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Abusive Supervision Emotional Exhaustion and Work Family Conflict as Predictors of Organizational Cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Officers in Imo State

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Abstract

This study examined Abusive Supervision, Emotional Exhaustion, and Work-Family Conflict as predictors of Organizational Cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Officers in Imo State. A total of 273 officers from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) in Imo State participated in the study. The participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The age range of the participants was between 27 and 58 years ($M = 41.21$, $SD = 7.93$), comprising 111 males and 162 females. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Data were collected using paper-based questionnaires, which included a demographic survey and four standardized self-report measures. They are: the Abusive Supervision Scale (ASS) by Tepper (2000), the Burnout Inventory (OLDI) by Demerouti et al. (2003), the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFC) by Haslam et al. (2015), and the Organizational Cynicism Scale by Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998). The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, and data were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. Findings revealed that Abusive supervision significantly predicted organizational cynicism (accounting for 27.7% of the variance), Emotional exhaustion was also a significant predictor (explaining 12.2% of the variance), and Work-family conflict contributed significantly as well, though modestly, accounting for 3.3% of the variance. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic, evidence-based approach to organizational leadership that promotes ethical and non-abusive management practices, supports employee emotional well-being, and fosters a healthy work-life balance. Such measures are crucial to mitigating organizational cynicism among security personnel.

Keywords: *Abusive Supervision, Emotional Exhaustion, Work-Family Conflict Organizational Cynicism*

Introduction

Organizational cynicism, a negative attitude held by employees toward their employing organization, has become an increasingly focal point in contemporary organizational behaviour research. Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998) define Organizational Cynicism as a multidimensional construct characterized by negative beliefs, emotional disdain, and behavioural expressions of disillusionment. This attitude is often directed towards the organization as a whole, driven by a perception that the organization lacks integrity and acts out of self-serving interests (Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013).

More recent studies have refined this understanding by emphasizing the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of organizational cynicism. Cognitively, cynical employees believe that their organization fails to meet expectations of fairness, justice, and ethical behaviour (Kim, Kim, & Yun, 2020). Emotionally, these employees experience frustration, anger, and disillusionment toward the organization (Zhu, Sosik, Riggio, & Yang, 2019). Behaviourally, cynicism often manifests in verbal criticism of the organization, reduced engagement in work tasks, and even withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism or

turnover intentions (Abid, Khan, & Hong, 2021). Also, employees may believe that their organization lacks integrity, and this belief can foster emotional disdain, which often manifests in behaviours like verbal criticism, disengagement, and withdrawal from organizational activities. These behaviours reflect a lack of trust in the motives behind organizational decisions and actions. Abraham (2000) notes that organizational cynicism frequently leads to reduced commitment, diminished job performance, and absenteeism, creating a downward spiral that affects both the individual and the organization.

Abusive supervision is another significant contributor to Organizational Cynicism in Nigeria's public sector. Employees who experience authoritarian or punitive leadership are more likely to develop cynical attitudes toward their supervisors and the organization as a whole (Okorie & Emeh, 2021). This is often observed in hierarchical organizations, such as civil defense and law enforcement agencies, where power imbalances are prevalent, and employees frequently feel powerless to challenge unfair treatment. The limited opportunities for redress in these settings only intensify feelings of cynicism, as employees perceive that their concerns are ignored or dismissed by leadership.

Abusive supervision is a specific form of workplace mistreatment where supervisors engage in sustained hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours directed at their subordinates, excluding physical contact (Tepper, 2000). These behaviours include actions such as public ridicule, humiliation, manipulation, and undermining employees' work or credibility. Such supervision reflects a pattern of persistent negativity rather than isolated incidents, which can have far-reaching consequences on the affected employees' psychological well-being, morale, job satisfaction, and overall performance. Martinko, Harvey, Brees, and Mackey (2013) define abusive supervision as subordinates' perception of the sustained display of hostile behaviours by supervisors, a perception that drives employee stress, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions.

In the Nigerian context, abusive supervision is a prevalent issue in both the public and private sectors, where hierarchical structures and power imbalances enable supervisors to exert considerable control over their subordinates with minimal oversight (Okorie & Emeh, 2021). In many Nigerian workplaces, particularly in government institutions and large corporations, supervisors often exploit their authority, resulting in widespread reports of public ridicule, micromanagement, and unfair performance evaluations.

