

## Employee's Perception of Women Leaders in Nigeria Private and Public Organisation

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**Abstract:** Despite the constraints and the negative worldview about women, the world today is witnessing an upsurge of feminine power, influence and productivity. Significant changes have therefore occurred in gender-role and gender based division of labour. This paper examined employees' perception of women leaders in Nigeria private and public organizations. A total of two hundred and fifty participants were used for the study (125 workers from public and 125 workers from private sector). An attitude towards women leader scale was administered into them and scores were analysed using the independent t-test and 2×2 Analysis of variance. Results show that there are negative attitude towards women leaders but there are no significant difference in the attitude of private and public employees towards women leaders. Sex and marital status also predict employees' attitude towards female leaders, with males and married people having a favourable attitude towards women leaders. Findings were discussed in the light of previous findings in the literature

**Key words:** Perception, private, public, gendar role

### INTRODUCTION

Although, men and women are clearly distinctive in terms of their reproductive contributions, through the world it is common to assign them different roles and attribute to them different capacities that are far removed from those biological qualities<sup>[1]</sup>. In popular culture and academic life, it is typical for men and women to be regarded as manifesting mutually exclusive behaviours with regard to several behaviours, such as emotionality, intelligence, conversational skill, leadership skill, ambition, abstract thinking or surgical skill<sup>[2]</sup>.

Traditionally, men have been seen dominating the primary employment sector, with their employment histories remaining unbroken from school to retirement. In contrast, women predominate in the secondary employment sector, which is typically unstable, offering poor career prospects and working conditions. There is also a dip or gap in paid employment associated with child rearing during the mid-twenties to early thirties.

Over the past decades, significant changes have occurred in gender-roles and in gender based division of labour<sup>[3,4]</sup>. The most notable of those changes are the dramatic influx of women into the workforce and the progress that women have made at entering positions that were initially thought to be an exclusive reservation of men.

Since the end of 1990s employment profile has change for both gender with women comprised about half of the workforce. Although, anecdotal evidence shows

that the place where women work have not changed substantially and remain different in kind from male occupations. In essence, women are working in occupations which reflect their perceived role in society and they are generally found servicing and caring for others, 35% of working women were servant, 19.5% textile workers, 15.6% dress makers.

Recent reports<sup>[5,6]</sup> have indicated that a glass ceiling exists in many organizations preventing women from rising to the top. Achunine<sup>[6]</sup> noted that even though women make up to 60% of the teaching force in Imo State tertiary institution, there is on single female vice-chancellor, Rector or provost and that at lower level of management from Deputy vice-chancellor to Deans, women have a token present, if any.

A surveyed report of 200 top companies about the progress of women on boards revealed that there is a slow pace of change. Although the number of women on the boards had risen from 11% in 1989 to 25% in 1999, the actual number of women executives remained low. The number of women in part time and non executive posts was considerably higher than in executive appointment, of the 57 appointments only 11 were executive<sup>[5]</sup>. The author conceded that the glass ceiling was being penetrated but at a very slow pace and that women executives are still a rare sight in the city and in business generally.

Despite the tremendous influx of women into the workforce as reported by Shaffer<sup>[4]</sup>, women are made to occupied the second fiddle roles in Nigeria organizations

as reported by Udegbe (1999). Infact, in the Nigeria police a woman was appointed to head a command for the first time in December 2000. This trend is based on the fact that women are generally regarded as good only for supportive roles.

Traditionally, women in Nigeria and African has come to accept some position and responsibility as womanly or manly based on the cultural definition of gender in African societies. One of the typical circumstance that has entrenched this mental set dated to the early existence and religious belief of our forefathers, for instance, it is a taboo for a woman to offer sacrifice to gods when a male is present no matter the age of such a male child. Women are believed to be in control only if there is no male. To this end, females have come to see the world as that of males. In fact the roles of women are consider complementary to that of men<sup>[7]</sup>.

