



ADVANCING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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Full Length Research Paper

Leadership Style and Career Success of Women Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations

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The purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between the leadership styles and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire served as the instrument to identify transformation, transactional, and passive leadership styles. The development of a career success index through summing the coded values of data regarding job satisfaction, work-life balance, tenure in the nonprofit industry, tenure in current position, and compensation level facilitated correlational analysis with leadership style. The Gulf Coast region of the United States was the geographic region for the study. The results indicated a significant and positive correlation between the transformational and transactional leadership styles and the career success index, $p = 0.024$ for Pearson's Product Moment; $p = 0.038$ for Spearman's rho, and $p = 0.012$ for Pearson's Product Moment; $p = 0.022$ for Spearman's rho, respectively. No significant relationship existed between passive leadership style and the career success index, with $p = 0.81$ for Pearson's Product Moment and $p = 0.983$ for Spearman's rho.

Keywords: Women in leadership, leadership style, career success of women, nonprofit leadership

Women remain underrepresented within public, corporate, and private organizational leadership positions (Emmerik, Wendt, & Euwema, 2010). Regarding corporate leadership, women hold approximately 3% of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions within Fortune 500 companies (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). Of the top 400 nonprofit organizations within the United States, women hold almost 19% of the executive leadership positions; therefore, noted disparity exists between women serving in executive roles within for-profit corporations in comparison to nonprofit organizations (Lansford, Clements, Falzon, Aish, & Rogers, 2010).

Women continue to experience difficulty regarding obtaining and establishing successful leadership careers because of the pervasive dominance of male leadership (Clarke, 2011; Doherty & Manfredi, 2009; Jonsen, Maznevski, & Schneider, 2010; Lansford et al., 2010; Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero, & Martos, 2012; Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia, & Walumbwa, 2011; Muhr, 2011; Vanderbroeck, 2010). Research indicates that women leaders add significant economic and social value to an organization's sustainability and profitability, yet leadership opportunities remain somewhat depressed for women in comparison to men (Jonsen et al., 2010; Lansford et al., 2010; Nadler & Stockdale, 2012). Regardless if the cause is ineffective or the lack of diversity initiatives, male-dominated

recruitment policies, or inherent bias regarding women in leadership positions, evidence indicates that leadership gender-disparity exists (Clarke, 2011; Ely et al., 2011; Lansford et al., 2010; Nadler & Stockdale, 2012).

Jacobson, Palus, and Bowling (2009) noted that leadership style, behavior, and decision making represent critical components of successful career development and advancement. When women occupy executive positions, subordinate men often resort to behaviors exhibiting condescension, bitterness, and resentment, potentially discouraging women from seeking leadership positions (Thoroughgood, Hunter, & Sawyer, 2011).

Literature Review

The identification and development of an effective leadership style is of paramount importance for women seeking career success (Elgamal, 2012). A critical gap exists within the existing body of knowledge regarding the examination of leadership styles and nonprofit executive leaders (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Glick, 2011; Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011). Insufficient research exists within the literature regarding leadership styles, behaviors, and strategies women must employ to overcome gender biases and disparity to advance successful careers in leadership (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Jones and Lentz (2013) recommended additional research regarding the

relationship between leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. Addressing the lack of women in leadership positions requires a thorough examination of leadership style choice, the patterns and rationale of leadership style selection, and achievements of successful women in leadership positions (Jacobson et al., 2009). Furthermore, examining the leadership styles of successful women might detect characteristics and behaviors that allow more women to enjoy flourishing careers in leadership (Jones & Lentz, 2013; Reed et al., 2011).

Examining the correlation between leadership style and the career success of women leaders in nonprofit organizations represents the purpose of this empirical research study. Comparing the leadership style of women experiencing sustained and effective leadership careers to leadership styles of women that lack career success within the nonprofit sector is an objective of this study. Research leading to a better understanding of leadership styles regarding adoption, employment, and application might assist women in breaking through the glass ceiling, leading to enhanced leadership opportunities in nonprofit as well as for-profit organizations (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Emmerik et al. (2010) noted that recognizing differences in leadership styles of successful women leaders in nonprofit organizations is a critical component of meeting the growing need for effective leaders.

Transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership style implies strong leadership regarding the motivation of followers to perform at higher levels than originally thought possible. Transformational leaders evoke the need for strategic, forward-thinking planning for continuous improvement in the organization (Oshagbemi, 2008). Transformational leaders focus on the people in the organization as opposed to day-to-day operational aspects (Brettel, Engelen, & Voll, 2010). Embracing employee commitment, showing respect for individuals, promoting organizational altruism, and exhibiting authenticity, honesty, and broad, long-term strategic thinking exemplifies a transformational leader (Brettel et al., 2010; Jain & Premkumar, 2010). The leader emphasizes the culture of organizational change, transformative initiatives, and the concept that people are the most valuable organizational asset rather than focusing on command-and-control, organizational hierarchy, or autocratic decision making (Brettel et al., 2010).

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) noted that transformational leadership style relates strongly with an affiliative style in that team-building, collaboration, organizational synchronization. Promoting connectivity within the organization represents the means to attain the strategic vision. Transformational leaders engage in consultation with team members to finalize decisions (Oshagbemi, 2008). The leader values the participation and opinions, expert or otherwise, of other organizational members to facilitate decision-making through consensus building (Oshagbemi, 2008). Furthermore,

transformational leaders possess no fear of delegating significant duties to subordinates (Oshagbemi, 2008).

Organizational leaders spend approximately 20% of their time managing and mitigating conflict (Ka Wai, Xu, & Peng Man, 2008). Effective coaching and conflict management represent hallmarks of transformational leaders. Recognizing the diversity of worldviews, opinions, and cultures within the work group and utilizing this knowledge to increase organizational value, attain strategic targets, and produce the desired outcomes requires an effective transformational and coaching leadership style (Mukhtar & Habib, 2010). Transformational leaders place emphasis on connecting individual employee needs with strategic goals to draw out the best in each person in pursuit of organizational success (Goldman et al., 2002). Aligning the personal objectives of the individual worker with the corporate goals through promoting employee engagement, improving job satisfaction, and building a culture of commitment illustrates the utilization of a transformational leadership style (Jyh-Shen & Tung-Zong, 2009).

Transactional leadership style. Transactional leaders, in contrast to transformational leaders, immerse themselves in the day-to-day operational aspects of the organization. Bass and Avolio (2004) noted that transactional leaders seek to meet their personal and professional goals by exerting pressure on other organizational members. Whereas the transformational leader tends to forgo emphasizing the need for personal success, the transactional leader remains focused on obtaining personal recognition for organizational success (Tabassi & Bakar, 2010). Lincoln (2012) commented that transactional leaders align closely with authoritative leadership in that the leader emphasizes the distribution of rewards or places contingent rewards at the forefront regarding employee performance. In other words, the transactional leader values the subordinates for what they can accomplish in a set period as opposed to who they are or what they know.

Although sometimes effective regarding attaining strategic objectives, transactional leaders tend to be more directive, retaining sole authority to define and implement strategic plans without significant input from subordinates (Oshagbemi, 2008). Lower and middle managers might follow the directives of the leader, yet transactional leaders must carefully consider that the lack of respect of the expertise and experience of others tends to lower morale, reduce job satisfaction, and create added organizational conflict (Oshagbemi, 2008). Recognizing that the type or style of leadership required in regards to attaining optimum performance and ultimate success is dependent on the organizational situation, transactional leadership style potentially holds significant value for organizational leaders.

Passive leadership style. Passive leadership style implies the absence of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Brettel et al. (2010) theorized that leaders engaging in passive leadership refrain from exerting the proper effort and diligence regarding developing individuals or team members into people who align their personal and professional goals with the organizational

strategic or operational objectives. Passive leaders avoid leadership responsibilities, exhibit ineffective behaviors, and forgo decisions (Giri & Santra, 2010). Subordinates lack feedback, direction, support, communication, and accountability when engaged with a passive leader (Schilling, 2009).

Passive leaders explicitly or implicitly delegate authority or responsibility to direct reports who lack the expertise to engage in effective decision making (Chaudhry & Javed, 2012).

Recognizing that leadership behaviors are contagious, passive leaders send organizationally damaging signals to subordinates. Schilling (2009) noted that avoidance or passive behavior, in essence, leaves the organization adrift because the lack of leader involvement creates a lack of organizational orientation. Passive leaders create a void within organizations, which may deprive the company of necessary directions to remain competitive and sustainable (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010). The literature clearly implies that effective leaders avoid engaging in passive-avoidance style.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study of the leadership styles of women in relation to career success is the contingency theory. Dries (2011) defined career success as the achievement of professional and personal objectives in conjunction with work-life satisfaction. The applicability of the contingency theory depends on the environment of the organization, the relationship between the leader and followers, and the leader's ability to motivate subordinates using positional authority (Allio, 2013). Based on the premise that career success is contingent on the foundational constructs of leadership style, behavior, experience, expertise, and compensation level, the contingency theory is best suited to serve as the guiding theory.

