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DETERMINANTS OF COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR WITHIN MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN THE LEASING SECTOR

ABSTRACT

This study investigated gender differences in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in the leasing sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. A total of 187 employees (135 males and 52 females) from seven leasing firms participated using a convenience sampling technique. The Work Deviance Scale by Bennett and Robinson (2000), comprising Organizational Deviance (CWB-O) and Individual Deviance (CWB-I), was used to measure CWB. Independent samples t-tests were employed to assess gender differences. Results showed no significant difference between male ($M = 17.25$, $SD = 8.90$) and female ($M = 17.31$, $SD = 8.93$) employees in organizational deviance, $t(185) = -0.038$, $p = .969$. Similarly, although females ($M = 14.88$, $SD = 4.18$) scored slightly higher than males ($M = 13.75$, $SD = 3.73$) on individual deviance, the difference was not statistically significant, $t(185) = -1.806$, $p = .073$. Levene's tests confirmed equal variances for both subscales. These findings suggest that gender does not significantly influence CWB levels within the leasing sector, though practical implications for addressing workplace deviance across genders remain important. The study recommends that organizations in the leasing sector implement holistic behavioural management strategies that are not gender-biased, as findings indicate no significant gender differences in counterproductive work behaviour. Emphasis should be placed on creating organizational cultures that promote ethical behaviour and discourage deviant acts among all employees, regardless of gender.

Keywords: Counterproductive Work Behaviour, Gender Differences, Leasing Sector, Organizational Deviance, Individual Deviance

1. INTRODUCTION

Work behaviour remains a critical area of study in organizational psychology and human resource management due to its direct impact on productivity, employee well-being, and overall organizational effectiveness. Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), which refers to voluntary behaviours by employees that harm organizations or their members, is a global concern cutting across industries and regions (Jeewandara & Kumari, 2021; Szostek, Balcerzak, Rogalska & Pelikánová, 2022).

CWB undermines organizational goals and has been linked to decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover, and negative workplace culture (O'Brien, Henson & Voss, 2021; Lipińska-Grobelny, 2021). The leasing sector, pivotal in supporting economic growth through asset financing and risk management, contributes significantly to Nigeria's business landscape (Bello, Ahmad & Aliyu, 2016; Agbloyor, Abor, Issahaku & Adjasi, 2020). However, like many service-oriented industries, it is susceptible to workplace behaviours that can impede operational efficiency (Bello, Ahmad & Aliyu, 2016).

Gender differences may affect how employees perceive organizational stressors, cope with workplace challenges, and exhibit deviant behaviours. In Nigeria, where traditional gender roles strongly influence social and professional interactions, exploring these differences in a workplace context becomes critical. Research on CWB has often focused on antecedents such as job dissatisfaction, organizational justice, leadership styles, and work environment (Wu, Sun, Zhang & Wang, 2016; Oluwole, Aderibigbe & Mjoli, 2020; Ahmed, Zhang, Fouad, Mousa & Nour, 2024). These determinants interact in complex ways to influence whether employees engage in behaviours like absenteeism, sabotage, theft, or interpersonal aggression (Eventus, Ekpo, Wonah, Chike, Oboko & Mofam, 2024). Studies from other emerging economies suggest that gender moderates the relationship between workplace stressors and CWB, with women often displaying different coping mechanisms than men (Loi, Loh & Hine, 2015; Murtaza, Roques, Talpur & Khan, 2021). However, contextual and cultural factors unique to Nigerian organizations, particularly in sectors like leasing, remain under-explored.

While some studies have examined CWB in Nigerian organizations broadly, there is a paucity of research that specifically identifies the determinants of such behaviours among employees in the leasing sector (Oluwole, Aderibigbe & Mjoli, 2020; Jeewandara & Kumari, 2021; Lipińska-Grobelny, 2021). Also, gendered differences in CWB within the leasing sector remain largely unexplored, leaving organizational leaders with limited insights to develop targeted interventions. This knowledge gap is significant because unmanaged CWB results in substantial financial losses, damage to reputation, and deteriorating employee morale (Agbloyor et al., 2020). Additionally, failure to consider gender-specific determinants risks ineffective policy and management strategies that do not address the nuanced needs of male and female employees.

