
Managerial competency in government owned organizations: a comparative analysis of gender differences in Nigeria by Arugu and Olori.

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Managerial competency, government owned organisations, gender differences, power structure, male and female managers

Abstract

This study involves a comparative examination of gender differences in managerial competency of government owned organizations. The population consisted of 45 males and 35 females' respondents drawn from the selected organizations through convenience sampling. Findings indicated that men predominantly occupied the managerial positions in government owned organizations under review and individual differences seemed more striking than gender differences because the structure of the organization shaped the behavior of how the managers functioned. It was also revealed that in the area of effectiveness on the use of control measures, female managers succeeded because they were able to draw upon what was unique to their experiences as women. They have learned how to manage effectively without relying on the control of resources and power to motivate others. Women who were hitherto successful have not received much recognition or credit. The male managers in this study were able to outperform their female counterparts in all skill areas because of the organizations' power structures although women approached these challenges in similar fashion like their male counterparts. In other words, if women possessed power within an organization, their effectiveness will be similar to that of men. Gender differences will play a limited role where there is a balance in the power structure.

Therefore, managers should not be judged based on their gender but as individuals. In view of the above findings and conclusion, it was recommended that organizations should change their structures and thinking patterns in terms of recruitment/placement. Female managers should not be discriminated against, but should also be given an opportunity. In other words, the power structure must be even. The study therefore demands a re-evaluation of the role of women in corporate-life.

Introduction

One of the hottest issues in the workplace is what makes a good boss. Throw in the question of gender and everyone has an opinion, an experience or a horror story. Are men or women better leaders? Which sex can you trust more? Can women make decisions? Who do you prefer to work for?

The importance of managerial performance and effectiveness has long been recognized by major writers such as, Drucker (1955) in Bass (2000) who propounded that: the manager is the

dynamic life-giving element in every business. Without their leadership, resources of production remain resources and never become finished products. In a competitive economy, the quality and performance of manager determine the success of a business; indeed they determine its survival. For the quality and performance of its managers in the only effective advantage an enterprise in a competitive economy can have.

Therefore, the overall responsibility of management can be seen as the attainment of a given goal of an organization. The success and ultimate survival of the organization is therefore dependent on the attainment of its aims.

Therefore, organizations in an effort to achieve their objectives effectively and efficiently strive to enhance their performance by keeping in their employment suitably qualified persons that possess appropriate managerial competencies. Aaltio (2002) maintained that in the recruitment and selection process, investigations into (supposedly) neutral personnel procedures have found that information criteria based on gendered stereotypes are maintained in selection decisions. It has also been discovered that there is a gap between the rational procedure of specifying scientifically the job, and the informal evaluation of recruiting candidates and evaluating their suitability.

Competence approaches are among the techniques that claim to measure this suitability e.g. behaviour, skills, knowledge and understanding crucial to effective managerial performance. Since the basis for the techniques are basically scientific, they are said to provide organizations with a gender-neutral form of assessment.

Over the years several studies have been carried out on gender differences in Leadership Styles and Gender Role Stereotyping in the workplace, but a landmark meta-analysis of which gender best possess the managerial competencies required for achieving corporate performances is yet to receive any rigorous study. This is the gap, which this study tends to close. Hence the following hypotheses were raised.

- Ho₁; There is no significant difference between male managers' leadership skills and that of their female counterpart
- Ho₂; There is no significant difference between male managers achievement oriented skills and that of their female counterpart.
- Ho₃; There is no significant difference between male managerial interpersonal skills and that of their female counterpart.
- Ho₄; There is no significant difference between male managers' problem-solving skills and that of their female counterpart.

Literature Review

Every manager in any organization irrespective of his/her gender, (i.e. male or female) can play out similar roles in the achievement of the organization's set objectives. In other words managers often perform different roles bound by their position. These, they are able to do based on the managerial skills they possess. What makes a good manager? What characteristics contribute to managerial effectiveness? The answer could come from an understanding of either what managers actually do or what they are expected to do. In other words, an understanding of the managerial role(s) would help identify the requisite attributes of a manager.

In order to achieve certain objectives, the manager in an organization is invested with formal authority and status, giving rise to roles; with authority comes status; the status leads to various interpersonal relationships, which influence access to information; and information enables the manager to make decisions and strategies." Following this line of argument,

Mintzberg (1975) as cited by Acker (1992) in his analysis of the manager's job, both folklore and fact, identifies ten roles managers play: three interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader and liaison), three informational roles (monitor, disseminator and spokesman) and four decisional roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator). He suggested the following eight skills as critical for effective performance in the above-cited roles: Peer relations, leadership, conflict resolution, decision making under ambiguity, information processing, resource allocation, entrepreneurship and introspection.

