

**Workplace Toxicity and Employee Performance among Virtual Organisations in Lagos
State, Nigeria**

**Blessing OSIFO
PG/MGS1510849**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

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BEING A RESEARCH THESIS PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, AND SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.Sc.) DEGREE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

MAY, 2026

DECLARATION

I, **BLESSING OSIFO**, hereby declare that the work is presented in this thesis is a genuine work done originally by me and has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree. All sources of information referred to in this work are acknowledged with reference to the respective authors.

BLESSING OSIFO
M.Sc Student/Researcher

Date

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This is to certify that this thesis titled ‘**Workplace Toxicity and Employee Performance among Virtual Organisations in Nigeria**’ was carried out by **Blessing Osifo** in the Department of Human Resources Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

Dr O.T. ASHAFOKE
(Supervisor)

Date

Dr. (Mrs) E. E. IDUBOR
(Ag. Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to GOD ALMIGHTY, who by his mercies has made this day possible.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between workplace toxicity and employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. Virtual organisations have become an increasingly prominent feature of the modern business landscape as technological advancements, global connectivity and digital work platforms continue to redefine the nature of organisational operations. It is aimed at determining how workplace bullying influences employee performance; ascertaining the relationship between workplace harassment and employee performance; examining the extent to which toxic leadership influences employee performance; and ascertaining whether cyber incivility affects employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

Four dimensions of workplace toxicity, which are: workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership and cyber incivility in relation to employees' performance, were examined. The study specifically adopted a descriptive survey research design to gather information from primary sources, using structured questionnaires administered to employees in the selected virtual organisations in Lagos State. A total number of three hundred and sixty-four (364) valid responses were collected from employees in the selected virtual organisations. The data gathered were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings indicated that each dimension of workplace toxicity examined, which are workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership and cyber incivility, was significantly and positively associated with employees' performance among the respondents. The analysis demonstrates a very strong association between the independent variables (workplace toxicity) and employees' performance, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.872. This value signifies a very strong positive linear relationship. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.746, indicating that only 74.6% of the variance in employees' performance is explained by the predictors. Based on these results, it is recommended that the organisation strengthen internal policies that address harassment, enforce fair treatment among staff, and develop transparent reward systems that minimise favouritism. In addition, the organisation should recommend continuous employee counselling, improved supervisory conduct, and policy reforms targeting toxic managerial practices.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.2 Background to the Study

Virtual organisations have become an increasingly prominent feature of the modern business landscape as technological advancements, global connectivity and digital work platforms continue to redefine the nature of organisational operations. A virtual organisation is typically characterised by geographically dispersed employees who collaborate through digital communication technologies rather than physical co-location (Lipnack & Stamps, 2020). Globally, virtual organisations contribute significantly to organisational agility, cost reduction, access to wider talent pools and improved responsiveness to volatile market demands (Zhang & Cao, 2021). In Nigeria, the adoption of virtual work structures has expanded, particularly in the technology, consulting, education, banking and creative sectors, enabling firms to circumvent infrastructural limitations, reduce operational overheads and engage skilled professionals from different regions (Adebayo, 2021). Despite these contributions, virtual organisations also encounter challenges such as communication gaps, weakened social bonds, technological dependence, mistrust and leadership difficulties, which may negatively influence employees' work experiences and outputs (Ojo & Fadeyi, 2022). These challenges are compounded when elements of workplace toxicity emerge within virtual environments.

Workplace toxicity refers to harmful behavioural patterns or organisational conditions that undermine employees' psychological, emotional and professional well-being (Frost, 2020). Although often associated with physical workplaces, evidence suggests that toxicity may be more subtle yet pervasive in virtual settings due to reduced physical visibility, asynchronous communication and decreased opportunities for interpersonal resolution (Nkomo, 2023).

Workplace toxicity encompasses a range of negative interpersonal dynamics and organisational practices that undermine employee well-being and productivity (Sarkar, 2025). Toxic behaviours such as bullying, harassment, narcissistic leadership, and ostracism have been identified as significant factors contributing to a detrimental work environment (George, 2023). These behaviours not only affect individual employees but also have broader implications for organisational culture and performance (Asamoah-Appiah, et al., 2024).

One major dimension of workplace toxicity is workplace bullying, which includes repeated hostile behaviours such as exclusion, intimidation or humiliation carried out through digital platforms, often termed cyberbullying in virtual contexts (Einarsen, et al., 2020). Workplace harassment, including gender-based, racial or psychological harassment, may also manifest in virtual interactions, sometimes concealed by the anonymity or distance afforded by digital communication (Olawale & Okafor, 2022). Toxic leadership is another critical dimension, as leaders who display manipulative, authoritarian or abusive tendencies can exert even greater control in virtual organisations where surveillance technologies and communication barriers may heighten employees' vulnerability (Schmidt, 2021). Cyber incivility can include ignoring messages, using an aggressive tone, sending curt emails, publicly criticizing others online, or misusing collaborative platforms (Lim & Teo, 2009). This may usually be amplified by technological features such as asynchronicity, reduced social cues, and perceived anonymity (Kokkinos, et al., 2021).

Employee performance is crucial for organisation due to its significant benefits such as enhance capacity for the organisation to experience increased commitment, competitive advantage and achieving corporate goals when employee is performing optimally (Ojeleye & Ojeleye, 2024). Employee performance refers to the effectiveness with which employees execute their tasks and

contribute to organisational goals (Sari, & Dudija, 2024). Employee performance within virtual organisations relies not only on technical competence but also on psychological safety, motivation, trust and effective communication (Agu & Eze, 2021). Toxic behaviours can erode employees' morale, reduce engagement, increase stress levels and ultimately hinder task completion, creativity and collaborative efficiency (Okechukwu, 2023). Nevertheless, if the place of work becomes toxic then it would hamper employee performance. Workplace toxicity encompasses a range of negative interpersonal dynamics and organisational practices that undermine employee well-being and productivity (Smith, & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020).

Extensive discussion on toxic workplace environment indicates that lack of support, micromanagement and neglect are key prevailing factor that may affect employee performance. Ojeleye and Ojeleye (2024) opine that the negative consequences of workplace bullying are well-documented in extant and empirical studies as employee often face anxiety, depression and mental health related issues as consequences of toxic workplace environment. In virtual settings, where employees often have limited direct interaction with their supervisors, the impact of such leadership can be amplified. Without regular face-to-face communication, employees may feel undervalued and disconnected, leading to a decline in their performance and commitment to the organisation. Given the increasing reliance on virtual organisational models in Nigeria, coupled with growing concerns about rising incidences of toxic behaviours within digital workspaces, there is a need for empirical inquiry into how workplace toxicity influences employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Due to the complex nature of workplace toxicity and its impact on the overall employee performance, key stakeholders such as manager, researchers and professionals have shown

growing interests on the current knowledge towards its burgeoning prevalence and consequences (Ukpabio, & Okon, 2017). Despite its importance, workplace toxicity remains a persistent problem in many organisations, including those in Nigeria. In support of this argument, Wang et al. (2020) opine that Toxic work environments can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including increased stress, burnout, and turnover intentions, all of which detract from employee performance (Gabriel, 2016).

The impact of workplace toxicity on employee performance is a critical concern, as it can lead to decreased productivity, higher turnover, and compromised organisational success (Arifin, 2024). In support of this, the concept of workplace toxicity has emerged as a significant concern in modern organisations, affecting employee well-being, productivity, and overall organisational performance (Smith, & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). These negative behaviours can lead to decreased employee motivation, increased stress and anxiety, and compromised physical and mental health. With these, workplace toxicity has become a pervasive issue in modern organisations, including virtual organisations, which are not exempt.

Workplace toxicity is prominent and obvious as there are specific and unique problems that can serve as foundation for enhancing workplace toxicity in Nigeria (Adesina, 2025). For instance, Nigeria is a high-power culture society which are characterised by poor transparency culture, communication and authoritative leadership approach which are possible indicators that can increase toxicity in the workplace (Iguisi, & Lawal, 2015). Within virtual organisations, new challenges and paradigms are seen as obvious towards increasing workplace toxicity and these may have severe consequences on their performance. Notably, virtual teams are prone to cyberincivility and bullying due to a lack of interaction, social cues, and personal interactions

with colleagues and superiors, which may increase the likelihood of negative behaviours and, subsequently, result in poor performance (Omogbe & Azage, 2022).

Several frameworks and conceptualisations have been provided to understand the nature of the behaviours that workplace toxicity may take (Tastan, 2017). To understand the impact of workplace toxicity on employee performance, it is essential to select appropriate measures of workplace toxicity carefully. Numerous measures of workplace toxicity are obvious in prior studies such as Sari and Dudija (2024), Jabbour Al Maalouf (2025) & Ojeleye and Ojeleye (2024) to mention few of them and these studies reveal that the workplace bullying scale (WBS) measure workplace bullying behaviours and experiences such as rude or dismissive behaviour, lack of respect and disregard for others' feelings. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) measure bullying, victimisation at work, personal bullying, work-related bullying and physically intimidating forms of bullying. The toxic leadership scale (TLS) measures the nature of leaders' behaviour and styles of leading such as abusive supervision, authoritarianism, self-promotion, unpredictability, self-aggrandizement and narcissism. Lastly, the workplace incivility scale (WIS) measure frequency of employees' experiences of disrespect, cyber bullying, rude, or condescending behaviours from superiors or co-workers and ostracising experiences on the job. These discussions are consistent with the work of Lawrence et al. (2024), which states that each of these measures captures a specific workplace toxicity variable, and their selection is based on specific considerations depending on the need for research investigation and the environment in which the research is taking place.

Despite the significance of workplace toxicity, there is a scarcity of research on its relationship with employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. This has called for further investigation into the research gap based on findings from the extant and previous literature.

Firstly, existing studies such as Brown (2023); Sari and Dudija (2024) & Priesemuth and Schminke (2024) have primarily focused on western contexts, specifically the US and Qatar. The study examines key workplace toxicities, such as bullying and toxic leadership, and their impact on employee performance. The findings of this study show a relationship between a toxic workplace environment and employee performance. The study shows that perceptions of workplace toxicity may differ based on the sample population and geographical context. Also, the gap has called for a more robust understanding of the need to investigate further the extent of the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance, which has generated mixed results and a high level of inconclusiveness.

Numerous studies, such as Adebayo and Eze (2017) and Orunbon et al. (2022), find that there is a negative relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. For example, Adebayo and Eze (2017) cite that a toxic workplace negatively impacts an employee's ability to perform optimally on the job. This finding creates a significant research gap, as it fails to identify the modalities and mechanisms through which workplace toxicity may influence employee performance, particularly in virtual organisations in Nigeria. These modalities and mechanisms may include leadership quality, social learning, work-life balance, interpersonal relationships, and employee job satisfaction and commitment (Al-Soqair & Al Gharib, 2023).

Lastly, studies such as Asamoah-Appiah, et al., (2024) and Mdhlalose (2025) focused on general relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance but sometimes majority of the studies lack longitudinal explanation on how and when workplace toxicity influence employee performance. This research gap provides better understanding on how toxicity may influence performance considering other related factors. Based on the argument, several classifications and research gap above, this study aims to examine how workplace toxicity

influences employee performance by considering bullying, harassment, toxic leadership and incivility as the independent variable in virtual organisation in Lagos State.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the above research gap identified, the following are the intended research questions:

- i. what is the relationship between workplace bullying and employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State?
- ii. does workplace harassment influence employees in virtual organisations in Lagos State?
- iii. to what extent does toxic leadership affect employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State?
- iv. how does cyber incivility affect employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to examine how workplace toxicity influences employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine how workplace bullying influences employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- ii. ascertain the relationship between workplace harassment and employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- iii. examine the extent to which toxic leadership influences employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- iv. ascertain whether cyber incivility affects employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

1.5 Research hypothesis

In line with the research questions, this study will examine the following null hypothesis:

- H0₁: Workplace bullying does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- H0₂: Workplace harassment does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- H0₃: Toxic leadership does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- H0₄: Cyber incivility does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the relationship between workplace toxicity and employees' performance in selected virtual firms in Lagos state. In terms of subject matter, the study examines each of these firms, provides adequate explanations, and offers appropriate justifications, exploring employees' perceptions of workplace toxicity and how this may influence their job performance. The study timeframe is 2025. Geographically, the study will be domiciled in Lagos State, specifically using virtual organisations such as Andela, Crossover, Afrilean (Education, Lagos), Flutterwave, and CribMD.

1.7 Significance of the study

In recent years, virtual organisations have become increasingly prevalent, particularly in rapidly developing urban centers like Lagos State. In virtual environments, toxic behaviours often go unnoticed or unaddressed due to the lack of physical interaction and oversight. These behaviours can significantly impact employee morale, engagement, and overall performance. This study

examines the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. The significance of this study extends across multiple stakeholders, each of whom stands to benefit from its findings and in the following ways:

Human Resource Managers and Professionals: Human Resource professionals will greatly benefit from the outcomes of this study, particularly those working in virtual or hybrid organisations in Lagos State. This study will provide HR professionals with a research-backed framework to identify early signs of toxicity in virtual communication, such as digital bullying, exclusion, gaslighting, or poor leadership conduct. The study can help HR refine performance appraisal systems by incorporating behavioural assessments and peer feedback mechanisms that detect signs of toxic collaboration or leadership.

Employees: This study brings their experience to light and gives voice to those who may feel isolated or unheard. By highlighting how toxicity affects performance, mental health, and career progression in virtual settings, the research provides a foundation for advocacy and policy reform that prioritises employee welfare. The study empowers employees by giving them data-driven evidence to seek better treatment, call for reforms, and participate in shaping healthier virtual work cultures in Lagos-based organisations. Employees will benefit from the development of improved communication practices, mental health support systems, and accountability frameworks stemming from the findings.

Virtual Organisations: Employers will benefit from the study's findings by gaining insight into how seemingly subtle toxic behaviours, such as exclusion from virtual meetings, passive-aggressive messages, micromanagement, or a lack of recognition, can undermine employee morale and productivity. This study will equip management with evidence-based strategies to

diagnose and mitigate toxic behaviours in virtual settings and guide the development of virtual workplace policies, improve leadership training, and promote transparent and healthy communication practices. Also, the study will enhance capacity for employer to transform their virtual culture into one that values emotional intelligence, accountability, and inclusivity, thereby enhancing both employee well-being and organisational performance.

Academics and future researchers: The study provides a model for measuring virtual toxicity using both qualitative and quantitative methods, assessing its impact on performance, and proposing relevant interventions to fill the gap and add value to knowledge by providing appropriate recommendations and conclusions on toxicity. This study can serve as a foundational reference for future research, opening avenues for comparative studies, regional case analyses, and cross-sector investigations.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Workplace Toxicity: Workplace toxicity is detrimental to an organisation's viability. This implies that when the work environment is pessimistic and toxic, achieving corporate success may be difficult.

Employee Performance: Employees' performance is characterised by activities that develop and enhance the requisite skills and competencies. It involves systematic, planned actions taken by management to provide opportunities for employees to learn and acquire the necessary abilities to meet current and future work demands.

Workplace Bullying: Bullying is a situational and contextual factor that is not limited only to bosses as it can also be exerted by supervisors, managers, peers, subordinates, colleagues and anyone in the workplace

Workplace Harassment: Workplace harassment occurs when someone is targeted based on a protected characteristic where retaliation occurs when an employee is punished for reporting harassment or participating in an investigation.

Toxic Leadership: The term toxic leadership reflects the cumulative harm such a leader inflicts not just on individuals but also on the health and sustainability of the entire organisation. Toxic leadership does not provide the capacity for effective employee engagement and commitment to the organisation's needs and aspirations.

Cyber Incivility: Cyber incivility has attracted increased scholarly attention, particularly in organisational behaviour, psychology, and communication research, and refers to rude, discourteous, or disrespectful electronic communication that violates workplace norms of mutual respect.

Virtual Organisations: A virtual organisation is characterised by its reliance on digital communication and remote collaboration, enabling employees, teams, and departments to operate from different geographical locations without a centralised physical office.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Preamble

This chapter examines key literature reviews on workplace toxicity and employee performance. Specifically, the chapter focuses on an extensive review of employee performance, its significance, and the measurement of employee performance. Notably, the study explores key issues in the workplace toxicity dimension, such as bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership, and cyber incivility, and identifies a research gap. The chapter further examines an empirical review and a conceptual and theoretical framework to support the argument from prior studies that examine the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Employee performance

Employee's performance is a multidimensional phenomenon that may be defined in terms of key components such as effectiveness, efficiency, economy, productivity, quality, and behaviour. Employees' performance was viewed as an index for improvement, recompense, retribution, reviews, and changes in remuneration (Liao et al., 2012). In support of this, Abba and Mugizi (2018) opine that it is a multidimensional construct that includes job-specific task proficiency and non-job-specific proficiency, which are defined as organisational citizenship behaviour, written and oral communication proficiency, effort demonstration, personal discipline maintenance, facilitation of peer and team performance, supervision and management administration aspects. Employees' performance encompasses multiple types of behaviour and is a source of competitive advantage, encouraging responsiveness while boosting overall organisational effectiveness (Yakubu et al., 2023). The degree of effort and behaviour that

employees exhibit in carrying out their assigned duties and obligations within a specific time frame is what determines their performance (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020).

The degree to which a worker's productivity meets the organisation's performance standards is known as employee performance (Ismail et al., 2022). The actions and talents of the staff members who perform in a certain situation determine performance. Employee performance relates to an employee's overall work outcomes, including efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness. Employee performance may be defined as an employee's efficient use of resources in performing given duties; these resources could be in the form of money, equipment, and time (Triansyah et al., 2023). In the opinion of Otache et al. (2023), employee performance may be a dynamic interaction among energy, attention, and organisational support that motivates employees to perform at their best. This means that employee performance thrives in a supportive workplace that encourages active participation, dedication and fosters alignment between personal goals and company objectives (Ojeleye & Ojeleye, 2024).

An employee's output effectiveness and efficiency are referred to as their performance. It describes how workers perform at work and how well they complete the duties assigned to them (Hauwa et al., 2025). This implies that employee performance is the completion of specified tasks in accordance with predetermined or identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). The quantity and quality of work that workers contribute to the company's overall success is referred to as employee performance. Arguably, Orishede and Bello (2019) argue that performance evaluation should be based on the specific contributions employees make to the organisation within a given timeframe. In the opinion of Al-Ali and Shamaileh (2015), the definition of employees' performance has, over time, become more

encompassing, as it has expanded its reach to incorporate other characteristics such as organisational quality management and structure.

Employees' performance embodies personnel beliefs about their behaviour and contributions to the achievement of the organisation's goals, in terms of both quality and quantity, as expected by staff (Atatsi et al., 2019). Employee performance has been characterised as a set of activities that develop and enhance employees' requisite skills and competencies. It involves systematic, planned actions taken by management to provide opportunities for employees to learn and acquire the necessary abilities to meet current and future work demands (Malaolu & Ogbuabor, 2013). With this, this study sees employee performance as the collection of workers' behaviours that can be observed, quantified, and assessed at the individual level (Yakubu, et. al. 2023). This implies that these behaviours are also congruent with the organisation's aims which is an important factor in determining individual work effectiveness.

2.2.2 Importance of employee performance

Sari and Dudija (2024) opine that employee performance shows job achievement levels and adherence to business norms, regulations, or requirements for a formal position. One important factor in determining an organisation's success is employee performance. Employee engagement, dedication, and inspiration are crucial for an organisation to meet its goals and objectives (Utin & Yosepha, 2019). In an effort to create a structure that would increase organisational efficiency and performance, the significance of employee performance is becoming increasingly apparent in the age of greater integration, globalisation, and fierce competition (Triansyah et al., 2023). Anitha (2014) states that employee performance is crucial to a company's success in today's global competitive market, as employees can maximise resources to provide goods and services at a reasonable cost.

