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Leadership and Gender Performance in Public Organisations

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Abstract

The study investigated gender and leadership issues in public offices in South-East, Nigeria. Gender refers to the status of varied roles and actions that can be ascribed to men and women. The specific objectives were to examine the leadership issues/challenges encountered by women and men in public offices. The survey research design was adopted, the population was 1426 junior and senior staff category of seven public organisations in South-East, Nigeria. The results

revealed that discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home were confirmed leadership issues /challenges encountered by women, and also insecurity, impatience and domination were leadership issues encountered by men respectively in public offices. The study proposed that promotion of leaders should be based on performance and not on gender.

Keywords: Gender, Masculinity, Femininity, Transactional leadership, Transformational leadership

1. Introduction

The characteristics of male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys as well as the relationship between men and men and those between women and women describe gender. The attributes, relationships and opportunities connected to male and female are socially constructed and are learned through socialization process. They are time specific and changeable (Hannan, 2001). Gender is different from sex while sex refers to the differences in biological and physiological nature of a man and a woman. Gender refers to the expectations, privileges, responsibilities, opportunities and roles the society ascribed to males and females. Thus, the society determines these and expects men and women, boys and girls to act as specified. However, the society expects the man and the woman to play different roles at home, in the market, office, and government (Akinboye, 2004).

Gender compares the status of women to that of men. Gender reveals the differences between men and women as described by the society. Gender is described as the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. Gender refers to the expectations already had about the aptitudes and characteristics of men and women (masculinity and femininity). The roles and expectations of male and female are learned, changeable over time and are variable within and between cultures. Gender analysis has revealed how women's subordination is socially constructed and thus able to change, as against being biologically predetermined and static (Akinboye, 2004). Every society has a gender system that consists of the notions of male and female in a certain place at a certain time and the consequences regarding who does a thing, who decides it, and how we collectively and individually perceive ourselves and one another. Our thinking and ideas about sex/gender determine not only our family life and sexuality but also religion, law, politics and the labour market. Gender as a term identifies a specific aspect of all human life (Enloe, 2007).

Shettima (1996) posits that gender can be seen as a socially defined status of roles and actions ascribed to women and men for differentiation, what is expected of them by society, and how they communicate for significant co-existence. Needs of men and women vary in different ways because not every employee wants job to find fulfillment, neither do they want the same out of a work situation. This is the reason why men and women approach work from different perspectives. Gender studies do not deny the material and biological aspects. The biological descriptions of the human body, thus, have cultural and social consequences. Biology as a subject of research is relevant to gender (Swedish Council, 2009). Gender as a concept can be traced to the 1976 University of Sussex workshop on women subordination, where a consensus emerged that women subordination is socially constructed, unlike sex, which is biologically determined. Thus, sex refers to the biological differentiation between males and females in terms of their reproductive functions. However, gender refers to the differentiation between the roles of men and women as described by the society (Onyeonoru, 2005). The study seeks to examine the leadership issues encountered by women in public offices; and also ascertain the leadership challenges encountered by men in public offices.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Leadership Issues encountered by Women in Organisations

The leadership issues women encounter in leadership include these as follows: low Aspiration of Women: *women* face challenges

in leadership and equally contested that if women expressed relatively low aspirations in leadership, it may have been related to the actual barriers to their advancement (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1999). Women tend to direct their career goals to jobs that align with social perceptions of feminine roles (Mordi, Simpson, Singh & Okafor (2010). Women's aspirations are consistent with realistic expectations about promotion and advancement for women (Kanter, 1997). Powell, Posner and Schmidt (2007) posit that given that women had to surmount several challenges to be in managerial positions than men, they tend to show more concern for their career along with their families.

Inequality: The inequality against women in organisations is exhibited in the form of male dominance to the exclusion of women from major decisions. Thus, in spite of the massive entry of women in the commercial banks and the increasing numbers of women in mid-level managerial positions in commercial banks, top-level positions remain difficult for women to attain today as they were more than a decade ago. Women encounter a variety of barriers impeding their surge to the top of their careers as they work in organisations dominated by male decision-makers and their established practices (Wilson, 2004).

