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FEAR OF SUCCESS AS A FUNCTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ANDROGYNOUS TENDENCIES AMONG WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

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Abstract

The fear of success has been reported as a syndrome among women who may even be said to be successful and hold managerial positions in public or private practice. While there has been much research in this area in developed and some developing nations, there is still a dearth of such studies in Nigeria. The study was aimed at finding out the prevalence of fear of success, sex role orientation and sex typing syndromes among women in managerial positions. The study also aimed to find if there is a significant relationship among the variables. Subjects were women in the higher echelons of educational management in the university system. A sample of 130 female academicians was purposively selected for the study. Findings revealed high prevalence of fear of success and sex typing. Though there is a relationship between Lecturers sex role orientation and fear of success, it was not significantly. It is recommended that women should free themselves of stereotypical beliefs and modify their value system to cope with the demands of present day living.

Key word : Fear of success, sex typing syndrome, Androgynouns tendencies, sex role orientation

Introduction

When female status is to be considered in any society, many factors are taken into consideration. The dimension could be on occupation or social class.

economic or political class, power, prestige, control of resources or wealth etc, (Omideyi, 1996). Whatever the dimension, the consensus in most societies, either sophisticated or otherwise, is that females cannot be said to be at per in status with their male counterparts. The antecedents of these are well documented by Mowaiye, (1995) and Mowaiye (1996). However, in recent times, most societies are experiencing expansion in the scope of the operations for women in all walks of life. The once rigid and traditional oriented societies are already paying attention and giving way to the millennium goals as regard women. There are indications that even developed nations are now more aware of the dangers of leaving the third-world nations behind in this change. And so, efforts are being put in place to pull them along the lane of change. Also,there are increasing opportunities for women in the political arena and other spheres.

Closely alligned to sex role orientation is another common syndrome among women, the fear of success(Shying away from success) syndrome. The syndrome is multidimensional in nature. It has been reported that some women in a bid to tackle the difficulty resort to what has been termed the "chameleon syndrome". Some women appear successful by all standards, yet internally, they still respond on some occasions by "shying" away from success because of its supposed consequences, (Payne & Congemi, 1997, Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 1996).

O'Leary and Braun (1972) studied the personality characteristics of academic women in varied fields. The researchers reported that these professional women not only exhibited gender flexibility tendencies but also did not manifest fear of success traits. They were in fact reported to be dominant, stable and more self sufficient than their male colleagues. These females, compared to their counterparts who were homemakers were reported to be more imaginative and radical in thinking. A similar report was also made by Helson (1971) as reported by Skordas, (1988). However, the subjects used were women mathematicians.

Wenger's (1998) study confirmed the tendency for non-traditional women not to be disposed to fear of success. Behavioural Scale data analysis was by Multiple Regression with fear of success as the criterion. Anderson (1983) studied women chief executive officers in business and higher education. The women were

the women attributed these traits to extracurricular activities which allowed them to practice leadership skills, a great deal of parental attention or great growth stimulation situations in their formative years. Thus, it seemed the formative years are important in the training skills that may be necessary for females in the millennium.

In a related study, Mowaiye-Fagbemi (2000) using university female undergraduate students had reported a significant relationship between fear of success and sex role orientation. Undergraduate female students who were less disposed to fear of success were also found to be atypical as regards sex roles. The report challenged parents to provide the socialization that would not inhibit achievement for females and stated the need for the general society to embrace a new orientation as regards gender issues for the benefit of the society itself. And if one is to go by Anderson's (1983) report, then the effort of parents and guardians cannot be over-emphasised.

The present study is a follow-up to the earlier study by Mowaiye-Fagbemi (2000) and also attempts to corroborate earlier research reports which tend to use professional women in the high echelon of managerial cadre. In this study, women who are in competitive settings with their male counterparts are used.

This study is also interested in finding out if the women under study would still be plagued by fear of success or suffer from sex stereotype?

Method

Female managerial staff with at least a master's degree in Nigerian Universities were sampled for the study. Some were members of the university highest decision body; the senate. The random and purposive sampling procedures were used in the research. Over one hundred and thirty women participated in the study which took almost 2 years to complete. One noticeable part of the study was that there were to be found more female managerial staff in the universities in eastern Nigeria compared with other parts of the country. The sex role orientation instrument by Mowaiye-Fagbemi (1999) was used to measure the women's sex roles while the Fear of Success Cues (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 1996) was used to detect fear of success among the subjects. For the purpose of data analysis,

were used. Generated hypothesis was:

There is no significant difference in the sex role orientation scores of subjects with fear of success as compared to those without fear of success.