Bennis (1984), in his five-year longitudinal study of successful managers in the public and private sectors, discovered four common traits or competencies in them: Management of attention (Good managers hold a compelling vision that can mobilize action), Management of meaning (To make their vision apparent to others, good managers communicate effectively so that followers personally enroll in the vision), Management of trust (Good managers are ideologically and/or behaviourally consistent over time and people can count on them), and Management of self (Good managers know themselves and employ their strengths and skills effectively).

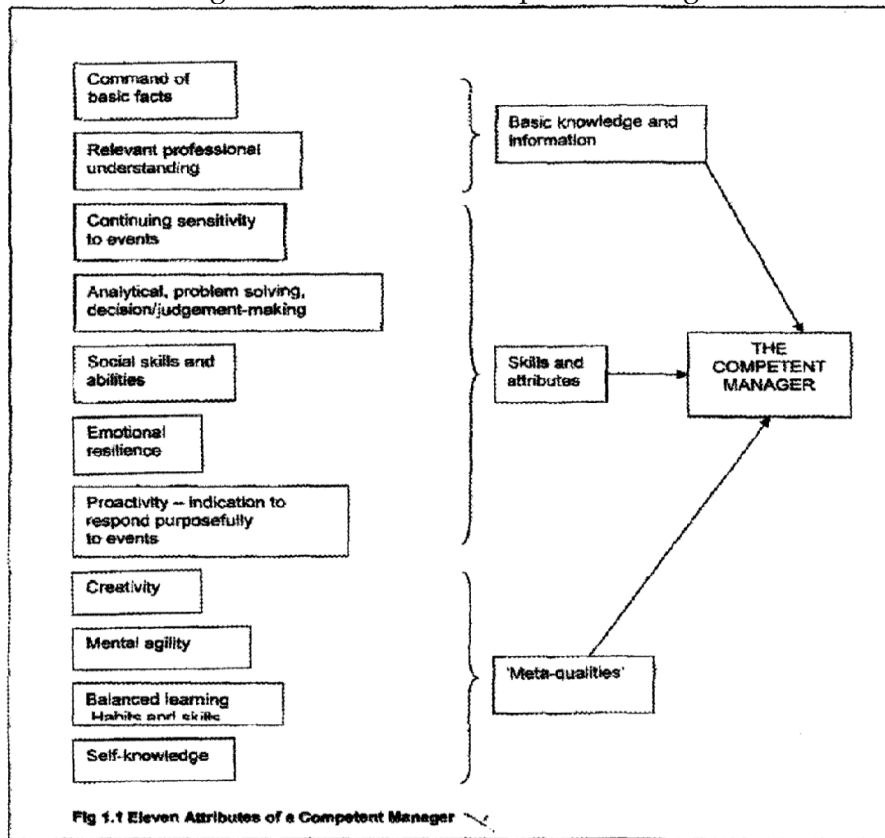
Katz (1974) identified three broad categories of skills as necessary for an effective manager: the technical, the human, and the conceptual skills. The 'technical' refers to skills for dealing with "things" and subject specialties, while the 'human' refers to skills related to the various aspects of dealing with people. The 'conceptual' involves clarity of thought and the ability to see the enterprise as a whole and in the perspective of the industry and the nation.

Rao and Selvan (1992) in their study of the strengths and weaknesses of senior executives in India found six categories of characteristics that were most frequently mentioned by senior executives as indicative of managerial competence. The categories are:

1. Technical competence (good understanding of the job and qualifications).
2. Systems competence (analytical and problem-solving skills, work planning and work organization, and result orientation).
3. Interpersonal skills.
4. Group/team-building competence.
5. Leadership and
6. Other personal characteristics (hard work, commitment, etc.)

Pedier et al (2012) identified 11 attributes, which they found were possessed by competent managers and lacking in not-so-competent managers - across organizations. These are: command of basic facts, relevant professional knowledge, continuing sensitivity to events, analytical and problem solving skills, social skills, emotional resilience, proactivity, creativity, mental agility, balanced learning skills and habits, and self-knowledge. The attributes are grouped into three different levels but they are interconnected and the possession of one contributes to the possession of another as shown in the figure below.

Fig. 1: Attributes of a competent Manager



Source: Pedler, M., Burgoyne, J and Boydell, T. A. 2012.

