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ORGANIZATIONAL MOBBING BEHAVIOUR AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Organizational mobbing is prevalent in Nigeria universities due to a combination of systemic, cultural, and institutional factors. The distinct socio-cultural environment in which Nigerian universities function may have an impact on the dynamics of mobbing behaviour and its effects on employees' performance. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the extent of the relationship that exists between organizational mobbing behaviour and employee performance in Nigerian universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study is ten thousand seven hundred and seventy two (10,772) from the three sampled universities in Anambra State. Yamane's 1967 formula was used to determine a sample size of three hundred and eighty six (386) used for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument used in sourcing information from the respondents. Descriptive statistics (mean) was used to analyze the study's data while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS ver. 25). The findings reveals that there is significant and positive relationship between rumour spreading and employee commitment, harassment and the quality of work rendered by employee in Nigerian universities in Anambra state. The study therefore, concludes that there is a significant relationship

between organizational mobbing behavior and employee performance in Nigerian Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. It is recommended that among others that University Management needs to establish and maintain transparent and effective communication channels within the university to prevent the spread of rumours and create open forums where employees feel comfortable sharing accurate information as this will help to reduce misinformation and promote trust.

Keywords: Mobbing- behaviour, Employee-Performance, Nigerian Universities and Anambra State

Introduction

Organizational mobbing, a pervasive form of workplace bullying characterized by systematic harassment, collective hostility, and deliberate isolation of a target, is a significant issue within the Nigerian university system. This phenomenon adversely affects both academic and non-academic staff, leading to severe implications for employee performance and overall institutional efficiency. In the Nigerian university system, mobbing behavior often manifests through unjustified criticism, spreading of rumors, deliberate isolation, and sabotage of professional activities(Eneh, & Olokun, 2019). Academic staff may face hindrances in their research work, biased peer reviews, and obstacles in career advancement such as denial of promotions or sabbaticals. Non-academic staff might encounter undue work pressure, unwarranted disciplinary actions, and social exclusion within the workplace. Ajayi (2018) noted that several factors contribute to the prevalence of mobbing in Nigerian universities. Hierarchical and authoritarian structures prevalent in many Nigerian institutions can foster environments where power dynamics are easily exploited. The highly competitive nature of academia, combined with scarce resources and opportunities for professional growth, exacerbates tensions and rivalries among staff. Additionally, inadequate organizational policies and weak enforcement of anti-bullying measures create conditions where mobbing behaviors can proliferate unchecked (Idemudia, & Modise, 2017).

The impact of mobbing on employee performance within Nigerian universities is profound. Victims of mobbing often experience significant psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, low commitment, poor output, inefficiency on the part of employees and Low cooperation. This mental health deterioration can lead to decreased job satisfaction, lowered morale, and reduced productivity. Academically, mobbing stifles innovation, undermines collaborative efforts, and deteriorates the quality of education and research output. Non-academic staff suffering from mobbing are less efficient, exhibit higher absenteeism, and are more likely to resign, leading to increased turnover rates and loss of institutional knowledge (Omole, & Ojo, 2020).Fazal, Farwida, Aminullah, Tariq, and Shabir, (2020) argued that addressing mobbing behavior in Nigerian universities requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Institutions must establish clear anti-mobbing policies with well-defined procedures for reporting and addressing complaints. Regular training programs aimed at fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and collaboration are essential. Leadership must be vigilant in recognizing and proactively mitigating mobbing behaviors, ensuring that power dynamics are not exploited to the detriment of individuals.

Organizational mobbing constitutes a problem to many institutions of higher learning today, irrespective of size and or location. This antisocial behaviour confronts organizations operating in developed and developing countries alike with the consequences well documented in the scholarly literature (Fazal, Farwida, Aminullah, Tariq,& Shabir,2020; Okafor & Okafor, 2019). At the individual level, mobbing may lead to suicide tendency, loss of self-respect, and self-image,high stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, sleep disturbances, increased depression, unhappiness, anxiety, withdrawal, and undue cautiousness, thereby affecting performance. At the organizational level, it adversely affects employee commitment, job satisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover. Dimgba, Ikon, and Onwuchekwa (2022) noted thatemployees of an organization are vital as they spend maximum productive time in the office. Healthy relationships among employer and employee would boost energy and efficiency, while a toxic relationship especially in the

university community could breed inefficiency and ineffectiveness on the job, thereby reducing employee performance.

