Self Determination and Employee Innovative Behaviour in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between Self Determination and Employee Innovative Behaviour. Using Cross Sectional Survey design, a sample size of 310 employees from the Telecommunication Industry in the South-South zone of Nigeria was used as respondents. The results drawn from the use of Spearman Rank Order Correlation showed that Self Determination had a significant positive relationship with idea generation and idea development, but weak significant relationship with idea implementation. This result suggest that an empowered employee with autonomy to alter work processes positively will no doubt lend his competence and skills to promoting new ideas in work organization as was observed in the telecommunication sector. Keywords: Self-determination, idea generation, idea development, idea implementation

1. Introduction
In today’s turbulent business environment, all organizations are inevitably facing demands for both radical and incremental change. Moreover, globalization and increasing competition have however reinforced organizations need to constantly learn about new practices, procedures and technologies. In order to be able to cope with this continuous change, organization must design strategies to be innovative (Burgelman et al., 2004; Dasgupta & Gupta, 2009). Thus, the innovative behavior of employees is considered to represent an important competitive advantage for organizations,(Beckman & Barry, 2007). Through empowerment, organizations allow employees to assume several roles and responsibilities and thus exert a greater influence at work while enjoying increased autonomy (Pare & Tremblay, 2007). Task involvement through empowerment increases a greater sense of support and intrinsic motivation and provides positive work attitudes.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Self-Determination
Self-determination is an individual's sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Self-determination reflects autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes; examples are making business decisions about work methods, pace, and effort (Bell & straw, 1989, Spector, 1986). Goals that are selected through self-determination are well-internalized and autonomous (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). According to Ryan et al, (2008), one cannot be following one's true self and not be autonomous. Self-determination encompasses employees' sense of control over how their work is done. Staples (1990) argued that empowerment deals with the efforts of individuals and groups to increase their control. Deci, Connell and Ryan (1989) describe this as being able to initiate and regulate personal behavior. In other words, employees with self-determination have some control over what they will do, how much effort they will put in, and when they will start and stop Spector, (1986).

Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) is one of the most widely applied theories of intrinsic motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Sheldon et al, 2003) self-determination theory seeks to explain what happens when people pursue a task or innovation with energy and devotion, in situations where there are no external rewards in operation. According to SDT, the "key to understanding intrinsic motivation is the person's cognitive evaluation of the rewards, pressures, and constraints within the (work) environment" (Sheldon et al, 2003). The crux of creating intrinsic motivation according to SDT is the experience of autonomy - a sense of volition that one's behavior is self-chosen or, "literally, self-authored or endorsed" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This experience 'of autonomy can be generated by job characteristics, such as having control over aspects of one's work or increased latitude for decisions, but it is often most powerfully produced when people perceive that the work goals and objectives they are pursuing reflects their own deeply-held values and enduring interests (Sheldon & House-Marko, 2001; Sheldon et al, 2003).

Drawings in part on earlier work by deCharm (1968), Deci and his colleagues have argued that individuals, because of their desire for certainty, are like actors seeking to exercise and validate a sense of control
over their external environments. As a result, they are likely to enjoy, prefer, and persist at activities that provide them with opportunities to make choices, to control their own outcomes, and to determine their own fates (Condry & Chambers, 1978; Deci & Ryan, 2003; Robbins & Wilson, 2003; Lepper, 2006). Conversely, the absence of choice and control has been hypothesized and shown to produce a variety of detrimental effects on intrinsic motivation, life satisfaction, and health status Koestner, & Kaufman, 2000.

In a class example, Zuckerman et al. (1978) found that college students who were given choices over which puzzles to solve and how much time to allocate to solving each puzzle were more intrinsically motivated during a subsequent period than those who were not given such choices. In a more organizational context, various psychologists and designers (Averill, 1993; Gifford, 1998; Barnes, 2002) have found that the provision of choice in the physical work environment (e.g. the ability to choose office lighting or stop environmental noise) can lead to desirable outcomes such as improved mood and job performance.

