Confronting Social Dominance Ideology: How Professional Women Manage Career Stereotypes in Male-Dominated Occupations

Journal:	*Employee Relations*
Manuscript ID	ER-04-2022-0161.R3
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Female Managers and Professionals, Gender stereotypes in Nigeria, Social dominance in Nigeria

Confronting Social Dominance Ideology: How Professional Women Manage Career Stereotypes in Male-Dominated Occupations

Abstract

Purpose – Using social dominance theory as a conceptual lens, this study explores how female managers and professionals strive to defy perceived career stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated occupations.

Design/methodology/approach – The dataset comprises 30 interviews with female bank managers and senior engineers in Nigeria – a non-Western location and work group – a sample that is considered under-researched.

Findings – The qualitative analysis identifies how the interviewed women adopted three strategies in managing gender and career stereotypes, with some expressing concerns of experiencing emotional dissonance as they contend with occupational segregation based on gender.

Research limitations/implications – The extent to which the findings can be generalised may be constrained by the study's limited sample size. Nevertheless, the findings shed light on the underlying importance of disclosing how working women exert themselves in navigating the social dominance ideology in Nigeria that is notable for extreme gender role differentiation. This often results in an intensification of the efforts made by female professionals in confronting the endemic nature of male chauvinism in Nigerian organisations.

Originality – Research on gender and career constraints has, in the main, restricted our understanding of the barriers that Nigerian women face in their careers as a result of the masculine hegemony perpetuated by social dominance. The present study aims to challenge however, proponents of social dominance by unveiling the mitigating strategies that women living in an inegalitarian society adopt to confront occupational male-group ascendency.

Introduction

This article contributes to the scarce literature in the global South on the fight against gender stereotyping at work especially in the banking and engineering professions in Nigeria. Stereotype becomes thicker because Nigerian value system is based on a social dominance ideology that elevates patriarchy which is often problematic for women working in presumed male-dominated occupations in this context (Adisa et al., 2020). Social dominance proposition is based on the notion that social groups are hierarchically positioned to reflect a universal human susceptibility regarding the formation of group-based superiority, and that members of the dominant group enjoys disproportionate or unequal share of positive social value than other inferior groups (Akanji et al., 2021b). Generally, the realities of occupational gender segregation that constrain women's career development are known (García-Mainar et al., 2018). Little is known, however, about how women still progress their careers and manage these stereotypical obstacles (Fernando, 2012). The present study focuses on the considerable efforts that Nigerian professional women exert in managing male superiority, which has been found to disadvantage their careers (Jaga, 2020).

In light of the opportunity that this gap in the literature presents, this study draws on social dominance theory (SDT) to frame our arguments on how gendered group-based inequalities cause career women to strive harder to dislodge social dominance mentality in certain occupations identified as hyper-masculine jobs in Nigeria (Akanji et al., 2020). Nigerian 'male-

typed jobs' are those that the population of men are overwhelmingly more than their women counterparts. For instance, jobs such as automobile mechanics, engineering, construction, banking, commercial bus driving, and ICT related professions are associated with men because of the high demand of time, effort and stereotypical specifications required to fit into these occupations in Nigeria (Lawanson, 2008; Jimoh et al., 2016). Adisa et al., (2020) argued that the unequal distribution of men and women among different jobs in the financial and STEM sectors in Nigeria emerges from cultural expectations requiring women to self-allocate to occupations that allows them to combine work and family demands to avoid social sanctions. Despite the global efforts to strengthen gender equality and inclusion, women still struggle with institutional prejudices that are often the root cause of the underrepresentation of women in managerial and professional positions (Grady, 2015). For instance, published data reveals that two-thirds of women in managerial positions at Fortune 1000 US firms were below the top two or three steps of leadership levels, since men are more likely than women to be considered for those positions (Ng and Sears, 2017). Although reports on gender stereotypes at work have narrowed in recent decades in the US, females continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations (Wang and Degol, 2018).

While significant research on the stereotypes impeding women's career progression has been extensively undertaken in Western nations (Grady, 2015; Galperin, 2019), little is known from an African context such as Nigeria. This article argues that similar circumstances are ubiquitous in Nigeria – a society with high patriarchal structures. Hence, the main contribution of this paper is to show how women exert agency within a setting that is stereotyped against them. In doing this, the present study presents research data from Nigeria, a country that has been described as the giant of Africa (Adisa et al., 2020). The reason why Nigeria has been chosen as the focus of the study is that masculine hegemony pervades the Nigerian society (Okafor et al., 2011). This social practice is often demonstrated in the heavily gendered division of labour beliefs suggesting women should be preoccupied with housework and caregiving responsibilities. Hence, the prevalence of gender stereotyping is the reason why Nigerian female managers and senior professionals grapple to adopt personalised career management strategies to navigate the illusory gender-role belief system of 'think manager, think male' (Ganiyu et al., 2018).

Drawing on social dominance propositions, we see gender not as a static entity but as a socially constituted and dynamically situated social practice operating in developing societies, leading to the constant structuring of some occupations along gender lines (Carli et al., 2016). In this way, the excessive and systemic nature of male privilege in STEM occupations is considered to give disproportionate positive value and material returns to women in similar careers (Schmader, 2023). Through this lens and based on interviews with 30 Nigerian women working in occupations that are traditionally seen as being male dominated, the study data unveils how women manage occupational segregation by gender (Phathara-on and Jaya, 2017). While more empirical evidence is needed to further explore these issues, there is a lack of research on how women confront disadvantageous career situations. Rather than merely repeating the existing debates on the barriers women face in their careers based on the hyper-masculine nature of Nigerian organisations (Adisa et al., 2020), the present study aims to extend the current body of literature by focusing on the strategies used to mitigate the social dominance that exacerbates gender stereotypes in perceived male-populated professions in Nigeria. In other words, this article links managing gender stereotype to SDT by providing critical qualitative evidence of the progress that women have made in their attempts to challenge self-perpetuating social dominance orientation forcing unequal gender-based social relations in Nigeria (Aluko, 2015).

Hence, drawing on the SDT, this article aims to contribute new insights into this gender and work discourse by addressing the following research question:

How do female managers and professionals manage stereotypes associated with working in traditionally male-dominated occupations?

The research context

We develop our contribution in the context of Nigeria, an African nation with a population of over 200 million people, 49% of which are women (Akanji et al., 2020). The institutionalisation of gender dominance pervades the inegalitarian Nigerian society, where men are considered the breadwinners and women the caregivers (Mordi et al., 2013). Other daily traditional features of Nigerian culture include a high level of respect for the elderly, religion, and wide acceptance of gender inequality and status differentials in social and organisational settings (Ituma et al., 2011). Some of these cultural values are fundamental in understanding the factors that impact women's workplace behaviours as they contend with the self-imposed superior status of the male gender. Oladejo et al. (2012), reports the increasing gender gaps in the banking sector – men typically dominate the position of bank managers in Nigeria. Despite the change in demographics that has resulted in the active participation of professional females in Nigeria's corporate space, Mogaji at al. (2021) expresses concern that only 12% of women occupy the positions of chief executive officer and senior manager in Nigerian banking institutions.

