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Developmental Paper: An Analysis of How Mncs Manage Diversity to Foster Gender Equality in the Workplace – A Nigerian Perspective

Gendered Embodiment and Identities within Multinational Organizations in
Nigeria: A Case of Female Engineers.



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Abstract

In this qualitative study, we draw upon the works of Sandra Harding's Feminist Standpoint Theory and Joan Acker work on Hierarchies, Jobs, and Bodies. We explore the lived experiences of female engineers working in multinational organisations in Nigeria, to understand how they interpret gendered embodiment and then we analyse organisational marginalisation vs gender equality initiatives of two MNCs in Nigeria. The findings show that the most women consider their gendered embodiment in relation to their reproductive functions, attitudes, feelings and responsibilities influenced by personal values, culture and religion. Likewise, these organisations are male dominated especially at the top management level and technical roles and this creates a perception of bias and subtle discrimination against the female engineers who are the minority. Concurrently, the evidence of gender imbalance and the lack of gender equality amongst the workforce drives the organisations to implement interventions for gender equality and foster the advancement of more female engineers in the workplace.

Key words: Gendered Embodiment, Identity, Gender Equality, Nigeria

Introduction

In this study, we examine how two multinational organisations in Nigeria, marginalises qualities and aspects of embodiment associated with women vs being an agency for gender equality. In order to understand how these multinational organisations marginalises in relation to gender embodiment, we aim to explore how female engineers interpret gendered embodiment in the workplace. We can consider the human body, a medium that helps individuals explore and experience the world (Monaghan, 2002). Therefore, how an individual perceives his/her body can be dependent on social factors that influences these perceptions. These social factors include cultures, environment and even personality (traits). In light of this, women's bodies in organizations have been framed as challenging. For instance, Gatrell (2011; 2019) illustrates how the lack of recognizing the needs of breastfeeding mothers in order to provide flexible support even at work can be problematic. Similarly, Haynes (2012) in her work on '*Gender, Identity and the Body in Professional Services Firms*' argues that physical capital is significantly gendered in professional services firms, and this does have 'implications for equality and diversity in professional work' (p.491). Even though these problems have been highlighted, it largely represents the Global North (Monaghan, 2002; Oerton, 2004; Simpson and Pullen, 2018), creating an even more difficult situation where forms of embodiment is marginalised. Therefore, it is relevant to consider the multiplicity of embodied forms (Metcalf and Woodhams, 2012) and to explore bodily processes in cultural spaces like Africa. To this effect, we aim to understand how female engineers in two multinational organisations operating in Nigeria, interpret gendered embodiment and how these organisations marginalises qualities and aspects of embodiment associated with women vs their gender equality initiatives as an agency for gender and development.

In view of the prerequisite for gender equality, we explore the concerns around pay-gaps, low female labour force participation especially in engineering technical roles and senior management levels and the awareness of gender inequality as a reason for economic, social,

and political inefficiencies (Ross-Smith & Huppertz, 2010; Calkin, 2018). These gaps strengthen the discourse that promotes utilizing women as economic asset, educating, and empowering girls to produce profitable returns over time. This is because women are often recognised as marginal actors, either as victims of “underdeveloped” cultures, passive recipients of aid, or reproductive vessels for overpopulation (Calkin, 2018. pg 2). This indicates that girls and women are untapped human capital resources and are investment assets that can advance socio-economic growth likewise, needing protection against violence and harmful practices, and having access to reproductive health, general wellbeing. For instance, UNDP (2019) records that

‘Although there are more women than ever in the labour market, there are still large inequalities in some regions, with women systematically denied the same work rights as men. Sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, and discrimination in public office all remain huge barriers. Climate change and disasters continue to have a disproportionate effect on women and children, as do conflict and migration.’

