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Influence of Sex-Role Expectations on Perceived Work Performance Among Employees in Multinational Corporations in Nigeria

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KEYWORDS Performance; gender; sex-role expectation; organization

ABSTRACT The study, which adopted ex post facto research design, investigated the influence of sex role expectations on perceived work performance. A total of three hundred (309) employees were drawn from two multinational corporations in Nigeria. In all, two hundred and five (205) were males representing 66.6%, while the remaining one hundred and nine (109) were females representing 33.7% of the total participants. Their age ranged between 19-58 yrs with a mean age of 31.40 yrs (S.D = 7.03). Two hypotheses were tested in the course of the study. The result obtained revealed that there was a significant difference between employees high on male expected characteristics and those low on male expected characteristics on perceived work performance, $(t(2, 294) = 2.339 ; P < .05)$. However there was no significant differences between employees from Procter and Gamble and those from Fan Milk on perceived work performance, $(t(2, 294) = 1.517 ; P > .05)$. Based on the outcome of the results obtained, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made with emphasis on the importance of employees' characteristics in selection and placement in organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Those who study organization and the behaviour of people in them are concerned with a host of issues, but work performance has always been the bottom line. Unless members of an organization do their jobs, the organization ultimately fails. Of recent, Blumberg and Pringle (1982) proposed a model of work performance that tries to improve on the traditional performance equation (performance = Ability x Motivation) by attempting to incorporate the full range of individual and environmental variables, which interact to produce level and quality of work performance. This model consists of three components, which they call Opportunity, Capacity and Willingness to perform.

In spite of the fact that equal opportunities for men and women have been a priority in many countries, enormous gender differences prevail in most competitive high-ranking positions (Greenwald and Mahzarin, 2001). In their study, Greenwald and Mhzarin (2001), revealed that there is a significantly higher gender gap in performance. With this finding at the back of the mind of the researchers, it was therefore hypothesized that there would be significant difference among employees who are high on male expected characteristics and those high on female

expected characteristics on perceived work performance. In another related study, Goldin and Rouse (2000) and Wenneras and Wold (1997) hypothesized that women and men would differ in ability or propensity to perform in environment in which they have to compete against one another. The findings from these studies showed that there was significantly difference in the performance of male and female with males performing better than females. Based on this finding it is expected that employees high on male expected characteristics would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than employees low in male expected characteristics. In another study designed to find out gender differences in work performance, Beyer (1981) design experiments in which gender difference in work performance was tested. The finding from the experiment revealed that the average performance of the men significantly increases while that of women is not affected. Thus, according to Beyer (1996) men significantly perform better than women on the average.

Literature Review

Several theories have been propounded by organizational theorists who try to explain reason for gender differences in the way male and female

behaved in social setting of which the contemporary workplace setting is not an exception. A good example of one of such theories is the bio-social theory, which was propounded by Money and Ehrhardt (1972). The bio-social approach to sex – role argues that biological characteristics are mainly important in building an individual into what he/she would be.

According to this theory, what the biological characteristics does in the life of an individual is to set up expectations on the part of parents, which determine how children are then treated. So the way that the child is labeled directly affects the way he or she is going to be brought up. Money and Ehrhardt (1972) argued that gender identity follows this kind of *labelling* process. They reported that during the first few years of life, there is considerable flexibility in how a child categorizes itself. Children of between two and three years of age can adopt different gender identities quite easily, and often do in their play, unless they are sensitized to rigid role behaviour very early in life. However, this becomes more fixed as the child grows older, and comes to identify more with its gender group. The implication of the above assertion as it relates to this study which set out to investigate possible differences among employees high on male expected characteristics and those high on female expected characteristics on perceived work performance is that there is likely to be gender differences in perceived work performance among employees used in this study. This is because the expectations from males are different from those of females and therefore could influence their perception of performance.

