Original Paper

Gender and Leadership Style in Nigeria's Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Historically, leadership in Nigeria has been construed to be a male province based on African culture and tradition. As a result of this longstanding convention, females in leadership roles including education are subjected to different standards, which in effect constitute an effort to cast doubt on their ability and credibility. However, the past few decades have witnessed a change in leadership perspectives as many females now occupy supervisory positions. This study utilized survey research to examine leadership practices of male and female principals at the secondary school level in Nigeria in order to ascertain if there are differences in leadership styles. The sample was comprised of 303 teachers, 156 females and 147 males, and 24 principals, 12 females and 12 males. Six hypotheses were tested. The independent t and Mann-Whitney tests were utilized for analyses. Results were mixed as testing gave no significant difference with regard to two leadership dimensions and significant differences existed for four leadership dimensions.

Keywords

leadership, secondary schools, Nigeria, tradition, gender, practices, culture

1. Introduction

In Nigeria, West Africa, leadership in almost every arena has been male dominated. This bias permeates the fabric of the nation. Therefore, concerted efforts to reshape this reality receive strong condemnation from male leaders, and regrettably from some females who through years of marginalization have accepted male domination. Kruger (2008) and Wrushen and Sherman (2008) remarked that women sometimes question their capabilities for leadership because of a lack of confidence or aspirations. Male domination in leadership is prevalent in the education sector of Nigerian society, particularly in secondary schools. The workforce at this level is dominated by females, but not in leadership roles.

Given their numbers, it would be logical to conclude that a significant percentage of females should serve as school principal. The disparity reflects traditional Nigerian cultural beliefs about male and female roles in society and the fact that males are perceived as superior to females (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015).

Similarly, Ifedili (2004) stated that it is well known in Nigeria that women have been denied positions of authority because of cultural beliefs, which makes them practically invisible when they seek leadership appointments. Okeke (2017) concluded that Nigeria is a masculine society and that this reality is reflected in the workplace. Further support of Nigeria's masculine society and female invisibility in leadership is found in Okeke-Ihejirika (2017) assertion that men continue to be viewed as the ideal leader who is not burdened by social roles and expectations. Furthermore, Ifedili related that historically, women could not aspire to leadership positions because they were restricted to family roles. As is often the reality, when women are in leadership position, they will have to negotiate the competing loyalties of work and family responsibilities (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2017). Work-balance is a term used to describe the conflicting demands women face. Commenting on work-life balance, Emslie and Hunt (2009) reported that women experience difficulty negotiating roles such as employee, partner, mother, friend, and daughter. When females do obtain leadership roles they necessarily engage in trying to balance work and family obligations (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008).

Adebayo and Udegbe (2004) concluded that Nigerian traditional and cultural beliefs constrain women from leadership positions. Hence, as noted by Coleman (2005), women may not seek leadership positions because the status quo appears not to favor them. Tisdell (1993), too, observed that men are generally groomed for leadership roles and are authoritarian, while women are socialized to be supportive and caring. Similarly, Schein (2001) and Powell, Butterfield, and Parent (2002) drew a correlation in terms of role socialization between male and female leadership. As a result of tradition and culture, there is no doubt that gender has become a basis of ranking in present-day Nigerian society, such that men hold most managerial or executive positions in organizations, with females remain in subordinate and lower level jobs (Udegbe, 1996). Adebayo and Udegbe observed that in Nigeria it may be acceptable for a male supervisor to verbally chastise a recalcitrant female or male subordinate, whereas the same behavior by a female supervisor would be perceived as out of role and unacceptable. Female supervisory behavior of this magnitude would definitely be frowned upon in northern Nigeria, which is predominately Islamic.

On the subject of sex stereotype, Yahaya (1999) expressed that during their upbringing females are usually trained to accept that there are different roles for males and females as well as the superiority of males over females. Generally, adults discourage competition between females and males, the result being different societal roles. Chisholm (2001) and Aladejana and Aladejana (2005) advanced that women struggle to have their authority accepted and respected once they are appointed to leadership positions. According to Chisholm, females are expected to do favors or are given extra responsibilities that would not have been asked of their male counterparts.

