

**A Study of Ethical Work Climate and Deviant Workplace Behavior among Academic
and Non-Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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and Non-Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities**

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**A LONG ESSAY WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS
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IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA.**

APRIL, 2026

DECLARATION

I declare that:

This project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Business Administration, University of Benin, under the supervision of Dr. A.P. Kadiri.

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this project was carried out by Akhigbe Blessed Omoibo with the Matriculation Number **PG/MGS2415240** and submitted this research work to the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test and does not violate copyright regulations.

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty whose grace I surf through the hurdles of life and for his loving care and protection upon my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the link between Ethical Work Climate (EWC) and Deviant Workplace Behavior our (DWB) in Nigerian universities, focusing on both academic and non-academic staff at the University of Benin. It analyzes how key dimensions of ethical climate—caring, rules, law and code, instrumental, and independence—shape the prevalence of deviant behaviours, including misuse of organizational property, production-related deviance, political misconduct, and personal aggression. The findings indicate a moderate level of both ethical climate and deviant behavior our within the institution. In particular, instrumental and independence climates were identified as significant drivers of deviant workplace behaviour, implying that environments dominated by self-interest and unchecked autonomy are more susceptible to unethical conduct. In contrast, caring and rules-oriented climates were shown to reduce the incidence of deviance, highlighting the importance of formal ethical structures in guiding employee behavior our. The study advances theoretical understanding of organizational ethics within higher education and offers practical guidance for university administrators on cultivating ethical environments that reduce deviance and strengthen accountability. It recommends the adoption of robust ethical frameworks, continuous ethics training, and a balanced approach to autonomy and oversight. The paper concludes by outlining directions for future research, including comparative studies across institutions, qualitative approaches, and the exploration of moderating factors such as leadership style and organizational justice.

Keywords: Deviant Workplace Behavior our, Ethical Work Climate, Nigerian Universities, Organizational Ethics, Employee Conduct

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The concept of Ethical Work Climate (EWC) has gained increasing attention within organizational behavior literature for its central role in influencing employee attitudes, decision-making, and overall workplace conduct. In academic institutions—particularly Nigerian universities—EWC refers to the shared perceptions among employees concerning ethically acceptable behavior and the organization’s approach to addressing ethical dilemmas (Victor & Cullen, 2021). A robust ethical climate not only reinforces values such as fairness, transparency, and accountability but also serves as a buffer against Deviant Workplace Behaviour (DWB) such as absenteeism, dishonesty, favoritism, and misuse of institutional resources.

Nigeria’s university system faces systemic ethical challenges, including incidents of academic fraud, abuse of power, and corruption. These issues compromise institutional credibility and erode public trust (Adedoyin, Ojeaga, & Okon, 2023). Within this context, understanding how EWC influences employee behavior becomes imperative. Studies (e.g., Mackey et al., 2021; Ferrell et al., 2022) have shown that ethical climates that emphasize rules, care, and fairness tend to reduce unethical conduct and enhance employee commitment and morale.

Despite the proven benefits of EWC, Deviant Workplace Behavior remains prevalent in Nigerian universities, with over 25% of staff admitting to some form of workplace deviance (Adeyemi, 2021). The interplay between EWC and DWB is complex and context-dependent,

yet under explored in Nigeria's academic context. University leadership and institutional policies are critical in shaping ethical climates, and ethical leadership has been identified as a protective factor against DWB (Brown et al., 2005).

This conceptual study seeks to examine the relationship between various dimensions of EWC—namely caring, rules, instrumental, law and code, and independence—and deviant behavior in Nigerian universities. The overarching goal is to provide a framework for understanding how ethical climates can be leveraged to foster a more positive academic environment characterized by integrity, accountability, and professional conduct.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Although the ethical work climate has been recognized as a determinant of employee behavior, its role in shaping workplace conduct within Nigerian universities remains underinvestigated. Existing research has largely centered on corporate environments (e.g., Vardi, 2021; Peterson, 2022), failing to address the cultural and institutional dynamics unique to academic settings in Nigeria.

There is a critical knowledge gap regarding how specific dimensions of EWC—such as caring, rules, law and code, instrumental, and independence—impact the incidence of DWB in universities. While studies like Martin and Cullen (2020) have indicated that rule-based and care-oriented climates reduce unethical conduct, these conclusions have not been sufficiently contextualized to Nigerian higher education. This study addresses this empirical void by exploring how ethical climate dimensions affect deviant behaviors, including academic

dishonesty, power abuse, and administrative misconduct. By focusing on Nigerian universities, the research aims to generate insights that are not only academically relevant but practically applicable in fostering ethical cultures within educational institutions.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between caring climate and deviant workplace behaviour among university workers?
2. What is the relationship between law and code climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers?
3. What is the relationship between rules climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers?
4. What is the relationship between instrumental climate and deviant workplace behaviour among university workers?
5. What is the relationship between independence climate and deviant workplace behaviour among university workers?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this conceptual paper is to examine the relationship between ethical work climate and deviant workplace behavior in Nigerian universities. The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate how the caring ethical climate dimension influences deviant workplace behavior.
2. To investigate the role of the law and code climate in mitigating workplace deviance.
3. To assess the effect of a rules-based ethical climate on unethical conduct in universities.
4. To determine the relationship between an instrumental climate and DWB.
5. To explore the influence of independence climate on deviant behaviour in academic settings.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