Money and Ehrhardt based their approach mainly on studying hermaphrodites, pseudo-hermaphrodites and those with testicular feminising syndrome. What they showed was that the physical characteristics of sex seem to be relatively unimportant in terms of the ultimate gender-role characteristics that the individual eventually adopts. Out of ten individual with testicular feminising syndrome, they found that eight showed a preference for the female role, and all of them reported dreams of raising children. This was despite the fact that, genetically at least, these people were male. Money and Ehrhardt argued that the human psyche, or the central nervous system, is so open to the effects of learning that it is possible to reverse completely the biological contribution to psychosexual

identity. Based on the basic assumption of this theory, it can be hypothesized that male employees would significantly score high on perceived work performance than female employees in this study.

In another related study to explain reasons why there seems to be gender difference in job performance, Brown and Corcoran (1997) argued that one possible explanation for the significant increase in the gender gap in mean performance when assessing worker's performance, is gender difference in risk-attitude. Other studies that set out to give reasons for gender difference in job performance came up with results that seem mixed, with a possibly higher degree of risk-aversion among women. According to Brown and Josephs (1996) most often, women internalize stereotype about women being less good at certain tasks, or performing worse in competitive working environment. Thus, according to the researchers, the effect is of course identical to the one where these beliefs are based on actual differences.

Lynn et al (1996) found that men's performance increased with career stage measured as professional tenure, but they did not find a corresponding effect among women. Similarly, Larwood and Guket (1989) argued that theories of the career development of men do not fit women's career development. They stated that the model of men's career is simple, and can be seen as continuous development whereas the career development of women should be characterized as disjointed.

Ornstein and Isabella (1990) also argued that women do not adhere to the traditional model of career development because women's careers are interrupted more frequently than those of men, mainly because of childbearing and child rearing. According to the researchers, the general idea is that, because of the relatively disjointed character of women's career development, which is mainly caused by more interruptions, the influence of professional tenure on their performance will be less strong than it is for men. This they argued, may even be the case if, for example, women stay longer in their profession than men do, because these interruption, such as maternity leave, and temporary working part-time are generally not reflected in performance appraisals. Therefore there may be significant difference among female employees who are married and those not married on perceived work performance in this present study.

Dodd-McCue and Wright (1996) and Gatton (1999) argue that the gender differences in job performance may be due to situational differences. According to role constraint theory, gender difference in job performance is caused by difference in work roles (Rosario et al., 1988; Sigmon, 1995). For example they argued, because women generally occupy lower levels of jobs than men do, their jobs offer fewer opportunities to develop higher levels of work centrality. In a similar vein, Cohen (1992) stated that, because of a lack of meaning job content, individuals in low status occupations are unlikely to be involved in their jobs. And this can subsequently influence their job performance.

In an attempt to investigate the influence of socio-demographic characteristics that may be responsible for the various gender differences in job performance as established by various studies, Cohen and Kirchmeyer (1995) found that having children significantly affected organizational commitment which subsequently influence the level of job performance among employees. Generally, people attach less importance to the organization and their careers when they have young children. As women typically bear the most responsibilities for child raising (Campbell et al., 1994; Scandura and Lankau, 1997), the influence of having young children is probably greater on women's work behaviour than the men.

In other studies (e.g.; Morrow and McElroy, 1987; Ornstein and Isabella, 1990; Realin, 1985; Vander veld et al., 1998), it was revealed that age, job status and working hours were found to significantly influence gender differences in job performance. These studies revealed that older employees were more involved in their job and thus were found to perform better than younger employees. It was also established that older employees were less inclined to leave an organization than younger employees.

Statement of Hypotheses

- (1) Employees high on male expected characteristics would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than those who score low on male expected characteristics.
- (2) Employees of Procter and Gamble would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than employees of Fan milk.

METHOD

Research Design: The study adopted ex post facto research design. This was considered appropriate due to the researchers limitation in manipulating the variables of interest in the study. The independent variables are sex role expectations and type of organisation while the dependent variable is perceived work performance.

Sampling Technique: The sampling technique that was adopted in the study is the accidental sampling method of the non-probabilistic sampling technique. The researchers adopted this technique because of the social nature of most work settings, including the ones covered in the study. The nature of the organization where the research was conducted is such that it will be difficult to use other sampling techniques.