The idea that choice confers personal agency and control to the chooser, and is thus intrinsically motivating, can be traced back to early psychological research on choice and self-determination. The American psychologist Richard, (1978) postulated, "looking at both sides of the coin, we may hypothesize that when a man perceive his behavior as stemming from his own choice, he will cherish that behavior and its result; when he perceives his behavior as stemming from the dictates of external forces, that behavior and its results, although identical in other respects to behavior of his own choosing, will be devalued". Repeatedly, across many domains of enquiry, other psychologists have also contended that the provision of choice will increase an individual’s sense of personal control (Lefcourt, 1973; Rotter, 1966; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

2.2. Employee Innovative behavior

According to Scott & Bruce, (1994) employee innovative behaviour in the workplace has three parts. First, the employee identifies a problem and comes up with new solutions in other words they generate new ideas. Second, the individual seeks ways to promote her or his solutions and ideas, and builds legitimacy and support both inside and outside the organization that is, they try to develop the idea. Third, the employee makes the idea or solution concrete by producing a prototype or model of innovation that can be experienced, applied and implemented within a work role, a group, or the organization as a whole (Kanter, 1983). As such, innovative work behavior encompasses all three parts ranging from when an employee recognizes a problem for which he or she generates new (novel ideas) to when the employee or individual work to develop or promote and build support for them and finally produces by implementing such ideas for the benefit of the organizations or parts within it.

The individual is the ultimate source of any new idea (Redmond et al, 1993) and provide the foundation for organizational innovation (Shalley and Gilson, 2004). Hence, theoretically, the innovative performance of employees provides the raw material needed for organizational innovation (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Innovative employees are those who tend to identify opportunities for new products. They may find new uses for existing methods or equipment, or generate novel but operable work related ideas. These people not only are more likely to come up with creative solutions to problems and champion ideas to others, but also develop adequate plans for the implementation of new ideas. As Shalley and Gilson (2004) suggest, innovative employees produce novel and useful ideas about organizational products, practices, or procedures. Besides, these people might create a spillover effect by serving as role models to the rest of the organization. Shalley and Gilson (2004) stated that innovative employees' new ideas are transferable to other employees in the organization for their own use and development. Consequently, such innovativeness at the individual level, through idea generation and implementation, is likely to lead to the development of innovative products at the organizational level.

Due to their creative abilities, innovative employees can adjust remarkably to any situation and use what they have at hand to reach their goals. Their qualities often consist of curiosity, wonder, interest in how things work, openness to experience and fluency of thinking (Csikszentmihaly, 1996), flexibility, originality, tolerance of ambiguity and interest in divergent (open-ended) and convergent thinking (Guilford, 1959). However, recent studies even suggest that when faced with uncertainty, many individuals hold a subtle bias against the proposition of creative ideas (Mueller, Melwani & Goncalo, 2011).

2.3. Self-Determination and Employee Innovative Behavior

Employees possessing innovative cognitive abilities work best in environments that allows risk taking, autonomy and freedom to deviate from the status quo (Kirton, 1990). Research has also found that having freedom to decide what to do and how to do one's work, a sense of control over one's work and ideas, and freedom from organizational or work constraints all enhances individual capacity for innovative behaviors (Amabile, 1988). Similarly, people who possess great intrinsic motivation at work are those who need challenges, do work that are meaningful and have the freedom from external constraints, which allows them to effectively unleash their innovative abilities
(Amabile, 1988). Sheldom (1995) demonstrated that personal autonomy is a core characteristic of innovative people, and Mumfort and Gustafson (1988) suggest that innovativeness might increase when organizations support autonomy.