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Eagly, Wood, and Diekman (2000) noted that leadership patterns could be either agentic or communal. Under agentic characteristics, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) declared that there are features, which are ascribed more strongly to men than women. Some of these characteristics are assertiveness, control, and confidence. On the other hand, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt affirmed that there are some characteristics, which are ascribed to women more than men and are called communal characteristics. Caring, sensitive, and compassion are found in the communal category. Cali (2001) noted that when women are perceived as competent, they are often seen as violating prescriptive gender role norms that require them to be communal.

Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) reported that women encounter numerous barriers in society that prevent them from advancing and succeeding in leadership. Among those barriers were exclusion from networks, lack of support, sponsorship, and mentoring. Support for females to advance to leadership in educational organizations in Nigeria, especially secondary schools is still absent. In fact, women continue to be marginalized in all spheres of Nigerian society (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). Yahaya (1999) stated that religious leaders and their followers believe that women should only be seen and not heard. In addition, many religious leaders stress that women should not be equal to men because God gave man preeminence over woman. In essence, the conclusion is that men are born with leadership capabilities well above their female counterparts.

Despite all the societal traditions and beliefs that impede the progress and respectability of women as capable leaders in Nigerian society, they continue to flourish in the leadership positions they have attained. Udegbe (2004) informed that women's numbers continue to grow as a result of professionalism and passion exhibited in the execution of their assignments. Women's increase in leadership positions was further reinforced by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in 1995. The most important aspect of the Beijing conference was that it shifted the focus from women's issue to the concept of gender development, underlining the significant correlation between the advancement of women and the improvement of society. As a result of this shift, the advancement of women received major media attention in Nigeria. The dynamics of Nigerian society began to change and crusades emerged that touted equal opportunity for male and female leaders and the issue of inferiority between the two sexes began to dissipate.

In education, leadership positions in schools were extended by the government to women which was not the case previously. With this change in government policy females were appointed as school leaders. The stereotypical view of the male leader's superiority has been challenged and there is a general view in Nigerian society that leadership is not the sole prerogative of males (Udegbe, 2004).

2. School Leadership

Hall (1993) observed that neither a masculine nor a feminine style was sufficient for effective school leadership, and that every good leader should adopt an "androgynous style" comprising both sets of behaviors from which a principal can select as the most appropriate for the situation. Androgynous

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style is the mixing of masculine and feminine characteristics. Androgynous style may be physiological traits or gender identity, behavioral personal and social anomalies. Coleman (1996) agreed with Hall (1993) and added that many female leaders in England have adopted the androgynous style. Coleman (2003) identified androgyny as a major leadership phenomenon, cutting across gender stereotypes irrespective of the individual school leaders' sex. Also, Coleman reported that: (a) Gender may not be a determinant of leadership style, but has an influence on self-perceptions of men and women leaders; (b) the orthodoxy of the male "macho" style of leadership widespread among males is something of a myth; and (c) the majority of male and female head teacher's shared values about themselves as leaders who are collaborative and people centered, a style that has more in common with the female than with the male leadership stereotypes.

Harwayne (1999) declared that today's principals are expected and required at all times to display certain behaviors and qualities that mirror the responsibility they shoulder regardless of gender in order to meet the twenty-first century educational needs of the children entrusted to their care. Gender remains one of the central dimensions in the study of leadership. Schueller-Weidekamm and Kautzky-Willer (2012) concurred with that assessment adding that women remain disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions. Women are continually confronted with the decision pursuing a leadership position, which is accompanied by prestige and influence and the responsibilities of home and family.

