

ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES SUCCESS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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Article history:	Abstract:
Published: 10 th March 2022	The construction industry remains an importance booster of entrepreneurial opportunities within and outside Abuja metropolis Built Environment (BE). This study investigates the barriers to women entrepreneurial opportunities success within Abuja metropolis BE. Convenient random sampling technique was employed to administer 108 structured questionnaires to female construction professionals and general entrepreneurs within Abuja metropolis, out of which 89 were returned. Percentile and Mean Index Score (MIS) were the analytical method applied to analyze the data. The findings from the study identified Women's lack of financial and credit facilities, lack of natural love for the BE and inadequate BE entrepreneurial technical expertise are the top barriers to women BE environment entrepreneurial opportunities with a high mean index score of 4.83, 4.78 and 4.67 respectively. The study concludes that it is imperative for women to participate in construction enterprises in order to widen the array of entrepreneurial opportunities prevalent in the industry. The study recommends that emphasis should be on the provision of adequate and financial resources to women, improvement of women construction entrepreneurial skills and family-society motivation for women who are willing to venture into construction enterprise.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Opportunities; Build Environment; Abuja metropolis; Barriers; Women; Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The Built Environment (BE) is critical to the performances of the construction industry which can significantly affect a nation's economic growth and job opportunities. The BE in Abuja metropolis like many others are dominated by male workers and entrepreneurs. Workers in the BE work as professionals and managers, planning, organizing, and advising on specialized activities which involve planning, organizing, and management of construction resources and activities (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013). The contribution of Women to the economy is critical for the growth of the private sector that is largely prevalent in Abuja metropolis, which provides a significant share of job opportunities (Aneke, 2021). Women's inclusion in private-sector industrial activities within Abuja metropolis, can significantly contribute to economic growth and empowerment (Balogun et al., 2016). The construction industry is the world's second-largest male-dominated industry among all major industrial groups (Galea et al., 2015). Despite the industry's male dominance, Women entrepreneurs have been observed to establish their presence and surviving over time (Mathur-Helm, 2011; Aneke, 2021). Entrepreneurs share a number of distinct and similar characteristics which includes being an optimist in the sense that they maintain a positive attitude despite disappointments, setbacks, and past failures (Haupt & Ndimande, 2019). Because senior female executives are uncommon in most male-dominated industries within and outside Abuja metropolis, Women entrepreneurs in the construction industry have few role models (English & Hay, 2015). Furthermore, the BE within and outside Abuja BE has largely failed to take into account some of the most important issues related to Women's obligations to their jobs and families (Munyoki, 2018). Women work in administrative, technical and professional positions in the construction industry (Lombardi, 2017). Very few Women work in entrepreneurship, and data on these Women are scarce to non-existent (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014). Apart from being identified as a sector unsuitable for Women due to the nature of most of its tasks being physically demanding, the construction industry is regarded as a 4D industry with a BE perpetually seen as having negative public image of being dull, dirty, dangerous and difficult, resulting in low female participation (Francis, 2017; Nalitolela et al., 2020), which often affects Women participation in entrepreneurship opportunities within Abuja BE.

Female participation in the BE entrepreneurship is increasing in some countries, including India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom (Francis, 2017). Women are employed in unskilled labour jobs, while men perform skilled labour jobs within the BE in India (Devi & Kiran, 2013). Women are found to be involved in middle and junior management levels in the construction industry in South Africa (Agherdien & Smallwood, 2008). Construction professionals in the United Kingdom argue that Women are unsuitable for work on BE because they have no idea what or how it will be built. Wong et al., (2021), posited that despite their success in other fields, Women are underrepresented in the construction industry, and that impacted the growth and development of the industry within Abuja BE. Abuja BE female entrepreneurs faces a number of challenges, including limited access to market information, an unfavourable policy and regulatory environment, and poor connections to support services, all of which are barriers that have resulted in female-owned businesses being less profitable than male-owned businesses (Jaafar et al., 2014). The need to introduce Women into the construction industry stems from the fact that the BE is currently experiencing a skilled labour shortage and entrepreneurship opportunity inadequacies, and Women recruitment into the BE workforce as well providing them with favourable policies and environment to take up the entrepreneurship opportunities prevalent within the BE can be established as a potential solution to bridging the skills gap within Abuja BE while enhancing equal opportunities for Women in the industry, as well as bringing diversity to the industry (Nalitolela et al., 2020). Despite the BE intimidating image toward Women's recruitment and entrepreneurship, the construction industry remains one of the country's fastest-growing key economic sectors, which requires everyone's skills and talents, including Women's (Sospeter *et al.*, 2014). Moncaster & Dillon (2018) noted that Women leave the construction industry at the same rate as they enter it. They leave the industry as a result of a variety of barriers such as discrimination, poor work-life balance, and personal preference (Sang & Powell, 2012; Morello et al., 2018; Lan, 2019). Furthermore, the BE is characterized by masculine characteristics such as aggression, forcefulness, disputes, and competitiveness (Tunji-Olayeni et al., 2021). As a result of the aforementioned, the study will attempt to assess the barriers militating against Women entrepreneurial opportunities in the BE within Abuja metropolis. The study is therefore designed to:

