PAJRI
PAN-AFRICAN JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Pan-African Journal of Research and Innovation in Education, Training and Vocational Studies

ISSN: 3413-9431 | Vol. 1, Issue 2 | www.pajri.com | DOI: https://doi.org/10.0000/0000

Effect of Shirking Behaviour on Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Ogun State.

Folake Ronke Arogunmati[1], Adebayo Femi Michael[2]

[1]Department of Guidance and Counselling, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State.

[2]Babcock University, Ogun State

*Corresponding author: oluwafolakematini@gmail.com

Received: 2026-10-04	Accepted: 2026-10-26	Published: 2026-10-27

ABSTRACT

Shirking, defined as the deliberate withholding of effort that employees could otherwise contribute to organisational goals, can weaken the efficiency of schools, yet the productivity implications of its distinct forms remain insufficiently documented for private secondary schools in Nigeria. This study therefore examines the association between eight shirking behaviours and perceived teacher productivity among private secondary school teachers in Ogun State. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 225 teachers who were purposively selected according to years of experience, level of education and senatorial district, and productivity was regressed on an overall shirking score and on the eight individual behaviours while years of experience was controlled and heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors were used. Reported shirking was low (M = 2.17, SD = 0.82) whereas perceived productivity was high (M = 4.40, SD = 0.48), and the overall shirking score was negatively associated with productivity (B = −0.393, 95% CI [−0.485, −0.301], p < 0.05). In the model containing the eight behaviours, which was significant overall (F(10, 214) = 21.22, p < 0.05) and explained 49.8% of the variance in productivity, pretending to be busy, cyberloafing and trading during work were significantly and negatively associated with productivity, lateness showed a positive conditional association that is consistent with statistical suppression, and the remaining behaviours were not significant once the others were controlled. Recognition and rewards for performance, improved salaries and regular training were the remedies rated highest by the teachers. The findings are associational and indicate that supervision, remuneration and recognition systems deserve priority in the management of private secondary schools.

KEYWORDS: Shirking behaviour, Employee productivity, Absenteeism, Lateness, Work avoidance, Cyberloafing, Secondary schools.

How to Cite

Arogunmati, F. R., & Adebayo, F. M. (2026). Effect of Shirking Behaviour on Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Ogun State. *Pan-African Journal of Research and Innovation in Education, Training and Vocational Studies, 1(1-2), 60-71.*

1. Introduction

Teachers' productivity determines the quality of instructional delivery, the timeliness of assessment and record keeping, and ultimately the achievement of institutional goals in secondary schools, so that any systematic reduction in teachers' effort carries consequences that extend beyond the individual classroom. Such reductions are conceptualised in the organisational behaviour literature as shirking, which refers to the deliberate or discretionary withholding of effort that employees could otherwise contribute toward organisational goals and which is broader than physical absence because it also covers job neglect, social loafing and free riding (Bennett, 2005).

The behaviours that fall under this definition in schools include absenteeism, lateness, avoidance of assigned duties, pretending to be busy, deliberate reduction of work effort, cyberloafing, trading during working hours and the use of excuses to avoid extra lessons, and each of them can occur without being captured by attendance records, because a teacher who is present may still prepare lessons inadequately, delay marking or neglect student supervision. The cost of such behaviour is not trivial, since evidence from an urban school district indicates that every ten days of teacher absence lowers students' mathematics achievement by 3.3 percent of a standard deviation (Miller et al., 2008), and teacher absence has itself been analysed as a form of shirking with matched teacher and school data (Bradley et al., 2007).

Research on teachers' productivity in Nigeria has concentrated on public schools and on structural determinants such as institutional factors, reward systems, salaries, working conditions and the regularity of salary payment (Adu, 2015; Adu et al., 2016; Ahmed, 2024; Alonge et al., 2020), whereas the productivity implications of distinct shirking behaviours among teachers in private secondary schools have received little direct empirical attention. Findings from public schools, commercial firms and health institutions cannot be transferred automatically to private secondary schools, where proprietors bear the financial risk, where accountability to parents is direct and where arrangements for supervision, remuneration and job security can differ, so that school administrators in Ogun State lack evidence on which behaviours matter most for productivity and therefore on where supervision and incentives should be directed.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the association between eight shirking behaviours and teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria, and it is guided by four research questions, namely to what extent shirking behaviours are reported and how productive teachers consider their schools to be, whether overall shirking is associated with productivity once years of teaching experience is controlled, which specific shirking behaviours are associated with productivity, and what reasons, consequences and remedies teachers attach to shirking. The study contributes context-specific evidence that can inform supervision, attendance management, motivation and role-sensitive productivity strategies in secondary education in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualising Shirking and Teachers' Productivity

Shirking is distinguished in the literature from simple absence because it covers any discretionary reduction of effort, and Bennett (2005) separates shirking, job neglect, social loafing and free riding as related forms of withholding effort that differ in whether they are individual or collective and in whether they involve physical absence from the workplace. This distinction is especially relevant to teaching, where a teacher may attend school regularly and nevertheless lengthen routine tasks, transfer responsibilities to colleagues, pretend to be occupied or divert working time to personal activities such as online browsing and petty trading. Absence is not uniform either, because it can be classified along a voluntary and involuntary continuum in which only the discretionary part qualifies as shirking (Birioukov, 2016), which explains why the eight behaviours examined in this study are treated as discretionary effort reductions rather than as attendance indicators.

