Original Research

Organizational Cynicism and Deviance Work Behaviour in the Banking Sector: Investigating the Role of Work-Life Balance and Perceived Organizational Support as Mediators

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Abstract

Objective: This study explores the mediating roles of work-life balance (WLB) and perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between organizational cynicism (OC) and deviant work behaviours (DWB) in Nigerian banks. It extends the application of Organizational Justice Theory and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory to the banking sector, highlighting their relevance in understanding employee behaviour within high-pressure organizational settings.

Design/Methods/Approach: The data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to 120 bank employees. Data analysis was conducted using Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM)**.**

Findings: The study indicates that organizational cynicism significantly contributes to deviant workplace behaviours, driven by factors such as poor leadership, lack of transparency, unrealistic targets, and job insecurity**.** However, both work-life balance and perceived organizational support were found to have a negative and significant impact on workplace deviance, indicating that better work-life balance and higher organizational support are associated with reduced employee misconduct. Moreover, mediation analysis confirms that WLB and POS partially mediate the OC-DWB relationship, suggesting that reducing cynicism alone is insufficient; organizations must also enhance employee well-being and foster a supportive work culture.

Originality/Value: The study advances theoretical knowledge by demonstrating the partial mediating mechanisms through which organizational cynicism translates into deviance, and highlights the significance of social exchange dynamics and perceptions of fairness in shaping employee behaviour.

Practical/Policy implication: The findings underscore the need for banking institutions and policymakers to go beyond surface-level interventions aimed at reducing cynicism. To effectively curb deviant workplace behaviours, organizations should implement comprehensive strategies that promote work-life integration, enhance organizational support systems, and cultivate ethical and transparent leadership.

Keywords: Organizational cynicism, Work-life balance, Deviant work behaviours, Perceived organizational support

JEL: J53, J81, M54

1. Introduction

The banking sector has experienced significant changes driven by globalization, e-banking, and financial innovation. While these advancements have improved efficiency and competitiveness, they have also introduced workplace challenges such as organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviours (DWBs). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these issues, reshaping workplace dynamics, employee perceptions, and ethical standards within the industry. According to Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019), organizational cynicism and DWBs in the banking sector increased during and after the pandemic due to job insecurity, inconsistent management policies, and financial strain. Similarly, Amin et al. (2020) highlight that the combined effects of COVID-19, e-banking expansion, and financial innovation led many banks to downsize their workforce or implement salary cuts, fostering distrust and resentment. Frequent changes in work policies, such as remote work transitions and return-to-office mandates, added to employee confusion and frustration. Moreover, inadequate safety measures, heavier workloads, and a perceived lack of concern from management fuelled dissatisfaction (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019). This situation led employees to perceive that banks prioritized profits over staff welfare, particularly as financial institutions continued to report profits despite widespread economic difficulties. As a result, economic hardships drove some bank employees toward financial misconduct, including unauthorized transactions and embezzlement.

Meanwhile, others resorted to "quiet quitting," performing only the bare minimum due to low morale. Stress and frustration also contributed to increased workplace conflicts, insubordination, and a decline in the quality of customer service (Eze et al., 2020). Additionally, the shift to remote work created vulnerabilities for data breaches and the misuse of bank resources. Ali et al. (2020) define organizational cynicism as employees' negative perceptions of their organization, marked by beliefs that their employer lacks integrity, distrust in leadership, and a sense of hopelessness regarding workplace improvement. Similarly, Amin et al (2021) describe deviant workplace behaviours (DWBs) as deliberate actions that violate organizational norms and potentially harm the institution or its members.

The combined impact of globalization, e-banking, financial innovation, and the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly shaped organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviors in the banking sector (Anis & Emil, 2022). In this context, understanding key workplace factors such as organizational cynicism, deviant work behaviours (DWB), work-life balance (WLB), and perceived organizational support (POS) is essential for addressing these challenges (Chen et al., 2019; Chen & Li, 2020; Shafiqu et al., 2020; Tariq & Amir, 2019). Sajuyigbe et al. (2022) emphasize that work-life balance plays a crucial role in mitigating organizational cynicism and deviant behaviours in organizations. By implementing flexible work policies, managing workloads effectively, and fostering a supportive work culture, banks can enhance employee trust, reduce unethical practices, and cultivate a more engaged and committed workforce (Setyoko & Kurniasih, 2022). Thus, adopting WLB initiatives not only benefits employees but also enhances overall organizational performance and reputation.

Beyond WLB, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is another key factor in reducing workplace cynicism and deviant behaviours. A supportive work environment that promotes fair treatment, reduces job-related stress, and encourages ethical leadership helps create a more loyal, engaged, and ethically responsible workforce. Investing in employee well-being and organizational support ultimately benefits both staff and the institution, leading to a more productive, ethical, and reputable banking sector (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019).

Recent studies have increasingly focused on the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviours in both developed and developing nations (Hesham Sakr et al., 2022; Chen & Li, 2020; Shafiqu et al., 2020; Adeoti et al., 2020; Eze et al., 2020; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019; Dar & Rahman, 2019). However, a significant gap remains in the literature, as no empirical studies have explored the mediating roles of work-life balance (WLB) and perceived organizational support (POS) in this relationship. Understanding how WLB and POS influence the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviors is crucial for developing effective workplace interventions, particularly in high-pressure industries such as the banking sector. Addressing this gap will provide deeper insights into how organizations can mitigate workplace negativity and unethical behaviours through supportive policies and employee-centred management strategies.