Even while mobbing is acknowledged as a widespread problem worldwide, little is known about the particular form and effects of mobbing in Nigerian academic institutions. It is essential to comprehend how employee performance is affected by mobbing, which is defined as continuous harassment, intimidation, and exclusionary practices by co-workers or superiors. This will help to create a positive work atmosphere and increase productivity. Furthermore, the distinct socio-cultural environment in which Nigerian universities function may have an impact on the dynamics of mobbing behaviour and its effects on employees' performance. Therefore, a thorough investigation is required to fully understand the complex relationship between employees' performance and organizational mobbing in Nigerian universities. This will help develop effective intervention strategies and policies that will lessen negative effects and advance organizational well-being

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the extent of the relationship that exists between organizational mobbing behaviour and employee performance in Nigerian universities in Anambra State. The specific objectives are:

(1) To ascertain the extent of relationship that exists between rumour spreading and employee commitment in Nigerian Universities in Anambra State;

(2) To determine the level of relationship that exists between harassment and quality of work rendered by employee in Nigerian Universities in Anambra State

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Mobbing Behaviour

Mobbing is derived from the word "mob" as a concept, and the word mob is derived from the Latin word "mobile emphasis", which is defined as "unstable crowd". In English, mob

refers to an irregular crowd or gang group that uses violence and pressure against the law (Lokmanoğlu, 2019). The term was first used by Konrad Lorenz in the 1960s to "describe the abuse used by birds to intimidate, upset and frighten stronger and lonely birds inside and outside the flock" (Yıldırım & Ekinci, 2019) Mobbing is defined as "intimidation or psychological terror resulting from systematic hostile and unethical behaviour of one or more persons against another person or persons" (Haciveli, Yagizerler, Aslants and Yinal (2023). It is understood that the systematic characterization of immoral acts against the victim and acts of violence against the same victim by a specific person is routine, not of short duration and lasts for at least six months (Kalleberg, 2021)).

Workplace mobbing is a form of group bullying that isolates an individual and causes humiliation and psychological abuse, which not only affects a worker's productivity, but it also, has an effect on an employee's overall health. Mobbing can result in increased stress levels, anxiety, low work performance, and resignations that lead to difficulty in recruiting (Garba, 2020).

Rumour Spreading

Rumour is derived from Latin word 'rumorem' (noise), is "a tall tale of explanations of events circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, event, or issue in public concern. It involves a form of a statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed. Organizational rumor is an informal communication network conducted by the members of the organization

Implicitly regarding the events within the organization, and it is generally considered as an adverse situation for the organization (David & Ander, 2023). There are many reasons for rumors to emerge in organizations. Research has shown that one of the main factors which are the sources of rumors among employees in organizations is the lack of information provided to employees on subjects they need (Hasnain, 2017)., uncertainties about a subject

concerning employees, deficiencies or blockages in official communication channels, employees' fears and worries, organizational changes taking place and employees' distrust towards the organization (David & Ander,2023).

In an organization where organizational rumor is widespread, assumption-based, unproven information flow among members is dominant, and organization members are reluctant to establish open communication (Graham, 2018; Huo & Ma, 2017). Organizational rumor behavior is an instinctive behavior that is inferred in the work and usually requiring unverified beliefs. Managers and supervisors can better estimate rumors if they search for the message behind them even though management may never cut the chains of rumors in its organization. The management can see rumors understandable, easy to manage, and meaningful, perhaps the best principle of management is "work with others as you want them to work for you." Managers must also understand that behavior usually has more than one motivation and there are many paths available to achieve the same goal. If managers rely on the final triple relationship of empathy, entrepreneurship and truth, they will be able to defeat the rumors in their organizations (Akande & Odewale, 2018).

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Harassment

Harassment in the workplace, negative attacks on personal and professional performance are often unexpected, unreasonable, and frequently unnoticed. It is the heinous act of undermining a person or groups of workers by pitiless, spiteful, cruel, or humiliating tactics. It is illegal and also a form of discrimination to harass someone verbally or physically based on their gender, religion, or ethnicity (Duffy & Sperry, 2021). Someone is harassing you if he (or she) does things to make you feel uncomfortable, says things to make you feel uncomfortable, or puts you in danger in some way. The harasser, on the other hand, may choose the gender, race, handicap, age, appearance, sexual performance, faiths, beliefs, family, birthplace, or political convictions to make the victim feel uncomfortable (Obi, Ewuim, & Obi, 2021).

