

Sense-making and Employee Deviant Behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between Sense-making and Employee Deviant Behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study is the 202 employees from the 18 Deposit Money Banks in Nigeria. The study concentrated on the headquarters of the various banks as they oversee the activities of other branches within the state. The sample size of 134 was determined using census method since our population was small. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between Sense-making Employee Deviant Behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. The study thus recommends that Management of Deposit Money Banks should advocate sense making as a means of reducing production deviance.*

Keywords: *Sense-making, Employee Deviant Behaviour, Property Deviance, Production Deviance, Personal Deviance*

INTRODUCTION

Deviant workplace behaviour (DWB) is a prevalent and costly phenomenon for organizations. Studies have shown that deviant workplace behaviour not only cost organizations substantial amount of money annually but have negative and psychological consequences for employees as well (McCardle, 2007; Milkovich & Newman, 2008; Baharom *et al.*, 2017). Deviant workplace behaviour in this context refers to voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Johnson & Indvik, 2001). It was reported that employees accounted for a higher percentage of retail thefts than did customers (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). Annual costs of workplace violence are estimated at \$4.2 billion per year (Everton *et al.*, 2007). A report had it that employee theft, and fraudulent behaviour cost organizations \$200 billion and \$400

billion yearly respectively (Kidwell & Kochanowski, 2005). Interpersonal deviances lead to job stress and less job satisfaction and subsequently reduce productivity (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2007). Businesses pay more than \$150 billion annually for managing occupational stress of absenteeism of employees (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh & Kessler, 2006).

Attitudes exhibited by employees can directly affect the atmosphere and productivity within organizations. An environment that is professional and conducive for work needs to be created by an employer in order to keep employees motivated. If this environment is created, the employees are likely to work hard and successfully complete each assignment as expected of them. An attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken 1998). Attitude describes the way an employee feels inside. These are an employee's feelings toward his employer, his co-workers and his position within the organisation. All employees have attitudes toward their working environment. One important predictor of this attitude is employee sense-making.

Sense-making is concerned with the interpretations of events and situations. Schutte (2016) describes sense-making as a process of assigning meaning and interpretations to one's context. However, from the angle of workplace spirituality, it details enriched and conscious interpretations and understanding of events or outcomes which enable the employee to make decisions or act in ways that are not only responsible but also considerate of others. Schutte (2016) also asserts that employees with a clear sense of their environment and the knowledge of the underlying systematic features of their relationships tend to be more cautious of their behaviour. This is as Kesari and Pradhan (2018) argue that the line between transcendence and sense-making was blurred, given that both are concerned with the perceptions of one's context, however, this could be contended based on an overview of operational definitions drawn from previous studies (Bansal, 2015; Marschke, Preziosi & Harrington, 2016; Walt, 2018) which emphasize on transcendence as primarily rising above emotional turmoil and avoiding the frivolities of actions such as retaliation and negativity in dealing with situations, and the definition of sense-making as the understanding of relative events as well as the apportioning of meaning to situations. Therefore, this study sought to examine the relationship between sense-making as a dimension of workplace spirituality and employee deviant behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. This study was guided by the following research question:

This study was guided by the following research question:

- i. What is the relationship between sense-making and property deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between sense-making and production deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State?
- iii. What is the relationship between sense-making and personal deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State?

