International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

Women's Exclusion from Decision-Making: Causes, Impacts, and Pathways to Equality in African Countries

Authors:

Annastasia Noko Moloto (emolotan@unisa.ac.za)
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Ntsieni Fitzgerald Ramasimu (ramasnf@unisa.ac.za)
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Abigail Chivandi (sibandaabigail87@gmail.com)
IMM Graduate School of Marketing, Johannesburg, South Africa

Michael Mncedisi Willie
Council for Medical Schemes, South Africa

Salamat Atinuke Ajede
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode, Nigeria

Abstract:

This study examines the influence of gender discrimination on decision-making in the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors across five African countries. It investigates the historical, cultural, and structural factors underpinning women's persistent underrepresentation and evaluates the organisational and career-level impacts of this exclusion. A qualitative research design was employed, incorporating content and thematic analysis of historical and cultural documents to capture the multifaceted nature of gender discrimination and its sector-specific implications. Findings indicate that patriarchal norms, entrenched gender stereotypes, and systemic discriminatory practices remain significant barriers to women's participation in decision-making roles. These factors limit career advancement, reinforce leadership gaps, and undermine equitable organisational practices. The study highlights the necessity of targeted, context-sensitive interventions to dismantle these barriers and promote women's inclusion in leadership. The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of the cultural–structural interplay that sustains gender inequality in male-dominated African industries. It provides an evidence-based foundation for developing strategies aimed at increasing women's representation in decision-making roles. Practically, the study underscores the importance of implementing inclusive policies, addressing systemic biases, and creating supportive workplace environments to enhance organisational performance and expand women's career opportunities. By offering a cross-sectoral and cross-country perspective, this study adds novel insights into the dynamics

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

of gender discrimination in critical African industries, presenting actionable recommendations for policymakers, industry leaders, and advocacy groups committed to advancing gender equality and improving decision-making outcomes.

Keywords:

Gender Discrimination, Decision-Making, Mining Industry, Aviation Sector, Automotive Industry, Military Sector, Gender Equality, Structural Barriers, Cultural Norms

Submitted: 2026-06-03. Revised: 2026-07-09. Accepted: 2026-07-24.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

Introduction

Gender discrimination in decision-making remains a pervasive global challenge with profound implications for individuals, organisations, and society. Persistent gender inequalities disproportionately expose women to socioeconomic risks, including lower educational attainment, higher poverty rates, and reduced access to economic opportunities (Mbiyozo, 2022; Institute for Security Studies, 2022). The labour market continues to exhibit marked gender segregation, with women concentrated in low-wage, precarious employment and burdened with disproportionate unpaid care work (International Labour Organisation, 1995; Charmes, 2019). Furthermore, women's livelihoods are often more dependent on resource- and environment-based industries, making them particularly vulnerable to economic and environmental shifts.

The exclusion of women from decision-making processes stems from a complex interplay of historical, cultural, social, and structural factors. While notable progress has been achieved in many regions, entrenched inequalities persist in various contexts, particularly in male-dominated industries. In Africa, systemic biases continue to restrict women's participation in leadership and strategic decision-making roles within sectors such as mining, aviation, automotive, and the military (Pierce & Herbert, 2000; Martin & Barnard, 2013).

The underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions has long been recognised as a significant barrier to gender equality and organisational effectiveness (Son Hing et al., 2023; Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Addressing this issue requires a nuanced understanding of its multifaceted causes and consequences. This study examines gender discrimination in decision-making across five African countries, focusing on its drivers, impacts, and manifestations within the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors. By identifying the underlying factors sustaining women's exclusion, the research aims to inform the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions that promote equitable participation in decision-making processes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study draws on the Resource-Based View (RBV) to explore how diversity in decision-making can serve as a strategic organisational asset, the Dynamic Capabilities (DCs) framework to assess how organisations adapt and transform towards inclusivity, and Contingent Leadership (CL) theory to examine leadership approaches suited to diverse contexts. Integrating these perspectives provides a robust analytical lens for understanding both the systemic barriers and the potential organisational gains associated with advancing women's representation in decision-making roles.

Gender discrimination in decision-making has long been a pervasive issue across various sectors, impacting the social, economic, and political landscapes of societies worldwide. In many African countries, despite progress in gender equality, women continue to face systemic barriers that limit their

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

participation and representation in decision-making roles within key industries such as mining, aviation, automotive, and the military (Martin & Barnard, 2013; Msuya, 2020; Chege, 2022; Osiki, 2022). Historically, African societies have been characterised by patriarchal structures that relegated women to domestic roles and marginalised them in public spheres (Chege, 2022). The colonial era further entrenched these gender disparities by introducing Western patriarchal norms, which often exacerbated pre-existing inequalities (Dill & Crow, 2014; Agbaje, 2019; Msuya, 2020). As a result, women in many African countries were systematically excluded from education, leadership, and decision-making opportunities, with long-term consequences for their socio-economic status and empowerment (Ilesanmi, 2018).

