

The Influence of Mindfulness on the Link between Self-Efficacy and Transformational Leadership among National Youth Service Corps in Oyo State, Nigeria

Agokei, R. C.

*Department of Guidance and Counselling,
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo
E-mail: agokeialexander@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

The study examined the moderating effect of mindfulness on the link between self-efficacy and transformational leadership among National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members serving in Oyo state Nigeria. The participants in the study were 400 youths drawn from 2011 Batch 'A' corps members deployed to the State. Three valid and reliable instruments were used to assess mindfulness, self-efficacy and transformational leadership. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and hierarchical regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The result demonstrated that mindfulness and self-efficacy significantly correlated with transformational leadership. The moderating effect of mindfulness on the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership was also found to be significant. On the basis of the findings, it is suggested that NYSC administrators and policy makers should make conscious efforts to consider incorporating mastery-based experiences in mindfulness skills and self efficacy into service policy and training programmes at the orientation training and service delivery levels.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, self-efficacy, Transformational leadership*

INTRODUCTION

A critical assessment of the Nigerian society in recent times indicates that it is besieged by variety of social and security challenges. These challenges include but are not limited to socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militia, political and electioneering conflicts, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes, etc. Despite myriads of attempts via scholarly research, policies, military and communal interventions to resolve, its prevalence and escalation in recent times is worrisome. While leadership has received much criticism and condemnation for the nation's problems (Oyewunmi, 2010; Fadegbo, 2007; Dike, 2006), little or no attention has been given to how transformational leadership among today's youth could stem the problem. As noted by Agokei and Umar (2012) it is a common aphorism to acknowledge that the youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow, however its meaningfulness is yet to be given credible priority. If since independence leadership has been the bane of the nation's

security challenges, awakening youths to positive leadership qualities is imperative to stem not only the problem but to secure the future. This study explores relational qualities of transformational leadership among youths. Although the original theory of transformational leadership was propounded by Burns (1978), as far as the administrative literature is concerned, the subject and studies of transformational leadership are relatively new. However, according to House and Shamir (1993); Mohammad, Al-Zeaud and Batayneh, (2011), the theory has been well documented and has been the subject of considerable research (Sarros, Gray and Densten, 2001; Hardy, Arthur, Jones, Shariff, Munnoch, Isaacs and Allsop, 2010; Ghafoor, Qureshi, Khan and Hijazi, 2011). From variety of definitions, transformational leadership could be seen as that which motivates followers to do more than they are expected to do in a way that upgrades the individuals' level of awareness of the importance and value of outputs and how they are produced.

To this, Nwagbara (2010) reported that it also brings about motivation amongst the people in a manner that produces leadership by consent rather than coercion. Furthermore, transformational leadership promotes the effect of transactional leadership on followers by changing their personal values in order to support the organizational aims and vision (Bass, 1985, 1990). They achieve this by creating an atmosphere of confidence, which helps in vision sharing. Bass (1999) describes componential factors of transformational leadership to include idealized influence, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The author argues that idealized influence and inspirational leadership are displayed when the leader envisions a desirable future, articulates how it can be reached, sets an example to be followed, sets high standards of performance, and shows determination and confidence. He further stated that intellectual stimulation is displayed when the leader helps followers to become more innovative and creative while individualized consideration is displayed when leaders pay attention to the developmental needs of followers and support and coach the development of their followers.

To this end, transformational leadership is unique in that it concentrates on development and progress, solidity, authorization, self-confidence and promoting development and strategic thinking (Mohammad, Al-Zeaud and Batayneh, 2011). Thus, the understanding of transformational leadership transcends the acuity of leadership to include the emancipation of followers from fear and trepidation of governance to become committed, productive and united to one course. Transformational leaders operate from a personal value system that exceeds their agendas and loyalties. Their hallmark is their capacity to take a perspective on interpersonal relationships and to achieve a self-determined sense of identity. This is in congruence with Chemjong (2004) who adds that transformational leaders carry on the change process more effectively than others. They clearly define

things and cares for others. They never discriminate on grounds of race, color, sex, religion, age, or social class (Chemjong, 2004). It is therefore no surprise that transformational leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states, create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared visions. According to Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino (1991), transformational leadership does not just happen by chance but is the result of certain antecedent conditions that contribute to transformational leadership development. This study focuses on the relational qualities of self-efficacy and mindfulness as leadership accelerator for transformational leaders among youths.

