

GENDER AND WORK VALUE PREFERENCES: A STUDY ON I. T. PROFESSIONALS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA.

By

*Judith E. Otu
Department of Sociology
University of Calabar
Calabar – Nigeria.

&

**Godwin A. Ugal
Department of Sociology
University of Calabar
Calabar- Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Knowledge on work value preferences of different types of employees is important because work value preferences affect job satisfaction and job commitment. The aim of this paper is to study if gender differences affect work value preferences. A questionnaire with 28 items was administered on a sample of 107 I .T. professionals to measure work value preferences among them. The data were factor analyzed with varimax rotation. This condensed the work values into eight different and independent categories. These are called (1) professional skill development, (2) job security, (3) authority and status,(4) facilitating work environment, (5) congenial social relationships, (6) fringe benefits,(7) travel abroad and (8) leisureliness in the job significant gender effect was found on four of these work values. Males gave more importance to “authority and status” and “travel abroad” in comparison to females. Females gave more importance to “congenial social relationships” and “facilitating work environment”. Gender effect was not found on the remaining four work values.

*Judith E. Otu (Ph.D) is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

**Godwin A. Ugal (Ph.D) is a Professor in psychology in the Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Nigeria. E-mail: godwinaugal@yahoo.co.uk.

GENDER AND WORK VALUE PREFERENCES: A STUDY ON I. T. PROFESSIONALS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA.

INTRODUCTION

Life values are related to both ends and means. Life values in the context of ends denote what is desirable while values in the context of means denote what is right. Values are cognitive entities that control our actions. Since values are either desirable or right, any individual can not rate them negatively. But their relative importance can differ across individuals and across other values. Holland (1973), Perrone (1965) and Vroom (1964) attributed these differences across individuals to differences in early family experiences. Dawis et al, (1968) and Gottfredson (1981) related these differences to socio cultural factors.

Work values are sub set of life values. Work values are the rewards the employees seek from the paid work in exchange of their productivity. Employees compare the rewards they actually receive from the job with the rewards that they expect and deserve, if they match, it will lead to job satisfaction; otherwise it will lead to job dissatisfaction (Locke, 1969 and Lawler, 1973). Ravlin and Meglino (1987) found that work values affect perception and decision – making. They report that people in the context of their duties find opportunities to apply their own dominant values in uncertain organizational situations.

The aim of this paper is to find out gender effect on work value preferences of I. T. Professionals. This knowledge will enable us to properly design job attributes and to develop criteria for selecting and recruiting the personnel for different jobs in the organizations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many writers have argued that sex differences in values arise from gender roles, gender stereotypes and gendered social structures that influence self-concept and self-presentation.

A role is a set of expected behavior patterns attributed to some one occupying a given position in a social unit (Robbins, 2001:227). Gender roles are defined as sets of norms prescribing the behaviors and activities appropriate for each sex (Eagly, 1987). Gender stereotypes are shared sets of beliefs about the psychological traits characteristic of women and men (William and Best 1990). Gendered structures are institutional roles and processes that generate differential outcomes for women and men (Gregory 1990 and Gutek 1993). Gendered roles and stereotypes fit more or less completely with the different activities required of women and men by the gendered social structure (Konrad et al. 2000).

Gender socialization is one process, which people learn about and are influenced by gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender structures (Konard et al.2000). Gender socialization includes normative pressures that reward people for fulfilling gender roles and stereotypes and sanction them for gender inappropriate behavior (Burn, 1996). Gender socialization also provides information to people regarding the expectations of others and the meaning of specific situational cues, both of which influence the extent to which gender appropriate behavior is displayed (Deaux and Major 1987).

The normative pressures and informational cues associated with gender socialization can influence both people's self-presentations and their self-concepts. Self-presentation is affected when people fulfill gender stereotypes to obtain rewards or avoid sanctions. Self-presentation in a manner conforming to gendered expectation does not necessarily imply that the people's self-concept is consistent with gendered roles and stereotypes (Martin and Ruble 1997). Self-concept is influenced only when people accept gender appropriate values as their own. When this happens, gender roles and stereotypes are said to be internalized (Burn, 1996).

Social identity theory suggests that membership in social groups affect the development of people's self-concept (Tajfel and Turner 1986). By identifying themselves as member of social groups, people develop conceptualization of the self that derives from membership in emotionally significant social categories or groups (Brewer and Brown 1998). Internalization of gender roles occurs because being categorized as a member of one sex or the other accentuates similarities within sex categories (Konrad et al. 2000)

Motivational theories of social identification provide another possible explanation for the internalization of gender roles and stereotypes. People derive a sense of self-worth from their social identities in the form of collective self-esteem (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992). The desire to maintain a sense of collective self-esteem can motivate people to self-stereotypes or think of themselves as sharing the characteristic of valued social groups. Hence, when people esteem a group to which they belong, they can derive a sense of self-worth by internalizing the distinguishing values and attributes held by that group (Konrad et al 2000).

