EFFECT OF JOB BURNOUT ON WORKPLACE DEVIANCE BEHAVIOR AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN KADUNA POLYTECHNIC

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Abstract
Workplace deviant behaviour has increasingly become a concern within Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly polytechnics, where academic staff are exposed to intense occupational demands. Prior studies have established that such behaviours are often linked to psychological strain rather than deliberate misconduct. Against this background, this study examined the effect of job burnout dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment on workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 363 academic staff, of which 327 valid responses were analyzed. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization exerted positive and statistically significant effects on workplace deviant behavior. Conversely, reduced personal accomplishment showed a positive but statistically insignificant effect. It was concluded that workplace deviance among academic staff is largely a stress-induced behavioural response rather than a purely disciplinary issue. The study contributes to the limited empirical literature on burnout and deviance within Nigerian polytechnics and highlights the importance of addressing emotional well-being to promote ethical conduct and institutional effectiveness.

Keywords: Job burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, workplace deviant behaviour

1.0 Introduction

Workplace deviance (WD) has emerged as a persistent challenge threatening the stability and operational efficiency of educational institutions in Nigeria. Workplace deviance is conceptualized as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). It manifests in forms such as withholding effort, absenteeism, and hostility toward colleagues. In the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions, empirical evidence indicates that these behaviors are often not isolated acts of indiscipline but psychological responses to intense occupational stressors (Idris et al., 2025; Suleiman, 2020). Idris et al. (2025) established that when academic staff are subjected to chronic emotional drain, they often resort to deviant behaviors as a coping mechanism to restore equity or conserve their remaining energy. At Kaduna Polytechnic, the pressure of managing a massive student population with limited resources may create a fertile ground for such counterproductive behaviors, potentially compromising the institution's mandate.

The connection between these deviant behaviors and the work environment is distinct across different sectors in Nigeria. While Ezenwaka and Iyamah (2021) stressed that workplace deviance in the banking sector is heavily influenced by perceptions of organizational justice, specifically fairness in pay and procedures, the academic sector presents a different dynamic driven by psychological burnout.

Suleiman (2020) noted that among educators, occupational stress is a primary predictor of deviance, where the inability to manage emotional demands leads to negative behavioral outcomes. This implies that while bankers may deviate due to greed or unfairness, academic staff often

deviate due to exhaustion. This distinction is critical for Kaduna Polytechnic, where the Publish or Perish culture adds a layer of stress absent in corporate sectors, necessitating a specific investigation into how job burnout drives these behaviors locally.

Job Burnout is seen as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, primarily affecting individuals in helping professions like teaching. Ajao et al. (2025) posited that burnout is a significant correlate of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), noting that employees who feel emotionally exhausted are less likely to adhere to organizational rules. Specifically, Goga et al. (2025) established that in academic settings, Depersonalization developing a cynical, detached attitude toward students, strongly predicts interpersonal deviance, explaining why some staff may exhibit aggression or negligence toward students. This suggests that the rude or negligent behavior often observed among lecturers is frequently a symptom of untreated psychological burnout.The situation in Nigerian Polytechnics as rooted by Bankole et al. (2025) highlighted that academic staff in polytechnics face distinct stressors, including poor infrastructural facilities, high student-to-staff ratios, and perceived organizational injustice, which significantly fuel burnout. (Bankole et al., 2025).

Thus, the integrity of academic operations at Kaduna Polytechnic may be undermined by a prevalence of these unethical staff behaviors, including chronic lateness, unauthorized absence from lectures, aggressive behavior toward students, and the mishandling of assessments. Suleiman (2020) warns that such occupational deviance, if unchecked, leads to a toxic work environment and degrades the quality of education delivered to students. Management's traditional response has been reactive, relying on punitive sanctions such as queries and disciplinary committees; yet, these measures have yielded limited results because they address the behavior without tackling the root cause; the psychological state of the workforce.

