

Gender and Architectural Profession in Nigeria: Are Female Architects Up to the Task

Dr. OLAYENI Kofoworola Pius¹ & Dr. ADISA Buki²

Abstract

This paper examined gender and the profession of architecture in Nigeria. It took a cursory look at the male-female dichotomy in the practice of the architectural profession, specifically on membership, certification, experience, project types and work schedule. Professionally certified architects from the North Central, South east and South Western regions of the countries were sampled by the use of a structured questionnaire. The results showed that female architects made up about a quarter of the total number of architects in Nigeria. It further showed that gender differentiation has significant relationship with the professional experience of the architects. On the other hand, gender has little impact on the professional service rendered by the architects nor in the types of projects participated in. Architectural profession in Nigeria is still strongly male dominated despite the fact that female architects can to a large extent perform same tasks as their male counterparts. This then raises the need for more gender inclusiveness in the training, employment and retention of architects in Nigeria.

Keyword: Architects, Architectural profession, Construction industry, Gender

1.0 Introduction

The concept of profession can be traced to the sixteenth Century English usage which means a vow or oath taken upon entering a religious order. According to Gordon (2004) the meaning by mid eighteenth century has expanded to include anyone entering an occupation, primarily divinity, law and medicine. By the nineteenth century, a profession came to be known as an occupation that regulates itself through systematic, required and collegial discipline, that has a cognitive base in specialized technical knowledge; and that supposedly has an orientation of service to clients and the public good, embodied in a code of ethics (Starr, 1982).

According to Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC, 1991), a profession is learned calling with specialized skills, distinctive functions and recognized social obligations and has unique characteristics which is rendering of service based upon advanced knowledge, skill and judgment. A profession is involved in the adoption of procedures of licensing, credentialing or certification (Altshuld, 2005). Whereas Vanderstraeten (2007) discussed profession as occupational arrangements for dealing with human problems, Whitbeck (1988) opined that professions are seen as occupations that both require advanced study and mastery of a specialized body of knowledge aimed at promoting, ensuring, or safeguarding some matter that significantly affects others well-being Professionals have been seen as people with formalized training most especially in the sciences (Davies 1996). Professionals at some point in their training overcame some set of entry barriers (Canning and Dwyer, 2001).

Appelbaum and Lawton (1990) described them as a group of people organized to serve a body of specialized knowledge in the interests of society. Hoyle and John (1995) suggested that the professional possesses and uses expert or specialist knowledge. This knowledge is used autonomously for the clients and wider society.

¹ Department of Architecture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. E-MAIL: pk_olayeni@yahoo.co.uk Phone: +2348034921082

² Department of Architecture, Obafemi Awolowo University. Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Goode (1960) sees professionals as people having and sharing common identity, with a common language (Krejsler, 2005), which can only be partially understood by outsiders and they reproduced themselves by a rigorous selection process.

2.0 Gender and Profession

Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed roles for men and women (Makama, 2013) or masculinity and femininity (Oakley, 1985), though it is for most time taken for a shorthand for women (Finley, 1989). It is seen as the organization and social construction of sexual difference (Haynes, 2017). Gender is the way society divide humanity based on biological difference and this is based on sex. It is also the idea of male and female which exists in certain place at a particular time together with the consequences of functions assigned to them (Ademuson, NY). Consequently, the terms gender gap, gender inequality, gendering and others reflect the marginalization of one gender done in a way to favour the other.

The gendering of profession and professionals was a quiet task because professions such as in the domains of medicine, law and engineering and those in the construction industry were initially dominated by males. It is a situation where men and women hardly receive equal treatment in training, certification, recruitment, emolument, career development and other areas relating to the career or profession. It is discrimination in professional career based on the gender of the professional. The dissatisfaction of women or their out of proportion small or large number (Davies, 1996) is a matter that continues to be discussed in various professional spheres. In the legal profession for example, though more women seem to be graduating from law school, the disparity between men and woman is still intense (Chan, 2017). Gender was seen as playing important part once they finish their training (Reece, 2000). The legal profession is made quintessentially male (Hagan, Zatz, Arnold & Kay, 1991). It was observed that the legal community in time past limits gender diversification placing women and minority groups at a disadvantage.