One of the most important contextual factors likely to affect innovation is work design particularly the amount of job autonomy and job complexity. Many studies have linked job control to innovative outcomes (Amabile, 2000; Andrew & Gordon, 2007; Ekwall, 2006). Frese et al., (2004), found that personal initiatives was lower amongst Eastern Germans than Western Germans due to lower job autonomy and showed that initiative was enhanced with increase in these job characteristics. LePine and Van Dyne (1998) found that employees were more likely to constructively challenge the status quo to improve their work if they had greater self management. Axtell et al. (2001) found that autonomy was associated with a greater likelihood of making suggestions. Amabile and Gryskiewicz (2001) found that 74% of scientists mentioned autonomy as a major factor in successfully innovative incidents, while 48% reported a lack of autonomy as being a major constraint on unsuccessful incidents. An exception, however, is Frese et al. (1999) who found a slight negative association between job control/job complexities and having ideas for a suggestion scheme, they suggested that those with high control and complexity can change things themselves, and so may not need to participate in such a scheme.

Many have forwarded explanations for why autonomy is important to innovation. Andrews (1996) showed that autonomy assisted in utilizing innovative potential. Ekwall (2006) believed that autonomy contributed to an innovative climate which affected levels of innovation. Autonomy has been shown to increase felt responsibility (Frese et al., 1996; Andrews, 1996), and intrinsic motivation both of which affect innovation.

However, the effect of autonomy may not be as straightforward as it appears. Pelz and Andrew (1997) found that an individual’s level of autonomy interacted with the average level of autonomy within the group. In very loose settings, R&D scientists with more autonomy withdrew from stimulation from colleagues, which decreased their innovation. Conversely, in settings where the group on average had little autonomy, those few autonomous individuals were prevented from capitalizing on their innovativeness. Only in the middle range situations, was autonomy positively related to innovation. These studies suggest that there might be individual and organizational contingency factors that influence the effect of autonomy on innovative behavior.

The beneficial effects of choice have also been of central importance to creativity research. A large number of studies have demonstrated that innovativeness is enhanced when individuals are given autonomy and freedom in their work (Amabile, 1988; Amabile & Gitomer, 2004; Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 2005, Witt & Beorkrem, 2006). For instance, Amabile and Gitomer (2000) found that children who were given choices in which task materials to use when creating a collage produced collages that were assessed to be more creative than those produced by children given no choice. Similarly, work by Greenberg (1999) found that subjects who were given choice in selecting which problems to work on produced more innovative outputs. More recent studies by Zhou (1998) that considered multiple situational factors also found high task autonomy to be a necessary condition for innovative behaviour. Common to all of this research is the key idea that choice confers freedom on the innovator and thus enhances his or her intrinsic motivation on the task, a critical antecedent for innovative behavior (Amabile, 2002; Hennessey & Grossman, 2006).

According to this formulation then, managers who want to empower their employees by giving them a greater sense of control over their work should seriously consider offering all employees some form of choice whenever possible. However, recent research has begun to modify this view from a more cautious perspective.

Chua and Lyengar (2005) highlighted the potential pitfalls that managers may encounter when giving employees increased choices on task requiring innovativeness. Specifically, managers need to pay attention to which they give extensive options on jobs requiring innovativeness. If extensive options are given to employees with high innovative self-efficacy and a goal of creativity, one could potentially see the desired results. However, a potentially dangerous situation arises when a manager gives an employee with low innovative self-efficacy extensive choice when solving an innovative related problem. Not only will the employee probably not deliver an innovative output, he or she might be de-motivated and discouraged by the complexity involved in the expected positive results.

The major factor identified in the literature that impedes innovative behaviour is control (Amabile, 2008; Kanter, 1983). It could be control in decision making, control of information flow, or even perceived control in the form of reward systems that put too much emphasis on increasing extrinsic motivation. A culture that supports and encourages control will result in diminished creativity and innovation. The primary reason for this is that control negatively affects intrinsic motivation. According to Amabile (2000), expertise and innovative skill must be accompanied by intrinsic motivation to produce highly innovative behavior. However, this notion may not be as straightforward as it appears. Kimberly (1981) found that in stable and predictable environments, some degree of formalization and centralization of decision making might actually increase an organization’s ability to implement
innovations. These conceptualization places acceptable limitations on the relationship between the variables therefore the following hypothesized statements are made.

