

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT ASPECTS IN CONSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The paper presents research on gender aspects in construction, related to the wide area of diversity management. The predominant image of construction is that of a male-dominated industry requiring brute strength and a good tolerance for outdoor conditions, inclement weather and bad language and it has been acknowledged worldwide that women in the construction industry are underrepresented. Women represent low percentage (usually no more than 20%) of the workforce in the construction and numbers of women who represent manual trades i.e. roofers, bricklayers and glaziers were as low as to be immeasurable in national surveys. It is very important to attract more women to construction industry in order to fill the skills gaps and to make changes within the industry in terms of gender segregation and enhanced productivity. The poor image of construction, a lack of role models and knowledge, poor careers advice, gender-biased recruitment literature, practices, peer pressure, and poor educational experiences are cited as having a negative impact to women entering the industry. Paper shows structural and image related barriers militating against the entrance of women into this industry include, i.e.: the dominant male workforce, exclusive networks, informal recruitment, discriminatory sexist behavior, long hours culture, conflict and crisis – reasons why women tend to choose not to enter this industry.

Key words: women at work, construction, diversity, gender

GENDER ASPECT IN CONSTRUCTION

Women in the construction industry could be categorized in three groups: working in professional/technical positions, working in administrative positions, and working as construction staff on sites.

Women in different stages of profession in construction industry can be categorized as:

- young women joining after completing education,
- women starting on with family responsibilities and to be retained in the workforce,
- women trying to return or returning to work following a career break,
- and Women who may join construction industry seeking a career change.

Women have inherent strengths that can positively contribute to the construction industry. Women generally:

1. Are perceived to have better listening skills and soft skills (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).
2. Are perceived to be more creative than men, they pay more attention to detail, are more thorough, are more organised, more precise and make a deeper and more thorough analysis (Gurjao, 2006; Fortune, 2010).
3. Are better at negotiating relationships and keeping the peace, while men tend to be more aggressive (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015; Radziszewska-Zielina & Szewczyk, 2015).
4. Traits like teamwork, politeness and multi-tasking that are considered feminine can have beneficial application on site (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).

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5. Have stronger communication, empathy, and as compared to men they are able to respond better to stress (Othman & Jaafar, 2013).

6. Are more likely to be innovative and flexible and adopt a participatory mode of working (Watts, 2009).

7. As project managers are found to have the ability to perceive warnings, stay alert when problems or conflicts arise, picture and analyse the problem to make an appropriate decision (Książek, Nowak, Kivrak, Rosłon & Ustinovichius, 2015; Książek & Ciechowicz, 2016).

Given the projected loss of skilled labour over the next few years, it is clear that the construction industry cannot just sit back and do nothing. It will literally run out of workers. The sector does face a challenge in recruitment; most young people have little idea of the wide range of employment opportunities available, so it is not surprising that many recruits join the industry only because a family member is already involved in construction. The industry must overhaul its recruitment campaigns and change its image and culture if it is to become an attractive modern employment choice. Like other male-dominated sectors of the economy, there are many factors that make life difficult for women: primarily, widespread and unchallenged sexism combined with the repeated undermining of their worth. Just as for women in the science, engineering and technology sectors, women in construction need determination to stay and ride out these problems. Trade unions are important in this regard, but have played both negative and positive roles at differing times. Sometimes they have worked to exclude women on the grounds of protecting men's jobs, while at other times they have taken an active role in recruiting and supporting them. The industry should also wake up to the possibility of recruiting both women and men at a later stage in their life. While some roles in construction depend upon physical strength, many others require training and the expertise that comes with age and experience, yet there is an absence of funding and clear training routes for those who in later life decide to enter the trades. The industry suffers from a lack of modern employment practices in many areas, creating problems for women and men with caring responsibilities or disabilities. The construction industry is an extreme case in that the way jobs are structured allows greater discrimination, both direct and indirect. Learning from other disciplines that have changed the profile of their profession, such as law and medicine, should be an easy first step. It is vital for the health of the UK economy that the problems are tackled. There are social value and community benefits to having women join the construction sector – it holds opportunities for women and girls, and also for male entrants of all ages.