Basic knowledge and information is needed by the manager in making decisions and taking action. This is the foundation level. These specific skills and attributes directly affect behaviour and performance. The skill or quality of continuing sensitivity to events allows managers to acquire basic knowledge and information. The meta-qualities' allow managers to develop and deploy skills and resources, and to develop the situation-specific skills needed in particular circumstances.

Although these attributes as described by various researchers above try to explain what constitutes managerial competence, they tend to be narrow in scope. Drawing especially on the work of Katz, (1974); Koontz et al (1983); Mintzberg, (1990), the competence items for this study is grouped around four basic managerial skills;

(a) Leadership Skills; these include;

- Impact and Influence on Subordinates
- Extent of Teamwork Cooperation
- Level of Organizational Commitment
- Quality of Directing
- Decision Making & Flexibility
- Stress Management Ability

(b) Achievement Orientation Skills;

- Level of Self Control and Confidence
- Effectiveness in the Use of Control Measures
- Extent of Drive for Task Achievement
- Quality of Professional Expertise
- Monitoring & Controlling Performance

(c) Interpersonal Skills;

- Effectiveness in Communication
- Managing Relationships
- Level of Interpersonal Understanding
- Promotion of Customer Orientation

(d) Problem Solving Skills.

Today, an increasing number of people favor a pluralistic view of managerial talents and contributions, which emphasizes the value of women's "different voice" (Daly & Ibarra, 1995). But Leadership has changed. Giving a voice to all people is a must for every manager and the foundation of an organization that is willing to experiment and learn. But, in fact, whistleblowers, creative deviants, and other such original voices routinely get smashed or silenced in organizational life. They generate disequilibrium, and the easiest way for an organization to restore equilibrium is to neutralize those voices, sometimes in the name of teamwork and "alignment"..., but buried inside a poorly packaged interjection may lay an important intuition that needs to be teased out and considered. To toss it out for its bad timing, lack of clarity, or seeming unreasonableness is to lose potentially valuable information and discourage a potential leader in the organization (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

For decades, the question of gender went largely unaddressed by social scientists. Indeed, many early studies were "gender neutral", that is, they either did not consider gender as a variable of interest, or simply included only male subjects in their design. In organization studies, the complex relationships between leadership, power and gender became a research topic in the 1970's, when Rosabeth Moss Kanter started the debate on the "blind spots" of organizational analysis (Kanter, 1977). The aspects of organizational life that hide gender attributes of leadership and power became topical issues in research. The prevailing gender-neutral tradition, particularly in the US, was broken, and the discourse of organizations as sites where gender attributes are presumed and reproduced, started to gain foothold especially in the 1990's.

The under-representation of women in high-status roles has been documented by feminist literature (for example Acker, 1992; Auster; 1993; Gherardi; 1995). The under-representation of women in high-status roles has been documented by feminist literature (for example Acker, 1992; Auster; 1993; Gherardi; 1995).

In organizations and management, gender segregation and gender relations occur in roles and organizational positions, like the (female) secretary is subordinate to the (male) boss (Pringle, 1988), in similar way the supportive wife/mother looks up to the authoritative husband I father. There are inequalities that favour men on various criteria including salary and professional grade. Feminist theory argues that sex roles exist in patriarchal societies and organizations, which are established by social structures and relationships that favor men, (Gough, 1998). Gender regime exists and continues to exist, (Wahi, 1992): Social roles are gendered and determined by a variety of social, political and economic factors, and in addition to sex and biological differences between men and women. There are cultural and historical factors that build them. It is generally believed that leadership, organizational culture and

communication are constructed with a masculine subtext, and dominant views on leadership are difficult to integrate with femininity. (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Aaltio, 2002).

Earlier management research took it for granted that managers were men, (see for example Mintzberg, 1973, 1989; Dalton, 1959), and ignored gender issues altogether. The so-called great-man theory is one of the earliest management theories. It argues that persons (men) who have influenced Western civilization have characteristics that are needed in a good leader.

Methodology

The population of this study consisted of government owned institutions in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital where the survey method of research design a questionnaire was administered on a cross-section of eighty (80) managers (45 males and 35 females) selected by convenience sampling from government owned institutions in Port Harcourt.

In this study, managerial competency is operationalized as leadership skills, achievement oriented skills, inter-personal skills, and problem-solving skills. In testing the stated hypotheses in the study, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used, which was computed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.

Analysis and result

This section is concerned with the analysis of data generated for this study through the test of hypotheses.

Ho₁; There is no significant difference between male managers' leadership skills and that of their female counterparts.