Hence, in paying attention to gendered embodiment and partnerships between institutional agents for capacity building and projection of women voices, we use narrative analysis to examine how these women, as female engineers, perceive themselves in male dominated roles and the workplace. Concurrently, in exploring gender equality initiatives by two multinational organisations, we use content analysis to derive themes that show how these organisations act as an agency for gender equality and the in the same vein reveal the contradictions concerning marginalisation of female engineers. We examine the implementation of gender equality initiatives that align with the Sustainable Development goal 5. This emphasises how women voices are projected, and how these organisations eradicate forms of discrimination, violence and all harmful practices for women and girls, Ensuring that women generally have access to sexual health and safeguarding reproductive health and reproductive rights and identify the need for reform, equal rights to economic resources (Economic and Social Council, 2018). Although we explore gender equality initiatives in the workplace, which can be managerial, we argue that a development approach especially in an emerging market is a more relevant approach in addressing gender inequality in the workplace. Therefore, contributing new insights to gendered embodiment and gender equality. Consequently, the research questions are,

1. How do female engineers in multinational organisations, interpret gendered embodiment?
2. How do multinational organisations marginalise women in relation to gendered embodiment vs being an agency for gender equality?

Feminism, Gender Bodies and Inequality

We aim to understand how female engineers perceive gendered embodiment to explain organisational marginalisation vs its gender equality initiative. Hence, we explore the concept of gender and gendered embodiment and we highlight its significance in developing the discourse in this study. We take a feminist approach in understanding the concept of gendered embodiment with reference to what we aim to achieve. Consequently, as an introduction to engaging with a feminist approach, we refer to the fact that feminist studies broadly explore women issues from a biological, sociological and psychological positioning. This has led to

the eruption of various feminist standpoints (Buck and James, 2005) nonetheless; these standpoints primarily focus on gender. We highlight two main feminist perspectives in defining gender. These perspectives include gender as a sexual characteristic thereby describing gender as a 'biological endowment' (Grosser and Mood, 2017 p.325). Another perspective highlights gender as a social construct that positions women as subordinates to men (Grosser and Mood, 2017). The latter explores the relationship between the male and the female gender in relation to the economic, political and social empowerment of the female category.

However, scholars (Crawford et al., 2004; Schwarzkopf; Hearn, 2019) argue that exploring 'gender' can possibly take a broader approach due to the evolving social construct of society. In addition, McCall (2005) attributes this evolving construct of society to be because of gender intersecting with other social divisions. Nonetheless, for this study we focus on gender in the context of difference between the male and female social and sexual construct. Likewise, feminist studies that primarily buttress the empowerment of the female gender have discussed over the years, concerns of discrimination and differences between various social groups in society. Focusing on Africa, feminism in Africa has been described to be birth out of the experiences and conditions of colonialism, slavery, and patriarchy that seek to eliminate the intersecting nature of multiple forms of oppressions (Norwood, 2013). Although all contextual forms of feminism share the ambition to disarm patriarchal systems that prioritize men's interest and authority over women (Norwood, 2013), feminism in Africa has consciously taken an extremely heterogeneous approach. This is because, it exhibits marks of diverse colonial contexts and influence by multiple diversity dimensions (religion, ethnicity, culture, class, age), before being further shaped by an array of anti-colonial and nationalist movements (Mama, 2011).

Similarly, Norwood, (2013) indicates that although African women's experiences are geographically diverse, the commonality of their struggles expressed in varied experience of 'colonial subjugation', which refers to the economic, political, and cultural exploitation of a country by a foreign nation, unifies them in unique ways. Historically, many pre-colonial African societies had structures for female political involvement, through institutions such as queens or queen mothers and through women's associations and networks (Drew, 1995). Hence, Drew (1995) argues that the existence of colonialism brought about the destruction of these structures and established a male dominating political structure. Furthermore, Drew (1995) stresses that the perception of women withdrawing from leadership and political involvement aggravates the reality that male domination of politics has historically been and continues to be contested. Drew (1995) also highlights an outstanding aspect of female consciousness in many African societies. This is the association of motherhood with power, which dates from the pre-colonial and pre capitalist era.

