

Perceptions of Effective Behavioral Leadership Qualities, by Gender of Teachers, in the Schools for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated gender similarities and differences in teachers' perceptions of essential behavioral leadership qualities (EBLQ) for effective school leadership of principals, in the schools for children who are blind or visually impaired (SCBVI) in Nigeria. We, hence, attempted to answer three questions: 1) What were the perceived essential leadership qualities necessary for effective leadership in SCBVI in Nigeria? 2) How did men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI differ in their perceptions of essential characteristics for effective leadership in their schools? 3) How did men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI differ in their perceptions of effectiveness of their school principals as school leaders? The main catalyst for this study is the neglect of the Nigerian SCBVI in leadership studies, despite the importance of these schools in educating a segment of the Nigerian school children. By studying these schools, knowledge is produced about essential leadership qualities for successful leadership of the schools, as well as the perceived rates of leadership effectiveness of the principals by gender of their teachers. Findings revealed that except for one leadership characteristic (resource procurement skills) there were no significant differences, by gender of the teachers, in leadership qualities deemed essential for principal effectiveness. However, the qualities were differentially ranked based on mean scores, by gender of the teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI. This study concluded with the observation that the canon of knowledge on theories of leadership style preferences by gender did not adequately fit the leadership preference styles of the Nigerian SCBVI teachers by gender.

Keywords: Leadership, EBLQ, Educational Leadership, Leadership Effectiveness, Special Education Leadership, Leadership in Schools for the Blind

1. Introduction and literature review

The concept of leadership is complex and difficult to restrict to a few variables and measures, because of the various ways it could be operationalized. According to Oyinlade, Gellhaus and Darboe (2003), various scholars had defined leadership based on their various conceptualizations. This is attributable to the fact that social scientists have no universal agreement on how to define the concept (House & Javidan, 2004). This point was echoed by Goddard and Miller (2010) who asserted that "...it is essential to note that across the field, the ways in which researchers have conceptualized and measured leadership differs markedly, and these differences are likely highly consequential for the effects investigators report" (p. 220). Similarly, in an earlier study, Stogdill (1974) claimed that there were as many leadership definitions as there were scholars defining the concept. This essentially means that the definition and meaning of leadership may vary based on how the concept is operationalized.

Despite the variations in the operationalization of the concept, it seems widely accepted that central characteristics in leadership include non-coerciveness and strong use of influence in coordinating the efforts of others toward common goals (Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003). This characteristic is readily observed in Schlechty (1990), who described a leader as "a person who is in a position to influence others to act, and who has, as well, the moral, intellectual, and social skills required to take advantage of that position" (p. 14). Similarly, House and Javidan (2004) defined leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization of which they are members" (p. 15). Also, Gardner (2007) noted that leadership was "... the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or a team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers" (p. 17). In other words, leadership is the main avenue through which certain people, act as influencers and change agents, to produce changes (or achieve resolutions) in a population (McWhinney, 1997).

Our extensive review of relevant literature revealed that over the past five decades, leadership scholars in both the western and nonwestern countries had focused on issues of leadership success (e.g., Christie, 2010;

Eagly & Lau, 2010; Edwards & Aboagye, 2015; French II, 2016; Gardner, 2007; House & Javidan, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1991; Schlechty, 1990; Stogdill, 1974; Yulk, 1981; Zagorsek, Jaklic & Stough, 2004). In this plethora of studies on leadership success, has emerged a pattern of differences in effective leadership characteristics of men and women (Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango, 2009; Coleman, 2003; Kiambavi, 2008). Eagly, Wood and Diekmann (2000) for example, identified the leadership styles of men and women as agentic and communal, respectively. They explained that agentic characteristics included behavioral traits such as being domineering, forcefulness, assertiveness, independence, competitiveness, ambitiousness, and problem solving. Conversely, the authors described communal characteristics as including helpfulness, nurturing, sympathy, supportiveness, and interpersonal relationships.

Other differences in leadership style preferences have been indicated by scholars such as Book (2000) and Rosener (1995), that men were more likely to be hierarchically oriented than women, while women were more likely to be cooperative and collaborative than men. In addition, studies of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors (Bass, Avolio & Atwater, 1996; Gibson, 1995; Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Van Engen, Van der Leeden & Willemsen, 2001; Wittmer, 2001) had shown that men were more likely to successfully lead through transactional characteristics, while women tended to lead more effectively through transformational qualities. The transactional style stresses the leader's ability to initiate task structure, clarify organizational goals, roles and task requirements. The leader also has high reliance on authority and organizational bureaucracy. In contrast, transformational leadership centers on the creation of a vision, mobilization of commitment, interpersonal relationships, inspirational motivation and individualized considerations (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001; Dong, 2001; Rosener, 1990). The distinction between men's and women's leadership style preferences was also indicated by Eagly, Makhijani and Klonsky (1992) who asserted that women tended to favor a feminine style of leadership characterized by caring and nurturing, while men's leadership preference was more masculine, domineering and task oriented.

School leadership had also been extensively studied in western countries (e.g. Blasé, 1987; Cortez-Rucker & Adams, 2013; Goddard & Miller, 2010; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008), with findings and conclusions that demonstrated a wide array of effective school leadership characteristics. Blasé (1987) for example, described factors of effective school principalship, as characterized by teachers, to include accessibility, consistence, knowledge, decisiveness, ability to follow-through with decisions, supportiveness, leadership style (authoritativeness vs democracy) and fairness (absence of favoritism). The relevance of each factor for leadership effectiveness, however, varies from one school to another (Blasé, 1987).