The number of women executives remains low and at the same time, more women are entering the professional workforce and striving for a chance to become leaders. The increase in women among employees and executives is further accompanied by an unprecedented change in demographic diversity within organizations (Stelter, 2002). Despite these changes, educational leadership remains a predominantly male domain and percentages of women in such positions are extremely low (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002) noted a disproportionate representation of women in the superintendency. On the other hand, a NCES (2007) report indicated that between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 the percentages of female public school principals increased from 41 to 56 percent in elementary schools and from 14 to 26 percent in secondary schools. Gender issues in school education continue to persist, and theoretical models of gender leadership could help to explain the existing differences among high school principals and leaders in higher education (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Sanchez and Thornton (2010) mentioned that the literature on leadership provide abundant information and propose numerous theoretical explanations to gender differences in management and educational leadership. At the beginning of the new millennium, social role theory, and role congruity theory were used to explain gender differences and their implications for leadership behaviors (Stelter, 2002). First, leadership and organizational dynamics were conceptualized as complex structures encompassing divergent views, and as long as men and women embrace those cultural and traditional roles, this

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divergence will account for how men and women engage and deal with leadership (Stelter, 2002). Second, attachment theory was used in an attempt to study gender disparities in leadership, suggesting that the degree of interpersonal relation behaviors and caregiver decisions in women and men would predetermine the choice of leadership disposition and styles (Stelter, 2002). Attachment in itself is the deep emotional and enduring bond that connects people together over time. However, of particular interest is the social role theory and role congruity theory, which are extensively used in the analysis of gender differences in leadership.

Biological and genetic differences among women and men are claimed to contribute to the existing differences in male and female leadership styles (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003). Women are believed to inherit leadership traits that are different from those in men which further predetermine the development of particular leadership decisions (Appelbaum et al., 2003). For instance, women are known to more be caring and compassionate while men are seen as assertive and authoritarian. Whether or not biology is responsible for the existing gender differences among leaders is difficult to quantify. Many researchers tend to focus on the analysis of the main social factors underlying gender differences in leadership. More often than not, studies of gender in leadership apply to the socio-demographic explanation of gender, and many researchers do not use any theoretical perspective at all (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

One of the implications of social role theory is that people might question the capability of women in particular positions, including leadership roles. As a consequence, individuals often assume that leadership only involves agentic characteristics that women lack. Conceivably the most telling implication of social role theory is that people who defy gender stereotypes are often seen unfavorably. Diekman, Goodfriend, and Goodwin (2004) claimed that gender differences in power are perceived to be eroding as women gain more access to positions typically associated with power. In terms of limitation of social role theory, Sczesny and Kuhnen (2004) showed that social stereotypes do not always affect the decisions and behavior of individuals. Sczesny and Kuhnen argued that when recruiters and managers consider their decision carefully and methodically, they become more inclined to correct or adjust these stereotypes. Sczesny and Kuhnen concluded that cautious, systematic recruiters and managers do not perceive males as more suitable leaders than females. This paradigm shift is consistent with current reality with women's leadership capability as many are now in the upper echelon of organizations.

3. Gender Differences in Leadership Styles

Gender differences in leadership style has in recent years become an area of immense interest for study in the fields of sociology, management and psychology, especially in view of the increasing number of women assuming leadership roles. However, it is known that there are basic differences in the ways males and females function as leaders and that such distinctions are associated with gender. The gender differences stand to provide a focal point in explaining why very few women have been able to assume

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leadership roles. Ironically, women are joining the workforce in large numbers, but few are able to hold top management and administration positions. Vecchio (2002) asserted that women's low number in leadership positions might be a two-fold issue: (a) they lack leadership qualities; and (b) people are not comfortable with their leadership style.

Vecchio (2002) conducted research in United States of America to examine the gender differences among school principals, and found some basic dissimilarity in leadership styles. Male principals had much more experience than females. In clear indication of the leadership style of women, it was found that female principals conducted more weekly faculty meetings than their male counterparts. Women were not found to be very active in attending national or regional level conventions. The most significant difference among male and female principals was that females were more concerned, interested about the ways in which a typical school day will be spent. While 77 percent of females reported that their main duty was to act as instructional leader, only 58 percent of men reported having similar viewpoints. However, females and males confirmed that most of their day was spent in general managerial functions.

In terms of the time engaged to allocated activities, males and females agreed that maintaining contact with teachers and discipline among students were the most important functions of school principals. Lesser time was devoted by males and females on issues of general management. Based on the manner in which a typical day is spent by both groups, almost 80 percent were found to be involved in teaching as well as administrative work. Female principals used 48 percent of their time in teaching. Male principals were found to be using only 35 percent of their time on teaching.

