

Think Likeable Managers Think Successful Male Managers: A Study of University of Jos Students on an Age-Long Stereotype

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Abstract: The evaluations of successful male and female managers in terms of likability was examined from responses to 4 variations of the Schein descriptive index by 200 randomly selected students of University of Jos, Nigeria. Findings indicated that both the ratings of successful female managers, ratings of successful male managers, were similar to those of likable managers ($r = 0.89$, $r^1 = 0.94$; $r = 0.89$, $r^1 = 0.92$; $p < 0.01$); implying that both successful male managers and successful female managers are perceived to have Schein index attributes commonly ascribed to likable managers. This was same for correlations of ratings of successful male managers ($r = 0.92$, $r^1 = 0.92$, $p < 0.01$), successful female managers ($r = 0.89$, $r^1 = 0.94$, $p < 0.01$) and likable managers ($r = 0.85$, $r^1 = 0.96$, $p < 0.01$) with ratings of successful managers (non-gender identified). Similarly, male participants' ratings were similar to female participants' ratings of all the managerial profiles. Contrary to the think manager-think male phenomenon, results generally indicate that to think likable manager is to think both successful male manager and successful female manager. Further research needs to be conducted to assess other possible ramifications of this phenomenon by assessing directly if to think unlikable manager is to think successful female manager and/or successful male manager.

Key words: Likeable managers, successful managers, male managers, female managers, gender stereotypes, Schein descriptive index

INTRODUCTION

A plethora of research in psychology has examined the effect of stereotypes on target judgements. Much of the early research focused on stereotype effects on attributions for past behaviour; on prediction of future behaviour and on target evaluation (Deaux and Emswiller, 1974; Nisbett and Borgida, 1975; Locksley *et al.*, 1980).

In line with the effect of stereotypes on target evaluation, workplace research has examined the stereotypes effect on evaluation of individuals; of particular focus has been a vigorous and extensive study of the effect (s) of gender stereotypes on the evaluation of women and men in workplace environment at the entry, middle and top management levels. Such research has laid the foundation for the claim that gender stereotypes are largely responsible for some biased evaluations in organisations; such that gender stereotypes have been frequently used to explain why women are not hired or promoted into positions leading to organisational power and prestige (Dennis and Kunkel, 2004; Powell and Butterfield, 1989; Schein, 2001).

Indeed, in the past 3 decades or more, US and international research findings have consistently shown

that societal expectations of the good manager are closely related to the male stereotype (Dennis and Kunkel, 2004). Hence, the expectation seems to be that leaders in most professional and management positions display characteristics that are associated with the 'masculine' stereotype rather than the 'feminine' (Deal and Stevenson, 1998; Dennis and Kunkel, 2004; Dubno, 1985; Haslett *et al.*, 1992; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975). Such that it seems that masculine characteristics have come to be viewed as the standard in leadership and management (Dennis and Kunkel, 2004).

Indeed research-based evidence explicitly indicates that gender role stereotypes produce negative evaluations of women and preferences for masculine traits (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Dennis and Kunkel, 2004); a phenomenon often referred to as think manager-think male (Schein, 1973, 1975).

More recent research provides further information regarding the perception of male and female managers, specifically successful male and female managers. In the first of a series of studies by Heilman *et al.* (2004), it was demonstrated that when it was unclear whether a woman had been successful, because her performance had not yet been reviewed, she was seen as less competent than

an identically presented male manager, but thought to be likable. However, when it was clear that she had been highly successful and designated as a top performer, she was seen as equally competent as her male counterpart but was thought to be far less likable.

The tendency for women managers, who are clearly successful to be disliked was studied in a 2nd, subsequent study to be limited to situations in which the managerial job was male sex-typed and therefore, the woman's success was a violation of stereotype prescribed behaviour. In the 3rd study, likability was shown to affect decisions regarding organisational rewards, this latter study, because it took likability as the independent variable and systematically varied them, lends strong support to the argument that in addition to the negative reactions directed at women who have proven themselves to be competent, there are unfavourable consequences for their career prospects.

So for women as recent research indicates, competence and indeed being successful at managerial positions may not be all it takes for women to cease to be plagued by gender stereotypes, as even their success at managerial position translates into some other form of barrier.

