



Abusive Supervision and Age as Predictors of Counterproductive Work Behaviour among School Teachers in Owerri

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Abstract

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This study delves into the examination of abusive supervision and age as factors predictive of counterproductive work behaviour within the realm of Catholic School Teachers in Owerri, Imo State. A total of two hundred and twenty-four participants, comprising 92 males and 132 females, were chosen from four Catholic Schools in Imo State, employing a convenience sampling technique. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 57, with a mean age of 38.38 and a standard deviation of 8.58. The study was guided by six hypotheses. Data collection relied on two instruments: the Abusive Supervision Scale developed by Tapper (2000) and the Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist developed by Spector et al. (2006). The research design employed was a cross-sectional survey design, and data analysis was conducted through hierarchical multiple regression and standard linear regression. The findings of this study illuminated that younger school teachers who confront a higher degree of abusive supervision tend to exhibit a greater inclination towards engaging in counterproductive work behaviour. In particular, all four dimensions of abusive supervision – production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal behaviour – were identified as significant positive predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. In light of these findings, the study recommends that school administrators focus on establishing both formal and informal channels of communication to furnish social support to their subordinates. Furthermore, fostering a school culture that significantly mitigates the occurrence of abusive supervision is encouraged, ultimately contributing to a more productive and harmonious work environment for Catholic school teachers in Owerri, Imo State.

Keywords: *Abusive Supervision, Age, Counterproductive Work Behaviour, Catholic School Teachers, Owerri, Imo State*

Introduction

Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) represents a spectrum of intentional and detrimental actions undertaken by employees, causing disruption to both the organization and its members (Jacobs, Belschak & Den Hartog, 2013). These behaviours encompass a wide range, from theft and sabotage to various forms of interpersonal aggression, encompassing both physical and verbal manifestations. Moreover, CWB extends to subtle actions such as intentional slowdowns, time and resource wastage, and withdrawal in the form of absence or delays (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh, & Kessler, 2006). Targeting individuals within the organization, referred to as CWB-1, involves acts like verbal assault and aggression (Wu, Sun, Zhang, & Wang, 2016). In essence, CWB comprises deliberate acts contradicting the goals and established norms of the organization.

The term Counterproductive Work Behaviour originates from the realm of workplace and organizational psychology (Sackett, 2002). It denotes voluntary actions that inflict harm on the organization, its clients, coworkers, and supervisors (Spector & Fox, 2005). Further clarification by Spector and Fox (2005) emphasizes the deliberate nature of CWB, where acts are intended to harm either the organization or individuals within it. Sackett (2002) underscores CWB as a conscious deviation from established organizational norms resulting in harm to the organization's interests, categorizing it into interpersonal CWB targeting co-workers and organizational CWB directed at the organization itself (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Spector et al. (2006) proposed five forms of CWB: abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal.

The origins of CWB are diverse, arising from individual-related factors and situational factors (Yüksel, 2012). Individual-related factors involve personality traits such as conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness. Additionally, demographic factors like job experience, marital status, age, gender, and income contribute to the complex interplay influencing CWB. Situational factors encompass workplace conditions that predispose employees to engage in CWB, including perceived injustice, psychological contract breaches, organizational constraints, work stressors, and organizational culture and climate (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007). Interpersonal conflicts in the workplace stand out as a critical antecedent of CWB, wherein such conflicts can act as triggers prompting employees to resort to CWB as a response. In essence, CWB is a voluntary choice by an employee to engage in actions that harm the organization or its members.

The examination of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB has been the subject of various studies and theories. Social exchange theory, as posited by Masterson and Taylor (2000), underscores the reciprocity in workplace interactions. Employees, when treated with respect and fairness, are more likely to reciprocate with higher organizational commitment. However, studies such as those by Zellars, Tepper, and Duffy (2002) suggest that retaliation against abusive supervision can escalate the situation. Employees may resort to counterproductive work behaviour as a subtle means of retaliation, choosing discreet methods when open resistance proves ineffective (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007).

