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Demographic Effects on the Sources of Guidance Used by Nigerian and UK Managers

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to determine the effects of demographic variables such as age, gender, organization size and organization ownership on the sources of managerial guidance most often used by managers from Nigeria and UK. The guidance sources included formal rules, unwritten rules, subordinates, specialists, co-workers, superior, own experience and widespread beliefs as to what is right. Data were collected from 288 Nigerian and 141 UK managers. UK managers reported relying most frequently on their own experience, Nigerian managers reported relying most strongly on formal rules. Hierarchical regressions showed that reliance on formal rules, on superiors, on unwritten rules and on subordinates were significantly related to demographic predictors. However, the demographic predictors of reliance on these sources differed between the two countries and these differences are interpreted in terms of differences in national culture.

Keywords Sources of Guidance, Demographics, Cross Cultural Differences, Nigerian Managers, British Managers

I. Introduction

There are conflicting positions in the management literature concerning the relationship between culture and management practices. Some researchers have focused on national differences in styles of management, while others have been concerned with demographic effects occurring within single nations. Only rarely have both sources of variance been considered together.

The central element in any manager's effectiveness is the ability to influence how events are treated, and thereby shape the occurrences of future events. In handling work events, managers operate within a context of alternative sources of guidance, many of which extend beyond the individual (Peterson & Smith, 2000; Smith & Peterson, 1988). Early studies using this perspective have explored reported reliance by managers in USA, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Britain on a variety of possible sources of guidance (Peterson et al. 1990; Peterson et al. 1996; Smith, Peterson & Wang, 1996). More recently, a larger scale survey was completed across 53 nations (Smith, Peterson, Schwartz et al., 2002) showing wide differences in the sources of guidance that were most favoured. The present study draws upon selected data from this survey. The eight sources specified in the survey were selected on the basis of prior literature (Peterson & Smith, 2000) and of the expectation that they would be among the most frequent sources in a wide variety of cultural contents.

The aim of this study is to test whether the demographic variables that predict the typical sources of guidance on which managers rely vary between cultures. The basic model underpinning demography theory is due to Pfeffer (1983), who proposed that demographic variables have an important causal influence on intervening processes, which in turn affect a variety of organizational outcomes.

The influence of demographic effects can vary across nations because population and socio-cultural patterns vary. This variation may be especially relevant to the use of demography theory to compare British and Nigerian managers. Beside obvious differences in population attributes, differences in management practices and organizational characteristics and processes may further affect the link between group demography and organizational outcomes.

II. Review of Literature

This study draws on the categorization theory of Tsui et al., (1992) and Pelled, Xin & Weiss (2001), who proposed that people have a natural tendency to classify themselves and others into abstract social categories based on demographic attributes. Researchers have noted an especially strong tendency to use both physically perceptible and culturally meaningful characteristics (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Recent evidence has shown the importance of the demographic composition of management teams for a variety of phenomena including strategic change (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992) and organizational effectiveness (Mitchels&Hambrick, 1992; Murray, 1989).

Studies from Anglo Nations: Weirsema & Bird (1993) found demographics to be significant predictors of turnover in top management teams in both Japan and U.S. This study illustrates the way in which demographic effects may vary when applied to new cultural contexts. The four characteristics of team members that Wiersema & Bird (1993) included in their study were age, organizational tenure, team tenure and the prestige of the university attended. These are variables likely to have an important causal influence on social dynamics (Pfeffer, 1983). Ryder (1965) posited that age is important because it influences a person's background and personal experience outside the employing organization. Long tenure is an indicator of experience in an organization that is likely to influence top management team process, which may in turn affect their level of performance. This

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results in part from similar backgrounds and experience gained from tenure within the organization (Allen & Cohen, 1969). Organizational tenure thus provides a frame of reference within which managers operate. Homogeneity in organizational tenure is likely to lead to a similar interpretation of events (Allen & Cohen, 1969).

Davidmann (1995) found that the style of management relates to the size of the organization. Nadler & Tushman (1988) also posited that size is an important attribute that shapes behaviours and decisions, while Park & Luo (2001) reported that size affects a firm's capability to handle the task environment. They also posited that managers in large organizations are less inclined to adopt participative managerial attitudes, while those in smaller organizations are more flexible in decision-making. In general, size is reported to affect organizational culture, ownership structure, and agency relationships (Aldrich, 1979). However, Orpen (1994) found that work attitudes and performance of Australian managers in the private and public sectors were unaffected by the size, shape, reward structure and climate of their organizations. Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse & Myers (1998) studied large samples of managers in Australian public service and in the UK National Health Service and found no significant gender differences in leadership characteristics. However, job and organizational tenure as well as senior management experience did affect leadership philosophy. Elloy, Everett and Flynn (1995) showed that personal variables were less significant than situational and outcome variables as predictors of job involvement. Of the personal or demographic variables studied, only gender showed a significant correlation with job involvement.