Another significant variable of note is emotional exhaustion. It is a critical dimension of burnout, representing a state of being emotionally drained and depleted due to prolonged exposure to stress in the workplace. Maslach and Jackson (1981) noted that emotional exhaustion is often accompanied by feelings of fatigue, emotional depletion, and a reduced ability to engage effectively with one's work or colleagues. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in jobs that require constant interpersonal interaction and demand high emotional labor, such as healthcare, education, law enforcement, and civil defense roles. The impact of emotional exhaustion on both individuals and organizations is profound. As individuals become emotionally exhausted, they experience diminished energy and motivation, which affects their ability to perform job duties effectively (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 2018). This exhaustion often leads to negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and decreased job satisfaction, all of which have been well-documented in recent studies. In some cases, emotionally exhausted employees may experience physical health problems, such as headaches, insomnia, and gastrointestinal issues, which further compound the negative impact on their well-being (Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, & Mutanen, 2020).

Work-family conflict has garnered increasing attention in recent years due to its widespread prevalence and significant impact on employee well-being and organizational outcomes. As first conceptualized by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict occurs when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible, making it challenging for individuals to fulfill the requirements of both domains. The conflict manifests in two distinct forms: work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW). These forms describe the bi-directional nature of the conflict, where one domain has a negative influence on the other. As societal expectations surrounding work and family continue to evolve, the challenge of achieving a work-life balance has intensified, particularly in professions with demanding work schedules and high levels of responsibility (Ahmad, Watson, & Sivabalan, 2021).

Work interfering with family (WIF) occurs when the pressures and responsibilities of one's job interfere with fulfilling family roles. This can manifest in several ways, including long working hours, rigid work schedules, job-related stress, and the inability to disengage from work, even during personal time (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2020). Employees experiencing WIF may struggle to be emotionally or physically present for family members, which can lead to strained relationships, reduced family satisfaction, and heightened stress at home. On the other hand, family interfering with work (FIW) refers to situations where family demands impede one's ability to meet work-related responsibilities.

Furthermore, work-family conflict can contribute to negative organizational outcomes, such as Organizational Cynicism and emotional disengagement. Employees who experience WIF are particularly likely to perceive their workplace as unsupportive of their personal needs, leading to feelings of cynicism toward the organization (Nohe et al., 2015). This cynicism may manifest in diminished organizational commitment, decreased willingness to go beyond prescribed work duties, and the erosion of trust in leadership (Ahmad et al., 2021). On the family side, unresolved work-family conflict can lead to strained relationships, marital dissatisfaction, and challenges in parenting, further exacerbating the emotional toll on the individual (Shockley et al., 2017).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, Organizational Cynicism has emerged as a critical issue within many workplaces, particularly in high-stress environments such as civil defence organizations. This growing phenomenon, characterized by deep mistrust in leadership, negative attitudes toward the organization, and disengagement from its goals, poses a significant threat to both employee well-being and organizational performance, potentially severely impacting job satisfaction, employee performance, and overall organizational effectiveness. The resulting disengagement and demotivation pose a significant threat to the success of civil defence operations, which rely on dedication, morale, and teamwork. Civil Defence officers, tasked with the demanding responsibility of ensuring public safety, are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental effects of cynicism, which can undermine their morale, productivity, and commitment to their mission.

Among the primary drivers of organizational cynicism are abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict. Abusive supervision, which involves demeaning, hostile, or controlling behavior from superiors, fosters an atmosphere of fear, resentment, and disillusionment among employees. Emotional exhaustion, a state of chronic fatigue and burnout resulting from prolonged exposure to workplace stress, further compounds these feelings, leaving employees disengaged and indifferent. Additionally, the struggle to balance demanding work obligations with personal and family responsibilities—known as work-family conflict—can lead to heightened stress and dissatisfaction, eroding employees' commitment to both their personal lives and their organization.

Despite the significant impact of these factors, there remains a dearth of empirical research specifically examining how abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict contribute to organizational cynicism among civil defense officers in Nigeria, particularly in Imo State. The unique challenges faced by these officers, who operate in a highly pressurized and often volatile environment, necessitate a deeper understanding of how these factors interact to shape their attitudes and behaviors. This study seeks to address this critical gap by investigating the extent to which these variables predict Organizational Cynicism among civil Defence officers in Imo State.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, this study examined Abusive Supervision, Emotional Exhaustion, and Work-Family Conflict as predictors of Organizational Cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State.

