

## EMPLOYEE WORK ISOLATION AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR MANIFESTATIONS IN PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Employees who feel self-estranged often manifest low commitment to work which affects organisational performance. Therefore, the purpose is to examine the relationship between employee work isolation and deviant behaviour manifestations in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria. The literature highlighted the empirical, conceptual and theoretical review of isolation and deviant behaviour manifestations with measures of production deviance, property deviance, political deviance, and personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria. The study population consist of 3000 employees in eleven pharmaceutical firms in South-South Nigeria, 353 sample size was gotten using the Taro Yamen's formula (1973), while questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect data. Out of the 353 questionnaire distributed, 334 were retrieved, and 326 were finally utilised for data analysis. The quantitative data was analysed using spearman's rank order correlation coefficient with the aid of statistical package for social sciences with a significance level of 0.01. The findings showed that there is a moderate, low positive and significant relationship between self-estrangement and deviant behaviour manifestations in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria. The findings reveals that employee work isolation significantly affects deviant behaviour manifestations in the studied pharmaceutical firms. The study recommended that management of pharmaceutical firms should develop a supportive organizational culture that is based on motivation, communication, growth opportunities, mutual respect, employee involvement, autonomy, social and emotional well-being especially in team based environment like pharmaceutical firms.

**Keywords:** Isolation; Deviant Behaviour Manifestations; Pharmaceutical.

### INTRODUCTION

The study of employee behaviour at the workplace in today's volatile business environment has become imperative due to globalization, industrialization and technological advancement (Evwierhurhoma, & Oga, 2020). Also, with traditional consumers of tangible services in the pharmaceutical sector becoming increasingly sophisticated in their demands, tastes, and values, greater demand is made on the employees as they strive to meet customers' expectations. More so, deviant behaviour has become one of the major issues in contemporary work settings. Also, Kurki (2020) described deviant as any behaviour that is considered to be outside the bounds of what is considered acceptable or normal within an organization or workplace. Therefore, treating colleagues rudely, assaulting or harassing subordinates, being absent or late at work, slowing

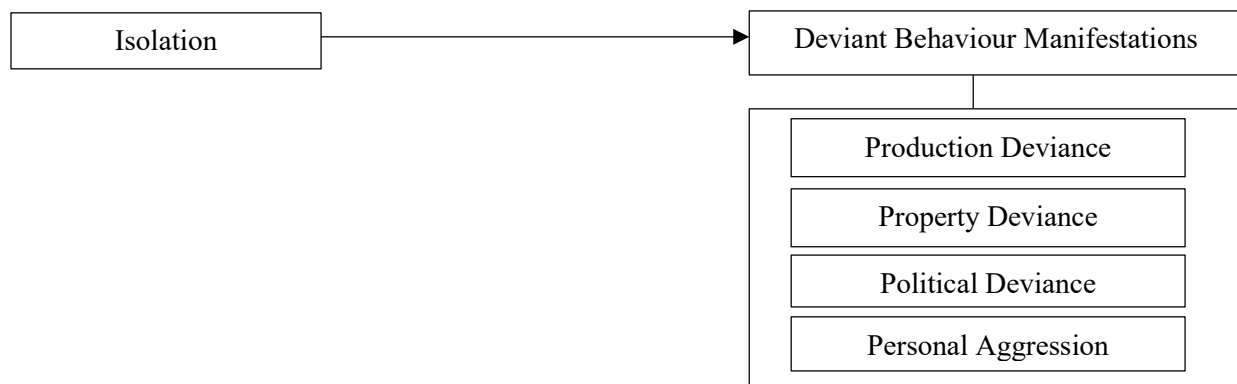
down production, stealing the company’s money or materials are examples of workplace deviant behaviours, which are also unproductive behaviours. (Zappalà et al., 2022).