To guide empirical validation, the following null hypotheses are proposed:

- H_{o1} : There is no significant relationship between caring climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers.
- H_{o2} : There is no significant relationship between law and code climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers.
- H_{o3} : There is no significant relationship between rules climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers.
- H_{o4} : There is no significant relationship between instrumental climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers.
- H_{o5} : There is no significant relationship between independence climate and deviant workplace behavior among university workers.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This conceptual investigation focuses on Nigerian universities, with particular attention to the ethical climates perceived by academic and administrative staff. The study will examine the five dimensions of EWC (caring, rules, law and code, instrumental, and independence) and their relationship with various forms of DWB. Insights will be drawn from the context of a selected university but are expected to inform broader institutional dynamics across Nigeria's higher education sector.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is of theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, it extends the boundaries of organizational behavior research by contextualizing the EWC–DWB relationship within the Nigerian academic setting—an area previously under explored in the literature. Practically, the study provides evidence-based recommendations for university administrators, policymakers, and ethics committees on how to cultivate environments that promote ethical conduct.

By understanding how ethical climate dimensions correlate with deviant behavior, university leadership can implement targeted strategies such as ethical awareness training, transparent governance, and clear disciplinary mechanisms. This approach not only mitigates deviance but also reinforces a values-driven institutional culture that supports academic excellence.

Moreover, the findings could enhance institutional reputation, improve staff morale, and contribute to student success by promoting a culture of fairness and integrity. Stakeholders who stand to benefit include lecturers, deans, vice chancellors, ethics committees, students, and the broader academic community.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The ethical work climate within an organization significantly shapes employee behaviours, attitudes, and overall workplace dynamics. It establishes the moral framework that guides decision making and interactions among staff. In contrast, deviant workplace behavior encompasses actions that violate organizational norms and can harm individuals or the organization itself. Understanding the interplay between ethical work climate and deviant workplace behavior is crucial for fostering positive organizational cultures and minimizing harmful behavior. This chapter explores the conceptual meanings, dimensions, and consequences of ethical climates on deviant workplace behavior, providing an empirical review of relevant literature to identify research gaps and build a strong conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Meaning of Ethical Work Climate

An ethical work climate refers to the shared perceptions of what is considered ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues are managed (Victor & Cullen, 2021). It represents the collective values, norms, and practices that guide employees decision making processes. An ethical work climate fosters transparency, accountability, and fairness, shaping employees attitudes and behavior towards achieving organizational goals in morally acceptable ways. It serves as a moral compass that influences not only individual actions but also the overall ethical culture of the workplace. This climate plays a pivotal role in ensuring that ethical

considerations are integrated into everyday business practices, promoting trust and integrity across the organization

2.3 Dimensions of Ethical Work Climate

The ethical work climate can be categorized into various dimensions each representing a distinct perspective in how ethical behavior is understood and encouraged within an organization. Victor and Cullen (2021) identified these dimensions as frameworks that shape employees perceptions of ethical conduct and decision making in the workplace. These dimensions provide insight into the varying ethical priorities that organizations adopt, influencing employee behavior and overall organizational culture.

2.3.1 Caring Climate

In a caring climate, decisions and actions are driven by concern for the well being of others. Employees prioritize relationships and the collective good over individual gains. Decision making in this climate is guided by empathy, compassion, and a commitment to supporting others. In Nigerian universities, this dimension may manifest in practices like providing scholarships for underprivileged students, mentorship programs for staff and students, and proactive mental health and support initiatives, ensuring that the institution genuinely cares for its members.

2.3.2 Law and Code Climate

This dimension revolves around strict adherence to laws, regulations, and professional codes of conduct. Employees are expected to align their actions with established external and internal standards. In the context of Nigerian universities, this climate is evident in efforts to enforce academic integrity policies, such as combating examination malpractice, and ensuring

compliance with government guidelines on education standards. It builds a structured environment that promotes accountability and fairness.

2.3.3 Rules Based Climate

A rules based climate focuses on internal procedural guidelines to guide behavior. Here, organizational rules are considered the primary standard for ethical decision making. Nigerian universities can exhibit this climate through standardized admission processes, promotion criteria for academic staff, and strict adherence to grading policies. A robust rules based climate ensures consistency and reduces the likelihood of biased decision making within administrative and academic operations.