Existing literature strongly suggests that deviance is often a withdrawal behavior triggered by Job Burnout. However, the contextual gap remains; most empirical studies in Nigeria have focused on Universities (Idris et al., 2025; Goga et al., 2025), the Banking Sector (Ezenwaka & Iyamah, 2021), or other regions like the South West (Bankole et al., 2025) and Delta State (Tarurhor &Opatayo, 2022). There is a scarcity of empirical evidence linking the specific dimensions of burnout to workplace deviance within the Polytechnic system in Northern Nigeria. Hence, Polytechnicsin northern Nigeria differs from others due her cultural context, funding, and resources constraints. The northern region has a stronger emphasis on Islamic education and traditional industries (e.g leatherwork, textiles etc) influencing polytechnic program. Also, the funding challenges impacting infrastructural facilities compared to institutions in other regions. This study is designed to bridge this gap by empirically investigating how the specific dimensions of burnout drive workplace deviance among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic.

2.0 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB) is defined by Bennett and Robinson (1995) as voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both. This definition emphasizes the voluntary aspect, implying that the employee lacks the motivation to conform to normative expectations rather than lacking the ability to do so.Although the existing literature typically categorizes these behaviours into two distinct dimensions; interpersonal deviance (directed at individuals) and organizational deviance (directed at the institution), this study adopts a unidimensional approach. Consequently, WDB is examined here as a composite global construct to capture the total breadth of counterproductive

actions resulting from burnout, rather than distinguishing between specific targets of the behaviour. In the context of this study, WDB is operationally defined as voluntary behaviours engaged by academic staff in Kaduna Polytechnic which are against the norms of the institution, such as lateness, absenteeism, withholding effort, or acting rudely toward students and colleagues, serving as a negative coping mechanism to occupational stress.

Concept of Job Burnout

Job burnout is described as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Unlike general stress, which involves too much pressure, burnout is about not enough, feeling empty and devoid of motivation. In the Nigerian Polytechnic sector, burnout is particularly prevalent due to structural deficits; this is further buttressed by Bankole et al. (2025), who highlighted that academic staff in polytechnics face distinct stressors, including poor infrastructural facilities and high student-to-staff ratios, which accelerate the burnout process. For the purpose of this study, job burnout is seen as a multidimensional psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It is operationalized not merely as a state of temporary fatigue, but as a chronic response to occupational stressors that depletes the emotional and cognitive resources of academic staff, potentially triggering negative behavioral outcomes.

Concept of Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional Exhaustion (EE) refers to the feeling of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). When academic staff experience this state, they feel drained and lack the energy to face another day of teaching or supervision. It represents the basic individual stress dimension of burnout.In the context of this study, emotional exhaustion is conceptualized as a chronic state of physical and psychological depletion resulting from the excessive teaching loads and administrative demands at Kaduna Polytechnic. It is operationalized as the point where an academic staff member lacks the emotional resources to engage constructively with students and colleagues, often serving as a precursor to withdrawal behaviors such as lateness, absenteeism, and withholding effort, as a means of conserving their remaining energy.

Emotional Exhaustion and Workplace Deviant Behaviour

Empirically, Ajao et al. (2025) investigated the correlates of counterproductive work behavior among school teachers in Ogbomoso metropolis. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology and gathered data via questionnaires from a sample of 964 teachers selected using stratified and accidental sampling approaches. Their data, analyzed using correlation and regression, revealed that exhaustion had a significant influence on deviant behavior. Similarly, Suleiman (2020) conducted a predictive study of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Kwara State using a sample of 198 teachers. The study adopted a correlational design with Pearson Product Moment correlation as the statistical tool and found that occupational stress (a precursor to exhaustion) was significantly related to workplace deviance.

Furthermore, Idris et al. (2025) examined the effect of job burnout dimensions on workplace deviance among academic staff of Kaduna State University. Using a stratified sample of 395 academic staff and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), their findings established that emotional exhaustion was a primary driver of deviant behavior. In the same vein, Goga et al. (2023) investigated the link between emotional exhaustion and deviance among 142

academic staff at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Their regression analysis confirmed that as emotional resources deplete, the likelihood of engaging in counterproductive acts increases significantly. These researchers concluded that when employees are exhausted, they are less likely to adhere to organizational rules. Based on the findings that exhaustion leads to withdrawal, the study hypothesizes:

H_{01}: Emotional exhaustion has no significant effect on workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic.

