

Leadership Potentials of Women in The Nigerian Construction Industry –A Literature Visit

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Abstract: The success or failure of an organisation cannot be severed from its leadership, as such the imperative of leadership in every organization cannot be overemphasized. Men by default are seen as leaders in every organisations, construction industry inclusive. Research abound on the leadership potentials of men, whereas little to nothing is known about leadership potentials of women. Women have ability to influence, and their in-built traits have no little measure in building their capacities to be a leader. Their positions as elder sisters, wives and mothers are potentials for leadership and their abilities to influence play significant roles in leadership. More findings indicate that the predominant leadership potentials exhibited by women are emphatic potentials, ethical potentials and multi-tasking potentials. The study concluded that the leadership potentials of women are essential ingredient that propel them to move from physiological needs to self-transcendence need which is the highest need of humans as postulated in the Maslow's theory.

Keywords: Construction industry, Leadership, Organisation, Potentials, Women

I. Introduction

Good leadership is highly essential for an organisation to achieve its goal and improve its productivity [1,2]. It is the art of influencing others to achieve desired results [3]. Leadership involves making sound and difficult decisions, creating, and articulating a clear vision and establishing achievable goals. Leadership is also said to be the heartbeat of any organisation to achieve its goal [4]. [5] affirmed that the success of an organisation and project delivery is a function of the leadership and interpersonal skills of site workers.

Furthermore, leadership is the most important and essential factor in project construction management [6]. This was further corroborated in the study of [7] that leadership is more significant to construction

organisations than any other organisation. In addition, the importance of leadership cannot be over-emphasized in construction projects right from pre-contract to post-contract stage of construction projects. More importantly [8] revealed that poor leadership does not lead to the failure of the leaders alone but have negative effects on the construction industry, project delivery, and human relationship between owners; workers and subordinates. [28-30] argued that gender diversity can be a source of competitive advantage to reduce some of these challenges of the construction industry through leadership of women.

Literarily, both men and women constitute the world gender, but men assumed leadership positions by default hence women leadership needed urgent attention, however it is unfortunate that the leadership potentials of women in construction and built environments are hardly discussed. Leadership is not abstract, you talk about leadership where there are a group of people to provide leadership for, hence the name “leadership”. This connotes leader in the company of other people (in the ship). The presence of female

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or male in the leadership is directly or indirectly related to gender. The word “Gender” is defined in terms of cultural differences, socio class, race, rather than biological ones. Discussions about leadership cannot be meaningful without reference to gender, hence the literature visit to leadership potentials of women gender in the construction industry.

II. Materials and Methods

This study, therefore, intends to do an extensive review of literature on leadership and women’s potential to lead, this is with a view to ascertain the extent of knowledge in this regard.

A. Women Leadership in Construction Industry-How Far?

The rate of advancement of women into the highest positions in the construction industry and other organisations were reported to be very low [9,10] and vertically restricted [11]. There has been an appreciable increase in women's participation in other sectors like education and health [12] but their presence in the construction industry and at the leadership level is considered low. The study by [13] attests that women's participation in the construction industry is 9-10%. The study specifically found that only 9.2% of registered Quantity Surveyors in Nigeria are female and only 2.2% could register quantity surveying consultancy firms. Their involvement in construction related academic disciplines does not in any way significantly differ. [13] further reveal that while 22.9% of quantity surveying academic posts in Nigerian polytechnics are occupied by women, they only occupied 18.4% of the same positions in the Nigerian universities. Women are one of the determinants in the overall development of any country; their presence at the level of

leadership of the construction industry could be of added advantage to the industry. This is because women were also discovered to be high in intuition and construction works involve direct perception and apprehension of truth and facts [9].

Leadership could be offered in the construction industry as professionals most especially as one gets to the senior professional cadre such as senior architect, senior quantity surveyors, etc. On the other hand, it could be as executive leadership-principal/managing partners, partners, directors, professors, etc. These levels of leadership are where decisions that concern the realization of the organisation goals are made. However, the study of [14] established that women are very few in the leadership of the construction industry. There was equally a record of under-representation in the leadership of the construction industry due to several reasons not different from the prevailing ones of gender biase [11]. A little shift from the aforementioned reason is the fact that women have to overwork themselves more than their male counterparts in order to prove themselves that they are capable of being a leader [15].