The table below shows the responses of respondents as well as a summary of ANOVA test of leadership skills between genders.

Table 1: Responses on Leadership Skills between Genders

Males	Females	Both	
5	4	4	
8	2	3	
8	1	5	
9	2	2	
8	4	1	
10	3	1	
T ₁ = 48	T ₂ = 16	T ₃ = 16	T = 80

We tested the hypothesis above using the analysis of variance technique and the following result was obtained.

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA Test of Leadership Skills between Genders

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P-value
Treatment	113.7	2	56.885	24.815	1.830675.05
Error	3467	15	2.311111		
Total	148.4	17			

Comparison significant at the 0.05 levels

Alpha 0.05 Confidence = 0.95

DF = 2.15

F.Cal = 24..62

F.Crit = 3.68

Responses from table 1 were used in testing this hypothesis. Since the Critical F-value with 2 and 15 df at 0.05 level of significance = 3.68. Therefore, since our calculated F-ratio of 24.62 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.68, and is significant at $P < .05$. we reject H_0 and conclude that male managers possess better leadership skills than their female counterparts.

H_{02} : "There is no significant difference between male managers' Achievement Oriented Skills and that of their female counterparts.

Table 3 below shows the responses of respondents which were used in testing the hypothesis

Table 3: Achievement Oriented Skills of Genders

Males	Females	Both	
10	1	4	
6	5	3	
6	9	3	
11	3	5	
9	2	3	
$T_1 = 42$	$T_2 = 20$	$T_3 = 18$	$T = 80$

All using ANOVA technique, we obtained the results below.

Table 4: Summary of AVOVA Test of Achievement Oriented Skills between Genders

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P-value
Treatment	70.00	2	35.466	6.6086	0.012
Error	64.40	12	5.37		
Total	138.33	14			

*Comparison significant at the 0.05 levels

Alpha = 0.05 Confidence = 0.95

DF = 2,12

Fcal = 6.60

F Crit = 3.89

Since the calculated F-value 6.60 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.89, and is significant at $P < .05$, we reject H_0 and conclude that male managers are more achievement Oriented than their female counterparts.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between male managers' interpersonal skills and that of their female counterparts.

Table 5 and 6 below show the responses of respondents as well as a summary of ANOVA test of interpersonal skills between genders.

Table 5: Responses on Interpersonal Skills between Genders

Males	Females	Both	
9	5	4	
10	5	5	
11	4	7	
10	6	4	
$T_1 = 40$	$T_2 = 20$	$T_3 = 20$	$T = 80$

The ANOVA results is as shown below

Table 6: Summary of AVOVA Test of Interpersonal Skills between Genders

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P-value
Treatment	67.67	2	33.385	30.00	0.0001
Error	10.00	9	1.1111		
Total	77.87	11			

*Comparison significant at the 0.05 levels

Alpha = 0.05 Confidence = 0.95

DF = 2,9

Fcal = 30

F Crit = 4.26

Since the calculated F-value 30.00 is greater than the critical F-value of 4.26, and is significant at $P < 0.05$, we reject H_0 and conclude that male managers possess better interpersonal skills than their female counterparts.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between male managers' Problem Solving Skills and that of their female counterparts.

Table 7 and 8 below show the responses of respondents as well as a summary of ANOVA test of Problem Solving Skills between genders.

Table 7: Responses on Problem Solving Skills between Genders

Males	Females	Both	
10	6	2	
11	3	6	
9	7	3	
11	8	4	
$T_1 = 41$	$T_2 = 24$	$T_3 = 15$	$T = 80$

Using ANOVA technique at $\alpha = 0.05$, we have:

Table 8: Summary of ANOVA Test of Problem Solving Skills between Genders

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P-value
Treatment	87.17	2	43.582	15.40	0.0012
Error	25.50	9	2.83		
Total	11267	11			

*Comparison significant at the 0.05 levels

Alpha = 0.05 Confidence = 0.95

DF = 2,9

Fcal = 15.40

F Crit = 4.26

Since the calculated F-value of 15.38 is greater than critical F-value of 4.26, and is significant at $P < 0.05$ level, we reject H_0 and conclude that male managers possess better Problem Solving Skills than their female counterparts.

Discussion of findings

Examination and analysis of the database revealed some expected and surprising results. One major observation in this study was that in all the under studied organizations, men predominantly occupied most of the managerial positions. This is in line with Schein's (1973), assertion in his early historical account on the involvement of genders in the work place, which recorded an almost complete neglect of the feminine gender, resulting in women being virtually absent in the work environment characterized by male dominance. From the study it was also observed that women have not received much recognition or credit in the area of effectiveness in the use of control measures.

