



The Role of Male Allies in Advancing Gender Equality in Nigerian Workplaces for Sustainable Development

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Abstract: Nigeria, a country with a diverse and dynamic workforce, has made significant strides towards gender equality in recent years, but persistent disparities persevere. The research investigates the motivations, actions, and impact of male allies who actively support the empowerment of women in their workplaces. The objectives include to assess the tangible impact of male allyship in promoting gender equality and sustainable development. The study employs the survey questionnaire which were purposively shared to 100 staff of Bingham University, Karu, Nigeria, to shed light on the evolving landscape of gender dynamics in Nigerian workplaces. The Intersectionality and Bystander Intervention theories were adopted to help understand the role of male allies in advancing gender equality in Nigerian workplaces for sustainable development. The study concluded that Gender equality is not singularly a woman's issue instead it is a societal issue that requires collective effort and the support of both men and women, therefore, male allies play a critical role in dismantling the barriers that hinder women's progress in the workplace, which in turn contributes to sustainable development. Findings suggest that male allies play a pivotal role in breaking down traditional gender barriers, fostering workplace diversity, and advancing women's careers. Amongst the recommendations was that there is need for organizations to offer leadership and allyship training to male employees in managerial positions to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to actively promote gender equality within their organizations.

Keywords: Allies, Development, Equality, Gender, Workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Male allies for gender equality are advocates who work in partnership with women to uproot and transform harmful gender relations and stereotypes. In working environments filled with men, women need to have a feeling of belonging that allows them to be involved just as actively as their male counterparts. Gender equality in Nigerian workplaces is a vital component of progress and sustainable development in today's rapidly changing world. In a nation as diverse and dynamic as Nigeria, where the country characterizes a substantial percentage of its populace working directly for a pay, gender disparity reflects more than just an argument founded on the principles of equity but an imperative towards fostering economic and social development. Importantly, however, empowering women is evidently one primary concern for this paper, as it seeks to outline its counterargument no less important regarding male allies as proactive driving forces for gender equality.

In the context of the fight for an equitable and just society, this paper discusses prospects for male involvement as allies in building an inclusive and richer future among Nigerian workplaces. The importance of male allies, the hindrances they may face, and what difference they could make in breaking traditional gender roles as part of sustainable development in Nigeria have been considered in the following sections. The latest World Economic Forum (WEF) Gender Gap reports state that there

is an amount of 136 years remaining for the closing of the global gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2023). Although, the business sphere can reveal a faster advance regarding gender parity in leadership, since, based on the Grant Thornton Report Women in Business: Opening the Door to Diverse Talent, 33% of global mid-market senior leaders are women, and 90% of organizations report having at least one woman sitting on their senior team.

There is yet a lot of work to be done, and male allies should necessarily get engaged in it because leadership must lead a change. Impossible to amend decision-making processes, policies, and business strategy without responsibility adopted by the former. That is why men's participation is essential, as Sheree Atcheson (2018), currently - Group VP at Valtech responsible for Diversity and Inclusion, had noted. Unfortunately, activity around gender parity is often still seen as a female preserve. "What is often wrong in many business organizations is that the women usually get engaged in gender initiatives, and at the same time, there is a problem of how to address men who dominate the workplace," says Vassilis Kazas(2022), the managing partner at Grant Thornton Greece. This leads to change initiatives being seen as women's issues when the position should actually be the other way around. For this reason, there is significant male rhetoric on gender parity that has not translated into real commitment. In 2019, Vassilis Kazas found in his report that while 77% of men in theory did everything, they could for gender fairness, only 41% of women

agreed they did. Meanwhile, 60% of the overall respondents said they rarely see men speaking out against gender discrimination.

