

## Distributive Justice, Individual Spirituality, and Deviant Behaviour Among Academics at Taraba State University

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### Abstract

The study examined the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour, and the moderating role of individual spirituality among university academics at Taraba State University. Relevant literatures on distributive justice, deviant behaviour and spirituality were reviewed under conceptual, theoretical, and empirical review. The study was anchored on social exchange theory and person organisational fit theory. A descriptive survey research design method was used. The target population for the study is 586 academics at Taraba State University. The sample size was 226. The study employed a purposive sampling technique. The structural questionnaire was used to source data from the respondents. The researcher distributed 300 questionnaires, but only 190 copies were retrieved, and used for the analysis. Structural equation modeling specifically Partial least squares (PLS) software version 4 was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings of the study revealed that distributive justice has a negative and significant effect on the deviant behaviour of academics at Taraba State University. Individual spirituality does not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. The study recommends that the government and management of the university should ensure that academics' salaries, benefits, allowances, and promotions are given to them at the right time to reduce deviant behaviour.

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### **Background to the Study**

In today's knowledge-driven world, the ability of a nation to effectively function and remain competitive depends on the impact created by its Ivory Tower, which is a citadel of learning, research, and community development. However, the achievements of these universities depend on the quality and commitment of the academics. It has been established that the perception of unfair distribution of rewards relative to work inputs creates tension within an employee, whereas employees who are treated fairly by their supervisors and perceive justice exhibit citizenship behaviours and organisational commitment, which are socially appropriate. ((Wurim, 2013; Gomam et al., 2017; Akram et al. 2019). As such, an increase in academics' perception of fairness in the distribution of outcomes in comparison to their effort in terms of teaching, research, publications, administration, and community service will lead to a low desire for deviant behaviour.

Organisational justice is an individual's perception of an organisation's fairness (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Although organisational justice includes four dimensions: distributive, procedural, informational, and interactional justice (Shibaoka, Takada, Watanabe, Kojima, Kakinuka, Tanaka & Kawaka, 2010), this research has chosen to discuss distributive justice because earlier studies have shown that individuals who receive benefits from their organisations will feel responsible for repaying those benefits through their efforts and loyalty (Dar, 2017). Indicating that based on the principle of reciprocity, employees have relationships with other individuals in the organisation. As such, the perception of justice in the organisation will shape positive employee behaviours and thereby avoid deviant behaviour (Mohd & Abdul, 2019). Distributive justice has to do with individual perceptions of fairness in rewards distributed by the organisation; the outcomes in a work context might take the form of pay or salary, social approval, benefits, job security, promotion, and career opportunities (Mathur & Padmakumari, 2013).

Justice in payment had been identified as a driving force that enables employee to become reactive, efficient, and productive (Dhanya & Prashath, 2019). As such, fairness in the payment system for the employees could maximise their potential and satisfaction level, which ultimately increases their values and reduces deviant behaviour in the long run. Evidence supports the relationship between distributive justice and deviance; for example, Chenyark-Hai and Tziner (2014), Abbasi, Baradari, Shaghariji, Shahraki, & Hashim (2020), Hashish (2019), as well as Dar (2017), found a negative and significant relationship between perceived distributive justice and deviant behaviour. Contrary to their findings, Hamdi and Nasurdin (2006), Kura, Shamsudin and Chauhan (2013) as well as Obalade and Mtembu (2023) have earlier found a negative and insignificant relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. This study finds distributive justice to be a suitable predictor for explaining deviant behaviour among university academics. In line with the context of this study, academics who perceive fair distribution in their outcomes might develop positive perceptions in their minds. Such positive perceptions might result in various positive work outcomes. This aligns with the social exchange theory (Blue, 1964), which argues that a feeling of fairness in the distribution of outcomes should result in positive work attitudes towards the organisation.