Specifically, this study's objectives were to determine whether:

1. Abusive Supervision will predict Organizational Cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State.

2. Emotional Exhaustion will predict Organizational Cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State.
3. Work-Family Conflict will predict Organizational Cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State.

Empirical Review

Abusive Supervision and Organizational Cynicism

The 2023 study by Ghafoor Chaudhry et al. in Pakistan provides an in-depth analysis of the role abusive supervision plays in fostering organizational cynicism. The research surveyed 350 faculty members from higher education institutions, focusing on how negative supervisory behaviors, such as public humiliation and withholding information, drive various dimensions of organizational cynicism: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Structural equation modeling revealed that abusive supervision significantly predicts these cynical attitudes, with cognitive cynicism being the belief that the organization lacks integrity, emotional cynicism manifesting in anger and resentment, and behavioral cynicism seen in critical or undermining behavior toward the organization.

In a similar vein, a 2022 study conducted in Egyptian university hospitals explored the correlation between abusive supervision and Organizational Cynicism among 230 nurses. The study utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure emotional exhaustion and found that abusive leadership, characterized by toxic behaviors such as belittling or overburdening staff, was a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion. This exhaustion then acted as a mediator, amplifying organizational cynicism. Nurses reported feelings of anger and frustration directed toward their leaders, which also manifested in negative attitudes toward the hospital itself. The study concluded that in high-stress environments like healthcare, where emotional labor is intense, the effects of abusive supervision are particularly severe, leading to both reduced job performance and a marked decrease in organizational loyalty (BMC Nursing, 2022).

Emotional Exhaustion and Organizational Cynicism

In a 2022 study by Erdogan et al., the researchers investigated the relationship between emotional exhaustion and Organizational Cynicism among 375 hotel employees in Istanbul, Turkey. Using a cross-sectional survey method, they employed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure emotional exhaustion and an Organizational Cynicism Scale to assess negative workplace attitudes. The study found that employees with high emotional exhaustion levels exhibited significantly higher levels of cognitive and emotional cynicism. Particularly, these employees expressed strong beliefs that their organizations lacked integrity, which led to a decline in their engagement and trust in the company. The results highlighted the detrimental effect of burnout, especially in high-stress, service-oriented industries, suggesting that emotional exhaustion plays a pivotal role in shaping cynical attitudes towards management.

In a 2023 study conducted by Wang and Zhang among 420 middle school teachers in Beijing, China, emotional exhaustion was examined in relation to organizational cynicism. This study revealed a strong correlation between the two, with emotionally exhausted teachers showing signs of cognitive and emotional cynicism. The teachers who were most burned out perceived their schools as dishonest and unsupportive. The study's regression analysis supported the hypothesis that emotional exhaustion significantly contributes to negative attitudes, particularly when workplace demands outweigh available support. Schaufeli et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study in the Netherlands, exploring how emotional exhaustion contributes to Organizational Cynicism among 350 nurses over a two-year period. Their research tracked the nurses' emotional exhaustion and measured their cynical attitudes using the MBI and Organizational Cynicism Questionnaire. The findings demonstrated that nurses experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion were more likely to express negative emotions such as distrust and frustration towards their institutions.

Work-Family Conflict and Organizational Cynicism

Work-family conflict and Organizational Cynicism have been widely explored across different professional settings. Mansour and Tremblay (2021) examined work-family conflict among Canadian workers in various sectors, including government, private, and non-profit organizations. Using a transactional stress model, the study posited that work-family conflict arises when employees perceive a lack of organizational support in balancing work and personal life. The findings indicated that workers with higher levels of work-family conflict showed greater emotional exhaustion, which directly contributed to organizational cynicism. This negative attitude toward the organization was more pronounced in the non-profit sector, where the strain of balancing personal responsibilities with the demands of the job was particularly high (Mansour & Tremblay, 2021).

