides detail information on the research design, target population, sample size, and sampling techniques employed. Additionally, it describes the instruments to be used for data collection, the procedures to follow in the course of research process, the methods of data analysis, and the ethical considerations.

Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design. This design is appropriate for exploring and analyzing the influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) in public organisations.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The population for this study comprises employees of three selected public organisations in Abuja, Nigeria. These organisations were selected based on their national relevance and accessibility. According to the Human Resource (HR) records of the organisations, the population is distributed as follows:

Proportional Allocation of Sample Size

The total sample size of **286** was proportionally distributed across the three organisations based on their individual population sizes. The formula used is:

Proportional Sample = $(\text{Population of Organization}) \times \text{Total Sample Size} / \text{Total Population}$

Table 1: Proportional Distribution Per Organisation

S/ N	Organization	Population n	Proportional Sample Size
1	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)	1,701	$1,701 \times 238 = 84$ 4,851
2	Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)	1,550	$1,550 \times 238 = 76$ 4,851
3	National Identity Management Commission (NIMC)	1,600	$1,600 \times 238 = 78$ 4,851
Total		4,851	238

Sample Size Determination

To achieve a representative sample for this study, Cochran's (1977) formula is used to calculate the ideal sample size for a study, particularly when dealing with large populations or when the population size is unknown. The formula is $N_0 = (z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)) / e^2$

Where:

- N_0 = sample size
- z = z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95%)

- p = estimated proportion of the population with the attribute (often assumed as 0.5 for maximum variability)
- e = margin of error (precision) $e=0.05$

using the formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 238$$

Sampling Technique

This study adopted a stratified random sampling technique in selecting respondents for the study. Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling method in which the population is divided into homogeneous subgroups known as strata, after which respondents are randomly selected from each subgroup to ensure adequate representation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004). The technique is particularly appropriate when the population consists of identifiable groups that may differ in size but must be proportionally represented in the sample.

In this study, each of the selected organizations constituted a stratum, while employees within each organisation formed the sampling units. The use of stratified sampling was considered appropriate because the organizations differ in workforce size, and proportional representation was required to avoid sampling bias and improve the generalizability of the findings.

The total population of employees across the three organizations served as the sampling frame, from which a sample size of 238 respondents was drawn.

Stages in the Stratified Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure was carried out in several stages to ensure systematic selection and adequate representation of respondents.

Stage One: Identification of the Target Population

The first stage involved identifying the target population for the study. The target population consisted of all employees working in the three selected organisations included in the study. These employees were considered appropriate respondents because they possess relevant information concerning the variables examined in the study. The total number of employees across the three organisations constituted the population (N).

Stage Two: Stratification of the Population

In the second stage, the entire population was divided into strata based on organizational affiliation. Each organization represented a separate stratum. This stratification ensured that employees from each organization were adequately represented in the sample. By dividing the population into strata, the researcher was able to minimize sampling error and increase the precision of the sample estimates.

Stage Three: Determination of the Sample Size

The total sample size for the study was 238 respondents. This sample size is considered adequate for studies involving large populations and is commonly used in social science research to ensure sufficient statistical power and representativeness.

Stage Four: Proportional Allocation of the Sample

After determining the total sample size, the researcher used proportional allocation to distribute the sample across the three organizations according to their population sizes. This ensured that organizations with larger workforce sizes received larger sample allocations, while those with smaller workforce sizes received proportionally smaller allocations.

Stage Five: Random Selection of Respondents

After determining the number of respondents required from each organization, simple random sampling was used to select the respondents within each stratum. Employee lists obtained from each organization served as the sampling frames, and respondents were randomly selected to ensure that every employee had an equal chance of being included in the study. This approach helped reduce selection bias and enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Justification for the Use of Stratified Sampling

The choice of stratified random sampling in this study was justified because it ensured adequate representation of employees from each organization. It also increased the precision of the sample estimates and reduced sampling error. Furthermore, stratified sampling allowed the researcher to make meaningful comparisons across organizations while maintaining proportional representation in the final sample.

