

Demographic Perspectives on Institutions of Higher Education Strategies Involving Women Leadership

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ABSTRACT: This study seeks feedback from all constituents (administration, faculty, staff, students) of various age groups and ethnicities within a Higher Education (HE) institution about their perspectives involving women leadership. The survey tool used forty dichotomous statements with a Likert scale for data collection. Surprisingly, males and females moderately agreed on most statements presented in the categories of, 1) Perspectives on Organizational Leadership Structure, 2) Perspectives of Presence of Women in Leadership Roles, 3) Perspectives of Treatment of Women and Leadership Roles 4) and Perspectives on Leadership Attributes of Women with the highest statistical difference observed in the Presence and Treatment of women in Leadership Roles categories. The dichotomous presentation of contradictory statements used in the survey serves to play a significant role in the overall moderate agreement between male and female respondents. Nonetheless, some interesting perspectives were also obtained that could be attributed to possible socio-political, ideological, and even personal experiences that influenced the constituents' response. The validity of the survey instrument can be tested further if used in other institutions/organizations and at the same time considering various demographics that may play a crucial role in decision-making and program implementation.

Keywords - constituents, higher education, institutions, leadership, women

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education (HE) institutions must remain relevant in the twenty-first century. Higher Ed is changing at a fast pace in its use of curriculum, formal delivery, and leadership [1]. Historically, leadership within colleges and universities has been dominated by males. There are increasing numbers of female undergraduate students, as well as female professionals present within Higher Ed [2]. Women in leadership within HE has shifted much over the years [3, 4, 5, 6]. HE institutions have a significant role in shaping the future of society and its needs, in which the voices of women should be included [7, 8]. Most studies focus on what women in leadership experience or the lack of diversity found in HE leadership. This study seeks to capture survey feedback from all constituents, including students, faculty, administration, and staff. Of over 9800 surveys sent out to university constituents, 1389 responses were received (~14%). The survey entailed a total of forty questions written in dichotomous statements covering a broad category of women leadership.

There has been little written about constituent feedback within HE institutions and constituents' perspectives about women leaders, particularly those constituents who are not executive leaders. HE leaders' relationships across the board with various constituents can be positive and help to improve their work environment. Hearing from constituents can also broaden understanding on all levels about leaders, managers, and other dynamics that perhaps may have gone unnoticed. Murphy (2022) points out the various influences that leaders can have on constituents and how leaders can be influenced by the former. Leaders can influence constituents by improving student outcomes and by building and implementing skill development and employability skills in students; also, encouraging mentor processes among faculty members and academic staff; as well as helping staff and employees to feel valued knowing that management cares [9].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to the twenty-first century, few women had power and leadership within HE, therefore many did not pursue positions within HE institutions. In the article "Potential Female and Minority Communication

Educators: An Exploratory Study of Their Views on Teaching as a Profession,” an inquiry was conducted with females and/or minorities who might have a potential interest in public relations within academia. Many of them expressed favorability about the possibilities of working in HE [10]. There was concern about delegating time to other duties outside of teaching and salaries. The participants provided little acknowledgment of discriminatory nuances toward women and minorities, despite the supporting literature about HE practices at that time. Ultimately, those being interviewed had already established professional work outside of HE and were more interested in becoming adjuncts [10]. This supports the literature of women being underrepresented in comparison to men in academia leadership [11, 5].

A New Zealand study highlights environmental influences that impact a university, workplace policies, and practices that can overall impact women. Women within HE engaged within relationships with colleagues and others who may be supportive or non-supportive. Arini, et al. (2008, 2011) focused on the following interactions which can influence the environment of female leaders: colleagues (fellow faculty), leadership (executives), and those in Human Resources (administrative staff). Although it is important to understand women’s perspectives on their leadership roles, it is additionally important to assess the perspectives of constituents with whom women leaders are engaging and their impact on women leaders. These perspectives can be insightful. The more opposition, negative experiences, and hostility women encounter, the less likely they are to pursue leadership roles within the institution [12, 13].

Advocacy for advancing women in leadership roles with various sectors of society has been in the works for quite some time now [14, 5, 16, 17, 18]. Women leadership has even become a global phenomenon influencing social changes in various places around the world [19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24]. The trending change of women’s role in leadership was also noticeable in the academic community particularly in higher education [25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31]. Studies focusing on faith-based institutions of higher learning seem to have a common claim on the staggering pace of change taking place as manifested by the much lower percentage of women in leadership compared to secular colleges and universities [32, 33, 34, 35, 36].

Nonetheless, regardless of the pace of change, it is undeniable that more women have now occupied leadership roles in higher education. With such progress comes scrutiny of their success, ability to lead, and effectiveness in performing the tasks expected of a leader. Several studies present a variety of factors that seem to hold as barriers for women leaders to exercise their full potential in the workplace. One study pointed out that women are still disadvantaged if they are unable to intertwine the masculine version of professional success and the feminine ideal of personal satisfaction [37]. It is also suggested that women from diverse ethnic backgrounds do not share the same experiences in their work environment. Nguyen (2013) pointed that in Vietnam, family support plays a crucial factor for women’s career advancement [38]. Females in the academic institutions are unwilling to take on management roles because of strong family obligations and the negative stereotype posted on women as leaders [39]. Sales et al. (2019) concluded that factors such as “being overlooked, marginalized, undervalued, and unappreciated in their professions as leaders due to their dual minority status” are the themes that deter African American women’s progress toward leadership status [23]. Abalkahil (2017) suggested that for Saudi women to gain access to leadership posts, institutions including the government must formulate policies and proper approaches in the process [39]. Doherty and Hunter Revell (2020) invoked that the Theory of Authentic Leadership Empowerment (TALE) “offers nurse leaders, nursing professional development practitioners, and other stakeholders concerned with developing authentic leaders a holistic theoretical framework to understand leadership development at the individual level while also accounting for the importance of contextual influences” [40]. Generally, the impact of cultural and contextual practices within organizations specific to the environmental workplace were highly endorsed for further exploration to better understand the barriers that seem to have ambiguous influence on women leadership [41, 42].

