

## **Moral Disengagement and the Social Construction of Procurement Officers' Deviant Behaviours**

**Joseph Mpeera Ntayi**  
**Makerere University**

**Sarah Eyaa**  
**Makerere University**

**Muhammed Ngoma**  
**Makerere University**

*In this study we attempt to explain the recent unethical practices of public procurement officers in Uganda using Bandura's (1999) moral disengagement variables and Durkeim's (1858-1917) notion of anomie. Perceived normative conflict and procurement planning behavior are added to the model to examine their relative effect on the behavior of procurement officers. Using data from 405 usable questionnaires collected from both Central and Local Government the study finds that Moral disengagement, perceived normative conflict, work anomie and procurement planning are significant predictors of social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. The interactive effect of moral disengagement and procurement planning behaviors diminishes the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. These findings have both policy and managerial implication which we later present in the paper.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every individual is a free moral agent endowed with an internal resource that enables him/her to choose to behave humanely or inhumanely (Bandura, 1999). Behaviors occur as a result of complex interplay between inner processes and environmental influences (Bandura, 1971; Lent and Brown 1996; Coleman, 1988). The internal resource in social and moral behavior has greater stability and serves as the basis for regulating one's conduct. Kelly (1955) contends that, Individuals create their own ways of understanding events around them using constructs or patterns that make the world meaningful to them. In this way, basing on accumulated knowledge and experience, people act as scientists and as such develop constructs which are similar to postulates, propositions or hypothesis. These hypotheses are tested and if found to hold, they hold onto them and develop suitable behavioral patterns. The procurement officers' laboratory for these hypotheses or constructs is a socially constructed organization. Social construction focuses on the construction of procurement officers' behaviors as an intrinsic social action in which behavior emerge out of interaction between historically situated behaviorally entrenched groups of people (Crotty, 1998) in an organization. Social constructionism holds that all behavior patterns and consequential reality is conditional upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and conveyed within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1998). From this epistemological perspective, humans join organizations and pursue procurement careers in which historically specific actions and conduct prevail. It

is through such behaviors that employees engage their employers (Gee, 1996) and question the essence of values and norms and regulatory framework like the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets (PPDA) Act (2003), that governs work related behaviour in Uganda's public procurement. In social construction, every moral claim is subject to questioning and validation. Critical questioning enables public procurement officers to assess the validity of moral claims, justify beliefs socially and treat behaviour on the same footing. It is this action that may create perceived normative conflict and work anomie (normlessness), yet Kant (1724-1804), emphasized that moral life was centered on duty.

Behavioral patterns reflecting moral disengagement and work anomie in public procurement continue to surface. African Development Bank – ADB (2006) has revealed that in Africa the public procurement process is particularly prone to anomic practices, especially given the large sums of money involved and the range of activities it encompasses. As budgets come under pressure and payments are delayed incentives to engage in deviant behaviors increases. A survey of businesses by the Ugandan Private Sector Foundation and the World Bank found that 81 of the firms surveyed had been involved in procurement related bribery and reported having spent an average of 7.9% of their total cost on bribery, compared to 6.3% for fuel and 6.8% for loan interest. Also 70% of respondents reported higher bribe payments than corporate income tax (African Development Bank, 2006).

The violation of public procurement duties motivated by private interests of procurement officers in Uganda yet rules or norms objectively define their limit requires a systematic inquiry. The relative paucity of quantitative data and detailed empirical analysis coupled with the difficulty of comparative studies due to great variability in norms and rules hinder clarity on the debate. Further, research on procurement deviant behaviors in Uganda has remained sparse and no systematic effort has been made to link moral disengagement, perceived normative conflict, workplace anomie, procurement planning behaviors and the social construction of procurement officer's deviant behaviors. The purpose of this study is to provide this missing link.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTRIBUTION**

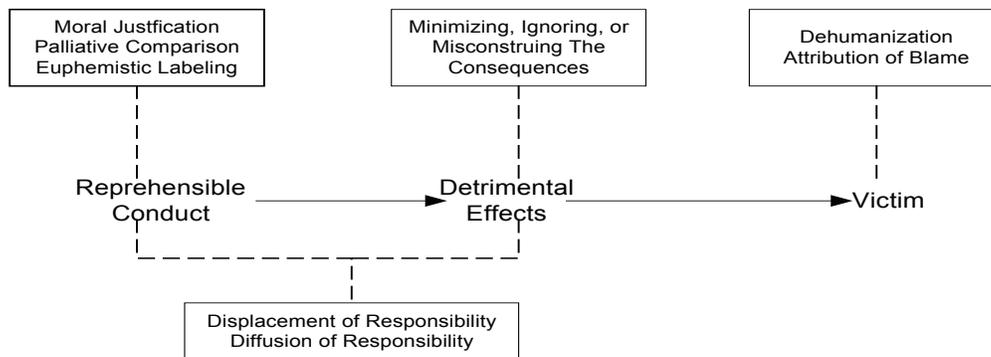
An analysis of expenditure reveals that on average 65% of the Central Government recurrent non wage is expended on procurement related items compared to 31.28% for Local Governments (National Integrity Survey - NIS, 2006). This position makes public procurement an important function which requires nurturing yet according to the NIS (2006), this function is characterized by rent seeking opportunities. These rent seeking behaviors point towards presence of moral disengagement which requires systematic inquiry. Consistent with the Inspector General of Government report - IGG (2002) and NIS (2006), ADB (2006) has revealed that, moral disengagement results when the state attempts to over regulate the economy through acts applied with discretion and devoid of effective accountability. This action encourages anomie with impunity in key functions such as procurement, public works and service delivery. If early action is not taken, endemic anemia will become institutionalized and citizens will come to accept it and all its inefficiencies/distortions as an inevitable cost of doing business—thereby eroding the moral/ethical standards of society that traditionally served as restraining mechanisms. According to NIS (2006) public procurement related deviant behaviors are a custom deeply rooted in culture, and therefore socially constructed. This calls for early action based on research since the Government of Uganda has advocated for the notion of modernization of the economy. Consistent with Durkheim's notion of anomie (1858-1917), modernization tends to remove the restrictions determined by social position and the opening of opportunities for contracts. In this paper, we attempt to add to the works of IGG (2002), NIS (2004), NIS (2006) and Ntayi et al. (2008), by offering a plausible prediction of the social construction of public procurement officer's deviance in Uganda, using moral disengagement, perceived normative conflict, work anomie and procurement planning behavior.