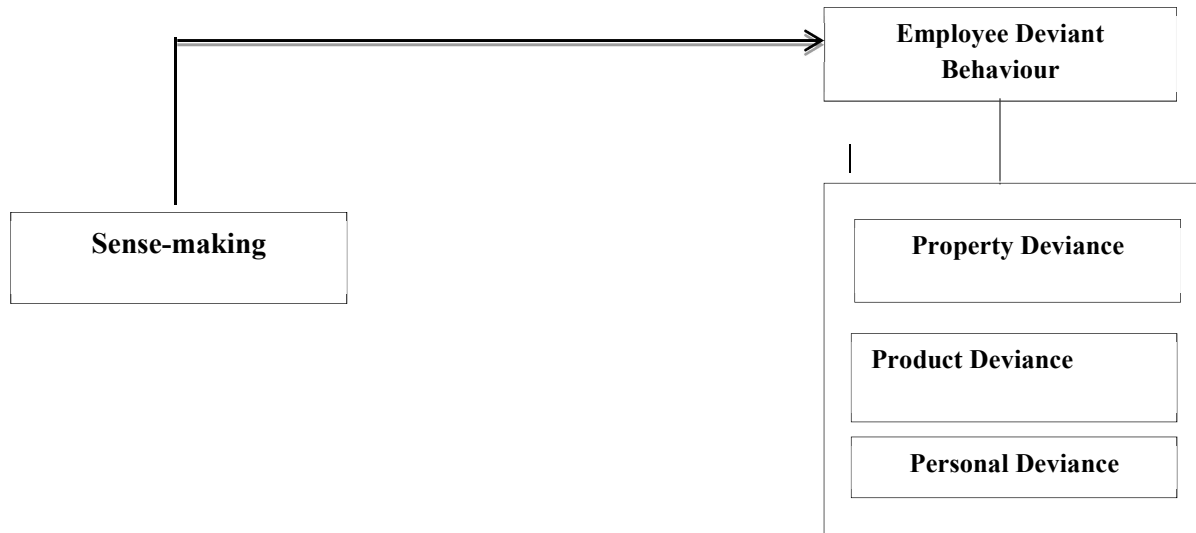


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for sense making and Employee deviant Behaviour

Source: Researchers (2021)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory

In understanding the motives for communicative actions within relationships, many have compared relationships to that of a fiscal market (Osborn, 2012). Exchange theorists have shown that individuals invest in relationships and expect to receive gains in return (Dunbar, 2015). Rather than merely investing monetary currency, however, investments may include time, energy, love, face-work, and countless other life currencies. Theorists who take this perspective tend to assume that individuals are motivated by a desire to improve their situations while also minimizing the amount of effort to do so (Dunbar, 215). In comparing relationships to an exchange, scholars have hoped to understand what factors influence why a relationship begins, how long it will last, and when it will end (Ribarsky, 2013).

Social exchange theory proposes that every relationship involves inputs (costs/investments) and outcomes (rewards) and that the combination of these costs and rewards allows for the prediction of relational outcomes. Additionally, this theory provides further insight into why individuals engage in face-saving techniques for their partners. Specifically, individuals make decisions based on predictions of what will occur as a result of their actions (Ko & Hur, 2014). Therefore, individuals will make decisions on how to help others manage face based on predictions of what

will occur. Even in romantic relationships, individuals often choose the course of action that they believe will bring the most reward with the least amount of effort (Ribarsky, 2013).

Concept of Sense-making

This is concerned with the interpretations of events and situations. Schutte (2016) describes sense-making as a process of assigning meaning and interpretations to one's context. However, from the angle of workplace spirituality, it details enriched and conscious interpretations and understanding of events or outcomes which enable the employee to make decisions or act in ways that are not only responsible but also considerate of others. Schutte (2016) also asserts that employees with a clear sense of their environment and the knowledge of the underlying systematic features of their relationships tend to be more cautious of their behaviour. This is as Kesari and Pradhan (2018) argue that the line between transcendence and sense-making was blurred, given that both are concerned with the perceptions of one's context, however, this could be contended based on an overview of operational definitions drawn from previous studies (Bansal, 2015; Marschke, Preziosi and Harrington, 2016; Walt, 2018) which emphasize on transcendence as primarily rising above emotional turmoil and avoiding the frivolities of actions such as retaliation and negativity in dealing with situations, and the definition of sense-making as the understanding of relative events as well as the apportioning of meaning to situations.