Despite this assumption of associating motherhood with power, several African states still struggle with equal opportunities for both the men and women. In agreement with Drew (1995) argument that the social structures strongly promote male dominance which somewhat encourages discrimination against the women at the social, economic, political strata even within organisations. Nevertheless, in a bid to eliminate acts of discrimination and social injustice against women, the past couple of decades have seen the rise of interventions, debates aligned with the MDG s and now SDG goals to eradicate all forms of gender inequality and empower women (Durojaye, 2014). Consequently, we argue that engaging with the realities of

gendered embodiment from a context approach, facilitates the eradication of forms of gender inequality in the workplace.

Gendered Embodiment from a Feminist Lens

In defining gendered embodiment, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the body as having a vital role in representing and experiencing the world (Loots, 2006). Similarly, Haynes (2012) expresses in her work that embodiment ‘emphasizes the lived body of a subject who knows the world through bodily perception’ (p.493) which could be affirmative or undesirable. For instance, some debates (Velija et al, 2013; Bryant, & Garnham, 2014) about embodiment forms hinges on the notion that women are weak and vulnerable in comparison to their male counterparts. However, Velija et al (2013) in exploring the experiences of eleven females in the martial arts, highlight the perceptions of participants to reject the notion of women being weak and vulnerable as the body is flexible and women can build their bodies to a point of having robust resistance. This takes into consideration, expectations concerning how the feminine body should ‘look like’ acts as a form of pressure for women to place emphasis on ‘beauty and thinness’ (Velija et al, 2013). Following, Engdahl & Gelang (2019) in their study concerning expressions of gendered embodiment using mannequins, argue that embodiment also includes emotional and self-reflexive features, communicated by spoken or unspoken communication by others. Haynes (2012) draws on Bourdieu concept of embodiment as something of worth that carries symbolic importance with the ability to seek after and demonstrate power at various levels. Similarly, and for the purpose of this study, we argue that gendered embodiment examines the lived experience of human beings, in order to explore the connection between the biological and social-cultural factors. Hence, we interpret the experiences of female engineers in order to understand and identify the biological characteristics that inform their understanding and perception of gendered embodiment in the Nigerian context. Concurrently, we examine gender as a social construct in order to recognise how these women are marginalised in the workplace. Hence, indicating how organisations consciously or unconsciously are institutionalised by the patriarchal order from socio-culture influences. Subsequently,

We draw on Harding (1999; 2004) standpoint theory that explains ‘feminist objectivity’ as ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway 2004, 84). This standpoint argues that research should start from the marginalised group and progress to studying the institutions or order of power that identify or categorise these marginalised groups. This standpoint as others unveils the purpose of understanding marginalised individuals with the aim to promote social reforms. We argue that the recognition of the marginalisation of female engineers in the Nigerian context creates an avenue to begin the conversation or progress the conversation for social reform for women. Similarly, Smith (1992, cited in Harding, 2004) argue that women’s experience is the foundation for feminist knowledge, which in turn, is a key driver for social reforms to benefit women. Although we establish that feminist discourse, explore reforms to benefit women, there had been deliberations (Buck and James, 2005) to clarify the aims and contributions of feminist studies to social reforms for women. Likewise, we aim to clarify the contributions of feminists’ studies to social reforms in the Nigerian context. We argue that these social reforms should consider the gendered embodiment of these women in order to be practical and beneficial.

Though there are lots of controversies with the Harding’s standpoint ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding, 20004) its relevance in this work, hinges on her arguments concerning modernity

and traditional binary, where she argues that studies aimed at social progress should begin with the lives experiences of women who have been marginalised (Intemann, 2010; Bergeron, 2011). She brings together concerns regarding feminism and post colonialism perspectives on gender. Bergeron, (2011) in her review of *Feminism, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* by Harding, emphasises that

‘Harding demonstrates, blocks the ability to make adequate sense of the needs and desires of women and traditional cultures in the non-Western world, which are too often portrayed as irrational obstacles to scientific thinking and progress. It also relies upon notions of Western exceptionalism in which Europe and North America are viewed as the origin of all that is modern and scientific’.

