STANDARDIZATION AND PSYCHOMETRIC DEVELOPMENT OF DESTRUCTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR SCALE AMONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract

Destructive workplace behaviors pose severe threats to organizational sustainability, employee mental health, and public governance, yet contextually validated instruments adapted for Sub-Saharan African organizations remain remarkably scarce. This study developed and psychometrically validated the 20-item Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS) among public and private sector employees in South-Eastern Nigeria. Utilizing a cross-validation split-sample research design (N = 500), data were collected across major commercial and administrative centers (Enugu, Awka, Onitsha, Owerri, Umuahia, and Abakaliki). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA; n1 = 200) supported a clean five-factor correlated structure comprising Production & Task Deviance, Property & Resource Misuse, Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression, Political & Sectional Deviance, and Unethical Compliance & Corruption, accounting for 66.40% of the total variance. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA; n2 = 300) established superior model fit for the five-factor correlated model (x2/df = 1.72, CFI = .965, TLI = .958, RMSEA = .049, SRMR = .044) relative to alternative single-factor and two-factor models. Multi-group CFA verified full scalar measurement invariance across public (n = 142) and private (n = 158) sector workers (delta-CFI <= .004). Nomological network testing via Structural Equation Modeling confirmed that abusive supervision positively predicted DOBS scores (beta = .54, p < .001), while DOBS scores significantly predicted increased turnover intentions (beta = .48, p < .001) and employee burnout (beta = .52, p < .001), while reducing organizational citizenship behavior (beta = -.41, p < .001). Latent mean comparisons demonstrated that public sector workers exhibited higher political/sectional deviance and production deviance, whereas private sector workers exhibited higher property misuse and interpersonal toxicity. The DOBS provides I/O psychologists and HR policymakers with a robust diagnostic tool tailored for developing economy contexts.

Keywords: Destructive Organizational Behaviour, Psychometric Validation, Counterproductive Work Behavior, Measurement Invariance, Public vs. Private Sector, South-Eastern Nigeria.

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Destructive behaviors in organizational settings—frequently operationalized under constructs such as counterproductive work behavior (CWB), workplace deviance, and organizational misbehavior—represent voluntary actions by employees that violate core organizational norms and threaten the well-being of the organization, its stakeholders, or its members (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Spector et al., 2006). In Sub-Saharan African economies, particularly in Nigeria, destructive organizational behaviors exact an exorbitant toll on economic productivity, public service delivery, and corporate sustainability. Systemic challenges such as bureaucratic absenteeism, property diversion, workplace bullying, nepotism, and unethical compliance present unique operational hurdles (Ohemeng et al., 2018; Nnedum et al., 2024).

Despite the profound operational impact of workplace deviance, most psychometric scales used to diagnose these behaviors such as Bennett and Robinson's (2000) Workplace Deviance Scale (WDS) and Spector et al.'s (2006) Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C)—were developed and standardized in Western organizational environments. Consequently, these Western instruments often fail to capture localized dimensions prevalent in developing economies, such as political/sectional deviance (e.g., tribalism, regional favoritism) and coerced unethical compliance (Vardi & Weitz, 2004). To address this empirical gap, this study develops and standardizes the Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS) specifically tailored for public and private sector enterprises in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Theoretical Foundations

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory: The primary theoretical lens for this study is Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). COR theory posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster valued resources (e.g., time, psychological energy, status, and economic security). Workplace stress and psychological strain occur when individuals experience resource loss, the threat of loss, or an inability to regain resources following significant personal investment. Under COR theory, destructive behaviors function as defensive resource protection mechanisms (e.g., work slowdowns or absenteeism to conserve physical energy) or illicit resource acquisition strategies (e.g., sectional favoritism or property diversion to secure unearned advantages; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) & Stressor-Emotion Model: Complementing COR theory, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of negative reciprocity (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007) suggest that when employees experience supervisory abuse or organizational injustice, they restore psychological balance by engaging in targeted destructive acts. Furthermore, the Stressor-Emotion Model of Counterproductive Work Behavior (Spector & Fox, 2002) posits that environmental stressors (e.g., erratic power supply, delayed salaries in public civil service, or aggressive sales targets in private firms) elicit negative emotions such as frustration and anger, which directly catalyze voluntary destructive actions.