However, when employees feel they are unfairly treated by their organisation, their commitment, performance, and job loyalty levels will reduce, and they might express deviant work behaviour (Saleem & Gopinath, 2015; Gomam et al., 2017). Bennet and Robinson (1995), identified various typologies of deviant behaviours that vary along two dimensions: organisational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Organisational deviance includes a variety of negative behaviours targeted at the organisation itself, whereas interpersonal deviance includes negative behaviours that are directed at co-employees. However, this study focuses on organisational deviance since it relates to the university. It is the concern of institutional authorities to effectively manage the behaviour of employees. Organisations wish to have employees who carry out their duties and responsibilities without bringing harm to the workplace (Hussain & Hussain, 2020). It seems, then, that negative deviant behaviour could be an important problem for organisations. Hence, understanding this set of behaviours, especially as they relate to the causal effects of organisational justice and spirituality, is important. It was observed that deviant workplace behaviour is a global phenomenon, and appreciable research efforts have been dedicated to it (Fegbenro & Olasupo, 2020). However, most of the efforts at studying deviant workplace behaviour focus on the developed countries of the world (Igbe, Okpa & Aniah, 2017).

While deviant behaviour is a global problem that cuts across all forms of human organisations, the university is particularly known for several workplace deviant behaviours (Fabonhungbe, Akinbode & Ayodeji, 2012). These had led to increased cases of dismissals of university academics, revenue losses in terms of recruitment, advertisement, selection, and training costs, tarnishing of the reputation of the university, and loss of knowledge assets that are costly to replicate and replace (Elegbeley & Okojide, 2020; Harris, Levelle, & McMahan, 2018). To address this problem, the Nigerian government established funding support agencies such as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund and the Petroleum Development Fund to provide the necessary infrastructure for teaching and learning and to ensure the training of academics both at home and overseas. Similarly, the majority of Nigerian universities have staff rules and regulations that address deviance and outline both disciplinary procedures and sanctions for deviant behaviour (Ochentenwu, 2022). However, deviant behaviour among university academics is on the rise (Fegbenro & Olasupo 2020).

Based on the findings that suggest inconsistency, this study examined the role of individual spirituality in the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University. The spirituality paradigm recognised that people not only work with their hands but also with their hearts and spirits (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), which means bringing employees' hearts, minds, bodies, and souls to an organisation is vital for both individual and organisational success. Spirituality has been framed into three broad dimensions: individual, organisational, and workplace spirituality (Pawar, 2017). Likewise, empirical evidence has shown that spirituality can enhance a sense of justice, leading to improved ethical behaviour (Minon, 2017), thereby reducing deviant behaviour (Nwanzu & Babalola,

2021). Hence, the researcher sought to examine the relationship between distributive justice, workplace deviant behaviour, and individual spirituality.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Studies have revealed that university academics also exhibit deviant behaviours; for instance, plagiarism is said to be more prevalent among Brazilian university academics (Berlink, 2011). Santoso and Cahaya (2019) ascertain that university academics in Indonesia frequently plagiarise due to job overload, unfair rivalry among academics, and the pressure to reach publication goals. According to earlier research, university academics in Nigeria also exhibit deviant behaviours. For instance, Nwadiani (2018), Onoyese (2019), Duhu, Girei and Wakili, (2021), and Oyeizugbe (2021) identified plagiarism, sexual harassment, acting rudely, and slacking off as only a few of this behaviour. Similarly, reports from Nigerian daily newspapers indicate that university academics' deviant behaviour is on the rise. For instance, on June 2, 2021, two lecturers at the University of Lagos, Akoka, were sacked for sexual harassment (Alabi, 2021). More so, in February 2020, when Nigerian universities are on a long hold of academic activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employments of two faculty members at Modibbo Adama University Yola were terminated due to victimisation and sexual assault. Similar to this, three senior lecturers at Modibbo Adama University Yola were demoted for academic dishonesty in June 2022 (Ochentenwu, 2022). Academics at Taraba State University recently refused to continue with the examination that was scheduled to start on Monday, January 20, 2023, because the university administration and the government of Taraba State were unable to pay the academics their 10-month salary arrears in spite of the academics' repeated protests (Tyopuusu, 2023).