$H_0$: There is no significant relationship between self-determination and idea generation.
$H_1$: There is no significant relationship between self-determination and idea development.
$H_0$: There is no significant relationship between self-determination and idea implementation

3. Methods
This study collected data from members of the telecommunication industry in the South-South zone of Nigeria using cross sectional survey design. The population of the study is made up of employees in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. We used the employees in the telecommunication firms in the six state capitals of the South-South region as our accessible population. From the list of all the companies that are registered with the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), the researcher studied six telecommunication firms that are listed as primary service providers. The population figure was sourced from the telecommunication firm’s nominal role. A total of one thousand five hundred and seventy-five employees made up the total population. The sample size for this study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sample size determination table. Our sample size was three hundred and ten employees. However when we distributed our questionnaire, the completed and usable copies for the analysis was 209, representing 67.41% of respondents who genuinely participated in our study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire and indepth interview. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A comprised of demographic information such as gender, educational qualifications and managerial level. Section B elicited respondent’s views concerning the study variables. The questionnaire adopted the 5-point Likert Scale rating, where respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement or series of statement. The scale used for measuring self-determination was adapted from the work of Sprietzer (1995) and kirman and Rosen (1997). Employee Innovative Behaviour was measured using Bruce (2001) and Amabile (2002) Innovative Behaviour questionnaire (IBQ) which we adapted for our study. The IBQ measured idea Generation, Idea Development and Idea Implementation. The variables that were employed for this study were sourced from existing literature and had been pre-tested and validated in previous studies (Sprietzer, 1995; Kirman and Rosen, 1997; Bruce, 2001; Amabile, 2002). Therefore the variables had construct validity. Cronbach alpha was used to test for reliability in our study. Cronbach alpha is commonly used in research to test internal reliability. According to researchers (Bryman and Bell 2003; Nunally 1978; and Dana 2001) an alpha coefficient of 0.80 is generally accepted as a good level of internal reliability of the instrument, though an alpha level of 0.7 is also considered to be efficient. For test of reliability the following Cronbach Alpha Coefficients were obtained for our scales: Self-determination (0.853), Innovativeness (0.792). Hence all our variables had internal reliability.

Frequencies and percentages were used to classify our demographic data. Our variables were subjected to univariate and bivariate analysis. Inferential statistics using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the association between Self-determination and Employee Innovative behaviour.

4. Data analysis and Results
Frequencies and percentages were used to classify our demographic data. Our variables were subjected to univariate and bivariate analysis. Inferential statistics using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the association between Self-determination and Employee Innovative Behaviour. The results from our demographic data indicated that the minimum qualification of the respondents as proposed in the instrument is the NCE/OND and 47 (22.5%) of the respondents have these level of qualification. The next which is HND/B.Sc/BA had 67 (32.1%) of the respondents that were in those categories and the Masters degree level had 83 respondents which represents 39.7% of the sample. The highest of the qualification which is Ph.D had 12 (5.7%) of the respondents at that level of qualification. 111 respondents were males working in the telecommunication industry representing 53.1% of , while females made up the remaining 46.9% and were 98 respondents. The first level management of the organizations has 111 respondents which represent 63.6% of the sample subjects. The middle level management had 51 (24.4%) of the respondents that operates at that level and the top management level had 25 of the respondents which also represents 12% of sample. This indicates that most workers were highly educated in the Telecommunication industry in Nigeria. We obtained the following mean scores for each variables using univariate analysis. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 give the mean scores for each variable. Self-determination (SD) had four items on the scale, Idea Generation (IG) had 9 items. Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Self Determination Survey

