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WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION

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Introduction

- **Sang and Powell (2012) contend that the construction industry remains one of the most male dominated sectors as women are under-represented in all construction occupations and professions**
- **Study conducted in South Africa confirmed that most construction firms employed small numbers of women (Madikizela and Haupt, 2010)**

Objectives of the study

- **Perceptions relative to women in construction**
- **Perceived competencies and competence of women in construction**
- **Challenges faced by women in construction**
- **Representivity of women in construction**

Research methodology and sample stratum

- Questionnaire consisted of six sections
- 13 of the 26 questions were five-point Likert scale type questions
- Remaining 13 were a mix of 'Yes' / 'No'
- 109 General contractor (GC) members of the East Cape Master Builders Association (ECMBA)
- Contacted telephonically – 56 willing to participate
- 11 responded to a self-administered survey
- Follow up phone calls
- 19.6% response rate

Research findings (Demographics)

- All the respondents were male
- Employment:
 - > 50% employed > 12 < 35 employees
 - Minority indicated ≤ 12 employees
 - Only one respondent indicated 100 employees.
- Women in employment:
 - < 50% employed > 1 < 4 women
 - The majority employed no women
 - One employed more than 15 women
 - < 50% employed women in management positions, which varies between > 1 < 4 women
 - > 50% no women in management positions

Research findings (Perceptions relative to women in construction) (1)

- **81.8% - Construction is still regarded largely as a male domain**
- **54.6% - Women are not taken seriously as professionals in construction**
- **Extent to which four factors affected the appointment of women in leadership positions: society (4.00) was ranked first, followed by tradition (3.80), organisation culture (3.70), and sexist attitudes (3.60)**
- **72.7% do not believe that construction should be male-dominated because it is 'rough and tough'**
- **ITO extent 'women in managerial positions are more demanding than their male counterparts': MS = 3.27**

Research findings (Perceptions relative to women in construction) (2)

- **90.9% - women have the confidence to pursue and motivate themselves in the construction industry knowing that they are able to do the job, and do it well**

Research findings (Competencies and competence of women) (1)

- **Extent to which six factors affect the core competencies of women in construction: commitment (3.73); dedication (3.73); responsibility (3.73); acknowledgement (3.64); confidence (3.64), and self-promotion (3.28)**
- **81.8% - women are prepared to work harder in order to be successful if given a chance to prove themselves**
- **Respondents disagree ‘women cannot secure top jobs or successfully assume management roles due to factors such as actual talent, ability, and skills’: MS = 2.45**
- **72.7% - women seem to do well in situations where they need to manage different projects all at once**

Research findings (Competencies and competence of women) (2)

- Respondents agree 'woman can succeed in construction using their female skills without having to adopt a masculine approach': $MS = 3.27$

Research findings (Challenges faced by women in construction) (1)

- Respondents disagree ‘the power men assume over women makes them feel they can label women negatively’: MS = 2.91
- Respondents agree ‘to participate in construction takes great courage mainly because it is regarded as male terrain’: MS = 3.09
- Respondents agree ‘women have to face many challenges in order to get recognition which makes it difficult to penetrate and persevere in the male-dominated construction environment’: MS = 3.55
- 81.8% - Women have made great strides in construction, but that the ‘glass ceiling’ is far from being shattered

Research findings (Challenges faced by women in construction) (2)

- **Extent factors constitute barriers to the advancement of women in construction: Male dominated work environment and culture was ranked first (3.55), followed by women representation in the industry's formal structures (3.36), male-biased construction education courses (3.18), construction's macho image (2.91), and sexist attitudes (2.73)**
- **Increasingly important that women cease thinking that they have to be similar to men in order to succeed as men do: MS = 3.82**
- **Agreement 'When it comes to succeeding in construction, the competition is tough especially when you are competing against your male-counterparts': MS = 3.82**

Research findings (Representivity of women in construction)

- Degree of concentration of women in unskilled, low-skilled, low paid jobs: $MS = 3.18$
- 100% - 'despite the increase in the number of women being employed in the construction industry, they still constitute only a very small percentage of the industry's workforce'
- Respondents agree 'The construction industry's boardrooms are sadly lacking in women': $MS = 3.91$

Conclusions (1)

- **Construction is still largely regarded as a male domain and that women are not taken seriously as professionals in construction**
- **Society, tradition, organisation culture, and sexist attitudes play a major role when appointing women in leadership positions**
- **Construction should not be male dominated because it is considered rough and tough, and women should be given a chance to prove themselves in the construction industry**
- **Commitment, dedication, acknowledgement, responsibility, confidence, and self-promotion have an impact on the core competencies of women in construction**

Conclusions (2)

- **Women are prepared to work harder in order to be successful if given a chance to prove themselves**
- **Women are perceived to do well in situations where they need to manage different projects all at once**
- **Women in managerial positions are perceived as more demanding than their male counterparts**
- **Women have the confidence to pursue and motivate themselves in the construction industry knowing that they can do the job and complete it successfully**
- **To participate in construction takes great courage mainly because it is regarded as male terrain**
- **Women have to face many challenges in order to gain recognition in the construction industry, which makes it difficult to penetrate and persevere in the male dominated environment**

Conclusions (3)

- **Women can succeed in construction using their female skills without having to adopt a masculine approach**
- **Women have made great strides in construction, but the ‘glass ceiling’ is far from being completely shattered**
- **Important that women cease thinking that they have to be similar to men in order to succeed as men do**
- **Women still constitute only a small percentage of the industry’s workforce**
- **Competition is tough especially when competing against male counterparts**
- **Construction industry’s boardrooms are sadly lacking women in managerial as well as chief executive posts**

Recommendations (1)

- **Range of equality measures should comprise a mix of gender-specific initiatives aimed at improving women's careers in construction, and at addressing the barriers to women pursuing a career in construction**
- **Strategies aimed at mainstreaming women into construction**
- **Create a more equitable work environment through the development of cultural change**
- **Genuine commitment to the development of a more equitable industry from the highest level that women are likely to be able to develop their careers in parity with men**

Recommendations (2)

- **Improve the industry's image to attract women graduates**
- **Organisations need to provide mentors for undergraduates and young graduates entering the construction industry**
- **Mentors should ideally be women who would also act as role models to women entering the industry - male mentors would help reduce some of the stereotypes of management through increased interaction with women recruits**