Similarly, Kakar et al. (2022) investigated how work-family conflict affects organizational cynicism among healthcare workers in Pakistan, with a particular focus on nurses. In this cross-sectional survey involving 331 participants, the researchers found that poor work-life balance was a significant predictor of negative attitudes toward the organization. The study revealed that nurses facing higher levels of work-family conflict reported feeling unsupported by their employers, leading to increased emotional exhaustion and organizational cynicism. Using partial least squares structural equation modeling, the research confirmed that person-job fit mediated this relationship, suggesting that better alignment between job demands and employees' personal lives could lead to reduced negative perceptions of the organization (Kakar et al., 2022). This study emphasized the importance of implementing family-friendly policies in healthcare environments where job stress is inherently high.

Ugwu (2021) conducted a study on Nigerian bank workers, examining how work-family conflict influences Organizational Cynicism and job embeddedness. The cross-sectional study surveyed 200 bank workers, revealing that work-family conflict significantly predicted organizational cynicism. Workers who struggled to balance their job demands with family responsibilities reported greater dissatisfaction with organizational policies, particularly in terms of work flexibility. This dissatisfaction led to higher levels of organizational cynicism, underscoring the need for banks to implement more flexible work arrangements to help employees manage their dual responsibilities (Ugwu, 2021).

Onyeishi (2020) conducted a study at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, examining how organizational justice and work-family conflict predicted workplace deviance and cynicism. The study surveyed 300 non-academic staff and found that perceived injustice in terms of workload and support heightened work-family conflict, which led to emotional exhaustion and organizational cynicism. Employees who felt that their efforts were not fairly compensated or valued by the organization were more likely to exhibit negative attitudes toward their workplace. The study recommended that organizations should foster a culture of fairness and support to reduce work-family conflict and mitigate the rise of organizational cynicism.

Hypotheses

1. Abusive Supervision will not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps in Imo State.
2. Emotional Exhaustion will not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps in Imo State.
3. Work-Family Conflict will not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps in Imo State.

Method

Participants

The study sampled 273 officers of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) based in Imo State. The corps comprised 111 males and 162 females. The participants' ages ranged from 27 to 58 years, with a mean age of 41.21 years and a standard deviation of 7.93. Marital status showed that 48 participants

were single, while 225 were married. The sample included officers across various departments and ranks, ensuring diversity in demographic and occupational characteristics. A convenient sampling technique was employed to give each officer within the NSCDC Imo State Command an equal chance of selection. Eligibility criteria required participants to have served in the Corps for at least one year to ensure they had sufficient experience to respond meaningfully to the constructs examined in the study.

Instruments

Four instruments were used for data collection: the Abusive Supervision Scale (ASS), the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (ODBI), the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFC), and the Organizational Cynicism Scale.

Abusive Supervision Scale by Tepper (2000)

The Abusive Supervision Scale (ASS), developed by Tepper (2000), is a 15-item instrument designed to measure subordinates' perceptions of non-physical abusive behaviors exhibited by their supervisors. Sample items include statements such as, "My boss ridicules me" and "My boss tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid." Respondents rate the frequency of their supervisors' behaviors using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = "I cannot remember him/her ever using this behavior with me", 2 = "He/she very seldom uses this behavior with me", A higher score indicates a greater perception of abusive supervision, with lower scores (close to 15) suggesting minimal negative supervisory behaviours, moderate scores (around 40–55) indicating occasional instances, and higher scores (close to 75) reflecting frequent and severe supervisory abuse.

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (ODBI) by Demerouti, Bakker, Vardako, & Kantas (2003)

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (ODBI), developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Vardako, and Kantas in 2003, is a 16-item scale with positively and negatively framed items that measure burnout with two dimensions: exhaustion (physical, cognitive, and affective aspects) and disengagement (negative attitudes toward work objects, work content, or work in general). Eight items represent each of these two dimensions, with four items in each dimension being positively worded and four negatively worded, arranged in a mixed pattern for psychometric balance. Items 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16 explore exhaustion, while 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15 explore disengagement. It includes items like "I feel drained at the end of the workday" and "I find it hard to relax after a day at work," and Respondents indicate the frequency with which they experience various burnout-related feelings and behaviors. Each item has four Likert-type response options, which are scored as follows: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4). Reverse scoring is applied to the items marked with an 'R' in the instrument, such that strongly agree is scored -4 and strongly disagree. The OLB I demonstrates strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha scores of 0.74-0.87), fit of factorial validity, and construct validity when compared with the widely used Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The minimum burnout level is a total burnout score of 16 (8 for each subscale), while the maximum burnout level is a total burnout score of 64 (32 for each subscale).

Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) by Haslam et al. (2015)

The Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS), developed by Haslam, Filus, Morawska, Sanders, and Fletcher (2015), is a 10-item instrument designed to assess the conflicts that arise between work and family responsibilities. It evaluates two dimensions of work-family conflict: Work-to-Family Conflict (WFC) and Family-to-Work Conflict (FWC). The WFC dimension measures the extent to which work demands interfere with family responsibilities, such as being unable to participate in family activities due to work obligations. An example of an item measuring WFC is, "My work prevents me from spending enough quality time with my family." The WAFCS uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Very Strongly Agree).

The WAFCS has demonstrated strong psychometric properties. The instrument demonstrates high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.93 for WFC, 0.91 for FWC, and 0.92 for the overall scale. Correlations with related constructs, such as job stress, family satisfaction, and psychological well-

being, support its validity. Criterion validity is evidenced by the scale's ability to predict outcomes such as job performance, absenteeism, and family functioning. The scale's robust psychometric properties make it a reliable tool for both research and practical applications.

Organizational Cynicism Scale (OCS) by Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998)

The Organizational Cynicism Scale (OCS), developed by Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998), is a 14-item instrument used to measure employees' cynical attitudes and behaviors toward their organization. This scale assesses three dimensions of organizational cynicism: Cognitive Dimension (Items 1–5): Evaluates employees' beliefs about organizational inconsistencies, such as "I believe my organization says one thing and does another."

Affective Dimension (Items 6–10): Measures emotional reactions toward the organization, including tension and frustration, as in "I often experience anxiety when I think about my organization."

Behavioral Dimension (Items 11–14): Captures outward expressions of cynicism, such as "I criticize my organization's practices and policies with others."

The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicates "Strongly Agree." Higher scores indicate stronger levels of organizational cynicism, with subscale and total scores interpreted as follows: 4.20–5.00 = Very High, 3.40–4.19 = High, 2.60–3.39 = Medium, 1.80–2.59 = Low, and 1.00–1.79 = Very Low. The instrument has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.94$ reported by Dean et al. (1998).

Procedures

Permission was sought from the appropriate authorities at the NSCDC headquarters in Imo State to conduct the study. Once approval was granted, officers from various divisions and departments of the NSCDC were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. Only those officers who felt confident and knowledgeable enough to complete the questionnaire were administered the survey.

For participants with literacy challenges, the researcher was assisted by other NSCDC officers who were fluent in both English and the local languages spoken by the participants. These officers helped explain the questions clearly and accurately, and assisted with recording the responses when necessary. The physical questionnaires were administered during work hours at the NSCDC command center and other relevant offices in Imo State, and participants were given adequate time to complete the surveys. The data collection process lasted approximately four weeks. All responses were securely stored and anonymized to ensure confidentiality. At the end of the data collection, participants were debriefed and provided with a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose and procedures. Special attention was given to any participant who may have experienced emotional discomfort during the process. The researcher ensured that all participants completed the study in a stable and positive mental state.

Results

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among Key Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Organizational Cynicism	2.98	.86	—			
2. Abusive Supervision	42.57	14.65	.527**	—		
3. Emotional Exhaustion	41.01	12.29	.603**	.628**	—	
4. Work-Family Conflict	32.92	8.85	.566**	.635**	.626**	—

Note. $N = 273$; ** = $p < .01$.

Table 1 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations among the key study variables: Abusive Supervision, Emotional Exhaustion, Work-Family Conflict, and Organizational Cynicism. The results

showed that Organizational Cynicism was significantly positively correlated with Abusive Supervision ($r = .527$, $p < .001$), Emotional Exhaustion ($r = .603$, $p < .001$), and Work-Family Conflict ($r = .566$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that higher levels of perceived abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict were each associated with higher levels of organisational cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State.