Women in the leadership of the construction industries are still considered very low due to many reasons of which few were earlier discussed. However, unravelling the leadership potentials of women can be of encouragement for women to show more interest in the construction industry as well as built environment-related courses and build a carrier to the leadership positions. This is an eye-opener to the industry to encourage women to rise to the top and display their leadership potentials for added advantage to the industry. In view of this, the leadership of women is characteristics and potentials of women that can benefit the lots of an

organisation, hence the need to check women's potentials in a leadership capacity.

B. Potentials of Women in Leadership Positions

i. Empathic Potentials

The attitude and meanings people give to work may be affected by whom a leader is, either male or female. Female leadership is emphatic and makes people feel better about themselves and their works. In addition, it stressed on the social values and interpersonal relationships of workers. These attitudes are a reflection of the in-born caring nature of women. The nature of women believe in protecting peaceful cultures and relationships among people, empathising with people and make a conducive and healthy environment for people to carry out their daily responsibilities [16]. Women play a social responsibility of care and concern if women find themselves in leadership positions these responsibilities would be more displayed, especially in the construction industry, where workers need to be cared for in terms of assuring their health and safety on sites. Women have natural potentials that can positively contribute to the construction industry. Women are established to have better listening skills and soft skills [15]. These attributes are subsets of emphatic potentials which enabled women to feel, listen and choose the right communication language for their co-workers and subordinates. They were also credited to have been paying more attention to details and more thorough in the analysis of situations[17]. This potential is likewise supported in the study of [18] where women were identified to be stronger in communication, empathy and the ability to respond better to stress. There is no doubt that construction industry activities can be strenuous and stressful however, the empathic potential of women can be anti-dote to the

workers and subordinates working under the leadership of women.

Also, women are deep thinkers, they have broader perspectives and considers every possibility to an issue and opt for the best. In the construction industry, there are many ways of achieving construction works but with different implications in terms of time, money, human resources and quality. The role of the quantity surveyors to the construction industry which is mostly giving values for money would be enhanced with these qualities in women. In relative to the construction industry, experiences, creativity and intuition are significant in the process of achieving goals. In view of the foregoing these potentials of deep thinking, broader perspectives and intuitiveness can enhance women's leadership in the construction industry. Construction works and services are all about creativity and intuitiveness and dealing with the human resource aspect involves empathy. Also, women's method of communication is emphatic in nature, the horizontal method usually engaged by women, foster friendly and healthy relationships between subordinates and leadership, creates team spirit and equality [9]. Being empathic entails a leader getting involved in the personal lives of workers, sympathising and empathising with the workers, sharing their joy and pains. All these would attract co-operation and dedication to the work from the subordinates and co-workers.

ii. Ethical Potentials

Women in leadership support ethical business practices [19]. Women have the potential of upholding morals and ethical standards. This made women more relevant in the construction industry. The construction industry has been bedeviled with, corruption and unethical activities which has caused loss

of lives and properties due to incessant building collapses especially in Nigeria.

Women in leadership positions could salvage the industry in displaying their ethical potentials in ensuring that ethical standards are upheld in construction works. Women in leadership positions tend to salvage the industry by ensuring that ethical standards are upheld in construction works. Ethics play vital role in the construction industry, right from the design stage to the delivery of the projects. Upholding ethics and moral standard is very significant to the construction industry and at all stages of construction, however, women in leadership have been noted for upholding ethical standards.

This implies that it tends to be difficult for women in leadership positions to allow unethical practices under their watch to go unchecked. The study has discovered also, that a great link exists between the leadership of women and good corporate governance and management practices. This connection to the leadership potential of the female gender cannot be severed from the ethical potential of women.

iii. Multi-Tasking Potentials

The belief that women are better than men at managing different activities simultaneously finds its origins in the role of women in various societies [31, 32]. Women are often caregivers to the family and of the households in addition to external employment. The motherhood experiences can as well develop into many skills which can be applied to leadership and working life as well. Women believe in teamwork, which is the basis of construction works.

Multi-tasking is affiliated to the nature of women, combinations of their roles as elder sisters, wives, mothers and workers in their secular jobs is an attestation to this. Women thrive in multi-tasking, their ability to

influence is a positive value in achieving so many things at a time [20]. The power of positive influence is a plus to get so many things at a time for women. The experience in multi-tasking in family and social activities by women is an addition that can be carried over to their secular jobs.

The agility and abilities of women are numerous displayed in the non-remunerated labour force unlike men and also noted for multi-tasking in such labour works [33]. The study further established that most African women are restricted from participating fully and effectively in the construction industry but encumbered with other multiple activities. Women's representation on workers' rights is limited and occupational health and safety standards are ignored. Household chores force women to sell their labour for low pay. Despite the position that women are actively involved in the social, economic and political facets of life, discriminatory political, economic, social rules and regulations prevailing have affected women to the extent that these societal irregularities have ultimately barred women from enjoying the fruits of their numerous labour.