In contemporary Africa, while efforts to address gender inequalities through policies and legislation have been made, significant challenges remain. Women are still underrepresented in sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as mining, aviation, automotive, and the military (Pierce & Herbert, 2000; Ranchod, 2001). These industries are not only critical to the economic development of African nations but also play a key role in shaping national policies and strategies. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles within these sectors reflects broader societal issues, including gender biases, cultural norms, and structural barriers (Heilman, 2012). For instance, the mining industry in Africa has been traditionally male-dominated, with women often relegated to lower-wage, informal, or precarious employment (Charmes, 2019; Mashaba & Botha, 2023). Similarly, the aviation and automotive industries have seen limited female participation, with women frequently encountering gender-based discrimination and obstacles to career advancement (International Labour Organisation, 1995). In the military, gender stereotypes and cultural norms hinder women's entry into leadership roles, despite their proven capabilities and contributions (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023).

Gender discrimination in these sectors has profound impacts, affecting not only the individuals involved but also the overall efficiency and effectiveness of organisations. Research indicates that gender diversity in decision-making can lead to more innovative solutions, improved organisational performance, and better economic outcomes (Mbiyozo, 2022; Institute for Security Studies, 2022). However, the persistent exclusion of women from these roles undermines the potential for such benefits, perpetuating a cycle of inequality and limiting the opportunities for growth and development in African nations. Given the importance of these industries to Africa's economic and social fabric, it is crucial to understand the underlying causes of gender discrimination and develop strategies to promote greater inclusion and equality. This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining the specific factors underlying the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles in these sectors and by proposing actionable solutions to address these disparities.

Despite efforts to promote gender equality, women in Africa continue to face significant discrimination in decision-making roles across key industries such as mining, aviation, automotive, and the military. This

exclusion is rooted in historical, cultural, and structural factors that perpetuate gender bias and limit women's opportunities for participation and leadership. The persistent underrepresentation of women in these sectors not only reinforces gender inequalities but also has detrimental effects on organisational effectiveness and socio-economic development. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to gender discrimination and the development of strategies to create more inclusive decision-making environments.

This study explored the causes and impacts of gender discrimination in decision-making within the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors in African countries. It seeks to identify the historical, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and assess the effects of this exclusion on individual and organisational outcomes. Ultimately, the study aims to propose strategies to promote gender equality and enhance women's participation in decision-making roles within these industries

Literature Review

Gender discrimination remains a significant barrier to women's participation and advancement in various sectors across Africa, particularly in traditionally male-dominated industries such as mining, aviation, automotive, and the military. These sectors are critical to the continent's economic development and are vital in shaping national policies and strategies. However, systemic biases, cultural norms, and structural barriers continue to limit women's opportunities and perpetuate gender inequalities.

The history of women's discrimination in Africa

Women's experiences in African nations differ, and some common themes and historical trends can be seen in the history of gender inequality on the continent (Amayah & Haque, 2017). Women played significant roles in their communities as mothers, caregivers, and, in many traditional African societies, occasionally leaders (Chege, 2022). There were, however, also instances of gender-based restrictions and disparities. As examples of gender-based discrimination and control over women's bodies, some societies practised female genital mutilation or female circumcision.

Colonial powers imposed their own patriarchal rules and political structures, which frequently exacerbated already-existing gender disparities or created new ones (Dill & Crow, 2014; Agbaje, 2019). Women's roles were frequently undervalued and restricted to domestic spheres, while men were given preference in fields such as leadership, education, and the workforce (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Many African countries sought to address gender inequalities through legislation and policies to promote women's rights and empowerment after gaining independence from colonial rule (Msuya, 2020). Although these measures have been implemented unevenly, women still

experience various types of discrimination in many facets of life, and for many African women, accessing formal employment and education remains challenging (Osiki, 2022).

Socioeconomic factors, cultural practices, and traditional norms have at times restricted girls' access to education, resulting in lower literacy rates and fewer employment opportunities for women (Bermúdez Figueroa, Dabetić, Yuste et al., 2023). In Africa, women frequently experience economic disparities due to their restricted access to credit, land ownership, and job opportunities. This may make it more difficult for them to become financially independent and make a significant contribution to the growth of their communities. Traditional gender roles and norms may make women more vulnerable to discrimination. These norms often dictate expectations for women's behaviour, mobility, and choices, limiting their autonomy and agency (Stewart, Wright, Smith et al., 2021; Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023).

