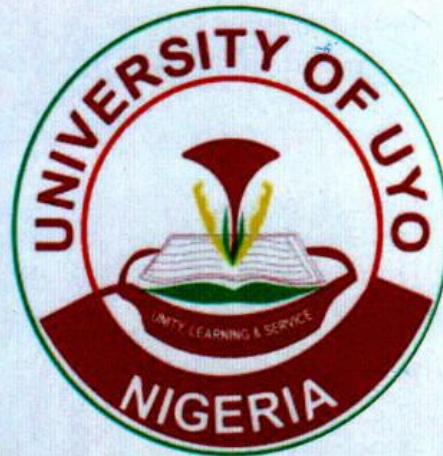


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ISSUES AFFECTING GENDERED ROLES OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Urbanization and attendant challenges affect urban residents differently. There is also a consensus that these challenges affect men and women in diverse ways. This includes gender-based differentials observed in access to decent work opportunities, access to financial assets and housing security, fair tenure rights, access to services, use of open space, engagement in public governance structures and personal security. Studies reveal that these challenges and perceived gaps are further exacerbated gender defined factors that assign roles in all spheres of the society. The study examined gender issues as they affect performance of professionals in the town planning profession. Results were obtained by subjecting the field data to analysis on a 5-point likert scale. Findings reveal that masculinity norms and culture (with a mean score of 3.60) as well as definitive gender roles set aside by our culture and tradition (with a mean score of 3.50) constitute gender issues of concern among town planning professionals. The study recommends gender mainstreaming as a panacea for improved inclusiveness of women.

Keywords: Gendered Roles, Urban Planning Profession, Built Environment

Introduction

Urbanization has been conceptualized as the demographic process whereby an increasing share of the national population lives within urban settlements (Aroura, Youssef, Nguyen-Viet and Soucat, 2014). Urbanization result from the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, both within their own countries and trans-nationally; arising from attraction of the population to economic, cultural, social and educational opportunities, along with the quality of life that a city provides (Hoornweg, Freire, Baker-Gallegos,

and Saldivar-Sali, 2013). UNDESA (2018) observed that in 2018, 1.7 billion people (23% of the world's population) lived in a city with at least 1 million inhabitants. In 2030, a projected 28% of people worldwide will be concentrated in cities with at least 1 million inhabitants. Currently, cities with more than 10 million inhabitants are termed 'megacities', and globally, the number of megacities is projected to rise from 33 in 2018 to 43 in 2030. In the past few decades, urbanization and urban growth have accelerated in many developing countries. In 1900, 10% of the world's population lived in cities. Today, the figure is over 50%, and it will reach 75% by 2050. Urban populations are growing quickly - 2.5 percent a year in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3.3 percent in Northern Africa, 4 percent for Asia and the Pacific and 5 percent in Africa. But international comparisons are complicated by differing national definitions of urban areas. In Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the overall ratio of women to men is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, and the inverse is true for Africa and Asia.

There is increasing evidence that men and women experience cities in diverse ways in terms of access to decent work opportunities, access to financial assets and housing security, fair tenure rights, access to services, use of open space, engagement in public governance structures and personal security. Impliedly, that is to say that although cities and towns, compared to rural areas, generally offer women more diverse work opportunities to increase financial independence, they do not benefit from urbanization and the opportunities in cities equally (WUNRN, 2014). Beyond the fears and risks of outright violence and assault, women and girls face gender-based discrimination across all aspects of daily life. These ranges from gender-based violence to more subtle discrimination, including exclusion from political and socio-economic participation and limited access to services in the context of economic development and privatization. The sheer lack of inclusiveness, gender-sensitive and poor policy frameworks have resulted in exclusionary trends in development generally and in professional development particularly. These issues are predicated on gender construct and society's definition of gender-based roles. Thus, recent researches focus on the significance of entrenching gender perspectives in all aspect of issues affecting urban governance in order to uncover existing patterns in work place disparities and effects of such disparities (Onwuemele and Coker, 2017). Similarly, the inherent insensitivity to gender differences in the way the city is perceived and used also affect residents' ability to make more informed choices has received widespread investigation (Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2009). Gender perspectives in the urban planning profession is based on the concept that those who are affected by decisions have the right to be involved in the

decision-making process. Hence, this paper seeks to explore the various issues affecting gendered roles among professionals in the built environment sub sector in Nigeria.