What this simply probably translates to may include, that based on prescriptive gender stereotypes, success at management for women is counter normative and consequently disapproved, it also translates that successful women in management would be disliked and if they are disliked, then it may also mean that this would affect their work life in terms of the rewards they get, since research has shown that being liked or likable can affect organisational rewards like promotions.

This is consistent with the idea that 'affect' may operate to bias performance ratings (Dipboye, 1985; Feldman, 1981; Varma *et al.*, 2005) and with research that demonstrates that liking can interfere with performance rating accuracy (Cardy and Dobbins, 1986). Heilman *et al.* (2004) research demonstrates the effect of liking not only on performance ratings but also on the allocation of potential organisational rewards; a situation that can significantly affect the upward mobility of the female manager who has proved herself competent by being a successful manager.

It is not surprising that likability should/is important in the study of gender stereotypes and requisite management characteristics. This is so because research has long shown that competence and liking/likability are 2 main dimensions on which people tend to be perceived and judged (Reeder and Brewer, 1979; Rosenberg *et al.*, 1968; Skowronski and Carlston, 1989). However, most

research on gender stereotypes and leadership, specifically management have to a large extent-focused on the competence dimension of evaluation. The liking dimension (Heilman's *et al.*, 2004) has been largely neglected.

It is therefore necessary, in line with Heilman *et al.* (2004) study, to continue to study the 'liking' dimension. This is important given the findings by Heilman *et al.* (2004) that 'success' for the female managers was penalised by dislike and the implication and far-reaching consequences of low likability for the successful female manager.

Thus, this study is aimed at assessing the present general perception/evaluation of successful female and male managers on both competence and liking dimensions. As such the research would go beyond the common place labels of ideal manager, successful manager, good manager, effective manager to that of 'likable' manager.

The major goal of this study is to assess, in line with Schein studies and other similar studies that have established that to think manager is to think male, if to think likable manager is to think successful male manager and/or inversely put, if to think unlikable manager is to think successful female manager.

By and large, it would be expected that successful female managers would be perceived as having imbibed masculine managerial behaviour in order to be successful and consequently perceived to have acted in ways that are against gender role expectations and incongruent with their gender roles. Based on the foregoing, we tentatively state the following:

- There will be a significant positive relationship between respondents ratings/evaluation of successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful male managers
- There will be a significant negative relationship between male respondents ratings/evaluation of successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful female managers
- There will be a significant positive relationship between respondents ratings of likable managers and successful male managers
- There will be a significant negative relationship between respondents ratings/evaluation of likable managers and successful female managers
- There will be a significant negative relationship between male respondents ratings/evaluation of likable managers and successful female managers

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: A sample size of 200 respondents (male = 96, female = 104) with a mean age of 28.08, was drawn by simple randomisation from the student population of University of Jos-final year, part-time students of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Instrument: The Schein descriptive index was utilised in this study. The Schein descriptive index is an instrument, comprising 93 adjectives, that was 1st used by Schein (1973) to assess attitudes toward male and female managers. The SDI has been used several times to define the characteristics of managers generally, successful middle managers, good managers, ideal managers, alcoholic managers (Brenner *et al.*, 1989; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Booysen and Nkomo, 2006; Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Four forms of the index were used, respondents were asked to describe successful managers, likable managers, successful male managers and successful female managers. Information like age, gender and department of participants was also obtained.

Procedure: Permission was sought from the course instructors at the departments. A packet containing an equal number of all 4 questionnaires was given in each class so that the Index could be distributed randomly within each class. The questionnaires were completed during class time and returned after completion. Participation in filling out the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, contingent on potential participant pick of a yes from a 'Yes or No lucky dip'. Students did not know that 4 variations existed. Instructions were as follows:

On the following pages you will find a series of descriptive terms commonly used to characterise people in general. Some of these terms are positive in connotation, others are negative and some are neither very positive nor very negative.

We would like you to use this list to tell us what you think (likable managers/successful male managers/ successful female managers) in general are like.

In making your judgments, it may be helpful to imagine that you are about to meet a person for the 1st time and the only thing you know about them is that they are managers (likable manager, successful manager, successful female manager and successful male manager). Please rate each

word or phrase in terms of whether or not it is characteristic of likable manager/successful managers/successful female manager/successful male managers.