Though self-efficacy is not the only important influence on behavior, it is one of the most researched behavioural mediators in literature (Bandura, 1997; Adeyemo and Agokei 2009; 2010). According to Bandura (1997), humans make life decisions based on perceived self-efficacy by undertaking activities and choosing situations we deem to be within our capabilities for success. Additionally, activities associated with failure are avoided. Self-efficacy beliefs can influence an individual to become committed to successfully execute the behaviors necessary to produce desired outcomes. Self efficacy theory states that the level and strength of self-efficacy will determine: (1) whether or not a behavior will be initiated, (2) how much effort will result, and (3) how long the effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles. When humans have a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy, they put forth a greater effort to accomplish a task despite the obstacles they encounter than those who have a weak sense of self-efficacy. It is believed that individuals who have a higher degree of self-efficacy will have a higher intention to remain enrolled in a designated task and will be more likely to persist in the face of external obstacles. Self-efficacy has proved to be a powerful motivational predictor of well-being (Munir and Nielsen, 2009) and future collaborative practices (LeBlanc et al. 2010). It has also been found to have strong relatedness with transformational leadership (Walumbwa, Lawler, Avolio, Wang and Shi, 2004; Kark, Shamir and Chen, 2003). Further, Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) in their study observe that interventions aimed at increasing self-efficacy can increase transformational leadership. In recent studies, efficacy beliefs were found to be a predictor of transformational leadership (Agokei and Umar, 2012) and partially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and well-being (Salanova, Lorente, Chambel and Marti ´nez, 2011). Furthermore, the study goes one step further to show how the transformational leader explains self-efficacy directly, but also provides an explanation for levels of task engagement. Notably, a transformational leader will foster closer relationships with subordinates that are characterized by having less distance between them despite ‘their power’ and by an individualized consideration of member needs and capabilities (Bass 1990).

This relationship is sustained by both mutual trust and openness and the richness of verbal communication and bi-directional feedback between leaders and members (House and Shamir 1993), thus promoting the development of their self-efficacy mainly through vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Kark and Dijk 2007; Walumbwa, Bruce, Avolio and Zhu, 2008). Mindfulness is an area of increasing interest and research. The concept is most firmly rooted in Buddhist psychology, but it shares conceptual kinship with ideas advanced by a variety of philosophical and psychological traditions, (including ancient Greek philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, and naturalism in later Western European thought) and transcendentalism and humanism in America. Mindfulness is usually defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmental to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Brown and Ryan, 2003).

The first part of this definition expresses the idea that mindfulness is an active process; it involves active attention which leads to awareness. The second part of the definition highlights that it regards the present, rather than the past or future. The third part emphasizes that the attention is nonjudgmental and accepting, without thinking that the experience of the present moment is good or bad, right or wrong, important or not. It involves attending to the external environment such as sights, sounds, and smells, as well as to internal bodily sensations, thoughts, and feelings. In practicing mindfulness, one becomes aware of the current internal and external experiences, observes them carefully, accepts them, and allows them to be let go of in order to attend to another present moment experience. In the views of Bishop et al. (2004) mindfulness is understood as two interrelated components: The first component involves the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment. The second component involves adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance. This definition of mindfulness refers to a less formal practice and one that would be used in everyday form.