In her view, Bergeron (2011) references that this denies the significant contributions of other perspectives of lives experiences beyond the global North and obstructs awareness of the appreciated resources that other perspectives demonstrate.

Although Harding’s arguments generally purports the notion that these lives experiences should focus on women’s lives ‘as organised in households’ (Intemann, 2010 pg. 467), we argue that women’s lives experiences should include experiences in household, community and the organisation. Harding herself (Harding, 2004), who draws on other standpoint feminist views like Dorothy Smith and Nancy Hartsock, argues that standpoint project remains marginal to conventional ‘post positivist philosophy of science’ (pg. 25), as it does to the field of science studies more generally, as several observers have noted. She (Bergeron (2011) further stresses this point of Harding that ‘Modernist science has denied the scientific achievements of non-Western cultures while simultaneously serving to anchor imperial projects aimed at colonizing these cultures. Therefore, in seeking to understand the lived experiences of these female engineers, we emphasise this to be a case of advancing the literature concerning gendered embodiment from ‘experts by experience’ and also capitalise this as a way of decolonising gendered embodiment beyond the global North.

Gender Inequality in Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in Western Africa gained independence in 1960 after being colonised by Britain (Anyanwu, 1982). It operates on a federal, state and local government structure and it is by far the most populous country in Africa, although estimates vary (Vreeland, 2003). A continuing population challenge faced by the country has been the unification of the 200-plus ethnic groups and cultures identified within its borders (Udogu, 2005). Nigeria as a pluralist state does have statutory system that implemented concurrently with religious or customary laws. This sometimes creates pressure between statutory and cultural practices (Durojaye et al, 2014) however, emphasising the significance of cultural practices embedded in its constitutional structure. Similarly, the constitution reveals the government’s commitment to addressing gender inequality. This has been demonstrated in its adoption of programmes with the Women’s International Network (WID), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) (Akobo, 2016) and the Ministry of Women Affairs to manage government responses to gender mainstreaming (Durojaye et al, 2014).

These programmes include dialogues and campaigns to ensure women participate in programmes and processes that benefit the female gender both at the national and organisational level. Consequently, national policies and programmes in Nigeria having

affiliations with international strategies, aim to eradicate gender inequality (United Nations, 2014). Most of the discussions and strategies in Nigeria essentially focuses on education and employment. This is because, at the basic (primary) level of education in Nigeria, female school attendants are lower than males (Ajala and Alonge, 2013). This disparity is worse in some parts of Nigeria (United Nations, 2012). For instance, the recent events on terrorist tagged practices especially in the Northern part of the country exposes the consistent challenge against educating the girl child and empowering women hence, creating a gap between women and their male counterparts on every level of national development. Likewise, in employment more males get jobs especially in political roles, STEM related fields and more senior management positions.

Similarly, associating these forms of inequalities to socio-cultural marginalisation of women in Nigeria, some identified indicators that contribute to this marginalisation include violence and harmful traditional practices, the lack of basic human rights, and the lack of access to education, health and employment opportunities (World Development Report, 2012). Correspondingly, a number of factors that affect women in Nigeria include poverty, child labour, religious practices that support early marriage, illiteracy (Ajala and Alonge, 2013).

Elaborating on the socio-cultural values includes the expectation on women to perform domestic roles, which sometimes alienates her from social, economic and political investing opportunities available to men. These opportunities include active political roles, business ventures and career development plans. Nonetheless, enlightened parents avoid discrimination against female education and empowerment. This has also helped to increase the number of females in education and supported empowerment initiatives in Nigeria; however, because of the still significantly lesser number of women in education, organisations face the challenge of ensuring a gender balance in relation to employing more women and positioning them in top management roles. This is especially the case for organisations and multinationals in science and technology related fields.