2.3.4 Instrumental Climate

An instrumental climate prioritizes personal or organizational self interest over ethical principles. Decisions are often made with a focus on achieving specific goals, sometimes at the expense of broader ethical considerations. In Nigerian universities, this climate might manifest in unethical practices such as favoritism in the allocation of resources, nepotism in recruitment, or prioritizing institutional prestige over the welfare of staff and students. This climate creates a competitive and self serving environment where ethical considerations are often overlooked, fostering issues such as corruption, nepotism and resource mismanagement. Addressing an instrumental climate in Nigerian universities requires robust accountability mechanisms, transparent governance structures, and a cultural shift towards prioritizing collective well being and academic integrity over self interest. By mitigating such issues, universities can align their goals with ethical principles, ultimately fostering a more trustworthy and equitable educational environment.

2.3.5 Independence Climate

An independence climate values individual autonomy and moral judgment in decision making. Employees are encouraged to rely on their personal ethics when handling situations rather than being bound by external rules or hierarchical instructions. In Nigerian universities, this climate could empower academic staff to address student grievances fairly, develop innovative teaching methods, or make independent research contributions without undue interference, fostering creativity and ethical responsibility.

These dimensions reflect the diverse ways ethical climates can shape organizational culture and behavior. For Nigerian universities, fostering a balanced approach among these dimensions is vital to addressing challenges such as corruption, favoritism, and resource management, ultimately creating a more ethical academic environment.

2.4 Meaning of Deviant Workplace Behavior

Deviant workplace behavior (DWB) refers to voluntary actions that violate significant organizational norms, potentially harming the organization, its members or both (Robinson & Bennett 1995). These behaviors can be broadly categorized as either constructive or destructive depending on their intent or outcomes. Constructive deviance may involve breaking norms for positive reasons, such as solving problems. However, destructive deviance which is more commonly studied, encompasses behaviors that undermine organizational integrity and cohesion, such as theft, sabotage or absenteeism. A study by

Tian and Guo (2023) explored the emotional impact of DWB, finding that organizational shame often mediates its effects on employee performance. This indicates that DWB does not only harm organizations directly but also influences individual emotional states, which can

cascade into broader organizational outcomes. Additionally, perceived organizational support can mitigate some of the negative consequences by fostering a more supportive environment for employees. In Nigerian universities, DWB manifests in behaviors such as examination malpractice, harassment and misuse of institutional resources. These actions can erode the trust between staff and students, damage the reputation of institutions and hinder academic excellence. To address DWB, Nigerian universities must prioritize ethical leadership, clear policy enforcement and channels for reporting and resolving grievances. Promoting a culture of accountability and support can reduce harmful deviance while encouraging positive innovation that benefits both staff and students.

2.5 Typological Dimensions of Deviant Workplace Behavior

Deviant workplace behavior encompasses a wide range of voluntary actions that breach organizational norms, negatively affecting the organization, its members or both. These behaviours whether minor or severe, are often a result of dissatisfaction, perceived injustice or weak ethical climates. Robinson and Bennett (1995) developed one of the most widely recognized frameworks, categorizing DWB based on two dimensions: *organizational and interpersonal*. The increasing focus on DWB in researches underscores the critical need to address such behaviours due to their impact on productivity, morale, and institutional reputation (Tian & Guo, 2023). This typological approach offers a structured way to examine deviance causes and consequences.

2.5.1 Organizational Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Organizational deviant workplace behaviour encompasses actions directed against the organization, often motivated by dissatisfaction, perceived inequalities and weak

organizational controls. These behaviours typically compromise the organization's resources, processes, or reputation and include actions like theft, absenteeism, sabotage, and misuse of assets. According to Sackett (2002), these acts, whether intentional or unintentional, are detrimental to organizational performance and profitability. In Nigerian universities, organizational DWB manifests in various forms such as embezzlement of funds, alteration of official records, and unethical procurement practices. For instance, embezzlement of research grants undermines the ability of universities to invest in meaningful academic pursuits. Moreover the mismanagement of public funds allocated for infrastructural development affects the quality of education and tarnishes the institutions reputation.

Absenteeism is another form of organizational DWB in Nigerian universities. Academic and non-academic staff often skip work or fail to perform their duties effectively, leaving students at a disadvantage. Sabotage such as intentional damage of organizational resources is sometimes used by employees to express dissatisfaction. This might include tampering with IT systems, leaking sensitive information, or causing delays in administrative processes. Acts like these can have far reaching implications in Nigerian universities.

The causes of organizational DWB are multifaceted. Weak governance structures, lack of transparency, and limited accountability mechanisms often provide a breeding ground for such behaviours. Efforts to mitigate these issues must focus on building robust institutional frameworks, enforcing policies, and promoting ethical standards across all levels of the organization. The introduction of ethical training programs and whistleblower mechanisms can also encourage accountability and discourage deviant behaviours.