Institutions with a diverse student body could benefit from leadership that is also diversified [8]. Data collected from various constituents of an organization about their needs and the types of leaders who impact them is needed. Engaging the voices of constituents, particularly those of a younger generation may result in valuable feedback about leaders, including women leaders. For this study, of the constituents surveyed, both men and women agreed that regardless of gender, leadership roles within institutions should include merit and qualification of all applicants, yet they also moderately agree that there should be intentionality toward an equity to incorporate men and women as leaders. Institutions that are slow in establishing a diversification of women leaders should assess the institution’s progression or lack thereof that may impact potential leaders to feel stifled, isolated, silenced, or ignored.

Women in leadership can be beneficial in many ways to HE institutions by providing distinct, perceptive, and innovative styles of leading [43, 44, 6]. Women leaders with different leadership styles are likely to encounter different experiences. Some possible leadership styles are collaboration and consultative [43]. Most institutions are familiar with these styles of leadership whether women or men display them. Other common forms of leadership implemented during times of change are transactional and transformational approaches, which are also demonstrated by men or women [6]. It is likely that women will need to adopt

leadership standards that may be traditional and patriarchal in format [13]. In doing so, women have had to use implore these traditional leadership methods that constituents are familiar with, although the methods may not be a natural fit. Such styles are portrayed as expectations of heroism, physical and emotional toughness, and self-reliance [13]. Airini et al. (2011) provided feedback from both men and women that leadership standards should be equitable for males and females. The second part of that dimension implied that there should be some level of adjustment for either male or females in leadership standards.

The experiences that women encounter within leadership have been different from their counterparts [45, 46]. For many women the processes of professional development or career advancement may be non-linear and may not equate to those which men typically encounter, particularly within higher education. The ideal that women should maintain positions as careers (nursing, teachers in first and secondary schools) in domestic fields, rather than the opportunity to meet the career demands in higher education may be a by-product of not formulating a path that works for women, resulting in a “gendered culture” environment [45]. “Gendered culture” refers to practices and procedures that are seen to embody fundamentally male values and interests. Both men and women aspire to develop and make advancements within the HE environment and pathways should be developed for both. For years many universities have perhaps unknowingly implemented a gender cultured pathway. The constituents of this study were surveyed about dimensions of specificity for both men and women in leadership. Those dimensions measured for both male and female HE leadership are merit, qualifications, leadership self-assessments, inspiration, workload responsibilities vs. domestic/familial obligations, leadership standards, and workplace quality standards compared to work-life balance.

The dominant roles of men in HE starts early, beginning from student leadership up to executive roles such as provost, vice-president, and president. Over the years, women have slowly moved into more leadership roles. Madsen’s (2011) article describes the dramatic improvement of the number of women within significant roles from 1975 to 2006. Women representing roles of college presidents rose from 5% to 23% [43]. With more women obtaining advanced degrees today, it naturally results in qualifications to compete in the HE sector of employment and the likelihood is that they will be more apt to serve in leadership positions.

Madsen’s (2011) article addresses Harvard’s move to initiate their first female president within the twenty-first century, noting that it is not only historic, but also indicative of the changing landscape in HE. It is a paradigm shift. Interestingly, Ivy League universities are leading the way in selecting women presidents, which could impact other institutions given these top schools’ public exposure. Brown University led the way in two firsts-- selecting its first African American and female president. This shift to see women in such advanced roles, is not the norm for some.. Some research shows that individuals are comfortable with women in leadership from academia, business, media, and military; yet, it has not translated to a reality within many of these areas. Notwithstanding, women can bring unique and positive dynamics to leadership. Women are already leaders in other sectors, starting within the basic areas of influence such as office settings, primary, middle, and secondary educational settings, and obviously within the home environment. Women can be instrumental leaders with men and help create environments of positive working relationships and provide opportunities of growth to those they lead. Collaboration seeks to solicit the views of all and make use of common goals as motivation to work together [43].

Exploring feedback from those involved within the HE system on all levels (from students to administration) will help determine what is happening within institutions and what is working well for women in leadership opportunities. Additionally, examining areas of challenges could benefit institutions by determining areas needing improvement. To support women depending on the family developmental needs such as childcare, flexible work hours for children’s extra-curricular activities could be helpful. Many women may be conflicted with the burden of meeting needs within their families and adequately managing their leadership responsibilities.

Within institutions of higher education, the organization is comprised of students, faculty, and administrative staff. The culture and contextual practices of the institution are therefore defined by these important sectors. Consequently, their perspectives on women leadership will have an unequivocal influence on the overall framework of the organization’s structure and successful operation. Understanding the point of view of the institution’s constituents on women’s role in leadership can serve as baseline information for appropriate strategies that colleges and universities may put into practice for a more efficient workplace and is the purpose of this study.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was submitted to constituents of a private, religious institution located in the southeast area of the United States. A consent form (Table 1) and anonymous survey (Table 2) was distributed on-line through the University’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness to all constituents of the university and other possible collaborative extension sites comprised of: students, faculty, and administrative employees who served as respondents and voluntarily participated in the study.

The first set of information on the survey pertains to demographics, namely; Gender (male or female), Role in the organization (Student, Faculty, Administrative Staff), Age range (18-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years, 65 or older), and Ethnicity using the Classification based on U.S. Census Bureau (White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa, Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment, Hispanics or Latino refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands), and others.

Table 1. Content of the consent form provided to university constituents attached to the survey.

This survey aims to gather baseline information that may serve as reference for institutions/organizations in framing policies and procedures involving women in leadership. We want to assure you that this survey is completely anonymous with no identifiable information captured, and your responses will be combined with many others in the data analysis to further protect your anonymity.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Gender

Male Female

Role in the Organization

Student Faculty Administrative Employee (Ex: Executive Leadership, Administrative Staff, or Others)

Age range

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 or older

Ethnicity (Classification Based on U.S. Census Bureau) Check one or more boxes.

