

Research Article

FEAR-BASED MOTIVATION AND EMPLOYEE EFFECTIVENESS IN TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA.

^{1*}EMMANUEL Cynthia Chisom, ²KIFORDU A. Anthony, ³ORISHEDE Felix

¹Department of Business Administration DELSU Business School, Asaba

²Department of Business Administration Delta State University, Abraka

³Department of Business Administration Delta State University, Abraka

Article History:

Received: 27 April 2026 | **Accepted:** 02 May 2026 | **Published:** 06 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20047010>

*** Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.*

Abstract

This study examined fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State. The specific objectives were to determine the effect of job insecurity on employee effectiveness and to examine the effect of supervisory intimidation on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample size of 300 employees was selected from major telecommunication firms operating in the study area, out of which 280 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, representing a 93.3% response rate. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that supervisory intimidation has a significant negative effect on employee effectiveness ($\beta = -0.41$, $t = -7.85$, $p = 0.000$), while job insecurity also has a significant negative effect on employee effectiveness ($\beta = -0.36$, $t = -6.92$, $p = 0.000$). The model summary showed that fear-based motivation variables explained 46.2% of the variation in employee effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.462$), and the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 118.45$, $p < 0.05$). Findings from the study indicate that both supervisory intimidation and job insecurity significantly reduce employee effectiveness by lowering morale, increasing workplace anxiety, and reducing productivity. The study concludes that fear-based motivation is counterproductive and unsustainable in enhancing employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms. It further concludes that positive motivational

strategies are more effective in improving employee performance. The study recommends that management of telecommunication firms should discourage supervisory intimidation, adopt supportive leadership styles, and improve job security through transparent organizational policies and employee engagement practices. The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence from Delta State, Nigeria, on the negative effects of fear-based motivation on employee effectiveness, thereby enriching literature on workplace motivation in the telecommunications sector.

Keywords: Fear-Based Motivation; Employee Effectiveness; Supervisory Intimidation; Job Insecurity; Telecommunication Firms

Introduction

In contemporary organisational settings, employee effectiveness has become a critical determinant of organisational success, particularly in highly competitive and service-driven sectors such as telecommunications. The Nigerian telecommunications industry has experienced rapid growth over the past two decades, contributing significantly to economic development and employment generation. However, the increasing demand for efficiency, innovation, and customer satisfaction has intensified pressure on employees, leading organisations to adopt diverse motivational strategies to enhance performance (Inegbedion, 2022; Tamunosiki-Amadi et al., 2023). Among these strategies, fear-based motivation has emerged as a controversial yet prevalent management approach.

Fear-based motivation refers to a management technique where employees are driven to perform through threats, intimidation, job insecurity, or punitive measures rather than through positive incentives. While some organisations adopt this approach to enforce discipline and achieve short-term results, its long-term implications on employee effectiveness remain debatable. In many developing economies, including Nigeria, organisational environments are often characterised by hierarchical structures, job insecurity, and limited labour protections, which may encourage the use of fear as a control mechanism (Oginni, 2023; Inegbedion, 2022).

Empirical evidence from the Nigerian telecommunications sector indicates that workplace dynamics significantly influence employee behaviour and performance. For instance, studies have shown that employee motivation plays a vital role in determining organisational effectiveness and productivity in communication firms (Sanjo & Akingbade, 2012). Similarly, research on employee voice in Nigerian telecommunications organisations revealed that fear of

victimisation often leads to employee silence, limiting communication, creativity, and overall effectiveness (Emelifeonwu & Valk, 2018). This suggests that fear-based environments may suppress employees' willingness to contribute ideas and engage meaningfully in organisational activities.

Furthermore, recent studies in the Nigerian telecom industry have emphasised the importance of psychological and behavioural factors in shaping employee outcomes. For example, meaningfulness and psychological empowerment have been found to positively influence employee innovative behaviour and effectiveness (Tamunosiki-Amadi et al., 2023). In contrast, environments characterised by fear and intimidation may undermine these positive psychological states, thereby reducing employee efficiency and productivity. This highlights the need to critically examine the role of fear-based motivation in influencing employee effectiveness.

