

# PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG WOMEN IN NIGERIA CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Despite the fact that women possess the required knowledge, skills, competences, training and experiences to perform effectively and efficiently, they found it difficult to break through in career advancement in built environment, thereby constitute small percentage at the top management positions. This study therefore investigates factors impeding women from being at par with their male counterparts at the highest levels of managerial positions with a view to achieving parity with their male counterparts. Data for the study were collected from construction and consulting firms in Lagos State, Nigeria, through well-structured questionnaire. A total of 150 copies of questionnaire were administered to randomly selected architects, quantity surveyors, engineers and contractors. A total of 95 copies representing 63% were retrieved and found suitable for the analysis. The data collected were analyzed through SPSS using Mean Score (MS) and Standard Deviation (SD). Findings from the analyses revealed the most important factors that constitute barrier to women career development in built environment were family/work life balance (MS of 4.11 and SD of 0.900), high degree of stress on the job (MS of 4.06 and SD of 0.873) and lack of flexibility work hours and schedules (MS of 4.03 and SD of 0.822). Better work/life balance and equality in career development opportunity for both male and female were the most important factors facilitating women career development in built environment with MS of 3.89 and 3.69 respectively and SD of 0.896 and 0.834 respectively. It is therefore recommended that employers should establish flexible working practices and provide equality in career development opportunity for both men and women, so that women may be at par with their male counterparts at the highest levels of the managerial positions.

**Keywords:** *Built Environment, Career Advancement, Gender, Managerial Position, Women Participation*<sup>46</sup>.

## 1.0 Introduction

There is no doubt that significant progress has been achieved in furthering the cause of gender equality in the labour market over recent decades (Munn, 2014, Akomolafe & Muhammed, 2015). Women have been moving steadily towards occupations, professions and managerial jobs previously reserved for men. This is evident in Nigeria as shown by the increased number of women in both traditional occupations (fields like teaching, trading and nursing) and non-traditional occupations (such as law, building construction, engineering, quantity surveying, architecture and project management) (Obamiro & Obasan, 2013). The increasing participation

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of women in labour market is found to be closely linked with economic factor (Masidah, Wardah & AbdulRazak, 2015). Women want to be more economically independent (Sazali, Al-Mamun, Mohammad & Zhan 2014). Additionally, the earnings received help them to supplement their husband's income to gain better quality of life. The fact that male-dominated jobs provide higher income than the women's traditional jobs can be suggested as one of the reasons that prompt the entry of women in non-traditional occupation (Masidah, *et al.*, 2015). Despite this welcome development, Nigerian women constitute small percentage of the top management jobs (Obamiro & Obasan, 2013; Rajkumar, Swaathi, & Sivaranjani, 2016). Akpinar (2012), found out that despite penetration of women in non-traditional professions, they are woefully under-represented at the top management levels and in most cases stuck at lower levels. Even in a woman dominated profession like teaching, for example, majority of teachers are women while top administration are men dominated. Similarly in the health field, doctors and hospital heads are very often men, while most of the nurses and support staff are women. According to Durasaro (2016) there is no task that males can perform that females cannot perform but because of conventional, traditional, physiological and religious perceptions of women, there has always been a role stereotype. People perceive women to be the weaker sex who cannot and should not perform certain roles regardless of their ability to perform such roles. Women sometimes begin their careers on an equal footing with men and started losing ground gradually over time or continue to progress on par with their male counterpart until at some point, their progress will be blocked. Although women as a whole may place less emphasis on career success than men, there are a considerable number of women who strive for top management positions and are unable to attain them (Rajkumar *et al.*, 2016). This study therefore investigates factors impeding women from being at par with their male counterparts at the highest levels of managerial positions and examines how to facilitate women career advancement with a view to achieving parity with their male counterparts.

Governments, businesses, trade unions and women's organizations have devoted much thought and energy to overcoming the attitudinal and institutional discrimination that bars women from certain jobs and hinders their career development, while the commitment to fight gender discrimination is renewed periodically at international conferences (Salma, Miranda & Griffin 2014). Yet, many of the results fall short of expectations (Akpinar 2012). In fact, the immediate past government advocated for up to 40% of women participation in strategic or managerial positions. Akunyili (2006) asserted that significant changes have occurred in gender-roles and in greater gender-based division of labour over the past and such changes are the dramatic influx of women into the workforce and the progress that women have made by entering positions and careers initially thought to be a reservation for men. But compared to men, women are often left behind when it comes to advancement even if they have the same educational background and work experiences.