(<https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-13.pdf>)

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino

Two or More Races

Other _____

There were five categorical themes included in the survey, namely: 1) Perspectives on Organizational Leadership Structure, 2) Perspectives on Presence of Women in Leadership Roles, 3) Perspectives on Treatment of Women in Leadership Roles, 4) Perspectives on Leadership Attributes of Women, 5) Perspectives on Women’s Success in Leadership. Each of the themes are further divided into subcategories which cover areas on distribution of leadership roles, opportunities, leadership styles, organizational structure, constituency involvement in women leaders, self-assessments, presence, attitudes, institutional approaches, human resource practices, domestic obligations, women attitudes about leadership roles, transition, institutional approach, prioritizing women’s leadership, women’s domestic obligations and leadership, selection process, leadership standards, expectations of women leadership styles, sensitivity and decision-making, technical support, female support, personal goals, confidence, male colleague collaboration, and demeanor. Each sub-categorical area is presented in dichotomous statements that allows the respondent to evaluate based on a six-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Highly Agree, Moderately Agree, Moderately Disagree, Highly Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Data was consolidated and analyzed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to determine significance.

Table 2. Dichotomous statements on perspectives involving women leadership.

Evaluate your perspective on each pair of statements involving women leadership using the following scale: 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Highly Agree, 3) Moderately Agree, 4) Moderately Disagree 5) Highly Disagree, 6) Strongly Disagree:

Perspectives on Organizational Leadership Structure

Women Leadership Distribution

1) There should be equal number (50/50) of men and women with leadership roles within the institution regardless of merit and qualification.

2) The gender distribution of men and women in leadership roles within the institution, should not necessarily be 50/50, but be based on merit and qualification.

Organizational Structure Involving Women and Leadership

3) Every organization's structure involving women and leadership is uniquely shaped by the needs set forth by its constituency.

4) Every organization's structure involving women and leadership should be the same regardless of the needs of its constituency.

Constituents' Role Involving Women Leadership

5) An institution's approach toward women in leadership should be developed by the constituents.

6) An institution's approach toward women in leadership should be developed by the current leadership.

Leadership Self-Assessment

7) Women should complete a leadership self-assessment analysis if they plan on serving in a leadership role.

8) Men should complete a leadership self-assessment analysis if they plan on serving in a leadership role.

Perspectives on Presence of Women in Leadership Roles

Women's Presence in Leadership Roles

9) The leadership of women within an organization can be inspirational to its constituents.

10) The leadership of men within an organization can be inspirational to its constituents.

Women's Attitudes About Leadership Roles

11) Women should be pressured into leadership roles.

12) Women should not be pressured into leadership roles.

Transition of Women Leaders

13) Institutions with a history of male leadership should help women transition into leadership roles.

14) Institutions with a history of male leadership should not help women transition into leadership roles.

Institution's Approach Involving Women and Leadership

15) Institutions should formulate flexible criteria for women applicants.

16) Institutions should adhere to rigid criteria for women applicants.

Perspectives on Treatment of Women and Leadership Roles

Prioritizing Women in Leadership

17) An organization should continue to advertise a position past its set listing date if there are no women applicants.

18) An organization should terminate the advertising of a position at the set time whether or not there are women applicants.

Women's Domestic Obligations and Leadership

19) The number of work hours required for a woman leader should be adjusted based on the leader's personal responsibilities and domestic/familial obligations.

20) The number of work hours required for a male leader should be adjusted based on the leader's personal responsibilities and domestic/familial obligations.

Selection Process of Women Leaders

21) Women leaders who are selected based on their qualifications gain respect from the constituents.

22) Women leaders who are appointed to increase female representation gain respect from the constituents.

Setting Leadership Standards

23) Leadership standards should be the same for both men and women leaders.

24) Leadership standards should be adjusted based on whether the leader is a man or a woman.

Perspectives on Leadership Attributes of Women

Expectation on Women Leadership Styles (i.e. collaborative, consultative, transactional, transformational)

25) Women's leadership styles may vary and be flexible based on their desired outcomes.

26) Women should ascribe to one leadership style based on their desired outcomes.

Sensitivity and Decision-making

- 27) Women leaders should use their sensitivity when making decisions.
28) Women leaders should separate themselves from their sensitivity when making decisions.
- Technical Support
- 29) Women in leadership positions need workplace quality standards and work-life balance from the institution and its constituents.
30) Men in leadership positions need workplace quality standards and work-life balance from the institution and its constituents.
- Women Supporting Qualified Women
- 31) Women in leadership should NOT show bias in providing opportunities for qualified women in the workplace.
32) Women in leadership should show bias in providing opportunities for qualified women in the workplace.
- Perspectives on Women's Success in Leadership
- Personal Goals vs Leading Others
- 33) Women's success in leadership should be measured based on the accomplishments of their set goals.
34) Women's success in leadership should be measured based on the accomplishments of the goals set by those they are leading.
- Vote of Confidence Gained
- 35) Women's success in leadership should be evaluated by those they lead in an organization.
36) Women's success in leadership should be evaluated by everyone in the organization.
- Men as Allies or Competition
- 37) To be successful, women leaders should regard male leaders as competition.
38) To be successful, women leaders should regard male leaders as allies.
- Demeanor vs Outcomes
- 39) Women's success relies on them being able to suppress their emotions to meet their goals.
40) Women's success relies on them being able to express their emotions to meet their goals.
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IV. RESULTS

Demography

The study's survey was administered electronically to 1389 participants associated with the research site. A total of 853 participants completed the survey, representing a 61.4% survey response rate. The survey's completion rate was 99.31%. Nearly three-quarters (71.9%; $n = 613$) identified as female by gender. Approximately six in 10 (63.1%; $n = 538$) study participants were students enrolled at the research site, with the remaining 36.8% ($n = 314$) identified as faculty or staff employed at the study's research site. Nearly 40% (36.1%; $n = 308$) were represented in the age category of 18-24. Approximately half (49.9%; $n = 426$) of the study's participant sample were ages 25 to 54. Study participants 55 years of age and older comprised slightly over 10% (13.2%; $n = 113$) of the total sample of participants.

Internal Reliability & Model Fitness

The internal reliability achieved through study participant response to the 40 survey items on the research instrument was adequate to good ($\alpha = .74$ [95% CI .72, .77]). Research instrument validation was conducted using a CFA model to determine if the study's construct of Women in Leadership adequately described the study's data. Maximum likelihood estimation was conducted to determine the standard errors for the parameter estimates in the analysis. Considering the Chi-square goodness of fit (GOF) test's sensitivity to large sample sizes, often indicating poor model fitness (Hooper et al., 2008), fit indices were used to evaluate more precisely whether the study's construct described the data. The CFI index (.95), NFI index (.94) and SRMR index (.04) values were all indicative of good model fit. The RMSEA index value of .09 (CI .06, .12) was indicative of acceptable to marginal fit.