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Organizational Cynicism

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Model 1					
Abusive Supervision	.031	.003	.527	10.20	<.001
$R^2 = .277$, $\Delta R^2 = .277$, $F(1, 271) = 103.93$, $p < .001$					
Model 2					
Abusive Supervision	.014	.004	.244	4.03	<.001
Emotional Exhaustion	.031	.004	.449	7.41	<.001
$R^2 = .399$, $\Delta R^2 = .122$, $F(2, 270) = 89.76$, $p < .001$					
Model 3					
Abusive Supervision	.008	.004	.143	2.22	.027
Emotional Exhaustion	.025	.004	.354	5.56	<.001
Work-Family Conflict	.025	.006	.253	3.94	<.001
$R^2 = .432$, $\Delta R^2 = .033$, $F(3, 269) = 68.24$, $p < .001$					

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict predicted organisational cynicism. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 2 above.

In Model 1, Abusive Supervision alone significantly predicted Organizational Cynicism, $F(1, 271) = 103.93$, $p < .001$, accounting for 27.7% of the variance in Organizational Cynicism ($R^2 = .277$, $\beta = .527$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which stated that "Abusive Supervision will not significantly predict Organizational Cynicism," is rejected.

In Model 2, Emotional Exhaustion was added to the model. The overall model remained significant, $F(2, 270) = 89.76$, $p < .001$, with Emotional Exhaustion emerging as a significant predictor ($\beta = .449$, $p < .001$). The inclusion of Emotional Exhaustion explained an additional 12.2% of the variance in Organizational Cynicism ($\Delta R^2 = .122$). Thus, Hypothesis 2, which stated that "Emotional Exhaustion will not significantly predict Organizational Cynicism," is also rejected.

In Model 3, Work-Family Conflict was added, and the model remained statistically significant, $F(3, 269) = 68.24$, $p < .001$. Work-family conflict significantly predicted Organizational Cynicism ($\beta = .253$, $p < .001$), accounting for an additional 3.3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .033$). Consequently, Hypothesis 3, which stated that "Work-Family Conflict will not significantly predict Organizational Cynicism," is rejected.

Summary of Findings

1. Abusive supervision significantly predicted organizational cynicism among Civil Defence Officers, contributing to 27.7% of the variance.
2. Emotional exhaustion significantly predicted organizational cynicism, explaining an additional 12.2% of the variance beyond abusive supervision.
3. Work-family conflict significantly predicted organizational cynicism, accounting for a further 3.3% of the variance.

Discussion

This study investigated the predictive roles of abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict in shaping organizational cynicism among officers of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Imo State. Anchored in both theoretical and empirical frameworks, the findings provide robust evidence that these three workplace stressors significantly influence the development of cynical attitudes in a structured, high-pressure organizational setting. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, as presented in Table 2, revealed that each independent variable made a significant and positive contribution to the prediction of organizational cynicism. These outcomes offer compelling justification for rejecting all three null hypotheses proposed and underscore the relevance of leadership behaviour, emotional well-being, and work-life balance in understanding attitudinal disengagement within paramilitary environments.

The first hypothesis, which stated that abusive supervision would not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State, was rejected. Findings revealed that abusive supervision significantly predicted organizational cynicism, accounting for 27.7% of the variance. This indicates that the more officers are exposed to abusive supervisory behaviours, the more likely they are to develop cynical attitudes toward the organization. This result is consistent with previous studies, such as Chaudhry et al. (2023), Moin et al. (2021), and Khan et al. (2021), which found that behaviours like belittling, public criticism, manipulation, and excessive control were strongly associated with cognitive, emotional, and behavioural forms of cynicism.

Secondly, emotional exhaustion emerged as a significant predictor of organizational cynicism, accounting for an additional 12.2% of the variance beyond abusive supervision. This led to the rejection of the second hypothesis, which proposed that emotional exhaustion would not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State. This finding highlights the profound emotional toll that chronic stress and fatigue can take on employees, especially in high-pressure environments such as the NSCDC. This outcome aligns with global research, including studies by Schaufeli et al. (2023), Wang and Zhang (2023), Lim et al. (2021), and Erdogan et al. (2022), all of which confirm that emotionally exhausted employees are more likely to distrust their organizations and experience reduced organizational commitment (key precursors to cynicism). Emotional exhaustion is often symptomatic of broader organizational issues, including work overload, inadequate leadership support, and poorly designed jobs. When these conditions persist, they contribute to a depletion of psychological resources, a process described in Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which suggests that individuals under resource strain are more likely to adopt defensive attitudes like cynicism. In the context of this study, NSCDC officers frequently operate in emotionally demanding and high-stress conditions. Thus, the strong relationship between emotional exhaustion and organizational cynicism observed in this study reinforces the idea that employee well-being is not only a health concern but also a crucial determinant of organizational attitudes and productivity.