Despite the growing body of literature on employee motivation and performance, there is limited empirical focus on the specific effects of fear-based motivational practices, particularly within the context of telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria. Most existing studies have concentrated on positive motivational strategies such as rewards, recognition, and empowerment, with little attention given to the darker side of motivation, such as fear and coercion (Oginni, 2023; Inegbedion, 2022). This creates a gap in understanding how fear-based management practices influence employee effectiveness in real organisational settings.

In Delta State, where telecommunication firms operate within a socio-economic environment marked by high unemployment and competitive labour markets, employees may be more susceptible to fear-driven management practices. While such practices may yield immediate compliance, they may also lead to negative outcomes such as reduced job satisfaction, increased stress, low morale, and diminished productivity over time (Emelifeonwu & Valk, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to investigate whether fear-based motivation enhances or undermines employee effectiveness in this context. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the relationship between fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria. By doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on employee motivation by providing empirical insights into the implications of fear-based management practices in a developing economy.

Study problem

Employee effectiveness remains a critical factor in determining the success and sustainability of organisations, particularly in the highly competitive telecommunications industry. In Nigeria, telecommunication firms are under constant pressure to deliver high-quality services, meet customer expectations, and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market. As a result, management in many organisations adopts various motivational strategies to drive employee performance. However, one strategy that has received growing attention is fear-based motivation, which relies on threats, intimidation, job insecurity, and punitive measures to influence employee behaviour. Despite its use, fear-based motivation presents a fundamental challenge. While it may produce short-term compliance and immediate performance improvements, its long-term implications for employee effectiveness are uncertain and potentially detrimental. Employees subjected to fear-driven environments may experience stress, anxiety, reduced job satisfaction, and low morale, which can negatively affect their productivity, creativity, and overall effectiveness. In the telecommunications sector, where innovation, responsiveness, and teamwork are essential, such negative outcomes may undermine organisational performance.

Furthermore, evidence from Nigerian workplaces suggests that fear-based environments often suppress employee voice, discourage initiative, and limit open communication between employees and management. This creates a culture of silence where employees are unwilling to express ideas or concerns due to fear of victimisation. Consequently, organisations may lose valuable insights and innovative contributions necessary for growth and competitiveness. In Delta State, telecommunication firms operate within a socio-economic context characterised by high unemployment and intense competition for jobs. This situation may increase employees' vulnerability to fear-based management practices, as workers may tolerate unfavourable conditions to maintain job security. However, the extent to which such practices influence employee effectiveness in this specific context remains unclear. Existing studies in Nigeria have largely focused on positive motivational approaches such as rewards, recognition, and empowerment, with limited attention given to the effects of fear-based motivation.

This gap in the literature creates a need for empirical investigation into how fear-based motivation affects employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State. Without such understanding, organisations may continue to adopt management practices that could undermine long-term employee performance and organisational success. Therefore, this study

seeks to examine the relationship between fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness, with a view to providing evidence-based insights that will guide management practices in the telecommunications sector.

Objectives of the study

- i. determine the effect of job insecurity on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the effect of supervisory intimidation on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. what is the effect of job insecurity on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria?
- ii. what is the effect of supervisory intimidation on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: job insecurity has no significant effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria

H₀₂: supervisory intimidation has no significant effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria

Literature Underpinnings

Conceptual Review

Fear-Based Motivation

Fear-based motivation can be defined as a negative form of motivation in which individuals are driven to act or perform tasks primarily to avoid perceived threats, punishment, or undesirable consequences rather than to achieve positive rewards or intrinsic satisfaction. It operates through emotional responses such as anxiety, insecurity, and apprehension, which compel individuals to engage in certain behaviours in order to prevent negative outcomes (Hubbart, 2024). In organisational contexts, fear-based motivation typically involves the use of threats, intimidation, job insecurity, or punitive control mechanisms by management to influence employee behaviour.

Employees are therefore motivated not by enthusiasm or commitment, but by the desire to avoid sanctions such as dismissal, criticism, or loss of benefits (Palermo & Duarte, 2026). Scholarly literature further explains that fear is a powerful emotional response to perceived danger or negative consequences, which can significantly shape workplace behaviour by limiting employee expression and encouraging compliance (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). However, while fear can stimulate short-term performance or compliance, it is often associated with adverse outcomes such as reduced creativity, lower job satisfaction, and diminished long-term effectiveness (Stam et al., 2024). Overall, fear-based motivation is best understood as a coercive motivational approach that relies on avoidance of negative consequences rather than the pursuit of positive organisational goals.