Abusive supervision, initially defined by Tepper (2000), encompasses hostile behaviours from employers perceived by employees, including continuous insults and demeaning actions. Such supervision negatively impacts employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and voice behaviour (Wu, Wang, & Liu, 2012). Moreover, it is associated with increased resistance and aggressive behaviour by employees, resulting in deviant actions against coworkers (Desmarais, 2006). Specific examples of abusive supervisory behaviours include berating, lying, undermining, sarcasm, invasions of privacy, and blaming employees for others' mistakes (Duffy & Ferrier, 2003).

Abuse against others includes harmful and nasty behaviours affecting fellow employees, such as spreading false rumours, engaging in malicious acts against co-workers, and physical assaults (Sackett, 2002). Production deviance involves employees deliberately performing their jobs incorrectly or making multiple errors, encompassing intentional slowdowns and reductions in output quality and quantity (Spector et al., 2006). Sabotage entails the intentional destruction of organizational property, often linked to the misuse of information to tarnish the organization's image. Theft involves the unlawful acquisition of another person's

belongings for personal use, including the production of misleading records or stealing organizational property. Withdrawal takes the form of avoiding work through tardiness or absence, involving actions like extended breaks, reduced working hours, premature work closure, or habitual lateness (Spector et al., 2006).

Numerous factors contribute to counterproductive work behaviours, ranging from personal traits to workplace systems. One key personal factor of interest in influencing the likelihood of engaging in CWB is age. Age, reflecting the length of an individual's life experience, significantly affects job performance. While some studies suggest that older employees are more inclined towards organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and less likely to engage in CWB compared to their younger counterparts (Ng & Feldman, 2008), earlier research on age differences in CWB has yielded mixed findings. Some studies found no significant age differences, while others suggest that age is indeed a predictor of CWB (Onuoha, 2013; Uche et al., 2017; Cohen et al., 2013). Given these discrepancies, a more in-depth investigation into age differences in CWB is imperative to contribute meaningfully to the existing literature.

Statement of the Problem

In the dynamic landscape of the Nigerian working environment, the prevalence of Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) and its manifestation through abusive supervision poses a significant challenge to the productivity and well-being of employees (Tepper, 2007; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Abusive supervision, marked by sustained hostile behaviours from supervisors towards subordinates, has been identified as a critical issue with consequences ranging from diminished job satisfaction to increased turnover intentions and the proliferation of CWB among affected employees. Despite the extensive research on abusive supervision globally, there is a distinct lack of understanding within the specific context of private school teachers in Nigeria.

Private school teachers in Nigeria, though playing a pivotal role in the educational system and socio-economic development, operate in an environment that may present unique challenges and dynamics (Okoro, 2012; Yusuf & Bolarinwa, 2012). The scarcity of research on the factors contributing to CWB among this occupational group hampers the development of targeted interventions and policies tailored to the Nigerian context. Moreover, the role of age, a factor often culturally and organizationally significant in Nigeria, as a potential moderator in the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB has been overlooked. Recognizing the cultural and organizational nuances of the Nigerian working environment, this study seeks to shed light on the specific challenges faced by private school teachers in Owerri, Nigeria.

By focusing on private school teachers in Nigeria, this research contributes directly to our understanding of workplace aggression in the unique socio-cultural and organizational context of the country (Adebakin & Odukoya, 2014; Afolabi & Adewara, 2018). The Nigerian working environment, characterized by its cultural diversity and specific organizational dynamics, may influence the occurrence and manifestation of abusive supervision and CWB in ways not fully captured by existing global research.

Moreover, the consideration of age as a potential moderator acknowledges the cultural importance of age in Nigerian society (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Zaniboni et al., 2013). Age-related dynamics may shape how private school teachers in Nigeria respond to abusive supervision, impacting their likelihood of engaging in CWB. This cultural sensitivity adds depth to our understanding of the complex interplay between abusive supervision, age, and CWB, with implications for organizational practices and policies tailored to the Nigerian context.

In essence, this study aims to bridge the gap in knowledge by providing context-specific insights into abusive supervision and CWB among private school teachers in Nigeria. By doing so, it contributes valuable information for organizations and policymakers seeking to address workplace aggression in a manner that is culturally and contextually sensitive, ultimately fostering positive work environments for private school teachers in the Nigerian educational landscape.