Thirdly, work-family conflict significantly predicted organizational cynicism, accounting for an additional 3.3% of the model's variance. This result led to the rejection of the third hypothesis, which stated that work-family conflict would not significantly predict organizational cynicism among Civil Defence Officers in Imo State. The finding indicates that difficulty in balancing professional responsibilities with family life contributes to the development of negative attitudes toward the organization, particularly when employees perceive a lack of organizational support for their personal needs. This aligns with the findings of Mansour and Tremblay (2021) and Kakar et al. (2022), who reported that employees experiencing poor work-life balance tend to exhibit emotional strain and harbor unfavorable views of their organizations, especially when institutional support systems are weak or absent. This finding is further supported by local studies, such as those by Ikpeama (2023) and Etodike et al. (2023), which confirmed that unresolved work-family conflict contributes to emotional burnout and fosters cynicism and disengagement in Nigerian organizational settings. Collectively, these results highlight the importance of institutional recognition of employees' personal and familial obligations, as neglecting these concerns can subtly erode trust, commitment, and morale, thereby increasing the risk of organizational cynicism. Finally, the findings of this study align closely with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model developed by Demerouti et al. (2001), which served as the theoretical framework underpinning this research.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry important implications for leadership, organizational policy, and employee well-being, particularly within high-stress, structured environments like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC). It showcased the significant role of abusive supervision in predicting organizational cynicism, underscoring the urgent need for leadership reform. Supervisory positions should not be based solely on rank or technical competence but should also require demonstrated emotional intelligence, interpersonal sensitivity, and ethical leadership training. Organizations must prioritize leadership development programs that promote respectful communication, psychological safety, and inclusive management styles. Implementing regular supervisory evaluations and feedback mechanisms can also help identify and correct toxic leadership behaviors early. The study also emphasizes the importance of prioritizing employee well-being as a crucial component of organizational success. Emotional exhaustion was a significant contributor to cynicism, indicating that unaddressed stress and burnout can severely erode morale and trust. Institutions like the NSCDC should invest in mental health resources, including access to professional counseling, peer support groups, and stress management workshops.

Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Although significant associations were found, the temporal sequence of cause and effect cannot be determined. Future research using longitudinal or experimental designs would help in confirming the directionality of these relationships.

Recommendations

The significant impact of abusive supervision on organizational cynicism calls for a strategic overhaul in leadership selection and development. The NSCDC should institute mandatory leadership training focused on emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, and supportive supervisory practices. Supervisors should be regularly evaluated not only on performance outcomes but also on how they relate to subordinates. More so, , given the predictive role of emotional exhaustion, the NSCDC should prioritize employee mental health by providing access to psychological services, stress reduction workshops, peer support programs, and regular wellness check-ins.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should consider increasing the sample size significantly to enhance the statistical power and reliability of the findings. Larger samples drawn from multiple states or regions across Nigeria would provide a more representative understanding of organizational cynicism within the NSCDC and similar paramilitary organizations. Expanding the geographic scope to include various commands across the country is crucial, as organizational culture, leadership styles, and work conditions may differ substantially between regions. Such broader studies would allow for comparative analyses and help identify region-specific factors influencing employee attitudes.

Conclusion

This study offers robust empirical evidence that abusive supervision, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict are significant predictors of organizational cynicism among Nigeria Security and Civil Defense officers in Imo State. The findings underscore the need to address toxic leadership behaviours, chronic workplace stress, and work-family imbalance, all of which contribute to negative employee attitudes and reduced organizational commitment. Abusive supervision was found to erode trust and engagement, emotional exhaustion highlighted the psychological toll of high-demand environments, and work-family conflict revealed how personal strain can fuel organizational distrust. These results contribute meaningfully to the literature on occupational health, Industrial Psychology, and public service management, particularly within paramilitary contexts like the NSCDC. To mitigate organizational cynicism and its harmful effects, a holistic approach is required; one that includes leadership development, mental health support, work-life

balance reforms, and a culture of transparency and inclusion. Such efforts will not only improve employee well-being and morale but also enhance performance, foster institutional trust, and strengthen the overall effectiveness of public service organizations in Nigeria.

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