



## INTERPERSONAL WORKPLACE AGGRESSION AND DEVIANT WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR: A MODERATING ROLE OF HONESTY-HUMILITY AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

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Received: 12.11.2022

Accepted: 21.5.2023

Date of Publication: June, 2023

### Abstract

This study investigated interpersonal workplace aggression, honesty-humility, and deviant workplace behaviour among telecommunications industry employees. A cross-sectional design using a survey design with the use of a standard questionnaire was employed to collect data from respondents. A multistage sampling technique was used through convenience and a simple random sampling to select 384 respondents of which 320 were retrieved and analyzed. The Stressor-Emotion model and the Social Exchange Theory underpinned the study. The study tested three hypotheses through correlation, simple regression, and the Baron and Kenny Process Marco version 3.5. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and deviant workplace behaviour. In contrast, no significant relationship was observed between honesty-humility and deviant workplace behaviour. Notably, the study identified that honesty-humility moderated the relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and deviant workplace behaviour. In light of these results, the study recommends that management should consider implementing training programs aimed at educating employees on these three constructs. Additionally, human resources management should prioritize the assessment of these qualities when screening potential candidates during the recruitment process. The study also discusses its implications, limitations, and offers directions for potential future research endeavors.

**Keywords:** Deviant workplace behaviour, Interpersonal workplace aggression, honesty-humility, Telecommunication industry.

### 1. Introduction

The fastest-growing deviant workplace behaviours among workgroups in recent years have been suspected to be employee theft, fraud, and sabotage, as well as pulling cruel jokes, acting aggressively, and bickering (Morshedi, 2021). Given the rising incidence of this conduct in the workplace and the significant economic and social costs connected with it, it is clear why there is an increased interest in workplace deviant behaviours (Akanni *et al.* 2018; Morshedi, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2019). The term "counterproductive work behaviour, (CWB)" or "Deviant Workplace

Behaviour (WDB)," refers to employee behaviour that intentionally breaches important organizational rules and negatively impacts the organization and/or its members (Meisler *et al.*, 2019). Both the organization and/or other people may be the target of DWB. Examples of typical DWB behaviour are coming to work late, stealing from the company, or insulting coworkers. As such, it represents a crucial organizational behaviour that, because of its negative effects on organizational functioning at all levels, poses a ubiquitous challenge for organizations (Fernández del Río *et al.*, 2021).

DWB is a major worry for organizations and a subject receiving more scientific attention (Bennett and Robinson, 2003). Recent studies have shown that poor workplace behaviour has social and psychological consequences in addition to financial ones for the organization (Hollinger *et al.*, 2018; Tucker, 2018). To forecast DWB, two perspectives have been discussed in the literature. The first, referred to as situation-based, claims that particular aspects of the workplace make businesses more susceptible to employee deviation. Empirical research shows that some organizational factors, such as interpersonal workplace aggression (Neuman and Baron, 1998); job stressors (Fox *et al.*, 2001), weak sanctions for rule violations (Hollinger and Clark, 1983), organizational frustration (Spector, 2019), a lack of control over the work environment (Marasi *et al.*, 2018), and downsizing, increase a company's susceptibility to employee deviance. This viewpoint contends that regardless of individuals' personal attributes, employees will engage in DWB based on situations in the workplace setting. This implies that organizations with employees that display DWB may experience overall failure in organizational effectiveness (Dunlop and Lee, 2004; Pletzer *et al.*, 2020) because as proposed by Muhammad *et al.* (2021) DWB will produce employee dysfunction in applying work ethic.

To buttress this, this study was of the view that the prevalence of employees' attempts to cause harm to others with whom they work; have worked; or the organizations where they are currently or have formerly worked may lead to DWB. The second viewpoint, which is person-based, contends that an individual's behaviour is determined by their personality regardless of the setting or circumstance in which they find themselves (Ametepe *et al.*, 2022; Oluwafemi, 2013). This viewpoint seeks to find patterns in people's individual differences across a wide range of contexts and periods. The idea that there is a personal profile of someone who is likely to be deviant is one that is also widely held (Henle, 2005).

Personalities including Type A personality, risk-taking, sensation-seeking, and negative affectivity may be present in the profile. These two viewpoints align with the person-environment fit theory which highlights the significance of taking into account how people and the environment interact (Ametepe *et al.*, 2022; Oluwafemi, 2013; Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Hence, the extent to which employees' attitudes emphasize treating others fairly and honestly, refraining from using others for personal advantage, feeling no temptation to breach the law, being uninterested in extravagant money and luxuries, and having no special claim to high social position, affect the interaction between interpersonal aggression and DWB. This implies that personality influences how circumstances are viewed, and this interaction in turn determines behaviour (Henle, 2005). To the best of the

researcher's knowledge, there are not many interactional studies that look at DWB, despite the widespread belief that person-situation interactions are likely to offer better explanations of work behaviours than a person- or situation-based explanations alone, particularly in the manufacturing sector, (House *et al.*, 1996; Xiao *et al.*, 2018).

