

DIGITALES ARCHIV

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft
ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics

Dania, Omoyebagbe Rosaline; Inegbenebor, Anthony

Article

The types of fear experienced of prevalent in the Nigerian workplace

Provided in Cooperation with:

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Reference: Dania, Omoyebagbe Rosaline/Inegbenebor, Anthony (2019). The types of fear experienced of prevalent in the Nigerian workplace. In: Accounting and taxation review 3 (3), S. 91 - 104.

This Version is available at:
<http://hdl.handle.net/11159/4440>

Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics
Düsternbrooker Weg 120
24105 Kiel (Germany)
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)
<https://www.zbw.eu/econis-archiv/>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieses Dokument darf zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen. Sofern für das Dokument eine Open-Content-Lizenz verwendet wurde, so gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

<https://zbw.eu/econis-archiv/terms-of-use>

Terms of use:

This document may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes. You are not to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public. If the document is made available under a Creative Commons Licence you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the licence.

ISSN: 2635-2966 (Print), ISSN: 2635-2958 (Online).

©International Accounting and Taxation Research Group, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

Available online at <http://www.atreview.org>

Original Research Article

The Types of Fear Experienced or Prevalent in the Nigerian Workplace

Dania Omoyebagbe Rosaline & Inegbenebor Anthony

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin-City, Edo State, Nigeria.

*For correspondence, email: zaname_dania@yahoo.com

Received 09/09/2019

Accepted: 21/09/2019

Abstract

*Fear is a problem of people and its existence in the workplace could cause a lot of damage to the organisation because of failure to acknowledge its presence. This study seeks to determine the types of **fear experienced** by workers **or prevalent** in public and private Nigerian work environments. To accomplish the objectives of this study, a cross-sectional survey was deployed using questionnaires to collect data for the study. A purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of specific organisations in the identified sectors based on their size and selection of employees from these institutions was based on convenience sampling. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to employees of Tertiary Education, Health, Financial Institutions as well as the Civil Service (State and Federal) all in Benin City. Data obtained were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Also, descriptive statistical analysis, Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, and Multiple regression tests were conducted at 0.05 levels of significances. The results showed that: there are different types of fear prevalent in the workplace and the most common types are fear of failure, fear of having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships and fear of not meeting one's expected targets; Evidence from this study revealed that fear exists in the workplace and the types of fear prevalent in the workplace are different in the public and private sector organisations. In view of our findings, we recommend that organisations can deploy the use of trust, shared vision, effective leadership and delegation of authority to reduce fear and to create win-win dynamics throughout the organisation.*

Keywords: Fear, Workplace, Trust, Effective Leadership, Shared Vision

<p>Citation: Dania, O.R., & Inegbenebor, A. (2019). The types of fear experienced or prevalent in the Nigerian workplace. <i>Accounting and Taxation Review</i>, 3(3), 91-104</p>
--

INTRODUCTION

Organisations today are often somewhere on a continuum between trust and fear. While

some organisations consciously and diligently work towards building high trust environments where employees thrive, and

productivity is high, others are trapped in an environment of mistrust which dampen employee morale, discourage initiative and subsequently affect organisational performance (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998).

The increasing demand and pressure on employees to perform to meet set organisational goals and targets is resulting in organisational stress. While some employees are able to cope with it, others are not able to. Organisations that are able to provide the enabling environment for employees to manage organisational stress effectively are able to build trust and create employee-friendly environment. However, those organisations which have been unable to manage stress have engaged in behaviours that promote and enhance fear in such organisations (Cure, 2012).

According to Burke (1976), as cited in Suarez (1993), no passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. An organisation's worst enemy is not always the competitor, but sometimes it is the fear that lives within its own walls (Rieger, 2011). Although fear has been used as a tool to motivate staff in the workplace, the long-lasting negative effect of fear on employees far outweighs the motivation it produces (Thomas 2014).

Within organizations, people often have to make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent - whether to share or withhold their ideas, opinions, and concerns. The problem is that in many cases, they choose the safe response of silence, withholding input that could be valuable to others or thoughts that they wish they could express (Milliken & Morrison, 2003). Employees might be afraid of the outcome of speaking up, they might feel like nothing will change, they might simply feel intimidated with the subject matter that they wish to express, or they might feel intimidated by whom they would have to talk to. Also, if their co-workers are not speaking up, they might be inclined to shut

their mouths as well and this is what Milliken and Morrison, (2003) termed "collective silence".

