

African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues

Volume 28 Number 2, June/July, 2025 Edition

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Journal of the African Society for THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOCIAL ISSUES % DEPT OF Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

GENDER PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION IN CEMENT BUSINESS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

While works exist on the informal economy sector of Africa generally, and the gender asymmetry inherent in many sections of the sector, more works are needed to interrogate the emerging patterns as meso and micro levels. It is against this background that this article examines the patterns of participation of men and women in selling of cement in Ibadan metropolis. Exploratory research design was adopted for the study that informed this article. Purposive sampling was used to select Bodija Ojurin, Eleyele, Moniya, Ajibode-Laniba, Are, Agbowo, Jericho and Ologun Eru as research settings because they were major cement clusters in Ibadan. The research participants were active female and male cement sellers and sales representatives of cement companies. 44 In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with the cement sellers and two Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were conducted with sales representatives of cement companies. NVIVO 15 software for qualitative data analysis was used to analyse data through content and thematic analyses. Findings suggest there is dominance of male participation. There is overwhelming male control of the sector even though women are emerging as active players in the industry. Cultural norms and physical demands are key factors contributing to male-domination of landscape. There is persistent sustenance of gendered nature of the cement business which highlights challenges and shifts in gender participation patterns. Gender plays crucial roles in the informal economy of Ibadan particularly and in Africa generally. Stakeholders across levels should continue to factor gender into policies and interventions targeting informal economy in Ibadan, Nigeria and Africa.

Keywords: *Gender and Informal Economy, Gender and Cement in Ibadan, Male Dominance in Cement Business*

INTRODUCTION

Gender in Nigeria's context refers to the intricate interactions between social, cultural, and economic elements that influence people's roles, identities, and experiences according to how they consider themselves to be masculine or feminine (Olonade et al., 2021). This explains the complex understanding of gender dynamics in Nigerian society by drawing on a variety of scholarly viewpoints. Gender roles are traditionally determined by cultural norms and expectations that specify particular behaviors, obligations, and opportunities for men and women in Nigeria, as they are in many other nations (Mensah, 2023). These expectations frequently mirror patriarchal systems in which women are largely in charge of providing care, handling household chores, and fostering family ties, while males are assigned positions of authority, decision-making, and provision (Sarkar, 2023; Osirim, 2001).

Gender, however, is not a monolithic concept in Nigerian society; rather, it interacts with several social factors, including class, ethnicity, religion, and geography, to generate a range of experiences and identities. For example, the gender norms and behaviors of the Hausa-Fulani culture in northern Nigeria could differ from those of the Yoruba culture in the southwest or the Igbo culture in the southeast (Mba, 2017). Women are frequently viewed as inferior to men, especially in Northern Nigeria. The impact of Nigeria's colonial history on gender dynamics has been substantial, as the legacy of colonialism has reinforced certain gender norms and resulted in the marginalization of women in formal political and economic organizations (Mama, 2001). The necessity of addressing gender disparities and advancing gender equity in Nigeria has gained more attention in recent decades. The World Bank (2019) notes that efforts by civil society, governments, and legislative bodies have attempted to dismantle gender norms, empower women, and improve their access to economic, healthcare, and educational opportunities

Gender disparity and its effects on Nigerian society have been studied by many scholars (Mensah, 2023, Olutayo, 2021. Akanle, 2021, Stoppa, et. al 2020, Olonade et al., 2021, Mba, 2017, Mama, 2001, Olutayo, 2021, Olutayo and Adebayo, 2018, Olutayo and Yalley, 2019, Akanle, 2021, Akanle, Adesina and Fakolujo, 2017). These studies explored the complex interplay between gender dynamics and the social, cultural, and economic elements that influence the experiences of men and women in the cement sales industry in particular. Nigerian gender inequality is still a major problem, with high and pervasive differences in a number of categories, including political representation, economic prospects, education, and health. Significant macro-economic losses have resulted from these disparities in terms of economic diversity, growth, and income equality (Akhtar et al., 2023). There are calls for more women to hold elected office, and the fight for gender equality in Nigeria is gathering steam (Foster, 2021; Akindele et al., 2020). In the Nigerian economic operations, as in many other civilizations, traditional gender roles have been assigned.

Traditionally, women may be more active in home-based businesses or informal retail, while males have controlled industries like the trading of building supplies, particularly cement which is the focus of this research. These gendered distinctions frequently mirror larger cultural expectations and societal conventions around femininity and masculinity. Organizations in Nigeria, such as the Dangote Group, have committed to increasing funding for women's career development and empowerment (Nwoko et al., 2023). There have been attempts to dispel prejudices, assist women in leadership positions, and foster a more gender-inclusive workplace through programs like the Dangote Women's Network. The dedication to advancing mental health awareness among women pursuing career progress is part of the commitment to gender equality.

Gender roles that have been profoundly ingrained in Nigerian society for a long time have defined specific domains of action for men and women. These roles, which prescribe opportunities, actions, and limitations for people based on their gender identification, are frequently indicative of larger cultural norms and expectations. Attention is drawn to the pervasive impact of patriarchy, the system in which men have the majority of power and authority for making decisions in Nigerian society (Ajibade et al., 2021; Agbo, 2021). In addition to maintaining gender inequality, this patriarchal structure gives men and women different access to resources, opportunities for education, and employment.

Furthermore, people's experiences in Nigerian society are made more difficult by the intersections of gender with other social categories including class, ethnicity, and religion (Okpokwasili & Dukor, 2023). Women from low-class areas, for example, may experience prejudice that is exacerbated, making them more vulnerable and limiting their opportunities in both social and economic domains (Jamatia, 2023). Gender inequality is also reflected in Nigeria's economic environment, where men predominate in formal job sectors and hold positions of authority. Nonetheless, women contribute significantly to the informal sector by working in artisanal fields, small-scale trading, and agriculture to support their families and communities (Ofosu et al., 2022). Notwithstanding these obstacles, there is a rising understanding of how critical it is to address gender inequality and advance gender equity in Nigeria. The goals of civil society initiatives, grassroots groups, and government programs have been to challenge old gender stereotypes, improve women's access to economic and educational opportunities, and empower women (Izugbara & Okech, 2011).