### **Moral Disengagement, Work Anomie and Social Construction of Procurement Officers' Deviance**

As a term from social psychology, moral disengagement is conceptualized as a process of convincing the self that ethical standards do not apply to oneself in a particular context. Morally disengaged individuals separate moral reactions from inhumane conduct by disabling the mechanism of self-condemnation (Fiske, 2004). Moral disengagement is a composite of cognitive restructuring/moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of

responsibility, disregard or distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame. Figure 1 is an exposition of the mechanism of moral disengagement.

**FIGURE 1  
MECHANISM OF MORAL DISENGAGEMENT**



Note. From *Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency* (p. 365) by A. Bandura, C. Barbaranelli, G. Caprara, and C. Pastorelli, 1996, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71.

Disengagement of moral self-sanctions enables people to pursue detrimental practices freed from the restraint of self-censure. This is possible in situations where ascendance of naked self-interests are a result of social fragmentation and internecine conflict (Billon, 2003). Consistent with Durkheim's notion of anomie (1858-1917), Johnson (1986) has revealed the outcome of moral disengagement to correspond with the fault lines of society.

In the anomic situation there is a discrepancy between what society has promised and the available resources for fulfilling them. Merton (1938) has revealed that deviant behaviors are high in societies where the pursuit of wealth and economic being are widely shared cultural goals that are stressed more than rules governing appropriate means (norms) for realizing those goals. When norms governing the appropriate means of goal attainment are weak and opportunity is limited, a sizeable portion of the population is encouraged to "innovate" and pursue wealth by illegal means (Jensen, 2002).

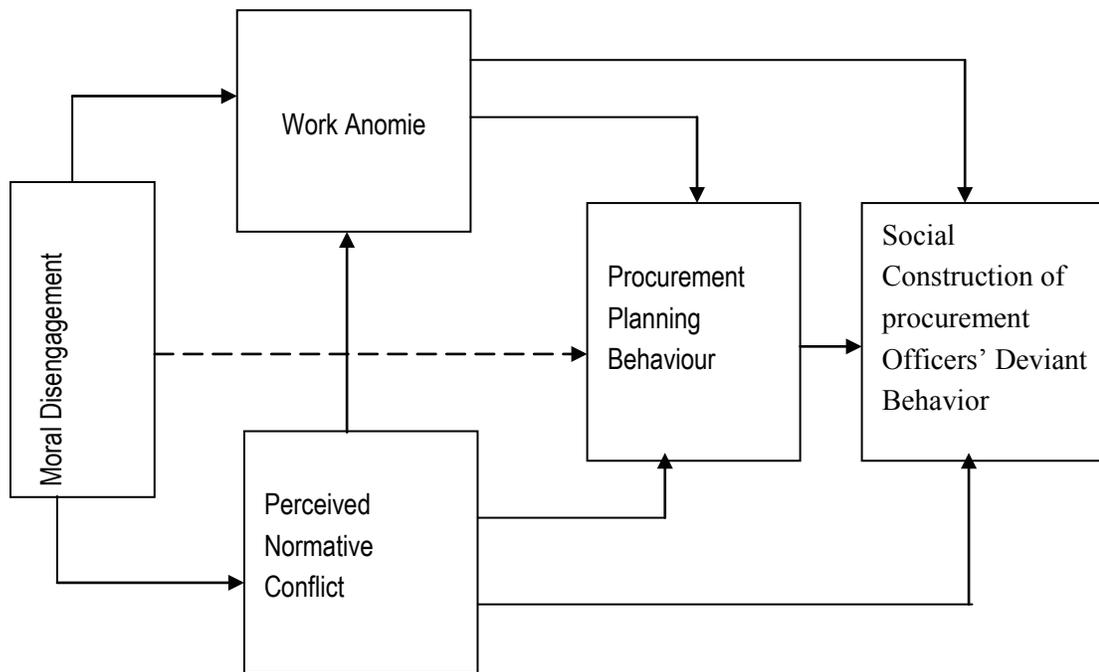
### **Moral Disengagement, Perceived Normative Conflict and Procurement Planning Behaviour**

Perceived normative conflict is a state in which due to social psychological pressure employees feel compelled to side with either formality or the workgroup. The more they side with workgroup the more the informal opposition rules (Wenzel, 2000) against the formal ones, resulting into organizational conflict. Manrique de Lara, Tacoronte and Ting Ding (2007) found no support for the relationship between perceived normative conflict and workplace deviance. Since norms refer to implicit or explicit rules and procedures, of expected behaviour, that embody interests and preferences. When a situation of normlessness is created, this advances into an anomic state. Generally speaking, the literature is not consistent with regard to the impact of perceived normative conflict and work place deviance. From the dominant sociological literature, it is inferred that there is a communion between perceived normative conflict, work anomie, moral disengagement and work place deviance as presented in figure 2.

### **Work Anomie and Social Construction of Procurement Officers' Deviance**

Scholars have attempted to link anomie to various types of deviant outcomes (Caruana et al., 2001). However research linking work anomie to the social construction of the procurement officers' deviant behaviour is sparse. Work anomie is a state in which social norms regulating employee behaviour have broken down and are no longer effective, generating a situation of normlessness, disconnectedness, and helplessness leading to employee deviance (Bass, 1990; Hodson, 1999).