Gender schema theory provides an additional perspective on why people might internalize gender role and stereotypes. Gender schemas are interrelated net works of mental associations representing information about the sexes that influence information processing (Ruble and Martin 1998:987). Once children recognize their membership in a gender category, they are motivated to learn gender schemas providing the details and scripts for activities expected of their sex. The internalization of gender roles and stereotypes in childhood can influence adult attributes and behavior (Konrad et al. 2000).

Another perspective is that people internalize gender roles and stereotypes to accommodate themselves to situations they can not change. Changing one's preferences to conform to the alternatives available reduced tension caused by frustrated desires (Borg, 1991). Rewards for displaying gender appropriate behaviors can frustrate an individual's desire to full fill gender inappropriate values.

Traditionally gender roles assign men the role of income provider and women the role of home maker (Konrad et al. 2000). Lacy et al. (1980) report that men more than women value high earnings. Job security is more important to men because it helps to ensure the ability to generate income and provide for the family's needs (Konrad et al. 2000). Lacy et al. (1980) report that women more than men value good hours and an easy commute. Convenient geographic location is more important to women because as homemaker she must follow the income provider's job location. Caring for the family is difficult for jobholders who travel. Because of this, women are less likely than men to desire jobs that require travel (Konrad et al. 2000). William and Best (1990) consider preference for achievement and autonomy as belonging to masculine stereotype. Thompson et al. (1992) report that men are less likely than women to express a desire for a comfortable work environment. William and Best (1990) found that females are more associated with the trait of affiliation and so they seek numerous personal friendships. Stein and Bailey (1973) found that females have greater need for social approval.

Appriori factors:

The researchers conceived the following apriori factors of work values using factors analysis.

1. Skill development in their profession.
2. Job security.
3. Positive work environment.
4. Congenial social relationships.
5. Authority and status.
6. Fringe benefits.

Method

The data have been collected from a sample of 107 I. T. professional working in two different companies in the sample consisted of 42 females and 65 males. To measure work values, 28 items have been selected for the present study from Konrad et al. (2000). The researchers have discussed about the relevance of each of these 28 items with five I . T. professionals.

A questionnaire was developed with these 28 items. Each item is given seven responses with response one indicating not at all important and responses seven indicating very much important. The questionnaire was administered to the 107 I.T. professionals and data were collected in the month of December 2001.

The data were factor analyzed with varimax rotation. This has given rise to eight orthogonal factors. For each factor and for each sex mean and standard errors were calculated Z test were used to test the hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

The researchers predicted six orthogonal factors but the factor analysis after varimax rotation has given rise to eight orthogonal factors. The items with factor loadings greater than or equal to 0.40 are shown in the table 1 and the factors have been named appropriately. The first factor consists of “opportunities to learn new things”, “Provides challenging work”, “requires creativeness”, “opportunities to use abilities”, “recognition for good performance”, “interesting job”, “ professional development” and “opportunities for promotions”. This factor is named as professional skill development. The second factor has items related to authority and status. The respondents felt “opportunities to exercise leadership”, “ reputation of the company”, “total pay” and “opportunities to travel within India” as related to authority and status. The I.T, professionals in their unique socio-psychological environment may see association of these items to authority and status. Factor three is named as congenial social relationships. “social service you can render on the job” is associated with this factor. Factor four is called as “comfortable working conditions” ans “work place location that suits you”. Factor five is named as travel abroad. Factor six refers to fringe benefits while factor seven is job security, factor eight is called as leisureliness in the job.

Hypotheses

Based on the factor analysis the researchers have formulated the following hypotheses.

1. HO: There is no significant difference between males and females with regard to work value of professional skill development.
2. HO: There is no significant difference between males and females with regard to work value of job security.
3. HO: There is no significant difference between males and females with regard to work value of facilitating work environment.
4. HO: There is no significant difference between males and females with regard to work value of congenial social relationships.
5. HO: There is no significant difference between males and females with regard to work value of authority and status.

Values of means and standard errors and Z values of different work value preferences for males and females have been presented in table2.