These antisocial and unproductive behaviours have created an emotional decline on employees’ performance which leads to having thought of leaving the present position in the workplace (Itzkovich & Heilbrunn, 2016). Ultimately, deviant behaviours such as absenteeism, theft, gossip, sabotage, tardiness, insubordination can contribute significantly to high employee turnover in organisations, and one possible factor capable of inducing these behaviours could be work alienation. Thus, work alienation is the state where employees feel demotivated and apathetic towards their work. They feel alienated or separated from their employer and have no passion for work that they are required to do (Evwierhurhoma & Oga, 2020).

The purpose of the study was therefore to examine the relationship between isolation as a dimension of work alienation and measures of deviant behaviour manifestations in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. examine the relationship between isolation and production deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the relationship between isolation and property deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- iii. examine the relationship between isolation and political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- iv. examine the relationship between isolation and personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

**Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1:** Employees Work Isolation and Deviant Behaviour Manifestation

**Source:** Desk Research, 2025 – (Work alienation - Nair & Vorha, 2010; measures of deviant behaviour manifestations were adapted from the work of Robinson & Bennett 1995, cited in Ramzan, Asif, & Hassan, 2018).

**Research Questions**

- i. To what extent does isolation affect production deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria?

- ii. To what extent does isolation affect property deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent does isolation affect political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria?
- iv. To what extent does isolation affect personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria?

### **Statement of hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and production deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and property deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical foundation**

This study is grounded in social exchange theory which explains that emphasizes that inter-individual relationships are controlled by calculating individually the benefit and cost derived as well as the search of a better equality from such relationship (Blau, 1964). A social exchange relationship rests on the norm of reciprocity. Thus, if an employee feels their effort is been reciprocated in a good way like been involve in decision making or organisational activities, they will work in the interest of the organisation, but if employees feel the organisation does not have their interest they will behave in ways that doesn't conform to the standards or rules of the organisations these acts can be subtle at the beginning but can equally lead to deviant behaviour. Employees who are alienated in the form of isolation will likely manifest deviant behaviours in the organisation which is a way of reciprocating their feelings in the organisation.

### **Conceptual review**

#### **Employee Work Isolation**

Employee isolation occur when they withdraw from their environments and they feel they don't have the ability to fit into any group as well the organization and isolation manifest in two forms: when a person feels he or she is not wanted in the organization; as well when a worker no longer desire the organization in which he or she belongs (Eryılmaz & Burgaz, 2011).

Isolation is a form of alienation and experience of loneliness that negatively affects workers especially health-wise. It can be voluntary in the sense that the workers purposely isolate him or herself from activities or events while involuntary isolation are those isolation that are forced on workers by others. Also, individuals become alienated from their work when they do not have a social connection with others who are involved in the production of work. Hence, a lack of meaningful relationships with other workers is the third driver of work alienation. Alienation is

driven by a lack of interconnectedness with others who jointly create a product which can lead to deviant behaviours in the organization.

### **Concept of Deviant Behaviour Manifestations**

Ramzan, Asif, and Hassan (2018) posit that deviant behaviour refers to an intentional acts executed by employees of the organization that violate norms of the organization and have capacity to maltreat the organization or members of the organization. Ramzan, Asif, and Hassan (2018) categorized workplace deviant behaviour into being directed towards individuals or organisations. The former category is referred to interpersonal deviances, which harms individuals while the latter category is referred to organizational deviance which focuses on the organisations themselves. Theories and research has shown that there are numerous factors which are responsible for this amoral act. Ranging from situational factors to dispositional factors the consequences of deviant behaviour is devastating. Nevertheless, the occurrence of deviant behaviour in the workplace is not without a cause which is as a result of employee work alienation.

Furthermore, deviant behaviours are also counterproductive behaviours which are workers actions that violate organizational standards capable of harming organizational wellbeing and its members as well as other stakeholders (Ramzan, Asif, & Hassan, 2018). These behaviours includes but not limited to sabotage, theft, wasting of organizational resources, absenteeism, arriving late to work and leaving early before the closing time. Bennett and Robinson (2000) expressed that organizational deviance has two targets: the number one target is against the individual and it includes behaviours like gossiping, behaving boorishly towards others, and every other action that affect individuals in the organization while the number two target is on the organization itself and includes actions such as, sabotaging organizational properties, coming late to work, using organizational time for individual benefit, misuse of organizational resources, and other behaviours that negatively affects the success of the organization.

