

ISSUES IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

ISSN: 1117-7314

Vol. 14: June 2011

JOURNAL OF THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DIVISION OF THE
NIGERIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, SOUTH WESTERN ZONE

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

Editor-In-Chief: Benedicta Y. Oladimeji, Ph.D



Content

Issues in Health Psychology

- An African Perspective On Gender And Adjustment Issues
In Firms' Entrepreneurial Orientation - John O. Ekore, Ph.d
Department Of Psychology, Faculty Of The Social Sciences,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria..... 1
- Impact of Dental Anxiety, Age, and Gender on Oral
Health-Related Quality of Life among Dental Patients
in Benin, Nigeria. - Olaide N. Koleoso* & Osawe Omoregie.
Department of Mental Health*: Oral Pathology, Dentistry
Clinic University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City..... 8
- Relevance Of Clinical Psychologist To Patient Health
Treatment In The General Hospital: Case Illustrations on Prospects
And Challenges of Clinical Psychologists roles in Specialists
Hospital, Akure, Nigeria. - Tomolaju Olubusayo Christiana Clinical
Psychology In State Specialist Hospital, Akure..... 24
- Personality Profile Of Drug Dependents At The Neuropsychiatric
Drug Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta - Sodeinde, O.O; Isikwe, O.I;
Adegbola, Akinhanmi, A.E; Ibikunle, A.O Neuropsychiatric
Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta..... 31
- Stress As A Predictor Of Hypertension In Benue State Civil
Servants Living In Makurdi. - Alex C.i.d. Shaahu Department Of
Psychology, Benue State University, Makurdi.....43
- Social Support, Social Maladjustment, And Psychological
Wellbeing As Determinants Of Psychopathic Deviance Among
Civil Servants In Akure, Nigeria - Adebayo O. Adejumo.....64

AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER AND ADJUSTMENT ISSUES IN FIRMS' ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION

By

John O. Ekore, Ph.D
Organisational Psychologist & Senior Lecturer,
Department of Psychology,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
Tel: +234 8023007369
E-mail: jekore@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper reviewed earlier attempts that consider female and males on entrepreneurial development. A specific contextual difference in their reaction to cultural expectations in organizational practices and entrepreneurial traits was considered from African perspective which has not enjoyed much attention in entrepreneurial adjustment discussions. The paper revealed that certain cultural practices reinforced by stereotype largely determine the difference between male and females' adjustment to a firm's entrepreneurial orientation. This necessitated the proposition that men and women would differ in their adjustment to the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation, especially in an African country. A major conclusion reported in the paper is that any firm that seek to promote entrepreneurial orientation need to consider the employees adjustment as an important variable.

Key words: Africa, Gender, Adjustment, Entrepreneurial Orientation

Introduction

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), which has been described as a mindset in firms that enable their employees to act entrepreneurially and enter new lines of business, is rarely examined in African studies on employees and organizational development. The three dimensions of EO which include innovativeness, risk taking propensity, and proactiveness have become popular among scholars to the extent that it form a theme in the entrepreneurship exemplar's conference of June 2011. Its focus draws from the work of Lumpkin and Dess, 1996. The dimensions have been linked with firms' performance and growth. Hence, there is the need for increased attention on cross-cultural perspectives in the discussion of entrepreneurial orientation. This is due largely to the continuous emphasis on those qualities that motivate employees to be exceptional while promoting organizations' critical objectives.

Where EO has been studied, the adjustment of employees and the culture of the society where the organization is located have not been a major focus for consideration, especially from African perspectives. Yet, it is a common knowledge from the surplus literature on cross-cultural studies that firms continually found employees to differ in the level of adjustment to organizational practices, which do not exclude entrepreneurial orientation.

Entrepreneurial Orientation and Gender in Nigeria

There are organizational practices in Nigeria that reinforce the gender divide which alter entrepreneurial orientation for male and female employees. These consequently shape their adjustment to EO. In western countries of Europe and America, male and female employees are encouraged by firms to be innovative, engage in some measure of risk taking, and proactive. These dimensions may not be strange to employees in Europe and America, especially when they are from those countries. Culturally, male and females are reared and trained to appreciate these qualities and translate them into practice in the workplace. Despite the uniqueness of individuals in terms of personality, most organizations require these traits from employees to succeed and be profitable in the 21st century. The organizational

climate in the west and some other emerging economies do encourage employees to consider the traits as relevant for effectiveness. When the organization encourage such traits, adjustment to the demands for entrepreneurial orientation become easier for male and female employees.

In developing countries of Africa, the story is largely different. There are practices especially in Nigeria that discourage male and females to equally appreciate and display same traits in social settings. When each of the dimensions of EO is examined, there seem to be a cultural restriction based on gender stereotype and definition. Though literature is replete with gender differences in the dimensions, there are reinforcing practices in Nigeria which tend to be common in several African countries.

For instance, the Nigerian culture is averse to females exhibiting high risk-taking behaviors. It is regarded as a masculine quality. When a female engages in high risk-taking, she is likely to be labeled by family members, friends, relatives, and co-workers. The social disapproval tends to discourage the motivation to exhibit the trait at work.