Sense-making is the process that involves the meaning people give to their experiences (Weick, 2020) and through which they work to get a hold on events that appear to them as uncommon, unexpected and complicated, or are not in line with their expectations (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sense-making involves the active construction of events and frameworks for understanding; since individuals construct the situations they try to understand (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). It gathers information, after which a cognitive process grows to create meaning about the unknown event (George & Jones, 2001). Sense-making is describing and understanding organizational life from an employee perspective (Weick, 1995). Sense-making is relevant for the study of organizational life because identified salient characteristics associated with change are viewed as a triggering signal to the employees. Sense-making is a process by which an employee ascertains the extent to which there is a revision in what the employer provides to the employee. It includes the decision-making process by the employee regarding how to respond to these revisions (Weick, 2020).

Employee Deviant Behaviour

Employee deviant behaviour is expressed in actions and attitudes that contradict and go against clearly established expectations and in that way can be considered detrimental or destructive. Employee deviant behaviour according to Goodboy, Martin and Bolkan (2017) is traceable to conflict situations between the employee or staff of interest and other key or significant members of the organization. However, Ramlee, Osman, Salahudin, Yeng, Ling and Safizal (2016) argue that employee deviant behaviour could also be linked to factors outside the organization but for some reason, is expressed within the organization. Balogun *et al.*, (2018) argue that deviance is

an expression of frustration that is manifested through anger at co-workers and at the organization itself. It is as such a conscious and deliberate action that is demonstrated through the employee's disorderly and destructive actions which ultimately impact the organization.

The employee deviant workplace behaviour phenomenon is increasingly becoming popular and this issue had attracted many researchers to study the phenomenon as it impacts employees' productivity and well-being (Tamunomiebi & Zeb-Obipi, 2009). According to Appelbaum, Laconi and Matousek (2007), the review of various scholars describes employee deviant behaviour in the workplace. Joseph (2020) describes employee deviant behaviours as misbehaviour in the workplace that is categorized into aggressive behaviour which consists of sexual harassment, intimidation, open hostility towards co-workers and so on. unproductive behaviour which constitutes coming late at work, sneaking out of work during working hours, being involved with taking extended lunch and so on. abuse of property and organizational politics which involves spreading out false rumours and gossip.

Robinson and Benneth (2015) define workplace employee deviant behaviour as volunteer behaviour from members of an organization that infringes organizational norms by doing that which would threaten the growth of the organization with its employees. Robinson and Bennett (2015) have given different names for employee deviant behaviour like workplace deviance, counterproductive behaviour (Mangione 2012), antisocial behaviour (Giacalone & Greenberg 1997), and misbehaviour (Vardi *et al.*, 2004). Behaviour is seen deviating when organizations' customs and policies are infringed by individuals who can endanger the growth of the organization with its employees. Employee deviant Behaviour in the workplace exist at different organizational levels and this behaviour includes; unpunctuality at the place of work, spending working time for personal reasons, using working facilities for personal matters and needs, using inappropriate and different standards and procedures in working, displaying unfair attitudes to colleagues (Eliyana, 2015).

Property deviance

This concept is adopted in measuring or manifesting acts or behaviour which are detrimental to the physical or tangible assets of the organization (Narayanan & Murphy, 2017). Employees express property deviance in the nonchalant and disorderly way they handle the organizations' properties such as their use of components such the organizations' computer systems, the closing of doors, use of equipment such as photocopiers or printers and other valuable materials or hardware within the workplace. Actions that deviate from the norms and acceptable practices of use and management of the organizations' properties or equipment are considered as employee deviant and in most cases involve the abuse and disregard of such properties or equipment. Narayanan and Murphy (2017) argue that such actions could be destructive and result in the wastage of materials and the inefficient running of the organization.

Organizational deviance encompasses production and property deviance. All behaviours in which employee deviant employees partake eventually have a negative impact on the overall

productivity of the organization. According to Robinson and Benett (1995), Property deviance can be described as those instances where employees acquire or damage the tangible property or assets of the work organization without authorization. Property deviance harms the organizations and is quite severe. Sabotaging equipment, accepting kickbacks, lying about hours worked, releasing confidential information, making intentional errors, misusing funds or expense accounts, theft and stealing from the company are forms of property deviance. Some of these acts are connected with direct costs for the organization since the equipment has to be replaced (Robinson & Benett 1995). Furthermore, these can affect productivity because work cannot be performed until the equipment is replaced. Everton, Jolton and Mastrangelo (2005) define theft as the unauthorized taking, control, or transfer of money and property of the formal work organization that is perpetrated by an employee during occupational activity.

