

## **Influence of Team Leadership and Team Commitment on Teamwork and Conscientiousness**

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**ABSTRACT** With the introduction of teams in organizational operations and its benefits, successes at the team levels are expected to transcend to same at the organizational level. However, this is not always the case. This necessitated this study that examined the hypothesized influences of team leadership, team commitment on teamwork and conscientiousness (otherwise known as organizational citizenship behaviour, OCB). Questionnaires were used to collect data from 250 participants drawn from 25 teams at a crude oil exploring firm based in Port – Harcourt, Nigeria. Results confirmed only one of the four tested hypotheses. Of the two subscales of OCBs (teamwork and conscientiousness), team leadership was found to influence only teamwork and team commitment was found to have little or no predictive value on organizational citizenship behaviour. Finally, we recommended that OCBs be encouraged and sustained among Nigerian employees through monetary reinforcements.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today's experts in organizational behaviour are giving more attention to the topics of team and citizenship behaviour. They have studied these topics by examining factors that influence the display of individual behaviour at the team and organizational level of analysis. Thus, successful organizations recognize that their competitive advantage in today's highly competitive global market is their employees. Managers also have come to accept the principle and practice that organizational development (OD) must begin with their personnel development. Employee development through team building and employment of self-managed teams has been found to be positively related to improved organizational productivity (Druskat and Wolf 1999).

Cognizance of the notion that employees are their competitive edges, contemporary organizations are taking much interest in employees' behaviour at workplace and implementing strategies aimed at improving organizational development through personnel development. Despite these attempts, most Nigerian employees exhibit little or no citizenship behaviour toward their employing organizations, by way of lack of commitment to work and increased absenteeism.

For this reason, it is not uncommon in contemporary Nigerian companies for employees to neglect company property in degenerating conditions, make unimpressive statement about their organizations, disclose confidential

information to rival competitors, liaise with external agents to defraud their employers. All these behaviours are detrimental to organizational growth and development.

As the quest for developing effective and result – oriented organizations increases, managers and employees rises, experts in organizational behaviour have shifted attention to the topics of team and citizenship behaviour at the team and organizational level of analysis. Today's managers are team players and facilitators and so teams afford management the effective and affective means to monitor and motivate employees. However, teams do not always work effectively, they have to be designed, controlled and reinforced for optimal functioning. That is where the concepts of leadership and commitment have implications.

Leadership behaviour, among other factors, no doubt influences employees' attitude to work, and team leadership style is one of the major factors that make or mar a team's success. A study by O'Connor (1972) revealed that companies earned higher net profits with effective leaders. It therefore holds that successful organizational behaviour is highly dependent on effective leadership.

Team commitment, which reflects an individual's psychological attachment/ identification and loyalty to a team, is another job related attitude likely to influence citizenship behaviour at the team and organizational level.

(This study is carried out under the notion

that variables that influence citizenship behaviour at the team level will act likewise at the organizational level and that findings at the team levels could be inferred to organizational levels).

Organizational citizenship behaviours have been described as individual behaviours that are discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized in the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promote effective functioning of an organization (Organ 1988). A distinguishing feature of OCB is that management cannot require or force employees to exhibit OCB, and employees cannot expect any formal rewards for these behaviours. However, as Organ (1997) noted, supervisors do regularly take into account, and reward OCB both directly and indirectly (e.g. by way of preferential treatment, performance ratings, promotion etc). It therefore, holds that OCBs are internally motivated arising from and sustained by an individual's intrinsic need for a sense of achievement, competence, belonging or affiliation.

It is important to note that OCBs have been categorized on the basis of common themes or dimensions, and they include: altruism or helping behaviour, conscientiousness, individual initiative, civil virtue (Podaskoff et al. 2000) and recently, teamwork, courtesy and team mindedness (Pearce and Herbig 2004). Some researchers (e.g. Organ and Ryan 1995) have also divided OCB into two groups: behaviour that is directed at individuals in the organization (OCBI) and behaviour that is concerned with helping the organization as a whole (OCBO).

Although investigators have conducted much research on the topic of OCBs with individuals as the target of examination (e.g. O'Bannon and Pearce 1999), little has been done on citizenship behaviour at the team level that subsequently leads to citizenship behaviour at the organizational level. Thus, this study will apart from other expositions basically examine team behaviours (Using the construct of team leadership and team commitment) and their influence on OCBs (teamwork and conscientiousness).

Some antecedent variables have been noted from previous studies to influence OCB; they include: Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership behaviour, role perception, fairness perception and individual dispositions. Shamir, Zakay, and Popper (1998) found that charismatic leader behaviour was positively related to the followers identification with, trust in leader, motivation, citizenship behaviour, identification with and attachment to workteam.

Other researchers have found that job context (Kerr and Jermier 1978), leader fairness (Farh et al. 1990; Williams et al. 2002), leader-subordinate relationship (Wayne and Green, 1993), traditional leadership style (Schake et al. 1993), situational leadership style, leaders basic motivation, leaders ability to influence followers expectation of job satisfaction, followers willingness and personality (Fieldler 1977; Hersey and Blanchard 1998) have significant positive influence on OCBs.

