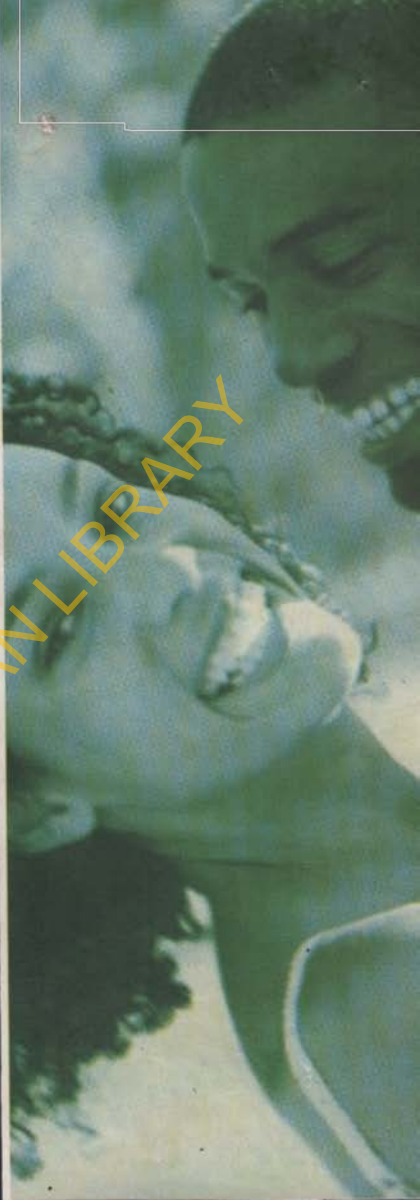


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ATTITUDES OF SUBORDINATES TOWARD WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION

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Abstract

The "study investigated how women in leadership position are perceived accepted and evaluated by their subordinates. In an attempt to elicit subjects' response, the subordinates attitude questionnaire scale was constructed and was administered to 222 workers consisting of 111 males and 111 females drawn from University of Ibadan, Oyo State Secretariat, Nigerian Bottling Company, National Bank of Nigeria, First Banks Nigeria, Chartered Bank, and Cooperative Bank. The t-test of independent sample was used to analyse the research data. The findings revealed that: (a) Male subordinates have negative attitude toward women leader; (b) Subordinates with higher educational qualification have positive attitude towards women leaders; (c) Young subordinates have negative attitudes toward women in leadership position; (d) Christian subordinates have positive attitude toward women in leadership positions than their Moslem counterparts.

Background to Study

The study of women's employment and leadership has been and continues to be of crucial importance in the feminist agenda for change. Traditionally, work place institutions were regarded as masculine value because it involved competition, aggressiveness and achievement. Before women can gain their status in workplace, they have to express those masculine traits or characteristics. The analysis and explanation of processes which generate gender division and inequality in workplace have always been linked to feminist campaign to end sex discrimination and inequality in workplace.

In Nigeria, government has made several decrees aiming at enhancing the status of women in the society. In spite of this, women still face very unique problem both in the process of entering the labour market and in effectively participating on equal grounds with

their colleagues. On the basis of this phenomenon, therefore, this study will be accepted and evaluated by their subordinates.

There is a growing body of literature that suggests that women are evaluated differently from, and very often more negatively than men even though their respective performances are identical. Deaux (1976) has demonstrated that sex of a person is a most salient and memorable individual characteristic. Bern and Bern (1971) stated that sex of a leader may influence the processes and effectiveness of leadership. Sayles and Strains (1977) show that women are taught to be submissive rather than assertive, humble and soft-spoken rather than aggressive, or loud-mouthed. In recruiting employees, for example, women got jobs where they would neither complain nor offer suggestions about issues which affected them. Hence, they were by-passed in decision-making.

According to Sayles (1977), women managers primarily because of their sex (the weaker sex) have an extra challenge. They are looked down upon by their subordinates, male and often times females who resent being bossed by women. Sometime, sex-role expectations are compared with managerial effectiveness. In a study carried out by Solanke (1982), women managers have greater inputs to achieve success because societal orientation towards the profession is male. This is because successful women must push hard and strike to be independent, even though, she may be seen as tough and bitchy. The few female managers who succeed used a lot of weapons such as aggression, coercion, assertion, strictness or harshness because the door of industry especially in executive position, have not swung open to women as they have for men (Stellman, 1977). Frieze, Olsen and Good (1990) report that after controlling for experience, female with Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduates earned significantly less than male counterparts. Breth and Reily (1992) found out that even when female managers exhibit the same career advancing behaviour as male managers, they still earned less money and were offered lower career progress on transfer opportunities. Burke (1996) examined views of 280 women directors to find out why so few women sit on corporate boards. He found out that attitudes of male chief executives and board chairman were seen as the biggest obstacle. Sears (1968) posited that older person has been found to be more prejudiced than younger person and people with less education has also been shown to be prejudiced than better educated counterparts.