GENDER AND THE QUESTION OF SOCIETAL CONSTRUCT

Although often used interchangeably, the terms sex and gender do not mean the same thing. Though loosely interconnected, both refer to two different connotations in our society. UNESCO (2003) posit that sex has an exclusively biological connotation, whereas gender refers to socially constructed notions about masculine and feminine roles that may or may not coincide with notions of a person's sex. More specifically, gender refers to the social attributes, roles, and responsibilities associated with being male or female. In that regard, gender is a social and cultural construct that assigns roles, behaviors, identities, and responsibilities, and at the same time, limitations, to girls, women, boys and men (Escalante and Valdivia, 2015). It also refers to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relationships between women and those between men. It describes expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes, and likely or appropriate behaviours of both women and men, including what it means to be masculine or feminine. Thus, gender roles and expectations attributed to being male or female are learned. Such roles are not fixed but can and do change over time.

The place of gender in broad social and political issue therefore determines men's and women's rights, participation, access to power, and social and political status. Implicitly, the concept of gender is vital to examining systems of subordination and domination and understanding how such systems are socially constructed. Gender roles, responsibilities, norms, expectations, and stereotypes that are accorded to men and women in different ways directly affect power relationships in society, such as division of labour and decision-making structures. Gender becomes relational when it does not exclusively refer to women or men but rather to relations between them. Socialization and stereotypes teach and reinforce these ideas and expectations thereby making gender consideration a key factor in examining the power relations in various groups of people. Gender effects in the built environment sub sector throughout the world has resulted in, amongst other things, a steady growth in studies aimed at analyzing and highlighting the "gender" factor and bias within the nature of housing and urban planning legislation (Wang, 2008).

Gender perspectives in the Built Environment Sub sector

The effects of gender have rarely been sufficiently addressed in the urban planning profession just like in any other built environment profession.

Urban planning profession has traditionally been "gender blind" and such challenge poses a great need for reinventing planning ideals to make it an inclusive process. The unequal representation of each gender in the profession plays a hindering role to this need (CAP, 2009). This assertion is in agreement with the views of Clarke et al (2005) who observed that in most developed countries; the built environment profession is the most male dominated and one of the biggest industrial employer as well as major contributor to the gross domestic product. Jimoh et al (2016) also noted that in the UK, between 1990 to 2005, the percentage of women employed in the built environment has remained broadly stable between 10% to 12% of the entire workforce. Similarly, Biquelet-Lock, Divine and Crabb (2020), also notes that the Royal Town Planning Institute comprises of 39% female membership and 61% male membership in the UK, while having final year student membership of 45% male and 55% female. The persistent unequal gender representation in urban planning has led UK government exploring ways of utilizing the skills of women and also examining ways to encourage women's entry into male-dominated jobs (op. cit, 2016).

Aside from the UK, the majority of the European countries employ an average of 10% female workforce, while women constitute 8% of all employees in the construction sector (Aulin and Jigmond, 2011). However, in recent times there has been an increase with Austria and Germany having 13.5% and 12% respectively of active women participation in their construction sectors indicating the highest female employment rate among European countries. On the contrary, women participation is the lowest in Greece with only 2%, while Malta and Portugal have 4.3% of women participation in the construction sector. Most of the member countries have high level of participation ranging between 5% and 9%. Countries such as Romania, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Lithuania and France have between 9% and 10% of women in the construction industry (Jimoh et al, 2016). A cursory look at statistics reveals that most women in the construction industry within the European Union serve as administrators, technicians and professionals rather than skilled laborers. In the UK for instance, 78% of women employed in the construction industry are involved in administrative work. Moreover, women constitute less than 6% of construction workers in the specialized and managerial levels of the industry (Jimoh et al, 2016).