Table 1: factors and their loadings

Factor No.	Factor	Loading
Factor 1: Professional skill development		
27	Opportunities to learn new things	0.86
16	Provides challenging work	0.81
28	Requires creativeness	0.78
21	Opportunities to use abilities	0.71
26	Recognition for good performance	0.70
24	Interesting job	0.66
18	Professional development	0.44
14	Opportunities for promotions	0.41
Factor 2: Authority and status		
6	Authority the job gives you	0.84
23	Social status the job gives you	0.77
2	Prestige the job gives you	0.77
11	Opportunities to exercise leadership	0.66
12	Reputation of the company	0.45
3	Total pay	0.42
10	Opportunities to travel within Port Harcourt	0.42
Factor 3: Congenial social relationship;		
13	Friendly co-workers	0.80
17	Opportunities to make friends	0.78
4	Friendly supervisor	0.63
19	Social service you can render on the job	0.47
Factor 4: Facilitating (positives)work environment		
8	Convenient job hours	0.79
9	Comfortable working conditions	0.69
5	Work place location that suits you	0.40
Factor 5: Travel abroad		
15	Opportunities to travel outside Port Harcourt	0.90
22	Opportunities to settle down in other countries	0.73
Factor 6: Fringe benefits		
25	Fringe benefits (ESOPS, Home loans)	0.51
1		0.77
Factor 7: Job security		
	Job security	
Factor 8: Leisureliness in the job		
20	Provides leisure time	0.77
7	Freedom to do the job your own way	0.72

Table 2: Gender differences in Work value preferences and Z value

Factor No	Factor	Mean		S.E.		Z Value
		M	F	M	F	
1.	Professional skill development	6.07	6.16	0.054	0.073	0.99
2.	Authority	5.19	4.85	0.069	0.111	2.60*
3.	Congenial social relationships	5.21	5.62	0.106	0.116	2.61*
4.	Facilitating work environment	5.02	5.82	0.181	0.181	3.13*
5.	Travel abroad	4.40	3.76	0.178	0.266	1.03
6.	Fringe benefits	4.79	5.12	0.214	0.240	0.49
7.	Job security	5.43	5.60	0.248	0.243	0.49
8.	Leisureliness in the job	4.61	4.54	0.150	0.212	0.27

M = Male, F = female, and *Indicates significance at 95% confidence level

The male respondents have rated the work values of professional skill development, job security, congenial social relationship and authority and status as important in that order. Their preference for congenial social relationships in comparison to authority and status is indicative of changes that are taking place on the traditional masculine image due to the compulsion of fitting well in modern industrial environment. The male respondents attributed their importance to the remaining four work values as given in the table two.

The female respondents like their male colleagues rated professional skill development as the most important. When a women decides to be a career woman, she needs to cultivate this work value. The second and third most important work value for females are facilitating work environment and congenial social relationships, which fits well with the traditional female image. However, it is interesting to note that female respondents have rated facilitating work environment as more important than congenial social relationships. The constructs grouped under facilitating work environment help the female respondents to play better their roles as homemaker where as the constructs grouped under congenial social relationships affect their roles as I .T. professionals.

Coming to the gender differences on importance scores of the eight work values studied. Significant differences have been found between males and females on the following work values:

1. Females rated facilitating work environment as significantly more important than males at 95% confidence level. With regard to this work value, both the sexes seem to be sticking to their traditional gender roles and stereotypes. For females this value is second most important whereas for males it is fifth most important.
2. Females rated congenial social relationships as significantly more important than males at 95% confidence level. On this work value, females seem to maintain to their traditional roles and stereotypes while males seem to deviate on their traditional roles and stereotypes to some extent. Modern organizations are teamwork oriented and increasingly employees spend more time on the job related issues. Congenial social relationships reduce tensions in work place. So males seek congenial social relationships in the job. Despite this, females still are giving more importance to this work value than the males.
3. Males rated authority and status as significantly, more important than females. Males and females seem to be keeping to their traditional roles and stereotypes with regards to this work value.
4. Males rated travel abroad as significantly more important than females at 95% confidence level. Both males and females seem to be sticking to their traditional roles and stereotypes.

On the other work values, namely professional skill development, job security, fringes benefits, leisureliness in the job, males and females do not differ significantly on their importance scores at 95% confidence level. Professional skill development has become a must to keep a job and grow through it. As females take up the role of income provider, they shall look forward to be competent in the job. The respondents are all working in private sector companies. In these organizations survival is based on professional competence. This is crucial to keep up the role of income provider for both the sexes. Job security is becoming more and more important to females as they deviate from homemaker role to provider role.

So females are catching up in this work value with the males. On the work value of fringe benefits, it has been explained in the parenthesis that it represents ESOPS and home loans in the questionnaire. As the researchers felt that both ESOPS, and home loans represent wealth creation for the family, it was hypothesized that males will score more on this work value than the females. However, our results showed that females gave more importance than males on this value. Females seem to be more concerned about having a home of their own and this may be the reason for this higher score. However, the difference is not statistically significant.