Consequently, there is a pressing need for empirical research that disentangles these determinants to enhance workplace harmony and productivity in Nigeria's leasing sector. This study aims to fill the gap in knowledge by contextualizing these dynamics within Nigeria's leasing sector. Understanding the determinants of

counterproductive work behaviour through the lens of gender differences within the Nigerian leasing sector offers practical and theoretical contributions. This study provides actionable insights for human resource managers and policymakers aiming to foster a positive work environment, reduce deviant behaviours, and enhance organizational performance. Moreover, it enriches the literature on gender and work behaviour in the Nigerian context, supporting broader discussions on workforce diversity and inclusion.

The null hypotheses of this study are:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female employees in the level of counterproductive work behaviour directed at the organization in the leasing sector.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female employees in the level of counterproductive work behaviour directed at individuals in the leasing sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study is underpinned by Social Exchange Theory (SET), which was originally propagated by sociologist George C. Homans in 1958 and later expanded by Peter Blau in 1964 (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Homans introduced the idea of social behaviour as an exchange of goods, both material and symbolic, between individuals (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels & Hall, 2017). Blau further refined the theory by applying it to organizational settings, emphasizing that work relationships function like economic transactions where individuals expect rewards in return for their contributions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). These interactions are not governed by formal contracts but by mutual expectations, trust, and norms of reciprocity.

The core assumption of SET is that human relationships are formed through a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives (Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman, 2001). In the workplace, when employees perceive that their contributions, such as hard work, loyalty, or overtime, are not matched by appropriate rewards such as promotion, recognition, or job security, they may feel betrayed or exploited (Cooper-Thomas & Morrison, 2018). This perceived breach of the psychological contract, which refers to the unwritten expectations between employer and employee, creates dissatisfaction and erodes trust (Cooper-Thomas & Morrison, 2018). Over time, such feelings lead employees to withdraw, reduce effort, or retaliate through counterproductive work behaviours.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), such as absenteeism, lateness, sabotage, or interpersonal conflict interpreted as a form of negative reciprocity under SET (Eventus, Ekpo, Wonah, Chike, Oboko & Mofam, 2024). When employees believe they are being unfairly treated or their expectations are unmet, they may engage in CWBs as a way to restore equity or express dissatisfaction (Eventus et al., 2024). In the context of the study on male and female employees in the leasing sector, SET helps explain how perceived injustices or unfulfilled promises, possibly differing by gender due to unequal access to opportunities, drive such behaviours (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, understanding social exchange processes helps organizations identify root causes of CWB and design fair, reciprocal systems to reduce them.

2.2 Empirical Review

Ahmed et al. (2024) explored toxic leadership on CWBs in Egypt's higher education sector, collecting data from 392 employees and analyzing it with AMOS 25 for structural equation modelling. Their findings indicate that toxic leadership positively influences CWBs, organizational cynicism, and organizational injustice, with cynicism and injustice partially mediating the relationship between toxic leadership and CWBs. This suggests that negative leadership fosters distrust and perceived unfairness, amplifying behaviours like sabotage, withdrawal, and abuse. Similarly, Oluwole et al. (2020) studied 380 banking sector employees in Nigeria, finding that job insecurity and organizational injustice positively correlate with CWBs, including sabotage and withdrawal. Their results highlight how distributive and procedural justice can mitigate these effects, emphasizing the role of fairness in curbing deviant behaviours.

Murtaza et al. (2021) investigated 251 healthcare employees in Pakistan, using hierarchical moderated regression to show that workplace incivility positively covaries with CWBs, but Islamic work ethics negatively moderate this relationship by bolstering psychological resources. Alqhaiwi et al. (2024) applied Affective Events Theory to 328 hotel employees in Jordan, demonstrating that workplace bullying triggers CWBs through hostility, with trait mindfulness reducing this effect. Carpenter et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis across 7,110 units and over 391,000 employees, revealing that unit-level CWBs correlate with collective job attitudes, strategic HR practices, and fairness perceptions, negatively affecting productivity, customer satisfaction, and profit.

Lipińska-Grobelny (2021) surveyed 230 employees and found that a supportive organizational climate, marked by responsibility, clear requirements, and warmth, reduces CWBs like abuse, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal, with gender moderating specific relationships. Elliotthey et al. (2024) studied 369 Egyptian

nurses, showing that strong work ethics negatively predict CWBs and workplace ostracism, which mediates this relationship. Subhaktiyasa and Sintari (2024) analyzed 310 Indonesian lecturers, finding that spiritual leadership reduces CWBs through enhanced spiritual well-being. Pugliese et al. (2024) surveyed 300 employees in Italy, demonstrating that team identification, more than organizational identification, predicts lower CWBs and higher citizenship behaviours, mediating the effects of communication climate and perceived external prestige.