Theorists noted a link between the application of the contingency theory and organizational success with leader ability, adaptability, and style, positional power, organizational culture, and follower commitment to the leader (Pertusa-Ortega, Molina-Azorin, & Claver-Cortes, 2010). Application of the theory of contingency facilitates the determination of the most appropriate leadership style when faced with unique organizational or external environmental situations (Tabassi & Bakar, 2010). For example, Allio (2013) noted that transactional leadership style and behavior correlates with contingent reward, wherein transactional leaders reward performance and penalize under or nonperformance. Successful transformational leadership relies on effective leader-follower relationships in which the leader focuses on inspiration and motivation as opposed to contingent rewards (Allio, 2013). As noted by Jaaskelainen et al. (2012) and Jokipii (2010), the utilization of only one leadership style limits a leader's overall effectiveness because of the variety of organizational, situational, and follower issues that demand flexible leadership. Women serving in executive nonprofit positions make effective use of the contingency theory when they possess the ability to alter leadership styles as required to remain competitive, address emergencies, or maintain organizational success during

structural shifts (DeCaro, DeCaro, & Bowen-Thompson, 2010). Women leaders apply the contingency theory in the form of situational analysis coupled with leadership style flexibility and adaptability to forecast the effect of future events, explore critical issues, anticipate and address complex problems, collect relevant information, make effective decisions, and achieve the desired results (Oghojafor, Idowu, & George, 2012).

Organizational success remains contingent upon leader experiences and expertise, especially during strategic change, environmental shifts, or competitive struggles (Prindle, 2012).

Applying the contingency theory to leadership strategies requires leaders who avoid a singular method of problem solving and decision making through examination and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Jaaskelainen et al., 2012). A key attribute of the contingency theory is the relationship between achievement of strategic objectives, organizational structure, and the ethical and cultural climate within the organization (Pertusa-Ortega et al., 2010). The effective application of the contingency theory depends upon the aptitude of nonprofit executives to apply current data and knowledge in an impartial manner and reach beneficial solutions (Storey & Hill, 2010).

Successful leaders recognize that organizational politics and community-societal demands create challenges that tests organizational competencies, professional capabilities, and personal values. Utilization of the contingency theory allows leaders to recognize variables that are contingent on organizational leadership and position power. Furthermore, strategy development and implementation, situational analysis and leadership, and the competitive environment are elements consistent within the framework of the contingency theory. A leader's propensity to influence environmental, situational, and organizational settings indicate the employment of the foundational canons of the contingency theory. Contingency theorists agree that a single or unique technique to problem resolution does not exist; therefore, the need to employ contingency methods (Jaaskelainen et al., 2012; Jokipii, 2010; Prindle, 2012; Storey & Hill, 2010).

Methods

A quantitative method is appropriate when examining potential relationships between variables (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2011; Emmerik et al., 2010; Orser & Leck, 2010; Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine the potential relationships between transformational, transactional, and passive leadership styles and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. A quantitative method, correlational design, was the appropriate choice because the purpose of the research was to examine potential relationships between variables. Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) served as the means regarding testing of the existence and significance of the relationships.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) served as the instrument to identify and measure the propensity of the

participants' leadership styles regarding transformational, transactional, and passive styles. The MLQ holds broad acceptance in the research community because of the Cronbach's alpha scores for reliability determined to be 0.94; therefore, greater than the acceptable statistical level of 0.70 (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012; Sahaya, 2012). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha for transformational leadership (0.94), transactional leadership (0.82), and avoidance/passive leadership (0.85) indicate the MLQ as reliable (Groves & LaRocca, 2011). Using the MLQ scoring key, measurement of scales or subsets of each leadership style occurred, facilitating a quartile ranking for each participant regarding transformational, transactional, and passive leadership styles (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