### **Production Deviant Manifestations**

In this study, production deviant refers to the situation in which employees perceive that their co-workers instead of working, waste time in gossiping with colleagues and take longer breaks from work. Production deviance refers to minor action that may influence organizational productivity (Bennett and Robinson, 2003). Consequently according to Vivek (2017) all deviant behaviour displayed by the employees in the organization is regarded as production deviance. Vivek (2017) further explained that it has to do with employee's behaviour that is not officially in conformity approved norms in the organization as regards to productivity of the job to be performed such as going to undue breaks, using work time for personal use, coming late to work, leaving workplace earlier than the scheduled time. However, wasting resources is the most common form of production deviance, when employees use too many materials or too much time to do too little work. Workers who work too slowly or take too many breaks are also wasting resources because organizations are paying for every second.

### **Property Deviant Manifestations**

According to Ramzan, Asif, and Hassan (2018) property deviance occurs when employees involve in theft of inventory, property destruction, accepting kickback, stealing products, add

wrongly additional expenses in accounts. In this study, property deviance is a perception of employees that their co-workers are making errors intentionally and stealing office equipment. Property deviant behaviours is a serious action of the workers that contravene the use of organization's property without permission. It occurs when organization's worker destroy or obtain tangible properties of the organization without been authorized.

### **Political Deviant Manifestations**

Political deviant behaviour occurs when employee engages in communal relationship that puts others in political drawback (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). In other words, political deviant behaviour has to do with the involvement of employees in social interaction that place others in a disadvantage position politically in the organization. Organizational vulgarity, favouritism, undercharging preferred customers, compromising company secrets non-constructively, and blaming co-workers are examples of political deviance. These deviant acts contributes towards a negative working environment which breeds hostile work environment, demoralizing employee morale and destroying leader- member and or managers-employee relationship.

### **Personal Aggression Manifestations**

Personal deviant manifestations is a negative form of behaviour in the workplace which includes hostile or aggression behaviour of individual who have negative thinking against other employees. According to Ramzan, Asif, and Hassan (2018) posits that it includes sexual harassment, verbal abuse against other employee, physical action to interrupt or distrust work of others, steaming co-worker, and endangering for co-workers. In this study, personal aggression is operationalized as the situation in which employee perceives that their supervisors or co-workers sexually harass and verbally abuse other employees.

Personal aggression manifestations are actually quite common in organizations. It can be quite costly to organizations. It is defined as hostile verbal and physical actions directed toward other employees. Accordingly, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, stealing from co-workers, endangering co-workers are considered as personal aggression. Unwanted comment that offends, humiliates, or engenders anxiety or fears are considered verbal abuse. Harassment occurs when employees are subjected to unwanted physical contact or verbal remarks from a colleague. Abuse occurs when an employee is assaulted or endangered in such a way that physical and psychological injuries may occur. Co-worker violence has serious consequences beyond any physical damage the victim may receive.

### **Empirical review**

Cui et al, (2023) investigated the influence of empathy on work alienation among Chinese nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic: The mediating effect of ego depletion in China. The study adopted descriptive, cross-sectional study involving 353 nurses from Shaanxi. The Jefferson Scale of Empathy-Health Professionals, Self-Regulating Fatigue Scale and Work Alienation Questionnaire were used to collect data through an online survey. Structural equation modelling was conducted to analyze the mediating model. The findings revealed that work alienation was negatively correlated with empathy and positively correlated with ego depletion. Empathy was negatively correlated with ego depletion. Empathy can directly predict work alienation while ego depletion has a mediating effect between empathy and work alienation.