Deming (1982) opined that in organizations where fear exists, scrap and breakage get hidden, numbers and schedules are misrepresented, and harmful products are forwarded to customers because the quality assurance inspector knows better than to stop the line.

Some organisations are losing their best hands, undergoing downsizing, engaging in layoff as well as losing their potential. People hardly connect these issues that organisations undergo to fear because they fail to see the connection between the organisations' real problems and fear. Goldsmith (2002:39) believes that "Fear affects productivity, communication, ability to creative and emotional wellbeing".

The seeming challenges and consequences of fear in organizations have sparked our interest in the study of fear in the Nigerian workplace. The focus of this work is on the types of fear in the workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fear in the workplace

According to Deming (1986), fear is a problem of people, and it exists in the workplace and causes a lot of damage to the organisation. Fear is pervasive and could affect certain aspects of the organisation such as commitment to the organisation, effectiveness, sense of belonging to the organisation, job satisfaction, absenteeism rates or performance indicators in the workplace. Griffiths (2012) opined that fear in the workplace starts by the people in the organisation not communicating openly and, this then becomes the prevailing culture in the organisation. With this culture of poor communication or absence of it, the grapevine thus becomes very strong and the normal communication processes in the organisation are rendered less effective.

Fear in the workplace is defined by Ryan and Oestreich (1991: 21) as; “feeling threatened by possible repercussions as a result of speaking up about work-related concerns. These feelings of threat can come from four sources: actual experience, stories about others’ experiences, assumptions and interpretations of others’ behaviour and negative, culturally based stereotypes about those with supervisory power”.

THEORIES OF FEAR

There have been different schools of thought on theories of fear used to explain fear in the workplace, as explained by Coelho and Purkis, (2009). The various theories propounded by different management scholars are discussed below.

Conditioning theory of fear

The classical conditioning model of specific phobias which started with research laboratories in animals originated in the second half of the 20th century. Watson and Rayner (1920) observed that they could teach (i.e., condition) an animal or a child to respond with fear to a harmless situation by repeatedly linking a harmless conditioned stimulus (CS) with a frightening unconditioned stimulus (US). This theory was later modified by Mowrer (1960) who suggested a theory of fear in which the development of avoidance is crucial to the persistence of conditioned anxiety by preserving the exposure to the CS and preventing the extinction of fear responses. The conditioning theory of fear assumed that fears are acquired and that the process of acquisition is a form of conditioning.

Vicarious/Informative Models

Pioneer work in vicarious learning was done by Bandura (1965, 1971, 1977) and in line with his findings, Rachman (1978) suggested vicarious conditioning as an important factor in phobia acquisition and added that information and instructions from parents and other family members influenced the acquisition of fear. Also important contributions to the role of

vicarious conditioning in phobia acquisition come from Mineka and Cook’s (1986) experiments where the duo assessed 22 rhesus monkeys that observed, on video, other monkeys of their species reacting with intense fear to relevant stimuli (snakes or artificial crocodiles) and irrelevant stimuli (flowers or artificial rabbits). The monkeys that watched the videos had no previous experience with any of the stimuli but the research confirmed that, whereas observer monkeys did not initially show fear to any of the stimuli, after 12 sessions they had acquired fear of evolutionarily relevant stimuli, but not of none evolutionarily relevant stimuli.

Cognitive Models

This theory was propounded by Thorpe and Salkovskis (1995) who considered that Seligman’s (1971) work relegated to second place the role of cognitions in phobias. Conditioning they opined could be conceptualized as a cognitive process, during which the participant learns that a determined event or stimulus precedes an aversive outcome. Fear from a cognitive perspective is related not only to a biological preparation or stimulus-response association but also to the attributions regarding the safety and danger of the stimulus, the perception of control over the situation and the attribution made about the bodily alarm warning sign that the stimulus brings forth (Arntz, Rauner, & Van Den Hout, 1995).

Types of Fear

According to Rieger (2011), fear surfaces quietly and subtly, it eats away the fabric of many organisations, kills enthusiasm, lowers energy and drive, and brings about failure. In companies, fear can take various forms: fear of not meeting a goal, of not getting a bonus, of losing decision rights and respect. These fears could induce employees and managers alike to protect themselves by building outwardly impenetrable barriers fortified by rules and

practices that benefit one group while harming other groups.

