

**BBS**  
BROWN BAG SEMINARS

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## EXPLORING JOB AUTONOMY, ETHNICITY, AND MANAGER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE: A STUDY OF EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCES

In modern workplaces, job autonomy— the degree of freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling work —has become increasingly the norm. Job autonomy leads to positive outcomes, such as enhanced organizational commitment, but might also raise new challenges, especially for minority employees. We built on the existing literature to explore whether job autonomy is a tool to promote ethnic minority employees into leadership positions or, conversely, whether it could hamper their progression, potentially leading to negative experiences in their professional journey. Therefore, this study tested how job autonomy influences ethnic minority employees' perceptions of their relationship with their managers, their experiences with discrimination, and their leadership potential. We conducted a quantitative study online (N = 200) to compare ethnic minority and majority employees' experience with high (vs low) job autonomy. Overall, employees with high job autonomy (vs. low job autonomy) reported a better relationship with their manager (support, trust) and more potential as leaders (self-efficacy and commitment). Employees from an ethnic minority had the same leadership aspiration, commitment, and self-efficacy level as those from a majority. However, ethnic minority employees were more discriminated against than ethnic majorities, but only when having low job autonomy. These results suggest that high job autonomy could be conducive to positive manager-employee relationship, particularly for ethnic minorities, whereas low job autonomy could harm them. While enhancing our understanding of how employees perceive and experience job autonomy in the workplace, this research calls for a deeper investigation into job autonomy's potential to decrease inequalities and promote diverse leaders.