Women in Nigeria play active roles in the informal economy of the country which is increasingly the lifeline of the country in the face of chronic under/unemployment, gender mainstreaming and glass-ceiling in the formal sector. According to Onemano (2023), about 82.1 percent of women in Nigeria participate actively in the informal sector of the economy. Hence, in terms of ownership, women in Nigeria account for about 41 percent of the ownership of Small and Micro-businesses in the country

(Partnership for Advancing Women in Economic Development [PAWED, Nigeria], 2022).

In Nigeria, cement sellers are essential to the building sector since they operate as a middleman between cement producers and buyers. Nigeria has a sizable cement market, which is indicative of the nation's continued urbanization and infrastructural development. Cement vendors work in both the regular and unofficial sectors, making a substantial national contribution to the supply chain for building supplies. Cement is sold in Nigeria in a variety of ways, from big distributors that supply building corporations to small shopkeepers that cater to their local communities. These vendors frequently purchase cement directly or through distributors from producers including Dangote Cement, Lafarge Africa, and BUA Cement. After there, they distribute the cement to merchants, building sites, and individual clients, frequently handling logistical difficulties like storage and transportation.

In Nigeria, the cement industry is characterized by both potential and difficulties. On the one hand, continuous infrastructure projects, home building, and commercial developments contribute to the increasing demand for cement. For cement vendors, this demand guarantees a stable market that offers chances for financial gain and company expansion. Conversely, vendors of cement have a range of difficulties, such as variations in the cost of cement, rivalry from other vendors, and problems pertaining to the genuineness and quality of the product. Furthermore, certain cement selling businesses may face difficulties with regulations and compliance because to their informal nature, especially with regard to licensing and taxes.

Gender dynamics within the cement selling business in Nigeria also calls for more attention as there are increasing number of women in the business over the years. Although men may have historically dominated this industry, the number of women working as retailers and entrepreneurs is increasing over the years (Nwakanma, 2021). One major reason for this is the growing initiatives aimed at empowering women in the cement sales sector and advancing gender equality. These include programs that give access to funding, training, and business support services (Nwakanma, 2021). In Nigeria, the dynamics of gender among cement vendors are a reflection of larger societal trends in resource access and economic engagement. Though more general studies on entrepreneurship and informal commerce shed light on the gender distribution of different economic sectors, there is a dearth of research that specifically addresses the gender breakdown of cement vendors in Nigeria.

Men have historically been more visible when it comes to selling cement, especially in formal retail establishments and larger-scale distribution networks. This dominance could be explained by things like easier access to financing, networks of business associates, and cultural norms that support male entrepreneurship (Ibrahim & Bala, 2020). According to Nwabueze and Olawepo (2018), women entrepreneurs in Nigeria have been seen to participate in a range of economic activities, such as trade and retailing, despite frequently encountering obstacles such restricted access to capital and market networks. Efforts to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in Nigeria have also led to initiatives aimed at supporting female entrepreneurs, including those involved in cement selling. It is against this background that this article examines gender patterns of participation cement business in Ibadan, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research design was used in executing this research. Exploratory research design was adopted because of the nature of this research which is very new and largely uncovered hitherto in the literature. Exploratory research design is very appropriate for relatively unexplored or under-explored social realities like the interfaces of gender and cement business in Ibadan. The research setting of this study was Ibadan metropolis. Ibadan metropolis was selected because of its practical blend

of traditionality and modernity (Akanle, Adesina and Fakolujo, 2017) which is important for understanding salient gender nuances and balance in Small Medium and Micro enterprises of cement. Unlike Lagos, for instance, Ibadan retains its traditional forces in gender relations which are vital for the objectives of this study.

Hence, based on transect walk and reconnaissance conducted for this study, Ibadan is a major cement hub in Nigeria. For instance, the three largest cement manufacturing companies in Africa are Dangote Cement, BUA and Lafarge and they all have significant presence and business interest in Ibadan making Ibadan very relevant as the research setting. Definitive clusters of cement sales also exist in Ibadan and gender activities are observable as males and females are involved in the business in city. Hence, primary locations are sociocultural and business contexts of the cement concentrations in the metropolis. Targeted and purposively selected areas in the metropolis, based on transect walk and reconnaissance visits to the field are; Bodija Ojurin, Eleyele, Moniya, Ajibode-Laniba axis, Are, Agbowo, Jericho and Ologun Eru.

The population of the study included female and male sellers of cement in Ibadan metropolis. The inclusion criteria were sellers of cement with active engagement in the business for not less than five years. The five years benchmark was selected based on transect walks and reconnaissance engagements at the research settings during which five years was found to be an average year of active involvement to be able to provide relevant data as research participants. Sampling for this study was purposive. The sampling was informed by the need to target research participants on purpose. Target samples for the research were those who met the inclusion criteria, who had relevant knowledge, who were willing to participate in the study, and were available. Non-probability sampling technique was therefore used for the study. Both primary and secondary data were gathered for the study. Secondary data was gathered through journal articles, books, chapters in books and reliable online sources. For primary data, purely qualitative method of data collection was adopted for this study. Thus, participant observation, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and In-depth Interviews (IDIs). The study conducted 44 IDI sessions with cement sellers and two KIIs with sales representatives of Dangote cement and Lafarge. Participant observation was for six months. Participants gave consent and voluntarily participated in the study. The numbers of participants per location in Ibadan is below.