Employee Performance

Employees are said to be the backbone of many organizations, irrespective of the shapes and forms of the business. The performance of employees and their commitment to duty determines to a great

extent the sustainability of organizations (Ebuka, 2022). When employees are managed properly and deliberately, it would add to organizational performance improvement (Khan, 2020). Employee performance is seen as the achievement of goals (Amegayibor, 2021). Hence, whatever influences their performance is usually given attention. Bullying in an organization has been observed to influence workers' performance in the past, and hence, adequate attention is needed in this regard.

Employee performance, which plays a central role in determining organizational performance, is the point reached as a result of the work done with the simplest definition (Kambur, 2022). Almost every organization needs high-performing employees to gain competitive advantage. Individual performance is the achievement of individual results at the desired quality and level by combining the knowledge, skills and abilities of a person with his personal effort and behavior.

Employee Commitment

Khan, and Iqbal (2020) posited that employee commitment is an emotional attachment to and involvement with an organization. An employee is very likely to be committed to his work if he is actually satisfied. When such happens, conflicts between employer and employee, sometimes, are reduced to a minimum or totally avoided.James, and Inyang (2023) stated that “Organizational commitment to employees must be built and created so that employees are able to complete their tasks effectively and efficiently”. This must be done in the organization so that employees have a high commitment for the organization so that that loyalty will be developed, as well as the relationships that support each other in achieving organizational goals.

Quality of Work Rendered

Employee quality of work refers to the standard of output produced by employees, reflecting the degree to which the work meets the expectations and requirements set by the organization encompassing aspects such as accuracy, completeness, efficiency, and consistency (Jiang, & Zhang, 2021). High-quality work is essential for achieving organizational goals, enhancing customer satisfaction, and maintaining a competitive edge. Several factors influence employee quality of work which include skill level, motivation, health and well-being, leadership, work environment, culture, economic condition, technological advancement and organizational mobbing (Northouse, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

A theoretical framework is integral to the research process, providing n structure, coherence, and basis for analysis and interpretation. The theory that will underpin this study is social cognitive

The social cognitive theory, firstly proposed as Social Learning Theory by Miller and Dollard (1941) and expanded later by Bandura and Walters (1963), clearly applies to human behaviour within the organisational context (Griesser & Ekman, 2015). Within the organisational context, human learning takes place within a social context that contains varied, shared exchanges between the individual, the environment, and human behaviour. Organisations are social settings that encompass dynamic situations. Hence, human learning within the organisational context cannot be expected to take place in a completely autonomous way nor as a way of routinely mimicking environmental stimuli. Consistent with this perspective, the present research draws upon the Social Cognitive Theory to explain the likely effects of workplace mobbing on its victims.

Empirical Literature

Carmen, Carolina, José, Ma, and Raúl (2021) investigated Mobbing and Quality of Life at Work in workers of a Private University in Jalisco, Mexico. Descriptive, cross-sectional, and analytical were employed for the study. Three questionnaires were used to collect the information: one on sociodemographic and labor data, the CVT-GOHISALO questionnaire to evaluate Quality of Life at Work and the IVAPT-PANDO to calculate Mobbing. The universe of study was all the workers (census) of the University, excluding workers who did not want to participate. The result revealed that 54.8% of the people in the study were women, with an average age of 36.6 years, 44.6% are single, 48.6% have a bachelor's degree with an average working seniority of 5 years. The association results show that between Mobbing and Quality of Life at Work there was statistical significance in the seven dimensions of the CVT (by its acronym in Spanish) instrument. 72.7% perceive the presence of workplace violence. Concerning the level of intensity of psychological violence at work, 27.8% of the population did not perceive it. The study concluded that the presence of Mobbing does affect the Quality of Life at Work.

Damanpour and Evan (2021) examine the effect of cyber mobbing and performance, “The problem of organization Lag.” The objectives of the study were to ascertain the effect of social media mobbing on employee performance and to assess whether social media attacks have a higher correlation in a high and/or low-performance organizations. Four hypotheses were derived from the model and were tested in a sample of 85 organizations. Findings revealed that; social media mobbing significantly influences employee performance and that, social media attacks have a higher correlation in low-performance organizations

METHODOLOY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of this work comprised of the Management, and Staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam and Madonna University Okija, Anambra State.

