A Quantitative Study Evaluating Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives' Preference for Leadership Style, Independence, and Organizational Satisfaction During New Product Launches

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of a pharmaceutical sales representative's experience with new product launches influences a preference for leadership style, a need for independence, and organizational satisfaction. New product launches are standard throughout the pharmaceutical industry, often creating stressful and tense work environments for employees. Lofty corporate goals, pressure, and expectations have led managers to lead through an authoritarian leadership approach, which may negatively impact employee performance, motivation, confidence, and organizational commitment. Relational and authentic leadership styles will be considered an alternative to generate positive and influential working environments among pharmaceutical sales representatives.

Design/methodology/approach: The participants of this study included active pharmaceutical sales representatives that have participated in a recent new product launch within the

pharmaceutical industry within the past 2 years. Each participant completed an anonymous survey to evaluate their preference for leadership style. Data was evaluated through a quantitative analysis utilizing a Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression to determine the significance and correlation between the surveyed variables.

Findings: The findings of this research indicate that pharmaceutical sales representatives have a preference for leaders that allow for representatives to have the autonomy and independence to make decisions within their roles. Authoritative leadership was found to have an unfavorable impact that decrease individual creativity. Representatives prefer a less hands-on approach. A micromanagement leadership style may not be an effective approach during a new product launch. Representatives prefer to utilize their experience, creativity, and have trust from their leadership team to perform at an optimal level.

Originality: The originality of this research provides leaders with a reasonable approach to empowering employees through their work. While this study focuses on the pharmaceutical industry, the findings can be applicable across various industries. Employees strive to feel trusted and supported in their roles, which can be best aligned through an authentic or relational leadership style.

Keywords: Leadership, authoritative leader, authentic leadership, relational leadership, independence, employee satisfaction, morale, performance

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most competitive global markets, the pharmaceutical industry continues to provide innovative medications to enhance to lives of humanity. Global health demand has led pharmaceutical companies to continue heavy investments in research (Schweitzer, 2007). While research and development continue to be a priority, the pressure of rising costs to produce new

blockbuster medications strains organizations (Kielstra, 2011). Since the early 1980s, the biotechnology revolution has expedited the research processes that have led to many widely recognized treatments utilized today (Babler, 2010). Developing groundbreaking treatments involves a lengthy and exhaustive process of research, time, and money. The daunting process of creating a prototype for clinical trials and high-quality manufacturing standards are stringent requirements that organizations take in their next step toward FDA approval (Babler, 2010). New innovative medications take approximately ten to twenty years to develop and bring to market for patient utilization (Kielstra, 2011). Following a standard and lengthy FDA approval process, pharmaceutical organizations must devise strategic initiatives for launching the newly approved medication to the public. Innovation within the pharmaceutical industry continues to represent many achievements in the medical community (Lakdawalla, 2018). As blockbuster medication patents expire, organizations become stressed about producing new blockbusters rather than medications with viable income (Kielstra, 2011). The success of the medication does not strictly rely on the drug itself but depends significantly on how effectively organizations can bring the medication to the broader population (Babler, 2010). The pharmaceutical industry has been driven by fear, due to the increase in research and development costs and an overall lower rate of return (Kielstra, 2011). The risk of failure can be detrimental to internal and external stakeholders, emphasizing effective management and leadership practices.

Core business practices need proper alignment through leadership to successfully lead to business outcomes (Magano and Thomas, 2017). Leadership performance often dictates the success of business outcomes, emphasizing prioritizing leadership styles to the specific project (Nixon *et al.*, 2012). Innovative medications that are brought to market require exceptional leadership practices. Influential leaders are needed during new product launches, balancing their

franchises and people's needs (Nolan, 2014). While there is notably an abundance of leadership styles that can be utilized, this paper seeks to explore authoritarian leadership in the context of leading pharmaceutical sales representatives through new product launches. The authoritarian leadership style has garnished significant criticism and is considered ineffective in modern global organizations (Shen *et al.*, 2019). An authoritative style is direct leadership approach where the leader strives to have complete control over employees (Shen *et al.*, 2019). Frequently found in collectivistic cultures and societies with a high power distance, autocratic leadership has appeared throughout the pharmaceutical industry (Amad Bodla *et al.*, 2019). Authoritarian leadership styles are often viewed as the dark side of leadership with destructive tendencies such as a negative impact on an organization or the effectiveness of employees (Aravena, 2019). As innovative medications are brought to market, effective leadership practices are needed to support employee effort and motivation. Skills such as vision-oriented, inspiring, and coaching are common skills to gain employee commitment during a critical time (Nolan, 2014). Emotional intelligence will be referenced as leader effectiveness can be influenced by their ability to manage their emotions and those of others. Goleman's (1998) model will be utilized as an emotional intelligence construct that connects a leader's emotions and competencies. This research will consider if an autocratic leadership style creates a destructive outcome for employees, which may reduce employee effectiveness, motivation, and well-being within the work environment (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pharmaceutical Industry