Concept of Depersonalization

Depersonalization (DP) is defined as an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's care or service (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In an academic setting, this manifests as a cynical, detached attitude toward students, effectively treating them as objects rather than individuals.In the context of this study, depersonalization is conceptualized as a defensive psychological detachment adopted by academic staff at Kaduna Polytechnic to shield themselves from the overwhelming emotional demands of a massive student population. It is operationalized as the development of callous, cynical, and indifferent attitudes such as ignoring student complaints or treating colleagues with hostility, which serves as a precursor to interpersonal deviance by reducing the perceived moral cost of mistreating others.

Depersonalization and Workplace Deviant Behaviour

A recent empirical study byGoga et al. (2025) examined the effect of job burnout on workplace deviant behaviour among university academic staff. The study utilized a survey research design and collected data from 142 academic staff using a structured questionnaire. Their findings, analyzed using regression techniques, suggested that Depersonalization was a strong predictor of interpersonal deviance. Furthermore, Idris et al. (2025) investigated the effect of job burnout dimensions on workplace deviance specifically among academic staff of Kaduna State University (KASU). Drawing a sample of 395 academic staff through stratified sampling, they used PLS-SEM to analyze the hypotheses. They established that as staff became more cynical (depersonalized), incidents of hostility toward colleagues increased. However, Akpan (2021) noted in a study of University of Uyo staff that while depersonalization exists, its intensity might vary based on institutional support.

Based on the findings that cynicism and detachment lead to hostility, the study hypothesizes:

H_{02}: Depersonalization has no significant effect on workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic.

Concept of Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA) refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is the self-evaluation component of burnout where staff feel their efforts are futile. In this study, reduced personal accomplishment is conceptualized as a pervasive sense of professional inefficacy among academic staff at Kaduna Polytechnic, where individuals feel their teaching and research efforts yield little positive impact due to systemic constraints. It is operationalized as a decline in self-efficacy and job satisfaction, where the inability to meet professional standards leads to a psychological withdrawal from work tasks (such as passivity), rather than the active hostility seen in other dimensions of burnout.

Reduced Personal AccomplishmentandWorkplace Deviant Behaviour

A foundational study by Onyia (2015) investigated the causes and management of job-related stress among staff of polytechnic libraries in Southern Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design, and data were analyzed to show that poor working environments contributed to a sense of professional failure. Additionally, Kazir and Dalah (2021) conducted a comparative study of deviant work behaviour and staff performance between Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua and Federal College Education Potiskum in Yobe State. Using a structured questionnaire distributed to selected academic staff, they found that poor performance often linked to reduced accomplishment, was associated with deviant behavior. Conversely, Oluwadiya (2023) focused on doctors and found that while burnout prompted turnover intention, the link between reduced accomplishment and active deviance was complex and less direct compared to exhaustion.Based on the mixed evidence regarding the impact of professional inefficacy on deviance, the study hypothesizes:

H_{03}: Reduced personal accomplishment has no significant effect on workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is the Stressor-Emotion Model, developed by Spector and Fox (2005). Spector and Fox (2005) were the developers of the Stressor-Emotion Model, which provides the theoretical underpinning supporting the link between emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and workplace deviant behaviour (WDB). The model points out that various emotional responses are developed as a consequence of employees' appraisal of the work environment (Smoktunowicz et al., 2015). According to Spector (1998), all events that pose a threat to well-being are stressors which lead to emotional reactions that are negative.

Spector and Fox (2005) stated that people who continually become exposed to emotion-induced events have an increased likelihood to engage in a behavioural response. Hence, negative emotions heighten the likelihood or facilitate WDB by motivating the individual to actively and directly attack the person who creates the situation, or to develop passive and indirect coping strategies like work avoidance or alcohol consumption (Spector & Fox, 2005). Conversely, positive emotions are facilitators for Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). In essence, the model suggests a flow from environment to perception, to negative emotion, and finally to WDB (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001).