Table 1 provides information on population of Nigeria men and women and their representation in position of authority.

**Table 1: Nigerian Representation in Position of Authority**

Position of Authority	Male (%)	Female (%)
State Governors in Nigeria	100	0
Deputy State Governors in Nigeria	83	17
Member of Nigerian Senate	93	7
Members of House of Representatives in Nigeria	96	4
Nigeria population	51	49

Source:Durosaro (2016)

Estimated population of Nigeria as of 2015 has 184,635,279, a total of 93,495,170 are males while 91,140,109 are female representing 50.6% and 49.4% respectively (Durosaro, 2016). As at 2015, all the thirty-six (36) states governors in Nigeria are male representing 100%. A total of 30 Deputy Governors are males while only 6 are females representing 83.3% and 16.7 % respectively. A total of 102 Nigerian senate members are males while 7 are females, representing 93% and 7% respectively. Numbers of members of house of representative that are males are 346, while 14 are female representing 92.2% and 3.8% respectively.

## **2.0. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Career Development**

Mordi, Adedoyin & Ajonbadi (2011) conceptualized career as a sequence of professional experience and organizational objectives which an individual goes through during all his life. Babatunde, Babalola & Opawole (2012) therefore described career development as a long term personal and professional growth of individuals. It is a complex process that shapes the career of the individuals over their life span. The availability of effective career development practices not only heightens the growth and self-esteem of employees for them to utilize skills and knowledge, it could also serve as an important link to retain good employees to stay with the organization. The decision for employees to stay or leave might depend on whether or not they gain support at work and personal growth (Claudi, 2010). This requires employers to provide resources, tools, and the appropriate environment to ensure continued self-development. Learning and adaptability are important for female professionals to strive for career success. Similarly, Rajkumar *et al.*, (2016) suggested training and exposure may imply a high level of concern for organizations to extend employees' potentials in the organization. Employees who receive such developmental opportunities are more motivated and have more confidence in their work. Subsequently, employees who receive such opportunities might repay their organization with the likeliness of extending their self-fulfillment, leading to reduce turnover. Akpinar (2012) concluded that construction firms aiming to improve organizational commitment among female employees should ensure women have access to career development opportunities and ensure just processes are used in allocating organizational rewards.

### **2.2 Barriers to Women Career Development in Construction Industry**

Griffin (2013) indicated that lack of role model, poor career advice, gender biased recruitment, peer pressure and poor educational experiences are some factors that limit women's entry to

the industry which affects the career aspirations and development. According to Babatunde *et al.*, (2012) women have limited access to the wide range of developmental experiences and activities that build the credibility needed to advance in their career therefore there is lack of suitably qualified women for senior management positions. Durosaro and Ogungbemi (2014) identified high level of illiteracy among women, low self-esteem, feeling of inferiority complex and poor career aspiration. According to Akomolafe and Mohammed, (2015) women are confronted by a significant number of barriers, beginning with difficulties in joining the field of construction, the image of construction, career knowledge, family commitment, male dominated culture and work environment which made it difficult for women to capture the most senior position in the organization's hierarchy. Shanmugam, Amaratunga, Haigh, & Baldry, (2006) identified women's lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness, failure to have their contribution recognized, not being taken seriously, and fear of failure as the barrier to women entry into leadership position. Salman *et al.*, (2014) found that the most prevalent problem is sexual harassment, long working hours, isolation on the jobsite, negative perceptions of women capabilities, expectations to mimic male's aggressive behaviours, lack of mentors/role models, small representation on the jobsite, family/work life balance, slow career progression, high degree of stress on the job, lack of encouragement from supervisors, unfair assessment of training needs, low performance rating compared to male counterparts, lower salaries than male counterparts and unique safety and health concerns. Radhlinah and Jingmond (2011) identified lack of training and hiring programs, working environment, lack of flexible work hours and schedule are the issues confronting women career development in the construction industry. Durosaro (2016) found out that cultural practices; norms, unwritten family codes, denial of promotional opportunities in the formal work environment, psychological abuse through intimidation and negative media posturing and discrimination.

### **3.0 Materials and Methods**

Data for the study were collected through the use of well-structured questionnaire administered on professionals in consulting and contracting firms in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. Lagos metropolis was chosen as the study area because 60 - 65% of head offices of both consulting and contracting firms were located in this area (Babatunde *et al.*, 2012). In addition, the study area is quite active in terms of project/construction activities (Obamiro & Obasan, 2013). The professionals that were administered questionnaire include architects, quantity surveyors, engineers and contractors. Random sampling method was chosen to select appropriate sample for the questionnaire survey.