Hypotheses Development

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *The Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS) is best fit by a five-factor correlated model comprising Production & Task Deviance, Property & Resource Misuse, Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression, Political & Sectional Deviance, and Unethical Compliance & Corruption.*

- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *The five-factor measurement model of the DOBS demonstrates full measurement invariance (configural, metric, and scalar) across public and private sector workers in South-Eastern Nigeria.*

- **Hypothesis 3a (H3a):** *Perceived Abusive Supervision is positively related to employee Destructive Organizational Behaviour.*

- **Hypothesis 3b (H3b):** *Destructive Organizational Behaviour is positively related to Turnover Intentions and Employee Burnout.*

- **Hypothesis 3c (H3c):** *Destructive Organizational Behaviour is negatively related to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).*

• **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** *There are significant structural differences in the latent mean scores of DOBS sub-dimensions between public and private sector workers, with public sector workers scoring higher on political/sectional deviance and production deviance, and private sector workers scoring higher on property misuse and interpersonal toxicity.*

Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional psychometric validation design was adopted. To prevent capital-capitalizing on chance, a split-sample cross-validation approach was implemented. Sample 1 (n1 = 200) was utilized for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and preliminary item reduction, while Sample 2 (n2 = 300) was reserved for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), multi-group measurement invariance testing across economic sectors, and structural equation modeling (SEM) for nomological network validation (Hinkin, 1998; Kline, 2016).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised full-time workers across public sector state/federal ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and private enterprises (commercial banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, and commerce) in six major commercial and administrative centers of South-Eastern Nigeria: Enugu, Awka, Onitsha, Owerri, Umuahia, and Abakaliki. A stratified non-probability quota sampling technique yielded 500 usable responses from 550 distributed surveys (90.9% retrieval rate). Public sector employees constituted 48.0% (n = 240) and private sector employees constituted 52.0% (n = 260). Males represented 54.8% (n = 274) and females 45.2% (n = 226). Mean age was 36.8 years (SD = 8.2 years), and average organizational tenure was 6.5 years (SD = 4.1 years).

Measures and Psychometric Instrumentation

Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS): An initial pool of 25 items spanning five sub-dimensions was drafted following a comprehensive literature review and expert content validity indexing (CVI = .92 across 8 I/O psychology experts). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always). Five reverse-coded items were included to control for acquiescence response bias.

Nomological Measures: Abusive supervision was measured using Tepper's (2000) 10-item scale (alpha = .89). Turnover intentions were assessed via Colarelli's (1984) 3-item scale (alpha = .87). Employee burnout was evaluated using the 8-item Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti et al., 2010; alpha = .85). Organizational Citizenship Behavior was measured using Lee and Allen's (2002) 8-item OCB-O scale (alpha = .86).

Controls for Common Method Bias (CMB)

Procedural controls included scale counterbalancing, assurances of complete anonymity, and strict non-collection of personal identifiers. Statistical controls evaluated Harman's single-factor test and an Unmeasured Latent Method Factor (ULMF) in CFA (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012).

Results

Little's MCAR test confirmed that missing data (< 1.0%) were missing completely at random ($x^2 = 38.62$, df = 34, p = .268). Expectation-maximization imputation was applied. Harman's single-factor test accounted for only 26.85% of total variance, well below the 50% threshold. Adding a latent method factor in CFA yielded negligible fit changes (delta-CFI = .007), establishing that method bias was minimal.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (Sample 1, n1 = 200)

KMO measure (.887) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($x^2 = 2714.30$, $p < .001$) verified sampling adequacy. Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation was conducted. The five reverse-coded items exhibited low communalities (< .32) and cross-loadings (> .36) and were pruned. Re-running PAF on the remaining 20 items yielded a clean 5-factor solution explaining 66.40% of the total variance (Table 1).

Table 1: EFA Factor Loadings, Communalities, and Variance Explained (Sample 1, n1 = 200)