Orser and Leck (2010) defined leadership career success as a person's ability to obtain and maintain a leadership position that provides job and career satisfaction, work-life balance, equitable and sustaining compensation, and the achievement of self-efficacy. Researchers noted five key career success indicators: (a) tenure in current position (Clarke, 2011), (b) tenure in the industry (Muhr, 2011), (c) job fulfillment (Cook & Glass, 2011), (d) work-life balance satisfaction (Doherty & Manfredi, 2009), and (e) total compensation level (Orser & Leck, 2010). Supplemental questions attached to the MLQ provided the means to obtain data regarding job satisfaction, work-life balance, tenure in the nonprofit industry, and tenure in current position. The publically available Internal Revenue Service (IRS) form 990 filed by all nonprofit organizations within the United States served as the means to collect compensation data. In consideration of these key career indicators, and for the purpose of creating a statistically testable variable, the development of a career success index occurred through summing the coded values of data regarding job satisfaction, work-life balance, tenure in the nonprofit industry, tenure in current position, and compensation level. Job satisfaction and work/life balance satisfaction codes consisted of using the Likert scale responses from participants of 1 – 5, 1 = very unsatisfied, 2 = unsatisfied, 3 = neither unsatisfied nor satisfied, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = very satisfied. Additional interval constructs included position tenure and time in the nonprofit sector measured in months and years, with the codes 1 – 5, with 1 = 26% or more below the mean, 2 = 16% to 25% below the mean, 3 = within 15% of the mean, 4 = 16% to 25% above the mean, and 5 = 26% or more above the mean. Compensation codes were 1 - 5, with 1 = 16% or more below the mean, 2 = 6% to 15% below the mean, 3 = within 5% of the mean, 4 = 6% to 15% above the mean, and 5 = 16% or more above the mean. Calculating the career success index was a function of adding the coded values of the five key success indicators for each participant. The lowest career success index value was 5 and the highest possible index value was 25.

The IRS Form 990 contains the name of nonprofit organizations, name of key leaders, salary of key leaders, addresses, financial reports, and organizational mission statements. By utilizing the information provided within the IRS Form 990s, a means to

identify and contact potential participants, crosscheck each participant's position in a nonprofit organization, and make a final determination regarding a potential participant's suitability for this study existed. Recruiting participants occurred by delivering an invitation to participate letter, an informed consent form, the MLQ survey, the supplement questions attached to the MLQ, and instructions for participation, through the U.S. Postal Service.

The Gulf Coast region of the southeastern United States experience annual increases in population, escalating the need for nonprofit services because of broader society challenges, more local community needs, or increased human suffering caused by local or widespread natural disasters (Olson, 2011). Nonprofit leaders face stressful situations and emotional challenges to fulfill their community, state, or societal mission. The impact of local or widespread natural disasters, and increasing community and societal demands on nonprofit organizations creates a need for strong, yet empathetic leadership. A purposive sample of women serving in leadership positions within nonprofit organizations along the Gulf Coast of the United States was a representation of the total population of women nonprofit leaders in the United States. Participants served in the positions of chief executive officer, executive director, president, or vice-president of their respective organizations. Invitations to participate mailed to 350 women who served as nonprofit organizational leaders resulted in 70 completed and returned MLQ surveys and supplement career success questions, or a 20% response rate. The final sample size exceeded the minimum sample size of 64 calculated by means of G*3 Power sample size calculator.

Research Questions

Women are unrepresented in leadership roles within nonprofit and for-profit organizations and face challenges regarding improving career success opportunities. Challenges to a successful career tend to decrease employee commitment, job satisfaction, and self-worth, requiring further research to address methods to increase opportunity for women to attain or maintain a sustained and successful career (Channar, Abbassi, & Ujan, 2011). A research question that facilitates examining the potential existence of a relationship between the career success of females and leadership style within the nonprofit sector might afford women the opportunity to learn new and different leadership behaviors to overcome the barriers, biases, and challenges in the workplace.

The research questions to address the problem were:

- Q1.** What, if any, significant correlation exists between a transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations?
- Q2.** What, if any, significant correlation exists between a transactional leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations?

Q3. What, if any, significant correlation exists between a passive leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations?

Hypotheses

Quantitative researchers develop null and alternative hypotheses to serve as testable statements, with the result being either a rejecting of the null or a failure to reject the null hypotheses. Based on the research questions, the following null and alternative hypotheses align with the problem and purpose of the study:

H1₀. No significant correlation exists between a transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

H1_a. A significant correlation exists between a transformational leadership style and the career success of females in nonprofit organizations.

H2₀. No significant correlation exists between a transactional leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

H2_a. A significant correlation exists between a transactional leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

H3₀. No significant correlation exists between a passive leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

H3_a. A significant correlation exists between a passive leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

Results

The results indicated a significant and positive correlation between the transformational and transactional leadership styles and the career success index, $p = 0.024$ for Pearson's Product Moment; $p = 0.038$ for Spearman's rho, and $p = 0.012$ for Pearson's Product Moment; $p = 0.022$ for Spearman's rho, respectively. No significant relationship existed between passive leadership style and the career success index, with $p = 0.81$ for Pearson's Product Moment and $p = 0.983$ for Spearman's rho. The analysis of the results of statistical testing follows.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficients between Transformational Scales and Career Success Index