To gain a competitive advantage in highly competitive markets, businesses must have high-performing employees who support the attainment of strategic goals by producing high-quality goods and providing high-standard services, enabling the firm to establish a strong market presence (Yakubu et al., 2023). To satisfy customers, firms often make significant efforts but fail to pay adequate attention to employee satisfaction. For instance, customers cannot be truly satisfied unless employees are satisfied and highly motivated, a central issue in employee performance (Abba & Mugizi, 2018). To support this argument, there is a need for organisations to identify frameworks to optimise the potential of their workforce to generate added value and achieve corporate goals and objectives (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). This implies that an appropriate structure must be in place for the organisation to implement effective employee performance strategies.

Employee performance is strongly influenced by motivation, particularly in the Nigerian workplace. Employees must be highly motivated to remain committed to the goals and aspirations of the organisation through an improved employee performance system that fosters motivation, which can encourage greater dedication and productivity among workers (Nwafili, 2024). Employee performance has been a concern for managers because low-performing employees make it difficult for organisations to achieve strategic goals (Ismail et. al. 2022). Although employee performance is a helpful indicator of the labour productivity index, it is understood that it may not always indicate each employee's effort. In support of this claim, Omoruyi et al. (2025) contend that a company can use its workforce to gain a competitive edge by raising productivity, which is crucial for gauging an organisation's performance in the marketplace.

Employee performance helps firms grow faster in the market (both local and global) and face cutthroat competition without worrying about failure, since the quality of available employees is enough to match any challenges that may serve as constraints for the organisation (Abba & Mugizi, 2018). Improving employee performance may be a major challenge for most organisations, particularly those that lack a culture of performance management. Organisations that experience poor employee performance tend to experience low productivity and poor employee commitment to deliver optimal results for the organisation (Omoruyi et al., 2025). In all, highly performing employees can help organisations improve the services provided and, subsequently, increase the firm's reputation and overall job satisfaction among employees (Liao et al., 2012).

2.2.3 Measures of Employee Performance

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to how precisely and economically work is executed, achieving desired outcomes with the least unnecessary input. Mbore and Cheruiyot (2017) cite that efficiency combines both quality and quantity by delivering desired results on time with minimal waste. Efficiency is a crucial metric for assessing employee performance because it evaluates how effectively individuals utilise resources such as time, materials, and effort to achieve organisational goals. It reflects the ratio between input and output, emphasising productivity and cost-effectiveness (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Measuring efficiency helps organisations identify high-performing employees who can complete tasks promptly with minimal waste, thereby enhancing overall operational performance (Dessler, 2021). However, relying solely on efficiency can be limiting. Efficiency-based evaluations often prioritise quantity over quality, neglecting creativity, innovation, and teamwork (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). For instance,

employees might focus on completing tasks quickly rather than producing high-quality outcomes or engaging in long-term strategic thinking. Therefore, efficiency should be integrated with other performance measures, such as effectiveness, job satisfaction, and adaptability, to provide a more balanced assessment (Aguinis, 2019). Ultimately, while efficiency remains an essential dimension of performance evaluation, a holistic approach ensures fairer, more accurate judgments of employee contributions to organisational success.

Timeliness

Timeliness is a key measure of employee performance that evaluates the ability to complete tasks and meet deadlines consistently. Employees who demonstrate timeliness contribute to organisational efficiency by ensuring workflows are maintained, projects are delivered on schedule, and client expectations are met (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Timely performance reduces bottlenecks, enhances coordination among team members, and supports effective resource management, making it an essential aspect of overall productivity (Dessler, 2021). However, timeliness as a sole performance metric has limitations. Emphasising deadlines over quality or accuracy may lead to rushed work, errors, and employee stress (Aguinis, 2019).

Furthermore, external factors such as resource availability, task complexity, and organisational processes can influence an employee's ability to be timely, making it a partially controllable measure (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). To provide a balanced assessment, timeliness should be considered alongside other performance indicators such as quality, efficiency, and initiative. This holistic approach ensures that employees are not only prompt but also effective, productive, and proactive, aligning performance evaluations with both organisational goals and employee development.

Productivity

Productivity is one of the most commonly used indicators of employee performance, reflecting the efficiency and effectiveness with which individuals or teams convert inputs into valuable outputs. It measures how well employees achieve organisational objectives by producing goods or services within a given timeframe (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). High productivity indicates that employees are utilizing resources optimally, meeting performance targets, and contributing to organisational profitability (Dessler, 2021). However, productivity as a sole measure can be problematic because it often emphasises quantity over quality. Excessive focus on output may lead to work stress, reduced motivation, or burnout, especially when employees are pressured to maintain high performance levels (Aguinis, 2019). Moreover, external factors such as technology, leadership style, and workplace culture can significantly influence productivity outcomes (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Thus, organisations should evaluate productivity alongside other qualitative indicators, such as job satisfaction, innovation, and teamwork, to gain a comprehensive understanding of employee performance. In conclusion, productivity remains a vital yet incomplete measure of performance, best applied within a multidimensional evaluation framework.

Initiative

Initiative is a critical measure of employee performance that evaluates an individual's willingness to take proactive action, identify opportunities, and address challenges without constant supervision. Employees who demonstrate initiative contribute to organisational growth by proposing innovative solutions, improving processes, and responding effectively to dynamic workplace demands (Aguinis, 2019). High levels of initiative often correlate with leadership potential and a capacity for self-directed work, which enhances both personal and organisational productivity (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Despite its importance, measuring initiative can be

subjective, as it relies on observation of behaviours rather than strictly quantifiable outputs. Employees may exhibit initiative in subtle ways, such as volunteering for additional responsibilities or suggesting improvements, which may not always be immediately visible to managers (Dessler, 2021). Additionally, organisational culture and management support significantly influence employees' willingness to act proactively; a rigid or unsupportive environment can suppress initiative (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Therefore, while initiative is a valuable indicator of performance, it should be assessed alongside other metrics, such as efficiency, productivity, and teamwork, to provide a well-rounded evaluation of employee contributions.

Quality of work

Quality of work refers to the degree to which output meets defined standards and client expectations, such as low error rates, adherence to guidelines, and meaningful impact. Quality of work is a fundamental metric for assessing employee performance, as it evaluates the accuracy, completeness, and professionalism of outputs. High-quality work reflects an employee's attention to detail, technical competence, and commitment to organisational standards (Aguinis, 2019). Unlike measures such as efficiency or productivity, which focus primarily on speed or quantity, quality emphasises the value and reliability of work produced, which directly impacts customer satisfaction and long-term organisational success (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). However, assessing quality can be inherently subjective, as it often relies on managerial judgment and predefined standards (Dessler, 2021). Variations in task complexity, available resources, and organisational expectations can affect perceptions of quality.

Additionally, excessive focus on quality may slow task completion if not balanced with efficiency considerations (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Therefore, while quality of work is a critical

performance measure, it is most effective when used in combination with other indicators such as productivity, initiative, and teamwork. This multidimensional approach ensures that employee evaluations capture both the excellence and effectiveness of contributions.

2.2.4 Factors that influence employee's performance

Employees' performance is determined by factors such as managerial standards, knowledge, skills, and commitment to a given task (Shadare & Hammed, 2019). In support of this, Hakala (2018) identified specific employee performance metrics: work quality, quantity, timeliness, cost effectiveness, originality and innovation, policy adherence, personal appearance/grooming, and management by objectives. Notably, Anitha (2013) asserts that the environment in which employees perform tasks, schedules, relationships with bosses, co-workers, and team members, compensation procedures, and staff engagement are determining factors for performance. The following are the measure of employee performance:

Quality of Training and Development

Training and development have long been recognised as crucial determinants of employee performance across organisations. The quality of employer-provided training programmes significantly shapes employees' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours, which, in turn, influence their ability to perform tasks effectively and contribute to organisational success (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). To favourably compete with competitors in the business environment, businesses need to have personnel with the essential skill as skills development is an integral part of organisation and employee performance (Elnaga, & Imran, 2013). Employees who receive continuous and structured development opportunities are better equipped to adapt to change. Quality training programmes instil resilience, flexibility, and problem-solving capabilities, which are essential for sustaining high performance in uncertain environments (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020)

The fundamental goal of staff training is to enhance the knowledge and skills required to carry out organisational tasks. Staff skills and training play a dual role in motivation and utilisation.

Employees who receive high-quality training are better able to perform their tasks, demonstrate greater accuracy, and minimise costly errors (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). This competence directly boosts organisational productivity and efficiency. The quality of training and development remains a central measure of employee performance, which may influence not only employees' immediate skills and capabilities but also their motivation, adaptability, and long-term career commitment (Noe, 2017). Organisations that invest in high-quality, relevant, and continuously evolving training initiatives are more likely to achieve superior employee performance and maintain a competitive advantage (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Nature of leadership style

Leadership style refers to the manner in which leaders direct, motivate, and interact with their employees. It plays a critical role in shaping employee performance; it is defined in many studies in terms of task accomplishment, quality, innovation, and engagement (Alluhaybi et al., 2024). For instance, leadership is a challenging organisational issue because of its subjectivity and dynamic character, but empirical studies have, over time, revealed that a good leadership style will ensure employees' performance within the organisation (Avolio, 2007). Transformational leadership had a significant positive relationship with work engagement and innovative work behaviour, both of which are facets of performance. Gameda et al. (2020) note that transactional leadership also has a positive relationship, though weaker than transformational leadership, and that passive-avoidant leadership is negatively associated with engagement and thus with performance.

Lama, et al., (2024) opine that laissez-faire or passive-avoidant styles tend to reduce or fail to enhance performance. Therefore, in modelling or assessing employee performance, leadership style should be included as an independent variable, measured with validated instruments, and its

influence evaluated both directly (via performance metrics) and indirectly (via mediators such as engagement or motivation). More specifically, Alluhaybi et al. (2024) argue that the nature of leadership style determines how employees feel about their superior, which may influence their commitment and ability to perform optimally. This can be used to measure their performance on the job in the long run. The organisation should determine the extent and nature of the leadership style that can improve and motivate workers towards greater productivity while at the same time enhancing their capacity (Osifo & Lawal, 2019).

Motivational factors

Motivational factors are considered a significant tool by scholars and researchers as powerful determinants of employee performance in Nigerian organisations. Motivation is one of the most critical determinants of employee performance because it influences employees' willingness to exert effort, maintain persistence, and align their behaviours with organisational objectives (Gagne et al., 2015). Motivation can be classified into intrinsic motivation, where employees are driven by internal factors such as growth, achievement, and purpose, and extrinsic motivation, which involves external rewards such as pay, recognition, and promotions (Jayaweera, 2015). Both forms of motivation play a significant role in shaping employee productivity and overall performance. For instance, sectoral studies in Nigeria's private and public sectors report that performance-linked pay and transparent promotion pathways reduce turnover intentions and increase discretionary effort (Imran, et al., 2014)

Motivation significantly enhances job satisfaction and employee performance, particularly when linked with recognition, participation, compensation and promotion. This implies that employees who perceive equitable reward systems tend to show higher levels of dedication, which translates into improved performance outcomes (Gagne, et. al., 2015). Most studies show that direct

financial incentives increase the immediate utility of organisations, suggesting that non-monetary rewards (recognition, promotion, career progression) complement pay in driving sustained performance, especially when pay increases are constrained. The absence of motivation or reliance on inadequate motivational strategies can negatively affect performance, and a lack of motivational incentives can lead to high turnover intentions and reduced service quality, highlighting the link between motivation and performance outcomes (Imran et al., 2014).

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture plays a critical role in shaping employee performance by influencing values, behaviours, and attitudes within the workplace. Organisational culture fosters employee alignment with organisational goals (Awadh, & Saad, 2013). When values and norms are clearly communicated, employees tend to adapt their behaviours to match expectations, resulting in improved task performance and efficiency (Arogundade, 2020). Organisational culture can encourage employees to be enthusiastic and disciplined in their work. The organisational culture is expected to inspire all employees, provide a distinctive character, and serve as an embodiment that attracts public confidence in employees' performance (Motilewa et al., 2015). Organisational culture enhances intrinsic motivation by shaping perceptions of fairness, reward systems, and support, thereby improving productivity and commitment levels (Akanbi et al., 2025).

Organisational culture defines how things are done in an organisation and provides a framework that guides employees' actions toward achieving organisational objectives. This alignment creates a sense of purpose and ensures that employees work collaboratively toward common objectives. In support of this, Wambugu (2014) cite that organisational culture shapes the quality of relationships within the workplace. A culture that encourages open communication and trust

fosters collaboration and reduces conflict, thereby improving individual and team performance. A supportive and innovative culture allows employees to experiment with new ideas and embrace change, leading to greater creativity and problem-solving (Aturu-Aghedo et al., 2024). Organisational culture is a vital determinant of employee performance. It aligns employees with organisational goals, motivates them through recognition and fairness, encourages innovation, fosters collaboration, and enhances retention (Awadh, & Saad, 2013).

Organisational communication

Effective organisational communication is widely recognised as a key determinant of employee performance. The communication climate influences performance through engagement and fairness. This implies that communication patterns did not directly affect the interactional pattern itself but did positively affect employee performance (Oronje & Wainaina, 2019). Communication involves not just transmitting information, but also feedback, channels, culture and how employees interpret messages. Scholars argue that effective communication improves clarity, alignment, motivation, and, ultimately, productivity (Oera 2021). The communication structure shows a significant positive correlation with employee performance, indicating that a better communication structure directly contributes to higher employee performance (Pertiwingsih & Rozikan, 2023).

Communication enhances employee commitment, satisfaction and engagement as mediators between communication and performance (Oyebode, et al., 2022). When employees understand the organisation's goals, feel their voices are heard, and receive quality information, they are more likely to align their behaviour with those goals, exert discretionary effort, and perform better (Rodrick, 2022). For instance, the literature demonstrates a multifaceted relationship: communication affects performance via clarity, feedback, climate, channels, and networks, and

through mediators such as engagement, satisfaction, and commitment (Weldeghebriel et al., 2022). Poor communication leads to ambiguity, low morale, misalignment and lower performance, whereas good communication leads to motivated, well-informed employees who perform well.

2.3 Workplace toxicity

Workplace toxicity is a widespread problem that can have a serious negative influence on employees' physical and emotional health (Labrague, 2024). Because workplace toxicity permeates and impacts the entire organisation's environment, in important conditions like low employee engagement, a toxic culture, and eventually toxic managers and leaders, it is disastrous for the organisation's stakeholders. According to Garg et al. (2023), narcissistic behaviour, aggressive and offensive leadership, intimidating conduct from coworkers and bosses, harassment, bullying, and exclusion are all signs of workplace toxicity. Al Soqair and Al Gharib's earlier research (2023). In essence, toxic work environments are the main cause of violence in the workforce, which includes physical assaults and threats of assault directed at people who are on duty or at work (Garg et al. 2023).

As a result of this discovery, terms such as toxic leaders, toxic managers, and toxic culture have become more common in business, management, and psychology literature to characterise the detrimental factors that lead to toxic organisations (Tsuno et al., 2017). Workplace ostracism, workplace narcissism, workplace bullying, workplace incivility, workplace aggression, workplace harassment, workplace passivity, and other aspects are included in workplace toxicity (Asamoah-Appiah et al., 2024). However, Mdhlalose (2025) states that workplace toxicity negatively impacts an organisation's ability to function. This suggests that a toxic workplace is pessimistic and that achieving corporate success may be challenging.

Furthermore, Bhat and Patni (2023) suggested that one place where civility still prevailed was toxic workplaces, where coworkers treated one another with a mix of formality and friendship, politeness and distance. It is typified by a variety of wrongdoings, including harassment, bullying, discrimination, and power abuse, which can be committed by coworkers, managers, or even the organisation itself (Muhammad, 2023). This implies that workplace toxicity arises when organisational culture tolerates, or even reinforces, harmful behaviours. For instance, when leaders misuse power, managers fail to provide support, or colleagues engage in gossip, exclusion, sabotage, or behaviours such as burnout and disengagement among employees, leading to lower productivity and higher turnover (Gabriel, 2016). This implies that the workplace is seen as a sustained pattern of harmful interpersonal and organisational practices that damage employees' psychological health, diminish job satisfaction, and reduce organisational effectiveness.

2.3.1 Measures of workplace toxicity

Workplace bullying

Adeoye et al. (2020) state that bullying is a situational and contextual phenomenon that can be perpetrated by managers, leaders, peers, subordinates, coworkers, and others in the workplace. Workplace bullying is considered a core dimension of workplace toxicity because it signals a breakdown in organisational culture and communication, which may erode psychological safety and create a climate of fear and hostility (Al Soqair & Al Gharib, 2023). Workplace bullying is not limited to direct aggression but may take the form of covert behaviours like silent treatment, exclusion or subtle sabotage of another person's work (Muhammad, 2023).

Bullying is characterised as persistent, unwarranted, aggressive, critical, insulting, threatening, and gossiping behaviour that is not acceptable in the workplace and has the potential to cause

physical or psychological harm to an employee (Labrague, 2024). According to Tsuno et al. (2017), bullying has been shown to affect both the victim and the organisation in terms of employee engagement, job performance, turnover, and health and well-being. Bullying can be person-related or job-related, and it can lead to a toxic work environment that can hasten depression, anxiety, stress, low engagement, lateness, low productivity, and work destruction (Gabriel, 2016).

Workplace bullying is a persistent negative actions or behaviours directed at an employee that are intended to intimidate, humiliate, or undermine them (Garg et. al. 2023). Workplace bullying is repetitive, systematic, and harmful behaviour that creates a hostile environment that threatens the dignity, psychological safety, and well-being of the targeted individual. Research suggests that workplace bullying is a widespread problem, with estimates suggesting that up to 50% of employees have experienced bullying behaviour at some point in their careers (Sari, & Dudija, 2024). Bullying can lead to job stressors, job fatigue, buffering resources, a poor work atmosphere, work destruction, and low productivity, all of which are signs of a toxic workplace (Arubayi, 2023). In all, workplace bullying is not just a personal conflict but a structural marker of toxicity within a workplace culture, which signifies poor leadership, communication, and a lack of accountability that make it difficult to measure what constitutes a toxic work environment (Bou Reslan et al., 2025).

Garg et al. (2023) argue that workplace bullying occurs when a person is subjected to persistent, negative behaviour from a single bully or a group of bullies over a prolonged period. It can take many forms, such as receiving unjustified criticism, being held accountable, receiving different treatment from other team members, being purposefully excluded and isolated, being humiliated, being the target of jokes, or being overly watched (Fatima et al., 2024). Assigning assignments

that are improper for their level or job description, providing unfair supervision, harshly criticising performance or character, and unfairly blaming employees for issues that are not solely their fault are all signs of bullying. Criticism, micromanagement, blame, social exclusion, humiliation, jokes, and over-monitoring of an employee might also fall under this category.

Workplace harassment

As part of a toxic work environment, harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour that degrades a person, violates their dignity, or intimidates others. This can include unsolicited and explicit speech about a person's race, sexual orientation, faith, belief, origin, age, genes, colour, or ethnicity (Saram et al., 2024). The adoption and implementation of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) in 2021 brought workplace harassment to the attention of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This suggests that any action that is unwanted, disrespectful, threatening, embarrassing, intimidating, or that creates a hostile environment qualifies as harassment. According to Lenmark, Campos-Medina, West, and Wagner (2025), workplace harassment may adversely affect an individual's and the workplace's emotional health, leading to a decline in employee morale and, ultimately, lower organisational productivity.