The pharmaceutical industry primarily focuses on new product innovation due to the high pressure of intense global competition (Blum-Kuster and Hussain, 2001). Pressure to sustain a

competitive edge has led the pharmaceutical industry to undergo intense pressure to deliver innovative medications faster than ever (Brown and Grundy, 2011). From developing new molecules, seeking regulatory approval, and bringing pharmaceutical medications to market, practical project management skills are required to be successful (Babler, 2010). An extensive research process generally takes up to twenty years to bring successful products to market (Kielstra, 2011). With a lengthy research and development process, the cost of developing new medications has risen when factoring in inflation and the lower rate of return (Kielstra, 2011). With the extensive process involved with bringing innovative medications to market, leaders are needed to plan, coordinate and oversee the execution of each stage (Babler, 2010). While research and development efforts are costly, their success rates in bringing new products to market are meager (Schuhmacher *et al.*, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges within the pharmaceutical industry, impacting the development and distribution of new medications (Mlika *et al.*, 2020). As the industry reconfigures into a post-COVID-19 environment, organizations must find new ways to have a successful commercial launch (Mlika *et al.*, 2020). As new medications make it to market, leadership teams are held responsible by executive leadership teams for ensuring corporate distribution goals are met according to plan.

As a recent challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the pharmaceutical industry and how representatives can access their targeted offices. In pre-COVID-19, representatives had regular access to their targeted offices and could gain quick traction with new product launches. The traditional pharmaceutical model of representatives going into physician offices has struggled to adapt post-COVID-19, struggling to adapt to an adjusted industry (Mlika *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, representatives have struggled in the post-COVID-19 world due to limited access and the potential of not reopening in the future. Mlika *et*

al. (2020) focused on developing five adjusted success factors for launching medications in a market that has adjusted: personalized content, analytics-enabled engagement, innovative patient channels and services, nimble front-line operations, and closed-loop interactions. Front-line operations focused on sales reps enhancing their impact on total launch success; however, leadership skills and traits were disregarded from this approach (Mlika *et al.*, 2020). While sales representatives are critical to the successful launch of a new product, success is hardly attainable without proper leadership. Focusing on bringing profitable medications to market versus focusing strictly on blockbusters can reduce the stress level on research, development, and leadership decisions (Kielstra, 2011). Effective leadership is required to create a culture that encourages motivation, performance, and strategy follow-through. Leadership ability should not be overlooked, regardless of how the market is shifting.

Effective Leadership

Leadership can be challenging for organizations to manage and maintain, considering the frequent stress of market volatility and uncertain futures (Wulffers, 2017). Regardless of the industry, organizations need influential leaders to sustain efficient and successful work practices. Influential leaders lead with an established vision and purpose, continuously coaching and motivating their followers (Nolan, 2014). Resilient leaders are needed to sustain confidence in the leader/follower relationship, responding appropriately as situations vary in stressful times (Wulffers, 2017). Leaders create inspiring environments where team members are motivated to thrive and maintain consistent engagement in organizational direction (Nixon *et al.*, 2012). Influential leaders model the way for others, demonstrating an example driven by values and moral principles (Kouzes and Posner, 2013). Project management is essential to leaders in obtaining organizational goals. While all projects are unique and complex, leadership is needed

to support team members by maintaining engagement (Anantatmula, 2010). Effective leadership utilizes skills necessary to reach project outcomes, balancing the project, team members, and the organization (Nixon *et al.*, 2012). A project manager's role and desired leadership style significantly influence the project's success (Turner and Muller, 2005). The leader must provide appropriate motivation and influential working culture (Anantatmula, 2010). Effective leaders create positive cultures that drive expectations and beliefs, ultimately driving employee behaviors and habits (Gordon, 2017). Poor leadership and project management may lead to undesired outcomes that cannot be reversed.

Positive leadership creates an uplifting and supportive environment where employees can thrive (Cameron, 2012). Positive energizers can increase leadership effectiveness by boosting and motivating individuals through trust (Cameron, 2012). Without a clear direction or purpose, lacking positive energy often makes others feel exhausted or diminished (Cameron, 2012). Agility and resilience must maintain leadership effectiveness in continuously changing environments to meet market demands (Wulffers, 2017). A combination of various traits supports effective leadership, whereas poor leadership cannot inspire or influence those around them (Wulffers, 2017). Establishing trust and confidence with followers is essential in creating a positive team climate (Gosling *et al.*, 2012). Influential leaders should exert assertiveness, a balance of decisiveness, dominance, and tolerance to stress (Gosling *et al.*, 2012). Investing time is needed to cultivate a positive culture and shared vision (Gordon, 2017). Influential leaders believe in their people and their ability to work together to produce exceptional results generating collaborative and effective teams (Gordon, 2017). Individuals can embrace freedom while feeling trusted and supported by their leaders. The autonomy to share ideas can enhance an individual's satisfaction as it relates to their manager and organization. Team unity enhances the

connections between team members, elevating knowledge and commitment to each other (Gordon, 2017). Leading with faith over fear enables leaders to overcome negativity associated with workplace challenges, leading individuals to believe in themselves and their ability to be resilient (Gordon, 2017). Effective leadership measures that provide positive direction often lead to positive employee emotions, enhancing organizational performance (Cameron, 2012). Inspiring employees through positive energy and a consistent climate have motivated individuals to thrive in their environment (Cameron, 2012). Maintaining a consistent and balanced atmosphere of emotions is needed when balancing employee culture and performance. A favorable climate and regulating emotions enable individuals to thrive and increase their commitment to their role and organization (Cameron, 2012).