It is therefore evident that the notion of instructional leadership is considerably impacted with the percentage of time spent on teaching in a typical school day. Female principals have a greater teaching load, which makes them susceptible and less effective in providing instructional leadership when compared to their male colleagues (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Other issues that need to be examined in determining gender differences in leadership between male and female school principals are: (a) Leadership approach that characterizes school principals; and (b) whether there are considerable differences between male and female leadership styles.

Although there are some differences in the leadership styles of male and female principals, they often have to make task oriented decisions. Task orientation is found to be the most important concern of principals; others pertain to climate and individual problems. Eagly and Karau (2002) found that principals with more than five years of experience tend to be more consistent in their leadership styles across their entire careers. Both male and female principals in this category are unmistakably task oriented. In some aspects, this perception of task orientation among principals becomes conflicting with the patterns of being instructional leaders. The consistency is in consonance with the fact that both male and female principals give a larger percentage of their time in general management functions of the school (Collard & Reynolds, 2004). It is recognized that the main focus of principals is to complete daily tasks efficiently and effectively at all times. Most principals are committed people who are

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actively engaged in varied educational actions on a daily basis, and are mostly contented with their respective administrative roles and are eager to meet the job challenges they confront (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

Collards and Reynold (2004) asserted that principal average tenure indicates that they are not inclined to adopt transient approaches because they are personally responsible for the smooth functioning of their school, they mostly strive to improve their performance by getting involved in many school related and staff development activities at local and state levels. On the other hand, Collards and Reynold informed that principals are not professionally much involved at the national level. Principals see themselves as instructional leaders; however, they spend considerable large of amount of time on administrative and management functions. Principals have a tendency to make themselves highly visible in the school environment and enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities. At the same time, Hamori-Ota and Virginia (2007) hinted that principals are not found much in classroom.

The leadership styles of principals vary, but when it comes to execution and completion of assignments or projects, school leaders become extremely task oriented. Because of such attitudes, attention to creating a better climate and to meet individual needs, are considered less important because they become excessively involved in work relative to maintaining discipline, management, teaching and taking part in school management (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Such task oriented leadership styles can be considered common among a majority of principals irrespective of whether they are new or experienced. In this context, it is not proper to categorize principals as effective or ineffective. However, principals have the option to make use of other leadership styles but have to consider the large numbers of daily tasks, which implies that time, is a very important resource for them. Unfortunately, maintaining the organizational structure often proves to be the prime concern of principals and all other areas take secondary position (Clisbee, 2005).

If perceptions of instructional leadership are to become real, principals have to be given opportunities to become strong leaders. At the same time, they have to realize that a better option in allocating time to other important matters is to delegate a part of their daily work relative to management to other staff occupying lower administration positions (Clisbee, 2005). Therefore, empowering others is an effective leadership style. In particular, providing teachers with leadership opportunities not only assists them to improve their classroom, it also affords the organization with professionals who may assume an administrative role in the future.

Clisbee (2005) claimed that there is a global shortage of women in school leadership positions despite being a majority at the instructional level. Schermerhorn (2008) implied that the situation was a result of a long held societal belief that tied leadership to males. Schermerhorn further stated that male domination continues to be supported in other positions including the appointment of principals. Research has been conducted using the social role theory in terms of gender stereotypes relative to leadership. Findings often reveal differences in leadership styles but confirm the competency of female principals relative to their male counterparts.

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Generally, research has revealed that typical male qualities such as assertiveness, courage and sense of competitiveness are more related to stereotypic viewpoints in regard to management roles as opposed to the typical communal feminine qualities such as affection, support and kindness. Smith and Fritz (2004) found that men and women do not differ much in terms of objective measures relative to performance, which means that gender stereotypes impact the male evaluation of female colleagues. Research conducted by Powell, Butterfield, and Bartol (2008) led to the conclusion that females are often evaluated in negative terms in comparison with males. In essence, the disparity was found to occur only because of gender bias.

