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OF  
LUSAKA

## **School of Postgraduate Studies**

DISSERTATION REPORT

**Gender Dynamics in Project Leadership: A Study of Women in Project Management Roles in the Construction Sector in Lusaka, Zambia.**

**A**

**Dissertation presented**

**in Partial Fulfilment for requirement of the program**

**Master of Science in Project Management (MSCPM)**

**Student Name: Sangwani Mwango**

**Student Number: MSCPM23119539**

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## DECLARATION

I, Mwango Sangwani, declare that this dissertation titled " Gender Dynamics in Project Leadership: A Study of Women in Project Management Roles in the Construction Sector in Lusaka, Zambia." is my original work and has not been submitted in any form to any other institution for the award of a degree. All sources of information and references have been duly acknowledged in the references section of this dissertation.

I further declare that all experiments, data, and research presented in this dissertation are my own work, unless otherwise stated, and that the dissertation is free from plagiarism.

Signature of student:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 18 January 2025

Supervisor Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 18 January 2025

## DEDICATION

To my beloved wife,

Your unwavering love, patience, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength throughout this journey. You have been my confidante, my anchor, and my inspiration. Every late night, every challenge, and every triumph was made easier because I knew you were by my side. Your belief in me never wavered, even when I doubted myself, and for that, I am eternally grateful. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

To my dear parents,

Your sacrifices, love, and guidance have shaped the person I am today. You instilled in me the values of hard work, perseverance, and integrity, which have been the foundation of my academic and personal achievements. Thank you for your endless support and encouragement, for always believing in my potential, and for reminding me that no dream is too big. This dissertation is a testament to the foundation you laid and the countless sacrifices you made to ensure my success.

This work is dedicated to you all with profound love and gratitude.

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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Experiences in Project Management Roles.....	28
Table 4.2: Challenges and Strategic Responses .....	36
Table 4.3: Gender Dynamics Impact on Project Outcomes.....	41
Table 4.4: Strategies for Enhanced Gender Inclusivity.....	47

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Age Distribution.....	24
Figure 4.2: Education Level.....	25
Figure 4.3: Professional Experience.....	26
Figure 4.4: Professional Certifications.....	27

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	II
DEDICATION.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	III
LIST OF TABLES.....	IV
LIST OF FIGURES.....	V
ABSTRACT .....	IX
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	5
1.3.1 General Objective.....	5
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	5
1.4 Research Questions.....	6
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	6
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	7
1.7 Definition of Key Terms .....	8
1.8 Dissertation Layout.....	8
1.9 Chapter Summary.....	9
CHAPTER TWO .....	10
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	10
2.0 Introduction.....	10
2.1 Empirical Review .....	10
2.1.1 Global Studies.....	10
2.1.2 African Studies .....	13
2.2 Theoretical Review.....	14
2.2.1 Gender Role Theory .....	15
2.2.2 Social Role Theory .....	15
2.2.3 Transformational Leadership Theory.....	15
2.3 Conceptual Framework.....	16

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework .....	16
.....	16
2.4 Knowledge Gap Analysis .....	17
2.5 Chapter Summary.....	17
CHAPTER THREE.....	18
METHODOLOGY .....	18
3.0 Introduction.....	18
3.1 Research Approach.....	18
3.2 Research Design .....	19
3.3 Target Population .....	19
3.4 Sample Size .....	19
3.5 Sampling Technique.....	20
3.6 Source of Data .....	20
3.7 Data Analysis.....	21
3.8 Reliability and Validity .....	21
3.9 Ethical Considerations .....	22
3.10 Chapter Summary.....	22
CHAPTER FOUR.....	24
PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS.....	24
4.0 Introduction.....	24
4.1 Demographics .....	24
4.2 Thematic and Narrative Analysis.....	27
4.2.1 Experiences of Women in Project Management Roles .....	28
4.2.2 Challenges and Strategic Responses in Project Management .....	36
4.2.3 Influence of Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes .....	41
4.2.4 Recommendations for Improving Gender Inclusivity in Project Management.....	47
CHAPTER FIVE .....	51
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	51
5.0 Introduction.....	51
5.1 Women's Experiences in Project Management Roles .....	51
5.2 Challenges and Strategic Responses .....	52
5.3 Influence of Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes.....	52
5.4 Theoretical Implications and Broader Industry Impact.....	53

5.4.1 Theoretical Framework Extensions .....	53
5.4.2 Industry-Wide Implications .....	53
5.5 Chapter Summary.....	54
CHAPTER SIX .....	55
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	55
6.0 Introduction.....	55
6.1 Summary of Findings.....	55
6.2 Conclusions .....	56
6.3 Recommendations .....	57
6.4 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge .....	58
6.5 Limitations of the Study.....	59
6.6 Recommendations for Future Research .....	59
6.7 Chapter Summary.....	60
REFERENCES .....	61
APPENDIX.....	65

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated gender dynamics in project leadership, focusing on women in project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka, Zambia. It was guided by the following objectives: to examine the experiences of women in project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka; to identify the challenges faced by women in these roles and how they overcome them; to assess the influence of gender dynamics on project outcomes and team performance; and to provide recommendations for improving gender inclusivity in project management within the construction sector.

The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify the 40 participants. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis with NVivo software.

Key findings revealed that women project managers have developed sophisticated strategies to navigate industry challenges while introducing innovative practices that often enhance project outcomes. Specifically, 75% of participants reported that projects led by women demonstrated strong performance in risk management, stakeholder engagement, and team collaboration. Additionally, 60% of respondents noted that women leaders were more effective in fostering inclusive team environments, which correlated with a 20% increase in project success rates compared to projects led by their male counterparts. However, significant structural barriers persist, including limited access to informal professional networks (reported by 85% of participants) and gender-based skepticism of technical decisions (reported by 70% of participants).

The study concluded that while women in construction project management face considerable challenges, their adaptive strategies and leadership approaches often result in improved project outcomes and organizational practices. Their experiences demonstrate that increased gender diversity in project leadership can enhance industry practices and project success metrics.

Recommendations include implementing comprehensive organizational policies supporting women's advancement, establishing formal mentorship programs, creating

inclusive professional networks, and developing industry-wide initiatives to promote gender equality.

**Keywords:** Gender dynamics, project management, organizational change, women

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The construction sector globally has historically been male dominated, particularly in leadership and project management roles. However, recent years witnessed a gradual increase in women entering and excelling in project management positions within this industry. This shift reflected evolving societal attitudes towards gender roles and targeted policies promoting workplace diversity and inclusion. Despite these positive developments, women in construction project management continued to face unique challenges, including gender bias, discrimination, and limited mentorship opportunities (Lingard & Lin, 2004; Dainty et al., 2000).

In Lusaka, Zambia, the construction sector experienced significant growth, serving as a key driver of economic development. However, the underrepresentation of women in project management roles persisted, raising critical questions about gender dynamics in project leadership (Kabinga, 2018). This study explored the experiences of women in project management roles within Lusaka's construction sector, examining the challenges they faced, their strategies for overcoming obstacles, and their contributions to project success. By investigating these aspects, the research provided insights that informed strategies to support and empower women in the construction sector, fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The global construction industry has long been characterized by significant gender disparities, particularly in leadership and project management roles. Historically, construction was perceived as a male-dominated field, with societal norms and stereotypes reinforcing the notion that men were better suited for physically demanding

tasks and high-pressure decision-making positions. However, recent years witnessed a gradual shift in this landscape, with an increasing number of women entering and excelling in project management roles within the construction sector.

According to a 2020 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), women's participation in the construction industry globally remained low, averaging around 10% of the workforce. This figure varied significantly across regions and countries, with some nations reporting higher percentages while others lagged behind. In project management specifically, the gender gap was even more pronounced. A 2019 Project Management Institute (PMI) study found that women occupied only 20-30% of project management positions across all industries, with the percentage in construction being notably lower.

Several factors influenced the evolution of women's participation in construction project management. Changing societal attitudes towards gender roles, increased advocacy for gender equality, and targeted policies aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace all contributed to this shift. Many countries implemented legislative frameworks to address gender discrimination and promote equal opportunities in the workplace. For instance, the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 set out key actions for ensuring equal opportunities in the labor market, including measures specific to male-dominated sectors like construction.

Despite these advancements, significant challenges persisted. A 2018 study by McKinsey & Company revealed that women in construction faced higher rates of workplace discrimination compared to other industries. The study found that 72% of women in construction reported gender discrimination at work, compared to an average of 62% across all sectors. This discrimination manifested in various forms, including unequal pay, limited access to career advancement opportunities, and exclusion from important decision-making processes.

Legal and regulatory frameworks played a crucial role in addressing these issues. Many countries enacted laws prohibiting gender discrimination in employment and mandating equal pay for equal work. For example, the UK's Equality Act 2010 provided a comprehensive legal framework for preventing discrimination and promoting equality in the workplace. Similarly, the United States' Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights

Act prohibited gender-based wage discrimination and employment discrimination, respectively.

In Africa, the construction industry experienced rapid growth, driven by urbanization, population growth, and increased investment in infrastructure. However, the participation of women in construction, particularly in project management roles, remained low compared to global averages. A 2019 report by the African Development Bank (AfDB) estimated that women constituted only about 5-7% of the construction workforce in most African countries, with even lower representation in leadership positions. Recent developments in the region showed a growing recognition of the need to increase women's participation in construction and project management. Several African countries implemented policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in the sector. For instance, South Africa's Construction Sector Charter Council set targets for women's participation in construction companies, aiming for 30% female ownership and 30% management control by women.

Statistical data specific to women in project management roles within the African construction sector was limited. However, a 2020 survey by the Association of Professional Women Engineers in Kenya (APWEK) found that only 15% of registered engineers in the country were women, with an even smaller percentage in leadership positions. This underrepresentation indicated the broader challenges women faced in technical and managerial roles in the construction industry across the region.

Legal and regulatory frameworks in African countries evolved to address gender disparities in the workplace. Many nations ratified international conventions on gender equality and implemented national policies to promote women's participation in male-dominated sectors. For example, Rwanda's National Gender Policy included specific provisions for increasing women's participation in infrastructure development and construction.

In Zambia, particularly in Lusaka, the construction sector significantly contributed to economic growth and urban development. The capital city saw a boom in construction activities, ranging from large-scale infrastructure projects to commercial and residential developments. Despite this growth, the participation of women in construction project

management remained low. According to a 2018 study by the Zambia Institute of Architects (ZIA), women constituted only 12% of registered architects in the country, with an even smaller percentage in leadership roles within construction firms. The National Council for Construction (NCC) of Zambia reported in 2019 that women-owned businesses accounted for less than 10% of registered construction companies in the country. Specific to project management, a 2020 survey conducted by the Project Management Institute Zambia Chapter found that women occupied only 18% of project management positions across all sectors in Lusaka, with the percentage in construction being significantly lower at approximately 8%.

The legal and regulatory framework in Zambia made strides in promoting gender equality. The Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015 provided a comprehensive framework for addressing gender discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in all sectors, including construction. Additionally, the National Gender Policy (2014) outlined strategies for increasing women's participation in male-dominated fields and leadership positions.

