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Counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned University: Job characteristics and organizational support in perspective

Joseph T. Uchir¹ . Aondoaver Ucho² . Christabel D. Gwambe²

¹ Registry Department, Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria

² Department of Psychology, Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria

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Abstract

Counterproductive work behaviour has become a prominent topic of study among organizational behaviour scholars in the 21st Century. This is probably because of the observable impact it has on organizational productivity. This study investigated the influence job characteristics and perceived organizational support have on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral, Nigeria. A total of 289 participants (204 males and 85 females) took part in the study. Results of Standard Multiple Regression analysis showed that, there was a significant joint positive influence of autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance and feedback on counterproductive work behaviour. There was a significant independent positive influence of autonomy and significant negative influence of feedback on counterproductive work behaviour. The study also revealed a significant joint positive influence of job characteristics and perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour and significant negative influence of perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour. It was recommended among other things that universities in Nigeria and other similar institutions should embark on job enrichment drives that provide the pertinent job characteristics such as feedback and support in the workplace.

Keywords: Counterproductive work behaviour, Job characteristics, Perceived Organizational Support, University.

Aondoaver Ucho PhD (*Corresponding author*)

aucho@bsum.edu.ng

Department of Psychology,
Benue State University Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

Introduction

For decades, counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) has appeared as a topic of concern to organizational behaviour scholars and managers probably due to its substantial cost and disrupting tendency (Aladenusi & Ayodele, 2018; Krischer et al., 2010; Uche et al., 2017). This cost many have stated include loss of productivity due to delay at the workplace, theft, or sabotage (Aladenusi & Ayodele, 2018; Robinson, 2008) or psychological cost involving withdrawal or low job commitment- for those who are targets of counterproductive interpersonal behaviours, or high stress and uncertainty for those who perceive such behaviours (Schat & Kelloway, 2005).

Often termed deviant behaviour, CWB is known to be an intentional employee behaviour that is harmful to the legitimate interests of an organization (Makhdoom et al., 2019). It embraces a variety of acts including absenteeism, spreading of nasty rumours, sabotage, verbal abuse, theft, physical assault, stealing from co-worker, coming late to work, lying, refusing to cooperate, withdrawal, and withholding of efforts (Chang & Smithikrai, 2010). Fox and Spector (2005) in discussing CWB stated that these deviant behaviours have negative effect either at the interpersonal level, for colleagues or clients, or at the organizational level, with the potential to cause significant damage and loss to the organization.

In Nigeria and other places, researchers have used different terms such as misbehaviour (Uche et al., 2017) and antisocial behaviour or workplace deviance (Mase, 2017) to denote CWBs. These attempts are to bring to limelight the fact that these acts are truly counterproductive and should be taken seriously in management of organizations.

One way of understanding and degrading counterproductive work behaviours in organizations is to identify predictors of these behaviours both at interpersonal and organizational level. In response to this need, researchers have conducted numerous studies targeted at identifying and understanding the antecedent factors of CWB (Abdullah & Halim, 2016; Mase, 2017). Mase for instance assessed personality factors in relation to CWB among civil servants in Benue State, however, there is need to also study job-related and or organizational-based factors that could impact CWB particularly among non-teaching staff of universities, a critical workforce that man the administration segment of the university in Nigeria.

One important aspect of the job relates to employees' perception of the characteristics of the job itself. Job characteristics are the attributes of jobs that can have motivational influences on employees. Hackman and Oldham (1980) identified five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Skill variety is the degree to which a job requires the worker to use a number of different skills and talents; task identity is the extent to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work, or doing a task from beginning to end with a visible outcome; task significance is the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people; autonomy is the extent to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out; while feedback is the degree to which the job provides direct and clear information about the level of effectiveness of one's performance.

Comprehensive theoretical and empirical studies have demonstrated that these five core job characteristics have significant influence on critical psychological states, which in turn influence work outcomes, given the strength of the employee's growth needs (Bohlander & Snell, 2013; Cascio, 2010). That is, the greater the meaningfulness of the

job (skill variety, task identity, and task significance) as well as the more experienced responsibility (autonomy) and the more knowledge of results (feedback), the greater will be employees' motivation, performance, commitment, and satisfaction, and the lower their likelihood of engaging in behaviours that are counterproductive in an organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Although research around that link job characteristics to different organizational outcomes, both positive and negative, little have been found that directly linked job characteristics and counterproductive work behaviour especially among university workers in Nigeria.