One of the largest economic sectors in any given nation is the Telecommunication sector. These corporations employ thousands of employees in a variety of professions in numerous areas of specialization (human resources, marketing, sales, customer relations, technical, the administration just to mention a few). According to Yagils (2021), different types of work-related aggression are also prevalent among the personnel in this industry, including bullying and harassment, and a hostile work environment, to name a few. However, because DWB is so common, a targeted, organized program of research on it will not be a misplaced priority. This frequently overlooked and misinterpreted aspect of employee behaviour has so far received relatively little attention in empirical studies (Burrow *et al.*, 2022). However, little is known of studies that investigate the moderating role of honesty-humility in the relationship between interactional workplace aggression and workplace deviant behaviours. Consequently, the goal of this study is to investigate the interactions between the person (honesty-humility trait) and situation factors (interpersonal workplace aggression) that contribute to DWB.

## **2. Theoretical Review**

### ***2.1.1 Stressor-Emotion Model***

The Dollard *et al.* (1939) frustration-aggression theory serves as the foundation for a large number of recent research on the Stressor-Emotional (S-E) model. By including the DWB and study literature on workplace stress, the model assumes a relationship between the environment, perceptions, emotions, and finally, DWB (Fox *et al.*, 2001). Employees monitor and assess workplace activities, and those that are deemed to pose a risk to their health are referred to as occupational stressors by the authors (Pindek *et al.*, 2021; Spector, 1998). This suggests that interpersonal workplace aggression which is a kind of stressor may result in DWB either directly or indirectly by provoking negative feelings. That is such targets cope with the stressor by concentrating on lowering the emotions caused by the stressor (e.g. avoiding work, compromising work quality to meet deadlines, or staying at home to avoid work) In line with this, the overall individual components of DWB have been linked in numerous studies to a number of workplace stresses, including organizational injustice, role conflicts, organizational restrictions, interpersonal workplace aggression, workload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts at work (Spector and Goh, 2001; Spector *et al.*, 2005).

According to the S-E model, experiencing bad feelings at work (experiencing aggressive behaviour from colleagues or superiors), perceived as organizational stressful (Kahn and Byosiere, 1992), triggers a prompt response (DWB) to job situations (Lazarus, 1991). This agrees with the submission of Baka (2015) and Ružojčić *et al.* (2021) who opine that various forms of workplace aggression, such as yelling or threatening others, spreading rumors, making inappropriate gestures, hiding information, or giving dirty looks, often lead to negative and dysfunctional behaviour from

the targets. Second, experiencing stressful situations excite and encourages ensuing behavioural reactions to physiological change (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997). Such emotions fuel DWB, which might occur impulsively or later. A number of studies have found a link between negative emotions and job demands as well as between negative emotions and DWB (Baka, 2015; Fox *et al.*, 2001; Spector and Goh, 2001). Other studies have confirmed the impact of unpleasant emotions on work stress - DWB link (Fox *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

*H1: Interpersonal Workplace aggression has a direct impact on DWB among employees in the Telecommunication industry.*

### **2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Homans (1958) developed the concept of social exchange theory (SET). The SET explains that a relationship exists between two people through a process of cost-benefit analysis in which people weigh the benefits and losses of their social relationships. In other words, it is a statistic designed to measure the effort that an individual invests in a one-on-one relationship. According to social scientists, a constructive norm of reciprocity governs interactions and exchanges between businesses (and those who represent them) and employees (Gouldner, 1960; Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2020). In line with the notion that "the emphasis is placed not on the return of benefits but on the return of hurts," our claim is that interpersonal workplace aggression is related to deviance via a negative reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960: 172).

According to Lee *et al.* (2021), the quality of social exchange ties between partners should be diminished by unfair treatment, and as a result, employees should be less likely to retaliate in kind through misconduct. Accordingly, the perspective of this study assumes that negative reciprocation can help to restore equilibrium and get rid of the resentment and irritation brought on by aggression from colleagues in the workplace. Resonating this theory to this study means that employees' perceptions of aggression in the workplace function as an unfair treatment for the workers and may be a factor in workplace deviant behaviour. Interpersonal aggression in the workplace may trigger workers to start acting negatively as a sort of retaliation against the company. This aberrant behaviour might also be seen as a kind of unfavorable employee feedback from the aggression experienced. This can be better understood as the employee's unfavorable reaction to the employer's unfavorable treatment. Even though the employer's perspective of the issue is incorrect, there are some circumstances in which the employee engages in rebellious behaviour as a form of protest.