Also, in the accounting profession, issues of equality of accounting professional have been discussed (Kyriacou, 2000). Some studies noted that the profession displays a male dominated hierarchy (Kirkland and Loft, 1993; Haynes, 2008). The dominance of the male gender in the profession necessitated the push for diversity (Bacchi & Eveline, 2009) initiatives like inclusiveness in hiring, promotion and organizational environment. The engineering profession is not left behind in this issue as the field of professional engineering is seen as masculine (Phipps, 2002). The engineering profession has an image that is masculine, heavy, dirty and tough (Evetts, 1994). Women are sometimes relegated to non-technical support roles and a sense of physical masculinity pervades the profession to the detriment of women (Carter and Kirkop, 1990).

The construction industry has a tag of one of the most gender insensitive sectors. Sang and Pavel (2012) highlighted the persistence of gender inequality in the construction industry as it remains one of the male dominated profession. Whittock (2010) discussed the non-traditional employment in the construction industry, noting that women have not sufficiently challenged established notion of “women” work. Agapiolu (2002), writing on the Scottish construction industry noted that women are much represented in clerical and secretarial position as against the skilled and semi-skilled positions. For skilled professionals, the low number of women is well documented (Bagihole, Dainty & Neale, 2000) compared to other industries, the gender skewedness in the construction industry is quite alarming (Sommerville, Kennedy & Orr, 1993). In fact, Sang and Powel (2012) affirmed that legislation on equality in employment are not achieving much in the construction sector as the industry is still largely male dominated. These authors cited literature which described difficulties experienced by women working in the construction industry. In the UK, Sang and Powel citing ONS (2009) put the number of women in the construction industry as approximately 10% compared to other industries while another puts it at only 9% of the workforce in construction industry out of which about 80% hold secretariat posts (Shanmugam, Amaratunga, Haigh, Elvitigala, Baldry, & Ruddock., 2007). It was discovered that although there is an increase in the number of women entering schools for construction-related discipline, only a few of them end up in the industry (Clarke, 2016)

The architectural profession as a subset of the construction industry fared no better. Architecture was considered a masculine profession (Caven, 2006). In most advanced countries, it has been found that there are low numbers of women architect. For example, in the UK, women architects are 14% of registered architect (RIBA, 2002). The situation is similar in countries like Australia (RAIA 1991) and Canada (Philips, 2017). It was discovered that despite an increase in enrolment of female students to schools of architecture, the corresponding expectation for increase in number of female qualified female architect was not achieved (de Graft-Johnson, Manley & Greed, 2005;

Whitman, 2005). In the US, architecture is strongly tilted towards the male gender. It was noted that although nearly half of architecture school graduates are women, those licensed to practice are less than 20% (Stratigakos, 2016). In Australia, it was shown that the profession of architecture has the lowest proportion of women when compared with the legal, medical and accounting professions across all age groups,

Architectural profession in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when expatriates from UK were the dominant figures in the building and construction industry. In the early 1950s, the first indigenous school of architecture commenced training of would be Nigerian architects. With diploma certificates, the graduates were exempted from part II of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) professional examination. After Nigeria independence in 1960, the school of architecture was reorganized and started awarding Bachelor and Masters Degree in Architecture (B.Sc and M.Sc Architecture). In the 1970s, more schools of Architecture were started in the country. Presently, there exists more than 25 Degree-awarding schools of architecture in Nigeria, under the supervisory roles of the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON). ARCON was established 1962 via a Decree and has continued to work in internship training, examining and moderating the certification of architects in Nigeria. These they do in conjunction with the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), a body of professional architects founded in 1960. The profession of architecture can therefore be said to have developed over a period of time in Nigeria. It started with the expatriates working with the colonial government in Nigeria before the 1960 independence, and progressively with Nigerian architects trained in the UK and US. Post-independence indigenously trained architect continued the development of the profession till date

3. Methodology

The study explores the profession of architecture in Nigeria seeking to have an understanding of the male – female dichotomy of the profession. Through a questionnaire survey design, the study explored architectural firms located in three cities located in the west, east and central Nigeria, namely Lagos, Enugu and Abuja. Two of these cities, Lagos and Abuja have the highest concentrations of architectural firms in Nigeria. Abuja 190 firms, Enugu 57 firms and Lagos 289 firms (ARCON, 2013). One of every two architectural firms was selected and two architects were purposively drawn from the selected firm for questionnaire administration. A total of 408 questionnaires were retrieved out of 536 administered representing 76%.