In the context of this study, Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization are considered the negative emotional reactions to stressors that heighten the likelihood of engagement in WDB among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic. This is because academic staff work in an extremely stressful environment (Goga, Bashir & Aliyu, 2023). Similarly, Aminullah and Olojuola (2021) reported that lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions are suffering from high academic workloads. These include teaching very large classes (common in polytechnics), and invigilating students under tension due to poor accommodation. Consequently, the model predicts that staff will resort to deviance as a behavioural response to these emotional strains.

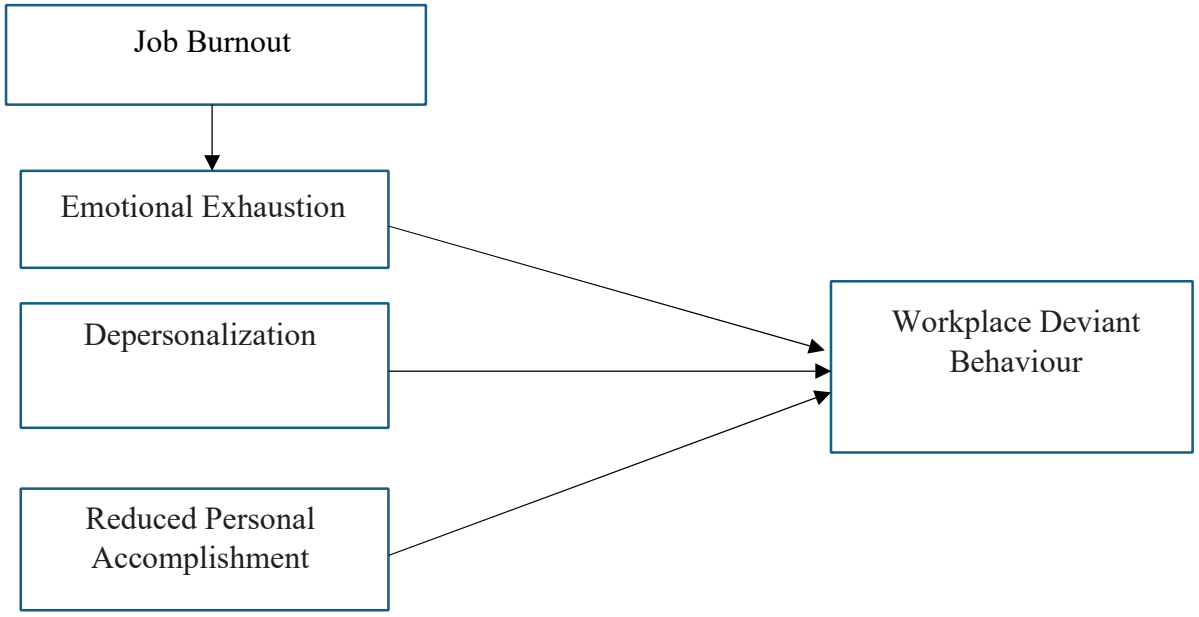


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 represent the conceptual framework which serves as a schematic representation of the hypothesized causal relationship between the study's variables. The model positions Job Burnout as the Independent Variable (IV) on the left, disaggregated into its three core dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. These dimensions are linked via directional arrows to Workplace Deviant Behaviour, the Dependent Variable (DV) on the right. This structural flow visually illustrates the study's central proposition: that variations in the levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment directly exert an influence on the manifestation of deviant behavior among academic staff.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a survey and correlational research design. The study relied exclusively on primary data, which was collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The mode of administration was face-to-face, utilizing a drop and pick method to ensure a high response rate and direct engagement with the respondents. A cross-sectional research design was also employed, where data were collected at a single point in time from the study respondents.

