

Gender Bias in the Selection of Estate Surveyors and Valuers in Lagos Property Market

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Abstract

The Estate Surveyors and Valuers (ESV) as a real property service provider normally receive instruction/ brief from the clients mostly from property owners for assignments that span through their range of services. In the process, it has been observed that there is gender bias in clients' selection of whom to give the assignments relating to their property assets. This study identified the proportion of male and female ESV/agents practicing in the study area, measured the selection criterion their clients were biased with, and determined the causes of bias in order to correct gender imbalances in real property market transactions. The study methodology adopted survey design in which the target population was the property owners whose properties were being managed by the ESV/agents within Ikeja Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Lagos State, Nigeria. The Year 2014 edition of the Directory of members and registered firms of ESV was used to pick the 64 practicing firms within the LGAs. Two properties owners randomly sampled from each of these ESV firms' management files. Close-ended questionnaire was employed to collect relevant data from the 128 property owners. Data collected were analyzed using weighted mean scores and discriminant function analysis to resolve the study objectives. The findings showed there was higher proportion of male ESV than female, in both staff strength and clients choice. There were bias orchestrated by personal relationship, knowledge and experience. Bias was found to be a function of environmental and natural human tendencies and notion of lack of competence of female than male ESV. The study recommended that female ESV should brace up to compete by exhibiting high level of managerial qualities as good/first impression sustained delivery and performance/success.

Keywords: Estate Surveyors and Valuers, Gender Bias, Lagos, Property Market

INTRODUCTION

The Estate Surveyors and Valuers (ESV) services in the property market are many and varied cutting across the various disciplinary areas such as agency, management, valuation, feasibility and viability appraisal, supervision of development works and general consultancy works. In all, their survival and continuity in the practice depend on receiving brief or instruction as often as possible from either prospective property owners (sellers or landlords) and users (buyers or tenants). This brief can be in oral or written form but Buzor (2011) cautioned that the intention must be advised by the ESV to ensure clarity and forestall any disagreement between the parties involved. Client therefore engages the ESVs as a result of many reasons: as registered professional, to commit their funds for investment with the expectation of an optimum return from the investment through the estimation of exact market value of their properties (Aluko, Ajayi & Amidu, 2004).

In clients selection of whom to give their landed property related advise, they often fall into differs agents either the hand of the trained professional (ESV) or the ill equipped, non professional and brief case agents who are opportunists and could ruin the client and the assets

(Odudu, 2014). Hence there is a need to take caution in the selection of who assist them in realizing the objectives of holding property. It has been established that clients have different criteria for selecting their choice of ESV/Estate Agents. These ranges from agents that can help achieve their best interests through effective marketing. Other criteria include: experience, communication and good relationship, personal history, area knowledge, fee charged, representation and dedication (Property Institute and Effective Property Manager, 2013). Here comes the issue of gender where some clients believe female estate agents may not possess these criteria or perform satisfactorily (Fabinu, 2014)

A study on gender issues in land administration noted that some clients perceive female Estate Surveyors and Valuers as being incapable of handling briefs effectively and also having the impression that female Surveyors are lazy, incompetent, laced with family problems that often rendered them non-performing(Ishaya, Makama and Sabo 2011). Apart from clients' selection, in employer's staff selection in the workforce, it was observed that in the past, there are bits of gender bias in the male estate surveyors/agents employment of their staff strength. Presently, the competition between professionals and quacks in sourcing and getting services has forced some companies to consider employing female agents that could help in arousing the interest of property owners in obtaining properties for letting and managing purposes. This in the social contexts is an abuse. At a time in the banking sector, Coetzee, Helena and Madele (2012) stated that preference for female staff was part of the selection criteria in some African retail banking sector.

Logically, there have been gender inequality in both the enrolment of trained/ pupillage estate surveyors and valuers in all the tertiary institution offering the course since the inception of the profession in early 1970s till date in Nigeria. Odudu, (2014) confirmed that yearly, the induction of new members into the profession for Real Estate practice in Nigeria, has increased in population to 3325, out of which only 20 percent are female ESV. In other words, gender imbalance started from training period which culminated into their proportion both in work force and service provision (Ugwulebo, 2011). The believe, therefore was that gender differences in a competitive environment like ours has an important implication for the understanding of differences in any national economic and social outcomes. Hence, the study assess the level of gender bias that exists among clients/ property owners with their property agents that involved in their property transactions and management within Ikeja Local Government Areas of Lagos State. The remaining section of the paper include literature review, data materials and methods, findings, discussion of results, conclusion and recommendations.