Another study in school leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003) indicated that instructional leadership behaviors, or some combination of instructional and transformational leadership practices produced effective school leadership. This combination of leadership practices consequentially shapes student learning (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Blair (2002) also asserted that leadership was complex and challenging because on one hand, it might require subscription to democratic principles whereby the principal would consult widely and consider the varieties of opinions obtained before making decisions. Conversely, however, the principal might, unavoidably, make decisions that might be unpopular with parents and school staff. The successful principal, therefore, must be able to gain support of the community, but at the same time be able to remain resolute in the face of opposition (Blair, 2002). In short, "leadership in such contexts needs to combine both 'soft' and 'strong' approaches, be both democratic but, if necessary, also autocratic" (Blair, 2002, p. 190)

Despite the plethora of studies on school leadership, published works on leadership in the schools for children who are blind or visually impaired (SCBVI) are limited. The few available were mainly conducted by Bina (1982, 1999), Council of Chief States School officers (1996), Latham and Holloway (1999) and by Oyinlade and his colleagues in the US (Oyinlade, 2006; Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003) and in Nigeria (Ajuwon & Oyinlade, 2016; Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017). All the studies by Oyinlade and his colleagues adopted the Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities (EBLQ) method of leadership assessment, to measure perceived EBLQ for effective leadership in SCBVI in both the US and Nigeria. In addition, the studies also determined the effectiveness of the principals of SCBVI in both countries relative to the essentiality of the leadership characteristics in each country.

Our extensive search for literature revealed a greater dearth of studies on the differential perceptions of essential leadership characteristics by gender of teachers in SCBVI. In fact, the only available study found with a focus on leadership preferences by gender of teachers in SCBVI was by Oyinlade, Gellhaus and Darboe (2003). This study found that men and women teachers in the US SCBVI were significantly different in their perceptions of EBLQ for effective leadership of their principals in seven of the 18 EBLQ items that were analyzed. The study (Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003) also found that men and women teachers overwhelmingly gave different rankings for the EBLQ items, for their levels of essentiality for leadership effectiveness. Gender differences were found in 13 of 18 EBLQ items rated by the teachers for effective principalship. Congruence in ranking of the items was true only in five items; "provision of support", "creativity", "knowledge of policies",

“hard work” and “fiscal efficiency” which were ranked 5th, 14th, 16th, 17th and 18th, respectively, by both genders, as essential for principal effectiveness.

While the two recent studies by Ajuwon and Oyinlade (2016) and Oyinlade and Ajuwon (2017) focused on leadership in the Nigerian SCBVI, neither of these studies focused on preferences for leadership qualities by gender of the teachers. Ajuwon and Oyinlade (2016) compared the top ten effective leadership characteristics in both the US and Nigeria, and discovered similarities and differences between the two countries. Specifically, the authors found honesty as the most important (highest ranked) leadership quality in the two countries. Similarly, the two countries listed “good listening skills” and “motivator” qualities as important behavioral administrative leadership skills, but the US schools listed additional behavioral administrative skills such as “fairness”, “support”, “problem-solving skills” and “organizational knowledge” that were not listed for the Nigerian schools. The Nigerian schools, however listed qualities like “timely payment of salaries”, “humility”, “fear of God”, “good property management skills”, and “resource procurement skills”, that were absent on the list of leadership qualities for the US SCBVI. From their analysis, Ajuwon and Oyinlade (2016) concluded that leadership traits were both culturally bound as well as transcultural.

This study focused on understanding gender similarities and differences in the perceptions of essential behavioral leadership qualities (EBLQ) for effectiveness of school principals, among the teachers, in the schools for children who were blind or visually impaired (SCBVI) in Nigeria. The Nigerian schools for children who are blind or visually impaired play significant roles in the education of blind children in Nigeria (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017). The importance of these schools in Nigeria remain constant despite the popularity of the inclusive education movement which favors educating both sighted and non-sighted children in the same classroom. Thus, in Nigeria, the success of the schools for the blind and visually impaired students is crucial for the roles these schools play in educating a sector of school children in the country (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017). And, despite their importance, these schools in Nigeria have been significantly overlooked in empirical leadership studies (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017). It is our perceived importance of the need to better understand leadership necessities in the Nigerian SCBVI that provided the catalyst for this current investigation.

2. Research objective

From the assertions and conclusions in literature reviewed (Bass, Avolio & Atwater, 1996; Book, 2000; Eagly, Wood & Diekmann, 2000; Gibson, 1995; Rosener, 1995; Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Van Engen, Van der Leeden & Willemsen, 2001; Wittmer, 2001), this study sought to determine the extent to which gender of school teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI influenced perceptions of essential leadership behaviors for success as principals in these Nigerian schools. This objective is informed by assertions in literature regarding the likelihood that men and women had different preferences for leadership behaviors (transformational vs transactional, agentic vs communal, structure initiating vs consideration, authoritative vs democratic), and that significant differences existed between men and women teachers in their perceptions of essential leadership characteristics for school principals in the US SCBVI (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005). To meet this objective, the following specific questions were answered in this study:

1. What were the perceived essential leadership qualities necessary for effective leadership in the schools for children who were blind or visually impaired (SCBVI) in Nigeria?
2. How did men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI differ in their perceptions of essential characteristics for effective leadership in their schools?
3. How did men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI differ in their perceptions of effectiveness of their school principals as school leaders?

By answering these questions, this study is expected to contribute to literature on leadership, especially pertaining to leadership in SCBVI in Nigerian. The contribution to the Nigerian SCBVI is particularly important because of the dearth of leadership studies in these schools in Nigeria. The hope is that this study would also stimulate interests among leadership scholars, especially in Africa, to conduct further leadership studies in the SCBVI in their respective countries, so as to better understand leadership issues and needs of these schools in various African countries.

3. Method

The Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities (EBLQ) approach for determining essential leadership characteristics and leadership effectiveness (Oyinlade, 2006; Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017; Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003) was adopted for this study. As fully explained in Oyinlade (2006), the EBLQ method is a standards-based leadership assessment approach that measures leadership effectiveness against the standards of essential leadership qualities for particular leadership positions. In this regard, the EBLQ method requires that essential leadership characteristics for leadership effectiveness be, first, established, before the effectiveness of the leader is measured, since such effectiveness is measured against the level of essentiality of each leadership characteristic (called quality).