Nigerian Studies. The studies cited above were almost all conducted within Anglo cultures such as USA, UK and Australia. We next consider whether studies from Nigeria have provided similar indications. Mogaji (1997) found that demographic and background factors were significantly but not strongly related to organizational commitment and the job involvement of Nigerian managers. Akin-Ogundeji (1987) interviewed personnel and training managers in Nigerian manufacturing companies and reported that demographic background influenced training practices and issues.

Eze (1988b) assessed the relative decision-making strengths of Nigerian managers. The sample included 165 managers selected from foreign-owned companies, indigenous enterprises and the public sector. Using a locally developed questionnaire, he found that participation in decision-making by Nigerians decreased from the public sector through indigenous to the foreign-owned sector, showing that ownership, belongingness and commitment is higher in the private sector than in the public sector. However, this may be due to the extrinsic motivations of Nigerians, who value material wealth more than any other thing. He contends that the value attached to higher wages, incentives and tighter organizational control in the private sector has more effect in sustaining a sense of belongingness, commitment and ownership in Nigerian managers than does participation in decision-making.

Mogaji (1994) investigated the effects of ethnocultural factors and organization ownership on decision-making among 10 Ibo and 10 Yoruba managers. The ethnocultural factor was measured by Eze's (1978) Ethnic Group Affiliation Need Index (EGANI) while the author's own questionnaire was used to measure decision-making ability. The results showed that the Yorubas had higher ethnic affiliation, while the Ibos scored higher on decision-making. The group affiliation scores of the Yoruba managers increased from private to public organizations. Analyzing the test scores with a 2x2 factorial design, it was found that group affiliation was not significantly influenced by the ethnocultural factor, organization type or by the interaction of the two variables. In relation to decision-making, the influence of organization type was found to be significant. A further analysis showed that there is a difference between the private and public organizations among the Ibos.

In a further Nigerian study, Eze (1988a) collected data from 72 managers from the foreign-owned private sector and 30 managers from the indigenous private sector. They were asked to rate statements and concepts often used by Nigerian managers and leaders in both private and public sectors during discussions and interviews. The results indicated that Nigerian leadership is predominantly authoritarian. This sheds great light on managerial assumptions and beliefs in Nigeria. According to the author, the two sectors included in this study, are known to provide more effective leadership than the public sector. However, he recommended the inclusion of the public sector in a future study. According to him, further analyses of demographic variables like age, gender, tenure, ethnic group and their effects on leadership in Nigeria are required.

We selected four of the basic demographic variables that are most relevant to organizational behaviour for inclusion in this analysis: age, gender, organization size and organization ownership. Among other possible demographic variables that have been included in prior studies, tenure is typically found to be correlated with age, and ethnicity has very different implications in Nigeria and UK.

Hypothesis There will be significant influence of age, gender, organization size and organization ownership on the sources of managerial guidance used by UK and Nigerian managers.

III. Method

The questionnaire measuring leader event management focuses upon eight work events that were selected as likely to occur from time to time within the work of almost any manager in almost any type of organization. The events were described to respondents in the following way:

Appointing a new subordinate in your department.

When one of your subordinates is doing consistently good work.

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When one of your subordinates is doing consistently poor work.

When some of the machinery or equipment in your department seems to need replacement.

When another department does not provide the resources or support that you require.

When there are differing opinions within your department.

When you see the need to introduce new work procedures into your department.

When the time comes to evaluate the success of new work procedures.

Respondents were asked to indicate on five-point rating scales for each of these events, how much they relied on each of eight sources of guidance. These were: one's own experience and training, superiors, others at the same level as oneself, subordinates, specialists, formal rules and procedures, informal rules about 'how things are usually done around here', and 'beliefs which are widespread in my country as to what is right'. Data for a given event from respondents who indicated that they had not experienced that event recently were discarded. There were further questions concerning respondents' demographic circumstances.

Respondents were middle-level managers, working in a wide variety of organizations. Each manager's handling of the eight events was treated as an independent sampling of preferred ways of handling events. A mean score was therefore computed across all eight events for each sources of guidance. Cronbach alpha scores showed high consistency across events in all countries within the overall sample (Smith, Peterson, Schwartz et al., 2002). Scores derived from Likert-type rating scales are vulnerable to the possibility of individual and cultural differences in questionnaire response bias. Estimates of response bias were therefore computed for each individual and for each nation by averaging the reported reliance on all sources of guidance across all events. Samples were not closely matched on some demographic criteria. The present study therefore reports separate analyses for each country. Individual response bias was controlled. The relation between demographic criteria and reliance on guidance sources is the focus of this analysis.