Based on the above discussion, workplace harassment refers to unwelcome conduct based on race, gender, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, or other legally protected characteristics that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment (Hodgins, et al., 2024). This implies that this behaviour can be in the form of verbal, physical, visual and psychological, which may undermine the personality and dignity of an individual, that may interfere with their ability to perform their job successfully (Motilewa et al. 2015). Workplace harassment is a serious issue that affects both employees and organisations. For instance, workplace harassment can involve unwanted sexual advances, inappropriate

comments or any behaviour of a sexual nature that affects an employee's work environment. With this understanding on what constitutes harassment, fostering a culture of respect in the workplace can create a safer, more supportive work environment (Triansyah, et al. 2023).

Gale, et al., (2019) opine that workplace harassment occurs when someone is targeted based on a protected characteristic where retaliation occurs when an employee is punished for reporting harassment or participating in an investigation. For instance, remote and hybrid work environments have also introduced new forms of harassment, such as inappropriate messages sent through professional communication tools, exclusion from virtual meetings, or monitoring behaviours that cross ethical lines (Popa, 2025). These developments show that workplace harassment is not confined to physical spaces and must be addressed in digital environments as well (Magnavita, et al., 2024). In Liang's (2024) view, workplace harassment remains a complex issue that demands continuous review, open discussion, and responsive strategies. It is not enough to react to incidents; proactive education and clear policies are also needed. Also, cultural changes are essential to creating a harassment-free workplace.

Toxic leadership

Toxic leadership can become embedded in the culture if leaders are not held accountable or if there is no clear framework for ethical leadership. The term toxic leadership reflects the cumulative harm such a leader inflicts not just on individuals but on the health and sustainability of the entire organisation (Akinyele & Chen, 2024). This has led to a growing emphasis on leadership development programmes that prioritise emotional intelligence, communication, and ethical decision-making as core competencies (Anastasiou, 2025). Toxic leadership is a critical factor in the perpetuation of workplace bullying. Research suggests that leaders who engage in bullying behaviour themselves, or who fail to address bullying behaviour among their team

members, create a culture of fear and intimidation that can have devastating consequences for employees (Agber, et al., 2025).

Toxic leaders often engage in behaviours such as manipulation, exploitation, and emotional abuse, which can lead to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness among employees. Toxic leadership is broadly defined as a style of leadership in which those in positions of power engage in destructive behaviours that harm the people they lead and the broader organisational culture (Calvin et al., 2024). These behaviours may include manipulation, abuse of authority, micromanagement, intimidation, narcissism, and a general disregard for ethical or professional standards (Olabiyi, et al., 2024). While some toxic leaders may display aggressive behaviour or verbal abuse, others use more subtle forms of control, such as favouritism, exclusion or passive-aggressive communication. This ambiguity makes toxic leadership difficult to address, especially in environments where toxic behaviours are normalized or tolerated as part of a high-performance culture. Akinyele and Chen (2024) cite that a key element in the discussion of toxic leadership is the interplay between personality traits and organisational structure, as many toxic leaders exhibit traits associated with narcissism, authoritarianism, or insecurity.

Toxic leadership is a complex and multifaceted issue that extends beyond bad behaviour. It involves patterns of control, manipulation, and ethical blindness that require ongoing review and critical discussion (Ojeleye, & Ojeleye, 2024). This implies that toxic leadership is defined as a leadership style characterized by destructive behaviours which may include manipulation, authoritarianism, unethical practices, and emotional or psychological abuse (Bubnys, & Zubkiene, 2024). For instance, toxic leaders often undermine their team members, prioritise personal gain over group success, and foster environments of fear, favouritism, or dysfunction (Alam, 2025). Current research and discussions increasingly frame toxic leadership not only as

an individual failing but as a systemic issue. More importantly, Mishra and Jena (2025) argue that toxic leadership differs from simply being a tough or demanding boss; effective leaders may set high expectations, but they also support their teams and communicate clearly.

Cyber incivility

The concept originates from workplace incivility theory, which frames incivility as low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In digital contexts, cyber incivility can include ignoring messages, using an aggressive tone, sending curt emails, publicly criticising others online, or misusing collaborative platforms (Lim & Teo, 2009). Unlike face-to-face incivility, cyber incivility is amplified by technological features such as asynchronicity, reduced social cues, and perceived anonymity (Kokkinos et al., 2021). These features can lower interpersonal inhibitions, facilitating more impulsive or hostile communication online. Cyber incivility is an emerging challenge shaped by technological, psychological, and organisational factors. Although typically subtle, its cumulative effects can be harmful, affecting individual well-being, team functioning, and organisational performance.

Continued research is needed to understand its long-term impacts better and to develop more sophisticated digital-era interventions. Cyber incivility is often differentiated from cyberbullying and trolling. Cyberbullying involves repeated, intentional harm and a clear power imbalance, whereas cyber incivility is low intensity and may be unintentional (Lim & Teo, 2009). Trolling, by contrast, involves deliberate provocation for amusement. Understanding these distinctions is important for developing appropriate policies and interventions. Organisations can mitigate cyber incivility by establishing explicit digital communication norms, offering training on email etiquette, and providing stress-management resources (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Encouraging a culture of psychological safety, where employees feel comfortable addressing misunderstandings,

has also been shown to reduce escalation of incivility (Park et al., 2014). Technological tools such as delayed-send features or automated tone-checking software may further help users regulate communication tone.

2.3.2 Consequences of workplace toxicity

The negative consequences of workplace bullying are well-documented. Victims of bullying often experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as physical health problems, such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease (Hussain, 2016). This implies that workplace toxicity may stem from bullying, poor leadership, lack of trust, excessive competition, harassment, gossip, or unfair policies (Adebayo, & Eze, 2017). For example, bullying, harassment, discrimination, micromanagement, and favouritism are just a few ways workplace toxicity can manifest (Coates, 2024). Additionally, it can result in a high standard of tension, exhaustion, and mental health problems including anxiety and depression, all of which can hurt employee engagement, productivity, and well-being and, ultimately, the organisation's success (Arifin, 2024).

Octavian (2023) argues that workplace toxicity is a serious problem that can significantly affect workers' career advancement, well-being, and organisational success. It is imperative that organisations take proactive measures to foster a friendly and upbeat work atmosphere, address toxic behaviour when it arises, and offer resources and support to affected employees (Mdhlalose, 2025). Long-term negativity at work can be toxic, as it impairs one's capacity to handle conflict arising from unmet expectations (Agarwal, 2019). For instance, toxic behaviours such as gossip, favouritism, or a lack of transparency breed conflict and mistrust among colleagues, making effective collaboration among employees difficult when individuals feel excluded or unsafe (Adesina, 2025).

Workplace toxicity may lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced productivity, and increased turnover intentions, ultimately resulting in significant economic costs for organisations (Bhat, & Patni, 2023). Workplace toxicity is not limited to interpersonal relationships but include structural and systemic issues, such as unclear job roles, unrealistic performance expectations, lack of transparency, and inadequate recognition (Anjum & Ming, 2017). These conditions can create an environment where employees feel undervalued, insecure, and powerless, contributing to a culture of fear and dissatisfaction (Imran, et.al. 2014). Workplace toxicity also fuels high turnover rates where talented employees are less likely to remain in organisations where disrespect or harassment prevail, which damages team morale, creating a cycle where dissatisfaction spreads and more employees consider leaving (Tastan, 2017).

Despite the severity of the problem, many organisations fail to address toxic behaviours, often due to lack of awareness, inadequate policies, or insufficient support systems for victims (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). Workplace toxicity can have a big effect on an employee's life and career. Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder are among the mental and physical health issues it might cause (Ukpabio & Okon, 2017). Favouritism, when some people are given preference over others, is a common occurrence in toxic workplaces. In support of this, Bou Reslan et al. (2025) note that this may result in unjust treatment, a lack of acknowledgement, and limited job advancement opportunities.

2.4 Relationship between Workplace toxicity and employee performance

2.4.1 Workplace bullying and employee performance

Many empirical studies show a negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee performance. For example, a study conducted by Fatima, et al. (2024) in Nigeria found that 40.2% experienced bullying and the level of bullying was significantly associated with worse

work performance. In support of this, Zafir (2019) carried a research in Malaysia to look into the relationship between ergonomic workplace features and the outcomes of job stress. The key finding shows that ergonomic workstations are a crucial way to lessen the negative consequences of work-related stress in organisations. Muhammad (2023) contends that humiliation, arbitrary deadlines, and exposure to an enormous workload are examples of workplace bullying actions that have a substantial detrimental impact on employees' job performance.

Studies on bullying and incivility generally point out that in remote or hybrid work arrangements, bullying can happen via digital means such as cyberbullying, exclusion from online meetings and being ignored in chats, which may impact well-being, engagement and ultimately performance (Gabriel, 2016). In developed countries, according to Garg et al. (2023), bullying at work has a major and detrimental impact on performance in North Cyprus, and the relationship between the two is mediated by psychological resilience and emotional intelligence. These have created a significant research gap, as most studies in Nigeria focus on physical workplaces such as transport, healthcare, and education (Adeoye et al., 2020). There seems to be a lack of empirical research focusing exclusively on virtual firms in Lagos State. Also, virtual work changes how behaviour is mediated, like in the area of digital communication, time zones and disconnectedness, where bullying may be less overt but possibly more insidious, like in the area of exclusion, ignoring and delayed feedback and at the same time, employee performance metrics in virtual settings may differ as well (Arubayi, 2023). With the above, a significant gap remains that calls for further, unfocused research.

2.4.2 Workplace harassment and employee performance

According to recent studies conducted in a number of countries, workplace harassment significantly affects both the workplace and human resource issues (Anastasiou,

2025). Numerous studies have examined the relationship between workplace harassment and employee performance; however, there is a dearth of research on firms that operate entirely virtually, despite several recent findings from Nigeria and other countries. In Nigeria, Motilewa et al. (2015) cite clear evidence that workplace harassment strongly and negatively impacts employee performance, as shown by the study, which found that harassment and favouritism both had statistically significant adverse effects on employee performance. In the study by Zan et al. (2025), workplace harassment is shaped by factors such as job design, leadership style, and supervisor support, which are significantly related to declines in performance. This implies that in more traditional in-person settings, harassment is reliably associated with worse output, reduced motivation, more absenteeism, or lower quality of work.

Ullah et al. (2025) observe that workplace cyberbullying significantly decreased innovation performance, both directly and through increased work disengagement, among the IT sector in Pakistan. A similar study by Saram et al. (2024) cites that online harassment and cyberbullying indicate that victims suffer mental distress, reduced job satisfaction, and lowered organisational commitment, which are considered as predictors of poorer employee performance. For instance, a study conducted in the USA by Schaaf (2022) shows that about 38% of employees still report experiencing harassment through remote channels such as email and video conferencing.

Taken together, the Nigerian and international research supports the view that workplace harassment is negatively related to employee performance, and that this relationship persists (and possibly becomes more complex) in virtual or remote settings. Virtual communication channels may introduce new forms of harassment or intensify certain dynamics (exclusion, digital

aggression, cyberbullying, etc.), which still lead to lower performance via lowered motivation, reduced engagement, poorer well-being, emotional exhaustion, or disrupted work processes.

2.4.3 Toxic leadership and employee performance

Studies have shown that toxic leaders are more likely to engage in workplace toxicity themselves, and are also more likely to tolerate or even encourage bullying-related behaviour among their team members (Calvin et al. 2024). This can create a culture of bullying and harassment that permeates an entire organisation, leading to widespread employee dissatisfaction, turnover, and decreased productivity (Agber et al., 2025). The empirical research, both within Nigeria and internationally, suggests that toxic leadership undermines employee performance, often through mediators such as job satisfaction, work motivation, psychological well-being, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, or organisational silence (Akinyele & Chen, 2024). For instance, Olabiyi, et al. (2024) opine that most literature on toxic leadership shows a clear and fairly consistent negative relationship with employee performance, while research focusing specifically on virtual organisations are less common. However, several recent studies, such as Mishra and Jena (2025), indicate that toxic leadership in virtual or hybrid settings also undermines performance.

In Nigeria, Ojeleye and Ojeleye (2024) did research on SMEs in Zamfara State and found that toxic leadership and dehumanisation had substantial negative effects on SME performance. The same study showed that employee resilience could moderate this negative relationship, meaning that more resilient employees experienced a smaller drop in performance under toxic leadership. In a similar study by Mishra and Jena (2025), which revealed that while toxic leadership significantly lowered job satisfaction and motivation, its direct effect on employee performance was weaker or non-significant when those mediating variables were controlled. Given the body of evidence showing that toxic leadership is significantly associated with decreased employee

performance in many organisational settings (Agber et al., 2025), and given that virtual or remote work contexts do not appear to mitigate these effects but often accentuate them through added stressors and communication challenges. It is reasonable to posit that in virtual organisations, there is likely a significant negative relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance.

2.4.4 Cyber incivility and employee performance

In Nigeria, several empirical studies show that incivility, broadly defined and not always strictly cyber, correlates negatively with employee performance and productivity. For instance, in a survey of 227 employees from local government councils in Delta State, researchers found that workplace incivility was negatively associated with task performance. Aruoren and Ugbehene (2023) used regression analysis to demonstrate that incivility significantly reduces task performance, though its relationship to adaptive performance was weaker; they also found that incivility increases counterproductive work behaviours. In a different Nigerian context, Odiri (2024) examined governmental tertiary institutions and found that discrimination and sexual harassment forms of incivility significantly impair firms' productivity. This suggests that, beyond individual performance, incivility can scale up to harm organisational outcomes, such as productivity.

Also relevant is a study of brewing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria, which found that supervisor incivility was strongly negatively correlated with employee commitment, a precursor to performance. Because commitment is widely recognised to influence both effort and performance, this finding provides indirect but important empirical support for the claim that incivility can undermine performance in the Nigerian workplace. Moving to international evidence more directly related to cyber incivility, Meier et al. (2012) showed that supervisor

cyber incivility (e.g., rude emails or messages) is positively associated with employee burnout, absenteeism, and turnover intentions. Although this study does not directly measure performance, burnout and absenteeism are strong negative predictors of performance, which logically links cyber incivility to poorer job outcomes.

More recently, Xiao et al. (2023) examined the effects of active (overt) and passive (covert) cyber incivility on employee well-being in a sample from China, using self-determination theory to examine mediating psychological mechanisms. They found that both forms of cyber incivility lead to emotional exhaustion, and intrinsic motivation mediates this relationship. For example, emotional exhaustion and reduced motivation are well-established antecedents of lower job performance, suggesting that cyber incivility indirectly undermines performance by negatively affecting employees' psychological resources.

Taken together, these findings from Nigeria and abroad paint a consistent empirical picture on cyber incivility (or broader workplace incivility) damages employee performance, both directly (by reducing task performance) and indirectly (by increasing burnout, reducing motivation, or weakening commitment). In the Nigerian context, while many studies examine face-to-face incivility, they strongly imply performance decrements, and international cyber incivility research confirms similar pathways in digitally mediated settings.

2.5 Conceptual framework

In line with the above extant literature review, this study proposed a conceptual framework as depicted in the figure. The purpose of the framework is to examine the extent of the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. The diagram provides adequate assumptions about different dimensions of workplace toxicity (workplace bullying, workplace

harassment, toxic leadership, and workplace incivility) and employee performance. The relationship between all the variables is shown below in the Figure:

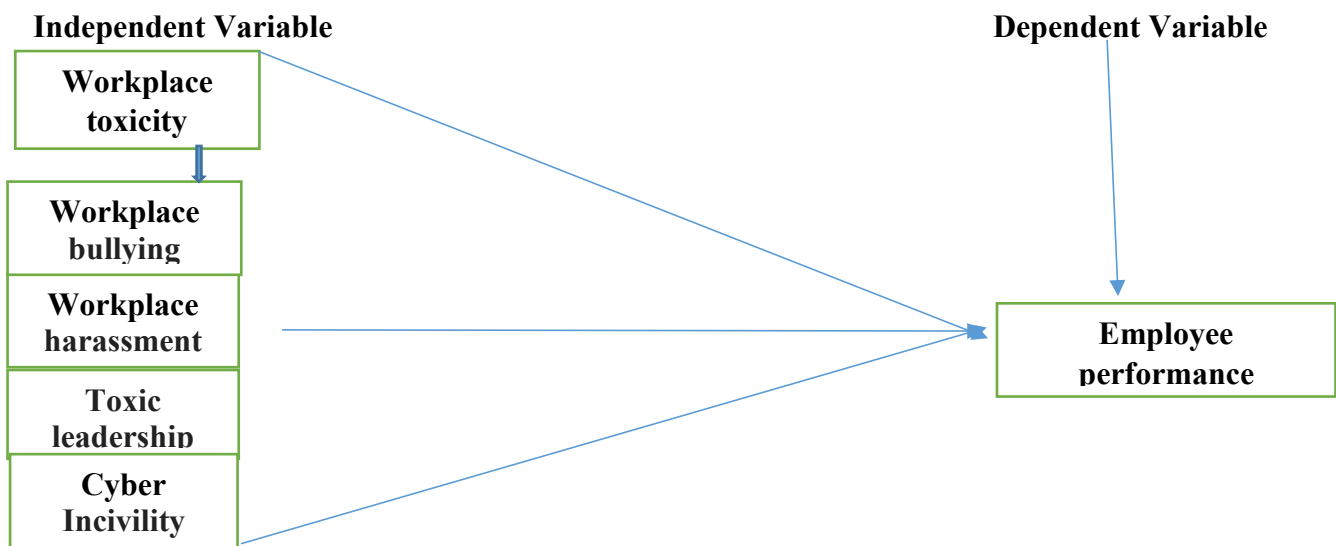


Figure 1: Source: Self-Developed, 2026)

2.6 Theoretical review

This study will be based on the following theories:

2.6.1 Psychological Contract Theory

The psychological contract idea, though foreshadowed earlier, has more formal roots in the work of Chris Argyris in the 1960s, and later Edward Schein, Harry Levinson, and others who considered unwritten expectations between employer and employee (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) is a key lens through which scholars examine workplace toxicity and its impact on employee performance (Herrera, & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). The theory rests on the assumption that there are mutual, implicit expectations between employer and employee beyond the formal contract, including promises about development, fairness, support, job security, and respect (Topa et al., 2022). The theory assumes that reciprocity and exchange exist, and that employees respond to employer behaviours, which may be positive or negative, with attitudes and behaviours of their own (Hayes & Keyser, 2022). This implies that greater

commitment and higher performance are needed when the employer meets its obligations, and this view aligns with social exchange theory and equity theory (Santos et al., 2024). As part of the assumptions, employees continuously compare what was promised or what they believe was promised with what is delivered. This implies that when there is a discrepancy, particularly when employer obligations are perceived as unmet, employees experience a breach of contract. If the breach is serious or continuous, it may lead to violations and emotional reactions (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021).

Recent literature also often assumes that psychological contracts are dynamic: they can evolve over time, be renegotiated, or erode if not managed. Some studies consider individual difference variables (e.g. past breach experience) or contextual moderators that influence how breaches affect outcomes (Shao et al., 2022). Psychological contracts are by nature subjective and implicit. In this context, different employees may hold different mental models of the promises they believed were made and the obligations they perceived as fulfilled (Topa et al., 2022). Toxic behaviours often represent violations of implicit mutual obligations and in this situation for instance, treating employees fairly with respect, upholding promises of development and maintaining psychological safety are practical examples of contract (Morrison, & Robinson, 1994).

Psychological contract theory remains a valuable framework for understanding how workplace toxicity undermines employee performance. Its main proponent has developed a conception rooted in social exchange theory, emphasizing beliefs about mutual obligations, perceived breach, violation, and outcomes (Karani, et al., 2022). The theory offers both explanatory depth and leverage for intervention: by managing expectations, strengthening communication, and ensuring

fairness and the fulfilment of obligations, organisations can reduce the negative impact of toxicity and preserve or enhance performance (Shao et al., 2022).