Procedure	DV ¹	IA ²	IB ³	IM ⁴	IS ⁵	IC ⁶
Pearson						
Coefficient	CSI ⁷	0.222	0.208	0.301	0.149	0.132
<i>p</i> value		0.064	0.085	0.011*	0.218	0.275
Spearman's rho						

Research question one. The focus of research question one was examining the potential correlation between a transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. Bivariate correlation analysis occurred using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and Spearman's rho statistics (r_s). The statistical analysis indicated a statistically significant and positive correlation exists between transformational leadership and career success ($r(70) = 0.270, p = 0.024; r_s(70) = 0.248, p = 0.038$) as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients Between Transformational Leadership Style and Career Success

Procedure	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
Pearson		
Coefficient	CSI ²	0.270
<i>p</i> value		0.024*
Spearman's rho		
Coefficient	CSI ²	0.248
<i>p</i> value		0.038*

Note. ¹Transformational leadership. ²Career Success Index. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed). $N = 70$.

Transformational leadership style consists of five components that define the traits and manners of a leader's behaviors. Statistical analysis provided the significance level of each of the transformational components as related to career success: idealized influence ($r(70) = .222, p = 0.064; r_s(70) = 0.230, p = 0.055$); idealized behaviors ($r(70) = 0.208, p = 0.085; r_s(70) = 0.228, p = 0.058$); inspirational motivation ($r(70) = .301, p = 0.011; r_s(70) = 0.303, p = 0.011$); intelligent stimulation ($r(70) = 0.149, p = 0.248; r_s(70) = 0.118, p = 0.329$); and individual consideration ($r(70) = 0.132, p = 0.275; r_s(70) = 0.135, p = 0.264$). Of particular note from the individual analysis of the transformational leadership scales, only one of the five components, inspirational motivation, significantly correlates with career success; therefore, the strength of the relationship between transformational leadership style and career success lies within the inspirational motivation component. Table 2 contains the results of the testing of the five transformational elements.

Coefficient		0.230	0.228	0.303	0.118	0.135
<i>p</i> value	CSI ⁷	0.055	0.058	0.011*	0.329	0.264

Note. ¹Dependent variable. ²Idealized attributes. ³Idealized behaviors. ⁴Inspirational motivation. ⁵Intellectual stimulation. ⁶Individual consideration. ⁷Career Success Index. *Correlation is significant

Further examination of the relationship between transformational leadership and career success through regression analysis occurred. Figure 1 illustrates the regression curve estimation through a scatterplot, confirming the significant relationship indicated by Pearson's *r* and Spearman's rho statistics. With the null hypothesis for research question one stated as: No significant correlation exists between a transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations, rejection of the null occurred.

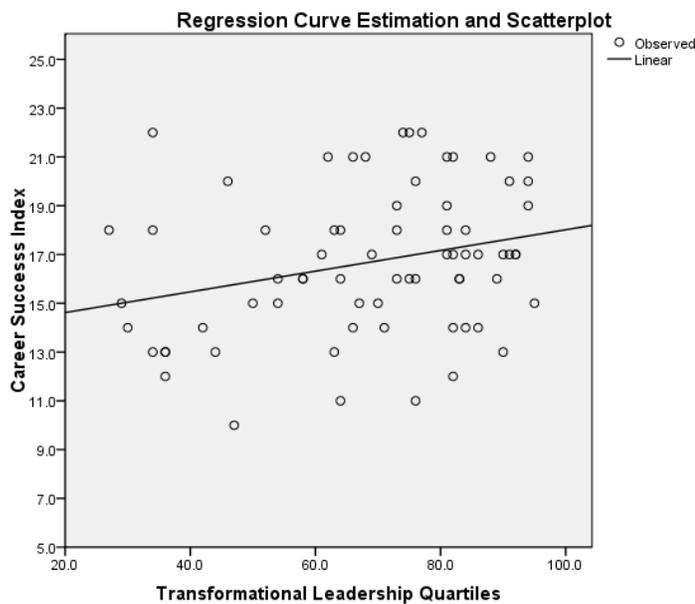


Figure 1. Regression curve estimation and scatterplot: transformational leadership style and career success index

Research question two. Research question two addressed the existence of a potential relationship between transactional leadership style and the career success of women in the nonprofit sector. The findings indicated a statistically significant and positive relationship between transactional leadership style and career success ($r(70) = 0.298, p = 0.012$; $r_s(70) = 0.273, p = 0.022$). Of note, the correlation analysis indicates a stronger relationship between transactional leadership and career success in comparison to the relationship between transformational leadership and career success. Table 3 presents the results of the transactional leadership analysis.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients Between Transactional Leadership Style and Career Success

Procedure	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
Pearson		TA ¹
Coefficient	CSI ²	0.298
<i>p</i> value		0.012*
Spearman's rho		
Coefficient	CSI ²	0.273
<i>p</i> value		0.022*

Note. ¹Transactional leadership. ²Career Success Index. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed). *N* = 70.