Similarly, the dominance of men in the Nigerian engineering profession also restricts career advancement of women. This is as a result of group-based social hierarchies that foster masculine hegemony and thereby increases the marginalisation of female engineers (Kehinde and Okoli, 2004). For instance, gender quotas in relation to educational attainment reveal a limited number of females are studying engineering at Nigerian universities (Okorafor et al., 2021). From this perspective, SDT explains the acceptability of gender discrimination through compelling cultural ideologies constraining women careers. As such, empirical evidence exists on SDT establishing gender identity, which is particularly affected by occupational segregation in Nigeria (Adisa et al., 2020). While SDT explains the relevant processes in different social organisations – from cultural ideologies and institutional biases to gender roles and the psychology of prejudices – working together to produce strong group-based inequalities (Pratto and Stewart, 2012), little is known on how stigmatised groups respond and manage the overwhelming career stereotypes based on their presumed lower identities. Hence, the present study aims to fill this knowledge gap.

This article is organised as follows: We first briefly outline the theoretical background of the study. Thereafter, we explained the research design and analytical method, and we then present our findings followed by discussion of findings. We then conclude, as well as highlight the study's practical implications, limitations, and suggesting possible areas for future research.

The theoretical background

Social dominance theory (SDT) explains how societies maintain group-based dominance (Pratto et al., 2006). Hence, the theory is premised on the notion that social groups are hierarchically positioned, reflecting one group based on certain demographic features such as an ethnic, racial, national, gender and/or religious group, perceived to hold disproportionate power and enjoys an unequal share of positive value to the detriment of other groups (Mifune et al., 2019). Thus, SDT foregrounds group-based superiority and oppression. It sometimes

arises from common features of a given society to acknowledge the legal and social rights of the dominants that portray their way of life as desirable, while the subordinate group receives insignificant social recognition and is even stigmatised (Pratto and Stewart, 2012). SDT underscores group-based discrimination as a pervasive phenomenon, because it is supported by unified societal endorsement of a superiority complex and the legitimising myths of social dominance orientation (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). As such, societies of this nature (like Nigeria) demonstrate group oppression in the form of sexism, which results in men holding disproportionate power and receiving disproportionate privileges compared to women in the workplace (Adisa et al., 2020). Research on work, gender, and organisation persistently report that female leaders and those aspiring to become managers often face difficulties that men do not, particularly in jobs that are historically dominated by men as 'group favourites' (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2013).

As such, women's disadvantaged position in male-typed occupations is caused by, and reflects, patriarchy, and women's sub-ordinate position in society and the family (Pearlman, 2019). As a result, the fact that there are perceived male-dominated occupations reinforces gender stereotypes, which makes it even more challenging for women to thrive in these domains (Li et al., 2019). This is because environments of this nature are driven by systemic institutional and individual prejudices that foster group-based hierarchies consensually placing sharp differences between the dominant and dominated group (Islam, 2014). In reinforcing unequal group-based social systems, men continue to dominate STEM professions across the globe, while the few women who begin their careers in STEM may face the adversarial effects of low acceptance (Carli et al., 2016). The central aim of SDT in this area has been to understand the ubiquity of group-based inequality, highlighting the significance of men having higher social-dominance orientations than women – when the glass ceiling becomes thicker. While proponents of SDT argue that the cause of group-based social hierarchy is that the group with power (i.e. men) dominates the subordinate group (i.e. women), little attention is given to how the subordinate group react to this essentially stereotypical social system (Bates and Heaven, 2001). According to Turner and Reynolds (2003), SDT 'not only makes futile any effort to liberate humanity from oppression, domination, and divisive hatreds, it also asserts that social systems built on perpetual coercion, domination, and conflict are adaptive…and are good for us'. Consequently, SDT is found to be a one-sided framework that hardly explains the situations in which low-status groups may reject the status quo or defy the whims and caprices of the dominant group (Zhia et al., 2022). Therefore, there is little empirical evidence on how women deliberately defy and/or manage the effects of work stereotypes and still pursue their careers when faced with the problem of workplace sexism (Helman and Parks-Stamm, 2007).

To a greater degree, recent studies claim that much progress has been made towards establishing a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion as a value-added strategy aiming to increase workplace egalitarianism in western economies in order to mitigate the harsh reality of gender stereotype (Kim et al., 2020). Hence, Ellwood et al., (2021), for example, finds that gender pay gap between female and male chief executive officers at the British NHS foundation trusts decreased significantly, as female chief executive officers of the trusts increased from 37% in 2012–2013 to 47% in 2017–2018. Elsewhere, Adisa et al., (2020) reveal that in Africa, Nigeria is notable for extreme hyper-masculinity at work, leading to the persistent disadvantage of women in the workplace, despite the social awareness and individual desire to mitigate the glass ceiling effect. Turning to the sphere of personal actions, Fernando (2012) suggests that studies in other developing nations in South Asia demonstrate that Indian women, in their attempts to break gender stereotypes at work, demonstrate resilience and determination in portraying themselves as capable managers. In doing so, it shows how women can exert agency

and craft their own career path in masculine environments. As such, prior reviews on gender research highlight the need to go beyond reporting only on group-based dominance that inhibits women from advancing beyond a certain point in their careers to demonstrating how women manage organisational stereotypes in a bid to reject being perpetually classified as a low-status group (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Caceres-Rodriguez, 2013).

Therefore, women are still willing to either resist or work their way around the legitimising myths that perpetuate patriarchy and the inequitable preferences of social rights that support male preferences (Pratto et al., 2006). Accordingly, the present study focuses on understanding how women navigate their careers in a country where strong masculine hegemony prevails (Akanji et al., 2021b). Nigerian society provides a fertile field for this study given the country's endorsement of an inequitable preference for hierarchical structures over egalitarianism. Regardless of the social setting, leadership is often perceived as the automatic right of African men (Osondu-Oti and Olominu, 2018). Notably, the profound endorsement of sexism in any national context, impeding women's career progression, has often been conceptualised as an unpleasant reality that is to a large extent outside of an individual's control, since it is orchestrated by broader sociocultural or organisational biases (Bombuwela and Chamaru, 2013). However, our unique contribution in this article is that we identify the deliberate thinking and behavioural processes within the control and decisive desires of individuals. Thus, we explore the reactions of the subordinate group in a social hierarchy that perpetuates inequalities. In so doing, we highlight how career women appraise and confront threatening glass-ceiling situations.