The questionnaire had three sections A, B and C. Section A encompasses personal information of respondents. Section B relates to objectives of this research which are to examine factors constituting barriers to women career advancement in construction industry. While section C describes factors that facilitate women career development in built environment.

#### 4.0 Data Analysis and Research Findings

One hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were administered to randomly selected professionals in both consulting and contracting firms in the study area. Judgmental sampling method was adopted to select respondents from the study population who can offer the contributions sought. A total of ninety five (95) copies representing 63% were collected and found suitable for the analysis. Respondents' demographic profile is presented in Table 2. It is evident from the findings that the selected construction companies are male dominated (70%) which is similar across the globe as indicated in past studies (Obamiro & Obasan, 2013; Masidah, *et al.*, 2015; Rajkumar, Swaathi, & Sivaranjani 2016). It is shown from the findings that majority of the respondents have come of age.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondent**

Demographic Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Gender	Male	66	70	70
	Female	29	30	100
Age	21-30 years	4	4	4
	31-40 years	13	14	18
	41-50 years	56	59	77
	Above 50 years	22	23	100
Specialization	Consultant	58	61	61
	Contractor	37	39	100
Highest Education qualification	SSCE/ND/NCE	12	14	14
	HND/B.Sc./B.Tech.	57	59	73
	M.Sc/M.Tech	26	27	100
	P.hD	-	0	100
Experience in construction field	0-5 years	11	12	12
	6-10 years	27	28	40
	11-15 years	25	26	66
	Above 15 years	32	34	100

About 82% of the respondents are above 40 years old. All the respondents are educated with 27% having a postgraduate degree, 59% of the respondents with a first degree. Few of the respondents (14%) have less than first degree. Analysis of respondents' work experience reveals that a significant number of the respondents (60%) had been with the companies for more than ten years while 28% had been with the companies for between 6-10 years, only 12% of the respondents had worked between 0-5 years.



#### 4.1 Factors Constituting Barrier to Women Carrier Development in Construction Industry

Twenty eight (28) major factors that women always contend with in career progression in construction industry were presented to the respondents to indicate their opinions on a five-point Likert scale, 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). In evaluating the results, the Mean Score

**Table 3: Factors Constituting Barrier to Women Carrier Development in Construction Industry**

(MS) and the Standard Deviation (SD) were used to rank the degree of agreement of factors that constitute barrier to women carrier development in built environment. Table 3 provides

Factors Constitute Barrier to Women Carrier Development	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
Family/work life balance	4.11	0.900	1
High degree of stress on the job	4.06	0.873	2
Lack of flexible work hours and schedule	4.03	0.822	3
Unfair perceptions of women performance capabilities	3.91	0.853	4
Gender biased recruitment	3.89	0.963	5
Lack of mentor/role model	3.83*	0.857	6
Male dominated nature of the industry	3.83*	0.954	7
Harshness of job conditions	3.80	0.901	8
Poor career guidance	3.77	0.910	9
Unfair performance evaluations by male supervisors	3.74	0.950	10
Sexual harassment	3.71	0.860	11
Lack of support from the spouse	3.57	1.119	12
Failure to have women's contribution recognized	3.51	0.919	13
Lack of encouragement from supervisors	3.49	0.818	14
Career limited to clerical/administration duties	3.17	0.785	15
Traditional/Religious restriction of women to certain work types	2.94	1.027	16
Lack of confidence and timidity	2.91	0.781	17
Fear of failure	2.86	1.061	18
Feeling of inferiority complex	2.66*	0.816	19
Low self-esteem	2.66*	0.838	20
Macho behaviour of male colleagues	2.37	1.215	21
Lack of networking opportunities	2.34	0.968	22
Loss of sense of femininity and social rejection	2.14*	0.912	23
Slow career progression	2.14*	0.944	24
Poor career aspiration or focus	2.09	0.907	25
Limited training opportunities	2.03	0.954	26
High level of illiteracy among women	1.97	1.043	27
Lower salaries than male counterparts (pay gap)	1.91	0.781	28

the summary of the statistical mean and standard deviation. The table shows that family/work life balance is the most significant factor that constitute barrier to women carrier development in built environment. It was ranked first with a MS of 4.11 and a SD of 0.900. Women experience more work-family conflicts because of the responsibility of child bearing. High degree of stress on the job was ranked second with a MS of 4.06 and SD of 0.873. Lack of flexible work hours and schedule was ranked third, obtaining a MS of 4.03 with a SD of 0.822.