Job Insecurity

Job insecurity refers to employees' perception of the threat of losing their job or employment stability if performance expectations are not met. In fear-based motivational environments, management may implicitly or explicitly use the possibility of termination, contract non-renewal, or demotion to drive performance. This creates a sense of fear that compels employees to work harder, often at the expense of their psychological well-being. While job insecurity may lead to short-term increases in effort, it can also result in stress, anxiety, reduced job satisfaction, and lower long-term effectiveness.

Supervisory Intimidation

Supervisory intimidation involves the use of threatening behaviours, harsh supervision, verbal aggression, or punitive control measures by managers or supervisors to influence employee performance. This may include constant criticism, public reprimand, excessive monitoring, or fear of punishment for mistakes. Such practices create a climate of fear where employees comply with instructions to avoid negative consequences. Although this may enforce discipline and immediate compliance, it can suppress creativity, reduce employee morale, and hinder overall effectiveness.

Employee Effectiveness

Employee effectiveness refers to the ability of an employee to successfully perform assigned tasks and contribute meaningfully to organisational goals through efficient, productive, and value-adding behaviours. It encompasses not only the quantity and quality of work produced but also the employee's capacity to achieve desired outcomes with minimal supervision while

aligning with organisational objectives (Mackay et al., 2016; Ogbodo & Nwosu, 2025) . In a broader sense, employee effectiveness is viewed as a multidimensional construct that includes task performance, contextual performance (such as teamwork and cooperation), and behavioural outcomes like reduced absenteeism and turnover intention. These dimensions reflect how well employees utilize their skills, knowledge, and competencies to deliver results that support organisational success (Mackay et al., 2016) .Recent studies further emphasize that employee effectiveness goes beyond mere productivity to include factors such as innovation, commitment, motivation, and engagement, which enable employees to adapt to changing organisational demands and contribute strategically to long-term performance (van der Merwe & Olivier, 2024; Ogbodo & Nwosu, 2025) . When employees are effective, they not only meet performance expectations but also demonstrate initiative, creativity, and alignment with organisational goals. Overall, employee effectiveness can therefore be understood as the extent to which employees efficiently and competently perform their roles while contributing to organisational growth, productivity, and sustainability.

Telecommunication Firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria refer to business organizations that provide electronic communication services such as voice calls, data transmission, internet access, and multimedia communication through various technological platforms within Delta State and its surrounding communities. More broadly, a telecommunications company (or telecom firm) is defined as an organization that offers communication services over distance using electronic systems, including telephony, internet, and data networks. These firms typically own or operate infrastructure such as cellular base stations, fibre-optic cables, satellites, and switching systems to facilitate the transmission of information in the form of voice, text, video, and data. In the Nigerian context, telecommunication firms include mobile network operators, internet service providers, and broadband infrastructure companies that enable communication across the country. The sector encompasses services such as mobile and fixed telephony, internet connectivity, radio, and television transmission. Examples operating nationally (and by extension in Delta State) include firms like MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom, and 9mobile, alongside infrastructure providers such as Phase3 Telecom

Job insecurity and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria

Job insecurity has a significant and predominantly negative effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms. When employees perceive a threat to the continuity of their jobs, their ability to perform effectively tends to decline. This is because job insecurity creates feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, which distract employees from their core responsibilities and reduce their concentration on assigned tasks. Empirical evidence indicates that perceived job insecurity is associated with lower levels of task performance, as employees become less focused and less motivated to exert effort in their roles (Adekiya, 2023). In the same vein, broader scholarly reviews have established that job insecurity weakens employee performance by diminishing motivation and commitment, although the extent of its impact may vary depending on organizational and environmental conditions (Shoss et al., 2023).