Organizational literature also points to the significant role of organizational factors in counterproductive work behaviour. Employees of an organization always take particular interest and belief in their organization based on the extent to which the organization values their welfare, comfort, and security. This belief has been conceptualized as perceived organizational support (POS). Erdogan and Enders (2007) define perceived organizational support as the degree to which an individual believes that the organization cares about him/her, values his/her input and provides him/her with help and support. In fact, perceived organizational support reflects the quality of social interactions between the employees and the employer (Casper et al., 2011).

Eisenberger et al. (2001) showed that a series of beliefs, thoughts and behaviours between the two sides are exchanged during social interactions which are of great importance to the organization. However, the presentation of each of these ideas, thoughts, and behaviours is dependent upon the employee's perceptions of the way the organization is responsible for appreciating and valuing them. Previous studies demonstrate that organizational support given to employees by their organization engenders improvement of positive behaviours and attitudes like affective and normative commitment (Aube et al., 2007; Fuller et al., 2003), organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) and work engagement (Ravindranath, 2017; Ucho, 2019).

Indeed, employees who perceive that their organization is supportive show higher performance, proactive behaviours, reduced absenteeism, and a lessened intention of quitting their job (Arshadi & Hayavi, 2013; Caesens et al., 2016; Riggle et al., 2009). Perceived organizational support can have a positive impact on employee attitudes and behaviours mainly because it creates a sense of obligation within the individuals to repay the organization.

Although the organizational literature is saturated with studies linking perceived organizational support to positive organizational outcomes including work engagement (Kou, 2012), job satisfaction and job commitment, there is paucity of studies linking perceived organizational support to negative work outcomes like counterproductive work behaviour. Hence, there is the need to turn attention in this direction.

The Problem

The Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission, ICPC (2012) have reported that there is pervasive counterproductive work behaviour in Nigerian universities among non-teaching staff. The CWBs listed include manipulation of admission processes, appointments, and promotion of staff; manipulation and falsification of academic records such as transcripts; sexual harassment and victimization of applicants; syndicated plagiarism by students and staff; and non-adherence to bidding processes in the award of contracts. These are critical issues that are affecting the growth and ratings of Nigerian universities. In this light, it is pertinent to carry out scientific investigation to point out the predictive variables of these deviant behaviours professionally termed counterproductive work behaviours.

Literature Review

Job Characteristics and CWB

Empirical literature on the association between job characteristics and counterproductive work behaviour is quite scanty. However, efforts have been made to identify the available studies that either directly or indirectly link job characteristics with counterproductive work behaviour. In this direction, AbdulRahim et al. (2016) examined the impact of job characteristics on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). Three forms of CWB were identified: interpersonal CWB, production CWB, and property CWB. Data were collected on a sample of 355 employees. The regression analysis carried out showed mixed results. Job characteristics demonstrated a significant and negative relationship with production CWB. The relationship between job feedback, interpersonal CWB and property CWB was inverse. Similarly, job identity demonstrated a significant and negative relationship with organizational CWB. However, job autonomy did not show any significant relationship with CWB.

Arshad et al. (2016) explored whether all five core components of job characteristics and three types of role stressors serve as the predictors of cyber loafing (form of production deviance) behaviour of employees at workplace or not. It was hypothesized separately that job characteristics and role stressors would have impact on cyber loafing. Data was collected from employees of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited who had access to internet at workplace. It was found out that out of five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, job autonomy, and feedback) skill variety and job autonomy had significant negative impact on CWB.

In a similar vein, Ansari et al. (2013) investigated the effect of personality (conscientiousness, trait anger), job (skill variety, feedback) and organizational (distributive justice, organizational constraints) factors on counterproductive work behaviours. A random sample of 185 employees (men and women) of Second Gas Transmission Operational Area in Iran completed the research questionnaire. The research model estimated with structural equation modelling. Results of estimate indicated that there were significant negative relationships between skill variety and perceived distributive justice with total counterproductive behaviour and its dimensions. In addition, there were significant positive relationships between perceived organizational constraints with total counterproductive behaviour and its dimensions. Also, it was shown that there were significant relationships between conscientiousness with two dimensions of CWB (sabotage and drugs). Furthermore, it was indicated that perceived organizational constraints have the strongest effect on CWB.