This study is concerned with studies on gender bias, employers/ clients' selection and Estate Surveyors and Valuers in the property market. Gender is often confused with sex; while sex refers to the biology and anatomy makeup in human being. Gender has been said to refer to set of qualities amid behaviours' expected from male and female within the society (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). To them, gender in a post structural perspective is a socially constructed term where men and women are not assumed to have gender specific traits with any social consequences but that such differences shape reality and are important study objects. The United Nation's Economic Scientific and Cultural Organisation defines gender as the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created or expected in our families, societies and our cultures. These roles and expectations are often identified as factors hindering the equal rights and status of women with adverse consequences that affect life, family, socioeconomic status and health (Health and Safety Authority, 2007).

Therefore, many researchers working on gender and organization have drawn on concepts of gender as a social practice that people enact in everyday situations so that gender bias are created by the society based on individual perception and orientations (Blau & Lawrence, 1999; Burgess & Juzhong, 2001; Esteve-Volart, 2004; Miller, 2008; Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Globally, gender issues had been researched from different perspectives.

Several studies have also identified dimensions of gender bias in workforce and the society. For instance, Khandaker, (2013) noted a persistent discriminatory inequality of female gender in Healthcare and access to resources in Bangladesh. In Nigeria, Udegbe (2004) observed that there was political restriction and women access to power in the country; Agbalajobi (2010) submitted that Nigerian society celebrated men as being the unique and stronger gender fit for public position, while women are considered to be feeble, weak and should remain in confinements. Jayachandran (2014) concluded that these sentimental feelings were the root of most gender inequality in developing countries..

In real estate services, Poon and Brownlow (2016) noted a generational and educational shift towards male- female dominat. David (2015) supported that there had been in- equality in the academia and career choices. Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) reiterated gender imbalances in strategy and human resource management. This culminated into inequality of gender both in labour and professional practice (Antecol, Cobb-Clark & Hellard, 2011); and a resulting effect of performance in leadership and managerial aspirations in organization (Meir & Mastracci, 2006) The construction and real estate industry equally witnessed this (Poirier,2009; and Singh, 2014). researches on gender differences in organizations suggests two theoretical perspectives on the influence of gender in work and occupational contexts. The first perspective views gender as an individual-level property that is correlated with occupational and job variables and secondly, is the behavioral differences between men and women as the result of these correlates. Equally it had been observed that women in the construction industry as civil engineers were not finding it easy to continue in the profession as a result of the outdated image of the engineers as symbol of manliness and hegemonic masculinity. The study concluded that it is up to the construction industry to revise and update itself in order to adapt to modern times by being flexible and thereby increasing and retaining the women engineers.

In Croson and Gneezy (2009), a comprehensive and exhaustive review of the work on gender differences in economic experiments' findings was summarily put that women are indeed more risk-averse than men; their social preferences are more situational specific than those of men; and that women are more averse to competition than are men. This gender differences in risk attitude and social preferences has been found to have important implication for the understanding of differences in economic and social outcomes in our competitive environments. That is ,the more social people are, the more self confident and performing better they become. Two prominent issues that have recently been connected to gender differences in preferences are the gender gap in labor markets (Bertrand and Hallock, 2001, Bertrand *et al.*, 2010, Manning and Swaffield, 2008) and the influence of women in human development (Miller, 2008).