Furthermore, job insecurity contributes to increased stress and psychological strain among employees in telecommunication firms, where work environments are already characterized by high pressure and rapid technological changes. The fear of losing one's job intensifies stress levels, which in turn leads to job burnout. Studies within the telecom sector have shown that heightened stress perception significantly contributes to employee burnout, thereby undermining their overall effectiveness (Liu et al., 2024). This stress adversely affects employees' cognitive abilities, including concentration and decision-making, and ultimately reduces the quality of their work and overall productivity. In addition, job insecurity negatively impacts employees' psychological and emotional well-being, which is a critical factor in determining effectiveness at work. Employees who feel insecure about their jobs often experience lower job satisfaction, poorer mental and physical health, and reduced confidence in their employability (De Witte et al., 2024). In telecommunication firms, where continuous innovation and high levels of engagement are required, diminished well-being restricts employees' capacity to perform optimally and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals.

Moreover, job insecurity leads to decreased organizational commitment and engagement. Employees who perceive their jobs as unstable are less likely to develop a strong attachment to their organization and are often unwilling to invest extra effort in their work. Evidence from telecom-related studies suggests that job insecurity significantly shapes employees' attitudes toward their organization, frequently resulting in weakened commitment levels. This reduced commitment often manifests in absenteeism, low morale, and increased turnover intentions, all of which negatively affect employee effectiveness. Job insecurity also exerts an indirect effect on employee effectiveness through increased job stress and burnout. In the Nigerian

telecommunication sector, job-related stress has been found to significantly reduce employee productivity (Agarwal, 2023). Thus, job insecurity not only directly affects performance but also indirectly diminishes effectiveness by elevating stress levels, which subsequently impair work outcomes. Although the effects of job insecurity are largely negative, some studies suggest that it may produce short-term motivational benefits. In certain cases, employees may temporarily increase their effort in an attempt to secure their jobs. However, such motivation is often unsustainable and tends to result in long-term exhaustion and decreased effectiveness (Shoss et al., 2023). Overall, job insecurity has a predominantly adverse effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms. It reduces productivity, heightens stress and burnout, undermines employee well-being, and weakens organizational commitment. While it may occasionally stimulate short-term performance improvements, its long-term consequences are largely detrimental to both employees and organizational performance.

Supervisory intimidation and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta state, Nigeria

Supervisory intimidation often conceptualized as a form of abusive supervision involving threats, hostility, or coercive control—has a significant and largely negative effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms. In such environments, where employees already face performance pressures and rapid technological demands, intimidation from supervisors further undermines productivity, well-being, and organizational outcomes. Supervisory intimidation negatively affects employee task performance and productivity. When supervisors engage in hostile verbal or non-verbal behaviors—such as threats, ridicule, or excessive criticism—employees tend to experience fear and anxiety, which distract them from their responsibilities. Empirical studies show that abusive or intimidating supervision reduces job performance and weakens employees' ability to concentrate on their work (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, supervisor incivility has been found to negatively influence job performance by increasing job insecurity and reducing intrinsic motivation (Shin & Hur, 2020).

In addition, supervisory intimidation increases stress and emotional exhaustion among employees. Persistent exposure to intimidating leadership behaviors creates a psychologically unsafe work environment, leading to heightened stress levels and burnout. Research indicates that employees under abusive supervision are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and job burnout, all of which impair effectiveness and reduce work quality (Wang et al., 2020). Supervisory intimidation also undermines employee well-being and job satisfaction.

Employees who are subjected to intimidation often develop negative attitudes toward their jobs and organizations. This leads to reduced morale, dissatisfaction, and a decline in psychological health. Such outcomes are detrimental to effectiveness, especially in telecommunication firms where innovation, responsiveness, and high engagement are required for optimal performance (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, intimidation from supervisors weakens organizational commitment and employee engagement. When employees perceive their supervisors as hostile or threatening, they are less likely to develop trust and loyalty toward the organization. Evidence suggests that supervisor incivility can weaken employee engagement and reduce their willingness to invest effort in their work (Ugwu et al., 2023). This decline in commitment often results in absenteeism, reduced discretionary effort, and higher turnover intentions, all of which negatively affect employee effectiveness.