The National Universities Commission indicates that as of 2022 there were 219 accredited universities in Nigeria, including 111 private universities, 59 state government universities, and 49 federal universities. However, despite the increase in the number of universities in Nigeria, the 2022 report from Times Higher Education showed that only three Nigerian universities (the University of Ibadan, the University of Lagos, and Covenant University) are listed in the top 600 universities in the world based on teaching (15%), research output (18%), citations (30%), global outlook (2.5%), and industry income (2.5%). Consequently, several questions concerning the future and viability of education in Nigeria are raised. This is due to the fact that loss caused by deviance is expensive, both in terms of the cost of knowledge assets lost, which are expensive to replicate and replace, as well as the cost of recruitment, advertising, selection, training costs, and damage to the university's reputation (Elegbeley, & Okojide, 2020), Harris, Lavelle, & McMahan 2018), Rubenstein, Eberly, Lee, & Mitchell 2018). Saleem and Gapinath (2015), Chenyark-Hai and Tziner (2014), as well as Dar (2017), among others, have investigated the effects of distributive justice on deviant behaviour. While the results of the previous studies were inconsistent (Hamdi and Nasurdin, 2006; Kura et al., 2013; Obalade and Mtembu, 2023), none of the previous studies had examined the role of individual spirituality as a moderator in the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University. This calls for investigation in this field of study.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University?
2. To what extent does individual spirituality moderate the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University?

## **Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to examine the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour and the moderating role of spirituality among academics at Taraba State University. However, the following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To examine the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba state university.
2. To evaluate the moderating role of spirituality on the relationship between organisational justice and deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Distributive Justice**

Distributive justice refers to the employees' perceptions regarding the remuneration remitted by the organisation. It supports employees' perceptions about how fairly job demands and rewards are commensurate to the referenced group. Distributive justice is an individual's perception of the fair distribution of resources and employees' behaviour or beliefs about the fairness of wages and recourses given to them (Al-A'wasa, 2018). The outcomes in a work context might take the form of pay or salary, pay rises, training opportunities, social approval, benefits, job security, promotion, and career opportunities, while the inputs would include education, intelligence, seniority, training, experience, and effort (Baldwin, 2006; Mathur & Padmakumari, 2013). The dimension of distributive justice describes the process of achieving equality between the organisation's employees, suggesting that distributive justice is one of the organisational justice dimensions that focuses on making employees believe that they have received wages that equal the outcome of their work. As such, the perception of justice in the organisation will shape positive employee behaviours and thereby avoid deviant behaviour (Mohd & Abdul, 2019).

### **Concept of individual spirituality**

The spirituality paradigm recognised that people not only work with their hands but also with their hearts and spirits (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), which means bringing employees' hearts, minds, bodies, and souls to an organisation is vital for both individual and organisational success. Spirituality has been framed into three broad dimensions: individual, organisational, and workplace spirituality (Pawar, 2017). Villani et al. (2019) as well as Mukherjee (2019) state that spirituality is the most important part of human beings, which cannot be seen and provides meaning and purpose to life as well as attachment to God Almighty. Individual Spirituality is concerned with a person's inner life, which has positive consequences for his or her behaviour in the organisational



context. It is recognised as one of the four fundamental forces (body, mind, heart, and spirit) of human existence (Fry, 2003). Vem, Tuamil, & Ocholi (2020), define individual spirituality as an individual's inner life that is found to have positive consequences for his or her behaviour in an organisational context “(70). Roof (2015), also defines individual spirituality as the individual's relationship or experience with the divine that informs an individual's existence and shapes their meaning, purpose, and mission in daily life” (583). It does not need to include religion, nor does it by nature exclude religion.