Therefore, gender bias or discrimination arising as a result of the established differences from the literature have been noted to mean the unequal treatment of equals, whether deliberate or not; any action that has the effect of limiting opportunities because of sex, race, religion etc; and treating a person differently for irrelevant reasons. According to Peterson and Thea (2006) research on gender bias indicates that there are so many ways ranges from unfair actions of the employers, job compensation package, hiring, favoritism related to job promotion; etc. Ugwulebo (2011) described gender bias as a social evil that not a single nation can claim to

have always been free of. The disparity shows up in some home that prefer male education to females, girls and women being treated as secondary to men, employers preferring male staff and the societies offers women a lower rung on the ladder of success. Women were observed to be under-represented in most vocation and professional jobs for reasons adduced to incompetency despite qualified women to fill the positions (Ishaya, Makama and Sabo, 2011). Gender bias is an acute and persistent problem especially in developing countries. It is also severe in some part of the world. In whatever form gender bias or discrimination takes, it is an inefficient practice with the consequences of lowering economic growth by reduction in per capita GDP and distorting the allocation of talent in any society (Esteve-Volart, 2004). Summarily, all these forms of discriminations, biases, inequality and imbalances have the tendencies of limiting advancements, undermining relationships, weakening commitments and inclusion in all spheres of life and must be corrected. This study intends to investigate the extent to which this social ill pervades within the real property market transaction in the study area.

The criteria for selection of estate surveyors and valuers

Studies are abound that postulated several criteria that company managers and other clients often considered in the selection of their employees and managers of their resources both fixed, tangibles and in tangible assets. In real estate services, clients criteria has been found to be many and varied. According to Property Institute and Effective Property Manager (2013), the following criteria are listed as: Experience, Communication and Good relationship, Marketing plan, Personal history, Area knowledge, Fee, Representation, and Dedication.

According to AGCAS Editors (2014) on Estate Agents entry requirements, skills in negotiation and persuasion, a confident and outgoing manner, commercial awareness and the ability to achieve sales targets, excellent communication skills, customer service focus, determination, perseverance, and patience, an understanding of marketing techniques and IT skills; are integral part of the profession success.

Cheung, Kuen, Judy and Skitmore (2002) summarized the clients criteria for selection of clients in Architectural consultancy to include: Firms' background, Reputation, Technical competence /qualification;. Experience with similar project; Past performance; Cost control; .Quality of work; . Time control. Capacity to accomplish the work, Present workload. Availability of qualified personnel. Professional qualification/experience, Project approach, Approaches to time schedule. Approaches to quality, Design approach/methodology.

Some clients criteria also can be gender biased because they want to sell their property for a higher price, so they think that when they give the brief to a female estate agent thereby having the opinion that the male agent is bad for the selling price of their property (Salter, Mixon and King, 2012). This study considered the criterion identified in the Property Institute and Effective Property Manager (2013) as appropriate for analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The study is limited to agency, property management, and valuation due to the fact that these are the services frequently demanded for either by property owners or users (tenants) within the Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State. This area was chosen as a result of large concentration of practicing firms of ESV rendering these services to the teeming populace. Based on the directory of the institution, the practice of estate surveying and valuation in the country is presently fragmented with over 500 registered firms and 281 operating in Lagos State (NIESV Directory, 2014).

The target population for this study, therefore includes the Practicing ESVs and their clients (landlords) of selected residential properties within Ikeja LGA of Lagos State.; and their size is sixty- four (64) firms based on the directory while two properties owners were purposely selected from the firms’ management files totaling 128 property owners/ clients. A close-ended questionnaire was designed to elicit relevant data on the criteria clients used to select the agent

Table 1: Specification of Variables

S/N	VARIABLE CODE	VARIABLE MEANING	MEASUREMENT
X ₁	EXPER	Experience of Agent	1 if long years, 0 otherwise
X ₂	GCOMREL	Good communication and human relation	1 if male , 0 otherwise
X ₃	MKPLAN	Good marketing plan	”
X ₄	PFHIST.	Personal Financial History	”
X ₅	NEKNOW	Neighbourhood Knowledge	”
X ₆	NPFEE	Negotiated Professional Fee	”
X ₇	DEDIC	Dedication to Brief	”
X ₈	GREP	Good Representation	”
X ₉	SEX	Sex of the Agent	”
X ₁₀	RELIG	Religion Affiliation	”
X ₁₁	ETHNIS	Ethnicity Status	”

managing their properties, the extent of gender bias and the causes of bias in real property market. Data analysis are done using inferential statistics that include frequency distribution and percentages, weighted mean scores and discriminant functions analysis respectively. In the discriminant function, a set of independent variables were used to find linear combinations of those variables that is best in discriminating between the groups of cases i.e. factors considered by the property owners/ clients in their choice of male and female ESV/ agents.