Setting/Participants: The study was carried out in two factories at Ibadan metropolis: Procter and Gamble as well as that of Fan Milk Nigeria Plc. Both organizations are Multinational Corporations based in Nigeria with distribution offices in other parts of the country.

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed by the researchers to participants in the two organizations. However, it was only possible to retrieve 309, which now constitute the sample size for the study. One hundred and twenty seven 107 (41%) were from Fan Milk Nigeria Plc while the remaining one hundred and eighty two 182 (58.9%) were from Procter and Gamble.

This indicates that the researchers had a response rate of 63.5% from employees of Fan Milk Nigeria Plc and 91% response rate from employees of Procter and Gamble. Their age ranged from 19 – 58 years with a mean of 31.4 yrs (S.D.=7.03). In all, two hundred and five (205) (66.3%) were males, while the remaining one hundred and four (104) (33.7%) were females. Further analysis of the socio-demographic variables revealed that, out of the total number of participants for this study, one hundred and forty eight (108) (47.9%) were married, one hundred and fifty three, 103, (49.5%) were single, five (5) (1.6%) were divorced, and three (3) (1%) had been separated from their spouse. With regard to the educational qualification of the participants, it was revealed that forty-nine (49) (15.9%) had senior secondary school certificate, eighty-three (83) (26.9%) had NCE/ND, one hundred and fifty

three (153) (49.5%) had first degree, seventeen (17) (5.5%) had master degree while three (3) (1%) had Doctorate degree.

Instrument: The questionnaire method was adopted for data collection in the study. Each questionnaire was divided into three sections.

Section one was used to gather information relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Information relating to age, sex, name of organization, marital status and educational qualification was tapped from this section.

Section two of the questionnaire measures perceived work performance. This was done using a 14 – item scale developed by Whetten and Cameron (1995). Participants were expected to express their degree of agreement with statement on a 5-point Likert type scale. The degree of responses varies from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scoring of items was reversed where necessary and then summated to form a single score. The coefficient alpha for this scale as reported by the male author was 0.77. But for this study, the scale has a reliability coefficient alpha of 0.84.

Section three of the questionnaire measure sex-role expectation. This was done using a twelve-item scale developed by Brehm (1985). Out of the twelve items, items 1-6 measures male expected characteristics while items 7 –12 measures female expected characteristics. Participants were expected to express their degree of agreement with statement on a 5 – point Likert type scale. The degree of responses varies from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The scoring of items were reversed where necessary and where then summated to form a single score. The coefficient alpha for the items measuring male expected characteristics is 0.62, while the coefficient alpha for items measuring female expected characteristics is 0.73. In all, the reliability coefficient for the entire scale is 0.84.

Procedure: Data collection began with the administration of four hundred questionnaires to employees of both Procter and Gamble and Fan Milk Nigeria Plc. In all, the researchers distributed

two hundred questionnaires to participants in each organization. The researchers was given permission to conduct the study using the organizations stated above after explaining to the Personnel Managers of both organizations what the study was all about. What the researchers did after sorting for permission was to seek for assistance from some employees in these organizations to assist in the distribution and later collection of the questionnaires. The researchers were able to achieve after persuasion to these sets of employees. And there was an agreement that the researchers should return on a specific day for the collection of the filled questionnaires. The researchers after about 15 working days went for the questionnaires and found that in all, only one hundred and twenty seven (107), were available in Fan Milk and one hundred and eighty two (182), in Procter and Gamble. Those assisting in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires within the organization could not account for the remaining questionnaires. It was only in Fan Milk that a total of seventeen unfilled questionnaire were returned. These number was then used by the researchers for analysis.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one stated that employees who are high in male expected characteristics would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than those who score low in male expected characteristics. It was tested with t-test for independent sample and the result obtained is presented in table 1.