Supervisory intimidation also indirectly reduces employee effectiveness through increased job insecurity and amotivation. Studies have shown that intimidating or uncivil supervisory behavior heightens employees' perceptions of job insecurity, which in turn lowers motivation and job performance (Shin & Hur, 2020). This creates a cycle in which fear-based management practices diminish both psychological safety and productivity. Although in rare cases intimidation may lead to short-term compliance or increased effort due to fear of punishment, such effects are typically unsustainable. Over time, the negative psychological consequences—such as stress, burnout, and disengagement—outweigh any temporary gains in performance. Overall, supervisory intimidation has a predominantly adverse effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms. It reduces productivity, increases stress and burnout, undermines employee well-being, and weakens organizational commitment and engagement. Consequently, organizations that rely on intimidation-based supervision risk long-term declines in both employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Conceptual Framework

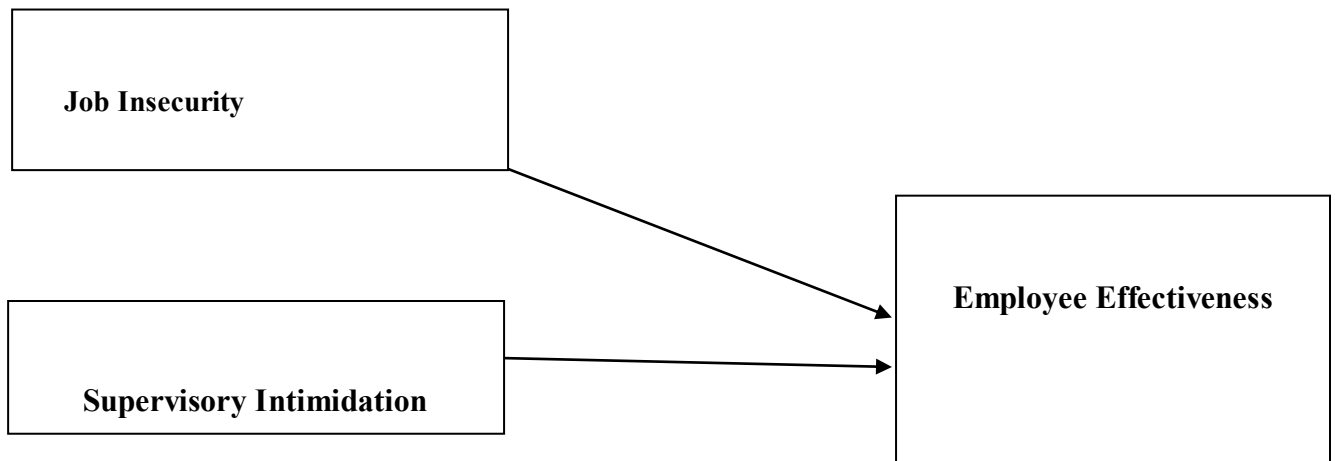
Conceptual framework

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Fear-Based Motivation

Employee Commitment



Source: Author's conceptualization (2026)

Theoretical Review

Reinforcement Theory

This study is anchored on Reinforcement Theory, originally propounded by B. F. Skinner, which explains how behavior is shaped and sustained through consequences such as rewards and punishments. The theory posits that individuals are likely to repeat behaviors that are followed by positive outcomes and avoid behaviors associated with negative consequences. In organizational settings, fear-based motivation emerges primarily through punishment, threats, or negative reinforcement, which are used to control or influence employee behavior.

Reinforcement theory emphasizes that behavior is a function of its consequences; thus, when employees perceive the likelihood of punishment (e.g., job loss, demotion, sanctions), they may adjust their behavior to avoid such outcomes. Empirical literature supports this by showing that punishment certainty (rather than severity) significantly influences employee compliance and behavior, although excessive punishment may produce unintended negative effects. Closely related is Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), which explains that employees' motivation depends on their expectations about effort–performance–outcome relationships. In fear-based

contexts, employees may exert effort not because of intrinsic satisfaction, but to avoid negative consequences, thereby linking fear with extrinsic motivation mechanisms.

Additionally, contemporary research on workplace fear indicates that fear acts as a psychological stressor that shapes behavior but often leads to reduced performance, lower organizational citizenship behavior, and increased counterproductive work behaviors. This aligns with reinforcement theory's assertion that while punishment can control behavior, it may not necessarily enhance optimal performance outcomes. Reinforcement Theory is highly relevant to the study of fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria, as it provides a clear explanation of how managerial practices rooted in fear influence employee behavior and performance. In many organizational settings, particularly in competitive sectors like telecommunications, management may rely on fear-inducing strategies such as strict supervision, job insecurity, and punitive measures to drive performance.