Teachers' productivity is understood in this study as the efficiency and effectiveness with which teachers convert their time and competence into valued school outputs, which include syllabus coverage, assessment, classroom management, student support and, in the Nigerian secondary school context, results in external examinations such as the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and progress in internal examinations. Productivity is therefore operationalised through perceived syllabus coverage, SSCE performance over the past three years and students' improvement in internal examinations, which are outputs that proprietors, parents and regulators actually observe, although such indicators are collective school outcomes that are influenced by factors beyond the individual teacher.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Agency theory describes employment as a contract in which a principal delegates work to an agent whose effort cannot be perfectly observed, and the resulting information asymmetry allows the agent to pursue personal interests at the expense of the principal's objectives when monitoring or accountability is weak (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). In private secondary schools the proprietor is the principal and the teacher is the agent, so that absenteeism, lateness, work avoidance and reduced effort constitute agency problems which diminish instructional quality and administrative efficiency.

The shirking model of efficiency wage theory complements this view by showing that, where monitoring is imperfect, employers can discourage shirking by paying wages above the market level because the possibility of dismissal then becomes costly to the employee (Shapiro & Stiglitz, 1984), although the effectiveness of this mechanism depends on credible supervision, on labour market conditions and on how

employees value their jobs, and the model has since been extended to heterogeneous labour markets (Ryska & Průša, 2011). Motivation theories add that the willingness to exert effort, with or without supervision, depends on workplace incentives and on the extent to which work satisfies psychological and material needs, as expressed in the distinction between motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959) and in expectancy theory, which holds that people exert greater effort when they believe that performance will lead to valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Salary, welfare provision, promotion and recognition are therefore central to any explanation of why teachers withhold effort.

Research on social loafing further indicates that individuals exert less effort when their individual contributions cannot be identified, as shown in experiments in which making individual output identifiable reduced loafing (Williams et al., 1981), and that loafing lowers group performance (Ying et al., 2014), which is relevant to schools because teachers' tasks are interdependent and the effort of one colleague affects the workload and outcomes of others. These perspectives jointly predict that shirking is negatively related to productivity, that it is more likely where supervision is lax and rewards are weak, and that remedies built on recognition, remuneration and credible monitoring should reduce it.

2.3 Empirical Evidence

Empirical studies converge on the view that teacher absence reduces learning outcomes, as shown by the finding that each ten days of absence lowers students' mathematics achievement by 3.3 percent of a standard deviation and that adjusted absence rates vary widely between schools (Miller et al., 2008), and absence has also been analysed explicitly as shirking by combining teacher and school data (Bradley et al., 2007). A second body of work on Nigerian secondary schools relates teachers' productivity to institutional, personal and reward-system factors (Adu, 2015), to factors that hinder productivity (Adu et al., 2016), to working conditions and salary (Alonge et al., 2020) and to irregular salary payment and fringe benefits (Ahmed, 2024), which together point to remuneration and working conditions as recurrent determinants. The relationship between upward adjustments of the minimum wage and labour productivity in Nigeria has also been examined (Ologbo et al., 2024), which illustrates the prominence of remuneration in debates on labour productivity.

Three gaps nevertheless limit the usefulness of this evidence for private secondary schools, because the studies reviewed here concentrate on public schools and on absence or pay rather than on the full range of shirking behaviours, they rarely distinguish behaviours that involve physical absence from those that occur while the teacher is present, such as pretending to be busy or cyberloafing, and they seldom report how teachers themselves explain shirking or which remedies they favour. These gaps suggest that a disaggregated analysis is needed, in which each behaviour is related separately to productivity and in which teachers' own accounts of causes, consequences and remedies are recorded, because the behaviours may differ in how visible they are to supervisors and therefore in how strongly they are checked by sanctions, a possibility that follows directly from the agency and efficiency wage arguments.

2.4 Research Gap and Hypotheses

The literature reviewed above leaves unanswered whether overall shirking and each of its distinct forms are associated with the productivity of teachers in private secondary schools, and the present study responds by testing two hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) states that overall shirking is negatively associated with teachers' productivity after years of teaching experience is controlled, and the second hypothesis (H2) states that each of the eight shirking behaviours, namely avoidance of duty, lateness, absenteeism, pretending to be busy, deliberate reduction of work effort, cyberloafing, trading during work and faking excuses to avoid extra lessons, is negatively associated with teachers' productivity when the other behaviours and years of experience are held constant. The research questions on reasons, consequences and remedies are descriptive, and no directional hypotheses are advanced for them.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted because it allows standardised data on teachers' perceptions of shirking behaviours and productivity to be collected from a defined population at a single point in time and analysed statistically, and the relationships estimated under this design are interpreted as associations rather than as causal effects.