**FIGURE 2**  
**CONCEPTUAL MODEL RELATING MORAL DISENGAGEMENT, WORK ANOMIE, PERCEIVED NORMATIVE CONFLICT, PROCUREMENT PLANNING BEHAVIOUR AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PROCUREMENT OFFICER'S DEVIANCE IN UGANDA**



Anomie is an internal value of an individual that has a possible effect on procurement ethics. Extant literature reveals that there is link between anomie and deviant behaviors. Lewick et al. (1997) have shown that individuals attitude towards the organization are important predictors of dishonesty as a form of deviant behaviour. Schein (1980) and Chatman (1989) also revealed that increased tension and workplace frustration are powerful determinants of dysfunctional behaviour and may discourage planning, creating feelings of perceived normative conflict. These behaviors may also be due to the perception of absence norms. This is confirmed by Nee (1998), who contends that opposing aims and values of an organization from those of its members may be responsible for deviance. Feelings of normlessness may trigger workplace deviance (Caruana et al., 2001; Durkeim, 1893/1897; Srole, 1956).

**Control Variables**

Controlling for the impact of sex (Stradling, Meadows and Beatty, 1999), age (Lynn and Lockwood, 1998), level of education (Ntayi et al., 2008) and monthly income (Low, Davey and Hooper, 2008) is necessary not only because these constructs are central in predicting deviant behaviors, but also because they tend to be correlated significantly with the dependent variables specified in this study.

**Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study is to extend previous research efforts by testing the relative importance of moral disengagement, work anomie, perceived normative conflict, and the procurement planning behaviour in predicting the public procurement officers' deviant behaviors. To achieve this goal, the following hypotheses are formulated for examination in this study. Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): There is high prevalence of moral disengagement, work anomie, perceived normative conflict and social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors in Uganda's public procurement. Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): Moral disengagement, perceived normative conflict, work anomie and procurement planning behavior affect the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>): Work anomie and perceived normative conflict mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and social

construction of procurement officers' deviant behavior. Hypothesis 4 (H<sub>4</sub>): For a given level of moral disengagement, the higher the level of work anomie, the higher the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behavior. Hypothesis 5 (H<sub>5</sub>): For a given level of moral disengagement, the higher the level of perceived normative conflict, the higher the level of the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. Hypothesis 6 (H<sub>6</sub>): Procurement planning behaviors moderate the relationship between moral disengagement and the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample and Data Collection Procedure**

Data for this study were collected from both Central and Local Government, an area that has been examined in previous National Integrity Surveys (NIS) and IGG surveys. Public procurement, especially at the Local and Central Government levels, is believed to be one of the principal areas where unethical practices blossom (NIS, 2002; Office of the Inspector General of Government, 2003; NIS, 2006). Accounting officers, members of the contract committees, officials working in procurement and disposal units, technical evaluation committees and other employees performing procurement functions were sampled following the guidelines of NIS (2004) and NIS (2006). Surveys from 519 respondents from both Local and Central Governments were conducted. The effective response rate was 78% resulting in 405 usable questionnaires. 62% of the respondents were male and 38% females. As regards their level of education, 71.6% had attained university education leaving 28.4% with diploma (tertiary education qualification). Regarding monthly income in Uganda Shillings, the study revealed that 45.9% of the sampled public procurement officers were earning between Uganda Shillings 500,000 - 800,000 followed by 36.3% earning below Uganda Shillings 500,000 only. 12.5% earn between Uganda Shillings 800,000-1,500,000 only, while the remaining 5.3% earn above Uganda Shillings 1,500,000. The average exchange rate at the time of this study was United States dollar (\$) 1= Uganda Shillings (Shs) 1,630.

### **Measures and Scores**

Moral Disengagement scales were adapted scales developed by Bandura (1999; 2002) and Hymel, Locke-Henderson and Bonanno (2005), to examine the existence of the eight broad categories of moral disengagement. These eight broad categories are cognitive restructuring/moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, and displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregard or distortion of consequences, dehumanization and attribution of blame. Responses to all item scales were anchored on a five point scale reflecting the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement. The composite moral disengagement scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of 0.887. Perceived normative conflict was constructed using scale items developed from work group norms literature (Hyatt and Ruddy, 1997; Turner, 1990) and intra-group conflict (Jehn, 1995; Friedman, 2000). We took into account the specific characteristics of the studied local and central government setting. When the public procurement officers chose the work group more frequently and strongly, the normative context that they perceive may be more conflicting. This measure was reliable with Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.920. Work anomie scales were based on the expanded Srole's (1956) five item scale to nine items in 1972. We revised some items to fit the subject and Local and Central Government context of the study. Item scales were self supplied in line with the existing anomie literature. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.837. Procurement planning scales were developed using ideas from the PPDA (2003), World Bank and Bakunda (2009). The composite scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of 0.885. The social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors was measured using scales adapted from Manrique de Lara, Tacoronte and Ting Ding (2008) and Ntayi (2005). Item scales were specifically adapted to tap the social construction nature of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. Test for consistency revealed a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.783.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among study variables are presented in table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**ZERO-ORDER PEARSON CORRELATIONS AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sex (1)	0.50	.50	1.00								
Age group (2)	2.20	.57	.107*	1.00							
highest level of Education (3)	2.64	.54	.005	-.277**	1.00						
monthly income (4)	1.77	.86	.035	.233**	-.025	1.00					
Moral disengagement (5)	3.52	.71	.038	-.048	.041	-.031	1.00				
Perceived Normative Conf.(6)	3.89	.74	-.098*	-.014	-.040	-.002	.346**	1.00			
Work Anomie (7)	3.84	.77	-.093	.029	-.012	.088	.247**	.224**	1.00		
Procurement Planning Behavior.(8)	3.07	1.03	.057	-.119*	.055	-.035	-.324**	-.158**	-.084	1.00	
Procurement officers' Deviance (9)	3.47	.56	.030	-.067	-.020	.030	.675**	.492**	.428**	-.445**	1.00