While Argyris (1986, 1990), Ryan and Oestreich, (1991, 1998) and Premeaux (2001) identified the fear of speaking up in the workplace, Lowe, and McBean (1989) point out the fear of providing information, fear of not knowing, fear of giving up control, and the fear of change which they adduce are pervasive in the workplace and could lead to negative behaviors. Ralston (1995) itemized the list of fears in the workplace to include fear of confronting authority, fear of reprisal, fear of being vulnerable, fear of appearing ineffective or powerless, fear of not being accepted, fear of alienating others, fear of looking incompetent, and fear of losing control.

Ryan and Oestreich (1991) described some common workplace fears as having one's credibility questioned, being left out of decision making, being criticized in front of others, not getting information necessary to succeed, having a key assignment given to someone else, having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships, getting stuck in a dead end job, not getting deserved recognition, not being seen as a team player, having suggestions ignored or misinterpreted as criticisms, receiving poor performance ratings and getting fired. Suarez (1996) developed a list of seven types of fears and they are; fear of reprisal or a poor appraisal, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of change, fear of speaking up, fear of not making a mark on one's "watch", and fear of new knowledge. In a similar vein Messina and Messina (2002) talked about the fear of taking risks, which they believe could lead to fears such as fear of rejection, fear of incompetence, fear of failure, and fear of hurting others. Finally, Wilson and Edmondson (1991) noted that most of the organizational fears experienced in the workplace are related to position, authority, power, and psychological and social factors of organizational life. For the purpose of this study, the following

common types of fear in organizations would be discussed.

Fear of reprisal or receiving poor appraisals

Reprisal is the act of getting revenge for a loss or injury or an act of retaliation in any form. It is also defined as an act of violent response to perceived injustice. Fear of reprisal is a fear that results when a leader or direct supervisor takes action against an employee who raises a concern and additionally, it is when many employees shy away from using the voice strategy to bring unjust acts to the awareness of their superiors for fear of reprisal from either the manager or the organization as a whole. This type of fear causes "please-the-boss," "look-good-at-any-cost," or "just-do-what-you're-told" behavior, at the expense of others, even customers (Lowe & McBean, 1989).

Fear of failure

Several authors have defined fear of failure in different ways. Morales-Gualdron and Roig (2005), Minniti and Nardone (2007), Langowitz and Minniti (2007) define the fear of failure as attitude to risk while Wagner and Stenberg (2004) describe fear of failure as an indicator of a high degree of risk aversion. According to Lowe and McBean (1989), fear of failure is tied to fear of reprisal because reprisal is usually an outcome of failure. Failure is one of the most common and damaging fears that many people struggle within the workplace, particularly in the banking sector as it pertains to the meeting of employee's expected target. Fear of failure is associated with lack of risk-taking and innovation. The focus here is on short term goals and because of the organization's desire to achieve these short term high targets, employees are constantly under pressure and threat to meet these set goals. This creates an atmosphere of tension and fear and this type of fear brings about job insecurity and unhealthy rivalry amongst employees. It also leads to distrust amongst superiors and their subordinates as most

times the blame of not meeting the set targets are put on the subordinates who may not necessarily get needed support and guidance from their bosses. They are also most times deprived of the opportunity of defending themselves. In the opinion of Atkinson, (1964), the propensity to avoid failure functions to counter and dampen the inclination to undertake achievement-oriented activities. Defensiveness, scepticism, and apathy are behaviours of people who are avoiding failure.

Fear of success

Buddhapriya (1999) defined fear of success as the definite intention to avoid success, because of the negative consequences that come from achieving success. With success come a lot of unknown enemies and a good number of people are afraid that when they become successful, it would lead to a hurtful relationship with their peers. Success could result in negative consequences such as jealousy, envy, higher expectations, and fear of failure following a promotion or being cold-shouldered as a "rate buster" (Suarez, 1993). With success could also come positive consequences such as the additional responsibilities that come with being successful. With success, comes a whole new set of expectations about how people will expect you to behave in your new position. When you succeed, people would look up to you for advice, leadership, as being a model of virtue and you will forever change how you see yourself. The fear comes from not wanting to fall short of the new expectations (Cole, 2014).

Fear of mathematics

Total Quality Leadership (TQL) is data-driven, and data are normally analyzed using quantitative methods and tools. Those who are afraid of mathematics in an organization would transfer this fear to the use of the tools and methods associated with TQL. This class of fear is also linked to fear of new knowledge and people who are afraid of mathematics would be found making sceptical remarks such as; "these

tools are good for my people, not for me," or "We do not have the time to learn all that" (Suarez, 1993).