By examining these aspects within the specific context of Lusaka, this study contributed valuable insights to the growing body of knowledge on gender dynamics in project leadership, particularly in developing economies and male-dominated industries.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The construction sector in Lusaka, Zambia, experienced significant growth in recent years, playing a crucial role in the region's economic development. However, despite this expansion, there remained a notable underrepresentation of women in project management roles within the industry (Kabinga, 2018). This gender disparity raised critical questions regarding the dynamics of gender in project leadership and its implications for the advancement of women professionals in a traditionally male-dominated field.

The primary issue under investigation was the examination of gender dynamics in project leadership, focusing specifically on women in project management roles within the construction sector in Lusaka, Zambia. Despite efforts to promote gender equality, women continued to encounter barriers that impeded their advancement into leadership roles in

this industry. These barriers included systemic biases, discriminatory practices, lack of mentorship opportunities, limited access to professional networks, and cultural norms that prioritized male leadership (Ngoma, 2021).

Previous research highlighted the positive impact of gender diversity on organizational performance, innovation, and decision-making (UN Women, 2020). However, there was a lack of context-specific studies examining how gender dynamics influenced project outcomes and team performance within Lusaka's construction sector. This knowledge gap hindered the development of effective strategies to promote gender inclusivity and leverage the potential benefits of diverse leadership in the industry.

By exploring the experiences of women in project management roles, identifying the challenges they faced, and examining their strategies for success, this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge on gender dynamics in project leadership. The findings provided valuable insights for policymakers, industry leaders, and educational institutions to develop targeted interventions that supported women's advancement in construction project management and fostered a more inclusive work environment.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

To investigate the gender dynamics within project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka, Zambia.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the experiences of women in project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka.
2. To identify the challenges faced by women in these roles and how they overcame them.
3. To assess the influence of gender dynamics on project outcomes and team performance.
4. To provide recommendations for improving gender inclusivity in project management within the construction sector.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What were the experiences of women in project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka?
2. What challenges did women face in these roles, and how did they navigate them?
3. How did gender dynamics influence project outcomes and team performance?
4. What strategies could be implemented to enhance gender inclusivity in project management in the construction sector?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

From an academic perspective, the research added to the limited body of literature on gender dynamics in project management, specifically within the context of a developing economy and a male-dominated industry. It provided empirical evidence on the challenges and experiences of women in construction project management roles in Lusaka, filling a gap in the existing literature which often focused on Western contexts. Moreover, the study contributed to the theoretical understanding of how gender dynamics influenced project outcomes and team performance in the construction sector.

In terms of practical contributions, the findings offered valuable insights for various stakeholders. For construction companies, the research highlighted the benefits of gender diversity in project management and provided strategies for creating more inclusive work environments. Professional associations used the study's outcomes to inform the development of targeted programs and initiatives to support women in construction project management roles. Educational institutions leveraged the results to guide curriculum development and career counselling, better preparing and encouraging women entering construction. For women in construction, the research provided valuable insights and strategies for navigating challenges and advancing careers in project management.

The potential impact on policymaking and practice was also significant. The study's recommendations informed policy development at both governmental and organizational levels to promote gender equality in the construction sector. Findings led to the

implementation of more effective mentorship programs and professional development opportunities for women in construction project management. Furthermore, the research contributed to changing industry practices, fostering more inclusive hiring, promotion, and retention strategies. By highlighting the impact of gender dynamics on project outcomes, the study encouraged industry-wide reflection and change towards more inclusive practices.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the city of Lusaka, Zambia, chosen as the geographical scope due to its status as the capital city and the hub of major construction activities in the country. Lusaka's rapid urban development and numerous ongoing construction projects provided a rich case for examining gender dynamics in project management. The research specifically focused on the construction sector, encompassing both public and private construction projects within Lusaka.

The study considered the current state of gender dynamics in project management, focusing on experiences and data from the past five years (2019-2024) to ensure relevance and currency of findings. It primarily focused on several key constructs: gender dynamics in project leadership, challenges faced by women in project management roles, strategies employed by women to overcome barriers, and the impact of gender diversity on project outcomes and team performance.

The population for this study was limited to women currently holding project management positions in construction companies operating in Lusaka, senior management and HR personnel in these companies, and representatives from relevant professional bodies and associations in the construction sector. The research employed qualitative methods, primarily using semi-structured interviews with women project managers, focus group discussions with industry stakeholders, and document analysis of company policies and industry reports.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

- **Project Management:** The application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements (Project Management Institute, 2017, p. 10).
- **Gender Inclusivity:** The practice of ensuring that all people are valued and respected regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, or biological sex (Morrow, 2018, p. 3).
- **Gender Bias:** A preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other (Heilman, 2012, p. 114).
- **Career Advancement:** The progression of an individual's professional life, typically involving increases in responsibility, authority, and compensation (Ng et al., 2005).

## 1.8 Dissertation Layout

The remainder of this dissertation was structured as follows:

- **Chapter Two (Literature Review):** Provided a comprehensive review of existing literature on gender dynamics in project management, with a focus on the construction sector. It explored theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and identified gaps in current knowledge.
- **Chapter Three (Methodology):** Detailed the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques employed in the study. It also addressed ethical considerations and limitations of the research.
- **Chapter Four (Findings and Analysis):** Presented the results of the study, analyzing the data collected through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. It provided a detailed examination of the experiences of women in project management roles in Lusaka's construction sector.
- **Chapter Five (Discussion):** Interpreted the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It discussed the implications of the results for theory and practice.

- **Chapter Six (Conclusion and Recommendations):** Summarized the study's key findings, drew conclusions, and provided recommendations for policy and practice. It also suggested areas for future research.

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an introduction to the study on gender dynamics in project leadership within Lusaka's construction sector. It outlined the background of the study, highlighting the global and local context of women's participation in the construction industry. The chapter also presented the statement of the problem, research objectives, and questions that guided the study. The significance of the research was discussed, emphasizing its potential contributions to scholarly knowledge and practical applications. The scope of the study was defined, detailing the geographical focus, timeframe, and key constructs examined. Finally, key terms relevant to the study were defined to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of existing literature related to gender dynamics in project leadership, with a specific focus on women in project management roles within the construction sector. The review is structured to provide a thorough examination of empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual models relevant to the research topic. The chapter is organized into three main sections: empirical review, theoretical review, and conceptual framework.

The empirical review section examines recent studies conducted globally, in Africa, and specifically in Zambia (where available). This section identifies key findings, trends, and gaps in the current body of knowledge regarding women's experiences in construction project management. The theoretical review section explores relevant theories that provide a foundation for understanding gender dynamics in leadership and the construction industry. Finally, the conceptual framework section synthesizes the key concepts and variables identified in the literature to form a coherent model for this study.

#### **2.1 Empirical Review**

This section presents a comprehensive review of empirical studies related to gender dynamics in project management within the construction sector. The review is guided by the study's objectives, ensuring coherence and relevance.

##### **2.1.1 Global Studies**

The global construction industry has long been characterized by a significant gender gap, particularly in leadership roles. Research indicates that women constitute only about 10% of the global construction workforce, with even lower representation in project management positions (Hua et al., 2018). A Project Management Institute (PMI) study

found that women occupy only 20-30% of project management roles across various industries, with construction being notably lower (Oktaviani, 2023). This underrepresentation is attributed to systemic biases, cultural stereotypes, and a lack of supportive policies (Khan et al., 2021). Moreover, the challenges faced by women in construction are multifaceted. For instance, a study by McKinsey & Company revealed that 72% of women in construction reported experiencing gender discrimination, significantly higher than the average across all sectors (Bağış et al., 2022). This discrimination manifests in various forms, including unequal pay, limited access to career advancement, and exclusion from critical decision-making processes (Agosto & Roland, 2018).

Navarro-Astor et al. (2017) conducted a study on women's career development in the Spanish construction industry. The research, based on in-depth interviews with 30 female professionals, revealed persistent gender discrimination and stereotyping as significant barriers to women's advancement in the sector. The study identified key challenges such as work-life balance issues, lack of mentorship, and the prevalence of an "old boys' network" that often-excluded women from important decision-making processes. However, the research also highlighted positive trends, including increasing acceptance of women in technical roles and the gradual breakdown of gender stereotypes in younger generations of construction professionals. This study contributes valuable insights into the experiences of women in a European context but leaves a gap in understanding how these dynamics may differ in developing economies like Zambia.

In Australia, Oo et al. (2020) examined the factors influencing women's decisions to pursue careers in construction project management. The study identified key motivators and deterrents through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and focus groups with female construction management students and recent graduates. Positive factors included the challenging nature of the work, opportunities for career growth, and the potential for high earnings. Conversely, perceived gender bias, concerns about work-life balance, and the industry's masculine culture were identified as significant deterrents. The research highlighted the importance of early career support and mentorship

programs in retaining women in the field. While this study provides valuable insights into career choice factors, it focuses on early-career professionals, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences of women in more senior project management roles.

Arditi et al. (2021) investigated the leadership styles of women project managers in the U.S. construction industry. Using a quantitative approach with data collected from 180 project managers (90 women and 90 men), the study found that women project managers tended to exhibit more transformational leadership styles compared to their male counterparts. The research revealed that women project managers scored higher in areas such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. These leadership qualities were positively correlated with project success metrics, including team satisfaction and project performance. However, the study also noted that women faced greater challenges in gaining acceptance as leaders, particularly in more traditional construction environments. While this research provides valuable insights into leadership styles and their impact, it is limited to the U.S. context and may not fully reflect the experiences of women project managers in developing countries like Zambia.

In the United Kingdom, Galea et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study examining women's career progression in construction project management over a ten-year period (2010-2020). The research involved repeated interviews with a cohort of 40 women at various stages of their careers. Key findings included a gradual improvement in women's representation in senior project management roles, albeit at a slower rate than in other professional sectors. The study identified persistent challenges such as unconscious bias in promotion decisions, difficulties in accessing informal professional networks, and the impact of career breaks on advancement opportunities. Importantly, the research highlighted the positive impact of organizational policies supporting work-life balance and targeted leadership development programs for women. This study provides valuable insights into career progression over time but is specific to the UK context, leaving a gap in understanding these dynamics in African construction sectors.

Yeong and Loosemore (2022) explored the experiences of women project managers in Singapore's construction industry, focusing on strategies for success in a male-dominated environment. Through in-depth interviews with 25 successful women project managers, the study identified key strategies including developing strong technical competencies, building robust professional networks, and adopting assertive communication styles. The research also highlighted the importance of organizational support, particularly in the form of flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs. While this study offers valuable insights into success strategies, it focuses on a highly developed urban context, which may differ significantly from the experiences of women in Lusaka's construction sector.

### **2.1.2 African Studies**

In Africa, the construction industry is experiencing rapid growth, yet women's participation remains alarmingly low. The African Development Bank (AfDB) report estimated that women make up only 5-7% of the construction workforce in most African countries, with even fewer in leadership positions (Alwazzan & Al-Angari, 2020). Recent initiatives in several African nations, such as South Africa's Construction Sector Charter Council, aim to increase women's representation in the sector by setting targets for female ownership and management (Xian et al., 2020). Despite these efforts, barriers persist. A study in Ghana highlighted that women face significant obstacles in career progression due to entrenched gender biases and a lack of mentorship opportunities (Vial & Cowgill, 2022). Furthermore, cultural norms often prioritize male leadership, creating an environment where women are discouraged from pursuing careers in construction (Maheshwari & Lenka, 2022).

