

## PERCEIVED COMPETENCE, DISCRIMINATION AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AMONG UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES: A MEDIATING STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The study considered the mediating effect of perceived competence in the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behavior among university employees in Southwestern Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from university employees in four purposively selected Universities ( $n = 384$ , Females = 45.7%). Their age ranged from 21 to 63 years (median age = 48 years,  $SD = 9.36$ ). Data collected using three standardized psychological scales were analysed using Pearson moment correlation and Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis. Results showed that there was a significant inverse relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour ( $r(382) = -.57, p < 0.05$ ), and that perceived competence mediated the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance among the respondents ( $\beta = -.54; t = -.12.74; p < .01$ ). The study concluded that workplace discrimination has significant negative relationship with workplace deviant behaviour and perceived competence mediated the relationship between workplace discrimination and work place deviant behaviour. Based on these findings, the study recommended that university managements should engage the services of professional organizational/industrial psychologists in developing psychological test aimed at improving competence among university staff which invariably will reduce work deviant behaviour.

**Keywords:** Perceived Competence, Workplace Deviant Behaviour, Workplace Discrimination

### INTRODUCTION

Employees' behaviour and attitudes towards work are essential for any organization to achieve its mission and objectives. Employers of labour must recognise that not all employees embrace good behaviour. Some may consciously or unconsciously exhibit unethical and unruly behaviour in the course of work. These unethical behaviour or unruly behaviour has the capacity of bringing the organisation to a state of disrepute. These kinds of unacceptable behaviour are regarded as workplace deviant behaviour in the literature (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). One of the pioneer scholars in the study of workplace deviant behaviour, Robinson and Bennett (1995) define work place deviant behaviour as a situation whereby an individual or group of individuals violates an organization's customs, policies or internal regulations, which invariably jeopardize the well-being of the organization or its citizens. Klotz and Buckley (2013) define deviant behaviour as unproductive activities which are capable of damaging organisational goals and harmful to the organisation through directly affecting its functioning or property, or by bringing pain to an employee in such a way that is capable of reducing their effectiveness. Omar (2011) in his own word describes workplace deviance as a deliberate or intentional desire which causes harm to an organisation.

Deviant behaviour often comes in two forms namely interpersonal and organizational. Interpersonal include deviant directed to colleagues, co-workers and subordinate at the place of work. This deviant act ranges from verbal abuse, physical assault as well as gossiping. On the other hand organisational include deviant acts directed to the organization. This act may include but not limited to sabotage, tardiness, withholding of effort to lying, theft, absenteeism and tardiness. This behaviour can occur simultaneously, singly, or even sequentially and it is capable of having great consequences on both the organisation as well as its members (Fagbohungebe Akinbode, & Ayodeji 2012). Workplace deviant behaviour has continued to be a serious issue globally and in Nigeria inclusive. About 45% of the U.S. retailers' inventory shortage was attributed to employee theft in 2010 (Hollinger & Adams, 2010). It was also reported that in the year 2015,

about 35% of adult Americans experienced workplace bullying (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2015).

In Nigeria, the menace of workplace deviance has also gained considerable attention from all concerned stakeholders especially in recent times. In particular, issues of cases involving cybercrime (Chinedu, 2012) financial misconduct (Azu, 2012) and poor attitude to work (Obinna, 2011) have been reported in the newspapers and in local and national electronic media. There is also a continuous wide spread news that the menace of deviant behaviour in the university has attained a worrisome stage as a result of various kinds of deviant acts or behaviour being perpetrated by university employees (Kalejaiye & Adeyemi 2013; Uwannah, 2015). This behaviour includes tardiness, theft, absenteeism, fraudulent act, aggression, verbal abuse, vandalism, spreading rumours, aggression, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment. Other forms of deviant behaviours perpetuated by university employees across Nigeria as reported by Igbe (2017) include extortion of money, irregularity in conducting examination for students, abuse of office, distortion of staff records and students' grades for financial gain, gross insubordination or disregard for constituted authority, employment racketeering, misappropriation of university funds, admission fraud and impersonation. Furthermore, Houreld (2012) reported that in the Nigerian educational setting, for many years, the rate of absenteeism and sexual harassment has been very rampant. This can be seen from a recent case of sexual harassment reported by a Nigeria newspaper known as the punch newspaper between a professor and a master student, in one of the public university in Nigeria (The Guardian, 2018). This represents a typical case of a deviant behaviour occurring in a university system. If the current level of work deviance in the university system should continue unabated, this can have a negative implication on the growth and standard of the university system in Nigeria which ordinarily demands high ethical behaviour among its employees. Most of this deviant behaviour exhibited by staff in the Nigerian universities is most likely triggered by some factors that still have not been given adequate attention in the literature. Hence, the study investigated the role of workplace discrimination on workplace deviant behaviour.