Table 1. Locational IDIs distribution of cement sellers in Ibadan

S/n	Location	No. of IDIs
1	Bodija	7
2	Eleyele	3
3	Moniya	15
4	Ajibode-Laniba	3
5	Ologun Eru	2
6	Ojurin	6
7	Are	1
8	Agbowo	1
9	Jericho	6
	Total	44 Session
10	KIIs	2 Sessions

A total of 46 interview sessions were organised with interviewees. It is noteworthy that the 44 KII sessions and two KII sessions were based on Point of Saturation (PoS) framework in non-probabilistic sampling. In other words, the interviews were terminated when PoS was reached. NVivo 15 Pro Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used for data analysis. Content analysis and Thematic analysis were adopted in interpreting and presenting the data. Global best practices in research ethics were observed throughout the research process. Ethical principles observed included; Informed Consent, anonymity, non-

maleficence, beneficence, right of withdrawal, freedom from harm, non-inducement and non-coercion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive and thematic analyses of interview data were conducted. The descriptive analysis was used for the demographics data of the participants and presented in Table. The thematic analysis of interview data led to identification, generation and analysis of patterns, codes or/and specific themes for the study. The results are presented thematically through word cloud analysis, diagrams, hierarchical charts, matrix coding queries, word trees, and visualisations. The thematic analysis led to the finding of different themes in the study of gender and power balance among cement sellers in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Table. 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the interviewees

Variable		Frequency	Percentage %
Community	Bodija	7	15.9
	Moniya	15	34.1
	Ojurin	6	13.6
	Jericho	6	13.6
	Are	1	2.3
	Agbowo	1	2.3
	Ajibola Laniba	3	6.8
	Ologun Eru	2	4.5
	Eleyele	3	6.8
Gender	Male	28	63.6
	Female	16	36.4
Age	21-30	7	16.1
	31-40	11	25.3
	41-50	18	41.4
	51-60	5	11.5
	61-70	2	4.6
	71-80	1	2.3
Qualification	Primary	2	4.5
	SSCE	26	59.1
	ND	3	6.8
	HND	5	11.4
	B.Sc	4	9.1
	M.Sc	3	6.8
Religion	PGD	1	2.3
	Christianity	20	45.5
	Muslim	24	54.5
Ethnicity	Yoruba	42	95.5
	Igbo	2	4.5
Business Category	Distributor	2	4.5
	Retailer	40	92
	Sales Rep.	2	4.5
Interviews	IDIs	44	
	KIIs	2	
Total		46	100

This table presents the socio-demographic characteristics of 46 respondents. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents provide valuable insights into their backgrounds and business roles within the cement-selling industry in Ibadan. Respondents were drawn from various communities within Ibadan metropolis. Moniya had the highest representation (34.1%), followed by Bodija (15.9%), Ojurin (13.6%), and Jericho (13.6%). Other communities, such as Ajibola Laniba (6.8%), Eleyele (6.8%), Ologun Eru (4.5%), Are (2.3%), and Agbowo (2.3%), had lower representations. This diverse spread highlights the geographic inclusiveness of the study.

Regarding gender distribution, males constituted the majority (63.6%), while females accounted for 36.4%. This reflects the male-dominated nature of the cement business, consistent with the study's findings. Respondents ranged widely in age, with the majority falling within the 41-50 age group (41.4%). Other age groups represented include 31-40 years (25.3%), 21-30 years (16.1%), 51-60 years (11.5%), and smaller proportions in the 61-70 years (4.6%) and 71-80 years (2.3%) brackets. Educational qualifications varied, with most respondents possessing SSCE (59.1%). Others had ND (6.8%), HND (11.4%), B.Sc (9.1%), M.Sc (6.8%), Primary education (4.5%), and PGD (2.3%). The prevalence of secondary-level education suggests that starting or entry into the cement business may not require advanced educational qualifications.

The majority of respondents identified as Muslims (54.5%), while Christians made up 45.5%. In terms of ethnicity, the Yoruba ethnic group dominated the sample (95.5%), with only a small percentage of Igbo respondents (4.5%). This aligns with Ibadan's cultural and demographic composition, being a Yoruba-majority city. The majority of participants were retailers (92%), followed by distributors (4.5%), and a minimal representation of sales representatives (4.5%).

The Pattern of Participation of Men and Women in Cement Business

The results from the IDI interviews showed that various patterns of men and women in cement business exist among participants in Ibadan, Oyo State. The most prominent theme relating to this objective (pattern of men and women) is "*Male domination*". This shows that most cement sellers are men with few women. Most participants expressed that men majorly dominate the business. There are other themes that show the pattern of gender in cement business in Ibadan. These are; *Emerging female sellers*, *Equal pattern*, *Women domination*, *Women's skills and administrative role*, and the theme *Reasons for male domination*.

A dominant theme emerging from the analysis is "Male domination," which highlights that men overwhelmingly control the cement business, with women representing only a small fraction of participants. Most respondents emphasized that the industry is traditionally male-dominated, often attributing this to societal norms and perceptions of gender roles. This theme shows the disparity in gender representation within the sector, reinforcing the notion that cement trading is widely considered a masculine enterprise. However, other patterns also emerged, indicating some shifts in the gender dynamics of the business. The theme "Emerging female sellers" suggests a growing presence of women venturing into the trade, challenging the conventional male dominance. Additionally, some participants identified an "Equal pattern," where men and women participate at comparable levels in specific contexts. Interestingly, the theme "Women domination" surfaced in a few instances, indicating scenarios where women were leading in specific niches of the cement business. Other themes, such as "Women's skills and administrative role," shed light on how women are contributing through organizational and managerial functions, complementing men's roles in the trade. The theme "Reasons for male domination" further contextualizes the findings by detailing the factors—cultural, economic, or physical—that perpetuate male dominance in the industry. Together, these themes illustrate the evolving but predominantly gendered landscape of the cement business in Ibadan.