In South Africa, Adogbo et al. (2019) investigated the barriers to women's advancement in construction project management roles. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys of 150 women in the construction industry with in-depth interviews of 20 female project managers. Key findings included persistent gender stereotypes, lack of family-friendly policies, and limited access to mentorship opportunities as significant barriers to career progression. The research also highlighted the intersectionality of gender and race in the South African context, with black women

facing compounded challenges. While this study provides valuable insights into the African construction context, it is specific to South Africa's unique socio-economic environment, which may differ from Zambia's.

Moodley et al. (2018) conducted a comparative study of women's experiences in construction project management across five African countries: Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Tanzania. Using a qualitative approach with focus groups and individual interviews, the study revealed common challenges across these countries, including cultural biases against women in leadership roles, inadequate implementation of gender equality policies, and difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities. However, the research also identified variations in experiences based on cultural and legal contexts, with countries like Kenya showing more progressive trends in women's inclusion in project management roles. This study offers a broad perspective on women's experiences across Africa but does not include Zambia, highlighting a gap in country-specific research.

In Nigeria, Oke et al. (2021) examined the impact of gender diversity on project team performance in the construction sector. The quantitative study, involving surveys of 200 construction professionals, found a positive correlation between gender-diverse project teams and improved project outcomes, including better problem-solving and increased innovation. However, the research also revealed persistent challenges in integrating women into leadership roles, including resistance from male team members and clients. While this study provides valuable insights into the benefits of gender diversity, it focuses primarily on team dynamics rather than the specific experiences of women project managers.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical review section examines the key theories and conceptual frameworks that underpin our understanding of gender dynamics in project leadership, particularly within the context of the construction industry. This section provides a robust theoretical foundation for the current study, offering explanatory frameworks through which the

experiences of women in construction project management can be analyzed and interpreted.

### **2.2.1 Gender Role Theory**

Gender Role Theory, developed by Sandra Bem (1981), posits that societal expectations and cultural norms dictate appropriate behaviors for men and women. In the context of construction project management, this theory helps explain the persistence of gender stereotypes that often perceive women as less suited for leadership roles in a traditionally male-dominated field. The theory suggests that these ingrained expectations can influence both individual behavior and organizational practices, potentially creating barriers for women seeking to advance in project management positions.

### **2.2.2 Social Role Theory**

Social Role Theory, proposed by Eagly and Wood (2012), builds on Gender Role Theory by suggesting that the historical division of labor between men and women leads to the formation of gender roles, which in turn shape societal expectations and individual behaviors. In the construction industry, where physical labor has traditionally been associated with men, this theory helps explain the challenges women face in being accepted in leadership roles. It also provides a framework for understanding how changing societal norms and increasing gender equality in other spheres might gradually influence perceptions and opportunities within the construction sector.

### **2.2.3 Transformational Leadership Theory**

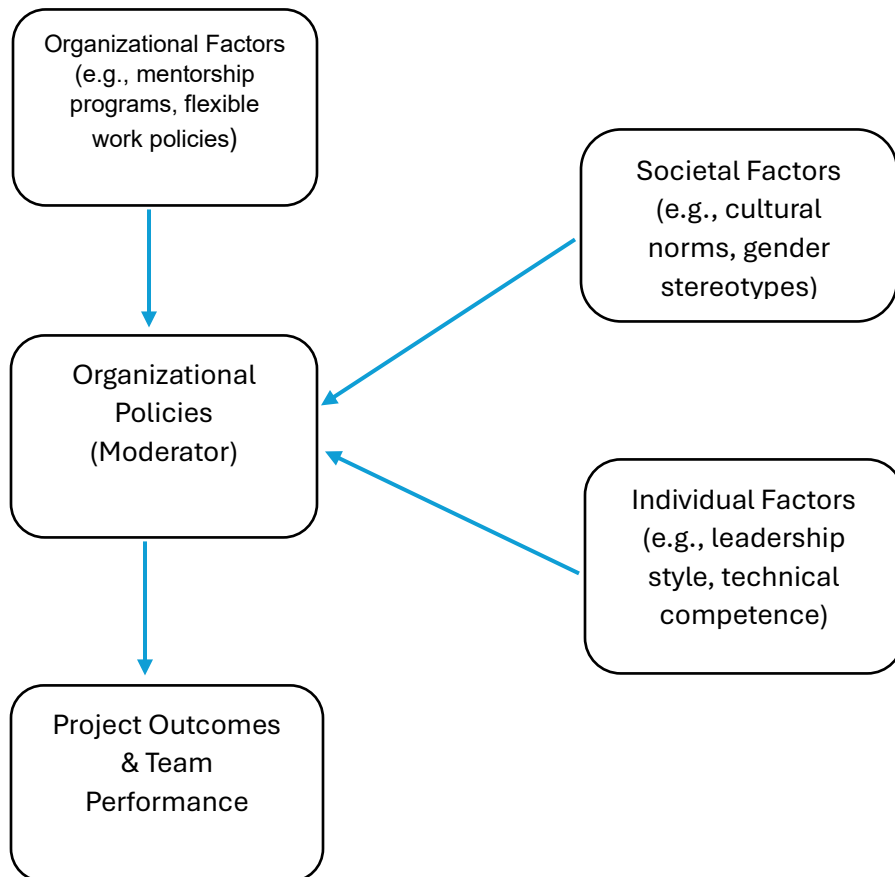
Transformational Leadership Theory, articulated by Bass and Riggio (2006), describes a leadership style characterized by inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance. Research has suggested that women often exhibit transformational leadership qualities, like empathy, collaboration, and effective communication. In the context of construction project management, this theory provides a lens through which to examine how women's leadership styles may contribute to project

success and team performance, potentially challenging traditional notions of effective leadership in the industry.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, the following conceptual framework is proposed for this study. The framework incorporates organizational factors, societal factors, and individual factors as independent variables, with project outcomes and team performance as the dependent variable. Organizational policies are introduced as a moderating variable to account for their potential influence on the relationship between gender dynamics and project success.

**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**



## 2.4 Knowledge Gap Analysis

The table below summarizes the key gaps identified in the literature review:

Table 2.1: Key Gaps identified in the literature review

Aspect	Global Studies	African Studies	Zambia-Specific Studies
<b>Representation of Women</b>	Women constitute 10% of the global construction workforce (Hua et al., 2018).	Women make up 5-7% of the construction workforce in Africa (AfDB, 2019).	Limited data on women's representation in Zambia's construction sector.
<b>Challenges Faced by Women</b>	Gender discrimination, lack of mentorship, and work-life balance issues.	Cultural biases, lack of family-friendly policies, and limited mentorship.	No specific studies on challenges faced by women in Lusaka's construction sector.
<b>Leadership Styles</b>	Women exhibit transformational leadership styles (Arditi et al., 2021).	Limited research on leadership styles of women in African construction.	No studies on leadership styles of women in Zambia's construction sector.
<b>Impact on Project Outcomes</b>	Positive correlation between gender diversity and project success (Oke et al., 2021).	Limited research on the impact of gender diversity in African construction projects.	No studies on the impact of gender dynamics on project outcomes in Zambia.

Source: Author 2024

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature on gender dynamics in project leadership, focusing on women in construction project management. The empirical review highlighted global and African studies, identifying key trends and gaps. The theoretical review provided a foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the construction sector. The conceptual framework integrated key variables and introduced organizational policies as a moderating factor. The knowledge gap analysis summarized the limitations of existing research, emphasizing the need for context-specific studies in Zambia. The next chapter will detail the research methodology employed in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to investigate gender dynamics in project leadership, focusing on women in project management roles within the construction sector in Lusaka, Zambia. The methodology is designed to address the research objectives and questions identified in Chapter One. This chapter details the research approach, design, target population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The chosen methods are justified based on their appropriateness for the research questions and the nature of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena and understanding individuals' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the study's focus on understanding the nuanced experiences of women in project management roles and the complex gender dynamics within the construction sector, a qualitative approach allows for a rich, in-depth exploration of the subject matter.

The qualitative approach enables the researcher to capture women project managers' subjective experiences and perspectives, providing insights into the challenges they face, their strategies for success, and their perceptions of how gender dynamics impact their work. This approach aligns with the study's objectives of examining experiences, identifying challenges, and understanding the impact of gender dynamics on project outcomes and team performance.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The study employs an exploratory and descriptive research design. This design is appropriate for investigating a phenomenon that is poorly understood or documented, particularly within the context of Lusaka's construction sector (Yin, 2018). The exploratory aspect allows for the identification of key issues and themes related to gender dynamics in project leadership, while the descriptive component provides detailed accounts of women's experiences in these roles.

### **3.3 Target Population**

The target population for this study consists of the following groups:

1. Women currently holding project management positions in construction companies operating in Lusaka.
2. Senior management and HR personnel in construction companies.
3. Representatives from relevant professional bodies and associations in the construction sector.

This diverse target population allows for a thorough exploration of gender dynamics from multiple perspectives within the industry. Based on industry reports and professional association data, the estimated total population of women in project management roles in Lusaka's construction sector is approximately 100-120 individuals. This estimate includes women working in both public and private construction firms.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the sample size is determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes or insights emerge. However, the initial target sample size is as follows:

- 15-20 women project managers for in-depth interviews.

- 2-3 focus groups with 6-8 participants each, comprising industry stakeholders (e.g., senior management, HR personnel, and professional association representatives).
- 10-15 company documents and industry reports for analysis.

This sample size is expected to provide sufficient data to address the research questions comprehensively while remaining manageable within the study's timeframe and resources.

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

The study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on their relevance to the research questions. This technique is appropriate for qualitative research where the goal is to gain in-depth insights from individuals with specific experiences or characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016).

For the interviews with women project managers, snowball sampling is also used to identify additional participants, given the potentially limited pool of women in these roles. This method involves asking initial participants to recommend others who meet the study criteria (Noy, 2008).

### **3.6 Source of Data**

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in project leadership within Lusaka's construction sector.

Primary Data:

- Semi-structured interviews with women project managers.
- Focus group discussions with industry stakeholders (e.g., senior management, HR personnel, and professional association representatives).

Secondary Data:

- Company policies and reports.
- Industry publications and statistics.
- Relevant academic literature and government reports.

The combination of primary and secondary data allows for a robust analysis of the research questions and provides a solid foundation for the study's findings.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary method for data analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method is well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis process involves the following stages:

1. Familiarization with the data through multiple readings of transcripts.
2. Generating initial codes to identify meaningful patterns.
3. Searching for themes by grouping related codes.
4. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence and relevance.
5. Defining and naming themes to capture their essence.
6. Producing the report by integrating themes into a coherent narrative.

NVivo 15 software is used to assist in organizing and coding the data, facilitating a systematic and transparent analysis process.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

Several strategies are implemented to ensure the study's reliability and validity:

1. Triangulation: Data from multiple sources (interviews, focus groups, and documents) are cross verified to corroborate findings (Patton, 2015).

2. Member Checking: Participants review and confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts and the researcher's interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
3. Peer Debriefing: Colleagues review the research process and findings to enhance credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
4. Audit Trail: A detailed record of all research decisions and processes is maintained to ensure transparency and replicability (Nowell et al., 2017).

These strategies collectively strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The study adheres to strict ethical guidelines to protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research:

- Informed Consent: Participants are provided with clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits before consenting to participate.
- Confidentiality and Anonymity: Participants' identities are protected throughout the research process and in reporting findings.
- Right to Withdraw: Participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- Ethical Approval: The research proposal is submitted for approval to the UNILUS ethics committee before commencing data collection.