Disparate Treatment: Women are victims of disparate treatment because they are usually abused on sex and age. Speaking with group of young women looking for work in the new generation banks, they tell stories of being asked by recruiters about their future family plans. It is discrimination to ask only women about family-care responsibility. Some organisations, like new generation's banks hire and promote men over an equally qualified women because, it is believed that women are not competitive in nature and as such employed as first line officers (Wilson, 2004).

Social Networking among Women: Women's network could be a vehicle for advancing in their career, and could as well be a strategy to give the women a voice in the organization and better their lots. In Nigeria, women's networking is still a challenge which could be as a result of a number of factors like ethnicity, religion, culture, family background and social status. However, to acknowledge the social networking of women, it is necessary to understand the social-structure of the society and how it affects their organizations (Hersby, Ryan & Jettan, 2009).

2.1.2 Men's Leadership Challenges in Organisations

Men are usually aggressive and competitive. Thus, men managers manage organisations differently from women. Previous researches reveal that men tend to command and control (Rosener, 1990); they are competitive, and like to be seen as decision makers, they are often reluctant to discuss issues with their colleagues and staff (Flanders, 1994); were directive and authoritative (Rigg & Sparrow, 1994) and demonstrated task orientation (Park, 1996). Thus, men are often perceived to be lacking interpersonal sensitivity and warmth, less expressive, not likely want to ask for directions, highly quantitative and more autocratic and directive than women.

2.1.3 Femininity and Masculinity Leadership Characteristics

Female managers' style in leadership is seen as the number of women in leadership increases. Majority of the female leaders choose transformational leadership style. Powell (2004) posits that when female leaders use transformational leadership style, they will be evaluated more favorably than male leaders. This is because transformational leadership is more associated with the feminine than masculine gender stereotype. The women transformational leaders also have trust that lead to team effectiveness and organisational citizenship behaviour. Women usually show individualized consideration to followers, they actually show their empathy and support to the subordinates. Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2002) submit that women were rated higher than men in most aspects of transformational leadership. Consequently, women using transformational leadership style are perceived to be successful. Interestingly, many of the traits of the transformational leadership such as empowerment and collaboration are associated with women which indicate that many feminine features contribute to the leadership efficacy. Generally, women are good in motivation

(they are enthusiastic and energetic) communication: they ensure that their employees are well informed, feedback: they improve their team by achieving results, and aspirations: they set high and attainable goals. Men are seen better at building knowledge based on past experience. They are open to new ideas and thus, promote innovation. Men are willing to take chances and they are strategy driven when they take actions to accomplish goals. Being calm, men tend to keep their emotions in check, delegate authority: they assign objectives and responsibilities, they show cooperation in coordinating roles and they are persuasive: they can sell ideas and win people over.

2.1.4 Feminine leadership and Masculine leadership Compared

Some of the female features, such as, using their intuition in decision-making process, being careful, getting a good work-life balance, and social responsibility, are aligned to the basic cultural propositions regarding the way men and women behave. Additionally, women tend to be better in terms of empathy that is showing good people management skills by establishing a strong connection with their team; and communication: expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly, and keeping a solid communication flow when compared to men. Also, women are more qualified in terms of interpersonal relationship: feeling toward others, kindness: good listening skills, and having cordial relationships with their team and their superiors. Contrary to traditional belief, women have great results on the leadership scale when productivity is measured. Women are enthusiastic towards achieving their goals; they have high expectations both from themselves and their colleagues.

However, on scales that determine focus on strategic planning and the overall company vision, men have good results. Masculine leadership characteristics were traditionally most appreciated. However, previous researchers reveal that some of these masculine traits: assertiveness, individual mindset, and task oriented leader did not always contribute to leadership effectiveness. The transformational leadership has emerged with its efficiency being supported by more researchers. Although people often believe that masculine traits such as aggressiveness and dominance are related with leadership, but actually, effective leadership requires an androgynous combination of feminine and masculine traits which include risk taking, empathy, openness to experience, extraversion, assertiveness, conscientiousness, intelligence, emotional intelligence, integrity and trustworthiness, and the ability to motivate and persuade others (Eagly & Carli, 2007)