Considerable research has also examined sex differences in leadership processes. There were comparisons between male and female leaders in terms of the traditional categories of leaders' behaviour such as initiating structure and consideration. Irby and Brown (1995) in their study investigated male and female perceptions of effective leadership skills. It was found that both males and females perceived male leader authority to be automatic and gender-based. While women's authority was viewed as being earned over time and through hard work, the majority of the respondents reported that they preferred to be supervised by male leaders.

Gutek, Cohen and Tsui (1996) found out that women perceived more discrimination against women than did men and both sexes perceived more discrimination against men. Deaux and Taynor (1973) designed a study to investigate prejudice among women towards women in the area of intellectual and professional competence. The result confirmed the hypothesis that college women value the professional work of men more highly than the identical work.

Lesonen and Burge (1991) use a group of 923 finishing comprehensive vocational institute teachers (494 males and 429 females) to respond to a gender role attitude scale. Findings indicate that female teachers hold more modern gender-role attitudes than the male teachers on almost all items. Male teachers tend to support women's house-keeping roles rather than their roles related to career development and leadership.

Marye (1993), Rayburn (1986) disclosed that for about 2000 years now, the Bible has been an instrument for the promotion of ideas associated with women being seen as evil and as inferior to men. She discloses that religion is a form of oppression against women.

Results

The t-test for independent sample was the statistics employed to test the hypotheses.

Table 1
Independent t-test summary table showing the attitude toward women leaders as determined by age, sex, educational qualification and religion.

Sex	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t	P
Male	111	91.2	16.0	230	2.37	<0.05
Female	111	98.9	13.0			
Age						
Young ≤ 30years	118	91.9	14.2	220	2.05	<0.05
Old ≤31years	104	95.7	15.2			
Educational Qualification:						
Lower	36	93.5	18.1	220	0.03	<0.05
Higher	186	93.6	14.2			
Religion:						
Christians	167	95.3	13.7	219	2.94	0.05
Moslems	54	88.6	16.7			

The results as indicated in the above table show the following: male subordinates have negative attitude towards women leaders than female subordinate ($t = 2.75$; $df = 220$; $p < 0.05$), young subordinates have negative attitude towards women leaders than old subordinates ($t = 2.05$; $df = 220$; $p < 0.05$). There is no significant difference on the level of educational qualification of subjects and attitude towards women leaders ($t = 0.03$; $df = 220$; $p > 0.05$); and Christian subordinates have positive attitude towards women leaders than their Moslem counterparts.

Discussion

The first hypothesis which stated that male subordinates will have negative attitude towards leaders more than female subordinates was confirmed. This finding has support in earlier research work by Ben and Ben (1971), Solanke (1982), Stellman (1977), Irby and Brown (1995), Deaux (1970) and Burge (1991). They found out that women are being perceived by men not to have leadership qualities.

The second hypothesis which stated that subordinates with higher educational qualification will have positive attitude towards women leaders more than their counterparts with lower educational qualification was not confirmed. The result is in contrasts to Sears (1968) who found out that people with less educational qualification have been shown to be prejudice than better educated counterparts.

The third hypothesis which stated that young subordinates will have negative attitude towards women leaders more than old subordinates was confirmed. This finding is not in support of studies of Sears (1968) and Bunke (1996) who found out that old people have negative attitude towards women managers. Sears (1918) posited that old persons have being found to be more prejudiced than young persons. Burke (1996) found that Chief Executive and Board Chairman were equally seen to be the biggest obstacles to women.

The fourth hypothesis which stated that Christian subordinates will have positive attitude toward women leaders than their Moslem counterparts was confirmed. This finding is contrary to earlier research works by Marye (1993) and Raybum (1986). Though they didn't differentiate between religions but they supported that in those days, the Church discriminated against the women.

Conclusively, therefore, research evidence have shown that sex, age and religion of subordinates clearly predicated positive attitude predisposition towards women in leadership. It also suggests

that Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, National Council of Women Society, Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative, and other Non-Governmental Organizations should do more to educate people in their attitude change towards women in leadership position.

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