4. Findings and Discussions

Table 1: **Gender**

	Freq.	%
Male	309	75.7
Female	99	24.3
Total	408	100.0

Table 2: **Registered with ARCON**

	Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	309	100.0	99	100.0
No	0	0	0	0.0
Total	309	100.0	99	100.0

Table 3: Firm Location

	Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1 Abuja	118	38.19	25	25.25
2 Enugu	26	8.41	5	5.05
3 Lagos	165	53.40	69	69.70
Total	309	100.0	99	100.0

Table 4: Education

	Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1 HND	7	2.27	2	2.02
2 B.Sc	9	2.91	1	1.01
3 PGD	6	1.94	1	1.01
4 M.Sc	271	87.70	82	82.83
5 M.Phil/Ph.D	16	5.18	13	13.13
Total	309	100.0	99	100

The findings showed that of all the 408 architects sampled, about 75.7% were males and roughly 25% were females. This goes a long way to corroborate other studies about gender and profession. In this case, women represent a quarter of the total number of architects. With respect to professional certification, all the architects sampled (408) have been certified by the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) which shows that the female architects are not inferior to their male counterparts. These female architects also boast of good academic qualifications with more than 80% of them having a post graduate degree in architecture. Nigerian female architects are seen here to compare favourably with their male colleagues. It became apparent therefore that apart from the share numerical advantage male architects have over their female colleagues; all other demographical characteristics considered in this study showed that the two are at par especially in academic training and professional certification

Table 5: Gender and Professional Experience of Architects in Building Industry

Years Post Professional Qualifications was obtained	Gender		Statistic
	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	
36 – 45 years	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	$\chi^2 = 9.2204$ df = 3 p = 0.026
26 – 35 years	8 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	
16 – 25 years	35 (85.4)	6 (14.6)	
6 – 15 years	87 (68.0)	41 (32.0)	
Less than 6 years	179 (77.5)	52 (22.5)	
Total	309 (75.7)	99 (24.3)	

Considering the professional experience of the respondents, with respect to their gender, Table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship between architects' Professional experience and Gender. The Chi-square test to check if architects' gender has significant influence on Professional experience shows that there was significant relationship between architects' gender and their Professional experience. The professional experience is taken as the length of years between the time they were inducted into the professional body after passing their final professional examination and the time this study was carried out. The result shows that there was no architect who had up to 45 years post professional experience.

No female architects had between 26 to 35 years post professional experience among the sampled architects. It also revealed that out of 41 architects who had between 16 to 25 years post professional experience, 85.4% were males and 14.6% were females. And out of 128 architects who had between 6 to 15 years post professional experience, 68.0% were males and 32.0% were females. The results finally showed that there was significant relationship between architects' gender and their post-professional experience in Nigeria ($p = 0.026$). This is an indication that retention of female architects in the industry on the long run is difficult, where we have more males with longer professional experience. That females drop off from the industry due to lack of employment opportunities and limited prospect for promotion is reported in some studies (IES, 1995). This may call for more effort at retaining and promoting more female architects.

Table 6: Gender and Project Types

Project Types		Architect's Gender				Statistic
		Male		Female		
		N	%	n	%	
Residential Buildings	Often	306	99.0	98	98.9	$\chi^2 = 0.0012$ df = 1 Fisher's = 1.000
	Rarely	3	1.0	1	1.0	
Estate Developments	Often	153	49.5	58	58.6	$\chi^2 = 2.4708$ df = 1 Fisher's = 0.072
	Rarely	156	50.5	41	41.4	
Commercial Buildings	Often	282	91.3	89	89.9	$\chi^2 = 0.1690$ df = 1 Fisher's = 0.689
	Rarely	27	8.7	10	10.1	
Religious Buildings	Often	194	62.8	50	50.5	$\chi^2 = 4.7020$ df = 1 Fisher's = 0.034
	Rarely	115	37.2	49	49.5	
Institutional/Educational Buildings	Often	194	62.8	61	61.6	$\chi^2 = 0.0436$ df = 1 Fisher's = 0.905
	Rarely	115	37.2	38	38.4	
Sport/Recreational Buildings	Often	46	14.9	19	19.2	$\chi^2 = 1.0376$ df = 1 Fisher's = 0.344
	Rarely	263	85.1	80	80.2	
Total		309	100.0	99	100.0	

The study examined the type of projects engaged in the industry among the architects. This was done to observe if some of the job descriptions are gender related. The relationship between types of architectural projects and gender were examined (Table 6). The Chi-square test was carried out in order to test if there is a significant relationship between gender and involvements in different types of architectural projects.