3.2 Population, Sampling and Sample

The target population comprised teaching employees of private secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria, and a non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique was adopted to select respondents on the criteria of

years of experience, level of education and senatorial district (Ogun East, Ogun Central and Ogun West). A total of 225 completed responses, collected through an online structured questionnaire, were retained for analysis, and the profile of the respondents is reported in Table 2. Participation was voluntary, respondents gave their consent before completing the questionnaire, and they were assured of the anonymity of their responses, which were used for research purposes only. Because the sample was drawn purposively rather than at random, the results describe the surveyed teachers and cannot be generalised statistically to all private secondary school teachers in the state.

3.3 Instrument and Measures

The questionnaire contained a respondent profile section covering sex, highest level of education and years of experience, followed by five measurement sections whose item wording was adapted to the secondary school context from the conceptualisation of effort withholding in Bennett (2005), after which the draft instrument was reviewed by experts for content relevance and clarity and was pilot tested before the main survey. Productivity was measured with three items (syllabus coverage, SSCE performance for the past three years and students' improvement in internal examinations), shirking with eight items (avoidance of duty, lateness, absenteeism, pretending to be busy without producing results, deliberate reduction of work effort, cyberloafing during the work period, trading during work and faking excuses to avoid extra lessons), reasons for shirking with seven items, consequences of shirking with six items and remedies for shirking with six items.

Productivity, shirking, reasons and remedies were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high), whereas the consequence statements were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), so that higher scores indicate a greater reported incidence of shirking and a higher level of productivity, and the shirking and productivity scores were computed as the mean of their items. Mean scores were interpreted with a single decision rule applied to all tables, in which 1.00 to 1.80 denotes very low or strongly disagree, 1.81 to 2.60 low or disagree, 2.61 to 3.40 moderate or neutral, 3.41 to 4.20 high or agree, and 4.21 to 5.00 very high or strongly agree.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency was assessed separately for each construct, because pooling items that measure different constructs into one coefficient does not describe the reliability of any single scale. Cronbach's alpha was 0.863 for the eight shirking items, 0.787 for the three productivity items and 0.854 for the six remedy items (Table 1), all of which exceed the conventional benchmark of 0.70, whereas the coefficients for the seven reason items (0.615) and the six consequence items (0.512) fell below it, and the reasons and consequences were therefore analysed item by item and were not combined into scale scores.

Table 1

Reliability of the Measurement Scales

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α	Mean inter-item *r*
Shirking behaviours	8	.863	.434
Reasons for shirking	7	.615	.199
Consequences of shirking	6	.512	.099
Remedies for shirking	6	.854	.675
Productivity	3	.787	.565

Note. n = 225. Coefficients were computed separately for each construct.

Content validity therefore rests on the adaptation of the items from the literature and on the expert review described in Section 3.3, and construct validity of the shirking scale was examined with a principal component analysis of the eight items, which showed adequate sampling adequacy (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.788) and a significant Bartlett test of sphericity, $\chi^2(28) = 1{,}413.82$, $p < 0.05$. The first component had an eigenvalue of 4.21 and accounted for 52.6% of the variance, with all eight items loading between 0.49 and 0.95 on it, while a second component (eigenvalue = 1.51) accounted for a further 18.9% of the variance and separated pretending to be busy and cyberloafing from the remaining behaviours. The overall shirking score was retained as a summary measure on the strength of its internal consistency and dominant first component, and the individual behaviours were also analysed separately so that the distinction suggested by the second component is not lost.

3.5 Data Analysis

Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations summarised the respondent profile and each

item, and productivity was then regressed on the explanatory variables with ordinary least squares, and years of teaching experience was entered as a covariate through two dummy variables (16 to 20 years and above 20 years, with 6 to 10 years as the reference category, since no respondent reported another experience band). Four models were estimated, in which Model 0 contained experience only, Model 1 added the overall shirking score to test H1, Model 2 entered the eight shirking behaviours simultaneously to test H2, and Model 3 repeated Model 2 after averaging avoidance of duty and deliberate reduction of work effort into a single effort-withholding score, because the two items were almost perfectly correlated (r = 0.97) and produced variance inflation factors above 10 in Model 2.

The modelling choices follow from the hypotheses and from the structure of the data. Ordinary least squares was used because the productivity score is an average of three five-point items and is treated as an approximately continuous outcome, years of experience was entered as dummy variables because it was recorded in bands rather than in years and because the relationship with productivity need not be linear, and the overall shirking score and the eight behaviours were modelled separately because H1 concerns shirking as a whole whereas H2 concerns the unique association of each behaviour, which can only be estimated with the other behaviours held constant. Model 3 was added as a sensitivity check because the near-perfect correlation between two predictors makes their separate coefficients unreliable, so that a result which survives their combination can be trusted more than one that does not.

Because the residuals of the full model showed heteroscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan test, $p < 0.05$) and departed from normality (Shapiro-Wilk test, $p < 0.05$), tests and 95% confidence intervals for the coefficients are based on heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3) standard errors, whereas the overall model F-tests are the conventional ones. A negative coefficient indicates that a higher reported incidence of a behaviour is associated with lower productivity, statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level, and variance inflation factors (VIF) were inspected for multicollinearity, with the whole analysis conducted in Python by means of the pandas and statsmodels libraries.