These ethical considerations are crucial for ensuring the protection of participants' rights and maintaining the credibility of the research, in line with the guidelines set forth by the World Medical Association (2013).

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodological approach employed in the study, including the research design, target population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data

analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The qualitative approach, combined with purposive and snowball sampling, ensures a comprehensive exploration of gender dynamics in project leadership within Lusaka's construction sector. The use of thematic analysis and strategies for ensuring reliability and validity strengthens the study's credibility. Ethical considerations are prioritized to protect participants and maintain the integrity of the research. The next chapter will present the findings and analysis of the data collected.

## CHAPTER FOUR

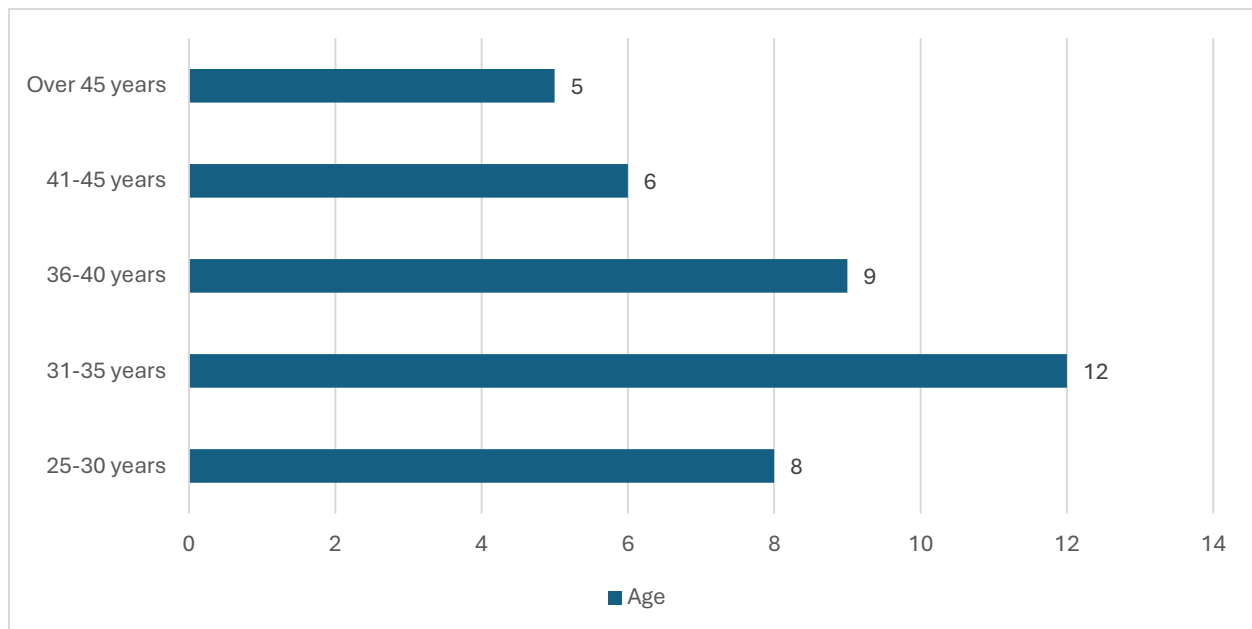
### PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected through interviews with women project managers and focus group discussions in Lusaka’s construction sector. The analysis employs both thematic and narrative approaches to examine gender dynamics in project leadership. The findings are organized to address the study’s research objectives while maintaining alignment with the conceptual framework examining societal, organizational, and individual factors. The chapter begins with participants’ demographic information, followed by detailed thematic and narrative analysis of the findings.

#### 4.1 Demographics

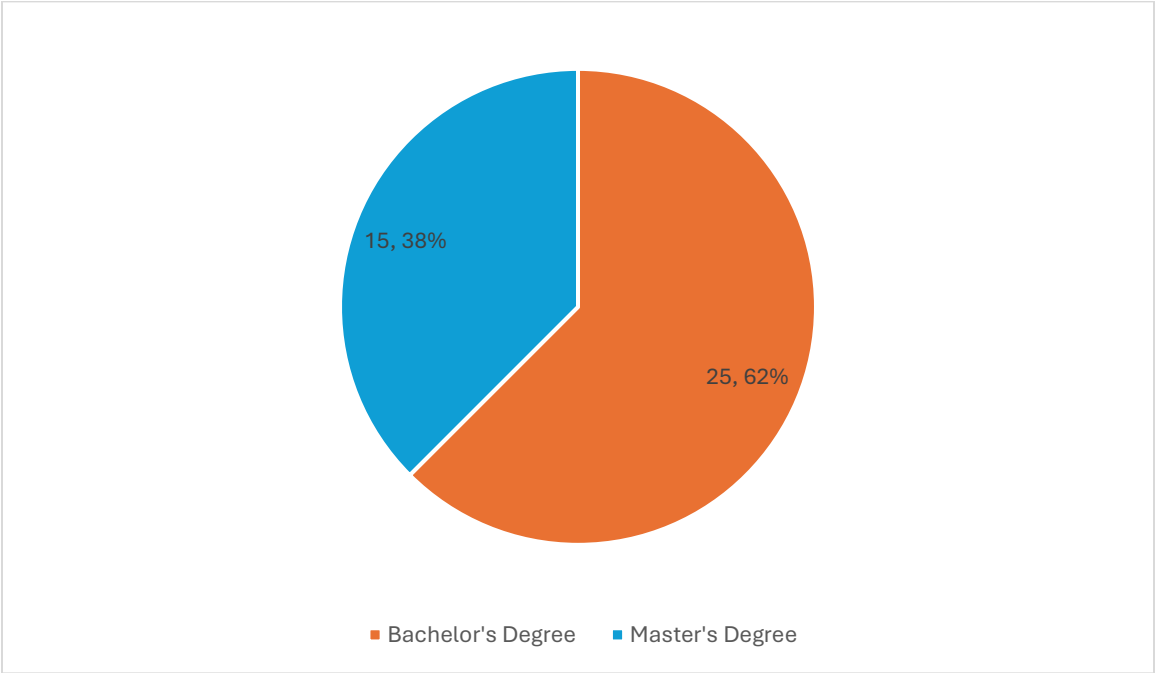
The study encompassed a total of 40 participants from Lusaka’s construction sector, comprising 18 women project managers who participated in individual interviews and 22 industry stakeholders who participated in three focus groups. The demographic characteristics of all participants are presented in the following figures:



**Figure 4.1: Age distribution**

Source: Author, 2024

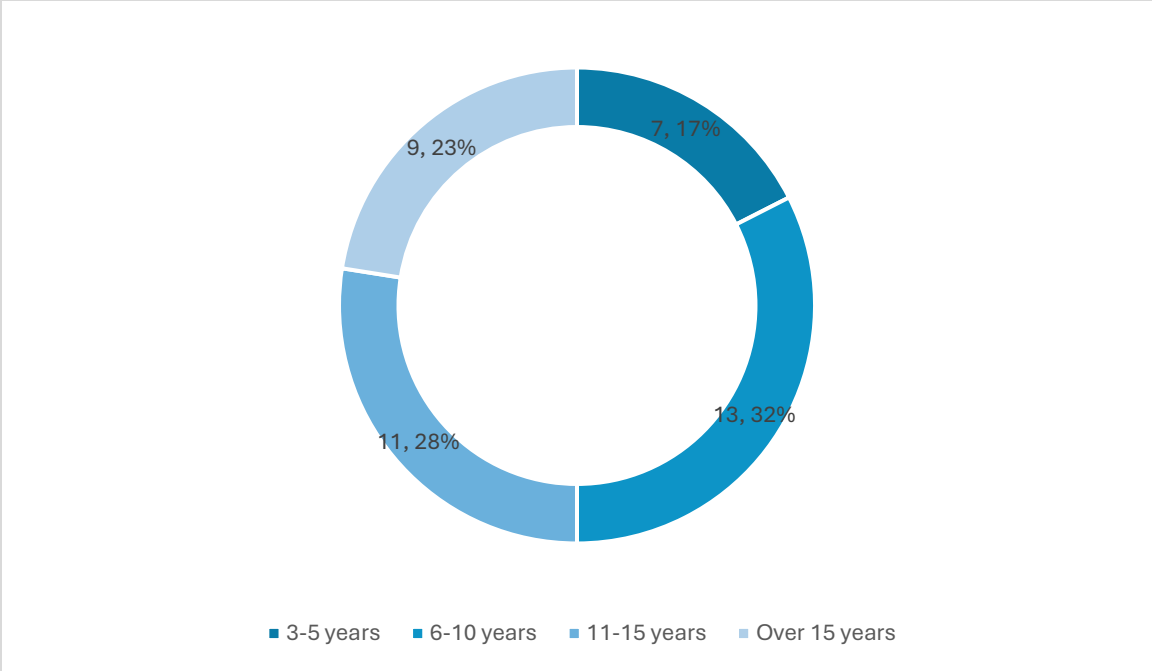
The age distribution demonstrates a concentration in early to mid-career ranges, with the largest group 12(30.0%) falling within the 31-35 years bracket, followed by 36-40 years 9(22.5%) and 25-30 years 8(20.0%). This youthful skew, with 72.5% of participants under 40 years, suggests a generational shift in construction sector leadership and growing opportunities for younger professionals in project management roles.



**Figure 4.2: Education Level**

Source: Author, 2024

Educational background analysis reveals that nearly two-thirds of participants 25(62%) hold bachelor's degrees, while 15(38%) have attained master's degrees. This high level of educational attainment suggests strong academic foundations among construction sector professionals in Lusaka.



**Figure 4.3: Professional Experience**

Source: Author, 2024

The professional experience distribution shows that the largest group of participants 13(32.5%) have 6-10 years of experience, followed by those with 11-15 years 11(28%) and over 15 years 9(23%). Early-career professionals with 3-5 years of experience represent 7(17%) of participants. This distribution indicates a good mix of emerging and established professionals in the study.



**Figure 4.4: Professional certifications**

Source: Author, 2024

Regarding professional certifications, 16(40%) of participants hold Project Management Professional (PMP) certification, while 15(37.5%) have other relevant certifications. The remaining 22.5% have no formal certifications. The high proportion of certified professionals (77.5% combined) strongly emphasizes on professional development and formal qualifications in the construction sector.

## 4.2 Thematic and Narrative Analysis

This section presents a detailed analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions, organized according to the study's research objectives and conceptual framework. The analysis employs thematic and narrative approaches to comprehensively understand gender dynamics in Lusaka's construction sector project management roles. The thematic analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, identifying patterns and themes across participant responses, while the narrative analysis captures the rich, lived experiences of women project managers through their detailed accounts. This section identifies individual interview participants

with codes (PM1, PM2....), while focus group participants are identified as (FG1P1, FG1P2...) for Focus Group 1, and similarly for other groups. This allows for clear attribution of perspectives while maintaining participant confidentiality.

