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WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AMONG CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONAL BODIES IN NIGERIA

Abstract

The study evaluated a comprehensive examination of the participation of women in leadership roles within the Nigerian construction industry. The study evaluated the representation of women in leadership positions; assessed factors promoting their participation; identified the barriers and challenges impeding their progression; investigated the impact of gender diversity on decision-making processes and organizational culture within construction professional bodies and examined strategies adopted by construction professional bodies to increase women's participation in leadership positions.

Through the administration of a structured questionnaire via Google Forms, data were collected from sixty-nine participants representing various professions within the construction sector. The respondents exhibited diverse demographic characteristics, including gender distribution, professional affiliations, positions held within construction bodies, and years of leadership experience.
The research identified critical factors that significantly promote women's participation in leadership positions. These included "Training and Education Opportunities," highlighting the pivotal role of knowledge and skill development in fostering gender diversity. Additional factors encompassed a "Supportive family and social environment valuing women's careers," "Public Advocacy and awareness campaigns promoting gender equality," and "Recognition and Reward systems acknowledging women's contributions." Furthermore, the study unveiled varying perspectives concerning factors influencing women's participation in leadership roles based on gender. Notably, "Public and government initiatives that foster women's participation" and "Public Advocacy and awareness for promoting gender equality" elicited divergent views. This underscores the necessity of tailoring strategies to address gender-specific perspectives and needs.

A significant finding highlighted the formidable barrier of a "Male Dominance Culture" within construction bodies, underlining the pressing need for inclusive organizational cultures and equitable opportunities. Additionally, prominent barriers identified included "Biased Selection Policies and Practices," "Work-Life Balance Challenges," and "Family and Care Responsibilities."
Impacts stemming from gender diversity on decision-making processes and organizational culture were also examined, with "Better Creativity and Innovation" emerging as the highest-rated outcome. Other impact worthy of note include " Increased accountability and transparency" and " Improved professional development initiatives," The significance of these impact was consistently perceived by all respondents, irrespective of gender. Lastly, respondents emphasized the importance of "Leadership training and development" and "Networking Opportunities" as critical strategies for construction bodies to adopt in promoting women's leadership roles.
In light of these findings, recommendations are made for construction industry stakeholders. These include the development of gender-inclusive training programs, comprehensive advocacy campaigns, fostering inclusive organizational cultures, and investing in leadership development and networking opportunities. These recommendations serve as a roadmap towards fostering greater gender diversity and women's participation in leadership positions within the construction industry.

Keywords

1.0   Introduction

The construction industry in Nigeria is a vital sector driving the nation's economic growth and development.

Within this industry, professional bodies play a crucial role in shaping policies, standards, and practices,

significantly impacting the sector's trajectory (Smith, 2019); and indeed, importance of women participation in playing these roles cannot be overestimated. However, despite the importance of gender diversity and inclusivity in organizational leadership, women's representation in leadership positions within construction professional bodies in Nigeria has been a subject of concern. In the construction industry, women in Nigeria have historically been underrepresented in leadership positions in professional bodies such as industry associations and regulatory boards (Johnson et al., 2020).

Several studies have highlighted the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, but there is a need for a comprehensive investigation to understand the current state of affairs and the barriers hindering women's participation in these critical decision-making positions. While Okafor and Nwosu (2018), Adegoke and Adewale (2020), and Jimoh et al. (2016) have conducted studies on gender diversity and women's participation in the Nigerian construction industry, there is a gap in research specifically focusing on the representation of women in leadership roles within construction professional bodies.

Thurairajah et al. (2007) explored women leadership in construction organizations, but their findings may not encompass the unique challenges faced by women in leadership positions within professional bodies. Additionally, Tunji-Olayeni et al. (2021) investigated the work-life experiences of women in the construction industry but did not focus explicitly on leadership representation.

Furthermore, while studies such as Adisa et al. (2020), Najimu et al. (2022), and Adegoke et al. (2020) discussed factors limiting women's participation in the construction sector, there is a need to delve deeper into the specific barriers that hinder their advancement to leadership positions within professional bodies. Understanding these factors is vital to devising effective strategies to promote gender diversity and women's leadership advancement within the Nigerian construction industry, as emphasized by Vargas-Salfate et al. (2018), Yamak et al. (2016), Tijani-Adenle (2016), Obamiro and Obasan (2013), Ali (2014), and Akintan (2013). By addressing these issues, the research can contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable construction industry in Nigeria, as advocated by industry experts and professionals on platforms such as LinkedIn (LinkedIn post, 2023. Based on the foregoing, some objectives are set to be achieved in this study.

2.0   Settings or Methods

The study focused on construction professionals in Southwest Nigeria, as recommended by Okafor et al. (2019), due to the region's accessibility and availability of potential participants. By concentrating on Southwest Nigeria, the study captured among others a diverse representation of women in leadership positions within construction professional bodies in the study area.

Table 3.1: Targeted Sample size

Organization	Total Population	Percentage used	Sample Size used
Quantity Surveyors	5,000	1%	50
Builder	15,000	0.1%	15
Engineers	40,000	0.1%	40
Architects	10,000	0.5%	50
Total			115

Of the 115 targeted population, a total of 69 respondents participated in the study, and this therefore means that the study adopted the quantitative method of research. The questionnaire devised on the ground knowledge gathered from the literature review on the project topic. Closed-ended questions are adopted for the study which according to Kothari (2016) is easy to handle, simple to answer and relatively quick to analyze.