4. Results

4.1 Respondent Profile

The respondents comprised 135 men (60.0%) and 90 women (40.0%), of whom 69 (30.7%) held a bachelor's degree or Higher National Diploma, 60 (26.7%) a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and 96 (42.7%) a master's degree, and 33 respondents (14.7%) had taught for 6 to 10 years, 102 (45.3%) for 16 to 20 years and 90 (40.0%) for more than 20 years, with no respondent reporting fewer than 6 years or 11 to 15 years of experience (Table 2).

Table 2

Respondent Profile

Variable	Category	*n* (%)	Cumulative %
Sex	Male	135 (60.0)	60.0
	Female	90 (40.0)	100.0
Highest level of education	Bachelors/HND	69 (30.7)	30.7
	PGDE	60 (26.7)	57.3
	Masters	96 (42.7)	100.0
Years of experience	6 to 10 years	33 (14.7)	14.7
	16 to 20 years	102 (45.3)	60.0
	Above 20 years	90 (40.0)	100.0

Note. N = 225. HND = Higher National Diploma; PGDE = Postgraduate Diploma in Education. No respondent reported the remaining response categories of education and experience.

4.2 Level of Productivity

No respondent rated syllabus coverage, SSCE performance or the improvement of students in internal examinations below moderate, and syllabus coverage had the highest mean (M = 4.65, SD = 0.54), followed by students' improvement in internal examinations (M = 4.44, SD = 0.50) and SSCE performance (M = 4.11, SD = 0.67), and the productivity score computed from the three items averaged 4.40 (SD = 0.48; Table 3).

Table 3
Productivity Measures

Item	VL	L	M	H	VH	*M*	*SD*	Level
Syllabus coverage	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (3.1)	65 (28.9)	153 (68.0)	4.65	0.54	Very high
SSCE performance for the past 3 years	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	40 (17.8)	121 (53.8)	64 (28.4)	4.11	0.67	High
Students' improvement in internal examinations	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	126 (56.0)	99 (44.0)	4.44	0.50	Very high

Note. n = 225. Cells show frequency with percentage in parentheses. VL = very low; L = low; M = moderate; H = high; VH = very high. Level follows the decision rule in the Methodology section.

4.3 Level of Shirking Behaviour

The eight shirking behaviours had means between 1.91 and 2.34, which fall in the low range of the decision rule (Table 4), with lateness (*M* = 2.34), cyberloafing (*M* = 2.33) and pretending to be busy (*M* = 2.30) at the upper end and trading during work (*M* = 1.99) and faking excuses to avoid extra lessons (*M* = 1.91) at the lower end. The share of respondents who rated a behaviour as high or very high ranged from 3.6% for lateness to 23.1% for cyberloafing, and the overall shirking score averaged 2.17 (*SD* = 0.82).

Table 4
Shirking Behaviours

Item	VL	L	M	H	VH	*M*	*SD*	Level
Avoidance of duty	94 (41.8)	57 (25.3)	39 (17.3)	1 (0.4)	34 (15.1)	2.22	1.39	Low
Lateness	27 (12.0)	104 (46.2)	86 (38.2)	6 (2.7)	2 (0.9)	2.34	0.76	Low
Absenteeism	70 (31.1)	96 (42.7)	45 (20.0)	14 (6.2)	0 (0.0)	2.01	0.87	Low
Pretending to be busy without producing results	58 (25.8)	100 (44.4)	36 (16.0)	4 (1.8)	27 (12.0)	2.30	1.22	Low
Deliberate reduction of work effort	89 (39.6)	60 (26.7)	42 (18.7)	2 (0.9)	32 (14.2)	2.24	1.36	Low
Cyberloafing during work period	60 (26.7)	103 (45.8)	10 (4.4)	32 (14.2)	20 (8.9)	2.33	1.26	Low
Trading during work	104 (46.2)	56 (24.9)	45 (20.0)	3 (1.3)	17 (7.6)	1.99	1.18	Low
Faking excuses to avoid extra lessons	95 (42.2)	73 (32.4)	47 (20.9)	2 (0.9)	8 (3.6)	1.91	0.99	Low

Note. n = 225. Cells show frequency with percentage in parentheses. VL = very low; L = low; M = moderate; H = high; VH = very high. Level follows the decision rule in the Methodology section.

4.4 Reasons for Shirking Behaviour

Experience of parents' unruly behaviour (*M* = 4.29) and poor salary and welfare packages (*M* = 4.17) obtained the highest means among the reasons for shirking (Table 5), followed by lack of promotion and recognition (*M* = 3.88), unclear job prescriptions (*M* = 3.71) and behaviour of the learners (*M* = 3.48), whereas social media loafing (*M* = 3.36) and lack of strict supervision (*M* = 3.35) obtained the lowest means and fell in the moderate range.