### **2.2 Workplace Deviance Behaviour (WDB)**

Workplace deviance is the term that applies to voluntary employee activities that contravene the significant organizational policies, norms, or procedures and which according to Robinson and Bennett (1995), endanger the organization's, its members, or both' well-being. Workplace deviance, which some authors refer to as Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (Fagbougbe, *et al.*, 2012; Fagbenro and Olasupo, 2020; Dewangan and Verghese, 2022) is defined as the "voluntary activity that breaches significant organizational standards, therefore,

endangering the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both," (Robbinson and Bennett, 1995). Kaplan (1997) defined workplace deviance as voluntary acts or behaviours that take place when an employee is either not motivated to follow organizational standards or is more inclined to break them. Nwuche and Eketu (2015) opined that workplace deviance is a condition that can take many different forms when there is a lack of conformity to the rules and regulations of an organization. According to Fagbenro and Olasupo (2020), it is also known by various names such as workplace misconduct, employee deviance, and unproductive work behaviours.

Moreover, Anis and Emil (2022) opined that the intention of an employee who engages in workplace deviance is to hurt a company. Examples of workplace deviations include actions taken against organizations such as hostility, absenteeism, theft, violence, showing up late for work, sabotage, and putting minimal effort into your work. Likewise, examples of workplace deviance include actions taken against coworkers or superiors such as playing mean pranks, arguing, making fun of people, and acting rudely constitute counterproductive behaviour. Over the past few years, such workplace behaviour has gotten much attention and media coverage (Zhang, 2019). This attention is frequently a result of the striking negative consequences associated with inappropriate organizational behaviour including the financial ruin of many rank-and-file employees as a result of illegal actions by corporate managers, other violent acts committed by employees at work, and the expensive sexual assault indictments.

To produce a truly accurate estimate of the cost of deviant behaviour in the workplace would be challenging, if not impossible, especially when one takes into account all of its manifestations, including employee theft, corporate fraud, harassment, bullying, retaliation, drug, withholding work effort, and violence, and alcohol abuse, as well as the measures taken to stop and correct them (Zhang, 2019; Nwuche and Eketu (2015). A few researchers have offered a variety of explanations as to why workers display deviant behaviour. For instance, hostile attribution, attitude retaliation, negative affectivity (Fagbounbe *et al.*, 2012; Fox *et al.*, 2001), and trait rage (Douglas and Martinko, 2001). are a few examples of these investigations. According to Haldorai *et al.* (2020), and Tesluk *et al.* (2001), these variables are causally connected to workplace deviant behaviour.

The multiple-dimensional scaling technique used by Robbinson and Bennett (1995) to categorize workplace deviant behaviour into two different types of deviance: those that were targeted at the organization (organizational deviance), and those that were targeted at its members (interpersonal deviance). The first category of deviance is referred to as organizational deviance and includes acts of thievery, sabotage, tardiness, early departures, and disengagement from the workplace. The other deviance referred to as interpersonal deviance, describes improper behaviour toward superiors, subordinates, and coworkers at work. They include outward manifestations of rudeness, making fun of people, and physical violence. Both are harmful and result in undesirable results. These two actions could take place together, separately, or even in reverse order. In the same manner, the findings by Robbinson and Benneth (1995) revealed that, apart from these two

dimensions, workplace deviance appears to fall into four separate categories including political deviance, personal aggression, production deviance, and property deviance.

### ***2.3 Interpersonal Workplace Aggression and Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB)***

Clearly related to the definition of Neuman and Baron (1998), workplace aggression was defined as efforts by individuals to harm others with whom they work, or have worked, or the organizations in which they are presented, or were previously employed. Rather than aggression directed against the organization, this study concentrated on interpersonal types of aggression directed at individuals within the organization. This simple definition of aggression is in line with more comprehensive definitions of aggression, which often include any sort of action aimed toward the objective of damaging or injuring another living being who is meant to avoid such treatment (Baron and Richardson, 1994). This study views workplace aggression as a broad behavioural construct and makes an effort to define it as the examination of negative behaviours like threats and physical assault as well as lower-level behaviours like spreading rumors, withholding information from coworkers, and yelling is made possible by this broad conceptualization, which more accurately captures the types of behaviours that employees are likely to exhibit in an organizational setting. Furthermore, this study focuses on a variety of aggressive behaviours that are directed at other people with the intent of harming them rather than behaviours directed at the organization with retaliatory intent (Adeoti *et al.*, 2021; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), behaviours with an "ambiguous intent to harm" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; He *et al.*, 2021) or revenge behaviours (Bilal, Farooq and Hayat, 2019).