The target population for the study consists of the academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic, specifically focusing on the Tudun Wada Main Campus, which hosts the College of Engineering (COE), the College of Science and Technology (CST), and the College of Technical and Vocational Education (CTVE). Based on data derived from the 2025 Registry Division Academic Staff Disposition, the current active academic staff strength across these three colleges is established at 1,061.

To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula was utilized on the population of 1,061, resulting in a base sample of 290. However, to mitigate the effect of potential non-response, a 25% markup was added to the base sample as recommended by Israel (1992).

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

25% of 290 ≈ 73.
Total Distributed = 290 + 73 = 363.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. This prevents overrepresentation of staff from any particular college; hence, each of the three colleges at the Tudun Wada campus stood as a stratum, and simple random sampling was used to select individual participants from each stratum. The specific distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:
Stratified Distribution of Sample Size (Tudun Wada Campus)

S/N	Colleges (Strata)	Population	Proportion Formula	Sample Size
1	College of Science & Technology (CST)	496	$\frac{496 \times 363}{1061}$	170
2	College of Engineering (COE)	333	$\frac{333 \times 363}{1061}$	114
3	College of Tech. & Voc. Ed. (CTVE)	232	$\frac{232 \times 363}{1061}$	79
	Total	1061		363

Source: Derived from Institutional Audit Data, 2026.

Regarding variable measurement, the instrument was divided into sections. The dimensions of Job Burnout were measured using items adapted from the original Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986). Specifically, Emotional Exhaustion was measured using 5 items, Depersonalization was measured using 5 items, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment was measured using 5 items. The dependent variable, Workplace Deviant Behaviour, was measured using 10 items adapted from the original workplace deviance scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree).

To ensure the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, content validity was established. Specifically, three experts who are Lecturers in the Department of Business Administration, Kaduna State University (KASU), were asked to scrutinize the instrument for simplicity, clarity, format, and ambiguity. Their suggestions were used to refine the final questionnaire. Reliability was assessed through a pilot study of 30 staff members selected from the College of Environmental Studies (Barnawa Campus). This location was chosen because the staff share similar characteristics with the target population but were excluded from the main study to prevent data contamination. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each construct. All constructs yielded Cronbachalpha values above the 0.70 threshold, confirming the instrument's internal consistency.

Finally, the data were analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The mathematical model for the study is specified as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y_j = \alpha + \beta_{1j}(EE) + \beta_{2j}(DP) + \beta_{3j}(RPA) + e_j}$$

Where:

Y = Workplace Deviant Behaviour
α = Constant
$\boldsymbol{\beta_{1-3}}$= Regression Coefficients
EE = Emotional Exhaustion
DP = Depersonalization
RPA = Reduced Personal Accomplishment
$_j = j^{th}$ academic staff member in the sample (where $_j = 1,\ldots n$).
e = Error term

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Response Rate

A total of 363 questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic (Tudun Wada Campus). This sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula with an additional 25% markup to account for non-response. Out of the distributed copies, 327 were retrieved and found usable for analysis, while 36 were either lost or incompletely filled. This represents a response rate of 90.08%, which is considered highly adequate for analysis.

Table 1:
Response Rate

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distributed	363	100.0
Returned & Usable	327	90.08
Unreturned/Invalid	36	9.92
Total	**363**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were computed to determine the level of Job Burnout and Workplace Deviant Behaviour among the staff.

Table 2:
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	327	3.46	.870	High
Reduced Personal Accomp. (RPA)	327	3.22	.955	High
Depersonalization (DP)	327	3.12	.894	Moderate
Workplace Deviance (WDB)	327	2.99	.802	Moderate

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that academic staff experience high levels of Emotional Exhaustion (M=3.46) and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (M=3.22). Depersonalization was found to be moderate (M=3.12). The dependent variable, Workplace Deviant Behaviour, had a mean of 2.99, indicating a moderate level of reported deviant behaviour within the institution.