This study makes important theoretical and empirical contributions to the behavioural science literature, offering insights relevant to both scholars and practitioners. Theoretically, it integrates Organizational Justice Theory and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory to explain how perceptions of fairness and leadership quality influence employee attitudes, such as cynicism, perceived support, and deviant behaviour—as well as work-life balance. This integrated framework highlights the dynamic interplay between Organizational Cynicism (OC), Work-Life Balance (WLB), Perceived Organizational Support (POS), and Deviant Work Behaviours (DWB), thereby deepening our understanding of employee behaviour in the banking sector. Empirically, the study addresses gaps in previous research by systematically examining the mediating roles of WLB and POS in the OC-DWB relationship using Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM). The findings demonstrate that both WLB and POS partially mediate this relationship, indicating that reducing cynicism alone is insufficient. Enhancing employee well-being and fostering a supportive, fair, and balanced work environment are equally essential.

Practically, the study emphasizes the need for banks and policymakers to move beyond superficial responses to workplace cynicism. Effective reduction of deviant behaviours requires comprehensive strategies, including flexible work arrangements, stronger organizational support systems, ethical leadership, and consistent employee recognition. By

bridging theoretical and empirical gaps, this research makes a significant contribution to academic discourse, offering actionable recommendations for enhancing workplace culture, reducing employee misconduct, and fostering commitment within the banking sector.

2. Theoretical Framework

Several theories, including Social Exchange Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, Psychological Contract Theory, Organizational Justice Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, have been utilized in previous studies (Hesham Sakr et al., 2022; Chen & Li, 2020; Shafiqu et al., 2020; Adeoti et al., 2020; Eze et al., 2020; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019; Dar & Rahman, 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Tariq & Amir, 2019) to explain the relationships between organizational cynicism, deviant work behaviour (DWB), work-life balance (WLB), and perceived organizational support (POS). However, this current study is anchored on Organizational Justice Theory and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory. The selection of these theories is based on the fact that both theories are crucial for understanding workplace behaviours in Nigerian banks.

Organizational Justice Theory emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, stemming from foundational research on workplace fairness and equity, which built upon Equity Theory developed by J. Stacy Adams (1965). The concept was later refined by scholars such as Jerald Greenberg (1987, 1990), who introduced the term *organizational justice* and broadened its scope (Hassan et al., 2022). The theory centres on employees' perceptions of fairness within an organization and how these perceptions shape their attitudes, behaviours, and overall performance. Traditionally, the theory comprises three core dimensions: Distributive Justice (the fairness of outcomes), Procedural Justice (the fairness of decision-making processes), and Interactional Justice (the fairness of interpersonal treatment). In subsequent work, Colquitt (2001) added a fourth dimension, Informational Justice, which emphasizes the transparency and adequacy of explanations provided during decision-making. Organizational Justice Theory has been widely applied across diverse organizational contexts to explore issues such as leadership effectiveness, employee motivation, workplace behaviors, and organizational change (e.g., Utari et al., 2019; Shafique et al., 2020; Rahmi et al., 2021; Safdar et al., 2022).

Organizational Justice Theory emphasizes the importance of fairness in influencing employee attitudes and behaviors, including cynicism, deviant actions, and perceptions of organizational support. Greenberg (1987) explains that the theory examines how employees perceive fairness in their workplace and how these perceptions impact motivation, job satisfaction, and ethical conduct. When employees feel their organization is fair, they tend to be more committed, engaged, and ethical. Conversely, perceived unfairness can lead to cynicism, misconduct, and a decline in morale. For instance, in the banking sector, distributive injustice, such as unfair promotions, salaries, or workload distribution, can make employees feel undervalued (Dar & Rahman, 2019), leading to burnout and difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019). It may also drive unethical behaviors, such as embezzlement or customer exploitation (Hesham Sakr et al., 2022). Procedural injustice, including biased policies or inconsistent disciplinary actions, fosters distrust in leadership, increases stress (Chen & Li, 2020), and can justify rule-breaking behaviours like time theft (Shafiqu et al., 2020). Similarly, interactional injustices, such as poor managerial treatment or a lack of concern for employee well-being, can exacerbate cynicism and make achieving a work-life balance more challenging (Tariq & Amir, 2019). Organizational Justice Theory is highly applicable to the Nigerian banking sector, as fairness in decision-making, policies, and interpersonal treatment directly influences employee attitudes, performance, and ethical behaviour. Banks that prioritize fairness can enhance employee commitment, reduce workplace stress, and mitigate financial misconduct, ultimately contributing to a more stable and trustworthy financial system.

Similarly, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory is a leadership framework that emphasizes the quality of the relationships between leaders and individual subordinates, rather than focusing on overarching leadership styles or traits (Tan et al., 2020). Developed by Graen and colleagues in the 1970s, the theory suggests that leaders form distinct dyadic relationships with each team member, and the quality of these relationships can vary significantly (Setyoko & Kurniasih, 2022). Research has consistently demonstrated that high-quality LMX relationships are associated with positive organizational outcomes, including increased job satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, and enhanced performance (Setyoko & Kurniasih, 2022). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships are often associated with disengagement, interpersonal conflict, and higher turnover (Sajuyigbe et al., 2022). The theory has also been applied in remote work settings, where strong leader-member relationships have been found to reduce isolation and foster team cohesion and productivity (Okolo et al., 2022). LMX Theory emphasizes the impact of leadership relationship quality on work-life balance, organizational cynicism, and employee support. According to Eze et al. (2020), LMX theory focuses on the dynamic between leaders (e.g., managers, supervisors) and their subordinates (employees). Unlike traditional leadership theories that assume uniform treatment of all employees, LMX suggests that leaders develop distinct relationships with each subordinate, resulting in varying levels of trust, support, and communication among them. Employees who establish strong, trust-based relationships with their leaders tend to benefit from greater autonomy, increased support, and more growth opportunities.