3.0   Results

The results involve the background profile of the respondents and investigation on the various objectives of the study.

3.1   Result on the assessment of Factors promoting the participation of women in leadership positions among construction professional bodies in Nigeria

All participants indicate that all identified factors achieved mean values of 3.00 and higher. This signifies that, according to the surveyed participants, these factors significantly promote women's participation in leadership positions (with mean scores ranging from 3.81 to 3.30). This suggests that the respondents hold these factors to be of substantial importance in fostering women's involvement in leadership roles within construction professional bodies. This reaffirms the considerable relevance of these factors in encouraging women's engagement in such capacities. Conversely, there is no statistically significant difference in the perspectives of surveyed participants regarding the remaining ten factors that promote women's leadership roles within construction professional bodies with respect to their gender; this is as indicated by their t-values @ p-value> 0.05.

3.2   Result on the Assessment of barriers and challenges inhibiting women's participation in leadership roles of among construction professional bodies in Nigeria

This analysis takes into account perspectives from both male and female respondents. In pursuit of this objective, the study identified and assigned ratings to these barriers based on their perceived levels of significance. To ascertain their levels of significance, the surveyed participants provided ratings for these identified barriers. Upon analysing the outcomes from both male and female respondents, it becomes evident that the overall trend aligns notably in terms of the barriers ranked as the highest and second-highest. However, a notable divergence emerges beyond these top two barriers. The third-ranked barrier, on average, also ranks third for female respondents but ranks sixth for male respondents.

3.3   Result on the Assessment of Impact of gender diversity on decision-making processes and organization culture within the construction professional bodies

This analysis accounts for the perspectives of respondents' genders, seeking to achieve its objective by identifying and assigning ratings to these impacts according to their perceived levels of significance. To gauge this significance, participants in the survey rated the impacts associated with gender diversity. Upon examining the outcomes from both male and female respondents, it becomes evident that the overall trend notably aligns with regard to the barriers ranked as the highest and second-highest. However, a significant discrepancy emerges beyond these top two barriers. The barrier ranked third on average also maintains its third rank for female respondents, but it drops to fourth for male respondents. This divergence continues as the fourth-ranked barrier, on average, is placed seventh by female respondents and third by male respondents.

3.4   Result on the Assessment of strategies adopted by construction professional bodies to increase women's participation in leadership positions

The study specifically examined the strategies utilized by surveyed respondents within these construction bodies to foster increased representation of women in leadership roles. This underscores the fact that the surveyed respondents viewed these strategies as vital in advancing the presence of women in leadership roles within construction bodies. On closer examination of responses from both male and female respondents, it becomes evident that the overall ranking trend does not consistently align with the individual rankings based on respondents' gender. The strategy that received the highest average ranking ranked third by female respondents and second by male respondents. Similarly, the strategy ranked second on average was ranked fifth by female respondents and first by male respondents. This pattern persists, with the strategy ranked fifth on average being ranked second by female respondents and sixth by male respondents.

4.0   Discussion

The literature review identified up to 13 possible impact of gender diversity in this study. As a result of the ranking of these impact by descriptive analysis, it is of utmost importance for construction bodies to actively pursue these impacts within their organizations, as this study demonstrates that gender diversity significantly affects decision-making processes and organizational culture within construction professional bodies. However, a significant discrepancy emerges beyond these top two barriers. The barrier ranked third on average also maintains its third rank for female respondents, but it drops to fourth for male respondents. This divergence continues as the fourth-ranked barrier, on average, is placed seventh by female respondents and third by male respondents.

This suggests that the ranking of barriers based on the average responses of all participants does not consistently align with the individual ranking provided by each gender, except for the top two rankings. In the study conducted by Jimoh et al., 2016, a pivotal point was emphasized regarding the significance of women's representation within the construction industry. Their research underscored that increasing the adequacy of women's employment in this sector can substantially enhance diversity within decision-making processes and the overall organizational culture of construction professional bodies.

This not only addresses several human resources challenges but also aligns with the recognized impacts of gender diversity on decision-making processes and organizational culture. Also research by Cox and Blake (1991) demonstrated that diverse teams bring different perspectives to the table, fostering a wider range of ideas and approaches for resolving conflicts which aligns with the top ranked impact which is better creativity and innovation.

5.0 Conclusion

Amidst the array of impacts stemming from gender diversity on decision-making processes and organizational culture, "Better Creativity and Innovation" clearly emerged as the highest-rated outcome. It is paramount to note that this significance was uniformly perceived by all respondents, regardless of gender. This extends to other equally impactful facets such as " Increased accountability and transparency" and " Improved professional development initiatives," collectively emphasizing the universally acknowledged importance of gender diversity in influencing the decision-making dynamics and organizational culture within construction bodies.

Respondents highlighted the significance of "Leadership training and development" and "Networking Opportunities" as crucial strategies to be adopted by construction bodies to embrace. These findings emphasize the necessity of investment in leadership development programs and networking platforms to facilitate women's growth in leadership roles within the construction industry

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