Table 5
Reasons for Shirking Behaviour

Item	VL	L	M	H	VH	*M*	*SD*	Level
Lack of strict supervision	30 (13.3)	30 (13.3)	33 (14.7)	96 (42.7)	36 (16.0)	3.35	1.27	Moderate
Poor salary and welfare packages	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (13.3)	126 (56.0)	69 (30.7)	4.17	0.64	High
Lack of promotion and recognition	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	60 (26.7)	132 (58.7)	33 (14.7)	3.88	0.63	High
Unclear job prescriptions	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	66 (29.3)	159	0 (0.0)	3.71	0.46	High

				(70.7)				
Experience of parents' unruly behaviour	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (13.3)	99 (44.0)	96 (42.7)	4.29	0.69	Very high
Social media loafing	30 (13.3)	30 (13.3)	30 (13.3)	99 (44.0)	36 (16.0)	3.36	1.27	Moderate
Behaviour of the learners	30 (13.3)	0 (0.0)	60 (26.7)	102 (45.3)	33 (14.7)	3.48	1.16	High

Note. n = 225. Cells show frequency with percentage in parentheses. VL = very low; L = low; M = moderate; H = high; VH = very high. Level follows the decision rule in the Methodology section.

4.5 Consequences of Shirking Behaviour

All six consequence statements had means above 3.40 (Table 6), with the highest agreement recorded for parents' dissatisfaction in schools with high rates of shirking (M = 4.60), the weakening of teamwork and organisational discipline among staff (M = 4.57) and the promotion of indiscipline among students (M = 4.57), followed by the delay of task completion (M = 3.63), the increase of operational costs (M = 3.60) and the reduction of students' academic performance (M = 3.48).

Table 6

Consequences of Shirking Behaviour

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	*M*	*SD*	Level
Frequent absenteeism and lateness delay task completion	30 (13.3)	33 (14.7)	0 (0.0)	90 (40.0)	72 (32.0)	3.63	1.41	Agree
Reduced employee commitment lowers academic performance among students	63 (28.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	90 (40.0)	72 (32.0)	3.48	1.61	Agree
Labour shirking increases operational costs of schools	0 (0.0)	63 (28.0)	30 (13.3)	66 (29.3)	66 (29.3)	3.60	1.18	Agree
Labour shirking weakens teamwork and organisational discipline among school staff	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	96 (42.7)	129 (57.3)	4.57	0.50	Strongly agree
Shirking behaviours among teachers promote indiscipline among students	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	96 (42.7)	129 (57.3)	4.57	0.50	Strongly agree
Parents are grossly dissatisfied in schools with high rates of shirking behaviours	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	90 (40.0)	135 (60.0)	4.60	0.49	Strongly agree

Note. n = 225. Cells show frequency with percentage in parentheses. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Level follows the decision rule in the Methodology section.

4.6 Remedies for Shirking Behaviour

Recognition and rewards for performance obtained the highest mean among the remedies (M = 4.87; Table 7), followed by regular training and career development and improvement in salary and other working conditions (both M = 4.71), regular appraisals (M = 4.56) and frequent unannounced inspections by ministry officials (M = 4.32), whereas strict disciplinary measures obtained the lowest mean (M = 3.84), with 66 respondents (29.3%) rating this remedy as low.

Table 7

Remedies for Shirking Behaviour

Item	VL	L	M	H	VH	*M*	*SD*	Level
Regular training and career development	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	66 (29.3)	159 (70.7)	4.71	0.46	Very high

Recognition and rewards for performance	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (13.3)	195 (86.7)	4.87	0.34	Very high
Regular appraisals	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	99 (44.0)	126 (56.0)	4.56	0.50	Very high
Strict disciplinary measures	0 (0.0)	66 (29.3)	0 (0.0)	63 (28.0)	96 (42.7)	3.84	1.26	High
Improvement in salary and other working conditions	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	66 (29.3)	159 (70.7)	4.71	0.46	Very high
Frequent unannounced inspections by ministry officials	0 (0.0)	30 (13.3)	0 (0.0)	63 (28.0)	132 (58.7)	4.32	1.01	Very high

Note. n = 225. Cells show frequency with percentage in parentheses. VL = very low; L = low; M = moderate; H = high; VH = very high. Level follows the decision rule in the Methodology section.

4.7 Regression Results

The four models differ in the variance in productivity that they explain (Table 8), since experience alone explained 14.4% (Model 0), the addition of the overall shirking score raised the explained variance to 33.2% (Model 1; $\Delta R^2 = 0.188$), and the model containing the eight shirking behaviours explained 49.8% (Model 2), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.474, while Model 3 explained 49.6% (adjusted R^2 = 0.475). The zero-order correlation between the overall shirking score and the productivity score was $r = -0.54$.

Table 8

Summary of the Regression Models

Model	Predictors	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	F (df)	p
0	Experience only	.144	.136		18.60 (2, 222)	< .001
1	Experience and overall shirking score	.332	.323	.188	36.57 (3, 221)	< .001
2	Experience and eight shirking behaviours	.498	.474	.354	21.22 (10, 214)	< .001
3	Experience, effort-withholding score and six other behaviours	.496	.475	.353	23.52 (9, 215)	< .001

Note. n = 225. Dependent variable: productivity score. ΔR^2 is the change in R^2 relative to Model 0. F tests are the conventional overall tests.