Act of violence at work happens frequently (Baka, 2015; Mento *et al.*, 2020). In three firms that Glomb and Liao (2003) examined for employees, it was discovered that between 60% to 70% of the employees had encountered mild forms of violence at work, and of all the samples, 6% had been physically abused at work. According to Baron and Richardson (1994) and Neuman and Baron (1996), common aggressive behaviours in the workplace include threatening others, yelling, spreading rumors, withholding information, making lewd gestures, and giving them disparaging looks. According to earlier studies by Spector *et al.* (2005), being the target of workplace aggression is linked to unpleasant feelings and dysfunctional behaviours in organizations, and employees in Nigeria are no exception.

However, a worker's response to a stressor may vary depending on their personality qualities. For instance, certain personality qualities may make people more likely to notice environmental stressors. Similar to this, additional personality characteristics are linked to a higher experience of negative affect. The tendency to perform DWB is also linked to specific personality factors. As a result, the next section discusses the attributes of honesty-humility and its moderating effect as it influences how DWB and interpersonal workplace aggression (a stressor) interact (reaction to a stressor).

## **2.4 The Moderating Role of Honesty-Humility**

Honesty-humility was conceptualized using the Ashton and Lee (2007) six-dimensional HEXACO model. Honesty, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experiences are the six main categories used to describe the HEXACO personality. The Big Five and the HEXACO are both hierarchically organized (Lee and Ashton, 2004, 2018). The HEXACO acronym H, or honesty-humility, denotes a tendency to treat people fairly and with sincerity (Ashton and Lee, 2007). The sign of honesty and humility is the predisposition to avoid taking advantage of others, especially when doing so carries no risk of negative consequences (Ashton and Lee, 2007; Lee and Ashton, 2018). A recognized component that has a major impact on a range of abnormal workplace behaviours is honesty and humility (Henle, 2005). Since honesty and humility have the power to influence how people feel, think, and act, they play a crucial part in comprehending human behaviour. It, therefore, means that the trait honesty-humility encompasses the act of fairness, which is the propensity to treat people justly and equally; sincerity, which is the propensity to be sincere in interpersonal interactions; greed avoidance, which is the propensity to be uninterested in material wealth, opulent possessions, and outward indications of high social status; and modesty, which is the propensity to be modest and unassuming (Lee and Ashton, 2007). People that score highly on the honesty-humility scale tend to be identified as giving, loyal, honest, sincere, faithful, undeceitful, altruistic, helpful, etc. Individuals who lack honesty and humility, on the other hand, frequently portray themselves as hypocritical, egoistic, presumptuous, dishonest, selfish, cunning, deceitful, pretentious, haughty, etc. (Ashton *et al.*, 2020).

According to Pletzer (2019; 2020), and Zettler and Hilbig, (2010), the HEXACO personality model, in general, and Honesty-Humility in particular, were useful in explaining such abnormal, counterproductive professional behaviours. Honesty-Humility was found to have a strong correlation with antisocial conduct directed both against particular people and the organization by Lee *et al.* (2021). In another vein, honesty-humility was discovered as a good predictor even after controlling for the Big Five personality traits. Similar to this, in cross-cultural research, Lee *et al.* (2021) found that delinquent behaviour in the workplace, such as alcohol abuse, theft, absenteeism, vandalism, and the like, significantly negatively correlated with honesty-humility in samples from Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands.

In particular, Lee and Ashton (2018) reported that Honesty-Humility accounted for significant proportions of incremental variance beyond the Five-factor model (FFM) in predicting workplace delinquency and employee integrity. The study was conducted among university students from three different countries, namely Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands. Relatedly, research indicates that those with low levels of honesty and humility are more prone than people with high levels of honesty and humility to exhibit abnormal conduct at work (Ashton and Lee, 2007). In a sample of 264 Korean employees, Honesty-Humility outperformed the Big Five in terms of incremental validity, according to Lee, Ashton, and Shin (2005b). Recently, integrity was found to predict counterproductive work behaviour across all integrity tests by Marcus *et al.* (2013), accounting for practically significant percentages of incremental variance beyond the Big Five characteristics.