To determine the EBLQ for any leadership position of interest, the EBLQ method (Oyinlade, 2006) calls for the use of judges, and a systematic method for selecting leadership characteristics that are used in the design of a leadership scale. Judges are individuals who are very familiar with the particular leadership position of interest. They may comprise of the people who report to a particular leader, as well as those to whom the leader reports. These judges supply what they perceive to be essential qualities for effectiveness of the leadership position of interest, and based on a systematic process of selection, the judges' perceived qualities are selected and used to construct a leadership scale that is used to determine both the essential leadership qualities (i.e. the EBLQ) as well as measure the effectiveness of a given leader. Details of the EBLQ method (Oyinlade, 2006) are applied to this study as outlined in the following sections.

3.1 Instrumentation

The first EBLQ study conducted in the US established the precedent of the use of 10 judges and the 50-percent rule for selecting leadership characteristics for a leadership position of interest. By the 50-percent rule, leadership characteristics are selected for assessing leadership effectiveness only when a characteristic is mentioned by at least 50-percent of the judges. This 50-percent rule was based on the assumption of high cultural similarities among the judges used in the first US study (Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003).

In selecting judges for this study, two schools were randomly selected from each of the six geopolitical regions (North Eastern, North Central, North Western, South Western, South Southern and South Eastern) in Nigeria, and two teachers were selected and invited to serve as judges from each school, through snowball sampling. The random selection of schools was from the list of the 22 schools on the list of schools for the blind from the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) and the Nigerian Council of Exceptional Children (NCEC) in Nigeria. Of the 24 teachers solicited to be judges, 16, with at least one representation from each of the geopolitical regions, agreed to participate. Each provided a list of his/her ten (10) perceived essential behavioral qualities for effective leadership in the Nigerian SCBVI as requested in an open-ended questionnaire. The larger number of judges in Nigeria was necessitated by the complex tribal, educational and socioeconomic characteristics across the geopolitical regions of the country, which we assumed could potentially influence perceptions of leadership qualities among the judges. And, as we anticipated, the 160 behavioral leadership qualities given by the 16 judges were extremely diverse, and rendered the 50-percent selection rule (used in the US study) impossible for this study, because no single behavioral leadership quality mentioned by the judges was mentioned by at least 50 percent of the judges. It was,

Table 1. EBLQ items for effective leadership in the schools for the blind in Nigeria

- a) **Humility:** Regularly presenting oneself in humble ways
- b) **Strong Interest in Working with Blind Children:** Love to work with blind and handicapped children.
- c) **Accessibility to Students, Faculty and Staff:** Willingness to be readily available to meet with students, faculty and staff
- d) **Good Listening Skills:** Ability to listen carefully without interruptions, and genuinely try to understand the speaker's point of view.
- e) **God Fearing and Moral Uprightness Behavior:** Behaving in ways that show concerns for the wrath of God, and therefore living a morally upright life
- f) **Good Presentation Skills:** Ability to communicate ideas and intentions to others clearly
- g) **Consultative Decision-Making Style:** Consulting with teachers and actively using teachers' input in decision making
- h) **Timely Payment of Salary:** Making sure that teachers and staff receive their monthly salaries, regularly, on time and without delay.
- i) **Resource Procurement:** Effective provision of teaching and learning resources for both students and faculty
- j) **People-centered Leadership Style:** Leadership skills that focus on the collective well-being of students, faculty and staff.
- k) **Excellent Educational Qualification:** Having strong educational training, especially in special education.
- l) **Motivator:** Ability to help create a school environment in which teachers are eager to work/achieve needed goals
- m) **Budgeting and Financial Accountability:** Ability to prepare good financial budgets, spend wisely and with integrity and adequately account for how money is spent.
- n) **Honesty:** Honesty and transparency in all dealings related to school activities
- o) **Organizational Knowledge:** Having adequate organizational skills and knowledge of the technical details necessary to run the school system for the blind in Nigeria
- q) **Ensuring Reliable Transportation:** Ability to secure regular and uninterrupted transportation for students and staff, to and from school
- r) **Ensuring Regular Water and Electricity:** Ability to make sure the school has regular and uninterrupted supply of water and electricity.
- s) **Provision for Faculty and Staff Development:** Helping to secure and support opportunities for continuing training and development of faculty and staff.

t) Positive Relations with the Community: Maintaining a relationship with the community that fosters positive perceptions of the school for the blind

u) Good Property Management Skills: Ability to manage school buildings, properties and ground very well to prevent dilapidation

however, discovered that the average frequency in which a leadership quality was mentioned was four, and this led to the adoption of the 25-percent selection rule for this study. That is, any leadership quality mentioned by 25 percent ($N = 4$) of the judges was selected for the leadership scale used in this study. This yielded a total of 20 useful final items (see table 1) which were operationalized from the common descriptions of each item as given by the judges.

The 20 behavioral leadership items were used in constructing the two scales used in data collection. The first scale, the scale of essentiality, asked respondents to score each of the 20 items for its level of essentiality as a behavioral quality for effective leadership in their respective schools. Higher scores (7 = most essential, 1 = least essential) represented higher perceptions of essentiality of each item for leadership effectiveness. The second scale, the scale of leadership effectiveness, asked each respondent to score his/her principal on the extent to which he/she deemed the principal to be performing effectively on each of the essential quality items. Like the scale of essentiality, the scale of effectiveness also ranged from a high of 7 (most effective) to a low of 1 (least effective), indicating higher scores as perceptions of higher levels of leadership effectiveness.

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

A questionnaire containing the two scales (essentiality and effectiveness) was served to each of the teachers in each of the 22 Nigerian SCBVI. The availability sampling technique was used due to the non-availability of actual list of all the teachers in each school across the country for random sampling. Each respondent was asked to first complete the scale of essentiality (scoring each scale item on its perceived level of essentiality for effective principal leadership behavior) before scoring his/her particular principal for effectiveness on each item.