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Moral disengagement (mean=3.82, s.d=0.71), perceived normative conflict (mean=3.89, s.d=0.74), work anomie (mean=3.84, s.d=0.77) and the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors (mean=3.47, s.d=0.56) exist among the procurement officers in the sampled local and central government procurement officers supporting H<sub>1</sub>. Responses to all item scales in this study were anchored on a five point Likert scale reflecting the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. These findings are consistent with Country Procurement Assessment Report - CPAR (2004), United States Agency for International Development - USAID (2003), IGG (2004) and Ntayi et al. (2008) who have shown unethical conduct in public procurement to occur at both local and central government. Additionally, consistent with Bakunda (2009), the level of procurement planning behavior is still low (mean=3.07, s.d=1.03). Results obtained from open ended questions revealed that public procurement officers 'innovate around' the rules with the assistance of the legal mind familiar with the procurement law. This usually results into perceived normative conflict. Procurement officers begin by breaking down procurements into small components (micro-procurements) until the whole process deteriorates into a workplace practice. This, seemingly correct state of affairs deteriorates into normlessness and requests for procurement of desired items are intentionally made to fall in this category.

Respondents were observed to exhibit high means on the composite dimensions of the moral disengagement construct. Scores for these components were as follows: cognitive restructuring/moral justification (mean=3.81, s.d=0.55). This means that some detrimental procurement behaviour gets justified and socially acceptable in the guise of protecting honour and reputation (Cohen and Nisbett, 1994). Euphemistic labeling was found to exhibit a high mean of 3.82 and standard deviation of 0.68. In Uganda's public procurement euphemistic labeling culture is commonly used to make negative acts appear less negative e.g. "man eateth where he worketh" or "he is a bright and/or sharp fellow". Euphemistic language provides a convenient tool for conferring a respectable status upon them (Lutz, 1987). Advantageous comparison exist among public procurement officers (mean=3.64, s.d=0.50). Here injurious procurement conduct is rendered benign. Displacement of responsibility scales revealed a mean of 3.74, and a standard deviation (s.d) of 0.80. Consistent with Andrus (1969), Local and Central Government procurement officers viewed their actions as springing from the dictates of others rather than as something they are personally responsible. Diffusion of responsibility (mean=4.10, s.d=0.76),

disregard or distortion of consequences (mean=3.69, s.d=0.83) and dehumanization behaviour existed among local and central government procurement officers (Mean=3.57, S.D=0.88). Bandura (1991) reveals that when individuals assume a norm of morality, their self-sanctions for actions that match or contravene their personal values serve as the regulatory influencers. Our study further revealed that procurement officers scored high on the attribution of blame scale (mean=4.14, s.d=0.72). The sampled Local and Central Government procurement officers in Uganda blamed the PPDA Act (2003) for delays in procurement and for being too restrictive instead of lack of proper procurement planning (CPAR, 2004).

Overall the pattern of inter-correlations is consistent with the hypothesized relationship as presented in table 1. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between moral disengagement and perceived normative conflict ( $r=.346$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), Work anomie ( $r=.247$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and social construction of procurement officers' deviance ( $r=.675$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) supporting  $H_2$ . This means that the more morally disengaged procurement officers become, the more they tend to lean on collegial advice on the procurement rules and procedures instead of following the PPDA Act (2003). Procurement planning behaviour was observed to be significantly inversely correlated with Moral disengagement ( $r=-.324$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and perceived normative conflict ( $r=-.158$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Surprisingly, although the relationship between procurement planning behaviour and work anomie were in the hypothesized direction, this relationship was not significant. Perceived normative conflict was significantly positively correlated with work anomie ( $r= 0.224$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and social construction of procurement officers' deviance ( $r=0.492$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This means that the more anomic procurement officers become, the more they exhibit procurement related work place deviance. This is consistent with Imukat (2008) who reveals that there is no area in Uganda today which is free from the social deviance malady.

### Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression analyses were carried out consistent with (Aiken and West, 1991). With variables entered simultaneously within each hierarchical step. Co linearity diagnostics were examined for all variables entered at each step and found to be within the recommended range (e.g.  $VIF<4$ ; Field, 2005).The regression results are displayed in table 2. The control variables entered in step 1 did not explain any substantial percentage of variance in the social construction of procurement officers' deviance ( $R^2 = .005$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Interestingly, 0.5% of the variance in the social construction of procurement officers' deviance was instead explained by the intercept ( $\beta=1.69$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The overall model was not significant (F statistic = 0.538, significant F change = 0.708).

**TABLE 2**  
**HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF**  
**PROCUREMENT OFFICERS' DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Co linearity statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.69**	.65**	.29	-.04	.35*	1.32**	Na	na
Sex	.01	-.02	.00	.02	.01	.02	.96	1.03
Age	-.06	-.04*	-.04*	-.04	-.02	-.02	.86	1.16
Education level	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.05	.92	1.09
Income	.03	.07	.06	.05	.05	.04	.95	1.06
Moral Disengagement (MD)		.67**	.62**	.57**	.52**	-.21(ns)	.84	1.19
Work Anomie (WA)			.24**	.23**	.23**	.18(ns)	.95	1.05
Perceived Normative Conflict (PNC)				.21**	.20**	-.11(ns)	.94	1.07