Design: An independent measure design was employed wherein subjects were assigned to only 1 of the 4 conditions by simple randomisation (lucky dip).

Statistical analyses: This study employed Pearson's Correlation statistics to compute the relationship of the different managerial profiles. The analyses were performed separately for the male and female samples. The underlying assumption being that if there is a positive relationship between any 2 managerial profiles, those profiles would have been rated similarly and similarity in ratings implies similarity in evaluation/perception of the pair of managerial profiles in focus.

The intra-class correlation coefficients ([*r*.sup.1]) which are preferable to Pearson's correlations for such analyses because ICCs consider both the relative correspondence and the absolute agreement between ratings (Hays, 1963) and which has been consistently used in all replications of Schein's research and variations of the research, were also computed.

As in past research, ICCs were computed from 2-randomized-groups analyses of variance where the classes, or groups, were the 93 descriptive items.

The larger the value of [*r*.sup.1], the more similar observations in the same class tend to be. Thus, the smaller the within-item variability, relative to the between-item variability, the greater the similarity between the mean item ratings of each pair of managerial profiles. In other words, a high correlation reflects similar ratings for a particular set of comparison conditions (e.g., likable managers and successful male managers).

Note: The use of ICCs as a measure of correspondence is comparable to a 2 way random effects model/absolute agreement in reliability analyses where 2 raters rated 93 objects. In the use of the ICCs, the raters are analogous to the different managerial profiles, while the objects are the adjectives (items in Schein index).

RESULTS

Findings generally indicate that to think likable manager is to think both successful female and male managers. There was significant similarity in the ratings of all pairs of managerial profiles assessed in the study, as shown by both Pearson and intraclass correlation coefficients (Table 1 and 2). For both male and participants, the same similarity in ratings of pairs of managerial profiles was indicated (Table 3 and 4).

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficients for each managerial profile

Source	Likable managers	Successful managers	Successful male managers	Successful female managers
Likable managers				
Pearson correlation	1	0.916 (**)	0.867 (**)	0.892 (**)
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
N	93	93	93	93
Successful managers				
Pearson correlation	0.916 (**)	1	0.849 (**)	0.885 (**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
N	93	93	93	93
Successful male managers				
Pearson correlation	0.867 (**)	0.849 (**)	1	0.889 (**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
N	93	93	93	93
Successful female managers				
Pearson correlation	0.892 (**)	0.885 (**)	0.889 (**)	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
N	93	93	93	93

Table 2: Analysis of variance of mean item ratings and intraclass correlation coefficients for all respondents

Source (all respondents)	df	Mean square	F	r ¹
Likable managers and successful male managers				
Between items	92	0.013	0.127	0.923*
Within items	91	0.106		
Likable managers and successful female managers				
Between items	92	0.551	6.308*	0.943*
Within items	91	0.087		
Successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful male managers				
Between items	92	0.445	4.05*	0.918*
Within items	91	0.110		
Successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful female managers				
Between items	92	0.002	0.019	0.942*
Within items	91	0.088		
Successful managers and likable managers				
Between items	92	0.613	8.39*	0.956
Within items	91	0.073		

Table 3: Pearson correlation for Pairs of managerial profiles for male and female respondents

Pairs of managerial profile	Male respondents	Female respondents
	r	r
Likable managers and successful male managers	0.789*	0.821*
Likable managers and successful female managers	0.854*	0.820*
Successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful male managers	0.764*	0.796*
Successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful female managers	0.821*	0.811*
Successful managers and likable managers	0.830*	0.902*

Table 4: Ten items rated most characteristic of each managerial profile

Successful managers		Successful female managers		Successful male managers		Likable managers	
Attribute	Mean rating	Attribute	Mean rating	Attribute	Mean rating	Attribute	Mean rating
Ambitious	3.48	Ambitious	3.44	Ambitious	3.08	Able to separate feelings from ideas	3.48
Competent	3.40	Cheerful	3.16	Competent	2.92	Analytical ability	3.44
Creative	3.36	Competent	3.68	Frank	2.92	Cheerful	3.28
Industrious	3.24	Competitive	3.46	Grateful	2.96	Competent	3.34
Intelligent	3.34	Creative	3.28	Industrious	3.48	Consistent	3.42
Leadership ability	3.68	Independent	3.22	Intelligent	3.16	Industrious	3.18
Neat	3.30	Industrious	3.36	Self-confident	2.98	Intelligent	3.50
Objective	3.62	Intelligent	3.26	Shows appreciation	3.00	Leadership ability	3.20
Self-confident	3.38	Strong need achievement	3.32	Strong need for achievement	3.32	Obedient	3.26
Steady	3.28	Strong need for security	3.34	Strong need for security	2.98	Skilled in business matters	3.32