Fear of Change

Organisational change, according to Hutchison (2001) consists of the processes that break down existing structures and create new ones such as new cultures, business strategies and new ways of working. In organizations, employees are afraid of change because of the dangers they believe change entails. Fear brings about resistance to change and the attitude that, "we have always done things this way, why do we have to change it now?" According to Eagle (1999), fear of the unknown is a strong reason that would make it difficult for employees to accept change and resistance to change arises out of the fact that people are usually content with what they are conversant with. Evans (2001) opined that people have a natural fear of change, and they feel a loss of control when change is mandated. Change may cause employees to fear that they are going to lose something and makes them feel that their power may be diminished. Change is seen as a threat by many to their well-valued beliefs or security (Suarez, 1993) and the uncertainty that comes with change can increase an individual's fear of making mistakes. Senge and Kaeufer (2000) agreed that change efforts could induce fear since it brings about changes in the status quo.

Fear of speaking up

Speaking up refers to voluntary efforts to raise an issue or concern to those in positions of higher authority (Adler-Milstein, Singer, & Toffel, 2011). It is common practice in organizations to find people afraid of speaking up and would often rather remain silent out of factors which are managerial, organizational or personal. The fear of speaking up could greatly influence the ability of people to describe things that are happening in their workplace correctly. According to Milliken and Morrison (2003) people within

organizations frequently have to make decisions about speaking up or remaining silent on challenging issues, concerns, their ideas or opinions. In many instances, they choose the safe harbour of silence, thereby withholding information that would be valuable to others and could bring about significant changes and improvement in the organisation because of fear of repercussions and management's tendency to kill the messenger (Suarez, 1993). According to Benson (1991:2), "we learn more from mistakes than from successes and when you have got people who are afraid to tell you they have made a mistake, you do not have a chance to learn". Managers must forgive mistakes and should provide a forum so that everyone can learn from them and share them with others

Fear of loss

This type of fear is driven by a prevalent sense of entitlement. According to Kahneman and Tversky (1979), when someone feels entitled to something, the pain of having to give up that entitlement is much more intense than the pleasure that would come from an incremental gain of the same size. The fear of loss is not just financial but could be fear of losing ownership over a particular area, losing creditability, self-esteem, loss of employment, demotion or having to give up a title or other bonuses and perks. People would go to great lengths to protect something they felt entitled to even if doing so was not in the best interest of the organization as a whole. As organizations become larger and more complex, fear of loss brings about bureaucracy, low morale, inefficiency and ultimately failure.

Fear of criticism

The fear of receiving negative criticism has been defined as feeling excessive and constant anxiety (Aydm, 2008; Leary, 1983; Weeks, Heimberg, & Rodebaugh, 2008) that one would be criticised in a negative and hostile way by others (Leary, 1983). The fear of being negatively assessed could

influence an individual's behaviour behaviors during the learning process and the fear of receiving negative criticism could lead to the several subsequent problems; such as, fear of failure (McKinney, 2003). An analysis of the literature by Boztaş and Sungur, (2001) and Durmuş, (2008) reveals that individuals who fear negative criticism avoid undertaking personal endeavours involving risk and as such would not want to take the risk of performing certain acts since they assume that they would be unable to bear what they perceive to be dangerous results of said acts (Boyer, 2006; Halstead & Taylor, 1996). Individual's expression of loss of self-esteem could influence co-workers and family relationships adversely and could also impact negatively on performance as individuals' tend to lose every sense of creativity and motivation.

Fear of taking risk

Employee risk taking according to Neves and Eisenberger (2014), is the eagerness by employees to withstand uncertainty and mistakes as they explore new ideas, promote unpopular positions, or tackle very challenging problems without obvious solutions, in order to boost the likelihood of success (Neves & Eisenberger, 2014). Fear in the workplace make people afraid to take risk because of the fear of messing up things and thus kills initiative and drive in employees which invariably affects productivity. It leads to a situation where employees work only in line with a particular performance standard and do not make any extra effort to surpass it, thus stifling innovation. Employees do not work to their full potential and often show resentment for work. The drive to take risks to do a good job is not there due to fear. This brings about inhibition of creativity where people work one day at a time without looking ahead into the future (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998).

Methodology

The study was carried out using a correlational research design owing to the inability to manipulate the independent variable of interest (Agbonifoh & Yomere, 1999). The data collection method used was the survey method with the aid of questionnaire because of the subjective nature of the study.