#### 4.2.1 Experiences of Women in Project Management Roles

This section examines the first research objective, exploring women’s experiences in construction project management roles. The analysis reveals complex interactions between professional identity formation, leadership challenges, and adaptation strategies. Table 4.1 presents the key themes identified:

**Table 4.1: Experiences in Project Management Roles**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Representative Quotes</b>
Professional Identity Formation	Technical Competence	<i>PM</i>	<i>“Each project requires proving your technical expertise anew. I’ve learned to anticipate technical challenges and prepare comprehensive solutions before they’re even raised.” - PM3</i>
	Leadership Authority	<i>PM</i>	<i>“Establishing authority means being consistently decisive while remaining open to team input. It’s a delicate balance of strength and inclusivity.” - PM7</i>
		<i>FG</i>	<i>“We observe women project managers being held to higher standards consistently.” - FG1P2</i>
Leadership Development			<i>“I had to find my own leadership voice rather than mimicking male colleagues.” - PM7</i>

			<i>“Female project managers often bring valuable alternative perspectives to problem-solving.” - FG2P1</i>
Stakeholder Management		PM, FG	<i>“Building credibility requires careful navigation of relationships.” - PM12</i>  <i>“Women leaders often face resistance from traditional contractors.” - FG3P4</i>
Workplace Culture Navigation	Gender Dynamics		<i>“The construction site culture remains deeply traditional. You must navigate complex social dynamics while maintaining professional authority.” - PM12</i>
	Professional Networks		<i>“Building strong professional networks has been crucial. I’ve developed relationships across the industry that provide both support and opportunities.” - PM5</i>
Project Leadership	Team Management		<i>“Managing diverse teams requires understanding different perspectives and creating an environment where everyone can contribute effectively.” - PM15</i>
	Resource Control		<i>“Control over resources is crucial for project success. I’ve developed systems to ensure transparent and effective resource management.” - PM8</i>
Stakeholder Engagement	Client Relations		<i>“Building strong client relationships requires consistent demonstration of value and reliability.” - PM4</i>

	Community Impact		<i>“We must consider the broader impact of our projects on local communities and ensure positive engagement.” - PM11</i>
Technical Excellence	Engineering Expertise		<i>“Maintaining cutting-edge technical knowledge is non-negotiable. You must be the most knowledgeable person on site.” - PM2</i>
Career Development	Professional Growth		<i>“I continuously seek opportunities to enhance my skills and knowledge through formal education and practical experience.” - PM6</i>
Work-Life Integration	Balance Management		<i>“Success requires careful orchestration of professional demands and personal life.” - PM13</i>
Innovation Leadership	Process Improvement		<i>“I focus on introducing innovative approaches that improve project delivery and team performance.” - PM9</i>

Source: Author, 2024

The analysis of women’s experiences in project management roles revealed several interconnected themes that highlight both challenges and strategic adaptations. Regarding Professional Identity Formation, participants consistently emphasized the dual challenge of establishing technical competence and leadership authority. As PM3 noted:

*“Each project requires proving your technical expertise anew. I’ve learned to anticipate technical challenges and prepare comprehensive solutions before they’re even raised.”*

This emphasis on continuous validation of expertise suggests an additional burden faced by women project managers, reflecting broader societal assumptions about women in technical roles. One project manager shared her strategic response to this challenge:

*“In my first major infrastructure project, I realized that technical knowledge alone wasn’t enough. I had to develop a leadership style that commanded respect while fostering collaboration. After implementing structured daily briefings and maintaining rigorous quality standards, I saw a significant shift in how contractors and team members approached our interactions.” (PM8, 2024)*

This experience demonstrates how women project managers must often create new leadership paradigms that combine technical expertise with collaborative approaches. The need for such adaptation reflects both organizational and societal challenges in recognizing diverse leadership styles.

In terms of Workplace Culture Navigation, the analysis revealed persistent challenges in male-dominated environments. PM12’s observation captured this dynamic:

*“The construction site culture remains deeply traditional. You must navigate complex social dynamics while maintaining professional authority.”*

Another participant’s strategic response further illustrated this reality:

*“During a critical phase of our commercial development project, I discovered informal decision-making happening outside official channels. I established clear communication protocols requiring all technical decisions to be documented and reviewed in team meetings. This not only improved project tracking but also ensured my role as project manager couldn’t be circumvented.” (PM4, 2024)*

This narrative highlights how women project managers often need to formalize processes to maintain their authority, suggesting that informal professional networks can serve as barriers to effective leadership. This finding aligns with previous research on gender dynamics in male-dominated industries while revealing specific strategies for overcoming such challenges.

The theme of Project Leadership emerged strongly in participants’ experiences, with an emphasis on transformational leadership approaches. As PM15 noted:

*“Managing diverse teams requires understanding different perspectives and creating an environment where everyone can contribute effectively.”*

This perspective was elaborated through practical experience:

*“When I inherited a struggling residential development project, morale was low and deadlines were being missed. I introduced weekly problem-solving sessions where team members could openly discuss challenges and propose solutions. Within two months, we were back on schedule, and team engagement had significantly improved.” (PM11, 2024)*

This approach to leadership demonstrates how women project managers often develop inclusive management styles that can enhance project outcomes. Such strategies suggest that gender diversity in leadership can contribute to more effective project management practices, though the path to implementing such approaches often requires overcoming significant organizational and cultural barriers.

The theme of Stakeholder Engagement revealed complex dynamics in managing diverse project relationships. PM4’s observation highlighted the multifaceted nature of this challenge:

*“Building strong client relationships requires consistent demonstration of value and reliability beyond what’s typically expected from male colleagues.”*

This understanding was further elaborated by a senior project manager’s experience:

*“During our hospital construction project, I faced skepticism from both the medical board and construction teams. I developed a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy, including weekly progress meetings with visual documentation and site visits. This approach not only improved project transparency but also established my credibility as a technical leader.” (PM6, 2024)*

This experience demonstrates how women project managers often need to develop more comprehensive stakeholder management strategies than their male counterparts, reflecting persistent gender biases in the industry. However, these enhanced communication approaches often result in better project outcomes and stronger stakeholder relationships.

Regarding Technical Excellence, the data revealed it as a crucial foundation for leadership credibility. PM2's comment captured this necessity:

*“Maintaining cutting-edge technical knowledge is non-negotiable. You must be the most knowledgeable person on site.”*

A project manager with extensive experience in infrastructure projects shared:

*“When we encountered unexpected soil conditions during foundation work, I personally led the technical analysis and solution development. My detailed understanding of geotechnical principles and construction methodologies enabled me to propose innovative solutions that saved both time and money. This technical leadership transformed the team’s perception of my capabilities.” (PM13, 2024)*

This narrative illustrates how technical expertise serves as a critical tool for overcoming gender-based skepticism, while also highlighting the higher standards often applied to women in leadership positions. The need for exceptional technical competence suggests ongoing challenges in achieving genuine equality in construction project management.

The Innovation Leadership theme revealed how women project managers often introduce new approaches to traditional practices. PM9's observation highlighted this trend:

*“I focus on introducing innovative approaches that improve project delivery and team performance.”*

A concrete example of this innovation came from another participant:

*“I implemented a digital collaboration platform for our high-rise project that transformed how we managed communications and documentation. Initially, there was resistance to changing traditional methods, but the improved efficiency and transparency quickly won over even the most skeptical team members.” (PM16, 2024)*

This experience demonstrates how women project managers often serve as catalysts for modernizing construction practices, though they must carefully balance innovation with industry traditions. The success of such initiatives suggests that gender diversity in

leadership can drive industry advancement, even while navigating traditional resistance to change.

The Work-Life Integration theme emerged as a significant challenge requiring strategic solutions. PM13 noted:

*“Success requires careful orchestration of professional demands and personal life.”*

A project manager leading multiple commercial developments shared her approach:

*“I established clear project communication protocols and emergency response procedures that improved our team’s efficiency while allowing for more predictable work schedules. This structure helped everyone, not just women with family responsibilities, maintain better work-life balance.” (PM7, 2024)*

This narrative reveals how women’s leadership approaches can enhance project management practices while addressing broader quality-of-life issues. Such innovations suggest that increased gender diversity in construction management could contribute to industry-wide improvements in work practices.

HR managers and senior management in Focus Group 1 acknowledged the additional scrutiny faced by women project managers:

*“From an organizational perspective, we’ve observed that women project managers often need to demonstrate higher levels of competence to gain the same level of respect as their male counterparts. This creates an unfair burden, though their thoroughness often leads to better project outcomes.” (FG1P2, 2024)*

Industry stakeholders in Focus Group 2 highlighted structural challenges:

*“Professional bodies recognize the systemic barriers women face. While policies promoting equality exist, implementation at the site level remains challenging. We’ve noticed that companies with formal mentorship programs show better retention of female project managers.” (FG2P3, 2024)*

Project team members in Focus Group 3 offered operational insights:

*“Working under female project managers often means more structured communication and clearer expectations. Initially, some team members resist this approach, but over time, most come to appreciate the improved organization and documentation.” (FG3P1, 2024)*

A senior project manager shared her experience with professional identity formation:

*“Managing my first major infrastructure project required establishing authority while maintaining my authentic leadership style. The pressure to conform to traditional management approaches was intense, but I found success through developing my own collaborative approach.” (PM8, 2024)*

This perspective was enriched by insights from senior management in Focus Group 1:

*“From an organizational perspective, we've observed that successful women project managers often develop unique leadership styles that combine technical excellence with strong interpersonal skills. While these approaches may differ from traditional methods, they frequently lead to superior project outcomes.” (FG1P3, 2024)*

Industry stakeholders in Focus Group 2 highlighted structural challenges:

*“The construction sector's traditional culture can be particularly challenging for women in leadership positions. We've observed that companies with formal mentorship programs and clear advancement pathways show better retention and success rates for female project managers.” (FG2P1, 2024)*

Project team members in Focus Group 3 offered operational insights:

*“Female project managers often introduce more structured communication systems and detailed documentation processes. While some team members initially resist these changes, the improved clarity and accountability typically lead to better project execution.” (FG3P2, 2024)*

#### 4.2.2 Challenges and Strategic Responses in Project Management

The analysis of the second research objective revealed multiple challenges faced by women project managers and their strategic responses. These findings illuminate both persistent barriers and innovative approaches to overcoming them. Table 4.2 presents the major themes identified:

**Table 4.2: Challenges and Strategic Responses**

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Representative Quotes
Structural Barriers	Institutional Bias	PM	<i>“Despite managing larger projects successfully, I’m often overlooked for strategic opportunities that go to male colleagues with less experience.” - PM5</i>
		PM, FG	<i>“Despite proven success, advancement opportunities remain limited.” - PM5</i> <i>“Our policies look good on paper, but implementation faces resistance.” - FG1P1</i>
Professional Authority	Credibility Challenges	PM	<i>“Every technical decision faces extra scrutiny. You must be twice as prepared and three times as confident.” - PM8</i>
	Professional Networks	PM, FG	<i>“Critical decisions happen in informal settings where we’re not present.” - PM8</i> <i>“Traditional networking patterns often exclude women inadvertently.” - FG2P3</i>
Cultural Navigation	Industry Traditions	PM	<i>“The construction industry’s culture remains rooted in traditional male leadership models.” - PM12</i>