The results showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and religious building projects only. It was shown that 62.8% of the male architects and 50.5% of the female architects reported they were often involved in Religious Building projects 37.2% of the male architects and 49.5% of the female architects reported they were rarely involved in Religious Buildings. The chi-square value was significant at 5% level. This means that there is a relationship between gender and their involvement in design and supervision of religious buildings.

The result did not show that there were significant relationships between gender and the other types of project such as residential building projects, institutional/educational projects, commercial building projects and recreational building projects.

In summary, both male and female Nigerian architects engaged in almost similar tasks when the type of projects that architects engage in is examined, female architects' capacity is not limited just because of the fact that they are females.

Table 7: Gender and work schedule

Work Schedule	Architect's Gender		χ^2	<i>p-value</i>	
	Male n (%)	Female n (%)			
Sketch Designs	Not at all	10 (3.2)	9 (9.1)	11.3345	0.023
	<25% of my time	108 (34.9)	34 (34.3)		
	25-50% of my time	103 (33.3)	25 (25.3)		
	50-75% of my time	60 (19.4)	15 (15.2)		
	75-100% of my time	28 (9.1)	16 (16.2)		
Presentation Drawings	Not at all	12 (3.9)	6 (6.1)	4.1019	0.392
	<25% of my time	86 (27.8)	26 (26.3)		
	25-50% of my time	116 (37.5)	30 (30.3)		
	50-75% of my time	69 (22.3)	30 (30.3)		
	75-100% of my time	26 (8.4)	7 (7.1)		
Work Drawings	Not at all	13 (4.2)	3 (3.0)	8.1784	0.085
	<25% of my time	38 (12.3)	14 (14.1)		
	25-50% of my time	112 (36.3)	29 (29.3)		
	50-75% of my time	113 (36.6)	32 (32.3)		
	75-100% of my time	33 (10.7)	21 (21.2)		
Contractual Documentations	Not at all	24 (7.8)	8 (8.1)	6.4250	0.170
	<25% of my time	95 (30.7)	18 (18.2)		
	25-50% of my time	73 (23.6)	31 (31.3)		
	50-75% of my time	98 (31.7)	35 (35.4)		
	75-100% of my time	19 (6.2)	7 (7.1)		
Site Supervision	Not at all	6 (1.9)	4 (4.0)	1.2071	0.751
	<25% of my time	29 (9.4)	16 (16.2)		
	25-50% of my time	85 (27.5)	26 (26.3)		
	50-75% of my time	138 (44.6)	33 (33.3)		
	75-100% of my time	51 (16.5)	20 (20.2)		
Total		309 (100.0)	99 (100.0)		

The study also revealed that female architects in Nigeria were equal to the professional tasks required of them. Apart from the development of the preliminary sketch design with a p-value of 0.023, all other tasks including supervision of construction works and contractual documentation and management are not dependent on gender as both the male and female architects in the Nigerian context commit their times to doing various tasks required of them as professionals. The female architects, despite other responsibilities they are saddled with, are still involved in various architectural services both in and outside the office and these commit substantial part of their time.

5. Conclusion

Architecture profession in Nigeria is heavily male dominated as the study has shown, this is not because of the lack of effort on the part of women as it was revealed that female architects are in all ways as qualified as their male counterparts. In terms of educational training female architects are adequately trained most of them up to postgraduate level. This is an indication that female architects are not hindered by the challenges posed by academic requirements. Professional certification, though a rigorous exercise, does not deter Nigerian female architects from pursuing a career in architecture. The gender disparity in the architecture profession in Nigeria can therefore not be said to be based on the academic or professional considerations alone, other factors are likely to be at play. Efforts though need to be made to encourage more women to take up careers in architecture and in other male dominated profession especially in the construction industry in Nigeria.

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