In recent times, over these past years in Europe, the male dominance in the urban and building design profession has become less pronounced and decreasing as the number of female urban design professionals who graduate from university increases (Marita et al, 2018). Overall, the proportion of female architects is 39% among a total of 565,000 architects in Europe.

However, the proportion varies between countries ranging from 15% in Estonia to 58% in Greece and Latvia. Sweden is among the countries with the highest percentage of female architects. For instance, females constitute 53% of members of the Swedish Association of architects (total of 12,393 members), which encompasses architects (48% females of 8733 in total), landscape architects (73% females of 1852 in total) and urban planners (64% females of 1807 in total), according to Marita et al (2018).

The trend is not similar in the United State of America. The unequal representation of each gender is slowly declining in the USA. Warren (2003), noted that in the USA, the built environment profession is the fastest growing industry for women, although only about 3% of the those employed by the industry comprises of women, an increasing number of women are starting new business in the field. Schrum and Geisler (2003) further agreed to this point when they noted that markets tend to not treat women equal to men but to treat women as individuals in their own right and on their merit. Jimoh et al (2016) also observed that the built environment profession is the fastest growing segment for female business owners as it has increased by more than 30% since 1997, and government efforts to award contracts to the less-privileged and women-owned business in the USA are responsible for this trend.

On the other hand, Jimoh et al (2016) noted that despite the glaring need for equal gender representation in the built environment professions, there was limited participation of women in the professions in the developing countries due to perceived factors. In the developing countries, women in the construction sector are generally employed as laborers and helpers unlike in the western countries where women are employed in administrative, technical and professional work (Jimoh et al, 2016). In South Africa, a career in the construction industry has not been a popular choice for women, with only 12.4% of participation as opposed to the social industry where 55% of the posts are filled by women (Statistics South Africa, 2003). Wells (2004) had noted that in some Asian countries like Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, women account for 95%, 88%, and 78% respectively of employees in construction industries but as labourers rather than professionals. In Nigeria women in the construction industry make up just 13.3% of the overall workforce and 60% of them employed as clerks, sales and service persons, a mere 1.6% of the largest occupational group tradesperson and related workers are women. Women also represent 9% of the total number of architects in Nigeria (Enwerekewe and Mangden, 2019). In quantity surveying profession, the ratio of female to male participation is 1:8 in the South-East part of Nigeria (Nnamdi et al, 2019).

These global attestations to unequal representation as well as the low participation of women in the built environment professions in Nigeria portend that certain factors need to be investigated. Such could be generated by a number of cultural ethics and values existing among the people groups and which differ from place to place. In Nigeria, Adeyemi et al, (2006) observed that the amalgamated ethnic groups that make up Nigeria as well as low level of orientation about the professions such as family obligations, fear of competition with men, female preference for other jobs, gender discrimination, lack of mentoring, lack of career progression, orientation on the nature of the industry, socio-cultural perceptions as well as sexual harassment could be responsible. The fear of competition with men is a deterring factor as Marita *et al* (2018) in their research observed that female professionals in the built environment industry rated their possibility to influence environmental aspects low unlike the male professionals who rated their own possibility to influence the environmental aspects high. The female professionals however placed great importance on environmental aspects even though they felt their possibility to influence was low. Conversely, the male participants felt they had greatest possibility to influence the environment although some males rated the importance of environmental aspects the lowest. The gender differences identified are important from an equality and environmental perspective as they may influence pro-environmental behaviour among professionals and ultimately influence the environment performance of the built environment (Marita et al, 2018). Enwerekowe and Mangden (2019) also stated that low female participation in the built environment professions in Nigeria was also associated with poor work-life balance, client perception, pay disparity, incompatible work culture, unemployability, recession, discrimination and sexism (more on site than in the office) and definitive gender roles that has long been held as deterring factors for women.

