Gender Stereotyping and Career Advancement of Female Managers in Nigerian public and private firms: A comparative Study (A study of selected firms in Enugu State)

Abstract: This paper comparatively examined gender stereotyping and career advancement of female managers in Nigerian public and private firms. The paper adopted a survey design, and the study was conducted using a sample of 322 top and middle level management staff drawn from three public firms and three private firms in Enugu state. Relevant data was collected using a four point likert scale questionnaire and the Non-Parametric paired samples test using 20.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data gathered. The output of the data implies. It is concluded that the lower rate of gender stereotyping in public organization is not unconnected with career advancement pattern in public organizations that is purely based on duration of service and that is guided strictly by the public service rule rather than performance or any other factor. However, for the private organizations, career advancement is often associated with productivity and other extraneous boardroom considerations, making it possible for personnel influences that may promote gender bias to determine the advancement of women to management cadre. The researchers therefore recommend that there is need to adopt and implement the affirmative action in corporate world to reduce the gap between female and male managers.

keywords: Advancement, Career, Gender, Management, and Stereotype .

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INTRODUCTION

From creation, women are recognized as weaker vessels hence are to be protected by their male folks. Some religious and traditional practices even preach that women should only be heard and not seen. Hence, men traditionally are saddled with leadership responsibilities both in the society and the corporate world. This assertion is in consonance with Heilman, (2001) when he opined that Leadership roles have generally been found to align more strongly with male gender role characteristics - assertive, independent, aggressive, and competitive - than female gender role characteristics - nurturing, caring, warm, unselfish, and communal, thus putting men in a better position to obtain these positions. Supporting this view, svantstrom (2003), submitted that Management has a long tradition of male dominance. This pertains not only to the fact that historically, most corporate managers have been men. The concept of good management largely is often given masculine connotations and is strongly associated with stereotypes, norms and prejudicial attitudes relating to gender. According to Schneider (2004) stereotyping occurs when a person is viewed as a member of at least one category that stereotypes may apply to and generalizations can be made from. This truth is even better expressed in south-eastern Nigeria cultural setting where women are perceived with less attention, these poor perceptions are found both in domestic affairs and public leadership issues thereby creating an aura of failure about them. Lyness and Heilman (2006), posit that gender stereotypical expectations have been found to lead to negative perceptions of women leaders, resulting in less favourable evaluations of women and less frequent promotions than equally qualified men.

However, over the years, there tend to be a gradual role exchange or better still an increase in the number of women that are taking up leadership positions both in the larger society and in the corporate world. Nigerian women are now seen sitting at the top of boards of multinational corporations, demonstrating leadership in political and religious organizations. This may not be unconnected with

the efforts of gender equity and equality movements across the world, availability of information and education to all without gender bias. Despite the successes recorded, the support Nigerian female managers enjoy from their male folks still leaves much to be desired. This study therefore is aimed at understanding how gender stereotyping affects the career growth of female managers in Nigerian organizations.

Statement of the Problem

It is a globally held opinion by scholars that women are underrepresented in the workplace, especially at the top management level. In Nigeria and indeed the south-eastern territory, this may not be unconnected with the perception that women are not to be seen leading but followers. This believes is even emphasized by the religion and culture of the people in the south-east. However, women civil and workplace right advocates are scaling hurdles to push for women inclusion at the top level management cadre of public and private organizations. But the multi-tasking roles of women have seen them engaged with out-of-work roles incongruent with those expected of leaders, making it difficult for them to excel in leadership positions. Moreover, prevailing public expectations have created consistent negative perceptions of women leaders, resulting in less favourable evaluations of women and less frequent promotions than their men counterpart. While moves like women affirmative action are geared towards reducing the imbalance in men-women placement in positions of authority, the scale of its adoption in public and private sector may have been vitiated by various factors. The objective of this paper therefore is to comparatively examine gender stereotyping and career advancement of female managers in Nigerian public and private firms.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotypes are categorical beliefs regarding the traits and behavioural characteristics ascribed to individuals based on their gender. They serve as expectations about the attributes and behaviours of individual group members (Bono and Duehr 2006). Gender is used to describe the cultural, social and psychological traits of individuals as masculine or feminine based on typically for each sex but which may be ascribed to traits of either biological sex (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002). On the other hand, some views say that gender is not the only basis for stereotypes. Not only does biological sex activate gender role stereotypes, but other cues that are part of a global, multi-faceted gender role stereotype can also activate the attribution of leadership. A multidimensional conception extends the formerly trait-based view of gender stereotypes and opens a more differentiated perspective. According to this conception, stereotypes are composed of diverse components, such as traits, role behaviours, occupations and physical appearance (Sczesny and Stahlberg 2002). While the salience of a person's biological sex is often considered sufficient for the activation of the corresponding stereotype components, the work of Deaux and Lewis (1984) suggests that gender-stereotyped physical

Characteristics (e.g. broad shoulders versus dainty physique) can outweigh sex as a basis of judgment. Their results show that the components of gender stereotypes differ in their ability to implicate other components, with physical appearance playing a dominant role. Gender stereotypes can be described as the characteristics, attitudes, values and behaviours that society specifies as appropriate for the particular gender. The differences may have arisen not just from biological differences but also from sex role socialization during childhood and the way in which men and women develop psychologically (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002).

