

## Effect of Leadership Style on Job-Related Tension and Psychological Sense of Community in Work Organizations: A Case Study of Four Organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study focused on the effect of leadership style on job-related tension and psychological sense of community in work organizations. The study made use of two hundred selected workers from four manufacturing organizations in Lagos state of Nigeria. Three instruments were used to generate data for the study namely Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), Job-related Tension (JT) and Psychological Sense of Community Questionnaire (PSCQ). Data collected was analyzed with t-test for independent groups and 2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Five hypotheses were tested and results shows that workers under democratic leadership style do not experience higher job-related tension than workers under autocratic leadership style. Also, workers under autocratic style of leadership do not experience higher sense of community than workers under democratic style of leadership. Moreover, result revealed that female workers do not experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic leadership style. Furthermore, no significant difference was found in the level of psychological sense of community of male and female workers under democratic style of leadership. Finally, sex status does not have any significant main effect on job-related tension. The results were discussed and recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.*

### Introduction

Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals (Omolayo, 2000), a process whereby one person exerts social influence over other members of the group (Bamigboye, 2000), a process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group of individuals in an effort towards goal achievement in given situations (Akanwa, 1997), and a relational concept involving both the influencing agent and the person being influenced (Eze, 1995). Effective leadership is the extent to which a leader continually and progressively leading and directing his/her followers to the agreed destination which is defined by the whole group (Omolayo, 2000).

Leadership style is the pattern of behaviors engaged in by the leader when dealing with employees. Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) identified three leadership styles which are autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Autocratic leadership style involve the leader making all the decisions, wielding absolute power, assigning tasks to members of the group and maintaining a master-servant relationship with members of the group. On the other hand, democratic leadership style involves the use of consultative approach, encourages group participation in decision making and maintaining a master-master relationship with group members. The laissez-faire leadership style involves non-interference policy, allows complete freedom to all workers and has no particular way of attaining goals. However, there is no one best style of leadership. The effectiveness of a particular style is dependent on the organizational situation (Omolayo, 2004).

Work stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the work (United States National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1999). Khan, Wolf, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) defines it in relation to two aspects of organizational stress namely role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict occurs when members of the role set expect different things from the focal person, and when internalized values, ethics or personal standard collide with other expectations. Role ambiguity, on the other hand, occurs when members of the role set fail to communicate to the focal person, the expectation they have or information needed to perform the role. People experience role ambiguity when they do not know what is expected of

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them. According to them, work stress is the feeling of tension, discomfort, uncertainty, indecisiveness and distress that a worker experiences as a result of the social and physical circumstances of the work setting. Leaders can reduce these stressors by providing direction and support for their employees (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998), and this makes style of leadership very important in organizations.

Community is a group of people who are usually interdependent, who participate in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both defined the community and are nurtured by it (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1985). Psychological sense of community is a feeling of belongingness, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Thus, the element in a community includes mutual interdependence among members, sense of belonging, connectedness, we-spirit, trust interactivity, common expectations, shared values and goals, and overlapping historical background. Psychological sense of community in work organization refers to the workers' appraisal and identification with the work groups or work networks.

Organization is an entity which is set up for a purpose. This purpose determines what it sets out to do, but it actually does and how it does it will be influenced by a number of internal and external forces such as environment and history of the organization. Eze (1995) defined organization as the human co-ordination of a number of persons or individuals in the service of mutual help for the achievement of common goals through the division of labor and functions, and through hierarchy of authority.