While difficulties still exist, it is important to recognise that significant efforts have been made to address gender discrimination in Africa. Gender equality has been promoted by women's rights organisations, activists, and policy initiatives through increased awareness, change advocacy, and advocacy. While progress varies greatly from nation to nation, the general trend is toward greater gender equality and recognition of women's rights (Batliwala, 2010). Women historically had limited access to education and were frequently subjected to arranged marriages, often driven by political or economic considerations rather than personal choice (Anderson, 2009). Exclusion from education, the workforce, and the political sphere remained prevalent, but the women's rights movement gradually influenced changes in laws and social attitudes (Bermúdez Figueroa et al., 2023). Over time, many nations have enacted legislation to combat gender discrimination (Rustin, 2021). Despite these legal advancements, persistent challenges such as gender-based wage disparities, occupational segregation, and underrepresentation of women in leadership roles continue to affect numerous industries in Africa, including mining, aviation, automotive, and the military (Carranza, n.d.;).

Gender Discrimination in the Mining Sector

The mining sector in Africa has historically been dominated by men, with women often relegated to lower-wage, informal, or precarious employment. This gender-based segregation is deeply rooted in cultural norms and societal perceptions that view mining as a physically demanding and dangerous occupation unsuitable for women (Lahiri-Dutt, 2011). Despite the increasing participation of women in the mining workforce, they continue to face significant challenges, including limited access to training, leadership roles, and decision-making opportunities (Chisamya et al., 2012). Research shows that women in the mining sector often experience discrimination in hiring practices, wage disparities, and workplace conditions. Women are frequently excluded from formal mining activities. Instead, they engage in artisanal and small-scale mining, often informal and unregulated, thereby exposing them to greater risks and vulnerabilities (Hinton et al., 2003; Mashaba & Botha, 2023). Mashaba and Botha

(2023) highlight that limited career awareness, negative perceptions, work-life balance challenges, a male-dominated environment, and medical fitness requirements deter women from pursuing careers in mining.

Gender Discrimination in the Aviation Sector

The aviation industry in Africa is another sector where gender disparities are prevalent. Despite global efforts to increase gender diversity in aviation, women remain underrepresented in technical, operational, and leadership roles (Alsos, Hytti & Ljunggren, 2016). Gender stereotypes and cultural biases often discourage women from pursuing careers in aviation, particularly in roles traditionally perceived as "male" occupations, such as pilots, engineers, and air traffic controllers (Germain, Herzog & Hamilton, 2012; Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). A report by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) highlights that women make up a small percentage of the global aviation workforce, particularly in Africa, where societal norms and gender biases are more deeply entrenched (ICAO, 2023).

Women in aviation frequently encounter obstacles such as limited access to training, gender-based discrimination in recruitment and promotion, and a lack of supportive workplace policies (Marintseva, Mahanecs, Pandey et al., 2022; Nur & Rahman, 2023). These barriers not only impede women's career advancement but also contribute to the persistent gender imbalance in the industry. Globally, the proportion of women pilots remains low, reflecting the perception of piloting as a male-dominated profession. However, some countries have made notable strides. India leads the world with 15% of its pilots being women, followed by Ireland with 9.9% and South Africa with 9.8% (LiveMint, 2023).

Gender Discrimination in the Automotive Sector

The automotive industry, like mining and aviation, has been traditionally male dominated, with women facing significant challenges in gaining entry and advancing within the sector (Mashaba & Botha, 2023). Gender stereotypes often depict the automotive industry as a "man's world," with women perceived as less capable of handling technical and mechanical roles (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). This perception has resulted in a significant gender gap in the industry, with women underrepresented in technical positions, management, and leadership roles. Studies indicate that women in the African automotive industry face various forms of discrimination, including gender-based wage gaps, limited access to training and development opportunities, and exclusion from decision-making processes. These challenges are compounded by societal norms that discourage women from pursuing careers in traditionally male-dominated fields, further perpetuating the gender gap in the industry.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

Gender Discrimination in the Military Sector

The military sector in Africa is perhaps the most challenging environment for women, given its deeply ingrained patriarchal structure and culture. Despite global efforts to increase women's participation in the military, they remain significantly underrepresented in combat roles, leadership positions, and decision-making processes (Fieldhouse & O'Leary, 2020). Gender discrimination in the military is often rooted in cultural beliefs that view military service as a male prerogative, with women relegated to supportive or administrative roles (DeGroot, 2001; Fieldhouse & O'Leary, 2020). Research highlights those women in the African military face numerous challenges, including gender-based harassment, limited access to training and combat roles, and exclusion from leadership positions (Fieldhouse & O'Leary, 2020). These barriers limit women's opportunities for career advancement and reinforce the gendered division of labour within the military, perpetuating stereotypes about women's capabilities and roles in society (Fieldhouse & O'Leary, 2020; Tremmel & Wahl, 2023).

Structural and Cultural Barriers

Across these sectors, structural and cultural barriers play a significant role in perpetuating gender discrimination. Patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and societal expectations often discourage women from pursuing careers in male-dominated industries, while discriminatory practices in recruitment, promotion, and workplace policies further entrench gender inequalities (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023; Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Additionally, the lack of supportive workplace environments, such as flexible work arrangements, maternity leave, and anti-discrimination policies, exacerbates the challenges women face in these sectors (Kabeer, 2005).