Rohmann and Rowold (2009) found that respondents rated females better than men in their study on gender leadership. It was also found that when females attempt to emulate male leadership behaviors it is often perceived to have a negative impact on their evaluation because they are seen as incompetent. Powell, Butterfield, and Bartol (2008) held that gender stereotypes lead to bias against female leaders. Therefore, it is within this context that the social role theory is used as basis of understanding the gender roles in terms of consensual perceptions about men and women are characterized. In applying social role theory to leadership, it can be said that leaders adopt roles on the basis of their particular position in the given hierarchy and thus have to perform with constraints relative to their gender roles (Brown & Irby, 2005).

4. Principal and Teacher Qualifications

Principals in state owned secondary schools must have at least a master's degree to lead a secondary school based on government policy. In the past, a bachelor's degree was the benchmark for the position. In the private setting, the requirement is almost the same. The difference is in terms of required years of job-related experience. Teachers in state owned primary schools must possess at least the National Certificate of Education (N.C.E.) in a subject area. Previous policy was to have a Grade II teacher certificate. The N.C.E. is a three-year certificate program designed exclusively for teachers. The certificate can be obtained from any college of education, and some universities. In the case of secondary education, teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree in any discipline. However, there are still many teachers in the system who are in the process of acquiring a bachelor's degree as stipulated with policy.

A bachelor's degree in Nigerian universities and colleges normally takes four years for Education, Humanities, and Social Science, and five to six years for Science and Professional programs. Previous policy was for teachers to have at least a National Certificate of Education (N.C.E.). Teachers in private schools generally do not follow this credential provision. In most cases, they possess a bachelor's degree before being employed to teach in private schools. The terms headmaster and headmistress are applied to leaders of primary schools in Nigeria. A headmaster or headmistress must have at least a bachelor's degree. The former policy was for headmaster to have at least an N.C.E.

Surprisingly, in the last three decades, Nigerian society has become more receptive to females as

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leaders as a result of waning prejudicial traditional over-reach in the country. In addition to receptivity to female leadership, increased access to western media, culture, and immigration has also played a significant role in cultural and attitudinal shift in behavior and respect to women in leadership positions. Consequently, women are becoming pioneers in many areas of human endeavors, and more are now occupying leadership roles in the country. Recent Nigerian government administrations now clamor to have at least thirty percent female representation in the cabinet. This new policy shift was also reiterated by President, Goodluck Jonathan during his inaugural speech to the nation in 2011. The policy shift has further reinforced the capability and suitability of women as proven leaders. Despite increase in leadership opportunities for women, and government pronouncements, their numbers remain low when compared with males in Nigeria. Therefore, the problem of this study relates to the prejudicial traditional and cultural beliefs in Nigeria concerning women in leadership positions. Age old beliefs hold that women are incompatible to leadership positions despite having many as proven leaders in terms of their capability and efficiency.

5. Materials and Method

The purpose of this research was two-fold: (a) examine the leadership practices of male and female heads of secondary schools and (b) determine whether there are differences in the school leadership practices of male and female school heads. Survey research was used to collect data from male and female teachers about the leadership practices of school principals. The Principal Leadership Behavior Questionnaire (PLBQ) was the data collection instrument. The PBLQ consists of six dimensions: (a) decision making practices; (b) interpersonal relationship practices; (c) ethical leadership practices; (d) instructional leadership practices; (e) collaborative leadership practices; and (f) professional development practices. Each dimension has eight items. Likert scale-type responses for PBLQ items provided raw data. Six hypotheses were tested based on the PLBQs six dimensions. The hypotheses were:

H_01: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' decision-making practices.

H1: There is a significant difference between male and female principals' decision-making practices

H_02: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' interpersonal relationship practices.

H2: There is a significant difference between male and female principals' interpersonal relationship practices

H_03: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' ethical leadership practices.

H3: There is a significant difference between male and female principals' ethical leadership practices.

H_04: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' instructional leadership practices.

H4: There is a significant difference between male and female principals' instructional practices.

H_05: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' collaborative leadership

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practices.

H5: There is a significant difference between male and female principals in collaborative leadership practices.

H_06: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' professional development practices.

H6: There is a significant difference between male and female principals' professional development practices.