Approximately 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the 22 Nigerian SCBVI schools based on the quantity of questionnaire copies requested by the secretary or principal in each school. In total, 271 teachers (men = 149; women = 122) sufficiently completed and returned their questionnaires for analysis. Twenty-two (22) principals also completed and returned their questionnaires, but only the responses of the teachers were used in the analysis for this study, because this study focused only on the perceptions of leadership qualities and effectiveness from the perspectives of followers (in this case, teachers).

4. Analysis and Results

The following analyses were systematically conducted, consistently with the steps in the EBLQ leadership assessment method (Oyinlade, 2006), to answer the questions of this study:

4.1 Construct Validity

Mean scores were calculated for each of the 20 scale items of essentiality, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to establish scale validity. The Cronbach alpha was also calculated to determine scale reliability. Results (table 2) of the CFA produced a two-component factor loading with the highest factor values loading consistently on the first component, thereby indicating high internal consistency among all 20 items of essentiality. Also, intercorrelation matrix among all the 20 EBLQ items yielded no inter-item correlation above $r = .700$, thereby not suggesting the possibility of multicollinearity among any two scale items. Lastly, the Cronbach reliability test produced a high alpha ($\alpha = .936$).

Table 2. Factor analysis using principal component extraction method and inter-item correlations among essential behavioral leadership qualities items

EBLQ ITEMS	FACTOR ANALYSIS		Inter-item correlation matrix									
	Components		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	1	2										
1. Humility	.551	.360										
2. Strong interest in working with bind children	.635	.235	.421									
3. Accessibility to students, faculty and Staff	.712	.322	.435	.469								
4. Good listening skills	.703	.153	.375	.405	.565							
5. Good presentation skills	.676	.069	.303	.383	.415	.607						
6. Consultative decision-making style	.677	.151	.398	.388	.514	.507	.467					
7. Timely payment of salary	.623	-.477	.239	.361	.335	.390	.428	.373				
8. Resource procurement	.691	-.115	.335	.433	.444	.521	.458	.425	.527			
9. People-centered leadership style	.702	.142	.336	.512	.540	.437	.398	.437	.414	.442		
10. Excellent educational qualification	.672	-.094	.332	.448	.402	.402	.473	.389	.409	.417	.382	
11. Motivator	.758	-.172	.365	.386	.472	.463	.492	.487	.509	.497	.521	
12. Budgeting and financial accountability	.727	-.035	.368	.420	.512	.489	.418	.379	.421	.491	.476	
13. Honesty	.748	-.082	.417	.446	.469	.422	.503	.390	.473	.489	.517	
14. Organizational knowledge	.711	.239	.342	.460	.566	.454	.440	.533	.346	.459	.559	
15. God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	.610	.284	.354	.335	.444	.402	.454	.329	.203	.384	.446	
16. Ensuring reliable transportation	.665	-.346	.318	.354	.378	.460	.404	.441	.482	.398	.406	
17. Ensuring regular water and electricity	.671	-.486	.255	.325	.375	.361	.307	.358	.532	.485	.407	
18. Provision for faculty and staff development	.694	-.165	.265	.322	.464	.442	.437	.498	.377	.420	.446	
19. Positive relations with community	.636	.003	.401	.409	.366	.338	.396	.393	.329	.263	.356	
20. Good property management	.662	.075	.336	.365	.445	.445	.353	.448	.288	.440	.438	

Table 2 continues.

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	ALPHA
1. Humility											
2. Strong interest in working with bind children											
3. Accessibility to students, faculty and Staff											
4. Good listening skills											
5. Good presentation skills											
6. Consultative decision-making style											
7. Timely payment of salary											
8. Resource procurement											
9. People-centered leadership style											
10. Excellent educational qualification											
11. Motivator	.560										
12. Budgeting and financial accountability	.406	.535									
13. Honesty	.510	.578	.613								
14. Organizational knowledge	.470	.480	.467	.429							
15. God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	.376	.431	.433	.471	.440						
16. Ensuring reliable transportation	.442	.464	.434	.486	.359	.307					
17. Ensuring regular water and electricity	.428	.538	.481	.488	.389	.354	.568				
18. Provision for faculty and staff development	.411	.520	.489	.421	.507	.365	.480	.562			
19. Positive relations with community	.483	.472	.468	.481	.424	.366	.411	.412	.449		
20. Good property management	.358	.424	.481	.479	.470	.410	.416	.445	.474	.446	
CRONBACH'S ALPHA											.936

4.2 Overall Ranking of Essential Leadership Quality Items

The mean score of essentiality for each essential leadership quality item was ranked consistently with Ajuwon and Oyinlade (2016) to determine overall rankings of each item, without controlling for gender of respondents. This ranking indicated that the most perceived essential qualities for

(EBLQ) leadership effectiveness in the Nigerian SCBVI were 1) timely payment of salary, 2) honesty, 3) humility, 4) excellent educational qualification and 5) good property management skills, respectively. And, at the bottom of the rank, the least perceived essential leadership quality was “ensuring reliable transportation” (ranked 20th). The other least essential leadership qualities were: “people-centered leadership style” (ranked 19th), “consultative decision-making leadership style” (ranked 18th), ensuring regular water and electricity (ranked 17th) and “accessibility to students, faculty and staff” (ranked 16th). Table 3 shows the complete ranking of all the 20 essential behavioral leadership quality items.

4.3 Ranking of Essential Leadership Qualities by Gender

Mean scores for each of the 20 EBLQ items were calculated by gender, and the t-test was used to investigate the presence of significant statistical differences in the mean scores by gender. Results of the t-tests showed that except for one item, “resource procurement” ($M_{(men)} = 5.960$, $M_{(women)} = 6.230$, $N = 269$, $t = 2.123$, $p = .0347$), in which a significant difference existed between men and women teachers in its level of essentiality, the teachers were not statistically significantly different by gender in how they perceived the essentiality of each leadership item (see table 3). Although no significant statistical differences were found in the scores of essentialities of the EBLQ items by gender of the teachers (except for one item), the mean scores were ranked (1= most important, 20 = least important) by gender, to determine differences in perceptions of importance of each item by gender.

