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Gender and Transformational Leadership of the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund in Bayelsa States, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study investigated the relationship between gender and transformational leadership of the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund in Bayelsa State. The researcher adopted the case study design. The population consisted of 119 employees of the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund in Bayelsa State. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit the data. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses, and the SPSS version 24 software was used. An analysis of the data showed a significant correlation between gender and transformational leadership. The findings indicated that male leaders are more inclined towards intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, whereas female leaders demonstrate a greater propensity for individualistic consideration and inspirational motivation. The study concludes that both male and female leaders have transformational leadership traits and that equal opportunity should be given to them in work organizations to reduce gender inequality and discrimination. The researcher recommends that the management of NSITF should provide equal opportunity for both male and female leaders to reduce gender discrimination. That female leader should be allowed to participate in leadership roles like their male counterparts.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, gender, male leaders, female leaders, leadership style

1. Introduction

Throughout history, femininity has been characterized by societal stereotypes that characterize women as having dependence, submissiveness, and conformity, resulting in the perception that they lack leadership qualities. The misconception that leadership consists solely of the display of dominance or authority demonstrates the masculine bias. Many individuals, irrespective of gender, continue to be unfamiliar with the concept of a woman in a leadership position, even though the number of women in such positions has increased. The entrenchment of traditional leadership norms presents a significant challenge in pursuing changing perceptions. As in numerous others, males have conventionally occupied leadership roles in our society. Leaders are often described using characteristics such as competitive, assertive, or authoritative, which are generally associated with masculinity. The existence of a female leader is generally regarded as uncommon, and individuals who achieve leadership roles are often praised for their apparent similarity to men (Hearn & Parkin, 1986). An instance of this can be seen in the frequent characterization of Margaret Thatcher as the 'best man' in Great Britain.

Eagly and Karau (2002) outline two distinct forms of prejudice that can be identified about women in leadership positions. In general, prejudice originates from misconceptions that are formed as a result of social stereotypes and definitions of gender roles and characteristics. This gender stereotype not only promotes prejudice but also stops women from advancing in their managerial careers around the world. The general notion that female managers are inferior to male managers in terms of leadership skills and competencies is another element that contributes to the bias against female managers (Herrera et al., 2012). As a result of these biases against women, advancement to the highest levels of management within an organization requires additional effort on the part of female managers. In an effort to progress towards executive roles within an organization, female leaders encounter and have to overcome the glass ceiling. The factors contributing to this challenge may differ across cultures and organizations (Palacio, 2010). Male subordinates may resist complying with the directives of female top-level supervisors for various reasons, even when these individuals attain executive-level positions within an organization (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In the last decade, the necessity of increasing the number of women in leadership positions has grown substantially.

Alzougool et al. (2015) assessed a leader's effectiveness based on the degree to which they were able to instruct their team in the various skills required to complete tasks, including communication, goal-setting, planning, cooperation, creativity, and task orientation. Hence, this research examined the link between gender and the transformational leadership of the Nigerian social insurance trust fund in Bayelsa State.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Concept of Leadership*

In recent decades, the concept of leadership has transcended from simply exerting the leader's will on followers and eliciting obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation to focusing on improving behaviours, thoughts, and motivations in order to attain goals that are beneficial to both individuals and groups (Eklund et al., 2017). The leader's identity remains significant and is pertinent to the ongoing discourse on gender and leadership (Eklund et al., 2017).

Northouse (2004) defines leadership as the process of influencing a group of individuals to accomplish a shared goal. Influence is the capacity to effect change and inspire those who follow you (Herrera et al., 2012). Furthermore, leadership, as defined by Yukl (2002), is the process of having influence over others in order to foster consensus and a shared comprehension of the actions and methods that are most effective in attaining common objectives. While both Northouse (2004) and Yukl (2002) use the word "influence" to describe leadership, and they agree that reaching group goals is the final goal, neither author makes any gender-based distinctions in leadership (Herrera et al., 2012). A comprehensive evaluation of the correlation between gender and leadership is imperative owing to its profound importance. The characteristics and skills of good leaders have been the subject of much literature. Those whose names have come to be associated with exceptional leadership are Jack Welch, Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk. However, what are some commonalities between Christine Lagarde, Indra Nooyi, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and Ursula Burns? These women are just a fraction of the many whose names have come to be associated with exceptional leadership and whose methods differ from the norm for women in positions of power (Herrera et al., 2012).