Research has established that workplace discrimination has a great tendency to demotivate employees and make them engage in unethical behaviour at work (DiMaria 2011; Zhao, Peng & Sheard 2013; Yang & Treadway, 2016). Workplace discrimination refers to anything that makes an employee feel less appreciated or treated differently based on certain features and characteristics which do not reflect on their job performance. Riesch and Kleiner (2005) define workplace discrimination as giving special treatment or favour to an individual or a group of people over others. It is often characterized by unfairness and being biased while making a decision or treating people based on certain demographic features. In the literature, there are basically two kinds of discrimination which an organisation can be sued for. These are disparate treatment and disparate impact. Disparate treatment is a situation where an employee is discriminated because the employer of labour does not like his/her age, gender, religion and ethnicity while the disparate impact is a situation where the policies and regulations of the organisation are discriminatory (Kapur & Kleiner, 2000). For instance, employees are given jobs on the basis of requirement of certain demographic characteristics such as weight, height and age group.

In the university setting, a cursory observation by the researcher showed that non-academic staffs often perceived that academic staff often discriminate against them, either on the ground of having higher educational qualification or having better relevance in the university system. Also, sometimes junior academic staff often perceives senior lecturers or professors as being discriminating against them on the ground of having more educational exposure, relevance and some other socio demographic grounds. These are often some forms of discrimination in the university system which can also trigger deviant behaviour among university employees. Many past studies such as DiMaria (2011); Zhao, Peng and Sheard (2013) have indicated that unfair

treatment especially from the employee's perspective has a tendency to make an employee engage in deviant behaviours (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). When employees perceive discrimination in the workplace i.e discriminatory promotion exercises, being sectional and bias in reprimanding erring staff, this events could trigger negative emotions such as frustration, anger, unhappiness and sadness, resentment. Consequently, this could make employees engage in workplace deviant behaviour such as absenteeism, verbal abuse, gossiping, theft, and tardiness in an attempt to retaliate the organization or its members. All these negative behaviour can have a detrimental effect on the organization's productivity as well as employee productivity.

Despite a critical literature search, it is evidenced in the literature that there is relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour, little is still known about the mechanism by which workplace discrimination exert influence on workplace deviant behaviour especially among university employees, This, therefore, motivated the researchers to enrich the understanding of the relationship between workplace discrimination on workplace deviant behaviour by introducing perceived competence as a mediating variable in this present study. Balogun, Ojedokun and Tijani (2012) define competence as a person's ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through bringing together the use of his or her cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of problem-solving. In other words, perceived sense of competence can refer to when an individual personally believes that he/she has capacity, skill, strength or ability to do something correctly, efficiently or adequately. This differs greatly from one person to another. Some individuals believe in themselves as being competent in a wide variety of activities or tasks, while others do not believe in themselves as being competent.

In the workplace, sense of competence may serve an instrumental function in determining how an employee solves issues as well as interacts with other people in the working environment. Employees who perceive themselves as not being competent in the organisation might not have the capacity to cope with the challenges associated with being discriminated against in the workplace. The inability to cope with these situations might result in an employee engaging in different deviance acts (Rychen & Salganik, 2013). Hence, perceived competence can have a causal role in explaining deviant behaviour even in the face of being discriminated at work. It is from this foregoing that this present study seeks to address the limitations of the extant literature and contribute to knowledge by first, investigating the role of workplace discrimination on workplace deviant behaviour and secondly, examine the mediating effect of perceived competence in the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance behaviour especially among less explored sample such as university employees and in a developing country such as Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Workplace Discrimination and Workplace Deviant Behaviour*