Purpose of the Study

This research seeks to examine whether abusive supervision and age can predict counterproductive work behaviour among private school teachers in Owerri. The study will specifically focus on the following objectives:

1. Determine if age predicts overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
2. Assess if abusive supervision predicts overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
3. Explore whether abusive supervision predicts specific forms of counterproductive work behaviour, including production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal among school teachers in Owerri.

Empirical Review

Abusive Supervision and Counterproductive Behaviour

In a meticulous exploration of the dynamics between leadership practices and counterproductive work behaviour, Fawzia and Amira (2022) undertook a study focused on perceived abusive supervision among staff nurses at Ain-Shams University Hospital. Their findings, based on a staggering 94% of participants perceiving a high level of abusive supervision, illuminated a robust positive relationship between perceived abusive supervision and instances of counterproductive work behaviour. This study not only underscores the prevalence of abusive supervision but also establishes its detrimental impact on work behaviour within a critical healthcare setting.

Turning to withdrawal behaviour, Ganesh Dhruva and Rewan (2020) delved into the impact of abusive supervision within the Nepalese multipurpose saving and credit cooperative limited. Their research uncovered a noteworthy positive impact of abusive supervision on withdrawal behaviours among employees. This study contributes to the broader understanding of the repercussions of abusive supervision, shedding light on its consequences for employee disengagement and withdrawal.

In the context of call centres in Pakistan, Syed, Shrafat, Ahmed, Farah, and Hina (2020) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the interplay of organizational cynicism, abusive supervision, and workplace deviance. The study elucidated a positive effect of both abusive supervisor behaviour and organizational cynicism on the manifestation of workplace deviance. This research extends our understanding of the organizational factors that contribute to counterproductive work behaviours in the unique environment of call centres.

Mohseni and Kashi's (2021) examination of the influence of abusive supervision on subordinates' performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, knowledge hiding, and job burnout added depth to the literature. The results highlighted a positive effect of abusive supervision on various facets of counterproductive work behaviour, including knowledge hiding behaviours and job burnout. This study contributes valuable insights into the nuanced consequences of abusive supervision across multiple dimensions of employee behaviour.

In the healthcare sector, Yoke, Murali, and Jo (2019) specifically focused on the impact of abusive supervision on counterproductive work behaviours among nurses. Their research uncovered a critical link between perceived injustice resulting from abusive supervision and subsequent counterproductive work behaviour among nurses. This study emphasizes the importance of addressing abusive supervision in healthcare settings to mitigate its adverse effects on employee behaviour.

Liang-Chih, Cheng, and Szu (2019) delved into the psychological aspects of the relationship between abusive supervision and employee withdrawal behaviour. Their findings underscored that abusive behaviour from supervisors leads to psychological withdrawal among employees. This study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms at play in the aftermath of abusive supervision.

Examining organizational identification as a mediator, Liu, Yang, Liu, and Zhu (2018) conducted a multi-wave study, revealing that organizational identification partially mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' organizational deviance. This research enhances our understanding of the intricate psychological processes involved in the impact of abusive supervision on organizational behaviour.

In a study encompassing secondary school teachers, Nwachimere, Nwonyi, and Ugwumgbor (2017) investigated abusive supervision, work tension, and overload as predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. Their results demonstrated significant predictions for all examined factors, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of influences on counterproductive work behaviour in the educational sector.

Focusing on the Nigerian police force, Nwani, Ofoke, Eze, and Udechukwu (2017) explored abusive supervision and work tension as predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. The study established positive associations between abusive supervision, work tension, and instances of counterproductive work behaviour within the unique context of law enforcement. This research contributes to the understanding of how leadership practices impact counterproductive work behaviour in high-stakes professions.

An and Wang's (2016) survey-based exploration into the relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviour among employees from four manufacturing companies revealed a positive correlation. This study extends our knowledge of the universality of the relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviour across diverse industries.