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>SD 2</th>
<th>SD 3</th>
<th>SD 4</th>
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<td>Valid</td>
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<td>209</td>
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100
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<th>Source: SPSS COMPUTATION</th>
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**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Idea Generation (Employee Innovative Behaviour) Survey**

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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>-.320</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std Error of skewness</td>
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<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
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**Source: SPSS COMPUTATION**

**Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Idea Development (Employee Innovative Behaviour) Survey**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>2.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
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<td>.361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>-.967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std Error of skewness</td>
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<td>-.967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
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**Source: SPSS COMPUTATION**

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Idea Implementation (Employee Innovative Behaviour) survey**

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<tr>
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<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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**Source: SPSS COMPUTATION**

**Table 5. Association between Self-determination and Employee Innovative Behavior**
**Correlation is significant @ 0.01 Level (2-tailed)**

The results of the correlation as shown in the table 5 above are indicative of the nature of relationship between the examined variables. It shows that a significant positive relationship exist between self determination and employee innovative behavior. The r value of 0.414 (p < 0.01) shows that a strong positive relationship exists between self determination and idea generation. In the case of self determination and idea development, a very strong positive significant relationship showing r = 0.928 (P<0.01) in case of self determination and idea implementation showing r = 0.355 (p < 0.01). Shows that there is a weak positive relationship based on the outcomes, the null hypotheses stated are rejected.

Therefore we restated our hypotheses thus:

- **H01:** there is a significant positive relationship between Self-determination and Idea Generation.
- **H2:** there is a very strong significant positive relationship between Self-determination and Idea Development.
- **H3:** there is a weak significant positive relationship between Self-determination and Idea Implementation.

Employees require authority and operational space to be able to undertake assigned tasks effectively. A work climate that permits employee the enablement to determine themselves equally encourages their ability to generate ideas that are meaningful for the attainment of strategic goals. The results suggest strongly that self determination is required by employees as a way of promoting a creative work climate that ensures a competitive firm. The outcome of our analysis simply suggests the degree to which self determination component of psychological empowerment engenders support for the development of the ideas that are generated. An empowered employee with autonomy to alter work processes positively will no doubt lend his competence and skills to promoting new ideas in work organization as was observed in the telecommunication sector in Nigeria. The study results here have also emphasized the influence of a self determined employee in the overall implementation process of innovativeness effort. At this point, they have the authority or autonomy to reengineer work process that facilitates goals. If their contributions and inputs are leveraged to the extent that they seek knowledge and earn rewards, they will be willing to show commitment to assigned tasks that will ultimately result to attaining goals.

### 5. Discussions of Findings

Self Determination strongly relates with EIB. The discourse on self-determination a form of psychological empowerment no doubt is anchored on the need to expand the authority latitude of employee in terms of all relational, operational and administrative areas of work. The thinking here as expressed is that such increased authority scope will largely spur positive behavioral outcomes that will assist in the attainment of goals. Extant literature on autonomy is robust and is a pointer to the fact that understanding autonomy for employee is a workplace imperative though it may ultimately result to ceding of some managerial powers but has a positive implication on goal attainment observed Borins (2001).

