# Sexism in the Construction Industry against Women

## Introduction

Sexism can be defined as discrimination, prejudice or stereotyping against someone with the basis of sex. Sexism mostly affects women. When it comes to the construction industry, it is evident that men have dominated the field. It is very rare to come across a woman, in the construction industry. The few women who are in the industry can affirm to having faced sexual discrimination at some pointing their career (Jamieson, 2005). Thinking about the construction industry, the first thing that springs to the mind is men in reflector jackets, helmets, and buns with initials of construction companies. Noting that the image that comes to the mind is that of men, not women. This is the root of discrimination against women in the construction industry. This paper will discuss the problem sexism in the construction industry especially against women. Even in the present world, women are still discriminated against in the construction industry.

As with most industries, there is a sex-based perception in the field of construction. Since time immemorial, the field is looked at as a male oriented industry. Going back to the Stone Age culture, building activities were mostly preserved for men, in most cultures. Women were assigned ‘lighter’ tasks such as cooking and cleaning the household. This deep-rooted culture still has its remains today, which is a shame since it is not a culture with which we should be so proud of (Ness, 2012). The perception that women belong to the kitchen is greatly experienced by female construction workers first hand. Even after the industrial revolution whereby gender roles shifted and changed, some ill perceptions such construction sites are male oriented did not change much. As a result of this, less young female students opt to take up architecture and other construction related courses in the university, rendering it to remain male dominated.

According to the annual women in architecture survey, 66 % of women still feel that the industry has not accepted yet that women can take up senior positions within the profession of architecture (Dainty, 2004). Architecture is classified in the construction industry. In the research, more than half of the male present agreed to this. This should explain why male-dominated industries like architecture fail to promote women to higher positions. For example, supposing these men, with this misguided perception happened to be on the interview panel to promote workers in the industry, it is then obvious that women would stand limited chances, as compared to their male counterparts.

Still, with regard to the research, 66% of the women interviewed ascertain to the fact that they had experienced sexual discrimination at different levels in their profession. On average, male architects are estimated to earn between 37-42,000 Euros a year, while their female counterparts earn between 27-32,000 Euros a year (Ronai, 2014). At average, this poses a difference of almost 10, 000 Euros. This is typically discrimination of the highest order. This discrimination based on gender has its roots back in the university. Reports confirm that more than half of the female architecture students had at some point experienced gender discrimination.

An estimated 44 % of the women win their places at the university to study architecture, but only 34% ever qualify (Ronai, 2014). Most of those who drop along the way do so because of the discriminative approach of the curse. Sadly, this state is leaving young girls with the dream of becoming architecture with no role models to emulate. For example, there is only one prominent female architect, Dame Zaha Hadid, who is credited with designing the London aquatic center for London 2012 Olympics (Ronai, 2014). All other great architects are men. Women also in a way increase the chances of them being discriminated against based on gender with regard to the construction industries. The research concluded that most women think that having children prevents them from pursuing their careers in architecture. This gives their male counterparts grounds to discriminate them. One of the many reasons women are not easily promoted is because the employers do not think that the women will be available to provide long-term services. This is because of the issue of giving birth and having children. A solution to this would be to adjust the maternity and paternity laws, for example by making maternity leave and paternity leave equal. This way, promoters would view employees with an equal perspective.

In the field of construction, it is common for male directors to disrespect female leaders, even when they are of higher rank than they are. The men find it hard to believe that women may be better than they may in such a male dominated industry. It is also common for partners who are of different sexes to have conflicts (Ronai, 2014). The men have a perception that the women should ask for permission from them before undertaking various projects. This is the same with the clients. They tend to think that the female counterpart is subject to the man and that they do not hold equal powers in the corporation. When you Google the word women constructors, articles about wolf whistling are the top articles. Women in the construction industry often work with men and it is evident that they often experience wolf whistling even from their subordinate staff. This is excessively discouraging.

Men should realize that woman as much as men have the ability to create with hands and with the brain too. God created them with equal brains that are made different by the states of the environment (Caven, 2006). Some women have proven to be good at this, and so others should be given a chance to proof themselves too. The government at large should come up with ways that regulate the wages of both genders and focus on creating equal chances for both. However, as much as women are still being discriminated against in the construction industry, the reality is gradually changing. This change should be embraced. To accelerate this positive change, there should be some modifications made in the construction industry. Among these modifications, there should be equal chances in education with regard to construction related courses. The government should come up with ways to regulate the numbers to at least equal or close to that.