The study showed that men outperformed women in 18 out of the 19 skill areas. While this in itself was highly significant, it was also surprising. A review of the leadership performance factor made up of six skills, showed an interesting variation of style. Men were

more likely to impact/influence subordinates for successful completion of tasks, clarify the expected outcomes with those doing the work as well as staying on top of progress than women do. The most problematic factor for women was their Extent of Teamwork Cooperation,, Quality of Directing, Level of Organizational Commitment, and Stress Management. The worst rated of the six leadership skills, i.e. Level of Organizational Commitment. This noticeable difference was excused on the ground of family constraint. It was also reed that women do not fair well in Stress Management skill because they are more likely to voice their frustrations, openly sharing them with others and may even allow it to affect their work performance. While releasing tension and stress is encouraged as physiologically healthy, apparently, for women it comes at a price. Women were faulted for this manner of releasing tension but they were not alone, men who vocalized their frustrations also received poor scores in this area.

Most surprising to us was that men and women almost shared the same strength on one behaviour; Professional Expertise while women outperformed men in the performance factor labelled effectiveness in use of control measures. We used controlling measures in the sense that Drueker (1989) refers to the tam

Organizing work, keeping performance within defined tolerances, and making sure that events happen when and as they are supposed to. It implies monitoring details and staying on top of work so that activities get done on time. The data on Professional Expertise and effectiveness in the use of control measures demonstrates that women heavily focus on those tasks for which they are responsible. The few female managers that were in the understudied organizations had been successful because they were able to draw upon what was unique to their experiences as women. They learnt to manage effectively using their transformational traits and power to motivate others, by developing alternative ways to achieve success, possibly because they had seldom access to power. In other words, the structure of the organization depicts how the manager's functioned. Supporting this viewpoint, Kanter (1977) explored women in leadership roles and found that when women possessed power within an organization, their effectiveness was similar to that of men. Hence, individual differences seemed more striking than gender differences. This revealed that women would do better if given the opportunity to handle managerial positions more often. Our brief review of the literature regarding women's managerial competencies indicated that they do not get the credit they deserve for performing so well in this area.

In the area of interpersonal skills, as anticipated in our analysis, data showed that men do indeed communicate more effectively than their female colleagues. We found out that men received higher ratings in all four interpersonal behaviours than the females did. And, the differences were statistically significant. The men in this study were more likely to share information about work matters with their subordinates better than their female counterparts. Also, they let others know what they need and expect in the way of support. •They seek clarity of communication that ultimately reduces confusion and conflict.

Finally, data on Problem Solving skills revealed that men outperformed women in all four listed behaviours. As anticipated, the results were not surprising. The results support similar findings by Kanter's (1977) description of the "Masculine Ethic" of managers. He describes the traits associated with males that make effective managers as tough-minded approach to problems: analytic abilities to abstract and plan, a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations in the interest of task accomplishment as well as a cognitive superiority in problem solving and decision making. Although data revealed slight differences, these differences were based also on more of individual differences than gender differences. Also, the structure of the organization shaped the behaviour of how the managers functioned.

The above findings supported the traditional view of male managers performing better than their female counterparts, although the study also revealed areas where women outperformed or were competing with their male counterparts.

Conclusion and recommendations

An in-depth analysis of the data revealed an overall pattern of men being rated higher than women. The findings indicated that men and women have almost the same strengths and weaknesses and support the position that people should not be judged based on their gender but as individuals.

In view of the above findings and conclusion drawn the following recommendations were made:

- (i) Government owned institutions should change their structures and thinking patterns in terms of recruitment. Female managers should not be discriminated against if they possess the relevant and required qualifications to handle managerial positions. They should be given an opportunity.
- (ii) Since any wide variation between genders can be as a result of unequal opportunity in managerial positions, it therefore becomes necessary to give women an equal opportunity with their male counterparts so that they can explore their talents. This means that government organizations should be structured in such a way that there must be a balance of power between male and female managers.
- (iii) Where women occupy managerial positions, they should be given every necessary support i.e. conducive work environment.
- (iv) Both men and women in general should focus their continuing professional development on mastering all of the managerial skills mentioned in this study. If they can improve their talents in these areas, they will be more competent.

Limitation of the study

The result of this study is only relevant to government owned organizations, and therefore it cannot be used as a basis for generalization that male managers possess better managerial competencies than their female counterparts in all other organizations.

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