## **Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **Distributive justice and Deviant behaviour**

Evidence has been found to support the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. For example, Saleem and Gapinath (2015), argue that distributive justice is the dimension that has the greatest impact on deviant behaviour. In the same vein, Chenyark and Tziner (2014), in their study examined the relationship between counterproductive work behaviour, perceived justice, and climate occupational status and found a negative relationship between perceived distributive justice and counterproductive workplace behaviour. Dar (2017), in his study, examined the relationship between distributive justice and workplace deviance in Pakistan. The results of the study showed that distributive justice significantly and negatively correlated with workplace deviance. Contrary to their findings, Hamdi and Nasuridin (2006), Kura, et al. (2013) as well as Obalade and Mtembu (2023), have earlier found a negative and insignificant relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. In line with the context of this study, academics who perceive fair distribution in their outcomes might develop positive perceptions in their minds. Such positive perceptions might result in various positive work outcomes. This aligns with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which argues that a feeling of fairness in the distribution of outcomes should result in positive work attitudes towards the organisation.

**H1:** Distributive justice negatively influences deviant behaviour among university academics.

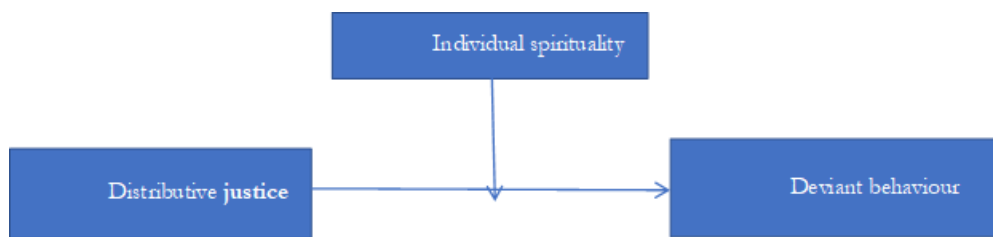
### **Moderation Role of Spirituality**

Previous literature shows that spirituality improves work results and reduces deviant behaviours in the workplace (Prasanna & Madhavaiah, 2017; Ahmad & Omar, 2014; Zhang, 2018; Nwanzu and Babalola, 2021; Adeoti, Shamsudin & Wan, 2017), and can enhance a sense of justice and improve ethical behaviour (Minon, 2017), thereby reducing deviant behaviour (Nwanzu and Babalola, 2021; Adeoti, Shamsudin & Wan, 2017). Spirituality has been aligned with the purpose of individual life, which provides meaning, inner awareness and knowledge, a sense of existence, and lifelong results and has led to beneficial personal outcomes (Kumar, 2018). Prior study had suggested a possible relationship between spirituality and deviant behaviour (Li & Cheng, 2018). Likewise, empirical evidence has supported the moderating role of spirituality (Selvarajan, Singh, Stringer, & Chapo, 2020; Young, Caswell & Shcherbakova, 2000; Mujib & Rena, 2020). In the same vein, Haldorai (2019) also supports the intervening role

of spirituality in the relationship between ethical climate and workplace deviance. Giacolone and Jurkiewicz (2003), assessed the relationship between personal spirituality and perceptions of unethical business activities; their result establishes a significant relationship between ethics and personal spirituality.

This study is in line with Vem et al. (2020) regarding spirituality as an individual's inner life, which is found to have positive consequences for his or her behaviour in the organisational context to moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. In line with the findings that suggested inconsistency and also in line with the fact that people with more spirituality feel more responsible for doing their jobs, which brings more loyalty to organizational value (Golestanipour, 2016), we, therefore, hypothesized that:

**H2:** Individual spirituality moderates the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour



**Figure 1:** Researchers' Conceptual Framework 2023

### Theoretical Background

This study examines the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour among university academics and the moderation effect of spirituality through the theoretical lenses of social exchange theory and person-organisation fit theory. The social exchange theory was propounded by Blau (1964), and the basic precept of the theory was to explain employees' perceptions of interpersonal relationships. Employees form perceptions of what constitutes fair input and output by comparing their situation with others. When employees perceive that their inputs are fairly rewarded by outputs, they are satisfied, happier, and more motivated in their work and might not involve deviant behaviour (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014). Therefore, the theory has wide-ranging implications for employee perceptions, morale, efficiency, and deviance. It also shows why employees see themselves the way they are treated in terms of their surrounding environment, teams, and systems collectively and not in isolation, and so they should be managed and treated accordingly. Hence, academics who perceived fairness in the organisation might not engage in deviant behaviour.