Procurement Planning Behaviour (PPB)								
MDxWA						.09	Na	na
MDxPNC						.63**	Na	na
MDxPPB						-.23*	na	na
R	.073	.67	.71	.73	.75	.76	na	na
R square	.005	.44	.50	.54	.57	.58	na	na
Adjusted R square	-.01	.44	.49	.53	.56	.57	na	na
F – statistics	.538	63.80	65.68	66.29	64.67	49.60	na	na
Sig.	.708	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
R Square Change	.005	.439	.054	.041	.028	.015	na	na
F change-statistics	.538	315.17	42.75	35.06	25.12	4.64	na	na
Sig F Change	.708	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003	na	na

Note: n = 405 Standardized regression coefficients are reported, ns=not significant  
\*\* regression is significant at the 0.01 level, \* regression is significant at the 0.05 level

In Model 2 moral disengagement was a significant predictor, predicting 44% of the variance in the social construction of procurement officers' deviance. The  $\Delta R^2$  was 43.9% and the F change statistics was significant (F – statistic = 315.17,  $\beta=0.67$ , F change of 0.00), partially supporting H1 and H2. When a third model was run entering work anomie, both moral disengagement and work anomie were significant predictors of the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors with a prediction potential of 49%. The  $\Delta R^2$  was 5.4% and the F change statistics was significant (F – statistic = 65.68). Although moral engagement construct remained significant, its beta coefficient dropped from  $\beta=0.67$  to  $\beta=0.62$  while the coefficient of the introduced work anomie construct was  $\beta=0.24$ . The values of the beta coefficients indicate the importance of the two variables in predicting social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. Of particular importance, is the significance of the moral disengagement ( $\beta=0.57$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), work anomie ( $\beta=0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and perceived normative conflict ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) in the prediction model. The results presented in model 4, reveal that the above three variables predicted 54% of the variance in the social construction of procurement officers' deviance with perceived normative conflict contributing to 4.1% (F statistic= 66.29, F change statistic =35.06, Significant F change = 0.00), thus supporting H<sub>2</sub>. Model 5 introduces yet another variable of procurement planning behaviour ( $\beta=-0.18$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) which significantly inversely affects the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour with a percentage  $\Delta R^2$  of 2.8% and the F change statistics was 25.12, F – statistic = 64.67, and significant F change = 0.00), supporting H<sub>2</sub>. The interactive effects of moral disengagement with work anomie (MDxWA), moral disengagement with perceived normative conflict (MDxPNC) and moral disengagement with procurement planning behaviour (MDxPPB) were entered in step 6. The interactive effect of moral disengagement with work anomie (MDxWA), moral disengagement with perceived normative conflict (MDxPNC) and moral disengagement with procurement planning behaviour (MDxPPB) accounted for 1.5% of the variance in social construction of procurement officers deviant behaviour ( $R^2$  adj. = .57,  $\Delta R^2$  = .015  $p < 0.01$ ) supporting H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub> and H<sub>6</sub>. These results indicate that when work anomie, perceived normative conflict and procurement planning behaviour are introduced in the regression model, their interacting influence increase the predictive power by 1.5%. Further, results in model 6, show that the interaction between moral disengagement and procurement planning behaviour is negative which is also depicted in Figure 2, implying that when procurement planning is introduced to firms which rank high on moral disengagement, social construction of procurement officers deviant behaviour is diminished. The four variables of moral disengagement ( $\beta=0.52$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), perceived normative conflict ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), work anomie ( $\beta=0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and procurement planning behaviour ( $\beta=-0.18$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), predicted 57% of the variance in the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour construct.

Following the graphical and statistical analysis recommended by Aiken and West (1991), interaction graphs between moral disengagement and moderating variables were drawn (see figures 3, 4 and 5). Among procurement officers who score low and high on moral disengaged, those with low and high levels of work anomie were significantly likely to have increased social construction of their deviant

behavior (see figure 3). Thus work anomie acts at both the low and high end of moral disengagement. It complements moral disengagement and further strengthens social construction of procurement officers' deviant behavior, supporting H<sub>4</sub>.

**FIGURE 3**  
**INTERACTION BETWEEN MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND WORK ANOMIE**

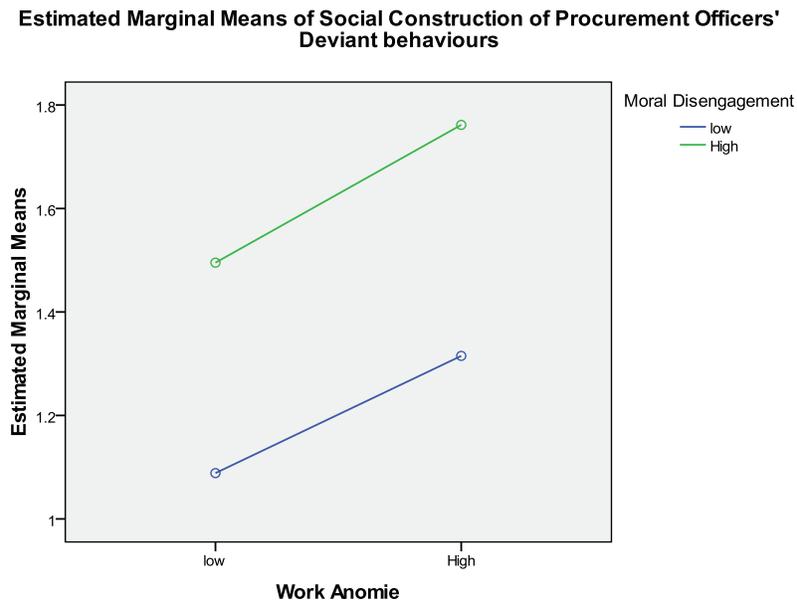
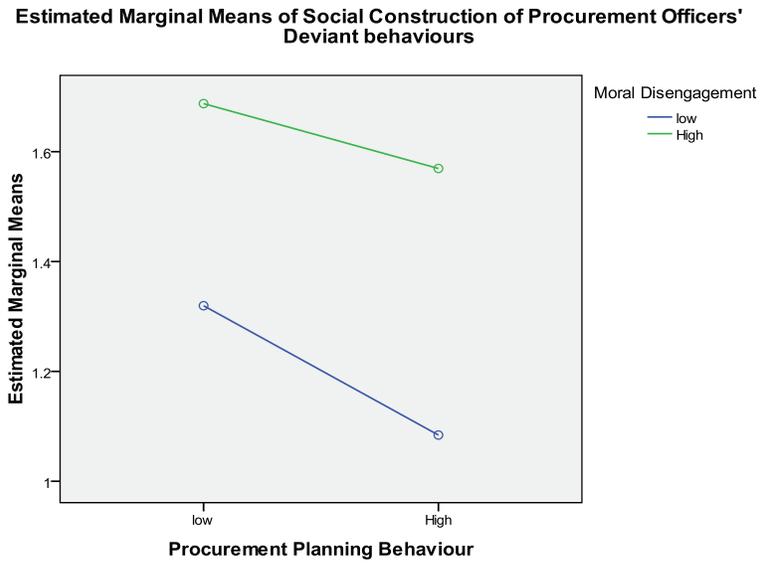