IV. Results

The means in Table 1 indicate that relative to UK, Nigeria managers report stronger reliance on formal rules and widespread beliefs, while UK managers report stronger reliance on their own experience and training. The samples were relatively similar in terms of age, gender and proportion working in government organizations. However, there were substantially more managers working in multinational organizations in the UK sample.

Each of the remaining tables below shows the results of two stepwise regressions, one for each nation, and includes only those variables that entered the regression equation at $p<.05$. Significant effects were obtained for reliance on four of the eight sources of guidance.

Table 1. Adjusted Means with Standard Deviations

	UK	Nigeria
N of respondents	**141**	**288**
Mean age	**39.1**	**38.1**
% Male	**77**	**69**
% in government organizations	**24**	**27**
% in multinationals	**42**	**21**
Reliance on formal rules	**.18 (.72)**	**.45 (.52)**
Reliance on unwritten rules	**-.07 (.69)**	**-.11 (.51)**
Reliance on subordinates	**-.06 (.58)**	**-.13 (.46)**
Reliance on specialists	**-.55 (.59)**	**-25 (.50)**
Reliance on co-workers	**-.30 (.62)**	**-.12 (.37)**
Reliance on superior	**.40 (.68)**	**.21 (.48)**
Reliance on own experience and training	**.98 (.60)**	**.19 (.54)**
Reliance on beliefs that are widespread in my nation as to what is right	**-.64 (.76)**	**-.27 (.70)**

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue II, February 2025

Table 2 shows that reliance of UK managers on subordinates was significantly greater for men. Among Nigerian managers however, reliance on subordinates was stronger among women and among those employed by the government or by multinationals.

Table 2. Relationship of Demographics to Reliance on Subordinates

Country	Predictor	R Square	Beta	Sig.
UK	**Male**	**.030**	**.175**	**p<.05**
Nigeria	**Male**	**.026**	**-.151**	**p<.01**
	Government owned	**.048**	**.193**	**p<.01**
	Multinational owned	**.065**	**.137**	**p<.05**

Table 3 shows that reliance on formal rules was stronger in government-owned organizations in the UK and among younger managers in Nigeria.

Table 3. Relationship of Demographics to Reliance on Formal Rules

Country	Predictor	R Square	Beta	Sig.
UK	**Government-owned**	**.037**	**.192**	**p<.05**
Nigeria	**Age**	**.049**	**-.222**	**p<.001**

Table 4 shows that the reliance on superiors was higher in multinationals within UK and among male managers in Nigeria.

Table 4. Relationship of Demographics to Reliance on Superiors

Country	Predictor	R Square	Beta	Sig.
UK	**Multinational ownership**	**.310**	**.175**	**p<.05**
Nigeria	**Male**	**.018**	**.134**	**p<.05**

Table 5 shows that women managers in Nigeria relied more on unwritten rules, but no effects were detected in the UK

Table 5. Relationship of Demographics to Reliance on Unwritten Rules

Country	Predictor	R Square	Beta	Sig.
Nigeria	**Male**	**.016**	**-.126**	**p<.05**

V. Discussion

The results support the hypothesis: there are clear differences between the two samples in the association between demographic indicators and reliance on various guidance sources. Organization size showed no significant effects in either sample, perhaps because respondents are not always clear as to the size of the organization in which they work. In the case of the UK, men were more likely to rely on their subordinates than women, those working for government organizations relied more on rules and those working for multinationals relied more on their superiors. Age was not a significant predictor. In the more hierarchical context of Nigeria, younger managers relied more on formal rules. Gender also had more marked effects in Nigeria, with men relying more on their superiors but women relying on unwritten rules and subordinates. Reliance on subordinates was higher in government-owned and multinational organizations, which implies that private firms were the most hierarchical.

These contrasts reflect the different circumstances of UK and Nigeria. In the UK, the personal attributes of age and gender were less salient, at least within the somewhat smaller UK sample.The guidance sources that managers relied upon were more dependent on the type of organizations in which they worked. In the more hierarchical context of Nigeria, age and gender were clearly more significant. Organization type was also important, but the effect of working in a multinational organization differed between the two samples. Multinationals in the UK are most typically owned by nations that are somewhat more hierarchical, so that managers in UK multinationals would rely more on superiors. Multinationals in Nigeria are typically owned by nations that are less hierarchical than Nigeria, so that managers in Nigerian multinationals are more participative.

VI. Conclusions

The results indicate that demographic effects on managerial behavior can only be meaningfully interpreted within the broader cultural contexts in which they occur. The results also underline the importance of controlling for demographic variance when making comparisons between managerial behaviour in different nations.

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue II, February 2025

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