Research methodology

We adopt a qualitative interpretivist design in this study to gain insights into the phenomenon being explored. The inductive approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' feelings, emotions, reactions, and behaviours deduced from their own words (Saunders et al., 2012). We conducted the study in two major commercial cities of Nigeria: Abuja (the Federal Capital) and Lagos State (a commercial city). We selected different commercial banks where the participants held some position in management: bank managers, heads of internal audit departments, and heads of marketing departments. In the engineering profession, we also interviewed women working at private ICT firms (ICT support and broadband Internet services) and telecommunications networks (mobile phone network providers and road construction firms), where the participants held supervisory and leadership roles. The snowballing and referral sampling techniques were used to recruit research participants. In this process, the initial participants who showed interest in the study were asked to nominate their colleagues for participation in the study, if they satisfied our sampling criteria. Thus, a non-probabilistic sampling approach was used to recruit 30 female bank managers and senior engineers in total. The purposive sampling approach was chosen because the researchers have reasonable knowledge of the sample size to be used and targeted the samples sought (Creswell, 2013). The sampling technique is known to be a time- and cost-effective approach and is often an important consideration in cross-sectional research (Patton, 2015), like the current study.

The researchers observed ethical protocols considered crucial for high-standard qualitative research throughout the data collection. We explained the purpose of the study clearly to the participants in order to secure their full involvement (Saunders et al., 2012). The anonymity of participants and their workplaces were also preserved. In so doing, the participants were given pseudonyms: Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc. We requested and secured each interviewee's formal consent for voluntary participation before the beginning of each interview. Altogether, the participants varied in terms of age (30–60 years old), years of work

experience, leadership position held, marital status (25 were married, and 5 were single), and the nature of the business sector in which they worked. They were all university graduates. Thus, the participants met our eligibility criteria – the demographic details relating to the participants are clearly outlined in Table 1 below.

Insert Table 1 here

The interviews were held in quiet rooms within the office premises during the participants' break times because of the busy nature of some offices (e.g. the banking hall) – this was done to minimise distractions and produce high-quality voice recordings (Creswell, 2013). The fact that the researchers and interviewees shared similar cultural background helped in mitigating any reticence that they may have felt towards us as researchers, and this encouraged them to fully engage in the study (Adisa et al., 2021). We also showed a high level of empathy, which gave the interviewees comfort and confidence to share their experiences without hesitation. Each semi-structured interview lasted for about 40–60 minutes. We began each interview with open-ended questions, allowing for flexibility in the discussion. We then asked questions about the interviewee's lived experiences of the gender-stereotyping challenges they face in their daily jobs. Thereafter, the questions were gradually narrowed down to more specific questions about the planned actions they adopted to navigate and combat gender biases in establishing their managerial and leadership journeys in occupations perceived to be dominated by males in Nigeria and the effects thereof. Examples of the interview questions asked are shown in Table 2 below.

Insert Table 2 here

The interviews were conducted in the English language, which is the official language of Nigeria. All sessions were electronically recorded with formal consent of participants. We continued the data collection until we reached saturation point – the point at which further interviews would be unlikely to reveal new insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Overall, we investigated the challenges confronting the interviewees in their daily professional lives to further understand their experiences of breaking into 'a man's world' as they grapple to progress their careers and with what implications (Fernando, 2012).

Data analysis

At this stage, we transcribed all the recorded interviews verbatim. Thereafter, we thematically analysed the transcriptions. This qualitative design is often used to identify, analyse, and report on patterns conceptualised as 'themes' within datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). On reflections of researchers' social position when it comes to the interpretation of the data sets, we ensured that our similar cultural background with participants did not cause biases during analysis so that dependability on the collected data would not be compromised (Cresswell, 2013). In doing this, the transcribed interviews were returned to the participants for "member checking" in order to confirm the accuracy of all related data before analysis. Member checking is often suggested as a validation method for judging good qualitative research void of biases (Birt et al., 2016). Thereafter, we began open coding to concisely understand how the participants viewed their individual worlds (Pratt et al., 2006). In so doing, we began reviewing the chunks of transcripts and subsequently engaged in a data-reduction process. This was achieved through line-by-line coding of the data, which involved assigning words or phrases that directly suggested the salient, summative, and essence-capturing features of the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas categorised as 'causes' of why the participants react the way they do to male-group dominance followed by the 'effects' – the strategies they use to manage

these forms of group-based social hierarchies that challenge their careers (see open codes in Table 2). In other words, the initial open codes illustrated the sources of work stereotyping experiences confronting women in male classified jobs using the SDT as a theoretical lens. In addition, other open codes conceptualised as 'effects' represented the participants' responses to the occurrences produced by the causes – denoting the actions taken by participants to mitigate the stereotypes encountered as a result of their working in perceived male-dominated occupations (see Table 2).

When the open-coding process was complete, these first-order codes were subsequently consolidated, rendering them more theoretical and abstract (Gregory et al., 2018). This process is often considered a transition from open to axial coding in qualitative design (Pratt, 2008). At this stage, we identified the relationships between the cause-and-effect codes that created the distinct key themes emerging through the axial codes (see Table 2). In other words, the axial codes were used to identify the conceptual explanations for the participants' behaviours and actions shaping specific strategies aimed at contesting the extreme attitude of male privilege in the Nigerian banking and engineering professions.

Findings

The study results reveal concerns about the regimented cultural perceptions of gender roles that reinforce sexism and gender stratification in certain professions in Nigeria. The participants drew on their experiences that have necessitated their adoption of certain methods of fulfilling their managerial abilities in the midst of male-group dominance. In this presentation of our findings from the interviews, the indicative quotes and samples of open and axial codes, cumulating in the emergence of the core themes, are summarised in Table 2. An in-depth analysis of these key themes follows:

Proliferating work effort

This theme - proliferating work effort means women increasing and demonstrating work abilities in order to mitigate gender biases. Hence, strong indications of the participants' desire to labour more as a confrontational tactic against the assumed incapability of women to excel in male-dominated jobs were given by eight other participants. The self-induced method adopted by each woman aims at keeping stereotypes 'invisible' by concentrating on enhancing their work ethics (Block et al., 2018). Consequently, the participants claimed they work harder than their male counterparts – mentally and physically – leading them to being caught up in a vicious cycle of working extremely hard in order to dislodge the existing categorisations of the banking and engineering professions as being exclusively for men. In other words, the findings reveal that participants' responses to gender-stereotype threats have been to increase their work efforts in order to justify their ability to fit into job spaces perceived as ill-suited for their gender (Adisa et al., 2020). According to study participants, Nigerian organisations consider women as being less capable and knowledgeable in managerial roles than men (Osondu-Oti and Olominu, 2018). Consequently, these women claim to use tactics such as working long hours and using a great deal of energy to fight occupational gender segregation:

> *I sometimes sense 'degrading looks' from my male colleagues about my potential… It was very tough for me getting into this position, because recruitment and promotion outcomes are largely decided on the basis of male preferences, an approach that is ingrained in all institutions and structures of our society. However, I have been able to fend off gender prejudices by working extended shifts, even at the expense of my work-family balance. I sometimes stay*

> *late at the office to ensure that my reviews and reports on safety protocols at our road construction sites are at their best* (Participant 6).
>
> *It is annoying to hear side-comments from my male superiors that my role is often occupied by married men who are considered stable and experienced, as if singlehood and femininity are stigmas. I prove them wrong by increasing my work rate and intensifying my efforts, insistently displaying superior knowledge in investment-banking, sales, trading, customer service, and asset management… I'm known to be a workaholic who fights to keep my status visible at work* (Participant 1).