Efforts to Address Gender Discrimination

Despite these challenges, efforts are being made to address gender discrimination in these sectors. Gender equality initiatives, policy reforms, and advocacy efforts by women's rights organisations have increased awareness of gender disparities and promoted women's participation in male-dominated industries (Kabeer, 2016). Initiatives such as gender-sensitive recruitment practices, mentorship programs, and leadership training for women have been implemented in some African countries to address the gender gap in these sectors (Martin & Barnard, 2013; Msuya, 2020; Chege, 2022; Osiki, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives varies, and significant work remains to be done to achieve gender equality in decision-making roles within Africa's mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors (Kabeer, 2016; Mashaba & Botha, 2023). Addressing gender discrimination in these industries requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy reforms, cultural change, and women empowerment through education, training, and leadership opportunities (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Williams, 2022).

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

Methods and Data

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist stance was considered appropriate because gender discrimination in decision-making is a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by historical legacies, cultural norms, institutional practices, and sector-specific dynamics. Rather than measuring gender disparities numerically, the study sought to interpret how discrimination is embedded, reproduced, and legitimised within the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors across selected African countries.

The research employed a secondary data design, drawing exclusively on existing scholarly and institutional sources to generate a comprehensive and theoretically informed analysis of gender discrimination in decision-making roles.

Data Sources

The study relied on multiple forms of secondary data to ensure depth and triangulation. These included:

• Peer-reviewed journal articles addressing gender discrimination, leadership, organisational behaviour, and sector-specific gender dynamics;

• Policy documents and legislative frameworks relating to gender equality in African contexts;

• Industry and institutional reports from reputable regional and international organisations;

• Historical and socio-cultural analyses examining patriarchy, colonial legacies, and structural inequality in Africa; and

• Sector-specific publications focusing on mining, aviation, automotive, and military industries.

These sources were selected to provide both contextual background and empirical evidence relevant to the study's objectives.

Sampling Strategy and Inclusion Criteria

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify relevant documents. Sources were included if they:

• Addressed gender discrimination, women's participation, or decision-making in organisational or sectoral contexts;

• Focused on African countries or provided insights applicable to African industries;

• Related directly to one or more of the four focal sectors (mining, aviation, automotive, and military); and

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

• Demonstrated scholarly rigour or institutional credibility.

This approach ensured that only information-rich and contextually relevant materials informed the analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The study utilised qualitative content analysis complemented by thematic analysis. The analytical process unfolded in several stages:

• Document Familiarisation: Selected sources were systematically reviewed to identify key arguments, patterns, and contextual dynamics.

• Open Coding: Recurring concepts relating to causes, impacts, and mitigation strategies of gender discrimination were coded.

• Theme Development: Codes were categorised into broader thematic domains, including cultural and societal norms, organisational policies and practices, educational and professional barriers, economic factors, workplace environment, and systemic bias.

• Theoretical Integration: Emergent themes were interpreted through the lenses of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities (DCs), and Contingent Leadership (CL) theory to link gender inclusion with organisational capability, adaptability, and leadership effectiveness.

• Cross-Sector Synthesis: Thematic patterns were compared across the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors to identify both common structural barriers and sector-specific dynamics.

This systematic and iterative analysis enabled the development of a coherent explanation of how gender discrimination persists and how it may be addressed strategically.

As the study relied exclusively on publicly available secondary data, no human participants were involved. Ethical standards were upheld through accurate citation, faithful interpretation of sources, and avoidance of misrepresentation.

Results

This section systematically analyses the key thematic areas impacting gender discrimination in decision-making, revealing a complex interplay of cultural, organisational, educational, economic, and systemic factors. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes significantly influence perceptions of leadership and authority, often undermining women's capabilities and restricting their access to leadership positions (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Societal expectations can undervalue women's leadership potential, while gender stereotypes shape biased evaluations of competence and suitability for leadership roles (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Cultural norms also dictate career choices, further impacting women's

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

opportunities for advancement. Gender disparities are exacerbated by organisational practices that lack inclusivity. The absence of comprehensive diversity policies, combined with gender bias in recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluations, impedes women's career progression. Without targeted diversity initiatives, fewer women advance to senior management positions, and existing biases continue to affect their professional advancement. Unequal access to education and training opportunities limits women's representation in high-status roles, particularly in STEM fields where they are underrepresented (Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Gokulsing. 2021). Gender differences in risk-taking behaviours and occupational segregation further restrict women's career growth and professional opportunities. Economic pressures, including pay disparities and financial incentives, shape career choices and progression. Wage gaps and other economic pressures impact women's career advancement and job satisfaction. Persistent gender pays gaps, driven by differences in career paths and professional choices, affect women's long-term career outcomes. Male-dominated workplace cultures and networks limit women's access to informal support and mentorship. Gender segregation in job roles further restricts career opportunities, with organisational structures and practices often reinforcing these inequalities. Unconscious biases among decision-makers, coupled with institutional barriers, contribute to gender discrimination. Cognitive biases and systemic issues affect decision-making processes, disadvantaging women in promotions and evaluations. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for mitigating gender discrimination and promoting equitable decision-making. Table 1 below delineates factors that influence Gender Disparities in Career Advancement.