School-going girls should be encouraged to take up courses that entail to the construction industry. If the perception that this is a male-dominated profession is changed at an early age, the children will not be afraid to chase their dreams and become the best female contractors and architectures the world has ever seen. The few available female role models should focus on making the young girls what they want to be.

There is an issue about the police not taking issues about female discrimination and sexual harassment seriously when it comes to the construction industry. Reading the articles on wolf whistling done at women by their male counterparts and other males at construction sites, they all end up with one single message, that the issue was reported but the police did little or nothing to the offenders. This defeats the morale of women in the industry. It creates an impression that no one really cares about their rights (Drury, 2014). The police should be asked to address this matter as a serious crime. It should be noted that according to the law, discrimination of any kind, might it be based on race; sex of any other misgiving is illegal. Women in the construction industry should be bold, stand out and fight for their place.

Organizations and construction companies should be encouraged to employ more women so and to create gender balance. This will encourage more women to join the profession. The companies should also be ready to promote qualified women to higher positions in the firm. This is so as to encourage women in the lower corporate levels and to ensure that women empowerment has been practiced in this sector (Fielden, 2001). The male counterparts in the organization should also be encouraged to view their women counterparts as working partners so as to promote cooperation at the workplace. Women should embark to forming their own construction companies. This is a powerful tool in ensuring that sexism is abolished in the construction companies. They should struggle to prove themselves and avoid pitying themselves and playing as victims. They should stand out and show the world that what men can do, women can also do. They should ensure that they offer quality services and offer substantial competition to the men counterparts. They should also employ men in their companies to prove that not only men can employ them but they too can contribute to the job market with reference to the construction companies.

Another thing should be to encourage women in the construction field to further their studies. This would ensure that they have equal or even higher academic qualifications, offering good competition ground in the job market with their male counterparts (Ronai, 2014). Education empowers. The less educated subordinate male staff of the corporations and constructions companies will learn to respect and recognize the more learned women in the companies. This should encourage the women to further their careers without fear of being discriminated based on sex. Women should embrace aggressiveness as this is a field that requires one to be aggressive and focused on coping up with the agility of men. The field of construction is desirable. It calls for dedication, experience, connections and creativity (Jamieson, 2005). Women should learn all these things and try to practice them. It should be taken with great caution that the industry has fewer professionals than it is required. The demand for professionals surpasses the supply. Therefore, all people despite their sex should be encouraged to join the profession. It is also an adorable profession with fair wages.

In conclusion, women in construction industry face discrimination as much as the women in other industries that are deemed to require physical strength. The sexist discrimination, mainly practiced by men, is caused by the common misguided belief that the sector is male-dominated. This is an illegal practice against women and it should be discouraged by all means. The government should come up with ways to ensure that this discrimination is minimal and that women join the construction industry as much as men. The women should learn that they are qualified as much as the men and they should not allow discrimination to come their way. Sexism or discrimination against a particular gender has been a real issue that most groups are grappling with in different industries including the construction industry. Sexism is rampant especially in industries that are deemed to require physical strength or intelligence. Discrimination is especially direct towards women because of the erroneous notion that they cannot handle tasks that require physical strength or intelligence. Most of the discrimination is directed to women because of the thought that men are stronger to women in both physical strength and intelligence. While it could be true that men are stronger physically, it is erroneous to think that men are superior to women in terms of intelligence. Women are equally intelligent and can handle work in the construction industry. It is also factual that tasks that traditionally required physical strength can be done with the help of machines in today’s construction industry. As such, it is not fair to discriminate women when it comes to such tasks today because they can comfortably handle the machines used in the construction industry as long as they are trained to do so. The construction industry requires the input of women just as it requires the input of men and the qualification to work in this sector should be determined by qualifications and the experience that one has rather than one’s sex or gender. More women should be encouraged to take educational courses that can help them work in the construction industry and demystify the myths that women cannot successfully work in this industry.

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