The justification for this theory is based on the premise that psychological contract breach has a significant negative effect on job performance among new-generation employees, and this is partially mediated by job burnout, suggesting that toxic conditions that violate expectations contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduce performance (Santos et al., 2024). Also, when an employer or organisation displays toxic behaviours, i.e., unfair treatment, lack of support, or broken promises, employees are likely to perceive that the implicit terms of the psychological contract have been violated. But under psychological contract theory, this will lead to emotional reactions, diminished trust, and lowered morale, which will reduce employee performance (Karani et al., 2022).

2.6.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory has its roots in sociology and social psychology, notably in the work of George Homans (1958), who proposed that human behaviour is based on a cost-benefit relationship, and in the work of Peter Blau (1964), who fully elaborated the theory in organisational contexts. Social exchange theory (SET) is a prominent theoretical framework employed in organisational behaviour research to understand workplace toxicity. People engage in interactions with others in organisations that involve an exchange of resources, not only material rewards but also intangible ones (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Social exchange theory remains a powerful theoretical lens for understanding how workplace toxicity, such as incivility, bullying, favouritism, and other negative social behaviours, influences employee performance (Ayop & Ishak, 2024). It is noted that exchanges are governed by reciprocity when employees perceive that their organisation or supervisors treat them fairly or

offer valued support. They feel obliged to reciprocate in positive ways to improve performance. In the opinion of Huo et al. (2023), employees continually assess what they give and what they receive. If they perceive the exchange as unfair, they are likely to react negatively, potentially leading to withdrawal (Sulistyan, 2020). For instance, an employee might feel upset and underperform even before consciously recognising that the treatment is unfair, and the temporal sequencing is often unclear in cross-sectional studies.

The theory provides actionable insights into improving organisational support, fairness, leader behaviour, and other integral parts of social exchange, which can help reduce toxicity or buffer its effects on performance (Meira & Hancer, 2021). The theory offers both explanatory depth and practical leverage, with a focus on interventions that restore fair treatment, strengthen perceived support, and ensure transparency to build trust. This can re-establish positive exchanges and mitigate performance losses due to toxicity. Social exchange theory often assumes that reciprocity will be enacted linearly, but in practice, negative behaviours may trigger retaliatory responses, silence, withdrawal, and other complex reactions that may prompt employees to continue performing but suffer in well-being (Xia et al., 2021). The theory offers a strong explanatory framework linking toxic social interactions (incivility or injustice) to employee attitudes and further to behaviour (task performance, contextual performance, counterproductive work behaviour (Romani-Dias & Carneiro, 2020).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the above theories; for example, the selection of psychological contract theory is justified by its demonstrated explanatory power in linking toxic organisational behaviours to employee outcomes. Empirical evidence shows that psychological contract breach has a significant negative effect on job performance, often

mediated by burnout and emotional exhaustion conditions closely associated with toxic work environments (Santos et al., 2024). When organisations engage in toxic behaviours such as unfair treatment, lack of support, broken promises, or disrespect, employees perceive these behaviours as violations of implicit agreements, leading to diminished trust, lower morale, reduced commitment, and ultimately decreased performance (Karani et al., 2022). Given that virtual organisations often rely heavily on trust, communication and perceived organisational support due to the absence of physical interaction, psychological contract dynamics become even more salient. Thus, PCT provides a robust framework for explaining how workplace toxicity disrupts employee expectations and erodes performance in virtual organisational settings in Nigeria.

Also, SET is appropriate for this study because it provides a direct explanatory link between toxic behaviours and employee performance outcomes. Toxicity erodes perceptions of organisational support, fairness and trust, thereby interrupting positive exchange cycles and prompting negative responses that damage performance (Meira & Hancer, 2021). The theory emphasises interventions that strengthen support, fairness and positive leader behaviour to counteract toxicity and restore healthy reciprocal relationships. It also helps explain complex behavioural responses to toxicity in virtual organisations, where employees may continue to perform tasks while simultaneously withdrawing psychologically or emotionally (Romani-Dias & Carneiro, 2020). In a Nigerian virtual organisational context where interpersonal interactions are mediated through digital platforms, SET offers an effective lens for understanding how employees interpret organisational behaviours and reciprocate through performance-related outcomes.

2.8 Empirical Review

Workplace bullying and employees' performance

Fagbenro et al. (2024) conducted a study examining the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between personality traits and workplace bullying among nurses. The study examined how personality traits predispose nurses to workplace bullying and how self-efficacy mediates this relationship. Conducted among nursing personnel in Nigerian healthcare institutions, the research used a quantitative cross-sectional approach with standardized psychometric instruments analyzed through structural equation modelling. Results indicated that traits such as neuroticism and low agreeableness increased vulnerability to bullying, while self-efficacy buffered these effects by enhancing coping mechanisms. The authors recommended training programmes that strengthen nurses' self-efficacy and the implementation of bullying-prevention frameworks in hospitals.

Olaleye and Lekunze (2024) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and psychological resilience in relation to workplace bullying and employee performance, with a focus on a moderated-mediation perspective in Nigerian organisational settings, and sought to determine whether emotional intelligence and psychological resilience mitigate the damaging effects of workplace bullying on performance. Using a quantitative survey and moderated-mediation modelling, the study found that bullying significantly reduced performance, but that employees with high emotional intelligence and strong resilience exhibited better adaptive responses and lower declines in performance. The authors recommended leadership interventions that foster emotionally intelligent work climates and resilience-building workshops for staff.

The work by Njoku et al. (2024), titled *Workplace Bullying and Psychological Performance of Academics at the Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Imo State*, analysed the psychological consequences of bullying on academic staff. Using a correlational survey and statistical analysis of responses from lecturers in the institution, the authors found that bullying heightened

emotional exhaustion, reduced concentration and hindered overall psychological functioning in academic tasks. They suggested that management prioritise mental health support systems, strengthen anti-bullying protocols, and promote civility in the academic environment.

Saka et al. (2023) examined the influence of workplace bullying on the performance of hotel employees, focusing on the mediating roles of emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. The study examined how emotional intelligence and resilience mediate the bullying–performance relationship in the hospitality industry. Conducted among hotel workers and using structural equation modelling, the study revealed that bullying negatively influenced performance, but both emotional intelligence and resilience served as significant mediators, reducing the deterioration in performance. The authors recommended tailored emotional intelligence development programmes and resilience-enhancing training for hotel staff.

The study titled *Workplace bullying and performance of Employees: Manufacturing firms' perspective in Anambra State* by Patrick et al. (2022) investigated the extent to which workplace bullying undermines employee performance in manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. The objective was to determine how verbal abuse, work-related harassment and intimidation affect workers' productivity and commitment. Using a survey design and structured questionnaires distributed to employees across selected manufacturing companies, the authors employed descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings showed that bullying practices significantly and negatively affected employee morale, task accomplishment and overall performance. The study recommended that management should institutionalize anti-bullying policies, enforce disciplinary measures and provide reporting channels that protect victims from retaliation.

Okikiola and Ruth (2022) carried out study on the effect of Workplace Bullying and Harassment on Performance of Academic Staff in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State. The study explored how bullying and harassment affect the effectiveness of academic staff at a Nigerian public university. Adopting a descriptive survey design with questionnaires administered to lecturers, the study revealed that persistent harassment, exclusion and verbal aggression eroded lecturers' psychological well-being, teaching quality and research output. The authors recommended strict enforcement of institutional policies on staff welfare, the establishment of grievance committees, and continuous sensitisation programmes to reduce abusive behaviours.

The research, Workplace Bullying and Occupational Stress: Microfinance Banks' Perspective in Anambra State, by Obianuju et al. (2022), investigated bullying as a predictor of occupational stress among employees of microfinance banks in Anambra State. Employing a survey methodology, the researchers discovered that relational aggression, excessive monitoring and ridicule significantly elevated employee stress levels. They recommended continuous employee counselling, improved supervisory conduct and policy reforms targeting toxic managerial practices.

Gadi and Kee (2021) explored workplace bullying, human resource management practices, and turnover intention, with the mediating effect of work engagement: evidence from Nigeria. The study further examines how HRM practices interact with bullying to influence turnover intention among Nigerian employees. Using a survey design and regression-based mediation analysis, the researchers found that workplace bullying increased turnover intention, while effective HRM practices indirectly reduced this effect by promoting work engagement. The study recommended that HR departments should adopt engagement-based strategies and enforce zero-tolerance policies against bullying.

The study by Nazim et al. (2021), titled "An investigation into the relationship among workplace bullying, job satisfaction, and job performance," focused on employees across organisational sectors in India. Using a quantitative survey, the authors found that workplace bullying was negatively associated with both job satisfaction and performance. The study recommended that organisations should implement employee-support structures, improve supervisory relations and adopt preventive strategies against hostile behaviours.

Adewumi and Danesi (2020) conducted a study to explore workplace bullying in Nigerian workplaces and examined the prevalence, forms, and organisational implications of bullying across multiple Nigerian work environments. Using mixed methods, including surveys and interviews, the study found that bullying was pervasive and often manifested through verbal abuse, intimidation and social exclusion. The findings emphasised that bullying resulted in reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism and psychological distress. The researchers recommended nationwide awareness campaigns, stronger labour regulations and organisational restructuring to enforce respectful workplace cultures.

Workplace harassment affects an employee's performance

Arubayi and Eruvbedede (2022), in their paper titled 'Effects of workplace harassment and favouritism on staff performance in Nigeria,' conducted an empirical investigation into how negative workplace behaviours influence employee productivity in Nigerian organisations. Their primary research aim was to assess the extent to which harassment and favouritism affect staff performance and to understand the dynamics through which these factors undermine organisational effectiveness. The authors adopted a quantitative research design, deploying structured questionnaires to employees across selected workplaces in Nigeria. The collected data were analysed using statistical tools to identify trends, correlations and the magnitude of the

effects. Findings revealed that workplace harassment significantly reduced employees' motivation, efficiency, and overall performance, while favouritism created perceptions of inequity and emotional dissatisfaction, further weakening productivity. Based on these outcomes, the authors recommended that organisations strengthen internal policies to address harassment, enforce fair treatment among staff, and develop transparent reward systems that minimise favouritism.

Ngwane (2018), in the study titled *Workplace Harassment and Its Impact on Staff Performance: A Case Study of a South African Higher Education Institution*, set out to examine how different forms of harassment influence the performance and well-being of employees in a university environment. The overall research aim was to understand the prevalence, nature and consequences of workplace harassment and to determine how these experiences shape staff productivity and institutional functioning. Employing a case study design, the researcher used a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to capture both statistical trends and staff members' personal experiences. Findings from the study revealed that persistent harassment ranging from verbal aggression to subtle forms of intimidation contributed to emotional fatigue, reduced motivation and a noticeable decline in work performance. As a result, the study recommended that higher education institutions implement comprehensive anti-harassment policies, establish formal reporting and support mechanisms and strengthen supervisory training aimed at fostering respectful and inclusive workplace cultures. These measures, according to the author, are essential for improving staff well-being and ensuring sustainable institutional productivity.

Ahmed, et al., (2022), in their article titled *impact of harassment on employees' job performance: mediating role of workplace stress: A study of female teachers in Azad State in Pakistan*, sought

to investigate how workplace harassment affects job performance among female educators and to determine whether workplace stress mediates this relationship. The overall research aim was to provide empirical evidence on the psychological mechanisms by which harassment influences work outcomes, particularly among female professionals in the education sector. The authors employed a quantitative research design, administering structured questionnaires to female teachers across selected educational institutions. Statistical analysis, including mediation modelling, was used to assess the direct effect of harassment and the indirect effect transmitted through workplace stress. The findings revealed that workplace harassment had a significant negative impact on job performance, as affected teachers reported diminished concentration, reduced motivation and lower overall task accomplishment. Based on these outcomes, the authors recommended that educational institutions establish strict anti-harassment frameworks, implement confidential reporting channels and provide psychological support services to mitigate stress.

Acquadro Maran et al. (2022), in their study titled *Sexual harassment in the workplace: Consequences and perceived self-efficacy in women and men witnesses and non-witnesses*, investigated how experiences of sexual harassment, whether direct or indirect, affect employees' psychological well-being and self-efficacy. The research aimed to compare the perceptions and emotional consequences among individuals who had personally experienced harassment and those who had only witnessed such incidents, while also exploring gender differences in these responses. The authors adopted a quantitative research design, using standardised psychological scales administered to a diverse sample of male and female employees across various organisations. Findings revealed that both direct victims and witnesses of sexual harassment experienced heightened emotional strain, including anxiety, stress and a reduced sense of

personal control at work. The authors recommended organisational interventions that include awareness training, confidential reporting systems and programmes that strengthen employees' coping resources.

The study on employee motivations in protecting workplace harassment: Longitudinal analysis of protection motivation theory from fear appeal perspective" by Atta et al. (2022) presents an in-depth examination of how employees respond to workplace harassment within organisational settings in Pakistan, using the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) as its analytical foundation. The authors aim to investigate the psychological mechanisms that motivate employees to adopt protective behaviours when confronted with harassment and to understand how fear appeals influence these motivations over time. To achieve this aim, the study employs a longitudinal research design, enabling the authors to track changes in employee perceptions, threat appraisals, coping responses, and protective intentions over multiple time points. The methodology integrates structured surveys administered to employees from various organisations, measuring constructs such as perceived severity, vulnerability, self-efficacy, and response efficacy, as well as behavioural outcomes. The findings reveal that fear appeals significantly enhance threat appraisal, which in turn strengthens employees' intentions to engage in protective actions against harassment. Moreover, coping appraisals, especially self-efficacy, emerge as powerful predictors of sustained protective behaviour. The study concludes that organisations must strategically design communication and training programmes that emphasise both the seriousness of harassment and employees' confidence in their ability to respond effectively. It recommends continuous awareness campaigns, supportive reporting mechanisms, and leadership engagement to foster safe and proactive workplace cultures.

The article *Shadows of Inequality: Exploring the Prevalence and Factors of Discrimination and Harassment in Nigeria* by Zan, et al., (2025) investigates the persistent challenges of discrimination and harassment across diverse social and professional environments in Nigeria. Set within the Nigerian socio-cultural context, the study aims to understand not only how widespread these discriminatory practices are but also the structural, economic, and interpersonal factors that sustain them. The authors frame their research around the need to generate evidence-based insights to guide policy interventions and institutional reforms that reduce inequalities and protect vulnerable groups. To achieve this aim, the researchers employ a mixed-method methodology combining large-scale surveys with in-depth interviews conducted across multiple Nigerian states. This approach allows them to measure discrimination prevalence quantitatively while also capturing the lived experiences and perceptions that shape individuals' exposure to harassment. Through statistical analysis and thematic coding, the authors identify patterns related to gender, ethnicity, income status, and workplace hierarchy. The findings indicate that discrimination and harassment remain widespread, with women, ethnic minorities, and low-income groups disproportionately affected. The authors recommend stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, expansion of workplace protections, and comprehensive public awareness campaigns.

The article, "Prevalence and Pattern of Workplace Bullying as Psychosocial Hazards among Workers in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria," by Nkporbu et al. (2016), examines the extent and nature of workplace bullying within an academic institution in Nigeria. The authors aim to highlight how bullying functions as a significant psychosocial hazard affecting staff well-being, productivity, and institutional harmony. Their research is situated in a tertiary institution in Nigeria, where diverse academic and administrative roles create complex interpersonal dynamics

that may facilitate various forms of bullying. To achieve their research objectives, the authors adopt a cross-sectional survey methodology, administering structured questionnaires to staff across different departments and employment categories. Statistical analyses further help identify demographic patterns and institutional factors associated with higher exposure to bullying behaviours. The findings reveal that workplace bullying is both common and multifaceted, manifesting as verbal abuse, undue criticism, social isolation, and intimidation. The authors recommend the development of clear anti-bullying policies, regular staff sensitization programmes, accessible reporting mechanisms, and stronger administrative accountability to foster a healthier and more supportive work environment.

The article "Gender-Based Violence at Workplace: The Nigerian experience" by Okebiorun and Oluwakemi (2022) explores the widespread issue of gender-based violence in Nigerian workplaces, highlighting its social, cultural, and institutional dimensions. The authors seek to provide evidence that can support policy reforms and improve workplace protections for vulnerable employees. To address this aim, the researchers employ a qualitative research methodology supported by descriptive analysis. Data are gathered through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observational insights across selected workplaces, allowing the authors to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms of employees who have encountered gender-based violence. The findings indicate that gender-based violence remains pervasive, driven by cultural stereotypes, organisational silence, and inadequate legal enforcement. They recommend strengthening legal frameworks, implementing confidential reporting systems, training management on gender sensitivity, and fostering organisational cultures that promote equality, accountability, and respect for all workers.

The study on intimidation, harassment, and discrimination in internship and residency in a teaching hospital in south-west Nigeria by Abodunrin et al. (2017) investigates the prevalence and effects of hostile interpersonal behaviours within medical training environments. The study was conducted in a major teaching hospital in South-West Nigeria. The research aims to examine how intimidation, harassment, and discriminatory practices shape the professional experiences of interns and residents and how these behaviours affect learning, performance, and psychological well-being. The authors emphasise the need to understand these patterns to improve training conditions and promote medical professionalism. To fulfil this aim, the researchers adopt a descriptive cross-sectional methodology, using structured questionnaires administered to interns and residents across various clinical departments. The findings reveal that intimidation and harassment are widespread, often originating from senior colleagues and consultants who use hierarchical power to exert undue pressure. The authors recommend implementing institutional policies that explicitly prohibit harassment, establishing confidential reporting channels, training supervisors in ethical leadership, and cultivating a supportive and respectful culture within medical education environments.

The article on qualitative analysis of the effect of sexual harassment on career advancement among female employees in selected banks in Lagos metropolis by Olanipekun et al. (2023) explores how sexual harassment influences the professional growth and career trajectories of women working in banking institutions in Lagos, Nigeria. The study is situated in the Lagos metropolis, a major commercial hub where competitive work environments and complex organisational structures shape employee interactions. The authors aim to understand how sexual harassment acts as a barrier to career advancement and to reveal the personal and professional consequences experienced by women in the sector. To address this aim, the researchers employ a

qualitative methodology that includes semi-structured interviews with female employees from several banks across Lagos. The findings show that sexual harassment is both pervasive and damaging, often perpetrated by individuals in positions of authority. Female employees report that harassment leads to reduced confidence, career stagnation, avoidance of certain departments or supervisors, and in some cases, resignation from promising roles. The authors recommend implementing stronger organisational policies, gender-sensitivity training, transparent disciplinary procedures, and creating safe channels for reporting misconduct.

Toxic leadership and employees' performance

Mishra and Jena (2025) conducted a study on toxic leadership, overwork, and stress, with a focus on a review and integration of the literature over the last 15 years. The objective of the paper is to examine the factors influencing employee stress and to explore the role of leadership, particularly toxic leadership, in driving overwork. It specifically investigates how traits such as narcissism, abusive supervision, and corporate psychopathy contribute to stress and overwork in organisational environments. The methodology involves a systematic literature review covering studies from 2010 to 2024 and a bibliometric analysis conducted using MS Excel and VOS Viewer. The review focuses on the concepts of toxic leadership and the dark triad of leadership traits. The findings indicate that toxic leadership significantly amplifies employee stress, with specific leadership behaviours acting as key contributors. The paper recommends designing organisational policies and work structures that consider both employee well-being and institutional goals, aiming to reduce stress and overwork through better leadership practices and healthier workplace environments.

Bubnys and Zubkiene (2024) conducted a quantitative study of toxic leadership across different types of educational institutions. This study was conducted in Lithuania, and its objective is to analyse how toxic leadership manifests in educational settings and to identify the dominant dimensions and their effects on organisational culture, employee well-being, and productivity. The methodology follows a quantitative research strategy grounded in a positivist paradigm and deductive logic. Data were collected through a closed-ended survey questionnaire, and the statistical analysis methods used were descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U tests. The findings indicate that toxic leadership is a significant issue which are prevalent hostility, bullying and authoritarianism in the sample. The study reveals that toxic leadership can affect overall organisational effectiveness. The study recommends increasing awareness of toxic leadership traits and implementing leadership assessment can resolve toxicity.