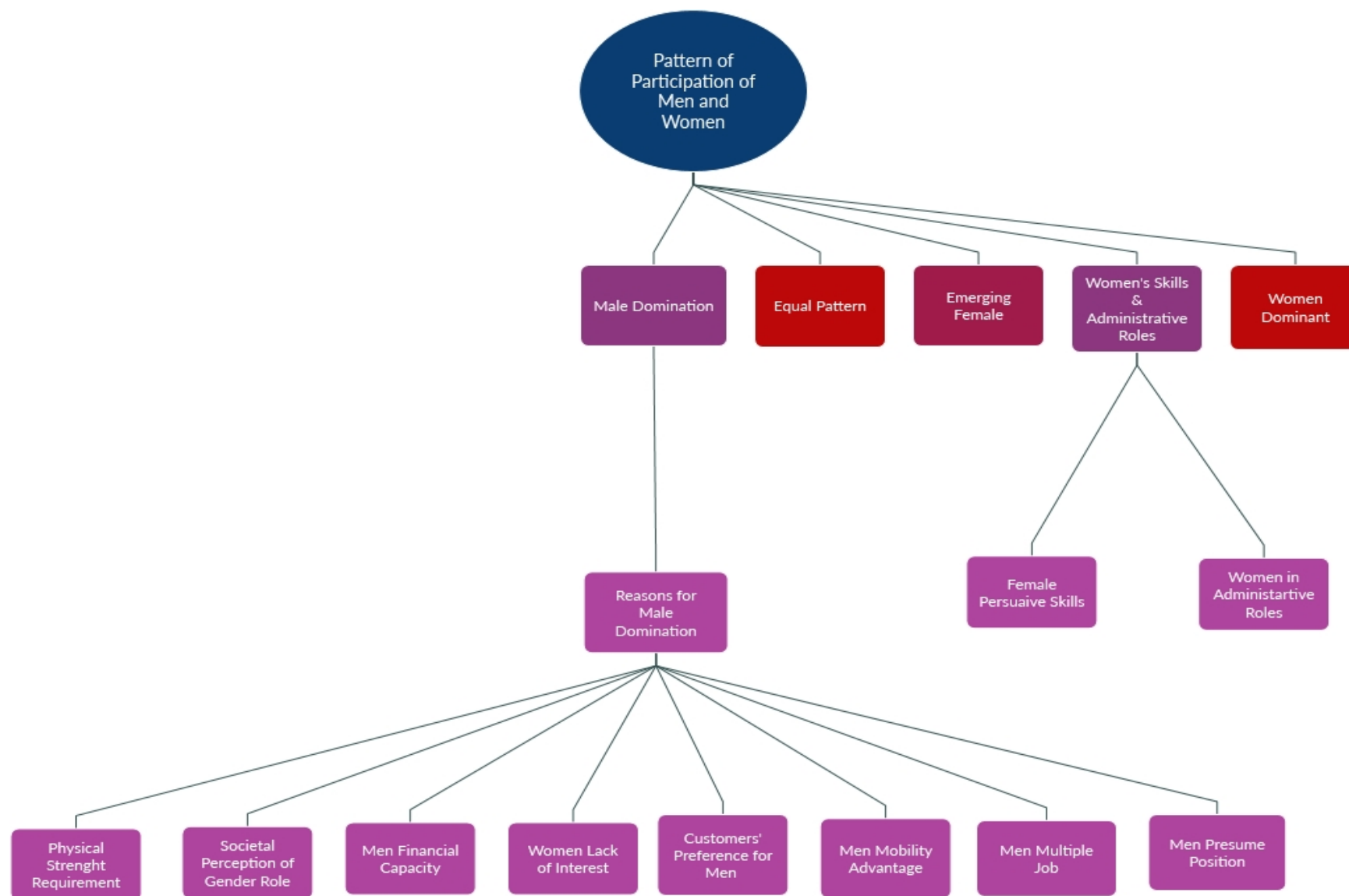


Figure 1: *Mind Map showing the pattern of men and women cement business* (Source: fieldwork, 2024)

Male Domination

The sub theme "Male domination" in the cement business shows the overwhelming presence of men across various levels of the trade in Ibadan, as expressed by the participants. Many respondents consistently pointed out that men predominantly control the business, with women's involvement being minimal or supplementary. This is expressed thus:

"(Laughs) this business is mostly dominated by men though we also have women in this business but not compared to the number of men in this business (IDI9/Male/46/MSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

"This business is dominated by men though we have women as sales representatives or say sales person but the number of men in this business is more than women in Ibadan. Though there are women in this business but men are more". (IDI10/Male/68/HND/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

"In my own experience here in Ibadan, I don't know of other places oo, but here in Ibadan we have men in this business than we have women in this business." (IDI12/Male/39/PGD/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

"We have a higher number of men dealing in cement business than we have women. My husband owns this business but I just sit to attend and oversee for him because he is not around. Men dominate cement business". (IDI13/Female/35/HND/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Other participants acknowledged the presence of women in the cement business but consistently emphasized that men significantly outnumber them, dominating various aspects of the trade and maintaining a stronger presence across all levels of operation:

"Hmmm. I think from start it is mainly men that are plenty in this business, it is not that women are not in this business because ten (10) people are selling cement you will see maybe one (1) or two (2) women only. From start it was dominated by men" (IDI14/Male/50/ND/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

"The male are dominant in the business. Although my outlet is owned by a female. I think in this area, this is the only outlet owned by a female or even doing a business of this nature. To my knowledge, you will find males in most of the levels in the business, be it distributor, wholesaler, retailer, etc." (IDI30/Female/24/ND/Retailer/Laniba/2024)

"Men are more women are more. Men and women are into the business. But the men are dominant. One can really say. Both men and women are involved but men slightly dominate." (IDI32/Female/60/SSCE/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

When participants were asked to describe the distribution of men and women across different levels or phases of the cement business, they consistently emphasized male dominance at every stage. Whether in distributorship, wholesale, or retail, men were identified as the majority, with women playing minimal or supportive roles. This observation highlights a significant gender disparity in the industry, as supported by the table below, which provides a detailed breakdown of these distributions.

Some participants used number to describe the gender proportion across the levels of the business. The average result is below:

Table 3: Gender proportion by level in the cement value chain according to an interviewee

Levels	Gender Proportion	
	Men (%)	Women (%)
Manufacturing/production	90	10
Major distributorship	75	25
Sub-distributorship	85	15
Retailing	65	35
Sales representation	70	30

Source: Field study (2024)

While prevalently some participants describe the proportion across the levels of the business in the table using words format. Some participants' submissions are below:

Table 4: Gender proportion by level in the cement value according to an interviewee

LEVELS	Gender Proportion	
	MEN	WOMEN
Manufacturing/production	There are only men here	No women
Major distributorship	Mostly men	Few women
Sub-distributor	Mostly men	Few women
Retailing	Mostly men	Few women

(IDI3/Male/44/BSC/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

This is also supported with the following excerpts from the interviews:

"The male are dominant in the business... The retailers dominate and they are basically male. They are more than the distributors. We have about two key distributors in Moniya axis who are also male."