This study is also anchored on Person-Organisational-Fit (P-O) theory. The theory was propounded by Scheider (1987). He came up with the theory to explain the suitability of employees' values with the values that exist in the organisation based on the perception

of the employees themselves (Farooqui & Asha, 2014). The theory suggests that individual work attitudes and behaviours are influenced by how well their personal goals and values align with those of the work environment (Edwards and Cable 2009). When P-O Fit occurs, employees and organisations are said to have certain shared fundamental characteristics in common (Vem et al., 2020). This is seen in the areas of values, as it relates to existential purpose and goals, which explain their intentions and actions (Vem, et al., 2020). Academics' spirituality is linked to relationships with or experiences with the transcendent, which shape their purpose in daily life (Roof, 2014). As such, academics' perception of justice cannot be separated from compatibility with the organisation; as long as an employee feels that there is compatibility between their values and the values of an organisation they tend to be satisfied with their work (Ali and Shah, 2021), and the outcome will be better and more positive (Vem et al., 2020).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study was designed as a descriptive survey study. This is so because the study described a situation and its minimal bias in the collection of data. A descriptive design describes population characteristics through the selection of an equal sample (Wanjau & Wanarigi, 2012). A self-reported questionnaire was used to obtain data from the target population. Though Podsakoff, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) criticized this approach for its weakness concerning common method bias, we adopted a procedural approach (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn & Eden, 2010) by ensuring that across measures or similarities in item structure or wording did not mislead respondents.

### **Population and Sample**

The study population comprises male and female academics working at Taraba state university, which are 586 academics as obtained from the university system digest for 2019. 226 respondents were selected for the study using Krejci and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination. In survey research, a sample size of 10–30% is considered adequate and appropriate for the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The sampled participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This was employed because the researchers had predetermined purposes, which were to ensure that different levels of academics were included in the study sample.

## **Measurement**

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for the study was adapted from previous literature and published work by different researchers, and the items were used to measure the responses of the participants; specifically, distributive justice was measured using items adapted from Shibaoka et al. (2010). The distributive justice scale had four items. The nature of the questionnaire used in this study was a 5-point Likert scale type of questionnaire, which ranged from 5 "strongly agrees" to 1 "strongly disagrees". Organisational justice studies such as Razaie et al. (2014) and Golparvar and Jovadian (2012) have used the scale in their studies and confirmed the reliability of the instrument to measure justice within organizational settings.



Similarly, spirituality was measured using the Human Spirituality Scale developed by Wheat (1991). The scale has three dimensions: a larger context (LC), awareness of life (AL), and compassion (CP). The scale had 20 items and used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 never to 5 constantly. The nature of the questionnaire used in this study was a 5-point Likert scale type of questionnaire, which ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Kolodinsk, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2008); Mukherjee and Singha (2019) have used the spirituality scale in their studies and have also confirmed the reliability of the instrument in measuring spirituality within organisational settings.

Deviant behaviour, the dependent variable, was measured using 10 items adapted from Bennett and Robinson (2000) as in Gomam et al. (2017). Bennet and Robinson (2000), originally developed two scales: a 12-item scale of organisational deviant behaviour (directly harmful to the organisation) and a 7-item scale of interpersonal deviant behaviour (directly harmful to other individuals within the organisation). This present study adapted 10 items from the organisational deviance scale because they are in line with this present study. The nature of the deviant behaviour questionnaire used in this study was a 7-point scale type questionnaire, which ranges from 7 "strongly agree" to 1 "strongly disagree". In a recent study, for example, Fegbenro and Olusupo (2020), used the scale to measure deviant behaviour among academics and non-academic staff. Likewise, Astuti, Maryati and Harsono (2020), Mohd and Abdul (2019), and Abbasi et al. (2020) also used the 7-point deviant behaviour scale in their studies.