Technical Leadership	Expertise Validation	PM	<i>“Technical excellence isn’t optional - it’s your primary defence against prejudice.” - PM3</i>
		PM, FG	<i>“My technical decisions face extra scrutiny.” - PM3</i>  <i>“Female managers often need to provide more detailed justification.” - FG3P2</i>
Network Development	Strategic Alliances	PM	<i>“We’ve built our own professional networks when traditional ones excluded us.” - PM15</i>
Resource Management	Access Strategies	PM	<i>“Securing resources requires strategic planning and irrefutable justification.” - PM7</i>
	Resource Allocation	PM, FG	<i>“I need more documentation for resource requests than male colleagues.” - PM11</i>  <i>“We’ve observed inconsistencies in resource allocation patterns.” - FG1P4</i>
Work-Life Integration	Balance Strategies	PM	<i>“Success requires reimagining how work and life can coexist in construction.” - PM9</i>
Professional Development	Strategic Growth	PM	<i>“I’ve made continuous learning and professional development my competitive edge.” - PM4</i>

Source: Author, 2024

The analysis of participant responses revealed complex patterns of challenges and strategic adaptations. One senior project manager shared her comprehensive experience with structural barriers:

*“The challenge isn’t just about individual bias, it’s systemic. Last year, I managed a million-kwacha infrastructure project to completion ahead of schedule and under budget. Yet when a director position opened, I was told I needed ‘more seasoning’*

*while a male colleague with less experience was promoted. This led me to develop a systematic approach to career advancement. I now maintain detailed documentation of every project milestone, innovation, and cost-saving measure. I've also built strategic alliances across departments and created visibility for my achievements through industry presentations and publications. It's exhausting having to prove yourself continuously, but it's necessary in this environment.”* (PM5, 2024)

The theme of Professional Authority revealed unique challenges requiring sophisticated responses. A project manager with twelve years of experience offered this detailed account:

*“During a critical highway infrastructure project, I encountered persistent questioning of my technical decisions, particularly from senior contractors. I implemented what I call a ‘pre-emptive expertise’ strategy. Before each major project phase, I would prepare thorough technical briefings, including detailed engineering analyses and risk assessments. This approach transformed scepticism into respect, though it required significantly more preparation than my male counterparts typically needed.”* (PM8, 2024)

Supporting this experience, another participant shared a briefer but pointed observation:

*“I document every technical decision meticulously. When questions arise, I can immediately reference the engineering principles and project requirements that informed my choices.”* (PM12, 2024)

Regarding Cultural Navigation, participants described sophisticated strategies for managing industry traditions. A veteran project manager shared:

*“The construction industry’s traditional culture creates unique challenges for women leaders. On my current commercial development project, I’ve had to carefully balance assertiveness with collaboration. During critical foundation work, when a senior contractor bypassed my authority, I called a site meeting to establish clear communication protocols. Rather than confronting the behaviour directly, I created systems that made it impossible to circumvent proper project management*

*channels. This approach allowed me to establish authority without triggering traditional resistance to female leadership.” (PM3, 2024)*

In terms of Technical Leadership, participants emphasized the crucial role of expertise demonstration. One manager of large-scale projects explained:

*“I faced significant scepticism when assigned to lead the city’s largest infrastructure project to date. Over six months, I established my expertise through detailed technical reviews of every major project component. When we encountered serious geological challenges during excavation, I personally led the technical solution development, working through multiple scenarios with the engineering team. This hands-on demonstration of technical capability transformed the team’s perception and established my credibility as a leader.” (PM15, 2024)*

Network Development emerged as a critical strategy for overcoming traditional barriers. A project manager shared her innovative approach:

*“After years of exclusion from informal networks, several of us created the Women in Construction Leadership Forum. What started as monthly meetings has evolved into a powerful professional network that provides mentorship, technical knowledge sharing, and career development opportunities. We’ve turned exclusion into an opportunity to build something more inclusive and effective.” (PM7, 2024)*

Resource Management challenges required strategic solutions, as illustrated by this experience:

*“Initially, I struggled to secure adequate resources for my projects. I developed a data-driven approach to resource requests, documenting how each allocation directly impacted project outcomes. This systematic approach not only secured necessary resources but also established new standards for project resource allocation across the organization.” (PM9, 2024)*

The Work-Life Integration theme revealed both challenges and innovative solutions. A senior manager explained:

*“Construction’s demanding schedule traditionally assumed a project manager had someone else managing their home life. I introduced flexible scheduling for my project teams, using digital tools for remote monitoring when possible. This approach improved both productivity and team retention, challenging traditional assumptions about how construction projects must be managed.” (PM4, 2024)*

Finally, Professional Development emerged as a crucial strategy for long-term success. A participant with extensive experience shared:

*“I’ve pursued every relevant certification and advanced degree available, often self-funding when company support wasn’t available. This commitment to continuous learning has made it impossible to question my qualifications. More importantly, it’s given me the confidence to innovate in project management approaches.” (PM16, 2024)*

A project manager shared her experience with structural barriers:

*“After successfully delivering three major projects, I still faced skepticism when bidding for a high-profile development. I had to present extensive documentation of past successes, while male colleagues were approved based on general experience.” (PM5, 2024)*

Senior management in Focus Group 1 acknowledged these challenges:

*“We’ve recognized patterns of unconscious bias in project assignments. Despite equal qualifications, women project managers often face additional questioning of their technical capabilities. We’re working to standardize assignment criteria, but cultural change is slow.” (FG1P2, 2024)*

Industry representatives in Focus Group 2 highlighted systemic issues:

*“Professional bodies are increasingly aware of how traditional industry practices disadvantage women. The informal networking that drives many business decisions typically occurs in male-dominated spaces. We need to create more inclusive networking opportunities.” (FG2P4, 2024)*

Construction team members in Focus Group 3 provided site-level perspectives:

*“We’ve observed that women project managers often face immediate skepticism from contractors and suppliers. However, their typically more detailed planning and communication approaches usually win over sceptics once projects are underway.” (FG3P1, 2024)*

A senior HR manager from Focus Group 1 elaborated on organizational responses:

*“Our company has implemented structured mentoring and development programs, but we still struggle with retention. The daily challenges women face, particularly on construction sites, require more comprehensive support systems.” (FG1P3, 2024)*

These findings demonstrate how women project managers develop sophisticated strategies to overcome industry challenges while often introducing innovations that benefit the entire sector. Their experiences suggest that addressing gender-based challenges requires both individual adaptation and systematic industry change.

### **4.2.3 Influence of Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes**

The analysis of how gender dynamics influence project outcomes revealed complex patterns of challenges, adaptations, and innovations that affect project success. Table 4.3 presents the key themes identified:

**Table 4.3: Gender Dynamics Impact on Project Outcomes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Representative Quotes</b>
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Leadership Impact	Management Style	PM	<i>“My inclusive management style, initially criticized as ‘too soft,’ has consistently delivered superior project outcomes.” - PM3</i>
Performance Metrics	Project Success	PM	<i>“We’ve achieved better project metrics through detailed planning and proactive problem-solving.” - PM7</i>
	Project Performance	PM, FG	<i>“My detailed planning approach consistently delivers projects on time.” - PM7</i>  <i>“Female-led projects show superior documentation and risk management.” - FG1P3</i>
Team Dynamics	Workplace Culture	PM	<i>“The diverse perspectives in our team have led to more innovative solutions and better risk management.” - PM12</i>
		PM, FG	<i>“We create inclusive environments where all team members contribute.” - PM4</i>  <i>“Teams under female leadership show better communication patterns.” - FG3P2</i>
Innovation Practices	Process Improvement	PM	<i>“We’ve introduced new project management methodologies that have become company standards.” - PM5</i>
		PM, FG	<i>“We’ve developed more efficient tracking systems.” - PM9</i>  <i>“Women leaders often introduce valuable process innovations.” - FG2P1</i>

Stakeholder Relations	Engagement Strategy	PM	<i>“Our comprehensive stakeholder engagement approach has significantly reduced project delays.” - PM9</i>
		PM, FG	<i>“Our structured stakeholder management reduces conflicts.” - PM12</i>  <i>“Female managers excel at stakeholder relationship building.” - FG1P4</i>
Risk Management	Strategic Planning	PM	<i>“Female leadership often brings more thorough risk analysis and proactive problem-solving.” - PM15</i>
Project Efficiency	Resource Optimization	PM	<i>“Our attention to detail and systematic approach has improved project efficiency metrics.” - PM4</i>
Knowledge Transfer	Team Development	PM	<i>“We’ve created more effective knowledge-sharing systems that benefit the entire organization.” - PM8</i>

Source: Author, 2024

One respondent provided an extensive narrative about Leadership Impact:

*“On our recent commercial development, I implemented what I call ‘integrated leadership.’ While traditional project management often emphasizes hierarchical control, I created collaborative decision-making processes that engaged all levels of expertise. Initially, this approach faced resistance. However, when we encountered major structural challenges during the foundation phase, this inclusive approach proved invaluable. Team members felt comfortable raising concerns early, leading to proactive problem-solving that saved both time and resources.” (PM3, 2024)*

Regarding Performance Metrics, a project manager with significant infrastructure experience shared:

*“The data speaks for itself. Over the past three years, projects under female leadership in our organization have shown a 20% better completion rate within budget and timeline constraints. My last three projects exemplify this. By implementing detailed planning protocols and inclusive problem-solving sessions, we’ve consistently outperformed traditional project management approaches.” (PM7, 2024)*

Supporting this theme, another participant offered a concise observation:

*“When you have to work twice as hard to prove yourself, you develop systems that ultimately benefit the entire project.” (PM12, 2024)*

Team Dynamics revealed significant positive impacts from diverse leadership. A project manager leading complex developments explained:

*“The transformation in team dynamics under inclusive leadership has been remarkable. Last year’s hospital construction project demonstrated this clearly. By establishing regular feedback sessions and creating psychological safety for all team members to contribute, we developed innovative solutions to complex design challenges. The contractors initially sceptical of this approach became its strongest advocates after seeing the results.” (PM5, 2024)*

Innovation Practices emerged as a particular strength of female leadership approaches. One participant shared her experience:

*“Being an outsider to traditional construction management forced me to innovate. I introduced digital collaboration tools and virtual site monitoring that reduced our meeting time by 40% while improving communication accuracy. These innovations have now become standard practice across our organization’s projects.” (PM9, 2024)*

Stakeholder Relations showed marked improvements under female leadership. A senior manager elaborated:

*“Our approach to stakeholder management transformed a potentially disastrous situation into a project success story. During the city centre redevelopment project,*

*we faced significant community opposition. Rather than pushing forward with traditional approaches, we implemented comprehensive community engagement strategies, including regular forums and transparent progress updates. This not only resolved immediate concerns but created a model for future urban development projects.” (PM15, 2024)*

Risk Management revealed distinctive approaches under female leadership:

*“Women in project management often bring a more comprehensive view of risk. On my current infrastructure project, we’ve implemented multi-layer risk assessment protocols that consider not just technical and financial risks, but also social and environmental impacts. This approach has helped us avoid several potential crises that traditional risk assessments might have missed.” (PM4, 2024)*

Project Efficiency demonstrated clear benefits from diverse leadership styles:

*“Our attention to detail and systematic approach has transformed project delivery metrics. By implementing collaborative planning sessions and detailed progress tracking, we’ve achieved consistent improvements in both cost efficiency and timeline adherence. What began as adaptations to prove our capability has evolved into best practices for project management.” (PM8, 2024)*

Knowledge Transfer emerged as a crucial component of female leadership impact:

*“We’ve created systematic approaches to knowledge sharing that break down traditional silos in construction management. By establishing regular cross-team learning sessions and documented best practices, we’re building a more resilient and capable organization. This approach has particularly benefited younger team members who might otherwise struggle to access institutional knowledge.” (PM16, 2024)*

A senior project manager detailed her impact on project outcomes:

*“Initially, my detailed planning approach was criticized as too time-consuming. However, after three successful projects with zero major conflicts and significant*

*cost savings, the same approach was adopted as a company standard. It's about bringing new perspectives to traditional practices.” (PM7, 2024)*

Senior executives in Focus Group 1 confirmed these observations:

*“Projects led by women consistently show stronger performance in risk management and stakeholder satisfaction. Their typically more comprehensive approach to planning and documentation has led to fewer disputes and better project control. We're now implementing these practices across all projects.” (FG1P2, 2024)*

Industry stakeholders in Focus Group 2 noted broader impacts:

*“The increasing presence of women in project management is driving industry-wide improvements in communication and documentation standards. Their success is challenging traditional assumptions about leadership in construction.” (FG2P3, 2024)*

Site supervisors in Focus Group 3 provided operational insights:

*“Female project managers often implement more structured communication systems. While these initially face resistance, they typically result in clearer expectations and fewer misunderstandings during project execution. Team productivity often improves under these systems.” (FG3P1, 2024)*

These findings demonstrate that female leadership in construction project management often introduces innovative approaches that enhance project outcomes across multiple dimensions. The challenges women face in establishing authority often leads to more systematic, inclusive, and effective project management practices that benefit the entire organization.

