

SOME PERSONALITY DETERMINANTS
OF THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION

by Victor H. Vroom

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effects of participation in decision-making on persons with different personality characteristics. It was hypothesized that equalitarians and individuals with strong independence needs would be more positively affected by the opportunity to participate in making decisions than authoritarians and persons with weaker independence needs.

The hypotheses were tested on a sample of 108 supervisors in a large industrial organization. Amount of psychological participation, defined as the amount of influence that an individual feels he has in decision-making, was intercorrelated with the participants' attitudes toward their jobs and supervisor's ratings of the participants' job performance. These intercorrelations were computed for the entire sample and for subgroups representing different degrees of authoritarianism and need for independence.

The findings corroborated previous evidence that participation generally has positive effects on both attitudes and motivation for effective performance. It also confirmed our hypotheses that the magnitude of these effects is a function of certain personality characteristics of the participant. Authoritarians and persons with weak independence needs are apparently unaffected by the opportunity to participate in making decisions. On the other hand, equalitarians and those who have strong independence needs develop more positive attitudes toward their jobs and greater motivation for effective performance through participation.

The results suggest the inadequacy of existing generalizations concerning the effects of participation. An adequate theoretical explanation of these effects should include a consideration of the influence of personality variables which interact with participation.

The general question of theories capable of dealing with both personality and environmental variables was discussed and a more general theory of attitudes and motivation put forth to account for the present findings and to serve as a guide for future research.

A second purpose of the present study was to explore the joint effects of ability and motivation on job performance. It was hypothesized that ability would be more positively related to the performance of highly motivated persons than of persons with lower motivation. This hypothesis was supported by a test using a measure of motivation derived from need for independence and psychological participation scores. A similar measure, based on authoritarianism and psychological participation showed little or no support for the hypothesis.