Finally, Vogel, Homberg, and Alena (2014) investigated the impact of abusive supervision and public service motivation on employee deviance. Their findings illuminated a positive association between abusive supervision and employee deviance, emphasizing the role of leadership practices in shaping employee behaviour, even within the framework of public service motivation.

Collectively, these studies offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviour across diverse sectors, providing valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the field.

Age and Counterproductive Behaviour

In a comprehensive exploration of demographic determinants impacting work counterproductive behaviour, Okeke, Okeke, and Ugwuanyi (2022) conducted a study focused on rural community-based primary school teachers. Their research revealed a significant relationship between age and work deviant behaviours, emphasizing the pivotal role of age in shaping counterproductive work behaviour within this specific occupational context.

Shifting the focus to university support staff, Abiodun, Babalola, and Uzor (2019) delved into age, pay satisfaction, and intent to leave as predictors of counterproductive work behaviour. The study demonstrated that age, pay satisfaction, and intent to leave emerged as significant predictors, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics influencing counterproductive work behaviour among university support staff.

Examining the Nigerian maritime sector, Ikechukwu, Olusoji, and Abiola (2017) undertook a study exploring the relationships between counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) and socio-demographic characteristics. Their findings highlighted significant associations between CWB and various demographic factors, including gender, age, marital status, employee cadre, and income. This underscores the intricate interplay between age and socio-demographic factors in shaping counterproductive behaviours within the maritime industry.

Salami's (2014) investigation into psycho-sociological factors as predictors of counterproductive work behaviour among non-academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria offered nuanced insights. The study, while revealing that age did not exert a significant influence on counterproductive work behaviour, underscored the importance of considering diverse factors when examining the predictors of workplace deviance.

In a study by Cohen, Panter, and Turan (2013), guilt proneness took centre stage as a potential predictor of counterproductive work behaviour. The research uncovered significant effects of age on counterproductive work behaviour, adding a psychological dimension to the understanding of how age contributes to the manifestation of workplace deviance.

These studies collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of the role of age in shaping counterproductive work behaviour across diverse occupational settings, from primary school education to university support staff, the maritime sector, and beyond. The findings underscore the need for organizations to consider age as a crucial demographic factor when designing interventions to mitigate counterproductive work behaviours in the workplace.

Hypotheses

1. Age will significantly predict overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
2. Abusive supervision will significantly predict overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
3. Abusive supervision will significantly predict production deviance work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
4. Abusive supervision will significantly predict sabotage work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
5. Abusive supervision will significantly predict theft work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.
6. Abusive supervision will significantly predict withdrawal work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri.

Method

Participants

A total of 224 teachers from four schools in Imo State, Nigeria, were recruited for the study. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling technique and included 92 males and 132 females with an age range of 25 to 57 years. The mean age was 38.38 years with a standard deviation of 8.58 years. The sample size from each school was as follows: Madonna Secondary School (63 participants), Assumpta Girls High School (59 participants), Holy Ghost College Owerri (55 participants), and Holy Rosary School of Nursing, Emekuku (47 participants).

Instruments

Two instruments were used for data collection:

Abusive Supervision Scale (ASS): This 15-item scale, developed by Tepper (2000), measures abusive supervision as perceived by subordinates. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The ASS has a reported reliability of $\alpha = .95$ (Tepper, 2000). In a pilot study involving 8 participants, Nwachimere, Nwonyi, and Ugwumgbor (2017), obtained a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .92$.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB Checklist): This 32-item checklist, developed by Spector et al. (2006), assesses the extent to which a worker engages in counterproductive work behaviours. Participants indicated how often they engaged in specific behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Higher scores represent a higher incidence of counterproductive work behaviours. The CWB Checklist has a reported reliability of $\alpha = .81$ (Spector et al., 2006). In a study conducted by Anene and Enyeobi (2019), the Nigerian Cronbach's alpha reliability of the CWB Checklist was found to be $\alpha = .92$.

Procedure

The study was conducted with the assistance of a research assistant. The researcher visited the four participating schools in Imo State and personally administered the questionnaires to the teachers. Before administering the questionnaires, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and assured the participants of the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed out of which 224 correctly completed questionnaires were used for data analysis.