Smith (1998) asserts that if the task is highly structured and the leader has good relationship with the employees, effectiveness will be high on the part of the employees. His findings further revealed that democratic leaders take great care to involve all members of the team in discussion, and can work with a small but highly motivated team. Schwartz (1987) found a high submissiveness among workers in democratic organizations, but those in autocratic organizations expressed frustration and anger. Bales (1970) found two different categories of specialist in work groups. These are task specialist and social-emotional specialist. The task specialist is concerned with the achievement of the group goals while the social-emotional specialist is concerned with maintaining positive social relationship within the group and motivating the group members to accept the goals of the group. However, a good leader can combine the two roles (Roger & Roger, 1994). The two categories actually distinguished two different style of leadership namely autocratic and democratic. Lewin et al (1939) concluded that democratic style of leadership is the most effective, but Smith and Peterson (1988) pointed that the effectiveness of group leaders is dependent on the criterion which was being used to assess leadership. Thus, if leadership is assessed in terms of productivity, then autocratic style is most efficient but if the role is seen as maintaining good morale and a steady level of work, democratic style is effective. Absence of leadership style brings about lack of direction from the leader resulting in low morale and lack of interest in the work. Hayers (2000) found that workers who fell under pressure reported autocratic supervision on the part of their leaders. The leaders rarely allowed them to participate in the decision making. It was also reported that workers who were under stress also reported harsh supervision and control on the part of their leaders (Hayers, 2000).

The availability of social support, both on and off the job, is a crucial determinant of organizational stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Apparently, the presence of social support helps reduce the outcome of stress by serving buffer against stressful event that occur at work (Landsbergis, Schnall, Deitz, Friedman & Pickering, 1992). Gender role also affects job tension. In a study conducted by Netemeyer and Johnson (1995), women reported more symptoms of stress (such as feelings of depression and feelings of overwhelmed) than men. They further found that women experience greater role conflict between work and family than men. This is because women perform the majority of the household duties and child care responsibilities. Doherenwend and Doherenwend (1997) reported that women had higher rate of nervousness while men had consistently higher rate of personality disorder caused by stressors. Kreitner & Kinicki (1998) summarized the factors that have been found to contribute to stress at work to include role ambiguity, unpleasant work environment, lack of participation in decision making, conflict with other employees, and lack of support from co-workers.

Strong feeling of community increases the flow of information among workers (Bruffee, 1993; and Dede, 1996). Workers benefit from community membership by experiencing a greater sense of well-being and support (Walker, Wassermann & Wellman, 1994; and Wellman & Gillia, 1999). Royal and Rossi (1996) opined that sense of community is related to engagement in work activities. There is need for workers to have sense of connectedness which affect the workers' ability to cope. Lack of connectedness breeds loneliness, low self esteem, isolation, low achievement, low motivation and low productivity (Gibbs, 1995). Sense of belonging and the feeling of connectedness indicate the presence of trust relationship and togetherness among the workers (Preece, 2000). The extent to which a job gives an employee opportunity to interact with other co-workers enhances the sense of community at work (Camman, Fischman, Jenkins & Wesh, 1983), but the organizational climate which will pave way for such interaction is determined by the leadership style (Buckner, 1988). The finding of Adebayo (2000) revealed that female residents significantly scored higher on psychological sense of community than male residents. However, Buckner (1988) and Davidson and Cotter (1993) reported lack of predictive power of gender on psychological sense of community. Kreitner & Kinicki (1998) observed that lack of support from co-workers goes a long way to contribute to stress in organization which could hinder sense of belonging. Likewise, members of dissimilar groups who experiences trauma cannot feel a sense of connectedness (Ottenberg, 1987). Young and Erickson (1988) noted that workers who experience isolation at work are prone to increased vulnerability to traumatic stress disorders.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Workers under autocratic leadership style will experience higher job-related tension than workers under democratic leadership style.
2. Workers under democratic style of leadership will experience higher sense of community than workers under autocratic style of leadership.
3. Female workers will experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic style of leadership.
4. There will be a significant difference in the level of psychological sense of community between male and female workers under democratic leadership style.
5. There will be a significant main effect of sex status on job-related tension.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research Setting**

The study was carried out in four manufacturing organizations in Lagos State of Nigeria. The organizations are Patterson-Zochonis Industries Plc, Nigerian Bottling Plc, Nestle Nigeria Plc, and Cadbury Nigeria Plc.