Though the potential relationship between leader behaviour and team level display of citizenship behaviour; has received less attention, George and Bettenhausen (1990) found that team leader's positive mood is positively related to team's pro-social behaviour. In another study Pearce and Herbig (2004) reported that team leader behaviour, team commitment and perceived team support, all had a positive effect on team citizenship behaviour (TCB) - Analogous to OCB, but at the team level.

Thus, from all indications, leadership characteristics influence citizenship behaviour at all levels of organizational functioning. Team commitment, the psychological attachment that members feel toward the team is analogous to organizational commitment. Earlier studies (e.g. Mayer and Schoorman (1992); Organ and Ryan (1995)) have reported that organizational commitment has a strong association with OCB. It therefore, holds that team members that are committed to team goals will display TCB and by extension OCB. Hence a positive relationship is expected between team commitment and OCB factors.

In view of the researched evidence drawn from review of related literature, the following hypotheses are to be examined:

- Team leader encouragement of teamwork will have a significant positive influence on teamwork.
- Team leader encouragement of teamwork will have a significant positive influence on conscientiousness.
- Team commitment will have a significant positive influence on teamwork
- Team commitment will have a significant positive influence on conscientiousness.

## METHOD

**Design:** This survey study adopted an ex-post-facto design. All responses were provided by team members from items on provided question-

naires. The independent variables are team leadership and team commitment. On the other hand, the dependent variables are teamwork and conscientiousness.

**Setting:** The study was carried out at an oil exploring and drilling company (Aker Maritime) based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The work force of the firm is divided into 48 teams. For example, we have the exploring teams, transport teams, quality control teams, sales teams, management teams etc. Some teams operate on shift bases. With a mean team size of 27.4 members (SD=8.6) and a range of 13-50, the teams' functions compliment one another.

**Participants:** Participants are 250 oil-drilling workers from 25 teams consisting of (190) 76% males and (60) 24% females, with a mean age of 35.5 years, 22-48 range and diverse but complimentary qualifications and job skills took part. The teams existed on either permanent or semi-permanent basis (i.e. members are transferred as the need for their specific skills are required by some other teams.) Majority of subjects have spent an average of four years either in the teams or organization.

**Instrument:** Questionnaires with four sections were used to collect data. Section A tapped measures on team members' rating of team leader behaviours that encouraged teamwork; section B measured team members commitment to team's goals; section C assessed team member's display of teamwork and section D assessed team member's exhibition of conscientious behaviour beneficial to their teams.

Scoring was based on Likert scaling technique (5-1 points) from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'.

Team leadership was measured with a 10-item Team Leadership Scale (TLS) developed by Afolabi (2004) with an alpha coefficient of .70 and test-retest reliability of .76. Team commitment was measured by a 10-item scale also developed by Afolabi (2004) reporting an alpha coefficient of .71. Teamwork was measured with a 10-item scale adapted from a 24-item questionnaire developed by Pearce and Herbig (2004) with a reported alpha

of .95 and a consistency reliability of .92. Level of conscientiousness was estimated by a revalidated version of a 12-item extracted from five-factor personality scale developed by McCrae and Costa (1999). The revalidated version by Afolabi (2004) reported a coefficient alpha value of .74. For this present study, a coefficient alpha value of .65 was established.

**Procedure:** A total of 260 questionnaires were given directly by hand to the 25 team leaders. An average of 10 questionnaires were administered to 10 randomly selected members of each of the 24 teams used for this study. Two hundred and fifty-four (254) questionnaires were returned and 250 were found useful for data analysis.

It took about a week to retrieve the questionnaires, because respondents were encouraged to fill them at their own convenience.

**Statistical Analysis:** Analyses of the data collected were subjected to the independent t-test measure for all the four hypotheses.

**RESULTS**

The results of the data analysis using independent t-test are shown on tables 1 to 4.

The first hypothesis which proposed that team leader encouragement of teamwork would have a significant influence on teamwork was confirmed with  $t(248) = 2.37, p < .05$ . The result is as shown on Table 1. This implied that teams with leaders that encourage teamwork would exhibit more teamwork.

The second hypothesis which stated that there would be a significant influence of team leader encouragement of teamwork on conscientiousness was not confirmed  $t(248) = 0.23, p > .05$ . This means that team leader encouragement of teamwork does not have a significant positive influence on exhibition of conscientiousness among team members. The result is shown on Table 2.