1. Identify the entrepreneurial opportunities success factors in the BE
2. Access the barriers to Women entrepreneurial opportunities successes in Abuja metropolis BE
3. Explore strategies to improve Women participation in entrepreneurship opportunities success within Abuja BE.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 231 million women started or ran businesses in the 59 economies studied for the 2018/2019 report on women's entrepreneurship (Elam et al. 2019). Many organizations and governmental institutions have long recognized the role of women in economic development, individual health, and societal advancement (Bullough et al. 2019). Although women entrepreneurs are important for creating new jobs and contributing to their societies' social and economic growth, the interplay and nuances of women's entrepreneurship, growth, and culture have received little attention (Brush et al. 2018; Hechavarria et al. 2019). Prior research has found social, cultural, infrastructural, educational, occupational, and role-related factors as entrepreneurial success factor barriers and enablers to women's entrepreneurship (Bullough et al. 2017; Jennings and Brush 2013; Welter & Smallbone 2011). While work-life imbalances present challenges for the success of women starting and operating enterprises (Ruderman et al. 2002). Women's talents are increasingly acknowledged as complimentary to business aims (Newburry et al. 2008)—skills gained particularly well from the very home chores that may have such an unequal influence on women, such as multitasking, interpersonal skills, and emotional empathy (Ruderman et al. 2002). Other research by Lucas (2003), reveals that when more women are seen managing businesses, the concept becomes institutionalized and less exotic. Figure 1 depicts the present gender distribution of SME ownership in Malaysia, where women entrepreneurs control just 19.7 percent of SMEs.

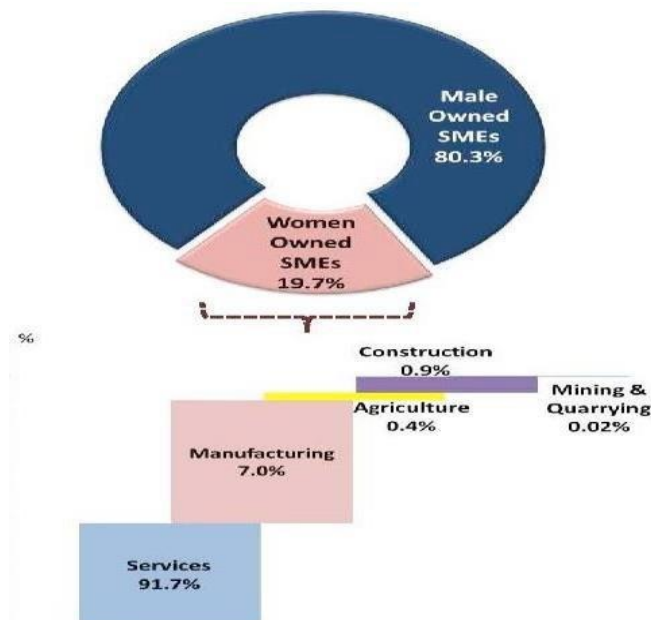


Figure 1: SME Ownership by Gender – Malaysia **Source:** Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM, 2014)