The study of [9] likewise attested to the fact that women engaged in many skills which include social skills and social interaction, conversational style of communication, acceptance of differences and much more being multi-skilled assist them to do well in any organisation. Ability of women to know how to give different and appropriate cares to babies, toddlers, teenagers, youths children and wards at home is a lesson to be brought forward in handling different types of co-workers and subordinates at work. Some of these abilities are seeing in right choice of words when communicating, patience, tolerance, understanding care and so on.

C. The Link between Women Leadership Potentials and Maslow Theory

Maslow's theory [21, 22] opined that every human being has a convincing desire to fulfil his or her full potential, to reach a level of self-actualization. The emphasis here is on the positive potential of women. The full potential of women could be the ability to reach the peak in a career of choice so as to utilize the strength to full capacity to reach a level of self – actualization which is the peak in the Maslow Theory triangle. The theory described the initial need of human beings as food, water and shelter which are psychological needs. These are followed by safety, esteem and self-actualization. Women will not want to get paid-work employment alone for fulfilment but the ability to get to the peak of their career and display their potential for leadership will be a pressing need to be satisfied.

The details and the application of the Maslow theory to this current research are depicted in Fig. 1.

i. Physiological Needs

The basic needs of life are the need to satisfy

the fundamental drives such as air, food, water, shelter, warmth, sleep, sex, etc as indicated in Fig. 1 [34, 35]. Women must be able to access the basic psychological and biological needs of life for their existence. The sense here is that women who lack the basic needs of life will not be able to think of career progression or being a leader. Likewise, leadership should not be chipping the necessity of showing concern about the subordinates getting access to these basic needs of life. Women's potentials have been noted for their strength as caregivers and emphatic, this does not necessarily mean direct provisions of these basic needs but champion a course that will assist the co-workers to access these needs easily. For instance, if leadership meets the basic needs of the followers by supporting the course of reasonable earnings and benefits that enabled them to afford adequate living conditions automatically such leadership will get the support of the followers. That is where the leadership of women was recorded to be

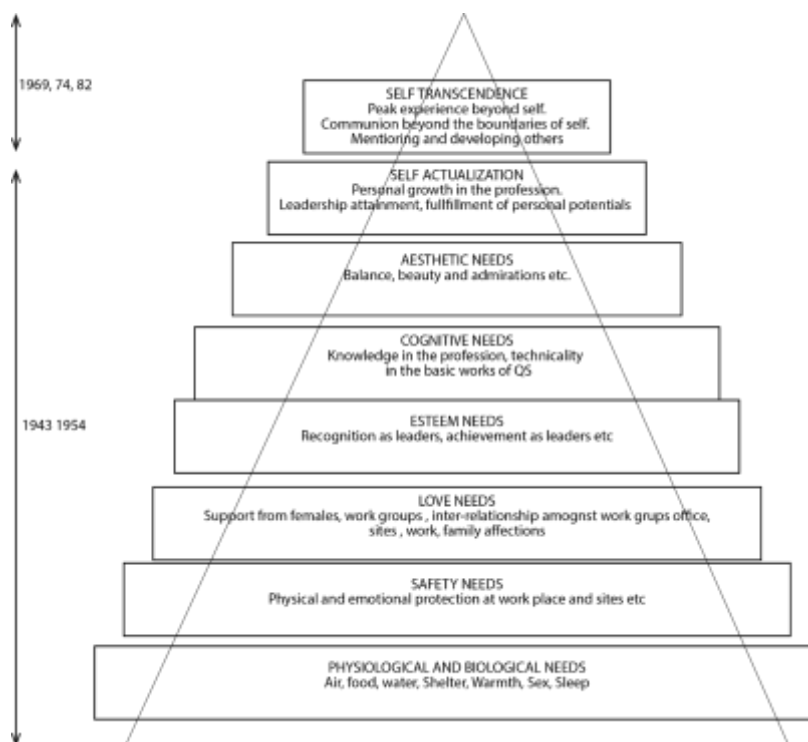


Figure 1: Maslow's Theory

people-oriented.

