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SEX DIFFERENCES IN ACHIEVEMENT MOTVIATION AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the sex differences among Nigerian University students. The students were drawn from various departments in the University of Calabar. French Test of Insight Questionnaire was utilised for the collection of the data. Results revealed that the male have higher achievement aspirations and scores than their female counterparts in the study. Results were discussed in the light of cultural and socialisation differences.

INTRODUCTION

Human motivation has always been a topic of keen interest to psychologists and behavioural social scientists. However, the lack of adequate methods of measuring it has hampered the growth of systematic knowledge in this field, especially in African Cultures. Human behaviour is invariably directed toward certain ends or goals closely related to the satisfaction or psychological needs. Psychologists have distinguished other classes of motives that are uniquely social; the motive to achieve for its own sake rather than for the benefits of the achievement is one such example (Duskin, 1970).

Individual differences are to be found in a wide range of human endeavours; and human reactions, responses and motivation also differ in our day to day life. Some people are moderately motivated while others are highly motivated even when the operational factors are held constant. Although the achievement motive is a very complex motivational and personality construct, it will be defined in this study as a learned personality characteristic which is demonstrated when a person shows standard of excellence in a competitive situation. It is also demonstrated in a long term involvement in goal attainment such as being a success in life or improving upon one's outstanding record of achievement. Achievement motive may not be limited to a long term personality trait, it may be brought about in an individual by situation that tends to elicit a need for achievement. Such situations are therefore, need achievement producing. The purpose of this study was to examine sex differences in the n-Achievement among Nigerian University students.

No social motive has been exhaustively studied as the need for achievement commonly referred to by psychologists (n-Achievement). McClelland and Atkinson (1948) combined the clinical insight that human motivation is expressed in free associative thoughts with experimental method of manipulating the strength of motivations. They adopted a technique developed by Murray (1938) for eliciting imaginative stories from individual in response to TAT pictures.

Sheriffs (1948) had described a projective test which he called the "Intuition Questionnaire" in which the subjects were required to describe the motivation behind isolated item of behaviour given as typical of a hypothetical person with whom the subject empathize. French (1958) combined the McClelland - Atkinson's (1948) method and that of Sheriffs (1948) to develop an instrument for the independent measure of complex motives or acquired drives (French Test of Insight).

Using Atkinson's (1964) framework Mehrabian (1968, 1969) developed questionnaire measures of achieving tendency designed to yield greater reliabilities than those obtained with fantasy - based measures of achievement. Recent investigators like Hermans (1970) Mehrabian and Bank (1978) favoured a return to self report behaviour inventories for the measurement of n-Achievement. The French Test of Insight is such an inventory which was used to overcome the problems that fantasy based measures pose.

Rosen (1962) Bradburn (1963) have shown that United States subjects manifest higher n-Achievement level than comparable groups of Brazillian and Turkish subjects respectively. These studies indicate that there are differences in achievement

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motivation between groups defined on a cultural or ethnic basis. As to what causes group differences in achievement motivation? McClelland (1961) has distinguished between "intrinsic" determinants which are required to produce n-Achievement in the individual, and "extrinsic" factors which operate to bring about individual conditions under which n-Achievement is produced. The most widely accepted theory, backed by considerable evidence, indicates that child-rearing or Socialisation practices are the most important intrinsic factors. Rosen (1962) summarised the evidence as follows:

"Several studies have shown that achievement motivation has its origin in a complex of inter-related socialisation practices. The first and most important of these is achievement training. Parents who provide this type of training set high goals for their child, indicate a high evaluation of his competence to do a task well, and impose standards of excellence upon problem-solving tasks, even in situations where such standards are not explicit. Also related to the development of achievement motivation is another set of Socialization practices called independence training. This type of training involves expectations that the child be self reliant when competing with standards of excellence. At the same time the child is granted autonomy in problem solving and decision making in situations where he has both freedom of action and responsibility success or failure. Essentially, achievement training is concerned with getting the child to do things well, while independence training seeks to teach him to do things on his own (self reliance) in a situation where he enjoys relative freedom from parental control (autonomy)".

The most extrinsic factors emphasised by McClelland (1961) include the ideological convictions of parents which lead them to modify their child rearing practices in the direction of those described above as optimal for the development of n-Achievement. Levine (1966) found significant ethnic differences in achievement motivation among the Nigerian boys. But he appeared to have overlooked the importance of sex differences in n-Achievement. Ogunlade (1979) studied sex differences in achievement motivation within one ethnic group, the Yorubas in Nigeria. Ibeh (1985) investigated the n-Achievement among some University of Nigeria students. He too seemed not to have seen the importance of sex differences. Singh and Basu (1981) dealt with n-Achievement among

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medical students in India. Erwee (1981) obtained a higher scores for males than females females on two dimensions of achievement motivation, aspiration level and personal causation.

Similarly Battistich et al. (1982) found considerable sex differences in the expression of an orientation toward social achievement behaviour which was concerned with social approval and social influences.