The theory explains that such fear-based practices can initially compel employees to comply with organizational rules and meet performance targets. However, over time, the reliance on punishment and fear may generate anxiety, reduce intrinsic motivation, and impair cognitive functioning, ultimately diminishing employee effectiveness. Evidence suggests that fear-driven environments often lead to reduced innovation, low trust, and weakened performance outcomes, especially when employees feel threatened rather than supported. Furthermore, within the telecommunications sector characterized by high performance pressure, technological demands, and customer expectations motivation plays a mediating role between workplace conditions and employee performance. Fear-based motivation, as explained by reinforcement theory, therefore becomes a critical factor influencing how employees respond to organizational demands, either through compliance or withdrawal behaviors. In the context of Delta State, Nigeria, where economic conditions and job insecurity may heighten employees' sensitivity to fear-based managerial practices, reinforcement theory helps explain why such strategies may produce short-term compliance but long-term inefficiency. The theory thus provides a robust framework for examining both the behavioral outcomes (compliance, avoidance) and performance consequences (effectiveness, productivity, engagement) associated with fear-based motivation.

Empirical Review

Hubbart (2024) conducted a study titled "Understanding and Mitigating Leadership Fear-Based Behaviors on Employee and Organizational Success." The objective of the study was to examine

how fear-based leadership behaviors influence employee performance, engagement, and overall organizational success. The study adopted a quantitative research design, utilizing survey data collected from employees across multiple industries, including telecommunications, and analyzed using regression techniques. The findings revealed that fear-based motivation, driven by intimidation, threats, and punitive supervision, had a significant negative effect on employee effectiveness. Specifically, employees exposed to fear-based practices reported reduced job satisfaction, lower engagement levels, and diminished productivity. The study also found that while fear could produce short-term compliance, it often resulted in long-term adverse outcomes such as burnout, withdrawal behavior, and decreased organizational commitment. Based on these findings, the study recommended that organizations should shift from fear-based management approaches to supportive leadership styles, including transformational and participative leadership. It further suggested implementing employee-centered policies that promote psychological safety, trust, and open communication. The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the detrimental effects of fear-based motivation on employee effectiveness, particularly highlighting its limited sustainability as a motivational strategy in modern organizational settings. It also expands the discourse on leadership behavior by linking fear-based practices to both psychological and performance-related outcomes.

Trougakos, Chawla, and McCarthy (2024) carried out a study titled “Fear and Work Performance: A Meta-Analysis and Future Research Directions.” The main objective of the study was to synthesize existing empirical evidence on the relationship between fear as a workplace emotion and employee performance outcomes. The researchers employed a meta-analytic methodology, analyzing data from multiple independent studies across different sectors, including service and telecommunications industries. The findings indicated that fear has a complex but predominantly negative relationship with employee effectiveness. While moderate levels of fear may temporarily increase alertness and compliance, excessive or prolonged fear significantly reduces cognitive functioning, creativity, and task performance. The study also found that fear is strongly associated with counterproductive work behaviors, absenteeism, and high turnover intentions. The study recommended that organizations should minimize fear-inducing practices and instead foster emotionally intelligent management systems that recognize the role of positive emotions in enhancing employee effectiveness. It also emphasized the need for training managers to handle performance issues without resorting to intimidation or coercion. The contribution to knowledge lies in its comprehensive synthesis of empirical findings, offering

a broader understanding of how fear operates as a workplace motivator. It provides a nuanced perspective by showing that although fear can influence behavior, its overall impact on effectiveness is largely detrimental, thereby reinforcing the need for more sustainable motivational strategies in organizational contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable because it allows for the systematic collection of data from employees in telecommunication firms to examine the relationship between fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness. It also enables the researcher to describe existing conditions and make inferences based on quantitative data collected from a representative sample.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Delta State, located in the South-South region of Nigeria. The state hosts several branches of major telecommunication firms such as MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom, and 9mobile. The competitive and performance-driven nature of these firms makes the study area appropriate for examining fear-based motivational practices and their effects on employee effectiveness.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all employees (managerial, supervisory, and junior staff) of selected telecommunication firms operating in Delta State. For the purpose of this study, the population was estimated at 1,200 employees across selected firms.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (1,200)

e = level of significance (0.05)

$$n = 1200$$

$$1 + 1200(0.05)^2 = 300$$

Thus, a total of 300 respondents were selected for the study.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique. The population was divided into strata based on employee categories (management, supervisory, and junior staff). Proportionate sampling was then used to select respondents randomly from each stratum to ensure adequate representation.