In light of the aforementioned challenges, it is pertinent to state that the legislative framework encourages gender balance. However, the lack of enforcement of these policies reinforces the reality of discriminatory processes for women's education at the primary, secondary and higher education levels, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria (World Development Report, 2012). In spite of this setback, it is still evident that there are several awareness programmes (Ajala and Alonge, 2013) such as conferences, seminars and workshops organised by the government, government sponsored agencies, organisations, NGOs and charity organisations to encourage female education and empowerment. For instance, In line with the SDG Goals, the women 2030 strategy in which Nigeria is part of is an intervention to ensure the effective implementation of the SDG goals. Likewise, the government has also created offices within its structure to ensure transparent and progressive collaborations with other stakeholders like the private sector. However, monitoring the effectiveness of these initiatives is still unclear especially for goal 5 on gender equality and empowering of women and girls (Punch, 2018)

This however, still needs a strong support from the state institutions, to ensure proper monitoring on the progress of the campaigns and programmes and to ensure that corporations and agencies exhibit complete adherence to these policies and practices. In view of the inconsistencies in the Nigerian context, we maintain that this reveals existing religious and cultural practices that impedes on the idea for gender equality, versus the drive to promote

gender equality through various initiatives. Therefore, we argue that the recognition of gender disparity in Nigeria highlights the relevance of a feminist approach as a foundation for addressing gender concerns. This also establishes the rationale for exploring Ackers theory, a feminist approach to recognising and managing these inequalities in the workplace.

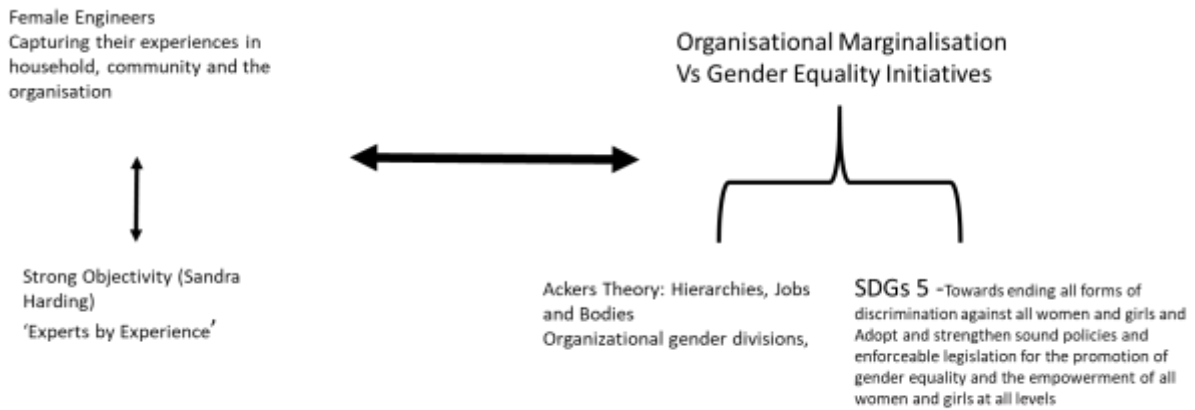
Organisational Marginalisation and Gender inequality

We use Ackers theory in understanding how a gendered organisation fosters inequality through its processes. Ackers (1990; 2006; 2012) argues that organisational processes influences income and status inequality between women and men. Hence, understanding these processes is necessary for understanding gender inequality. We further argue that this would mean, understanding cultures and identities (internally and externally) that influence the processes in an organisation. This is vital in order to progress the conversation significantly as we see a consistency concerning gender segregation for instance, gender pay gaps and gender imbalance especially across senior management levels which still pervades the discourses today (Amado et al., 2018; The Lancet, 2018; Jones et al., 2018). Acker's theory proposes that gender inequality can be demonstrated through 'organizational gender divisions, such as a gendered hierarchy, gender segregation of jobs and positions, a gendered wage gap, and practices that separate the workplace from the rest of life along gender lines' (Acker, 1999, p. 180).