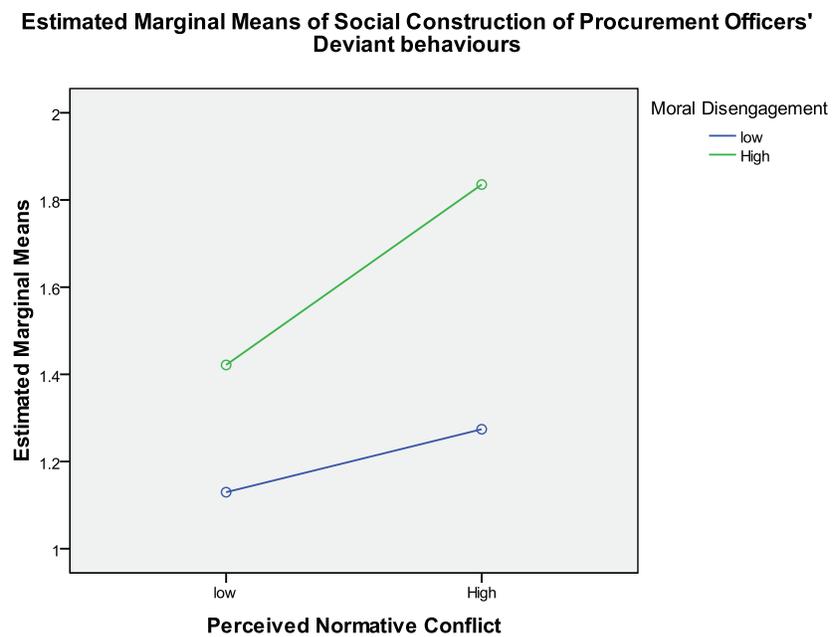
Figure 4 shows that the interaction between moral disengagement and procurement planning behaviour causes more than proportional change in the decline of the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour for procurement officers that score both low and high on the construct of procurement planning behaviour (supporting H<sub>6</sub>). Procurement planning behaviour acts as a constraint, limiting those who are both less or more morally disengaged from gaining social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour. Thus procurement planning behaviour can be an effective alternative means of reducing the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour.

For Figure 5, any level of moral disengagement interacts with perceived normative conflict to bring positive changes in social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour. This means that for both low and high scoring procurement officers what matters is moral disengagement interacting with perceived normative conflict to increase the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour. This position provides evidence to support H<sub>5</sub>. Thus perceived normative conflict acts as a complement to moral disengagement, further strengthening social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour. In the absence of perceived normative conflict, the impact of moral disengagement on social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour is likely to be lower.

**FIGURE 4**  
**INTERACTION BETWEEN MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND PROCUREMENT PLANNING BEHAVIOUR**



**FIGURE 5**  
**INTERACTION BETWEEN MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND PERCEIVED NORMATIVE CONFLICT**



### Mediating Effect of Work Anomie and Perceived Normative Conflict

We further tested for the effect work anomie and perceived normative conflict may have on the relationship between moral disengagement and the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour as per hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>). We used the procedure developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and modified by Kenny (2006). The results are reported in Table 3 and Table 4.

**TABLE 3**  
**THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF WORK ANOMIE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PROCUREMENT OFFICERS' DEVIANT BEHAVIOR**

Predictor	Dependent Variable							
	Work Anomie		Social construction of procurement officers deviant behaviour					
	B	SE	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta
Intercept	2.79**	0.33	1.91**	0.18		1.35**	-0.19	
Sex	-0.17*	0.07	-0.05	0.04	-.05	-0.02	0.07	-.02
Age	0.04	0.07	-0.06	0.04	-.06	-0.07	0.04	-.07
Education Level	-0.02	0.07	-0.07	0.04	-.06	-0.06	0.02	-.06
Income	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.03	.06	0.02	0.03	.04
Moral disengagement	0.28**	0.05	0.53**	0.03	.70	0.48**	0.03	.61
Work Anomie						0.20**	0.03	.28

N = 405, \*\* p < .01, \* p < .05

**TABLE 4**  
**THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PERCEIVED NORMATIVE CONFLICT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PROCUREMENT OFFICERS' DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR**