Gender discourse has also been entrenched in urban planning studies. Central to popular arguments is the notion that urban planning professionals do not take the unpaid work of women and girls such as domestic and care work into consideration when planning and managing cities. Women not only perceive and experience cities in different ways to men, but also use public spaces in different ways (UN Women/Safe Cities Global Programme, 2009). Women living in insecure neighborhoods are more likely to need to commute in the early or late hours to and from work, school or market. These routines may result in them being exposed to the risk of sexual assault especially if water collection is involved (UN Women /Safe Cities Global Programme, 2009). Additionally, traditional planning based on land use separation has led to fragmented urban environments where districts are in separate places linked by

extensive roads and transportation systems. These practices have long been criticized for isolating women at home, making access to services and facilities inconvenient, and discouraging home-based work (Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2009) because for many women, especially the poor, the home is a productive space where they work to earn a living. This has implication not only for zoning but also for plot size and design of housing. Planners oftentimes fail to understand how and where to best provide services and infrastructures to enable women to live efficiently and effectively (Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2009).

Work-place gender issues have also been in the front burner of recent researches. Such investigations are aimed at measuring discrepancies in wages, victimizations, unequal treatments and glaring biases.

Methodological Investigation into the Factors affecting gendered roles in Urban Planning Profession in Akwa Ibom State

Despite the increasing proportion of women in Town planning, women still face gender bias in variety of ways. Women in the planning profession still face a significant wage gap and they experience subtle or blatant forms of harassment and discrimination (Wang, 2008). Despite the glaring bias, planners have been unable to adequately cater for the problematic nature of gender perspectives (Wang, 2008).

In Nigeria, women in the built environment professions are under-represented and have slower practice development in recent years (Enwerekwe and Mangden, 2019). This was blamed on issues such as sheer lack of desire to progress, lack of mentors, wage gap, client perception, gender discrimination, definitive gender roles and so on. Nnadi et al (2019) observed that the male dominated nature of the professions also prevented higher participation by women as well as translation of qualifications into employment. They also asserted that the conservative nature of women in the built environment profession is a big hindrance to the awareness level of female professionals in Nigeria. Various traces of the conservative nature include the lack of good marketing strategy, sub-consultant status, inability to embrace change and inability to invest in the necessary technology. Due to the importance of gender perspectives in the urban planning and other built environment professions, this study seeks to investigate the gender differences in the urban planning profession in Akwa Ibom state, factors behind the differences and possible ways to reconcile the differences.

The study used data obtained from 113 respondents who are registered members of the Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP) to examine the perception of respondents with respect to socio-cultural factors and job

performance factors as they affect gendered roles of professionals in the town planning profession in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Using data obtained from field survey, this study investigated the dominant factors that affect gendered roles in the urban planning profession in Akwa Ibom state. The study surveyed 113 respondents who were registered members of the Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP). The male respondents were 96 (85%) and female respondents were 17 representing only 15%; The result revealed that there were more male respondents than the female respondents in town planning profession in Akwa Ibom state. The mean and median age of respondents were 43 years and 44 years respectively with a standard deviation is 7.720 suggesting a young population of town planners.

Planners with M.URP/MSc constituted a total of 60 town planners (53.1%) which makes it the educational qualification with the highest number of town planners in the state. This is explained by MSc/MURP being requirement for professional registration into the Town Planners Registration council (TOPREC). Those with B.URP were total 31 persons (27.4%), 12(10.6%) hold PhD while those with HND/B.Tech were only 3 town planners. A greater percentage of town planners in the state (50.4%) work as public servants while those in the private sector constitute 36.3%. Those in the academia constitute the lowest category that is 13.3% of the total number surveyed.

The study also investigated the current head of planning agencies among practicing town planners. 92.0% of male the respondents indicated to have headed functional planning agencies while only 8.0% of the females indicated to have headed a functional planning agency in the state. In other words, survey shows a dominance of males in the administrative cadre of most planning organizations.