Findings: Main Effect

The overall effect for study participant gender upon the linear combination of the five dimensions of the construct of Women in Leadership was statistically significant ($F(5, 777) = 2.30, p = .044, \eta^2_p = 0.01$). Following-up univariate ANOVAs were conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of effect exerted by study participant gender upon the five individual dimensions of the construct of Women in Leadership. As a result, statistically significant effects were specifically reflected for the dimensions of Presence ($F(1, 833) = 4.09, p = .04$) and Treatment ($F(1, 840) = 5.03, p = .03$).

Linear Discriminant Analysis Findings: Construct Dimensions

A linear discriminant analysis (LDA) was conducted to further evaluate the statistical significance of separation among the five dimensions of the construct of Women in Leadership by study participant gender. The LDA was conducted and evaluated for statistical significance of separation using the Wilk's test. As a result, the Wilk's test was statistically significant ($F(5, 777) = 2.30, p = .04$), indicating that there was significant separation between the levels of study participant gender for the dimensions of Organizational Structure, Presence, Treatment, Attitude, and Success. Correlations were further conducted and evaluated to determine which variables reflected a large contribution to the LDA components. As a result, the dimensions of Presence ($r = .63$) and Treatment ($r = .65$) reflected strong contributions in separating the groups.

Linear Discriminant Analysis Findings: Survey Item Pairs

Formal linear discriminant analysis (LDS) was conducted upon the 20 survey item pairs to evaluate the degree of separation in the items by gender of study participant. In the current study, five of the 20 survey item pairs reflected statistically significant separation of perceptions by gender of study participant: Pair 3 & 4 ($F(2, 836) = 4.38, p = .01$); Pair 9 & 10 ($F(2, 846) = 6.77, p = .001$); Pair 13 & 14 ($F(2, 844) = 3.03, p = .049$); Pair 19 & 20 ($F(2, 849) = 7.39, p = .001$); and Pair 27 & 28 ($F(2, 842) = 3.52, p = .03$).

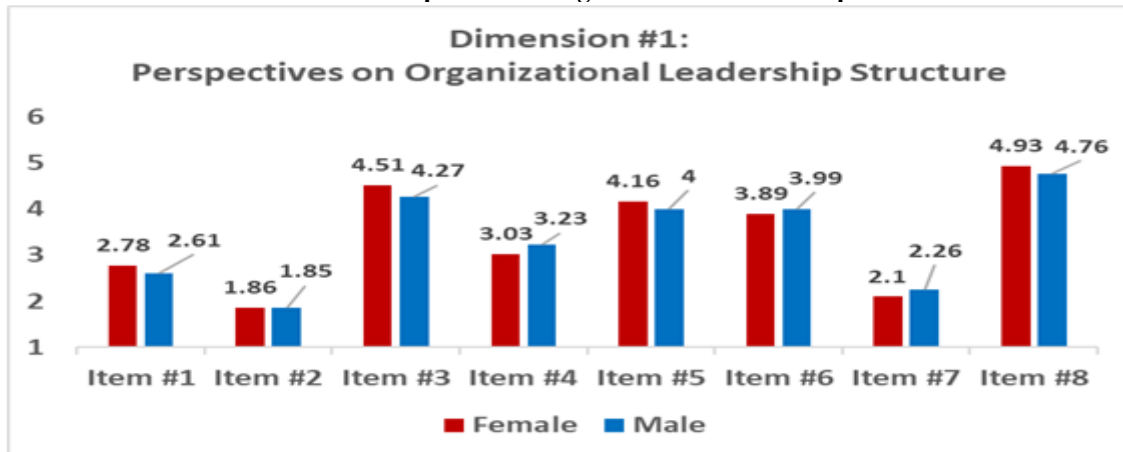
Findings by Dimensions of Women in Leadership

4.1 Perspective on Organizational Leadership Structure

Given the mode of the survey items represented in dichotomous form for each category/dimension, a wide range of the responses were obtained per item. Regarding dimension one, Perspective on Organizational Leadership Structure, the perspective on the Women Leadership Distribution sub-category specifically by gender distribution in leadership roles to be based on merit and qualification instead of being 50/50 distribution between genders (Item #2) for example, the respondents significantly agreed (male: $M = 1.85$, female: $M = 1.86$) as shown in Fig. 1. Nonetheless, with the alternative statement (Item #1) of 50/50 distribution regardless of merit and qualification, both genders reflected a moderate level of agreement with females responding at a slightly higher mean level ($M = 2.78$) than the males ($M = 2.61$).

For the sub-category of Organizational Structure Involving Women in Leadership, both genders reflected moderate levels of disagreement for the statement (Item #3) that the needs should be uniquely set forth by its constituency (male: $M = 4.27$, female: $M = 4.51$). This contradicts both male and female respondents' perspective on the alternative statement to which both genders moderately agreed that every organization's structure involving women and leadership should be the same regardless of the needs of its constituency (Item #4). In the dichotomous statements, the female respondents showed a higher average scale that an organization needs should be uniquely set forth by the constituency, and the male respondents agreed at a higher average scale that an organization's structure should be the same regardless of the needs of its constituency. Interestingly, for dichotomous statements on the Constituent's Role Involving Women Leadership sub-category, both male and female respondents reflected moderate levels of disagreement for both statements (Items #5 and #6) with females responding at a slightly higher mean level (male: $M = 4.00$, female: $M = 4.16$) in the former and the males showing a higher average scale (male: 3.99, female: 3.89) in the latter statements, respectively, although not statistically significant. Regarding Leadership Self-Assessment sub-category, both genders were largely in agreement (male: $M = 2.26$, female: $M = 2.10$) with the statement that women should complete a leadership self-assessment analysis (Item #7). Conversely, with the alternative statement that males should complete a leadership self-assessment analysis (Item #8), both genders largely disagreed (male: $M = 4.76$, female: $M = 4.93$). The slight difference in the scale responses between the male and female respondents in both statements was not statistically significant. The overall scale response of male ($M = 3.37$) and female ($M = 3.41$) respondents in this category were considered to reflect a moderate level of agreement.