In contrast, those with weaker relationships tend to experience more formal interactions, limited support, and fewer opportunities for career development (Chen et al., 2019). In the banking sector, where strict regulations, heavy workloads, and high-performance expectations prevail, the quality of leader-member relationships has a significant

impact on organizational cynicism. Employees with strong relationships feel valued, heard, and supported, which in turn reduces their cynicism (Okolo et al., 2020). They are also more accountable and motivated to uphold ethical standards (Kura et al., 2016). Furthermore, these employees receive mentorship, which decreases frustration and misconduct and fosters trust in management's intentions (Dar & Rahman, 2019).

Likewise, Mbanefo et al. (2019) highlight that supportive leaders offer flexible work arrangements, empathetic policies, and well-being initiatives that enable employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Employees with strong leader relationships feel acknowledged, supported, and empowered, viewing leadership as an extension of organizational support (Shantz et al., 2016). However, employees who feel neglected, micromanaged, or mistreated may develop cynicism (Akanni et al., 2018). This can lead to withdrawal behaviours (e.g., absenteeism, reduced effort) or destructive actions (e.g., fraud, policy violations, customer exploitation) (Chen et al., 2017). Such dynamics contribute to burnout, work-life conflicts, and diminished organizational commitment, as employees perceive leadership as lacking integrity and prioritizing profits over people. Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) argue that when leaders fail to communicate transparently and provide adequate support, cynicism among out-group members is likely to increase.

LMX Theory offers a powerful lens for understanding workplace relationships and their impact on organizational cynicism, deviant work behavior, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support in Nigerian banks. High-quality leader-member relationships can enhance trust, reduce misconduct, improve work-life balance, and strengthen employee commitment, while poor relationships can drive workplace negativity and ethical breaches. By investing in leadership development and employee support programs, banks can foster a more positive and productive work environment.

2.1 Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1.1 Organizational Cynicism and Deviance Work Behaviour

Organizational cynicism refers to employees' negative attitudes toward their organization, rooted in the belief that the organization lacks integrity, engages in self-serving behaviours, and does not genuinely care for its employees. It manifests through distrust, resentment, and the perception that leadership is dishonest or unethical (Anis & Emil, 2022). On the other hand, deviant work behaviours (DWB) encompass intentional actions that violate organizational norms and can harm the organization, its employees, or both. These behaviours include absenteeism, fraud, policy violations, workplace sabotage, and reduced work effort. According to Hamzah (2023), cynical employees often believe that their organization prioritizes profits over people and lacks ethical leadership. This erodes trust and diminishes employees' willingness to act in the organization's best interest, leading to deviant behaviours such as rule-breaking, dishonesty, or sabotage as forms of retaliation. Similarly, Arslan and Roudaki (2019) assert that employees experiencing cynicism may feel undervalued, unheard, or unfairly treated, which can result in frustration and disengagement. This can manifest in withdrawal behaviours such as tardiness, absenteeism, low productivity, and neglect of workplace responsibilities. Kuo et al. (2020) further argue that organizational cynicism fosters a negative work environment, where distrust in leadership and colleagues escalates. This, in turn, leads to interpersonal deviance, such as workplace bullying, gossip, and non-cooperative behaviour, ultimately disrupting organizational harmony.

Existing research establishes a strong link between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviour. For example, Agarwal and Avey (2020) explored this relationship in Nigeria and found a significant association between the two variables. Similarly, a study by Safdar et al. (2022) in Pakistan identified organizational cynicism as a strong predictor of deviant work behaviour. Chen and Li (2020) also confirmed that organizational cynicism significantly influences workplace deviance, while Chen et al. (2019) reaffirmed that it serves as a major determinant of such behaviour. Furthermore, Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) found that organizational cynicism often drives employees to engage in deviant actions as a means of addressing perceived injustices within the organization. Taimur and Khan (2017) also confirm that organizational cynicism leads to counterproductive behaviours of employees. Based on empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Organizational cynicism has a positive and significant influence on deviant workplace behaviours.

H2: Organizational cynicism has a negative and significant influence on Perceived Organizational Support

2.1.2 Work-life Balance as a Mediator

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to an employee's ability to effectively manage work responsibilities while meeting personal and family commitments, minimizing conflicts between the two. Nanda and Randhawa (2020) emphasize WLB as a crucial factor in achieving harmony between personal and professional life. Research highlights that maintaining a healthy WLB is particularly essential in the baking sector, which is characterized by long hours, tight deadlines, and high stress, posing significant challenges. Sajuyigbe et al. (2022) underscore the positive outcomes of WLB across various domains, while Mendis and Weerakkody (2017) confirm its beneficial impact on employee job satisfaction, morale, and personal well-being. However, organizational justice theory and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory suggest a strong link between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviours (DWB), particularly in the banking sector. High-pressure environments, strict regulations, and performance expectations shape employee attitudes and behaviours, often fostering cynicism. In line with this, Zahoor et al. (2019) highlight that job insecurity, unrealistic performance

targets, and unethical leadership contribute to cynicism among banking employees, leading to disengagement and a diminished commitment to ethical standards, thereby increasing the likelihood of misconduct. Woo and Kim (2020) further assert that perceived unfairness, such as inequitable promotions, salaries, workload distribution, biased policies, inconsistent disciplinary actions, and a lack of concern for employee well-being, can intensify cynicism and exacerbate WLB challenges. These factors collectively reinforce the complex relationship between WLB, organizational cynicism, and DWB, particularly in demanding sectors like banking. WLB acts as an intermediary factor that explains the relationship between two other variables: organizational cynicism and deviant work behavior in the Nigerian banking sector. Studies affirmed that WLB plays a crucial mediating role between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviour in organizations (Szostek, 2018; Scisco et al., 2019). When work-life balance is poor, cynicism is more likely to translate into workplace misconduct.