Furthermore, the standard deviation values, which range from .802 to .955, reveal the degree of variability in the respondents' views. Reduced Personal Accomplishment recorded the highest standard deviation (SD = .955), suggesting that there is a wider variation in how staff perceive their own professional efficacy compared to other variables. Conversely, Workplace Deviant Behaviour had the lowest standard deviation (SD = .802), indicating that the responses were more clustered around the mean and that there is a relatively higher consensus among staff regarding the occurrence of deviant acts. Since all standard deviation values are below 1.0, it implies that the data points are not widely dispersed, ensuring that the calculated means are a reliable representation of the population's reality.

Correlation Analysis
To establish the strength and direction of the relationship between the dimensions of Job Burnout and Workplace Deviant Behaviour, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted.

Table 3:
Correlation Matrix

	WDB	EE	DP	RPA
Workplace Deviance (WDB)	1			
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	.521**	1		
Depersonalization (DP)	.513**	.324**	1	
Reduced Personal Accomp. (RPA)	.189*	.156*	.142*	1

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

Table 3 shows a strong, positive, and significant relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Workplace Deviant Behaviour (r = .521, p< 0.01). Similarly, Depersonalization shows a strong, positive, and significant relationship (r = .513, p< 0.01). Reduced Personal Accomplishment shows a weak, positive relationship (r = .189, p< 0.05). Also, the correlation output indicates the absence of harmful multicollinearity, since none of the value is above the threshold of 0.8 as suggested by scholars (Gujarati & porter, 2009).

Multiple Regression Analysis

To determine the extent to which the three independent variables predict Workplace Deviant Behaviour, Multiple Linear Regression was conducted.

Table 4:
Model Summary

*	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	.576	**.332**	.326	.65861	**2.078**

a. Predictors: (Constant), RPA, DP, EE.
b. Dependent Variable: WDB

The R Square value of 0.332 implies that 33.2% of the variance in Workplace Deviant Behaviour is explained by the combined influence of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, while the remaining 66.8 were explained by other factors not captured in this study. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.078 falls within the acceptable range 1.5 to 2.5(Field, 2009), confirming that there is no autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 5:
ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	69.671	3	23.224	**53.538**	**.000**
Residual	140.110	323	.434		
Total	**209.781**	**326**			

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The F-statistic of 53.538 with a p-value of .000 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant and the model is fit for further analysis This confirms that the independent variables jointly predict the dependent variable.

Table 6: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.675	.194		3.472	.001	
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	**.319**	.044	.346	7.215	**.000**	1.110
Depersonalization (DP)	**.314**	.042	.350	7.412	**.000**	1.078
Reduced Personal Accomp. (RPA)	**.072**	.040	.085	1.811	**.071**	1.076

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.
a. Dependent Variable: WDB

Discussion of Findings

The results of the study indicate that job burnout significantly predicts workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff, with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization emerging as the most influential dimensions. A positive and statistically significant association was observed between emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance ($\beta = 0.319$, $p<0.05$), suggesting that sustained emotional depletion heightens the propensity for norm-violating behaviours as individuals attempt to conserve diminishing psychological resources. This finding is consistent with the Conservation of Resources theory, which posits that individuals experiencing resource loss are more likely to engage in defensive or withdrawal-oriented behaviours (Hobfoll, 1989), and aligns with prior empirical studies conducted among Nigerian academic staff that identified emotional exhaustion as a central precursor to counterproductive work behaviour (Ajao et al., 2025; Bankole et al., 2025).

Similarly, depersonalization was found to exert a strong and significant effect on workplace deviant behavior ($\beta = 0.314$, $p<0.05$), indicating that psychological detachment and cynicism toward students and colleagues erode moral restraint and professional commitment. This outcome corroborates earlier studies which established that depersonalization increases deviance by weakening empathy and ethical sensitivity in academic environments (Goga et al., 2025; Idris et al., 2025). The finding further supports the Stressor Emotion Model, which explains deviant behaviour as a behavioural response to negative emotional states generated by persistent workplace stressors (Spector & Fox, 2005).