6. Setting

This study was conducted in Lagos Mainland and Surulere Local Government School districts of Lagos state in Nigeria. The two districts are in the jurisdiction of Lagos State Ministry of Education Local Education District IV. Lagos state has 906 public primary schools with 859,456 students, 360 secondary schools with 633,247 students, and six higher education institutions. Lagos state is also home to many private primary and secondary schools. Recently, a number of for profit and non-profit, religious, and private universities have been established in the state, a result of university education deregulation in the country. Regardless of ownership structure, all educational institutions in Nigeria are regulated by the Ministry of Education at the state or federal levels.

7. Sample

A total of 303 teachers; 147 males and 156 females, selected through random sampling completed and returned the Principal Leadership Behavior Questionnaire (PLBQ). A requirement for participation was that teachers must have spent at least one year in their respective schools with the same principal. Principals, 12 males and 12 females were selected because of population disproportionality (15 males and 68 females). All principals selected had a master's degree and at least one year of job related experience.

8. Results and Discussion

The independent t-test was used to determine if there were differences in male and female principals' leadership practices based on the PLBQs six dimensions. Statistical significance was determined at the two-tailed alpha level of 0.05. The Mann-Whitney test was also used because assumption of homoscedasticity was met for all subscales except Interpersonal Relationship Practices. Also, the assumption of normality was met for all dimensions except for the Interpersonal Relationship and the Instructional Leadership Practices subscales, which showed slight positive kurtosis. For these subscales, the independent samples t test was used with nonparametric Mann-Whitney to ensure that the non-normality did not affect study results.

Null Hypothesis 1: Decision Making Practices

As can be seen in Table 1, the difference in mean scores between males and females was not

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statistically significant for the Decision Making Practice subscale, $t(301) = 1.70$, $p = .090$. The mean scores on the Decision Making Practices subscale for male principals ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .62$) did not show significant difference from scores for female principals ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .65$) in their Decision Making Practices. Given this result, a decision was made to fail to reject the null hypothesis for the Decision Making Practices subscale.

Null Hypothesis 2: Interpersonal Relationship Practices

Table 2 shows that results of t test for Interpersonal Relationship Practices mean scores did not show significant difference, $t(301) = -1.69$, $p = .092$. The table shows that female principals had a higher mean score on the Interpersonal Relationship Practice subscale than male principals.

Table 1. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscales for Decision Making Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Decision Making Practices	3.64	.62	3.51	.65	1.70	301	.090

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. (2-tailed) DMP Equal variance assumed -171 .6791.700 301 .090 Equal variance -1.713 271.438 .088 not assumed. However, the Mann-Whitney test was statistically significant, z = -2.40, p = .016. The Mann-Whitney test took precedence over the t test given the violation of normality and homoscedasticity assumptions for the Interpersonal Relationship Practices subscale. Analysis revealed difference in the Interpersonal Relationship Practices for male principals (M = 3.89, SD = .61) and female principals (M = 4.03, SD = .74). Given the result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 2. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscales for Interpersonal Relationship Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Interpersonal Relationship Practices	3.89	.61	4.03	.74	-1.69	301	.092

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. (2-tailed) IRP Equal variance Assumed 4.636 .032 -1.689 301 .092 Equal variance -1.749 292.150 .081 not assumed .

Null Hypothesis 3: Ethical Leadership Practices

As can be seen in table 3, the difference in mean scores of male and female principals in terms of Ethical Leadership Practices was statistically significant, $t(301) = -2.31$, $p = .022$. The null hypothesis

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was rejected and it is apparent given the scores that the Ethical Leadership Practices mean scores for male principals (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = .64) were lower than those for female principals (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = .68).

Null Hypothesis 4: Instructional Leadership Practices

As can be seen in Table 4, mean scores on the Instructional Leadership Practice subscale differed between the two groups, *t*(301) = -3.91, *p* < .001. The Mann-Whitney test was also statistically significant, *z* = -4.44, *p* < .001. The table shows that the Instructional Leadership Practices mean score for male principals (M = 3.79, SD = .63) were lower than for female principals (M = 4.08, SD = .63. Based upon the analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscales for Ethical Leadership Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Ethical Leadership Practices	3.80	.64	3.98	.68	-2.31	301	.022

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. (2-tailed)ELP Equal variance assumed .009 .923 -2.305 301 .022 Equal variance -2.329 273.869 .021 not assumed.