From our findings, the Nigerian institutional value system is organised around belonging to a male-based group, which provokes reactions from women to the disturbing causes of stereotyping at work. This reality draws on SDT, which emphasises the systemic male-group dominance, which fosters inequality and social-dominance orientations serving to devalue the career aspirations of women. Consequently, the reasons for the heightened glass-ceiling threats are making women more resistant in that they are maximising their own efforts in order to compete in male-type professions. The participants' determination to break into, and excel in an unusual environment further disagrees with the assumption of SDT that low-status groups have no choice but to maintain the hierarchies that oppress them (Turner and Reynolds, 2003). While the high-status group shows male favouritism based on established patriarchal values, the low-status group (women, in our study) reveals some level of resistance in combatting the exaggerated and systemic male-group dominance by working harder and for longer hours.

Doing masculinity

From the coded data, doing masculinity means participants adopting masculine characteristics in order to reject dominant ideologies that relegates women as weak and of a low-status group. The study also reveals that the heavily patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society is widely acknowledged as foregrounding the effects hindering women's career progression. Hence, 'doing masculinity' in the context of our study, simply means some participants deliberately displaying characteristics and behaviours that signify and validate maleness (Fernando, 2012). The participants spoke in strong terms against chauvinism that fosters economic dependence on men and restricts women to domestic roles (Sidani et al., 2015). In addressing male-centred preconceptions about certain jobs, our findings show how the cause and effects of sexism make women distance themselves from their own gender (i.e. adopting an anti-feminine approach) and express 'domineering behaviours, like those of a man' (the comment of Participant 3 in Table 2). In the context of social dominance orientation, men dominate the banking and engineering occupations, and women who work or aspire to work in those professions are often stigmatised. Therefore, performing masculinity implies disengaging from a domain in which they are stereotyped and targets of discrimination by displaying characteristics associated with men such as aggressiveness and competitiveness. More of the participants' views buttressing these points are as follows:

> *As a woman, I feel ostracised working as the head of my unit of only male engineers. I am expected to lead the team of male developers responsible for building new and supporting existing websites for our clients. However, there is this normative expectation that my job should go to a man, because Nigeria glorifies patriarchy. I defy this stereotypical thinking by showing strong attributes of dominance, ambition, and rationality – as if a man is their boss – when coordinating my male colleagues… It's mentally distressing and*

> *exasperating for me, because I am always projecting stern emotions, contrary to the emotional sensitivities of care, concern, and affections expected of a woman and mother* (Participant 19).
>
> *The banking industry is extremely patriarchal, which sometimes makes my workplace interactions challenging. Some men find it difficult to work under the supervision of female leaders like me… This forces me to ostentatiously carry out forensic audits like a male auditor, so that I am not perceived as a weak manager. I feel so emotionally drained having to express this male disposition that I naturally do not want. But that is the only way I fight gender stereotypes* (Participant 17).

The participants acknowledged that patriarchy affects their behavioural responses to the preference for males in the leadership positions they occupy. Overall, the findings signify that the extent of hyper-masculinity in work-based gender relations in Nigeria results in some participants demonstrating certain behavioural outcomes captured in our axial codes (see Table 2) and the preceding excerpts in order to gain recognition and respect in traditionally masculine occupations (Adisa et al., 2020). In this context, the response patterns depict a strategy deployed to keep the feminine gender invisible to others in order to mitigate discriminatory propensities. Implicitly, our findings indicate acceptance of the dominant discourse about the stigmatisation of women in perceived male-type occupations as ubiquitous, which in turn, results in women standing up for themselves by 'doing masculinity' in order to overcome the cultural notion that competent leaders are male and masculine (Fernando, 2012). Notably, when these participants defy occupational gender segregation and behave as men, they claim to be penalised by the backlash effects of emotional dissonance. These feelings of unease occur as they evaluate their emotional experiences of doing masculinity and having to endure simulations found to threaten their femininity.

While research on the gender disparity constraining women's careers rarely considers the psychological outcomes on those affected, the current study fills this knowledge gap by further unveiling how the discrepancies between expressed and real emotions can potentially impair their wellbeing, especially when an internal conflict intensifies between the woman's actual feelings and those used to navigate stereotypes at work (Billing, 2011). In this context, the Nigerian culture of male privilege in particular jobs are underpinned by patriarchal values and inegalitarian traditions perpetuating rigid gender roles that mainly assign women to the subordinate sphere of prioritising caregiving over a working life (Osondu-Oti and Olominu, 2018). As our data suggests, the pervasive and endemic nature of gender bias rooted in almost all social systems in Nigeria makes it extremely challenging for women to appear visible in the workplace. Based on SDT, the social dominance propagating male preference is historically, ideologically, and psychologically embedded in all social structures in Nigeria, resulting in a type of gender exclusion that requires women to suppress their femininity and adopt masculine characteristics in order to gain some level of acceptance and relevance.

Achieving social standing

As a key theme – achieving social standing refers to women trying hard to earn recognition so as to use the prevailing gender biases to their own advantage. Here, some of the participants claimed to recognise occupational gender segregation as a root cause of despising the professional capabilities and social status of women in acclaimed male-dominated jobs. Consequently, they claim to strive to underplay the stereotype threats by achieving a social status that makes them valued inside and outside the workplace. The axial codes generated

from the study foregrounds their reason to achieve social status as a way of confronting stereotypical experiences (see Table 2). For these women, downplaying the threat of being judged as a misfit means involvement in accomplishing the 'effects' that make them matter (see Table 2). These findings further strengthen the criticism levelled against the reductionism and philosophical ideation of SDT that assume group domination and oppression are sacrosanct (Turner and Reynolds, 2003). The reactions of subordinate groups to the social hierarchy are rarely explained in the SDT (Caceres-Rodriguez). It is deemed that group behavioural responses, like group identities, are fundamentally shaped by how subordinate groups appraise and manage the rigid gender-based division of labour that threatens their identities (Grady, 2015). They do so in light of their social circumstances and shared determination to engage in a self-made revolution against social dominance that causes occupational gender segregation (García-Mainar et al., 2018). We see this idea in the following excerpts.