It is interesting to know that some of the transformational leadership traits like collaboration and empowerment are traditionally related to women, which illustrates that many feminine features contribute to the leadership efficacy. Some of the papers published on gender developed and compared the feminine leadership with the masculine leadership. The feminine leadership style with focus on a good work environment with personal attention paid to subordinates welfare was called social-expressive; by contrast, the masculine leadership style was described as an instrumental one, focused on giving directions. The feminine leadership style that is focused on motivating, mentoring, inspiring, and empowering followers to fully develop their abilities to contribute to their organization is often contrasted with transactional leadership that focuses on direction and dominion (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

The findings on gender differences and leadership style can be further understood when they are interpreted as research findings on leader evaluation. Studying the evaluation of female and male leaders on characteristics and leadership behaviours revealed that both male and female leaders are evaluated favorably when using a democratic leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).

2.2 Empirical Review

Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009) conducted a study on women leadership challenges and organisational effectiveness: an investigation in the United States. The objective of the study was to determine the percentage of women that encounter challenges in leadership positions. The methodology adopted the survey design. The finding revealed that approximately 50 percent of women

leaders perceive barriers that prevent women from entering management positions. The study recommended that organizations should offer equal pay, training, and recognize the steps to overcome the “glass ceiling” barriers. Women should recognize and treat the barriers caused by gender discrimination such as lack of education, training and experiences.

Kawatra and Krishnan (2004) examined gender and transformational leadership on organisational culture of Management Institute in Eastern India. The objective was to assess the effect of leader’s feminine traits and transformational leadership on organisational culture. The study adopted the survey design. The finding revealed that femininity and transformational leadership enhance organisational culture. The study recommended that transformational and feminine leadership style should be upheld in order to enhance innovation in products and services in current business scenario.

Karunarathna and Jayatilake (2016) conducted a study on influence of gender on leadership styles and leaders’ effectiveness – A study focused on government university administrative staff of Sri Lanka. The objectives were to identify the difference in the transactional leadership style between male and female managers, to identify the difference in the laissez-faire leadership style between male and female managers and to identify the difference in the effectiveness of male and female managers. The study adopted the survey research design. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in transactional leadership style between male and female managers; there was no significant difference in laissez-faire style leadership between male and female managers; and there was no significant difference in the effectiveness of male and female administrators in government university of Sri Lanka. The study recommended that the research should be extended to private sector organizations to compare the findings in private sector and public sector so as to provide better narration.

3. Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for the study. Primary data were obtained from a structured questionnaire designed on five point likert scale format. The population of the study was 1426

junior and senior staff category of seven public organisations in South-East, Nigeria. The sample obtained by Cochran (1963) formula from the population was 422. Validity of the instrument was conducted by experts from the organisations. The reliability of the instrument was tested by Cronbach Alpha Coefficient which indicated 0.93, which implies high degree of internal consistency.

3.1 Analyses of Results

The hypotheses were tested with Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS –SEM) via SmartPLS. For hypotheses one and two the process started by bootstrapping using Smart PLS. This was followed by examining the significance of the path coefficients (β) and the coefficients of determination (R^2 or predictive accuracy). The last part of structural analysis (for main effect) is the evaluation of the effect size of each path in the model by means of Cohen’s f^2 (Cohen, 1988). The effect size measures if an independent latent variable has ample impact on a dependent latent variable. It is the increase in R^2 of the latent variable to which the path is connected, relative to the latent variable’s proportion of unexplained variance (Chin, 1998). Values for f^2 between 0.020 and 0.150, between 0.150 and 0.350, and exceeding .350 indicate that an exogenous latent variable has a small, medium, or large effect, respectively, on an endogenous latent variable (Hair Jr., Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2016).

The conditions to either accept or reject the stated hypotheses, for path coefficients (β values), values from .10 to 0.29, .30 to .49 and .50 to 1.0 are considered as weak, moderate and strong correlations, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Then, for a two tailed test, t values greater than 1.96 are significant, while t values less than 1.96 are non-significant (Hair, Babin and Krey, 2017).