2.5.2 Interpersonal Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Interpersonal deviant workplace behaviour refers to actions targeted at individuals within the organization such as colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors. These behaviours often stem from interpersonal conflicts, power dynamics, or dissatisfaction and include bullying, harassment, verbal abuse and social exclusion. Unlike organizational DWB which primarily affects processes and resources, interpersonal DWB erodes relationships, collaborations and morale. In Nigerian universities, interpersonal DWB can manifest in various forms. For example, sexual harassment is a significant issue in academia, with staff members abusing their positions of authority to exploit students or colleagues. A study by Adebayo and Ojo (2020) reveal the prevalence of sexual harassment in Nigerian universities, underscoring the psychological and academic impact on victims. Another form of interpersonal DWB is favouritism, where staff or students are treated preferentially due to personal connections or bias. Favouritism undermines the principles that academic institutions are built upon, leading to resentment, reduced motivation and a decline in performance. In addition, gossiping and spreading rumors are common interpersonal deviant behaviours that harm reputation and disrupt workplace harmony. Bullying is another form of interpersonal DWB frequently observed in Nigerian universities. Supervisors may belittle their subordinates, colleagues might ostracize individuals based on ethnicity, religion or other biases. Such behaviours create a toxic work environment that affects productivity and leads to higher turnover rates.

Research by Einarsen et al (2020) highlights the significant emotional toll that workplace bullying takes on individuals, leading to stress, anxiety, and even depression. Interpersonal DWB is often perpetuated by hierarchical power structures, a lack of clear policies, and

inadequate enforcement of disciplinary measures. Addressing these behaviours requires fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity. Institutions should implement grievance mechanisms, provide support systems for victims, and encourage open dialogue to resolve conflicts amicably. Training programs on interpersonal skills and workplace ethics can also help reduce incidents of interpersonal DWB and improve overall workplace harmony.

2.6 Determinants of Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Deviant workplace behaviour does not occur in isolation but rather shaped by a range of personal, organizational, and environmental factors. These determinants can either exacerbate or mitigate the likelihood of deviance, making it critical for organizations, including Nigerian universities, to identify and address them. Understanding these determinants is essential for developing targeted interventions that can foster ethical behaviour and discourage deviant actions.

2.6.1 Individual factors

Individual traits and personal circumstances play a significant role in influencing DWB. These include:

Personality traits: Employees with traits like low conscientiousness, high neuroticism, or a tendency towards aggression are more prone to deviance (Mount et al, 2006). For instance, an employee who lacks self- discipline may fail to fulfill responsibilities, while a staff member with a hostile temperament might engage in verbal abuse.

Job satisfaction: Dissatisfaction with job roles, pay, or organizational policies often leads employees to engage in deviant acts as a form of retaliation or coping (Colquitt et al, 2021)

Demographics and personal stressors: Factors like age, marital status, financial challenges,

or health issues can influence behaviour. Younger employees or students may be more inclined toward risk taking behaviours, while those facing financial stress might resort to theft or fraud.

2.6.2 Organizational factors

Organizational structure and culture significantly impact employee behaviour. They include:

Leadership style: Leaders who adopt autocratic or laissez-faire styles often foster environments where DWB thrives. Studies by Tepper (2000) found that abusive supervision is directly linked to higher rates of deviance among subordinates. In Nigerian universities, the lack of supportive leadership can lead to staff resentment and unethical behaviour. **Perceived organizational justice:** Employees who perceive unfair treatment regarding promotions, pay, or workload distribution are more likely to engage in deviance. For instance, staff members who feel sidelined may deliberately delay tasks or sabotage institutional processes.

Ethical climate: Weak ethical climates characterized by unclear policies, lack of accountability, and poor enforcement mechanisms create opportunities for deviance (Victor & Cullen, 2021). Nigerian universities often face challenges in maintaining transparency and enforcing disciplinary measures, thereby enabling deviant behaviours.

2.6.3 Environmental and cultural factors

The external environment and societal norms also play a crucial role in shaping workplace behaviour.

Cultural norms and values: In collectivist societies like Nigeria, loyalty to in-groups sometimes overrides organizational loyalty. This can result in favouritism, nepotism, or turning a blind eye to unethical practices.

Economic environment: Economic instability and high unemployment rates in Nigeria contribute to stress and financial insecurity, pushing individuals toward deviant behaviours like bribery, theft, or academic malpractice.

Peer influence: Employees or students are more likely to engage in DWB if they perceive it as a norm among their peers. Groupthink or a culture of silence can perpetuate deviant behaviours within an organization.

2.6.4 Situational factors

Situational triggers can often catalyze deviant actions. They include:

Workload and stress: High workloads, tight deadlines, and lack of resources can lead to burnout and frustration, increasing the likelihood of deviance (Fox *et al.*, 2001). For example, overburdened lecturers may resort to plagiarism in research or neglecting teaching responsibilities.

Opportunities for misconduct: Weak monitoring systems, poorly defined roles, or access to sensitive resources can create opportunities for deviance. Nigerian universities often grapple with issues like exam malpractice, where inadequate supervision and loopholes in processes are exploited.