### Method of Data Analysis

A total of 300 questionnaires were administered in anticipation of a 50% response rate, though the actual sample size is 226. Out of the 300 questionnaires administered, 200 were retrieved and 190 were usable, indicating a 63% response rate.

**Table 1:** Respondents' Characteristics

Indices	Number of respondents (N=190)	Percentage of respondents
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	152	80
Female	38	20
<b>Age range</b>		
25-35	30	16
36-45	93	49
46 and above	67	35
<b>Qualification</b>		
PhD	30	16
Masters	148	78
First degree	12	6
<b>Year of Experience</b>		
1-5	23	12
6-10	75	40
11years and above	92	48

## Results

The characteristics of the respondents include 80 percent males; 16 percent PhD holders, while others had either an MSc or first degree; and 48 percent had worked in the university for more than 11 years. To conduct the analysis, Partial Least Squares (PLS) software 4.0 was used. PLS-SEM is applied to exploratory research where 'theory is less developed' (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt and Thiele (2017), specifically when the primary focus of the study is to predict and explain the key target constructs or identify the key driver constructs (Hair et al. 2017). This comprises two broad evaluations, namely the assessment of the measurement model to evaluate the convergent validity of the constructs and the structural model to test and evaluate the effects.

## Measurement Model

To assess the measurement model, we evaluated the confirmatory factor analysis results, which enabled us to determine the composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity through the average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013). The CR and AVE values are presented in Table 2, and the result shows that the factor loadings of at least 0.830 are greater than the threshold of  $> 0.7$  by Nunnally and Bernstein (1978), therefore the criterion is not violated. Likewise, the constructs' reliability CR and the convergent validity coefficient (AVE) are greater than the thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al. 2017), therefore the criteria are not violated.

**Table 2:** Assessment of Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicators	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Spirituality second order	AL	0.952	0.967	0.908
	CP	0.967		
	LC	0.939		
Deviant behaviour	DB1	0.899	0.973	0.784
	DB2	0.901		
	DB3	0.878		
	DB4	0.887		
	DB5	0.888		
	DB6	0.901		
	DB7	0.858		
	DB8	0.915		
	DB9	0.830		
	DB10	0.893		
Distributive Justice	DJ1	0.889	0.967	0.769
	DJ2	0.883		
	DJ3	0.852		
	DJ4	0.884		

**Note:** Criteria: Factor loading/CR $>0.70$  (Nunnally and Bernstein 1978; Fornell and Larcker,1981) AVE $>0.5$  (Hair et al. 2011, Hair, et al. (2014).

Using the Fornell and Larcker criterion, discriminant validity was tested to establish that the constructs in the study are dissimilar to each other within the framework (Henseler,

Ringle, and Sarsted 2014). The technique establishes discriminant validity among constructs at a point where the squared AVE is higher than the correlation with other constructs. The result in Table 3 revealed that discriminant validity was established among constructs since the squared of the AVEs, as highlighted diagonally, is greater than correlations within the row and the column (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 3:** Assessment of discriminant validity using Fornell-lacker criterion

		1	2	3
1	Deviant behaviour	<b>0.885</b>		
2	Distributive justice	-0.842	<b>0.877</b>	
3	Spirituality	-0.715	0.663	<b>0.953</b>

**Note:** Diagonal elements highlighted represent the square root of AVE. And the off-diagonal elements are bivariate correlations between constructs.

### Evaluation of structural model

To evaluate the structural model, a bootstrapping procedure using 5,000 resampling was conducted using Smart-PLS 4.0 to determine the path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), while other recommended analyses were used to determine the model fit,  $R^2$ , effect size,  $F^2$  (Hair et al. 2014). Presently, Smart-PLS reports standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt 2014; Hair et al. 2017). The goodness of fit indices (SRMR) is fixed at a threshold value of 0.08; meanwhile, the present model establishes an SRMR value of 0.038, which is  $< 0.08$ , confirming the model's fitness.

