

Gender Inequality and Women Discrimination In Real Estate Firms in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study evaluates the women discrimination in the real estate industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. A total of seventy-eight (78) Estate Surveying and Valuation firms were randomly selected in the study area, Forty-five (45) questionnaires were retrieved and analysed using descriptive statistics. The study found that there were more male Estate Surveyors and Valuers than female in the study area. Most of the female estate surveyors and valuers are attached to property management departments of their firms and the challenges they encounter range from difficulty in balancing work and the home front to the fact that women are seen as not being capable of practicing the profession amongst others. The study recommended that the female Estate Surveyors and Valuers should be proactive and strive to be at par or even better than their male colleagues.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Real Estate Profession, Lagos State

1. Introduction

Gender structure in the workplace environment (real estate firms inclusive), are based on differences rather than the individual characteristics of men and women. The general assumption is that women are less expert than men; hence, women tend to be at disadvantage in gender-neutral context. This is because gender stereotypes are linked to women's roles and status in the society, as women become more visible in positions of authority (Kanter, 1977; Crawford, 2000; Carli, 2001; Cronin, 2004).

Kanter (1977) was one of the first people to discuss the structural aspects of gender. The author stressed that there are three factors that are decisive for men and women's career aspirations i.e. the opportunity structure, the structure of power and the proportional representation of a social category in these positions. Kanter emphasised that gender does not matter as much for career aspirations as the structural situation of individuals when we find sex differences with regard to engagement in work, career interest amongst others. This is supported by the study of Lefkowitz (1994) who found that differences between men and women in relation to their jobs, like preferences, values, and attitudes were largely spurious effects of other variables. The author emphasised that gender does not matter as much for career aspirations as the structural situation of individuals. Women react similarly to the world of works when one controls the spurious effect of systematic differences in the job field and rewards received by women in comparison with men - especially differences in income level (Alveasons and Billing, 2009; Stawiski, Deal and Rudderman, 2010; Pauli, 2011).

Presently, gender issues in the workplace is now very intricate and puzzling. Hence, several studies have been conducted on the issue both in developed and developing countries of the world (Crawford, 2000; Gray, 2001; Greenberg, 2004; Welle and Heilman, 2005; Nwobodo, 2008). For instance, in Chicago, Crawford (2000) looked at the expectations of women in typical male jobs in leadership positions in Chicago, Illinois. The survey was carried out on 120 MBA students enrolled at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University, and further restricted to those who have an average of four (4) years field experience. Two (2) sets of questionnaires were administered. The first was to find out whether women in typically female jobs are much more accepted when leading in a domineering style than women in typically male jobs. The second questionnaire addressed the issue of politeness, whether male subordinates found women to be less polite than female subordinates in a typically female setting. The study found that politeness is not the only factor affecting how subordinates see their managers; and by placing a woman in a typically female job, she is brought closer to the communal stereotype and it is expected to mediate the effect of gender stereotypes in leadership.

The work of Welle and Heilman (2005) explored the psychological dynamics that drive the expression of discrimination in the workplace in the US. The study revealed that gender discrimination is recognized as a problem by organizations, all of which are obligated by law to reduce it, and many of which believe that doing so will have a positive impact on the bottom line of their businesses. The authors stressed that reducing discrimination will ensure not only that women are selected, promoted, compensated and included based on their abilities and attributes, but those organizations themselves will be capitalizing fully on the talents of their women employees.

Another study in the US by Stewart, Bing, Gruys and Helford (2007) investigated gender differences in effective and continuance commitment, turnover intentions and psychological climate perceptions. A total of 553 (285 women, 268 men) questionnaires of employees holding a variety of job positions within the office supply organizations were analysed for the study. Results showed that female employees had higher levels of continuance commitment than men. There were no gender differences found for the climate dimensions when examining direct relationships. However, the task-oriented climate dimension of organizational support was a significant predictor of effective commitment and turnover intentions for men, whereas the relationship-oriented climate dimension of workplace recognition was a significant predictor of effective commitment and turnover intentions for women.