Sullivan and Decker (2001) asserted that women are perceived as possessing greater communion and less agency than men. They are also regarded as being more caring, collegial, and social, actively listening, emotionally connected, exhibiting maternal instincts, and showing an interest in relational exchanges. Men are anticipated to possess agentic qualities such as ambition, assertiveness, and competitiveness.

Eagly and Karau (2002) observed that a mismatch between the expectations of leadership and the characteristics of female leaders leads to unfair assessments of women in leadership positions. As noted by Eagly and Karau (2002), the incongruity between the qualities expected of female leaders and the expectations placed upon them results in unjust evaluations of women occupying leadership roles. While there have been certain developments suggesting an increasing acknowledgement of androgynous leadership, academics continue to emphasize that the traditional notion of a "successful leader" remains primarily linked to masculine attributes (Koenig et al., 2011), as exemplified by the saying, "Think male, think leader" (Schein, 1973). According to the role congruity theory (Eagly et al., 2003), a double standard may exist with regard to female leadership, resulting in (a) less favourable evaluations of women's leadership potential and (b) less favourable evaluations of women's actual leadership behaviours.

2.2. *Theoretical Framework*

Each research undertaking is built upon a particular theory grounded in the statements of the ontological and epistemological paradigms. This research paper is not different. This study is founded on the social role theory. Social Role Theory posits that gender stereotypes originated from the conventional expectations that positioned women as homemakers and males as family heads and leaders (Eagly et al., 2003). As a result of this stereotype, the capability and capacity of female leaders are erroneously perceived, particularly during performance evaluations, where they are rated lower than their male counterparts (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

Gipson (2017) states that no substantial disparities in style and achievement exist between men and women, notwithstanding the prevailing stereotypes. Gipson argues that although there are discernible variations in the leadership styles of men and women, neither gender unambiguously has an advantage in all circumstances.

2.3. *Gender and Transformational Leadership*

Various leadership styles exist, and it is recognized that certain leadership characteristics are influenced by gender, resulting in a lower representation of women in leadership roles compared to men (Martell & DeSmet, 2001; Karsten, 2006; Walenta & Kirchner, 2011; Badura et al., 2007). According to Callahan and Grunberg (2016), personality has an impact on the leadership style that a leader prefers, and gender is also likely to influence the preferred leadership style.

Leadership styles influence important employee outcomes, such as performance, satisfaction, and perceptions of that leader's effectiveness (Bass & Avolio, 1995). According to Hager (2018), women tend to implement the principles of transformational leadership more frequently. As a result, the female leadership style is characterized by effective communication, collaboration, accountability, inclusive thinking, empathy, and employee trust.

According to Sullivan and Decker (2001) and Nayab (2010), transformational leadership seeks to accomplish substantial cultural change by actively helping the company achieve its objective. Transformational leaders focus on the future and their concerns for the greater good (Saeed et al., 2014). It is a leadership style that focuses on the individual and their needs, which can improve the work environment and innovation among employees (Bass, 1997). Further, Druskat (1994) states that transformational leaders seek to motivate and enable employees to achieve the organization's objectives (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). This style of leadership also fosters emotional attachments and commitment to the followers. A research study demonstrates that followers are more motivated, engaged, and content when their leaders employ transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This positive impact extends to organizational, community, and employee outcomes.

Many scholarly works contend that transformative leadership adopts more "feminine" characteristics (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fletcher, 2004). Along with the rise of transformational leadership, organizations began to emphasize

employee agency and teamwork via decentralization and more flexibility in organizational structure (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fletcher, 2004). Transformational leaders inspire their followers by effectively conveying a vision and using symbols and emotional appeals to raise awareness. They motivate their followers to adopt new perspectives and treat them fairly and individually (Antonakis et al., 2003; Kark et al., 2012).

From the perspective of gender association, either men or women can demonstrate a transformational leadership style, but it matches the natural behaviour of women better (Raes et al., 2013). According to Vinkenburger et al. (2011), transformational leadership behaviour encompasses these intrinsic behavioural characteristics, including support, understanding, and socialization. Remarkably, the research undertaken by Ayman et al. (2009) indicated that the effective rating bestowed upon female leaders by their male subordinates (but not females) decreased in proportion to the degree to which they embraced the transformational leadership style.

3. Methodology

The research design is a road map that guides the activities of any study. The researcher used a case study design, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of the topic under study. The population was all the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund staff in Bayelsa State. The researcher gathered 119 workers from the administrative unit of the organization, which was used as the sample size. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit the data. An expert peer review was done to ensure validity, and the Cronbach alpha statistical technique was used to measure the reliability. The reliability outcome showed that all items scored above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1998), which was acceptable and accepted. The SPSS version 24 software was used to test the hypotheses, and the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was applied.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Test of Research Hypotheses

The researcher formulated two hypotheses, and they were tested with the aid of the SPSS statistical techniques.