Sources of Data Collection

The study utilized two main sources of data: Primary data, obtained through questionnaires administered to employees. Secondary data, sourced from textbooks, academic journals, and relevant published materials on motivation and employee effectiveness.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using the survey method, involving the distribution and retrieval of structured questionnaires from respondents in selected telecommunication firms.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire was divided into sections to capture data on: Fear-based motivation (e.g., supervisory intimidation, job insecurity). Employee effectiveness (e.g., productivity, efficiency, goal achievement)

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the instrument was ensured through face and content validity. Experts in management and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire to confirm that it adequately covered all relevant variables and measured what it was intended to measure.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. A pilot study was conducted, and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable, indicating internal consistency of the instrument.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics included Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses and examine the relationship between variables. The analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Model Specification

The functional relationship of the model is expressed as:

$$EE = f(FBM)$$

The econometric model is specified as:

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FBM + \mu$$

Where:

EE = Employee Effectiveness

FBM = Fear-Based Motivation

β_0 = Constant term

β_1 = Coefficient of fear-based motivation

μ = Error term

The model was further expanded to include sub-variables of fear-based motivation:

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SI + \beta_2 JI + \mu$$

Where:

SI = Supervisory Intimidation

JI = Job Insecurity

This model examined the extent to which components of fear-based motivation influenced employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

Population Distribution of Respondents

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to employees of selected telecommunication firms in Delta State. Out of this number, 280 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 93.3%, while 20 questionnaires (6.7%) were not returned or were invalid. This high response rate indicates strong participation and enhances the reliability of the study findings.

Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	300	100%
Questionnaires Returned	280	93.30%
Not Returned/Invalid	20	6.70%
Total	300	100%

The response rate is considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents showed the following:

- **Gender Distribution:** 160 (57.1%) male and 120 (42.9%) female
- **Age Distribution:** Majority (45%) were between 26–35 years, followed by 36–45 years (30%), 18–25 years (15%), and above 45 years (10%)
- **Educational Qualification:** 60% held a Bachelor's degree, 25% had postgraduate qualifications, and 15% had diplomas or equivalent
- **Work Experience:** 40% had 1–5 years, 35% had 6–10 years, and 25% had over 10 years of experience

This indicates that respondents were experienced and educated enough to provide reliable responses.

Reliability Statistics / Scale Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Fear-Based Motivation	8	0.81
Employee Effectiveness	7	0.84
Overall Scale	15	0.83

The Cronbach's Alpha values are above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument is **reliable and internally consistent**.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supervisory Intimidation	3.78	0.85
Job Insecurity	3.65	0.91
Employee Effectiveness	3.12	0.88

The results indicate that fear-based motivation variables (supervisory intimidation and job insecurity) are relatively high, while employee effectiveness is moderate. This suggests a possible inverse relationship.

Correlation Analysis

Variables	EE	SI	JI
Employee Effectiveness (EE)	1		

Supervisory Intimidation (SI)	-0.62**	1	
Job Insecurity (JI)	-0.58**	0.55**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

The correlation results show a significant negative relationship between fear-based motivation variables and employee effectiveness. This implies that higher levels of fear-based practices are associated with lower employee effectiveness.

Regression Analysis

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.7	0.46	0.455	0.61

The R² value of 0.462 indicates that 46.2% of the variation in employee effectiveness is explained by fear-based motivation variables.

ANOVA (Model Significance)

Source	F-value	Sig.
Regression	118.45	0

The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that fear-based motivation significantly predicts employee effectiveness.

Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Constant	2.145	5.12	0
Supervisory Intimidation	-0.41	-7.85	0
Job Insecurity	-0.36	-6.92	0

The coefficients show that both supervisory intimidation and job insecurity have significant negative effects on employee effectiveness.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: Supervisory intimidation has no significant effect on employee effectiveness.