Production deviance

The dimension of production deviance is concerned with the evident drop in production quality or quantity due to the behaviour of the worker. Organizations often establish production standards in terms of quality and quantity (Darvishmotevali, Arasli&Kilic, 2017). These standards require adherence and are important for growing the market base and profit of the business. However, production deviance occurs where workers or employees of the organization either knowingly or unknowingly act in ways that can be considered detrimental to the production capacities and goals of the organization. Rahim and Cosby (2016) argue that organizations depend primarily on the actions of their workers, thus shifts in behaviour or expressions of deviance from expected standards or frameworks could have serious or significant implications for the survival and performance of the organization. It is from this position evident that production deviance not only affects functional processes in the organization but also impacts the organization's overall wellbeing.

Robinson and Benett (1995) define production deviance as behaviours that violate the formally proscribed organizational norms delineating the minimal quality and quantity of work to be accomplished as part of one's job. For instance, most employees develop strategies to disrupt production in the organization. Such strategies include: being late to work, leaving early, taking excessive breaks, making personal calls, withholding effort that is, intentionally working slow, wasting resources, cyberloafing where one surfs the web doing non-work related tasks such as chatting on social networks sites, using drugs and alcohol in the workplace, giving unnecessary excuses like calling in sick when well (absenteeism) are forms of production deviance. Withholding effort describes the incidence where an individual gives less than full effort on a job-related task. An employee might withhold effort because he has negative views about the group or the organization. Kidwell and Kochanowski (1995) 2005 proposed that all these behaviours have an impact on the productivity of organizations. Lateness and absenteeism are closely linked to each other. Those employees who are absent frequently also tend to be unpunctual (Everton *et al.*, 2005).

Personal deviance

Deviance which is personal is that which directly affects the relationships and lines of communication or interaction of the individual. Personal deviance is expressed through actions that could be described as uncivil and abusive. It reflects behaviour that falls outside the norm of the organization and which significant others find uncomfortable, toxic and even harassing in nature. Sharma, Schuster and Singh (2016) argue that personal deviance portends the individual as being problematic and wayward. It is also depicted in the refusal to conform to the behavioural standards of the organization. Farhadi, Nasir, Omar and Nouri (2015) observe that such behaviour can be dangerous for the organization since it could affect the customers and the impression they have of the organization. The author further noted that while policies and regulatory frameworks are useful in addressing such tendencies within the workplace, these suggest an overly authoritative that coercive approach to the challenge; hence organizations should also consider alternatives such as mentoring, job design and other actions structured towards enhancing meaning and motivating the employee.

Violence that is initiated by co-workers can happen everywhere: No industry, no organization, and no employee can exclude the occurrence of such behaviour. Personal deviance is when an individual behaves in an aggressive or hostile manner towards others. Robinson and Benett (1995) affirmed that most employees develop some forms of personal deviance such as; sexual harassment, rape, verbal abuse, physical assaults, sabotaging the work of co-workers, stealing from co-workers, destroying property of co-workers, and endangering co-workers are forms of personal aggression. Everton *et al.*, (2005) narrate those employees who have more health problems either physical or emotional are less committed to the organization because they tend to be more depressed and have less job satisfaction than those who are not victims of aggression by their co-workers. When victims of such employee deviant behaviour receive and feel supported, there is a higher positive report of employee well-being than those not being supported. Everton *et al.*, (2005) suggest that organizations are faced with greater costs when individuals possess this type of behaviour. The costs are incurred as a result of lower productivity, lost work time, inferior quality, medical and legal expenses, and a damaged public image. Van Fleet and Griffin (2006) posit that verbal aggression and obstruction usually take place covertly in the workplace. Hence, harming the victims- whether they are individuals or the organization- can be carried out with little danger (Appelbaum, Deguire& Lay 2005).