The governments need to take a stronger lead in articulating the business case for change and helping to increase those programmes currently in operation. Culture change is essential to make the industry more welcoming of women; eliminating a perceived bullying culture will help everyone. Working on this would enhance the image of the construction sector, showing it as a modern and welcoming industry, somewhere to make a career. Opportunities to train and join the industry at different life stages need to be encouraged. While ensuring that young people can enter the workplace with relevant skills is important, this is not a reason to ignore others. Funding for apprenticeships and courses for those choosing a new career should be a priority for governments and industry alike. Chosen contractors (Radziszewska-Zielina, 2016; Nowak & Skłodkowski, 2016) need to ensure that those in training can secure work placement. Retention is also vital – holding onto good workers. This includes better conditions, flexible working policies and a commitment to supporting those women who wish to go into management. This would provide an attractive career path, but also build up a more diverse management, who in their turn are more likely to attract and recruit a diverse workforce.

WOMAN IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Records show that in medieval times, at least four trades involved women workers: carpentry, shipwrighting, plastering and plumbing. Construction is not the only industry in which women have historically done heavy work; women were down the pits with men in the 19th century. Thousands of women were re-trained to fill skilled manual jobs left vacant by men in WWI and WWII. Especially the Second World War proved beneficial

for women in terms of breaking down job barriers and creating new openings. Distinguishing between gender and sex, people can be biologically sex typed as male or female, but a gender role is learnt or socially determined. Children develop ideas about the roles of men and women even before they start school and these are often reinforced by many different influences including parents, teachers and the media. As a result, subject and career choices may be shaped from an early age. Gender is fundamental to the culture of organizations according to known studies within other. Organizations also form “gender cultures” known to be hierarchical, patriarchal, sex-segregated, sexually divided, sex-stereotyped, sex discriminatory, sexualized, sexist, misogynist, resistant to change, and to contain gendered power structures. Masculinity forms a key element of any corporate culture.

One of the areas it specifically covers is sex discrimination at work. This can come in one of the following forms (Gurjao, 2006):

- direct discrimination, treating one sex less favourably than another,
- indirect discrimination, putting in place rules or arrangements that apply to everyone, but that put one sex at an unfair disadvantage,
- harassment, unwanted behaviour linked to a particular sex that violates someone’s dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.

It can include, for example: not hiring someone, working conditions or rules that disadvantage one sex and are not necessary for the job in hand, banter or jokes that undermine someone’s confidence and ability to do their job.

There are consistent differences in the occupations entered by women and men. The under-representation of women in the occupational hierarchy shows in two ways:

1. The traditional gender split in the sectoral pattern of employment, i.e. segregation of women into traditional roles, “the glass wall”, with women being more likely to work in administrative and secretarial, personal services and sales occupations, and men more likely to work in manufacturing and production, has persisted for a long time and resulting in women invariably earning less than men.

2. The representation of women in many industries decreases with an increase of seniority of the position. Women occupy junior and supporting positions within high status professions. The “glass ceiling”, the situation where women can see, but not reach, higher level jobs and are prevented from progressing in their careers, still exists in many occupations and industries.

An occupational stereotype is a form of sex-role stereotyping, that is, a set of assumptions about the sorts of activities and interests that are associated with the roles of men and women in society. Sex segregation effectively creates a class of jobs which is then subject to societal stereotypes (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015). Segregation takes place first and is then embodied within stereotypes and cultural norms and expectations, which then serves to underpin the process of segregation. Individuals by and large perceive an occupation as being performed principally by men or by women, and then believe it must require masculine or feminine attributes in order for an individual to be effective within that role.

Two different forms of occupational segregation by sex are observed (Anker, 1997):

1. Horizontal segregation refers to the distribution of men and women across occupations, for example women may be perceived to work as maids, caretakers, nurses and secretaries and men as truck drivers and doctors.

2. Vertical segregation refers to the distribution of men and women in the same occupation but with one sex more likely to be at a higher grade or level, for example men are perceived as more likely to be production supervisors and women production workers, and men are more likely to be senior managers and women junior managers. In nursing, despite women dominating the field, male nurses were twice as likely to be found in higher grade nursing posts, although females had better post-basic qualifications.