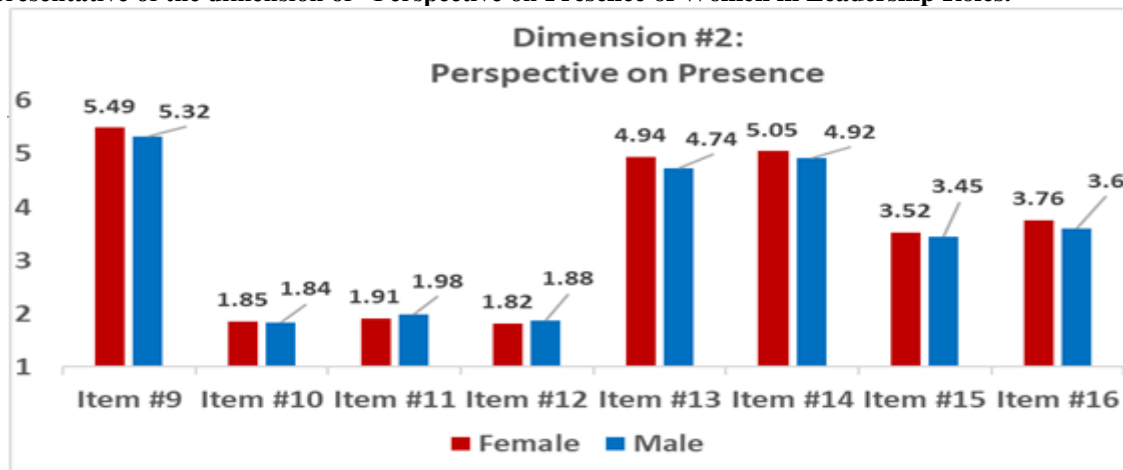
Fig. 1. Mean responses (1-6 Likert Scale) of male and female study participants to the eight items representative of the dimension of “Perspective on Organizational Leadership Structure.”



4. 2 Perspective on the Presence of Women in Leadership Roles

Like the dimension of Organizational Leadership Structure, the overall mean response between genders (male: $M = 3.46$, female: $M = 3.54$) for the category of Presence of Women in Leadership also reflected a moderate level of agreement as shown in Fig. 2. However, the difference in perspective between male and female respondents are found to be statistically significant. A surprising perspective was reflected in the disagreement, with a higher mean response in females than males ($M = 5.49$) and ($M = 5.32$), respectively on the statement that leadership of women can be inspirational to its constituents (Item #9). On the other hand, the alternative statement that leadership of men can be inspirational to its constituents (Item #10) showed both male and female respondents to be in total agreement with a very close scale response ($M = 1.84$ and $M = 1.85$). Regarding the Women’s Attitudes About Leadership Roles sub-category, both male and female respondents agreed with both statements as; “Women should be pressured” (Item #11), and the other, “Women should not be pressured” (Item #12) with quite a higher mean response in males ($M = 1.98$; $M = 1.88$) than females ($M = 1.91$; $M = 1.82$) for both statements. Contrary to the previous category, a total level of disagreement was reflected by both genders for both statements on “Male leadership should help women transition into leadership roles” (Item #13) and “Male leadership should not help women transition into leadership roles” (Item #14). For both statements, females responded at a statistically significantly ($p = 0.04$) higher mean response ($M = 4.94$; $M = 5.05$) than the male respondents ($M = 4.74$; $M = 4.92$). Regarding the Institution’s Approach Involving Women and Leadership sub-category, both genders were moderately in agreement to the statement that “Institution should formulate flexible criteria for women applicants” (Item #15) while at the same time in moderate disagreement to the alternative statement that the “Institution should adhere to rigid criteria for women applicants” (Item #16).

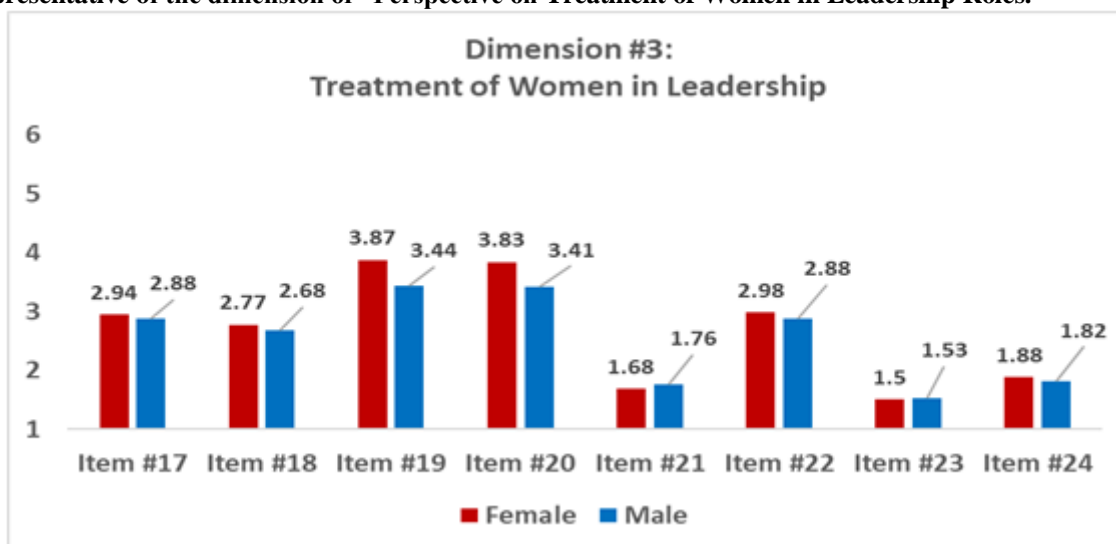
Fig. 2. Mean responses (1-6 Likert Scale) of male and female study participants to the eight items representative of the dimension of “Perspective on Presence of Women in Leadership Roles.”