Authoritative Leadership

People who follow a leader with authority do so because they believe the leader has knowledge or insight that will benefit their business practices (Brænder and Holsting, 2020). Followers assume that an authoritative leader genuinely cares about their achievement, personal advancement, and well-being within the context or organization they share (Brænder and Holsting, 2020). In contrast, if the leader's practices are viewed as too harsh or potentially destructive, followers may have a more pessimistic viewpoint regarding their leader *(Einarsen et al.*, 2007). When authoritative leaders and followers work succinctly, they share an ethos, philosophy, or distinctive approach to the organization. The leader demonstrates a profound and consistent understanding of their decisions, vision, and response to followers. People obey authoritative leaders because they believe it will benefit them in the long run (Vandenabeele, 2014). Strict and persuasive measures provide direct leadership and guidance to employees. Authoritarian leaders are compelled to react in original, problem-solving ways, demonstrating an

idealized worldview that will produce quick results. Authoritative leaders are inclusive and responsive to various individual and group needs (Rahim *et al.*, 2014). A confident leader that follows the authoritative pathway knows when to seek advice and is confident when to make decisions (Rahim *et al.*, 2014). Authoritative leaders highly value professional learning and are willing to invest in it inside and outside their organizations (Zabolotniaia *et al.*, 2019). Under solid and effective authoritative leadership, people have the chance to flourish (Johnston *et al.*, 2019). The authoritarian leader aims to foster self-control, assertiveness, and competence in their team members and students. Controlling team members allows leaders to direct all business strategies without deviating from the corporate agenda. Authoritative leaders envision their organization's future direction (Ahmed Iqbal *et al.*, 2021). The authoritative leader can unlock hidden potential in people and the organization by recognizing others' professionalism and ability (Rahim *et al.*, 2014). Unlocking potential may take a more direct approach that can be viewed as an intense form of authoritative leadership.

The direct form of authoritative leadership is commonly regarded as arrogant, over-confident, and egotistical (Gosling *et al.*, 2012). Authoritative leaders fail to rise to the challenges of tests due to complacency with structure. They may quickly lose the trust of their followers, which can lead to poor organizational outcomes and disrupt their team's culture. Authoritative leaders strive to gain control over their employees (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2017). An authoritative leadership style demonstrates absolute control and issues instructions, and employees are expected to follow them without questions (Jiang *et al.*, 2019). The "dark side" associated with authoritative leadership practices, commonly viewed as a strict format, may not be ideal for producing satisfied employees and negatively reduce an individual's motivation (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). An authoritative leader is not commonly found to provide support or

positive feedback to their employees (Jiang *et al.*, 2019). While authoritative leaders can benefit certain employees, a tyrannical leadership approach has been affiliated with the actions of authoritarian leaders that can be destructive to organizations (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). Authoritative leaders that demonstrate aggression under strict behavior practices are ineffective with minimal concern for others (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). Certain behaviors may also undermine the motivation of employees, which can lead to less creativity and employee independence to perform their roles (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). Interactions can also differ, leading from a task-oriented approach to initiating structure (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2017). It is important to note that authoritative leadership practices are not directly linked to directive leadership, as a directive leader will provide employees with support and feedback (Chiang *et al.*, 2021). Demanding absolute obedience, an authoritative approach generally elicits negative responses from employees, further decreasing morale and culture (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2017). Leaders making demands and focusing on control of employees' actions (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2017) create a hostile environment that will likely not enable employees to perform.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept surrounding emotional intelligence and leadership emerged during the early 1900s (Northouse, 2007). Leadership styles can dictate the outcomes of a project, emphasizing how managers regulate their emotional intelligence and work with their employees (Nixon *et al.*, 2012). Effective leadership requires leaders to maintain consistent traits that encourage high emotional intelligence levels, also aligning with transformational leadership qualities (Nixon *et al.*, 2012). Goleman (1998) approached emotional intelligence by suggesting it involves personal and social competencies. An individual's emotional intelligence is focused on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, enabling a leader to manage oneself and

the emotions of others (Gosling *et al.*, 2012). Goleman (1998) indicates that emotional intelligence can be learned, but not through traditional management training programs. The development of emotional intelligence can progress through obtaining feedback from the viewpoint of others (Gosling *et al.*, 2012). Maximizing the five skill sets associated with high emotional intelligence enables leaders to increase their team's performance (Goleman, 1998). Mayer and Salovey (1997) described emotional intelligence as an individual's ability to access and generate feelings and facilitate thought through emotion. Effectively perceiving, appraising, and expressing emotion are critical components enabling leaders to lead a team in a positive direction. Lacking an appropriate level of emotional intelligence can create challenges associated with leadership practices and workplace collaboration.

Antonakis (2003) found that negative emotions, specifically emotional outbursts, can lead to negative distress in a team environment. Furthermore, a leader's level of charisma may influence an individual's ability to regulate emotional outbursts that can be driven by their personality (Antonakis, 2003). While globalization continues across all industries, leaders must maintain an agile mindset that broadens their leadership capabilities (Hui-Wen *et al.*, 2010). Leading across different cultures requires managers to appropriately and effectively inspire a shared vision that encourages and creates enthusiasm across employees (Hui-Wen *et al.*, 2010). Influential leaders can naturally perceive emotions accurately and deal with them appropriately (Nelson and Cooper, 2007). Emotional contagion is "a process in which a person or group influences the emotions or behaviors of another person or group through the conscious or unconscious induction of emotion states and behavioral attitudes" (Schoenewolf, 1990). In order to understand the feelings of employees, a leader must understand their feelings first (Northouse, 2007). When a leader's emotional expression is observed, positive or negative, the group