Instruments

The instruments for data collection in this study are as follows:

Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C):

The Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB), developed by Spector et al. (2006), is a reliable and validated instrument used to measure various negative workplace behaviours across five subscales: abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.86. Subscale coefficients include abuse (0.85), production deviance (0.63), sabotage (0.55), theft (0.63), and withdrawal (0.64), indicating generally strong reliability, although sabotage shows lower reliability. Validity is supported by findings such as Lawal et al. (2019) reporting an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 in Nigerian contexts, and Akadiri & Umemezia (2019) reporting scores for the adapted constructs ranging from 0.706 to 0.801. The CWB has demonstrated strong predictive validity, linking counterproductive behaviours to negative organizational

outcomes, thereby making it an essential tool for assessing workplace behaviour in diverse environments.

Paranoid Thoughts Scale:

The Paranoid Thoughts Scale (GPTS), developed by Green et al. (2008), assesses persecutory ideation through a 32-item questionnaire divided into two subscales: Ideas of Reference and Ideas of Persecution. Participants respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Totally true). The original validation sample comprised 353 individuals without a history of mental illness and 50 individuals currently experiencing persecutory delusions, demonstrating its applicability across diverse populations. Psychometric evaluations of the GPTS revealed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .68 to .95 for total scores and subscales. Test-retest reliability was also robust, with intra-class correlation coefficients showing significant stability over a two-week follow-up period (.88 for scale A, .81 for scale B, and .87 for the total scale). In terms of validity, GPTS scores exhibited moderate but significant correlations with established measures, including the Paranoia Scale (PS, Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992) with Spearman's rho values between .71 and .81, and the Peters et al. Delusions Inventory (PDI, Peters et al., 1999), with values ranging from .39 to .43. Furthermore, the GPTS demonstrated good sensitivity to clinical change, with effect sizes ranging from .24 to 1.0, making it a valuable tool for assessing paranoid thought processes in clinical settings.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Summary of Reliability Analysis

Scale	Number of Items	Sample Size (N)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Persecutory Ideation Scale (PIS)	34	30	.864	Excellent internal consistency
Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)	20	30	.718	Acceptable internal consistency

Procedure

The researcher wrote the management of the organizations to seek permission and cooperation for data collection. After approval was granted, the researcher obtained employee lists from the organizations, which served as the sampling frame. Using a stratified random sampling technique, the population was divided into strata based on the three organizations. The total sample size of 238 respondents was then proportionally allocated to each organization according to their workforce size. Following the selection of respondents through simple random sampling, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and assured them of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The structured questionnaires were administered directly to the selected respondents during working hours with permission from the organisations. The researcher, with the assistance of research assistants where necessary, distributed and later retrieved the completed questionnaires. After collection, the questionnaires were screened for completeness, coded, and entered into SPSS v 27 for statistical analysis in order to test the study hypotheses and answer the research objectives.

Method of Data Analysis

This study employed the appropriate statistical techniques based on the nature of the variables involved and the analytical requirements of each hypothesis. For hypothesis one, multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether persecutory ideation significantly contributes to variations in counterproductive work behaviour among employees.

The second hypothesis, which proposed that the dimensions of persecutory ideation (ideas of reference, persecution/threat, mistrust or conspiracy beliefs, and hypervigilance or safety behaviours) will significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour was tested using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. All data analyses were performed using statistical software, and results were interpreted at a 0.05 significance level to ensure robust and reliable conclusions.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to ethical standards in psychological and organisational research. Participants were provided informed consent and participate voluntarily, with the freedom to withdraw at any time. Strict confidentiality and anonymity was maintained, and data was securely stored. The study ensured no harm comes to participants and was conducted respectfully.