In contrast, reduced personal accomplishment demonstrated a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with workplace deviant behavior ($\beta = 0.072$, $p = 0.071$), implying that feelings of professional inefficacy do not necessarily translate into observable misconduct. This result supports earlier assertions that reduced accomplishment is more likely to manifest as internalized dissatisfaction or emotional withdrawal rather than overt deviance, particularly within structured and norm-governed professional settings such as tertiary institutions (Suleiman, 2020). Overall, the findings suggest that emotionally reactive components of burnout are more behaviourally consequential than self-evaluative dimensions within the polytechnic context.

The findings of this study have important managerial, policy, and theoretical implications for tertiary education institutions, particularly polytechnics in Nigeria. The significant effects of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization on workplace deviant behaviour imply that deviance among academic staff should be conceptualized as a psychologically mediated outcome of

prolonged occupational stress rather than merely an issue of individual misconduct. This reinforces existing literature which emphasizes that emotionally induced stress responses function as proximal triggers for counterproductive work behaviours (Spector & Fox, 2005; Smoktunowicz et al., 2015). The results further imply that institutional conditions such as excessive workload, large class sizes, and inadequate staffing structures indirectly contribute to behavioural norm violations by intensifying emotional strain, a pattern previously documented within Nigerian tertiary institutions (Aminullah & Olojuola, 2021; Bankole et al., 2025). The insignificant influence of reduced personal accomplishment suggests that self-evaluative burnout dimensions may be buffered by professional ethics, institutional controls, or access to career development opportunities, thereby limiting their translation into deviant behaviour (Suleiman, 2020). From a theoretical standpoint, the study extends the applicability of the Stressor–Emotion Model by demonstrating that emotionally reactive dimensions of burnout exert stronger behavioural effects than cognitive self-assessments within the polytechnic system.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that job burnout is not merely a personal health issue but a critical organizational hazard that significantly explains variations in workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic. By validating the Stressor-Emotion Model, this research establishes that deviant acts such as lateness, absenteeism, and hostility, are predominantly psychological coping mechanisms triggered by intense occupational stress rather than isolated acts of indiscipline.

Specifically, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were identified as the primary drivers of this deviance. The study posits that when academic staff are emotionally depleted by excessive workloads and infrastructural deficits, they engage in deviant behaviours as a resource-conservation strategy, effectively cutting corners to preserve their remaining energy. Furthermore, the significance of depersonalization suggests that as staff develop cynical and detached attitudes to cope with large student populations, the psychological barrier to mistreating students or colleagues is lowered, leading to a normalization of interpersonal misconduct.

Conversely, the finding that reduced personal accomplishment has no significant influence on workplace deviant behaviour offers a critical nuance. It suggests that feelings of professional inefficacy tend to result in internal psychological withdrawal (such as passivity or low self-esteem) rather than active, externalized misconduct. This implies that deviance in Kaduna Polytechnic is fuelled by active distress and cynicism (EE and DP) rather than feelings of failure (RPA).

Consequently, the study challenges the traditional management approach of viewing deviance solely through a disciplinary lens. Instead, it necessitates a paradigm shift where workplace deviance is reconceptualized as a symptomatic response to systemic burnout. The study submits that sustainable ethical conduct and organizational stability in Northern Nigerian polytechnics cannot be achieved through sanctions alone, but requires a strategic focus on preserving the emotional well-being of the academic workforce.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following three recommendations are advanced:

1. Workload Rationalization to Curb Emotional Exhaustion: Since emotional exhaustion was identified as a primary driver of deviance, management should prioritize the reduction of excessive academic workload. This should be achieved through strategic recruitment of new

staff, equitable allocation of courses, and the engagement of adjunct lecturers to alleviate chronic staff shortages, thereby removing the root cause of burnout-induced deviance.