Gender stereotyping can be described as the totality of fixed ideas about the natural determination of male and female social characteristics (Kliuchko, 2011). A typical definition of gender stereotypes involves schematically generalised, simplified, and emotionally coloured images of womanliness/femininity/women and manliness/ masculinity/men. The author further quoted a more encompassing definition: Gender stereotypes are socially constructed categories of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' that are confirmed by different behaviour depending on sex, different distribution of men and women within social roles and statuses, and are supported by a person's psychological needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and to feel integral and not discrepant. These definitions are quite apposite as they bring forth pertinent issues relating to gender stereotypes.

• Firstly, they highlight the permanency of the ideas held by society about male and female characteristics;

• Secondly, stereotypes are societal constructions of what masculinity and femininity is.

• Thirdly, it touches on the crucial element of the role of stereotypes in influencing an individual's identity and their quest for a sense of belonging. Kliuchko (2011) further highlighted other important aspects about gender stereotypes. The attribution of qualities according to masculinity and femininity tends to 'pigeonhole' individuals. Characteristics such as "Active-Creative" are attributed to masculinity, including activity; dominance; self-confidence; aggressiveness; logical thinking; and leadership ability. "Passive-Reproductive" principles are attributed to femininity with characteristics such as dependence; solicitude; anxiety; low self-esteem; and the emotionality associated with it.

Common Workplace Gender Stereotypes

Keneiloe (2011) broadly classified workplace gender stereotypes into two. The first four gender stereotypes discussed below (Women are emotionally unstable, weak and timid', 'Women are risk averse', 'Women are intuitive decision makers', 'Anger is not feminine') are generic gender stereotypes about women, their abilities and attributes, while the subsequent three (think manager, think male; the masculinity of the leadership role; displacement of communal attributes in leadership) will focus on the leadership element of workplace gender stereotyping.

i. Generic gender stereotypes

a) Women are emotionally unstable, weak and timid: DeArmond, Tye, Chen, Krauss, Rogers, and Sintek, (2006) asserted that most research findings have consistently shown that men are judged to be emotionally stable, strong, assertive and workplace achievers. In contrast, women are often seen as emotionally unstable, weak, and timid. Ridgeway (2001) also reported that women are considered to lack the assertive ability and the leadership skills that are crucial when interacting with people. She also argued that the gender system is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership because gender stereotypes contain status beliefs that associate greater status worthiness and competence with men than women.

b) Women are risk averse: A common perception about women in the business world is that they are risk averse (Maxfield, Shapiro, Gupta and Haas; 2010). In their survey, Maxfield et al found strong evidence that women are not risk averse, but in fact embrace risk. They argued that women continue to be perceived as risk averse because of three factors: their risk taking is unrecognized; they mitigate costs when taking risks; and their engagement in role-congruent behaviour leads to the perception that they are risk averse. This therefore means that the perception that women are risk averse is not entirely true; they embrace risk but the perception is perpetuated by some behaviours displayed by women in the workplace, which are then interpreted as being risk averse. Heffernan (2007) also supported the argument that women are not risk-averse, but are rather cautious. She listed evidence to demonstrate that women, for example, take on more personal debt to fund their businesses than men do, and that they are generally more willing than men to go out on a limb. She argued that women are willing to embrace huge risks in their search for self-determination, which is one of the reasons so many of them leaving the formal workplace to join the entrepreneurial world.

c) Women are intuitive decision makers: Women managers are seen to embody what are perceived to be the emotional, illogical and sexual aspects of organizations, compared with men who tend to symbolize gender-neutral rationality and decision making (Green & Cassell, 1996). However, Hayes, Allinson, and Armstrong, (2004), in their research on intuition and women managers, disproved their hypothesis that female managers are more intuitive than male managers, meaning that there is no difference between male and female managers in terms of intuitive orientation. Robbins and Judge (2007) argued that women analyze decisions more than men do. They explain that women "ruminate" about more than men.