However, when employees feel supported in managing their work and personal lives, the negative impact of cynicism on behaviour is significantly reduced. Amin et al. (2021) demonstrate that Work-life balance plays a crucial role in reducing deviant workplace behaviour and organizational cynicism by promoting employee well-being, satisfaction, and commitment to their work environment. Similarly, Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) attest that organizations that prioritize work-life balance benefit from lower rates of deviant workplace behaviours and organizational cynicism. By fostering a supportive work culture, businesses can enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and ethical behaviour, ultimately leading to a more productive and harmonious workplace. Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Work-life balance (WLB) negatively and significantly influences deviant workplace behaviours.
H4: WLB mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviors.

2.1.3 Mediating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees perceive that their organization values their contributions, cares about their well-being, and provides them with necessary resources and assistance. According to Mufarrikhah et al. (2020), perceived organizational support serves as a protective factor that minimizes the adverse effects of cynicism on deviant workplace behaviours. Rahmi et al. (2021) assert that employees who feel supported are less likely to develop cynicism, as they perceive their organization as fair and caring. Supportive organizations cultivate trust and open communication, proactively addressing employee concerns before they escalate into cynicism. Similarly, Setyoko & Kurniasih (2022) highlight that employees who feel valued and recognized are less inclined to engage in unethical behaviours such as fraud, workplace sabotage, or insubordination. This sense of support fosters greater commitment and engagement, reducing the likelihood of deviant actions. Likewise, Cahayu et al. (2019) emphasize that even in cases where employees exhibit cynicism, strong perceived organizational support can counteract its impact by promoting positive workplace behaviours. He further notes that mechanisms such as fair treatment, employee assistance programs, and transparent leadership enable employees to manage their frustrations constructively.

Existing research indicates that perceived organizational support is linked to organizational cynicism and deviant workplace behaviour by reducing negative attitudes, enhancing employee commitment, and fostering a positive work environment (Ogbonnaya et al., 2018; Utari et al., 2021; Canboy et al., 2021). The banking sector, known for its competitiveness and high-stress environment, makes employees more susceptible to cynicism. However, banks that strengthen support mechanisms can mitigate cynicism and curb deviant behaviours, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and integrity. This aligns with organizational justice theory, which suggests that employees are more likely to contribute positively when they perceive strong organizational support. When employees recognize that the organization's efforts benefit them personally, they become more dedicated and diligent in their roles. A study by Tan et al. (2020) highlights a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and reduced deviant workplace behaviour. The study confirms that higher levels of perceived organizational support are associated with lower instances of workplace deviance, both at the individual and organizational levels. Similarly, Akhigbe and Sunday (2017) conducted research in higher education institutions, revealing that perceived organizational support serves as a powerful tool in mitigating cynicism and curbing deviant behaviours. Additionally, Chen et al. (2016) explored this relationship in Malaysia's voluntary sector, finding that perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between organizational cynicism and deviant workplace behaviour. Based on the empirical evidence, the following hypothesis emerged:

H5: Perceived Organizational Support negatively and significantly influences deviant workplace behaviours.
H6: Perceived Organizational Support mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviors.

2.2 Conceptual Framework for the Study

Figure 1 presents a conceptual model designed to predict deviant work behaviour, incorporating key factors such as organizational cynicism, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support. The model highlights the mediating roles of perceived organizational support and work-life balance in influencing the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviours. This section lays the groundwork for the conceptual framework and introduces

hypotheses regarding the interactions among these variables. In the banking sector, organizational cynicism can have serious consequences, fostering deviant work behaviours that jeopardize financial integrity, customer trust, and regulatory compliance.
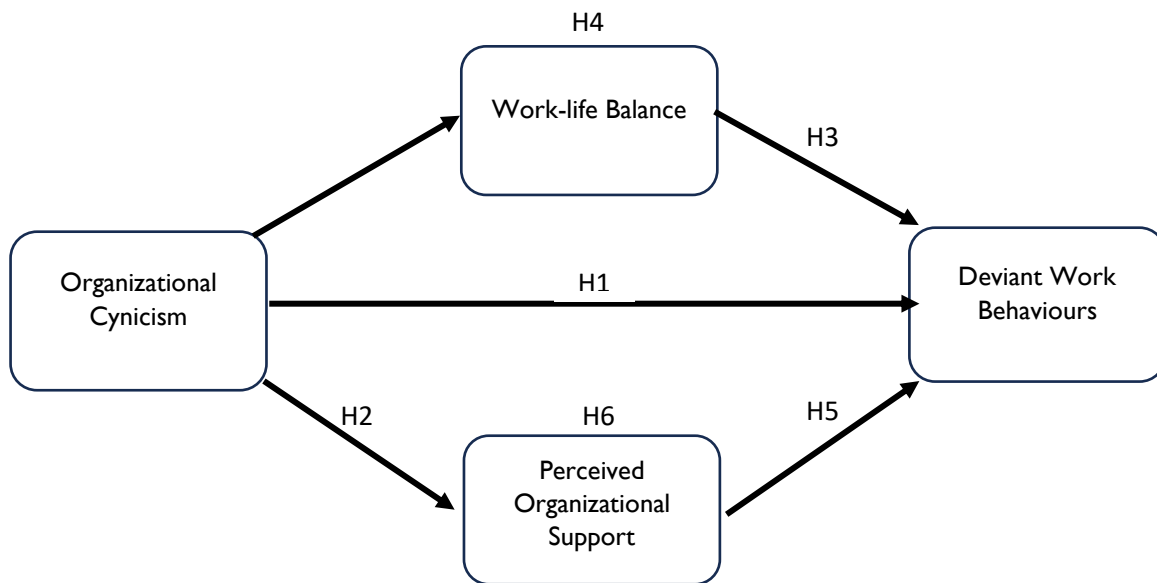