The summary of the structural model results is shown in Table 4. Relevant findings include: (1) the direct relationship that connects distributive justice and deviant behaviour  $\beta = -0.613$ ,  $t$ -value = 8.315;  $p$ -value = 0.000 is significant. This implies that the perception of an increase in distributive justice will have a significant negative effect on deviant behaviour among academics.

**Table 4:** Result of Hypothesis testing (direct relationship)

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	VIF	$F^2$	$R^2$	Decision
H1	DJ---> DB	-0.613	0.074	8.315	0.000	1.784	0.944	0.777	Significant
GOF	SRMR= 0.038								

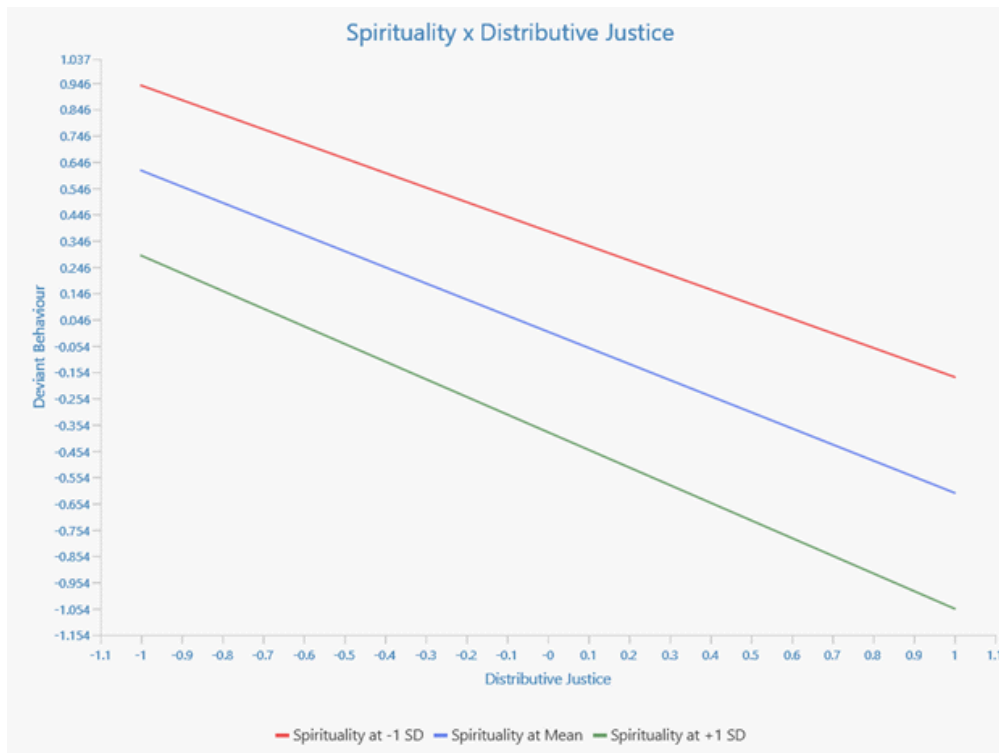
Similarly, other evaluations ( $R^2$  and  $F^2$ ) were done to determine the coefficient of determination and the substantive significance of structural relationships. The results presented in Table 4 show that the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  which measures the model's predictive power of 0.777 is substantially based on Cohen's (1988) and (Hair et al., 2017) criterion. Likewise, the  $f^2$  (effect size), which explains the influence of a latent variable on the structural model, was ascertained. The coefficients of 0.944 met Hair et al.'s (2014) criteria for a large effect size.

Another analysis was conducted to evaluate the moderating effect of individual spirituality. To assess the moderating effect that exists between distributive justice and deviant behaviour, PLS-SEM adopted the bootstrapping approach (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) to examine the significance of the direct path in the model. The indirect effect from Table 5 reveals  $\beta = -0.059$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 0.658$ , and  $p\text{-value} = 0.255$ , which is not supported. This implies that spirituality does not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. Furthermore, Preacher and Hayes's (2008) second condition reveals  $LCI = -0.226$  and  $UCI = 0.063$ , straddle a zero in-between the upper and lower intervals. This means that spirituality did not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour.