(IDI37/Female/43/BSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

"There are more men than women in the business. The men are more at every level be it distributorship, retailing, or others. Some of these men might even decide to set up a business or give out one of their outlet to their wife reason being that they do not want her to remain just a full house wife. Some of these women might even sell drink alongside the business."

(IDI40/Male/74/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

Reasons for male domination

There are several reasons for the dominance of men in the cement business, as highlighted in the interviews. Participants identified factors such as the *physical strength* required for handling cement products, societal perceptions of gender roles that favour men in such trades, and men's generally stronger *financial capacity* to invest in the business. Other reasons included *women's lack of interest in the field*, *customer preferences for male sellers*, and *men's mobility advantage*, which enables them to handle logistical demands. Additionally, *men often engage in multiple jobs*, leveraging the cement business as a side hustle, while their presumed authority and leadership position in society further solidify their dominance. The most prominent reasons are elaborated below:

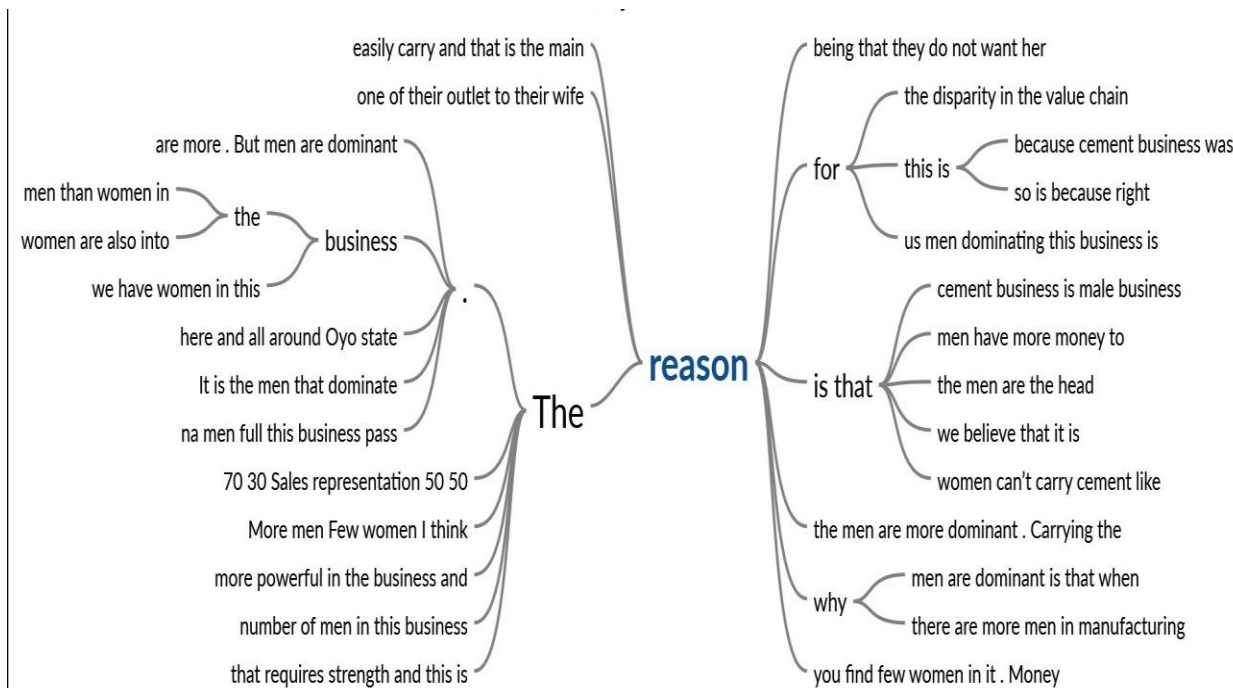


Figure 2: The Sub-theme Word Tree of Reasons for Male Domination (Source: Field study, 2024)

The Nvivo 15 word tree shown in the image outlines the interconnection of words used by the participants during the interviews to highlight the various reasons provided to explain male domination in the cement business. The central node, "The reason," branches out to phrases emphasizing factors such as the physical strength required for the business, which is often viewed as a domain for men. Multiple sub-nodes mention that men dominate the sector because they are believed to have more financial resources, the ability to carry heavy cement bags, and better logistical capabilities. Some participants also highlighted cultural views, asserting that cement trading is a male business, and women are perceived as less capable in handling the physical demands. Other reasons included a perceived disparity in the number of men versus women in the business, with some stating that the sector has a larger number of men involved in manufacturing and distribution, which reinforces their dominance. The word tree emphasizes the combination of physical, financial, and cultural reasons contributing to male dominance in the business.

Physical strength requirement

The subtheme "Physical strength requirement" highlights the perception that the cement business is male-dominated due to the physical demands associated with it. Participants noted that activities such as carrying heavy cement bags require significant strength, which many view as beyond women's capability. This belief reinforces the idea that cement trading is a "heavy job" unsuitable for women. This is highlighted thus:

"There are more men in this business than women because this business requires strength (which is carrying of the cement bags when customer buys it) and women cannot do that. Though there are women who own this cement business but there are more men than women in this business. Men dominate this cement business because cement business was seen as heavy job for women. Men could handle heavy things and women are not capable to handle. I think the reason why there are more men in manufacturing and production is because it's a physically demanding job that requires a lot of manual labor."

(IDI11/Male/46/BSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

"The reason is that women can't carry cement like men. Even taking the cement from their shops to where bikes or cars will park is something they find difficult to do. Although women are also in the business because they too have money to run such business, they control their money, and it less stressful for them but it is not as much as the men."

(IDI40/Male/74/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

Another participants highlighted that the lack of physical strength to move cement from the shop to a customer's vehicle can discourage buyers from patronizing women-owned outlets. They explained that customers are more likely to choose shops managed by men, as men can immediately load cement into vehicles without requiring additional assistance. In contrast, women often need to hire help for such tasks, which can delay service and inconvenience customers. This scenario shows how physical labour demands create a competitive advantage for men, and reinforcing male dominance in the cement business:

"Because carrying of cement from the shop to deliver for the client needs strength which a woman does not have. Like I earlier told you, it is because men have the energy to carry cement bag, because from the start this business involves energy and women cannot do this. Because if a customer comes with a vehicle now and there are two shops selling cement beside each other the person will go to the shop that a man is selling because the man will be able to carry the cement inside his car for him whereas the woman will not have the strength to carry it whereas the woman will have to go out and look for someone who will carry the cement into the customer car."