At each level of the entrepreneurship process, several factors influence female entrepreneurial success. According to Cabrera & Mauricio (2017), the most important factors are: at the internal level, human capital, education, and experience, which have an impact on the opportunity identification stage of the entrepreneurial process; and at the micro environment level, access to resources, which have an impact on the opportunity recognition within the BE, acquiring resources, and entrepreneurial performance stages, both of which have an impact on quantitative and qualitative success indicators. Mohammad et al. (2021) classified the factors influencing female entrepreneurial success into three categories: (1) factors arising from the nature of women entrepreneurs, such as personal characteristics, skills, and experiences; (2) environmental factors surrounding women's entrepreneurship, such as family support, cultural norms, social relations, competitiveness, marketing, and government policies; and (3) factors related to micro-financial institutions, such as financing and loans. According to Syed et al. (2011), family support, social links, and personal drive all have a favorable and substantial impact on the success of women entrepreneurs in small firms. According to Chee et al. (2012), the most important aspects that contributed to the success of women entrepreneurs were individual factors, organizational factors, and the environment, as well as the elements of interest, passion, risk takers, self-confidence, and optimistic attitude. Wube (2010) discovered that the personal traits of women entrepreneurs in MSEs and the firm they run had an impact on their performance. It also demonstrates that the absence of own premises (land), financial access, tough rivalry, insufficient access to training, access to technology, and access to raw materials are the primary economic variables influencing the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs. The study also discovered that conflicting gender roles, social acceptability, and networking with outsiders are the major social factors affecting these entrepreneurs, and that the main legal/administrative factors include access to policymakers, high amounts of tax and interest, bureaucracies and red tapes, and over all legal and regulatory environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

Convenient random sampling technique was employed to administer 108 structured questionnaires to mostly women construction professionals and entrepreneurs within the construction industry out of which 89 were properly filled and returned. Three construction companies as well as three (3) construction sites were visited in order to get the questionnaires through to the respondents. The study was undertaken within the BE of the Abuja metropolis. With regards to the prescription of Enshassi et al. (2009), this study used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 as follows: "1 = Not significant", "2 = Slightly significant", "3 = Moderately significant", "4 = Very significant", and "5 = Extremely significant". The collected data were analyzed using Percentile and Mean Index Score to achieve the objectives of the study.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS
4.1 Biodata of Respondents

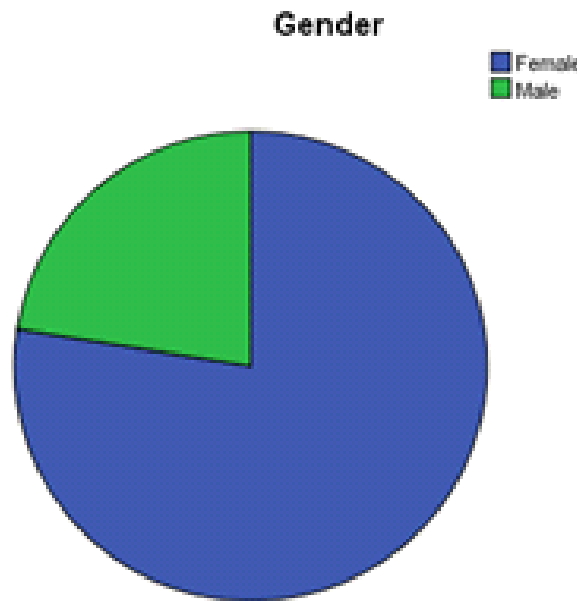


Figure 2 Pool of Male and Female Respondents

The study majorly targeted female respondents working in the construction industry. But owing to the dominance of the opposite sex (male) in the BE, the study therefore includes a limited number of male respondents. Out of the 89 questionnaire that were properly filled and returned, 69 were females and 20 were male respondents with a response rate of 77.5 and 22.5 per cent respectively.