Akinyele and Chen (2024) investigated causes and consequences of toxic leadership focus the Dark clouds of leadership. The main objective is to critically examine existing literature on toxic leadership, highlighting conceptual gaps, inconsistencies in measurement, and the need for stronger theoretical foundations. The methodology used is a narrative review that draws on an integrative framework to organise research on toxic leadership. The findings reveal that toxic leadership is a complex and harmful leadership style that negatively affects organisations, employees, and even broader societies. It is often poorly conceptualized and inconsistently measured, which limits understanding of its full impact. The study recommends rethinking how toxic leadership is defined and measured. It proposes a new theoretical model to guide future research, calling for clearer conceptualization, standardized measurement tools, and more robust theoretical approaches to understand its causes and consequences.

This quantitative study investigates the moderating role of resilience in the relationship between toxic supervision, dehumanisation, and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Zamfara State, Nigeria by Ojeleye and Ojeleye in 2024. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from employees of SMEs, with an increased sample size to ensure robustness. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data. The findings reveal that toxic supervision and dehumanisation negatively impact SME performance, while resilience serves as a crucial buffer, reducing these adverse effects. The study highlights the importance of fostering employee resilience to improve SME performance despite challenging workplace conditions.

Wolor, et al., (2022), in their study on Impact of toxic leadership on employee performance. The study investigated the direct effects of toxic leadership on employee performance. Using quantitative analysis, the study revealed a strong negative correlation between toxic leadership practices and employee productivity. The authors recommended that organisations foster supportive leadership styles, implement leadership training programmes, and establish mechanisms to monitor and address toxic behaviours to enhance employee performance and organisational effectiveness

Khan, et al., (2021) explored the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between toxic leadership and performance. The study utilised survey-based research and found that toxic leadership negatively affects performance, but high employee commitment can partially mitigate these effects. The authors recommended that organisations focus on strategies to strengthen employee commitment, such as recognition programmes, engagement initiatives, and supportive work environments, to reduce the negative impact of toxic leadership. In conclusion, the study emphasizes that while toxic leadership undermines performance, fostering

strong employee commitment can serve as a buffer, highlighting the importance of employee-focused interventions in organisations.

Dahlan, et al., (2024) examined the influence of toxic leadership behaviour on employee performance in higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. Through quantitative methods, they identified significant adverse effects of toxic leadership on employee performance. The authors recommended implementing leadership training programmes, behavioural monitoring, and supportive management practices to mitigate these negative effects. In conclusion, the study highlights that addressing toxic leadership is essential for enhancing employee performance and promoting a positive organisational culture in higher education institutions.

Kilic and Günsel (2019) did a study on *the dark side of leadership: The effects of toxic leaders on employees* discussed the broad psychological and organisational consequences of toxic leadership, emphasizing reduced employee motivation, increased turnover, and overall negative impact on organisational performance. The authors recommended that organisations should implement leadership development programmes, promote ethical and supportive leadership practices, and establish mechanisms to identify and address toxic behaviours early. In conclusion, the study underscores that toxic leadership not only harms employees' well-being but also undermines organisational stability, highlighting the need for proactive measures to cultivate healthy leadership environments.

Octavian (2023) analyzed the impact and effects of toxic leadership on employees and organisations. The study highlighted that toxic leadership negatively affects organisational culture, employee well-being, motivation, and overall performance. Using a qualitative and analytical approach, the research identified patterns of destructive leadership behaviours and their cascading effects on employee morale and organisational effectiveness. The author

recommended implementing organisational reforms, leadership training programmes, and policies that encourage accountability and supportive leadership practices. In conclusion, the study emphasises that mitigating toxic leadership is critical for improving employee well-being, fostering a positive organisational culture, and sustaining long-term organisational success.

Rizani, et al., (2022) did a study on the effect of the toxic leadership on organisational performance with workplace deviant behaviour of employees as mediation and explored how toxic leadership indirectly impacts organisational performance through deviant employee behaviours. Using a quantitative research approach, the study found that toxic leadership increases workplace deviance, which in turn reduces organisational performance. The authors recommended that organisations implement leadership monitoring, ethical leadership training, and employee support programmes to minimize toxic behaviours and their negative effects. In conclusion, the study highlights that addressing toxic leadership is critical not only to improve organisational performance but also to reduce counterproductive employee behaviours and promote a healthier workplace environment.

Cyber incivility and employee performance

Nag, et al., (2024) present A Theoretical Model of Selective Cyber Incivility: Exploring the Roles of Perceived Informality and Perceived Distance in the Human Resource Management Journal. In this conceptual publication, the authors develop a theoretical model explaining why employees may engage in selective cyber incivility in workplace digital communication. Using a theory-building methodology grounded in existing literature on organisational behaviour, communication, and cyber incivility, the article synthesizes prior empirical findings to propose new relational mechanisms. The author argue that two key perceptual factors, perceived formality of digital communication platforms and perceived psychological and social distance

between employees, jointly shape the likelihood of online uncivil behaviour. Their model predicts that higher level of perceived informality and distance increase the probability of selective cyber incivility, particularly toward targets perceived as less influential or socially distant.

Shahwar and Dhar (2024), in their article unravelling the mysteries of cyber incivility: a systematic review and research agenda published in the international journal of conflict management, conduct a comprehensive systematic review to synthesize the growing body of research on cyber incivility in organisational contexts. Using a structured review methodology, the authors analyze empirical and conceptual studies spanning multiple disciplines, including organisational behaviour, communication, and conflict management. Their review identifies key antecedents of cyber incivility such as workplace stressors, role conflict, and technological factors as well as major outcomes including reduced well-being, performance declines, and deteriorating interpersonal relationships. The authors also highlight methodological inconsistencies, theoretical fragmentation, and gaps related to cross-cultural influences, moderating mechanisms, and emerging digital platforms. Based on these findings, they propose a detailed research agenda urging scholars to adopt longitudinal designs, explore multilevel predictors, and examine the role of evolving communication technologies.

Hammouri, et al., (2024) present Sustainable Cyber Incivility and Service Innovation: Does Transformational Leadership Matter. In this empirical study, the authors investigate how cyber incivility within service-oriented organisations influences service innovation and whether transformational leadership can mitigate these effects. Using a quantitative research design, they collect survey data from employees in service-sector settings and apply statistical analyses to

examine relationships among cyber incivility, sustainability-oriented workplace behaviours, innovation outcomes, and leadership style. The findings reveal that cyber incivility negatively affects service innovation by undermining communication quality and employee engagement. However, transformational leadership significantly buffers these adverse effects, fostering a work environment more resilient to digital misbehaviour. The study contributes to the literature by linking cyber incivility to sustainable innovation practices and demonstrating the moderating role of leadership in digital-era organisational dynamics.

Tasoulis, et al., (2024), in their article “Scylla and Charybdis: The relationships between supervisor active and passive cyber incivility with job stress, work engagement, and turnover intentions. The study investigates how different forms of supervisor cyberincivility shape critical employee outcomes. Using a quantitative research design, the authors collected survey data from employees and analysed the relationships through structural equation modelling. Their methodology allowed them to distinguish the effects of active (overt) versus passive (covert or delayed-response) supervisor cyber incivility. The study’s major findings indicate that both types of cyber incivility significantly increase employee job stress, though active incivility shows a stronger effect. Elevated job stress, in turn, reduces work engagement and increases turnover intentions. The authors conclude that supervisor behaviours in digital communication channels have substantial implications for employee wellbeing and retention, highlighting the need for organisations to establish clear norms for respectful online interaction.

Tiwari and Niraula (2023), in their article titled " Cyberloafing, Workplace Incivility and Employee Productivity: an empirical study in Rural Municipalities of Kaski District. The study examined the interplay among employee cyberloafing, workplace incivility experiences, and

overall productivity in public-sector offices in rural Nepal. Employing an empirical, quantitative research design, the authors collected primary survey data from employees across multiple rural municipalities in Kaski District. They analysed the relationships among the study variables using statistical techniques, including correlation and regression analyses. Their major findings reveal that higher levels of cyberloafing are associated with reduced employee productivity and that workplace incivility further exacerbates this negative relationship. The study concludes that both digital misbehaviour and interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace significantly hinder productivity, underscoring the need for municipal offices to promote digital discipline and cultivate respectful work environments.

Xiao, et al., (2023), in their article focusing on the effects of two-dimensional cyber incivility on employee well-being from a self-determination perspective” published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, investigate how different forms of cyber incivility shape employee well-being through the lens of self-determination theory. Using a quantitative research design, the authors collected survey data from employees across Chinese organisations and applied structural equation modelling to test the proposed relationships. Their methodology distinguishes between two dimensions of cyber incivility: active (overt negative behaviours) and passive (withholding responses or delayed communication). Major findings show that both dimensions undermine employee well-being by frustrating basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Active cyber incivility exerts a stronger negative effect, while passive incivility presents more subtle but still significant harm. The study concludes that digitally mediated disrespect can erode psychological need satisfaction and, consequently, overall well-being, emphasising the importance of healthy communication norms in technology-driven workplaces.

Zhou, et al., (2022), in their article focusing on browsing away from rude emails: Effects of daily active and passive email incivility on employee cyberloafing. The study explores how daily variations in two types of email incivility active (overtly rude messages) and passive (ignored or delayed responses) shape employees' cyberloafing behaviour. Using a daily diary research design, the authors gathered multi-day data from employees to capture fluctuations in email incivility and corresponding behavioural responses. Multilevel modelling was employed to analyze within person and between-person effects. The major findings indicate that both active and passive email incivility increase same-day cyberloafing, with active incivility showing a stronger influence. The results suggest that employees may engage in cyberloafing as an avoidance or coping mechanism when confronted with digital disrespect. The study highlights the importance of civil email communication and the role of daily interpersonal dynamics in shaping counterproductive work behaviours.

McCarthy, et al., (2020), in their article "Do you pass it on? An examination of the consequences of perceived cyber incivility. The study investigates how employees respond to perceived cyberincivility in workplace digital communication. Using a quantitative survey-based methodology, the authors collected data from organisational employees to examine how exposure to uncivil electronic messages influences emotional reactions and subsequent behavioural intentions. Regression and mediation analyses were employed to test their theorised relationships. Major findings show that perceived cyber incivility triggers negative emotions, which, in turn, increase the likelihood that employees will perpetuate incivility through their own digital communications, demonstrating a passing-on or contagion effect. The study also highlights downstream consequences for interpersonal relationships and the workplace climate,

emphasising that cyber incivility not only harms recipients but can also propagate cycles of disrespect throughout the organisation.

Daniels and Thornton (2020) conducted a study on race and workplace discrimination, examining the mediating roles of cyber and interpersonal incivility. The study examined how racial workplace discrimination influences employee experiences through both digital and face-to-face incivility. Using a quantitative survey design, the authors collected self-report data from employees to assess perceived racial discrimination, exposure to cyber and interpersonal incivility, and related workplace outcomes. Through regression and mediation analyses, they tested a model in which discriminatory experiences increase the likelihood of incivility in both online and offline interactions. Major findings indicate that racial discrimination significantly predicts both cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility, which in turn serve as mediating mechanisms that exacerbate negative outcomes for targeted employees. The study highlights the interconnected nature of discrimination and incivility across communication channels, underscoring the importance of addressing both digital and interpersonal disrespect in diversity and inclusion efforts.

Heischman et al. (2019) conducted a study on "before you send that": Comparing the outcomes of face-to-face and cyber incivility. It investigates the differential effects of traditional face-to-face incivility versus digitally mediated (cyber) incivility on employee outcomes. Using a quantitative research design, the authors collected survey data from organisational employees. They applied comparative statistical analyses to examine the impact of both forms of incivility on workplace attitudes and behaviours. Major findings indicate that both face-to-face and cyber incivility negatively affect employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment,

but cyber incivility produces distinct consequences, including delayed emotional reactions and broader diffusion effects due to its digital nature. The study emphasises the unique challenges posed by cyber incivility and underscores the need for organisational policies that promote respectful communication in both physical and digital workspaces.

Table 2.1 Tabular Summary of Empirical Literature

S/	Authors & Date	Title	Country	Methodology	Major Findings
1	Fagbenro, et al. (2024)	Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy Between Personality Traits and Workplace Bullying of Nurses	Nigeria	Quantitative cross-sectional design; standardized psychometric instruments; Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	Neuroticism and low agreeableness increased vulnerability to bullying; self-efficacy reduced these effects by enhancing coping.
2	Olaleye and Lekunze (2024)	Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Resilience on Workplace Bullying and Employee	Nigeria	Quantitative survey; moderated-mediation modelling	Bullying reduced performance; employees high in emotional intelligence and resilience showed less performance decline.
3	Njoku, et al. (2024)	Workplace Bullying and Psychological Performance of Academics at Federal Polytechnic	Nigeria	Correlational survey; statistical analysis	Bullying increased emotional exhaustion, reduced concentration and impaired psychological functioning.
4	Saka, et. al (2023)	Influence of Workplace Bullying on the Performance of Hotel Employees: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Resilience.	Nigeria)	Survey; Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	Bullying negatively affected performance; emotional intelligence and resilience significantly mediated and reduced negative effects.

5	Patrick, et al. (2022)	Workplace Bullying and Performance of Employees: Manufacturing Firms' Perspective	Nigeria	Survey design; structured questionnaires; descriptive statistics and regression analysis	Verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation reduced morale, productivity and overall performance.
6	Okikiola and Ruth (2022)	Effect of Workplace Bullying and Harassment on Performance of Academic Staff in Olabisi Onabanjo	Nigeria	Descriptive survey; questionnaires	Harassment, exclusion and verbal aggression reduced psychological well-being, teaching quality and research productivity.
7	Obianuju, et al. (2022)	Workplace Bullying and Occupational Stress: Microfinance Banks' Perspective in Anambra State.	Nigeria	Survey methodology	Bullying through relational aggression, excessive monitoring and ridicule increased occupational stress. Recommended counselling, better supervisory conduct and policy reforms.
8	Gadi and Kee (2021)	Workplace Bullying, Human Resource Management Practices, and Turnover Intention: The Mediating Effect of Work	Nigeria	Survey design; regression-based mediation analysis	Bullying increased turnover intention; HRM practices mitigated this by enhancing work engagement.
9	Nazim Ali, et al., (2021)	An Investigation into the Relationship Among Workplace Bullying, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	India	Quantitative survey	Workplace bullying negatively affects both job satisfaction and job performance; recommends employee-support structures, better supervisory relations, and preventive strategies against hostile behaviours.

10	Adewumi and Danesi (2020)	Exploring and Investigating Workplace Bullying in the Nigerian Workplaces.	Nigeria	Mixed methods (surveys and interviews)	Workplace bullying is pervasive, commonly expressed through verbal abuse, intimidation, and social exclusion; leads to reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and psychological
11	Arubayi & Eruvbedede (2022)	Effects of Workplace Harassment and Favouritism on Staff Performance in Nigeria	Nigeria	Quantitative design; structured questionnaires; statistical analysis.	Workplace harassment reduces motivation and performance; favouritism creates inequity and emotional
12	Ngwane (2018)	Workplace Harassment and its Impact on Staff Performance: A Case Study of a South African Higher Education Institution	South Africa	Mixed-method case study; surveys and interviews	The study found out that harassment causes emotional fatigue, reduced motivation, and decreased performance.
13	Ahmed, et al., (2022)	Impact of Harassment on Employees' Job Performance: Mediating Role of Workplace Stress – A Study of Female Teachers in Azad State in Pakistan	Pakistan	Quantitative design; structured questionnaires; mediation analysis	The study found that harassment negatively affects job performance, and workplace stress mediates this relationship.
14	Acquadro et al., (2022)	Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Consequences and Perceived Self-Efficacy in Women and Men Witnesses and Non-Witnesses	Portugal	Quantitative approach using standardized psychological scales	The study found out that both victims and witnesses experience anxiety, stress, and reduced self-efficacy; calls for awareness training and confidential reporting systems.

15	Atta et al. (2022)	Employee Motivations in Protecting Workplace Harassment: Longitudinal Analysis of Protection Motivation Theory from Fear Appeal Perspective.	Pakistan	Longitudinal design; structured surveys measuring PMT components	The study found out that fear appeals heighten threat appraisal and protective intentions; self-efficacy strongly predicts protective behaviour.
16	Zan, et al., (2025)	Shadows of Inequality: Exploring the Prevalence and Factors of Discrimination and Harassment in Nigeria.	Nigeria	Mixed-method; surveys and interviews	Study found out that discrimination and harassment are widespread, affecting women, minorities, and low-income groups.
17	Nkporbu, et al., (2016)	Prevalence and Pattern of Workplace Bullying as Psychosocial Hazards Among Workers in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria.	Nigeria	Cross-sectional survey; structured questionnaires	Study found out that bullying is common and manifests as verbal abuse, criticism, isolation and intimidation.
18	Okebiorun and Oluwakemi (2022)	Gender-Based Violence at Workplace: The Nigerian Experience	Nigeria	Qualitative design; interviews, documents, observations	The study found out that gender-based violence is pervasive due to stereotypes, silence, and weak enforcement.
19	Abodunrin et al. (2017)	Intimidation, Harassment and Discrimination in Internship and Residency in a Teaching Hospital in South-West Nigeria	Nigeria	Descriptive cross-sectional, structured questionnaires	The study found that intimidation and harassment are widespread, often from senior staff, and negatively affect learning and well-being.

20	Olanipekun, et al., (2023)	A Qualitative Analysis on the Effect of Sexual Harassment on Career Advancement Among Female Employees in Selected Banks in Lagos Metropolis	Nigeria	Qualitative design; semi-structured interviews	The study found out that sexual harassment hinders career growth, reduces confidence, and may lead to job exit.
21	Mishra & Jena (2025)	Toxic Leadership, Overwork and Stress: A Review and Integration of the Last 15 Years	Spain	Systematic literature review (2010–2024) + bibliometric analysis using MS Excel and VOS Viewer	The study found out that toxic leadership significantly increases employee stress; narcissism, abusive supervision, and corporate psychopathy drive overwork and stress.
22	Bubnys & Zubkiene (2024)	Toxic leadership in different types of educational institutions.	Lithuania	Quantitative survey; positivist paradigm; descriptive statistics + Mann-Whitney U tests	The study found out that toxic leadership is prevalent in educational institutions, manifested through hostility, bullying, and authoritarianism.
23	Akinyele & Chen (2024)	Causes and consequences of toxic leadership: dark clouds of leadership	United Kingdom	Narrative review using an integrative framework	Study found out that toxic leadership is complex, harmful, and poorly conceptualized.
24	Ojeleye & Ojeleye (2024)	Moderating Role of Resilience in Toxic Supervision, Dehumanisation and SME Performance	Nigeria	Quantitative cross-sectional survey; SEM analysis	The study found out that toxic supervision and Dehumanisation harm SME performance. Employee resilience moderates these negative effects.
25	Wolor et al., (2022)	Impact of toxic leadership on employee performance	Indonesia	Quantitative study (details from citation limited)	The study found out that toxic leadership negatively affects employee performance.