Predictor	Dependent Variable							
	Perceived normative conflict		Social construction of procurement officers deviant behaviour					
	B	SE	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta
Intercept	2.91**	0.31	1.91**	0.18		1.27**	-0.19	
Sex	-0.16*	0.07	-0.05	0.04	-.05	-0.02	0.04	-.02
Age	-0.01	0.06	-0.06	0.04	-.06	-0.06	0.04	-.06
Education Level	-0.08	0.07	-0.07	0.04	-.06	-0.05	0.04	-.05
Income	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.03	.06	0.04	0.02	.06
Moral disengagement	0.37**	0.05	0.53**	0.03	.70	0.45**	0.03	.58
Perceived normative conflict						0.22**	0.03	.29

N = 405, \*\* p < .01, \* p < .05

In table 3, the three of Baron and Kenny's (2006) conditions for mediation are met. First, there is an effect to be mediated ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Second, there is a significant relationship between moral disengagement and the mediator ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and third, the coefficient of the mediator is significant in regression three ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with both moral disengagement and work anomie as predictors. Additionally, the absolute effect of moral disengagement on the social construction of

procurement officers deviant behaviour is less in regression three (Standardized beta = .61) than in regression two (Standardized beta = .70). Details are presented in table 3.

The Wald Test shows that the difference between the coefficients is different from zero, implying that there is partial rather than full mediation, supporting hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>).

Results in table 4 provide further support for hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>), since three of Baron and Kenny's (2006) conditions for mediation are met. First, there is a significant effect of moral disengagement on the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Secondly, there was a significant relationship between moral disengagement and the mediator, perceived normative conflict ( $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and third, the coefficient of the mediator is significant in regression three ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with both moral disengagement and perceived normative conflict as predictors. Additionally, the absolute effect of moral disengagement on the social construction of procurement officers deviant behaviour is less in regression three (Standardized beta = .58) than in regression two (Standardized beta = .70). The effect of moral disengagement on the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behavior is not reduced to zero when perceived normative conflict is introduced in the model, supporting the existence of partial mediation.

## **POLICY AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

At the policy level, there is need to put a halt to moral disengagement behaviors in Uganda's public procurement by making procurement officers accountable for their own actions. This can be done by forcing all those employees who are involved in deviant behaviors to refund and/or be dismissed from the public service and restrictions put on them never to conduct business with government. Bandura et al. (1975) has revealed that when individuals find themselves in a situation in which they are clearly responsible for their actions and victims are humanized, they will be less likely to engage in aggressive behaviour that violates moral standards. Consistent with Milgram (1974), we recommend use of situational manipulations that make it more difficult for procurement officers to use certain forms of moral disengagements. Situations that make it difficult to displace responsibility or deny consequences will encourage moral behaviour. These situational manipulations include frequent feedback from staff and reducing direct involvement of the accounting officers in appointment of the contract committee members and other procurement staff.

This study has revealed high procurement related deviance which is socially constructed. We therefore recommend frequent job rotations and transfers to discourage the formation of social deviance networks. Additionally, policy makers can encourage formation of the procurement professionals' body which registers professional members and/or blacklists or de-registers all those procurement officers who flout the rules of the procurement profession. Public procure-ment professionals can be encouraged to create a forum where articles about positive experiences are written. McAlister, Ama, Barroso, Peters and Kelder (2000) have termed this a behavioral journalism intervention programme.

This study has also revealed that when procurement planning behaviors interacts with moral disengagement, the social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors diminishes. It is our considered view that procurement planning in public institutions be forcefully enforced by relevant authorities. This is likely to force public institutions to budget and stick to the allocated budgets thus reducing wastage and promoting accountability. The interactive effects of moral disengagement with work anomie and perceived normative conflict result in the increased social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviour. It is our considered view that Local and Central Governments deal with work anomie by examining the state of social norms that regulate employee behaviour, if they are found to have broken down and are no longer effective, measures be put in place to halt the resultant behaviors. Additionally the Local and Central Governments have to remove workplace rigidities that force employees to side with fellow employees instead of following organizational rules. This can be done through establishment of a good supportive and conducive psychological climate and instituting a trusted system of handling organizational conflict.

As a policy measure, all education institutions like primary schools, secondary schools, commercial schools, technical institutes and universities should integrate business ethics in their training curriculum. This is likely to promote positive attitude towards ethical practice.

## CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we can conclude that moral disengagement, work anomie, perceived normative conflict and socially constructed deviant behaviors exist among local and central government procurement officers. Moral disengagement, work anomie, perceived normative conflict and procurement planning were shown to affect the construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors. The hierarchical regression model and interaction graphs showed that procurement planning behaviors moderate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Work anomie and perceived normative conflict mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and social construction of procurement officers' deviant behaviors.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One major limitation with this study was that measurement scales utilized a fixed choice response format. Although a few open ended questions were included in the study, behaviors that were not included among the choices were not evaluated by the public procurement officers. This means that, behaviors that were not included among the choices may have made a difference in the behavioral participants of public procurement officers. Future research may use more open ended behavioral responses and/or undertake a purely qualitative study to unearth behavioral patterns prevalent among public procurement officers. Further, this study measured behaviour during a single trip. The complexity of attitudes and behavioral patterns may have been complex than what a cross sectional study would allow.

## REFERENCES

- African Development Bank Group (2006). *Combating Corruption in Africa - Issues and Challenges*, Concept Note Paper for the 2006 Annual Meetings, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: Operations Policy & Review Department (OPRP).
- Aiken, L.S., & West, S.G. (1991), *Multiple Regression: Testing and Interpreting Interactions*, California: Sage.
- Andrus, B.C. (1969), *The infamous of Nuremberg*, London: Flavin.
- Bakunda, G (2009). Exploring Corporate Planning Behaviour in Africa: Competency Gaps and Implications for Management Development. In press.
- Bandura, A. (1971), Analysis of Modeling Processes. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Psychological modeling: Conflicting theories*, Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.
- Bandura, A., Jeffery, R. W., & Gajdos, E. (1975). Generalizing Change through Participant Modeling With Self-Directed Mastery. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 13, 141-152.
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behavior and development* (Vol. 1, pp. 45-103), New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Moral Disengagement. In I. W. Charny (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of genocide* (pp. 415-418), California, Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
- Bandura, A. (2002). Environmental Sustainability by Sociocognitive Deceleration of Population Growth. In Schmuck, P., & Schultz, W. (Eds.). *The psychology of sustainable development*, (pp. 209-238). Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic and Statistical Considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.