4.1.1. Hypothesis One

- H_{01} : There is no relationship between male leaders and transformational leadership.

		Male Leaders	Transformational Leadership
Male leaders	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.610**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	110	110
Transformational leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.610**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	110	110

Table 1: Correlation Outcome of the Relationship between Male Leaders and Transformational Leadership

*A 2-Tailed Correlation Coefficient of 0.05 Indicates Significance

Source: Survey Data, 2023

- Decision: The correlation coefficient calculated $r = 0.610^{**}$ showed a significant relationship between male leaders and transformational leadership. The relationship was significant at $p = < 0.05$. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis states a significant relationship between male leaders and transformational leadership.

4.1.2. Hypothesis Two

- H_{02} : There is no relationship between female leaders and transformational leadership.

		Female Leaders	Transformational Leadership
Female leaders	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.089
	N	110	110
Transformational Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.712**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.
	N	110	110

Table 2: A Correlation Result Illustrating the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Female Leadership

**Correlation Significant at 0.05

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The correlation coefficient $r = 0.712^{**}$ shows a strong, significant relationship between female leaders and transformational leadership. The relationship was significant at $p = < 0.05$. Based on this outcome, the alternative hypothesis, which posits a significant correlation between transformational leadership and female leaders, is accepted as the null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

5. Discussion

The study examined the relationship between gender and transformational leadership of the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund in Bayelsa State. The correlation coefficient outcome $r = 0.610^{**}$ showed a significant relationship between male leaders and transformational leadership. This finding supports the idea that transformational leaders have a favourable impact on their followers, helping them to accomplish both personal and professional objectives. The result further revealed that male leaders have a relationship with transformational leadership. Mentoring and inspiring their followers to reach their full potential is a hallmark of transformational leadership (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Inspiring their people to achieve long-term goals and objectives is a hallmark of transformational leadership.

The study measured the degree to which male leaders attend to followers' needs and act as mentors to their subordinates. This was examined under individualized consideration, and the responses indicated that male leaders have low individualized consideration, which deals with leaders' empathy, support and continuous communication as well as responding to followers' challenges (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fletcher, 2004). The findings further showed that male leaders are more concerned about intellectual stimulation and idealized influence. This result is in line with other studies which argued that male leaders develop vision and strategy, take risks, instil pride, and command respect to influence followers (Sullivan & Decker, 2001; Nayab, 2010).

Furthermore, the second hypothesis measured the relationship between female leaders and transformational leadership. The correlation outcome $r = 0.712^{**}$ showed a significant relationship between female leaders and transformational leadership. The findings indicated that female leaders are more emotional and have a high individualized consideration and inspirational motivation. This finding supports the notion that the role of a transformational leader might be more closely associated with the gender role traditionally associated with women. It further suggests that followers perceive a stronger correlation between the transformational style and the feminine characteristics of leaders.

Many scholarly works contend that transformative leadership adopts more "feminine" characteristics (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fletcher, 2004). Effective leadership entails elevating followers' consciousness and improving their values and objectives (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders inspire their followers by effectively expressing a clear vision and using symbols and emotional appeals to raise their consciousness. They urge their followers to think new ways and treat people fairly and individually (Antonakis et al., 2003; Kark et al., 2012). The emergence of transformational leadership coincided with organizational changes that emphasized employee empowerment and collaboration through a more flexible and decentralized structure (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fletcher, 2004). As illustrated by the assertions of Eagly and Carli (2003) and Vinkenburg et al. (2011), individuals are prompted to reconsider the essence of leadership when the leadership context undergoes a transformation. They propose that the essential qualities for exhibiting transformational behaviours are collaboration, interpersonal interactions, and power-sharing, traditionally associated with feminine or communal qualities.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher concludes that there is a relationship between gender and transformational leadership. That is, male leaders are more concerned about intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, while female leaders have more traits of individualistic consideration and inspirational motivation. The study concludes that both male and female leaders have transformational leadership traits and that equal opportunity should be given to them in work organizations to reduce gender inequality and discrimination. The researcher recommends that the management of NSITF should provide equal opportunity for both male and female leaders to reduce gender discrimination. That female leader should be allowed to participate in leadership roles like their male counterparts.

7. References

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