4.3 Perspective on Treatment of Women in Leadership Roles

A statistically significant effect ($p = 0.03$) for study participant gender upon the eight survey items associated with the dimension of Treatment of Women in Leadership Roles was reflected in the omnibus analysis as shown in Fig. 3. For the statement pertaining to continued advertising a position past its set listing date if there are no women applicants (Item #17), and the alternative statement which pertains to termination of advertising a position at the set time whether there are women applicants (Item # 18), both male ($M = 2.88$; $M = 2.68$) and female ($M = 2.94$; $M = 2.77$) respondents reflected moderate levels of agreement with both statements. A more apparent difference in perspective between genders was evident in the mean response to the Women’s Domestic Obligations and Leadership sub-category. For both statements, “The number of work hours required for a woman should be adjusted...” (Item # 19) and “The number of work hours required for a man should be adjusted...” (Item # 20), female study participants were in moderate disagreement ($M = 3.87$; $M = 3.83$) while male study participants were in moderate agreement ($M = 3.44$; $M = 3.41$), respectively. Regarding the sub-category on the Selection Process of Women Leaders, male ($M = 1.76$) and female ($M = 1.68$) respondents agreed with the statement that “Women leaders who are selected based on their qualifications gain respect from the constituents” (Item #21). The mean response for the alternative statement that “Women leaders who are appointed to increase female representation...” (Item # 22) reflected a moderate level of agreement for both genders (male: $M = 2.88$, female: $M = 2.98$). Male ($M = 1.53$) and female ($M = 1.50$) respondents strongly agreed with the statement that “Leadership standards should be the same for both men and women” (Item #23) and only agreed with the alternative statement that “Leadership standards should be adjusted based on whether the leader is a man or a woman” (Item #24).

Fig. 3. Mean responses (1-6 Likert Scale) of male and female study participants to the eight items representative of the dimension of “Perspective on Treatment of Women in Leadership Roles.”

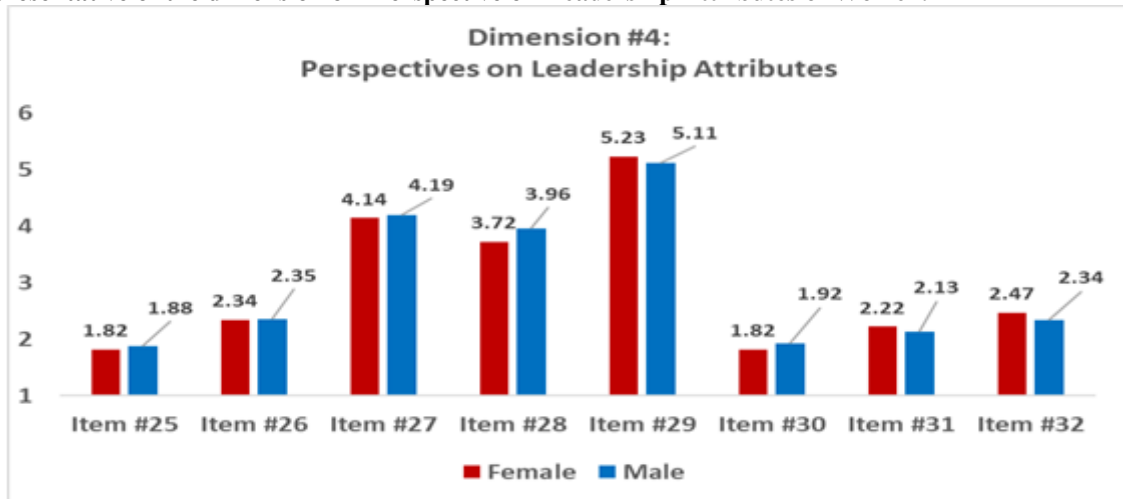


4.4 Perspective on Leadership Attributes of Women

The overall mean response is reflective of a moderate level of agreement for items associated with the dimension of Perspectives on Leadership Attributes of Women as shown in Fig. 4. Regarding the dichotomous statements of whether to vary and be flexible within the leadership role (Item #25) or to ascribe to one leadership style (Item #26), both male ($M = 1.88$; $M = 2.35$) and female ($M = 1.82$; $M = 2.34$) respondents agreed in their response scale to both statements. Interestingly, on the statements pertaining to decision-making that “Women leaders should use their sensitivity...” (Item #27), and the alternative that “Women leaders should separate themselves from their sensitivity...” (Item #28), the male ($M = 4.19$; $M = 3.96$) respondents reflected a significantly higher mean response in their moderate level of disagreement than female ($M = 4.14$; $M = 3.72$) respondents for the former and the latter statements, respectively. The finding supported by the LDA analysis reflected the statistically significant difference between male and female perspective on statements #27 and #28 ($p = .003$). Another intriguing result is the statement on the need of workplace standard and work-life balance for women (Item #29), and the alternative statement given the same conditions but for men (Item #30). Both male ($M = 5.11$) and female ($M = 5.23$) respondents disagreed with the former statement while in near complete agreement with the latter statement ($M = 1.92$; $M = 1.82$), respectively. When it comes to the statements of “Women in leadership showing bias...” (Item #31) and “...not showing bias (Item #32) in providing

opportunities for qualified women both in the workplace,” both male ($M = 2.13$; $M = 2.34$) and female ($M = 2.22$; $M = 2.47$) respondents agreed in their mean responses for both statements respectively.

Fig. 4. Mean responses (1-6 Likert Scale) of male and female study participants to the eight items representative of the dimension of “Perspective on Leadership Attributes of Women.”