In the University of Florida, Green, Lopez, Wysocki and Kepner's (2012) study on diversity in the workforce provided a general definition for diversity, discussed the benefits of diversity in the workplace, the challenges of managing a diverse workplace and presented effective strategies for managing diverse workforces. The researchers established that a diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and marketplace and thus brings high value to organisations. Hence, management tools should be used to educate people about diversity issues.

Dimensions of Gender Bias/Inequity/Discrimination

Contextual gender inequity or inequality can be approached from either perspective. However, prevalent topics on gender are focused more toward the female gender. This may however be a consequence of persistent discriminatory inequality as noted by as (Khandaker, 2013) between men and women in all spheres of life. Greater part of the world still experience gender segregation, as was emphatically noted by (The European Union's Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men, 2013 in Staffansson, 2014). Anyalebechi (2016) points that women are discriminated against or marginalized in every human society and seen as an entrenched, global pandemic.

From the Nigerian context, Anyalebechi (2016) explains that embraced differential gender are consequences of embraced cultural norms of the society; with women being traditionally designated to occupations that require skills with cultural values. In Udegbe (2004), it was specific that the male and female genders go along with a number of stereo-type that inherently impose on either, role performances and possibilities of differing kinds. In Agbalajobi (2010) study, discrimination against women takes its roots in the nature of our societies which celebrate men as being the unique and stronger gender fit for the public while the females are feeble, weak and can remain within confinements. These statements of fact from the above researches are in consonance with the summary points by Jayachandran (2014) on the roots of gender inequalities in developing countries.

The real estate industry is not an exemption as it is male-gender dominant (Poon and Brownlow, 2016), this may indicate both a generational and an educational shift in the industry. It is expected that the industry should be able to attract both men and women (Crawford, 2000; Pauli, 2011). Gender issues have been studied globally from differing dimensions, be it in the academia and career choice (Ogbogu, 2011; Yussuff, 2014; David, 2015); strategy and human resource management (Verheul, Risseeuw and Bartelse, 2002; Fatile and Adejuwon, 2011); employability and professional practice (Antecol, Cobb-Clark, Helland, 2011; Egbenta, 2015;) performance in leadership and managerial aspirations in public organisations (Meier and Mastracci, 2006; Okafor, Fagbemi and Hassan, 2011); construction and real estate industry (Poirier, 2009; Pauli, 2011; Hyslop, 2011; Staffansson, 2013; Obamiro and Obasan, 2013; Singh, 2014; Poon and Brownlow, 2016). These studies form the bedrock for this research, it is however obvious that there is paucity of research in Nigeria with respect to gender issues in the real estate profession. On this note, this study is set to investigate women discrimination in the real estate profession in Lagos State with particular reference to Lagos Island.

Real Estate and Women: Discrimination in Workplace/Practice

The real estate industry in any economy positively influences revenue generation. Staffansson (2014) stated that it is an industry with a vast connect between the construction and financial industries; and is also strongly influenced by the engineering field. Hence, it is one of the largest sectors providing job opportunities for different sets of professionals like the estate surveyors and valuers, architects, builders, land surveyors, quantity surveyors amongst others (Egolum, 2002; Egbenta, 2012). Zwiech (2009) identified types of discrimination meted against women, these include employment discrimination, professional discrimination, position discrimination, discrimination in the access to training, and pay discrimination. Notably, these forms of discrimination limit advancement. Of reference is the work of Poirier (2009) that shed more light on the facilitators and barriers to career advancement of women in commercial real estate who have achieved top-level leadership positions. Survey was carried out on thirteen (13) women holding senior-level management positions in the commercial real estate industry. They were interviewed regarding facilitators to career advancement and notable barriers, the role of mentors and work life balance issues. Interviews were carried out over a period of three (3) weeks. From the findings, the women attribute their success to facilitators of career advancement such as strong work ethics, relationship building and risk taking. Also, majority of women leaders believed gender-based barriers to advancement have weakened and would continue to do so as more women enter the industry and companies commit to diversity and inclusion.