26	Khan et al. (2021)	Mediating Effects of Employee Commitment in Relationship Between Toxic Leadership and Employees' Performance	Pakistan	Quantitative survey	The study found out that employee commitment mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance.
27	Dahlan, et al., (2024)	Influence of Toxic Leadership Behaviour on Employee Performance in Higher Educational Institutions in Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative research in higher education: survey-based analysis	The study found out that toxic leadership behaviours significantly decrease employee performance in academic institutions.
28	Kilic & Günsel (2019)	The Dark Side of Leadership: The Effects of Toxic Leaders on Employees	Turkey	Conceptual/empirical study (mixed or quantitative depending on original text)	The study found out that toxic leadership leads to psychological harm, reduced motivation, and negative organisational outcomes.
29	Octavian (2023)	Impact and Effects of Toxic Leadership on Employees and Organisations	Italy	Conceptual/analytical paper	The study found out that toxic leadership harms both employees and organisational systems, causing stress, reduced productivity, and cultural degradation.
30	Rizani et al. (2022)	Effect of toxic leadership on organisational performance, with workplace deviant behaviour as a mediator.	Indonesia	Quantitative study	The study found out that toxic leadership negatively impacts organisational performance.

31	Nag, et al., (2024)	A Theoretical Model of Selective Cyber Incivility: Exploring the Roles of Perceived Informality and Perceived Distance.	United State	Conceptual/theory-building study synthesising existing literature	The study found that high perceived informality and psychological factors can enhance distance-selective cyber incivility, particularly toward less influential or socially close targets.
32	Shahwar & Dhar (2024)	Unravelling the Mysteries of Cyber Incivility: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda	India	Systematic literature review	The study found that identified antecedents, such as stressors, role conflict, technological factors, and outcomes, can reduce well-being, lower performance, and deteriorate relationships.
33	Hammouri, et al., (2024)	Sustainable Cyber Incivility and Service Innovation: Does Transformational Leadership Matter	Jordan	Quantitative survey	The study found out that cyber incivility negatively affects service innovation by undermining communication and engagement.
34	Tasoulis, et al. (2024)	Scylla and Charybdis: The Relationships Between Supervisor Active and Passive Cyber Incivility with Job Stress, Work Engagement, and Turnover Intentions.	Greece	Quantitative survey with structural equation modeling	The study found out that both active and passive cyber incivility increase job stress and active incivility has stronger effects; job stress reduces engagement and increases turnover intentions.
35	Tiwari & Niraula (2023)	Cyberloafing, Workplace Incivility and Employee Productivity: An Empirical Study in Rural Municipalities of Kaski District.	Nepal	Quantitative survey with correlation and regression analysis	The study found that cyberloafing reduces productivity and commitment to the organisation's overall goal.

36	Xiao, Lu, et al. (2023)	Effects of Two-Dimensional Cyber Incivility on Employee Well-Being from a Self-Determination Perspective	China	Quantitative survey with structural equation modeling	The study found out that active and passive cyber incivility undermine employee well-being by frustrating autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
37	Zhou, et al. (2022)	Browsing Away from Rude Emails: Effects of Daily Active and Passive Email Incivility on Employee Cyberloafing.	Germany	Daily diary study with multilevel modeling	The study found out that both active and passive email incivility increase same-day cyberloafing; active incivility has stronger effects; employees may cyberloaf as a coping mechanism.
38	McCarthy, et al (2020)	Do You Pass It On? An Examination of the Consequences of Perceived Cyber Incivility	United State	Quantitative survey with regression and mediation analysis	The study found out that perceived that cyber incivility triggers negative emotions, increasing the possibility of increasing cycles of disrespect in organisations.
39	Daniels & Thornton (2020)	Race and Workplace Discrimination: The Mediating Role of Cyber Incivility and Interpersonal Incivility	United States	Quantitative survey with regression and mediation analysis	The study found out that racial discrimination predicts cyber and interpersonal incivility which mediates negative outcomes.
40	Heischman, et al. (2019)	Before You Send That: Comparing the Outcomes of Face-to-Face and Cyber Incivility	United States	Quantitative survey with comparative statistical analyses	The study found out that both face-to-face and cyber incivility negatively affect well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment.

Source: Researcher's Compilation (2026)

2.9 Research gaps

Existing research on workplace toxicity, including studies by Brown (2023), Sari and Dudija (2024), and Priesemuth and Schminke (2024), has predominantly focused on Western contexts, where key issues and measures of workplace toxicity are examined within those contexts. This highlights a need for more focused research on the Nigerian workplace, particularly to understand better the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance, which has yielded mixed and inconclusive results so far. Furthermore, a substantial body of evidence from Nigeria and other countries shows the negative impacts of workplace toxicity, such as bullying, harassment, toxic leadership, and incivility on employee job satisfaction, work-life balance, performance, and engagement (Adebayo & Eze, 2017 & Orunbon et al., 2022). For example, Adebayo and Eze (2017) cite that a toxic workplace negatively impacts an employee's ability to perform optimally on the job. This finding creates a significant research gap, as it fails to identify the modalities and mechanisms through which workplace toxicity may influence employee performance, particularly in virtual organisations in Nigeria. Also, Orunbon et al. (2022) investigate key dimension of workplace toxicity and how these can be operationalise to include key modalities and mechanisms that can improve employee performance. The findings from this study reveal that the impact of workplace toxicity depend on workplace environment, proxies for measurement and its frameworks.

However, there remains a significant gap in research regarding the specific ways and mechanisms through which workplace toxicity affects employee performance, especially within virtual organisations in Nigeria. Lastly, studies like those by Asamoah-Appiah et al. (2024) and Mdhlalose (2025) have explored the general correlations between workplace toxicity and employee performance. Yet, many of these lack longitudinal analysis that explains how and

when workplace toxicity impacts employee performance over time. Addressing this gap is essential for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of toxicity's influence on performance, considering other related factors.

2.10 Overview of virtual organisation in Nigeria

Virtual organisations have emerged as a transformative trend in Nigeria's evolving business landscape, driven by advancements in technology, globalisation, and shifting work dynamics (Adeyinka, et al., 2025). A virtual organisation is characterised by its reliance on digital communication and remote collaboration, enabling employees, teams, and departments to operate from different geographical locations without the need for a centralised physical office. This structure allows companies to leverage technology to enhance flexibility, reduce costs, and tap into a wider talent pool, which is particularly valuable in a diverse and rapidly developing economy like Nigeria (Omogbe & Azage, 2024).

In Nigeria, virtual organisations have gained prominence across sectors such as finance, technology, education, and consulting. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual work models as businesses sought to maintain continuity amid lockdowns and social-distancing measures (Okpor et al., 2023). Remote working and virtual teams have since become integral to many organisations' operational strategies. For Nigerian businesses, virtual organisations offer the potential to overcome infrastructural challenges, such as unreliable power supply and traffic congestion, which have traditionally hindered productivity and increased operational costs (Odunayo & Fagbemide, 2024).

The rise of internet penetration and mobile technology has been a critical enabler for virtual organisations in Nigeria (Ukpe, 2025). With increasing access to smartphones, broadband, and

cloud computing services, many Nigerian firms and start-ups now operate predominantly online, using digital platforms for communication, project management, and customer engagement (Okonkwo, et al., 2024). This has not only broadened organisations' reach but also encouraged entrepreneurial activities and innovation, especially among young professionals and tech-savvy individuals (Okachi-okere & Maclean, 2023). However, despite its benefits, the virtual organisation model in Nigeria faces several challenges. The digital divide remains a significant barrier, with uneven access to reliable internet services and digital tools, particularly in rural areas (Ukpe, 2025).

This disparity limits the full potential of virtual organisations and poses inclusivity concerns. Additionally, managing virtual teams requires robust leadership skills, effective communication channels, and clear policies to address issues such as employee engagement, performance monitoring, and workplace culture, which can be more complex in a virtual setting (Adeyinka et al., 2025). Despite these challenges, virtual organisations represent a growing and vital segment of Nigeria's economy. Government initiatives aimed at improving digital infrastructure, fostering innovation hubs, and supporting remote-work policies are helping to create a more conducive environment for virtual organisations to thrive (Omoregbe & Azage, 2024). As Nigerian businesses continue to adapt to global trends and local realities, virtual organisations are poised to play a critical role in shaping the future of work, promoting flexibility, inclusivity, and economic growth across the country.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preamble

This chapter presents the appropriate methods for this study to achieve its intended objectives of establishing the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. This chapter provides adequate information on how to carefully select the methods needed for the study, including research design, population, research instrument, sample size and sampling methods, operationalisation of variables, data source, model specification, and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

For this study, a survey was used to collect information about the population of interest. It enhances data collection quality and supports appropriate data analysis to predict certain aspects of the behaviour of interest under investigation. The descriptive research design helps carry out the study on respondents' opinions regarding workplace toxicity and employee performance. The justification for survey research was based on the premise that it provides an opportunity for investigating different units of the population at a specific time. Also, it allows the observation of sampled elements without any single attempt to modify them.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises of all employees in the selected virtual organisation in Lagos State.

Table 3.1: Population of the Study

S/N	Virtual organisation	Number of Employee
1	Andela	1342
2	Crossover	1758
3	Afrilearn (Education, Lagos)	186
4	Flutterwave	466
5	CribMD	376
	Total	4128

Source: Info sites and websites of the virtual organisation as of September 2026

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined based on the above population figure, using the normal approximation with a 5% margin of error and a 95% significance level. In order to achieve this, the formula is given below according to Taro Yamani formula:

$$\frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where, n = sample size; N = Population (4128); e =significance level (0.05%)

$$\frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{4128}{1 + 4128 (0.05^2)} = 364.66 \approx 365$$

Based on the above, the sample size was three hundred and sixty-five (365) as calculated from the formula above. To achieve this, stratified random sampling will be used. The justification was driven by the non-homogeneity of the formula used to determine the sample size and the need for the data to be homogeneous is highly fundamental.

Table 3.2: Sample Size Determination

S/N	Virtual organisation	Sample Size Calculation	No of Questionnaire
1	Andela	1342/4128*365	119
2	Crossover	1758/4128*365	155
3	Afrilearn (Education, Lagos)	186/4128*365	16
4	Flutterwave	466 /4128*365	42
5	CribMD	376/4128*365	33
	Total	4128	365

Source: Researcher Compilation (2026)

3.5 Source of Data

The study used a primary data source through the administration of a structured questionnaire. This was achieved by distributing copies of the questionnaire to employees in the selected virtual organisation in Lagos State to assess their perceptions of workplace toxicity and employee performance. The data obtained from this source will serve as the basis for the proposed analysis, to be presented in the future.

3.6 Model Specification

The model for the study was based on the work of Tsuno, et. al. (2017); Semedo, et. al. (2022); Cortina, et. al. (2001), Serafin, et. al. (2020); Shahwar & Dhar (2024) and Arubayi (2023) to examine the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. This model provides an adequate explanation of variations in dimensions of workplace toxicity- Workplace bullying (WOBUL); Workplace harassment (WORHAS); Toxic leadership (TOLEA) and Cyber incivility (*CYINC*) and its impact on employee performance.

The functional form of the model is expressed as:

$$EP = WORTOX \tag{3.1}$$

Where, $WORTOX = WOBUL, WORHAS, TOLEA, CYINC$

$$EP = f(WORTOX = WOBUL, WORHAS, TOLEA, CYINC) \quad (3.2)$$

This model is further expressed mathematically as:

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WOBUL_i + \beta_2 WORHAS_i + \beta_3 TOLEA_i + \beta_4 CYINC_i + e \quad (3.3)$$

Where:

EP	=	Employee performance
$WOBUL$	=	Workplace bullying
$WORHAS$	=	Workplace harassment
$TOLEA$	=	Toxic leadership
$CYINC$	=	Cyber incivility
e	=	error term
β_0	=	Constant
$\beta_1 \dots \beta_4$	=	Coefficients of the independent variables

3.7 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire containing a list of potential questions to examine the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance. The questionnaire was adapted from the work of Tsuno et al. (2017); Semedo et al. (2022); Cortina et al. (2001); Serafin et al. (2020); and Shahwar & Dhar (2024). The questionnaire was divided into two major parts, starting with a cover letter that provides a preamble for participants on specific information and their level of participation in the study. The first part (Section A) contained related questions that measured demographic information of the employee working in the virtual organisation, while the second part (Section B) covered

questions on workplace toxicity and employee performance using a 5 Likert scale from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’. To facilitate data collection, the questionnaire was administered via both online surveys (specifically Google Forms) and physical distribution to those who were available (See the attached questionnaire in Appendix).

3.8 Validity and reliability of the research instrument

The validity of the research instrument defines the most critical criterion and the degree to which the research instrument measures what is expected and is supposed to measure. In order to achieve this, the questionnaire was subjected to proper evaluation by the supervisor, who is an experienced tutor in the field. The suggestions and comments the supervisor suggested were appropriately incorporated, thus enriching the quality of the instrument for the study. For the reliability, a pilot study in form of pre-test was conducted, sampling 40 questionnaire to participants (who were not members of the sample for this study). The data collected were tested using a construct composite reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for each latent variable: workplace bullying (0.953), workplace harassment (0.978), toxic leadership (0.810), cyber incivility (0.786), and organisational performance (0.973). Based on this, values between 0.70 and 0.80 are considered acceptable, and values less than 0.60 are considered poor.

Table 3.3: Measurement items and Reliability Statistics scores of scales (Pilot test)

Variable	Source of Scale	Item Num	No of Item	Cronbach’s
Workplace bullying	Tsuno, et. al. (2017)	Q7- Q11	5	0.953
Workplace harassment	Semedo, et. al. (2022)	Q12-Q16	5	0.978
Toxic leadership	Cortina, et. al. (2001)	Q17-Q21	5	0.810
Cyber incivility	Shahwar & Dhar (2024)	Q22-Q26	5	0.786
Organisational performance	Arubayi (2023)	Q27-Q31	5	0.973

Source: Researcher’s Compilation (2026)

3.9 Operationalisation of Variable

For the purpose of this study, the operationalization of identified variables was sub-divided based on the relationship between independent and dependent variable. However, the table below presented the operational definition of all the variable identified in this study.

Table 3.4: Operational definition of variable

S/N	Variable	Operational definition	Measurement	Number	A priori
Demographic Information					
1	Gender	Male or Female	Two points categorically scale	Q1	
2	Age Distribution	21-30 Years; 31- 40 Years; 41- 50 Years & 50 Years & above	Four points categorically scale	Q2	
3	Educational Qualification	NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent; HND/B.Sc. or Equivalent Postgraduate level.	Three points categorically scale	Q3	
4	Year of Working Experience	2-5 Years; 6-10 Years 11-15 Years, 16 Years and above.	Four points categorically scale	Q4	
5	Name of your Virtual Organisation	Andela; Crossover Afrilearn (Education, Lagos); Flutterwave; CribMD	Five-point categorical scale	Q6	
6	Workplace Bullying	Bullying is a situational and contextual factor that is not limited only to bosses, as supervisors and managers can also exert it.	Likert-type Five-point scale	Q7- Q11	+
7	Workplace harassment	Workplace harassment refers to unwelcome conduct based on race, gender, religion, national origin, physical or	Likert-type Five-point scale	Q12-Q16	+

		mental disability, age and sexual orientation.			
8	Toxic leadership	Toxic leadership is a critical factor in the perpetuation of workplace bullying.	Likert-type Five-point scale	Q17-Q21	+
9	Cyber incivility	Cyber incivility can include ignoring messages, using an aggressive tone, sending curt emails, publicly criticising others online, or misusing collaborative platforms	Likert-type Five-point scale	Q22-Q26	+
10	Employee performance	Employees' performance was viewed as an index for improvements, rewards, retributions, reviews, and changes in remuneration.	Likert-type Five-point scale	Q27-Q31	+

Source: Researcher Compilation (2026)

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered through questionnaire administration were analysed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics focused on the analysis of respondents' demographic information. Specifically, the descriptive statistics used were frequency counts, means, and standard deviations. The inferential statistics were based on the objectives of the study, using correlation and multiple analysis as the estimation techniques to ascertain the possible relationship between workplace toxicity and organisational performance. As part of the inferential statistics, the study's hypotheses will be tested using the results of the multiple regression model. Finally, all tests of significance will be carried out at the 5% level of significance using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Preamble

The chapter present the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the respondents regarding the relationship between workplace toxicity and how its influences employee's performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. It covers the descriptive analysis and demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as data related to the four specific objectives of the study: workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership and cyber incivility. Additionally, this chapter includes the results of the regression analysis used to examine the hypothesised relationship between the dimension of workplace toxicity and employee performance. The findings are finally presented systematically to provide adequate and clear understanding of how workplace toxicity influence employee performance among virtual workers in Lagos State.

4.2 Retrieval Rate of Questionnaire Distributed

4.2.1 Retrieval Rate

From the survey conducted for the administration of the questionnaire, three hundred and fifty two (352) questionnaires were retrieved out of three hundred and sixty five (365) copies distributed. The retrieval rate is approximately 94% and calculated as follows below:

$$\text{Retrieval rate} = \frac{\text{Total retrieve}}{\text{Total distributed}} \times 100\% = \frac{352}{365} \times 100\% = 96.4\% \approx 96\%$$

4.2.2 Description of Respondents' Socio-Demographics

This section provides a detailed analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The variable examined include gender, age distribution, educational qualification, year of working experience and category of your virtual organisation.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Categories	Frequency	
		No	%
1	Gender		
	Male	214	60.8
	Female	138	39.2
	Total	352	100
2	Age Distribution	No.	%
	21-30 Years	128	36.4
	31- 40 Years	142	40.3
	41- 50 Years	56	15.9
	50 Years and above	26	7.4
	Total	352	100
3	Educational Qualification	No.	%
	NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent	64	18.2
	HND/B.Sc. or Equivalent	196	55.7
	Postgraduate level	92	26.1
	Total	352	100
4	Year of Working Experience	No.	%
	2-5 Years	104	29.5
	6-10 Years	138	39.2
	11-15 Years	72	20.5
	16 Years and above	38	10.8
	Total	352	100
5	Name of your Virtual Organisation	No.	%
	Andela	96	27.3
	Crossover	74	21.0
	Afrilearn (Education, Lagos)	68	19.3
	Flutterwave	66	18.8
	CribMD	48	13.6
	Total	352	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Respondents' Demographics

Gender: From Table 4.1, the analysis shows that 60.8% of the respondents were male while 39.2% were female. This indicates that relatively half of the respondent were female respondents.

Age Distribution: The data reveal that age distribution shows that 21-30 years old were 36.4% and those within 31- 40 Years old were 40.3%. The age distribution within 41- 50 years old were 15.9% and 50 years and above were 7.4%. The largest proportion of the respondent falls within 31- 40 years which reflect predominantly matured workforce in the virtual organisation.

Educational Qualification: The majority of the respondent (55.7%) had obtained HND/B.Sc. or Equivalent degree, while 26.1% held Postgraduate level degree. A smaller proportion (18.2%) possessed NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent qualifications. This indicate that most of the workforce possesses at least first degree or higher qualification.

Year of Working Experience: The analysis indicates that 39.2% of the respondent had 6-10 years of work experience, followed by 29.5% with 2-5 years. Respondents with work experience within 11-15 years constitute 20.5% of the sample while those within 16 years and above were 10.8% which are the least. This analysis shows that most employee are relatively mid-career professionals.

Category of your Virtual Organisation: The majority of the respondent (27.3%) were from Andela, followed by 21% from Crossover, Afrilearn-Education, Lagos (19.3%). Respondent from Flutterwave were 18.8% and those from CribMD were 13.6%. This indicate that most of the workforce are from Andela in Lagos State.

4.3. Descriptive Statistic of Research Variable

The variables were described using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. The independent variable is workplace toxicity while the dependent variable is employee performance.