Consequently, Akers (1990, 2006) believed that feminist approach in a gendered organisation was to create a non-hierarchical, egalitarian organisation that allowed the opportunity to have a nonpatriarchal way of working. In her argument, she noted the fact that feminist approach in creating these kinds of organisations were not followed through indicating the reason why this is still a challenge today. Likewise, Smith (1992) argued that the conceptualisation of organisational sociology promoted the male dominance status. This is the reality in the Nigerian context as culturally; Nigeria is a patriarchal and hierarchical society that exhibits the pros and cons associated with such societies.

Acker (1990) further argues that 'critical perspectives on organizations, focusing on control, power, exploitation, and how these relations might be changed, have ignored women and have been insensitive to the implications of gender for their own goals'. (p. 141). Therefore, we argue that in the Nigerian context, there is a lack of debate and feminist insights concerning the marginalisation processes within organisations. Hence, in the Nigerian context, we aim to examine organisational, national and individual cultures and identities that influence the processes for a gendered organisation.

In view of gender equality initiatives by these multinational corporations especially in the Nigerian context, we recognise the fact that these organisations implement most of these gender equality projects through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices (Akobo, 2016; 2017). They collaborate with international and national agencies to carry out projects that for and align these projects with the MDGs and now SDGs. Therefore, we will be examining these gender equality practices in relation to the SDG goal 5 targeted towards gender equality. To this effect, the framework for this study integrates Sandra Harding (1999; 2004) strong objectivity and Ackers (1990) theory with the SDGs. This is to ascertain existing gendered embodiment and the inequalities in these organisations, and to propose a developmental approach for of tackling gender equality in the workplace.



Methodology

This section outlines the method by which data was collected for this research. Semi-structured interviews are the main data collection method used. This collection method is well used in feminist research, as well as other qualitative processes (Kelly et al., 1994). A semi-structured interview, as explained by Saunders et al. (2009), gives the researcher the opportunity to be flexible with the questions. It also allows the researcher to obtain more information on a particular question in order to interpret it accurately, as well as to build on the response received. The data collection process includes target participants, actual participants, method of data collection, selection of participants, and the methods of approach.


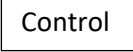
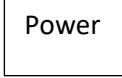
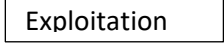
Data Collection

Semi structured interviews were completed in both MNCs. There were a total of 34 respondents 25 respondents from multinational X and 9 respondents from multinational Y. The technique; random and stratified sampling was used to select volunteering participants. Respondents participated from a staff strength of about 1500 to 2500 from MNC X and 150 from MNC Y in offices within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Each participant was interviewed in a one-to-one session. During this session, the participants responded to questions about their perception of gender inequality, and identified policies and practices that support gender equality in the workplace. The responses were transcribed. Themes were derived manually using the Ackers theoretical framework underpinning the study. Concurrently, using purposive sampling, 10 female engineers from the 34 initial respondents in both multinational X and Y completed semi-structured interviews on their perception about embodiment and work. The responses were transcribed and drawing on Sandra Harding's (1999, 2004) strong objectivity standpoint, we emphasise on their narratives about their experiences regarding gendered embodiment.

Content and Narrative Analysis

We use two forms of analysis in order to address the two research questions. A content analysis is used to understand organisational marginalisation vs gender equality initiatives. Likewise, a narrative analysis is used to understand how female engineers in these organisations perceive gendered embodiment.