2.3 Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

Workplace behaviours are broadly categorized into two types: in-role and extra-role behaviours (Katz & Kahn, 1978). In-role behaviours refer to tasks and responsibilities formally outlined in job descriptions, which employees are expected to perform as part of their roles (Vey & Campbell, 2004). In contrast, extra-role behaviours encompass actions that go beyond formal job requirements (Vey & Campbell, 2004). These behaviours include both positive contributions, such as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), and negative behaviours, such as Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (Wu & LeBreton, 2011).

Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) has garnered significant scholarly attention in the 21st century due to its widespread prevalence and costly impact on organizations (Hollinger, Slora, & Terris, 1992; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), as many as 75% of employees engage in some form of CWB, highlighting its status as a global organizational challenge. CWBs are not formally included in job descriptions, however, they undermine organizational functioning by harming individuals, the organization, or both (Sackett, Berry, Wiemann, & Laczko, 2006).

The evolution of terminologies associated with negative workplace behaviours has reflected the increasing academic focus on the topic. Spector (1975) introduced the term “organizational aggressiveness,” while Hollinger (1986) referred to such behaviours as “deviance.” It was Robinson and Bennett (1995) who later coined the phrase “workplace deviant behaviour.” The term “counterproductive” was first employed in this context by Spector and Fox (1999), and it has since become a widely accepted label for a broad range of harmful workplace actions.

Spector and Fox (2002, 2005) defined CWB as intentional behaviour by employees that is potentially damaging to the organization or its members. They further emphasized that such behaviour is voluntary and not merely a result of poor performance. For instance, while absence due to a family emergency would not be classified as CWB, deliberate absenteeism, time-wasting, sabotage, or the spread of misinformation

would be. These actions, though not always immediately harmful, have serious long-term consequences if left unaddressed. Wilkowski and Robinson (2008) referred to these actions as dysfunctional behaviours, reinforcing the view that CWB involves a conscious intent to disrupt or harm. One of the most comprehensive definitions of CWB was provided by Spector and Fox (2005), who conceptualized it as employee behaviour that harms or attempts to harm the organization and its stakeholders, including coworkers, supervisors, clients, and customers. Examples include job slowdowns, material wastage, absenteeism, and malicious gossip. They further argued that while some behaviours may appear trivial or harmless, such as minor gossip, they may evolve into more damaging outcomes if they spread within the organization.

The antecedents of CWB have also been explored extensively. Several researchers (Chen & Spector, 1992; Storms & Spector, 1987; Fox & Spector, 1999) identified CWB as an emotional response to stress, laying the foundation for the Stressor-Emotion Model. This model suggests that employees may engage in counterproductive behaviours as a reaction to negative emotions triggered by workplace stressors (Fox & Spector, 1999). Complementing this view, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory posits that individuals engage in CWB when they perceive a threat to their valued resources or when they experience actual resource loss. According to Szostek et al (2022), understanding the motivations and triggers of CWB is crucial in developing preventive measures and organizational interventions. As emphasized by Robinson and Wilkowski (2008), addressing the root causes of CWB helps organizations mitigate its damaging effects and foster a more productive work environment.

2.4 Dimensions of Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

The study of Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) has been approached through various classification methods aimed at capturing the complexity of negative behaviours in the workplace. One of the earliest attempts to categorize CWB was carried out by Hollinger and Clark (1982), who proposed a distinction between "property deviance" and "production deviance". Property deviance includes actions such as sabotage and the unauthorized taking of office supplies, while production deviance refers to behaviours like absenteeism and substance use at work (Hollinger, 1986). Another classification adopts a broader perspective by conceptualizing all such behaviours under a unified construct of CWB (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

Building upon this foundation, Bennett and Robinson (1995) introduced the 4Ps typology, which expanded the framework by adding two more categories: personal aggression and political deviance. Political deviance involves behaviours that manipulate social relationships for personal advantage, such as favouritism, gossip, and the dissemination of false information. Personal aggression includes direct hostility towards individuals, such as verbal abuse and sexual harassment (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). This framework also underpins later studies on workplace violence (Kelloway, 2006), cyberloafing (Blanchard & Henle, 2008), and bullying (LaVan & Martin, 2007).

In an attempt to broaden the classification of CWB, Gruys (1999) identified eleven categories, including theft and related behaviour, property destruction, misuse of information, misuse of time and resources, unsafe behaviour, poor attendance, poor quality of work, alcohol use, drug use, inappropriate verbal actions, and inappropriate physical actions. Spector and Fox (2001) later consolidated multiple studies and compiled a list of 64 CWB-related behaviours. They grouped these into five core categories: abuse (hostile or harmful actions toward others), production deviance (intentionally performing tasks incorrectly), theft, sabotage (deliberate damage to organizational resources), and disengagement (such as lateness or absenteeism during work hours) (Spector et al., 2006).