The entry of women into any position of authority in any organization is believed to be problematic to both women and their work association. Traditionally work place institution was regarded as masculine values because it involves competition, aggressiveness and achievement. All these traits are valued by both sexes, which are traditionally associated with masculinity.

Acting as a leader is a characteristic which is associated with men than women because traditionally women were regarded as weaker sex and it is erroneously believed that women's usefulness are limited only to child bearing, home keeping and preparation of family chats. This ill feeling towards female generally has negatively affected the attitude of employee towards female leadership in any organization.

The leadership roles are defined in term of influence over group activities. Therefore a leader in the group is a member who posses a number of leadership skills like the ability to organize activities, directing procedure, making policies and controlling inter group relationship.

Udegbe has identified factors militating against women leadership in organization. Which include

- The negative stereotype held by the society about the ability of women to provide good leadership, they are usually perceived as incompetent to provide good leadership
- People tend to make external attribution to success of women in leadership position, it is either she was lucky or the situation was conducive for the task accomplishment, while the success of a male leader is usually attributed to his ability and competence (inter attribution)
- Because there exist a ceiling for women in leadership position, consequently, women do not have a role model and finally, women lack encouragement and appropriate training.

Today, there are more female administrators than were twenty years ago, yet these women who have risen up through the ranks to the positions traditionally dominated by men tend to advocate equity, because of the uneven, gender based division of labour which has been maintained for long. There are growing bodies of literature that suggests that women are evaluated differently from and very often more negatively than men even though they're respective performance are identical. Deawx and Emsler Deawx and Fanynor designed a study to investigate prejudice towards women in the area of intellectual and professional competence. College women were asked to evaluate supposedly published journal articles on linguistics, law, arts, history, educations for each articles, half of the subjects saw a female author name. The result confirmed the hypothesis that college women value the professional work of men more highly than identical work of women.

The major problem militating against women leadership emanates from both the employers and employee, women position is generally believed to be that of culture bearer and kitchen assistant. Despite the activities of government and NGO's that are promoting the right of women, women leadership position still experience discrimination either from the employer or from their subordinate. This study therefore, is an attempt to investigate employee's perception of women leadership in Nigeria private and public organization.

#### **Hypothesis:**

- There will be a significant difference in the attitude of public and private employees towards women leaders.
- Attitude of employee towards women leaders will be negative.
- Sex and marital status will jointly predict attitude towards women leader

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participants:** A total of two hundred and fifty participants participated in the study. It comprised 125 workers from the public sector and 125 workers from the private sector. They were selected from six organizations, which include First Plc, UBA, Sky Bank, Wema Bank, as private sector and Ekiti State Ministry of Education and Ekiti State Primary Education Board from 21-65 years. 146 were female while 104 were male.

**Instrument:** An attitude towards women leaders was developed for the purpose of this research by the researcher. It is a 15 items instrument anchored on five point of strongly agrees to strongly disagree. A pilot study was conducted to establish the reliability and the validity. The validity was established through conference of expert while a split half reliability of 0.78 was gotten through split half reliability techniques. The questionnaire is worded in such a way that higher score reflect negative attitude towards women leader, while lower scores reflect positive attitude. The highest possible score is 75.

**Procedure:** Three hundred questionnaires was distribute to employee in the six chosen organisation through the assistance of the bank secretary after the establishment of a rapport with the bank manager.

### RESULTS

Hypothesis one which states that there will be a significant difference in the attitude of public and private employees towards women leaders was tested using the independent t-test. The result is presented in the Table 1. From the Table above, it can be observed that there is no significant difference between private and public organisation employee in their attitude towards female leader  $t = df (248) = 0.87$   $p > 0.05$  therefore the hypothesis is rejected. But, it can be observed from the mean that employee from both private and public organisation have a negative attitude towards female leaders.

The second hypothesis was tested using the 2x2 analysis of variance. The result is presented in the Table 2. From the Table above, it is observed that there is a significant main and interaction effect of both sex and marital status on employee's attitude towards female leaders  $F (df) 1, 146 = 5.16$   $p < 0.05$  therefore the hypothesis is accepted. A post analysis test using mean scores shows that male have a more

favourable attitude towards female leaders than their female counterparts. Married people are also more favourable disposed to female leaders than the singles.