The fitted discriminant analysis model is

$$D = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_8 + \beta_9X_9 + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \beta_{11}X_{11}$$

Where; $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_3, \dots, \beta_{11}$ = Discriminant co-efficients; X₁ = experience of agent; X₂ = good communication and human relation; X₃ = good marketing plan; X₄ = personal financial history; X₅ =neighbourhood knowledge; X₆ =negotiated professional fee; X₇ =dedication to brief; X₈= good representation; X₉= sex of agent; X₁₀=religion affiliation; and X₁₁ = ethnicity status. The specification of variables for the discriminant function is as stated in the table 1:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Considered by the Property Owners/ Clients in their Agents’ Selection

Table 2 showed the variables property owners’ considered in the choice of who to manage and value their properties and their reasons for making the choice. The frequency of having each of them varies between 52 percent and 94 percent suggesting that property owners’ rating of these factors are high with preference for male than female agents respectively Their reasons for the preference shows that most of them have a reserved doubt on female capability in performing their instructions.

Table 2: Variables Considered by Clients in their Agents’ Selection

VARIABLES	REASONS	PREFERED AGENT	FREQUENCY (%)
Experience	Agent with long years of service are unlikely to make mistake & such deliver timely	Male Agent	102 (94)
Communication and good relation	Agent with on-going relationship create clients satisfaction in returns	Male Agent	75 (59)
Marketing Plan	Agent must display few key strategies through beneficial adverts and promotions	Male Agent	80 (63)
Personal History	Agent that has customer management skills, good works and financial records	Male Agent	92 (72)
Neighbourhood Knowledge	Agent must be conversant with the area current situation and likely changes in the future	Male Agent	110 (78)
Negotiated Fee	Agent must reduced fee to retain client and enjoy patronage	Male Agent	67 (52)
Dedication to job	Client wants agent that value his opinion, listen to him and finish job in a timely fashion	Male Agent	85 (66)
Representation	Client want agent total allegiance to him with respect.	Male Agent	70 (55)
Sex	Agents that are not gullible and cumbersome with many challenges that prevent prompt job delivery	Male Agent	105 (82)
Religion	Clients trusts that agent of the same belief and sects will understand his goal and ensure success	Male Agent of his faith	68 (53)
Ethnicity	Clients want agents that understand his dialects for effective communication	Male Agent with the same tribe	82 (64)

Table 2 showed a priori and descriptive statistic of the preference of the property owners in the selection of ESV based on their gender. Among the reasons considered by the owners, it was discovered that the preference for the male Agents/ ESV dominated their choices and had the greater percentages in each of the owners’ selection criterion. This findings corroborated the earlier findings of Manning and Swaffield, (2008) and Bertrand *et al.*, (2010) that gender gap really exist in labour markets.

Factors Influencing Agents’ Selection by the Property Owners.

At this stage, the quantitative analysis were performed to ascertain the critical factors considered by property owners in their choice of agents. Here two stages of analysis were done: the efficacy/reliability of the discriminant functions, and the relative contribution of each of the variables.

Summary of Canonical Discriminant Functions: Reliability of the Discriminant Functions

Table 3: Eigenvalues

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	7.828 ^a	100.0	100.0	.942

The Eigen value indicates the proportion of variance explained while the canonical relation is a correlation between the discriminant scores and the levels of the dependent variable. A high correlation indicates a function that discriminates well. Though, the correlation of 0.942 is high, but not extremely high.

Table 4: Wilks' Lambda

Test Function(s)	of Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
1	.113	265.709	8	.000

Table 3 and 4 shows Eigenvalues and Wilks' Lambda functions respectively. The canonical correlation 0.942 together with Wilks' Lambda values of 0.113 indicates great discriminatory ability of the function. Also the significant value of chi-square statistic (0.000) shows that the discriminant functions perform better than chance at separating between the preferred and non-preferred agents based on their gender.