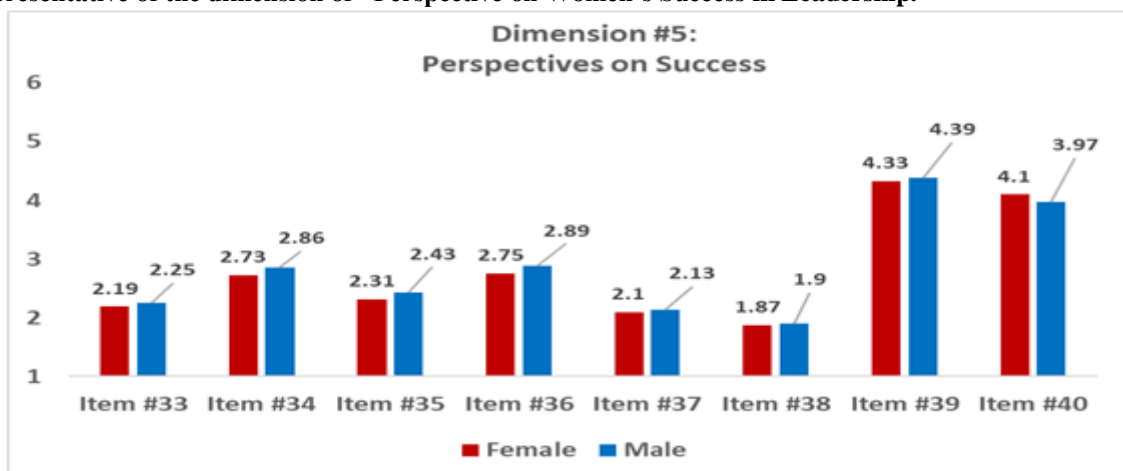


5.5 Perspective on Women’s Success in Leadership

Overall dimensions mean values for female and male study participants ($M = 3.08$ and $M = 3.05$) were reflected for the dimension of Women’s Success in Leadership as shown in Fig. 5. The mean responses for both genders of study participants for nearly all items within the dimension were similar and non-statistically significant by comparison. For example, on the statements of measuring success by personal set goals (Item # 33) compared to the alternative by those they are leading, both male and female respondents agreed with the former statement ($M = 2.25$; $M = 2.19$) and were in moderate agreement ($M = 2.86$; $M = 2.73$) for the latter statement. The same trend of the mean response of both male ($M = 2.43$; $M = 2.31$) and female ($M = 2.43$; $M = 2.31$) respondents was observed for the item statements regarding evaluating success by those they lead (Item #35) in which both genders agreed and moderately agreed with the alternative that evaluation should be done by everyone in the organization (Item #36).

For the sub-category of treating men as allies (Item #37) or as competition (Item #38) to be successful, both male ($M = 2.13$; $M = 1.90$) and female ($M = 2.1$; $M = 1.87$) respondents were in strong agreement with both statements. Similarly, both genders of study participants were in moderate disagreement for both statements concerned with “suppressing” (Item #39) (male: $M = 4.39$; female: $M = 4.33$) or “expressing” (Item #40; male: $M = 3.97$, $M =$ female: 4.10) emotions for women to successfully meet their goals.

Fig. 5. Mean responses (1-6 Likert Scale) of male and female study participants to the eight items representative of the dimension of “Perspective on Women’s Success in Leadership.”



V. DISCUSSION

This study about women in leadership is different than most that typically seek feedback primarily from women leaders and HE leaders about their perspectives on women in leadership. While each of these perspectives are needed for this topic, few, if not any studies focus on constituents' perspectives, who may influence the experience of women leaders in HE. The results of the feedback given by university constituents were interestingly synonymous in many respects. The participants were male and female students, faculty, and staff who are support and administrative within the institution who mostly shared a common perspective when it comes to women in leadership. This is the difference between taking the constituents' viewpoints on the subject, which is what this study seeks to accomplish, rather than their evaluation of a desired outcome especially in the light of gender equality. Constituents are key stakeholders in higher education because of their involvement within the educational processes [47]. Many would regard stakeholders' feedback as considerably valuable and, in some cases, influential to the university's operations such as hiring processes, work environment, and work relationships.

The current study generates a more constructive scheme on women leadership in an organization/institution. The focus should start with soliciting the constituents' perspectives on the matter as summarized into the five categories provided in the instrument used to conduct the survey. As mentioned earlier, only 5 out of the 40 statements presented to the male and female respondents showed a statistically significant difference in their perspective. It is also worth noting that the dichotomous presentation of the statements used in the survey instrument must have influenced the respondents' thought process. A consideration should be given to the possible influence on the participants' responses when reading the dichotomous statements, which are mostly contradictory to each other, side by side. It could be that the format of dichotomous statements impacted the participants to attempt to be fair when providing their feedback. Whereas, if the statements were read separately, the perceptions may have been processed differently. Being able to evaluate a given situation with the alternative scenario also being presented at the same time is probably what drove the overall scale of Moderately Agree between the male and female respondents. Given the opportunity to assess in a scale from Highly Agree to Highly Disagree instead of choosing one statement over another is purposely set to avoid logical fallacy [48].

What shapes women in leadership within organizations—constituents' needs or organizational structure? Feedback from men and women moderately disagreed regarding women leadership being shaped by constituent needs, although participants moderately agreed that organization structure "should be the same regardless of the needs of its constituency." This indicates that while constituents' needs are important, they are not the sole dominant factor to influence women in leadership, but that the organization's structure should be more conducive to supporting women leaders, regardless of needs. Perhaps the focus should be more on the organizational opportunities for women leaders and having a work environment in which one can grow and thrive. Being among leaders and those who are supportive is helpful. This aligns with many studies that affirm the importance of colleagues [12, 13, 49]. Relationships within HE help to foster collegiality, admiration, mentoring, support, validation, personal friendship, feelings of safety, power/control, pleasures, and satisfaction [50]. This validates the importance of faculty (colleagues) as constituents who can impact the organizational structure of building women leaders. Ultimately, mentoring and support for women faculty could contribute to professional development and lead to leadership competence.

Is the leadership of women within an organization inspirational to constituents as compared to the leadership of men to constituents? An astonishing result showed that while men and women disagreed with the leadership of women being inspirational, comparatively, they agreed that the leadership of men can be inspirational within an organization. This can be interpreted in many different ways. One consideration is that as the respondents read the dichotomous statements one after the other, perhaps the initial thought process was about fairness and avoiding favoritism toward one gender. However, this was not supported by the feedback obtained for the second statement, that is, men are more inspirational leaders. Another consideration is that perhaps the respondents reflected on their personal experiences with female and male leaders. One study, for example, claimed that women leaders in the United States are more effective than men but that more people prefer male over female bosses [50]. An interview with various industries' male leaders in Germany revealed that women need to not only show exceptional professional expertise, but also a complex mix of professional and interpersonal behaviors to be a successful leader [51]. All these factors should be given consideration when it comes to how women leadership is perceived by the constituents based on their past personal experience.

