

The Effects of Gender, Gender Role Orientation and Attachment of Labels on the Evaluation of Class Leaders.

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Abstract: This study, which was designed to find out the effect of gender, gender role orientation and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders, was carried out using 194 research participants drawn from among the students of the University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. 116 were females and 78 were males with an average age of 20.23. The instruments used were the Schein Descriptive Index and the Bern Sex Role Inventory. Five variations of the Schein Descriptive Index (along the following five labels: class leader in general, efficient male class leader, efficient female class leader, inefficient male class leader and inefficient female class leader) were responded to by the research participants. Seven Different hypotheses were tested using 2X4X5 ANOVA. Findings revealed that gender role orientation had a significant effect on the evaluation of class leaders. Furthermore there were no significant effects of gender, and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders and no interaction effects of gender and gender role orientation, gender and attachment of labels and gender, gender role orientation and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.

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1. Introduction

Many studies have been conducted to measure the effect of gender stereotypes on the evaluation of male and female staffs in various work places. Such studies have taken into consideration the various positions in workplaces and the effectiveness of the occupants of the various positions. There have been countless studies of men and women in managerial positions and peoples' perception of their effectiveness (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992).

Identical behaviours from men and women are often interpreted differently because perceivers attach different labels to the same behaviours enacted by men and women. One reason for this is gender stereotypes.

Schroers (2009) posits that gender stereotypes has many definitions but the common characteristics among all these definitions are: categorical / consensual / socially shared / widely shared / beliefs / expectations / mental associations / perceptions / about the characteristics / (personality) traits / behaviours / attributes / ascribed to individuals on the basis of their gender / about women and men (Powell, Butterfield and Parent, 2002; Duehr & Bono, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie & Reichard, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007). He quoted Heilman (1997) when she writes, "A stereotype is a set of attributes ascribed to a group

and believed to characterize its individual members simply because they belong to that group" (p. 879).

Prevailing gender stereotype may have serious consequences, especially for women. Upon meeting someone for the first time, people automatically ascribe a sex-stereotypical personality to that person, whether true or not, because the individual belongs to the group of men or women. Paid work traditionally has been seen as a man's domain. Although this is no longer what obtains, the stereotype still tends to exist (Heilman, 1997). Especially the position of leadership has continued to be described with typically male ascribed attributes (e.g. Schein, 1973, 1975; Powell & Butterfield, 1979, 1989; Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002).

Research indicates that the female leader will be described differently in terms of her personality, and may experience more covert bias than the male leader (Butler & Geis, 1990). Evidence exists that there is a decline in the epidemic of unconcealed bias in differential ratings and decisions about promotions of men and women, women leaders are still faced with obstacles associated with clandestine resistance to their influence attempts (Schroers, 2009).

One of the studies that first assessed gender-based evaluation of workers was carried out by Schein in the 1970's. Revelations from these investigations showed that management and hence, leadership was viewed as masculine; a phenomenon often referred to as "think manager-think male"

(Schein, 1973, 1975) hence the evaluation of women, as managers (leaders), was unfavourable as a result of this.

In 1989 Brenner, Tomkiewicz, and Schein replicated Schein's earlier work and found that the attitudes of male managers were remarkably similar to those held by male managers in the early 1970s. For the males, there was a large and significant resemblance between the ratings of men and managers, while there was a near-zero, insignificant resemblance between the ratings of women and managers.

Powell, Butterfield & Parent (2002) found out in their study that managerial stereotyping in favour of male sex has reduced than observed in earlier studies; nevertheless, they reported that, a good manager was still predominantly stereotyped as masculine.

As the number of women in management roles increases and organizations place a greater emphasis on diversity, a subsequent change in perceptions of women as leader-like is expected. To test this notion, Duehr & Bono, 2006, examined gender and management stereotypes of male and female managers and students. Results revealed considerable change in male managers' view of women over the past 30 years, as evidenced by greater congruence between their perceptions of women and successful managers and strong endorsement of agentic and task-oriented leadership characteristics for women. Stereotypes held by male students changed less, remaining strikingly similar to stereotypes held by male managers 15 years ago. Across samples, there was a general agreement in the characteristics of managers but less agreement about the characteristics of women. They also found men somewhat less likely than women to attribute successful manager characteristics to women. Respondents with positive past experience with female managers tended to rate women higher on management characteristics.

In one study by Adebayo and Ogbonna, (2009), the evaluation of successful male and female managers in terms of likeability was examined. Findings indicated that both ratings of successful female managers and successful male managers were similar to those of likeable managers; implying that both successful male managers and successful female managers are perceived to have attributes commonly ascribed to likable managers. Contrary to the think manager-think male phenomenon, results generally indicated that to think likeable manager is to think both successful male manager and successful female manager.