Mindfulness thus involves the capacity to be aware of internal and external events and occurrences as phenomena, rather than as the objects of a conceptually constructed world (Olendzki, 2005). Since mindfulness permits an immediacy of direct contact with events as they occur, without the overlay of discriminative, categorical, and habitual thought, consciousness takes on clarity and freshness that permits more flexible, more objectively informed psychological and behavioural responses. However, the goal of mindfulness is not to become more relaxed, but to be aware of and accepting of whatever state the body and mind are in. Mindfulness can be practiced through meditation, but unlike these other

techniques, mindfulness can be practiced through mindful eating, mindful driving, mindful walking, or any experience in our lives (Adeyemo and Agokei, 2011, 2010; Dimidjian and Linehan, 2003). Although the literature on mindfulness and transformational leadership is sparse, empirical research suggests that mindfulness-based interventions hold promise for a variety of outcome objectives such as leadership. Recently, studies examined the concept or the practice of mindfulness showing the impact on counsellor self efficacy and effectiveness (Adeyemo and Agokei, 2011, 2010; Bentley, 2007) post conventional leadership (Cayer, 2005) as well as on the immune system (Davidson et al., 2003) are convincing. A study by Waddock (2001) found mindfulness to be essential in the implementation of ethical thinking in management. Further studies indicate that mindfulness practice helps to increase attentive presence, acceptance, empathy, and self-awareness, as well as reduce stress (Baer, 2003; Bishop et al., 2004; Fulton, 2005). To this impressive list of benefits, it could be added that mindfulness is advantageous to the development of transformational leadership.

Considering the qualities and gains of having a transformative leader, it is imperative that it becomes a national focus to meet the present desired changes. The changes are so important that increasingly it has spoken about the need of transforming not only the ways of doing things but also, and mainly, the ways of apprehending reality. Consequently, it is legitimate to ponder over the conditions favoring the success of such national transformations. With the understanding of relatively universal and invariant hierarchical sequence in relation to adult developmental stages (Wilber, 2000), it is evident that a focus of transformation from an earlier stage of development produce more tolerant, effective and sustainable results. Further, with the recognition of the aphorism “you cannot teach an old dog a new technique” it beholds that only a focus on our youths who are leaders of tomorrow could yield tolerant and positive results. However, this does not indicate that older people cannot learn new techniques but rather a meeting point on generational change that encloses a focus on youths. Therefore this study focuses on exploring relational determinants of transformational leadership among youths. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of mindfulness on the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership of National Youth Service Corps members in Oyo state, Nigeria. The following Research Questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. Is there any significant relationship among mindfulness, self-efficacy and transformational leadership of National Youth Service Corps members?
2. Is there any significant influence of mindfulness on the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership of National Youth Service Corps members?

METHOD

The ex-post facto design was adopted in this study. This approach does not involve manipulation of any of the variables in the study. They are studied as they currently exist in the repertoire of the participants. The population for the study consists of national youth service corps members deployed to serve in Oyo state. Four hundred corps members among a total of 2,423 deployed to the state for the 2011 Batch 'A' were selected for the study. The selection was based on convenience and availability as well as willingness to participate and provide details as required for the study. Among the sample 213 were males while the remaining 187 were females. The participants were aged between 23 and 29 years with a mean of 26.1 years and a standard deviation of 6.7. Also along ethnic lines, the Ibos and Yorubas accounted for 24.75% (99) and 22.25% (89), of the sample. Hausas, Edos, Tivs, and Urhobos accounted for 8.5% (34), 8.25% (33), 7.75% (31) and 7.5% (30) respectively. Others are Efik, 7% (28) Idoma 6.25% (25), Ibibio (13) and Birom 3.25% (8). The remaining 4% (11) did not indicate their ethnic group.

The Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) used for the study consists of 39 items measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never or very rarely true) to 5 (very often or always true) (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer and Toney, 2006). Sample questions include "When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving" and "In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting." Participants answer each question in the way that best describes what is generally true for them. The five factors show adequate to good internal consistency with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.91 (Baer et al., 2006). The composite estimate of reliability was 0.96. When subjected to a two week test-re-test, the FFMQ reported a reliability coefficient of 0.74.

The scale is a 10-item version of leadership Self-efficacy measure adapted from the General self-efficacy scale developed and validated by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). The original scale has high proficiency in determining individual's level of self-efficacy. The scale is not only parsimonious and reliable; it has also been proven valid in terms of convergent and discriminated validity. The scale has typically yielded internal consistencies between alpha = .75 and .91 (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). The current scale has reported a two week test retest reliability coefficient of .78. The criterion variable, transformational leadership was measured using the transformational subscale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) (Bass and Avolio, 1990). The measure explains and demonstrates to individuals the key factors that set truly exceptional leaders apart from marginal ones. Internal reliability reported in the literature have ranged from .74 to .94. It has a two week test-retest reliability of 0.87.