Based solely on mean scores for each EBLQ item, the top five perceived EBLQ items for leadership success in the Nigerian SCBVI, by teachers who were men, were: 1) honesty ($M = 6.235$), 2) timely payment of salary ($M = 6.195$), 3) humility ($M = 6.148$), 3-tied) excellent educational qualifications ($M = 6.148$) and 5) strong interest in working with blind children ($M = 6.141$). The bottom five (perceived least essential) EBLQ items for leadership success by the teachers who were men (henceforth abbreviated as men teachers) were: “people-centered leadership style” ($M = 5.839$, rank = 16), “provision for faculty and staff development” ($M = 5.812$, rank = 17), “ensuring regular water and electricity” ($M = 5.745$, rank = 18), “consultative decision-making style” ($M = 5.732$, rank = 19) and “ensuring reliable transportation” ($M = 5.664$, rank = 20).

For women teachers, mean scores of EBLQ items revealed that women teachers scored the following behavioral leadership qualities as most essential for leadership success in the Nigerian SCBVI: “timely payment of salary” ($M = 6.320$, rank = 1), “resource procurement” ($M = 6.230$, rank 2), “humility” ($M = 6.221$, rank = 3), “good property management skills” ($M = 6.221$, rank = 3-tied), “honesty” ($M = 6.197$, rank = 5) and “excellent educational qualification” (also $M = 6.197$, rank = 5-tied). The bottom five (that is, least essential) qualities perceived by the women teachers for effectiveness of their principals were: “positive relations with the community” ($M = 5.951$, rank = 16), “consultative decision-making style” ($M = 5.918$, rank = 17), “accessibility to students, faculty and staff” ($M = 5.869$, rank = 18), “people-centered leadership style” ($M = 5.762$, rank = 19) and “ensuring reliable transportation” ($M = 5.648$, rank = 20). Complete ranking of all EBLQ items by gender of the teachers are on table 3.

Table 3. Differences in Mean scores and ranks of perceived levels of essentiality of all 20 EBLQ items by gender of teachers

EBLQ ITEMS	Overall Mean Scores		Mean Scores for Men Teachers		Mean Scores for Women Teachers		T-Statistics of Gender Difference			
	MEss Score	Essent Rank	MEss Score	Essent Rank	MEss Score	Essent Rank	M-W Mean Diff	DF	T-Value	P-Value
Timely payment of salary	6.251	1	6.195	2	6.320	1	-.125	269	-.864	.3883
Honesty	6.218	2	6.235	1	6.197	5	.038	269	.344	.7310
Humility	6.181	3	6.148	3	6.221	3	-.074	269	-.631	.5285
Excellent educational qualification.	6.170	4	6.148	3	6.197	5	-.049	269	-.397	.6919
Good property management skills	6.151	5	6.094	8	6.221	3	-.127	269	-1.114	.2662
Good listening skills	6.144	6	6.128	7	6.164	8	-.036	269	-.311	.7560
Motivator	6.119	7	6.135	6	6.098	10	0.37	269	.320	.7489
God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	6.100	8	6.087	9	6.115	9	-.028	269	-.219	.8267
Strong interest in working with blind children	6.092	9	6.141	5	6.033	11	.108	269	.888	.3756
Resource procurement	6.081	10	5.960	12	6.230	2	-.270	269	-2.123	.0347
Good presentation skills.	6.077	11	5.993	11	6.180	7	-.187	269	-1.488	.1379
Budgeting and financial accountability	6.026	12	6.047	10	6.000	15	.047	269	.351	.7256
Organizational Knowledge	5.974	13	5.933	13	6.025	13	-.029	269	-.738	.4609
Positive relations with the community.	5.934	14	5.919	14	5.951	16	-.031	269	-.267	.7896
Provision for faculty and staff development	5.900	15	5.812	17	6.008	14	-.196	269	-1.429	.1541
Accessibility to students, faculty and staff	5.882	16	5.893	15	5.869	18	.024	269	.187	.8515
Ensuring regular water and electricity	5.875	17	5.745	18	6.033	11	-.288	269	-1.847	.0658
Consultative decision-making style	5.815	18	5.732	19	5.918	17	-.186	269	-1.422	.1563
People-centered leadership style	5.804	19	5.839	16	5.762	19	.077	269	.629	.5302
Ensuring reliable transportation	5.657	20	5.664	20	5.648	20	.017	269	.108	.9144

MEss= Mean Score of Essentiality, **Essent Rank** = Rank of Essentiality, **M** = Men, **W** = Women

Table 4. Effectiveness Rankings of all 20 EBLQ items, ordered by effectiveness rankings of men teachers, for principals in the Nigerian SCBVI by Gender of teachers