Bass, B. (1990), *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, New York: Free Press.

Billon, P. (2003). Buying Peace or Fuelling War: the Role of Corruption in Armed Conflicts. *Journal of International Development*, 15, (4), 413-26.

Caruana, A., Ewing, M.T., & Ramaseshan, B. (2001). Anomia and Deviant Behavior in Marketing: Some Preliminary Evidence. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 16, 322-88.

Chatman, J. A. (1989). Improving Interactional Organizational Research: A Model of Person-Organization Fit. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, (3), 333-349.

Cohen, D., & Nisbett, R. E. (1994). Self-Protection and the Culture of Honor: Explaining Southern Violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 551-567.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.

Uganda Country Procurement Assessment Report (2004)

Crotty, M. (1998), *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, California: Sage.

Field, A. (2005), *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS* (Second Edition), London: Sage.

Fiske, S. (2004), *Social Beings: A Core Motives Approach to Social Psychology*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Friedman, R.A., Tidd, S.T., Currall, S.C., & Tsai, J.C. (2000). What Goes Around Comes Around: The Impact of Personal Conflict Styles on Work Conflict and Stress. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 11, 32-55.

Gee, J. P. (1996), *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, London: Taylor & Francis.

Hodson, R. (1999). Organizational Anomie and Worker Consent. *Work and Occupations*, 26, 292-323.

Hyatt, D. E. & Ruddy, T. M. (1997). An Examination of the Relationship between Work Group Characteristics and Performance: Once More into the Breach. *Personnel Psychology*, 50, 553-585.

Hymel, S., Rocke-Henderson, N., & Bonanno, R. A. (2005). Moral Disengagement: A Framework for Understanding Bullying Among Adolescents. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 1-11.

Imukat (2008). Corruption-A Malady Which Has Broken All Barriers of Society. In Press.

Jehn, K.A. (1995). A Multi-Method Examination of the Benefits and Detriments of Intra-Group Conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 256-82.

Jensen, G. (2002). Institutional Anomie and Societal Variations in Crime: A Critical Appraisal. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 22, 45 – 74.

- Kant, I. (1787) Kritik der reinen Vernunft, In: Immanuel Kant: Gesammelte Schriften, Herausgegeben von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Erste Abteilung, 3, Berlin, 1911 (Hungarian trans. by Kis J. In: A tiszta ész kritikája, Budapest: Ictus Kiadó, 1995).
- Kelly, G. A. (1955), *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Volume I and II), New York: W. W. Norton.
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (1996). Applying Social Cognitive Theory to Career Counseling: An Introduction. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44, (4), 307-309.
- Low, M., Davey, H., & Hooper, K. (2008). Accounting Scandals, Ethical Dilemmas and Educational Challenges. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 19, 222-254.
- Lynn, P., & Lockwood, C. R. (1998). *The Accident Liability of Company Car Drivers* (Report no. 317). Crowthorne: Transport Research Laboratory.
- Lutz, W.D. (1987). Language, Appearance, and Reality: Doublespeak in 1984. In P.C. Boardroom, (Ed.). *The legacy of language – a tribute to Charlton Laird* (pp.103-119). Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Manrique de Lara, P., & Tacoronte, D. (2007). Investigating the Effects of Procedural Justice on Workplace Deviance. Do Employees' Perceptions of Conflicting Guidance Call the Tune? *International Journal of Manpower*, 28, 715-729.
- McAlister, A.L., Ama, E., Barroso, C., Peters, R.J., & Kelder, S. (2000). Promoting Tolerance and Moral Engagement through Peer Modeling. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 6, (4), 363-373.
- Merton, R. K. (1938), *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York: Free Press.
- Milgram, S. (1974), *Obedience to Authority*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Uganda National Integrity Survey (2006).
- Uganda National Public Procurement Integrity Survey (2002), Conducted under the auspices of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority and the Office of the Inspectorate of Government.
- Uganda National Public Procurement Integrity Survey (2006), Conducted under the auspices of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority and the Office of the Inspectorate of Government.
- Nee, V., & Ingram, P. (1998). Embeddedness and Beyond: Institutions, Exchange and Social Structure. In M., Brinton, & V., Nee, (Eds), *The New Institutionalism in Sociology*, (pp.19-45), New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Ntayi, J.M. (2005). Work Ethic, Locus of Control and Sales Force Task Performance. *Journal of African Business*, 6, (1-2), 155-176.
- Ntayi, J.M., Munene, J.C., & Eyaa, S. (2008). Selling Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Perceived Selling Task Difficulty And The Performance Of Accounts Relationship Managers: Evidence From Commercial Banks In Sub-Saharan Africa Using A Multi-Methods Triangulation Approach. *African Journal of Marketing*, 1, 1 – 33.
- Schein, E. (1980), *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Srole L. (1956). Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study. *Sociology Review*, 21, 709-16.

Stradling, S.G., Meadows, M.L., & Beatty, S. (1999), *Factors Affecting Car Use Choices*, Edinburgh: Transport Research Institute, Napier University.

Turner, J.C. (1990). Current Issues in Research on Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories. In N. Ellemers., R. Spears., & B. Doosje (Eds), *Social Identity: Context, Commitment, Content*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Wenzel, M. (2000). Justice and Identity: The Significance of Inclusion for Perceptions of Entitlement and the Justice Motive. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 157-76.