The results presented in the table revealed that the hypothesis is upheld; $t(294,2)=2.33$; $P<.05$. This means that there is significant differences between employees who are high in male expected characteristics and those who are low in male expected characteristics in perceived work performance. Further comparison of their mean score showed that employees High in male expected characteristics had higher mean ($\bar{X}=27.76$) compared to those low on male expected characteristics ($\bar{X}=25.81$).

Table 1: Summary table of independent t-test comparing employees that are high in male expected characteristics and those that are low in male expected characteristics on perceived work performance

Male expected characteristics		N	Mean	S.D	df	t	p
Perceived Performance	High	112	27.76	6.93	294	2.339	<.05
	Low	184	25.81	6.97			

Table 2: Summary table of independent t-test comparing employees in procter and gamble with those of fan milk plc on perceived work performance.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Fan Milk	151	25.77	7.28	294	-1.517	>.05
P and G	181	27.04	6.8			

Hypothesis two which stated that employees of Procter and Gamble Nigeria Plc would significantly scored higher on perceived work performance than employees of Fan Milk Nigeria Plc, was tested with t-test for independent measure. The result obtained is presented in table 2.

The result presented in the table 2 revealed that the hypothesis is not confirmed; $t(294,2) = -1.517$; $P > .05$. This indicates that there is no significant difference in perceived performance among employees of both organizations. Further comparison of their mean scores revealed that there was no significant mean difference between employees of Fan Milk ($\bar{X}=25.77$) and those of Procter and Gamble ($\bar{X}=27.04$) on perceived work performance.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis, which stated that employees high on male expected characteristics would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than those who score low on male expected characteristics, was tested and the result obtained showed that the stated hypothesis was upheld.

From the result obtained, it is glaring that employees who are high on male expected characteristics significantly score higher than those low on male expected characteristics. This means that, there is a significant sex-role expectations difference on perceived work performance. This finding is in alliance with those of Lynn et al (1996) who found in their study that male significantly score higher on performance than female employees. Similarly, Ornstein and Isabella (1990) also found that male do perform better than female. The reason given from these studies mention was that, the gender difference in job performance found in their was as a result of gender difference in risk taking behaviour. They arguing that there was a possibly higher degree of risk – aversion between woman and this can affect their performance within the workplace. And this is what most culture upholds especially in African and Nigerian in particular. In

another related study on gender differences in job performance Larwood and Gutek (1989) argued these theories of the career development of man do not fit woman's career development. They stated that model of men's career is simple and can be seen as continuous development, whereas the career development of women is characterised as disjointed which might be the reason for the outcome of this finding. That is in Nigeria, male are not expected to behave exactly like females. Generally, the male child is made to believe from the very onset in life that he should be hard-working, assertive, bold, domineering, and so on. These characteristics may be implicated for why employees high on male expected characteristics were found to significantly score higher on perceived work performance.

The second hypothesis, which stated that employees of Procter and Gamble would significantly score higher on perceived work performance than employees of Fan milk was tested and the results obtained did not support the hypothesis. There was no significant difference in perceived work performance among employees of both organizations. This finding has shown that both employees in Fan Milk and those of Procter and Gamble perceived their work performance in same degree. This finding may not be unconnected with the fact that both organizations are Multinational Corporations and tend to have similar organizational culture. According to Richard (2003), corporate culture of an organization influences their perception of performance. Usually, most organizations with headquarters located in the developed countries and have branch offices in less developed countries usually share similar organizational culture and management style. This may have accounted for why the researchers found no significant difference in perceived performance among employees in both organizations used in this study.

CONCLUSION

The finding of this study has shown that sex-role expectations have a significant influence on

perceived work performance. Specifically, employees with male expected characteristics were found to perform better than those with female expected characteristic. Although, not part of the major finding of the research works, the researchers found that experience on the job significantly influences performance among employees used in this research work.

The researchers are therefore recommending that management of organizations need to consider sex-role expectations of workers as important factor in employees work performance, especially in multicultural organisations. Such understanding would guide development of training contents of both male and female employees of the organisation.

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