Transactional leadership style contains two components or scales, contingent reward and management-by-exception active. Correlation analysis regarding the transactional scales indicates a significant and positive relationship between contingent reward and career success ($r(70) = 0.306, p = 0.010$; $r_s(70) = 0.287, p = 0.016$), yet no significant relationship between management-by-exception and career success ($r(70) = 0.128, p = 0.290$; $r_s(70) = 0.121, p = 0.318$). The strength of the relationship between transactional leadership style and career success lies within the contingent reward component. Table 4 presents the results of analysis.

Table 4

Correlation Coefficients between Transactional Scales and Career Success Index

Procedure	Dependent Variable	CR ¹	MBEA ²
Pearson			
Coefficient	CSI ³	0.306	0.128
<i>p</i> value		0.010**	0.290
Spearman's rho			
Coefficient	CSI ³	0.287	0.121
<i>p</i> value		0.016*	0.318

Note. ¹Contingent reward scale. ²Management-by-exception active scale. ³Career Success Index. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). *N* = 70.

Regression analysis of the relationship between transactional leadership style and career success corroborated the existence of a statistically significant correlational. Figure 2 illustrates the regression curve estimation through a scatterplot diagram,

confirming the significant relationship indicated by Pearson's r and Spearman's rho testing. The null hypothesis for research question two: No significant correlation exists between a transactional leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. Because of the existence of a significant relationship, the rejection of the null occurred.

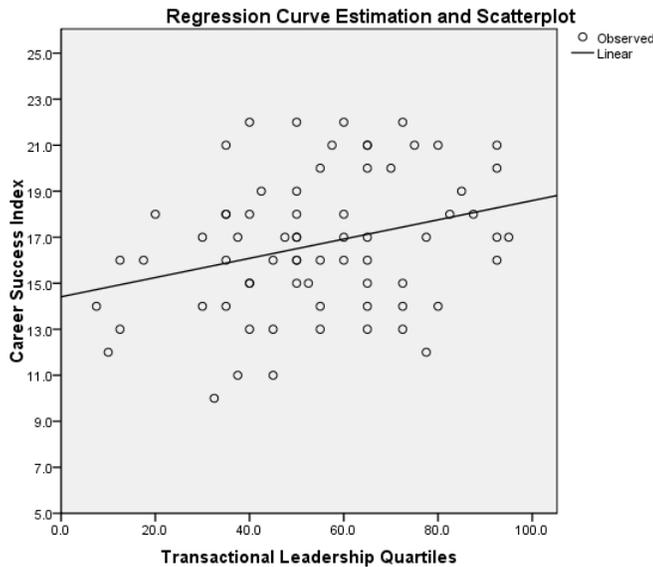


Figure 2. Regression curve estimation and scatterplot: transactional leadership style and career success index.

Research question three. Research question three focused on the potential correlation between passive leadership style and the career success of women. Statistical analysis indicated no significant relationship exist between passive leadership and career success ($r(70) = -0.029, p = 0.810; r_s(70) = 0.003$ and $p = 0.983$). Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5

Correlation Coefficients Between Passive Leadership Style and Career Success

Procedure	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
Pearson		PASS ¹
Coefficient	CSI ²	-0.029
p value		0.810
Spearman's rho		
Coefficient	CSI ²	0.003
p value		0.983

Note. ¹ Passive leadership. ² Career Success Index. $N = 70$.

Passive leadership style consists of two components, management-by-exception passive and laissez-faire. Statistical

testing of these two elements indicated no significant relationship between management-by-exception passive and career success ($r(70) = 0.0102, p = 0.401; r_s(70) = 0.098$ and $p = 0.401$) and no significant relationship between laissez-faire and career success ($r(70) = -0.146, p = 0.228; r_s(70) = -0.076$ and $p = 0.355$). Table 6 contains the results.

Table 6

Correlation Coefficients between Passive Scales and Career Success Index

Procedure	Dependent Variable	MBEP ¹	LF ²
Pearson			
Coefficient	CSI ³	0.102	-0.146
p value		0.401	0.228
Spearman's rho			
Coefficient	CSI ³	0.098	-0.076
p value		0.421	0.355

Note. ¹ Management-by-exception passive. ² Laissez-faire scale. ³ Career Success Index. $N = 70$.