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Similarly, maintaining a healthy work-life balance allows employees to effectively manage their professional and personal responsibilities, reducing excessive stress and burnout. At the same time, perceived organizational support minimizes frustration and resentment, lowering the chances of counterproductive behaviours such as absenteeism or sabotage. This highlights the importance of trust and ethics in the workplace, demonstrating that fostering both work-life balance and organizational support can help mitigate deviant work behaviours. Consequently, organizational cynicism is expected to have a direct impact on deviant work behaviours. In contrast, work-life balance and perceived organizational support are anticipated to play an indirect role in mediating this relationship.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample and procedure

The study population consists of permanent employees from four selected banks in Nigeria (Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB), Zenith Bank, United Bank for Africa (UBA), and Access Bank). The Nigerian banking sector is highly suitable for this research due to its high-pressure work environment, widespread employee dissatisfaction, and frequent reports of deviant workplace behaviour (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019). Employees often face poor work-life balance and limited organizational support, making them susceptible to organizational cynicism and unethical conduct (Akanni et al., 2018). Additionally, the sector's economic significance and the scarcity of context-specific studies further justify its selection, offering a valuable opportunity to explore the mediating roles of work-life balance and perceived organizational support in shaping employee behaviour (Ali et al., 2020). These banks were chosen due to their substantial employee benefits, career development opportunities, and positive work culture, which contribute to higher retention rates compared to other Nigerian banks (Eze et al., 2020). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 30 respondents from each bank across all branches in the Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibadan's status as a densely populated urban centre presents distinct challenges concerning employee well-being, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support, making it a highly relevant setting for exploring workplace behaviours. These characteristics establish Ibadan as a strategic and practical location for conducting in-depth research on the interrelationship between organizational cynicism, deviant work behaviour, work-life balance, and organizational support within Nigeria's banking sector (Eze et al., 2020). As a result, 120 questionnaires were distributed to participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study between January 20, 2025, and March 7, 2025. By the end of the data collection period, 115 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 95.8%.

3.2 Survey Instruments

The survey questionnaire was adapted from established measurement scales in the literature to assess organizational cynicism, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and deviant work behaviours. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (see Table 1). Table 1 presents the evaluation of the measurement model, assessing the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. The analysis was conducted using STATA software, which facilitated the computation of key psychometric indicators to test scale accuracy. The AVE values, ranging from 0.817 to 0.849, exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct captures a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators, thereby supporting convergent validity. Similarly, the Composite Reliability (CR) values, ranging from 0.818 to 0.849, indicate strong construct reliability.

Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha values, which range from 0.810 to 0.825, exceed the 0.70 benchmark, thereby reinforcing internal consistency and the reliability of the measurement scales. Furthermore, VIF values ranging from 1.978 to 2.149 remain well below the critical threshold of 5, indicating the absence of multicollinearity concerns. This ensures that the constructs are distinct and do not exhibit excessive correlation. The combination of high factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha confirms that the measurement scales used are both valid and reliable for assessing organizational cynicism, perceived organizational support, work-life balance, and deviant work behaviours in the banking sector.

Table 1: Evaluation of the measurement model

Scale Item	Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	VIF	Source
Organizational Cynicism Scale						
I feel that my bank lacks integrity in its dealings with employees.	0.799				1,986	
I believe that my bank's management says one thing but does another.	0.811	0.817	0.823	0.810	1,978	Anis and Emil (2022).
My bank does not act in the best interests of its employees.	0.807				2,023	
Policies in my bank are designed more to benefit management than employees.	0.813				2,101	
I often question the motives of my bank's leadership.	0.803				2,075	
Perceived Organizational Support Scale:						
I feel that my bank genuinely cares about my well-being.	0.812				2,103	
My bank is willing to listen to my concerns and address them appropriately.	0.845	0.824	0.819	0.825	1,992	Hamzah (2023)
I receive recognition and appreciation for my work from management.	0.818				2,088	
My bank provides me with the necessary resources to perform my job effectively.	0.821				2,011	
Work-Life Balance Scale:						
My bank allows me to balance my work and personal life effectively.	0.798				2,012	Sajuyigbe et al. (2022)
My workload is manageable enough to maintain a healthy work-life balance.	0.819	0.827	0.818	0.822	1,979	

Scale Item	Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	VIF	Source
I am satisfied with the flexibility provided by my bank regarding work hours.	0.821				2,029	
My job does not interfere with my ability to spend quality time with my family.	0.817				2,107	
I can take time off when needed without fear of negative consequences.	0.808				2,105	
Deviant work Behaviours Scale						
I have witnessed employees deliberately working at a slower pace than they could.	0.805				1,985	
Some staff members treat customers poorly when they are frustrated.	0.813	0.822	0.849	0.824	2,110	Abimbola and Anuoha (2023)
Employees sometimes engage in unethical behaviours to meet targets.	0.824				2,120	
I have seen coworkers take long breaks or leave work early without permission.	0.832				2,032	
Some employees in my bank ignore company policies when it benefits them.	0.809				2,149	

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Demographic Profile

Table 2 presents demographic insights into our respondents, including gender, age, marital status, education, and work experience. The results showcase that the majority are male (65.21%), indicating a gender imbalance, with men significantly outnumbering women. This aligns with industry trends, where males often dominate leadership and high-pressure roles in banking due to factors such as cultural norms, workplace policies, and challenges to achieving a work-life balance. Banks should consider gender diversity policies to create equal opportunities for women in leadership and decision-making roles. The age distribution shows that most respondents are 51 years and above (43.47%), followed by those aged 41-50 (34.78%), with younger academics (<30 years) forming a small minority (4.34%). This trend may be due to banks favouring experienced hires, job stability for older professionals, and fewer entry-level opportunities. Banks may face challenges in succession planning as older employees approach retirement. Marital status data reveal that 78.28% of respondents are married, while smaller proportions are single (13.04%), divorced (3.47%), or widowed (5.22%), highlighting potential implications for work-life balance and industry support needs.