Results

This section of the report presents the analysis and interpretations of the findings in table for easy understanding

Demographic information of respondents

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demography	Category	Perman ent	Contra ct	Casu al	Tot al
Gender	Male	172	19	5	196
	Female	66	24	3	93
	Total	238	43	8	289
Age	20-29	126	21	5	152
	30-39	72	1	0	73
	40-49	18	15	0	33
	50-69	22	6	3	31
	Total	238	43	8	289
Work Experience	Below 2 years	151	19	3	173
	3-5 years	53	2	3	58
	5-10 years	12	8	0	20
	Above 10 years	22	14	2	38
	Total	238	43	8	289
Marital Status	Married	109	6	0	115
	Single	111	25	3	139
	Divorced	18	10	3	31
	Separated	0	2	2	4
	Total	238	43	8	289
Level of Education	SSCE/Diploma	156	27	0	183
	BSc/Masters	61	10	5	76
	PhD	21	6	3	30
	Total	238	43	8	289
Tenure in Organization	2 years	127	20	2	149
	2-4 years	16	0	0	16
	4-6 years	20	17	3	40
	6 years and above	75	6	3	84
	Total	238	43	8	289
Income	₦50,000- ₦100,000	91	17	1	109
	₦110,000- ₦150,000	80	11	7	98
	₦160,000 and above	67	15	0	82
	Total	238	43	8	289

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents across modes of employment in Nigerian public organizations. A total of 289 respondents participated in the study, comprising 238 permanent employees (82.4%), 43 contract employees (14.9%), and 8 casual employees (2.8%). The gender distribution shows that 196 respondents (67.8%) were male, while 93

respondents (32.2%) were female, indicating that males constituted the majority of the workforce. In terms of age distribution, the majority of the respondents (52.6%) were between 20–29 years, suggesting that the workforce is relatively young. This was followed by respondents aged 30–39 years (25.3%), 40–49 years (11.4%), and 50–69 years (10.7%).

With respect to work experience, the findings show that 59.9% of the respondents had less than two years of work experience, while 20.1% had between 3–5 years, 6.9% had between 5–10 years, and 13.1% had more than 10 years of work experience. The marital status distribution reveals that 48.1% of the respondents were single, 39.8% were married, 10.7% were divorced, and 1.4% were separated, indicating that single respondents constituted the largest marital group.

Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of respondents (63.3%) possessed SSCE/Diploma certificates, while 26.3% had BSc or Master's degrees, and 10.4% possessed PhD qualifications, suggesting a workforce with varying levels of educational attainment. In terms of organisational tenure, 51.6% of the respondents had spent two years or less in the organisation, 5.5% had worked between 2–4 years, 13.8% had worked between 4–6 years, and 29.1% had spent six years or more in the organisation.

Finally, the income distribution indicates that 37.7% of the respondents earned between ₦50,000 and ₦100,000, 33.9% earned between ₦110,000 and ₦150,000, while 28.4% earned ₦160,000 and above. Overall, the results suggest that the respondents were predominantly male, relatively young, largely single, moderately educated, and mostly permanent employees with relatively short organisational tenure.

Hypothesis

Persecutory ideation (ideas of reference, threat, mistrust and hypervigilance) will significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organisations. This hypothesis was tested using hierarchical multiple regression in Table 5.

Table 4: Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Showing Persecutory ideation (Ideas of Reference, Persecution/Threat, Mistrust/Conspiracy Beliefs, and Hypervigilance/Safety Behaviours) prediction on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organisations

Model	Predictor	β	t	P	95% CI	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F	Sig.
1	Constant		25.904	.000	[40.079, 46.670]	.436	.190	.190	67.247	.000

2	IOR	.436	8.200	.000	[.990, 1.616]					
	Constant		21.150	.000	[37.170, 44.798]	.454	.206	.016	5.737	.017
3	IOR	.340	5.155	.000	[.629, 1.407]					
	PT	.158	2.395	.017	[.089, .913]					
	Constant		20.817	.000	[37.584, 45.434]	.457	.209	.003	1.232	.268
	IOR	.326	4.847	.000	[.579, 1.371]					
4	PT	.223	2.529	.012	[.157, 1.258]					
	MCB	-.082	-1.110	.268	[-.535, .149]					
	Constant		20.177	.000	[36.866, 44.837]	.466	.217	.008	2.891	.090
	IOR	.326	4.867	.000	[.581, 1.370]					
	PT	.215	2.441	.015	[.132, 1.231]					
	MCB	-.212	-1.997	.047	[-.989, -.007]					
	HSB	.162	1.700	.090	[-.069, .942]					