Perceived Organizational Support and CWB

Aladenusi and Ayodele (2018) determined the mediating effect of school climate (SC) on the relationship between teachers' counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) and job performance (JP) in secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. This study employed the descriptive research design type. Three hundred and sixty participants selected through multi-stage stratified random sampling technique, were used for the study. Three main instruments were used in collecting data. Data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Hierarchical Multiple Regression. Results showed an inverse relationship between CWB and positive SC and JP, while convergent significant relationship existed between positive SC and JP. Also, a significant mediation effect of SC on the relationship between CWB and JP. Based on the findings, it was established that SC is a strong factor in the relationship between CWB and JP. It is concluded that teachers' perception of the school climate as being satisfactory or not to a

great extent influences their behaviour positively or negatively in achieving the school’s vision.

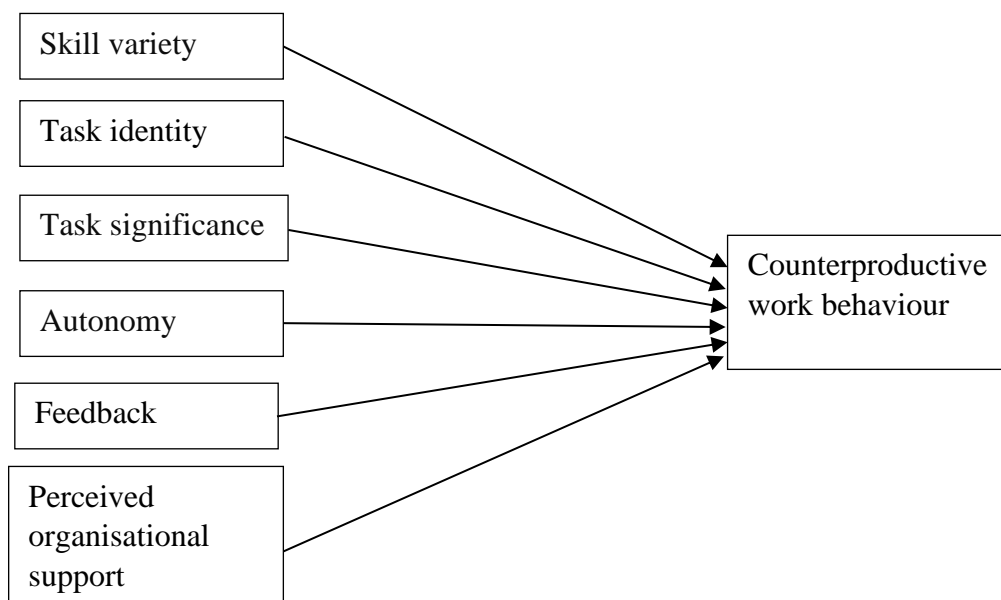
Onuoha (2013) investigated the influence of perceived organizational support and job burnout on CWB among employees in emotionally demanding jobs. The study was a cross-sectional survey, in which a sample of 328 employees in organizations that render highly personalized service participated. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that employees with favourable perception of organizational support were less likely to exhibit CWB.

Arif et al. (2018) studied perceived organizational support, leader member exchange and counterproductive work behaviours among civil servants in organization X in Pakistan. They sampled 271 respondents and concluded that perceived organizational support had negative relationship with counterproductive work behaviour. Their result implies that increase in perceived organizational support leads to decrease in counterproductive work behaviour. An inference into the study of Nnaebue et al. (2020) also indicated that employees’ perception of organizational support affects their deviant behaviour in a workplace. The authors studied the role of work overload and organizational justice dimensions in CWB among employees in private organizations in Nigeria. They found that work overload has positive relationship with CWB. This means when employees feel that they are overburdened, they tend to engage in CWB. The authors also reported that organizational justice has negative relationship with CWB implying that the higher fairness is perceived within the organization, the lower the CWB.

The conceptual relationships of the study variables are presented below:

Figure 1: *Conceptual Model of Job Characteristics, Perceived Organizational Support and Counterproductive Work Behaviour*

Job characteristics



Source: Uchir, Ucho, and Gwanbe, 2022

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual relationship between job characteristics and CWB. The figure indicates that skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback will independently and jointly impact CWB. Similarly, perceived organizational support will independently and in association with the job characteristics influence CWB. This conceptual

postulation is based on the job characteristics theory of Hackman and Oldham (1980) that suggests that five job characteristics produce critical psychological states in employees, and ultimately result in positive work. This theory could be applied in the relationship between organizational support and CWB also as the support the organization gives to workers to do their job could impact psychological states and ultimately lead to behavioural outcomes in a workplace.