Test of hypothesis One

H1: Discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home are leadership issues encountered by women in public offices.

Figure 1 and table 1 show the direct path model regarding the leadership between discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home and women in leadership position.

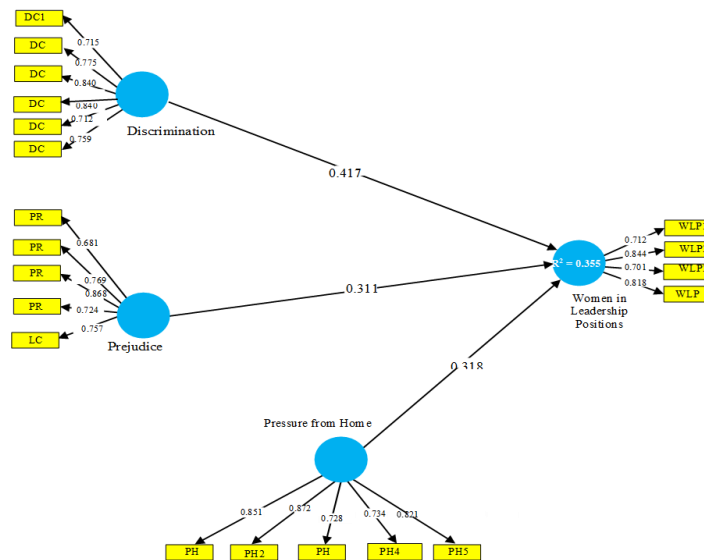


Fig 1: Specific Path Model of Latent Variables (Main effects) – DC, PR, PH and WLP.

Table 1: Results of Hypothesis One

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	Standard error	T. value	P. value	Decision
DI -> WLP	0.417	0.052	8.423	0.001	Not supported
PR -> WLP	0.311	0.032	7.614	0.000	Not supported
PH -> WLP	0.318	0.036	7.742	0.001	Not supported

Note: DI = Discrimination, PR = Prejudice, PE = Pressure from Home and WLP = Women in Leadership Position. T-Statistics greater than 1.92 at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Smart PLS 3.2.7 output on research data, 2020.

Figure 1 and table 1 show the structural model tested. The R² figure of 0.355 implies that the model variables (discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home) explains 35.5% variance of the dependent variable (women in leadership positions). The alternate hypothesis which states that, discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home are leadership issues encountered by women in public offices

was supported. The results reveal that these factors are leadership issues encountered by women in public offices with ($\beta = 0.417$; $t = 0.052$; $p < 0.001$), ($\beta = 0.311$; $t = 0.052$; $p < 0.001$) and ($\beta = 0.318$; $t = 0.052$; $p < 0.001$) for discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home respectively. Thus the alternate hypothesis was supported while the null rejected.

Table 2: Effect Sizes in Hypothesis One

Paths	Correlation Value	Predictive Accuracy (R ²)	Adjusted R ²	Effect Size (F ²)	Remarks on Effect Size
DC->WLP	0.417	0.355	0.357	0.150	Moderate
PR->WLP	0.311	0.355	0.353	0.112	Small
PH->WLP	0.318	0.355	0.351	0.093	Small

Reference values: DC = Discrimination, PR = Prejudice, PH = Pressure from Home, WLP = Women in Leadership Position. Where: R², 0.19 = Weak, R², 0.33 = Moderate, R², 0.67 = substantial, Cohen (1988), Effect size (f²) of 0.02 = small; 0.15 = medium, while 0.35 = large effect. T-Statistics greater than 1.92 at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Smart PLS 3.2.7 output on research data, 2020.

Table 2 shows the effect of the individual variables (discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home) on women leadership position. Based on the guideline, effect size (f²) of 0.02 = small; 0.15 = medium, while 0.35 = large effect of an exogenous latent variable. Effect sizes below 0.02 are counted as zero effects (Cohen 1988). Thus, the result reveals that discrimination posed the biggest challenge to women in leadership positions, followed by prejudice and

pressure from home respectively.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₂: Insecurity, impatience and domination are leadership challenges encountered by men in public offices

Figure 2 and table 3 below show the direct path model regarding the leadership challenges encountered by men in leadership positions.