Conclusion

Traditionally genders have followed specialized tasks. Women concentrated on tasks related to homemaker while men concentrated on tasks related to income provider. These differential orientations have to change in value orientations between the two genders. In recent times more and more women are taking up the role of income provider. This leads to some convergence of roles across the genders.

The present study indicates that females rated the work value of “facilitating work environment” and “congenial social relationships” as significantly more important than males, whereas males considered the work value of “authority and status” and “travel abroad” as significantly more important than females. With regard to these four work values, the males and females seem to be retaining their traditional roles and stereotypes.

The present study also indicates that males and females have scored alike on the importance of the work values namely “professional skill development”, “job security”. Males and females are converging on these work values due to pressures of modern times.

References

- Borg, I . (1991).** On the Relationship between importance and Satisfaction Ratings on job aspects. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 40:81-92.
- Brewer, M. B. and Brown R. J. (1998).** Inter-group relations. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske and G. Lindzey (Eds.) *Hand Book of Social Psychology: Forth Edition*, Vol. 2:554 – 594. New York: Mc Graw Hill.
- Burn, S. M. (1996).** *The Social Psychology of Gender*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Dawis, R.V. Lofquist, L. H. and Weiss, D. J. (1968).** Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation: Vol – XIII. A Theory of Work Adjustment, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Industrial Relations Center.
- Deaux, K. and Major, B. (1987).** Putting Gender into Context: An Interactive Model of Gender Related Behavior. *Psychological Review*, 94:369 – 389.
- Eagly, A. h. (1987).** *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social Role Interaction*, Hillsdale, N. J: Erlbaum.
- Gregory, A. (1990).** Are Women Different and why are Women thought to be Different? Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9:257 – 266.
- Gottfredson, L. S. (1981).** Circumscription and Compromise: A Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations (Monograph). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28:545 - 560.
- Gutek, B. A. (1993).** Changing the Status of Women in Management. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 4:301 -311.

- Holland, J. L. (1973).** Making Vocational Choices; A Theory of Careers. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: prentice Hall.
- Konrad, A. K. Richie Jr. J. E.; Lieb, P, and Corrigan, E. (2000).** Sex Differences and Similarities in Job Attribute preferences: A Meta Analysis, *Psychological Bulletin* 126, 4:293 – 641.
- Lacy, W. G.; Bokemeier, J. and Shepart, J. M. (1980).** Job Attribute Preferences and Work Commitment of Men and Women in the United States *Personnel Psychology*, 36:315 – 329.
- Lawler, E. E. (1973).** Motivation in Work Organization. Monterey, C. A.; Brooks/Cole.
- Locke, E. A. (1969).** What is Job Satisfaction? *Organizational Behavior a Human Performance*, 4:309 – 336.
- Luhtanen, R .K. and Crocker, J. (1992).** A Collective Self-esteem Scale: Self Evaluation of One's Social Identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18:302 – 318.
- Martin, C. L. and Ruble, D. N. (1997).** A Developmental Perspective of Self –construals and Sex Differences: Comment on Cross and Madson (1997), *Psychological Bulletin*, 122:45-50.
- Perrone, P.A.(1965).** Values and Occupational Preferences of Junior High School Girls, *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 44:22-257.
- Ravlin, E. C. and Meglino, B. M. (1987).** Effects of Values on Perception a Decision Making: A Study of Alternative Work Value Measures. *Journal Applied psychology*, 77 – 666-673.

- Robbins, S. P. (2001).** Organizational Behavior. New Delhi: Prentice Hall, India.
- Ruble, D. N. and Martin, C. I. (1998).** Gender Development. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.) Handbook of Child Psychology (Vol.3, pp933-1016), New York: Wiley.
- Stein, A. H. and Bailey, M. M. (1973).** The Socialization of Achievement Orientation in Females. *Psychological Bulletin*, 80:345-367.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1986).** The Social Identity Theory of Inter-group Behavior. In S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (Eds.) Psychology of Inter-group Relations (pp,7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Thompson, E. H. Jr., Pleck, J. K. and Ferrera, D. L. (1992).** Men and Masculinities: Scales for Masculinity Ideology and Masculinity Related Constructs. *Sex Roles*, 27:573-607.
- Vroom, V. H. (1964).** Work and Motivation. New York: Wiley.
- Williams, J. E. and Best, D. L.(1990).** Sex and Psyche: Gender and Self Viewed Cross Culturally. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.