ii. Safety Needs

This is the second level of needs. This refers to the need for safety and security. Women need safety both physically and emotionally. The safety of women both at home and at work should be a kind of support to their leadership. There should not be a kind of intimidation, or threat or harm on construction sites, offices, at meetings and the environment where they are operating. This kind of safety will give support to women's leadership. Likewise, for women to enhance the support of the subordinates must possess attributes that show concern for the safety and welfares of the followers and subordinates both at work and thereafter. More importantly that construction works are prone to dangers and occupational injuries. The study of [23] established that the construction industry is one of the economic sectors most affected by occupational injuries, severe and fatal accidents. Women by their nature always seek and show concern for their safety and would not indulge in unethical practices that would constitute dangers and injuries to the workers. An example of such is the provision of health facilities, health insurance, safety insurance, etc. Moreover, that Leadership was established to be a preceding phenomenon to occupational safety in an organisation. Therefore, some of the outcomes of having women's leadership are correlated with safety, health care and protection of the workers and a safe environment. This was likewise confirmed in the study of [24].

iii. Social Needs

Social needs are the third level of needs. They are activated after safety needs are met. Social needs refer to the need for belongings and love. Women's leadership needed to be supported in love and affiliation. The

followers must see themselves as part of the leadership by showing love, cooperation and by giving the right information at an appropriate time. To meet these needs the leadership should also reciprocate in love, inter-personal relationships and interest in work-family life.

Women's leadership is more characterized in inter-relationship. The consideration is that women are most suitable in the organisation that has a crisis or are on the verge of failure, as women can use the warm and communal traits to fix the problem [25]. This has led to the conclusion that women are social beings and noted for showing love and participating in the followers' social functions like wedding ceremony/anniversary, the christening of the baby's ceremonies, the celebration of successes, birthdays, etc.

iv. Esteem Needs

Esteem needs represent the fourth level of needs and include the need for self-respect cognition and approval of others. Women in leadership positions always endeavour to have positive interactions with everyone and subordinates, women's leadership encouraged sharing of power and information [26]. These leadership qualities enhanced performance in the construction industry when every member of the team are carried along and furnished with useful information on the job. This also will enhance the subordinate self-worth and feel important on the job since no vital information is kept from them. Everyone needs self-recognition and self-esteem and women are good at it, in causing the subordinates to really enjoy these feelings.

The commitment of women's leadership is well noted in appreciating their followers both in cash and kinds. Introduction of awards and banquets to recognize distinguished achievements, the best staff of the month, year, and end of the year awards. Bonuses,

motivations in sponsorship to trainings and conferences, timely promotions etc. will ensure the support of women leaders from the followers.

v. Self-Actualization

This is the last level at the top of the triangle of Maslow's theory [21,22] as shown in Fig.1. This refers to personal growth and fulfilment of personal potentials. This is where the need for women to be in leadership positions comes to play to actualize their full potential. The need here goes beyond women to be gainfully employed in the construction industry but to progress and get to the peak of the career and become leaders. Moreover, the followers and subordinates also are expected to be given opportunities to develop their fullest potentials. This is possible under the leadership of women, as their leadership engaged in shared-leader styles, participative, mentoring and developing the subordinates to maximize their potentials. The result will be nothing less than supporting the leadership of women.

vi. Self-transcendence

This is the additional level to the Maslow theory [21,22], which emerges in 1969, 1979 and 1982. This is a cause beyond self and experience and communion beyond the boundaries of self. Women in leadership would want to fulfil the natural duty of reproduction by exercising their natural potentials to make others happy and fulfilled. They want to be seen and counted as part of the success stories of others. Invariably women transcend and transform the organisation they find themselves. Women want a legacy that cannot be erased thereby intending to reproduce themselves in the followers through mentoring. Women's leadership are found to suit modern-day development [27].

III. Conclusion

Women in the leadership positions of construction industries are few. Many companies including the construction industry are missing available resources by not using the potentials possessed by women. Having more female leaders and bridging the gap of gender division in leadership would bring new ways of operating and more insight to the organisation.

Organisation is a living system, once it stops reproducing and progressing it becomes dead. In view of this, women's leadership has been observed in three potentials of empathy, ethics and multi-tasking. Empathy is personal feelings and attitude of being felt for the subordinates, ethical standard which affects the productivity and products of the organisation and multi-tasking which involves hard-working, diligence and ability to handle many tasks at a time without affecting one another. Women's leadership has been observed thriving in these potentials. In addition, women's leadership is being observed with a look at Maslow Theory of human needs. This paper thereby concludes that women's leadership revolves around the psychological needs to self-transcendence need which is the highest need of man. Women getting to the leadership positions fulfils the highest need of Maslow Theory which is the peak experience beyond self. It is also a process of utilizing full potentials in achieving the organizational goals and as well reproducing themselves in their subordinates.

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