For universities in Nigeria, these determinants highlight the need for proactive measures to curb DWB. Institutions must prioritize building robust organizational policies, promoting ethical leadership, and fostering a culture of transparency and fairness. Addressing individual

stressors through support systems and training can also reduce the likelihood of deviance. Additionally, efforts should focus on creating an environment that discourages misconduct and encourages accountability, ensuring that the values of academic excellence and integrity are upheld.

2.7 Consequences of Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Deviant workplace behaviour has far reaching implications for individuals, organizations, and the society at large. It disrupts the harmony and efficiency of workplace operations, damages relationships, and can have long term financial and reputational consequences. The implications of DWB are particularly significant in institutions like Nigerian universities, where such behaviours undermine the core mission of education, research, and societal development.

2.7.1 Implications for the organization

DWB has profound implications for organizations disrupting their operations, undermining their goals, and threatening their long term viability. Organizations depend on a cohesive workforce and efficient systems to achieve their objectives, but it introduces inefficiencies, financial losses, and reputational damage that hinder success. These behaviours create ripple effects that negatively impact organizational performance and culture.

Financial losses: Deviant behaviours such as theft, fraud, and misuse of resources result in direct financial losses. For example, Sackett (2002) estimated that theft alone costs organizations billions annually. In Nigerian universities, embezzlement of research grants or the misallocation of funds for development projects can lead to resource shortages and stalled initiatives, affecting students and staff

Operational inefficiencies: Acts like absenteeism, procrastination, and sabotage disrupt workflows, delay projects and reduce productivity. For instance, when academic staff fail to fulfill their teaching duties, it results in overcrowded schedules, inadequate supervision, and poor quality education delivery. These inefficiencies have a cascading effect on institutional performances.

Reputational damage: Widespread DWB, such as corruption or sexual harassment, can severely damage an organization's reputation. Nigerian universities have faced scrutiny over allegations of bribery in admissions or examination processes. Such incidents erode public trust, making it harder to attract funding, partnerships, or talented individuals.

Legal consequences: Deviant behaviours, especially those violating laws, expose organizations to legal risks. For example, harassment cases or fraudulent activities can lead to lawsuits, penalties, and government interventions, often requiring the organization to pay substantial settlements or legal fees. According to a study by Schieman *et al.* (2021), workplace lawsuits have become a growing concern, as courts increasingly hold employers accountable for creating or allowing toxic work environments. Organizations also risk penalties for failing to enforce labour laws or workplace safety regulations. For example, inadequate handling of workplace violence or bullying can lead to legal claims for negligence, further damaging an institution's reputation.

2.7.2 Implications for individuals

DWB has significant and often deeply personal effects on individuals, including both perpetrators and victims. These behaviours disrupt professional relationships and create a toxic environment that hinders productivity and well-being. For perpetrators, engaging in

DWB can lead to disciplinary actions, loss of reputation, and long term career setbacks. The impact of DWB is often more profound for victims as behaviours such as bullying, discrimination, or harassment not only affects job performance but also takes a toll on mental and emotional health.

Career consequences: Employees or students engaging in deviance risk disciplinary actions, including termination or expulsion. This can tarnish their professional records and limit future opportunities. Victims of DWB, such as harassment or bullying, may also experience setbacks due to reduced confidence or missed opportunities.

Psychological and emotional impact: Victims of interpersonal DWB like bullying or discrimination, often face stress, anxiety, depression or even post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Studies by Bowling and Beehr (2006) indicate that such behaviours lead to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover rate. In Nigerian universities, students subjected to such behaviours may underperform academically or drop out entirely.

Social isolation: Interpersonal deviance such as favouritism or gossip creates a toxic environment where individuals feel alienated. This affects teamwork and collaboration, further exacerbating workplace tensions.

2.7.3 Implications for society

The societal implications of DWB are far-reaching, as organizations are embedded within larger communities that depend on their success and integrity. When deviance becomes normalized within institutions, it erodes societal trust in organizations and their ability to function ethically. This is particularly critical in sectors like education, where universities

play a central role in shaping future generations and driving social progress. Some of the implications for the society are:

Erosion of social values: In educational institutions, behaviours like corruption and malpractice sets poor examples for students, who are future leaders and professionals. When such deviance becomes normalized, it perpetuates a culture of dishonesty and inefficiency in society

Economic costs: The cumulative effects of organizational inefficiencies, lost productivity, and corruption contribute to economic stagnation. For Nigeria, where universities play a critical role in national development, these losses are particularly detrimental.

Stifling innovation and growth: In academic institutions, DWB undermines research and development efforts. Acts like mismanagement of funds compromises the quality of outputs, limiting contributions to societal progress and innovation.

Deviant workplace behaviour poses significant challenges for organizations, individuals, and society. For Nigerian universities, addressing these implications is particularly urgent given their role in shaping the nation's future. DWB undermines efficiency, drains resources, and tarnishes reputations, leading to a cycle of declining trust and performance. It also fosters stress, alienation, and career setbacks, creating a toxic environment that stifles innovation and collaboration. By understanding the causes and consequences of DWB, institutions can implement strategies to foster ethical behaviour, enhance operational efficiency, and restore public trust.