Findings from Ishaya, Makama and Sabo (2011) research on duties and challenges faced by female estate surveyors and valuers in Kaduna State reiterate that their qualifications do not necessarily determine occupation and assignments. The authors identified agency, management and valuation as the duties performed by the female estate surveyors and valuers while some of the challenges they face are family problems, limited hours of work amongst others. Obamiro and Obasan (2013) investigated the effects of glass ceiling on women career advancement evidenced from the Nigerian construction industry using eight relevant factors. Results interpret that there exists some level of gender equality in terms of employment and career development opportunities. However, this contrasts with the findings of (Clive and Warren, 2016; Warren and Antoniadis, 2016).

Cornell University Program in Real Estate (2010) provided a portrait of the successes and challenges facing men and women within the commercial real estate. It provided the trends impacting the industry over five (5) years through an online survey of two thousand nine hundred and one (2,901) male and female commercial real estate professionals representing numerous disciplines. The survey was also coupled with follow up telephone interview with selected respondents. Thirteen (13) representative organisations were given an in-depth 15-25 minute online survey and it is to measure the trends and track the status of women within the commercial real estate industry. The survey consisted of eighty-four (84) questions pertaining to various aspects of respondents' careers. Findings revealed that the division of male and female was 31% and 69% respectively. The identified challenges are work/life balance, management dynamics in the workplace and advancement.

Pauli (2011) looked at the real estate industry in Stockholm, Sweden from the gender point of view. The research was carried out within a duration of seven (7) years that is, between 2001 and 2008. Interviews were adopted to obtain information for the research work. Twenty-two (22) companies were analysed, fourteen (14) of them being housing companies and the remaining eight (8) as commercial real estate companies. The findings of the research showed that men are on the top level in these organisations; there were women working as CEOs in housing companies but none in the commercial real estate companies. There are more women on the management board in the housing companies. It was finally established that it would take time to move women into the industry and it would take more time to get women to top management positions, longer in commercial real estate companies than in the housing companies.

Hyslop (2011) focused on career opportunities and the barriers present for women in the commercial real estate sector in Sweden. Eighteen (18) women were interviewed about their individual experience and their views about the commercial real estate industry that they are involved in. Eleven (11) of them were holding executive positions, while the other seven (7) held lower cadre positions. Findings showed that many underlying processes and structures found in theory can be identified in the Swedish real estate industry today, even though much work currently is done in many organisations to change the unequal distribution of men and women, particularly in the management process. The author purposed a positive change in the real estate industry in Sweden as a whole.

Another study conducted by Lietz (2012) in the United States of America, lays the case for what appears to be endemic under representation of women in private equity, venture capital and private real estate firms in terms of employing and promoting women within their investment decisions. The study reviewed information on the public and private firms on the employment composition of two hundred and eighty-three (283) investment firms in the private market. One hundred and forty-four (144) of them are private equity firms, eighty-two (82) are real estate firms, forty-four (44) are venture capital firms while the remaining thirteen (13) are funds firms. The findings suggest that women do not have the same opportunities as men have in these firms but have been relegated to support roles in the system. The researcher concluded that to increase the number of women in the industry, it is needful to adopt a critical mass principle drawing on the lessons learned in other male dominated fields; requiring greater transparency and accountability; expand the pipeline in all levels of educational institutions; build and expand professional networks and change the climate and culture.

Singh (2014) highlighted the necessity of adopting Work-Life Balance (WLB) policies for females working at different levels in the real estate industry in Pune, India. An experimental survey was carried out which comprised the interview of sixty (60) female employees for about fifteen (15) minutes each. These women came from different real estate companies in the country. The findings suggested that most females have a good sense about the construction company and that the female employees to the tune of 68.34% were not satisfied because they could not balance their work life as well as their personal life.