In view of the above, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant independent and joint influence of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university.

Hypothesis 2: There will be significant negative influence of perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant joint influence of job characteristics and perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university.

Method

The method section captures participants and procedure, instruments and design/statistics

Participants and Procedure

The participants for this study were 289 non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral Nigeria. They were sampled across the many divisions of the university. The participants had mean age of 42 years, 204 (70.8%) were males while 85 (29.4%) were females. 19 (6.6%) of the number sampled had no spouses, while 270 (93.4%) had. In terms of religion, 286 (99.0%) were Christians while 3 (1%) were Muslims. One hundred and seventy-six (61%) of the participants were of the junior cadre while 113 (39%) were senior.

The sample size for this study was estimated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula while the stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the participants. Non-teaching staff were classified into senior and junior categories and every other senior and junior staff of the university contacted was requested to respond to the research instrument.

The instrument was administered to the participants in their various offices and workstations after the researcher obtained approval from the registrar of the university. The response rate was high though a few potential respondents declined participation in the study despite the approval from the university registrar and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Instruments

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection in this study. The questionnaire was made up of five sections A – D. Section A elicited demographic characteristics of the respondents, Section B was the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), Section C was the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support, while Section D was Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist.

The demographic section of the questionnaire assessed seven variables which included respondents' age, sex, marital status, religion, tribe, department and work cadre.

Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) originally developed by Hackman and Oldham in 1980 was used to measure the five core job dimensions of skill variety (SV), task identity (TI), task significance (TS), autonomy (AU), and feedback (FB). The scale consists of two parts with 15 items in all; 5 items in the first part and 10 items in the second part. In the first part, the respondents are required to indicate directly the amount of each job characteristic they perceive to be present in their job. In the second part, the respondents are required to indicate the accuracy of a number of statements about the characteristics of their job. Three different items, one each from the first part and two each from the second part measure each job characteristic. A seven-point rating scale anchored by 1 = "Very Inaccurate" and 7 = "Very Accurate" is used as scoring format. The original Cronbach's alpha for the JDS was found to be .65 for Skill Variety, .73 for Task Identity, .50 for Task Significance, .46 for Autonomy, .35 for Feedback.

The 36-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) was used to assess perceived organizational support of non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral Nigeria. It is scored on a scale of 0 = Strongly disagree to 6 = Strongly agree. Respondents are asked to choose the options that best describe their opinion about their organization. Items are slightly modified by replacing the word "organization" with "university". Higher scores on the scale indicate higher organizational support while lower scores represent lower organizational support. Eisenberger et al. (1986) reported that the SPOS measures perceived organizational support with high reliability.

Lastly, the 32-item version of the Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C) developed by Spector and Fox (2005) was used to measure the magnitude of CWB. This scale is divided into five subscales namely: Abuse, Sabotage, Production Deviance, Theft, and Withdrawal. Responses are made on a five-item category scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 stands for Never, Once or Twice, Once or Twice per month, Once or Twice per week, and everyday respectively. Spector et al. (2006) reported reliability for the five subscales as; Abuse ($\alpha = 0.85$), Sabotage ($\alpha = 0.55$), Production Deviance ($\alpha = 0.65$), Theft ($\alpha = 0.63$) and Withdrawal ($\alpha = 0.64$). The overall reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale (all/32 items) is reported as .90 which shows that the internal consistency is high and the scale is reliable (Spector et al. 2006).

Design/Statistics

This research adopted the cross-sectional survey design. Job characteristics, organizational support and CWB were assessed using questionnaire at a particular point in time for analysis and inferences. Preliminary analysis involving descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and mean was carried out as presented in the description of demographic characteristics of the respondents. On the other hand, Standard Multiple Regression (SMR) analysis was applied to test the research hypotheses. SMR was used because it enabled the researchers to determine the overall fit (variance explained) of the models and the relative contribution of each of the predictors to the total variance explained in the dependent variable. These were done via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

Results

The results of the analyses in the study are presented and interpreted below. The first analysis involved inter-correlations of all the variables in the study, result is presented in table 1. The results of the three hypotheses stated above are presented in tables 2 and 3.