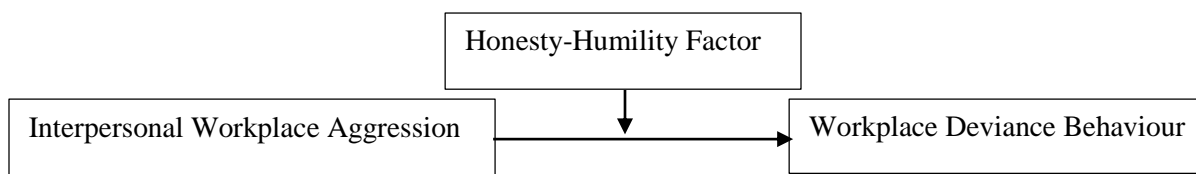
Along with being directly linked to deviant behaviours, honesty and humility are expected to strengthen the relationship between organizational formal restrictions on workplace deviance. People with low levels of honesty-humility are more likely than people with high levels to engage in DWB, according to the HEXACO model of personality structure (Ashton and Lee, 2020, 2007). This is because this set of people is less sincere, selfish, and pretentious. In a similar vein, a study by Ashton and Lee (2008) supports the reducing effect of honesty and humility. They asserted that individuals with low honesty and humility are more inclined to make unethical business decisions than individuals with high honesty and humility. According to the aforementioned empirical facts and theoretical point of view, the following hypotheses were developed:

*H2: There is a negative relationship between honesty-humility and workplace counterproductive behaviour among employees in the Telecommunication industry.*

*H3: Honesty-Humility moderates the relationship between workplace aggression and counterproductive behaviour among employees in the telecommunication industry.*

**Gap:** According to the aforementioned submissions, it can be concluded that numerous research has been conducted to determine the relationship between workplace aggression and DWB. In addition, numerous studies have also been conducted to examine the mediating and moderating effects of other variables on this connection. There is, however, a paucity of research on the moderating effect of honesty-humility on the relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and DWB. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

## 2.5 Conceptual Model for the Study



*Figure 1 Researchers' Initiatives, 2023*

Figure 1 shows the relationship among the variables of the study. The relationship establishes a direct relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and workplace deviant behaviour which is moderated by honesty-humility dispositional trait.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1 Research Design

To obtain responses from the study's respondents, this study used descriptive research with a cross-sectional design and a structured questionnaire. Descriptive research is the appropriate method to use when trying to identify features, frequencies, trends, and classifications. It is useful when little



is known about the topic or issue. Understanding when, how, and where something occurs is necessary before attempting to determine why it occurs. A questionnaire is deemed fit because it is often inexpensive, has large coverage, and is rather quick to complete.

### **3.2 Population, Sampling Techniques, and Sample Size**

Employees from the telecommunications sector in Lagos voluntarily participated in this survey. Specifically, the survey encompassed employees from prominent telecom companies, including MTN Nigeria Communication Limited, Global Communication (Globacom), Airtel Nigeria, and 9-Mobile. According to the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC, 2020), these four telecom giants collectively employ approximately 7,756 individuals. Among them, Global Communication (Globacom) stands as a local company with 3,000 employees, 9-Mobile employs 1,775 people, Airtel Nigeria has a workforce of 1,550 individuals, and MTN counts 1,431 employees, as reported by the human resources departments of these respective companies. Consequently, the total employee population across these four telecommunications companies was estimated at 7,756 employees.

For the purpose of this study, a sample size of 384 employees was selected for analysis, drawn from the broader employee population. The choice of 384 as the sample size was based on the established convention in numerous research studies involving populations exceeding 5,000 (Memon *et al.*, 2020), thus warranting its suitability.

To determine the sample, a multi-stage sampling approach was employed, with convenience sampling utilized in the initial selection of the four telecom companies. These four companies were chosen because they hold the largest number of subscribers in the Nigerian Telecommunication industry (Odeyemi, 2021). Subsequently, the study employed a simple random sampling technique to select individual respondents. The multi-stage sampling methodology offered the advantage of enabling the researcher to select participants with specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study's focus, and it facilitated the utilization of a range of sampling methods after the initial selection of respondents (Schutt, 2006). Following the collection of responses and the exclusion of incomplete or erroneous questionnaires, a total of 320 usable surveys were analyzed.

The overall response rate for the survey was 83.33%. Regarding the demographic distribution of respondents, 63 individuals (19.7%) identified as males, while 257 (80.3%) were females. The age distribution of respondents ranged from 21 to 30 years, with 61 (19.1%) falling into this category, 206 (64.4%) between the ages of 31 and 40, 33 (10.3%) aged 41-50, and 20 (6.3%) were above 50 years of age. Furthermore, the experience level of respondents varied, with 27 (8.4%) having 0-5 years of experience, 224 (70.0%) possessing 6-10 years of experience, 35 (10.9%) with 11-15 years of experience, and 34 (10.6%) having 16 years or more of experience. In terms of education, 11 (3.4%) respondents had completed up to ND/NCE, 152 (47.5%) had achieved HND/B. Sc./Equivalent qualifications, 118 (36.9%) had reached M. Sc./MBA/Equivalent levels, and 39 (12.2%) held Ph.D. degrees. Marital status among the respondents revealed that 47 (14.7%) were

single, 244 (76.3%) were married, 14 (4.4%) were widowed, 6 (1.9%) were separated, and 9 (2.8%) were divorced.