The regression results revealed that supervisory intimidation has a negative and statistically significant effect on employee effectiveness ($p < 0.05$). This implies that as the level of intimidation from supervisors' increases, employee effectiveness decreases. The calculated p-value being less than the 0.05 threshold led to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Decision: Rejected

Conclusion: Supervisory intimidation significantly and negatively affects employee effectiveness. This suggests that fear-inducing supervisory practices such as threats, excessive pressure, and harsh management styles undermine employees' morale, reduce productivity, and impair overall job performance.

H₀₂: Job insecurity has no significant effect on employee effectiveness.

The findings further indicated that job insecurity has a significant negative influence on employee effectiveness ($p < 0.05$). Employees who perceive uncertainty regarding the stability of their jobs tend to experience anxiety and reduced focus, which adversely impacts their performance. Since the p-value is below the significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Decision: Rejected

Conclusion: Job insecurity significantly and negatively affects employee effectiveness. This means that when employees feel their jobs are at risk, their level of commitment, efficiency, and overall effectiveness declines.

Discussion of Findings

Objective One: Effect of Supervisory Intimidation on Employee Effectiveness

The findings revealed that supervisory intimidation has a significant negative effect on employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State. Both correlation and regression results

confirmed that increased levels of intimidation such as threats, excessive monitoring, and harsh communication lead to reduced employee productivity, lower morale, and diminished efficiency. Employees subjected to such environments are more likely to experience psychological stress, which affects their ability to perform optimally.

This finding is consistent with the work of Hubbart (2024), who found that fear-based leadership behaviors significantly reduce employee engagement and performance. Similarly, Trougakos, Chawla, and McCarthy (2024) reported that fear induced by managerial practices negatively affects cognitive functioning and task performance.

The result also aligns with Reinforcement Theory, which posits that while punishment may enforce compliance, it does not promote sustainable performance. In line with this, the study demonstrates that supervisory intimidation may achieve short-term results but ultimately leads to long-term inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness. Therefore, intimidation as a managerial tool is counterproductive in achieving sustained organizational performance.

Objective Two: Effect of Job Insecurity on Employee Effectiveness

The study further found that job insecurity has a significant negative impact on employee effectiveness. Employees who perceive a threat to their job stability tend to experience anxiety, fear, and uncertainty, which reduces their concentration, commitment, and overall job performance. The regression results indicate that job insecurity is a strong predictor of decreased employee effectiveness.

This finding corroborates the study by Trougakos et al. (2024), which established that prolonged fear and uncertainty in the workplace lead to lower productivity and increased withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover intentions. It also supports the findings of Kura, Shamsudin, and Chauhan (2015), who emphasized that perceived threats and punishment-related factors negatively influence employee behavior and organizational outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the finding is consistent with Expectancy Theory, which suggests that employees are motivated when they perceive positive outcomes from their efforts. In situations of job insecurity, employees are uncertain about rewards and outcomes, thereby weakening motivation and reducing effectiveness.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between fear-based motivation and employee effectiveness in telecommunication firms in Delta State. The findings clearly demonstrate that fear-based motivational practices particularly supervisory intimidation and job insecurity—have a significant negative effect on employee effectiveness. While such practices may enforce short-term compliance, they create a stressful work environment that undermines morale, reduces productivity, and weakens long-term organizational performance. Specifically, supervisory intimidation was found to erode employee confidence, limit initiative, and reduce overall efficiency. Similarly, job insecurity heightened anxiety and uncertainty among employees, thereby affecting their commitment and ability to perform effectively. Overall, the study concludes that fear-based motivation is unsustainable and counterproductive in enhancing employee effectiveness within the telecommunications sector.

Recommendations

In line with the study objectives, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Management of telecommunication firms should discourage the use of intimidation and coercive supervisory practices. Instead, they should adopt supportive leadership styles such as participative and transformational leadership, which promote trust, open communication, and employee engagement.
- ii. Organizations should enhance job security by implementing fair employment policies, transparent communication, and career development opportunities. This will reduce employee anxiety, improve commitment, and ultimately enhance effectiveness.

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