The researcher personally distributed and collected the completed questionnaire from the participants. Permissions were obtained from significant authorities to facilitate the process. These included managing directors, supervisors, and controllers depending on the organization the corps members were deployed to participants. An informed consent form was provided to the Participants. They were adequately informed of confidentiality and the need to be precise and truthful in filling the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then filled and returned by the participants after adequate understanding.

To establish the moderating effect of mindfulness in the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership, it is imperative that certain intervening variables, particularly demographic variables are controlled in the statistical analysis to minimize the likelihood of spurious linkage resulting from unmeasured variables. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were utilized to determine the relationships among the outcome measure and the independent variables. Hierarchical regression analysis was further utilised in the analysis of data. This was done in three stages. Participants' characteristics (age, gender, mode of entry,) were entered first. In the second stage, the main effects of mindfulness and self-efficacy were ascertained. At stage three, the interaction terms (mindfulness \times self-efficacy) were entered into the regression equation. The F-change was estimated. The contribution and significance of each of the variables were determined using beta weight and t-ratio. The moderating effect of mindfulness was then tested through the examination of the interaction terms. If it was found that the interaction term was significant, it would then be considered that mindfulness played a mediating role in the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables. As demonstrated in the table, the mean scores for mindfulness, self-efficacy and transformational leadership are: 145.71, 25.52 and 32.75 respectively. The corresponding standard deviations for the three variables are: 9.61, 10.54 and 15.38. Significant relationships were found between transformational leadership and mindfulness and transformational leadership and self efficacy. Other variables that have significant correlations with one another are mindfulness and self-efficacy and age and mindfulness. Table 2 indicates the results of hierarchical regression analysis done on counselling effectiveness data. The results demonstrate that the control variables (age and gender) did not impact significantly on transformational leadership. However, self efficacy was found to impact significantly and positively on transformational leadership. When the interaction term (mindfulness) was introduced in the equation, it was found that there was significant increment in the

variance of transformational leadership. Thus, the results confirm the positive impact of mindfulness on the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership. The result found in this study has confirmed that self-efficacy is a critical factor influencing transformational leadership. This finding serves as an echo of previous findings concerning self-efficacy as a vital factor affecting behavioural outcomes (Adeyemo and Agokei 2009; 2010; Agokei and Umar, 2012; Bandura, 1997; Larson, Clark, Wesely, Koraleski, Daniels and Smith, 1999). The relationship between self efficacy and transformational leadership can be viewed from the perspective of how self-confidence can play a vital role in the successful performance of leadership duties. It is pertinent to note that individuals would more likely experience inspirational motivation and idealized influence if they sense the leader operates with confidence to accomplish stated tasks.

Bandura (1997) notes that those with strong self-efficacy beliefs set higher goals for themselves and exhibit stronger commitment, motivation, perseverance, and resiliency toward achieving those goals. Furthermore, he added that individual's assessment of himself or her as efficient is constituted of four ways which interact with themselves. First of them is the information which is gained by individuals after successful or unsuccessful activities. The second one is the information which is gained by individuals by observing others. The third one is encouragements, recommendations and pieces of advice from others. And the last one is emotional responses during the performance.

Hence, self-efficacy connotes an important aspect of performance and preparation to successfully perform a given behaviour, and involves a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioural skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve innumerable purposes. By extension, these generative capabilities in self-efficacy may include demonstrating increased persistence in the face of obstacles, show lower anxiety level, show flexibility in the use of experiential strategies, and employ more self-regulation strategies and greater propensity for self-motivation and successful leadership. These attributes may have predisposed the participants in this study towards potential transformational leadership qualities. This could be the plausibly explanation for the kind of linkage that was found between self-efficacy and transformational leadership of participants in this study. The study also revealed that the relationship between self-efficacy and transformational leadership in this case was found to be moderated by mindfulness. The effect of mindfulness on transformational leadership is corroborated by previous studies in Literature (Adeyemo and Agokei, 2011, 2010; Baer, 2003; Bishop et al., 2004; Fulton, 2005; Valente and Marotta, 2005; Cayer, 2005). These studies while focus on the development of mindfulness, find that mindfulness practice helps to increase attentive presence, acceptance, empathy, and self-awareness, as well as reduce