In a study done by Uwanah (2015), the researcher examined the impact of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on workplace deviant behaviour among university employees in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used to select a total of 600 participants using the proportionate stratified sampling technique. Four standardized psychological instruments were used for data collection. The hypotheses generated for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance using both multiple regression analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings of the study showed that absenteeism, favoritism and tardiness jointly contributed to employees' deviant behaviour among the sampled respondents. It was further found in this study that favoritism was found to be the most potent predictor of employees' workplace deviant behaviour. In a study done by Yang and Treadway (2016), they found that workplace ostracism has positive relationship with deviant behaviours among 234 manufacturing employees. In same vein, Mazni and Roziah (2015) examined the impact of organizational-related

factors (perceived organizational support, organizational justice, organizational discrimination, and trust) on interpersonal and organizational deviance. This study employed cross-sectional survey involving a sample of 220 support staff. The findings revealed that perceived organizational support and organizational ethical climate influences interpersonal deviance whereby organizational justice and perceived organizational discrimination influence organizational deviance among the sampled respondents.

Onuoha and Ezeribe (2011) examined job discrimination and job deviance among workers in a manufacturing organisation. The descriptive research design was adopted in this study while 506 participants were chosen via a stratified sampling technique from selected manufacturing organisation in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result revealed that there was significant positive relationship between job discrimination and job deviance among the selected respondents. Zhao, Peng and Sheard (2013) in their study found that there is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs).

In another study carried out by Pelin and Funda (2013) the influence of organisational climate and work discrimination on counterproductive behaviour among 204 employees were investigated. The study finding revealed that there was a significant negative relationship between dimensions of organisational climate such as reward, warmth, support/commitment, organisational structure and organisational standards with counterproductive behaviour. The result of the finding also showed that there was also a positive relationship between organisational climate and work discrimination on counterproductive behaviour. The result further revealed that organisational climate and work discrimination jointly predict counterproductive behaviour. From the reviewed literature, no study till date has investigated workplace deviance as an outcome variable in relation to workplace discrimination using data from university employees especially in developing country such as Nigeria, where workplace deviance is known to be on a high prevalence (Fagbohunge, Akinbode, & Ayodeji, 2012; Olabimtan & Alausa, 2014).

### *Hypotheses*

1. There will be significant positive relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour among university employees.
2. Perceived competence will significantly mediate the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour among university employees.

## **METHODS**

### *Research Design*

This research work adopted correlational research design. The independent variable is workplace discrimination while the dependent variable is workplace deviant behaviour. The mediating variable in this study is perceived competence.

### *Population and Sampling procedure*

The population of this study consist of employees (comprising academic, and non-academic staff) working in Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Ibadan, Lead City University and Oduduwa University. The rationale for selecting the above universities as sample in this study is because these universities have a large number of employees compares to other universities which give a fair representation of the population of both public and private universities in Southwestern part of Nigeria. The sample size for the study was determine using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size formula, a representative sample of 384 was obtained from the population of 9,597 from the four universities. A proportionate convenient sampling technique was used to select 169

from university of Ibadan, 132 from Obafemi Awolowo University, 49 respondents from Lead City University and 34 respondents from Oduduwa University.

### *Participants*

The study participants consisted of three hundred and eighty-four. They comprised males 229 (59.6%) and females 155 (40.4%) with a median age of 48 years and standard deviation of 9.36. The spread of respondents in terms of religious affiliation depicted that majority 234 (60.9%) were Christians, 149 (33.9%) were Muslims, while 1 (.3%) was a traditional worshipper. The analysis in terms of respondents educational level revealed that 19 (4.9%) have completed only primary/secondary education; 37 (9.6%) claimed they were NCE/OND holders, 123 (32.0%) reported that they were B.Sc/HND holders, 59 (15.4%) reported that were M.Sc holders, while 146 (38.0%) respondents claimed qualification at PhD level. The spread of respondents in terms of marital status showed that 33 (8.6%) were single, majority 279 (72.7%) were married, 45 (11.7%) were widowed while only 27 (7.0%) were separated. Staff category revealed that 165 (43.0%) were non-teaching staff while majority 219 (57.0%) were non-teaching staff. Furthermore, the distribution of respondents by university category showed that majority of the respondents 251 (65.4%) were from public universities while 133 (34.6%) respondents were from private universities. Finally, the distribution of respondents by length of service showed that 219 (57.0%) have used 1-10years in service, majority 230 (59.9%) of respondents have used 11-20years, while 37 (9.6%) have used 1-5 years working experience.