Table 1

Showing Mean, Standard deviation and Zero-order Correlation of the Study Variables

S/ N	Variab le	\bar{X}	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Age	42.45	7.70	1										
2	Sex	-	-	-.32**	1									
3	M.S	-	-	.40**	-.04	1								
4	J. C	86.85	14.57	.29**	-.02	.11	1							
5	A.	15.89	3.70	.24**	.04	.07	.76**	1						
6	T. I	10.87	4.55	-.21**	.05	.02	-.55**	-.22**	1					
7	S. V	10.40	3.79	.24**	-.12*	-.02	.64**	.25**	-.81**	1				
8	T. S	10.88	3.68	.18**	-.10	-.02	.64**	.26**	-.78**	.86**	1			
9	F.	10.69	3.99	.17**	-.05	.01	.67**	.23**	-.73**	.88**	.83**	1		
10	POS	111.44	35.07	.19**	-.02	-.04	.51**	.30**	-.49**	.46**	.44**	.46**	1	
11	CWB	42.72	14.42	-.10	-.02	.09	-.12*	-.13*	.02	.04	.17**	-.01	-.19**	1

Key: MS= Marital Status, JC= Job Characteristics, A = Autonomy, TI = Task Identity, SV= Skill Variety, TS = Task Significance, F = Feedback, POS= Perceived Organizational Support, CWB= Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Table 1 shows inter-correlation among variables in the study. The table shows a significant negative relationship between job characteristics and counterproductive work behaviour ($r_{(288)} = -.116$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that, increase in the job characteristics means a corresponding decrease in counterproductive work behaviour. The table also shows a significant negative relationship between autonomy and counterproductive work behaviour ($r_{(288)} = -.125$; $p < 0.05$) which also implies that, increase in autonomy means a corresponding decrease in counterproductive work behaviour, in the same vein perceived organizational support showed a negative correlation with counterproductive work behaviour ($r_{(288)} = -.194$; $p < 0.01$). The table also shows a significant positive relationship between task significance and counterproductive work behaviour ($r_{(288)} = .170$; $p < 0.01$) which means that, increase on task significance amounts to an increase in counterproductive work behaviour. This implies that non-teaching staff who are high on autonomy and perceived organizational support showed lower counterproductive work behaviour, while those who are high on task significance showed higher counterproductive work behaviour.

Table 2.

Standard Multiple Linear Regression Showing the Independent and Joint Prediction of Counterproductive work behaviour by Autonomy, Task identity, Skill variety, Task significance and Feedback (Job characteristics)

Predictor variable	R	R ²	F	P	β	t	Sig
Constant					-	7.307	0.000
Autonomy					.635	5.277	0.000
Task identity	.345	.119	7.642	0.000	.077	-1.154	0.249
Skill variety					-.181	-1.269	0.206
Task sig					.026	.429	0.668
Feedback					-.421	-3.413	0.001

Table 2 showed that autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance and feedback jointly predicted counterproductive work behaviour significantly ($F_{(5,288)}=7.642$; $P<0.001$, $R=0.345$ and $R^2=0.119$). This result indicated that the five dimensions of job characteristics jointly accounted for 11.9% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. The result confirmed the hypothesis that there will be a significant joint influence of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback on counterproductive work behaviour of non-teaching staff of universities.

The independent influence of the predictor variable was also examined, and the table showed that autonomy significantly influenced counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = 0.635$, $t = 5.277$, $p<0.001$), it showed that autonomy has a positive contribution and also accounted for 63.5% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour, meaning that when non-teaching staff of universities are given freedom on the job, they tend to involve in more counterproductive work behaviours capable of hurting the organization. Similarly, feedback significantly and negatively predicted counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = -0.421$, $t = -3.413$, $p<0.001$). It accounted for 42.1% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviours, meaning that when employees are given feedback of their job performance, it tends to discourage CWB. However, task identity ($\beta = 0.077$, $t = -1.154$, $p>0.05$), skill variety ($\beta = -0.181$, $t = -1.269$, $p>0.05$) and task significance ($\beta = 0.026$, $t = 0.429$, $p>0.05$) did not significantly predict counterproductive work behaviour.

Table 3.

Standard Multiple Regression Showing the Joint Prediction of Counterproductive Work Behaviour by Job Characteristics and Organizational support.

Predictor variable	R	R ²	F	P	β	t	P
Constant					-	33.36	0.00
						4	0
Job characteristics	.311	.79	15.29	0.00	.29	5.174	0.00
POS		7	4	0	2		3
					-.830	-7.170	0.00
							0

Table 3 showed that job characteristics and perceived organizational support jointly and significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of universities ($F_{(2,288)}= 15.294$; $P<0.001$, $R=0.311$ and $R^2=0.797$). This means that job characteristics and

perceived organizational support have joint positive contribution by accounting for 79.7% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. This implies that a high score on job characteristics and perceived organizational support means there will be a correspondent high counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff. This confirmed the third hypothesis that there will be significant joint influence of job characteristics and perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral Nigeria.