A number of theories have been put forth over the years to explain such widespread gender segregation of occupations. The basic principle of gender theories is that women’s disadvantaged position in the labour market is caused by, and is a reflection of, patriarchy and women’s subordinate position in society and the family. The

most frequently cited theories include, among others: Human Capital, Statistical Discrimination, Labour Market Discrimination, and Socialization theories (Gurjao, 2006). Those theories are explained below.

Theories of patriarchy. The key explanation offered by the patriarchy theories for women's subordination is that segregation by occupation is used to restrict women to the 'ghetto' of low paid work, restricting competition by raising/building glass walls and resulting in women invariably earning less than men.

Steven Goldberg's theory of the inevitability of male dominance and patriarchy based on psychophysiological processes argues that testosterone and other differences in male psychological development makes men generally more aggressive, self assertive, dominant and competitive and are a source of sex differences in motivation, ambition and behaviour. Consequently, they invariably seek to obtain the top position in any hierarchy, be it workforce, sport, politics, crime or any other area of social activity with a hierarchy of status and power that prompts competitive behaviour. He also states that men may not be necessarily able, competent or effective in using positions of power and authority, only that they are motivated to seek such positions with greater determination and persistence than women, and are more prepared to make sacrifices to get there, in terms of forgoing other activities or benefits (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).

Hartmann's theory of patriarchy, male organisation and job segregation defines patriarchy as men's domination of women; specifically men's control of women's labour with explicit emphasis on occupational segregation as the key mechanism used by men to restrict and constrain women's access to income and earnings, forcing domestic division of labour with a disproportionate share of housework and childcare responsibility thus excluding them from paid work; rendering them dependent on men. This may be simply stated as male organisation to further their interests against those of women, especially to control women's work wage which remains the basis for most formulations today (Gurjao, 2006).

Becker's theory of rational choices within families argues that the sexual division of labour results in men investing more in their human capital: education, training, career development and work experience. Women tend to prioritise family and choose jobs that are less demanding and compatible with domestic responsibility. This results in occupational segregation as women tend to seek jobs that are less demanding or require less responsibility (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).

Theories of occupational segregation. Theories that attempt to account for the establishment and maintenance of segregation include those based on individual differences, including human capital theory; those that are based on ideas of discrimination by employers, including labour market discrimination and rational bias theories; and those that take as their central premise, the notion of systemic barriers within organisations, including intergroup and dual labour theories. While no one theory accounts single-handedly for the establishment and continuance of gender segregation, together they help to make sense of these employment phenomena. There has been relatively little empirical research to test these theories at organisational level. There are, therefore, a number of influences which affect occupational segregation, the research shows that these are mutually reinforcing. Decisions made by individuals certainly contribute to the perpetuation of occupational segregation, but perceived occupational segregation in turn influences individuals' choices (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015; Książek & Ciechowicz, 2016). Occupational gender-stereotyping is important to consider because of labour market outcomes especially in terms of recruitment, hiring, pay, promotion, etc. that may result from them. Further, gender-stereotyping of occupations may discourage individuals from pursuing careers in occupations typed as gender-inappropriate for them, even though they may actually be well-suited for such careers (Gurjao, 2006). Descriptions of these theories are a summary of articles authored by (Anker, 1997; Gurjao, 2006). The various theories put forward to account for continued gender segregation, restricted career advancement and lower wages for women at work may be grouped into three different categories:

- those that focus on individual, objective differences between the sexes that account for women's relative lack of success compared with men,
- explanations based on discrimination by employers,
- explanations based on the existence of systemic barriers structural discrimination).

Individual differences theories suggest that objective differences between the sexes; factors such as women's attitudes, traits and behaviours prevent them from succeeding at the same rate as men. They also propose that women and men do different jobs because women and men themselves are different. However, studies that have examined characteristics which are relevant to work have in fact found few gender differences. Research (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015) has focused on managers has showed that gender differences in management style revealed very few differences between male and female managers with one key exception: when democratic/participative management style was compared with autocratic/directive, women showed more participative behaviour. Secondly, working in particular jobs, individuals are constrained by socialisation into the norms and expectations of that job, substantially reducing the scope for any individual differences.

