

# LEADER- UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT IN MANUFACTURING BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS IN OGUN STATE NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *The paper examines leader-unconscious bias and task accomplishment in manufacturing business organizations in Ogun state, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted while the simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 120 respondents. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection, measured on a 6-point Likert Scale. 120 copies of questionnaire were administered with a response rate of 75.8%. Data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistical techniques of Percentiles and Pearson Correlation with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for editing and encoding. The result shows that there is a very weak negative relationship between leader-unconscious and task accomplishment among employees of organization in the industrial estate ( $R = -0.273$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study recommends that leaders must demonstrate commitment towards equality and diversity in workforce and ensure absence of unconscious biases and discrimination on ethnic, gender, religion, age or any other ground.*

**Keywords:** *Leader-Unconscious Bias, Task Accomplishment, Business Organisation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The concept of implicit bias is a threat to good leadership behaviour. Implicit or unconscious bias refers to the attitude or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favourable and unfavourable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control (Blair, 2002; Rudman, 2004a). Implicit biases are pervasive and could hinder our senses of good judgment, most especially leaders with responsibilities to influence people to deliver results. Unconscious bias has the ability to influence every aspect of an organization, from decision making, recruitment, retention, supervision, to communication. Unconscious bias brings about discrimination and favouritism in the workplace, with grievous implication on the health and success of an organization and detrimental consequences for both the leaders and the followers. The effect could be both positive and negative. It could motivate for better performance and as well de-motivate and lower employees' morale, resulting in poor performance, with overall negative consequence for organizational effectiveness. Unconscious bias has been shown to affect the ways leaders deliver their duties in organizations, from decision making to communication and quality of support and supervision given to employees. Kyko (2005), identified among other factors, biased boss as a factor contributing to a toxic work environment which in turn leads to low productivity of workers. Human beings need to be treated properly in order to get the best output from them. It is therefore of importance that managers and leaders take without levity the issues of employees satisfaction in order to heighten the level of output and general performance. Leaders with the right behaviour, without bias, discrimination and prejudices are therefore needed in organizations, in order to achieve their objectives through the people they lead. There are evidences of the impact of unconscious biases on various aspects of organizations. From recruiting, hiring, performance review, employee development, compensation and benefits, to promotion. Its effects have been recorded in almost every sector of human endeavours; judiciary, business organizations, medical industry, sport and the education sector (Kandola, 2010; Wood, 2009; Burges and Greaves, 2009; Rivera, 2012), where people are judged and evaluated based on their age, colour, gender, ethnic affiliation, race, religious faith, weight, way of dressing and many more.

The quality of the leader-employee relationship – or the lack thereof – has a great influence on the employee's self-esteem and job satisfaction (Chen and Spector, 1991; DeCremer, 2003). Negative leader-employee relations reduce productivity and increase absenteeism and the turnover to the organization can be quite high (Ribelin, 2003). Jost, Rudman, Blair, Carney, Dasgupta, Glaser & Hardin (2009) revealed through their study, that students, nurses, doctors, police officers, employment recruiters, and many other exhibit implicit biases with respect to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, social status and other distinctions. This goes to show that no one is left out, including leaders within organizations, who hold the responsibility of delivering result through people.

## 1.1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The International's Women's Day was recently commemorated across countries around the globe in April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017, where the Director (Human Resources) of Unilever Nigeria Pc, Eniola Onimole, highlighted on the essentials and how the organization is fairing in advancing the course of women inclusion and empowerment and particularly how the company has been able to deal with gender stereotype against women (<http://www.businessdayonline.com/priority-improving-gender-representation-culture/>). She emphasized the fact that, stereotype against women has persisted due to unconscious bias, which we all hold and have failed to acknowledge exists; if we don't believe that it exists, there is little or nothing we will do about it. This is why the management of Unilever has used the International Women's Day to challenge the employees to think about how they can address their unconscious biases and understand the need to "unstereotype" and change their mindsets. Consequently, this study attempts to examine the effect of leader-unconscious bias in manufacturing business organisations to proffer solutions to address the challenge.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of leader-unconscious bias on task accomplishment in manufacturing business organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria.

## 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To what extent has leader-unconscious affected task accomplishment in manufacturing business organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria?

## 1.4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Leader-unconscious bias has no significant relationship with task accomplishment in manufacturing business organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria.

## 1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Organizations striving for excellence in the globalized world cannot continue to live in denial of implicit biases within the workplace environment. Negative impact of unconscious bias adversely affects diversity and inclusion, which has been identified to help in increasing workplace productivity. Nevertheless, without deviating from the standpoint of truth and reality, there is need to unearth hidden biases, so that leadership and management executives can begin to take conscious efforts at tackling and eradicating them, for the success of the organization. There is need to root out any form of discrimination as a result of unconscious bias based on employee's personality and social orientations, in order to foster a harmonious work environment for effective leader-employee relationship, which will in turn enhance the employees' productivity and foster organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, it has been observed in Nigeria that, most researches on the impact of leadership on employee's job satisfaction and productivity have centered on the leadership styles and not much as has been done on leadership behaviour influenced by implicit bias and its effects on job satisfaction and employee's productivity.