It emphasizes that being an ally is not only attentive to the organizational culture and talent management processes and policies like glass ceiling but it can also be as simple as standing out to support your female colleagues. *"It is about listening so that we can try to understand, learn what it is we do not know, how we can make a difference, and then do something about it. That could be as simple as trying to be a better team member,"* said Adrian Warr (2021), CEO of south-east Asia and APAC head of employee experience at Edelman and Co-chair of Male Allies in Hong Kong. Mais il y a des proactive pour aller chercher l'égalité en direction. *"An ally will only be as good as their actions,"* said Valérie Verdoni, Senior Director at Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Canada International Business Center. Female allies should demonstrate empathy on one hand and understand on the other that the actuality of what is happening with the woman may differ from his; it is supporting her. Yet, for this ally role, it entails networks, connection, and relationships, as "he needs to establish and maintain a trusting relationship with those female colleagues so he can enable such women to achieve their full potential".

That further reinforces the necessity of having male allies who are willing to push their networks out—so simple is it for people to pack their networks with those individuals from whom they would directly identify. However, things get worse because when there are more men than women in leadership positions. *"Male leaders can also play an important role in recruiting more women into senior positions by actively eliminating bias in the process. 'What I would request men to do is to discipline themselves based on the guideline of engaging the best person for the job, having interviewed a varied slate of candidates, as well as ensuring that they recognize that different does not mean wrong,'"* says Acheson. This paper bases its arguments on this premise as it seeks to analyze the influence of male who supports their female counterparts to advance gender equality in Nigerian workplaces for sustainable development.

Objectives

The study investigates workers' views on the extent to which males are allies to the agenda for gender equality in Nigerian workplaces towards enhancing sustainable development. These general objectives are then narrowed down into specific ones that include:

1. To Investigate the role of male allyship on female Employees performance in Nigerian workplaces
2. To assess the tangible impact of male allyship in promoting gender equality and sustainable development.
3. To Explore the obstacles and challenges that men face when actively supporting gender equality.

Theoretical Foundation/ Literature Review and Concepts

Intersectionality Theory:

The term "intersectionality" was introduced to legal studies by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Her article introducing the term dates back to 1989, and another of her works appeared on this topic in 1991. The idea behind the term is derived from critical race studies, which claim the existence of intricate connections between race, gender, and other systems that tend to collaborate in both oppressing and privileging alternative sectors.

Gender inequality alone is not found much in Nigeria like elsewhere, but rather it intersects with different axes of differences and inequalities such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or even age. According to intersectionality theory supporters, people are prone to various types of discrimination that are interrelated. In this sense, it leads us considering how the concept of intersectionality can guide our reflection on the nature of male allies' role in progressing gender equality if we want to know aspects of identity that are uniquely cross-cutting and influence perspective and experience. For example, a male ally from Nigeria at work may be coming from an ethnic minority with the added dimension of low socioeconomic status. For such a case, gender inequality for him may be experienced with these intersectional factors coming into play, thus requiring the programs set up to be tailored towards what have most affected him and the opportunities that may be at his disposition.

Bystander Intervention Theory

The phenomenon was first presented and promoted in the research laboratory by social psychologists John M. Darley and Bibb Latané in 1968 as it evoked interest in the topic after the death of Kitty Genovese in 1964. It focuses on the relationship of those who witness discrimination or harassment but are not directly involved. With regard to gender balance in Nigeria's workplaces, male allies can be socially positioned as bystanders. They can only watch and respond to situations of gender-based discrimination that they observe happening to women, such as when sexist comments are being said, incidence of women receiving less pay or other inequalities where they are excluded from decision making. Interventions from male allies encourage an active voice during such incidences and create inclusion. This strategy not only empowers women but also empowers a culture of responsible and dignified interaction. Another important aspect to consider is facilitating male allies with all skills and knowledge that will empower them to intervene effectively without concretizing the very harmful stereotypes or worsening the conflicts.

By combining Intersectionality and Bystander Intervention theories, the researcher creates a more holistic and contextually sensitive approach that proffer solution to male and female imbalance statuses in Nigerian workplaces and can develop tailored strategies that account for the unique experiences of women with intersecting identities while empowering male allies to actively contribute to sustainable gender equality and workplace development.

Literature review

Gender Inequality in Nigerian Workplaces

Nigerian workplaces, like those in many other countries, have been characterized by gender disparities. Numerous studies have highlighted the challenges women face in these environments, such as limited access to leadership positions, unequal pay, and harassment. For sustainable development to occur, these gender inequalities need to be addressed, and male allies can play a crucial role in this process.

Women form 45.5% of the Nigerian labour force (World Bank, 2019). Other diverse regions had registered an increase in female labour participation in both formal and informal grounds, rural, and urban areas between 1990 and 2009 (Olowa and Adeoti, 2014). Empowerment is more likely to happen with women doing

work outside the family home, more so if it is not a familial-based organization, remunerative jobs other than familial enterprises, and in regular and full-time permanent secure jobs. (Oluwagbemiga, Kolawole, & Akinwale, 2016).

Yet women are directed towards a lower level of success in their work because of a lower degree of education and fewer terms on finance as well as digital connectivity that they could make use of to open access to information on the market and banking services using mobile transactions. Female gender often become entrepreneurs out of economic necessity. But for professional prowess, females explore diverse tactical choices because they are restrained by gender-specific factors which exert their influence on the decisions that female entrepreneurs take, such as those arising from household related demands and other resources available to them. A gender gap in Nigeria was identified reaching 39% among men and women led small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Government policy, however, is subjugated through attention in the corporate area while females are expected to be seen in large number in farming, non-farm initiatives as well as informal sector. This is one other instance where male and female imbalance statuses in Nigerian organizations in which the lawful, dogmatic as well as social top limit have come to be accepted as limits for women's potential in the labour market (Oyekanmi, 2005).

The Concept of Male Allies

Male allies are individuals, typically men, who actively support and advocate for male and female impartiality in industrial organizations. Their support can take various forms, including mentoring, sponsorship, and advocating for policies that promote gender equity. The idea behind men being supportive of women in industrial organizations took its root in the understanding that achieving gender equality requires the engagement of both genders.

Gender equity allies are thus individual dominant group members (men) who show a personal commitment to taking action, both professionally and in their personal lives, developing supportive and collaborative relationships that establish the foundation for public acts of sponsorship and advocacy to effect cultural change within organizations systematically. While men often express low psychological standing and competence relative to specific ally actions for engagement in gender-parity initiatives, male engagement is important. As highlighted by Boston Consulting Group (2022), the findings further identified that while having the bulk of the active involvement of men in gender diversity and inclusion, considerably more women than men tend to be highly optimistic concerning their organization's progress in eliminating inequities (BCG, 2022).

The Impact of Male Allies on Gender Equality

Social Psychological and Personality Science published new research that found in different cultural contexts that the presence of an ally who is supportive of gender equality reduces anticipated feelings of isolation while increasing anticipation of support and respect. However, whereas several prevailing allyship reviews are focused on reactionary events such as observations or employment choices, seen to be driven by flagrant misogyny, this work points out that people need not wait for something manifestly sexist to occur before they can become effective allies. "Men support for women in workplace goes along way in promoting gender equality

at work; they serve as role models for other men and break stereotypes and biases while actively helping their female colleagues. In doing so, they contribute to a more inclusive and equitable work environment (Kerry, & Alyssa, 2022).

There is growing evidence that engagement with men is key to success in achieving gender equality. From committing acts of gender-based violence (GBV) to aversion for domestic work and caring responsibilities, men's behaviour manifests how social norms dictate actions. Most of these practices centre on a traditional view of masculinity (Amadu & Adetanwa, 1998). And yet, they are significant in themselves in countering those beliefs and practices that tell women to subordinate themselves. In many of the areas where Concern works, however, questioning these gender norms can be just as risky for men as for women. In a situation of crisis, therefore, men who have grown up under this structure feel added pressure. Since the commencement of the Syrian crisis that has caused the mass emigration of refugees, it was evident that the men could no longer offer support to their families and thus felt high-pressure situations would be best fixed by outwardly showing strength. Many men, therefore, erupted in violence with their wives and children for the first time. (Michael, & Richard, 2015).

Men could cooperate with women in many different fields. When the Boston Marathon started, female participation was impermissible on the false notion that they were not physically fit to run 26 miles. In 1967, Kathrine Switzer decided she wanted to run and was prepared to challenge this sexist and discriminatory practice. She succeeded in registering using her initials, hiding the fact that she was female. During the race, she was attacked by the race manager who wanted to stop her from competing. However, her coach and boyfriend stood up against her attacker and protected her from the attacks. She became the first woman to enter the Boston Marathon due to her sheer determination and the support of her father, who encouraged her to race, as well as the support from her other male allies who ran with her and protected her while she competed. Her male allies were essential to her success. By 1972, the rules changed to authorize an official women's race (BCG, 2018).

Male Allies in Nigerian Workplaces

While research on male allies in Nigerian workplaces is relatively limited, there are examples of organizations and initiatives that have started to embrace this concept such as HeForShe Nigeria, a global movement initiated by UN Women aimed at male participation for the promotion of gender equality, the Nigerian Women in Public Relations (NWIPR), the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), NGOs and Women's Rights Organizations and Educational Institutions such as Universities and colleges in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigerian men who actively support gender equality have been shown to create more inclusive workspaces, which can lead to improved employee morale, productivity, and long-term sustainability (Ajir, 2002).

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), under its Global Women's Leadership Program (GWLP), is developing a Male Allies for Leadership Equality (MALE) training curriculum as it searches for answers to the question: "How can women and men work together in leadership in a country that is in conflict or undergoing political change? Under the auspices of this program, IFES is going to conduct a series of focus group

discussions and key informant interviews for the purpose of establishing the best strategies to support the growth of coalitions of women and men who work together supporting gender inclusivity in political procedures. Knowledge was exchanged and advanced in three broad areas: men's acceptance of, support for, and practice of gender equality in institutional settings; how men could or did further women's leadership within homes and communities; and challenges faced by women in leadership and their strategies for working with male allies (International Foundation for Electoral Systems [IFES], 2006).

Working in Abuja, IFES met with a whole series of stakeholders, from the members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to male and female political party leaders, youth advocates, civil society representatives, and community activists from the northern states presently witnessing security challenges and instability. In general, both males and females felt that women had been culturally stereotyped into not being able to take up leadership roles at any level, with reasons such as a woman's duty being at home. Many people don't view women as leaders, and participants felt that if more were aware of how women's leadership could and would be benefiting society, then they would be more supportive of it. It was also observed that in places where there is conflict, there are difficulties for women to take up leadership roles because it is perceived that in such situations, they are expected to look only after humanitarian issues. Major barriers were highlighted as sexual harassment at the workplace, workplace equality, and a culture of corruption and favoritism (IFES).

Challenges and Barriers

In Nigeria, traditional gender roles and stereotypes often prescribe certain behaviours and attitudes for male as well as female. Male allies promoting gender equality may face resistance or criticism for deviating from these norms. Many men may not be fully aware of the gender disparities and discrimination women face in the workplace, which can hinder their ability to advocate for change. Male allies may also fear potential backlash from colleagues or superiors for advocating for gender equality, which can affect their willingness to speak out or take action and may find it challenging to connect with like-minded individuals or support networks in the workplace, making it harder to advocate for gender equality. Some male allies might experience stereotype threat, where they worry about being perceived as weak for supporting gender equality.

Therefore, organizational culture is an important factor in gender equality. Some organizations may not have policies or practices that support gender equality, which can create barriers for male allies trying to effect change and colleagues who do not share the same beliefs or values may resist or challenge male allies' efforts to promote gender equality, creating tension and difficulties in workplace relationships. Male allies may not have the necessary knowledge or skills to effectively promote gender equality, which can hinder their efforts. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Nigerian workplaces can make it challenging for male allies to find women role models or mentors, which can be important for their advocacy. There may be legal and policy barriers that affect gender equality in Nigerian workplaces, and male allies may need to navigate these complexities to make a difference.

The Intersection of Gender Equality for Sustainable Development

Moreover, gender is not only a social problem but also a development problem. Where women have been given equal opportunities, they prove to be one of the key contributors toward economic growth and development. The recognition of male champions in advocacy for gender equality for Nigeria is not an issue considered as part of social corporate responsibility for an institution, but instead a very important element in the realization of the SDGs. The doctrine of intersectionality lies in that lots of discrimination forms are mixed up in human relations. It suggests that a person may be exposed at the same time to, for example, sexism, racism, and ableism; thus, a Roma woman is subjected to discrimination on the grounds of both ethnicity and gender. It is, for this reason, an important concept for gender equality since it explains how diverse forms of discrimination interrelate and react among themselves in such a way that they worsen quantifiable inequality which has been measured.

No promise of good things: the blessings of intersectionality for promoting gender equality will probably remain circumscribed in impact and can even be deleterious to the position of some of the most disadvantaged women. When planning women's empowerment projects, special needs and challenges presented by Roma women may be overlooked or ignored, worsening further marginalization. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the marginalised Roma people, specifically the women, have their basic rights, access to health care, education, housing, employment, and standard living standards restricted. This was a problem even by then, with early marriage plaguing Roma women; 27% of marginalised Roma women between 20-49 years reported to have married before reaching the age of 18 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina compared to only 11% of non-Roma women of the same age. UNDP is taking due seriousness to intersectionality thereby not leaving anyone behind.

This follows the detailed guidelines of the approach based on the principle of having a structure in place to holistically deal with several affiliation of deprivation and disadvantage and discrimination that are interacting with gender inequality. For instance, the BiH Country Office Gender Equality Strategy and Plan of Action are intended to foster linkages with women groups dealing with women across all segments at the grass root levels. The main cross-cutting initiative from within the Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office (CO) which is a multi-activity nicknamed as the Intersectionality Corner is on board, and it has greatly increased the CO's awareness and impact about how gender inequality interfaces with other kinds of discrimination to engender certain and enhanced forms of disadvantages in women.

Other than that, gender equality is embedded as part of the sustainable development call. In fact, when women have equal opportunities, they contribute to the economy both at the national and firm levels. The herein conducted literature review for support males acting as allies gives 10 crucial themes. Although admittedly this is a subject on which research is still emerging, particularly in the context of Nigeria, evidence aligns with this view that male allies could be part of the helping constituency to affect a transformed and equal workplace. With Nigeria pursuing a course of sustainable development, it is much-needed that considerations on mainstreaming understanding and mobilizations of male allies

be put at the center of strategies geared towards gender equality and its attached benefits for a diverse and inclusionary workforce.

Concepts

Gender Equality: Gender equality is the notion that all human beings are free and equally dignified. Workplace gender equality implies providing an equal right and opportunity for women and men to indulge in different parts of their workplace and banning exclusion in relation to gender.

Male Allies: Male allies are men who actively support and advocate for gender equality. They recognize the challenges and inequalities women face, and they take actions to address these issues. In the context of this topic, male allies are individuals who help women advance in the workplace, support their rights, and work towards a more equitable work environment.

Nigerian Workplaces: This refers to the professional environments in Nigeria. Nigerian workplaces can include various

sectors such as government, private companies, non-profit organizations, and more.

Sustainable Development: Sustainable development can be viewed as any process that ensures the use of resources and establishing systems to enable the needs of the present generation to be met without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. In this regard, gender equality in workplaces shall not be just an affair of equitability but rather consideration of accruing benefits associated with long-term well-being and prosperity of Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employs the survey questionnaire that were purposively shared to 100 staff of Bingham University, Karu, Nigeria, to shed light on the evolving landscape of gender dynamics in Nigerian workplaces.

Analysis and Findings

Table 1: Role of male allyship on female Employees performance in Nigerian workplaces

Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
Agree	35	35.0	35.0	77.2
Disagree	15	15.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The question to determine the role of male allyship on female employee performance disclose that Male allyship play a significant role in enhancing the performance of female employees in Nigerian workplaces as gender diversity and inclusion are essential for fostering a more productive and equitable work environment. Table 1 shows that 85.0% of the respondents agree that Male allies actively challenge and question gender biases and stereotypes that exist in the workplace. By doing so, they help create an environment where women are seen as capable professionals, leading to increased confidence and better performance. while 15.0% of the respondents disagree with this notion. this table provide answer to objective one.

Table 2: Assessment of tangible impact of male allyship in promoting gender equality and sustainable development.

Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	48	48.0	48.0	48.0
Agree	40	40.0	40.0	82.2
Disagree	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 presents the tangible impact of male allyship in promoting gender equality and sustainable development. About 88.0% of the respondents are of the view that male allies advocacy (in a male dominated environment) for female colleagues when it comes to promotions, pay raises, and career development opportunities can help women advance in their careers, which positively impacts their performance and job satisfaction and thereby promote gender equality and equity in workplaces while 12.0 % of the respondents though disagree that male allies advocacy (in a male dominated environment) for female colleagues does not promote gender equality and impliedly does not also impact productivity.

Table 3: Exploration of the obstacles and challenges that men face when actively supporting gender equality.

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREE	52	52.0
AGREE	36	36.0
NOT SURE	6	6.0
DISAGREE	4	4.0
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	2.0
TOTAL	100	100

Source: field survey, 2023

Out of the respondents in the table above, the majority percentage was 88.0%, who argued that the men on the front line for support of gender equality can face several challenges, including backlash or criticism coming from persons who are unwilling to accept change due to its threat to prevailing circumstances. They may be faced by discouragements, ridicule, and hostility of peers, or they might be discouraged within their family and professional circling despite the sincerity of their efforts in promoting gender equity. In another note, it needs to regard these problems on looking for a more integrated and egalitarian society. Male allies were a high 6.0% of respondents who were not sure concerning the obstacles that could be faced by them while actively supporting for gender equality, and 6.0% of respondents also out rightly disagreed that any obstacle and challenges can follow men who are active supporters of gender equality.

Discussion

The survey unveiled that a relationship exists between the Male allyship and the enhancement of the performance of female employees in Nigerian workplaces as gender diversity and inclusion are essential for fostering a more productive and equitable work environment. This relationship can be both empowering and challenging, creating a complex interplay between work and personality. Hence 85.0% of the respondents agree that Male allies actively challenge and question gender biases and stereotypes that exist in the workplace. By doing so, they help form an atmosphere in which females are seen as capable professionals, leading to increased confidence and better performance. (see table 1).

This finding further correlates with the research by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), who through its Global Women's Leadership Program (GWLP) are developing a male allies for leadership equality (MALE) training curriculum to search for answers and in order to inform their development of the MALE curriculum, IFES conducted focus group discussions and key informant interviews on how best to foster the development of coalitions of women and men to advocate for more inclusive political processes. This finding also supports the bystander theory which in the context of advancing gender equality, considered male allies as potential bystanders who can intervene when they witness gender-based discernment. Impliedly, this shows that in Nigerian workplaces, where certain harmful behaviours might be deeply ingrained in the culture, this theory can help male allies play a crucial role in changing social norms by actively challenging and addressing sexist attitudes, behaviours, and practices. This theory helps develop a comprehensive strategy that extends beyond policy and structural

changes. This result lends support to the study's first objective, which is to Investigate the role of male allyship on female Employees performance in Nigerian workplaces