stress. However, as little research has been conducted to demonstrate that mindfulness is a mechanism mediating positive leadership outcomes, the current finding is an extension in literature affirming the moderating mechanism of mindfulness on transformational leadership. This result is easily explainable bearing in mind that conceptual and empirical literature suggests that mindfulness practice suggest leadership principles.

First, mindfulness may promote a less defensive, more willing exposure to challenging and threatening events and experiences, which may reduce negative cognitive appraisals of those situations, thus rendering lower levels of perceived stress. Second, mindfulness may foster an enhanced capacity to adoptively cope with situations perceived as challenging, threatening, or harmful. The characteristics described thus far indicate that the state of being mindful is inherently empirical, in that it seeks possession of the “full facts” in a manner similar to that of the objective scientist seeking accurate knowledge of some phenomenon. This stance encourages a deferral of judgment until a careful examination of facts has been made. Among other things, the practice of mindfulness allows to: (1) observe and challenge one’s assumptions, (2) consider many points of view before making a decision, (3) recognize paradoxes and ambiguities and better deal with them, (4) pay attention to the process, (5) better grasp the connectedness between the phenomena, and (6) achieve self-actualization (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Incidentally, these are all abilities of people who have acquired transformational leadership abilities. Therefore, this might pass for an explanation for the moderating effects of mindfulness on transformational leadership.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations between Variables

| | N | X | SD | TL | M | SE | AGE |
|---------------------------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| SEX Transformational leadership | 400 | 32.75 | 15.38 | 1.000 | | | |
| Mindfulness | 400 | 145.71 | 9.16 | .493** | 1.000 | | |
| Self-efficacy | 400 | 25.52 | 10.54 | .518** | .411** | 1.000 | |
| Age | 400 | 26.1 | 6.7 | .097 | .213* | -.057 | 1.000 |
| Sex | 400 | 1.48 | .61 | .042 | .102 | .068 | -.063 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Showing the Moderating Influence of Mindfulness on the Relationship between self -efficacy and transformational leadership Variables

| Variables | Beta | R ² Total | Change in R ² | F-Change | Sign. F-Change |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------------|
| Step 1 | | | | | |
| Control variables | | .039 | .039 | 1.77 | .044 |
| Age | .058 | - | - | - | - |
| Gender | -.017 | - | - | - | - |
| Step 2 | | | | | |
| Main variables | | .256 | .199 | 21.94 | .000 |
| Self efficacy | .391 | - | - | - | - |
| Mindfulness | .472 | - | - | - | - |
| Step 3 | | | | | |
| Interaction | | .491 | .249 | 52.66 | .000 |
| Self efficacy x Mindfulness | .582 | - | - | - | - |

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study have important implications for training personnel, youth corps members as well as administrators and policy makers in the National Youth service Scheme. The results provide evidence that a sizable portion of the variance in transformational leadership can be explained by not only critical components as self-efficacy but with the youths ability to be mindful. Therefore, it is recommended that NYSC administrators and policy makers should make conscious efforts to consider incorporating mastery-based experiences in mindfulness skills into service policy and training programmes at the orientation training and service delivery levels.

The prospect should be facilitated by introducing well trained and qualified personnel into the service programme to encourage the re-orientation and transformation process of developing self efficacy and mindfulness among youth corps members. Specifically, youth corps members should be encouraged to practice non-judgemental, observing and describing their present-moment experience, non-reacting to experience, and acting with awareness rather than acting on text guiding. The study also advocates that professional educational and school counsellors should explore ways in which they can learn and incorporate mindfulness into their every day practice to enhance delivery and development among youths. Perhaps with the development of self efficacy and mindfulness among our youths to encourage the development of transformational leadership, the future of the nation may be secured in peaceful transformation. Consequently the social and security challenges being currently experienced would have been checkmated and a distance past.

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