In some other societies too, several cross-cultural studies have found that men are more inclined to take risks than women in a variety of situations including work settings (Hudgens and Fatkin, 1985); Powell and Ansic (1997). Among the author's several studies, Hofstede (1998) concluded that a pan-culture differentiation in values where men stress ego goals and women stress social goals does exist. Although differentiation between men and women in terms of values appears universal, the magnitude varies across cultures. Despite the common knowledge of gender differences, there is a subtle classical conditioning for the female in Nigeria to engage less in risk taking behaviors. The phobia associated with risk-taking is then generalized to the workplace, unlike the male that is encouraged to engage more in risk-taking behaviors. When a female employee shows high risk-taking tendency, she is often labeled a 'man' in many workplaces in Nigeria. She is assumed to be tough and not feminine. A woman is expected to be submissive to supervisor, less adventurous, averse to risk-taking, less domineering, take on less demanding tasks, and more nurturing at the workplace. Risk-taking even in an uncertain situation is exclusively for the male employee.

is exclusively for the male employee. Yet, the contemporary organization equally expect male and females to show high risk-taking propensity because it has been identified as central to high performance in business and firms.

The self-fulfilling prophecy that females are not expected to be high on risk-taking propensity tends to shape the female orientation as she gets hired into the organization. The orientation is further reinforced by managers who assign responsibilities involving less risk to women while men are given those that involve more risks. In a bid to adjust to the demand for risk-taking behaviors, coping become differentiated by gender. While the female finds risk-taking behaviors to be stressful as she considers social norms and seek psychological approval, her male counterpart only tries to elaborate on it. The body of researches on employees' risk-taking behaviors seldom considers the adjustment of male and females in their entrepreneurial orientation. Perhaps, it is important to note that most organizational practices fail to achieve their desired level of success due to the corresponding adjustment by employees. Thus, in the attempt to foster entrepreneurial orientation, firms need to also consider the capacity for employees to adjust as a catalyst that shapes its success or failure.

Unlike risk-taking behaviors, gender differences are not so pronounced in the demand for innovativeness in workplaces. This dimension is rarely differentiated for male and females separately. Both men and women are expected to be high on innovativeness. Practical experience shows that employers ensure that applicants are assessed on this trait among other salient and uniform ones in the selection process. However, the trait alone cannot motivate entrepreneurial orientation by firms. Similarly, the degree of difference in proactiveness for male and females has not been well documented in Africa. However, there are cultural issues that suggest gender bias in promoting the trait at work. A ready example is that in many Nigerian homes, females are discouraged from being proactive. It is largely absurd across tribal groups for the female to be so forward. She is encouraged rather, to be careful and wait on events before reacting. On the contrary, the male is encouraged to act fast, and not to wait for events to occur before responding. He is expected to nip events

in the bud rather than allow them to happen. This difference is not largely different in workplaces in Nigeria. Yet, the firm is expected to motivate a mindset of entrepreneurial orientation that includes proactiveness for both male and female employees.

Adjustment to Entrepreneurial Orientation

It is important to note that entrepreneurial traits are not uniform across countries and cultures (Shane, 1992; Smith et al., 1997; Mueller & Thomas, 2001). The research streams on entrepreneurial traits, gender differences, and culture have not raise questions concerning the challenges for men and women in adjusting to entrepreneurial orientation. Their capacity to adjust may well determine the choice of entrepreneurship as a career. There is bundle of evidence that support cultural pattern of gender differences such that entrepreneurial traits are more prevalent among men than women. Such a pattern is an indication that men would be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities when firms promote entrepreneurial orientation, thus creating a gender barrier in entrepreneurial opportunities. As proposed from the work of Krueger and Brazeal (1994) on entrepreneurial intentions and potential for entrepreneurship, the potential for entrepreneurial activity in a country is largely conditioned by cultural, political, and economic factors. These factors help to shape and support entrepreneurial values and provide the motivations to form new ventures. According to Mueller & Thomas (2001), this potential for entrepreneurship combines an entrepreneurial orientation with a positive perception of opportunity. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes has generated traditional gender roles where men generally assume roles in society that reward assertiveness and independence and women generally assume roles that reward nurturing and cooperation (Hofstede, 1998).

In all their studies neither Krueger and Brazeal (1994) nor Mueller et al. (2001) consider gender and adjustment in their models of entrepreneurial cognition and intention. Hence this paper that tries to shed more light on the importance of adjustment by men and

shaped by culture in entrepreneurial orientation.

Conclusion

The various propositions that have been expounded from literature indicate that men and women differ in their responses to organizations' practices, including entrepreneurial development. Empirical findings however, did not show much about adjustment in entrepreneurial development of employees by firms. It can therefore be proposed based on gender stereotype across cultures, especially in an African country that female employees would significantly differ from their male counterparts in their adjustment to entrepreneurial orientation. The implication of this prediction is that a firm's entrepreneurial orientation would only achieve desired goal when adjustment programs are considered by the firm in the quest to promote entrepreneurship among employees. There is however, the need for more researches that will include adjustment measure for male and females in organizations that promote entrepreneurial orientation. The outcome from such investigations would guide adjustment intervention programs. The effort would increase the body of knowledge in terms of cross-cultural issues in workplace adjustment and entrepreneurship.

References

- Hofstede, G. (1998). Attitudes, values and organizational culture: Disentangling the concepts. *Organizational Studies*, 19 (3)477-493.
- Hudgens, G. and Fatkin, L.(1985). Sex differences in risk-taking: Repeated sessions on a computer-simulated task. *Journal of Psychology*, 119(3),1970-2206.
- Krueger, N.F. and Brazeal, D.V. (1994). Entrepreneurial potential and potential entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 18, Issue 3, 91-104.
- Lumpkin, G.T. and Dess, G.G. (1996). Clarifying the

entrepreneurial orientation construct and linking it to performance.

Academy of Management Review, 21(1),135-172.

Mueller, S.L. and Thomas, A.S. (2001). A cross-cultural study of gender-role orientation and its effect on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 18(1), 3-20.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY