



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF GENDER-BASED OCCUPATIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ONDO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender-based occupational restrictions have been major source of hinderances to women's empowerment and socio-economic development in Southwestern Nigeria, limiting their access to diverse professions and opportunities. This study investigates the impact of gender-based occupational restrictions on the economic, social, educational, and political empowerment of women. One hundred purposively selected women in Ondo metropolis who were into male/female-oriented jobs were interviewed. Purposive sampling method was used in ensuring representation from different professions. The analysis of the data was done using Mariska Van der Horst (2016) in Mead's role-taking theoretical frameworks. The findings showed that women in all the five professions reported the importance of having support systems, such as family, friends, and mentors, to help them navigate challenges. That is, supportive networks, mentorship and policies addressing workplace challenges are crucial for women's empowerment. Also, women face societal expectations and stereotypes limiting their participation, these restrictions perpetuate gender inequality, affecting women's socio-economic development and overall well-being. In order to solve this problem, there should be policy reformation, educational training for women in enhancing their skills and employability and organising awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and promote women's empowerment. Therefore, it was recommended that there should be age-inclusive policy, health support for women, financial security, leadership pipeline and safety through the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in women sizes.

Key words: Gender-based, labour market, empowerment, occupational segregation, restrictions



Introduction

Women play vital roles in society, contributing significantly to various aspects of life. Such significances could be social, economic, personal, and even global. Their significance extends beyond individual achievements to impact communities, nations, and the world at large. Meanwhile, some African countries have laws that mandate equal pay for equal work, but these laws are often not enforced, that is why there are occupational restrictions in some parts of African continent. Such restrictions vary across regions and industries, but certain patterns emerge. Some significant barriers in sectors like mining, construction and factories, energy, water, agriculture and transportation. In West Africa, specifically in Liberia and Nigeria, women working in extractive and agricultural sectors experience sexual violence and sex-based harassment, and, economic abuse. According to Sandberg (2013), she discusses the challenges women face in the workplace and encourages them to take leadership roles. She argues that women need to 'lean in' to positions of power to create more equitable opportunities. She has also been a vocal advocate for women's empowerment and equality in the workplace. In addition, Babcock, L. & Laschever, S. (2003) argues that women are less likely to negotiate for themselves in the workplace, which can lead to significant differences in salary, promotions, and career advancement. Their book's findings have implications for women's career development and highlight the need for women to develop negotiation skills to achieve their goals. By understanding the negotiation gap and developing effective strategies, women can improve their ability to advocate for themselves and achieve greater success in their careers. Friedan (1963) challenged the societal expectations placed on women, arguing that the traditional roles of wife and mother were limiting and suffocating. She identified a sense of discontent and unhappiness among women which she termed, 'the problem that has no name'. Women were expected to find fulfillment in domestic roles, but many felt unfulfilled and restless. Some other points made by her are about the feminine mystique, women's identity and social change.

In 2020, the world bank published a policy research working paper titled 'Gendered Laws and Women in the Workforce', which analysed the evolution of legal gender equality over time and its relationship to women's labour market outcomes using data from the Women, Business and the Law project that have keys areas as mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pension. However, the Women, Business and the Law project has expanded its research to include safety and childcare which aimed at identifying gaps in laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunities and provide insights for policymakers to promote greater equality and empowerment for women. The authors who contributed to World Bank, Women, Business and the Law project are; 'Gender Equality, Poverty and Economic Growth (Morrison et al., 2007)', 'The Equality Equation: Advancing the Participation of Women and Girls in STEM (Hammond et al., 2020)', 'Accelerating Gender Equality Through Reforming Legal Frameworks (2023)'.

Meanwhile, in gender equality and macroeconomics, Andrew Morrison, Dhushyanth Raju, and Nistha Sinha (2007) authored foundational policy research for the World Bank demonstrating the direct links between gender equality, poverty reduction, and accelerated economic growth (Morrison et al., 2007). Their work emphasizes those gender gaps in the labor market yield severe macroeconomic costs.

In addition, the STEM and Career Gap of Alicia Hammond, Eliana Rubiano Matulevich, Kathleen Beegle, and Sai Krishna Kumaraswamy (2020) produced The Equality Equation for the World Bank's Gender Group. Their research details how entrenched behavioral biases, psychological barriers, and institutional gaps track girls away from STEM fields and highly remunerative technical careers, cementing occupational segregation (Hammond et al., 2020).

Furthermore, legal frameworks and economic restrictions of Marina Elefante, Tazeen Hasan, Marie Hyland, Natalia Mazoni Silva Martins, and Tea Trumbic (2023) contributed to the World Bank's Gender Thematic Policy Notes Series. Their research explicitly tracks how discriminatory legal frameworks and institutional regulations restrict women's economic participation and highlights the direct benefits of implementing targeted legal reforms (Elefante et al., 2023).

In Southwestern Nigeria (including Ondo State), historical realities allowed pre-colonial Yoruba women significant mobility through market politics and trade networks (Adekunle, 2019). However, modern formal economic

institutions have failed to absorb women at equal rates to men, often restricting them to precarious informal micro-enterprises due to uneven educational attainment and structural credit biases (Odozi, 2012; Wuya, 2013).

Research Problems

Despite global, regional, and national instruments advocating for gender equality, women in Nigeria, particularly within municipal hubs like the Ondo metropolis, remain highly vulnerable to systemic underdevelopment, poverty, and economic marginalization (Nwokocha, 2013). This vulnerability is structurally maintained through gender-based occupational restriction (or occupational segregation), a process driven by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, rigid socio-cultural socialization, and institutional barriers (Aina, 1998; Nwokocha, 2013).

In Ondo State, cultural ideologies dictate distinct divisions of labor, often restricting women to informal, low-yielding domestic or retail activities while reserving high-status, high-income formal sectors for men (Odozi, 2012). This restriction creates an imbalanced economic landscape. The core research problem lies in understanding how these artificial boundaries limit women's economic independence, exacerbate the 'feminization of poverty', and depress overall sustainable development indicators within the Ondo metropolis.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to critically explore and evaluate the impact of gender-based occupational restriction on women in the Ondo metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to identify the specific cultural, religious, and institutional mechanisms driving occupational restriction in the Ondo metropolis, examine the socio-economic consequences of these restrictions on women's income levels, bargaining power, and vulnerability to poverty, assess the disparities in access to formal employment, leadership positions, and economic resources between men and women in the local economy, provide actionable recommendations for local policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders to dismantle these barriers and foster inclusive gender justice.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the forms of occupational restrictions experienced by women.
2. To examine the socio-cultural factors responsible for gender-based occupational restrictions.
3. To assess the effects of occupational restrictions on women's economic empowerment.

Research Questions

1. What gender-based occupational restrictions exist in the women's field? That is, to explore formal/informal rules, stereotypes, and barriers to entry or promotion.
2. How do these restrictions affect women's participation, growth, and empowerment? That is, to assess impacts on career mobility, income, leadership roles, and self-agency.
3. What institutional or societal beliefs sustain these gender-based restrictions? That is, to look into cultural norms, workplace policies, recruitment biases.

Literature Review

Gender-based occupational restrictions have long-standing implications for women's empowerment in both global and local contexts. In Nigeria, and particularly in regions like Ondo metropolitan, socio-cultural norms continue to influence women's access to various professions. According to Nnaemeka (1997) examines how African women resist cultural and institutional gender oppression. It contextualizes gender roles within post-colonial African societies, laying a theoretical framework for understanding occupation-based discrimination. Her book offers cultural insights relevant to Yoruba identity and gendered expectations in Southern Nigeria. Aina (1998) gave a seminar text on how traditional Nigerian cultural norms shape women's participation in public and economic life. The text on women, culture and society in Nigeria is useful for understanding how gender norms in Ondo influence occupational segregation and restrictions.

Okeke-Ihejirika, P. (2004) focused on Igbo women in his book which provides comparative insights into how educated women navigate occupational fields despite structural and cultural barriers. The book therefore used to compare women's experiences across ethnic groups in Nigeria, including the Yoruba population in Ondo. Amina, M. (1995) explores gender identities in African contexts and their implications for power and empowerment. She

offers a feminist critique that helps understand how women in Ondo might internalize or resist occupational restriction. Cornwall, et al (2010) provides a nuanced view of empowerment and how it is shaped by local contexts, power structures, and socio-economic realities. They offer conceptual clarity on what ‘empowerment’ means in practice and how it might manifest in Ondo women’s occupational lives. Amadiume, I. (1987) explores the fluidity of gender roles in traditional Igbo society challenging binary gender occupation norms. Though, not Yoruba specific, the text is essential for rethinking rigid gender-based job roles across African societies.

The Nigerian Scholarship, Government Reports, and Local Data are as stated below;

- The National Gender Policy (2006): This milestone government document explicitly mandated a 35% affirmative action target to guarantee that at least 35% of elective and appointive public positions be reserved for women (Wuya, 2013). However, implementation has largely failed, and women remain drastically underrepresented in federal and state administrative structures (Wuya, 2013).
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) & National Census Data: According to historical data from the National Population Commission (NPC), women comprise roughly half of Nigeria's total population (Wuya, 2013). Despite this numerical equity, gender dimensions in labor data show higher unemployment and underemployment rates for females, with women overwhelmingly concentrated as low-earning ‘own-account’ operators within the informal sector rather than formal employers (Odozi, 2012).

A documented case of occupational restriction in Ondo State, Nigeria, is the discrimination against women in the building construction industry. Sanni Rotimi Akinwale (2024) found that many construction employers in Ondo State prefer employing men rather than women because construction work is considered physically stressful and unsuitable for females. This gender bias restricts women’s access to employment opportunities and career advancement in the sector.

Ondo State is suitable as a study site for examining gender-based occupational restrictions because the state has a growing construction and informal labour sector where traditional cultural beliefs still strongly influence employment practices. In many communities within Ondo State, occupations such as building construction, carpentry, and other physically demanding jobs are socially viewed as male professions. This has created visible gender disparities in employment opportunities and career advancement for women.

The distinctive aspect of Ondo State is the coexistence of modernization and deeply rooted cultural norms. Although the state is experiencing urban development and infrastructural growth, many employers and artisans still rely on traditional perceptions that women are physically weaker or unsuitable for technical construction work. This makes Ondo State an important location for studying how culture and gender stereotypes continue to shape occupational participation in contemporary Nigerian society.

According to Akinwale (2024), women in Ondo State’s construction industry face discrimination in recruitment, task allocation, and career progression because employers often prefer male workers for construction-related roles. These documented cases make Ondo State a relevant and credible study site for research on gender-based occupational challenges in Nigeria.

In ILO and UN women reports, some regional case studies on gender and labour market participation, barriers to economic empowerment and policy recommendations were compiled. These were useful for contemporary statistics and policy-based discussions on women’s access to work.

Gender and Occupation

The intersection of gender and occupation has been a critical focus in sociological, economic, and organizational studies. Scholars have explored how gender shapes access to employment, influences occupational choices, and perpetuates inequalities in the labour market. Key themes in the literature include occupational segregation, the gender wage gap, glass ceiling and glass cliff phenomena, and the role of gender norms in shaping professional trajectories. Scholars like Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) argue that the Nigerian family and social systems restrict women's access to and control over the primary means of production, effectively institutionalizing male dominance and cementing female subordination (Nwokocha, 2013).



Occupational Segregation

Occupational Segregation is referred to the unequal distribution of men and women across different occupations. According to Reskin and Roos (1990) research consistently finds that women are overrepresented in caregiving, administrative, and service-oriented roles, while men dominate technical, managerial, and manual labour sectors. There are two types of segregation; horizontal segregation, differences in the types of jobs held by men and women that is, nursing versus engineering. Also, there is vertical segregation, gender-based hierarchy within occupations where men hold more senior or higher-paying positions (Williams, 1995).

Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap remains a persistent issue. While the gap has narrowed over recent decades, women still earn less than men on average. Explanations range from structural factors, such as discrimination and occupational segregation, to human capital theories focusing on education and experience (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Intersectional analyses reveal that the wage gap is wider for women of colour, emphasizing the need to consider race, class, and ethnicity alongside gender.

Gender Norms and Career Choices

Socialisation and cultural expectations play a critical role in shaping career aspirations. From early education, gender norms influence the perception of 'appropriate' jobs for men and women. For example, STEM fields are often coded as masculine, discouraging female participation (Eccles, 1994). Additionally, family responsibilities and societal expectations around caregiving disproportionately affect women's career paths and progression. As a result of the dynamics of patriarchy, Aina (1998) and Aina (2015) highlight that Nigerian societal relations are heavily informed by patriarchy, defined as a 'systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination' (Dogo, 2014; Abdulyakeen, 2022). This system naturally spills over into the workplace, confining women to subservient, nurturing roles while men occupy positions denoting authority and ambition (Dogo, 2014).

Glass Ceiling and Glass Cliff

The 'glass ceiling' refers to invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top leadership roles, despite equivalent qualifications. Studies highlight how biases in hiring, promotion practices, and workplace cultures contribute to this phenomenon (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The 'glass cliff' complements this by suggesting that women are more likely to be promoted to precarious leadership roles during times of crisis, setting them up for failure (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

Policy and Organisational Responses

Recent literature also explores interventions aimed at reducing gender disparities in the workplace. These include diversity training, mentorship programmes, parental leave policies, and pay transparency initiatives. While these efforts have had mixed success, they underscore the importance of institutional commitment and accountability.

Women's empowerment

Women's empowerment is the process of gaining power and control over one's life, making informed decisions, having the ability to act on them. The different dimensions of women's empowerment are; economic empowerment (access to education, employment and financial resources), social empowerment (equal participation in social and cultural life, free from discrimination and violence), psychological empowerment (self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of agency), political empowerment (representation and participation in decision-making processes).

The importance of women empowerment others are; improved health (empowered women make informed decisions about their health), economic growth (women's participation in the workforce contributes to economic development), social justice (empowered promotes equality and challenges discriminatory norms), sustainable development (empowered women contribute to achieving sustainable development goals). The key factors for women's empowerment are education, economic opportunities, social support, policy and legislation.

The challenges faced by women in getting empowered are societal norms, lack of access, violence and power imbalances. Meanwhile, there are ways out of every challenges which are the strategies employed in women empowerment, such as; education and awareness, economic empowerment programmes, social and cultural change,

policy and advocacy. By understanding these aspects of women's empowerment, we can work towards creating a more equitable and just society.

Impacts of occupational restrictions on women's empowerment

There are different impacts of occupational restrictions on women's empowerment, such as; economic, social, psychological and empowerment. Limited job opportunities, lower earnings, reduced economic autonomy are experienced by women.

Due to socio-economic disparities, Ajani (2008) documents that women lag significantly behind men across socio-economic indicators as a result of structural marginalization, rendering them disproportionately poorer and limiting their access to land, formal credit, and technology (Odozi, 2012). Adedokun (2000) emphasizes that due to these multi-layered restrictions, the majority of women in Nigeria wield very weak bargaining power when making critical economic or familial decisions (Nwokocha, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Social role theory suggests that people behave according to the roles they occupy in society. These roles come with expectations, norms, and behaviours that influence how individuals act and interact. Some key aspects of social role theory include;

1. Role expectations: Societal expectations about how someone in a particular role should behave.
2. Role performance: How individuals actually behave in their roles.
3. Role conflict: When multiple roles clash, causing stress or tension.

The theory helps understand how social contexts shape behavior and identity.

George Herbert Mead's (1931) social role theory which is adopted by Mariska Van der Horst (2016) situating Mead's role-taking with Contemporary role theory frameworks, explores how individuals act out socially defined categories, like gender roles, which shape their behavior and interactions. In the context of gender-based occupation restriction, Mead's theory suggests that societal expectations and norms dictate what roles are suitable for men and women. The key aspects of Mead's Social role theory are;

- Role taking: Mead introduced the concept of role-taking, which refers to cognitively taking the role of another person to understand their expectations and perspectives.
- Socially Defined Categories: Mead's theory posits that social roles are defined by societal norms, expectations and behaviours associated with a particular position or status.
- Dynamic Nature of Roles: Roles are not static, they evolve overtime as societal norms and expectations change.

The theory's applications to gender-based occupation restriction are:

- Societal Expectations: Women and men are often expected to occupy specific roles based on traditional gender stereotypes, limiting their occupational choices.
- Role Conflict: Women, in particular, may experience role conflict when trying to balance work and family responsibilities, as societal expectations often prioritise caregiving role over professional ones.
- Changing roles: As societal norms evolve, traditional gender roles are being redefined, allowing for more flexibility and equality in occupational choices.

The impacts on individuals and society are as follows:

- a. Limitations: Gender-based occupation restrictions can limit individuals' potential and perpetuate inequality.
- b. Empowerment: Challenging traditional roles can lead to greater equality and opportunities for individuals to pursue their chosen career.

Hypothesis

H 1a: Socio-cultural patriarchal norms do not significantly influence the restriction of women to specific occupational sectors in the Ondo metropolis.

1b: Socio-cultural patriarchal norms significantly influence the restriction of women to specific occupational sectors in the Ondo metropolis.



- H 2a: There is no significant relationship between gender-based occupational restriction and the average monthly income level of women in the Ondo metropolis.
- 2b: Gender-based occupational restriction significantly reduces the average monthly income level of women in the Ondo metropolis.
- H 3a: Institutional barriers (such as access to formal credit and corporate biases) do not place a significant constraint on women's transition from the informal sector to the formal sector in Ondo State.
- 3b: Institutional barriers place a significant constraint on women's transition from the informal sector to the formal sector in Ondo State.

Methodology

In analysing the data, purposive sampling method was used in ensuring representation from different profession. One hundred women who were into male/female-oriented jobs in Ondo metropolis were purposively selected for interview. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected with the usage of interview to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of gender-based occupational restrictions on women's empowerment. Women aged 35-60 were purposively selected due to the fact that they are expected to have been experienced and married. Twenty women each from engineering, banking, medicine, transportation and bricklaying profession were interviewed. There were fifteen questions, into five sections (sub-topics) which were demographic information, occupational restrictions, women's empowerment, challenges and support, and recommendations. Respondents' participation was voluntary, and no respondent was forced to participate in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the research process. Three hypothesis were developed in guiding the study.

Analysis and Result

One hundred women who are into engineering, banking, medicine, transportation and bricklaying professions were duly interviewed, having twenty people in each of the groups. Sample of the fifteen questions according to five sections (sub-topics) which were demographic information, occupational restrictions, women's empowerment, challenges and support, and recommendations are stated below:

A. Demographic Information: To understand the background of the participant.

1. Can you share your age, marital status, and highest level of education?
2. What is your current occupation and how long have you been in this role?
3. Where do you live, and how would you describe your community - urban, rural, or semi-urban?

B. Occupational Restrictions: To explore any limitations faced in work or career growth.

4. Are there any tasks or roles in your workplace/community that you feel are restricted based on your gender?
5. Have you ever been denied an opportunity, promotion, or training because of your gender? If yes, can you describe it?
6. What cultural or workplace norms make it difficult for you to advance in your career?

C. Women's Empowerment: To assess awareness and experience of empowerment initiatives.

7. What does "women's empowerment" mean to you in your daily life and work?
8. Have you participated in any programs, training, or groups aimed at supporting women's economic or social empowerment?

9. In what ways do you feel more empowered now compared to 3-5 years ago?

D. Challenges and Support: To identify barriers and existing support systems.

10. What are the biggest challenges you face as a woman in your occupation or community?
11. Who or what provides you with the most support when dealing with these challenges - family, peers, NGOs, government?

12. Are there support services or resources you wish were available but currently aren't?

E. Recommendations: To gather suggestions for improvement.

13. What changes would make your workplace or community more supportive of women's participation?
14. What type of training, policy, or program do you think would help reduce occupational restrictions for women?



15. If you could give one recommendation to policymakers or NGOs working on women's empowerment, what would it be?

All the questions were open ended, that is, the respondents were given the privilege to express their feelings freely. Such responses have been distributed according to the five different sub-sections, as shown below:

Demographic Snapshot

- a. Age: 35-60 (medium age - 46).
 - Most concentrated in 38-52 range.
- b. Marital status: (70% married, 15% widowed/divorced, 15% single).
 - Higher marriage rate than younger cohort.
- c. Education:
 - Engineering/Banking/Medicine: 80% have tertiary degrees.
 - Transportation/Bricklaying: 60% secondary or below.
- d. Experience: (10-30 years).
 - Many entered workforce in late 80s/90s, so they have seen changes over time.

Occupational Restrictions

The restrictions experienced by the women them at 35-60?

- Engineering: 14/20 still excluded from high-risk site roles. Excuse shifts from 'safety' to 'liability/insurance'.
- Banking: Glass ceiling persists. 11/20 says 'family commitments' are used to deny senior roles. Age bias starts at 45+.
- Medicine: 9/20 steered away from surgery/leadership. Patients and admin assume older women want to 'slow down'.
- Transportation: 17/20 barred from night/long-haul routes. As this is seen as 'too risky' for women over 40.
- Bricklaying: 18/20 limited to light tasks. Pay gap is explicit: paid less for same output.

Women's Empowerment

How they define it now:

- Banking/Medicine: Financial independence and decision-making power. 16/20 in medicine cite training juniors as empowerment.
- Engineering: 12/20 feel empowered running projects or own firms. But fewer see path to executive roles.
- Transportation/Bricklaying: Empowerment = owning assets. 8/20 transport women own their vehicles. 5/20 bricklayers lead small teams.
- Common theme: Empowerment at 35-60 is more about autonomy and mentoring than proving basic competence.

Challenges & Support

Professions	Top 2 Challenges at 35-60	Main support
Engineering	1. Age bias, tech skills gap. 2. Balancing eldercare with work	Female professional networks, adult children
Banking	1. Menopause and fatigue. 2. Caring for aging parents	Human Resources (HR) flexible leave, husband
Medicine	1. Burnout, reduced stamina. 2. Patient bias preferring younger/male doctors.	Hospital associations, spouse
Transportation	1. Safety, body aches. 2. Harassment at parks/stations	Women driver cooperatives
Bricklaying	1. Chronic pain, no sick leave. 2. Social stigma	Savings groups, adult Sons

Recommendations from Participants

The recommendations shift with age:

1. Age-inclusive policy: Ban age-based role restrictions. Create phased retirement options.
2. Health support: Menopause policies, physiotherapy access, reduced on-call for 50+.
3. Financial security: Pensions for informal workers, low-interest loans for asset ownership.
4. Leadership pipeline: Mandatory succession planning for women in banking/engineering/medicine.
5. Safety: Female-only rest stops, emergency systems, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in women's sizes.

According to George Herbert Mead's social role theory which suggests that people behave according to the roles they occupy in society. These roles come with expectations, norms, and behaviours that influence how individuals act and interact, such as seen in the analysis as women are seen as taking the roles of men according to the societal norms, such roles make them to get supports like; Female professional networks, adult children, Human Resources (HR) flexible leave, husband, Hospital associations, spouse, women driver cooperatives, Savings groups, adult sons.

Findings

1. Women in all the five professions reported the importance of having support systems, such as family, friends, and mentors, to help them navigate challenges. That is, supportive networks, mentorship and policies addressing workplace challenges are crucial for women's empowerment.
2. Women in all the five professions reported the need for policies that supports women's empowerment, such as equal pay, flexible work arrangements, and opportunities for career advancement. That is, they face societal expectations and stereotypes limiting their participation.
3. The top challenges that women in all the five between ages 35-60 face are; age bias, tech skills gap, balancing eldercare with work, menopause and fatigue, caring for aging parents, burnout, reduced stamina, patient bias preferring younger/male doctors, safety, body aches, harassment at parks/stations, chronic pain, no sick leave, social stigma.
4. Most (70%) of the respondents are married, 80% of the women who are into Engineering/Banking/Medicine have tertiary degrees while 60% who are transporters/ bricklayers have secondary education or below.
5. Empowerment at 35-60 is more about autonomy and mentoring than proving basic competence.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact of gender-based occupational restrictions on women's empowerment in Ondo metropolis. In view of this, the findings suggest that women in various occupations face challenges and limitations that affect their autonomy, decision-making power, and overall well-being. Meanwhile, according to the agreed hypothesis, it was discovered that;

1. Gender-based occupational restriction significantly reduces the average monthly income level of women in the Ondo metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender-based occupational restriction and the average monthly income level of women in the Ondo metropolis.
3. Institutional barriers (such as access to formal credit and corporate biases) do not place a significant constraint on women's transition from the informal sector to the formal sector in Ondo State

Recommendation

Based on the findings gotten on the data analysis, it is therefore recommended that there should be age-inclusive policy, health support for women, financial security, leadership pipeline and safety through the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in women sizes. More recommendations are as follows:



- a. Women's empowerment through education, training, and support programs that address occupational restrictions and societal expectations should be promoted.
- b. Stereotypes and biased that limit women's opportunities in certain occupation should be addressed.
- c. Policies that support women's empowerment, such as equal pay, flexible work arrangements, opportunities for career advancement should be developed.

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