Adebayo and Ogbonna, (2010), also examined the effect of gender and different

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managerial labels on the evaluation of managers and they found that there was no significant gender effect on the ratings of managers, characteristics/labels of managers did not significantly affect ratings of managers, similarly there was no significant interaction effect of gender and managerial labels on the ratings of leaders.

The literature reviewed above indicates that female leaders are more unfavourably evaluated than their male counterparts and that the gender of the evaluators also affects the evaluation of leaders. While many studies have used students as research respondents in investigating gender stereotypes in relation to leadership, it is unfortunate however, that gender stereotypes in relation to leadership peculiar to the student population (e.g. class leadership) have been largely ignored. It is not surprising that the attachment of labels has an effect in the study of gender stereotypes and requisite leadership characteristics of leaders. This is so because research has shown that competence and the attachment of labels are two main dimensions on which leaders tend to be perceived and evaluated. However, most research on gender stereotypes and leadership have to a large extent focused on the application of positive labels on evaluation. The negative label attachment has been largely ignored. The gender role orientations of the evaluators viz-a-viz gender stereotype in leadership perception have also generated little research interest. It is therefore necessary to investigate the application of both positive and negative labels and the effect of the gender role orientation of the evaluator (students) on the evaluation of class leaders.

The present study therefore aimed to ascertain whether the gender of the class leaders, the gender of the student evaluators, the gender role orientation of the student evaluators and the labels attached to the class leaders will significantly affect their evaluation by the followers (i. e. students)

Based on the above mentioned, we therefore state the following hypotheses:

- i. There will be a significant main effect of gender on the evaluation of class leaders.
- ii. There will be a significant main effect of gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders.
- iii. There will be a significant main effect of attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.

- iv. There will be an interaction effect of gender and gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders
- v. There will be an interaction effect of gender and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.
- vi. There will be an interaction effect of gender role orientation and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.
- vii. There will be an interaction effect of gender, gender role orientation and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.

2. Material and Methods

Participants: One hundred and ninety four undergraduate students, drawn from the University of Ado-Ekiti, participated in the study. One hundred and sixteen (116) female and seventy eight (78) male undergraduate with average age of 20.23 was used for the study. Random sampling technique through which respondents were randomly selected was used for this study.

Instruments: The Schein Descriptive Index and the Bern Sex Role Inventory were used in this study. The Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973) contains 93 adjectives and descriptive terms. It is used to assess attitudes towards male and female leaders. The Bern Sex Role Inventory is a 40 item inventory designed to measure sex role orientation which is an individual's acquired/learned sex typed behaviour in interpersonal relationship.

Five variations of the Schein Descriptive Index were used in this study, respondents were asked to describe class leaders in general, efficient male class leaders, inefficient male class leaders, efficient female class leaders and inefficient female class leaders. Demographic information like age, sex and department was also obtained.

Procedure: Copies of the questionnaires were administered to students of the University of Ado-Ekiti. Most of the respondents were found in the lecture rooms at the University of Ado-Ekiti campus. The first section measured the demographic information of the respondents. These include: age, gender, and department. The researcher also personally retrieved the questionnaire from the respondents, and thanked them for their participation. There were 5 variations of the questionnaires dispensed. Respondents did not know that five variations existed.

Design: This study is a survey research.

Statistical Analysis: Data collected from the field were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The seven generated hypotheses were analyzed using 2X4X5 ANOVA. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis to ensure accuracy.

3. Results

Table 1: Summary of 2x4x5 ANOVA showing the main and interaction effect of gender, gender role orientation and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders

Source	SS	MS	df	F	P
Gender(A)	67.75	67.75	1	.04	> .05
Representative Type (B)	7756.28	1939.07	4	1.08	> .05
Gender role orientation (C)	57271.62	19090.54	3	10.64	< .05
A X B	5818.48	1454.62	4	0.81	> .05
A X C	6993.42	2331.14	3	1.30	> .05
B X C	23483.46	1956.96	12	1.09	> .05
A X B X C	9605.73	1067.30	9	0.60	> .05
Error	270689.58	1792.65	151		
Total	392797.28		187		

SS = sum of mean, MS = mean square, df= degree of freedom

Outcome of statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant main effect of sex on the evaluation of class leaders [F (1, 187) = .04, P > .05]. However, there was a significant main effect of gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders [F (3, 187) = 10.64, P < .05]. There was no significant main effect of attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders [F (4, 187) = 1.08, P > .05]. There was also no significant interaction effect of gender and gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders [F (3, 187) = 1.30, P > .05]. Similarly, there was no significant interaction effect of gender and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders [F (4, 187) = .81, P > .05]. There was also no significant interaction effect of attachment of labels and gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders [F (12, 187) = 1.09, P > .05]. In the same vein, there was no significant interaction effect of gender, attachment of labels and gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders [F (9, 187) = .60, P > .05].