This result of the analysis of the third hypothesis that stated that there would be a significant influence of team commitment on teamwork was not confirmed. The result reads t

**Table 1: Independent t-test result showing the influence of team leader encouragement of teamwork teamwork.**

<i>Team leader encouragement of teamwork</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
High	191	44.81	5.67	248	2.37	< .05
Low	59	34.49	6.43			

**Table 2: t-test result showing the influence of team leader encouragement of teamwork on conscientiousness.**

<i>Team leader encouragement of teamwork</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
High	191	37.45	7.41	248	0.23	NS
Low	59	37.71	6.22			

**Table 3: t-test result showing the influence of team commitment on teamwork**

<i>Team Commitment</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
High	148	39.98	5.64	248	1.794	NS
Low	102	34.38	6.14			

**Table 4: Independent t-test result showing the influence of team commitment on conscientiousness**

<i>Team Commitment</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
High	148	41.64	7.09	248	1.90	NS
Low	102	37.37	7.23			

(248) = 1.80,  $P > .05$ , indicative that team members who reported high team commitment are not likely to exhibit teamwork. That is, they will not display behaviours that are beneficial to their teams or organizations. The result is shown on Table 3. With the results on Table 4,  $t(248) = 1.90$ ,  $p > .05$ , it shows that the fourth hypothesis which stated that there would be a significant influence of team commitment on conscientiousness was not confirmed.

## DISCUSSION

Of the four hypotheses generated and tested in this study, only one was supportive of previous findings on team interactions and citizenship behaviour. It therefore holds that other underlying social stimuli e.g. culture could be responsible for the disparity, against the backdrop that previous researches in this area of study were carried out in the Western cultures of Europe and America. Result of hypothesis one agrees with the works of Pearce and Herbig (2004), Cox (1994) which reported a positive effect of leader encouragement of teamwork on members display of team citizenship behaviour (TCB) and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This finding has serious implication for team leaders and managers in general. For them to sustain the exhibition of TCB or OCB, they must continue to encourage subordinates with all incentives at their disposal. The work of Kerr and Jermier (1978) also lent a support to the result of this hypothesis which demonstrated that leadership encouragement of teamwork and the actual exhibition of

teamwork by employees must take place in a conducive work environment. By this, we mean a work context that intrinsically motivates employees to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction.

The second hypothesis considered the influence of leader encouragement of teamwork on conscientiousness (another subdivision of OCB). Result was contrary to the earlier findings (e.g. Organ and Ryan 1995); Pearce and Herbig (2004) that reported team-leader behaviours encouraging teamwork as a positive predictor of conscientiousness. Our finding lends support to the opinion that conscientiousness, as a personality trait is developed over time and brought to work place. This implied that it takes more than leadership encouragement of teamwork to influence conscientious behaviours toward one's organization. According to the Five-factor personality trait theory (McCrae and Costa 1999), persons high on conscientiousness and agreeableness have been found to be more dependable, responsible, co-operative and achievement-oriented. These traits are more likely positive predictor variables for OCB, with little or no prompting by leadership factors. This finding also serves as a pointer to the fact that team-leader behaviours that positively influence one dimension of OCB (e.g. teamwork) may not necessarily have similar influence on other dimensions of OCB (i.e. altruism, courtesy, team mindedness, civic virtue or conscientiousness.)

The result of the third hypothesis also challenges previous findings. Whereas past studies indicated positive association between

team commitment and OCB (Mayer and Schoorman 1992; Organ and Ryan 1995) our finding indicates that team members who exhibit high commitment to teams' goals do not exhibit OCB (teamwork) at the organizational level. This is likely the case where teams are into competition instead of co-operation. Here, team members or employees carry out strictly only their designated portion of teamwork. This is especially the situation among the average Nigerian worker today where "nothing goes for nothing" bearing in mind that OCBs are not financially compensated for.

The fourth hypothesis, as in the second level credence to our previous argument/opinion that conscientiousness, as a dimension of OCB is more or less a by-product of personality trait. Based on these results, we posit that team leader behaviour that encourages teamwork and team commitment will not have a significant positive influence or predict TCB or OCB with the same subjects, within same organization and at the same period.

The gains of this study to organizational leaders and scholars cannot be overemphasized. Based on our findings, we recommend that management strategies aimed at improving teams' productivity, job satisfaction and members' exhibition of TCB and OCBs should among others:

- Train workforce on the dual (extrinsic and intrinsic) benefits of teamwork, TCB and OCB
- Develop and sustain fair and cordial relation between leaders and subordinates
- Professionally manage employees' perception of operational strategies and how these affect their career growth and development
- Establish and sustain employees' organizational sense of belonging by way of selling designated company shares to them
- Ensure that personality traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness are assessed in individuals before appointment as team leaders.

The outcome of the present study has serious implication for future researches. For example, though Organ (1988) originally defined OCBs as behaviours that are beneficial to organizations but not compensated for, we argue that compensation might after all be an important factor in the development and continual exhibition of OCB. We therefore suggest that future studies on team interactions in relations to OCB, especially among Nigerian employees should examine the possible influence of monetary and other compensation on OCB.

However, there were some limitations to this study. The first is that the study was limited to just one organization thereby limiting the generalizability of results thus obtained. Again, the independent variables were not manipulated, hence the choice of our research design with its likely setbacks. IN the contrary, it is hoped that the findings from this study would be found useful for future researches on how to modify and improve on the measurement of OCB and its predictor variables through team dynamics.

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