(IDI1/Male/57/HND/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

"The reason why men are dominant is that when this cement is bought and they need you to carry the cement to the road where the customer's vehicle is parked, it might be very difficult for them to do so. I for instance, even as old as I am, if I can still carry a bag of cement, although some customers might reject my request if helping them carry the cement. It is a business that requires strength and this is the reason you find few women in it." **(IDI40/Male/74/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)**

Another participant expressed in support that:

"Men have more ability to carry cement bags, while women most of the time book load carriers to help them out and sometimes these load carriers might not be readily available, slowing down their performance of their business in a way. This made men gain dominance."

(IDI17/Female/39/SSCE/Retailer/Ojurin/2024)

During the interview, a male participant (Picture 4.1) emphasized that women lack the physical strength required for the cement business, which limits their participation. He pointed out that while women excel in customer relations, such as engaging and interacting effectively with customers, they struggle with the physically demanding aspects, such as lifting and transporting cement. This disparity in physical capability, according to him, significantly contributes to the lower percentage of women involved in the business, highlighting the gendered division of roles within the industry:

"Women don't have strength for cement business. Women can only talk and interact with customers, but when it comes to strength, women cannot"

carry cement and this is the cause for the disparity in the percentage of women in this business” (IDI19/Male/41/SSCE/ Retailer/Bodija//2024)

The business is seen as a business that only strong people can do. Participants noted that many women are unable to lift even half a bag of cement, let alone a full bag, which discourages their involvement. This reinforces the belief that only physically strong individuals, typically men, are suited for the trade. As a result, the demanding nature of the work continues to favour male dominance, limiting women’s participation in the business.

“The reason is that we believe that it is anyone who is strong and capable of carrying a bag of cement that is the kind of person that fits the business. Meanwhile, some ladies cannot carry a bag of cement, even half bag they can carry talk more of a bag. That is why we believe that anyone who can carry what is heavy can get involved in the business. This is why men are dominant.” (IDI38/Male/38/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

Societal Perceptions of Gender Roles

The societal perception of gender roles significantly influences the participation of men and women in the cement business. Traditionally, the trade is viewed as unsuitable for women, aligning more with societal expectations that associate physically demanding jobs with men. This belief discourages women from venturing into the business, as it is culturally framed as a "man's job." Participants emphasized that this perception contributes to the overwhelming male dominance in the industry, reinforcing existing gender stereotypes and limiting women's opportunities in the sector.

“People believed cement business was not for a woman that’s why there is more men in this business than there are women” (IDI5/Male/44/MSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

“The reason for this is because cement business was seen as business men should do, and not women business” (IDI6/Male/55/HND/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

“I will not encourage having women in the business because of the tribe I came from (Hausa), I believe women should stay at home taking care of the children rather than working where men are dominated.” (IDI20/Male/36/SSCE/Retailer/Ojurin//2024)

A participant made a general statement and assert that everyone have the perception that the business is for men. The participant expressed thus:

“I believe that everyone knows the cement business is predominantly for men. It's widely recognized that men dominate this industry.” (IDI28/Male/45/SSCE/Retailer/Jericho/2024)

Men Financial Capacity

The financial capacity of men is another factor contributing to their dominance in the cement business. Participants in the interviews noted that men generally have more financial resources, which allows them to invest in and sustain the business. This financial advantage enables men to take on larger roles, such as owning distribution outlets or purchasing bulk cement, which women may find difficult due to limited access to capital. As participant explained, men’s greater financial power positions them as the primary players in the cement industry, reinforcing their dominance. This opinion is supported thus:

“Men have more money and they are more involved because of the capital they have. Men are more powerful in the business and the reason is that

men have more money to do this business than women”
(IDI18/Male/44/SSCE/Retailer/Jericho/2024)

This was also supported by another participant, thus:

“Men are powerful in this business, because which woman go fit 3million or more to buy trucks of cement”
(IDI3/Male/44/BSC/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Another participant supported this assertion and stated that men can request loans without fear which contributes to an increase in their wealth for the business:

“What accounted for the differential participation is that most men have more money compared to women, this gave them an advantage over women and that is why you can see them in all the value chain. Also, men can collect loans without fear and for you to be fully involved in this business you need a lot of money”
(IDI15/Female/45/SSCE/Retailer/Ojurin/2024)

Men’s Mobility Advantage

From the interview, it is also emphasized that *men’s mobility advantage* enables them to handle logistical demands of the cement business.

“Men have the strength to walk around and look for construction sites or new sites where he will meet people who need cement for building but a woman does not have such strength to walk around to look for sites. Because, cement business is not for women because a woman will not be able to do what men do in this business like moving up and down to check for site.” **(IDI3/Male/44/BSC/Retailer/Bodija/2024)**

A male participant highlighted that men dominate the cement business partly because they can easily use motorbikes to navigate around and deliver cement to construction sites. This mobility advantage allows them to quickly reach various locations, making their operations more efficient. The ability to move freely and deliver cement on-site gives men a logistical edge over women, who may face greater challenges in terms of transportation. This flexibility in movement contributes to the higher number of men in the business, as it enables them to serve a wider range of customers:

“Another factor that help the men is that they have connections through easy movement around. When men for instance take their bikes and move around their community, advertising their business to people at new sites and telling them that he would help bring the cement quickly as soon as they order, it becomes an advantage for them. But for the women, they cannot enter different sites. Even they even do that with their cars, they might not be able to use their cars to enter sites where new projects are ongoing because they cannot ride a bike.”
(IDI41/Male/28/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

Another male cement retailer supported this assertion by expressing how easy mobility has helped him in the business to have connection with engineers and building contractors.