members will likely replicate the leader's emotions (Nelson and Cooper, 2007). Leaders that regulate their emotional status can develop positive group cohesion through emotional recognition and balance (Zurcher, 1982). Destructive emotions that are not managed properly can lead to detrimental emotional states and interactions among team members (Melita Prati *et al.*, 2003). Without an established sense of emotions, leaders cannot balance the emotions of others (Melita Prati *et al.*, 2003). Emotional intelligence skillsets should not be overlooked when determining leadership effectiveness. As leaders of the 21st century struggle to achieve employee commitment, developing emotional intelligence can enable leaders to succeed in global marketplaces (Caldwell and Anderson, 2021). Influential leaders who model emotional intelligence will likely engage followers to accomplish a vision and organizational goals (Caldwell and Anderson, 2021). Consistent leadership behavior enables leaders to be viewed as credible and authentic by their followers (Caldwell and Anderson, 2021).

Leadership Theory

Leadership should be viewed as a two-way relationship that can be influenced by either individual (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Hollander, 1978). Authoritative leadership is frequently observed during a new product launch, directing and creating an environment of tense structure and culture. Relational leadership may be a viable alternative to support leaders and employees during a new product launch. Hollander (1958) developed leadership as a relational process where leaders would engage in interpersonal relationships with their employees (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational leadership focuses on rich connections between individuals and their organizations (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Hollander's model is relationship-driven (Uhl-Bien, 2006), focusing on cultivating genuine interest with others (Coleman, 2018). Relational leaders are viewed as caring, inclusive, ethical, and have a vision for their subordinates. Found to promote

high trust and productivity (Deluga, 1994), a relational leadership style can improve an organization's climate and the satisfaction of its employees (Regan and Brooks, 1995). Organizational climate plays a critical role in organizational success. A lack of a positive climate can negatively affect performance and motivation. Empathy is a vital component of a relational leader who can understand others and their point of view (Coleman, 2018). Utilizing an empathetic approach is often viewed as authentic, further aiding the development of the relationship (Coleman, 2018). An empathetic leader can create a positive climate where employees feel safe to make business decisions or speak up regarding concerns. A relational approach is more personal by nature, which may present challenges for leaders who are not instinctively personable (Coleman, 2018). A less personable individual can be challenged by a relational leadership approach due to certain traits not being present within the leader themself.

Establishing relational practices can reinforce positive gestures of culture and authenticity between the leader and team members (Coleman, 2018). Cleary *et al.* (2018) found that organizations that shift to a relational leadership model can strengthen their relational authenticity through collaborative and teamwork practices. Through a relational approach, leaders focus on the organizational values and relationships needed to sustain relational success (Cleary *et al.*, 2018). A positive approach to organizational values enables employees to connect with the company's mission. A relational approach is empowering, with the ability to influence followers through vision and collaborative processes (Carifio, 2010). Flexibility-oriented cultures have been shown to lead to positive organizational outcomes at the employee level by increasing employee satisfaction (Azanza *et al.*, 2013). Azanza *et al.* (2013) stated that by providing employee support and fostering a positive organizational culture, a flexible organization might generate a more significant competitive advantage than those who lack

flexibility. Schein (1985) states that organizational culture provides individuals with norms and standards to generate authentic leadership and organizational culture. An authentic approach resembles relational leadership, emphasizing the importance of culture, values, support, and collaboration. Authentic leaders have a high level of self-awareness and can consistently regulate who they are and their beliefs (Wulffers, 2017). When an authentic leader displays positive attributes, followers can observe and adopt similar behaviors and attributes (Wulffers, 2017). Authentic leaders' approach brings a transparent and unbiased form of leadership that demonstrates character and integrity (Wulffers, 2017). Knowing oneself and being true to oneself guides the actions of an authentic leader (Wulffers, 2017). Both leadership styles signify a more positive approach that can be more favorably viewed by other cultures that are different from high-power distance cultures.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were devised to gather relevant information about a representative's experience in new product launches concerning the preference for authoritative leadership practices, the need for independence, and organizational satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1

RQ 1: Does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices?

$H1_0$: A representative experience in new product launches does not influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices.

$H1_a$: A representative experience in new product launches does influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices.

Hypothesis 2

RQ 2: Does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their preference for independence?

$H2_0$: A representative experience in new product launches does not influence their preference for independence.

$H2_a$: A representative experience in new product launches does influence their preference for independence.

Hypothesis 3

RQ 3: Does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their satisfaction level regarding their leader and organization's ability to manage effectively?

$H3_0$: A representative experience in new product launches does not influence their satisfaction level regarding their leader and organization's ability to manage effectively.

$H3_a$: A representative experience in new product launches influences their satisfaction level regarding their leader and organization's ability to manage effectively.

Each survey question was aligned with specific questions (see Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1. *RQ 1 Survey Questions*

Survey Question Number	Question
9	I prefer my manager to be very hands-on in my business approach during a new product launch.
12	I prefer to work for a leader that is specific in their expectations and gives direct orders during a new product launch.
15	I prefer for my leader to be in more control of decisions regarding my work during a new product launch.

Table 2. *RQ 2 Survey Questions*

Survey Question Number	Survey Question
8	I prefer to make my own business decisions to have a successful new product launch.
10	It is important that my manager allows me to be creative and generate my own ideas during a new product launch.
16	I prefer to work for a manager that allows me to be actively involved within my team and organization during a new product launch.