Regarding academic qualifications, the majority of bank employees hold a Bachelor's degree (56.52%), while a significant number (39.13%) have a Master's degree, and a low percentage (4.38%) of employees have only a National Diploma. The banking sector has a highly experienced workforce, with over 68% of employees having more than 16 years of experience. A low percentage of employees (7.82%) with 1-5 years of experience suggests limited recruitment of fresh graduates. The aging workforce poses risks for innovation, adaptability, and digital transformation, as younger employees are often more tech-savvy and adaptable to change.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S /N	Demographic variables	Grouping	Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Gender**	Male	75	65.21
		Female	40	34.79
2.	**Age**	≤ 30	5	4.34
		31- 40	20	17.39
		41- 50	40	34.78

S /N	Demographic variables	Grouping	Frequency	Percentage
		51 and above	50	43.47
3.	**Marital status**	Single	15	13.04
		Married	90	78.28
		Divorce	4	3.47
		Widowed	6	5.22
4.	**Academic Qualification**	National Diploma	5	4.38
		HND/B.Sc.	65	56.52
		Masters	45	39.13
5.	**Years of experience**	1to 5 years	9	7.82
		6-10 yrs	12	10.43
		11-15yrs	15	13.04
		16 – 20yrs	35	30.43
		21 above	44	38.26

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.2 Path Analysis Results

Data analysis was conducted using Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM). Table 3 presents the direct effects of Organizational Cynicism (OC), Work-Life Balance (WLB), and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) on Deviant Work Behaviours (DWB) in the banking sector using Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM). A coefficient value of 0.5072 indicates a positive relationship, meaning that higher organizational cynicism is associated with increased deviant work behaviors. The Z-value of 7.48 and the p-value of 0.000 further prove that the relationship is significant. This implies that many banks have faced issues related to poor leadership, lack of transparency, unrealistic targets, and job insecurity. These factors can foster organizational cynicism, where employees lose trust in management and the organization's values. This study concurs with Otori et al. (2020), who establish a significant association between organizational cynicism and DWB.

Similarly, a study by Safdar et al. (2022) in Pakistan attests that organizational cynicism is a strong predictor of deviant work behaviours. In another study, Chen and Li (2020) also confirmed that organizational cynicism significantly influences workplace deviance, while Chen et al. (2019) reaffirmed that organizational cynicism serves as a significant determinant of deviant work behaviours. Furthermore, Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) found that organizational cynicism often drives employees to engage in deviant actions as a means of addressing perceived injustices within the organization. Taimur and Khan (2017) also confirm that organizational cynicism leads to counterproductive behaviours of employees. Furthermore, the results reveal a significant negative relationship between organizational cynicism and perceived organizational support, with a beta value of -0.3972 and a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that as employees perceive greater organizational support, their levels of cynicism tend to decrease. For banks, this finding highlights the importance of cultivating a supportive organizational culture. Enhancing employee support systems—through fair policies, transparent communication, employee recognition, and responsiveness to staff concerns—can significantly reduce negative attitudes such as cynicism. In turn, this can enhance employee morale, strengthen trust, and foster a more profound sense of overall organizational commitment. These findings are consistent with the work of Okolo et al. (2022), who found a significant negative relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational cynicism. Employees who perceive low levels of support are more likely to exhibit cynical behaviours, often as a response to feelings of betrayal or neglect. Similarly, Eze et al. (2020) argue that when employees feel unsupported, they may interpret this as a lack of care from the organization, leading to a breakdown in trust and the emergence of disillusionment. Conversely, high levels of perceived organizational support help employees feel valued, respected, and supported, fostering a more trusting and committed workforce.

A coefficient value of -0.4232 indicates a negative relationship, meaning that better work-life balance reduces deviant work behaviours. The Z-value of -4.19 and p-value of 0.000 indicate a substantial adverse effect. The implication is that a better work-life balance significantly reduces deviant workplace behaviours. The negative coefficient (-0.4232) suggests an inverse relationship, meaning that as work-life balance improves, deviant behaviours decrease. The strong Z-value (-4.19) and highly significant (p < 0.000) confirm that this effect is statistically robust and unlikely to be due to chance. Therefore, banks that promote work-life balance may effectively reduce deviant behaviours among employees. The study aligns with Amin et al. (2021), who demonstrate that Work-life balance plays a crucial role in reducing deviant workplace behavior by promoting employee well-being, satisfaction, and commitment to their work environment. Similarly, Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2019) attest that organizations that prioritize work-life balance benefit from lower rates of deviant workplace behaviours.

Evidence suggests that perceived organizational support is negatively and significantly associated with deviant work behavior, with a coefficient value of -0.5095, a Z-value of -8.08, and a p-value of 0.000. The implication is that higher perceived organizational support significantly reduces deviant workplace behaviours. The negative coefficient (-

0.5095) indicates an inverse relationship, meaning that when employees feel supported by their organization, they are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours. The strong Z-value (-8.08) and highly significant (p < 0.000) confirm that this effect is statistically significant and not due to chance. This suggests that organizations can mitigate deviant work behaviours by fostering a supportive work environment. The study is consistent with Tan et al. (2020), who confirm that higher levels of perceived organizational support correspond to lower instances of workplace deviance, both at the individual and organizational levels. Similarly, Akhigbe and Sunday (2017) also confirm that perceived organizational support serves as a powerful tool in curbing deviant behaviours.