> *Men dominate the engineering sector in Nigeria, which is evident at my workplace. They make me feel that I have no place in the profession. I am fortunate that the owner of this company, who is an affluent male engineer, is a close relative of mine and cherishes me like his daughter. He is a mentor whom I have used as a springboard to becoming successful, despite the resentment against female engineers specialising in road construction… In Nigeria, everything evolves around 'who you know'. So, I use my social affinity here to dispel culturally ascribed gender and workplace stereotypes* (Participant 2).

> *In my personal experience, the glass-ceiling and career challenges facing women like me in the Nigerian banking sector are disheartening. However, I have been able to repel the 'male norm syndrome' that treats us women as 'outcasts' by building strong social networks with other women in top-management positions in the banking industry. My connections with them drive me to aim higher than my current position and has accorded me respect among male bankers* (Participant 28).

From these narratives, the participants appear to downplay the devaluation of women in the perceived male-dominated occupations through the instrumentality of social relations and professional partnerships. In so doing, they claim to boost their social profile and support identities associated with influence and success. As such, the participants are symbol conscious in that they show interest in enhancing their social status through personal connections and seek to position themselves as women who are willing to use the prevailing gender stereotypes to their own advantage.

Discussion

Using SDT as a theoretical lens, this article set out to explore how women confront and manage gender and career stereotypes in occupations perceived to be dominated by males. Nigeria, largely neglected in favour of western research on gender, work, and organisations, is the focus of this study (Akanji et al., 2019). We considered two sectors (banking and engineering) where there are misgivings about the professional abilities of women working in these professions. With the ubiquitous drive to form group-based social hierarchies, we highlighted how patriarchy in Nigeria feeds into the categorisation of certain jobs as being exclusively for men, which thereby fortifies career discrimination experienced by women in those occupations. Our findings consequently present the different strategies adopted by women to defy career stereotypes, despite being caught in a vicious circle of fighting against male-group superiority. This study makes empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of combating

career stereotypes in a context in which women's desire to break into the 'man's world' is apparent, regardless of the stressful experiences encountered in the process. In terms of the study's empirical contribution, while a large body of literature on women and discrimination conventionally gives attention to organisational barriers women encounter as they seek career progression, little or no research attention has been given to the specific issue of the ways in which women – especially those in African contexts – appraise and contend with career and gender issues (Osondu-Oti and Olominu, 2018).

Evidently, the cultural values in Nigeria normalise the preferential treatment and disproportionate privileges of the dominant male group in the banking and engineering professions. Thus, our results illustrate the state of feminism in the Nigerian labour market and the pervasive nature of masculine hegemony, which is a *sine qua non* of patriarchy (Adisa et al., 2021). Drawing on SDT, we found that women are working in a climate of high gender inequality in Nigeria based on male-group superiority. However, our study indicates how SDT is being undermined through reactions of a subordinate groups (i.e. women) to the social hierarchy. The women interviewed have focused on increasing their work efforts (i.e. working longer hours than their male counterparts and intensifying their labour outcomes), with motives primarily aimed towards combating gender stereotypes. In combating the widespread reverence to the social norm of an 'ideal worker' as those susceptible to working long hours, Kim et al. (2020) argues that it is important for female managers, who are customarily underrepresented in STEM occupations, to ordinarily want to prove themselves as capable in defiance of broader cultural and organisational gender biases. In some other African countries, such as South Africa and Ghana, women are content to self-allocate more to occupations they identify as feminine jobs (e.g. nurses, childcare workers, dental assistants, office secretaries, and cosmetologists) to avoid gender stereotypes (Gama and Willemese, 2015). However, the paradox of the content 'female jobs' seems to be disappearing, with some Nigerian women striving to undermine the social dominance proposition through personal desires to confront the prevalence of occupational gender segregation (Jimoh et al., 2016). Accordingly, our findings indicate their fight to dislodge the 'causes' of systemic gender inequality as women strive for recognition that is necessitating the increase in their efforts at work. Our study participants increased their working hours for this reason. Additionally, the intensification of labour is embraced, since these women feel more pressured to prove themselves as ideal workers in defiance of stereotypes, even at the expense of their personal wellbeing and work-family commitments (Okafor et al., 2011).

Following the above, we demonstrate that although the SDT postulates that in-group's social positions are ubiquitous so that low-status groups also work to maintain the hierarchies which oppress them (Turner and Reynolds, 2003), our findings suggest otherwise. Hence, our insights and findings help the academic community to better understand how social dominance orientation is contested in male-dominated occupations in a highly patriarchal setting. Relying on women's accounts of organisational experiences, exerting labour is used to mitigate occupational gender segregation. However, the actions the participants have taken may not necessarily be the best ways of improving human capital and career development (Kim et al., 2017). Thus, Kuo et al. (2014) argues that increasing work efforts by constantly working longer hours often overtires employees psychologically and physically. From this perspective, increasing work effort further exacerbates work-life imbalance and job stress for women. Thus, our findings on proliferating work efforts as a career-management pathway reveal that women heavily rely on this method of working harder in order to counter social hierarchies associated with gender and occupational status.

We also provided evidence in relation to Nigeria in particular – a society with intense patriarchal structures that are endemic in the world of work – where the challenges women face in male-dominated professions are profound. This is the reason why some participants engaged in doing masculinity as a self-protective strategy by which they fight gender stereotypes. This pattern of reactive responses only reinforces the perceptions of male dominance, which conditions the mentality of women to typically project a masculine nature in order to blend into the stereotype of the ideal manager only portrays manliness (Khilji and Pumroy, 2019). Our findings further give evidence suggesting that women demonstrate masculine values in order to overcome workplace sexism, despite being susceptible to emotional dissonance. These findings reveal the extent to which psychological discomfort can jeopardise women's health as a result of their constant attempts to suppress their femininity through continuous surface acting in order to gain occupational relevance (see Table 2). Thus, we argue that the emotional dissonance that occurs when surface acting conflicts with projecting authentic emotions has a negative impact on employee wellness (Yozgat et al., 2012). This could result in mental fatigue and exhaustion. However, participants in the study accordingly highlight how, clearly overriding consideration of women enacting masculine behaviours acknowledges support for hierarchical structures with a heightened male preference for the kind of work they do (Fernando, 2012). This reality demonstrates the usefulness of SDT in understanding the challenges women face in male-type occupations. Hence, individual behaviours portray 'doing masculinity' as a strategy to obscure the assumption that the nature of the work is gender-specific – exclusively for men – which is the crux of our study.

To further buttress this point, our data also reveals participants' actions of contesting work stereotypes through achieving a certain social status, conceived as a self-sustaining method in the midst of a culture in which work roles are classified according to gender. Hence, these sets of women are using this method to manage a social system that places men in hierarchy-attenuating roles based on gender. Thus, achieving social standing emerged as a key consideration for confronting the Nigerian value system, characterised as a class-conscious system according to which individuals with a high social status are given greater audience and are accorded more respect in the workplace and wider society (Ituma et al., 2011). In sum, our findings here suggest that this career-management trajectory adopted by women to fend off gender and career stereotypes is often closely informed by contextual interpretations of their social environment (Fernando, 2012).