EBLQ Items	MEN TEACHERS					WOMEN TEACHERS				
	MEss Score	MEff Score	MEff-MEss Rate	Effect Rank	Qualitative Effectiveness Description	MEss Score	MEff Score	MEff-MEss Rate	Effect Rank	Qualitative Effectiveness Description
Humility	6.148	5.940	.966	1	Distinguished	6.221	6.016	.967	5	Distinguished
Excellent educational qualifications	6.148	5.913	.962	2	Distinguished	6.197	6.123	.988	1	Distinguished
Accessibility to students, faculty and staff	5.893	5.624	.954	3	Distinguished	5.869	5.779	.985	2	Distinguished
Good presentation skills.	5.993	5.705	.952	4	Distinguished	6.180	5.762	.932	9	Exemplary
Organizational Knowledge	5.933	5.570	.939	5	Exemplary	6.025	5.680	.943	6	Exemplary
God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	6.087	5.711	.938	6	Exemplary	6.115	5.705	.933	8	Exemplary
Consultative decision-making style	5.732	5.376	.938	7	Exemplary	5.918	5.467	.924	12	Exemplary
Strong interest in working with blind children	6.141	5.758	.938	8	Exemplary	6.033	5.844	.969	3	Distinguished
Good listening skills	6.128	5.738	.936	9	Exemplary	6.164	5.705	.926	11	Exemplary
People-centered leadership style	5.839	5.430	.930	10	Exemplary	5.762	5.582	.969	3	Distinguished
Honesty	6.235	5.705	.915	11	Exemplary	6.197	5.787	.934	7	Exemplary
Good property management skills	6.094	5.564	.913	12	Exemplary	6.221	5.525	.888	17	Proficient
Positive relations with the community.	5.919	5.383	.909	13	Exemplary	5.951	5.377	.904	15	Exemplary
Resource procurement	5.960	5.416	.909	14	Exemplary	6.230	5.656	.908	14	Exemplary
Motivator	6.135	5.544	.904	15	Exemplary	6.098	5.680	.931	10	Exemplary
Budgeting and financial accountability	6.047	5.409	.894	16	Proficient	6.000	5.533	.922	13	Exemplary
Ensuring regular water and electricity	5.745	5.128	.893	17	Proficient	6.033	5.418	.898	16	Proficient
Ensuring reliable transportation	5.664	5.040	.890	18	Proficient	5.648	4.893	.866	18	Proficient
Provision for faculty and staff development	5.812	5.101	.878	19	Proficient	6.008	5.180	.862	20	Proficient
Timely payment of salary	6.195	5.362	.866	20	Proficient	6.320	5.475	.866	18	Proficient
<i>Overall Scores (all 20 items)</i>	<i>119.8</i>	<i>111.5</i>	<i>.931</i>		<i>Exemplary</i>	<i>121.2</i>	<i>113.2</i>	<i>.934</i>		<i>Exemplary</i>

4.4 Ranking of Effectiveness by Gender

A unique feature of the EBLQ method of assessing leadership effectiveness is its standards-based approach. As demonstrated in some earlier studies (Ajuwon & Oyinlade, 2016; Oyinlade, 2006; Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2017; Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003), the EBLQ method assesses leadership effectiveness against the levels of essentialities of leadership qualities. To determine effectiveness against essentiality, the EBLQ method adopts a simple ratio formula: Leadership Effectiveness = MEff / MEss, where MEff = Mean Score of Effectiveness and MEss = Mean Score of Essentiality. The ratio value of this formula produces leadership effectiveness rates, termed, MEff-MEss rates (mean of effectiveness by mean of essentiality). These MEff-MEss rates were calculated in this study, similarly to previous studies by Oyinlade and

his partners, and were used to rank the effectiveness of the Nigerian SCBVI principals by gender of their teachers.

Oyinlade (2006) also introduced the use of qualitative effectiveness description (QED) to qualitatively describe the MEff-MEss rates. In doing so, he adopted a model similar to the grading system in American universities to qualitatively describe leadership effectiveness. At the highest level of leadership effectiveness, the EBLQ method describes a MEff-MEss rate of .95 and above as distinguished effectiveness, and with an acceptance leadership effectiveness level of good. At the lowest end, a MEff-MEss rate below .70 is described as ineffective with an effectiveness acceptance level described as unacceptable. See table 5 for the complete description of Oyinlade's (2006) QED for leadership effectiveness which was also fully adopted in this study.

Analysis of leadership effectiveness of the principals (table 4), by gender of teachers, revealed that men teachers ranked their principals to be most effective in humility (MEff-MEss rate = .966, QED = Distinguished). Other leadership qualities (EBLQ) whereby the principals were most ranked effective by their men teachers were: "excellent educational qualifications" (MEff-MEss rate = .962, rank = 2, QED = Distinguished), "accessibility to students, faculty and staff" (MEff-MEss rate = .954, rank = 3, QED = Distinguished), "good presentation skills" (MEff-MEss rate = .952, rank = 4, QED = Distinguished) and "organizational knowledge" (MEff-MEss rate = .939, rank = 5, QED = Exemplary). At the lower end, the EBLQ areas in which the men teachers ranked their principals least effective were: "budgeting and financial accountability" (MEff-MEss rate = .894, rank = 16, QED = Proficient), "ensuring regular water and electricity" (MEff-MEss rate = .893, rank = 17, QED = Proficient), "ensuring reliable transportation" (MEff-MEss rate = .890, rank = 18, QED = Proficient), "provision for faculty and staff development" (MEff-MEss rate = .878, rank = 19, QED = Proficient) and "timely payment of salary" (MEff-MEss rate = .866, rank = 20, QED = Proficient).

Findings of leadership effectiveness of the principals by women teachers (table 4) showed some similarities and differences with the men teachers in scoring their principals as effective vis-à-vis the perceived levels of essentiality of the EBLQ items. For the women teachers, the principals were most effective in "excellent educational qualifications" (MEff-MEss rate = .988, QED = Distinguished), followed by "accessibility to students, faculty and staff" (MEff-MEss rate = .985, rank = 2, QED = Distinguished), "people-centered leadership style" (MEff-MEss rate = .969, rank = 3, QED = Distinguished), "strong interest in working with blind children" (MEff-MEss rate = .969, rank = 3-tied, QED = Distinguished), and "humility" (MEff-MEss rate = .967, rank = 5, QED = Distinguished).

At the lower levels of effectiveness, the women teachers rated the principals as least effective as follow: "ensuring regular water and electricity" (MEff-MEss rate = .898, rank = 16, QED = Proficient), "good property management skills" (MEff-MEss rate = .888, rank = 17, QED = Proficient), "ensuring reliable transportation" (MEff-MEss rate = .866, rank = 18, QED = Proficient), "timely payment of salary" (MEff-MEss rate = .866, rank = 18-tied, QED = Proficient) and "provision for faculty and staff development" (MEff-MEss rate = .862, rank = 20, QED = Proficient).