“Though there are women in this business but men are more because they are able to go out and source for sites so the people can patronize them. As you can see (Picture 4.3), I want to go and deliver cement now for contractor at the site.”
(IDI10/Male/68/HND/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

Women Lack of interest

The lack of interest among women is another significant subtheme that contributes to their underrepresentation in the cement business. Participants noted that many women simply do not find the cement trade appealing or suitable for them, which results in fewer women pursuing opportunities in the business. This lack of interest is may often tie to societal expectations and traditional gender roles, which discourage women from engaging in businesses perceived as physically demanding or outside the domestic sphere. As a result, the number of women in the cement business remains significantly lower compared to men, as expressed by some participants. This is expressed by the participant thus:

“Women are not too many in this business as men. I think this is as a result of women not having interest in it, because if they have interest they would be many in all the different level”
(IDI13/Female/35/HND/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

“Maybe, it is because they (women) may not have interest in it or do not want to but I also know this job would be demanding more time which is suitable for a woman.”
(IDI5/Male/44/MSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

“Maybe it is because women have not picked interest in this business and men have interest.”
(IDI8/Female/38/SSCE/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

“We naturally see few women in this business. I think this is as a result of women not having interest in it, because if they have interest they would be many in all the different level. Women don’t like to dive into something that is stressful and the contractors are mostly men”
(IDI27/Female/45/SSCE/Retailer/Jericho//2024)

Customers’ Preference for Men

Notably, Customer preference for male sellers is another factor contributing to the dominance of men in the cement business. Some participants noted that customers often choose to buy from male-owned shops, particularly when they arrive with a vehicle to transport the cement. The belief that men are more capable of handling the physical demands, such as loading cement into a vehicle, influences customer decisions. As one participant explained, customers are more likely to favour the shop run by a man, reinforcing the gender disparity in the business.

“If a customer comes with a vehicle now and there are two shops selling cement beside each other the person will go to the shop that a man is selling”
(IDI1/Male/57/HND/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Another participant linked customer’s preference to women inability to carry cement. This is shown to cause customers to go to outlet that have men rather women:

“Carrying the goods is an issue with female. For instance, a customer who has once experienced such issue with a female seller might not want to go back there because the seller might not be able to carry the goods.”
(IDI37/Female/43/BSC/Retailer/Moniya/2024)

“Sometimes, if customers come they would want to buy from the males because they know they can carry it. I, for instance, do carry cement, but it affects my health though.”
(IDI33/Female/30/SSCE/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Emerging Female Participation in the Business

The cement business is expressed to have a new pattern or wave of gender according to some participants. Emerging female participation in the cement business has been observed as a new trend, according to some participants. While men still dominate the industry, there is a noticeable increase in the number of women becoming involved in selling cement. These women often leverage their strong interpersonal skills to attract and engage customers, which sets them apart in a traditionally male-dominated sector. This shift indicates a gradual change in the gender dynamics of the cement business, with women slowly carving out a space for themselves despite the challenges. It is stated thus:

"Men are many, but currently women are coming into the business"
(IDI7/Female/45/MSC/Distributor/Moniya/2024)

"There is no gender inequality in this business, maybe there is in other business because in this business we have 2 women who are major distributor and one other trucks that delivers cement to us a woman drives the truck so if there is any gender inequality we will not be seeing women at this places, so there is no gender inequality in this business and in the association we join" (IDI12/Male/39/PGD/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

"Hmmm.. I don't know at all, but nowadays women sell cement more than men" (IDI11/Male/57/HND/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Equal Pattern

The interviews revealed that, for some participants, there is an equal representation of men and women in the cement selling business in Ibadan. These participants noted that both genders are equally involved in the trade, with men and women sharing similar roles in selling cement. This perspective suggests that, in certain areas, women are becoming more active participants, challenging the traditional gender norms that typically associated cement selling with men. These participants highlighted the growing involvement of women, indicating a shift toward a more balanced gender distribution in the business. Some participant stated thus:

"There is equal representation in the selling of cement in Ibadan"
(IDI22/Female/42/SSCE/Retailer/Ojurin/2024)

"We have equal involvement of men and women in this business, but I don't know much about the dominance"
(IDI25/Female/43/SSCE/Retailer/Jericho/2024)

"We have equal gender in cement business. It depends on where and how we get the cement we sell. Some sources are cheap while some are expensive. Customer relations and character are the factors that determine the performance"
(IDI26/Male/39/SSCE/Retailer/Jericho/2024)

"Both male and female are involved in the business. After my shop, if you move forward a bit, you will find another woman who sells cement, and there is another woman at the extreme that also sells."
(IDI29/Male/50/SSCE/Retailer/Laniba/2024)

However, some participants expressed that women are now becoming more dominant in the business. This is expressed thus:

"The women dominate in this area. In many places here, women are found selling cement. In Ibadan generally, I can't really say. Both are involved, it

depends on the area to determine which is more. Basically, most of them are retired public officers who invest with their gratuity. Most of the women do not want to seat at home. So they would have to come out to sell their market. To keep them busy, seating at home idle can affect their health”
(IDI36/Male/30/BSC/Sales Rep./Ologuneru/2024)

“The women are dominant in the business. Because I feel the business is women’s business, men are only attaching themselves. Men too are present but not as much as women”
(IDI33/Female/30/SSCE/Retailer/Bodija/2024)

Another participant explained that the male-female domination in the cement business varies depending on the location within Ibadan. They observed that in some areas, women are more prevalent, while in others, men dominate. However, the participant noted that women are slightly more represented in certain areas. It is pointed out that both men and women, especially older individuals, often turn to the cement business when other opportunities are scarce, highlighting that the business is increasingly seen as a viable option for people of both genders in different locations. The participant expressed thus:

“It dynamic. In some areas women are more, in some, men are more. But the women are slightly more. If you look at it, both men and women who are old go for this kind of business because when they see that they have no other way.”