### **3.3 Measures**

The Deviant Workplace Behaviour (DWB) Scale, developed by Dalal *et al.* in 2009, consists of 12 items. Respondents rate each item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These items inquire about the frequency of engagement in various activities detrimental to work, such as "spent time on tasks unrelated to work." A higher score on this scale indicates a higher frequency of engagement in detrimental job habits. The internal consistency of the scale in this study was high, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95. Honesty-humility was assessed using the ten items from the HEXACO questionnaire, as developed by Lee and Ashton in 2004. Each of these items is scored on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale measures the honesty-humility variable, and the internal consistency of these items in this study falls within a range of 0.70-0.82. Interpersonal workplace aggression was measured through an 11-item scale created by Orpinas and Frankowski in 2001. Respondents assessed their agreement with these items on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One of the sample items on this scale is "I teased students to make them angry." A higher score on this scale signifies a higher frequency of engagement in aggressive behaviours. The scale exhibited good internal consistency in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The data analysis approach involved the systematic processing and presentation of pertinent data acquired from primary sources to enable in-depth analysis. The analysis primarily utilized computer-aided methods to assess the gathered data efficiently. The aim was to establish relationships between the dependent variable, workplace deviant behaviour, and the independent variables, specifically interpersonal workplace aggression, while considering the moderating variable, honesty-humility. To facilitate this analysis and test these relationships, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was employed. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all fundamental assumptions required for the statistical analysis were diligently met. These include the assumptions of linearity, independence of residuals, the presence of interval or ratio variables, homoscedasticity, the absence of multicollinearity, normally distributed residual errors, and the absence of outliers. Adhering to these assumptions ensures the robustness and validity of the analysis results.

### **3.5 Ethical Consideration**

In order to align the data accurately, the researchers recorded participants' phone numbers each time they submitted a questionnaire. It is noteworthy that, before distributing the copies of questionnaire, the researchers provided a comprehensive explanation of the survey process to all participants. Furthermore, the researcher assured participants that their participation in the survey was entirely optional, confidential, and had no bearing on their performance rating. An emphasis was placed on the importance of providing candid and honest responses to minimize any potential

social desirability bias. Importantly, it is essential to underscore that the study posed no harm or adverse consequences to the participants.

#### 4. Results

**Table I. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation between the variables of the study**

Factor	Mean	SD	CR	Correlation		
				DWB	WKAG	HOHU
DWB	3.257	.352	.780	1		
WKAG	3.207	.279	.931	.654	1	
HOHU	3.360	.330	.930	.100	.278	1

Notes: \*\* $p < 0.01$ . SD: Standard Deviation; WKAG: Interpersonal Workplace Aggression; HOHUE: Honesty-Humility; DWB: Deviant Work Behaviour

Table I showed a correlation analysis between interpersonal workplace aggression, honesty humility, and deviant work behaviour. The result revealed a linear relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and DWB ( $r = .654$ ,  $p < .01$ ), meaning that as interpersonal aggression increases in employees, DWB also increases accordingly and vice versa. On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between honesty-humility and DWB ( $r = .100$ ,  $p > .01$ ), implying that honesty-humility does not in any way affect DWB. According to Chapman (2018), results from correlation analysis cannot be relied on as it serves as a pre-test to other tests. Therefore, the next section explains the regression analysis conducted by the study to establish the predictability among the variables of the study.

**Table II: Data analysis for Hypothesis one**

Variables	B	Beta	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Adj	T-Value	F-value	Sig.
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Workplace Aggression	.827	.654	.654	.428	.426	15.422	273.836	.000
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**Note:** Outcome Variable: Deviant Workplace Behaviour

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

In Table II, a simple linear regression was calculated to predict deviant workplace behaviour based on interpersonal workplace aggression. It can be inferred that the  $R^2 = .428$ , indicates that interpersonal workplace aggression accounted for a 42.8% variance in deviant workplace behaviour. A significant regression equation was found  $\{F(1, 319)\} = 273.836$ ,  $P < .05$ . Respondents predicted  $DWB = 605 + .827$  (Interpersonal workplace aggression). The result further confirmed the correlation output presented in Table I. Therefore, hypothesis one which stated that interpersonal workplace aggression has a direct impact on DWB among employees in the Telecommunication industry was supported.