On a theoretical level, we used the SDT to examine how the supposed subordinate group confront gender-marked lines of male-group dominance. The tenets of SDT primarily asserts that gender-based relevance exist within social hierarchies built on perpetual male-group dominance, oppression and inequality (Pratto et al., 2006). The oppressed group based on demographic characteristics (e.g. weaker sex) are perceived as disadvantaged with little political power or ease in their way of life to counter systemic and exaggerated male preference reinforcing occupational gender segregation (Ford et al., 2021). Contrary to this theoretical standpoint, our findings highlight certain measure of personalised resistance to gender stereotype orchestrated by working in male-typed occupations.

Arguably, the stereotype managing methods adopted by women is used to counterbalance rigid social structures (Turner and Reynolds, 2003). Hence, the responses from our findings follow beliefs, ideologies and assumptions which they develop to make sense of their space and place in the hierarchical social structure (Tunçgenç, 2010). Impliedly, this shows the conceptual importance of context which is rarely considered in SDT. More specifically, we problematize the well-established theoretical proposition of SDT that proposes the clout of arbitrary-set

system of a social hierarchy characterised by disproportionate and excessive male advantage which is often perceived to be ubiquitous and unaffected by context (Adisa et al., 2020). While critics of this invariant position has suggested certain circumstances that gender-based differentiation of occupations may be reduced – e.g. the adoption of egalitarianism (Dean, 2010), we contest, conversely that contextual conditions can render gender stereotypes more intense that necessitates drastic actions to curtail. Therefore, the challenges of working in male classified jobs and our findings revealing mitigating strategies adopted by women to fortify themselves against values supporting occupational gender segregation speaks volumes about the contextual peculiarities of Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study findings present novel information about how the subordinate group (i.e. women) often disadvantaged based on assumed stability of preference for male-group hierarchy in certain occupations confront stereotypes associated with propositions of the SDT. Here, a context characterized by intense systemic and deeply ingrained patriarchy evidently shapes organisational life and fosters gender inequality in Nigeria. This is manifest in our study leading to women in the banking and engineering professions putting in considerable desire to break stereotypes encountered in these perceived male-type jobs regardless of experiencing stress and work-family conflicts.

Practical implications, study limitations and suggestions for future research

Considering these challenges, and to help women become successful in non-traditional occupations, this study recommends that the Nigerian banking and engineering sectors adopt gender equality climates. Embracing equality climates where emphases is laid on performance rather than gender differentials enhances a belief of instrumentality – that better job performance will lead to promotion and acceptance because of the absence of gender biases (Nishii, 2013). Further drawing from our findings, women should consider whether increasing working hours or intensifying labour to repel stereotypes actually pays off. As suggested by Kim et al., (2020), women's time could be better spent investing in career development. And, in fact, feigning masculinity is one of the problems of emotional labour demands which often leads to anxiety, burnout, and reduced satisfaction (Akanji et al., 2021). Investment in human capital should rather be encouraged by supportive organisational managers to mitigate the plight of women in the Nigerian banking and engineering sectors.

On a final note, this study does have some limitations, including its small sample size, scope (only the banking and engineering sectors), methodology (the subjective interpretivist design), and the study context (Nigeria) – all of which limit the generalisability of the study findings. Therefore, future research could utilise quantitative approaches to test larger representative samples in fulfilling the generalisability criterion (Saunders et al., 2012). Our research focused on Nigerian women who gave evidence based on the society in which they live and socialise. Narratives from other women from the global South or Western nations could reveal the cultural variations shaping the mechanisms they use to cope with social dominance experiences. Thus, it would be interesting for future studies to engage in cross-cultural research in order to gain more empirical and theoretical insights. The results of such studies, if comparative, could be more generalizable across different contexts.

References

Adisa, T. A., Mordi, C. and Akanji, B. (2021), "Freedom and flexibility: The work-family balance of single entrepreneurs in Nigeria", Employee Relations, Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 1232-1249.

Adisa, T. A., C. Mordi, R. Simpson and V. Iwowo. (2020), "Social Dominance, hypermasculinity, and Career Barriers in Nigeria". Gender, Work & Organizations, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 175-194.

Akanji, B., Mordi, M., Ajonbadi, A. A. and Oruh, E. S. (2021a), "Working with emotions: cultural employee perspectives to service management expectations", Employee Relations: The International Journal, Vol. 43 No. 6, pp. 1310-1326.

Akanji, B., Mordi, C. and Ajonbadi, H. A. (2020), "The experiences of work-life balance, stress, and coping lifestyles of female professionals: insights from a developing country", Employee Relations: The International Journal, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 999-1015.

Akanji, B., Mordi, C., Ajonbadi, H. and Adekoya, O. D. (2021b), "Exploring cultural values: A qualitative study of university heads of departments", Qualitative Research in Organisation and Management: An International Journal, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 350-369.

Aluko, Y. A. (2015), "Patriarchy and property rights among Yoruba women in Nigeria. Feminist Economics", Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 56– 81.

Bates, C. and Heaven, P. C. L. (2001), "Attitudes to women in society: The role of social dominance orientation and social values", Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 43 – 49.

Billing, Y. D. (2011), "Are women in management victims of the phantom of the male norms? Gender, Work and Organisation, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 298-317.

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C. and Walter, F. (2016), "Member checking: a tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation?", Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 26 No. 13, pp. 1802-1811.

Bombuwela, P. M. and Chamaru, D. (2013), "The effect of glass ceiling on women career development in private sector organisations: Case of Sri Lanka", Journal of Competitiveness, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 3-19.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), "Using thematic analysis in psychology", Qualitative Research, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 77-101.

Caceres-Rodriguez, R. (2013), "The glass ceiling revisited: Moving beyond discrimination in the study of gender in public organisations", Administration & Society, Vol. 45, No. 6, pp. 674–709.

Carli, L. L., Alwa, L., Lee, Y., Zhao, B. and Kim, E. (2016), Stereotypes about gender and science: Women scientist", Psychology of Women Quarterly, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 244-260.

Creswell, J. W. (2013), Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, Sage publications.

Darouei, M. and Pluut, H. (2018), "The paradox of being on the glass cliff: Why do women accept risky leadership positions?" Career Development International, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 397–426.

Davidson, M. J. and Burke, J. R. (2012), Women in management worldwide: Progress and prospects. Farnham: Gower Publishing.

Dean, J. (2010), "Feminism in the papers: Contested feminism in the British quality press", Feminist Media Studies, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 391– 407.

Ellwood, S., Garcia-Lacalle, Royo, S. and Yetano, A. (2021), "The shattered glass ceiling and a narrowing gender pay gap in NHS foundation trusts: gender and salaries of chief executives", Public Money & Management, Vol. 40 Issue 1, pp. 1-10.