The population of interest for this study comprised of 59,618 employees of public and private sector organizations in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the organisations for this study. First, the sectors that are the major employers of labour in the service sector in Edo State are determined to be Tertiary Education, Health, Financial Institutions as well as the Civil Service (State and Federal). From the sectors of interest selected, a purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of specific organizations from the sectors based on their size, profitability and strength. The selection of employees from these institutions was based on convenience sampling due to the impossibility of getting a list of all the employees in these organisations. The organizations selected as primary units for the chosen sectors were, University of Benin, Benson Idahosa University, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Faith Mediplex, Federal Civil Service, State Civil Service and four of the Commercial

Banks in Benin City, (Zenith Bank, First Bank, Access Bank and UBA) and distribution of questionnaires among these organisations were on a non-proportional basis.

Sequel to the heterogeneity and geographical spread of the population of study and due to the fact that we adopted a convenience sampling method, we administered a total of 400 copies of the questionnaire. Workers consisting of employees drawn from both public and private service sectors in Benin City, Edo state made up the sample size for the study. Given that we were dealing with a finite population, Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size. Given a total population of 59,618, we derived a sample size of 397, but this was rounded up to 400 to compensate for non-response.

Types of fear experienced or prevalent in the Nigerian workplace

This section sought to find out the types of fear employees experienced and those that are dominant in the workplace. Employees were to tick any type of fear towards which they often had feelings of fear. Thirteen (13) items in the Questionnaire was used. Twelve (12) of the items had different types of fear listed, and the thirteenth (13th) item offered respondents the opportunity to list their own type of fear. The result shown in Table 1 shows the findings from the 345 respondents.

Table 1: Types of fear prevalent in the workplace

S/N	Types of Fear	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Fear of failure	162	47.0
2	Fear of having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships	152	44.1
3	Fear of not meeting one's expected targets	136	39.4
4	Fear of having one's credibility questioned	128	37.1
5	Fear of loss(status/privileges/entitlements)	120	34.8
6	Fear of reprisal or receiving poor appraisals	116	33.6
7	Fear of losing your job	113	32.8
8	Fear of being left out of decision making	74	21.5

S/N	Types of Fear	Frequency	Percent (%)
9	Fear of having key assignment given to someone else	70	20.3
10	Fear of speaking up	49	14.2
11	Fear of change	43	12.5
12	Fear of success	30	8.7

Note: The percentages were calculated over 345.

Source: *Researcher's Computation (2016)*

The order of prevalence of fear in the Nigerian workplace in both private and public organizations are fear of failure (47%); fear of having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships (44.1%); fear of not meeting one's expected targets (39.4%); fear of having one's credibility questioned (37.1%); fear of loss(status/privileges/entitlements) (34.8%); fear of reprisal or receiving poor appraisals (33.6%); fear of losing your job (32.8%); fear of being left out of decision making (21.5%); fear of having key assignment given to someone else (20.3%); fear of

speaking up (14.2%); fear of change (12.5%); and fear of success (8.7%). The thirteenth (13th) item which was an open ended question was not filled by any of the respondents.

Table 2 shows the number of type of fear experienced by employees in the Nigerian workplace in terms of frequency distribution for both public and private sectors. The aim was to find out the distribution of respondents by the number of the different types of fear.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of types of fear prevalent in the workplace

No of Type of Fear Experienced	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	68	19.7
1	59	17.1
2	38	11.0
3	31	9.0
4	28	8.0
5	33	9.6
6	33	9.6
7	15	4.4
8	13	3.8
9	7	2.0
10	7	2.0
11	2	0.6
12	11	3.2
Total	345	100

Source: *Researcher's computation (2016)*

The Table reveals that 19.7% of the respondents have not experienced any type of fear examined in this study. Also, 17.1%

of the respondents have experienced one (1) type of fear while 11.0% of the respondents have experienced two (2) different types of

fear. The results further reveal that only 3.2% of the respondents have experienced all the different types of fear in the Nigerian workplace.

Test of Hypothesis:

Ho₁: The types of fear prevalent in the public and private sectors are not significantly different.

Ha₁: The types of fear prevalent in the public and private sectors are significantly different.