These universities were chosen because Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, is the only federal university in Anambra State, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam is the only state owned University in Anambra State and Madonna University Okija is the first privately owned University in Anambra State. Therefore, the choice of these universities among others for this study is justified. According to the personnel units of the respective universities as at September 2023, the entire population of the teaching and non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka is 8037 (2702 teaching and 5335 non-teaching), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam has 2,473 (615 teaching and 1858 non-teaching), while Madonna University Okija has 262 (84 academic and 178 non-academic staff) respectively. Therefore, the total population of this study is 10772. Questionnaire, which was administered to a statistically determined sample size from the entire population of the study, was employed for the purpose of collecting the required data.To guarantee the legitimacy of the survey, the questionnaire along with the objectives of the work were handed over to specialists and experts in the Weight and Measurement Unit (WMU), Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, for scrutiny. This helped build up that the instrument was proper for estimating the factors contained in the survey.

To check the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested through a pilot study to determine its internal consistency in soliciting information intended. The researcher used the test-retest method to determine the reliability of the research instrument. Copies of the research instrument were restricted to a sample of fifty (50) respondents who were representatives conveniently drawn from University of Nigeria Nsuka (UNN -25 copies), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUST-15 copies) and Coal City University, Enugu (CCU-10 copies). These universities share similar characteristics with the study unit and therefore, considered appropriate for a pilot study

Cronbach Alpha reliability test was employed in the analysis due to the nature of the instrument. Utami and Wilopo, (2018) recommended that an internal consistency greater

than (>0.70) should be considered a good measurement. Therefore, the Cronbach Alpha values were considered high enough and the instruments were considered reliable as all the variables recorded above 70.

Sampling Size and Sample Techniques

Judgmental sampling technique is used for this study. This sampling technique is used because it allows the researcher to approach his target audience directly. There are equally no criteria involve in selecting a sample except for the researcher's preference. However, random selection was done on the number of staff covered by each three universities i.e. UNIZIK, COOU, and Madonna University Okija respectively.

Population Structure of the Study

Table 1: The sampled Universities in Anambra State

Sampled Universities	Academic Staff	Non-academic staff	Total
Nnamdi Azikiwe University	2702	5335	**8037**
COOU	615	1858	**2473**
Madonna University Okija	84	178	**262**
Total	**3401**	**7371**	**10772**

Source: Personnel Department of Sampled Universities (2024)

Given the population of 10772, the study determined the sample size using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination, because the population was known, accessible and finite. The formula is given below:

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

Where

n = sample size

N = the finite population

e = Level of significance (or limit of tolerance error)

1 = Unity (constant)

Given that the finite population (N) was 10772 and the level of significance stood at 0.05

Given that the finite population (N) was 10772 and the level of significance stood at 0.05

$$n = \frac{10772}{1+10772(0.0025)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{10772}{27.93}$$

$$n = 385.678$$

$$n = 386$$

Therefore, 386 is the sample size of the study.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data used in the analysis of this study were obtained from the response of the respondents to the questionnaire administered to them by the researcher. Three hundred and eighty six (386) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents while Three hundred and sixty Seven (367) were properly and returned and was used for the analysis.

Table 2. Analysis of responses to questions on the extent of the relationship between rumour spreading and employee commitment in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
	Rumour Spreading							
1.	A lot of lies are spreadabout employees over the social media	145	155	19	33	15	4.04	Agree
2.	Employees' goodrelations with others arebeing spoilt with lies	103	158	13	53	40	3.36	Agree
3.	A lot of gossip are being spread aboutsome employees in the organization	129	145	10	48	35	3.77	Agree
	Employee Commitment							Agree
1	I do believe that a person must always beloyal to his/her organization.	115	125	15	60	52	3.52	Agree
2	If I got another offer for a better jobelsewhere I would not feel it was right to leavethe organization	56	65	12	125	109	2.54	Disagree
2	I do feel a strong sense of belonging to thisorganization	159	150	11	47	44	4.27	Agree
	Grand Mean						**3.58**	**Agree**

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2, Presents the analysis of the responses of the respondents regarding the relationship between rumour spreading ad employee commitments in Nigeria Universities in Anambra. The

table shows that respondents generally agree that a lot of lies are spread about employee's overs social media impacting their good relations with others and leading to gossip with the organization. In terms of employee commitment, participants agree that loyalty to the organization is important, feel a strong sense of belonging but disagree on whether they would leave for a better job offer. The overall grand mean of 3.58 indicates an agreement among the respondents regarding the impact of rumour spreading and employee commitment.