The results of the indirect effects show that work-life balance (WLB) significantly mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism (OC) and deviant work behaviors (DWB), with a coefficient of -0.302 (Z = -2.21, p < 0.001). Notably, the beta value drops from 0.5072 to -0.302 when WLB is included in the model (see Table 3). This suggests that enhancing work-life balance through flexible work arrangements and stress management initiatives can significantly reduce deviant workplace behaviours and organizational cynicism. The implication is that improving work-life balance can serve as an effective strategy for reducing both deviant workplace behaviours and organizational cynicism. By implementing flexible work arrangements and stress management programs, organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of cynicism, leading to a more positive work environment. This highlights the importance of employee well-being initiatives in fostering a healthier and more productive organizational culture.

Evidence also reveals that POS (-0.324, Z = -2.68, p = 0.000) mediates the relationship between OC and DWB. Specifically, when POS is introduced, the beta value decreases from 0.5072 to -0.324 (see Table 3). The implication is that perceived organizational support (POS) plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of organizational cynicism on deviant workplace behaviours. When employees feel supported by their organization, the impact of cynicism on deviant behaviours is significantly reduced. This suggests that fostering a supportive work environment through recognition programs, transparent communication, and employee engagement initiatives can help curb workplace deviance and promote a more positive organizational culture.

Table 3: Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM)

Path	Coef.	Z	P>|z|	Hypothesis	Remark
Direct Path					
OC→DWB	.5072	7.48	0.000	H1	Support
OC→POS	-.3972	-4.01	0.000	H2	Support
WLB→DWB	-.4232	-4.19	0.000	H3	Support
POS→DWB	-.5095	-8.08	0.000	H5	Support
Indirect Path					
OC→ WLB→DWB	-.302	-2.21	0.000	H4	Partially Support
OC→ POS→DWB	-.324	-2.68	0.000	H6	Partially Support

Note: OC = Organizational Cynicism, DWB = Deviant work behaviours, WLB = Work-life balance, POS = Perceived organizational support

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the direct effects of organizational cynicism and the indirect effects of work-life balance and perceived organizational support on deviant workplace behaviors in the banking sector. The findings indicate that organizational cynicism significantly contributes to deviant work behaviours, highlighting the negative impact of poor leadership, lack of transparency, unrealistic targets, and job insecurity. Conversely, work-life balance and perceived organizational support play crucial roles in mitigating deviant behaviours. A better work-life balance was found to significantly reduce workplace deviance, underscoring the importance of flexible work arrangements and stress management initiatives. Similarly, higher perceived organizational support lowers deviant behaviours, reinforcing the importance of fostering a supportive work environment through employee recognition and transparent communication. Furthermore, the mediation analysis confirms that work-life balance and perceived organizational support partially mediate the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant behaviours. This suggests that while reducing cynicism is essential, organizations can also minimize workplace deviance by enhancing employee well-being and fostering a supportive culture.

In conclusion, organizations, particularly in the banking sector, should prioritize strategies that reduce organizational cynicism, enhance work-life balance, and improve perceived organizational support to create a more positive and productive work environment. Implementing these measures can significantly curb deviant workplace behaviours, ultimately leading to better employee engagement, organizational commitment, and overall performance.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study enhances the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the significance of Organizational Justice Theory and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory in understanding workplace behaviours. Notably, this study demonstrates a framework to explain the mechanisms linking organizational cynicism (OC) to deviant work behaviours (DWB) in the high-pressure context of the banking sector. Organizational Justice theory posits that employees' perceptions of fairness in decision-making, resource allocation, and interpersonal treatment significantly shape their attitudes and behaviours. The observed strong positive relationship between organizational cynicism (OC) and deviant work behaviours (DWB) lends empirical support to this theory. Cynicism often arises from perceived injustices, such as lack of transparency, inequitable treatment, and unfulfilled organizational commitments, which undermine employee trust and foster counterproductive behaviour. This aligns with the core dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Moreover, this study extends Organizational Justice Theory by demonstrating that its influence on deviant behaviour operates not only directly, but also indirectly through perceived organizational support (POS) and work-life balance (WLB). The significant negative relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and OC further reinforces the notion that when employees perceive fairness and care from their organization, levels of cynicism are likely to decrease. This suggests that justice-driven organizational practices, such as transparent communication, equitable policies, and employee recognition, are essential in mitigating cynicism and, by extension, deviant behaviours. Additionally, the mediating roles of POS and work-life balance (WLB) in the relationship between OC and DWB extend Organizational Justice theory by demonstrating that justice perceptions can influence behaviour both directly and indirectly through mechanisms that reflect organizational concern and support.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of the quality of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates in determining employee outcomes. High-quality LMX relationships, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation, are associated with positive outcomes, including increased job satisfaction, loyalty, and reduced deviant behavior. The significant negative relationship between POS and DWB, along with the mediating effect of POS in the OC–DWB relationship, suggests that when employees feel valued, supported, and included, hallmarks of strong LMX, they are less likely to become cynical or engage in deviant acts. Conversely, conditions such as poor leadership, limited communication, and job insecurity identified in this study as precursors to organizational cynicism are reflective of low-quality LMX dynamics. In contrast, a supportive organizational environment that reduces cynicism and discourages deviance mirrors the constructive exchanges central to high-quality LMX relationships. Furthermore, the mediating role of WLB underscores how leaders who support flexible work arrangements and demonstrate concern for employee well-being can enhance the quality of LMX, ultimately leading to lower levels of workplace deviance.