Category	Source	Findings
Cultural and Societal Norms	Eagly & Carli (2007)	Traditional gender roles and stereotypes affect perceptions of leadership and authority.
	Heilman (2012); Tremmel & Wahl (2023)	Societal expectations often undervalue women's leadership capabilities.
		Gender stereotypes shape evaluations of competence and leadership.
	Calitz, Cullen & Fani	Cultural expectations influence

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

	(2020).	career choices and perceived suitability for leadership roles.
organisational Policies and Practices	Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly (2006)	Inclusive policies and practices contribute to gender disparities in career advancement.
	Cox & Blake (1991)	Gender bias in recruitment, promotion, and evaluation processes hinders women's career progress.
	McKinsey & Company (2023)	The absence of targeted diversity policies leads to fewer women in senior management roles.
	Ely & Meyerson (2000)	Gender biases in performance evaluations affect women's career progression.
Educational and Professional Barriers	Dosunmu (2019); Khosa (2023); Chanda & Ngulube (2024)	Unequal access to education and training opportunities affects women's representation in high-status roles.
	Dosunmu, (2019). Rayen- Ragoobur & Gokulsing (2021)	Limited representation of women in STEM fields impacts career advancement.
	Croson & Gneezy (2009)	Gender differences in risk-taking and competitive behaviours influence career trajectories.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

	Anker (1998)	Occupational segregation limits educational and professional opportunities for women.
Economic Factors	Blau & Kahn (2017)	Pay disparities and financial incentives shape career choices and progression.
	Schieman & Glavin (2011)	Economic pressures, such as wage gaps, impact women's
		career advancement and job satisfaction.
	Goldin (2014)	The gender pay gap persists due to differences in career paths and professional choices.
	Bertrand & Hallock (2001)	Financial incentives and Compensation disparities affect women's career decisions and job retention.
Workplace Environment	Kanter (1977)	Male-dominated workplace cultures and networks limit women's access to informal support and opportunities.
	Ibarra (1993)	Lack of mentorship and supportive networks for women affects career advancement.
	Adu-Oppong & Kendie	Gender segregation in job roles

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

	(2018).	and departments limits women's career growth and opportunities.
	Acker (1990)	Organisational structures and practices reinforce gender inequalities in the workplace.
Systemic Bias	Stamarski & Son Hing (2015); Ayari (2023)	Unconscious biases among decision-makers contribute to gender discrimination.
	Moss-Racusin et al. (2012)	Institutional barriers and biases impede women's progress into leadership roles.

Table 1: Factors Influencing Gender Disparities in Career Advancement

Discussion of the Findings

This study investigates gender discrimination in decision-making roles across the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors in African countries. The analysis reveals that cultural, organisational, educational, economic, and systemic factors collectively contribute to the persistent underrepresentation of women in these fields. Cultural norms and traditional gender roles significantly influence perceptions of leadership and authority, often leading to the undervaluation of women's leadership capabilities and biased assessments of their competence (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman, 2012; Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Societal expectations shape career choices and influence perceptions of women's suitability for leadership roles, limiting their professional opportunities and advancement (Calitz, Cullen & Fani, 2020).

Organisational policies and practices play a crucial role in addressing gender disparities. The study highlights that while inclusive policies can help mitigate gender inequalities, many organisations still exhibit biases in recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluations (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Cox & Blake, 1991; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). The lack of targeted diversity initiatives often results in fewer women reaching senior management positions (McKinsey & Company, 2023). The absence of comprehensive diversity policies reinforces existing biases and hinders women's career progression.

Educational and professional barriers further impact women's representation in high-status roles. Limited access to education and training restricts women's participation in STEM fields, where they are significantly underrepresented (Dosunmu, 2019; Chanda & Ngulube, 2024). Gender differences in risk-

taking and competitive behaviors, along with occupational segregation, constrain women's career growth and opportunities (Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Anker, 1998). Economic factors also shape career choices, including pay disparities and financial incentives, which affect women's job satisfaction and career advancement (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Schieman & Glavin, 2011; Goldin, 2014). Financial incentives and compensation disparities influence women's career decisions and job retention (Bertrand & Hallock, 2001).