**Table III Data analysis for Hypothesis two**

Variables	B	Beta	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Adj	T-Value	F-value	Sig.
Honesty-Humility	.106	.100	.100	.010	.007	1.785	3.185	.075

Note: Outcome Variable: Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table III, DWB was regressed in predicting honesty-humility among employees in the Telecommunication industry. Honesty-Humility did not predict deviant workplace behaviour,  $F(1, 319) = 3.185, p > .05$ , indicating Honesty-Humility did not have a significant impact on deviant workplace behaviour. Moreover,  $R^2 = .01$  depicts that Honesty-Humility explains 1% of the variance in deviant workplace behaviour. Additionally, the model coefficients further showed that ( $B = .106, t = 1.785, p > .05$ ), indicating that hypothesis two which stated that there is a negative relationship between Honesty-Humility and DWB among employees in the Telecommunication industry was not supported.

**Table IV. The Moderating Effects of Honesty-Humility using Haye’s Process Macro.**

Variable/ effect	Coeff.	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
Constant	3.241	.016	209.420	.000	3.211	3.272
(WKAG)	.799	.058	13.803	.000	.685	.913
HOHU	.004	.056	.063	.950	-1.106	.113
Int_1	.625	.197	3.176	.002	.238	1.012

Note: WKAG: Interpersonal Workplace aggression, HOHU: Honesty-Humility.

**Table V. Simple slopes for the association between Workplace aggression and Deviant Work Behaviour (DWB)**

Centered WKAG	Coeff.	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
-.330	.592	.099	5.932	.000	.396	.789
.000	.799	.058	13.803	.000	.685	.913
.330	1.005	.072	14.027	.000	.864	1.146

Note WKAG: Interpersonal Workplace Aggression.

To determine whether employee honesty-humility personality affects the relationship between interpersonal workplace aggression and deviant behaviour, a multiple regression model was put to the test. After centering interpersonal workplace aggression and honesty-humility and computing the interpersonal workplace aggression-by-honesty-humility interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991), the two predictors and the interaction were entered into a simultaneous regression model. Results indicated that honesty-humility ( $\beta = .004, SE = .056, p > .05$ ) and workplace aggression ( $\beta = .799, SE = .058, p < .001$ ) were both associated with DWB. However, honesty-humility did

not significantly predict deviant workplace behaviour. The interaction between workplace aggression and honesty-humility was also significant ( $\beta = .625$ ,  $SE = .197$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the effect of workplace aggression on DWB depended on the level of honesty-humility in employees, thereby confirming hypothesis three which stated that honesty-humility moderates the relationship between workplace aggression and DWB. Together, the variables accounted for approximately 45.3% of the variance in deviant workplace behaviour,  $R^2 = .453$ ,  $F(3,316) = 87.119$ ,  $p < .001$ . Simple slopes for the association between workplace aggression and DWB were tested for low (-1 SD below the mean), moderate (mean), and high (+1 SD above the mean) levels of honesty-humility. Each of the simple slope tests revealed a significant positive association between workplace aggression and DWB, but workplace aggression was more strongly related to DWB for high levels ( $\beta = 1.005$ ,  $SE = .072$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than for moderate ( $\beta = .799$ ,  $SE = .058$ ,  $p < .001$ ) or lower levels ( $\beta = .593$ ,  $SE = .099$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of honesty-humility. Figure 1 plots the simple slopes for the interaction.

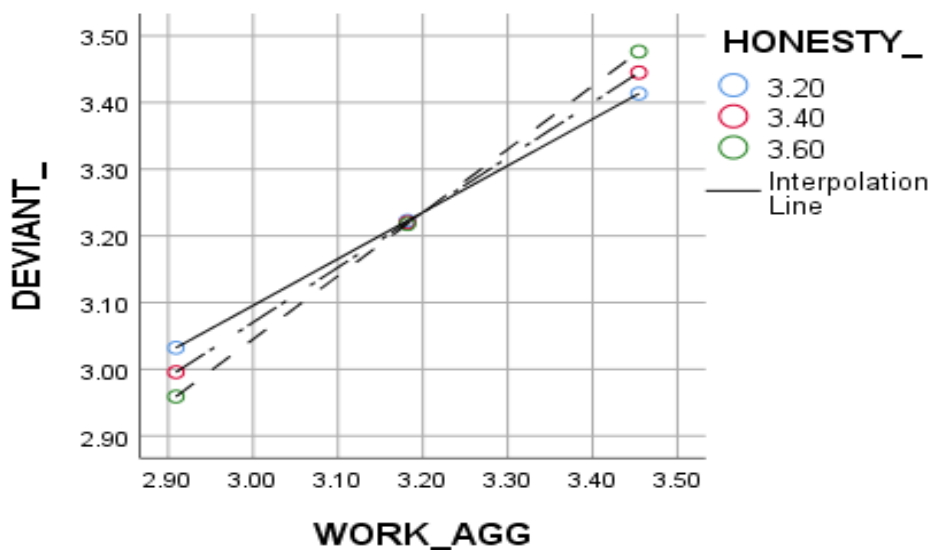


Figure 2: Slopes for the association between Interpersonal Workplace Aggression and Deviant Work Behaviour.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