2. Institutionalization of Psychological Support Programmes: To address the significant influence of depersonalization, the polytechnic should institutionalize regular staff development programmes focused on emotional intelligence, stress management, and student–staff relationship enhancement. These interventions are critical for reducing the psychological detachment and cynical attitudes that lead to interpersonal misconduct.
3. Sustenance of Professional Development Incentives: Although reduced personal accomplishment did not significantly predict deviant behaviour in this study, existing support systems such as access to research funding, transparent promotion processes, and conference sponsorship, must be sustained. Maintaining these incentives is essential to prevent latent professional dissatisfaction from escalating into future withdrawal behaviours or creating an environment ripe for burnout.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. Bridging the Contextual and Empirical Gap: First, this study fills a critical lacuna in empirical literature by focusing specifically on the Polytechnic sector in Northern Nigeria. Prior studies on workplace deviance have predominantly concentrated on Universities (Idris et al., 2025), the Banking Sector (Ezenwaka & Iyamah, 2021), or institutions in Southern Nigeria (Bankole et al., 2025; Tarurhor & Opatayo, 2022). By anchoring this investigation in Kaduna Polytechnic, this study provides rare empirical evidence highlighting how the unique structural constraints of the region such as funding deficits and specific cultural nuances, create a distinct burnout profile for academic staff that differs from the university system.

2. Theoretical Validation and Extension: Theoretically, this study extends the applicability of the Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005) to the Nigerian polytechnic context. It empirically validates that deviant behaviour is primarily a reaction to negative emotional states (exhaustion and depersonalization) rather than cognitive self-assessments. A key theoretical contribution is the finding that Reduced Personal Accomplishment acts as a silent variable; unlike emotional exhaustion, it does not significantly predict active deviance. This adds necessary nuance to burnout theory by suggesting that feelings of professional inefficacy lead to internal psychological withdrawal (passivity) rather than externalized misconduct, thereby distinguishing the behavioural outcomes of exhaustion from failure.

3. Managerial and Practical Implications: Practically, the study challenges the prevailing managerial paradigm that views workplace deviance solely as a disciplinary issue requiring punitive sanctions. Instead, it contributes an evidence-based perspective that conceptualizes deviance as a symptomatic response to systemic burnout. This shifts the focus of administrative intervention from reactive punishment to proactive resource conservation, offering a blueprint for management to mitigate deviance through workload rationalization and emotional intelligence training rather than queries and committees alone.

4. Methodological Contribution: Methodologically, the study successfully operationalizes Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB) as a unidimensional global construct. Unlike studies that bifurcate deviance into interpersonal and organizational dimensions, this research demonstrates that in high-stress environments, academic staff often exhibit a composite pattern of counterproductive behaviours. This finding simplifies the measurement of deviance for future researchers in high-pressure educational settings, suggesting that under severe burnout, the distinction between harming the organization and harming individuals becomes blurred.

Suggestions for Further Studies

While this study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between job burnout and workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff of Kaduna Polytechnic, several avenues remain for future research:

1. **Comparative Studies:** This study was limited to a single polytechnic in Kaduna State. Future researchers should consider conducting a comparative study between Academic Staff of Polytechnics and Universities to determine if the structural differences in teaching load and research expectations produce different patterns of burnout and deviance.
2. **Investigation of Moderating Variables:** The regression model revealed that the dimensions of burnout explained 33.2% of the variance in deviant behaviour. This indicates that other factors are involved. Future studies should introduce moderating variables such as Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Justice, or Religiosity to investigate what buffers the effect of burnout. For instance, why do some exhausted staff not engage in deviance?
3. **Longitudinal Research Design:** This study adopted a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point in time. Since burnout is a syndrome that develops progressively, future studies could employ a longitudinal design to track academic staff over a full academic session. This would help establish strict causality and observe how deviance fluctuates during peak stress periods (e.g., examination and accreditation periods).
4. Re-examination of Reduced Personal Accomplishment: This study found that Reduced Personal Accomplishment had no significant effect on workplace deviance. Future research should investigate whether this specific dimension predicts other negative outcomes, such as Turnover Intention or Depression, rather than active deviance. It is possible that staff who feel professionally ineffective are more likely to quit than to break rules.
5. **Qualitative Approaches:** A qualitative inquiry (interviews or focus groups) could be conducted to gain deeper insights into the specific types of resource-conservation strategies staff use. Understanding the lived experience of burnout would complement the quantitative findings of this study.

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