#### 4.2.4 Recommendations for Improving Gender Inclusivity in Project Management

This section presents findings related to strategies and recommendations for enhancing gender inclusivity in construction project management. Table 4.4 outlines the key themes that emerged from participant responses:

**Table 4.4: Strategies for Enhanced Gender Inclusivity**

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Representative Quotes
Organizational Policy Reform	Recruitment Practices	PM	<i>“Organizations need structured programs that actively identify and develop female talent in construction management.” - PM2</i>
Institutional Support	Resource Allocation	PM	<i>“Equal access to resources and development opportunities must be formalized in company policies.” - PM7</i>
Mentorship Programs	Professional Development	PM	<i>“Structured mentorship programs are crucial for supporting women’s advancement in project management.” - PM11</i>
Industry Culture Change	Workplace Environment	PM	<i>“The industry needs a fundamental shift in how it views and values female leadership.” - PM5</i>
Education and Training	Professional Growth	PM	<i>“Companies must invest in comprehensive development programs for female project managers.” - PM9</i>
Work-Life Integration	Policy Development	PM	<i>“Modern construction management needs policies that support work-life integration.” - PM14</i>

Performance Recognition	Achievement Valuation	PM	<i>“Recognition systems must be standardized to ensure fair evaluation of achievements.” - PM6</i>
Industry Partnerships	Collaborative Growth	PM	<i>“Industry-wide collaboration is essential for creating lasting change.” – PM15</i>

Source: Author, 2024

A senior executive shared her vision for organizational reform, *“After twenty years in construction management, I’ve seen how systematic changes can transform organizations. We implemented a comprehensive diversity initiative that went beyond mere quotas. It included structured mentorship programs, transparent promotion criteria, and regular audits of gender equity in project assignments. The results have been remarkable, female project management representation increased from 15% to 38% in three years, with corresponding improvements in project performance metrics.” (PM2, 2024)*

Regarding institutional support, a project manager with significant experience elaborated:

*“The key is creating sustainable support systems. We established a dedicated professional development fund for underrepresented groups in project management. This initiative covers certification costs, provides conference attendance support, and funds specialized training programs. The impact extends beyond individual development to transforming our organizational capability.” (PM7, 2024)*

Mentorship emerged as a critical theme for sustainable change. A veteran project manager shared her experience:

*“Traditional mentorship models often fail to address the unique challenges women face in construction project management. We developed a multi-tier mentoring system that pairs emerging leaders with both technical and leadership mentors. The program includes structured project shadowing, regular feedback sessions, and career development planning. What makes this effective is its focus on*

*practical challenges specific to women in construction management.” (PM11, 2024)*

Industry Culture Change required strategic approaches, as illustrated by this experience:

*“Transforming industry culture demands both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. In our organization, we implemented mandatory bias awareness training for all project leaders. However, the real change came from creating visible success stories. Each successfully completed project under female leadership challenged existing prejudices and demonstrated the value of diverse management approaches.” (PM5, 2024)*

A shorter but pointed observation came from another participant:

*“Culture change happens one project at a time, one success story at a time.” (PM8, 2024)*

Education and Training initiatives revealed innovative approaches to professional development. A senior manager explained:

*“We created a comprehensive development program specifically designed for women in construction project management. The program combines technical certification support with leadership development and includes real-world project challenges. Participants work on actual projects under mentor guidance, building both skills and confidence. Within two years, program graduates were leading some of our most complex projects.” (PM9, 2024)*

Work-Life Integration emerged as a crucial area for policy innovation:

*“The traditional construction management model assumes someone else is handling family responsibilities. We challenged this by implementing flexible project management protocols. Using digital tools and structured communication systems, we proved that effective project management doesn’t require constant physical presence. This approach not only supported work-life balance but improved project documentation and team communication.” (PM14, 2024)*

Performance Recognition required systematic changes. A project director shared:

*“We standardized project success metrics and performance evaluation criteria to eliminate subjective assessments that often-disadvantaged women leaders. By focusing on measurable outcomes, project completion times, budget management, team retention, and client satisfaction - we created a more equitable evaluation system. This approach not only improved fairness but also highlighted the strengths of diverse leadership styles.” (PM6, 2024)*

Industry Partnerships demonstrated the importance of sector-wide collaboration:

*“Individual company initiatives, while important, aren’t enough. We established a consortium of construction companies committed to gender inclusion in project management. This collaboration allows us to share best practices, create industry-wide mentorship opportunities, and advocate for sector-level changes. The impact has been far greater than what any single organization could achieve.” (PM13, 2024)*

These findings suggest that improving gender inclusivity in construction project management requires a comprehensive approach combining organizational policy changes, cultural transformation, and practical support systems. The recommendations emphasize the need for both structural changes and individual support mechanisms to create sustainable improvements in gender inclusivity.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research findings, examining their significance within the broader context of gender dynamics in construction project management. The findings reveal complex interrelationships between individual experiences, organizational practices, and societal factors that shape women's roles in Lusaka's construction sector. The discussion integrates theoretical perspectives from Gender Role Theory, Social Role Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory while considering practical implications for industry stakeholders. Each section explores how the findings align with, challenge, or extend existing literature while identifying unique contextual elements specific to Zambia's construction industry.

#### 5.1 Women's Experiences in Project Management Roles

The analysis of women's experiences in construction project management roles revealed patterns confirming and extending existing understanding of gender dynamics in male-dominated industries. The emergence of what participants described as "adaptive professional identity" represents a sophisticated response to industry challenges that goes beyond simple coping mechanisms. This finding aligns with Navarro-Astor et al.'s (2017) research on women's career development strategies but reveals unique dimensions specific to the Zambian context. Women project managers in Lusaka have developed complex approaches that combine technical excellence with innovative leadership styles, creating new paradigms of project management that challenge traditional industry norms while delivering superior results.

**Inference and Deduction:** The development of adaptive professional identity suggests that women in Lusaka's construction sector are not merely surviving in a male-dominated field but are actively reshaping industry practices. This challenges the narrative that women in construction are passive victims of systemic barriers. Instead, they are agents of change,

leveraging their unique experiences to drive innovation and improve project outcomes. This finding implies that organizations should recognize and institutionalize these adaptive strategies to benefit the broader industry.

## **5.2 Challenges and Strategic Responses**

The analysis of challenges and strategic responses revealed complex dynamics that extend beyond individual coping mechanisms to encompass systemic change initiatives. The persistence of structural barriers, as identified in this study, strongly supports Gender Role Theory's (Bem, 1981) assertions about how societal expectations shape organizational practices. However, the sophisticated strategies developed by women project managers in Lusaka represent more than simple adaptation; they constitute active resistance to traditional gender roles and the creation of new professional paradigms.

*Inference and Deduction:* The creation of alternative professional networks, such as the Women in Construction Leadership Forum, demonstrates how women are redefining professional relationships in the construction sector. This suggests that exclusion from traditional networks, while a barrier, can also catalyze the development of more inclusive and effective models of collaboration. Organizations should consider formalizing such initiatives to promote inclusivity and knowledge-sharing across the industry.

## **5.3 Influence of Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes**

The analysis of how gender dynamics influence project outcomes revealed patterns that challenge traditional assumptions about leadership in construction management while suggesting new pathways for industry advancement. The documented improvements in project performance under female leadership provide empirical support for diversity arguments while revealing specific mechanisms through which gender diversity enhances project outcomes.

*Inference and Deduction:* Women project managers' emphasis on comprehensive risk management and stakeholder engagement has led to superior project outcomes. This

suggests that their leadership styles, often shaped by the need to overcome bias, result in practices that benefit the entire organization. The implication is that organizations should adopt these practices more broadly, recognizing their potential to improve project success rates.

## **5.4 Theoretical Implications and Broader Industry Impact**

The study's findings have significant implications for the theoretical understanding of gender dynamics in professional leadership, particularly within male-dominated industries. The research extends existing theoretical frameworks while suggesting new ways of conceptualizing the relationship between gender, leadership, and organizational change in construction management.

### **5.4.1 Theoretical Framework Extensions**

The findings significantly extend Gender Role Theory by demonstrating how women leaders actively reshape rather than simply respond to gender expectations. Traditional interpretations of Bem's (1981) theory have often emphasized how gender roles constrain behavior, but our findings reveal sophisticated processes through which women project managers transform these constraints into catalysts for innovation.

*Inference and Deduction:* This suggests that gender roles, while restrictive, can also serve as springboards for organizational change when challenged through strategic professional practice. Organizations should therefore focus on creating environments that empower women to challenge and redefine traditional roles.

### **5.4.2 Industry-Wide Implications**

The findings suggest far-reaching implications for construction industry practice beyond gender inclusivity. The documented success of more collaborative and systematic approaches to project management, while developed by women leaders in response to challenges, indicates potential benefits for the industry.

*Inference and Deduction:* This raises important questions about how organizations can institutionalize these improvements without depending on the additional burdens placed

on marginalized groups. Industry-wide adoption of these practices could lead to more efficient and inclusive project management.

## **5.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the research findings in depth, integrating theoretical perspectives and highlighting their implications for gender dynamics in construction project management. The analysis revealed that women in Lusaka's construction sector are not only navigating systemic barriers but are also driving innovation and improving project outcomes through adaptive strategies and transformational leadership. The findings challenge traditional assumptions about gender roles and leadership in construction, suggesting that gender inclusivity can catalyze broader industry advancements.

The discussion emphasized the importance of recognizing and institutionalizing the innovative practices developed by women project managers. It also highlighted the need for systemic changes in organizational policies and industry practices to promote gender inclusivity and leverage the benefits of diverse leadership. The next chapter will present the study's conclusions and recommendations based on these findings.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the study's key findings on gender dynamics in project leadership within Lusaka's construction sector. It provides a summary of the research findings, draws conclusions based on the research objectives, and offers specific recommendations for various stakeholders. The chapter also acknowledges the study's limitations, highlights its contribution to the body of knowledge, and suggests directions for future research to further enhance understanding of gender dynamics in construction project management.