Fernando, W. D. A. (2012), "A social constructionist perspective of gender stereotyping at work: A case of highly skilled women in Sri Lanka", Gender in Management: An International Journal. Vol. 27 No. 7, pp. 463-481.

Galperin, H. (2019), "This gig is not for women": Gender stereotyping in online hiring", Social Science Computer Review, Vol. 37 Issue 6, 687-699.

García-Mainar, I., Montuenga, V. M. and García-Martín, G. (2018), "Occupational prestige and gender-occupational segregation", Work, Employment & Society, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 348–367.

Grady, J. (2015), "Gendering pensions: Making women visible, Gender, Work and Organization, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 445-458.

Gregory, R. W., Kaganer, E., Henfridsson, O. and Ruch, T. J. (2018), "IT Consumerization and the Transformation of IT Governance," Mis Quarterly, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 1225-1253.

Gama, N. and Willemse, L. (2015), "A descriptive overview of the education and income levels of domestic workers in post-apartheid South Africa", GeoJournal, Vol. 80 No. 5, pp. 721-741.

Helman, M. E. and Parks-Stamm, E. J. (2007), "Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace: Obstacles to Women's Career Progress", Correll, S.J. (Ed.) Social Psychology of Gender (Advances in Group Processes, Vol. 24, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 47-77.

Islam, G. (2014). Social dominance theory. In T. Teo (Ed) Encyclopaedia of critical psychology. New York, NY: Springer.

Ituma, A., Simpson, R., Ovadje, F., Cornelius, N. and Mordi, C. (2011), "Four domains of career success: how managers in Nigeria evaluate career outcomes", The International Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol. 22 No. 17, pp. 3638-3660.

Irvine, L. and Vermilya, J. R. (2010), "Gender work in feminized profession: The case of veterinary medicine", Gender & Society, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 56-82.

Jaga, A. (2020), "Something new from the South: community, work, and family in South Africa", Journal of Community, Work & Family, Vol. 23 Issue: 5, pp. 506-515.

Jimoh, R. A., Oyewobi, L. O., Adamu, A. N. and Bajere, P. A. (2016), "Women professionals' participation in the Nigerian construction industry: Finding voice for the voiceless", Organisation, Technology and Management in Construction, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 1429– 1436.

Kehinde, J. O. and Okoli, O. G. (2004), "Professional Women and Career Impediments in the Construction Industry in Nigeria", Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering, Vol. 130 Issue: 2, pp. 105-112.

Kim, Y. K., Atwater, L., Jolly, P. M., Kim, M and Baik. K. (2020), "The vicious cycle of work life: work effort versus career development effort", Group & Organization Management, Vol. 45 No. 3, pp. 351-385.

Lawanson, O. I. (2008). Female labour force participation in Nigeria: Determinants and trends. In A paper presented at Oxford business and economics conference program, Oxford, UK.

Li, J., de Souza, R., Estandian, S. and Fiene, J. (2019), "Have women broken the glass ceiling in North American dental leadership?", Advances in Dental Research, Vol. 30 Issue 3, pp. 78-84.

Mifune, N., Inamasu, K., Kohama, S., Ohtsubo, Y. and Tago, A. (2019), "Socail dominance orientation as an obstacle to intergroup apology", PLoS One, Vol 14 No. 1, pp. 11-21.

Mogaji, E., Hinson, R. E., Nwoba, A. C. and Nguyen, N. P. (2021), "Corporate social responsibility for women's empowerment: a study on Nigerian banks", International Journal of Banking Marketing, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 516-540.

Mordi, C., Mmieh, F. and Ojo, S. (2013), "An exploratory study of manager's perspective of work life balance in Nigeria: a case analysis of the Nigerian banking sector", Thunderbird International Business Review, Vol. 55 No. 1, pp. 55-75.

Ng, E. S. and Sears, G. J. (2017), "The glass ceiling in context: the influence of CEO gender, recruitment practices and firm internationalisation on the representation of women in management", Human Resource Management Journal, Vol. 27 Issue: 1, pp. 133-151.

Nishii, L. H. (2013), "The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 56, No. 1, pp. 1754-1774

Okafor, E. E., Fagbemi, A. O. and Hassan, A. R. (2011), "Barriers to women leadership and managerial aspirations in Lagos: An empirical analysis", African Journal of Business Management, Vol. 5 No. 16, pp. 6717-6726.

Okorafor, A. O., Kakiri, W. and Okorafor E. C. (2021), "Women participation in science, technlogy, engineering and mathematics in Nigeria: challenges and way forward", NAM Institute of the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) Journal, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 99-112.

Oladejo, K. S., Ojo, O. S. and Adeoye, D. O. (2012), Gender gaps and its implications on management practice: A lesson from Nigerian banking sector", Journal of Business and Management Review, Vol. 1, No. 10, pp. 69-78.

Osondu-Oti, A. and Olominu, T. (2018), "Breaking the glass ceiling for Nigerian women participation in politics", EPRA international Journal of Multidisplinary Research, Vol. 4 No. 12, pp. 173-181.

Patton, M. Q. (2015), Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice, 4th ed., Sage, Los Angeles.

Pearlman, J. (2019), "Occupational mobility for whom? Education, cohorts, the life course and occupational gender composition, 1970–2010", Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, Vol. 59 No. 4, pp.81– 93.

Powell, G. N. and Butterfield, D. A. (2015), "The glass ceiling: what have we learned 20 years on?", Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 306-326.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J. and Levin, S. (2006). Social dominance theory and the dynamics of intergroup relations: taking stock and looking forward. In W, Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds), European Review of Social Psychology, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 271-320.

Pratto, F. and Stewart, L. S. (2012), "Social dominance theory. In D, J. Christie (Ed), The encyclopaedia of peace psychology (1st ed., pp.1012-1016), Chichester, UK: Blackwell.

Pratt, M. G. (2008), "Fitting oval pegs into round holes: Tensions in evaluating and publishing research in top-tier North American journals", Organisational Research Methods, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 481-509.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2012), Research Methods for Business Students, 8th ed., Pearson, Harlow.

Schmader, T. (2023), "Gender inclusion and fit in STEM", Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 74 No. 1, pp. 219-43.

Sidani, Y. M., Konrad, A. and Karam, C. M. (2015), "From female leadership advantage to female leadership deficits: A developing country perspective", Career Development International, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 273-292.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990), Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.

Tunçgenç, B. (2010), "Towards a comprehensive socio-psychological perspective: A critique of social dominance theory", Journal of European Psychology Students, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 1-9.

Turner, J. C. and Reynolds, K. J. (2003), "Why social dominance theory has been falsified", British Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 199-206.

Vasconcelos, A. F. (2018), "Gender and leadership stereotypes theory: is it reaching the boundaries?" Management Research Review, Vol. 41 No. 11, pp. 1336-1355.