This study extends the application of Organizational Justice and LMX Theories to the banking sector, emphasizing their relevance in high-pressure work environments. The findings align with previous research (e.g., Hesham Sakr et al., 2022; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019) and offer empirical support for the influence of workplace fairness and leadership quality on employee behaviour. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study presents a comprehensive framework for understanding how perceptions of justice and leadership interactions collectively shape employee attitudes, well-being, and ethical conduct in organizations. Crucially, it advances both theories by identifying POS and WLB as dual mediators that translate justice and leadership into behavioural outcomes, revealing new theoretical pathways that underscore the importance of organizational support systems in curbing deviance.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer valuable practical insights for human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and policymakers in the banking sector. The significant positive relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant work behaviour underscores the urgent need to tackle underlying issues such as poor leadership, lack of transparency, job insecurity, and unrealistic performance expectations. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate efforts to promote trust, strengthen leadership integrity, and enhance organizational communication. Building a culture of trust involves fostering transparency, honouring commitments, and ensuring that leaders consistently model ethical conduct, accountability, and open dialogue. These efforts should be supported through integrity-focused leadership training, the establishment of clear and consistent communication channels, active solicitation of employee feedback, and the regular training of managers in effective communication. Keeping employees informed about organizational changes is also essential in reducing uncertainty and cynicism, thereby promoting a more positive, committed, and productive workforce.

Moreover, the strong negative link between work-life balance (WLB) and deviant behaviour underscores the importance of adopting flexible work arrangements, stress management programs, and adequate time-off policies. Enhancing WLB not only supports employee well-being but also reduces the likelihood of counterproductive work behaviours (Sajuyigbe et al., 2022). The study also shows that perceived organizational support (POS) significantly reduces deviant behaviours. When employees feel valued and supported, they are less inclined to engage in misconduct.

To foster such support, banks should implement initiatives such as employee assistance programs, recognition and reward systems, transparent communication, and participatory decision-making processes.

Notably, both WLB and POS are shown to mediate the effects of organizational cynicism on deviant behaviour. This highlights the importance of a comprehensive HR approach that combines both support and well-being strategies to mitigate the negative effects of workplace cynicism. Overall, these insights can inform the development of employee-centred policies aimed at cultivating a positive organizational climate. Banks that invest in supportive work environments and work-life balance initiatives are more likely to achieve increased productivity, lower turnover, and reduced workplace deviance. In essence, supporting employees is not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic advantage for organizational success. These findings have significant practical implications for banks, bank staff, and policymakers. Banks must address poor leadership, lack of transparency, unrealistic targets, and job insecurity, which are key contributors to organizational cynicism and workplace deviance. By promoting ethical leadership, clear communication, and fair policies, banks can cultivate trust, foster commitment, and enhance employee engagement. Given that work-life balance (WLB) partially mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and deviant behaviour, implementing flexible work arrangements, mental health support, and stress management initiatives can play a crucial role in enhancing employee well-being and reducing workplace deviance. To further foster a positive organizational culture, banks should also prioritize employee recognition programs, transparent decision-making processes, and supportive HR policies that promote fairness and inclusivity, thereby discouraging deviant behaviours and reinforcing employee commitment.

For bank staff, employees should recognize that workplace cynicism can lead to job dissatisfaction, stress, and counterproductive behaviours, making it essential to adopt positive coping strategies. They are encouraged to take advantage of bank policies on flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and mental health resources to enhance their job satisfaction and productivity. Furthermore, employees should actively engage in open communication with management, participate in support initiatives, and provide constructive feedback to help create a more supportive and positive work environment. For Policymakers, Policymakers should enact labour laws that promote work-life balance, regulate job security, and ensure fair employee treatment in banking sector. Banking regulations should mandate equitable HR practices, transparent promotion systems, and ethical leadership development to minimize organizational cynicism and deviant workplace behaviours. Additionally, regulatory bodies must ensure that banks implement and adhere to employee welfare policies, such as stress management programs, career development initiatives, and anti-discrimination measures, to foster a healthier, more productive, and ethically responsible work environment.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers valuable insights into the mediating roles of work-life balance (WLB) and perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between organizational cynicism (OC) and deviant work behaviour (DWB) in the banking sector, it has several limitations.

First, the research was limited to four major banks (GTB, Zenith Bank, UBA, and Access Bank) within the Ibadan Metropolis. Although these banks were selected for their strong reputations and positive work environments, the findings may not be generalizable to other banks, particularly smaller or less-structured institutions operating under different conditions. The exclusive focus on Ibadan also limits the study's ability to account for regional variations in work culture, management styles, and socio-economic factors. Future research should consider a broader geographic scope to enhance generalizability and capture regional differences in workplace behaviour.

Second, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal studies are recommended to track how OC, WLB, and POS evolve and influence deviant behaviours more accurately.

Third, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires may introduce social desirability bias, as respondents might underreport deviant behaviours or overstate perceptions of organizational support and work-life balance. To enhance the validity of future research, a combination of methods is recommended, including triangulation with supervisory or peer assessments, qualitative interviews or focus group discussions, time-lagged survey designs, and the use of behavioural data or HR records. Incorporating these approaches can strengthen the credibility of findings and offer a more nuanced understanding of the relationships among organizational cynicism, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and deviant work behaviours.

Finally, this study focused exclusively on WLB and POS as mediators. Other psychological and organizational factors, such as job satisfaction (Anis & Emil, 2022), psychological safety (Adeoti et al., 2020), emotional intelligence (Sajuyigbe et al., 2022), or leadership style (Akanni et al., 2018), may also mediate or moderate the OC–DWB relationship and should be investigated in future research. By addressing these limitations and extending the scope of inquiry, future research can offer more robust, contextually relevant strategies to enhance organizational health and employee conduct in the banking industry.

Acknowledgments

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