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistic of workplace toxicity

The analysis of workplace toxicity based on the questionnaire items highlights varying perception among respondents. The responses are summarised in Table 4.2 below and discussed under key component of workplace toxicity: workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership and cyber incivility. The analysis is based on a five-point scale, where a mean score below 3 indicates rejection, and a score above 3 signifies acceptance. Note: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on the table denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, Neutral, agreed and strongly agreed response rate respectively.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistic of Workplace Toxicity

Q/N	Item	Frequency					Total	Mean	SD	Decision Rule: < 3 Reject >3 Accept
		1	2	3	4	5				
Workplace Bullying										
6	I sometimes feel intimidated or humiliated by colleagues at my workplace.	22	40	14	157	119	352	3.9	1.094	Accepted
7	We experience unfair criticism or ridicule from our team members.	63	22	6	208	53	352	3.77	1.095	Accepted
8	I believe my company does enough to prevent workplace bullying.	23	30	0	165	134	352	4.03	1.029	Accepted
9	I feel safe to report bullying incidents in my company without fear of retaliation.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted

10	We support each other in addressing bullying behaviour in our workplace.	10	8	2	250	82	352	4.12	0.945	Accepted
	Average Total							3.936	1.0458	Accepted
	Workplace harassment									
11	I have witnessed or experienced harassment (verbal, physical, or psychological) at work.	15	7	2	196	132	352	3.88	1.064	Accepted
12	We feel respected by one another in my company regardless of gender, age, or background.	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.076	Accepted
13	I believe my company takes reports of harassment seriously.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.036	Accepted
14	I feel confident that harassment complaints are handled fairly in my workplace.	25	10	0	210	107	352	3.91	1.154	Accepted
15	We have clear policies in my company to deal with harassment issues.	10	7	2	232	101	352	4.01	1.033	Accepted
	Average Total							3.95	1.0726	Accepted
	Toxic Leadership									
16	I believe my supervisor/manager listens to employees' concerns.	10	3	1	253	85	352	3.6	1.098	Accepted
17	We are encouraged to speak freely without fear of punishment from our leaders.	15	2	4	178	153	352	3.8	1.001	Accepted
18	I sometimes feel demoralized by the way leadership treats employees.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted
19	I believe toxic leadership affects our teamwork and motivation.	6	8	0	295	43	352	3.76	1.005	Accepted
20	My company promotes leaders who treat employees with fairness and respect.	15	7	2	196	132	352	3.88	1.064	Accepted
	Average Total							3.848	1.0812	Accepted
	Cyber Incivility									
21	I have witnessed rude or disrespectful comments	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.078	Accepted

	being posted online.									
22	People often use a harsher tone online than they would in person.	63	22	6	208	53	352	3.77	1.095	Accepted
23	I feel uncomfortable or stressed when others behave disrespectfully on digital platforms.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted
24	Cyber incivility negatively affects communication in online groups or communities.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted
25	I believe that setting clear online behaviour guidelines can reduce cyber incivility.	10	8	2	250	82	352	4.12	0.945	Accepted
	Average Total							3.94	1.086	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Workplace Bullying

For **Item 6**, “*I sometimes feel intimidated or humiliated by colleagues at my workplace,*” 22 respondents strongly disagreed, 40 disagreed, 14 were neutral, while a majority of 157 agreed and 119 strongly agreed. The mean score of **3.90** with a standard deviation of **1.094** indicates strong agreement, reflecting the significant influence of workplace bullying on employee performance. For **Item 7**, “*We experience unfair criticism or ridicule from our team members,*” 63 respondents strongly disagreed, 22 disagreed, and 6 were neutral, while 208 agreed and 53 strongly agreed. The mean score of **3.77** and standard deviation of **1.095** show general agreement, suggesting that unfair criticism and ridicule are common and may negatively affect employee morale and performance. Regarding **Item 8**, “*I believe my company does enough to prevent workplace bullying,*” 23 respondents strongly disagreed, 30 disagreed, none were neutral, while 165 agreed and 134 strongly agreed. The mean score of **4.03** with a standard deviation of **1.029** reflects strong agreement, indicating that employees generally perceive their organisation as

proactive in preventing workplace bullying. For **Item 9**, “*I feel safe to report bullying incidents in my company without fear of retaliation,*” responses showed that 20 strongly disagreed, 22 disagreed, 12 were neutral, while 197 agreed and 101 strongly agreed. The mean score of **3.86** and standard deviation of **1.066** indicate agreement, suggesting a supportive reporting environment. For **Item 10**, “*We support each other in addressing bullying behaviour in our workplace,*” 10 respondents strongly disagreed, 8 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while 250 agreed and 82 strongly agreed. The mean score of **4.12** and standard deviation of **0.945** indicate strong agreement and response consistency. Overall, the **average mean score of 3.936** and standard deviation of **1.046** demonstrate agreement that workplace bullying affects employee performance, while organisational and peer support mechanisms help mitigate its impact.

Workplace harassment

For Item 11, “I have witnessed or experienced harassment (verbal, physical, or psychological) at work,” 15 respondents strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while a large majority of 196 agreed and 132 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.064 indicates agreement, suggesting that harassment is a notable experience within the workplace and may negatively influence employee well-being and performance. For Item 12, “We feel respected by one another in my company regardless of gender, age, or background,” 8 respondents strongly disagreed, 10 disagreed, 6 were neutral, while 242 agreed and 86 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 1.076 indicate general agreement, reflecting a relatively respectful workplace culture, although some respondents still perceive gaps in mutual respect. Regarding Item 13, “I believe my company takes reports of harassment seriously,” only 2 respondents strongly disagreed 2 while 5 respondents disagreed, while 220 agreed and 122 strongly agreed. The mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 1.036

shows strong agreement, indicating high confidence in management's seriousness in handling harassment reports. For Item 14, "I feel confident that harassment complaints are handled fairly in my workplace," 25 respondents strongly disagreed, 10 disagreed, none were neutral, while 210 agreed and 107 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.91 and standard deviation of 1.154 indicate agreement, suggesting that most employees trust the fairness of complaint-handling processes, though some concerns remain. For Item 15, "We have clear policies in my company to deal with harassment issues," 10 respondents strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while 232 agreed and 101 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.95 with a standard deviation of 1.0726 reflects strong agreement, highlighting the presence of clear organisational policies addressing harassment. Overall, the findings indicate that while harassment is experienced or observed by many employees, strong organisational policies, fair handling procedures, and management commitment play a crucial role in addressing harassment and supporting a safer work environment.

For Item 16, "I believe my supervisor/manager listens to employees' concerns," 1 respondent strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, 1 was neutral, while a majority of 253 agreed and 85 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.60 with a standard deviation of 1.098 indicates agreement, suggesting that most employees feel their concerns are acknowledged by their supervisors. For Item 17, "We are encouraged to speak freely without fear of punishment from our leaders," 15 respondents strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, 4 were neutral, while 178 agreed and 153 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.80 and standard deviation of 1.001 demonstrate agreement, indicating a generally open communication climate within the organisation. For Item 18, "I sometimes feel demoralized by the way leadership treats employees," 2 respondents strongly disagreed, 5 disagreed, 3 were neutral, while a large majority of 220 agreed and 122 strongly

agreed. The mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 1.238 reflects strong agreement, highlighting that leadership behaviour can significantly demoralize employees and affect their performance. For Item 19, “I believe toxic leadership affects our teamwork and motivation,” 6 respondents strongly disagreed, 8 disagreed, none were neutral, while 295 agreed and 43 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.76 and standard deviation of 1.005 indicate agreement, confirming the negative impact of toxic leadership on teamwork and employee motivation. For Item 20, “My company promotes leaders who treat employees with fairness and respect,” 15 respondents strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while 196 agreed and 132 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.064 indicates agreement, suggesting that the organisation generally promotes fair and respectful leadership. Overall, the average mean score of 3.95 with a standard deviation of 1.0812 indicates general agreement that leadership behaviour significantly influences employee morale, teamwork, and motivation, emphasizing the role of leadership practices in shaping workplace performance and culture.

Toxic Leadership

For Item 16, “I believe my supervisor/manager listens to employees’ concerns,” 1 respondent strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, 1 was neutral, while a majority of 253 agreed and 85 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.60 with a standard deviation of 1.098 indicates agreement, suggesting that most employees feel their concerns are acknowledged by their supervisors. For Item 17, “We are encouraged to speak freely without fear of punishment from our leaders,” 15 respondents strongly disagreed, 2 disagreed, 4 were neutral, while 178 agreed and 153 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.80 and standard deviation of 1.001 demonstrate agreement, indicating a generally open communication climate within the organisation. For Item 18, “I sometimes feel demoralized by the way leadership treats employees,” 2 respondents strongly

disagreed, 5 disagreed, 3 were neutral, while a large majority of 220 agreed and 122 strongly agreed. The mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 1.238 reflects strong agreement, highlighting that leadership behaviour can significantly demoralize employees and affect their performance.

For Item 19, “I believe toxic leadership affects our teamwork and motivation,” 6 respondents strongly disagreed, 8 disagreed, none were neutral, while 295 agreed and 43 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.76 and standard deviation of 1.005 indicate agreement, confirming the negative impact of toxic leadership on teamwork and employee motivation. For Item 20, “My company promotes leaders who treat employees with fairness and respect,” 15 respondents strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while 196 agreed and 132 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.064 indicates agreement, suggesting that the organisation generally promotes fair and respectful leadership. Overall, the average mean score of 3.848 with a standard deviation of 1.0812 indicates general agreement that leadership behaviour significantly influences employee morale, teamwork, and motivation, emphasizing the role of leadership practices in shaping workplace performance and culture.

Cyber Incivility

For Item 21, “I have witnessed rude or disrespectful comments being posted online,” 8 respondents strongly disagreed, 10 disagreed, 6 were neutral, while a majority of 242 agreed and 86 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 1.078 indicates agreement, suggesting that rude or disrespectful online behaviour is commonly observed. For Item 22, “People often use a harsher tone online than they would in person,” 63 respondents strongly disagreed, 22 disagreed, and 6 were neutral, while 208 agreed and 53 strongly agreed.

The mean score of 3.77 and standard deviation of 1.095 show general agreement, indicating that online interactions tend to be more aggressive than face-to-face communication. For Item 23, “I feel uncomfortable or stressed when others behave disrespectfully on digital platforms,” 2 respondents strongly disagreed, 5 disagreed, 3 were neutral, while a large majority of 220 agreed and 122 strongly agreed. The mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 1.238 reflects strong agreement, demonstrating that cyber incivility causes emotional discomfort and stress among employees. For Item 24, “Cyber incivility negatively affects communication in online groups or communities,” 20 respondents strongly disagreed, 22 disagreed, 12 were neutral, while 197 agreed and 101 strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.86 with a standard deviation of 1.066 indicates agreement, confirming that cyber incivility undermines effective communication. For Item 25, “I believe that setting clear online behaviour guidelines can reduce cyber incivility,” 10 respondents strongly disagreed, 8 disagreed, 2 were neutral, while 250 agreed and 82 strongly agreed. The mean score of 4.12 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.945 indicate strong agreement and consistency, highlighting the importance of clear guidelines in reducing cyber incivility. Overall, the average mean score of 3.94 with a standard deviation of 1.086 indicates agreement among respondents that cyber incivility is prevalent and negatively affect communication and well-being, and can be mitigated through clear organisational guidelines and policies.

4.3.2 Description of Employee performance

The analysis of employee performance based on the questionnaire items highlights varying perception among respondents. The responses are summarised in Table 4.3 below and discussed under key component of questions on employee performance. The analysis is based on a five–point scale, where a mean score below 3 indicates rejection, and a score above 3 signifies

acceptance. Note: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on the table denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, neutral, agreed and strongly agreed response rate respectively.

Table 4.3: Description of employee performance

Q/N	Item	Frequency					Total	Mean	SD	Decision Rule: < 3 Reject >3 Accept
		1	2	3	4	5				
Employee performance										
26	I believe workplace bullying and harassment negatively affect my company's performance.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted
27	We work together effectively to achieve company goals.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted
28	I feel that toxic leadership reduces employee productivity in my company.	6	8	0	295	43	352	3.76	1.005	Accepted
29	I believe my company's culture supports high performance and innovation.	25	10	0	210	107	352	3.91	1.154	Accepted
30	We perform better as a company when employees feel respected and safe.	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.076	Accepted
Average Total								3.896	1.1078	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results for Items 26 to 30 highlight employees' perceptions of how workplace behaviour, leadership, and organisational culture influence company performance. For Item 26, which examined whether workplace bullying and harassment negatively affect organisational performance, most respondents expressed agreement. Specifically, 197 respondents agreed and 101 strongly agreed, compared to 20 who strongly disagreed, 22 who disagreed, and 12 who were neutral. The mean score of 3.86 and standard deviation of 1.066 indicate a general consensus that bullying and harassment hinder organisational effectiveness and performance. Item 27 assessed teamwork and collaboration in achieving company goals. Responses showed strong agreement, with 220 respondents agreeing and 122 strongly agreeing, while only a small number expressed disagreement or uncertainty. The high mean score of 4.20 and standard

deviation of 1.238 suggest that employees largely perceive effective cooperation and teamwork within the organisation, which supports the achievement of organisational objectives. For Item 28, respondents evaluated the impact of toxic leadership on employee productivity. An overwhelming majority of 295 agreed and 43 respondents strongly agreed that toxic leadership reduces productivity, with very few respondents expressing disagreement and none remaining neutral. The mean score of 3.76 and standard deviation of 1.005 confirm agreement, emphasising the negative role of poor leadership behaviours in shaping employee outcomes. Item 29 explored whether organisational culture supports high performance and innovation. 210 respondents agreed and 107 strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.91 and standard deviation of 1.154. This finding suggests that the organisational environment is generally viewed as conducive to performance and innovation. Finally, Item 30 which examined the relationship between respect, safety, and company performance. 242 respondents agreed while 86 strongly agreed producing a mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 1.076, underscoring the importance of psychological safety and respect in enhancing performance. Overall, the average mean score of 3.896 indicates agreement that employee well-being, leadership quality, and organisational culture significantly influence productivity and overall organisational performance.

4.4 Estimation and interpretation of model/relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State

4.4.1 Correlation Analysis

Bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients were conducted on the data for all the variables in the study. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Correlation Coefficients of Research Variables

		EP	WOBUL	WORHAS	TOLEA	CYINC
EP	Pearson Correlation	1	.487**	.421**	.466**	.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
WOBUL	Pearson Correlation	.487**	1	.343**	.019	.398**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
WORHAS	Pearson Correlation	.421**	.343**	1	.178**	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
TOLEA	Pearson Correlation	.466**	.019	.178**	1	.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
CYINC	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.398**	.427**	.691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	352	352	352	352	352

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2026) (SPSS v 24. See Appendix for detailed results)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson’s correlation coefficients between each pair of variables are shown in Table 4.7. Bryman and Cramer (1997) posit that Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) should not exceed 0.80; otherwise, independent variables with a correlation exceeding 0.80 may be suspected of multicollinearity. Table 4.4 shows that there is no correlation coefficient that is up to 0.80. This shows that serial correlation is not present in the dataset. The results further show that employee performance (EP) is positively and significantly related to workplace bullying [WOBUL] ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.05$), workplace harassment [WORHAS] ($r = 0.4211$, $p < 0.05$), toxic leadership [TOLEA] ($r = 0.466$, $p < 0.05$), and cyber incivility [CYINC] ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.05$).

4.4.2 Results of Regression Analysis

Table 4.5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.765 ^a	0.585	0.581	0.2633067	2.155

a. Predictors: (Constant), *WOBUL*, *WORHAS*, *TOLEA*, *CYINC*

b. Dependent Variable: *EP*

The regression result shows that when the independent variables: workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership and cyber incivility were regressed on employee performance, a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.585 was obtained. Given the value of Adjusted R^2 of 0.581 indicates that the independent variables jointly explain 58.1% of the variation in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.155 reveals the absence of first order serial correlation.

Table 4.6 ANOVA^a results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	38.084	4	9.521	137.329	0.000 ^b
Residual	26.970	389	00.069		
Total	65.054	393			

a. Dependent Variable: *EP*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *WOBUL*, *WORHAS*, *TOLEA*, *CYINC*

The F-statistic of 137.329 is significant at $p < 0.05$. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables as a group. Also, the F-statistic value of 137.329 further indicate the ratio of variance and the significance of the difference between the workplace toxicity and employee performance.

Table 4.7: Coefficients^a

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.7470	0.2140	-	3.4920	0.0010
WOBUL,	0.2300	0.0390	0.2330	5.9720	0.0000
WORHAS	0.0930	0.0370	0.0940	2.5330	0.0000
TOLEA	0.3530	0.0410	0.0640	8.6098	0.0001
CYINC	0.4300	0.0440	0.5520	9.8450	0.0000

Dependent Variable: Employee performance

The results in Table 4.7 reveal that employee performance is positively and significantly related to all the workplace toxicity dimensions at 5% level of significance. The details of the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables are shown as follows: employee performance and workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.2300$; $t = 5.9720$; $p = 0.0000$); employee performance and workplace harassment ($\beta = 0.0930$; $t = 2.5330$; $p = 0.0000$); employee performance and toxic leadership capabilities ($\beta = 0.3530$; $t = 8.6098$; $p = 0.0001$); and employee performance and cyber incivility ($\beta = 0.4300$; $t = 9.8450$; $p = 0.0000$).

4.5 Test of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H0₁: Workplace bullying does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in a virtual organisation in Lagos State.

The results in Table 4.7 indicate a positive and significant relationship between workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.2300$; $t = 5.9720$; $p = 0.0000$) and employees' performance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that workplace bullying has a significant relationship with employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

Hypothesis Two

H0₂: *Workplace harassment does not have significant relationship with employee's performance in virtual organisation in Lagos State.*

From the result in Table 4.7, it shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between workplace harassment ($\beta = 0.0930$; $t = 2.5330$; $p = 0.0000$) and employees' performance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that workplace harassment has a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

Hypothesis Three

H0₃: *Toxic leadership does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.*

The results in Table 4.7 indicate a positive and significant relationship between Toxic leadership ($\beta = 0.3530$; $t = 8.6098$; $p = 0.0001$) and employee performance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that Toxic leadership has a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.

Hypothesis Four

H0₄: *Cyber incivility does not have a significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.*

From the result in Table 4.7, it shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between cyber incivility ($\beta = 0.4300$; $t = 9.8450$; $p = 0.0000$) and employee's performance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that cyber incivility has a significant relationship with employee's performance in virtual organisation in Lagos State.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

Workplace bullying and employees' performance

Based on the outcome of the first hypothesis shown above, the first null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that workplace bullying has a positive and significant relationship with employee performance in a virtual organisation in Lagos State. The finding indicates that exposure to bullying behaviours coincides with variations in performance outcomes. This finding aligns with studies in Nigeria that show high prevalence of workplace bullying and its impact on the performance of the workforce. For example, Okikiola and Ruth (2022) found that while bullying behaviours were prevalent among healthcare workers in Lagos, employees often compensated by focusing on task completion and output to maintain performance ratings, even when their well-being was compromised. Similarly, Patrick et al. (2022) observed that in highly competitive sectors, employees may respond to adverse behaviours by increasing effort to protect their job security and reputation.

Also, the study by Adewumi and Danesi (2020) shows that workplace bullying has a significant impact on critical factors, such as reduced cooperation, increased absenteeism, and psychological distress, which may determine employee performance. These studies suggest that while performance outcomes might remain intact in the short term, bullying often erodes teamwork and long-term productivity. The positive association in your study may therefore reflect contextual dynamics in virtual work, where output-based evaluation and remote supervision blur the interpersonal consequences of bullying. Overall, while your findings reveal a significant association, it is crucial to consider that performance gains may mask underlying emotional costs, as suggested by Nigerian researchers who highlight the latent stress impacts of bullying on employee morale and health.