Vargas-Salfate, S., Paez, D., Liu, J. H., Pratto, F. and Gill de Zuniga, H (2018), "A comparison of social dominance theory and system justification: The social role status in 19 nations", Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Vol. 44 No. 7, pp. 1060-1076.

Vinnicombe, S. and Singh, V. (2002), "Sex role stereotyping and requisites of successful top managers", Women in Management Review, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 120-130.

Wang, M. and Deggo, J. L. (2018), "Gender Gap in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM): Current Knowledge, Implications for Practice, Policy, and Future Directions", Education Psychology Revision, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 119-140.

Zhai, Y., Chong, L. Y., Liu, Y., Yang, Z. and Song, C. (2022), "Social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, and political attitudes toward governmental performance during the COVID-19 pandemic", Analysis of Social Science Issues and Public Policy, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 150-167.

Table 1: Participants' demographic details

Pseudonyms/age	Years of experience	Marital status	Positions	Business sector/city
Participant 1 (32)	7	Single	Branch manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 2 (40)	10	Married	Chief Resident Engineer	Road construction firm firm/Abuja
Participant 3 (55)	20	Married	Senior Software Engineer	Private ICT firm/Abuja
Participant 4 (35)	9	Single	Project Construction Coordinator	Road construction firm/Lagos
Participant 5 (48)	18	Married	Account Manager, Internal Audit	Banking/Lagos
Participant 6 (50)	15	Married	Senior Process Safety Engineer	Road construction firm
Participant 7 (60)	25	Married	Chief Technological Engineer	Telecommunications network/Abuja
Participant 8 (57)	12	Married	Head of Marketing Department	Banking/Lagos
Participant 9 (37)	8	Single	Senior Software developer	Private ICT firm/Lagos
Participant 10 (30)	7	Single	Branch Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 11 (43)	10	Married	Head, Internal Audit Unit	Banking/Abuja
Participant 12 (46)	11	Married	Technical Team Leader	Telecommunication network/Lagos
Participant 13 (33)	9	Single	Branch Manager	Banking/Abuja
Participant 14 (58)	13	Married	Project Team Leader	Road construction company/Abuja
Participant 15 (54)	11	Married	Site Supervisor	Road construction firm/Lagos
Participant 16 (51)	10	Married	Branch Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 17 (56)	14	Married	Manager, Inner Audit Unit	Banking/Abuja
Participant 18 (39)	8	Married	Marketing Manager	Banking/Abuja
Participant 19 (49)	18	Married	Senior Software Engineer	Private ICT firm/Lagos
Participant 20 (56)	15	Married	Construction supervisor	Road construction firm/Abuja
Participant 21 (38)	9	Married	Branch Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 22 (57)	11	Married	Head, Audit Unit	Banking/Abuja
Participant 23 (53)	13	Married	Marketing Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 24 (36)	7	Married	Engineering Manager	Private ICT firm/Lagos
Participant 25 (47)	12	Married	Branch Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 26 (58)	20	Married	Project construction Leader	Road construction firm/Abuja
Participant 27 (31)	8	Married	Audit Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 28 (46)	10	Married	Branch Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 29 (55)	15	Married	Marketing Manager	Banking/Lagos
Participant 30 (50)	17	Married	Senior Software Developer	Private ICT firm/Abuja

Table 2.

Sample questions	Indicative interview quotes	Open codes	Axial codes	Key themes
Briefly describe any stereotyping you have experienced working in this perceived male-dominated occupation. How do you manage to deal with such biases as a woman working in a male-type occupation? Does the experience have any impact on you?	I experience gender stereotypes, because the banking system places and favours men over women in terms of choosing branch heads. This made me tenaciously perspire more in pursuing my career aspiration of becoming one – despite the stress – the reason being that discrimination against women is endemic and infiltrates both inside and outside the workplace, inhibiting our professional advancement (Participant 25). It is sometimes a stressful experience for me to break the mystical assumption that engineering as a profession is an exclusively male occupation. I do this by working twice as hard as my male counterparts… When I am supervising road projects, I demonstrate a high level of competence, to the surprise of the male engineers on my team, because I painstakingly study the site papers a day or two beforehand so that no one will belittle me (Participant 15).	Causes: in-group favouritism, masculine hegemony, prevalent gender disparity, societal and institutional hierarchy-enhancing structures Effects: stressful pressures to demonstrating abilities, working harder than normal, becoming competitive	Combatting exaggerated and systemic male-group dominance Managing threatening circumstances of occupational gender segregation	Proliferating work effort
What do you think encourages gender discrimination in the work you do? How do you tackle this social reality?	Our society operates a social system in which men hold power in everything… The way I dislodge gender sentiments assigning women to only subordinate and familial responsibilities rather than managerial positions is to physically display assertive, competitive, and domineering behaviours, like those of a man. The mental switch and disguise is often exhausting, but this manly dogmatism is what earned me my promotion and makes other male engineers feel I'm not different from them (Participant 3). I often fend off our societal misgivings about relegating women to only caregiving roles and home affairs… I'm known to resist patriarchal ideologies by simulating the characteristics typically associated with men, which is the reason why I became a branch manager. Some members of staff feel it would be hard for me to get a husband, since I behave like a man… I feel psychologically drained, always acting like a man in order to be heard, but it is only way to confront the stereotypes threatening my female identity in this type of job (Participant 1).	Causes: glass ceiling, emphasis on male norms, the ideology that women are not good enough, the confinement of women to caregiving obligations. Effects: downplaying femininity, simulating manliness, recognising masculinity as way to project the self, adopting an anti-feminine approach, reinforcing perceptions of masculine ascendency	Supressing femininity to confront patriarchy Indulging in simulations for acceptance Pressurised surface acting	Doing masculinity
Tell me more about how you manage occupational segregation by gender especially in Nigeria where power, position, affluence, and	Since wealth and senior company positions attract recognition and honour in Nigeria, my style of gaining relevance in this occupation, perceived as a 'man's job', is to stay properly connected to some of the 'big boys' in the telecom giant industry who are willing to professionally support and assist my career progression because of my sociable	Causes: projecting women as low earners, patriarchal imperialism, misgivings about women's abilities	Buidling social networks and strong brand image	Achieving social standing

male domination is evident in the type of job you do.	nature… I'm also married to a rich man, which further gives me financial edge and respect from other senior male engineers as their boss (Participant 7). I fight gender stereotypes typical to the banking industry by gaining expertise and prestige in building a strong brand image as a marketer who has been generating millions of *naira* for my branch for many years. I got promoted to my current status above other male marketers, because I'm very good in persuading rich customers to open accounts with my bank and am known to always hit my targets (Participant 8).	Effects: Gaining financial stability, playing the female card, challenging the status quo, being recognised by performance not gender, building rapport as a strategy, being seen as wealthy	Reimagining power relations that dismantle gender devaluation	