Poon and Brownlow (2016) embarked on a study to investigate gender impact in employment outcomes and patterns of real estate graduates. Data for the study was collected from Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) for the years 2010-2012. Methods adopted included dimensionality reduction -to prepare the data set for further analysis, other descriptive and statistical analysis methods. The research findings indicate that gender has an impact on the contract type. Stating in further details that the recent male built environment graduates in Australia are more likely to gain full-time and permanent employment in more professionally or technically inclined roles with higher levels of salary than females who were relegated to the secretarial or administrative duties. The results of this study corroborate with outcomes of previous related researches in the construction industry (Court and Moralee, 1995; Avera, 2007; and Cartwright, Edwards and Wang, 2011; Ishaya, Makama and Sabo, 2011; Staffansson 2013).

3. Materials and Methods

The study employed the basic survey method for data collection. This also describes the two sources of data used. These were; primary and secondary sources. The latter comprised mainly of relevant data from published journal articles, reports and textbooks. Primary data was obtained through administering questionnaires related to gender inequality, dominance and challenges in the real estate profession to its target population of registered estate surveying and valuation firms in Lagos State with a total number of 339 according to the NIESV directory of 2014. The study concerned itself with the estate surveying and valuation firms in Lagos Island totaling 155 making up the sample frame. Employed was the recommendation by Nwana (1981) that a half of the sample frame can be an adequate sample size. Therefore a total of seventy-eight (78) estate surveying and valuation firms in Lagos Island were sampled and a response rate of 58 percent was retrieved and analysed with a view to achieving the stated objectives of the study. The study employed descriptive statistics for data analysis specifically frequency distribution, percentages and mean scores. The frequency distribution and percentages showed the demography of the estate surveyors and valuers. The mean scores were used to rank the variables in addition to frequency distributions and percentages. The variables employed were on factors causing the real estate profession to be dominated by the male gender, departments the female Estate Surveyors and Valuers were engaged in, challenges female Estate Surveyors and Valuers encounter and solutions to the identified challenges. The Estate Surveyors and Valuers' responses were measured on a five-point Likert format from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

4. Results and Discussions

Out of the forty-five (45) respondents from Estate Surveying and Valuation firms, 64% were male and 36% female (Table 1). This represents ratio 2:1, which means for every one female estate surveyor and valuer in an estate firm, there are two male estate surveyors and valuers. This result confirmed the work of Ishaya, Makama and Sabo (2011) carried out in Kaduna, Nigeria. The table also revealed that majority (Male = 79%; Female = 94%) of the estate surveyors and valuers had 1-10years of experience, B.Sc/HND holder (Male = 90%; Female = 100%) and probationer/associate (Male = 90%; Female = 94%) members of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV).

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Estate Surveyors and Valuers

		Male		Female	
		Frequency	Perc. (%)	Frequency	Perc. (%)
Gender		29	100	16	100
Years of Experience	1 - 5years	14	48	3	19
	6 - 10years	9	31	12	75
	11 - 15years	4	14	1	6
	16years and above	2	7	0	0
	Total	29	100	16	100
Educational Qualification	B.Sc / HND	26	90	16	100
	M.Sc	3	10	0	0
	Ph.D	0	0	0	0
	Total	29	100	16	100
Professional Qualification	Probationer	14	48	3	19
	ANIVS	12	41	12	75
	FNIVS	1	4	0	0
	Others	2	7	1	6
	Total	29	100	16	100

4.1 Factors Causing the Real Estate Industry to be Male Dominated

The analysis in Table 1 has established that there are more male estate surveyors and valuers than female estate surveyors and valuers in the real estate industry to the tune of 2:1. The study thus sought to investigate into why the industry is gender bias by male dominance. Table 2 shows the views of both the male and female estate surveyors and valuers in the study area by assigning 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 to “Strongly Agree”, ”Agree”, “Indifferent”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” respectively. Their responses are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors Influencing the Proportion of Male to Female in Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms

Factors	Male							Female						
	SA (5)	A (4)	I (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	M	R	SA (5)	A (4)	I (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	M	R
Working long and odd hours	50.0	25.0	6.3	0	18.8	3.88	5 th	48.3	48.3	0	3.4	0	4.42	1 st
Men opting to hire men	50.0	25.0	6.3	12.5	6.3	4.00	4 th	44.8	37.9	13.8	3.4	0	4.24	2 nd
Strenuous nature of the job	62.5	18.8	12.5	6.3	0	4.38	1 st	37.9	34.5	17.2	10.3	0	4.00	3 rd

Difficulty in women becoming partners	50.0	18.8	12.5	18.8	0	4.00	3 rd	37.9	31.0	20.7	10.3	0	3.96	4 th
Sexual harassment	31.3	31.3	25.0	12.5	0	3.82	6 th	24.1	37.9	24.1	13.8	0	3.72	5 th
Lack of self-confidence	31.3	56.3	6.3	6.3	0	4.13	2 nd	17.2	41.4	17.2	20.7	3.4	3.48	6 th
Discrepancies in gender wages	18.8	43.8	18.8	18.8	0	3.63	7 th	20.7	31.0	27.6	13.8	6.9	3.45	7 th

Note: Figures are in percentages

From the point of view of the male estate surveyors and valuers, the first and second factors that account for the estate surveying and valuation firms to be dominated by men are the strenuous nature of the job and lack of self-confidence on the part of the female estate surveyors and valuers. However, the female estate surveyors and valuers are of the opinion that estate firms are dominated by the male gender because of encouraged long and odd hours of work and most times, male estate surveyors and valuers prefer to employ male surveyors rather than female. The least relevant factor from the points of view of both male and female estate surveyors and valuers is discrepancies in gender wages. This implies that they do not concur to the fact that there is discrepancies in wages, even if there is, it is not due to gender.

4.2 Departments of Female Estate Surveyors and Valuers

The female estate surveyors and valuers were asked to identify the department they are often attached to in the estate firms they have worked with or presently work with. To achieve this, questionnaires were administered to the sixteen (16) female surveyors and valuers identified earlier in Table 1. To do this, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 were assigned to “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Indifferent”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” respectively. Table 3 shows their responses.

Table 3: Departments of the Female Estate Surveyors and Valuers

Department/Duties	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Indifference (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	Rank
Agency/Property Management	12.0	69.0	19.0	0.0	0.0	3.94	3 rd
All Departments in the profession	6.0	69.0	19.0	6.0	0.0	3.76	6 th
Valuation	12.0	63.0	19.0	6.0	0.0	3.82	5 th
Property Management	69.0	19.0	6.0	6.0	0.0	4.51	1 st
Facilities Management	6.0	50.0	25.0	12.0	6.0	3.88	4 th
Agency	25.0	69.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	4.19	2 nd

Note: Figures are in percentages

The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows that management, agency and agency/management were ranked first 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively as the departments that female estate surveyors and valuers were often attached to. It can also be observed from the table that very few female estate surveyors and valuers have the privilege of working in all the departments available in the profession. This is clearly shown by a mean 3.76 as against management department that had a mean of 4.51. The difference of 0.75 is a clear indication that there is a bit of discrimination even in the departments that the few female estate surveyors and valuers employed in estate firms are attached to.

This result is consistent with the findings of Lietz (2012) in the US that observed that women are not given the same opportunities as men.

4.3 Challenges Encounter by Female Estate Surveyors and Valuers

The researchers sought to know the challenges the female estate surveyors and valuers encounter during the course of discharge of their duties in the firms. This was done with a view to determine their challenges and proffer solutions to same. Table 4 shows the ranking of same.