The overall shirking score had a negative coefficient in Model 1 ($B = -0.393$, $SE = 0.047$, $\beta = -.671$, $p < 0.05$; Table 9), and respondents with more than 20 years of experience scored 0.288 points lower on productivity than those with 6 to 10 years ($p < 0.05$), whereas the 16 to 20 years group did not differ significantly from the reference group ($p = .382$).

Table 9

Model 1: Overall Shirking Score and Productivity

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI	r
Constant	5.401	0.088		61.60	< .001	[5.229, 5.574]	
Experience: 16 to 20 years	−0.077	0.088		−0.88	.382	[−0.251, 0.097]	
Experience: above 20 years	−0.288	0.038		−7.66	< .001	[−0.362, −0.214]	
Overall shirking score	−0.393	0.047	−.671	−8.43	< .001	[−0.485, −0.301]	−.54

Note. n = 225. Dependent variable: productivity score (1 = very low, 5 = very high). Standard errors, t values, p values and confidence intervals (CI) are heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3). β = standardised coefficient; r = zero-order correlation with productivity; the reference category for experience is 6 to 10 years. $R^2 = 0.332$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.323$, $F(3, 221) = 36.57$, $p < 0.05$.

Pretending to be busy ($B = -0.206$, $\beta = -0.521$), cyberloafing ($B = -0.160$, $\beta = -0.418$) and trading during work ($B = -0.074$, $\beta = -0.181$) had significant negative coefficients in Model 2 (Table 10), lateness had a significant positive coefficient ($B = 0.109$, $\beta = 0.172$, $p = 0.029$), and avoidance of duty, absenteeism, deliberate reduction of work effort and faking excuses to avoid extra lessons were not significant. All eight

behaviours correlated negatively with productivity at the zero-order level (*r* from −.20 to −.54), and the variance inflation factors were 23.48 for avoidance of duty and 16.69 for deliberate reduction of work effort, whereas those of the other behaviours did not exceed 4.87.

Table 10

Model 2: Shirking Behaviours and Productivity

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	95% CI	*r*	VIF
Constant	5.785	0.170		33.94	< .001	[5.449, 6.121]		
Experience: 16 to 20 years	−0.634	0.109		−5.79	< .001	[−0.850, −0.418]		
Experience: above 20 years	−0.873	0.095		−9.22	< .001	[−1.060, −0.686]		
Avoidance of duty	−0.053	0.085	−.152	−0.62	.538	[−0.221, 0.115]	−.54	23.48
Lateness	0.109	0.050	.172	2.19	.029	[0.011, 0.207]	−.20	1.69
Absenteeism	0.005	0.026	.009	0.19	.852	[−0.046, 0.056]	−.30	1.49
Pretending to be busy	−0.206	0.038	−.521	−5.48	< .001	[−0.280, −0.132]	−.54	4.05
Deliberate reduction of work effort	0.075	0.072	.212	1.05	.297	[−0.067, 0.217]	−.51	16.69
Cyberloafing	−0.160	0.037	−.418	−4.32	< .001	[−0.233, −0.087]	−.35	4.87
Trading during work	−0.074	0.027	−.181	−2.78	.006	[−0.126, −0.021]	−.33	2.91
Faking excuses to avoid extra lessons	−0.038	0.037	−.079	−1.03	.305	[−0.112, 0.035]	−.20	1.91

Note. $n = 225$. Dependent variable: productivity score (1 = very low, 5 = very high). Standard errors, *t* values, *p* values and confidence intervals (CI) are heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3). β = standardised coefficient; *r* = zero-order correlation with productivity; VIF = variance inflation factor; the reference category for experience is 6 to 10 years. $R^2 = 0.498$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.474$, $F(10, 214) = 21.22$, $p < 0.05$.

The effort-withholding score that combined avoidance of duty and deliberate reduction of work effort was not significant in Model 3 ($B = 0.033$, $p = 0.374$; VIF = 7.18; Table 11), and the coefficients of pretending to be busy ($B = −0.213$), cyberloafing ($B = −0.159$), trading during work ($B = −0.079$) and lateness ($B = 0.104$) retained the signs and significance reported for Model 2.

Table 11

Model 3: Productivity with Combined Effort-Withholding Score

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	95% CI	VIF
Constant	5.819	0.164		35.46	< .001	[5.495, 6.142]	
Experience: 16 to 20 years	−0.657	0.104		−6.33	< .001	[−0.861, −0.452]	
Experience: above 20 years	−0.891	0.091		−9.77	< .001	[−1.070, −0.711]	
Effort withholding (avoidance of duty and deliberate reduction of effort combined)	0.033	0.037	.093	0.89	.374	[−0.040, 0.106]	7.18
Lateness	0.104	0.049	.163	2.11	.036	[0.007, 0.201]	1.65
Absenteeism	0.003	0.026	.006	0.12	.907	[−0.049, 0.055]	1.48
Pretending to be busy	−0.213	0.038	−.540	−5.65	< .001	[−0.287, −0.139]	3.87
Cyberloafing	−0.159	0.038	−.414	−4.15	< .001	[−0.234, −0.083]	4.86
Trading during work	−0.079	0.027	−.194	−2.95	.003	[−0.131, −0.026]	2.83
Faking excuses to avoid extra lessons	−0.038	0.038	−.079	−1.02	.308	[−0.113, 0.036]	1.91

Note. n = 225. Dependent variable: productivity score (1 = very low, 5 = very high). Standard errors, t values, p values and confidence intervals (CI) are heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3). β = standardised coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor; the reference category for experience is 6 to 10 years. R^2 = .496, adjusted R^2 = .475, $F(9, 215) = 23.52$, $p < 0.05$.