d) Anger is not feminine: Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) conducted research consistent with this stereotype. The authors examined the relationship between anger, gender and status conferral. They argue that emotion theorists suggest that displays of certain emotions, such as anger, can communicate that an individual is competent and is entitled to high social status. However "women who do not display 'womanly 'attributes and men who do not display 'manly' attributes are judged less psychologically healthy and are

evaluated less favourably than those who do (Heilman, 2001). Females who express anger violate this feminine norm and therefore may not experience the boost in status enjoyed by angry men. Brescoll and Uhlman (2008) found that for men, expressing anger may heighten status: men who expressed anger in a professional context were generally conferred higher status than men who expressed sadness. On the contrary, for women, expressing anger had the opposite effect: professional women who expressed anger were consistently accorded lower status and lower wages, and were seen as less competent than angry men and unemotional women.

ii. Leadership oriented gender stereotypes

e) Think Manager, Think Male: One of the most common stereotypes is the manager as male stereotype, which fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2007). Booysen and Nkomo (2010) argued that it is important to study the perceptions individuals hold in regards to the stereotype. When we think manager, we think male. An important hurdle for women in management in all countries has been thought to be the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male (Schein, 2001). Most people associate the role of manager with the male gender. This stereotype fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2007).

f) Leadership is a masculine job: Carli and Eagly (2001) asserted that "leadership has traditionally been construed as a masculine enterprise with special challenges and pitfalls for women". "The entry of women into senior levels within organizations over the last decade or so has brought this stereotype into question" (Wajcman, 1996). Another similar perception is that successful managers are aggressive, forceful, competitive, self-confident, and independent and have a high need for control, which fundamentally contrasts from the commonly held perception that women lack these qualities and are characterized as being relatively submissive, nurturing, warm, kind, and selfless (Hayes et al., 2004). One of the reasons for this is that the leadership role has been "conventionally constructed in masculine terms" (Billing & Alvesson, 2000). They further argued that this classification of leadership in masculine terms, "relegates everything socially perceived as 'non-masculine' to the marginal and places it primarily outside the organization" and thus makes it harder for women to be recruited to and function in managerial jobs. The authors warned that the continued association of leadership with masculinity feeds gender labelling and discrimination against women fulfilling leadership roles. This stereotype places women in a negative light when considerations are being made for leadership positions.

g) Communal attributes have no place in leadership: In understanding leadership attributes, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) listed agentic (achievement orientation traits) and communal attributes as particularly relevant in understanding the leadership aspects of gender roles. They describe agentic characteristics, which are ascribed more

strongly to men than women, as primarily assertive, controlling and confident — for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident and competitive. In employment settings, agentic behaviours might include speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions.

Communal characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to women than men, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people, for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing and gentle. In employment settings, communal behaviours might include speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others' direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems. These attributes displayed by women are viewed in a generally negative light and as contrary to what business leaders should be like. The essence however, is that these communal attributes are not necessarily negative - they may even be strengths, but due to the generally held views of those in the workplace about what leaders are, they are seen to be weaknesses. These few examples of stereotypes, which continue to surface in the workplace, confirm the need to understand the underlying causes of these perceptions and stereotypes.

Causes of Stereotypes

Keneiloe (2011), posit that it is evident that the literature is abundant with content on the causes of stereotypes. To summarize, people stereotype:

❖ When they make assumptions that individuals will have particular norms, values and modes of behaviour simply because of some feature such as colour, race, nationality, education or upbringing.

❖ To simplify and cope with the large volumes of information to which they are continually exposed through categorization.

❖ To justify the system's unfairness (system justification theory).

❖ To simplify evaluation of others by using fewer dimensions (complexity extremity theory),

❖ To fill information voids about people (assumed characteristics theory).

❖ As a reaction to unexpected behaviours from other groups (expectancy violation theory).

❖ When their systems or ideology are threatened so as to induce structure and

❖ By division of labour according to gender.

Gender Stereotyping and Female Managers Career Advancement

Bell (2007) argued that common stereotypes about abilities, traits or performance of people belonging to certain groups may lead to disparate treatment in the workplace. Disparate treatment is defined as the "differential treatment of certain employees because of membership in a protected class. Disparate treatment is also referred to as intentional discrimination. The author offered an example of a stereotype that could lead to disparate treatment as "the assumption that women have limited math skills that could result in their purposely not being assigned jobs requiring math skills". According to Cabrera et al. (2009), 'role congruity theory' is an extension of 'social role theory', which argues that as a result of the allocation of women into domestic roles and men into paid work roles, women and men actively develop skills, behaviours and traits. These skills, behaviours and traits are then adopted by society as normative and internalized by individuals into fundamental gender roles that are both descriptive and prescriptive in defining how women typically do and should behave. This incongruity thus results in two potential biases against female leaders: (a) lower expectations for women's potential for leadership because leadership ability is associated with being male; and (b) lower evaluations of the female leader's actual behaviour (Cabrera et al.; 2009). Therefore, the role congruity theory predicts that in instances where the leader role is male stereotyped, the impact will be that female leaders will be subject to lower performance expectations and lower evaluations than comparable male leaders".