2.8 Empirical Review of Relevant Literature on EWC and DWB

Numerous studies have explored the interplay between ethical work climate and deviant workplace behaviour, which have provided insights into how ethical organizational environments influence employee conduct. This section reviews several empirical studies, detailing their methodologies, findings, and recommendations for improvement.

Suleiman and Ahmed (2020) conducted a study in Egypt to analyze the influence of ethical work climate on workplace deviance in public sector organizations. The study employed a cross sectional survey of 350 employees from 20 public sector organizations. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study revealed that ethical climates characterized by rules and law significantly reduced deviant behaviours. However, climates that emphasized instrumental goals were positively correlated with organizational deviance. The authors recommended enhancing rules based ethical frameworks and incorporating accountability systems to minimize deviant behaviours in public organizations.

Chen and Tan (2019) conducted a research to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership, ethical work climate, and workplace deviance in multinational corporations in Singapore. The study sampled 280 employees across 15 multinational corporations. Data were collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using regression analysis. Ethical leadership was found to strengthen ethical climates which in turn significantly reduced interpersonal deviance. Ethical climates served as a mediating factor between leadership and deviant behaviours. Organizations were advised to invest in ethical leadership training and foster a culture of inclusivity and care to reduce both organizational and interpersonal deviance.

Adeyemi and Babatunde (2022) studied the impact of ethical work climate on organizational deviance in Nigerian banks. The study surveyed 250 employees across 10 banks, employing a mixed methods approach that combined surveys and focus groups. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and regression modeling. It was discovered that an ethical climate such as a caring ethical climate reduced workplace incivility, such as rude and discourteous behaviour, which often escalates into organizational deviance. However, weak ethical climates were associated with increased deviance, including fraud and theft. The authors proposed embedding ethics into employee onboarding programs and enforcing a zero tolerance policy for incivility to mitigate deviance.

Lee and Park (2023) conducted a study to analyze the influence of ethical work climate on employee engagement and workplace deviance in South Korean retail organizations. The study involved 400 employees from 30 retail firms. Data were collected via surveys and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. They found that ethical climates characterized by fairness and transparency significantly increased employee engagement and reduced deviant behaviours. Conversely, instrumental climates were linked to higher levels of organizational deviance such as theft and misuse of resources. The authors emphasized the need for transparent leadership and ethical policies to foster employee engagement and reduce deviance.

Thomas and James (2021) conducted a research to study the role of ethical work climate in reducing cyberloafing as a form of deviant workplace behaviour in Australian tech companies. Data were collected through surveys from 300 employees in 15 tech companies. Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between ethical climate and cyberloafing. It

was discovered that a strong rule based ethical climate reduced cyberloafing by setting clear guidelines on acceptable internet usage during work hours. However, in the absence of such climates, employees were more likely to engage in personal internet use during work. Organizations were encouraged to implement digital monitoring tools and conduct regular ethics training to address cyberloafing.

Nguyen and Tran (2021) conducted a study to explore the relationship between ethical work climate and employee whistleblowing in Vietnamese manufacturing firms. The study utilized a survey of 200 employees and analyzed the data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. The results indicated that strong ethical climate such as caring ethical climate encouraged whistleblowing behaviours while reducing workplace deviance. Instrumental climates discouraged whistleblowing leading to a higher prevalence of unethical practices. The authors suggested fostering a caring climate and protecting whistleblowers through clear policies and organizational support.

Khan *et al.* (2021) conducted a study to examine the moderating role of job stress on the relationship between ethical work climate and deviant workplace behaviour in Pakistani IT firms. A sample of 300 employees from 25 IT firms was surveyed and data were analyzed using hierarchical regression modeling. Job stress was found to weaken the protective role of ethical climates in reducing deviant behaviour. Even in rules based climates, high job stress led to an increase in organizational deviance, such as sabotage and intentional errors. The authors recommended implementing stress management programs alongside ethical climate enhancement to create a supportive work environment.

Olayemi and Adebayo (2022) conducted a study to investigate how ethical work climates influence workplace deviance in Nigerian small and medium enterprises. This study analyzed survey data from 200 employees in 10 organizations, using regression modeling to identify significant relationships. The results show that instrumental climates were strongly correlated with organizational deviance, while caring and rule based climates mitigated such behaviours. The authors recommended leadership training focused on ethical decision making and periodic ethics audits to ensure compliance with organizational standards.

Ahmad and Gao (2020) conducted a research to analyze the impact of ethical work climate on deviant workplace behaviour in Chinese manufacturing firms. The study involved 300 employees from 20 organizations and utilized quantitative surveys analyzed using regression analysis. The research revealed that a strong ethical work climate significantly reduced organizational deviance, particularly in firms with ethical leadership. Employees were likely to engage in theft, sabotage, or absenteeism when ethical guidelines were clearly communicated and enforced. The authors suggested implementing ethical training programs and encouraging leadership accountability to foster a culture of transparency and reduce workplace deviance.