The survey further examined the factors affecting gender roles in the urban planning profession in Akwa Ibom State. Using a 5-point likert scale of basis of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree as well as their weights of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1; the study assessed the perceptions of the town planning professionals on gendered roles as they affect planning practice in the state. Weighted values were obtained for each of the factors and tested against established decision rule as put forward by Wole (2006). According to Wole (2006), the following can be used as the length in each of the scale for interpretation:

Strongly Disagree = 1 - 1.5

Disagree = 1.51 - 2.49

Undecided = 2.50 - 3.49
Agree = 3.50 - 4.49
Strongly Agree = 4.50

Thus, the sum total of each of the factors was divided by 113 which is the study population to arrive at interpretation. Table 5.1 -5.4 shows the criteria for assessment, frequency and weighted scores obtained.

Table 1. Perceptions Affecting Gender Roles in The Urban Planning Profession

Perceptions on Gender	SA (5)	WV	A (4)	WV	UD (3)	WV	D (2)	WV	SD (1)	WV
Masculinity norms and culture has a serious impact on the gender roles in Town Planning in the State	9	45	79	316	2	6	17	34	6	6
Gender discrimination plays a part in reducing the prominent role of female town planners in the State	9	45	33	132	2	6	49	98	20	20
Definitive gender roles set aside by our culture and tradition influences the roles of Town Planners in terms of their gender	21	105	52	208	13	39	17	34	10	10
Sexism and sexual harassment has affected the roles our women play in the town planning profession	2	10	10	40	12	36	58	116	31	31
Socio-cultural perception influences the roles of gender in Town Planning	16	55	27	108	8	24	42	84	20	20

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 above presents respondents perception on how socio-cultural and gender defined roles affects town planning practice. On the 'agree' scale, more respondents agreed that incompatible nature of work and family life of women (with a frequency score of 66) and the unemployability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions (with a frequency score of 65) constituted a factor that explains gender perceptions among practicing town planners the state.

On the undecided scale, client's preference to deal with male over female planners had the highest frequency of 33 while on the disagree scale, pay

disparity had the highest frequency of 70 while incompatible nature of work and family life had the lowest frequency of 13. Client's perception, perceived inability of female town planners to influence environmental aspects, incompatible nature of work and family life, unemployability nature of the profession outside planning agencies had the lowest frequencies of 0 each while pay disparity had the highest frequency of 12. The perception of the respondents tilting towards Undecided for observed factors indicate that such factors do not constitute glaring issues of concern as regards gender issues among the sampled population.

Table 2. Socio-cultural Factors Affecting Gender Roles in The Urban Planning Profession

Factors	Sum	Mean (sum/113)	Consensus Opinion
Masculinity norms and culture has a serious impact on the gender roles in Town Planning in the State	407	3.60	Agree
Gender discrimination plays a part in reducing the prominent role of female town planners in the State	301	2.66	undecided
Definitive gender roles set aside by our culture and tradition influences the roles of Town Planners in terms of their gender	396	3.50	Agree
Sexism and sexual harassment has affected the roles our women play in the town planning profession	233	2.06	Disagree
Socio-cultural perception influences the roles of gender in Town Planning	291	2.58	Undecided

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As presented above, a significant number of respondents (407) with a mean score of 3.60 agreed that masculinity norms and culture as well as definitive gender roles set aside by our culture and tradition has serious impact on the gender roles in Town Planning profession in the State. This further explains how factors such as client's preference to deal with male town planners than their female counterparts as well as fear of rejection of the female Town Planner's services influences their performance in the profession. (See table 4)

Table 3: Factors affecting gender roles and Performance in Town Planning Profession

Factors	SA (5)	WV (4)	A (3)	UD (2)	D (1)	WV (1)	SD (1)	WV	SD	WV
Client perception on a Planner's ability based on gender affects their professional practice ability	13	65	66	264	11	33	23	46	0	0
Pay disparity between Town planners discourages equal participation of both genders in the profession	7	35	4	16	15	45	70	140	12	12
Disorientation on the nature of the Town Planning industry means that there is no level playing ground for both genders with the male having advantage over the female	7	35	35	140	28	84	37	74	6	6
Fear of rejection on the part of female Town Planners influences their performance in the profession	10	50	45	180	15	45	38	76	5	5
The perceived inability of female town planners to influence environmental aspects affects their performance in the profession	7	35	51	204	21	63	29	58	3	3
Incompatible nature of work and family life restricts the efficiency of female Town Planners	29	145	65	260	5	15	13	26	0	0
Un-employability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions affects efficiency of the female gender in the profession	23	115	49	196	25	75	15	30	0	0
Generally, clients prefer to deal with male town planners than their female counterparts	9	45	23	92	33	99	46	92	2	2

