

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE Comparing Leadership Practices Between the United States, Nigeria, and Slovenia: Does Culture Matter?

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METHODOLOGY

The Leadership Practices Inventory was administered to 110 MBA students from the U.S. (Southeast Missouri State University), 105 MBA students from Nigeria (Nugu State University of Science and Technology, Lagos) and 134 MBA students from Slovenia (University of Ljubljana). The first two were administered in English and the latter in Slovenian. The proportion of males and females within each sample population were roughly equivalent, and the majority of respondents had less than 10 years of work experience. Measures of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the five leadership practices in country samples ranged from .62 to .79.

KEY FINDINGS

"Contrary to expectations and propositions, the LPI scores of MBA students in the United States, Nigeria, and Slovenia were relatively similar" (p. 23). The rank order was the same for respondents from all three countries, with Enabling being the most frequent, followed by Encouraging, Modeling, Challenging and Inspiring. Scores from U.S. participants were lowest on all five leadership practices, but not statistically different from the other countries.

Females in the U.S. sample scored significantly higher than their male counterparts on Enabling and Encouraging. Males scored higher than females on all five leadership practices in the Nigerian sample. Challenging was the only practice that males scored different (higher) than females in the Slovenian sample. In the overall sample, males scored significantly higher in Challenging and Inspiring than females.

Among male respondents, the majority of differences occurred between those from the U.S. and their counterparts in the other two countries (who had higher scores). Among female respondents, there were no significant differences in the usage of leadership practices between the three countries.

“Results from our study suggest that gender differences in leadership practices appear to be culturally contingent” (p. 29). No significant differences were found between respondents regarding their type of employment. No significant differences were found between respondents over and under the age of 30 years. Inspiring was the only leadership practice to significantly vary as the result of years of work experience (increasing).

Discriminant analysis revealed that five specific leadership behaviors, taken together, provided the best possible discrimination between respondents from the three different countries (items 1, 4, 5, 14, 23). Fifty-five percent of the cases were correctly classified (by country). “Judging from the mean values for the selected behaviors, it appears that Nigerian respondents most frequently – and much more than respondents from the other two countries – take time to celebrate accomplishments and make certain that people adhere to the values that have been agreed on. American respondents are much more clear about their own philosophy of leadership than others, but do not create an atmosphere of mutual trust that the others do. Slovenian respondents seek out challenging opportunities more than their Nigerian or American counterparts” (pp. 26-27).

The authors conclude: “In the aggregate, the LPI scores of students from the United States, Nigeria, and Slovenia were very similar.... Our research suggests that there may be some leadership behaviors that are universally endorsed. MBA students from the three countries engage in visionary, inspirational, and risk-taking leadership behaviors with equal frequency...Although our study did not examine the impact of various leadership practices on performance, it has shown that leaders from cultural different countries use many leadership practices in similar ways and with similar frequency. This at least implicitly suggests that they view these practices as effective” (p. 27).

“Because of the nature of the samples, the generalizability of the findings on the population of managers in the three countries is questionable. However, respondents do come from a wide array of companies and industries. They are atypical to the extent that they are MBA students and may be more educated and ambitious than the average manager. However, Hofstede (2001) argues that narrow samples (meaning just a few companies or a certain profession or other category of people) are atypical in some way. But that does not matter, as long as all the samples are atypical in the same way from one country to another. The quality of the matching of such samples and the generalizability of conclusions drawn from such research can only be proven *ex post*. ‘If the differences we find between cultures in one study are confirmed by those found by others in other matched samples studies, our matching was adequate’ (Hofstede, 2001)” (p. 31).

The authors end with: “Culture does matter. But its impact is not as strong as is commonly thought. Maybe the world is actually becoming a ‘global village’ after all” (p. 31).