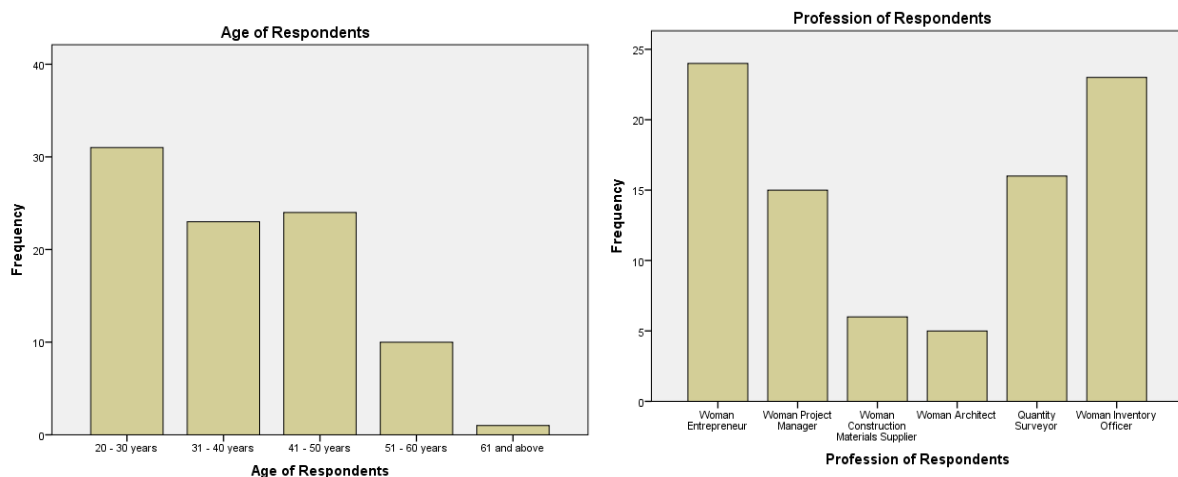


Figure 3 Ages and Professions of Respondents

The respondents are largely made up of female construction practitioners with an age bracket between 20 and 30 years. This amounted to 31 respondents with a total response rate of about 34.8 per cent. The age bracket between 31 and 40 years as well as 41 and 50 years are 23 as well as 24 amounting to a response rate of 25.8 as well as 27.0 respectively. The age bracket between 51 and 60 years was followed by 61 and above years. This consequently amounted to 11.2 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively. The study obtained more response from general women entrepreneurs mostly because of their prevalence and accessibility. They included 24 'Woman Entrepreneurs' amounting to 27 per cent response rate. This was followed by 'Woman inventory Officers', 'Woman Quantity Surveyors', 'Woman Project Managers', 'Woman Construction Materials Suppliers' and 'Woman Architects' with a response of 23, 16, 15, 6 and 5 respectively representing a response rate of 25.8, 18.0, 16.9, 6.7 and 5.6 respectively.