Workplace harassment and employee's performance

Based on the outcome of the second hypothesis shown above, the second null hypothesis was rejected. This implies workplace harassment have positive and significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. This finding resonates with recent Nigerian research that reveals persistent harassment in organisational settings and its impact on employees' performance. For instance, Arubayi & Eruvbedede (2022) reported that harassment, ranging from verbal aggression to exclusionary practices, has a significant relationship with employees' job performance. Similarly, Ngwane (2018) found that workplace harassment undermines the nature of work employees face in organisations, and as such, they are seriously affected by its implications and how it influences employee performance. In support of this, much of the existing literature emphasises the detrimental effects of harassment on performance, citing reduced job satisfaction, heightened stress, and poor organisational outcomes (Nkporbu, Harcourt & Harcourt, 2016). These studies argue that harassment undermines work efficiency and subsequently diminishes productivity. The positive relationship in this current study reflects unique features of virtual work, where employees focus on output quality and deadlines rather than interpersonal experiences.

Toxic leadership and employee's performance

Going by the outcome of the third hypothesis as shown above, the third null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that toxic leadership has a positive and significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. The significant positive relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State highlights that leadership behaviours perceived as harsh or coercive still align with employee performance. This result corresponds with findings from Wolor et al. (2022), who

reported that in several Lagos-based service organisations, directive and high-pressure leadership styles correlated with elevated performance outcomes in the short term, particularly in remote operational settings. Likewise, Akinyele and Chen (2024) noted that employees under strict leadership often prioritise work deliverables to comply with managerial expectations, and this has the potential to influence their performance.

However, many Nigerian studies characterise toxic leadership as harmful to employee performance. For example, Ojeleye and Ojeleye (2024), found that toxic leadership behaviours were associated with reduced organisational commitment, increased conflict, and lower overall performance. These outcomes affect the employee's commitment to the organisation's needs, and this, in turn, affects their performance in the workplace. The positive relationship in this study reflects the performance-oriented evaluation systems common in virtual organisations, where outcomes are prioritised. Employees may maintain or increase productivity under toxic leadership due to fear of job loss or cultural emphasis on resilience. Nonetheless, Nigerian researchers broadly agree that while performance might appear resilient initially, toxic leadership undermines employee performance by eroding trust and psychological safety.

Cyber incivility and employees' performance

Based on the fourth hypothesis's outcome shown above, the fourth null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that cyber incivility has a positive and significant relationship with employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. The significant positive relationship between cyber incivility and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State aligns with much of the literature. It aligns with emerging digital workplace studies in the Nigerian context. For instance, Ju and Pak (2025) found that although cyber incivility, such as curt messages and unprofessional online conduct, was prevalent in organisational communication channels, most

employees engage in free, unconformable online behaviour in their jobs, which influences their performance, especially in output-driven remote roles.

Similarly, Aljawarneh et al., (2022) observed that some workers treated digital incivility as a normative aspect of virtual work and focused on deliverables to maintain productivity measures. Nevertheless, broader Nigerian and international research generally indicates that cyber incivility negatively affects employees' performance (Alola, 2018). These studies argue that uncivil digital interactions contribute to stress and emotional exhaustion, which, over time, can degrade employee performance. The positive relationship in this study, therefore, reflects the early or short-term adaptation strategies of employees within virtual environments.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDING, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Preamble

This chapter presents a summary of findings based on the data analyses presented, key contributions to knowledge, recommendations, suggestions for future studies, and a conclusion based on the discussion of findings.

5.2 Summary of finding

The findings of this study are presented as follows:

- The study found out that there is a positive and significant relationship between workplace bullying and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. This finding presents evidence on the prevalence of different kinds of workplace bullying, which influence the performance of employees in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- The study found out that there is a positive and significant relationship between **workplace harassment and employee performance** in virtual organisations in Lagos State. This finding provides evidence on the prevalence of different types of workplace harassment, which influence employees' performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State.
- The data analysed indicate a significant, positive relationship between **toxic** leadership and employee performance. This finding provides evidence that strict, coercive, or high-pressure leadership styles may drive short-term performance in virtual organisations through fear of sanctions or cultural expectations of resilience.
- The study found out that there is a positive and significant relationship between cyber incivility and employee performance. This finding suggests that employees in virtual

settings may normalise uncivil digital interactions, leading to stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced performance over time.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in several key areas on the relationship between workplace toxicity and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. The following are the noticeable contributions of this current study:

- This study extends knowledge of workplace mistreatment by demonstrating that bullying can have a positive and significant relationship with employee performance in virtual organisations, particularly in the Lagos State context.
- This study provides empirical evidence that workplace harassment can coexist with maintained or improved performance in the short term, suggesting that employees may suppress the negative effects of harassment to meet performance expectations in competitive virtual environments.
- By establishing a positive relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance, the study adds a contextual perspective to leadership studies in Nigeria, showing that directive and coercive leadership styles may enhance performance in performance-driven virtual settings.
- The study advances emerging knowledge on cyber incivility by revealing that employees in virtual organisations may normalise uncivil digital interactions and prioritise task completion, thereby sustaining performance, while concealing emotional strain that may negatively affect long-term productivity and health.

5.4 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between workplace bullying, workplace harassment, toxic leadership, cyber incivility, and employee performance in virtual organisations in Lagos State. The findings revealed that all the dimensions of workplace toxicity have a positive and significant relationship with employee performance. These results suggest that, within virtual organisational settings, employees may sustain, or even increase, performance levels despite exposure to adverse work conditions. The positive relationship observed can be attributed to the unique dynamics of virtual work, in which performance is often assessed by outputs, deadlines, and measurable deliverables rather than interpersonal relationships. Employees in such environments may respond to bullying, harassment, toxic leadership, and cyber incivility by increasing effort, focusing on task completion, and prioritising job security and reputation. This adaptive response, however, appears to be largely short-term and may conceal deeper psychological and emotional costs. Although performance outcomes remain stable or improve, existing literature and supporting evidence indicate that prolonged exposure to these negative behaviours leads to stress, emotional exhaustion, reduced collaboration, absenteeism, and weakened organisational commitment. Over time, these factors may undermine employee wellbeing and threaten sustainable performance. Therefore, the positive performance relationship identified in this study should not be interpreted as evidence that negative workplace behaviours are beneficial. In conclusion, while virtual organisations in Lagos State may maintain productivity despite workplace bullying. Organisational leaders and policymakers must recognise the hidden costs of toxic work environments and implement strategies that promote respectful communication, supportive leadership, and employee wellbeing to ensure long-term organisational effectiveness.

5.5 Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following are the recommendations:

- **Virtual organisations should develop and enforce anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies** that explicitly cover remote and digital work environments. These policies should define unacceptable behaviours, outline key reporting procedures, and ensure confidentiality to encourage employees to speak up without fear of retaliation.
- **Management should prioritise employee wellbeing alongside performance outcomes**, recognising that sustained productivity under bullying, harassment, toxic leadership, or cyber incivility may conceal psychological distress. Also, regular wellbeing assessments, mental health support programmes, and access to counselling services should be integrated into organisational practices.
- **Organisations should establish respectful digital communication guidelines** to reduce cyber incivility in virtual workspaces. There is a need for clear expectations regarding tone, response time, and professional conduct in emails, chats, and virtual meetings to foster a more civil and inclusive online work culture.
- **Virtual organisations should develop a structure for effective performance evaluation systems that can balance output with behavioural and teamwork indicators.** This implies incorporating measures such as collaboration, communication quality, and adherence to organisational values, and, with this, organisations can discourage harmful behaviours that can reduce performance.
- **Human resource departments should introduce regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms**, such as anonymous surveys and virtual check-ins, to identify early signs of

workplace mistreatment and address them before they escalate into long-term performance and health issues.

5.6 Suggestion for further studies

Based on the above findings of this current study, the following are the suggestions for future studies:

- Future studies should adopt a longitudinal research design to examine whether the positive relationship observed between workplace bullying, harassment, toxic leadership, cyber incivility and employee performance can be sustained over time. This would help to determine how short-term performance gains eventually decline due to accumulated psychological stress, burnout, or reduced organisational commitment.
- Further studies should extend beyond virtual organisations in Lagos State to include other sectors and states across Nigeria. This would enhance the generalisability of the findings and allow researchers to examine how regional, cultural, or sectoral differences influence the relationship between toxic workplace behaviours and employee performance.
- Future studies could compare virtual organisations with traditional face-to-face workplaces in Lagos State or other regions of Nigeria. Such a comparative analysis would help determine whether the positive associations found are unique to virtual work settings or are consistent across different organisational structures.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY

Dear Respondent,

I humbly request your assistance in the completion of my questionnaire on my proposed research topic titled: **‘Workplace toxicity and employee performance among Virtual Firms in Lagos State’**. I am a postgraduate student undergoing programme in (*M.Sc in Human Resources Management*) in the above department. It is important to note that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to opt out of the study at any time prior to data collection. I guarantee your anonymity and confidentiality of your responses which will strictly be used for the purpose of the study. Your responses as a participant in this study will be analyzed collectively not individually. The findings from this study may be published in reputable journals to advance knowledge in the area under consideration.

Yours Faithfully,

Osifo Blessing

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please tick () and fill in the necessary information as may be appropriate

1. **Gender:** Male () Female ()
2. **Age Distribution:** 21-30 Years [] 31- 40 Years [] 41- 50 Years [] 50 Years and above []
3. **Educational Qualification:** NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent [] HND/B.Sc. or Equivalent [] Postgraduate level []

4. **Year of Working Experience:** [] 2-5 Years [] 6-10 Years [] 11-15 Years [] 16 Years and above []
5. Category of your Virtual Organisation: Andela () Crossover () Afrilearn (Education, Lagos) () Flutterwave () CribMD ()

SECTION B: Questions on Workplace toxicity and employee performance

Instruction: Evaluate each statement against a scale of one (1) Strongly Agree to one (5) strongly disagree to show the extent to which you agree with the statement. If you think are indifferent, please choose three (3).

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	SD	D
Independent Variable (Workplace Toxicity)						
Workplace Bullying						
6	I sometimes feel intimidated or humiliated by colleagues at my workplace.					
7	We experience unfair criticism or ridicule from our team members.					
8	I believe my company does enough to prevent workplace bullying.					
9	I feel safe to report bullying incidents in my company without fear of retaliation.					
10	We support each other in addressing bullying behaviour in our workplace					
Workplace harassment						
11	I have witnessed or experienced harassment (verbal, physical, or psychological) at work.					
12	We feel respected by one another in my company regardless of gender, age, or background.					
13	I believe my company takes reports of harassment seriously.					
14	I feel confident that harassment complaints are handled fairly in my workplace.					
15	We have clear policies in my company to deal with harassment issues.					
Toxic Leadership						
16	I believe my supervisor/manager listens to					

	employees' concerns.					
17	We are encouraged to speak freely without fear of punishment from our leaders.					
18	I sometimes feel demoralized by the way leadership treats employees.					
19	I believe toxic leadership affects our teamwork and motivation.					
20	My company promotes leaders who treat employees with fairness and respect.					
Cyber Incivility						
21	I have witnessed rude or disrespectful comments being posted online.					
22	People often use a harsher tone online than they would in person.					
23	I feel uncomfortable or stressed when others behave disrespectfully on digital platforms.					
24	Cyber incivility negatively affects communication in online groups or communities.					
25	I believe that setting clear online behaviour guidelines can reduce cyber incivility.					
Dependent Variable (Organisational Performance)						
26	I believe workplace bullying and harassment negatively affect my company's performance.					
27	We work together effectively to achieve company goals.					
28	I feel that toxic leadership reduces employee productivity in my company.					
29	I believe my company's culture supports high performance and innovation.					
30	We perform better as a company when employees feel respected and safe.					

APPENDIX II

Reliability TEST

Notes

Output Created		08- Sept-2025 17:36:13
Comments		
Input	Data	G:\Osifo 2025\Blessing\Reliability
	Active Dataset	Data.sav
	Filter	DataSet0
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	20
Missing Value Handling	Matrix Input	
	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.
Syntax	RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Q7 Q8 Q9 Q10 Q11 /SCALE(workplace bullying) ALL /MODEL=ALPHA /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.03

Scale: Workplace Bullying

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.953	5

Reliability

Notes

Output Created		08- Sept-2025 17:37:07
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	Matrix Input	
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Q12 Q13 Q14 Q15 Q16 /SCALE(' Workplace harassment ') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

Scale: Workplaceharassment

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha ^a	N of Items
.978	5

Reliability

Notes

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	N of Rows in Working Data File	20
	Matrix Input	
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Q17 Q18 Q19 Q20 Q21 /SCALE('Toxic leadership') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

Scale: ToxicLeadership

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.752	5

Reliability

Notes

Output Created		08- Sept-2025 17:39:30
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	Split File	<none>
Missing Value Handling	N of Rows in Working Data File	20
	Matrix Input	
	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
Syntax	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.
		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Q22 Q23 Q24 Q25 Q26 /SCALE(' Cyber incivility') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

Scale: Cyberincivility

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.786	5

Reliability

Notes

Output Created		07-NOV-2022 18:05:43
Comments		
Input	Data Active Dataset Filter Weight Split File N of Rows in Working Data File Matrix Input	G:\Osifo 2022\Blessing\Reliability Data.sav DataSet0 <none> <none> <none> 20
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing Cases Used	User-defined missing values are treated as missing. Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure. RELIABILITY /VARIABLES= Q27 Q28 Q29 Q30 Q31 /SCALE('Organisational Performance')
Syntax		ALL /MODEL=ALPHA /STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.
Resources	Processor Time Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00 00:00:00.00

Scale: Organisational Performance

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.973	5

**APPENDIX III
SPSS OUTPUT**

Measurement items and Reliability Statistics scores of scales (Pilot test)

Variable	Source of Scale	Item Num	No of Item	Cronbach's
Workplace bullying	Tsuno, et. al. (2017)	Q7- Q11	5	0.953
Workplace harassment	Semedo, et. al. (2022)	Q12-Q16	5	0.978
Toxic leadership	Cortina, et. al. (2001)	Q17-Q21	5	0.810
Cyber incivility	Shahwar & Dhar (2024)	Q22-Q26	5	0.786
Organisational performance	Arubayi (2023)	Q27-Q31	5	0.973

Source: Researcher's Compilation (2026)

Socio-Demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Categories	Frequency	
		No	%
1	Gender		
	Male	214	60.8
	Female	138	39.2
	Total	352	100
2	Age Distribution	No.	%
	21-30 Years	128	36.4
	31- 40 Years	142	40.3
	41- 50 Years	56	15.9
	50 Years and above	26	7.4
	Total	352	100
3	Educational Qualification	No.	%
	NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent	64	18.2
	HND/B.Sc. or Equivalent	196	55.7
	Postgraduate level	92	26.1
	Total	352	100
4	Year of Working Experience	No.	%
	2-5 Years	104	29.5
	6-10 Years	138	39.2
	11-15 Years	72	20.5
	16 Years and above	38	10.8
	Total	352	100
5	Name of your Virtual Organisation	No.	%
	Andela	96	27.3
	Crossover	74	21.0
	Afrilearn (Education, Lagos)	68	19.3
	Flutterwave	66	18.8
	CribMD	48	13.6
	Total	352	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2026*

Description of Workplace Toxicity

Q/N	Item	Frequency					Total	Mean	SD	Decision Rule: 3 Reject 3 Accept
		1	2	3	4	5				
	Workplace Bullying									
6	I sometimes feel intimidated or humiliated by colleagues at my workplace.	22	40	14	157	119	352	3.9	1.094	Accepted
7	We experience unfair criticism or ridicule from our team members.	63	22	6	208	53	352	3.77	1.095	Accepted
8	I believe my company does enough to prevent workplace bullying.	23	30	0	165	134	352	4.03	1.029	Accepted
9	I feel safe to report bullying incidents in my company without fear of retaliation.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted
10	We support each other in addressing bullying behaviour in our workplace.	10	8	2	250	82	352	4.12	0.945	Accepted
	Average Total							3.936	1.0458	Accepted
	Workplace harassment									
11	I have witnessed or experienced harassment (verbal, physical, or psychological) at work.	15	7	2	196	132	352	3.88	1.064	Accepted
12	We feel respected by one another in my company regardless of gender, age, or background.	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.076	Accepted
13	I believe my company takes reports of harassment seriously.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.036	Accepted
14	I feel confident that harassment complaints are handled fairly in my workplace.	25	10	0	210	107	352	3.91	1.154	Accepted
15	We have clear policies in my company to deal with harassment issues.	10	7	2	232	101	352	4.01	1.033	Accepted
	Average Total							3.95	1.0726	Accepted

Toxic Leadership											
16	I believe my supervisor/manager listens to employees' concerns.	1	2	1	253	85	342	3.6	1.098	Accepted	
17	We are encouraged to speak freely without fear of punishment from our leaders.	15	2	4	178	153	352	3.8	1.001	Accepted	
18	I sometimes feel demoralized by the way leadership treats employees.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted	
19	I believe toxic leadership affects our teamwork and motivation.	6	8	0	295	43	352	3.76	1.005	Accepted	
20	My company promotes leaders who treat employees with fairness and respect.	15	7	2	196	132	352	3.88	1.064	Accepted	
Average Total									3.848	1.0812	Accepted
Cyber Incivility											
21	I have witnessed rude or disrespectful comments being posted online.	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.078	Accepted	
22	People often use a harsher tone online than they would in person.	63	22	6	208	53	352	3.77	1.095	Accepted	
23	I feel uncomfortable or stressed when others behave disrespectfully on digital platforms.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted	
24	Cyber incivility negatively affects communication in online groups or communities.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted	
25	I believe that setting clear online behaviour guidelines can reduce cyber incivility.	10	8	2	250	82	352	4.12	0.945	Accepted	
Average Total									3.94	1.086	Accepted

Source: *Field Survey, 2026*

Description of Employee performance

Q/N	Item	Frequency					Total	Mean	SD	Decision Rule: 3 Reject 3 Accept
		1	2	3	4	5				
	Employee performance									
26	I believe workplace bullying and harassment negatively affect my company's performance.	20	22	12	197	101	352	3.86	1.066	Accepted
27	We work together effectively to achieve company goals.	2	5	3	220	122	352	4.2	1.238	Accepted
28	I feel that toxic leadership reduces employee productivity in my company.	6	8	0	295	43	352	3.76	1.005	Accepted
29	I believe my company's culture supports high performance and innovation.	25	10	0	210	107	352	3.91	1.154	Accepted
30	We perform better as a company when employees feel respected and safe.	8	10	6	242	86	352	3.75	1.076	Accepted
	Average Total							3.896	1.1078	Accepted

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4: Correlation Coefficients of Research Variables

		EP	WOBUL	WORHAS	TOLEA	CYINC
EP	Pearson Correlation	1	.487**	.421**	.466**	.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
WOBUL	Pearson Correlation	.487**	1	.343**	.019	.398**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
WORHAS	Pearson Correlation	.421**	.343**	1	.178**	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
TOLEA	Pearson Correlation	.466**	.019	.178**	1	.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352
CYINC	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.398**	.427**	.691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	352	352	352	352	352

Results of Regression Analysis

Table 4.5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.765 ^a	0.585	0.581	0.2633067	2.155

a. Predictors: (Constant), *WOBUL*, *WORHAS*, *TOLEA*, *CYINC*

b. Dependent Variable: *EP*

Table 4.6 ANOVA^a results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	38.084	4	9.521	137.329	0.000 ^b
Residual	26.970	389	00.069		
Total	65.054	393			

a. Dependent Variable: *EP*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *WOBUL*, *WORHAS*, *TOLEA*, *CYINC*

Table 4.7: Coefficients^a

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.7470	0.2140	-	3.4920	0.0010
<i>WOBUL</i> ,	0.2300	0.0390	0.2330	5.9720	0.0000
<i>WORHAS</i>	0.0930	0.0370	0.0940	2.5330	0.0000
<i>TOLEA</i>	0.3530	0.0410	0.0640	8.6098	0.0001
<i>CYINC</i>	0.4300	0.0440	0.5520	9.8450	0.0000

Dependent Variable: Employee performance