Unfair perceptions of women performance capabilities and gender biased in recruitments are another important factors constituting barrier to women carrier development and were ranked fourth and fifth with MS of 3.91 and 3.89, SD of 0.853 and 0.963 respectively. These were considered the most significant in this research study. According to Adeyemi, Ojo, Aina, & Olanipekun (2006) employers prefer men for tedious, dirty, hazardous tasks with long working hours on sites. Akomolafe and Muhammed, (2015) asserted that some employers believe that construction is unsuitable for women and it manifests in the recruitment process. This limits women's entry to the industry which affects the career aspirations and development (Akpinar, 2012). Nevertheless, it can also be seen from the table that traditional/religious restriction of women to certain work types, lack of confidence and timidity, fear of failure, low self-esteem and macho behaviour of male colleagues were also factors that constitute barrier to women carrier development in built environment albeit not significant. The least significant factors according to the findings include: lower salaries than male counterparts, high level of illiteracy among women and limited training opportunities for women.

#### **4.2 Factors Facilitating Women Carrier Development in Construction Industry**

Table 4 reveals the mean scores and standard deviation of the ranking of respondents with respect to improvement on career development of women in built environments. The table shows that better work/life balance was ranked the highest with MS of 3.89 and SD of 0.896. This was followed by equality in career development opportunity for both male and female (MS of 3.69 and SD of 0.834).

**Table 4: Factors Facilitating Women Carrier Development in Built Environments**

<b>Factors Facilitating Women Carrier Development</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Better family/work life balance	3.89	0.896	1
Equality in career development opportunity for both male and female	3.69	0.834	2
Flexible working practices	3.53	0.838	3
Improved perception of value of women's work	3.40	0.706	4
Women participation in construction management	3.35	0.861	5
Having an influential mentor	3.38	0.924	6
Leadership opportunities	3.29	0.916	7
Having support and networking opportunities	3.28	0.882	8
Fairer Pay (equal to men's pay)	3.26	0.837	9
Increased awareness of women's issues in the construction industry	3.33	0.736	10
Effective advance education	3.23	0.939	11
Specialized training	3.31	0.853	12
Consistently exceeding performance expectations	3.17	0.840	13
More training options	3.21	0.915	14
Registration with relevant professional bodies	3.16	0.804	15
Developing a style with which men are comfortable	2.92	0.850	16
Women to develop good relationship with men	2.91	0.867	17
Seeking difficult or high visibility assignments	2.97	0.929	18
Women to be tough and have strong desires to succeed	2.65	0.844	19
Taking career risks	2.96	0.785	20

The finding is consistent with the study of Lingard and Lin (2004), they concluded that construction firms aiming to improve organizational commitment among female employees should ensure women have access to career development opportunities. Ling and Leow (2008) indicated that providing courses for women to update themselves after career breaks or childbirth are useful measures. Masidah *et al.*, (2015) posited that issues related to competence, experience and education have been widely researched and discussed among the reasons why women cannot be promoted from middle to senior management positions. This is a serious barrier to women empowerment. Abdullahi (2006) identified inadequate education, training and experience in the past, as contributive to the difficulties women experience in getting management jobs. Flexible working hour, improved perception of value of women's work and women participation in construction management were ranked third, fourth and fifth with MS of 3.53, 3.40, 3.35 and SD of 0.838, 0.706 and 0.861 respectively. Flexible working hour, improved perception of value of women's work and women participation in construction management were ranked third, fourth and fifth with MS of 3.53, 3.40, 3.35 and SD of 0.838, 0.706 and 0.861 respectively.

### 5.0 Conclusion

From the findings, construction employers need to access a wider pool of talent from a more diverse range of people in terms of gender in order to develop a high quality workforce that is motivated and skilled to meet growing construction needs. Hence, female professionals are needed at all levels. The findings of this study however, revealed that family/work life balance, high degree of stress on the job and lack of flexible work hours and schedule were the major factors constituting barriers to women career development in Built environment. Moreover, the result of the mean scores revealed factors that can facilitate the career development of women to be: better family/work life balance, equality in career development opportunity for both male and female, flexible working practices and improve perception of value of women's work.

From the conclusion, it is clear that women career development in built environment can be improved through establishing flexible working practices and effective career development opportunity for all.

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