Human capital theory advocates that skills gained through education and training (opportunity cost) can alter the wages individuals receive. There is a more specific version of the individual difference theory that contends that people are rewarded for their previous investment in their own education and training. With qualifications and experience held constant, as in the case of the nursing profession, there remains an advantage for men relative to women that cannot be accounted for by differences in human capital. Therefore human capital theory clearly does not fully account for the differences in present-day patterns of employment of women and men. Women tend to prioritise family or domestic work, choosing to limit labour participation resulting in lowering their skills, qualification and experience and thus lowering their human capital value.

Explanations based on discrimination by employers. This group of theories is based on the principle that occupational segregation derives from the beliefs held by employers that differences exist between the sexes that make one sex less suitable for employment. There are two theories that explain or predict the hiring of women or other minorities where individuals or organisations condone discrimination: the labour market discrimination theory and the rational bias theory (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).

Labour market discrimination suggests that, where employers, customers and/or employees have discriminatory tastes that is preference for either sex as employees, they hire a member of the less favoured group if they can do so at a wage discount sufficiently large to compensate for the perceived loss of utility and/or discomfort associated with employing them (Ahuja & Kumari, 2015).

Rational bias suggests that a manager's decision to discriminate in favour of one gender or the other in hiring or promoting employees is influenced by whether such discrimination would be viewed positively by superiors or colleagues; that is, if there is a possibility of a manager being viewed positively by directors for choosing to hire a male rather than a female, then this is likely to increase the likelihood of the discriminatory decision being made.

SUMMARY

Women are under-represented with their distribution highly skewed within the construction industry, suffering from both occupational and organisational segregation. Two-thirds work in secretarial or clerical roles with significant under-representation in the engineering and technical occupations compared to their male counterparts. The barriers that prevent the entry of women into the industry begin in early socialising and education, and continue throughout training and recruitment. These barriers are further exacerbated by the industry as it continues to foster a male only image and remains entrenched in a culture which undermines the value of women.

The construction industry needs to find ways to balance its requirements, as an employer, if it wants to get the best out of people with childcare responsibilities. The working hours culture needs to be replaced with flexible working. Better work-life balance is being demanded by both men and women as men now take part in child care responsibilities (Zara, 2002). The construction industry currently fails to address issues combining work and family commitment, treating them as separate. The construction industry is facing a "demographic time-bomb" – that is, the pool of traditional male applicants is contracting and the current workforce is ageing leading to

problems of skill shortages and recruitment. Therefore, there is a need to tap into the talents of the “other half” of the workforce; women and ethnic minorities. This appears to be the driving force to encouraging women into the industry rather than equal opportunity.

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ASPEKTY ZARZĄDZANIA RÓŻNORODNOŚCIĄ W BUDOWNICTWIE

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule opisano prace badawcze poświęcone aspektowi gender w budownictwie jako części szeroko pojmowanego zarządzania różnorodnością. Przemysł budowlany jest postrzegany jako silnie zdominowany przez mężczyzn, w którym kobiety są zatrudniane w niewystarczającym stopniu. Praca kobiet w budownictwie charakteryzuje się niskim poziomem zatrudnienia (zazwyczaj poniżej 20%). Jest istotne, by zwiększyć ten poziom w celu podniesienia wydajności pracy, zwiększenia umiejętności personelu oraz niwelowania podziałów związanych z segregacją na tle płci. Przemysł budowlany, jako zdominowany przez mężczyzn, jest również postrzegany jako wymagający brutalnej siły, dobrej tolerancji na warunki zewnętrzne budowy, szczególnie pogodowe, a także np. nieparlamentarny język. Niekorzystny wpływ na rolę kobiet w przemyśle mają także: brak odpowiednich modeli zachowań, słabe doradztwo zawodowe, rekrutacja przeznaczona wyłącznie dla mężczyzn, presja zawodowa, niekorzystne doświadczenia okresu edukacji. Artykuł pokazuje strukturalne i wizerunkowe czynniki ograniczające pracę kobiet w budownictwie, takie jak: dominacja mężczyzn, stosunki pracy, nieformalne zatrudnienie, zachowania dyskryminujące, przedłużone godziny pracy, występujące konflikty.

Słowa kluczowe: praca kobiet, budownictwo, różnorodność, gender