Table 5. Oyinlade's qualitative descriptions of scores and ranking of effectiveness

Effectiveness (MEff-MEss) Rates	Rating Description	
	Qualitative Effectiveness Description (QED)	Acceptance Level
.95 and above	Distinguished	Good
.90 to .94	Exemplary	Good
.80 to .89	Proficient	Good
.70 to .79	Competent	Average
.69 and below	Ineffective	Unacceptable

5. Discussion

This study produced a few noteworthy findings. First, unlike the findings in the study by Oyinlade, Gellhaus and Darboe (2003) that showed significant differences between men and women teachers in the US SCBVI in seven of 18 EBLQ items, this study showed a significant statistical difference between men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI in only one of 20 items. This means that in the US, perceptions of essential leadership behavioral characteristics are more likely to vary by gender, than in Nigeria. That is, Nigerian men and women SCBVI teachers (unlike their US counterparts) seemed to have greater common perceptions of essential leadership behaviors for successful leadership of their schools. Objectively established explanations for the greater gender similarities for leadership behavioral preferences in Nigeria are unknown and beyond the scope of the investigation for this study. Our speculations, however, are that greater gender similarities in leadership behavioral characteristics exist in Nigeria, perhaps, because issues of leadership inadequacies and corruption are very prevalent in everyday life of the Nigerian people (Ajuwon & Oyinlade, 2016). Such experience could mean that both men and women suffer similar consequences from inadequate leadership on everyday basis, and, hence, become unified in their expectations for essential leadership characteristics. An extension of this explanation

could be that both men and women teachers in the Nigerian SCBVI have much more similar organizational leadership experiences and consequences than men and women in the US schools, where the various feminist movements in the US culture might have produced gendered expectations for leadership. The potential absence (or minimal presence) of gendered leadership behavioral expectations in Nigeria vis-à-vis the US, we argue, may be a major contributor to the greater similarities in essential behavioral leadership qualities between men and women teachers in Nigeria than found in the US study by Oyinlade, Gellhaus and Darboe (2003).

A second noteworthy finding in this study is the departure of the essentialities of the leadership items from the canon of knowledge on the theories of preferred leadership styles of men and women. Theories of preferred leadership styles of men and women, as earlier discussed, have concluded that men tend to favor the transactional, agentic, bureaucratic, masculine and structure initiating leadership styles, while women tend to prefer leadership styles that are transformational, communal, feminine and consideration. That is, men tend to be job-centered while women tend to be people-centered in their respective leadership styles. Our findings of preferred essential leadership behaviors by gender of the Nigerian SCBVI teachers essentially turned these theories on their heads.

The essential behavioral leadership qualities in the Nigerian SCBVI did not neatly (minimally at best) fit the job versus people-centered theories. Our rough estimations of the Nigerian EBLQ items (see table 6) reveal that women teachers ranked many people-centered leadership behaviors very low for essentialities. To be consistent with the theories, our expectations were that women teachers would rank people-centered leadership behaviors very high for essentiality, but, instead, we found people-centered behaviors such as “positive relations with the community”, “accessibility to students, faculty and staff”, “people-centered leadership style”, “provision for faculty and staff development” and “consultative decision-making style” to be among the bottom-ranked essential behavioral leadership preferences by the Nigerian women teachers. On the flip side, the Nigerian women teachers seemed to favor many job-centered leadership behaviors similarly to their men counterparts. Job-centered behaviors such as “timely payment of salary”, “resource procurement”, and “good property management” were the top three most highly ranked essential leadership qualities sought by the Nigerian women teachers. “Good presentation skills” and “excellent educational qualifications” were also among the top ten most preferred leadership qualities by the Nigerian women teachers. For the men teachers, on the contrary, job-centered behaviors such as “resource procurement”, “organizational knowledge”, “budgeting and financial accountability”, “good presentation skills” and “Ensuring regular water and electricity” were ranked low for leadership essentials (see table 6). It appears from these results that the Nigerian women teachers tend to favor job-centered leadership behaviors than their men counterparts; an important contradiction to leadership theories.

Table 6. Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities (EBLQ) organized by people and job-centered traits for men and women teachers.

EBLQ ITEMS	Mean Scores for Men Teachers		Mean Scores for Women Teachers	
	MEss Score	Essent Rank	MEss Score	Essent Rank
PEOPLE CENTERED BEHAVIORS				
Honesty	6.235	1	6.197	5
Humility	6.148	3	6.221	3
Strong interest in working with blind children	6.141	5	6.033	11
Motivator	6.135	6	6.098	10
Good listening skills	6.128	7	6.164	8
God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	6.087	9	6.115	9
Positive relations with the community.	5.919	14	5.951	16
Accessibility to students, faculty and staff	5.893	15	5.869	18
People-centered leadership style	5.839	16	5.762	19
Provision for faculty and staff development	5.812	17	6.008	14
Consultative decision-making style	5.732	19	5.918	17
Ensuring reliable transportation	5.664	20	5.648	20
JOB-CENTERED BEHAVIORS				
Timely payment of salary	6.195	2	6.320	1
Excellent educational qualification.	6.148	3	6.197	5
Good property management skills	6.094	8	6.221	3
Budgeting and financial accountability	6.047	10	6.000	15
Good presentation skills.	5.993	11	6.180	7
Resource procurement	5.960	12	6.230	2
Organizational Knowledge	5.933	13	6.025	13
Ensuring regular water and electricity	5.745	18	6.033	11

MEss= Mean Score of Essentiality, Essent Rank = Rank of Essentiality, M = Men, W = Women