Table 3. Analysis of responses to questions on the extent of the relationship between harassment and quality of work rendered by employees' in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
	Harassment							
1.	Staff have been sexually harassed at the workplace by their superior	126	122	16	55	48	3.6	Agree
2.	Cases of harassment at my workplace are not treated lightly	151	143	18	35	55	4.10	Agree
3.	Staff report every form of harassment to their superior	53	57	11	120	126	2.43	Disagree
	Quality of Work							
1	My quality of work is much higher than average	159	158	8	20	22	4.12	Agree
2	I strive for higher quality work than required	155	149	5	27	31	3.97	Agree
3	I provide high-quality service to my organization	157	134	9	34	33	3.94	Agree

Table 3., analyzes the responses of the respondents regarding the relationship between harassment and quality of work by employees in Nigeria universities in Anambra state. The table revealed that employees agree that staff have been sexually harassed at workplace by their superiors with a mean score of 3.6. On the question that cases of harassment are not treated lightly, the respondents agree in the organization, the respondents agree with a mean score of 4.0. Staff disagree on the question regarding if they report every form of harassment to their superiors with a mean score of 2.43. Additionally, regarding the question on quality of work rendered by the employees, the respondents agree with a mean score of 4.12 that their quality of work is much higher than average. The staff agree with a mean score of 3.97 that they strive for higher quality work than required. Finally, the respondents agree with a mean score of 3.94 that they provide high quality service to the organization. The overall grand mean of 3.69 indicates that an agreement among the respondents regarding the relationship between harassment and quality of work rendered by the staff in the organization.

Hypothesis One

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between rumour spreading and employee commitment in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State.

Table 4: Pearson's correlation between rumour spreading and employee commitment

		Rumour spreading	**Employee commitment**
Rumour spreading	Pearson's Correlation	1	.573**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	367	367
	Pearson's Correlation	.573**	1

		Rumour spreading	**Employee commitment**
Employee commitment	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	367	367
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4., reveals the correlation coefficient between rumour spreading and employee commitment ($r = 0.573$, $p<0.05$). From the correlation coefficient table, it is evident that rumour spreading is positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable (employee commitment). The value of p (0.5) is lower than 0.05 and the correlation coefficient is 0.573 or 57.3%. With this level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected and this implies that rumour spreading has a positive and significant relationship with employee commitment in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between harassment and quality of work rendered by employee in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State.

Table 5: Pearson's correlation between Harassment and Quality of work

		Harassment	Quality of work
Harassment	Pearson's Correlation	1	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	367	367

		Harassment	Quality of work
Quality of work	Pearson's Correlation	.611**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	367	367
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 5., reveals the correlation coefficient between Harassment and quality of work (r = 0.611, p<0.05). From the correlation coefficient table, it is evident that harassment is positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable (quality of work). The value of p is lower than 0.05 and the correlation coefficient is 0.611 or 61.1%. With this level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected and this implies that there is a positive and significant relationship between harassment and quality of work rendered by employees in Nigeria Universities in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the first hypothesis tested revealed that there is significant relationship between rumour spreading and employee commitment in Nigerian universities in Anambra state. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Damanpour and Evan (2021) who examined the effect of cyber mobbing and performance, "The problem of organization Lag." Findings revealed that; social media mobbing significantly influences employee performance and that, social media attacks have a higher correlation in low-performance organizations. Also, Fazal, Farwida, Aminullah, Tariq, and Shabir, (2020) out that mobbing and organizational commitment has significant relationship.

The second hypothesis tested revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between harassment and the quality of work rendered by employee in Nigerian Universities

in Anambra state. This finding in consonance with the findings of Carmen., Carolina, José, Ma, and Raúl (2021) who investigated Mobbing and Quality of Life at Work in workers of a Private University in Jalisco, Mexico and found that between Mobbing and Quality of Life at Work there was statistical significance in the seven dimensions of the CVT (by its acronym in Spanish) instrument. Also, Meramveliotakis and Kalaitzaki (2019) who found that mobbing behaviors affects employees' quality of working life, physical and mental health. In the same vein, Arubayi And Eruvbedede (2022) investigated the effect of workplace harassment and favouritism on staff performance and found that workplace harassment and favouritism statistically and significantly affect staff performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of data, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between organizational mobbing behavour and employee performance in Nigerian Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria and recommended that:

1. University management need to establish and maintain transparent and effective communication channels within the university to prevent the spread of rumours and create open forums where employees feel comfortable sharing accurate information as this will help to reduce misinformation and promote trust.

2. University management needs to develop and enforce comprehensive anti-harassment policies that clearly define unacceptable behaviors and create hotlines where employees can report harassment confidentially and receive assistance.

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