5. Discussion

5.1 Overall Association between Shirking and Productivity

The negative association between the overall shirking score and productivity (B = −0.393; β = −0.671) supports H1 and is consistent with the agency and efficiency wage argument that effort withheld by agents lowers the output that principals obtain (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Shapiro & Stiglitz, 1984). It also fits the evidence that teacher absence lowers student achievement (Miller et al., 2008) and that absence can be analysed as shirking (Bradley et al., 2007), although the present estimate rests on teachers' own ratings of school outputs and must be read as an association, because a cross-sectional survey cannot establish whether shirking reduces productivity or whether lower productivity, for example through frustration, encourages shirking. The finding that shirking was reported at a low level (M = 2.17) while productivity was rated high (M = 4.40) indicates that the relationship was estimated over a narrow range of the shirking scale, which suggests that its practical importance may be greater in schools where shirking is more prevalent than in the surveyed group, and it may also reflect social desirability in self-reports on a sensitive workplace topic.

5.2 Differences among the Shirking Behaviours

The behaviours that were significantly and negatively associated with productivity were pretending to be busy, cyberloafing and trading during work, which share the feature that the teacher is physically present while attention is diverted from teaching duties, and this pattern supports the argument that shirking is wider than absence from the workplace (Bennett, 2005). The two strongest standardised coefficients belonged to pretending to be busy (β = −0.521) and cyberloafing (β = −0.418), which also formed the second component identified in the factor analysis, and such behaviours are difficult for supervisors to detect, so that, in line with the agency argument that weak monitoring permits effort reduction (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) and with the evidence that identifiability deters loafing (Williams et al., 1981), they may deserve more monitoring attention than attendance alone. H2 is therefore supported for these three behaviours only and is not supported for the remaining five behaviours in the multivariable models.

Avoidance of duty, absenteeism, deliberate reduction of work effort and faking excuses to avoid extra lessons were not significant once the other behaviours were controlled, and this result should not be read as showing that these behaviours are harmless, because each of them correlated negatively with productivity at the zero-order level (r from −0.20 to −0.54). Three features of the data explain the conditional result, namely the near-perfect correlation between avoidance of duty and deliberate reduction of work effort (r = 0.97), which inflated the variance of both coefficients (VIF = 23.48 and 16.69) and left the shared effect unassigned, the low and narrow variation of absenteeism and faking excuses, which 6.2% and 4.4% of respondents rated as high, and the high level and limited range of the productivity scale. Combining the two collinear items in Model 3 did not change the other results, which indicates that the conclusions about the remaining behaviours are not artefacts of collinearity.

The positive coefficient of lateness in the multivariable models (B = 0.109) contrasts with its negative zero-order correlation with productivity (r = −0.20) and is therefore consistent with statistical suppression, in which a predictor changes sign when it is entered together with correlated predictors, and it should not be interpreted as evidence that arriving late raises productivity. The same caution applies to the findings for years of experience, where respondents with more than 20 years of experience rated productivity lower than those with 6 to 10 years, a difference that may reflect more critical self-assessment, differences in the schools in which experienced teachers work or the restricted experience bands in the sample, and that cannot be explained further with the present data.

5.3 Reasons, Consequences and Remedies

Experience of parents' unruly behaviour (M = 4.29), poor salary and welfare packages (M = 4.17), lack of promotion and recognition (M = 3.88) and unclear job prescriptions (M = 3.71) were the reasons rated highest, and the prominence of the pay-related reasons is consistent with the motivation and efficiency wage arguments that rewards and perceived inequity shape willingness to exert effort (Herzberg et al., 1959; Shapiro & Stiglitz, 1984; Vroom, 1964) and with studies that relate Nigerian teachers' productivity to salary, working conditions and the regularity of pay (Alonge et al., 2020; Ahmed, 2024). The high rating of parents' behaviour is a context-specific result for private schools, where teachers answer directly to fee-paying

parents, and since the survey recorded only perceptions it cannot show how this pressure operates, which makes it a priority for qualitative follow-up.

Teachers agreed most strongly that shirking leaves parents dissatisfied (*M* = 4.60), weakens teamwork and organisational discipline (*M* = 4.57) and promotes indiscipline among students (*M* = 4.57), which are consequences that threaten the reputation of a private school and are consistent with the interdependence of teachers' tasks that the social loafing literature emphasises (Ying et al., 2014). Recognition and rewards for performance (*M* = 4.87), improved salaries and working conditions (*M* = 4.71) and regular training and career development (*M* = 4.71) were rated above strict disciplinary measures (*M* = 3.84), although the latter still received agreement, and this ordering suggests that teachers favour a balance in which incentives are paired with credible monitoring and sanctions, as the efficiency wage model implies (Shapiro & Stiglitz, 1984) and as expectancy theory suggests when performance is linked to valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964).