### **Research Participants**

Participants were made up of two hundred randomly selected workers, comprising of one hundred male and one hundred female workers. They comprised of junior cadre workers such as clerical officers, machine operators, and the likes. Their age ranges between twenty and fifty-five years while their minimum educational qualification is the secondary school leaving certificate.

### **Research Variables**

Gender and leadership styles (autocratic and democratic) were the independent variables while the dependent variables were job-related tension and psychological sense of community.

## Research Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data from the selected participants for this study. The instruments are:

1. Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ) developed by Fleishman (1953) measures two leadership style in work organizations namely Democratic/Consideration/Person or employee-centred and Autocratic/Initiating structure/Task or work-centred. Its reliability coefficient as reported by Fleishman (1953) are 0.98 (Spearman Brown), 0.87 (Test-Retest) for democratic leadership style; and 0.78 (Spearman Brown), 0.75 (Test-Retest) for autocratic leadership style. Omolayo (2004) obtained a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.74 and 0.65 for democratic and autocratic leadership styles respectively. Concurrent validity coefficient of 0.142 for democratic style and 0.336 for autocratic style were obtained by Ejimofor (1987) while Omolayo (2004) reported a concurrent validity of 0.66 for the overall SBDQ instrument.
2. Job-related Tension (JT) developed by Khan et al (1964) assesses the nature, causes and consequences of two aspects of organizational stress namely role conflict and role ambiguity. Its coefficient of alpha reported by Sheridan and Vredenburg (1978) and Oseghare (1988) are 0.87 and 0.39 respectively. Concurrent validity coefficient of 0.51 and 0.46 were obtained by Sheridan and Vredenburg (1978) and Oseghare (1988) respectively.
3. Psychological Sense of Community Questionnaire (PSCQ) developed by Adesanya (2001) measures the workers' level of belongingness, level of identification and level of attraction. Its reliability coefficient are 0.91 (Test-Retest), 0.61 (Split-half), and 0.64 (Test-Retest) by Adesanya (2001), Amosu (2001) and Omolayo (2004) respectively. Adesanya (2001) obtained a construct validity coefficient of 0.72 while Omolayo (2004) reported a concurrent validity coefficient of 0.66 for the instrument.

## Statistical Methods

The t-test for independent groups and 2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data collected for this study.

## Results

The results of data analyses are presented below in table form.

**Hypothesis One:** Workers under autocratic leadership style will experience higher job-related tension than workers under democratic leadership style.

**Table 1: Summary table of t-test showing the level of job-related tension of workers under autocratic and democratic leadership styles**

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-obtained	t-critical	P
Autocratic style	82	40.07	10.80	198	0.59	1.96	>0.05 NS
Democratic style	118	39.95	10.71				

t (198) = 0.59, p>0.05

Source: Author's survey

Result shows that workers under autocratic leadership style do not experience higher job-related tension than workers under democratic leadership style. The first hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** Workers under democratic style of leadership will experience higher sense of community than workers under autocratic style of leadership.

**Table 2: Summary table of t-test showing the level of sense of community of workers under autocratic and democratic leadership styles**

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-obtained	t-critical	P
Autocratic style	82	51.48	9.05	198	0.13	1.96	>0.05 NS
Democratic style	118	51.64	9.36				

$t(198) = 0.13, p > 0.05$

Source: Author's Survey

From the above table, result indicates that workers under democratic style do not experience higher sense of community than workers under autocratic style. Therefore, hypothesis two is not accepted.

**Hypothesis Three:** Female workers will experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic style of leadership.

**Table 3: Summary table of t-test showing the level of job-related tension of male and female workers under autocratic leadership style**

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-obtained	t-critical	P
Male workers	42	40.71	9.98	80	0.18	2.00	>0.05 NS
Female workers	40	40.65	11.72				

$t(80) = 0.18, p > 0.05$

Source: Author's Survey

Result as shown in Table 3 revealed that female workers do not experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic leadership style. Hypothesis three is therefore not confirmed.