Design and Statistics

A cross-sectional survey design was employed for this study. Hierarchical linear regression and standard linear regression were used for data analysis. Hierarchical linear regression was used to determine whether a set of predictor variables (age and abusive supervision) explained the variance in the criterion variable (counterproductive work behaviour) after accounting for the effect of the control variable (counterproductive work behaviour). Standard linear regression was used to individually explain the statistically significant amount of variance of the independent variable (abusive supervision) on the dimensions of the dependent variable (counterproductive work behaviour).

Results

Table 1: Correlations for the Key Variables Used in the Study

	CWB	Gender	Age	AS	PD	S	T	WB
CWB	1	.012	-.952**	.899**	.737**	.800**	.870**	.875**
Gender		1	-.027	.048	.069	.116	.020	.020
Age			1	-.926**	-.733**	-.783**	-.860**	-.861**
AS				1	.713**	.800**	.837**	.851**
PD					1	.811**	.766**	.758**
S						1	.809**	.782**
T							1	.875**
WB								1

Note: $N = 224$, ** = $p < .01$; Keys: CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviour, AB = Abusive Supervision, PD = Production Deviance, S = Sabotage, T = Theft, WB = Withdrawal Behaviour

The Pearson correlation matrix (Table 1) reveals insightful relationships among the key variables. Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) demonstrated significant inverse associations with age ($r = -.952$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$) and abusive supervision ($r = .889$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$). Age exhibited inverse correlations with abusive supervision ($r = -.926$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), production deviance ($r = -.733$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), sabotage ($r = -.783$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), theft ($r = -.860$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), and withdrawal behaviour ($r = -.861$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$).

Conversely, positive relationships were identified between CWB and abusive supervision ($r = .889$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), CWB and production deviance ($r = .737$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), CWB and sabotage ($r = .800$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), CWB and theft ($r = .870$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), CWB and withdrawal behaviour ($r = .875$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$). Abusive supervision demonstrated positive correlations with production deviance ($r = .713$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), sabotage ($r = .800$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), theft ($r = .837$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), and withdrawal behaviour ($r = .851$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$). Production deviance correlated positively with sabotage ($r = .811$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), theft ($r = .766$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), and withdrawal behaviour ($r = .758$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$). Sabotage demonstrated positive correlations with theft ($r = .809$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$) and withdrawal behaviour ($r = .782$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$), while theft and withdrawal behaviour showed a positive association ($r = .875$, $n = 224$, $p < .01$).

Table 2: Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses for Counterproductive Work Behaviour on Age and Abusive Supervision

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Step 1β</i>	<i>Step 2β</i>
<i>Step 1</i>		
Age	-.952 (t = -46.44)**	-.842 (t = -15.65)**
<i>Step 2</i>		
Abusive Supervision		.119 (t = 2.21)**
ΔF	2156.31**	4.87*
R^2	.906**	.908*
ΔR^2		.002*
<i>Df</i>	1,222	2, 221
<i>Dublin Watson</i>	2.22	

$N = 224$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

The hierarchical linear regression analysis (Table 2) explored the relationship between counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), age, and abusive supervision. The overall model explained 90.6% of the variation in CWB scores among school teachers in Imo State. In the first step, age significantly predicted CWB ($\beta = -.952$, $p < .01$, $t = -46.44$), indicating that younger teachers in Imo State were more prone to engage in counterproductive work behaviour. In the second step, abusive supervision positively predicted CWB ($\beta = .119$, $p < .01$, $t = 2.21$). Thus, the first hypothesis was supported, suggesting that age is a significant predictor of CWB, while the second hypothesis was also supported, indicating that abusive supervision contributes to CWB.

Table 3: Summary of Standard Linear Regression Analyses for Counterproductive Behaviour on Production Deviance, Sabotage, Theft and Withdrawal Behaviour

Variables	R	R²	Adjusted R²	ΔF	B	Df	t	p
Production Deviance	.713	.509	.507	229.91	.713	1,222	4.46	.000
Sabotage	.800	.640	.638	394.03	.800	1,222	19.85	.000
Theft	.837	.701	.699	519.34	.837	1,222	22.79	.000
Withdrawal Behaviour	.851	.724	.723	582.74	.851	1,222	24.14	.000

$N = 224$, ** = $p < .01$

Table 3 presents the results of simple linear regression analyses, examining the relationships between abusive supervision and different dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among school teachers in Imo State.