Table 3. *RQ 3 Survey Questions*

Survey Question Number	Survey Question
11	How happy are you with how leadership has managed new product launches?
13	How happy are you with your leader's ability and willingness to listen to your opinions during a new product launch?
14	How satisfied are you with leadership's ability to develop realistic performance metrics and expectations during a new product launch?
17	How satisfied are you with your leader's ability to hold their composure during stressful times in a new product launch?
18	How satisfied are you with the level of trust and support given by your leader during a new product launch?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants of this study consisted of pharmaceutical sales representatives within the United States that have experience with new product launches. This quantitative study was supported and distributed through Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2022), an online survey platform. The survey was posted to LinkedIn, an online social media platform, to connect with the appropriate audience for survey participation. The survey included an informed consent page conveying the study's purpose and ensuring participant responses' confidentiality. Two pre-survey questions qualified participants to participate in the survey. The purpose of the qualifying survey questions

was to ensure survey participants were the right targeted participants for this market research. The qualifying survey questions required participants to indicate that they had worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative in the United States and participated in a new product launch. If an individual indicated that they did not work in the United States as a pharmaceutical sales representative or did not participate in a new product launch, the individual could not participate in this study. Demographic questions captured relevant data about the sample population's experience, age, and gender. 11 total survey questions followed, specifically focusing on how participants viewed their leader's actions and leadership ability during a new product launch. The survey was posted to LinkedIn for fifteen days (July 28, 2022, through August 12, 2022) and generated 53 surveys. For consistency, 10 surveys had to be discarded due to incomplete questions, bringing a valid survey completion count to 43.

Survey Questions

1. Years worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative

   Under 5, 6-12, 13-20, 21 or more

2. How many product launches have you participated in?

   1-2, 3-6, 7-10, 10-15, 16 or more

3. Gender

   Male, Female, Other, Prefer not to answer

4. Age

   21-29, 30-45, 46-59, Over 60, prefer not to answer

5. I prefer to make my own business decisions to have a successful new product launch.

   (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

6. I prefer my manager to be very involved and hands-on in my business approach during a new product launch.

   (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

7. It is important that my manager allows me to be creative and generate my own ideas.

   (1) not important at all, (2) low importance, (3) neutral, (4) very important, (5) not at all important

8. How happy are you with how leadership has managed new product launches?

   (1) not at all happy, (2) not very happy, (3) neutral, (4) happy, (5) very happy

9. I prefer to work for a leader that is specific in their expectations and gives direct orders.

   (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

10. How happy are you with your leader's ability and willingness to listen to your opinions?

    (1) not at all happy, (2) not very happy, (3) neutral, (4) happy, (5) very happy

11. How satisfied are you with leadership's ability to develop realistic performance metrics and expectations during a new product launch?

    (1) very dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, (5) very satisfied

12. I prefer for my leader to be more hands-on and in control of decisions regarding my work during a new product launch.

    (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

13. I prefer to work for a manager that allows me to be actively involved within my team and organization.

    (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

14. How satisfied are you with your leader's ability to hold their composure during stressful times?

(1) very dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, (5) very satisfied

15. How satisfied are you with the level of trust and support given by your leader during a new product launch?

(1) very dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, (5) very satisfied

Sample Description

Further analysis of the sample population and data analysis was calculated through SPSS (SPSS, 2022), a statistical analysis software suite. The sample population consisted of participants of both genders, 15 (34.9%) male and 27 (62.8%) female participants (see Table 4). Participants ages varied, with most participants, 39.5%, reported being within the age range of 30 to 45 years (see Table 5). When it came to years worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative, the data was nearly evenly distributed, with 27.9% of participants having 12-20 years of experience working as a pharmaceutical sales representative (see Table 6). When analyzing total experience with new product launches, 46.5% of the participants have reported having participated in 3-6 new product launches (see table 7). The data in table 8 further demonstrates that both males (9 out of 16) and females (11 out of 28) had the most experience participating in 3-6 new product launches. This study's sample population represents various individuals based on gender, age, and experience with new product launches within the pharmaceutical industry.

Table 4. *Gender of Survey Participants*

Value	Frequency	Percent
Male	15	34.9
Female	27	62.8
Prefer not to say	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

Table 5. *Age of Participants*

Age Range (years)	Frequency	Percent
21-29	8	18.6
30-45	17	39.6
46-59	15	34.9
Over 60	2	4.7
Prefer not to say	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

Table 6. *Years of Experience as a Pharmaceutical Representative*

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent
5 years of less	10	23.3
6-12 years	11	25.6
12-20 years	12	27.9
21 or more years	10	23.3
Total	43	100.0

Table 7. *Total Number of Product Launches Participated In*

Total Product Launches	Frequency	Percent
1-2	13	30.2
3-6	20	46.5
7-10	6	14.0
11 or more	4	9.3
Total	43	100.0

Table 8. *Crosstabulation Comparing Gender to the Total Number of New Product Launches Participated In*

Gender	1-2 launches	3-6 launches	7-10 launches	11 or more launches	Total
Male	4	9	2	0	15
Female	9	11	4	3	27
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	1	1
Total	13	20	6	4	43