### *Instruments*

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, comprising two standardized scales and section 'A' was self-designed.

#### *Section A: Personal Information Data*

This section taps demographic characteristics of university employees such as age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, staff category, educational qualification, university category and years in service.

#### *Section B: Workplace Discrimination Scale*

Workplace discrimination was measured with a 15-item perceived discrimination scale adapted from Sanchez and Brock (1996) discrimination scale. The items were modified in order to suit the setting and respondents of the present study. The modification involved altering some items which was used to capture the discrimination in the university system. This scale was developed to measure all forms of perceived discrimination in the workplace environment. Examples of some of the items in this scale read "At work, I feel uncomfortable when others make jokes or negative commentaries about me because of my ethnic group/gender" and "I regret joining the university community because there are lots of discriminatory gestures". Scores were measured using a 5-point Likert scale which ranges from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree where a high score indicated perceived high level of workplace discrimination and a low score indicates perceived low level of discrimination. Sanchez and Brock (1996) reported an internal consistency of 0.87, while the scale's unidimensionality was supported by a screen plot of Eigen values, factor analysis as well as parallel analysis which all suggested a one -factor solution. In this study, the scale was validated through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and virtually all the items loaded significantly on their constructs ( $p < .001$ ). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of 0.83 was also reported for the sampling adequacy of the scale. The present study has a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.90.

#### *Section C: Perceived Competence Scale*

Perceived competence was measured with a 13-item perceived sense of competence scale developed by Wagner and Morse (1975) and modified by Synder and Morris (1978). The scale was adopted for use in this study. The statements “No one knows this job better than I do” and “I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to perform this task well” are typical samples of items found on this scale. The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert format ranging from 5 = “Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. Items 5, 8, 10, 11 and 13 are reversed scores on the scale. A High score above the mean value on the scale indicates high level of sense of competence and low score below the mean value indicate low sense of competence. This scale has been used in Nigeria by Bajo (2005) and an alpha coefficient of 0.65 was reported while Split -half reliability coefficient of 0.57 for the scale was also reported. Balogun, Ojedokun and Tijani (2012) also got a reliability coefficient of 0.87 among some selected workers in a University Teaching Hospital in Nigeria. The study validates this scale with a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and on the 13 items, all items loaded almost significantly on their constructs ( $p < .001$ ), with weights ranging from 0.47 to 0.88. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of 0.70 was also reported for the sampling adequacy of the scale. The present study has a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.56.

#### *Section D: Work Deviant Behaviour Scale*

Workplace deviance was measured with 19-item Workplace Deviance (WPD) developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The scale was adopted for use to measure workplace deviant behaviour in this present study. The scale is specifically designed to measure workplace deviant behaviour among workers. Initially, the scale is a 28-item scale, but later it was revised to have 19 items which comprise items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, and 16 that measured the dimension of organisational deviance (deviant behaviours directed to the organisation), and items 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, and 19 measured the dimension of interpersonal deviant scale (deviant directly harmful to other individuals within the organisation). The sample on this scale read “worked on a personal matter instead of working for your employer” and “intentionally worked slower than I could have worked “. The statements were rated on a scale ranging from 1 - never, 2 -several times a year, 3 -monthly, 4 -weekly, and 5- daily. Bennett and Robinson (2000), the original authors of the scale, reported a coefficient of internal reliabilities of 0.81 and 0.78 respectively for the two dimension of the scale. The original author also conducted a convergent validity with workplace deviant behaviour score correlated with Lehman and Simpson (1992) measure of psychological withdrawal. They obtained a coefficient of convergent validity of 0.65 and 0.40 respectively for the two subscales. Furthermore, Bennett and Robinson (2000) also conducted discriminant validity by correlating the scores on workplace deviant behaviour scale and Farrel and Rusbult (1986) measure of job loyalty. They also got a coefficient of -.21 and -.13 respectively. A construct validity of the items was also established through the use of factor analysis. Also, the principal component analysis was employed and varimax rotation was applied but all the coefficient was not reported. In Nigeria, the scale has also been used by Olambitan and Alausa (2014) where they got a reliability coefficient of 0.77 and 0.75 for the two subscales among nurses in Lagos State. Fagbohunge, et al (2012) also reported a reliability coefficient of 0.80 for the full scale among some selected employees in Lagos State, Nigeria. In this study, the scale was validated with Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and on the 25 items, almost all items loaded significantly on their constructs ( $p < .001$ ), with weights ranging from 0.45 to 0.87. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of 0.92 was also reported for the sampling adequacy of the scale. Within the present study, this scale has an overall Cronbach coefficient of 0.97.