2.8 Research Gaps

Despite the extensive body of research on ethical work climate and deviant workplace behaviour, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the nuanced and contextual understanding of these phenomena. Existing studies predominantly focus on general frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and limited organizational contexts, leaving much to be explored in terms of practical applications and specific situational variables. To

this end, this research seeks to address the gaps by investigating how EWC influences DWB in diverse cultural, organizational, and industrial contexts. While previous studies have established a foundational understanding of the subject, there is a need for more in depth research that integrates contextual variables such as industry specific ethical climates, regional cultural differences, and emerging trends like remote work and digital transformation. By examining the interplay between these factors, this research seeks to establish a more comprehensive understanding of how EWC can be leveraged to mitigate DWB effectively. Furthermore, most existing research has been conducted in developed nations, which often differ significantly in workplace culture, organizational structures, and ethical standards compared to developing countries. For example, Nigerian organizations face unique challenges such as resource constraints, informal management systems, and cultural influences, which are not adequately addressed in the existing literature. This research will aim to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between EWC and DWB within Nigerian organizational contexts.

While some studies have identified mediators like job satisfaction and organizational trust, and moderators like leadership styles, job stress, in the EWC and DWB relationship, there is still limited exploration of other potential factors. For example, emotional intelligence, employee resilience, or organizational justice might play significant roles in shaping this relationship. Future research could delve deeper into these unexplored variables. There is also a lack of longitudinal studies as most studies on EWC and DWB are cross sectional, providing only a snapshot of the relationship at a given time. There is a lack of longitudinal

research that tracks changes in ethical climates and their impact on deviant behaviours over time. Such studies would be valuable for understanding the long term effects of organizational interventions, leadership changes, or cultural shifts on ethical climate and workplace deviance. While some studies have explored EWC in sectors such as manufacturing, banking, and healthcare, there is insufficient research on industry specific differences. For instance, the ethical challenges faced by technology firms or creative industries may differ significantly from those in more regulated sectors like finance or healthcare. This gap in industry focused studies limits the applicability of findings across different organizational contexts.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute significantly to the field by proposing actionable strategies for organizations to cultivate ethical work climates and reduce deviant behaviours. Addressing these research gaps is essential for developing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the interplay between EWC and DWB.

2.9 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study centers around two primary constructs: ethical work climate and deviant workplace behaviour. It posits that an organization's ethical climate significantly shapes employee behaviours, particularly their tendency toward or against deviant actions. In this model, the ethical work climate is treated as the independent variable, while deviant workplace behaviour is the dependent variable. The premise is that fostering an ethical work environment can effectively reduce workplace deviance by promoting positive attitudes and behaviours. An ethical work climate is a multidimensional concept that includes several key aspects such as caring climate, rules climate, instrumental climate, and

independence climate. Each of these dimensions mediates the relationship between the ethical work climate and employee behaviour. For instance, a caring climate, which prioritizes mutual support, fairness, and compassion, creates a workplace culture that discourages unethical practices and promotes collaboration. A rules based climate emphasizes strict adherence to organizational policies and procedures, providing a structured framework that mitigates deviant behaviours. Conversely, an instrumental climate that focuses on selfinterest and personal gain may inadvertently foster unethical conduct, as it promotes competition over collective well - being

This framework further explores how organizational ethical climates interact with individual employee characteristics, such as personal values, attitudes, and perceptions of fairness, to influence workplace behaviours. Employees who perceive their organization as ethical are more likely to engage in constructive behaviours, such as teamwork and organizational commitment, while those who perceive an absence of ethics may resort to behaviours such as sabotage, theft, or chronic absenteeism. Leadership styles also play a pivotal role in shaping the ethical climate. Ethical leaders who model fairness, transparency, and accountability inspire employees to align with organizational norms, reducing instances of workplace deviance. The Nigerian organizational context adds unique layers to this framework, as cultural norms, resource constraints, and informal practices significantly influence the ethical climate. In environments where ethical standards are weak or inconsistently enforced, organizations may struggle to create an ethical workplace. This study recognizes these challenges and aims to examine how ethical climates can be adapted to address specific cultural and institutional factors in Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for

developing effective strategies to minimize deviant workplace behaviours in the region. Additionally, this framework highlights practical applications for organizations seeking to curtail deviant workplace behaviours. Measures such as establishing robust codes of conduct, providing ethics training, and fostering a culture of accountability can help create a positive ethical climate. By doing so, organizations can reduce unethical practices, enhance job satisfaction, and improve overall organizational performance. A strong ethical work climate not only deters deviant behaviours but also promotes trust, loyalty, and shared responsibility among employees, leading to long term organizational success.

Finally, the framework provides a foundation for future interventions. It underscores the importance of bridging theoretical perspectives with actionable strategies offering valuable insights for both academic and professional contexts. By focusing on the relationship between ethical climates and deviant workplace behaviours, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on organizational ethics. It emphasizes the need for ethical work environments that prioritize employee well-being, reduce workplace deviance, and drive organizational effectiveness.