Measures

The Likert Scale is a widely recognized scale utilized in research collection that measures respondents' attitudes, allowing each to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement (Babin, 2019). The respondents can select responses that indicate how positive or negative they feel regarding a specific statement (Babin, 2019). The survey utilized for this research included five choices with assigned scores such as: (1) strongly agree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. Some questions were rated based on the participants' level of happiness, importance, and satisfaction, which followed a similar Likert Scale format. A higher score indicated a more favorable response related to the survey statement, while a lower score indicated a less favorable response (Babin, 2019). Survey results were measured through SPSS Data Analysis Software. Descriptive statistics, crosstabulations, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression tests were run to assess responses to each question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the participant responses, having an authoritative leader could be problematic during a new product launch. While authoritative leaders can provide direction and vision to their team members as they work toward a new product launch, they can also be overbearing and take away the freedom of seasoned employees to operate in the process of a new product launch. Providing direction and motivation to employees who are part of a new product launch is essential, but allowing employees to operate without being controlled is vital. The higher the experience a pharmaceutical sales representative has, the more autonomy they desire when it comes to the process of launching a new product. An authoritative leader with an experienced group of team members can be a great asset to a new product launch only if the leader allows the team members to operate without curtailing their participation. Guiding the new launch process

and not controlling all moving parts of a new product launch. Managing the process would provide sales representatives the critical freedom to use their experience to ensure that launching a new product will meet all organizational expectations.

Pearson correlations were utilized to analyze the survey data further to determine the strength of the linear relationship between the variables (Cronk, 2018). The Pearson correlation calculations provided a general overview of how the survey questions aligned with each other based on the research question. The purpose was to identify any significant linear relationships between variables at either the 0.05 level (2-tailed) or 0.01 level (2-tailed). See Tables 9, 10, and 11 for significant Pearson correlations.

Table 9. *RQ 1 Pearson Correlation Significant Linear Relationships*

Variable	Hands-on	Expectations	Control	Experience
Hand-on	---	.416**	---	---
Expectations	.416**	---	---	---
Control	---	---	---	-.439**
Experience	---	---	-.439**	---

Table 10. *RQ 2 Pearson Correlation Significant Linear Relationships*

Variable	Business decisions	Creative	Involved	Experience
Business decisions	---	---	---	.315*
Creative	---	---	---	---
Involved	---	---	---	---
Experience	.315*	---	---	---

Table 11. *RQ 3 Pearson Correlation Significant Linear Relationships*

Variable	Managing	Listen	Expectations	Composure	Trust & Support	Experience
Managing	---	.326*	.606**	.367*	.488*	---
Listen	.326*	---	.648**	.501*	.738**	---
Expectations	.606**	.648**	---	.336*	.581*	---
Composure	.367*	.501**	.336*	---	.782**	---
Trust & Support	.488**	.738**	.581**	.782**	---	---
Experience	---	---	---	---	---	---

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine if a significant existed between the variables associated with each research question. The data output for RQ 1, authoritative leadership: A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participant experience based on a hands-on approach, specific expectations, and control of decisions. A significant regression equation was found ($F(3,39) = 4.239$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .246. Participants predicated experience is equal to 3.249-.213(HANDS-ON) - .413(CONTROL) + .037(EXPECTATIONS). After controlling for the other variables in the model, hands-on is a non-significant predictor of participant experience ($t = -1.604$, $p = .117$). Specific expectations is a non-significant predictor of participant experience ($t = .272$, $p = .787$). Control of decisions is a significant predictor of participant experience ($t = -3.024$, $p = .004$). In addition, the R Square value of .246 states that out of 100% of all the possibilities in the universe that could impact a representative's experience in a new product launch, the representatives' Control accounts for 24.6% variability in the representatives' experience scores. See Tables 12, 13, and 14 below for additional statistics related to RQ 1 variables.

Table 12. *RQ 1 Regression Analysis Model Summary*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.496	.246	.188	.822

Table 13. *RQ 1 Regression Analysis ANOVA*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.600	3	2.867	4.239	.011
Residual	26.377	39	.676		
Total	34.977	42			

Table 14. *RQ 1 Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Unstandardized Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.249	.466		6.976	.000
Hands-on	-.213	.133	-.245	-1.604	.117
Expectations	.037	.134	.042	.272	.787
Control	-.413	.137	-.430	-3.024	.004

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine if a significant existed between the variables associated with each research question. Results for RQ 2, a need for independence: A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants' experience in new product launches to make their own decisions, allowed to be creative, and active involvement. The regression equation was not significant ($F(3,39) = 1.517$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .105. After controlling for the other variables in the model, making own business decisions is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = 1.973$, $p = 0.056$). Allowed to be creative is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = .419$, $p = .678$), and active involvement is also a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = .191$, $p = .849$). See Tables 15, 16, and 17 below for additional statistics related to RQ 2 variables.

Table 15. *RQ 2 Regression Analysis Model Summary*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.323	.105	.036	.896

Table 16. *RQ 2 Regression Analysis ANOVA*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.656	3	1.219	1.517	.225
Residual	31.321	39	.803		
Total	34.977	42			

Table 17. *RQ 2 Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Unstandardized Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.600	1.291		.465	.644
Decisions	.235	.119	.305	1.973	.056
Creative	.080	.192	.065	.419	.678
Involved	.040	.208	.029	.191	.849

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine if a significant existed between the variables associated with each research question. Results for RQ 3, organizational satisfaction: A multiple linear regression analysis was calculated to predict participant experience in new product launches based on leadership ability to manage, willingness to listen, realistic metrics, composure, and level of trust. The regression equation was not significant ($F(5,37) = .790$, $p > .05$). After controlling for the other variables in the model, leadership ability to manage is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = -.911$, $p = .368$). Willingness to listen is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = -.795$, $p = .432$). Realistic metrics is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = .957$, $p = .345$). Composure is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience ($t = -.346$, $p = -1.33$). Level of trust is a non-significant predictor of new product launch experience (t

= .789, p = .435). See Tables 18, 19, and 20 below for additional statistics related to RQ 3 variables.