### Procedure

An Introduction Letter was collected from the Department of Psychology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria introducing the researchers to the study settings. Having obtained approval from the four university management to conduct the study, the researcher afterwards sought participants' consent from each of the university, by making respondents fill the informed consent form that was attached to the questionnaire. The researcher also assured the participants on confidentiality and discretion of the study. The participants were also informed of the purposes and/or objectives of the study. In addition, the respondents were told by the researcher that there was no right or wrong answers, and as such should try to be as honest as possible in their responses. The respondents were told they had the right to discontinue from the study at any point in time. Questionnaires were handed over by the researcher to each university employee in their various offices in each respective university at different times. Most of the employees in the four universities used were so busy only a few employees filled their questionnaires on the spot while majority of the respondents returned it on a later day. The researcher faced a hectic task retrieving questionnaires especially from academic staff as most of the time the researcher visited them, they were either not in the office or had not attended to the questionnaire. Questionnaire distribution lasted approximately 12weeks. In all, a total of 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed, however only 384 questionnaires were considered for further data analysis while the remaining sixteen questionnaires were not returned.

### RESULTS

Hypothesis one states that there will be significant positive relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypothesis at 0.05% level of significant. The analysis procedure involves subjecting the respondents' composites scores on workplace discrimination scale and their corresponding level of workplace deviant behaviour to a relationship test, the summary of the analysis is presented in Table 1

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship between Workplace Discrimination and Workplace Deviant Behaviour**

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r	p
Workplace discrimination	51.76	10.50	382		
				-.57	<.05
Workplace deviant behavior	44.82	21.43			

Table 1 above shows that there was significant inverse relationship between workplace discrimination and work place deviant behaviour  $\{r(382) = -.57, p < 0.05\}$ . The result implies that as perception of workplace discrimination increases among employees, their tendency to engage in workplace deviance behaviour decreases. Thus, alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant positive relationship between workplace discrimination and work place deviant behaviour among university employees is accepted.

Hypothesis two states that perceived competence will significantly mediate the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour among university employees. The analytical approach of Baron and Kenny (1986) was adopted to test whether perceived competence can mediate the relationship between workplace discrimination, and workplace deviance. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), assumption, a variable functions as a mediator variable when (a) variation in the independent variable must significantly account for variation in

the dependent variable, (b) variation in the independent variable must significantly account for variation in the mediator (c) variation in the mediator must significantly account for variation in the dependent variable, (d) when the independent and the mediator are simultaneously entered into the equation, a previously significant relation between the independent and dependent variables must reduce or become insignificant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when the relationship is zero. The regression analysis constituted four models. In the first model, workplace deviance was regressed on work place discrimination. In the second model, perceived competence was regressed on workplace discrimination. In the third model, workplace deviance was regressed on perceived competence. Lastly, in the fourth model, the predictor (workplace discrimination) and mediating variables (perceived competence) were entered simultaneously into the equation in order to determine whether the introduction of the mediating variable (perceived competence) will influence the initial relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance. The summary of the result is presented in Table 2

**Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Mediation Effect of Perceived Competence on the Relationship between Workplace Discrimination and Workplace Deviant Behaviour**

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	B	SE	β	t	p
Workplace discrimination →Workplace deviant behaviour	.57	.33	188.12					
Workplace discrimination				-1.17	.09	-.57	-13.72	<.01
Workplace discrimination → Perceived competence	.24	.06	23.27					
Workplace discrimination				.11	.02	.24	4.82	<.01
Perceived competence →Workplace deviant behaviour	.26	.07	26.76					
Perceived competence				-1.13	.22	-.26	-5.18	<.01
<b>(Workplace discrimination &amp; Perceived competence →Work deviant behaviour)</b>	.59	.35	100.26					
Workplace discrimination				-1.11	.09	-.54	-12.74	<.01
Perceived competence				-.55	.19	-.13	-2.94	<.01
	Test Statistic		p					
Sobel Test	3.52896765		<.01					

In the model 1, workplace deviance was regressed on workplace discrimination. The result shows that workplace discrimination explains a significant 33% variance in relationship with work deviant behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.33$ ,  $F(1, 382) = 188.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Workplace discrimination has a negative impact on workplace deviance ( $\beta = -.57$ ,  $t = -13.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implies that an employee who perceives high workplace discrimination shows lower tendency to exhibit workplace deviance. The result in the second model revealed that workplace discrimination explained a significant 6% variance in relationship with perceived competence ( $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $F(1, 382) = 23.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Workplace discrimination has a significantly positive impact on perceived competence ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t = 4.82$ ,  $p < .01$ ), meaning that increase in workplace discrimination, leads to increase in perceived sense of competence. The third model revealed that perceived competence explained a significant 7% variance in relationship with workplace deviant behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.07$ ,  $F(1, 382) = 26.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The result further revealed that perceived competence has a direct impact on workplace deviant behaviour ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $t = -5.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), meaning that increase in perceived competence leads to decrease in workplace deviant behaviour.

In the fourth model, the predictor (workplace discrimination) and mediator (perceived competence) variables were simultaneously entered into the equation, the mediator (perceived competence) significantly but partially mediates the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance ( $\beta = -.54$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The inclusion of perceived competence in the third model reduces the beta ( $\beta$ ) value of the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance from  $-.57$  to  $-.54$ . Furthermore, a Sobel test was conducted to determine the mediating effect of perceived competence on workplace discrimination-workplace deviant

behaviour relationship since Baron and Kenny (1986) analytical approach did not provide enough information on the mediating effect of perceived competence in workplace discrimination-workplace deviant behaviour relationship, but only indicated that mediating effect of perceived competence is possible. The Sobel test revealed that perceived competence mediates the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviance ( $z = 3.53$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Thus, alternate hypothesis which states that there is mediation effect of perceived competence on the relationship between workplace discrimination and deviant behaviour is accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The study contributes to knowledge on the mediating effect of perceived competence on the relationship between workplace discrimination, quality of family life and workplace deviant behaviour among university employees in southwestern part of Nigeria. Regarding the hypotheses postulated to guide this present study, the result of the first hypothesis which reveals that there is significant inverse relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour. This implies that as perception of workplace discrimination is unfavourable among employees, their tendency to engage in workplace deviant behaviour decreases. Thus, workplace discrimination does not necessarily lead to workplace deviant behaviour. The finding is in line with study done by Galperin (2002) who conducted an empirical analysis that examined the relationship between job discrimination on workplace deviant behaviour among 684 workers. The study found a significant negative relationship between job discrimination and workplace deviance. The study finding, however, is in contrast with the work of Uwannah (2015) who found that favoritism as a form of discrimination have a positive significant relationship on deviant behaviour among 600 university employees in Ogun State, Nigeria. This finding is not in line with the finding of Zhao, Peng and Sheard (2013) who found that there is a positive association between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs). Yang and Treadway (2016) found that workplace ostracism has positive relationship with deviant behaviours. Özer and Günlük (2010) examined the effects of discrimination perception and job deviant behaviour among 250 Turkish public accountants. A possible explanation for this finding of workplace discrimination having a negative relationship on workplace deviant behaviour could be the fear of uncertainty of securing another job especially in a developing country such as Nigeria where unemployment rate is high and securing another job are hard to come by. Employee will prefer to engage in behaviour that is acceptable to the organization even if they are been discriminated at work. Another reason for this finding perhaps might be that other factor that brings about deviant behaviours were not considered in the final analysis of this study.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that perceived competence partially mediates the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour. This implies that unfavourable perception of discrimination among university employees' could decrease employees' engagement in deviant behaviour as a result of employees' competence being displayed at their workplace. The above result is in line with the observation made by Cropanzano and Baron (2001) who found that unfair job discrimination to emotions and ultimately conflict at the work is mediated by employees' sense of competence. In the same vein, Fabian, Ike and Alma (2014) investigated the mediating effect of sense of capability on the relationship between job discrimination and employee work deviant behaviour. The results found a mediating effect of sense of capability on the relationship between job discrimination and employees' work deviant behaviour. The study was also in line with study done by Bridget, Poot and Roskruge (2013) who investigated perception of workplace discrimination on sense of capacity among immigrants and native-born New Zealanders. The result showed that perceived job discrimination lowered sense of capacity of an employee. The rationale for this finding could be unconnected with the fact that when employee perceive themselves as been competent, this helps an