In addressing these issues within the Nigerian context, the study expands the existing body of knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of how ethical climates function in a developing economy. This conceptual framework serves as a tool for advancing research and guiding organizational efforts to foster ethical practices, ensuring a healthier, more productive workplace environment.

CHAPTER THREE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesized overview of the major findings, practical recommendations, theoretical contributions, and the conclusions derived from the study. The aim is to contextualize the implications of the research within the framework of ethical work climate (EWC) and deviant workplace behaviour (DWB) in Nigerian universities. In addition, the chapter outlines the study's contribution to existing knowledge and offers suggestions for future research. The structure of this chapter is organized under five major subheadings: summary of findings, conclusion, contribution to knowledge, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study investigated the influence of ethical work climate on deviant workplace behaviour among academic and non-academic staff at the University of Benin. The results reveal a moderate presence of both ethical climate and deviant behaviours across staff groups. Among the ethical climate dimensions assessed, caring, rules, and law and code climates were significantly present, indicating that principles of support, fairness, and compliance are fairly embedded in the institutional culture. However, instrumental and independence climates were only moderately prevalent, suggesting a perception of individualism and autonomy within the system.

In terms of workplace deviance, the study recorded a moderate level of deviant behaviour, with property-related and production-related deviance occurring more frequently than political or personal aggression. The correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between ethical work climate and deviant workplace behaviour, with instrumental and independence climates emerging as the strongest predictors of deviance. This implies that when workplace ethics prioritize self-interest or allow unregulated autonomy, deviant behaviour is more likely to emerge.

Regression analysis further confirmed that caring climate, rules climate, and instrumental climate had statistically significant effects on workplace deviance. These results underscore the importance of fostering a structured ethical environment to regulate employee conduct and promote responsible behaviour.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes several contributions to both theoretical and practical domains:

1. Theoretically, the study deepens the understanding of how specific dimensions of ethical work climate influence deviant workplace behaviour in academic environments, an area previously underexplored in Nigerian literature.
2. Empirically, it provides evidence that instrumental and independence climates are significant predictors of deviant behaviour, thereby extending ethical climate theory to new contextual dimensions in higher education.

3. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for university leadership and policymakers. Institutions can leverage these insights to develop ethical frameworks that discourage deviant behaviour, promote staff accountability, and align employee conduct with institutional values.
4. The study also sets a foundation for cross-sectoral comparisons, opening opportunities for similar investigations in non-academic or corporate environments within the Nigerian context.

5.4 Conclusion

The study concludes that the presence and perception of ethical work climate significantly influence deviant workplace behaviour among university employees. Specifically, environments that promote fairness, care, and adherence to rules tend to reduce unethical actions, whereas climates that prioritize personal gain or unchecked independence are more susceptible to workplace deviance.

The findings reaffirm the role of ethical structures in shaping workplace behaviour and suggest that employees' internal values, when aligned with institutional ethics, promote professionalism and organizational effectiveness. Conversely, the absence of strong ethical frameworks creates opportunities for misconduct, disengagement, and moral compromise.

Hence, it is imperative that universities actively nurture ethical climates that emphasize collective well-being, transparency, and accountability to reduce the incidence of DWB and enhance institutional integrity.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve ethical practices and mitigate deviant behaviour within Nigerian universities:

1. **Institutionalize Ethical Policies:** Universities should develop and reinforce comprehensive ethical guidelines that promote fairness, justice, and accountability. Emphasizing a rule-based climate will enhance compliance and reduce misconduct.
2. **Balance Autonomy with Accountability:** While promoting independence is important, excessive autonomy can lead to unethical actions. Institutions should adopt decision-making models that encourage initiative while maintaining clear ethical boundaries.
3. **Implement Regular Ethical Training:** Organizing workshops, seminars, and awareness programs on ethical behaviour can help employees understand the implications of deviance and foster a culture of ethical responsibility.

4. **Conduct Ethical Climate Assessments:** Regular audits and surveys should be conducted to evaluate ethical perceptions across departments. Feedback mechanisms such as anonymous reporting platforms can enhance trust and encourage transparency.
5. **Supportive Work Environment:** By investing in employee welfare and fostering inclusive leadership practices, universities can enhance job satisfaction and reduce tendencies toward deviant behaviour.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights, its findings are limited in scope. To build on its contributions, future research could explore the following areas:

- **Expand the geographical scope:** Replicate the study across multiple universities in different regions of Nigeria or West Africa to validate the generalizability of findings.
- **Integrate qualitative approaches:** Use interviews or focus groups to capture the subjective experiences of employees regarding ethical climate and deviance.
- **Examine mediating/moderating variables:** Investigate the role of leadership style, organizational justice, emotional intelligence, or cultural values in shaping the relationship between EWC and DWB.
- **Cross-sectoral analysis:** Explore how ethical climates function in non-academic organizations, such as government agencies or private enterprises, to draw broader organizational behavior insights.

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