4. Discussions

The result of the research shows that there was no significant main effect of gender on the evaluation of class leaders, thus hypothesis one is rejected. This is contrary to the findings of other researchers investigating similar phenomenon.

Schein's study (1973 & 1975) revealed that the characteristics associated with leadership were more likely to be held by men than by women, indicating that both the gender of the leader and the gender of the perceivers affected the outcome of their evaluations. Also Brenner, Tomkiewicz, and Schein (1989) found that gender significantly affected the ratings of leaders.

However, the result of the present study supports Adebayo and Ogbonna (2010) who found that gender had no significant main effect on the evaluation of managers (leaders). Reasons offered for their findings were the levels of exposure and education of the sample used for the research; they used final year part time students of the University of Jos.

Hypothesis two, which stated that there would be a significant main effect of gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders, is however confirmed. This suggests that gender role orientation influences the evaluation of class leaders. The finding is consistent with various studies that also investigated a similar topic. In a research conducted by Kent & Moss (1994), it was also found that gender role orientation had a significant effect on emergent leaders than gender.

In similar vein Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) investigated whether there has been a change in men's and women's stereotypes of leader and found that gender role orientation still significantly influenced the evaluation of leaders

Hypothesis three which stated that there would be a significant main effect of attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders (leaders) was rejected. This suggests that neither the labels of 'efficient male,' 'inefficient male,' 'efficient female,' 'inefficient female' nor "class representative in general" influences subjects' evaluation. This is consistent with the findings of Adebayo and Ogbonna (2010). They also found that attachment of managerial labels had no significant effect on the evaluation of managers (leaders). To them, managers (leaders) are largely evaluated similarly irrespective of the labels attached to them. This could be as a result of the fact that only positive labels were used in the study, whereas, in the present study, both positive and negative labels were tested.

Inconsistent with the findings of this research is the general indication in extant literature that even when male and female managers were labeled as being successful, males still perceived male successful leaders more than female successful leaders as having characteristics necessary for successful leadership.

Hypothesis four which stated that there would be an interaction effect of gender and gender

role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders is also rejected

Hypothesis five which tested for the interaction effect of gender and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders was also rejected. This is consistent with the findings of Adebayo and Ogbonna (2010). They reported that gender and attachment of managerial labels had no interaction effect on the ratings of leaders. However, O'Sullivan, Sauer, and Kennedy (2002) found an interaction effect of gender and characteristics perceived necessary for successful leadership on the ratings of leaders.

The findings of this research also revealed that there is no interaction effect of gender role orientation and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders, therefore hypothesis six is also rejected. This could be as result of the exposure of the research participants to seeing women in leadership positions in the university environment.

Hypothesis seven is also rejected as the findings of this study revealed that there is no interaction effect of gender, gender role orientation and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This research investigated the effect of gender, gender role orientation and attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders. Results of this study revealed that gender did not significantly affect the evaluation of class representative. Thus the gender of the perceiver and the perceived had no effect on the evaluation of class leaders.

Gender role orientation is found to be significant in the evaluation of class leaders. There is a significant mean difference between masculine and androgyny (40.06), and masculine and undifferentiated (48.04) on the evaluation of class leaders. There is also a significant mean difference between feminine and undifferentiated (27.32), and androgyny and masculine(-40.06). A significant mean difference also exists between undifferentiated and masculine (-48.04), and undifferentiated and feminine (-27.32).

Attachment of labels, such as efficient male, inefficient male, efficient female, and inefficient female, also did not significantly influence the evaluation of class leaders.

There was also no interaction effect of gender, and gender role orientation on the evaluation of class leaders.

Also, no interaction effect was found for gender and the attachment of labels. Gender role orientation and attachment of labels had no interaction effect on the evaluation of class leaders.

Lastly, there was no interaction effect of gender, gender role orientation and the attachment of labels on the evaluation of class leaders.

The result of this research could have been as a result of the exposure that is inherent in the university environment where the research respondents were gotten from. The insignificance of gender could be as a result of the fact that respondents have been exposed to both male and female in leadership position on the school campus. For example, almost all departments in the university have a female lecturer on their members of staff and as such respondents are no longer surprised that females are in leadership positions.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

Almost all the studies conducted to investigate the effect of gender on the evaluation of leaders have used educated people or university undergraduates who have exposure to formal education to rate leaders. It is therefore recommended that in future, people who lack formal education should be used as research participants in order to have a basis for comparison between educated and uneducated people in their ratings of leaders. This is especially necessary in a society like Nigeria where there is high preponderance of illiterates.

Also during the course of this study, many of the participants used were very reluctant to participate in the study based on the lengthiness of the questionnaire used. It is also therefore recommended that in future, a shorter form of the questionnaire be administered in order to save participants' time and to raise their interest in the items on the questionnaire.

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