Table 4: Challenges Encounter by Female Estate Surveyors and Valuers

Challenges	SA (5)	A (4)	I (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	M	R
Women perceived as lacking leadership qualities	31.3	43.8	0	6.3	18.8	3.63	8 th
Misconception of work ethics of female ESVs	43.8	31.3	6.3	6.3	12.5	3.88	7 th
Sexual harassment	43.8	25.0	18.8	6.3	6.3	3.94	6 th
Female ESVs not considered for partnership	56.3	18.8	6.3	12.5	6.3	4.07	5 th
Discrimination and bias	62.5	18.8	0	6.3	12.5	4.13	3 rd
Limited travelling for female ESVs	62.5	12.5	6.3	12.5	6.3	4.13	3 rd
Women seen as not being capable of practicing the profession	50.0	37.5	0	6.3	6.3	4.25	2 nd
Balance work and the home front	62.5	18.8	6.3	6.3	6.3	4.26	1 st

Note: Figures are in percentages

The table shows that the female estate surveyor and valuers have difficulty in balancing work and the home front. They are seen as not being capable of practicing the profession as they cannot meet the demanded requirements; part of which include frequent travels because of the responsibilities at the home-front, of which their male counterparts take on very comfortably. Table 4.4 further shows that female Estate Surveyors and Valuers indicated the following as the least of confronting issues concerned with their lines of duty. Firstly, they do not believe that they are perceived as lacking leadership qualities; secondly, there is little or no misconception of work ethics; and thirdly, the issue of sexual harassment.

4.4. Solutions to Gender Discrimination in Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms

The respondents were asked to proffer solutions to the issue of gender in the real estate profession. This question was poised to only female estate surveyors and valuers to give their candid responses. Their responses is analysed in Table 5.

Table 5: Solutions to Gender Discrimination in Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms

Solutions	SA (5)	A (4)	I (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	M	R
Female ESVs should not go on inspection alone to avoid sexual harassment	56.3	25.0	6.3	12.5	0.0	4.25	6 th
Estate firms should be willing to mentor the female ESVs	50.0	37.5	6.3	6.3	0.0	4.32	5 th
The profession should be marketed to female students in tertiary institutions	56.3	37.5	0.0	0.0	6.3	4.38	4 th
Partnership possibility for female ESVs	75.0	12.5	0	6.3	6.3	4.44	3 rd
Work-Life Balance programmes should be organised for female ESVs	62.5	31.3	6.3	0.0	0.0	4.57	2 nd
Female ESVs must be proactive on their own	87.5	6.3	0.0	0.0	6.3	4.69	1 st

Note: Figures are in percentages

From the ranking in Table 5, the option of Female ESVs being proactive on their own came 1st, followed by the possibility of female owners of estate firms organising work-life balance programmes for female Estate Surveyors and Valuers in order for them to survive in the profession. These imply that the respondents believe that gender issues can be solved if the few female estate surveyors and valuers already employed are given opportunities just like their male counterparts to be partners in their firms when they are able to fulfill all conditions that warrant appointment.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the female estate surveyors and valuers should be proactive and strive to be at par or even better than their male colleagues since most female estate surveyors and valuers are relatively aware of male dominance in the profession. Moreover, the governing bodies of the profession [Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) and Estate Surveyors and Valuers Registration Board of Nigeria (ESVARBON)] should spearhead the notion for more conscious efforts of the managing partners of firms to make some of the female ESVs to be partners in such firms. Furthermore, the large difference in the number of male to female estate surveyors and valuers did not begin at the practice level but at the choice of discipline from secondary school through entry into the higher institution. Hence, this study recommends that female students should be encouraged to take subjects that would foster the ambition of finally becoming Estate Surveyors and Valuers during career talks especially in the junior class level. In addition, at post-graduation, the female graduates of the Departments of Estate Management should be sensitised to practice the profession.

Acknowledgement

This is to appreciate the Management of Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria for their financial and other supports of this research.

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