The analysis examined whether the dimensions of persecutory ideation, namely ideas of reference (IOR), persecution/threat (PT), mistrust/conspiracy beliefs (MCB), and hypervigilance/safety behaviours (HSB), predict counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in Nigerian public organisations.

In Model 1, ideas of reference (IOR) were entered into the regression equation. The result showed that IOR significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = .436$, $t = 8.200$, $p < .001$). The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = .436$ and $R^2 = .190$, indicating that 19.0% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour was explained by ideas of reference. The model was statistically significant ($F = 67.247$, $p < .001$).

In Model 2, persecution/threat (PT) was added to the regression model. The results revealed that both IOR ($\beta = .340$, $t = 5.155$, $p < .001$) and PT ($\beta = .158$, $t = 2.395$, $p = .017$) significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour. The model yielded $R = .454$ and $R^2 = .206$, indicating that the predictors explained 20.6% of the variance in counterproductive work

behaviour. The addition of PT resulted in a significant increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .016$, $\Delta F = 5.737$, $p = .017$).

In Model 3, mistrust/conspiracy beliefs (MCB) was introduced into the regression equation. The results showed that IOR ($\beta = .326$, $t = 4.847$, $p < .001$) and PT ($\beta = .223$, $t = 2.529$, $p = .012$) remained significant predictors of counterproductive work behaviour, whereas MCB was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.082$, $t = -1.110$, $p = .268$). The model produced $R = .457$ and $R^2 = .209$, indicating that the predictors accounted for 20.9% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. However, the addition of MCB did not significantly improve the model ($\Delta R^2 = .003$, $\Delta F = 1.232$, $p = .268$).

In Model 4, hypervigilance/safety behaviours (HSB) was added to the model. The results indicated that IOR ($\beta = .326$, $t = 4.867$, $p < .001$) and PT ($\beta = .215$, $t = 2.441$, $p = .015$) remained significant predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. Additionally, MCB became a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.212$, $t = -1.997$, $p = .047$), while HSB was not statistically significant ($\beta = .162$, $t = 1.700$, $p = .090$). The model yielded $R = .466$ and $R^2 = .217$, indicating that the predictors jointly explained 21.7% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. However, the addition of HSB did not significantly improve the model ($\Delta R^2 = .008$, $\Delta F = 2.891$, $p = .090$).

Generally, the hierarchical regression analysis indicates that persecutory ideation significantly predicts counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations, with ideas of reference emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by persecution/threat. Consequently, the hypothesis that persecutory ideation will significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour is supported.

Discussion of Findings

The primary aim of this study was to examine the predictive influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in Nigerian public organisations. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether persecutory predicts counterproductive work behaviour. The discussion of findings is presented in line with the hypothesis tested with previous findings.

The findings of the hypothesis examined whether the dimensions of persecutory ideation predict counterproductive work behaviour. The findings indicated that ideas of reference and persecution/threat beliefs significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour, while mistrust/conspiracy beliefs and hypervigilance were less consistent predictors. These results support empirical evidence suggesting that suspicious cognitive patterns influence workplace behaviour. For instance, Freeman et al. (2013) found that individuals with elevated persecutory ideation scores reported significantly higher levels of interpersonal mistrust and defensive