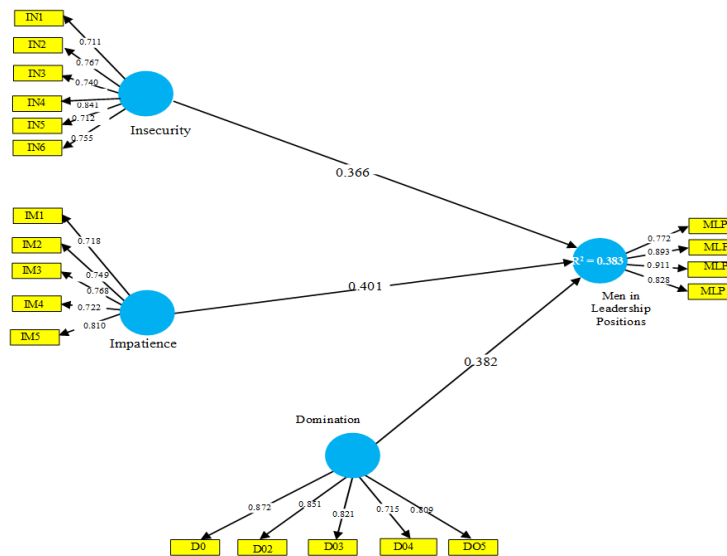


Fig 2: Specific path model of latent variables (Main Effects)-IN, IM, DO and WLP

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis Two

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	Standard error	T. value	P. value	Decision
IN -> MLP	0.366	0.047	7.323	0.000	Supported
IM -> MLP	0.401	0.040	8.714	0.001	Supported
DO -> MLP	0.382	0.048	7.544	0.001	Supported

Note: IN = Insecurity, IM = Impatience, DO = Domination and MLP = Men in Leadership Position. T-Statistics greater than 1.92 at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Smart PLS 3.2.7 output on research data, 2020.

Figure 2 and table 3 show the structural model tested. The R² figure of 0.383 implies that the model variables (insecurity, impatience and domination) explains 38.3 percent variance of the dependent variable (encountered by men in leadership positions). The alternate hypothesis states that insecurity, impatience and domination are leadership issues encountered by men in public sector offices. The alternate hypothesis was

supported as these factors were found to be leadership issues encountered by men in public offices. With ($\beta = 0.366$; $t = 0.047$; $p < 0.000$), ($\beta = 0.401$; $t = 0.040$; $p < 0.001$) and ($\beta = 0.382$; $t = 0.048$; $p < 0.001$) for insecurity, impatience and domination respectively. These results imply that insecurity, impatience and domination are challenges faced by men in leadership position in public offices. Hence, the alternate

hypothesis was supported while the null hypothesis rejected.

Table 4: Effect Sizes of the Latent Variables in Hypothesis Two

Paths	Correlation Value	Predictive Accuracy (R ²)	Adjusted R ²	Effect Size (F ²)	Remarks on Effect Size
IN->MLP	0.417	0.383	0.381	0.152	Moderate
IM->MLP	0.311	0.383	0.386	0.151	Moderate
DO->MLP	0.318	0.383	0.385	0.008	Small

Reference values: IN = Insecurity, IM = Impatience, DO = Domination and MLP = Men in Leadership Position. Where: R², 0.19 = Weak, R², 0.33 = Moderate, R², 0.67 = substantial, Cohen (1988), Effect size (f²) of 0.02 = small; 0.15 = medium, while 0.35 = large effect. T-Statistics greater than 1.92 at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Smart PLS 3.2.7 output on research data, 2020.

Table 4 shows the effect size of the individual variables (Insecurity, Impatience and Domination) on men leadership position. The results show that insecurity posed as the largest challenge to men in leadership position, followed by impatience, while domination has small effect on men in leadership position.