In order to identify inequalities, understand how MNCs implement policies, and practice as an intervention for gender inequality, a directed content analysis approach was adopted. This analysis explained the gender equality related initiatives by two MNCs. The analysis focused on organisational awareness and engagement for gender balance, which include the corresponding interventions by these corporations. It also considered the organisations level of investment in social activities relating to diversity and inclusion. Content analysis is flexible and can be adopted in an interpretive or systematic manner (Rosengren, 1981). This analysis approach is significant in organizational research because it allows researchers to identify and examine the distinctions of organizational behaviours, diverse perceptions, and societal trends. In this study, we adopt a direct content analysis. This is where codes are identified directly from the text data (transcribed interviews and the theory underpinning the study) before and during analysis. In identifying these codes, we had conversations about reoccurring and similar views concerning the organisational processes and outcomes. In this case, the framework developed from the Ackers theory. This is with the aim to identify coding units (core themes) that give understanding to the phenomenon. We use themes in our coding process as we look to interpret the data to answer the question ‘how do multinational organisations marginalise women in relation to gendered embodiment vs being an agency for gender equality’. Some of the themes identified are as interpreted in the table below.

Theoretical Perspectives	Key words and Extracts from literature (Theory and policies)	Key words and extracts from Interviews	Themes Derived From Interviews and theory (marginalisation vs gender equality)
Ackers Theory: Hierarchies, Jobs and Bodies  Organizational gender divisions,	Patriarchal Hierarchy } 	More men than women Shortage in STEM related Fields	Gender imbalance
	Culture Identity Hierarchy } 	Cultural biases Struggle with having a female boss More indigene alliances Being able to relate regardless of age difference	Discrimination and Respect culture
	Gendered hierarchy, Gendered wage gap 	We train indigenes We support education for the girl child We promote education in STEM related fields We have a quota system targeted towards having more professional indigenes and females	Employment and Education Shortages and Opportunities
	Gendered hierarchy	Maternity Support for women Management Support for women Mentoring Programmes	Career Development and the Glass Ceiling attitude

	Masculinity Gender segregation of jobs and positions	Reproductive structure Women's Physical strength in comparison to most men	Support/lack of support from male colleagues and management. Division of Labour because of gender.
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Table 1: Illustration of how content analysis was adopted.

Consequently, narrative analysis in this research focuses on documented interpretations and quotes that are based on themes derived in the linear sequence of participants' narratives (Franzosi, 1998), which include experiences/stories/events in their workplace and Nigerian society. These themes are analysed according to the three main research questions and objectives for this work.

As mentioned earlier, there were ten participants from Multinational A and Multinational B. These participants were from all levels within the organisation, including managers. As a qualitative research study looking to understand how female engineers interpret gendered embodiment in the Nigerian context and to understand how these practices impact gender and development within this emerging market, the sample size as reported here, does not look to generalise outcomes, but rather looks to contribute knowledge. This is comparable with other similar research work on diversity (Klarsfeld, 2010), therefore validating the sample size because of the purpose of this qualitative research. Based on Labov (1983, cited in Franzosi, 1998), what is said as narratives by respondents is a reflection of what is done; in this case, either within society or the organisation. The main source of information gathering, which is language, further embraces the ideologies of respondents/participants concerning how they understand and interpret diversity practises within their organisations. This brings to light the intent of this research, which is to understand diversity from a Nigerian perspective and to see how, if visible, these practices by multinationals affect or contribute to national development.

Quotations from and rational interpretations of narratives (Mishler, 2008), in connection with the main research questions and objectives, preserve context and reveal thoughts that further gives identity to participants (Clark & Mishler, 1992) as well as highlighting the usefulness of these narratives towards understanding and conceptualising diversity in Nigeria.

The reason for selecting this analytical approach is that it centres on humans and their life stories, which ultimately portrays their view of the world. Webster & Mertova (2007) state two contributions of narrative to research, including that 'it provides an account of the history of human consciousness and at the level of human consciousness, stories record personal consciousness from infancy, through youth and adulthood to old age' (p. 15). Similarly, the use of stories and storytelling has increased recently within organisational research (Saunders et al., 2009). In this research, storytelling aids in the collection of data based on the understanding, experiences and practice towards gender equality in both multinational corporations. Consequently, Saunders et al., (2009) argue that data collected as stories through interviews help to draw attention to relevant issues such as organisational politics and culture.

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