(IDI35/Male/67/Primary/Retailer/Ologuneru/2024)

The findings from objective one of this study reveal that male domination is the most prominent pattern in the cement business in Ibadan. The interviews indicated that men overwhelmingly control various aspects of the trade, including manufacturing, distribution, wholesale, and retail. Women, although present, are few and often hold supportive roles. The majority of participants emphasized that societal perceptions, such as the belief that cement trading requires physical strength, contribute significantly to this gender disparity. The physically demanding nature of the business, such as handling and transporting heavy cement bags, is commonly seen as a job suited for men, further reinforcing their dominance in the sector. However, some emerging trends suggest a shift in these gender dynamics. While the male dominance remains significant, themes such as "Emerging female sellers" and "Women’s skills and administrative role" highlight the growing involvement of women, particularly in managerial and administrative capacities. Despite this, women still face considerable challenges, including limited financial resources and less mobility compared to their male counterparts, which hinder their full participation in the business. The interviews also pointed out that men’s financial capacity and logistical advantages, such as mobility for delivery and site visits, enable them to maintain a competitive edge, thus continuing to dominate the industry.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed significant gendered patterns of participation in the cement business within Ibadan, Oyo State. The overarching theme, "Male domination," highlights the predominance of men across various levels of the trade. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that men dominate the industry, attributing this to societal norms, physical strength requirements, and financial capacity. This theme reinforces the perception that cement trading is culturally viewed as a male-oriented enterprise, supported by societal expectations and traditional gender roles. Despite male dominance, emerging shifts in gender dynamics were identified. The theme "Emerging female sellers" points to a growing number of women entering the business. These women, though still a minority, are gradually challenging traditional norms and contributing to the diversification of the sector. A few participants also reported instances of "Women domination" in

specific niches, where women have taken on leadership or ownership roles, though these cases remain relatively rare. This indicates a slow but notable transformation in the traditionally male-dominated business landscape.

The study additionally explores into the reasons behind male dominance, such as the physical strength needed to handle cement products. Many participants underlined that hauling heavy cement sacks is considered beyond the capabilities of most women. As it is pointed out, "Cement business requires strength, which many believe women lack". This belief often discourages women from participating in physically demanding roles and creates a competitive advantage for men, who can more efficiently meet the logistical demands of the trade. Customers are reportedly more likely to patronize male sellers due to their ability to provide immediate assistance, such as loading cement into vehicles. Societal perceptions of gender roles also play a crucial part in sustaining male dominance. Traditional norms discourage women from venturing into the cement business, framing it as unsuitable for their gender.

These stereotypes limit women's opportunities in the sector and reinforce existing disparities. Another contributing factor is men's financial capacity, which positions them as dominant players in the industry. Participants highlighted that men generally have greater access to capital, allowing them to invest in large-scale operations, such as distributorships and bulk purchases. This financial advantage reinforces men's control over the value chain and limits women's ability to compete effectively in the sector. Men's mobility advantage further strengthens their dominance in the cement business. Participants noted that men are more likely to engage in the physical and logistical demands of the trade, such as sourcing clients and transporting goods. This mobility allows men to expand their networks and customers, consolidating their presence in the industry.

The participation of men and women in the cement business in Ibadan Metropolis reveals a gendered pattern, with men dominating the industry due to various socio-cultural and structural factors. According to research, cultural perceptions that link male-dominated businesses to physical stamina and strength are frequently linked to male domination in these fields (Campuzano, 2019; Reid et al., 2018). Men have an inherent advantage in the cement industry due to the physical challenges of lifting and moving big cement sacks, which are historically seen as masculine tasks by society. The involvement of women in important operational jobs within the industry is restricted by this notion. Although women's participation is gradually increasing in cement business, it remains limited to specific niches, often administrative or customer service-related according to the study, within the business.

According to Ajiva et al. (2024), women in male-dominated industries frequently confront cultural and financial barriers that limit their ability to grow their businesses. Women in the cement business are mostly involved in support tasks, with men handling the primary trading and logistical duties. This division of labour mirrors larger gender disparities in economic participation, in which women face restrictions that limit their access to resources and opportunities. Furthermore, mobility challenges and societal expectations contribute to masculine domination. Men are frequently more mobile, aggressively pursuing consumers and negotiating sales on building sites, which women find less accessible due to cultural and safety concerns. This disparity shows the convergence of gender roles and societal conventions, which act as systemic barriers to women's participation in male-dominated occupations.

In the cement business, women's opportunities to actively participate in the trade are limited due to the physical difficulties of handling heavy materials and the idea that construction-related jobs are masculine. As seen in the cement industry, where women are frequently restricted to administrative positions or small-scale trading, this emphasizes how unequal access to resources, capital, and social networks sustains these inequities. Structural and cultural constraints make it even more difficult for women to enter the cement business (Eagly, 1987).

Conclusion

The findings reveal a dominant pattern of male participation, emphasising "Male domination" as a recurring theme. While men overwhelmingly control the industry, women are emerging as participants, with some engaging in administrative roles or showing dominance in specific niches. Factors such as cultural norms and physical demands contribute to the male-dominated landscape, although a growing number of women are beginning to challenge these traditional boundaries. The findings illustrate the evolving but persistently gendered nature of the cement business, highlighting both challenges and shifts in participation patterns. The cement business in Ibadan remains predominantly male-dominated, with societal norms and physical demands contributing to this pattern. However, the emergence of female participants signals a gradual shift, as women increasingly venture into the sector, taking on administrative and leadership roles.

These shifts indicate potential changes in traditional gender dynamics, albeit within a broader framework still largely defined by male dominance. The male-dominated nature of the cement business stems from entrenched societal norms and perceptions of gender roles. Stakeholders, including trade associations and government agencies, should organize gender sensitization programs to challenge these norms. Awareness campaigns emphasizing the capability of women in the cement industry can encourage greater participation and acceptance of women in the sector. Highlighting success stories of women in the trade could inspire more females to venture into this business. This study contributes significantly to the growing body of knowledge on gender dynamics in business, particularly within male-dominated industries in urban Nigeria. By focusing on a sector rarely explored in academic literature, the study offers fresh insights into how traditional gender roles and societal norms influence participation, power relations, and access to resources in the cement business.

Acknowledgements

Special appreciation goes to Paulen Smit Fellowship for Gender Studies, University of California, United States of America for the generous support provided for the research/doctoral programme from which this article was produced. We also appreciate our research participants who took time out of their very busy schedules to take part in the interviews. Thank you very much.

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