The overall fit of the model (indicated by R^2) shows that abusive supervision explained substantial variance in production deviance (50.9%), sabotage (64%), theft (70.1%), and withdrawal behaviour (72.4%) among school teachers in Imo State. The results indicated that abusive supervision significantly predicted increased scores in production deviance ($\beta = .713$, $t = 4.46$, $p < .01$), sabotage ($\beta = .800$, $t = 19.85$, $p < .01$), theft ($\beta = .837$, $t = 22.79$, $p < .01$), and withdrawal behaviour ($\beta = .851$, $t = 24.14$, $p < .01$). Thus, hypotheses 3 to 6 were all supported, suggesting that abusive supervision is positively associated with various dimensions of CWB among school teachers in Imo State.

Discussion

This study examined age and abusive supervision as predictors of counterproductive behaviour among school teachers in Imo State. The analysis of six hypotheses using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) revealed intriguing findings.

The first hypothesis, asserting that age will significantly predict counterproductive behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, was accepted. The results indicated that age is a significant predictor of counterproductive behaviour, with younger teachers more inclined to engage in such behaviours than their older counterparts. This aligns with existing research, such as Okeke, Okeke, and Ugwuanyi (2022), who found age to be significantly related to work deviant behaviours among rural community-based primary school teachers. Abiodun et al. (2019) and Ikechukwu et al. (2017) similarly reported significant relationships between age and counterproductive work behavior. The conclusion drawn is that, compared to older teachers, younger teachers are more prone to counterproductive work behaviour, possibly influenced by increased financial responsibilities. Younger teachers might face heightened financial responsibilities, which could motivate them to engage in counterproductive behaviour as a coping mechanism. Additionally, less experience and exposure to workplace norms may contribute to a higher likelihood of engaging in such behaviours.

The second hypothesis, positing that abusive supervision will significantly predict overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, was accepted. The findings indicate that abusive supervision is a significant predictor of counterproductive behaviour. This aligns with various studies, including Fawzia and Amira (2022), Mohseni and Kashi (2021), and Yoke, Murali, and Jo (2019), which reported positive relationships between perceived abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviour. The results imply that a higher level of abusive supervision corresponds to an increased likelihood of counterproductive behaviour among teachers. The impact of abusive supervision on withdrawal behaviour was consistent with the findings of Ganesh et al. (2020) and Liang et al. (2019), indicating that abusive supervision significantly predicts withdrawal behaviour.

A plausible explanation of this finding is that teachers subjected to abusive supervision may experience increased stress, frustration, and a sense of injustice, leading to a higher likelihood of engaging in counterproductive behaviours as a coping mechanism. The negative impact on withdrawal behaviour suggests that such supervision may drive teachers to disengage from their work.

The third hypothesis, stating that abusive supervision will not significantly predict production deviance work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, was rejected. The findings suggest a significant predictive effect of abusive behaviour on production deviance work behaviour. This is in line with the broader literature, including An and Wang (2016), Liu et al. (2018), and Syed et al. (2020), which found abusive supervision to be positively associated with various dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour, including production deviance. Abusive supervision may create a toxic work environment, leading teachers to violate organizational norms related to production standards. The stress and dissatisfaction resulting from abusive supervision may manifest in deviant behaviours that compromise productivity.

The fourth hypothesis, stating that abusive supervision will significantly predict sabotage work behaviour among school teachers in Imo State, Owerri, was accepted. The findings indicate a substantial and significant predictive effect of abusive supervision on sabotage work behaviour. The result is consistent with studies such as Syed et al. (2020), An and Wang (2016), and Vogel et al. (2014). In the study by Syed et al. (2020) it was found that abusive supervisor behaviour had a positive effect on workplace deviance, encompassing sabotage. An and Wang (2016) reported a positive correlation between abusive supervision and overall counterproductive work behaviour, including sabotage. Vogel et al. (2014), in their findings indicated a positive association between abusive supervision and employee deviance, which includes sabotage. The positive relationship observed between abusive supervision and sabotage work behavior can be attributed to the psychological and emotional toll imposed by abusive supervisory practices. Teachers experiencing abusive supervision may harbour feelings of resentment, frustration, and a desire for retribution. Sabotage work behaviour can serve as a form of retaliation or resistance against perceived injustices and mistreatment in the workplace.