Hypothesis one was aimed to find out if the type of fear that is prevalent in the public sector is the same as those that are prevalent in the private sector. The above hypothesis was tested using Chi-square. The result is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests for types of fear prevalent in organisations

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests for types of fear prevalent in organisations

Statement	Organisation Type				Both (N=345)	
	Public (N=189)		Private (N=156)			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Fear of failure	86	45.50	76	48.72	162	46.96
Fear of having disagreement that might lead to damaged relationships	86	45.50	66	42.31	152	44.06
Fear of not meeting one's expected targets	67	35.45	69	44.23	136	39.42
Fear of having one's credibility questioned	64	33.86	64	41.03	128	37.10
Fear of loss	59	31.22	61	39.10	120	34.78
Fear of reprisal or receiving poor appraisals	59	31.22	57	36.54	116	33.62
Fear of losing your job	61	32.28	52	33.33	113	32.75
Fear of being left out of decision making	51	26.98	23	14.74	74	21.45
Fear of having key assignment given to someone else	44	23.28	26	16.67	70	20.29
Fear of speaking up	30	15.87	19	12.18	49	14.20
Fear of change	28	14.81	15	9.62	43	12.46
Fear of success	25	13.23	5	3.21	30	8.70
Chi-Square Tests						
	Value		Df		Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)	
Pearson Chi-Square	25.792		11		0.007	
Likelihood Ratio	27.109		11		0.004	
N of Valid Cases	1193					

Source: *Researcher's computation* (2016)

***Note:** The percentages for Public, Private and Both were calculated over 189, 156 and 345 respectively

The Pearson Chi-Square, value calculated is 25.792 while the associated p-value is 0.007 and Degree of Freedom (DoF) is 11. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis otherwise we accept the null hypothesis. Given that the p-value of 0.007 is less than the chosen level of significance of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis which states that the types of fear prevalent in public and private sectors are not significantly different and accept the alternate hypothesis that the types of fear prevalent in public and private sector are significantly different.

FINDINGS

The results showed that: there are different types of fear prevalent in the workplace and the most common types are fear of failure, fear of having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships and fear of not meeting one's expected targets.

Discussion of findings

The study investigated employee fear in the workplace notably, amongst public and private sector organisations in Benin City. Based on analysis of data sourced from the field survey, it was discovered that not all the results are in full support of the study hypotheses. In this section, the findings of the study are discussed accordingly.

Firstly, the study found that the types of fear prevalent in the public sector are significantly different from that of the private sector. The prevalence of fear in the workplace is in tandem with earlier studies of the different types of fear that exists in the workplace (Argyris 1986, 1990, Buddhapriya 1999, Lowe & McBean 1989, Premeaux 2001, Ryan and Oestreich 1991, 1998, Suarez 1996). The types of fear that were more prevalent in the sampled private sector organisations are fear of failure, fear of losing one's credibility, fear of losing one's job and fear of poor appraisals; showing the emphasis on targets and integrity in the private sector. It also implies that the private sector is task-driven. In the

sampled public sector organisations, fear of having disagreements that might lead to damaged relationships, particularly among subordinates ranked highest in comparison to the private sector implying the sampled organisations are relationship-driven. This could be as a result of favouritism and the need to please the boss arising from being afraid of being left out of the in-group which forms the major tenet of the Leader-Member Exchange Theory. Members of the in-group get special attention from their bosses and get preferred rewards which the leader controls. This finding is similar to that of the Skills and Employment survey of 2012 where employees in the public sector were found to be more worried than their private sector counterparts about loss of influence over work. Following closely is fear of being left out of decision making, fear of having key assignment given to someone else, fear of speaking up, fear of change and fear of success. The fear of having key assignment given to someone else shows that the intrigues of internal politics could play out more in the public sector. Jobs could be assigned not based on competence but on having a good relationship with one's boss. Fear of job loss was higher in the private than in the public which negates the Skills and Employment survey of 2012 conducted for workers in the UK wherein fear of job loss was higher among public sector workers. This shows that the difference in environmental settings and workplace policies might have resulted in this difference. Also in the Skills and Employment survey (2012), fear of loss of status was higher in the public sector than in the private sector. This finding on the types of fear and its prevalence is quite interesting as it tends to portray the general belief in Nigeria that it is safer to work in the public sector than in the private sector due to fear of loss and security of job. It is also generally known that in the private sector there is emphasis on targets especially in the banks and our findings show that fear of not meeting ones' target was higher in the private sector than in the public sector.

Findings from the study also showed that of the 345 respondents, 68 respondents did not experience any type of fear while 277 which represents about 80% of the sample size experienced one type of fear or the other in the workplace (meaning at least 4 out of 5 persons experience fear in the workplace).

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

One of Deming's (1982) fourteen principles to quality management is to drive fear out of the workplace. This is owing to the fact that fear exists in the workplace and it prevents employees from achieving their maximum potential and giving their best to the organisation. Evidence from this study revealed that fear exists in the workplace even though; it is at a moderate level. Also, derivable from this study is that the types of fear prevalent in the workplace are different in the public and private sector organisations.