Table 3 also showed that there is significant negative influence of perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour ($\beta = -0.830$, $t = -7.470$, $p < 0.001$). POS accounted for 83.0% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. This means that, the higher employees perceived organizational support the less they get involved in counterproductive work behaviour. The result confirms the hypothesis that there will be significant negative influence of perceived organizational support on counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral Nigeria.

Discussion

Data analysis shows that skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback jointly have significant positive impact on counterproductive work behaviour. This result contradicts the position of Job Characteristics Theory that five job characteristics affect the psychological state of employees, and result to positive work outcomes. Considering the population however, the result is not surprising. Non-teaching staff in many universities are being owed allowances and sometimes salaries in the mist of stressful work environment and overload. This ugly situation can impact negatively on the attitudes and behaviour of the workers thereby contradicting the propositions of theories including that of job characteristics. This scenario also plays out in the independent influence of autonomy on CWB. Autonomy has positive impact on CWB implying that increase in freedom on the job leads to increase in CWB. The result again disagrees with that of Arshad et al. (2016) who found negative relationship between autonomy and CWB. On the contrary however, feedback has negative influence on CWB. It implies that feedback is key in determining the behaviour of non-teaching staff of universities irrespective of circumstances as it is also the case in the study conducted by Arshad et al. (2016).

Job characteristics and perceived organizational support had joint positive influence on CWB. However, when assessed independently, perceived organizational support had significant negative impact on CWB of non-teaching staff of universities. The result means that when an organization supports its employees to achieve their work and personal goals, the employees are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours. For instance, when staff perceive that the university is reciprocating their efforts by paying their statutory allowances and salaries as at when due as well as creating conducive work environment, their tendency of engaging in CWB will be less. The result agrees with findings of others such as Onuoha (2013), Arif et al. (2018) and Nnaebue et al. (2020) who all found evidence that employees who perceive high organizational support are less likely to show CWB.

Implications of the Study

Findings of the study imply that performance feedback reduces CWB significantly. It therefore means that university authorities should ensure regular performance evaluation and results communicated to workers. In fact, it is reported that when it comes to job performance, employee feedback is one of the most crucial tools in any human resources manager's arsenal (Louis, 2017; The Employees Edge, 2018). Contrary to the belief of many, feedback does not only mean criticism on workplace attitudes and behaviours, but also includes an equally crucial element of praise and recognition for hardwork, workplace achievements, and positive attitudes. CWB

impacts negatively on the life of organizations and any efforts at clipping it are likely to improve the fortunes of such organizations.

Findings of the study further imply that workers should not be given absolute freedom when performing their duties. Total freedom leads to CWB which may include absenteeism, presenteeism etc. in their study, Siregar et. al. (2021) reported that job autonomy enhances innovative behaviour. This means that employee freedom can help in setting the organisation on a positive path, however, findings of this study implies that absolute freedom can breed CWB among employees and in the university system.

Similarly, findings of the study clearly point to the fact that university managements must support their workers in whatever way possible in order to reduce CWB. Support can come in form of regular payment of salaries and allowances, promotion, training etc. corruption, theft, sexual harassment and many other CWBs common in Nigerian Universities can be curtailed if management support their employees.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was conducted in only one university that is government owned. Future research should be conducted across many universities with diverse ownership status. Similarly, teaching staff were not part of this research, future studies should consider incorporating teaching staff for robust analysis and comparison.

The research adopted a cross-sectional method in the assessment of the relationship between job characteristics, organizational support and CWB. The inability of the methodology to establish cause and effect relationship between the variables have left a gap in the interpretation of the findings. Future efforts should be geared towards addressing the cause and effect relationship of these variables.

In the same vein, generating data from employees about CWB without input from supervisors may be misleading. Future studies should complement such data by sourcing further information from other sources such as colleagues and supervisors. This will avoid the problem of common source variance.

Conclusion

This study was designed to assess counterproductive work behaviour among non-teaching staff of a state-owned university in Northcentral Nigeria with job characteristics including organizational support as predictors. The study found that autonomy, feedback, and organizational support are critical in reducing CWB. Universities' management should therefore take job characteristics (particularly autonomy, feedback, and support) seriously when trying to tackle the problem of CWB.

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