Moreover, male-dominated workplace cultures and networks limit women's access to informal support and mentorship, further impacting their career advancement (Kanter, 1977; Ibarra, 1993). Gender segregation in job roles and departments also restricts career growth and opportunities (Adu-Oppong & Kendie, 2018; Acker, 1990). Unconscious biases among decision-makers and systemic barriers are critical contributors to gender discrimination, impeding women's progress into leadership roles and perpetuating gender inequalities (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; Ayari, 2023).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined gender discrimination in decision-making across the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors in selected African countries, drawing on secondary data and interpreting the findings through the Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities (DCs), and Contingent Leadership (CL) theory. The analysis demonstrates that women's underrepresentation in decision-making is not the result of isolated organisational shortcomings but rather the outcome of historically embedded patriarchal norms, institutionalised biases, structural inequalities, and sector-specific cultures that collectively constrain women's advancement. Cultural expectations continue to shape perceptions of leadership and authority, frequently associating technical competence, risk-taking, and command roles with masculinity. These deeply rooted assumptions influence recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluation processes, thereby reinforcing systemic exclusion.

Across the four sectors examined, organisational practices emerged as a critical mechanism for reproducing gender discrimination. Biased recruitment procedures, limited transparency in promotion pathways, exclusionary workplace cultures, and the absence of structured mentorship opportunities restrict women's progression into strategic leadership roles. In technically intensive industries such as mining, aviation, and automotive, limited access to STEM education and professional training further narrows the pipeline of women eligible for senior positions. In the military sector, rigid hierarchical cultures and gendered role expectations compound these challenges by constraining women's access to combat and command positions, which are often prerequisites for higher-level decision-making roles. These findings indicate that discrimination operates simultaneously at cultural, institutional, and organisational levels.

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

From a strategic perspective, the persistence of gender discrimination undermines organisational effectiveness and sectoral competitiveness. Consistent with the RBV, gender diversity constitutes a valuable, potentially rare organisational resource capable of enhancing innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability. Excluding women from decision-making, therefore, represents not only a social inequity but also a misallocation of human capital. The DCs framework further suggests that organisations that fail to reconfigure their structures and cultures to embrace inclusivity risk diminished responsiveness in rapidly evolving economic and technological environments. Contingent Leadership theory underscores the importance of context-sensitive, inclusive leadership approaches that can navigate diversity and complexity. Together, these theoretical perspectives underscore that gender inclusion is both a normative imperative and a strategic necessity.

The findings point to several practical and policy-oriented implications. At the organisational level, institutions across the mining, aviation, automotive, and military sectors should institutionalise transparent, merit-based recruitment and promotion systems, embed gender equity targets into performance management frameworks, and establish formal mentorship and sponsorship programmes to support women's advancement. Leadership development initiatives that address unconscious bias and cultivate inclusive leadership competencies are essential for transforming workplace cultures. Strengthening access to technical education and professional development for women, particularly in STEM fields, is critical to expanding the leadership pipeline in male-dominated industries.

At the policy level, governments should strengthen the enforcement of gender equality legislation and integrate gender mainstreaming into sectoral development strategies. Gender-disaggregated data systems are necessary to monitor representation, wage disparities, and leadership participation across industries. Public–private partnerships can incentivise inclusive practices through recognition frameworks and compliance mechanisms, while regional collaboration may facilitate the exchange of best practices across African contexts. Addressing cultural barriers requires sustained societal engagement, including public awareness initiatives that challenge stereotypes surrounding women's leadership capabilities in technical and defence-related fields.

Notwithstanding its contributions, the study is subject to limitations. Exclusive reliance on secondary data limits direct engagement with the lived experiences of women currently employed in the selected sectors. Variations in data availability and depth across countries and industries may have influenced the comprehensiveness of certain sectoral insights. Furthermore, the absence of primary empirical testing limits the ability to establish causal relationships between gender diversity and organisational performance outcomes. Future research could incorporate qualitative interviews, case studies, or mixed-method approaches to provide richer contextual insights and empirically validate the strategic benefits of inclusive decision-making structures.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

Overall, the study demonstrates that gender discrimination in decision-making within key African industries remains structurally embedded yet strategically counterproductive. Advancing women's participation requires coordinated interventions at organisational, sectoral, and policy levels. By reconceptualising gender diversity as a strategic asset and embedding inclusive leadership practices within institutional frameworks, African industries can enhance innovation, strengthen competitiveness, and contribute to more equitable and sustainable socio-economic development.

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. Gender & Society, 4(2), 139-158.

Adu-Oppong, A. A., & Kendie, S. B. (2018). Impact of gender segregation on workplace advancement of women in Ghanaian universities. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 6(11), 248–260. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2018.611023

Agbaje, F.I. (2019). Colonialism and Gender in Africa. In: Yacob-Haliso, O., Falola, T. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77030-7_3-1.

Alsos, G. A., Hytti, U., & Ljunggren, E. (2016). Gender and innovation - an introduction. In G. A. Alsos, U. Hytti, & E. Ljunggren (Eds.), Research handbook on gender and innovation (Chapter 1). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783478132.00006.

Amayah, A. T., & Haque, M. (2017). Experiences and challenges of women leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa Journal of Management, 3(1), 1-29.

Anderson, S. (2009). The economics of dowry and brideprice. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 21(4), 151-174.

Anker, R. (1998). Gender and Jobs: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World. International Labour Organisation.

Ayari, A. (2023). Unconscious bias against women at work. In Corporate psychology and its impact on diversity, equity, and inclusion (pp. 95-114). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-9013-6.ch006

Batliwala, S. (2010). Capturing change in women's realities. AWID. Retrieved from https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Capturing_Change_in_Womens_Realities.pdf.

Bermúdez Figueroa, E., Dabetić, V., Yuste, R. P., & Saeidzadeh, Z. (2023). Gender and structural inequalities from a socio-legal perspective. In D. Vujadinović, M. Fröhlich, & T. Giegerich (Eds.), Gender-

competent legal education (pp. [insert page numbers if available]). Springer Textbooks in Law. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14360-1_4.

Bertrand, M., & Hallock, K. F. (2001). The gender gap in top corporate jobs. Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 55(1), 3–21.

Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The gender wage gap: Extent, trends, and explanations. Journal of Economic Literature, 55(3), 789–865.

Calitz, A. P., Cullen, M., & Fani, D. (2020). The influence of culture on women's IT career choices. In Responsible design, implementation and use of information and communication technology (Vol. 12067, pp. 345–357). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45002-1_30

Carranza, E. (n.d.). Gender-based employment segregation. World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/388581468164662631/pdf/Gen_der-based-employment-segregation.pdf

Carreiras, H. (2006). Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies. Routledge.

Chanda, T. C., & Ngulube, L. (2024). Women in leadership: Examining barriers to women's advancement in leadership positions. Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports, 18(6), 273-290. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajarr/2024/v18i6671

Charmes, J. (2019). The unpaid care work and the labour market: An analysis of time use data based on the latest world compilation of time-use surveys (ILO Working Paper). International Labour Organization. Geneva.

Chege, C. (2022). Mothers Leading by Example: Maternal Influence on Female Leadership in Kenya. https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/880.

Chisamya, G., DeJaeghere, J., Kendall, N., & Khan, M. A. (2012). Gender and education for all: Progress and problems in achieving gender equity. International Journal of Educational Development, 32(6), 743-755.

Cox, T. H., & Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. Academy of Management Executive, 5(3), 45-56.

Croson, R., & Gneezy, U. (2009). Gender differences in preferences. Journal of Economic Literature, 47(2), 448-474.

DeGroot, G. J. (2001). A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military. Pearson Education.

Dill, B., & Crow, B. (2014). The colonial roots of inequality: access to water in urban East Africa. Water International, 39(2), 187-200.

Dosunmu, A. G. (2019). Access to higher education and career advancement: Gender disparity in Africa. South African Journal of Higher Education, 33(5), 128-145. https://www.journals.ac.za/sajhe/article/view/3459

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders. Harvard Business School Press.

Ely, R. J., & Meyerson, D. E. (2000). Theories of gender in organizations: A new approach to organizational analysis and change. Research in Organizational Behavior, 22, 103-151.

Fieldhouse, A., & O'Leary, T. J. (2020). Integrating women into combat roles: Comparing the UK Armed Forces and Israeli Defense Forces to understand where lessons can be learnt. BMJ Military Health, 169(1), Article bmjmilitary-2020-001500. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjmilitary-2020-001500

Galsanjigmed, E., & Sekiguchi, T. (2023). Challenges Women Experience in Leadership Careers: An Integrative Review. Merits, 3(2), 366-389. https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3020021.

Germain, M.-L., Herzog, M. J. R., & Hamilton, P. R. (2012). Women employed in male-dominated industries: Lessons learned from female aircraft pilots, pilots-in-training, and mixed-gender flight instructors. Human Resource Development International, 15(4), 1-19.

Goldin, C. (2014). A grand gender convergence: Its last chapter. American Economic Review, 104(4), 1091-1119.

Heilman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. Research in Organizational Behavior, 32, 113-135.

Hinton, J., Veiga, M. M., & Beinhoff, C. (2003). Women and artisanal mining: Gender roles and the road ahead. In G. Hilson (Ed.), The Socio-Economic Impacts of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Developing Countries (pp. 161-203). Swets Publishers.

Ibarra, H. (1993). Personal networks of women and minorities in management: A conceptual framework. Academy of Management Review, 18(1), 56-87.

Ilesanmi OO (2018) Women's Visibility in Decision Making Processes in Africa— Progress, Challenges, and Way Forward. Front. Sociol. 3:38. https://Doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00038.

Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003). Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World. Cambridge University Press.