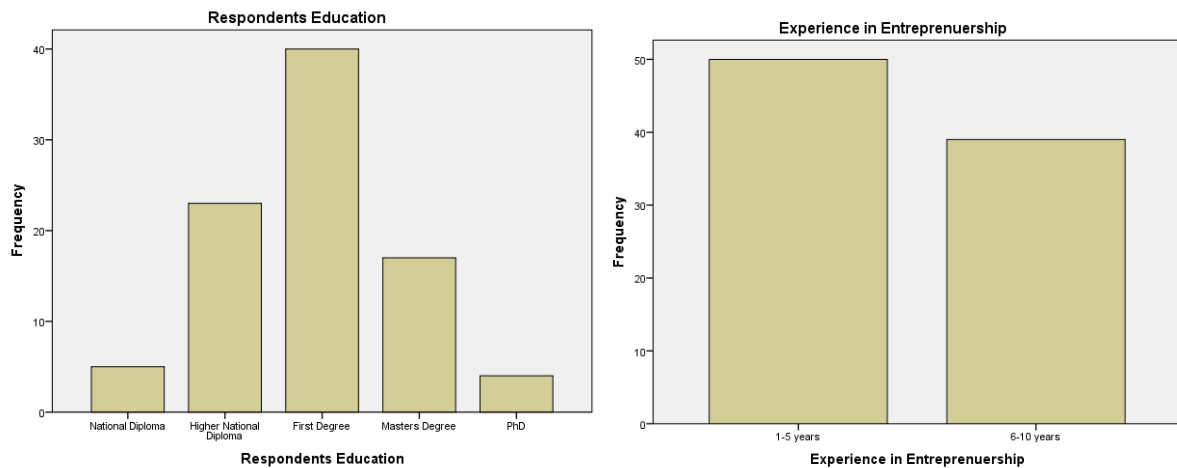


Figure 4 Educations of Respondents and Entrepreneurship Experiences

The study encompasses respondents who largely have First Degrees in varying courses relating to the construction industry. They are 40 respondents making a response rate of 44.9 per cent. Respondents with Higher National Diploma (HND) is next and then followed by the respondents with Master’s Degree. They are correspondingly 23 and 17 respondents making a response rate of 25.8 and 19.1 per cent respectively. Respondents with National Diploma (ND) and PhD were 5 and 4 respectively depicting 5.6 and 4.5 response rate each.

4.2 Barriers to Women construction entrepreneurship opportunities

The severity levels of the barriers to women construction entrepreneurship opportunities are depicted by table 1. The ranking posit that women are not granted enough credit facility like their male counterpart as the most severe barrier affecting women construction entrepreneurship (Abasilim, 2015). This is because most lending and crediting agents in Abuja thinks of women who are seen to be risk averters owing to their male-controlled homes and uncertain responsibilities (Garba 2011), unlike their male counterparts and are therefore riskier to be given a loan or credit (Ewoh 2014). This is emphasized by the mean score of 4.83 making it first in the ranking table. This is in line with the studies of Bharthvajau, (2014) and Haxhiu, (2015). Similarly, it is the position of the respondents that construction enterprises are not naturally loved by women (Galea et al., 2015), which makes it difficult for them to venture into the sector as positioned 2nd with the mean score of 4.78. Most of the respondents agreed that, BE technical perseverance required for them to be successful in the construction enterprise are inadequate (Sayah, 2022), and this thus, constitute a barrier to their success level in the construction sector business (Sodipo, 2017), as the factor is ranked 3rd with a mean score of 4.67. There is also an issue of self-confidence and loss being felt by women in the BE with a mean score of 4.63 and ranked 4th. This is as a consequence of their inadequacy of construction technical enterprise and has effect on their enterprise performances (Mohamad & Bakar, 2017; Rafiki & Nasution, 2019). Many women lacked the ability to take control of leadership in enterprises and subsequently create a barricade to their success level in construction enterprise. This is stressed by the 4.60 mean score and a rank of 5th in the table. Ranked 6th with mean score of 4.54 each are women finding it hard to adapt to enterprise change in BE as well as not having enough training in the area of construction enterprise. The respondents also posited that negotiation skills of the women within Abuja BE are low and are also affected by the risk involved in construction material prices and housing costs (Muhammed & Muhammed 2021), which are ranked 8th and 9th with a mean score of 4.52 and 4.49. The lack of adequate societal support needed by women to venture into construction entrepreneurship (Ibrahim, 2014; Nazifa & Muhammed, 2018; Sayah, 2022) also seems to be absent and most women are similarly affected by the perceived or reflective masculine nature of construction project enterprise as these factors have mean score of 4.46 and 4.42 and as a consequence ranked 10th and 11th. Others includes little construction enterprise creativity (Christabel, 2021), incoherent relationship with the construction workforce, work-family interface and the internal and external environmental nature of the construction BE seems not be pleasing to many women entrepreneurs. These factors are ranked 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th with a mean score of 4.35, 4.02, 3.92 and 1.62 respectively. Overall, with a high mean score for all the selected factors ranked, it can be seen that women enterprise involvement within Abuja BE are significantly affected by these factors but for the last two (work-family interface and internal and external BE environment effects) which has moderate and least effects respectively. The respondents see work-family interface as having moderate barrier to women entrepreneurship opportunities because in recent times, there has been adjustment to the working time of the construction workers within the BE. This is

evidenced in some construction companies sacrificing Friday as a work-free day for their workers. While that of internal and external BE environment having least effect in Women entrepreneurship opportunities barriers because most construction firms have enough protective equipment as well as well-structured work schedule within and outside their BE which is a booster to the construction workers.