## 1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Komal and Tahir (2007) surveyed employees from 34 organizations from oil and gas, banking and telecommunication sectors in Pakistan. They concluded that increasing employee participation will have a positive effect on employee's job satisfaction, employee commitment and employee productivity. However, the presence of leadership implicit bias might not allow a participative atmosphere in the workplace. Can this lead to reduced employee satisfaction, employee commitment and productivity? This is part of what this research study wants to investigate. Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza & Somia (2013) analyzed the responses from 200 employees in the banking sector in Pakistan. Manager's attitude among other four independent variables except personal problem was found to have a positive impact on the performance of the employees. It was concluded that if the control and attitude of the manager is interactive and promoting, then the employees work better. If the manager is unbiased towards the employees, the organization progresses more than others. It is necessary that the manager is unbiased and treats every employee without discrimination. Liao and Chuang (2004) in their study investigated the mediating role of the quality of leader-member exchange between the relationship of employee's performance and goal orientation. Their findings suggest that employee's effectiveness is increased on the job when he gets personal attention and strong response from the supervisor. Supervisor's and manager's role is important in uplifting the performance of employees at work. Tordera, Gonzalez-Roma and Peiro (2008) opined that the fundamental factors influencing the effectiveness of an organization are leadership and job satisfaction. Leadership is considered to be one of the most important determinants of employee's job satisfaction. It extensively influences employee's motivation and dedication. However, Kyko (2005), identified among other factors, biased boss as a factor contributing to a toxic work environment which in turn leads to low productivity. Therefore if a leader is implicitly biased, will he be able to bring about job satisfaction in his subordinates and help them to improve on their job performance? Nwagboso et al (2016) also confirmed that there is a significant relationship between employee job satisfaction and leadership behaviour. They investigated the relationship between leadership behaviour (independent variable) and employee job satisfaction (dependent variable) among selected paramilitary workers in Benin City, Edo State. It was found that noticeable leadership behaviours were transformational and transactional and the employees were to an average extent satisfied with their work. Segun-

Adeniran (2015) in her study confirmed that leadership and leadership styles employed by leaders affect productivity and general performance. Also, Ali et al (2013) found a positive correlation between leadership behaviour and employee performance. Pandita and Domnic (2016) reviewed various variables affecting job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Supervision was identified as one of the variables. According to their study, supervision plays a very important role in evaluating and enhancing the performance of each individual employee. A supervisor or leader by all means has to be neutral and his/her individual preferences should never come into deciding or evaluating the performance of an individual.

**2. METHODOLOGY:**

The study adopts survey design to enhance a comprehensive examination of independent and dependent variables. A sample of 120 respondents was randomly selected from the target population of 150 employees of some selected manufacturing companies in Agbara Industrial Estate in Ado-odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used in collecting the required primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts A and B. Part A contained items on the demographic variables and Part B contained items to measure the active variables of Leader-unconscious bias (independent variable) and Employee Performance (Dependent variable). The questionnaire was rated on a six-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (6), Agree (5), Fairly Agree (4), Fairly Disagree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The Simple Percentile and Regression Analysis statistical techniques were used to aggregate the responses and test the hypothesis.

**3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:**

H<sub>0</sub>: Leader-unconscious bias has no significant relationship with employee task accomplishment in manufacturing business organizations in Ado-odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun state, Nigeria.

LUB – Leader-Unconscious Bias

TA - Task Accomplishment

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-.273 <sup>a</sup>	.074	.064		17.504

a. Predictors: (Constant), LUB

Looking at the model summary table, it shows that there is a very weak negative relationship between leader-unconscious bias and task accomplishment among staff of the institution with regression coefficient of -0.273 and the adjusted R-square of 0.064. The result also revealed that only 7.4% variation in task accomplishment can be explained by leader-unconscious bias.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2169.821	1	2169.821	7.082	.009 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	26963.079	88	306.399		
	Total	29132.900	89			

a. Dependent Variable: TA

b. Predictors: (Constant), LUB

Moreover, the ANOVA table indicates F-value of 7.082 and p-value of 0.009. This implies that the test is significant, that is the model is adequate and sufficient in relating task accomplishment and leader-unconscious bias.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	49.571	5.716		8.673	.000
	LUB	-.350	-.132	-.273	-2.661	.009

a. Dependent Variable: TA

The coefficient table shows the relationship between the variables under consideration:

**TA = 49.571 - 0.350LUB**

The hypothesis is significant because the p-value of 0.009 is less than the significance value of 0.05, hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted and we then conclude that leader-unconscious bias has significant relationship with employee task accomplishment. The result shows that leader-unconscious bias contributes negatively to task

accomplishment. Though the relationship is very small, this might be due to the fear of job security, since there are no jobs in the country.

#### 4. CONCLUSION:

The interest in unconscious bias has increased over the past few years, with significant body of supporting evidence that has allowed the concept to become widely recognized both inside and outside the field of psychology (Claire Herbert, 2013). Research indicates that stereotype threat not only exists in workplace settings, but it can also unconsciously affect our self-perception and workplace performance (Robertson et al, 2003; Ross, 2008). Therefore, any form of bias must not be allowed in the workplace and this must be championed by leaders who have responsibilities to influence followers into action. Leader-unconscious bias will lower employees' performance and prevent the organization from getting the best out of them. While methods for measuring and preventing implicit biases may not be perfect, there is little doubt that it does exist and also has the potential to affect our actions and decision making (Claire Herbert, 2013). Effective leaders and managers are mindful of interpersonal relationships and by being aware of implicit bias can better mitigate potential employee conflict that can lead to poor performance according to findings of this study. Therefore, leaders should take more thoughtful actions and decisions not subjective in nature. Therefore business organizations should consider introducing training in a supportive, unthreatening environment to give their staff the chance to think about their biases in a constructive way. This is especially important for people (leaders) who may be undertaking important decisions such as in recruitment (Claire Herbert, 2013). Multinational companies like Google have adopted a training program for all their employees to help tackle the issue of unconscious biases in the workplace and help foster diversity and inclusion. Therefore, leaders should implement better training for themselves and their employees and also put in place systems that account biases.

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