Regression analysis of the correlation between passive leadership and career success further confirmed the absence of a significant relationship. Figure 3 illustrates the regressive curve estimation through a scatterplot diagram. With the null hypothesis for research question three stated as: A significant relationship does not exist between a passive leadership style and the career success of females in nonprofit organizations, a failure to reject the null resulted because no significant relationship existed. This finding of no significant relationship between passive leadership and career success of women in the nonprofit sector was somewhat of a surprise, recognizing that passive leadership oftentimes equates to the absence of leadership.

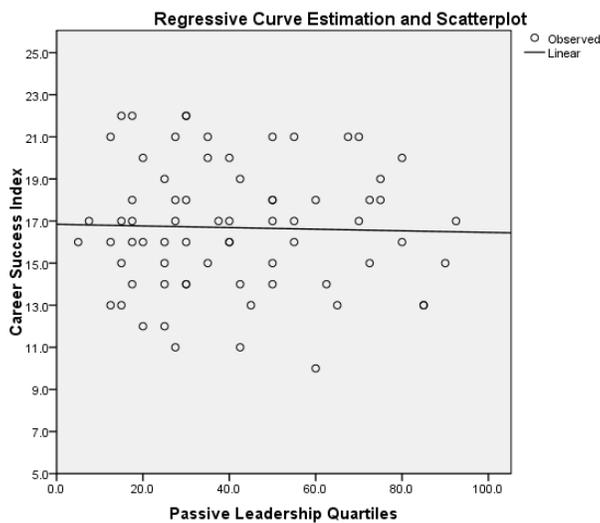


Figure 3. Regression curve estimation and scatterplot: passive leadership style and career success index.

Discussion

Prior research confirmed that the leadership style of an organizational leader affects outcomes, employee performance, and facilitates the formation of perceptions regarding a leader's effectiveness (Getz, 2009; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2012; Mukhtar & Habib, 2010; Orser & Leek, 2010). Furthermore, previous researchers found a critical link between leadership style and organizational and individual success (Junquera, 2011; Channar, Abbassi, & Ujan, 2011; Toor & Ofori, 2009). Andersen and Hansson (2011) noted that gender might be a factor regarding specific leadership styles, yet Getz (2009) commented that leadership style relates more often to leader behaviors than gender. Regardless of gender, career success remains a significant motivating factor for organizational leaders (Elgamal, 2010; Jones & Lentz, 2013; Junquera, 2011; Lansford et al., 2010). Jones and Lentz (2013) recommended further quantitative research because of a critical gap in the existing body of knowledge regarding the correlation between the career success of women in nonprofit leadership roles and leadership style. The purpose of this study was to address the critical gap with empirical research.

The research questions and hypotheses facilitated determining if leadership style had an effect on the career success of women within the nonprofit sector. A review of the results indicates significant statistical relationships between transformational and transactional leadership styles and the career success of women leaders in nonprofit organizations. No significant correlation existed between passive leadership style and career success.

Regarding the significant correlation found between transformational leadership style and the career success of women, the findings indicated that *inspirational motivation* was

the strongest transformational component within the relationship. The implication is that employing transformational leadership style with robust inspirational motivation behaviors significantly contributes to career success. Leaders who utilize inspirational motivational behaviors may enjoy greater career success than leaders who avoid inspirational activities to motivate followers. Specially related to the findings of this study, women leaders in nonprofit organizations that employ transformational leadership style including inspirational motivation behaviors might enhance the level of career success experienced when compared to other leadership styles and behaviors.

The findings indicated a stronger significant correlation between transactional leadership and the career success of women in comparison to transformational leadership. The transactional component *contingent reward* provided the strength within the relationship. Previous research indicated that men dominate leadership roles in nonprofit and for-profit organizations, employing a transactional leadership style more often than any other style (Ely et al., 2011; Emmerik et al., 2010). The implication exists that women who employ a transactional style with emphasis on contingent reward enjoy greater career success than women who utilize transformational, inspirational behaviors. In contrast to the findings of this study, Thorough good et al. (2011) noted that women exhibiting strong transactional leadership behaviors might create professional difficulties and risk alienating coworkers, subordinates, and superiors because of conflicting beliefs regarding the socially and professionally acceptable style expected of women.