**Hypothesis Four:** There will be a significant difference in the level of psychological sense of community between male and female workers under democratic leadership style.

**Table 4: Summary table of t-test showing the level of psychological sense of community between male and female workers under democratic leadership style**

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-obtained	t-critical	p
Male workers	58	52.72	9.62	116	1.23	2.00	>0.05 NS
Female workers	60	50.60	9.06				

$t(116) = 1.23, p > 0.05$

Source: Author's survey

Result above shows a no significant difference in the level of psychological sense of community between male and female workers under democratic style of leadership. The fourth hypothesis is therefore not accepted.

**Hypothesis Five:** There will be a significant main effect of sex status on job-related tension.

**Table 5: ANOVA summary table showing the effect of sex status on job-related tension**

Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F-obtained	F-critical	<i>p</i>
Main effect	40.89	2	20.45	0.172	3.84	>0.05 NS
Sex	0.23	1	0.23	0.002		

F (1,196) = 0.002,  $p > 0.05$

Source: Author's survey

From Table 5 above, result shows that there is no main effect of sex on job-related tension. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

### Discussion

The result of this study revealed that workers under autocratic leadership style do not experience higher job-related tension than workers under democratic style. Style variation is associated with the degree of subordinate's participation in decision making process, delegation and consideration for their needs. Democratic leadership style is associated with sensitivity and caring while autocratic style is associated with callousness and lack of concern for subordinates' welfare. However, autocratic leaders differ on a single dimension, which is the degree to which they delegate decision making authority to their subordinates. However, it is the responsibility of the leaders to take great care of their subordinates, to involve them in discussion, to motivate them to build team performance, to make decision, and to guide and direct the workers. These responsibilities can be carried out by leaders irrespective of the style of leadership of the leader. It is to be noted that without direction and guidance, the subordinates can become ignorant of their work activities, and therefore go astray. This result supports the findings of Smith (1998).

Findings of this study showed that workers under democratic style of leadership do not experience higher sense of community than workers under autocratic style. This suggests that workers do have sense of belongingness, identification and attraction in their organizations irrespective of the leadership style in operation. The plausible explanation of this is that leaders are instructors who guides and directs the workers for optimum performance. Workers are aware that they can not perform in isolation; therefore they interact with one another for job efficiency, job effectiveness and improved performance.

Furthermore, result of this study revealed that female workers do not experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic leadership style. The plausible explanation of this is that sex status is no longer a criterion for job positions. This is because job and work activities in work organizations are no longer gender specific. Therefore, job-related tension does not discriminate the sex status of the occupants of job positions. This result contradicts Netemeyer, et al (1995) and Doherenwend and Doherenwend (1997).

Moreover, no significant difference was found in the level of psychological sense of community between male and female workers under democratic style of leadership. This suggests that gender lacks predictive power on psychological sense of community. It also suggests that both male and female workers have a high sense of belongingness and sense of responsibility under the democratic style of leadership. This finding is in line with the previous findings of Buckner (1988) and Davidson and Cotter (1993), but contradicts that of Adebayo (2000).

No significant main effect of sex status was found on job-related tension. This suggests that sex status does not cause job-related tension, but other factors such as task confusion, delayed promotion, the use of favoritism instead of merit, dismissal and retrenchment, demotion, harsh discipline, undeserved transfer and redeployment, among others may be responsible.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that workers under democratic leadership style do not experience higher job-related tension than workers under autocratic leadership style. Likewise, workers under autocratic style do not experience higher sense of community than workers under democratic style. Female workers do not experience higher job-related tension than male workers under autocratic style while no significant difference exist in the level of psychological sense of community of male and female workers under democratic style. Also, sex status does not have any significant main effect on job-related tension.

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