A significant number of the respondents which translate to 88.0% of the respondents were of the view that male allyship have tangible impact in promoting gender equality and sustainable development. Even though 12.0 % of the respondents disagree that male allies advocacy (in a male dominated environment) for female colleagues does not promote gender equality and impliedly does not also impact productivity. This finding lend support to Boston Marathon race research in which females were not permitted to be part of the race when it started on the false notion that they were not physically fit to run 26 miles, however, in 1967, Kathrine Switzer's emerged the first female that enter the Boston Marathon due to her sheer determination and the support by her coach, boyfriend and father who encouraged her to race and the support from her other male allies who ran with her and protected her while she competed. Her male allies were essential and impactful to her success. By 1972, the rules changed to authorize an official women's race.

This finding also aligns with the inclusive Approach and targeted intervention of the intersectionality theory which indicate that the workplace is not a monolithic environment, and issues related to gender equality can vary greatly depending on the intersection of identities and by applying an inclusive perspective, one can ensure that the experiences of all women are considered, and strategies for male allies are developed with a more inclusive lens. In this same vein, the targeted interventions of intersectionality theory also allow for a more precise targeting of interventions. It can help identify where male allies can be most effective in addressing specific challenges faced by women with intersecting identities. For instance, male allies may need to focus on different issues when supporting women from marginalized communities as opposed to women from more privileged backgrounds.

Table 3 shows that 88.0% of the respondents (which consist of both male and female) were of the opinion that men who actively support gender equality can face various obstacles, challenges and backlash from individuals who are resistant to change. They may encounter resistance, mockery, or hostility from peers, colleagues, or family members despite their genuine commitment to promoting gender equity. While 6.0% of the respondents were not sure about any obstacle male allies could face, 6.0% of respondents out rightly disagree that any obstacles and challenges can trail men who actively support gender equality. This further verifies the report by Vassilis Kazas in 2019 which

claimed that 77% of men said they do 'all within their capability and capacity' to reach gender fairness, while 41% of females accept that they did. In fact, 60% of the respondents rarely see men speak in contradiction of male and female imbalance status out of the fear of being labeled a weakling. The report went further to note, "What several industries are not doing right is merely involving females on gender equality initiatives, while battling to establish the best way to tell the men occupying leadership roles in the workplace, and doing so from the position that women are a minority group. This amounted to change initiatives being regarded female's problems, whereas the opposite should have been the case." Consequently, many men in public declarations advocate for gender parity yet this obligation to the root is not reflected through action perhaps for the causal effect of backlashes and criticism influenced by social-cultural factors.

Conclusion

Due to all these reasons, the contribution of male allies will have to be drawn on in promoting and achieving gender equality in Nigerian workplaces toward sustainable development. Gender equality does not remain a women's issue or an issue for only women, but one that is for the whole society and accordingly demands inclusivity and support from both men and women. Male allies contribute significantly to tearing down barriers stopping women in the progression within the organization. This eventually works toward sustainable development. In such participation, likely will women engender an inclusive, diverse, just work environment, with aggregate effects on organizational growth and development. For gender equality, men may further champion equal opportunities in their workplace as agents of change by actively supporting policies related to work-family life balance, mentors and sponsors for the female gender at the workplace and catalysts of dialogue on issues related to gender inequality. This is aimed at professional development and welfare-enhancing activities of such women who will turn around to give something out with their belief being that this will stir out innovations in productivity and economic growth for Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. There is need to develop and implement gender sensitization programs within Nigerian workplaces to raise awareness among male employees about the importance of gender equality, its impact on sustainable development, and the role male can play as allies.
2. There is need to offer leadership and allyship training to male employees in managerial or supervisory positions to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to actively support and promote gender equality within their teams and organizations.
3. Encourage organizations to set clear and measurable gender equality goals as part of their sustainability initiatives, and involve male allies in the planning and execution of these goals.

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