Nigerian organisations should determine what causes fear in the workplace as this would enable them to know how to tackle it and reduce any negative impact arising from it. Also Nigerian organisations should aim at engaging in practices that would enhance employee trust, loyalty confidence and commitment. Leaders should unlearn the act of leading with fear so as to enhance employee potential in terms of commitment, creativity and innovation in the workplace and avoid compliance and conformity. Autocratic leadership style should be discouraged as much as possible. Avenues could be provided that would encourage a bottom-up appraisal to check ambiguous behaviours of superiors and also to encourage employees to voice their concerns and opinions because they might have the one million idea that could save or propel the company to greater heights. In the workplace, leaders should provide high level of support to employees to mitigate the negative impacts/level of fear. There should be effective communication, clear role description and delegation of authority. This

would help reduce incidences of fear and get employees to give their best by creating trusting relationships.

There should be conscious effort to understand the dynamics of trust and fear in the workplace. Special efforts should be geared towards training superiors on how to enhance quality working relationships with their subordinates, provide support for them and build confidence to help minimise fear in employees. Organisations should also create safe and trusting environments by channeling efforts towards recognising and correcting incidences of fear and also channel efforts towards positive initiatives that would drive goal attainment such as exercising fairness and equity without prejudice.

Future Research

This study mainly looked at fear mainly from the employee level analysis. Further research could be conducted to look at fear from the organisational level analysis.

Arising from the significant differences in the types of fear experienced in the public and private sector, a study could be carried out to find out factors responsible for these perceived differences. Also, further research can be used to determine other types of fear that exists in the Nigerian workplace which this study may not have captured.

References

- Adler-Milstein, J., Singer, S.J., & Toffel, M.W. (2011). Managerial practices that promote voice and taking charge among frontline workers. Working paper 11-005, Harvard Business School.
- Agbonifoh, B. A., & Yomere, G.O. (1999). *Research methodology in the management and social sciences*. Uniben Press; Benin City.
- Argyris, C. (1986). Skilled incompetence. *Harvard Business Review*, 64(5), 74-79.

- Argyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming organizational defenses: facilitating organizational learning*. Boston: Toronto: Allyn and Bacon
- Arntz, A., Rauner, M. & Van Den Hout, M. (1995). If I feel anxious, there must be danger: Ex- consequentia reasoning in inferring danger in anxiety disorders. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 33, 917-925.
- Atkinson, J. W. (1964). *An introduction to motivation*. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand. In
- Aydın, S. (2008). An investigation on the language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Turkish EFL learners. *Asian EFL Journal*, 31, 421-444.
- Bandura, A. (1965). Influence of model's reinforcement contingencies on the acquisition of imitative responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1, 589-595.
- Bandura, A. (1971). Vicarious and self-reinforcement processes. In R. Glaser (Ed.), *The nature of reinforcement*, 228-278. New York: Academic Press.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Benson, G. (1991). *Star Tribune*, Minneapolis, St. Paul, 2.
- Boyer, T. W. (2006). The development of risk-taking: A multi-perspective review. *Developmental Review*, 26(3), 291-345.
- Boztaş, M. H. & Sungur, M. Z. (2001). Kaçingankişilikbozukluğu. *Psikiyatri Dünyası*, 5, 71-79.
- Buddhapriya, S. (1999). Fear of success among women managers: an empirical investigation. *Vikalpa* Vol. 24, (4), (October-December), 17-27.
- Burke, E. (1756). *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful. from the international thesaurus of quotations* (Rhoda Thomas Tripp, compiler, 1987). New York: Harper & Row.
- Coelho, C. M. & Purkis, H. (2009). The origins of specific phobias: Influential theories and current perspectives. *Review of General Psychology*, 13 (4), 335-348.
- Cole., B. (2014). The fear of success: How to overcome it. [Retrieved on 2/09/ 2015 from \(www.mentalgamecoaching.com\)](http://www.mentalgamecoaching.com).
- Cure, L. K. (2012). *Leading without fear: the fine line between fear and accountability*. Tate Publishing and Enterprises, LLC.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Deming, W.E. (1982). *Quality, productivity and competitive position*. Cambridge M A: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Center for Advanced Engineering Study
- Durmuş, E. (2008). Yaratıcı drama ilebütünleştirilmişgruplapsikolojikdanışmanınüniversiteöğrencilerininutangaçlık düzeylerineetkisi. *Ankara ÜniversitesiEğitimBilimleriDergisi*, 41(1), 93-114.
- Eagle, M. (1999). Why do not people change? A psychoanalytic perspective. *Journal of Psychological Integration*, 9 (1), 3-32.
- Evans, E.A. (2001). Executive commentary. *Academy of management executive*, 15 (4) 94-95.
- Goldsmith, B. (2002). Dealing with fear in the workplace. *Cost Engineering*, 44, 39
- Griffiths, D. (2012). *Leadership – dealing with 'fear' in organisations*. Blogger on Leadership, Consultant, Author, Mentor & Coach - Boosting the Performance of Organisations & Individual