Salisu and Kabiru, (2015) conducted a study on psychological contract and deviant behaviour among Nigerian employees in private organizations in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was

adapted and validated for this study was used to ascertain the responses of the respondents. A survey and cross sectional research design was used and self-administered questionnaire with help of research assistant were used to collect the data from 280 samples. The analysis was conducted using SPSS, the major findings of the study indicated that transactional psychological contract has a strong positive significant relationship with deviant behaviour in private organization in Nigeria. Also, the relational and balance psychological contracts dimensions were significantly related to deviant behaviour in the organization.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design to examine the relationship between employee work isolation and deviant behaviour manifestations in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria. The time horizon adopted is cross-sectional while the unit of analysis was on the employee of eleven (11) pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria with a total population of 3000. The sample size of 353 employees was derived through the use of Taro Yamen (1973) sample size determination formula. The study adopted both questionnaire as the research instrument. Face and content validity was also used for the validity of the research instrument while the reliability of the research instrument indicates a Cronbach Alpha value higher than 0.7; specifically the employee isolation = 0.702; production deviance = 0.795; property deviance = 0.904; political deviance = 0.901 and personal aggression = 0.845. From the 353(100%) questionnaire distributed, 334(95%) copies of questionnaire were retrieved while the remaining 19(5.6%) were not retrieved, and only 326(92%) copies were finally utilised for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed through the use of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient Statistical as well as t-statistics to test the relationship between the variables of the study through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version Windows output 26 within a significance level of 0.01.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Table 1: Correlation Analysis on Isolation and Production Deviance**

**The strength of the Relationship between Isolation and Production Deviance**

		Isolation	Production Deviance
Spearman's rho	Isolation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.400**
		N	.000
Production Deviance	Production Deviance	Correlation Coefficient	.400**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	1.000
		N	.000
			326

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

Source: SPSS Version 26.0 Result, 2025

Table 1 indicates that rho = 0.400 and a PV =0.000 less than 0.01, this means that the relationship between isolation and production deviance in the studied pharmaceutical firms is

moderate, positive and significant. The test for the relationship between isolation and production deviance was reflected in the hypothetical statement below:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and production deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Isolation and production deviance showed the probability value  $P-v=0.000 < 0.05\%$  level of significance, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between isolation and production deviance. This shows that isolation if applied has a significant influence on production deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis on Isolation and Property Deviance**

**The strength of the Relationship between Isolation and Property Deviance**

		Isolation	Property Deviance
Spearman's rho	Isolation	1.000	.551**
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.000
	N	326	326
Property Deviance	Property Deviance	.551**	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.
	N	326	326

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

**Source:** SPSS Version 26.0 Result, 2025

Table 2 indicates that  $\rho = 0.551$  and a  $PV = 0.000$  less than 0.01, this means that the relationship between isolation and property deviance in the studied pharmaceutical firms is moderate, positive and significant. The test for the relationship between isolation and property deviance was reflected in the hypothetical statement below:

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and property deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South Nigeria.

Table 2 on isolation and property deviance showed the probability value  $P-v=0.000 < 0.05\%$  level of significance, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between isolation and property deviance. This shows that isolation if applied has a significant influence on property deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis on Isolation and Political Deviance**

**The strength of the Relationship between Isolation and Political Deviance**

		Isolation	Political Deviance
Spearman's rho	Isolation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
		N	326
Political Deviance		Correlation Coefficient	-.199**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
		N	326

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

Source: SPSS Version 26.0 Result, 2025

Table 3 indicates that rho = -0.199 and a PV =0.000 less than 0.01, this means that the relationship between isolation and production deviance in the studied pharmaceutical firms is weak, negative, and significant. The test for the relationship between isolation and political deviance was reflected in the hypothetical statement below:

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria

Table 3 on isolation and political deviance showed the probability value P-v=0.000 < 0.05% level of significance, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between isolation and political deviance. This shows that isolation if applied has a significant influence on political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis on Isolation and Personal Aggression****The Strength of the Relationship between Isolation and Personal Aggression**

		Isolation	Personal Aggression
Spearman's rho	Isolation	1.000	.530
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.000
Property Deviance	N	326	326
	Correlation Coefficient	.530	1.000
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.
	N	326	326

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

Source: SPSS Version 26.0 Result, 2025

Table 4 indicates that  $\rho = 0.530$  and a  $PV = 0.000$  less than 0.01, this means that the relationship between isolation and production deviance in the studied pharmaceutical firms has a moderate and significant relationship. The test for the relationship between isolation and personal aggression was reflected in the hypothetical statement below:

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between isolation and personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria

Table 4 on isolation and personal aggression showed the probability value  $P-v=0.000 < 0.05\%$  level of significance, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between isolation and personal aggression. This shows that isolation if applied has a significant influence on personal aggression in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

### Discussion of the Findings

The result from the data analysis between isolation and production deviance shows a moderate, positive and significant relationship exists. Isolation separates an employee from work environment and social interactions at work. For this reason, work isolation as a form of alienation reduce one's commitment, and prevents one's commitment to work which can lead to negative feelings towards the organization that can affect its productivity. The result indicates that isolation has a significant influence on production deviance, property deviance, political deviance and personal aggression, political deviance in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

In line with the above finding, FaridahWati et al. (2011) observed that employee work isolation is positively related to deviant behaviour. An organizationally isolated employee can easily engage in production deviant behaviour such as shirking, job neglect, social loafing and free riding as well as wasting resources, intentionally working slowly, leaving ahead of schedule without authorization, taking intemperate and more breaks, and absenteeism from work without any reasonable reason where both individual and organizational performance can be reduced. The reason could have been a result that they are not valued in the organization because they

lack integration with colleagues as well with the organization they work with. More so, work alienation such as isolation separates an employee from work environment and social interactions at work. For this reason, work isolation as a form of alienation reduce one's commitment, and prevents one's commitment to work which can lead to negative feelings towards the organization that can affect its productivity.

In line with the above finding of Abdul et al. (2016) expressed that an employee whose job lack identity will engage in counterproductive work behaviour, thus the employee may steal from the organization, use office facilities for personal use, taking unnecessary sick leave or leave work early. Employees' role in the decision-making process is very vital for organizations in terms of determining employees' attitudes towards the organization. More so, according to Blau (1964) if employees of an organization are isolated out of the decision-making process in the organization, they might develop some negative behaviours. In other words, an employee who feels to be externalized or isolated from the decision-making process may get alienated and then develop deviant behaviours. Therefore, organizations need to make it clear to employees how they fit into their immediate teams, divisions and the wider organization, and the value their role brings. As many organizations are increasingly concerned with encouraging team recognition, anything that drives collaboration across the business will result in benefits to overall performance. It is interdependency rather than independence that creates organizational success. It takes effort, as well as considered structure and communication between employees, for organizations to overcome individual isolation.

In respect to the above finding, Cooper and Kurland (2002) observed that employee work isolation was positively related to workplace deviant behaviours. They further suggest that isolation may influence the likelihood of acts of deviance under the conditions of diminished oversight. More so, one could argue that employee work isolation may lead to workplace deviance leading to increased levels of bullying, harassment, disrespect, and sabotage. This could be due to the illusion of control and social exclusion. Feeling that the employee is not quite accepted by other workers, an employee may begin to skip work, be late to work or start bullying colleagues. Also, employee work isolation is often the cause and a symptom of depression, which in turn can be an indicator of underlying well-being issues that might result in personal aggression such as threats of physical harm and verbal abusive attack.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The result of the study reveals a moderate and significant relationship between employee work isolation and deviant behaviour manifestations in pharmaceutical firms in South-South Nigeria. Employee work isolation is a significant predictor of deviant behaviour in the workplace, and employees manifest these behaviours in form of social or emotional disconnection, from their colleagues, supervisors or the organisation itself. They avoid team based tasks and collaborative work environments.

From the findings, the following recommendations were made based on the

1. Management of pharmaceutical firms should develop a supportive organizational culture that is based on motivation, communication, growth opportunities, mutual respect, employee involvement, autonomy, social and emotional well-being especially in team based environment like pharmaceutical firms. This will reduce isolation and ensures that

employees are informed, valued and heard in pharmaceutical firms in South-South, Nigeria.

2. Management of pharmaceutical firms should proliferate and enhance the variety of skills possessed by employees through training to facilitate the movements of workers from one department to the other to avoid work isolation in order to minimize the occurrence of deviant behaviours among employees.

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