Sense-Making and Employee Deviant Behaviour

Sense-making suggests an approach towards relationships anchored on enriched interpretations of such related interactions and exchanges that are unbiased or prejudiced. Rajappan *et al.*, (2017) argue that the perception of the external environment is highly subjective for employees with strong levels of spirituality. This is as they tend to offer meaning for their experiences based on their level of consciousness, understanding and heightened sense-making of their environment and of the feelings and conditions of others – thus spirituality allows for interpretations of the environment from a subjective basis rather than from an external basis.

Schutte (2016) argues that the actions and behaviour of individuals are consequent to their patterns of thought and their perception of their social environment. This also agrees with Bansal's (2015) observation that organizational members' perceptions shape their relationship with significant others such as their co-workers, customers and even the management of their organizations. Sense-making as such can be described as influencing the behaviour of the individual and in various ways enriches their perceptions – reducing their tendencies for deviance. The relationship between the variables is expressed in the following null hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and property deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and production deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and personal deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study is the 202 employees from the 18 Deposit Money Banks in Nigeria. The study concentrated on the headquarters of the various banks as they oversee the activities of other branches within the state. The sample size of 134 was determined using census method since our population was small. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The level of significance 0.05 was adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ($p < 0.05$). The level of relationship between sense-making with each of the measures of employee deviant behaviour is to examine the extent sense-making can impact on the outcome of each measure of employee deviant behaviour.

Table 1 Correlation for Sense-making on the Measures of Employee Deviant Behaviour

			Sense-making	Property Deviance	Production Deviance	Personal Deviance
Spearman's rho	Sense-making	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.868**	.722**	.585**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	117	117	117	117
	Property Deviance	Correlation Coefficient	.868**	.868**	1.000	.779**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	117	117	117	117
	Production Deviance	Correlation Coefficient	.722**	1.000	.868**	.853**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	117	117	117	117
	Personal Deviance	Correlation Coefficient	.585**	.853**	.779**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	117	117	117	117

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

Source: Research data, 2021

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and property deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between sense-making and property deviance. The *rho* value 0.868 indicates the direction and magnitude of this relationship which represents a very strong correlation. Also displayed is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between sense-making and property deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and production deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between sense-making and production deviance. The *rho* value 0.722 indicates the direction and magnitude of this relationship which represents a strong correlation. Also displayed is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between sense-making and production deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between sense-making and personal deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between sense-making and personal deviance. The ρ value 0.585 indicates the direction and magnitude of this relationship which represents a moderate correlation. Also displayed is the statistical test of significance (p -value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between sense-making and personal deviance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from the analysis reveal significant relationship between sense-making and employee deviant behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. The findings linked the effect of sense-making on employee deviant behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State, that is using sense-making to build employee deviant behaviour. A critical appraisal of the finding reveals that sense-making has a strong positive and significant effect on property deviance; sense-making has a strong positive and significant effect on production deviance; sense-making has a positive and significant effect on personal deviance. In all, sense-making has a strong positive and significant relationship with employee deviant behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State.

Sense-making suggests an approach towards relationships anchored on enriched interpretations of such related interactions and exchanges that are unbiased or prejudiced. Rajappan *et al.*, (2017) argue that the perception of the external environment is highly subjective for employees with strong levels of spirituality. This is as they tend to offer meaning for their experiences based on their level of consciousness, understanding and heightened sense-making of their environment and of the feelings and conditions of others – thus spirituality allows for interpretations of the environment from a subjective basis rather than from an external basis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the foregoing findings, it was concluded that sense-making has a significant influence on employee deviant behaviour in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. Implying that an increase in employee mindfulness would discourage deviant behaviours in employees in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State.

Therefore, it was recommended that that Management of Deposit Money Banks should encourage employee sense-making as a way of discouraging deviant work behaviours.

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