- Halstead, J. M. & Taylor, M. J. (1996). *Values in education and education in values*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Hutchison, S. (2001). Communicating in times of change. *Strategic Communications Management*, 5 (2), 28-42.
- Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263-91.
- Langowitz, N. & Minniti, M. (2007). The entrepreneurial propensity of women. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 31, 341-364.
- Leary, M. R. (1983). A brief version of the fear of negative evaluation scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 9(3), 371-375.
- Lowe, T. A., & McBean, G. M. (1989). Honesty without fear. *Quality Progress*, 22(11), 30-34
- McKinney, A. P. (2003). *Goal orientation: A test of competing models* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3157771).
- Messina, J., & Messina, C. (2002). *Tools for personal growth handling fear of success*
Coping.org.:retrieved December 15th 2014, from the World Wide Web:
<http://www.coping.org/growth/success.htm>
- Milliken F. J. & Morrison E. W. (2003). Shades of silence: Emerging themes and future directions for research on silence in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies* 40 (6): 1563–1568.
- Mineka, S. & Cook, M. (1986). Immunization against the observational conditioning of snake fear in rhesus monkeys. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 95, 307–318.
- Minniti, M. & Nardone, C. (2007). Being in someone else's shoes: The role of gender in entrepreneurship. *Small Business Economics* 28, 223-238.
- Morales-Gualdron, S.T. & Roig, S. (2005). The new venture decision: an analysis based on the gem project database. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 1, 479-499.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1960). *Learning theory and the symbolic processes*. London: Wiley
- Neves P. & Eisenberger, R. (2014). Perceived organizational support and risk taking. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29 (2), 187 – 205
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JMP-07-2011-0021>
- Premeaux, S. F. (2001). *Breaking the silence: Toward an understanding of speaking up in the work place*. Unpublished Dissertations, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College; 0107
- Rachman, S. J. (1978). *Fear and courage*. San Francisco: Freeman
- Ralston, F. (1995). *Hidden dynamics: how emotions affect business performance & how you can harness their power for positive results*. New York: American Management Association.
- Rieger, T. (2011). *Breaking the Fear Barrier; How fear destroys companies from the inside out*. Gallup Press New York.
- Ryan, K. D. & Oestreich, D.K., (1991). *Driving fear out of the work place: how to overcome the invisible barriers to quality, productivity and innovation*. San Francisco, Jossey- Bass Publishers.
- Ryan, K. D. & Oestreich, D.K., (1998). *Driving fear out of the workplace: creating the high-trust, high-performance organisation*. San Francisco, Jossey- Bass Publishers.

- Seligman, M. E. P. (1971). Phobias and preparedness. *Behaviour Therapy*, 2, 307–320
- Senge, P. M. & Kaeufer, K. H. (2000). Creating change. *Executive excellence*, 17 (10), 4-5
- Suarez J. G. (1993). *Managing fear in the workplace*, Arlington, VA.: U.S. Department of the Navy Total Quality Leadership Office, Publication No. 93-01
- Thomas, D., (2014). Love as a replacement for fear in the workplace: *emerging leadership journeys* 7 (1), 27-33. Repent university school of business and leadership. ISSN19414684
- Thorpe & Salkovskis (1995). Phobic beliefs: do cognitive factors play a role in specific phobias?. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 33, (7), 805–816
- Wagner, J., & Stenberg, R. (2004). Start-up activities, individual characteristics, and the regional milieu: Lessons for entrepreneurship support policies from German micro data. *Annual Regional Science* 38, 219-240.
- Watson, J. B., & Rayner, R. (1920). Conditioned emotional reactions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 3, 1–14.
- Weeks, J. W., Heimberg, R. G., & Rodebaugh, T. L. (2008). The fear of positive evaluation scale: Assessing a proposed cognitive component of social anxiety. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 22, 44-55.
- Wilson, L. & Edmondson, A. (1991). *Deming's elusive eighth point: Why you can never drive fear out of the organization and what to do about it*. Minneapolis, St. Paul: Pecos River Learning Centers