Computed at 1 S.D>X; Likable managers = 3.0724; Successful managers = 3.0569; Successful male managers = 2.926; Successful female managers = 3.0724

DISCUSSION

Findings from the study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between respondents' ratings of successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful male managers. This indicates that respondents' ratings of successful managers and successful male managers are similar; which means that successful managers are perceived as having characteristics commonly ascribed to male successful managers. Hence, hypothesis 1 was accepted. In the same vein, there was no significant negative relationship between male respondents' ratings of successful managers (non-gender identified) and successful female managers. Making for the rejection of hypothesis 2.

Similarly, a significant positive relationship between respondents' ratings of likable managers and successful male managers was also shown; indicating that respondents' ratings of likable managers and successful male managers are similar, indicating that likable managers are viewed as having characteristics commonly ascribed to male successful managers and vice versa. Making for the acceptance of hypothesis 3. Also, there was no significant negative relationship between respondents ratings of likable managers and successful female managers and a significant negative relationship between male respondents ratings of likable managers and successful female managers; indicating that successful female managers are evaluated as also having characteristics commonly ascribed to likable managers and this could translate to same likability for male and female managers. Thus hypotheses 4-6 were rejected.

The outcomes are dissimilar to findings from other research that has consistently shown that management is largely perceived as masculine and hence, more congruent to male gender roles (Schein, 1973; Cohen and Bunker, 1975; Kanter, 1993; Schein and Mueller, 1992; Kunkel *et al.*, 2003; Patiar and Mia, 2008; Schaap *et al.*, 2008). For example, the 'think manager-think male' phenomenon and sex-typing of management as revealed by Schein's early research, which also prompted a series of investigations of sex role perceptions and requisite management characteristics (Brenner *et al.*, 1989; Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Massengil and Dimarco, 1979; Schein, 1973, 1975; Schein and Mueller, 1992; Schein *et al.*, 1996), generally have demonstrated that men were viewed as inherently more like managers than were women (Dennis and Kunkel, 2004).

These studies, which were largely replications of Schein's original studies were conducted in different countries such as the US, Britain, Germany, China and Japan and findings seem to provide basis that the think

manager-think male phenomenon is global. However, findings from this study contrasts this 'seemingly' global phenomenon.

In consistent with findings for this research, is the general indication in extant literature, than even when both male and female managers are depicted as being successful, males managers are still perceived as having the characteristics necessary for successful management generally.

Also findings are dissimilar to findings from research by Heilman *et al.* (1989) in which participants compared successful middle managers to successful women managers and still male participants, did not see similarities; their gender stereotypes persisted. The study by Heilman *et al.* (1989) illustrates that women in general are viewed somewhat differently from women managers or successful women managers. However, whether they are depicted as just women managers, or successful women managers, they were still perceived compared to males similarly described, as not possessing characteristics necessary for management. This was not the case for this research.

This came as a surprise, as it was expected, based on role congruity theory and expectation states theory that when women and men engage in roles that are incongruent with their gender roles, they would be perceived and reacted to negatively. As such, since management generally and top management in particular, based on research findings, are generally perceived to be masculine, women may be reacted to negatively, because they would be engaging in roles incongruent with their gender roles.

Consistent with this theory, success at management may not be congruent with the female gender role and hence, can be penalised by negative reactions such as dislike. Simply put, it would be expected that successful female managers would be perceived as having imbibed masculine behaviour (s) in order to be successful and consequently, viewed to have acted in ways that are against gender role expectations and incongruent with their gender roles. Also as having violated gender status order based on gender status beliefs inherent in gender systems. This was not reflected in the findings of this research.