Table 1 Barriers to Women construction entrepreneurship Opportunities

FACTORS	Mean	SD	Rank
Women are not granted enough credit facilities	4.83	.607	1
Women naturally do not love construction enterprise	4.78	.420	2
Women mostly lacked the technical grits of construction enterprise	4.67	.586	3
Self-confidence and optimism are lost by women in the BE	4.63	.591	4
Leading a construction enterprise team is tasking for most women	4.60	.779	5
Women find it hard to adopt to enterprise changes in the BE	4.54	1.077	6
Women are insufficiently trained to venture into construction enterprise	4.54	.501	6
Women in BE negotiation abilities are frail	4.52	.770	8
The risk involved in construction projects and materials cost affects women participation	4.49	.605	9
Women lacks adequate societal support to venture into construction entrepreneurship	4.46	.966	10
Women are mostly affected by the masculine reflective nature of construction sector	4.42	.889	11
Women have little to know construction business creativity	4.35	1.001	12
Women relationship with construction workforce are incoherent	4.02	1.196	13
Work-family interface affects women construction enterprise	3.92	1.263	14
Women are affected by the internal and external environment of the BE	1.62	.761	15

Source: Field Work (2022).

4.3 Mitigating to measures to the barriers to Women construction entrepreneurship Opportunities

The selected mitigating measures to the barriers to women construction opportunities within the Abuja BE for the purpose of this study are 'Women should be financially positioned', 'Women skills in construction enterprise should be improved', 'Motivation should be given to women by their family and society', 'Women should be adequately engaged', 'Policy design to impact gender equality and institutional approach', 'Women should be encouraged to take career in construction enterprise' and 'Women construction enterprise should be patronized'.

Table 2 Mitigating measures to the Barriers to Women construction entrepreneurship Opportunities

FACTORS	Mean	SD	Rank
Women should be financially positioned	4.85	.355	1
Women skills in construction enterprise should be improved	4.74	.554	2
Motivation should be given to women by their family and society	4.57	.582	3
Women should be adequately engaged	4.54	.692	4
Policy design to impact gender equality and institutional approach	4.52	.642	5
Women should be encouraged to take career in construction enterprise	4.17	.801	6
Women construction enterprise should be patronized	3.94	.921	7

Source: Field Work (2022).

4.3.1 Women should be financially positioned (MS = 4.85)

It is the position of this study that most women either in construction enterprise or not are not well positioned financially to thrive as indicated by the mean score of 4.85 and ranked 1st. Odoemene (2003) posited that women statistically comprises more than half of the population of Nigeria but only about 35 per cent of them engage in entrepreneurship. Similarly, Elam (2019) posited that only 231 million women started or run businesses globally in 59 economies from a study of GEM. Onuoha (2010) and Cantwell (2014) suggested that most women entrepreneurs are inclined towards self-generated funds to start-up their business which is mostly owed to lack of funds and not having adequate security and market credit. It is also the position of Sodipo (2017), that women almost always find it difficult to penetrate the informal commercial network which makes it difficult for them to access funds, and therefore lead to them not being able to challenge the status-quo in terms of construction enterprise opportunities. Burch (2013), also

opined that among other things, women's inability to access funds make them not to be able to take the construction enterprise opportunities available to them. So therefore, women entrepreneurs need to be funded for them to take the entrepreneurship opportunities prevalent in the construction industry BE.

4.3.2 Women skills in construction enterprise should be improved (MS = 4.74)

This study emphasized that women construction entrepreneurship skills need to be improved in order not to just recognize opportunities but also to be able to take them. This is emphasized by the mean score of 4.74 and ranked 2nd in the mitigating measures table. In consonance, Ewoh (2014), posited that among others, there is severe lack of entrepreneurship skills in many women which has restricted their number in construction enterprise. But women entrepreneurship contributions are highly needed to improve not just the construction sector but the overall economy of the nation (Ukonmimi & Agha, 2016; Christabel 2021). Baker & Liou (1997) and Achtenhagen & Walter, (2011), posited that notwithstanding the contribution capable of being made by women entrepreneurs into any nation's economy, entrepreneurship has largely been dominated by their male counterparts. Therefore, improving women construction enterprise skills will go a long way in assisting women to be able to recognize construction enterprise opportunities, take them and contribute meaningfully to the economic growth and development of the nation (Gatewood et al., 2004; Mauchi et al., 2014).