Null Hypothesis 5: Collaborative Leadership Practices

As shown in Table 5, the independent samples *t* test for Collaborative Leadership Practices mean scores was statistically significant, *t*(301) = -2.10, *p* = .037. The table shows male principals mean scores were lower on the Collaborative Leadership Practices scale (*M* = 3.85, *SD* = .57) than female principals (M = 4.00, SD = .65). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscale for Instructional Leadership Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Instructional Leadership Practices	3.79	.63	4.08	.63	-3.91	301	.001

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. (2-tailed) ILP Equal variance assumed .616 .433 -3.907 301 .000 Equal variance -3.904 263.965 .000 not assumed.

Table 5. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscales for Collaborative Leadership Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Collaborative Leadership Practices	3.85	.57	4.00	.65	-2.10	301	.037

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. 2-tailed) CLP Equal variance assumed .624 .430 -2.099 301 .037 Equal variance -3.904 285.490 .032.

Null Hypothesis 6: Professional Development Practices

Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of female and male principals, $t(300) = -1.27$, $p = .204$. Consequently, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in the Professional Development Practices mean scores for male principals (*M* = 3.67, *SD* = .60) and female principals (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = .70). With this analysis, there was a decision to fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 6. Inferential Descriptive Statistics for PLBQ Subscales for Professional Development Practices

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers				
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Professional Development Practices	3.67	.60	3.77	.70	-1.27	300	.204

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t dt Sig. (2-tailed)PDP Equal variance assumed 1.938 .165 -1.274 300 .204 Equal variance -3.904 287.494 .191 not assumed.

9. Conclusion

A reason for conducting research is to contribute meaningfully to what is already known (Violanti & Jurczak, 2011). This research was concerned with whether there are differences in the school leadership practices of male and female school heads in Nigeria, West Africa. Six leadership practices were considered: Decision Making, Interpersonal Relationship, Ethical Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Collaborative Leadership, and Professional Development. Previous research has informed that in many ways female and male leadership practices are similar. On the other hand, the gender-centered perspective of leadership proposes that women develop a feminine style of leadership characterized by caring and nurturing (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Stelter, 2002). Behaviors associated with this

perspective include participatory decision making, collaboration, and quality interpersonal relationship between leader and subordinate (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinback, 1999).

Hypotheses testing in this research provide information for education stakeholders to realize that females are not at a disadvantage to males when leadership is at issue. A core question at the heart of female and male leadership comparisons happens to be, is one better than the other. This research results provide clarification to a long standing stereotype that depicts females as less capable leaders than males. Women's competence in leadership roles has often been viewed as inferior (Foschi, 1996), and their work in the same job is undervalued and not recognized as commensurate with that of men (Heilman, 1995). Results of this study offer no evidence that women are less capable than men with regard to school leadership. Given the current state of the literature about gender and leadership, which presents no specific flaws in women's leadership ability, this study's results should alert stakeholders and decision makers not to hold limiting views about women and school leadership.

Rohmann and Rowold (2009) found that respondents rated females better than men in their study on gender leadership. In this study, female mean scores were higher in the Interpersonal, Ethical, Instructional, and Collaborative leadership dimensions. It is worth calling attention to the importance that these leadership practices have in the 21st century. Interpersonal leadership is considered a key to trust building in organizations. Ethical leadership is concerned with a leader's ability to create the conditions under which other people live. Today, major emphasis centers on a school leader's ability to increase student academic achievement through instructional leadership. More and more, the principal's role as an instructional leader is to focus on student achievement, which is accomplished through the creation of relational and collaborative environments where one can motivate others (Paglis, 2010). Collaborative leadership, too, is a 21st century leadership skill used to galvanize organization members to embrace goal achievement. Hence, the results of this research indicate that women school leaders demonstrate key leadership practices as well as, and to an extent better than men. Culture, socialization patterns, and gender bias are factors in Nigeria's society that have prevented women from assuming leadership roles (Okarafor, Obidile, Okorafor, & Uduanochie, 2015). In a final analysis, study results support having confidence in women's ability to be head teachers and lead educational organizations.

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