Self determination as it were, is authoritatively adduced as a component of the empowerment construct (Gosha & Barttlett, 2002; Pettigrew, 2004; Davidson, 2007) which have empirically shown strong positive implication on employee behavior as it affects his input to work. Laschinger (2001) used a longitudinal predictive design to test a model linking changes in autonomy scope to changes in job satisfaction. Changes in autonomy scope had direct effect on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. Carless (2004) work also examined the relationship between work place autonomy and operational effectiveness. Their study outcomes have obviously reiterated autonomy as a major work place concern that should be seen as strategic to several other outcomes. Conger and Kanugo (1988), Porterfield (2002) had described self construct that describes how power is held and shared in organization. Judson (2003) had however believed that the managerial perspective to defining self determination is an attempt to equate empowerment exclusively with delegating or sharing decision making authority with frontline employees with various participative means. But the intent of the self determination construct in Conger and Kanugo (1988) work is to stimulate employee innate commitment which reflects the intellectual origins of the behavioral thoughts. Infact, Wei & Yuan (2010) strongly believed from the outcome of their empirical works that organizational innovative behaviour are typically affected by the leadership behavior that permits all inclusiveness and affective in style. In this vein the authors had recommended a comprehensive empirical insight into the transactional model of leadership and competitiveness. Drawing from these positions, in this study, the link between self-determination as a form of psychological empowerment has been emphasized.
Employees in the telecommunication sector in Nigeria are mindful of the operational and administrative authority space which is required to attract the cognitive balance for innovativeness in terms of idea generation and development. The findings of the study agrees with that of Bowen (2003) were he noted that empowerment practices through authority sharing constitutes the competitive capacity of service firms. However, the author noted that most empowerment schemes fails when they address only the power component and not necessarily giving attention to other areas like ability to create infrastructures that encourages knowledge seeking for improved work processes. Employees feeling an authority to alter or improve work process are an imperative cognitive feeling that is behaviorally asserted. The study volume in terms of self determination and idea development is positively very strong and significant. It simply reinforces the belief that while autonomy may have triggered the innovativeness mentally, they are interested in how organization provides resources and capabilities that will ensure idea development and eventual implementation.

Amabile (1983) found that people perform more creatively if they are motivated with self determining authority in hi-tech work places rather than promise of reward or threat of punishment. Giving employees high level of discretionary impetus especially as it affects work process and time ultimately facilitates their innovative behavior measured by idea generation, development and implementation. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) noted that conditions that allow an individual worker to initiate his own innovative process against formalized or prototype process creates a psychological fit that enrich the creative and innovative culture of organization. In other words, though it is initiated at the individual level, it is promoted to take an organization level practice. From the foregoing there is a strong indication for the intrinsic desire of employee to have autonomy latitude that empowers them to initiate the creative processes that permits innovative behavior. Empirical evidence here points to the fact that where employee freedom is constrained to the extent that there is little or no opportunity for self determination, innovative behavior is impliedly constrained.

6. Conclusions and Implications

We concluded from our study that:
1. Autonomy for innovative practices is found to be central to the innovative behaviour in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry
2. The study result showed a significant relationship between self determination and innovative behaviour in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry
3. Self determination provides the employee with the require authority latitude to alter work processes in a manner that will enhance task accomplishment. It eliminates operational rigidities that hinder the creative process in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry

We have noted from the on-set that this study will be significant in the extent to which it will help in expanding the frontiers of knowledge. In other words its theoretical implications are underscored especially in the area of further explanation on behavioral dynamics that should be underscored in order to stimulate a creative and innovative climate at work. The findings of the study essentially agree with extant literature. The study outcome serves to reinforce the thinking on the empowerment discourse in relation with its ability to motivate the employee towards achieving work place goals. A major theoretical underlay which the study has established is the affirmation of the psychological empowerment components. Manz & Sim (2002) had viewed psychological empowerment as a mere conceptual recast when viewed with job autonomy for employees. From our study, it tends to validate Conger and Kanungo (1990), Spreitzer (1995) and Bandura (1997). They have considered self determination as a form of psychological empowerment with substantial evidence.

This study from its conclusion provides managers with ideas for improving innovation and its management and control. The results presents a basis for ensuring a blend between extrinsic rewards and intrinsic elements as a means of instigating and sustaining employee commitment to innovative culture in organization especially as it is the case of the studied sector. The influence of work place autonomy for employees is equally underscored. Managers are often inclined to the thinking that the discourse on employee autonomy or self determination robs-off their managerial latitude therefore they are often akin to structural rigidities that are more assertive of power relationship. The employee willingness to be self determined is a strong factor establishing a creative climate that encourage robust innovative practices in the organization. Actively building an empowerment climate is a useful method for promoting creative performance even amongst managers.

References


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