Institute for Security Studies. (2022, December 7). Gender inequality is forcing African women to face the storm. ISS Africa. https://issafrica.org/iss-today/gender-inequality-is-forcing-african-women-to-face-the-storm

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). (n.d.). ICAO releases new analytical dashboards on female aviation personnel. Retrieved from https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-releases-new-analytical-dashboards-on-female-aviation-personnel.aspx.

International Civil Aviation Organization. (2023, April 27). ICAO releases new data on status of global aviation gender equality. ICAO Newsroom. https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-releases-new-data-on-status-of-global-aviation-gender-equality.aspx

International Labour Organization. (1995, August 25). Women work more, but are still paid less (ILO/95/22). International Labour Organization. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_007859/lang-- en/index.html

Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. Gender & Development, 13(1), 13-24.

Kabeer, N. (2016). Gender equality, economic growth, and women's agency: The "endless variety" and "monotonous similarity" of patriarchal constraints. Feminist Economics, 22(2), 295-321.

Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., & Kelly, E. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. American Sociological Review, 71(4), 589-617.

Kanter, R.M. (1977) Men and Women of the Corporation. Basic Books, New York.

Khosa, D. (2023). Gender equality or inequality in learning institutions in South Africa: A case of the professional advancement of women. E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 4(13), 1424-1439. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20234132

Lahiri-Dutt, K. (Ed.). (2011). Gendering the field: Towards sustainable livelihoods for mining communities. ANU Press. https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_459251. Retrieved from http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/33742

LiveMint. (2023, March 24). At 15%, India has most number of female pilots in the world. LiveMint. https://www.livemint.com/News

Martin, P., & Barnard, A. (2013). The experience of women in male-dominated occupations: A constructivist grounded theory inquiry. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde, 39(2), Art. #1099. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v39i2.1099

Mashaba, N., & Botha, D. (2023). Factors affecting the attraction of women to technical mining positions in South Africa. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 21(0), a2227. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v21i0.2227

Mbiyozo, A.-N. (2022, December 7). Gender inequality is forcing African women to face the storm. ISS Today.

McKinsey & Company. (2023, October 5). Women in the workplace 2023. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace-2023

Moss-Racusin, C. A., Dovidio, J. F., Brescoll, V. L., Graham, M. J., & Handelsman, J. (2012). Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 109(41), 16474-16479.

Marintseva, K., Mahanecs, A., Pandey, M. and Wilson, N., 2022. Factors influencing low female representation in pilot training recruitment. Transport Policy, 115, pp.141-151.

Msuya, N. H. (2020). Advocating positive traditional culture to eradicate harmful aspects of traditional culture for gender equality in Africa. Obiter, 41(1), 45-62. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1682-58532020000100003&lng=en&nrm=iso.

Nur, N. M., & Rahman, N. A. B. A. (2023). The contributing factors and initiatives to overcome women's obstacles and challenges in the aviation industry. In Women in Aviation. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-3098-2_9

Osiki, A. (2022). The impact of socio-legal inequality on women in the Nigerian domestic work sector. Law, Democracy & Development, 26, 48-83. https://doi.org/10.17159/2077-4907/2021/ldd.v26.3

Pierce, J. L., & Herbert, M. S. (2000). Camouflage isn't only for combat: Gender, sexuality, and women in the military. Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews, 29(*97542), 376. https://doi.org/10.2307/2654415.

Ranchod, S. (2001). Mining: Workplace. International Institute for Environment and Development. Retrieved from https://www.iied.org/default/files/pdfs/migrate

Rustin, C. (2021). What gender legislative reforms have meant for women in South Africa. Law, Democracy & Development, 25(special issue), 47-70. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-49072021000200002&lng=en&nrm=iso. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2077-4907/2020/ldd.v25.spe3

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.832

Son Hing, L. S., Sakr, N., Sorenson, J. B., Stamarski, C. S., Caniera, K., & Colaco, C. (2023). Gender inequities in the workplace: A holistic review of organizational processes and practices. Human Resource Management Review, 33(3), 100968. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2023.100968

Stamarski, C. S., & Son Hing, L. S. (2015). Gender inequalities in the workplace: The effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism. Frontiers in Psychology, 6. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400.

Stewart, R., Wright, B., Smith, L., Roberts, S., & Russell, N. (2021). Gendered stereotypes and norms: A systematic review of interventions designed to shift attitudes and behaviour. Heliyon, 7(4). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06660.

Tandrayen-Ragoobur, V., & Gokulsing, D. (2021). Gender gap in STEM education and career choices: What matters? Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education, 13(3), 849-863. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-09-2019-0235

Tremmel, M., & Wahl, I. (2023). Gender stereotypes in leadership: Analyzing the content and evaluation of stereotypes about typical, male, and female leaders. Frontiers in Psychology, 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1034258

Williams, E. (2022). Women's economic empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa. Demographic Research, 47, [page range]. https://www.demographic-research.org/vol47

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org