Data Analysis

The one way analysis of variance for the interaction of sex role and fear of success was carried out on the data – the results is shown below:

Table 1 Anova for the interaction of sex role and fear of success among the subjects.

Source	Df	SS	Ms	f-value	p-df
SR	1	27766.23091	27766.23	181.52	0.0001
FOS	1	343.70455	343.70455	2.25	0.1363
SR & FOS	1	409.9780	409.977	2.68	0.1041
ERROR	128	19579.56352	152.965340	-	-
Total	131	48099.477273			

Alpha = 0.051

From Table 1, the relationship between fear of success and sex role orientation is not significant, $F(1, 128) = 2.68.p > 0.05$. On the basis of this result, the generated hypothesis is accepted. Analysis using the frequency distribution and chi-square yielded the result presented in Table 2.

Table 2 FOS and Non-FOS subjects in the feminine and androgynous groups.

Group	FOS	Non-FOS	R/Totals
	N(%)	N(%)	
F	44 (62)	27(38)	71
A	21 (36)	29(64)	60
Total	65	66	131

Note

FOS – fear of success

Non-FOS – Those without manifestation of FOS

F – Feminine group

A – Androgynous group

From Table 2, the number of feminine oriented female subjects with manifestation of fear of success is 62%, which is higher than the number of androgynous subjects with the manifestation (26%). Conversely, the proportion of androgynous non-FOS(64%) is higher than the proportion of feminine non-FOS (30%) among the subjects. The Chi-square test applied to the distribution for the significance of difference between the obtained frequencies in the table revealed a significant χ^2 value of 8.75 which is greater than the value of 3.8 for 1 df. This shows a significant difference in the frequencies of FOS (fear of success) and non-FOS as shown in Table 2 for the androgynous and the feminine groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

A notable feature of the study was the high preponderance of females who were predisposed to the fear of success syndrome. There was also the high preponderance of sex typing among the subjects as most of them were feminine in their sex role orientation, notwithstanding their academic levels and profession. A comparison with an earlier report (Mowaiye-Fagbemi 2000) however revealed that the incidence of FOS and sex typing exhibited by the subjects were not as high as those exhibited by female students in higher institutions. However, the incidence of FOS exhibited by the subjects may just be in line with those of Condry and Dyer, 1976 and O'Leary, 1978 who reported that women in competitive environments are prone to fear of success due to their environment. Another factor that could be attributable to the high incidence of fear of success could also be the high level of sex – typing, situations which seem not to match the typing would definitely throw a subject to fear of success exhibition. This notwithstanding, it must be noted that while the relationship between sex role orientation and fear of success is significant so for students as reported by Mowaiye-there may be a relation between these subjects sex role orientation and fear of success, (SRO and FOS), it is not expected to be significant. The study also revealed that the difference in total (N) of androgynous and feminine women was not significant and that more of the women in the androgynous group also manifested no sign of FOS while the opposite was the case for the feminine group.

A significant point to note from the study is that even females in the high echelons of the society in Nigeria are prone to fear of success and sex typing. This could be a reaction or a result of the traditional nature of the Nigerian society. However, significant progress, either scientifically or developmentally cannot be made with such tendencies.

Fear in itself is a blockage to any significant achievement, so also is gender fixation. And if women who are equipped with higher degrees and whose thinking is expected to be broadened are still fixated in an area like gender issues, then it would be expected that it would be worse with females who are not of such calibre (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2000). And what this suggests is that the Nigerian society has a lot to do to be able to join other nations who are participants of development and futuristic and not just on-lookers. It also suggests the probability that the women are equally fixated in other stereotypical beliefs of traditional societies of which Nigeria is one. These are things which remain only in traditional societies. One way to begin would be for the ministries of women affairs to take specific steps to eradicate gender stereotypes in the society. It must begin somewhere, and it may be assumed that as more females are educated, there will be a flux in gender stereotypes. The starting point could be just in what goes into advertorials in the media, before moving into other areas.

Future studies may attempt to see the level of gender stereotype among the males of various cadres, and to also see if they suffer from the fear of success syndrome or the fear of failure syndrome. This also suggest that more people must get interested in the two areas of fear of success syndrome and fear of failure syndrome to espouse more on the prevalence of these syndromes not only in the

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