➢ Devaluation of performance - due to the stereotypical expectation that women will not be successful when they do 'manly work', when they do succeed, others would rather reject this disconfirming information, as accepting it would require a restructuring of beliefs. The performance expectations act to create self-fulfilling prophecies and evaluators engage in cognitive distortion that enables them to see what they expect to see. Also contributing to the devaluation of women's performance is the tendency to interpret the same behaviour differently depending upon who the actor is.

➢ Denying of credit to women for their successes - despite the many obstacles blocking the acknowledgment of a woman's successful performance in traditionally male work domains, there are times when her success is undeniable. But even then, a woman may not be viewed as competent. Rather, the expectation that she will fail is maintained by treating the success as not being due to the woman herself. Attributing responsibility in this way designates the woman's success as an exception and unlikely to have happened without special circumstances.

➢ Personal derogation – women who succeed at male sex-typed jobs are personally derogated and "viewed as counter-communal". Heilman (2001) "Women can be penalized for their competence by the everyday use of terms for successful women, such as "bitch", "ice queen", and "battle axe". Furthermore, women who

these stereotypes are often considered unfeminine and are disliked. Catalyst (2007) termed this phenomenon, 'The Double Bind – Doomed if you do, Doomed if you don't'. They argue that gender stereotypes create several predicaments for women leaders. Because they are often evaluated against a "masculine" standard of leadership, women are left with limited and unfavourable options, no matter how they behave and perform as leaders. Heilman (2001) argued that this attribution of qualities to gender becomes problematic when they begin to elicit gender bias from evaluators. "They produce the perceived lack of fit responsible for many types of biased judgments about women in work settings". Foldy (2006) argued that gender schemas and stereotypes that associate leadership qualities, potential, and ability with men serve as a psychological barrier to women's advancement in managerial and leadership roles. The male stereotype was characterized by high needs for dominance, achievement, aggression, and autonomy, compared to the female stereotype that was characterized by high needs for affiliation, nurturance and deference.

Gender stereotyping of the managerial position has been offered as a possible reason why women are not well represented in top level positions. Elaqcua et al.; (2009) proposed that the primary cause of women's scarcity at the top level of organizations is gender bias in evaluation. Because of gender bias and the way in which it influences evaluation in work settings, being competent provides no assurance that a woman will advance to the same organizational levels as an equivalently performing man.

Gender stereotyping, which is also referred to as 'sex-role' stereotyping, has been "consistently identified as a psychological barrier to women's advancement in the workplace" (Fullagar et al., 2003). One of the reasons for this is that gender stereotypes tend to be associated with certain family and professional roles. For a woman, housewife and mother are considered the most significant social role. She is assigned to the private sphere of life: home, giving birth to children and responsibility for interrelations in the family is entrusted to her. Inclusion in social life, professional success, and breadwinning are the lot of men (Kliuchko, 2011). This alludes to the prescriptive bias that characterizes gender stereotypes. Heilman (2001) argued that gender stereotypes are not only descriptive, but prescriptive as well. They prescribe what women should be like and how men should behave. Those not fitting to these prescriptions are judged harshly by society.

3.   METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a survey design, and the study was conducted using a sample of 322 top and middle level management staff drawn from three public firms and three private firms in Enugu state. Relevant data was collected using a four point likert scale questionnaire and the Non-Parametric paired samples test using 20.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data gathered. The test statistic for the paired samples test is as shown below;

$$t = \frac{\frac{\Sigma d}{N}}{\sqrt{\frac{\Sigma d^2 - \frac{(\Sigma d)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}}$$

1. RESULTS
The SPSS output of the data analysis is presented below;

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PUB	20.0000	25	7.90569	3.53553
	PRIV	19.0000	25	11.06797	4.94975

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PUB & PRIV		1.000	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	PRIV - PUB	1.00000	3.16228	1.41421	-2.92649	4.92649		.707	4	.519

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The paired samples correlation gave an output of 0.000 which shows that there is a strong relationship between the respondents to the research instrument. The output of the data implies that gender stereotyping is found in both public and private organizations in Enugu state, hence, there is no significant difference between gender stereotyping in public and private organization. However, gender stereotyping can be said to be more pronounced in private organizations than public organizations as the standard error mean of the private firms studied is higher than that of the public (4.94975>3.53553). It is concluded that the lower rate of gender stereotyping in public organization is not unconnected with career advancement pattern in public organizations that is purely based on duration of service and that is guided strictly by the public service rule rather than performance or any other factor. However, for the private organizations, career advancement is often associated with productivity and other extraneous boardroom considerations, making it possible for personnel influences that may promote gender bias to determine the advancement of women to management cadre. The researchers therefore recommend that there is need to adopt and implement the affirmative action in corporate world to reduce the gap between female and male managers.

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