A third noteworthy finding in this study was the predominance of incongruence in the level of essentialities and levels of effectiveness of the principals. Except for one EBLQ item; “motivator”, which women teachers ranked consistently as tenth for essentiality and effectiveness of their school principals, the rankings of effectiveness of the principals, by both men and women teachers, were not consistent with the rankings of essentialities of the EBLQ items. Men teachers, for example, ranked “timely payment of salary” as their 2nd most essential leadership behavior for successful principalship, but they (men teachers) ranked their principals as least effective (effectiveness ranking = 20th) for this highly important item. The same item was ranked most essential (essentiality rank = 1st) by women teachers, and they also ranked their principals poorly (18th) for effectiveness on the item. Also, the men teachers ranked their principals eleventh (11th) for effectiveness on “honesty”, a leadership behavior that the men teachers ranked as most essential (ranked 1st) for leadership essentiality. Other glaring examples of effectiveness-essentiality incongruences were the EBLQ items “excellent educational credentials”, “accessibility by students, faculty and staff”, and “strong interests in working with children who are blind and visually impaired”, in which the women teachers ranked their principals 1st, 2nd and 3rd, respectively, for effectiveness, but which the women teachers ranked as 5th, 18th and 19th, respectively, for essentialities. That is, the principals were ranked by the women teachers as most effective (ranked 1st) for a behavioral item that was ranked 5th for essentiality. Similarly, the principals were ranked by the women teachers as 2nd most effective on a behavioral item that was ranked only 18th for leadership importance.

6. Conclusion: Study Take-Away

Certain take-away can be derived from this study. One take-away concerns the discovery that the accepted canon of knowledge regarding the models of leadership style preferences for men and women did not neatly fit the gender leadership style preferences in Nigeria. As earlier concluded by Ajuwon and Oyinlade (2016), leadership traits are both culture specific and transcultural. It appears in this study that gender leadership preferences of the Nigerian SCBVI teachers mainly support the culture bound perspective rather than transcultural, as the canon of leadership theories on gender styles tend to suggest. It may very well be that the canon of knowledge support gender differences in leadership styles in western cultures, hence, the general acceptance of the theories. If this assumption were accurate, it is important that more studies of leadership styles be conducted in nonwestern cultures, especially African cultures where outcries of leadership deficiencies are common by both men and women on regular basis. Findings of studies from such nonwestern cultures, as African societies, may help to either confirm or limit the generalizability of the canon of knowledge on gender leadership preferences.

Another important take-away from this study is one that has been consistently found in earlier EBLQ studies of leadership effectiveness by Oyinlade and his colleagues (earlier cited). Like earlier studies, principals in the Nigerian SCBVI were not effective consistently with the levels of essentialities of expected leadership behaviors by their men and women teachers.

As indicated by Oyinlade and Ajuwon, (2017, p. 128):

“ideally, it is most desirable to have complete congruence in ranking of essentiality and effectiveness. That is, it is most desirable for leaders to be most effective in the leadership behavior deemed by followers as most essential for effective leadership, and for the congruence to be consistent for all items in any given EBLQ model. A consistent essentiality-effectiveness ranking on all items would mean that the principals were effective in their leadership behaviors consistently with what was essential for their leadership effectiveness. This would have meant that the principals had successfully prioritized and acted according to the essentiality of behaviors necessary for their leadership success. Such prioritization and action would have meant that the principals had put most of their energy on succeeding at the most essential leadership effectiveness item ... and lesser energy on all other consecutive items commensurately with the essentiality ranking of each item.”

If the leaders could prioritize their efforts to be effective consistently with the level of essentialities of leadership behaviors by gender of their followers, they (leaders) would be aligning their efforts consistently with the importance of leadership preferences of their teachers. Such alignment will likely improve the chances that they (principals) will gain greater recognition for effectiveness as well as gain greater support from their followers (teachers).

Lastly, it is important to note that a low ranking of effectiveness on some leadership behaviors compared to others, does not necessarily signal leadership ineffectiveness. Such was the case in this study. Despite the low rankings of the principals (by teachers of both genders) for effectiveness in some leadership behaviors such as timely payments of salaries, and provision for faculty and staff development, the actual effectiveness rates for each of these items were above 86 percent (proficient QED) by each gender. The recognition that a leader could, still, be very effective, even when ranked low for effectiveness relative to other leadership behaviors (or other leaders, for that matter) is necessary, to avoid what Reeves (2004) described as inaccurate disparagement. By inaccurate disparagement, a leader is incorrectly judged as ineffective because another leader is more effective

(Reeves, 2004). We apply Reeves' concept here as a final take-away to caution organizational officers, who conduct leadership effectiveness analysis, from erroneously determining that a leader is ineffective in a leadership behavioral characteristic simply because he/she is more effective in other characteristics. This caution is necessary to avoid the error of inaccurate disparagement.

7. Future Research

Given that studies of essential leadership behaviors for effective guidance of SCBVI is largely absent in academic literature, we recommend that future research in leadership focus on these schools. These schools are responsible for educating a segment of school children in virtually every country in the world, yet, they seem to be forgotten in scientific leadership studies. To better serve the children who attend these schools as well as to better preserve and improve the quality of education rendered in these schools, leadership studies that may provide practical knowledge for leadership improvement of these schools are strongly encouraged. Such studies are especially encouraged in African and other nonwestern countries where these schools may receive little attention from both government and the general public.

We also recommend that future research focus on the extent to which gender leadership preferences advanced in models such as "transactional vs transformational", "agentic vs communal", "structure initiating vs consideration" and "job-centered vs "people-centered" are transcultural or culture specific. While we have evidence to assert that these dichotomies were not clearly present in the Nigerian SCBVI, further studies are necessary to affirm or deny the extent to which these dichotomies, which represent the canon of knowledge in leadership theories, are universally valid or only valid in the western cultures where they were discovered. We especially encourage these dichotomies to be tested in various leadership situations in nonwestern countries to affirm or deny the extent to which they are supported in nonwestern cultures.

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