Several plausible explanations for the inconsistency of these research findings with extant literature and theories on the evaluations of managers can be provided. The 1st explanation is the possibility that gender stereotypes did not affect the ratings by the sample of this research. This explanation is however farfetched, as the evidence for gender stereotypes affecting evaluation of managers is large and consistent.

Another plausible explanation is the possibility that participants in this study simply rated all managerial profiles as managers; the differentiation in labels did not have any significant difference in their ratings. In other words, for the participants in this study, a manager is a manager to a large extent irrespective of the labels attached to them. Hence, data provided from this research would translate to simply ratings of managers. The data from this study would therefore, be largely relevant to the ratings of managers-providing characteristics that managers are expected to possess generally.

A general perusal of the ten most-endorsed attributes endorsed for each managerial profile, consistently indicate across all profiles, the following characteristics-intelligent, competent, industrious, as characteristics of all the managers described in the questionnaires. What this probably translates to, is that these 3 characteristics are a must for any type of manager-likable, successful, successful female and successful male managers.

The few variations and similarities in terms of individual characteristics on the Schein index include the fact that only likable managers and successful female managers were rated as being cheerful. This again is contrary to research findings that indicate that successful female managers are bitter and generally lacking in interpersonal skills. This can again be explained by genuine differences, in the sense that it is possible that participants assume that female managers who are successful would be cheerful, as least their success is something to make them cheerful.

The implication of these findings basically indicate that gender stereotypes that affect evaluation of members of both gender groups especially females might not be largely pervasive, resistant to change and multifaceted in the work place in this part of the world. For example, it may seem that for women to eradicate or at least reduce the effect of gender stereotypes on their evaluations in the work place, they only need to 'counter' such stereotypes that makes them look incompetent for management.

But the assumption based on the findings of other research and its implication, 'proving themselves competent' might only work for them to the point of middle management. For top management positions, they need not prove competence anymore, but may need to act in ways that are congruent to their gender roles and that do not violate gender status beliefs. Succinctly put, they need to be likable and to be likable, they must act as women again to be able to rise to the upper echelons of management. But this study contrasts this assumption(s). And thus, implies that a manager is perceived as a manager irrespective of gender or likability. Once a female

can be a manager and a successful one at that she is seen as any other manager, the bottomline is that she is a manager. And based on findings of this research she is perceived to possess the same characteristics as any other manager.

The findings of this study should however, be treated with some caution as there were some limitations. The 1st limitation came from the sample used in this study-students. Students unlike employees in organisations or managers themselves can not be said to be truly representative in terms of their evaluations of managers, since they are not yet as it is, in work environment. Even though the use of part-time students imply that more than regular full time students, they are likely to be workers or to have work experience(s).

Also, there was an overwhelming strong resistance to participate in this research. Many of the students were largely unwillingly to participate in the research; according to some of them, the questionnaire was too lengthy and as such would take too much of their time. Similarly, they did not like the fact that acceptance to participate in the research was not automatic but contingent on their picking a yes from a dip containing equal number of 'yes' and 'no' as a method of randomisation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, further research needs to be conducted to confirm the findings of this research. Also, future research may need to assess other possible ramifications of this phenomenon by assessing directly if to think unlikable manager is to think successful female manager and/or successful male manager.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore, recommended that future research should take these limitations into consideration; probably a shorter version of the Schein Descriptive Index should be used to take care of the time factor and people in real work environment should also be the participants. It would also be research-wise to be able to have comparisons of ratings of both likable and unlikable managers and compare to ratings of successful female and male managers to assess directly if to think likable manager is to think successful female manager and/or successful male manager. And if to think unlikable manager is to think successful female managers and/or successful male manager.

Based on the findings of this research, it is also recommended that policies that are made to help eradicate

unfavourable evaluation of females and their consequent under-representation in management, may only need to ensure that more women become managers. The assumption is that once women become managers and are successful at management, they are perceived as possessing the same managerial attributes as other managers; indeed a manager is manager and can be nothing more, whether it is a female, a male, a successful or a likable manager. Being a manager implies being able to carry out managerial tasks, any one who can not carry out managerial tasks is just not a manager and does not necessarily have to be described as a successful or unsuccessful manager or any other label for that matter; so it seems based on this study findings.

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