behavioural responses. In workplace settings, such mistrust may increase the likelihood of retaliatory or deviant behaviour. However, the finding that hypervigilance did not significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour suggests that not all aspects of persecutory ideation necessarily lead to deviant behaviour. Some individuals may respond to perceived threats through caution or withdrawal rather than active deviance.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the predictive influence of persecutory ideation on counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations. Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the study demonstrates that persecutory ideation is an important psychological predictor of counterproductive work behaviour. Employees who interpret workplace interactions as hostile, threatening, or directed against them are more likely to engage in behaviours that undermine organizational functioning. Such cognitive perceptions may lead employees to misinterpret normal workplace situations as acts of hostility, thereby increasing the likelihood of defensive or retaliatory behaviours that manifest as workplace deviance. Overall, the study concludes that counterproductive work behaviour among employees in Nigerian public organizations is influenced by a combination of individual psychological factors and organizational contextual factors. Consequently, addressing workplace deviance requires a comprehensive approach that combines psychological interventions aimed at improving employees' cognitive perceptions and organizational

Recommendations

1. Management of public organizations should introduce employee support programmes such as counselling services, stress management training, and conflict resolution workshops. These programmes can help employees better manage negative thoughts and workplace tensions, while also encouraging healthier ways of interpreting workplace situations and interactions with colleagues.
2. Public organizations should also create a more supportive and inclusive work environment by ensuring fairness, open communication, and employee involvement in decision-making. When employees feel heard, valued, and have some level of control over their work conditions, they are less likely to develop feelings of mistrust, frustration, or engage in behaviours that may harm the organization.

References

- Akinwale, A. A., & George, O. J. (2020). Work environment and deviant workplace behaviour among employees in Nigerian organizations. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 20(3), 45–58.
<https://doi.org/10.33423/jop.v20i3.3110>
- Aquino, K., & Douglas, S. (2003). Identity threat and antisocial behavior in organizations: The moderating effects of individual differences, aggressive modeling, and hierarchical status. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 90(1), 195–208.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-5978\(02\)00517-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-5978(02)00517-4)
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE). (2024). *Report to the nations: Global study on occupational fraud and abuse*. ACFE.
- Bentall, R. P., Corcoran, R., Howard, R., Blackwood, N., & Kinderman, P. (2001). Persecutory delusions: A review and theoretical integration. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 21(8), 1143–1192.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358\(01\)00106-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358(01)00106-4)
- De Cuyper, N., Baillien, E., & De Witte, H. (2009). Job insecurity, perceived employability and targets' and perpetrators' experiences of workplace bullying. *Work & Stress*, 23(3), 206–224.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370903257578>
- Freeman, D., & Garety, P. A. (2014). Advances in understanding and treating persecutory delusions: A review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 49(8), 1179–1189. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-014-0928-7>
- Freeman, D., Pugh, K., Vorontsova, N., Southgate, L., & Garety, P. (2013). Testing the continuum of delusional beliefs: An experimental study using virtual reality. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 122(1), 17–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029372>
- Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). (2023). *Annual report on corruption and anti-corruption interventions in Nigeria*. ICPC.
- Marcus, B., Taylor, O. A., Hastings, S. E., Sturm, A., & Weigelt, O. (2016). The structure of counterproductive work behaviour: A review, a structural

meta-analysis, and a primary study. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 203-233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206313503019>

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2023). *Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and trends*. NBS.

Ojedokun, O., Idemudia, E. S., & Desouza, E. (2021). Workplace incivility and deviant behaviour among employees in Nigerian organizations. *African Journal of Psychological Study of Social Issues*, 24(2), 144-158. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpssi.v24i2.12>

Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. (1995). A typology of deviant workplace behaviours: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(2), 555-572. <https://doi.org/10.5465/256693>

Spector, P. E., & Fox, S. (2010). Counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior: Are they opposite forms of active behavior? *Applied Psychology*, 59(1), 21-39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2009.00414.x>

Spector, P. E., Fox, S., Penney, L. M., Bruursema, K., Goh, A., & Kessler, S. (2006). The dimensionality of counterproductivity: Are all counterproductive behaviours created equal? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68(3), 446-460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.10.005>