The fifth hypothesis, proposing that abusive supervision will significantly predict theft behaviour among school teachers, was accepted. The results indicate a significant and positive relationship between abusive supervision and theft behaviour. This corresponds with the findings of Fawzia and Amira (2022), who reported a strong positive relationship between perceived abusive supervision and various dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour, including theft. Mohseni and Kashi (2021) similarly established a positive impact of abusive supervision on overall counterproductive work behaviour, encompassing theft. Teachers subjected to abusive supervision may experience a sense of injustice and frustration, leading to an increased likelihood of engaging in theft behaviour as a form of retaliation or as an expression of dissent.

The sixth hypothesis, suggesting that abusive supervision will not significantly predict withdrawal behaviour, was rejected. The findings imply that abusive supervision significantly predicts withdrawal behaviour among school teachers in Imo State. This aligns with the conclusions of Nwani et al. (2017) and Liang et al. (2019) who both reported positive associations between abusive supervision and withdrawal behaviours. Ganesh et al. (2020) similarly found a positive impact of abusive supervision on withdrawal behaviours. One plausible reason for this finding could be that abusive supervision may lead to increased stress and emotional exhaustion among teachers, driving them to psychologically and

Implications of the Study

This study highlights the fundamental role that age and abusive supervision play in shaping teachers' counterproductive behaviour, offering profound insights for educational institutions. The identification of age-related dynamics underscores the need to address workplace issues with a clear understanding of generational differences, emphasizing the importance of tailored interventions for younger teachers. As such, institutions can use this knowledge to cultivate a positive and productive work environment that caters to the unique challenges faced by educators at different stages of their careers.

The study also underscores the urgency of addressing and mitigating abusive supervisory practices within educational institutions due to their detrimental impact on overall counterproductive work behaviour among school teachers. Recognizing this, institutions should prioritize efforts to foster a leadership culture that is constructive and supportive, thereby cultivating an environment that enhances the professional well-being of teachers.

The multifaceted nature of counterproductive behaviour revealed in this study, including production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal behaviours associated with abusive supervision, highlights the need for targeted interventions and management strategies. These findings offer a roadmap for institutions to develop policies and practices specifically tailored to mitigate these dimensions of counterproductive behaviour, thereby promoting a healthier and more effective teaching environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, age and abusive supervision significantly and positively predict counterproductive behaviour among school teachers in Imo State. The dimensions of counterproductive behaviour, including production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal behaviour, are influenced by abusive supervision. The findings provide insights into the dynamics of counterproductive behaviour, emphasizing the importance of addressing age-related factors and mitigating abusive supervision to foster a healthier work environment.

The study contributes valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and school administrators in creating a conducive work environment for teachers in Imo State. Future research may explore additional factors influencing counterproductive behaviour and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing abusive supervision in educational settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. School administrators and policymakers should tailor interventions, mentorship programs, and professional development initiatives to the unique challenges faced by younger educators. By understanding the specific needs and challenges of younger teachers, educational institutions can effectively promote their professional growth and reduce instances of counterproductive behaviour.
2. School administrators, in collaboration with human resource professionals, should implement comprehensive training programs for supervisors, emphasizing the importance of constructive leadership styles. Creating a culture of open communication, providing clear channels for teachers to report instances of abusive supervision, and establishing transparent grievance procedures can contribute to a healthier and more supportive work environment.
3. School leaders should tailor their approaches to address these distinct facets, implementing measures to reduce production deviance, prevent sabotage, curb theft, and manage withdrawal behaviours. Developing specific policies and training programs that directly target these dimensions can contribute to a more positive and productive teaching environment.

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