5.4 Implications

For proprietors and administrators of private secondary schools in Ogun State, the results imply that monitoring should extend beyond attendance registers to the teacher's use of time while on duty, including the management of personal devices and trading activities, and that appraisal and recognition systems should be designed so that individual contributions are identifiable and rewarded. The prominence of remuneration, promotion and recognition among the reasons, and of rewards, salary and training among the remedies, indicates that these measures are likely to command teacher support, while protocols for handling conflicts between teachers and parents may address the reason that teachers rated highest.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the association between eight shirking behaviours and teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Ogun State and found that overall shirking, which was reported at a low level, was negatively associated with productivity after years of experience was controlled. At the level of individual behaviours, pretending to be busy, cyberloafing and trading during work were significantly and negatively associated with productivity, whereas lateness showed a positive conditional association attributable to suppression and the remaining behaviours were not significant when the others were held constant. Teachers attributed shirking mainly to parents' unruly behaviour, poor pay and welfare, and limited recognition, they reported parents' dissatisfaction and weakened discipline as its main consequences, and they rated recognition and rewards, improved salary and training as the most important remedies.

The findings suggest that private school proprietors should strengthen appraisal and recognition systems, review pay and welfare provisions, monitor on-duty behaviours that are not visible in attendance records, and establish clear procedures for teacher–parent conflicts, which is consistent with the agency and efficiency wage arguments that incentives and credible monitoring reduce the scope for shirking.

These conclusions are qualified by several limitations, the first of which is that the purposive sampling technique and the sample size of 225 limit generalisation beyond the surveyed teachers, and the sample contained only teachers with 6 to 10, 16 to 20 or more than 20 years of experience and none with an NCE or OND, so that the findings cannot be extended to early-career teachers or to other qualification groups. The cross-sectional design identifies associations without establishing causal direction, the data are self-reported and may be affected by recall and social desirability bias, and productivity was measured with three perceived school-level indicators that were rated high with little variation. The strong correlation between two shirking items reduced the precision of their individual coefficients, and the reliability of the reasons and consequences items was below the conventional threshold, which is why they were analysed item by item.

Future studies should use longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, incorporate objective indicators such as attendance records, lesson-note audits and examination results, include supervisors' ratings alongside self-reports, sample early-career teachers and teachers across qualification levels, and examine mediating factors including supervision, trust, remuneration, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, while comparative research across public and private schools would clarify how institutional conditions shape shirking behaviour and productivity in the educational sector.

References

Adu, E. O. (2015). Institutional, personal and reward system factors as determinants of teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences, 45*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2015.11893480

Adu, K. O., Olatundun, S., & Adu, E. O. (2016). Factors hindering teachers' productivity in public secondary schools. *Journal of Social Sciences, 49*(1–2), 70–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2016.11893599

Ahmed, A. A. (2024). Effects of irregular payment of teachers' salaries and provision of fringe benefits on implementation of curriculum in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research, 14*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.62154/t2na6223

Alonge, B. D., Onnoh, O. G., Olusesean, O. J., Ojo, O. A., & Nathaniel, O. O. (2020). Working conditions and salary as correlates of teachers' productivity in government-owned secondary schools in Emure Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Issues, 6*(1), 89–97. https://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v6i1.16400

Bennett, N. (2005). Withholding effort at work: Understanding and preventing shirking, job neglect, social loafing, and free riding. In R. E. Kidwell Jr. & C. L. Martin (Eds.), *Managing organizational deviance* (pp. 113–130). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231105.n5

Birioukov, A. (2016). Beyond the excused/unexcused absence binary: Classifying absenteeism through a voluntary/involuntary absence framework. *Educational Review, 68*(3), 340–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2015.1090400

Bradley, S., Green, C., & Leeves, G. (2007). Worker absence and shirking: Evidence from matched teacher-school data. *Labour Economics, 14*(3), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2006.05.002

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The motivation to work* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics, 3*(4), 305–360. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-405X(76)90026-X

Miller, R. T., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (2008). Do teacher absences impact student achievement? Longitudinal evidence from one urban school district. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30*(2), 181–200. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373708318019

Ologbo, U., Okafor, S. O., Maduka, O. D., & Eze, A. E. (2024). Upward review of minimum wage and labour productivity in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Energy and Environmental Economics, 15*(1), 152–169.

Ryska, P., & Průša, J. (2011). *Efficiency wages in heterogeneous labour markets* (IES Working Paper No. 28/2011). Charles University, Institute of Economic Studies.

Shapiro, C., & Stiglitz, J. E. (1984). Equilibrium unemployment as a worker discipline device. *American Economic Review, 74*(3), 433–444.

Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Williams, K., Harkins, S., & Latané, B. (1981). Identifiability as a deterrent to social loafing: Two cheering experiments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*(2), 303–311. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.40.2.303

Ying, X., Li, H., Jiang, S., Peng, F., & Lin, Z. (2014). Group laziness: The effect of social loafing on group performance. *Social Behavior and Personality, 42*(3), 465–471. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2014.42.3.465