Other implications obtained from the results may be attributed to the socio-political views of the respondents which may be indicative of the cultural impact on their given response. An example of contradicting viewpoints on women leadership is apparent in the Islamic community. In a critical analysis, Elius purported that given the evolution of the socio-political conditions, the ultimate decision on women in leadership basically lies with the Muslim community [52]. In similar ways, the southeast area of the U.S. is

viewed by many as more conservative than other areas of the country. Obviously, one political view is not reflective of the entire area, yet one might consider political views as a possible factor of influence.

Should historically male-led institutions help or not help women transition into leadership? The constituents' feedback from males and females unanimously moderately disagreed with the first statement of male leaders helping women transition to processes of leadership. Interestingly, the constituents' feedback disagreed more strongly regarding male leaders not assisting women in leadership. Thus, constituents disliked the idea of male leaders not doing anything to help women lead, yet they also conveyed that males should not necessarily be a part of the process of helping women transition into leadership while it is important to have support from male leadership. Through these responses, both male and female respondents are sending a message that they are not in favor of either scenario presented in the dichotomous statements and therefore other options should be put in place. This is what makes the instrument used in the survey profoundly effective as it allows findings such as these be explored for further consideration. Previous studies have indicated possible measures taken by other institutions which could provide some insights on the steps that can be considered around some of these issues involving women leadership. One approach toward women leadership was implementing gender quotas through legislation of a woman's seat on a Board of Directors [53]. Additionally, maybe the more important question to consider is how male support is provided during transition. Subjecting women to practices that have worked well for males, may not benefit women. Perhaps women leaders in male-dominated institutions can be their own agent for change [13]. Additionally, receiving the help of other women who may be in leadership within the organization or perhaps outside of the organization could be helpful. When it comes to helping women transition into leadership roles, one approach was implementing women-only development program designed specifically for those identified as high potential leaders [54] as well as re-interpreting the 360-degree feedback and networking through the lens of a woman's experience in organizations [55]. Eagly & Carli (2003) purport a claim that women suffer from prejudicial competence assessments in masculine-dominated organizations and therefore should appoint women in key positions as a symbol of progressive social change [56]. This information and the results obtained provide evidence that women may encounter longstanding systemic influences that make it difficult to progress within leadership.

Should work hours be adjusted for a female or a male leader based on her/his personal responsibilities and domestic/familial obligations? The results showed that women constituents moderately disagree while male constituents moderately agree with adjusting hours for either female or male leaders. Women who have children and families may experience a conflict of managing availability to their family's needs and their responsibilities within the workplace; women in HE may feel especially behind in research productivity, particularly if they have young children. One study provides insight about what helps or hinders women in leadership; one hindrance is related to balancing the domestic needs of children and work progression. It is not uncommon that a woman will put her career opportunities on hold or have slower career progression as she prioritizes family time before career building or achievement opportunities which may take her away from her family [13]. Higher education institutions such as Adelphi University have implemented a deliberate and multipronged approach that provided opportunities of diversifying administration, faculty, and staff to serve students more effectively [43]. Popular language today in institutions is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)—which includes women in leadership. Kafka (2022) denotes, the best approach, however, is to help employees feel engaged with a cultural change rather than gender- or racial-driven discrimination, or worst of all, the need to fulfill a quota [8]. Women need to see a multipronged path to leadership that works and not feel a need to choose work over their familial needs.

Should women leaders use their sensitivity when making decisions or separate themselves from their sensitivity when decision-making? The results show that men and women moderately disagree with each of these statements. The consensus appears to be that women should not change who they are emotionally, yet not allow emotions to dominate their decision-making. Thus, self-control of one's emotions should be implemented within one's style of leadership. Women possess an innate nature of warm nurturance and relationship building that can work in their favor and bring balance to leadership traits that may traditionally be viewed as uncaring and stoic. This aligns with the results implying that women can be themselves and lead collaboratively along with other leadership skills including relational development. Some of the challenges women face while in leadership are having to negotiate a 'traditional authoritarianism' within male-dominated organizations related to traits of bullying and fear tactics, penetrating a gentlemen's club (protecting paternalism), overly task-focused, workaholic, and interpersonal behaviors of aggression, rudeness, and hostility. These attributes have been associated with success [12]. Many women may feel that they will not be taken seriously without demonstrating some of these behaviors, thereby some may go to the extreme by alienating their emotions. In regard to emotional expression and/or suppression, it has been suggested that women leaders can be penalized even for minor display of anger or pride; however, being unexpressive can also be interpreted as a failure to fulfill their expected warm and communal role [57]. Nonetheless, the feedback obtained from this study implies support for women to lead with self-control, strength, and ultimately effective decision-making.

VI. CONCLUSION & LIMITATIONS

All the analyses are crucial considerations in the implementation of the organization's/ institution's leadership structure with women assuming leadership roles. These findings could be uniquely shared by the university constituents where this research was conducted but not necessarily with other institutions/organizations. The fact that the perspectives of both male and female respondents are clearly captured in the analyses whether they are in agreement or in disagreement on the dichotomous statements presented in each category, is a manifestation that the instrument used in the survey is reliable and effective. To test its validity, it is hoped that more institutions/organizations will implement and use this tool to get a good grasp of their constituents' perspectives on female leadership. Ultimately, this may serve as baseline information for producing better approaches to help make the right decisions in building infrastructure for a successful incorporation of women leadership in the system. Additionally, the assessment tool has been written as objectively as possible in relation to the dichotomous statements. However, the assessment statements may evoke strong feelings within participants because of each person ascribing to various political ideologies that may be related to equality, feminism, traditionalism, liberality, and conservatism. The objective was to provide an assessment tool where constituents could see each pair of statements, think critically, and provide non-biased, honest feedback. Results strongly suggest that the assessment tool is a reliable and valid tool. It provided consistent results from both male and female respondents, and myriads of data readily available for analyses.

This study has limitations in that it was conducted at a private university in the Southeast area of the United States which is not representative of many public universities throughout the country. It would be beneficial to utilize the assessment tool and consequently test its validity in other university settings both private and public. While this study only focused on male and female comparison, further studies can be done by focusing feedback from constituents based on age ranges, gender, and other demographics of the population. Some of the feedback was surprising and unclear as to what the thought processes were behind the answers. It would be helpful to do a quasi-qualitative research study where the constituents can provide more distinct input thereby providing greater insights on the implications of their given response.

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