Additional perspectives on CWB classification include the severity and mode of behaviour. Hollinger and Clark (1983) argued that the seriousness of CWB varies. For instance, verbal aggression is generally perceived as less severe than physical aggression, and thus may not be penalized as strictly. Conlon, Meyer, and Nowakowski (2005) further distinguished between active and passive forms of CWB. Active behaviours are overt and intentional, such as yelling at a colleague. Passive behaviours are more covert, including procrastination or being frequently late, and often escape managerial attention even though they significantly affect organizational performance.

Another significant classification approach focuses on the targets of CWB. Fox and Spector (2003) differentiated between behaviours aimed at the organization (CWB-O) and those directed at individuals within the organization (CWB-I). CWB-O encompasses acts such as damaging company property or intentionally performing tasks poorly, while CWB-I includes behaviours like verbal insults or physical assault toward colleagues (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Baron & Neuman, 1996). Although the two categories are moderately correlated, they reflect distinct dimensions of workplace deviance. Understanding these distinctions is important, as focusing on only one category leads to incomplete conclusions (Carpenter, Whitman & Amrhein, 2021). Furthermore, research has shown that

different types of CWB may be differently associated with specific emotional or situational stressors. This 'CWB-O and CWB-I' framework is adopted in this study as it provides a balanced and comprehensive approach.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional comparative design to examine gender differences in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in the leasing sector. A total of 187 participants (135 males and 52 females) were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling technique from seven major leasing firms in Lagos state, Nigeria. Inclusion criteria required that participants have at least six months of continuous employment to ensure familiarity with organizational norms and opportunities to exhibit counterproductive behaviours.

For Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), the Work Deviance Scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000) was adopted. The scale was scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = Several times a year, 4 = Weekly, to 5 = Daily. The scale comprised two dimensions, which are Individual Deviance (CWB-I) and Organizational Deviance (CWB-O). The Individual Deviance (CWB-I) has a 7-item, and Organizational Deviance (CWB-O) has a 12-item, which makes a total of 17 items for the scale. A sample of the items for each dimension includes "Acted rudely toward someone at work" (Individual Deviance), and "Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person" (Organizational Deviance). A score above the mean on each dimension implies that respondents measured high on each dimension. Each Individual Deviance and Organizational Deviance has a reported reliability Cronbach's alpha value of 0.84 and 0.74, respectively.

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and standard errors) were computed separately for male and female groups on the Organization (ORD) and Individual (IND) subscales. Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted to verify homogeneity assumptions ($p > .05$ for both subscales), allowing for the assumption of equal variances in subsequent comparisons. Independent-samples t-tests were then performed to compare male and female means on each CWB dimension, with significance set at $\alpha = .05$. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) and 95% confidence intervals for mean differences were calculated to assess the practical significance of any observed gender differences.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the independent samples t-test conducted to examine gender differences in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in the leasing sector. Specifically, it compares male (N = 135) and female (N = 52) employees on two dimensions of CWB: organizational and individual. The statistical results, shown in the tables below, are interpreted to determine whether there are significant differences between the two gender groups.

**Table 1: Group Statistics for Counterproductive Work Behaviour
(Organization and Individual)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ORD	Male	135	17.2519	8.90054	.76604
	Female	52	17.3077	8.93010	1.23838
IND	Male	135	13.7481	3.72510	.32061
	Female	52	14.8846	4.18050	.57973

Table 2: Independent Samples Test for Counterproductive Work Behaviour (Organization and Individual)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
ORD	Equal variances assumed	.001	.976	-.038	185	.969	-.05584	1.45401	-2.92441	2.81273
	Equal variances not assumed			-.038	92.350	.969	-.05584	1.45616	-2.94775	2.83607
IND	Equal variances assumed	3.039	.083	-1.806	185	.073	-1.13647	.62935	-2.37809	.10516
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.715	83.976	.090	-1.13647	.66248	-2.45388	.18095