Relative contribution of each variable

Table 5: Tests of Equality of Group Means

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
EXPER	.498	127.125	1	126	.000
COMGREL	.779	35.795	1	126	.000
MKPPLAN	.425	170.625	1	126	.000
PFHIST	.618	77.930	1	126	.000
NEKNOW	.189	541.406	1	126	.000
NPFEE	.221	444.938	1	126	.000
DEDIC	.757	40.449	1	126	.000
GREP	.283	318.938	1	126	.000

The table presented the results of Univariate ANOVA's carried out for each independent variable, giving an insight into the relative contribution of each of the variable. From the table, all the variables are significant ($p < 0.05$) for the two groups (Male and Female practicing ESV). The Wilks' Lambda function indicates that neighbourhood knowledge is the best of all at showing bias followed by negotiated professional fee between the groups. This is quite in agreement with the ranking in the structure matrix (table 6).

The subscript to the table 6 described the parameters upon which the structure matrix was held. This structure pointed out how best the variables were at discriminating between groups in order of their importance. Neighborhood knowledge is the most prominent, followed by negotiated professional fee, then good representation and good marketing plan. Although other variables are significance but their discriminant function I are less than 40 percent.

Table 6: Structure Matrix

	Function
	1
NEKNOW	0.741
NPFEE	0.672
GREP	0.569
MKPPLAN	0.416
EXP	0.359
PFHIST	0.281
DEDICA	0.203
COMGREL	0.191

Pooled within-groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant functions Variables ordered by absolute size of correlation within function.

Causes of Gender Bias by Clients’ Selection of ESV

Table 7: Respondents Weighted Mean Score on Causes of Gender Bias on Women

REASONS	SA	A	UD	DA	SD	WEIGHTED	
						MEAN	RANK
1. Inability to keep Confidentiality	43	72	13	0	0	4.23	1
2. Lack of Enough Strength	43	63	10	12	0	4.07	2
3. Loss of Dignity as Sales Promoter	44	29	45	10	0	3.84	3
4. Clients’ Disposition on Competence	3	78	22	25	0	3.46	4
5. Marital Issues	0	43	66	19	0	3.19	5
6. Business ties on opposite Sex	10	38	45	27	8	3.12	6
7. Consideration of women as weaker vessels.	10	24	37	12	45	2.55	7

The property owners’ responses of the causes for their bias against female agent were subjected to Likert scale of 5 point as 5 equal strongly agree; 4 equal agree, 3 equal uncertain; 2 equal disagree while 1 represents strongly disagree. Their mean scores on all the variables varies with the perceived inability of female agents to be confidential rated highest followed by view of female not having enough physical strength to ensure delivery of their assignment and loss of dignity as a sales promoters; while marital issues, business relationship/ties with the opposite sex; and inherent weaknesses of women as a weaker vessels were rated very low to have causes their level of biases for female estate surveyors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study evaluation of the criteria used by most property owners/clients in their selection of the gender in the agency and management of their properties within Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State, favoured male ESV than female ones. The discriminant function performed on the criteria factors of most property owners selection of male or female agents identified neighbourhood knowledge, negotiated professional fees, good representation and marketing plan as significant factors. Although female agents are not excluded from practicing and receiving brief from property owners, the study observed a distortion in the a priori criteria being used by clients/ property owners to select property agency/management services to have

favoured male agent more than female agents. Equally the study identified that there were lower female to male professional agents ratio which encourage discriminations existence and a discriminatory social norms that is somehow binding on the property owners choice of agents' selection. With the few female agents available, most property owners have adduced their discriminatory tendencies to their inability to keep confidential information and their perceived lack of strength to perform the task.

To redress the present situation in the property market, the study recommends that:

1. The female established companies and the female ESV in the academic institutions in Nigeria need to come together to form a career development unit to encourage more female students' choice into the Estate Management discipline in our tertiary institutions. The graduate female ESV should be motivated to enroll for the professional practice in order to increase the number of Female Firms in the society.
2. Gender inequality must be eradicated by the national government' embracing' International Change that female representation and participation is the basic condition for distributive justice in all facets of the national economy through gender empowerment index and gender development index.
3. Female agent need to work more on their emotions and convince clients of the safety of their property briefs in their portfolio, and equally sensitize their clients that publicly displayed and published information can better enhance the image and value of their properties.
4. Property owners/ clients are advised not to undermine the female agents' potentials but rather take the advantage of the talent inherent in female professional to increase the economic profile of their properties.
5. There must be targeted policies that keep on changing the social norms and society's perception of what women are capable of doing and achieving in real property market transaction and practice.

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