4. Discussion of Results

Hypothesis one was tested with partial least square – structural equation modelling to examine the leadership issues encountered by women in public offices. The result revealed that discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home were leadership issues encountered by women in public offices. (β = 0.417; t = 0.052; p < 0.001), (β = 0.311; t = 0.052; p < 0.001) and (β = 0.318; t = 0.052; p < 0.001) for discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home respectively). Thus the alternate hypothesis which states that discrimination, prejudice and pressure from home are the leadership issues encountered by women in public offices was accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009) revealed that approximately 50 percent of women leaders perceive barriers that prevent women from entering management positions.

Hypothesis two was tested with partial least square – structural equation modelling to ascertain the leadership challenges encountered by men in public offices. The result revealed that insecurity, impatience and domination were leadership challenges encountered by men in public offices (β = 0.366; t = 0.047; p < 0.000), (β = 0.401; t = 0.040; p < 0.001) and (β = 0.382; t = 0.048; p < 0.001) for insecurity, impatience and domination respectively. Thus, the alternate hypothesis which states that insecurity, impatience and domination are leadership challenges encountered by men in public offices was accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. Shidiye (2012) affirmed that men were more often perceived as lacking interpersonal sensitivity, less expressive, not likely want to ask for directions, more autocratic and directive than women.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that gender plays an important role in

determining the leadership style of individuals. As a result of increasing awareness, people of all genders, races, colors and nationalities have a universal desire to participate in the decisions that affect their life. In pursuing these decisions, they encounter problems which if otherwise not addressed or poorly addressed, may stall their potentials whether in leadership roles, leadership-style or general performance. Therefore, it has become very useful for organisations to continuously consider every aspect of gender in order to attain gender-balance, empower, minimize friction, as well as the barriers which limits the potentials of both male and female genders (for example stereotypes, discrimination, insecurity).

6. Recommendations

The study proffers the following recommendations

1. There should not be any form of discrimination against women in leadership, also, s women should endeavour to balance the family roles with their job roles.
2. Employees should not be quick in forming negative opinions about men in leadership position but should be supportive.
3. Appointment or promotion of leaders should be based on merit and performance and *not* on gender.
4. Organisations should continuously consider every aspect of gender in order to attain gender-balance, empower and minimize friction, as well as the barriers which limits the potentials of both male and female genders.
5. Public organisation employees should support the leaders in their chosen style and not to be antagonistic, as this can bring overall poor performance.

7. Acknowledgements

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict regarding their interest in this paper.

Appendix: Questionnaire

Challenges Encountered by Women in Leadership Positions

How do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Strongly Disagree; 4 =Disagree; 5 = Undecided

S/N	Discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
1	There is high level of inequality in my organisation					
2	Women are not given opportunities to lead					
3	Our organizational policies favour men to grow					
4	There are growth and development opportunities for men in our organization					
5	Women are not given equal chance to speak out					
6	There are some positions exclusively reserved for men					
S/N	Prejudice	1	2	3	4	5
1	Women are often stereotyped as lazy					
2	Sometimes women are unfairly denied promotion					
3	Often coworkers and superiors make slurs or jokes about women					
4	Most times women are unfairly humiliated in front of others at work					
5	Most times women leaders are treated with less courtesy or respect than their male counterparts					
S/N	Pressure from Home	1	2	3	4	5
1	My partner makes me feel like I am not taking care of the home					
2	I feel my partner would leave me if I am always busy at work					
3	My children want me to always be with them					

4	My partner yells at me whenever I returned late					
5	My partner feels I should stop working					

Section B

Challenges Encountered by Men in Leadership Positions

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Strongly Disagree; 4 =Disagree; 5 = Undecided

S/N	Insecurity	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am uncertain about my job					
2	I have self-doubt of my safety					
3	I often experience harassment from colleagues					
4	I have been threatened on several occasions when I exercise authority					
5	I feel I have no future in this job					
6	My superior do not trust me to work for long					
S/N	Impatience	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am eager to achieve my task					
2	I am very keen on what my subordinates are doing					
3	I experience restlessness when I have several expectations					
4	I do not tolerate laziness					
5	Customers must be serve on time					
S/N	Domination	1	2	3	4	5
1	I do not need anybody to take decisions					
2	I can hire and fire at will					
3	I do not like being challenged					
4	I feel my ideas are always superior					
5	Nobody has the power to question my decisions as the boss					

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