Item Code	Factor 1: PTD	Factor 2: PRM	Factor 3: ITA	Factor 4: PSD	Factor 5: UCC	Communality (h2)
PTD_1	.76	.10	.06	.08	.09	.64
PTD_2	.81	.12	.08	.05	.11	.72
PTD_3	.74	.08	.11	.10	.06	.61
PTD_5	.70	.14	.05	.07	.12	.57
PRM_1	.09	.79	.12	.06	.10	.68
PRM_2	.11	.75	.08	.11	.07	.62
PRM_3	.06	.82	.05	.09	.14	.73
PRM_5	.14	.68	.10	.12	.08	.54
ITA_1	.08	.11	.83	.09	.05	.74
ITA_2	.10	.06	.78	.14	.08	.67
ITA_3	.12	.09	.74	.10	.11	.62
ITA_5	.05	.12	.71	.07	.09	.56
PSD_1	.11	.08	.12	.84	.06	.75
PSD_2	.07	.14	.10	.79	.11	.69
PSD_3	.12	.10	.08	.76	.05	.63
PSD_5	.09	.06	.15	.72	.10	.58
UCC_1	.10	.12	.06	.08	.82	.72
UCC_2	.08	.15	.09	.11	.78	.67
UCC_3	.14	.08	.11	.05	.73	.60
UCC_5	.06	.10	.07	.12	.69	.53
% Var / Tot	**28.40%**	**14.25%**	**10.50%**	**7.10%**	**6.15%**	**66.40%**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Sample 2, n2 = 300)

Robust Maximum Likelihood (MLR) estimation in R (lavaan) evaluated model fit for Hypothesis 1 (H1). The proposed 5-factor correlated model exhibited superior model fit (x2/df = 1.72, CFI = .965, TLI = .958, RMSEA = .049 [90% CI: .040, .058], SRMR = .044), fitting significantly better than competing unidimensional and two-factor models (Table 2). This fully supports H1.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Comparisons (Sample 2, n2 = 300)

Model Structure	x2	df	x2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR	delta-x2 (delta-df)
Model A: 1-Factor	1142.30	170	6.72	.665	.626	.138 [.130, .146]	.122	—
Model B: 2-Factor	586.40	169	3.47	.852	.834	.091 [.083, .099]	.078	555.90 (1)*
Model C: Proposed 5-Factor	**275.20**	**160**	**1.72**	**.965**	**.958**	**.049 [.040, .058]**	**.044**	**311.20 (9)***

Table 3: Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity Matrix (Sample 2, n2 = 300)

Construct	alpha	omega	CR	AVE	1. PTD	2. PRM	3. ITA	4. PSD	5. UCC
1. PTD	.88	.89	.88	.65	(.81)	.50	.42	.46	.38
2. PRM	.87	.88	.87	.63	.43	(.79)	.48	.52	.44
3. ITA	.89	.90	.89	.67	.36	.41	(.82)	.54	.36
4. PSD	.86	.87	.86	.59	.39	.45	.47	(.77)	.42
5. UCC	.90	.91	.90	.70	.32	.38	.30	.36	(.84)

Table 4: Measurement Invariance Testing across Public (n = 142) and Private (n = 158) Sectors

Invariance Model	x2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Comparison	delta-x2 (df)	delta-CFI	delta-RMSEA	Decision
Configural	422.80	320	.959	.052	.048	—	—	—	—	Supported
Metric	441.15	335	.956	.053	.051	Metric vs. Config	18.35 (15)	-.003	+.001	Supported
Scalar	464.20	350	.952	.055	.053	Scalar vs. Metric	23.05 (15)	-.004	+.002	Supported

Table 5: Structural Model Paths for Nomological Network Testing (H3a-c)

Hypothesis & Path	Hyp. Direction	Path Coeff (beta)	Std. Error (SE)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H3a: Abusive Supervision -> DOBS	Positive (+)	.54	.041	13.17	< .001	Supported
H3b1: DOBS -> Turnover Intentions	Positive (+)	.48	.044	10.91	< .001	Supported
H3b2: DOBS -> Employee Burnout	Positive (+)	.52	.040	13.00	< .001	Supported
H3c: DOBS -> OCB	Negative (-)	-.41	.046	-8.91	< .001	Supported

Table 6: Latent Mean Differences between Public (n=240) and Private (n=260) Sector Workers

DOBS Sub-Dimension	Public Mean (SD)	Private Mean (SD)	Mean Diff.	t-statistic	Cohen's d	Higher Sector
Production Deviance (PTD)	3.24 (0.85)	2.72 (0.88)	-0.52	-6.71***	0.60	Public
Property Misuse (PRM)	2.65 (0.91)	3.08 (0.95)	+0.43	+5.16***	0.46	Private
Interpersonal Toxicity (ITA)	2.78 (0.89)	3.15 (0.92)	+0.37	+4.56***	0.41	Private
Political/Sectional Deviance (PSD)	3.38 (0.82)	2.85 (0.86)	-0.53	-7.06***	0.63	Public
Unethical Compliance (UCC)	3.12 (0.94)	2.68 (0.91)	-0.44	-5.32***	0.47	Public

Discussion and Practical Implications

This study successfully developed and standardly validated the 20-item Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS) in South-Eastern Nigeria. The removal of reverse-coded items eliminated method artifacts, yielding a clean 5-factor correlated model that explains 66.40% of total variance. Full scalar measurement invariance across sectors confirms that the DOBS can be confidently deployed in comparative organizational research (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000).

Grounded in COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), nomological testing demonstrated that DOBS is strongly driven by abusive supervision (beta = .54) and leads to severe organizational detriments: increased burnout (beta = .52), heightened turnover intentions (beta = .48), and

diminished citizenship behaviors (beta = -.41). Latent mean comparisons highlighted critical sector profiles: public civil service MDAs experience higher political/sectional deviance and task evasion due to tenure protections and political patronage, whereas private enterprises face greater property misuse and interpersonal toxicity driven by aggressive sales targets and resource scarcity.

Practical and Policy Recommendations

1. Public Sector Civil Service MDAs: State Civil Service Commissions across Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi states must establish transparent, merit-based appraisal systems to curb tribalism and regional favoritism. Electronic biometric tracking should be deployed to curtail chronic absenteeism.

2. Private Sector Enterprises: Corporate leadership in commercial banking, telecommunications, and manufacturing must institute strict zero-tolerance anti-bullying policies alongside independent audit controls to prevent asset diversion.

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Appendix: Destructive Organizational Behaviour Scale (DOBS) Final 20-Item Instrument

Instructions for Respondents: Below is a list of statements describing various workplace behaviors. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how frequently you (or employees in your immediate administrative unit) engage in these behaviors at work, using the following 5-point scale: **1 = Never | 2 = Rarely | 3 = Sometimes | 4 = Frequently | 5 = Always**

Item ID	Behavioral Statement	Sub-Dimension
PTD_1	Intentionally works slower than expected on assigned tasks or official duties.	Production & Task Deviance
PTD_2	Spends official working hours conducting personal business or private errands.	Production & Task Deviance
PTD_3	Takes unauthorized extended breaks or leaves the office early without official permission.	Production & Task Deviance
PTD_5	Feigns illness or invents administrative excuses to avoid demanding workplace tasks.	Production & Task Deviance
PRM_1	Uses official workplace equipment, fuel, or stationery for personal, non-official business.	Property & Resource Misuse
PRM_2	Handles company or government property carelessly, causing avoidable damage or loss.	Property & Resource Misuse
PRM_3	Diverts organizational resources or materials meant for official projects to personal use.	Property & Resource Misuse
PRM_5	Inflates official reimbursement claims or expense accounts for personal financial gain.	Property & Resource Misuse
ITA_1	Uses harsh, insulting, or disrespectful language toward colleagues or subordinates.	Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression
ITA_2	Spreads malicious workplace rumors or gossip to damage a co-worker's professional reputation.	Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression
ITA_3	Publicly belittles or ridicules colleagues during meetings or administrative interactions.	Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression
ITA_5	Intentionally isolates or excludes specific colleagues from official communications and unit activities.	Interpersonal Toxicity & Aggression
PSD_1	Shows open bias or favoritism toward colleagues based on ethnic, state, or personal ties.	Political & Sectional Deviance
PSD_2	Engages in excessive sycophancy or flattery toward superiors	Political & Sectional Deviance

	to secure unearned career favors.	
PSD_3	Forms exclusive workplace cliques to undermine or block decisions made by other units.	Political & Sectional Deviance
PSD_5	Undermines or sabotages initiatives spearheaded by colleagues from different regional backgrounds.	Political & Sectional Deviance
UCC_1	Bypasses established organizational policies or financial regulations to expedite personal goals.	Unethical Compliance & Corruption
UCC_2	Expects or accepts unofficial gifts, favors, or financial inducements to perform routine official duties.	Unethical Compliance & Corruption
UCC_3	Conceals administrative errors, financial discrepancies, or procedural violations from management.	Unethical Compliance & Corruption
UCC_5	Coerces or pressures colleagues to participate in non-compliant or illicit workplace practices.	Unethical Compliance & Corruption