The findings indicated no significant relationship between passive leadership style and the career success of females in the nonprofit sector. The utilization of passive leadership style demonstrates an evasion of leadership duties and reveals a sedentary and unproductive demonstration of leadership behaviors (Giri & Santra, 2010). Prior research indicated that women accept responsibility, exhibit effective and active leadership behaviors, and maintain an emotional connection to superiors, subordinates, and contemporaries (Aasland et al., 2010). Although participants in this study reported using passive leadership behaviors, and the results of statistical testing indicated an inverse relationship between passive style and career success, the *p* values indicated a lack of statistical significance. Aasland et al. (2010) noted that women leaders who employ a passive leadership style risk the rejection of female and male subordinates; therefore, lowering the leader's level of effectiveness to motivate and inspire followers. The implication exists that women who embrace passive and avoidance leadership behaviors tend to diminish career success opportunities.

Through the lens of the contingency theory, the findings indicate that the career success of women is contingent on a set of leadership constructs, attributes, and behaviors, all related to leadership style. Additionally, the findings indicate that strong

levels of the elements comprising the Career Success Index remain contingent upon the utilization of the most effective leadership style. Allio (2013) commented that relationship between the leader and followers regarding organizational outcomes was contingent on the ability of the leader to demonstrate positional authority and effective leadership. The successful application of the contingency theory remains dependent upon the ability of nonprofit leaders to apply relevant information and knowledge in an unbiased manner to attain effective solutions regarding a competitive environment, emergencies, disasters, or during times of organizational change (DeCaro et al., 2010; Storey & Hill, 2010). The findings indicate that stronger transformational leadership skills positively relates to stronger transactional leadership skills, providing added confirmation that successful nonprofit women leaders possess the ability to utilize the most appropriate leadership style based on the current circumstances or organizational situation.

Conclusions

Women are unrepresented in leadership roles within for-profit and nonprofit organizations. This purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between leadership style and the career success of women in the nonprofit sector. Data collection methods consisted of the MLQ, supplemental questions regarding key career success indicators attached to the MLQ, and compensation for the participants from the IRS Form 990. Statistical analysis of the data using Pearson Product Moment, Spearman' rho, and regression analysis indicated significant and positive relationships between transformational and transactional leadership styles and the career success of women. No significant relationship existed between passive leadership style and career success.

The finding of this study should be beneficial to women currently serving in leadership roles as well as women aspiring to serve as organizational leaders. Organizational leaders might find the findings of value regarding the need to implement leadership assessment surveys for a better understanding the leadership styles employed at the organization as well as the implications of each leadership style in relation to career success. The findings regarding women who employ a transactional or transformational leadership style tend to enjoy higher levels of career success than those women with passive leadership tendencies should provide impetus for organizational leaders seeking enhanced career success to embrace the more successful leadership styles.

Leadership style is contingent upon a leader's behaviors, actions, and communications with subordinates, contemporaries, and superiors. The findings of this study indicated that the career success of women correlates with leadership style in that career success partially depends on leadership style. This examination of the relationship between leadership style and career success provides women with additional information based on empirical research regarding enjoying successful leadership careers through more

promotional opportunities, increased career longevity, greater job-work-life satisfaction, and improved compensation levels.

Recommendations for Practical Use

The finding of this study indicated that transformational and transactional leadership styles positively affects the career success of women serving in leadership positions within nonprofit organizations. A practical application recommendation would be that women seeking to obtain or maintain career success to embrace and employ transformational and/or transactional leadership style. Organizational governing board members or directors could provide leaders with leadership-style-assessment surveys such as the MLQ to allow the board as well as the organizational leaders to identify their current style utilized. Recognizing the passive leadership style does not correlate with career success should provide leaders with impetus to avoid using passive leadership behaviors. Professional development and leader training could include sessions regarding the organizational as well as leader benefits of employing transformational and transactional leadership behavior and the avoidance of passive leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

A qualitative study concerning leadership style and career success could be beneficial to gain the lived experiences of successful women serving in leadership roles. With the foundation established regarding the existence of a relationship between leadership style and career success, delving deeper into the *how* and *why* questions would provide a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Qualitative researchers might gain a richer perspective of the phenomenon of career success as related to leadership style and behaviors.

Future research could expand the career success index to include education, ethnicity, domestic status, and professional development. Broadening the researched factors regarding career success should prove beneficial to organizational leaders for a better understanding of how to obtain and retain long-serving leaders. An enhanced career success index should assist women seeking initial leadership opportunities and/or advancement.

Within the nonprofit sector, men hold 82% of the leadership positions. A future study regarding the comparison of the career success of men to women as related to leadership style should provide additional insight. Although leadership style is not gender specific, studying the potential differences regarding the relationship between leadership style and career success of men versus women should result in noteworthy findings for organizational leaders as well as the existing literature.

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