### DISCUSSION

This study examined attitude of employee to women leaders in private and public organizations. The findings are in support of the expectation. Traditionally, women are expected to play a second fiddle role in the scheme of things. Ehigie<sup>[8]</sup> reported that a woman in a profession is seen as violating the values and norms revolving about the female role her career is seen as contradictory, ambiguous and a source of personal strain. This explains the negative feelings of employee towards women leaders.

This findings is also in line with previous findings which shows that there are generally expected role of women in the society and any deviation from such gender type roles are usually viewed negatively<sup>[9,10]</sup>. One study by Yoder<sup>[11]</sup> found that a sample of primary white college students who read a story about Anne or John at the top of her or his class in medical school, nursing, electrical, engineering day care training, or electrician training from subtle and generally negative effects for the non traditional women. These women were derogated by been judged less likeable, attractive and feminine and were expected not marry or have children.

Another findings that attest to the negative view of women as leader and which prevent their easy climbing of leadership ladder in work place was conducted by Sonnert<sup>[12]</sup> they discovered that among scientist there are great written gender variation in term of career progress made by men and women, it was therefore concluded that the career outcomes of women were less desirable than those of their male counter part.

The present study also found there is no significant difference in the attitude of both private and public employee towards women leaders. This may be because both the employee of private and public organisation exists within the same society and their attitude is a carry over of the general belief of the society about female leaders.

Finally, the findings also show that sex and marital status jointly predict attitude towards female leaders. What is surprising is that male are more favourable disposed to female leaders than their female counterpart. Women are usually portrayed as wicked, callous, strict, tough, difficult, bossy, aggressive, assertive, autocratic and insensitive<sup>[13]</sup> it has be suggest that women who try to enter into leadership positions are seen as flirtations and unable to work as a team member.

Table 1: Showing the difference in the attitude of public and private employees towards women leaders

Group	N	X	SD	DF	T	P
Public	125	45.01	9.10	148	0.87	>0.05
Private	125	44.23	8.03			

Table 2: Showing the result of a 2x2 ANOVA on effect of sex and marital status on attitude towards women leaders

Source variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	P
Sex	440.443	1	440.443	6.60	<0.05
Marital status	489.913	1	489.93	7.40	<0.05
Interaction	342.587	1	342.587	5.16	<0.05
Residual	9682.674	146	66.320		
Total	10943.340	149	73.445		

This is against the common belief that female are usually discriminated against by their male counterpart. As pointed out by Achunine<sup>[6]</sup> women are also thought of as incapable of fully performing administrative functions and having difficulty in gaining peer acceptance. She also reveals that other women usually castigate women aspiring to become a leader. Like poles attracts and unlike poles repels seems to be at play.

The favourable disposition of female leaders by married respondent may be out of personal experiences. A closer relationship with women may have discredited the stereotype perception held of female. As pointed out by Mednick<sup>[14]</sup> women have been trapped for generations by people's willingness to accept their own intuitions about the truth of gender stereotypes. Mednick<sup>[14]</sup> suggests that this need for simple explanations as to why women have trouble with accomplishment is part of the attraction of bandwagon concepts which provide explanations that are intuitively obvious, simple and evidently very satisfying<sup>[14]</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

Gender boundaries are maintained by feminists and anti-feminists, scholars and lay people alike, none of us is free from them<sup>[1]</sup>. This explains the effort of scholars at finding differences rather than similarities that exists between male and female. As pointed out by<sup>[15]</sup> Gender based discrimination is institutionalized in most political, economic, educational, occupational and religious systems. It has therefore become imperative to have a more vigorous campaign against stereotyping women. Historical antecedents have shown that women who have opportunity to occupied position of responsibilities have performed credible well; examples also abound in our present day Nigeria. But more importantly there is the need for women to encourage themselves, belief in the ability and demonstrate the capability to lead rather than paying lip services to women emancipation.

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