In many contemporary societies including Nigeria men are generally noted for their energy, achievement, striving and enterprise more than women. Some cultures generally seem to prefer male children to female. As Ogunlade (1979) rightly observed among the Yorubas " a lot of marriages have broken because the wife was unable to produce male child". There is also a feeling in these cultures that men settle and resettle in new places more frequently and easily than women" and that men are usually the industrious farmers, craftsman and professionals whereas women are regarded as having lower aspirations and goals than men.

Contrary to this feeling one observes in recent times in Nigeria that there is tremendous awareness among the women folk striving for equal opportunities with their men counterpart. Many women organisations like women in Nigeria, (WIN), Better life for Rural women, Media Women, and Council for Women Societies to mention just a few have sprang up all aimed at the same objective. It was in the light of this that the investigator thought it worthwhile to investigate sex differences in n-Achievement among Nigerian University students. On the basis of the literature review which was limited in amount of research dealing with sex differences in achievement motivation as well as the impressions and informal observations of the present investigator it was hypothesized that male University students would express higher achievement orientation than the female students.

METHOD

SUBJECTS:

All subjects were students in the University of Calabar. Three hundred and eight (308) students were enrolled in introductory psychology and were participating to fulfill a course requirement. The other one hundred and ninety seven (197) were enrolled in introductory sociology both taken by the investigator and were fulfilling the same course requirement. It was announced in the two large classes that subjects would have as an alternative to

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the class test anonymously complete psychological questionnaire. The Sample consisted of 165 (igbo male 79 female), 108 Ibibio (57 male 51 female), 99 Ekoi (47 male 52 female), 76 Efik (63 male 13 female), 23 Tiv (20 male 3 female), 17 Ijaw (13 male 5 female), and 16 Yoruba (10 male 6 female) students of mean age 18.4 years

PROCEDURE:

The experimental site was room 60 in faculty of Social Sciences block which offered privacy from other lecture blocks. The French Test of Insight (FTI) questionnaire was administered on the subjects in large groups supervised by the researcher. To further protect the subjects anonymity only the following background information were required, in which spaces were provided for them in the questionnaire age, sex, religion and ethnicity. The FTI carried names appropriate to each sex thus:

- 1) John never hesitates to express an opinion.
- 2) Rose never hesitates to express an opinion.

The instructions were printed on the top front page of the questionnaire and were read out to the subjects before the test began; they were to decide what this man or woman is like, what he or she wants to have or do and what the results of his/her are apt to be. The completed ones were collected at the end of the exercise. The responses contained in the completed FTI questionnaire provided the raw data for the measurement of the n-Achievement level of the subjects.

SCORING OF DATA:

The responses were scored by two independent research assistants in the department who were conversant with the scoring key proposed.

TABLE I
MEAN N-ACH. OF SCORES FOR MALES AND FEMALES

SEX	NO. OF STUDENTS	MEAN	SD	P
MALES	296	5.69	3.69	
FEMALES	209	4.15	4.66	.01

by French (1958) which was used for the categorisation of the themes for the presence, absence or unrelated n-Achievement

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themes. Interscores reliability coefficient based on the product moment correlation was .94

RESULTS:

Table 1 contains the means and standard deviations of the male and female subjects respectively. The result following the analysis of the data did indicate as was hypothesized that males subjects tended to have higher achievement orientation than their female counterpart. By the use of one tailed 't' for uncorrelated sample, the difference between the mean of the score by the male and female reached statistical significance at .01 level.

DISCUSSION:

The results of this study are consistent with the studies of Ogunlade (1979), Singh and Basu (1981) Erwee (1981) and Baltistich et al. (1982). In these studies the male obtained higher achievement motivation scores than their female colleagues. As predicted the male subjects expressed higher n-Achievement Orientation than their female counterpart in the sample studied.

The result of this study could be explained in terms of Socialisation and role expectation in the Nigerian culture. Despite the tremendous awareness and the striving among the Nigerian women - folk for equal opportunities and recognition in all spheres of lives it appears that the corresponding changes in the transformation of their personality and sex roles are not keeping pace with the awareness.

The results could also be explained in the context of the Nigerian situation, where inspite of many changes bridging up of the gap in norms, for the two sexes, the child rearing practices, roles and expectations are still different for the two sexes

One finds that in some Nigerian Cultures parents still frown at their daughters if they keep late nights and not at their sons. Their daughters are still expected to play feminine role of looking after the house, while the boys are easily over looked if they do not do it. Horner (1968) also found the same trend in the sample he studied. On the whole there is more cultural restraint on girls as compared to the boys. Across the Nigerian cultures, norms of modesty are different for boys and girls. This differential training on the parents could be responsible for females scoring lower than the males on n-Achievement; Rosen (1962) has demonstrated that, achievement motivation has its origin in a complex inter-related socialisation processes.

CONCLUSION:

This study has demonstrated that there is significant difference between the achievement of males and females in the sample studied using the (FTI) questionnaire. It further established that there should be a sustained, effective and conscious effort on the part of parents to use psychological strategies for re-socialisation, and re-learning for inculcating need for achievement in all their children irrespective of sex.

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