employee to be able to absorb any job related challenges that might want to arise in the workplace without them being reactive to engage in work place deviant behaviour as a form of retaliation to the organisation or colleagues at work.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the finding of this study it was concluded that workplace discrimination have an inverse relationship with work place deviant behaviour meaning that when employees perceive workplace discriminations it leads to reduction in work place deviant behaviour. The study also concluded that perceived competence mediate the relationship between workplace discrimination and workplace deviant behaviour among university employees.

### *Implication of the Study*

The findings from this study highlight practical implications. The mediating effect of perceived competence on the relationship between workplace discrimination, and deviant behaviour add to the growing evidence and support in reducing the menace of behaviours that are detrimental to the wellness of both the organisation and its members. Practically, the findings have provided university management, human resource manager and industrial psychologist with greater insights into how workplace discrimination which is a negative behaviour did not trigger any deviant behaviour among university employees. This result finding has implication for employees such that their ability to cope very well with discriminatory gestures in the workplace might not trigger them to engage in deviant act toward the organisation or its members. This result also implies that the gigantic nature of the university system might make the issue of discrimination not to be considered a negative outcome.

### *Recommendation*

University management should engage the services of professional organisational/industrial psychologists in developing psychological test at the recruitment level aimed at identifying people who are highly competent, while for staff who are already on the job, frequent training and psychological-intervention programmes can be put in place to improve and enhance their sense of competence such that these category of individuals will have the capacity and skill to cope with any discriminatory gestures among members in the university, as total eradication of workplace discrimination might be near impossible because of the gigantic structure of the university. This will go a long way in reducing the menace of deviant behaviour among university employees.

### *Limitation and Future Directions*

This present study is faced with some limitations. Firstly any study that is conducted within a limited scope of study has the challenge of generalizability of the results. This study stands in that line. Therefore, the finding of this study may be argued to be relevant or important within the scope of the setting of this study. This is because the respondents of this study were relatively small and only selected from four universities in Nigeria; therefore generalizability of the study findings to all university employees in Nigeria may be nearly impossible. However, the study findings still have implications for workplace deviant behaviour studies in southwestern Nigeria. Secondly, the attitude of respondents towards the filling of the questionnaires was also a major challenge. It took the participants several days and weeks before the questionnaire were returned as participants claimed they were too busy to fill a questionnaire. Thirdly, another limitation of the study is that the questionnaire used to collect data in this study is too cumbersome. Finally, the



study did not set up any form of control variable. Thus, drawing inferences should be done with caution based on these limitations. Future studies should take into consideration large sample size that cuts across different public and private universities in Nigeria. Also, future research can also improve the method of data collection such as the use of qualitative methods like interview, focus group discussion and observational method. Also, future study can also intercorrelate all the variables statistically and also use fewer items to collect data of this nature. Finally, future studies should also look at other variables that were not considered in this study.

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