From Levene's Test, $p = 0.976$ ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the variances are not significantly different. Therefore, equal variances are assumed. According to the t-test, the counterproductive work behaviour did not differ significantly, $t(185) = -0.038$, $p = 0.969$, $d = -0.05584$, 95% CI $[-2.92441, .10516]$. The mean for the male employees in the leasing sector ($M = 17.2519$, $SD = 8.90054$) is not significantly different from

the female employees in the leasing sector ($M = 17.3077$, $SD = 8.93010$). These findings support that there is no significant difference in the level of counterproductive work behaviour (organization) for male and female employees in the leasing sector. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for Hypothesis I, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

From Levene's Test, $p = 0.083$ ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the variances are not significantly different. Therefore, equal variances are assumed. According to the t-test, the counterproductive work behaviour did not differ significantly, $t(185) = -1.806$, $p = 0.073$, $d = -1.13647$, 95% CI $[-2.37809, 0.23634]$. The mean for the male employees in the leasing sector ($M = 13.7481$, $SD = 3.72510$) is not significantly different from the female employees in the leasing sector ($M = 14.8846$, $SD = 4.18050$). These findings support that there is no significant difference in the level of counterproductive work behaviour (individual) for male and female employees in the leasing sector. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for Hypothesis II, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

4.1 Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate no significant difference in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) between male and female employees within the leasing sector, aligning with previous research that has similarly found minimal or no gender disparities in such behaviours. O'Brien, Henson and Voss (2021) argued that gender alone is not a consistent predictor of workplace deviance, emphasizing that individual personality traits and job stressors play more influential roles. Supporting this view, Szostek et al (2022) noted that environmental triggers and organizational constraints are better predictors of CWB than demographic characteristics. Additionally, Lipińska-Grobelny (2021) found that while males and females may engage in different types of deviance, the overall frequency of counterproductive acts does not significantly differ by gender. The results of this study support the argument that situational and psychological factors, rather than gender, are central to understanding workplace deviance.

Moreover, the non-significant difference in both organizational and individual forms of CWB among male and female employees contrasts with some studies that have reported gender-based behavioural distinctions. For instance, Watson, Thompson and Jooste (2024) found that men tend to exhibit more aggressive and outwardly disruptive behaviours, while women are more likely to engage in passive forms such as absenteeism or gossip. Similarly, Potipiroon (2025) observed gender differences in specific facets of deviance, suggesting that socialization and role expectations may influence behavioural tendencies.

However, the findings of the present study align more closely with those of Jeewandara and Kumari (2021), who concluded that workplace deviance is often neutralized by organizational culture, policies, and job role structures that minimize personal behavioural expression. Given the professional and standardized nature of the leasing sector, it is plausible that institutional controls and job design reduce opportunities for gender-based differences to manifest in CWB.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is no significant difference in counterproductive work behaviour between male and female employees in the leasing sector. Both genders exhibit similar patterns of behaviour that could negatively affect organizational functioning and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. This indicates that gender is not a determining factor in the expression of such behaviours within this industry. The similarity in behavioural tendencies across male and female employees suggests a shared exposure to workplace conditions that may contribute to these outcomes. Therefore, counterproductive work behaviour appears to be a general workforce issue rather than one influenced by gender-specific traits.

The conclusion highlights that the manifestation of counterproductive work behaviour is likely influenced by factors that cut across gender lines. The consistent levels of such behaviours among male and female employees point to deeper, possibly structural or psychological variables that are common to all employees within the leasing sector. These findings challenge gender-based assumptions about workplace behaviour and support the view that all employees are equally susceptible to engaging in counterproductive acts under certain conditions. It underscores the importance of viewing counterproductive work behaviour as a universal concern rather than attributing it to gender differences.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's findings, it is recommended that;

- i. Since both male and female employees exhibit similar levels of CWB, training initiatives should be designed to address counterproductive behaviours across the entire workforce, not based on gender. The training should include modules on organizational ethics, interpersonal relationships, and stress management techniques.

- ii. HR departments should ensure disciplinary measures for counterproductive behaviours are uniformly applied, without assumptions based on gender. This fosters fairness, enhances employee trust, and ensures accountability at all levels.
- iii. Leasing firms should conduct quarterly surveys or feedback sessions to track employee engagement and detect early signs of disengagement or workplace dissatisfaction. This approach helps identify triggers of CWB irrespective of gender and provides data for timely interventions.
- iv. Organizations should introduce workplace wellness programs that focus on mental health, work-life balance, and stress reduction for all employees. These programs should be inclusive and non-discriminatory, acknowledging that both genders experience work pressure and stress similarly.
- v. Managers should be trained to identify and manage counterproductive behaviours without bias or preconceived notions based on gender. This ensures that behavioural issues are addressed based on evidence and actual performance rather than assumptions.

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