4.3.3 Motivation should be given to women by their family and society (MS = 4.57)

Burch (2013), posited that women need to be encouraged by their family and society in order for them to be able to venture into construction enterprises. This is underscored by its position in this study as women motivation from family and society is ranked 3rd with a mean score of 4.57. Ebhote (2015), indicated that in spite of women experience, education achievements and age, they are largely restricted by traditions and cultures which has influenced the society to think women as house-helpers and are almost always expected to be at home to take care of domestic matters.

4.3.4 Women should be adequately engaged (MS = 4.54)

This study sees women as not been adequately engaged to deliver in the BE. This is underlined by the factor ranking of 4th with a mean score of 4.54. The need for women entrepreneurship engagement was underscored by Odomene (2003), who posited despite women statistically making more than half of the population; only about 35 per cent of them are business inclined. This could be improved through proper mentorship (Burch 2013) and appropriate support (Christabel, 2021) as well as reducing gender gap between men and women (Garba 2011). He posited further that gender gap is the most challenging barrier to women entrepreneurship ability. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Project (GEM, 2012), estimated women entrepreneurship involvement to be around 187 million, with men engaged in entrepreneurship activities to be around 52 per cent and women general entrepreneurs are estimated to be around 48 per cent on the global scale. This does not however encourage much women participation in construction enterprise in the BE and thus reduce their growth and development (Arenius & Minniti 2003; Murdi et al., 2010).

4.3.5 Policy design to impact gender equality and institutional approach (MS = 4.52)

Ranked 5th with a mean score of 4.52, this study also sees policy design impact and institutional methods as integral to women success in construction entrepreneurship. These policies includes positive action towards women in graduate recruitment, gender bias training for employers and equality training and gender diversity awareness are some of the policies applied in the Australian construction sector (Galea, 2015), which we can look into, adjusted and applied by the relevant institutions to Nigerian construction sector in order to inspire women to take more business opportunities prevalent in the construction sector.

4.3.6 Women should be encouraged to take career in construction enterprise (MS = 4.17)

The nature of construction sector entrepreneurship opportunities requires women to take careers in the sector in order for them to be able to take those opportunities. This is enhanced by its position as 6th with a mean score of 4.17 and also stressed by the studies of Pandian & Jesurajan (2011) and Thaher, et al., (2021). It is therefore, no surprise that Odomene (2003) posited women in entrepreneurship to be around 35 percent. Women inability to take careers in the construction industry is induced by the perceived male-gendered nature of the construction sector (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2011; Galea et al., 2015). This shows that there remain a wide gap between men construction entrepreneurship and that of the women (Christabel, 2021).

4.3.7 Women construction enterprise should be patronized (MS = 3.94)

The study posits that women construction enterprises are not the most patronized which is occasioned by the male-gendered perceived nature of construction businesses in Nigeria as posited by the factor ranking of 7th and a mean score of 3.94. Since it is mostly perceived as male-gendered business in Nigeria, women find it hard to venture into construction entrepreneurship owing to the fear of low to lack of patronage which is mostly visible in the male-dominated construction industry.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study assessment of barriers to women entrepreneurial opportunities within the built environment revealed that factors such as women not being granted enough credit facilities, construction enterprises not naturally loved by women and women lack of construction enterprise technical tenacity are the top barrier affecting women participation and taking construction enterprise opportunities within Abuja BE as depicted by their high mean score respectively. The study concludes that there is need for women participation in the construction entrepreneurial activities in order to widen the array of opportunities prevalent in the industry, as well as to boost the sector economy and the overall economy of the nation. The study recommends that focus should be on providing adequate and more financial opportunities for women willing to venture into construction entrepreneurship, improvement in women entrepreneurship skills and family-society motivation.

STUDY LIMITATION

The scope of the study was narrowed to Abuja metropolis construction environment and it could be expanded to either region or the whole country for further studies.

Owing to the overwhelming number of male construction practitioners prevalent in the Nigerian construction industry, part of the questionnaire mostly targeted for women construction practitioners were also administered to male practitioners. Therefore, the study can be improved upon by using only female construction practitioners with an expanded scope.

Factors affecting women entrepreneurship opportunities in the construction industry as well as their mitigating measures were restricted and can be expanded and improved upon for further studies.

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