**Table 5:** Assessment of Moderation

Hypotheses	Indirect Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	LCI 5%	UCI 95%	Decision
H2	DJ SP→DB	-0.059	0.089	0.658	0.255	-0.226	0.063	Not Significant

**Figure 2:** Graphical Presentation of Moderating Role of Spirituality on the Relationship between Interpersonal Justice and Deviant Behaviour



Source: Smart-PLS 4.0

## **Discussion of Findings**

This study surveys the predictive effects of distributive justice on deviant behaviour among university academics and the moderating role of individual spirituality in the relationship between the antecedent and the outcome of this study. A thorough search of previous literature reveals that this study is among the first to empirically examine the moderating role of spirituality in the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour.

Hypothesis H1 postulated a negative and significant relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. The empirical findings of the study supported the hypotheses. The outcome agrees with an earlier study by Gomam et al. (2017), Dar (2017), Abbasi et al. (2020), and Hashish (2019), who posit that distributive justice contributed a significant predictive influence on reducing workplace deviance. The finding contradicts the view of Hamdi and Nasrudin (2006) as well as Kura, et al. (2013), who found a positive and insignificant relationship between the perception of distributive justice and deviant behaviour. In line with the view of exchange theory, the findings of the study revealed that distributive justice is an important phenomenon in terms of reducing deviant behaviour. However, the result of the indirect relationship through the moderating role of spirituality was not supported. As indicated in Table 5, confirm that spirituality does not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour.  $\beta = -0.059$ ,  $T = 0.658$ ,  $P = 0.225$ . Likewise, figure 2 graphically shows that spirituality does not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. Meaning that an increase in the level of academic spirituality does not increase academics' perception of distributive justice, this study contradicts the views of Ghadi (2017) and Chawla and Guda (2010), who postulate that spirituality mitigates a negative outcome and thereby reduces negative intention. The finding is not in line with the person-organisational-fit theory, which suggests that employees' missions and purposes guide their work attitudes and behaviours about their work environment (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

Distributive justice has been identified in the literature as an important determinant of employees' deviant behaviour in the organisation. On examining the effect of distributive justice on deviant behaviour, it was established that distributive justice has a negative and significant effect on deviant behaviour among university academics at Taraba State University. This means that an increase in academics' perception of fairness in the distribution of outcomes in comparison to their effort in terms of teaching, research, publications, administration, and community service is associated with a low desire for deviant behaviour among academics at Taraba State University. The findings from this study showed that there is a fair distribution of outcomes among academics at Taraba State University. It was found that academics' perceptions of fairness in the distribution of their outcomes have motivated them to reduce their involvement in deviant behaviour. The study revealed that fairness in academic outcomes such as their pay, earning allowance, and promotion are commensurate with those of their colleagues in



the university. However, academic spirituality does not moderate the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour.

### **Limitations and Direction for Future Research**

The study focuses on distributive justice, which is just one dimension of organisational justice; hence, future researchers can include other dimensions of organisational justice, such as procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice. This study uses spirituality as a moderator variable in the relationship between distributive justice and deviant behaviour. Future studies might use individual spirituality as a moderator variable in the relationship between other dimensions of organisational justice and deviant behaviour. This study uses quantitative data; other studies might use qualitative data. In terms of scope, this study was restricted to Taraba State University only and therefore does not reflect the entire population of academics in Nigeria, which remained a major limitation as well. Given this, the findings of this research cannot be generalised. Future research may replicate this study at other universities in Nigeria using a larger sample size. The nonprobability sampling techniques employed in this study might also have some negative effects on the outcomes of the study. By using the probability sampling technique, the validity and generality of the study can be improved.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The government and Management of the university should ensure that academics' salaries, benefits, allowances and promotions are given to them at the right time to reduce deviant behaviour.
- ii. The government and management of universities should redesign their distributive justice policy in a manner that superior performance by employees will attract special rewards
- iii. The university should provide a possibility of appeal for academics who feel they are unfairly treated, to ensure academic ethical standards.

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