Source: Field survey, 2021

The survey further investigated workplace factors as they affect the town planning practice

From table 3 above, on the agree scale, more respondents agreed that incompatible nature of work and family life of women (with a frequency score of 66) and the unemployability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions (with a frequency score of 65) constituted a factor that explains gender perceptions among practicing town planners the state.

On the undecided scale, client's preference to deal with male over female planners had the highest frequency of 33 while on the disagree scale, pay disparity had the highest frequency of 70 while incompatible nature of work and family life had the lowest frequency of 13. Client's perception, perceived inability of female town planners to influence environmental aspects, incompatible nature of work and family life, unemployability nature of the

profession outside planning agencies had the lowest frequencies of 0 each while pay disparity had the highest frequency of 12.

Table 4: Weighted Values, Mean Scores and Consensus Opinion of Respondents' perception on Selected factors affecting gender roles and Performance in Town Planning Profession

Factors	Sum	Mean (Sum/113)	Consensus Opinion
Client perception on a Planner's ability based on gender affects their professional practice ability	408	3.61	Agree
Pay disparity between Town planners discourages equal participation of both genders in the profession	248	2.19	Disagree
Disorientation on the nature of the Town Planning industry means that there is no level playing ground for both genders with the male having advantage over the female	339	3.00	Undecided
Fear of rejection on the part of female Town Planners influences their performance in the profession	356	3.15	Undecided
The perceived inability of female town planners to influence environmental aspects affects their performance in the profession	363	3.21	Undecided
Incompatible nature of work and family life restricts the efficiency of female Town Planners	446	3.86	Agree
Un-employability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions affects efficiency of the female gender in the profession	406	3.95	Agree
Generally, clients prefer to deal with male town planners than their female counterparts	416	3.68	Undecided

Source: Field Data Analysis, 2021

From table above, consensus opinion on the various factors showed that most respondents agreed that incompatible nature of work and family life with a weighted value of (446) and mean score of (3.86) significantly affect the efficiency of female Town Planners. Other factors that also affect performance are unemployability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions as well as clients' perception of a planner's ability based on their gender affect their professional practice ability. Respondents were however undecided on how fear of rejection on the part of female Town Planners, perceived inability of female town planners to influence environmental aspects or clients prefer to deal with male town planners than their female counterparts affect the performance of female town planners

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper has x-rayed the various factors affecting the performance of town planning professional in the built environment sub sector. A regards socio-cultural factor, in the wider societal context, such factors as masculinity norms and culture as well as definitive gender roles set aside by our culture and tradition constitute gender issues of concern among the target population. Other factors such as sexism and sexual harassment as well as socio-cultural perceptions are not deeply entrenched as gender issues among the sampled population. Outcome of the analysis further reveal that at the micro workplace context, factors such as client's perception on a planner's ability based on gender significantly affects their professional practice. Other factors with significantly high perception include incompatible nature of work and family life restricts the efficiency of female Town Planners and the high unemployability nature of the profession outside planning agencies and academic institutions.

There is therefore need for a gendered planning practice where sensitive gender differences are addressed. The panacea is the entrenchment of gender streaming principles and an understanding of such programmes as complex processes with political, socio-economic, socio-cultural dimensions that affect men and women in important and diverse ways within and between professions. Such processes provide a framework whereby the views of women and men, boys and girls are taken equally when undertaking budgeting, consultation, design and evaluation of physical and social infrastructure such as housing, employment generation schemes, community services, transport as advocated by Commonwealth Association of Planners (2009).

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