Table 18. *RQ 3 Regression Analysis Model Summary*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.311	.096	-.026	.924

Table 19. *RQ 3 Regression Analysis ANOVA*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.274	5	.675	.790	.564
Residual	31.603	37	.854		
Total	34.977	42			

Table 20. *RQ 3 Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Unstandardized Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.731	.507		5.388	.000
Manage	-.160	.175	-.192	-.911	.368
Listen	-.151	.189	-.210	-.795	.432
Expectations	.164	.171	.239	.957	.345
Composure	-.240	.180	-.346	-1.333	.191
Trust	.190	.241	.273	.789	.435

The results of this study demonstrate several significant findings from both Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analysis. The multiple linear regression models indicated whether the research question hypotheses were supported or rejected. In the case of RQ 1, does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices, the calculated ANOVA significance = .011 indicates a

significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted; H1a: A representative experience in new product launches does influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices. The results demonstrate that an individual's experience does influence their preference for authoritative leadership practices. As individuals gain more experience working through new product launches, their experience may continue to influence how much assertion and dominance they would like their leader to display.

In the case of RQ 2, does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their preference for independence, the calculated ANOVA significance = .225 indicates a non-significant relationship. In this case, the null hypothesis was accepted, $H2_0$: A representative experience in new product launches does not influence their preference for independence. The data for RQ 2 demonstrates that regardless of a representative's experience in new product launches, there is a need for independence. Representatives with little experience in new product launches are likely to want an acceptable degree of freedom while having a leader that can provide reliable direction. Depending on the situation, a balance of leadership and independence can be a successful method for all representatives.

In the case of RQ 3, does a representative's experience in new product launches influence their satisfaction level regarding their leader and organization's ability to manage effectively, the calculated ANOVA significance = .924 indicates a non-significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, $H3_0$: A representative experience in new product launches does not influence their satisfaction level regarding their leader and organization's ability to manage effectively. The results of RQ3 state that a representative experience participating in new product launches can deviate as they gain greater experience working with different leaders, organizations, and business models.

The Pearson correlations identified multiple significant linear relationships between the survey variables. A notable correlation, RQ 1, compared a hands-on approach and specific expectations. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between a hands-on approach and specific expectations/direct orders. A strong positive correlation was found (r (41) = .416, $p < .01$, indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. A hands-on approach had an overall survey mean = 2.42, and specific expectations had an overall mean value of 3.14. The relationship between the variables represents the individuals preferring a less hands-on approach while still having a leader that provides some expectations. A leader that provides too much direction and authority has been reported to be unfavorable during a new product launch.

Additionally, RQ 1 demonstrated an additional significance. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between a leader having control and product launch participation. A strong positive correlation was found (r (41) = -.439, $p < .01$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. The results convey that participants with adequate experience with new product launches prefer less controlling leaders and can have the freedom to make appropriate business decisions. A leader having control had a mean value of 2.00, demonstrating that participants disagreed with having a leader control their business decisions. Participant experience in new product launches had a mean value of 2.02, which equates to participating in approximately 3-6 new product launches. Tenured representatives prefer the autonomy to control their actions and business decisions over a micromanagement style.

Data output for RQ 2 expressed a notable significance. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between making own business decisions and new product

launches. A strong positive correlation was found (r (41) = .315, p < .01), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Representatives indicated that they prefer to make most of their own business decisions, with a calculated mean score of 3.72. The results further indicate that representatives participating in 3-6 new product launches demonstrate knowledge and experience, which may be why participants indicated they prefer to have a manager enforce less control.

Additional significance was found while analyzing RQ 3. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between new product launches and developing realistic metrics. A strong positive correlation was found (r (41) = .606, p < .01), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Participants reported a mean value of 2.51, indicating their dissatisfaction with leadership's ability to develop realistic goals and expectations. Participants in this study had experience with approximately 3-6 new product launches. The results indicate that participants view how leadership manages new product launches and how they set expectations for representatives. The data demonstrates a general displease with leadership's ability to set appropriate expectations and goals during a new product launch. By creating realistic metrics, individual and organizational culture could see a positive benefit related to well-being, performance, and morale.