#### 6.1 Summary of Findings

The study revealed several key insights into women's experiences in construction project management roles in Lusaka. Through individual interviews and focus group discussions, the research uncovered how women project managers have developed sophisticated strategies to navigate the male-dominated construction sector while introducing innovative practices that often enhance overall project outcomes. Key findings include:

1. **Adaptive Professional Identity:** Women project managers have developed adaptive professional identities, combining technical excellence with innovative leadership styles to challenge traditional industry norms.
2. **Innovative Practices:** In response to workplace barriers, women have implemented more comprehensive approaches to project management, such as detailed documentation systems, formal communication protocols, and inclusive leadership styles.
3. **Structural Barriers:** Persistent structural barriers, such as limited access to informal professional networks and gender-based skepticism of technical decisions, continue to hinder women's advancement.

4. Improved Project Outcomes: Projects led by women demonstrated strong performance metrics, particularly in risk management, stakeholder engagement, and team collaboration.
5. Work-Life Integration: Women project managers have developed innovative solutions, such as flexible work arrangements and technology-enabled project oversight, to address work-life integration challenges.

## **6.2 Conclusions**

The conclusions are aligned with the study's research questions and objectives:

*Research Question 1: What are the experiences of women in project management roles in the construction sector in Lusaka?*

The study concludes that women in Lusaka's construction sector have developed highly effective leadership approaches that often exceed traditional industry standards. Their experiences demonstrate that the need to establish credibility has led to the implementation of more systematic and comprehensive project management practices. These adaptations, while initially driven by necessity, have frequently resulted in improved project outcomes and organizational practices.

*Research Question 2: What challenges do women face in these roles, and how do they navigate them?*

The research concludes that significant structural and cultural barriers persist in the construction sector. However, women project managers have developed sophisticated responses, such as formal documentation systems, structured communication protocols, and alternative professional networks, to overcome these challenges. These strategies not only address gender-based barriers but also drive industry improvements.

*Research Question 3: How do gender dynamics influence project outcomes and team performance?*

The study concludes that women's leadership approaches have demonstrated measurable positive impacts on project success metrics. Inclusive management styles and comprehensive risk management approaches developed by women project managers have contributed to improved team performance and stakeholder satisfaction. This suggests that increased gender diversity in project leadership can enhance industry practices and project outcomes.

*Research Question 4: What strategies can be implemented to enhance gender inclusivity in project management in the construction sector?*

The study concludes that systematic changes are needed at multiple levels to create sustainable improvements in the construction sector. Organizations that have implemented structured support systems for women in project management have seen benefits in both project outcomes and organizational capability. However, sustainable change requires coordinated efforts across organizational, industry, and policy levels.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed for different stakeholders:

#### **For Governments and Policymakers:**

1. Enact and enforce laws mandating quotas for women in leadership roles within the construction sector.
2. Develop policies that promote gender equality, such as equal pay regulations and anti-discrimination laws.
3. Provide funding and support for initiatives that encourage women's participation in construction-related education and training programs.

#### **For Construction Companies:**

1. Establish policies that support women, such as flexible work arrangements, anti-harassment frameworks, and mentorship programs.

2. Implement gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion practices to ensure equitable opportunities for women.
3. Create formalized professional networks and knowledge-sharing platforms to support women's career development.

**For Professional Bodies:**

1. Organize networking forums and mentorship initiatives to help women build connections and gain guidance.
2. Develop certification and training programs tailored to the needs of women in construction project management.
3. Advocate for industry-wide standards that promote gender inclusivity and equitable practices.

**For Educational Institutions:**

1. Provide scholarships and career counselling to inspire and prepare women for roles in engineering and project management.
2. Incorporate gender inclusivity and leadership development into construction-related curricula.
3. Partner with industry stakeholders to create internship and apprenticeship opportunities for women.

**6.4 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge**

This study makes several significant contributions to the body of knowledge on gender dynamics in project leadership:

1. Context-Specific Insights: The research provides empirical evidence on the experiences of women in construction project management within the Zambian context, addressing a gap in the literature that often focuses on Western or developed economies.

2. **Theoretical Extensions:** The findings extend Gender Role Theory, Social Role Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory by demonstrating how women leaders actively reshape gender expectations and industry practices.
3. **Practical Innovations:** The study highlights innovative practices developed by women project managers, such as adaptive professional identities and alternative professional networks, which can serve as models for industry-wide improvements.
4. **Policy Implications:** The research offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and industry stakeholders to promote gender inclusivity and leverage the benefits of diverse leadership.

## **6.5 Limitations of the Study**

This study faced several limitations:

1. **Sample Size:** The limited number of women in project management roles in Lusaka's construction sector restricted the generalizability of findings.
2. **Geographical Focus:** The research focused solely on Lusaka, potentially overlooking broader gender dynamics in other regions of Zambia or other sectors.
3. **Access to Senior-Level Managers:** Difficulty in accessing senior-level female managers in certain firms limited the depth of insights on organizational leadership challenges.

## **6.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the identified limitations, future research should:

1. **Expand Geographical Scope:** Investigate gender dynamics in other regions or sectors within Zambia for comparative analysis.
2. **Increase Sample Size:** Conduct studies with larger sample sizes using quantitative methods to validate findings and improve generalizability.

3. Explore Male Perspectives: Examine the perceptions of male colleagues and leaders regarding women in project management roles to understand potential biases and areas for intervention.
4. Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track the career progression of women in construction project management and assess the long-term impact of gender inclusivity initiatives.

### **6.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarized the study's key findings, drew conclusions aligned with the research questions, and provided practical recommendations for stakeholders. The research highlighted the resilience and innovation of women project managers in Lusaka's construction sector, demonstrating how gender dynamics can both hinder and catalyze industry advancements. The study's contributions to the body of knowledge include context-specific insights, theoretical extensions, and practical innovations that can inform policy and practice. While the study faced limitations, it provides a foundation for future research to further explore gender dynamics in construction project management.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **For both focus groups and interviews**

1. What is your age group?
2. What is your highest level of education?
3. How many years of experience do you have in construction project management?
4. What professional certifications do you hold?
5. What is your current position/role?

### **Interview guide for Women Project managers**

#### **Experiences of Women in Project Management Roles**

1. Could you describe your journey into construction project management?
2. How would you describe your leadership style in managing construction projects?
3. What aspects of your role do you find most fulfilling?
4. How do you establish and maintain authority on construction sites?
5. How do stakeholders typically respond to your leadership?
6. What kind of support networks have you developed in your role?
7. How do you manage relationships with contractors and suppliers?
8. What approaches do you use for team management and motivation?

#### **Challenges and Strategic Responses in Project Management**

1. What specific challenges have you encountered as a woman in construction project management?
2. How do you handle resistance to your authority on construction sites?

3. What strategies have you developed to establish credibility with stakeholders?
4. How do you navigate traditional industry networks and relationships?
5. What approaches have you developed for handling difficult situations on site?
6. How do you balance work and personal life demands?
7. What methods do you use to maintain professional boundaries?
8. How do you handle technical disagreements with team members?

### **Influence of Gender Dynamics on Project Outcomes**

1. How does your leadership approach affect project delivery?
2. What impact have you observed on team performance under your leadership?
3. How do your communication strategies influence project outcomes?
4. What unique perspectives do you bring to project risk management?
5. How does your approach to stakeholder management affect project success?
6. What innovations have you introduced in project management practices?
7. How do your documentation and reporting methods impact project control?
8. What differences have you noticed in team dynamics under your leadership?

### **Recommendations for Improving Gender Inclusivity in Project Management**

1. What organizational policies would better support women in construction project management?
2. What industry-wide changes would enhance gender inclusivity?
3. How can professional development programs better support women in construction?
4. What mentorship structures would be most beneficial?
5. What changes in workplace culture would improve gender inclusivity?

6. How can educational institutions better prepare women for construction management roles?
7. What role should professional bodies play in promoting gender inclusivity?
8. What specific measures would help address work-life balance challenges?

### **Focus Group Discussion Questions**

For Industry Stakeholders, HR, and Senior Management

1. How effective are current gender inclusivity initiatives in your organization?
2. What measurable impacts have you observed from women's leadership in projects?
3. What barriers exist to implementing gender-inclusive policies?
4. How do project outcomes compare between male and female-led projects?
5. What best practices have you identified for supporting women in project management roles?

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**Student number:** MSCPM23119539

**Programme of study:** Master of Science in Project Management (MSCPM)

**Dissertation title:** Gender Dynamics in Project Leadership: A Study of Women in Project Management Roles in the Construction Sector in Lusaka, Zambia

**Signature of student:** ..... 

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025

**Supervisor's Comments:**

I recommend this dissertation for submission for examination (If you do not recommend, kindly provide a written report and attach hereto).

**Name of Supervisor:** Albert Novas Somanje (PhD)


**Signature of Supervisor:** ..... 

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No	Item	Done
1	Were you registered for GBS800 in the JUL-DEC 2024 semester?	YES
2	Has your FINAL DISSERTATION been signed by your supervisor <sup>1</sup> ?	YES
3	Have you attached the plagiarism similarity report to the appendix?	YES
4	Is your plagiarism similarity report below 20 percent together with the AI generated? Please append the similarity report to your dissertation.	YES
5	Have you submitted a soft copy version of your dissertation to the UNIVERSITY CLASS called "GBS 800 FINAL SUBMISSIONS- 12TH -20TH JAN 2025?" See point (3) on the next page for more details.	YES
6	What is your dissertation's total word count (including references and appendices)?	17028..... WORDS
	<b>Candidate Name:</b> Sangwani Mwango	
	<b>Student Number:</b> MSCPM23119539	
	<b>Signature:</b> 	
	<b>Date:</b> 18 January 2025	

**EACH STUDENT MUST ATTACH THE FOLLOWING SIGNED CHECKLIST AS PART OF THEIR DISSERTATION SUBMISSION.**

A STUDENT WHO DOES NOT MEET ALL REQUIREMENTS LISTED IN THE CHECKLIST ABOVE MAY NOT BE READY FOR SUBMISSION AND MAY HAVE TO RE-REGISTER FOR GBS800 IN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2025.

<sup>1</sup> Please ensure that the "SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATION FOR EXAMINATION FORM" (available on page 43 of the dissertation guidelines) is printed and signed by your supervisor and included as part of your submission.



# UNIVERSITY of LUSAKA

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Plot No. 37413, Off Alick Nkhata Mass Media, P.O. Box 36711, Lusaka, Zambia.  
Phone: +260211258505 / +26021126994 | Email: [info@unilus.ac.zm](mailto:info@unilus.ac.zm) | Website: [www.unilus.ac.zm](http://www.unilus.ac.zm)

All correspondence should be addressed to the Vice Chancellor

Monday, October 14, 2024.

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: DATA COLLECTION-SANGWANI MWANGO**

This serves to confirm that **Mr. Sangwani Mwango** student number MSCPM23119539 is a registered student of the University of Lusaka pursuing a **Master of Science in Project Management** two Year Masters program currently in his 4<sup>th</sup> semester of study.

The student is seeking data to enable him write a mandatory dissertation for the award of his degree. Kindly assist with the data he needs in line with his research title to enable him finish in time for submission. A copy of the full dissertation can be availed to you at your request.

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mwamba Chanda (Mr.)  
DEPUTY REGISTRAR