To meet up with the goals of this study, correlation, and regression analyses were conducted as presented in Table I, Table II, Table III, and Table IV. Interpersonal workplace aggression significantly predicted DWB, thereby supporting hypothesis one, and aligning with the research paradigm relating to the two relationships. This result is in line with the opinions of Spector *et al.* (2005), who opined that being the target of workplace aggression is linked to unpleasant feelings and dysfunctional behaviours in organizations, and employees in Nigeria are no exception. This implies that the respondents were of the opinion that employees exhibiting interpersonal workplace aggression engage in DWB. That is, a rise in DWB was obvious when employees show a rise in workplace aggression.

The outcome of the test for hypothesis two revealed that there was no significant relationship between the honesty-humility traits of employees and DWB. This finding did not support hypothesis two and the finding did not agree with the submissions of Henle (2005), Lee, Ashton, and Shin (2005), Ashton and Lee (2007), and Marcus, Ashton, and Lee (2013) who discovered a significant relationship between the honesty-humility traits and anti-social conducts directed both towards the individuals and the organization. This finding revealed that the respondents were of the opinion that honest and people with high integrity do not engage in DWB.

A more thorough analysis revealed a correlation between the rise in DWB and the rise in workplace violence, however, this association was moderated by the honesty-humility trait of the employees. As a result, hypothesis three was confirmed. This submission concurs with Ashton and Lee's views (2007, and 2020), who stated that individuals with low levels of honesty-humility are more prone to participate in deviant behaviours at work than individuals with high levels. Therefore, the study's participants agreed that in situations with low workplace aggressiveness, those who are high on honesty-humility exhibit low DWB. However, in situations with low workplace aggressiveness, those who are low on honesty-humility exhibit high DWB in the Telecommunication industry.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Interpersonal workplace aggression is a predictor of DWB, as established in the literature, and the study was able to confirm this. The study also showed that employees who possessed honesty-humility attributes refrained from engaging in improper workplace conduct. Furthermore, personnel with high Honesty-Humility scores exhibit less interpersonal aggression and counterproductive behaviour than do those with low Honesty-Humility scores.

On this basis, it is recommended that management implement training programs to instruct staff members in the concepts of workplace deviance, interpersonal aggressiveness, and honesty-humility. Human resources management should seek candidates who score highly on the honesty-humility scale during recruiting to minimize interpersonal workplace aggressiveness and subsequently reduce DWB, both of which have organizational consequences.

Finally, individuals must recognize their own accountability in this situation and cultivate the self-worth and personality attributes that enable them to respond to instances of violence in a proactive and constructive manner rather than by taking adverse action. They must be able to identify aggressiveness and clearly report it to the appropriate authorities so that swift corrective action can be implemented.

## **7. Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Study**

It adds to the body of knowledge by indicating that the association between interpersonal workplace aggression and improper WDB was mediated by honesty-humility, thereby fulfilling the objective of the study. The S-E model and the SET are both strongly supported by the findings in explaining the prevalence of CWB. According to the study, employees who encountered

interpersonal aggression at work (a stressor) were able to reduce that stress by engaging in WBD. In other words, WDB rises in tandem with rising workplace hostility. The SET is also explained in the same manner. This is due to the fact that workers often reciprocate by engaging in WDB when they experience interpersonal aggression at work.

The study will moreover be of practical relevance in that it will serve as a guide for organizational management and policymakers in that the results of the study can be incorporated into policies to prevent workplace aggression, as well as deviant work behaviour, and lessen its effects by implementing measures to do so. It will serve as a reminder to the HR department to look for dispositional traits like honesty and humility when hiring and choosing new employees, as these traits (as demonstrated by this study) have been found to lessen the negative effects of workplace aggressiveness on antisocial behaviour. Students who might want to undertake research on a related topic might use this study as a reference.

## 8. Suggestions for Further Studies

The current study, despite its limitations, supports the theory it was founded on. It gave an understanding of the mechanisms underlying counterproductive behaviours at work. The study is limited to interpersonal workplace aggression, deviant work behaviour, and the mediating effect of the honesty-humility trait. As a result, additional research may examine the honesty-humility factor's mediating role in the effects of the same factors assessed in this study. In addition, the study was cross-sectional in nature. To examine these behavioural effects on the employees over time, future research may use a longitudinal study. Besides this, the study was carried out in the telecom sector; hence, additional research can be done in sectors other than telecom.

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