

Fear of Success as a Function of Psychological Androgynous Tendencies among Women in Managerial Positions

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Abstract. The dearth of studies on fear of success syndrome and psychological androgyny in Nigeria has earlier been reported (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2000). Also noted however, are research efforts in this area. Fear of success has been highly linked to psychological androgyny. In an earlier research report, Mowaiye-Fagbemi, (2000) noted that there was a significant relationship to be found between fear of success and sex role orientation. Subjects in the study who were less disposed to fear of success were also rigid as regards sex role orientation among other reports. However, the subjects were students in tertiary institutions in the Nigeria. The present research study was aimed at espousing more on the variables under study. It was further aimed as a follow-up to the earlier research reported by Mowaiye-Fagbemi, (2000). In the present study, subjects were women in the higher echelons of educational management, this was aimed at finding out if indeed the two syndromes under study holds sway for women in such higher echelons of management and if there could be a significant relationship among the variable among the women.

1. Introduction

When female status is to be considered in any society, many factors are taken into consideration. The dimension could be on “rights”, 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 par in status with males. The antecedents of these are well documented. However, at recent times, changes abound as regards increasing and widening of scopes and operations of women. The once rigid and traditional oriented societies as regards sex roles are giving way to the millennium indicators of change in all aspects of society in the global village. These are indications that even developed nations are now more aware than ever, 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. This is getting more so on the political arena. So also is the issue of increasing opportunities for women in political arena and other arenas. One important aspect is the reaction and result to all the efforts. Are the traditional orientations changing? Closely aligned to sex role orientation is another common syndrome among women; the fear of success (FOS-shying away from success). The syndrome is multidimensional in nature. It has been reported that some women to beat the syndrome resort to what has been termed the “chameleon syndrome”. Some women appear successful by all standards, yet internally, they still respond on some occasions to “shying” away from success because of its supposed consequences. Such responses are well documented (Payne & Congemi, 1997, Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 1996).

In a related study, 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 female compared to their female counterpart who were home makers were reported to be more imaginative, and more 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 also confirmed the tendency for non-traditional women not to be disposed to fear of success. Behaviour Scale data analysis was by multiple regression with fear of success as the criterion. Anderson (1983) had as her subjects women chief executive officers in business and higher education. The women were reported to be atypical to feminine roles and were extremely achievement oriented, thus the possibility of FOS syndrome did not arise for the women. Interestingly, the women attribute 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 seems the formative years are important in the training skills that may be necessary for females in the millennium.

In a related study to the present study, Mowaiye-Fagbemi (2000) using university female undergraduate students had reported a significant relationship between fear of success and sex role orientation. Undergraduate females who were less disposed to fear of success were also found to be atypical as regards sex roles. The report challenged parents to give the socialisation that would not inhibit achievement for females and expressed 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 efforts of parents and guardians cannot be over-emphasised.

The present study is a sort of follow-up to the earlier study by Mowaiye-Fagbemi (2000) and also attempts to follow the lead of earlier research reports who tended to use professional women and women in the high echelon of managerial cadre who are competing with men. The study, it was hoped could be enlightening considering the fact that these women are in competitive settings with their male counterparts and also taking into consideration, the fact that all of the women possessed higher degree or degrees. With "these" background, would the women still be plagued by fear of success? Would they still be sex typed?

2. Methods

Female university lecturers in Nigerian Universities were samples for the study. Some were members of the university highest decision body; the senate. Some were heads of departments. The random and purposive sampling procedures were used in the research. Over one hundred and thirty women participated in the study. One noticeable part of the study was that there were to be found more female lecturers in the universities in eastern Nigeria (I .e total N.) as compared to other parts of the country. However, the researcher had to spread the participants to as many universities as possible rather than having a concentration of participants from particular area. The sex role orientation instruments by Mowaiye-Fagbemi (1996) was used to measure the locus of the women as regards sex roles while the fear of success cue (Mowaiye-fagbemi, 1996) was the cue used to detect innate fear of success among the subjects. For the purpose of data analysis, the Analysis of variance as well as the chi-square analysis and frequency counts were used. The hypothesis that guided the study goes thus:

3. Generated Hypothesis

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.

4. 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 result is shown below.

TABLE I: Anova for the interaction of sex role and fear of success among the females.

Source	Df	SS	Ms	f-value	P-f
SR	1	27766.23091	27766.23	181.52	0.0001
Fos	1	343.70455	343.70455	2.25	0.1363
SR & fos	1	409.97830	409.977	2.68	0.1041
Evior	128	19579.56352	152.965340	-	-
Total	131	48099.477273	-	-	-

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. A further analysis using the chi-square analysis and the frequency count was carried out on the data, and this is presented on table 2.

TABLE 2: Fos and non-Fos subjects in the feminine and androgynous groups.

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

Note:
 FOS – fear of success
 Non-FOS – These 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 (36%). 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 X^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 and NON-FOS as in table 2 for the androgynous and the feminine groups.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

A notable feature of the study was the high precedence of females who were predisposed to

the fear of success syndrome. There was also the high occurrence 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 reveals that the incidence of FOS and sex typing exhibited by the lecturers were not as high as those exhibited by students. However, the incidence of FOS exhibited by the lecturers is in line with those of Condry and Dyer, 1976 (p.64) and O’Leary 1978 (p.82) who reported that women in competitive environment are prone to FOS due to their environment. Another factor that could be attributable to the high incidence of FOS could also be high level of sex-typing among the women. It is to be expected that where there is such typing that situations which seem not to match the typing would definitely throw a subject to FOS exhibition. This notwithstanding, it must be noted that while the relationship between sex role orientation and fear of success is significantly so for students as reported (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2000), it is not significant for the lecturers. Thus, it seem that though there is a relation between lecturers SRO and FOS, it is not expected to be significant. The study also revealed that the differences in total (N) of androgynous and feminine women was insignificant 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 female in 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 Nigeria 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 degree (s) 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 calibres (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2000). And what this suggests is that the Nigerian society has a lot to do to be able to join the committee of 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 must not be assumed that as more female 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. Definitely, specifies steps must be taken.

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.

Many writers have argued that sex role orientation is related to age and mental health among other variables. Factors affecting or making one to be oriented towards a particular sex role orientation varies. Hollander and Packer, (1871) argued that occupational choice at adolescence is dependent on self-description and vocational stereotypes. Korman (1967) further asserted that individuals with positive self-esteem (SE) will select occupations in which they can implement their self-concepts, while low self-esteem people will seek out non satisfying occupations and positions. Research reports indicate that individuals with low self-esteem (SE) are more likely to suffer from a

variety of emotional and behavioural problems like, greater anxiety and less happiness, and perform more poorly in achievement setting than high self-esteem individuals. This poor performance could continue the vicious circle of self-criticism. One reason for this could be too much self-consciousness and self-focus on the part of low SE individuals but which cannot be found in individuals with high SE . Not only this, robust differences have been found between sex role identity and self-esteem. Masculine and androgynous people have been found to have higher self-esteem than feminine and undifferentiated people. Several studies attest to this . Thus, self-esteem may well be a function of one's sex role identity. This also suggest that more people must get interested in the two areas of fear of success syndrome and fear of failure syndrome to shed light more on the prevalence of these syndrome in the Nigerian society.

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