A final notable significance was found with RQ 3. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between holding composure and the level of trust/support. A strong positive correlation was found (r (41) = .782, p < .01), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Leaders' ability to hold composure had a neutral value of 3.51, and level of trust/support had a neutral mean value of 3.42. It is important to note that while these values are neutral, some participants saw their leaders as favorable, while others saw them

as unfavorable. Emphasis should be put on leadership composure, as leaders set the team's tone. Trust and support to representatives should be provided to support representatives' freedom to make appropriate business decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants of this survey expressed their need for leaders to trust them. Representatives want the freedom to make appropriate business choices to excel in business within their assigned geographies. A leader that instantly gives direct orders may not be the ideal manager for a pharmaceutical sales team. Representatives find leaders effective when they are not hands-on, allowing representatives freedom to feel trusted. There is a significant opportunity to improve executive and mid-level management teams to develop skillsets to handle new product launches better. As suggested earlier, developing emotional intelligence would be a start in solidifying traits that can guide leader behavior. Relational or authentic leadership would be an ideal fit for new product launches and for pharmaceutical organizations to implement regular operations. A relational approach does not necessarily equate to forced friendships but emphasizes a culture of inclusion and empowerment (Akram *et al.*, 2016). As participants of this study have stated, representatives want the freedom to make decisions while simultaneously receiving management support. Managers can create a community and feeling of purposefulness, emphasizing the privilege to generate ideas and share opinions with others (Akram *et al.*, 2016). A dynamic environment supported by relational leadership would motivate a pharmaceutical sales representative to thrive (Akram *et al.*, 2016). Relational leadership can influence a positive workplace where leaders and representatives can collaborate and reach mutualistic goals for the company. Likewise, an authentic leader can foster positive energy and collaboration among team members. An authentic leader is self-aware and can influence followers to transform and exhibit

similar positive attributes (Wulffers, 2017). A positive mindset and culture can positively impact representative performance and organizational culture.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation of this research article was selecting a quantitative method of collecting and analyzing the data (Bibi *et al.*, 2022). A research study's foundation is its research approach, and quantifying the data is the primary goal of quantitative research (Zyphur and Pierides, 2020). Assessing the opinions and responses of the sample population enables generalizations of the results. According to Pizarro and Zarifa (2022), inadequate target population representation may prevent the researcher from reaching its intended goals and objectives. Despite using an adequate sampling strategy, the subject representation depends on the probability distribution of the collected data (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Another limitation of this study was the researcher's inability to influence the environment. Researchers occasionally have trouble regulating the setting in which respondents answer survey questions (Zyphur and Pierides, 2020). Responses frequently depend on a specific time, depending on the circumstances present at that particular moment. Another limitation of quantitative research is the measurement of limited outcomes (Pizarro and Zarifa, 2022). The structured questionnaires used in quantitative research have closed-ended questions (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It results in the constrained findings mentioned in the research proposal. As a result, the results may not accurately reflect what happened (Bibi *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the respondents' choices are constrained due to the researcher's choice of responses. The choice to select authoritative leadership is another limitation of this study. Leaders with authority can appear domineering (Johnston *et al.*, 2019). The authoritative leadership style's prescriptive approach can appear oppressive to staff members with complete

discretion over how they carry out tasks, contribute to overhead, and work toward business goals (Johnston *et al.*, 2019).

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research in the pharmaceutical industry on new product launches that are impacted by other types of leadership is a segment to investigate further. This article focused on authoritative leadership; therefore, future studies that consider leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire could provide different viewpoints on the strengths and weaknesses of different leadership styles. Surveying one pharmaceutical company would allow for a direct hands-on approach to sorting out leadership strengths and weaknesses regarding new product launches. According to Nurfaradilla *et al.* (2021), unlike quantitative research, qualitative research typically collects data in narrative forms, such as the transcript of an in-depth, unstructured interview. The purpose of an interview would be to gather detail on experiences, motives, and opinions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Gaining a world perspective can provide rich content other than the interviewer's perspective (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). These non-numerical findings are organized, summarized, and interpreted through qualitative data analysis (Nurfaradilla *et al.*, 2021). Qualitative research generates rich, thorough, and reliable process data based on the viewpoints and interpretations of the participants rather than the researcher. Qualitative research could uncover rich content related to the purpose of this research that extends past the research questions of this study. A qualitative approach would allow the researcher to interview participants, which may lead to more information and specific details regarding the participant's perspectives. During the interview process, the interviewer would be able to listen but ask new questions based on the interviewee's answers (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). A qualitative approach could gather additional data to support the claims of this study. In

addition, future research could focus more on how the variables of this study further relate to each other. While this study gathered the relevant data to determine such predictions, the purpose was to focus highly on the research questions and whether to reject or accept the null hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a need for change within the pharmaceutical industry. Pharmaceutical sales representatives have expressed their need for leadership to improve how they manage new product launches and generate realistic goals and expectations. Individuals want freedom and the autonomy to excel in their roles without a manager directing each move. Creativity is essential to representatives, allowing individuals to implement new ideas that may not align with the corporate agenda. An authoritative leadership approach is unfavorable for the pharmaceutical industry, indicating that representatives do not prefer a hands-on approach. Direct orders in an authoritative format can be viewed as harsh and severe, creating poor working conditions, and can lead to a sense of micromanagement. Micromanagement can further derail organizational morale and culture, ultimately negatively impacting performance. While authoritative leaders allow creativity to a certain extent, representatives prefer not to have leaders in total control of their business decisions. Leaders should continue to practice maintaining composure during stressful organizational times. Poor composure can create a tense environment demonstrating a lack of emotional intelligence skills. A relational or authentic style should be considered a primary leadership method in the pharmaceutical industry, particularly during a new product launch. Demonstrating empathy, inclusiveness, and a mission-driven by ethics and values can enable employees to move toward their goals in a positive manner. Creating an inclusive environment that empowers creativity and collaboration can generate individual motivation (Akram *et al.*, 2016). Representatives want a sense of purposefulness; being able to

make decisions, be creative, and be involved in their organization will guide organizations toward more long-term sustainable success.

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