



In partnership with



Gendered Inequities In Nigeria's Creative Sector

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Abbreviations

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IP: Intellectual Property

IDI: In-depth interview

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

KII: Key Informant Interview

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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Authors

Michael Kunnuji & Florence Nweke

Youth Researchers

Folajumi Sefiu, Esther Olayinka Omoyele, Evidence Adjarho, Mofopefoluwa Oluwaseun Adeaga, Oluwaseun Adesola Muraina, Patience Inyang, Favour Ujor Agi, Babatunde Joseph, Fathiat Omolayo, Abimbola Akinyeke, Goodness Henry, Chidinma Sandra Ojukwu, Temiloluwa Olatiboye, Chikodi Christabel Ezinwa, Tomisin Akintibu (National Creative Ambassador)



Executive Summary

In the last decade, Nigeria's creative industry has experienced remarkable growth, contributing 2.5% to GDP in 2024 and ranking as the country's second-largest employer with over 4.7 million jobs by 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics [Nigeria], 2025; Jobberman Nigeria, 2021). Nigeria's movie industry produces about 2,500 films annually, making it the world's second-largest film industry, while Afrobeats artists have claimed multiple Grammy Awards since 2020. In addition, events like Detty December and Calabar Carnival generate substantial economic impact (UNESCO, 2021b; Adigun, 2025). The sector counters the one-way flow of cultural goods from high-income countries and offers employment opportunities to many (UNESCO, 2022; Jobberman Nigeria, 2025). With a youthful population—median age 18.1 years and 28.5% aged 18–35, it holds immense potential for young creatives (United Nations, 2024).

Entrenched gender barriers severely limit women's participation: young females remain under-represented in technical roles, confined to subordinate positions even in film-making, face unequal remuneration, and encounter poor access to funding compared to men (UNESCO, 2021a). Existing intellectual property laws and regulatory bodies fall short in ensuring gender justice, while emerging bills offer uncertain remedies. Nigeria's efforts to maximize the benefits of the industry align with the 2005 UNESCO Convention (ratified 2007), as seen in the 2024 Creative Economy Development Fund and the Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises (IDICE) program, which support creative ecosystems, IP-collateralized loans, entrepreneurship, and global partnerships (Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy [Nigeria], 2025; Anyanwu, 2024).

This report investigates gender-based inequities faced by young female creatives (aged 18–35) in this rapidly growing sector, that has proven to be a significant contributor to economic development. It explores the systemic barriers rooted in patriarchal norms, financial exclusion, and weak regulatory frameworks that disproportionately limit women's participation and success. To better understand what women creatives contend with, we conducted a study surveying 513 female creatives across seven key sites in Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, complemented by in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, photovoice, storytelling, and creative representation.

Key Findings

- **Prevalence of Harassment:** Over 90% of respondents reported experiencing harassment, including sexual propositions (29%), forced sex (17%), and denial of opportunities due to gender (36%), with 86% facing such issues in the past year.
- **Gender Pay Gap and Economic Barriers:** Approximately 46% witnessed a gender pay gap, with 32% personally experiencing underpayment due to gender. Limited access to capital, exacerbated by high collateral requirements, restricts women's ability to own businesses or assume leadership roles.
- **Systemic Exclusion:** Women face exclusion from decision-making and leadership due to male-dominated ownership, cultural stereotypes, and inadequate policies. Over 65% encountered job advertisements with criteria unrelated to skills, and 55% reported job or bid rejections, often linked to gender-based factors.
- **Internalized Gender Bias:** Both men and women internalize biases, presuming male competence in female-dominated fields (e.g., culinary arts) while questioning female competence in male-dominated areas (e.g., photography). Female-on-female micromanagement further stifles creativity.
- **Resilience and Digital Opportunities:** Despite challenges, 91% of respondents envision long-term careers in the sector, with 99% leveraging social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) to bypass traditional gatekeepers, particularly in new media (24% representation). However, technology introduces new barriers, such as equipment costs.
- **Policy and Infrastructure Gaps:** The creative sector lacks a robust cultural policy, adequate infrastructure (e.g., theaters, cinemas), and coordination, limiting opportunities and reinforcing inequities, particularly in northern Nigeria due to cultural and religious restrictions.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- 1. Establish gender-focused funding mechanisms:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy, in partnership with agencies like the Bank of Industry and the Development Bank, should introduce low-interest loans, microfinance schemes, and grants tailored to women in sub-sectors such as audiovisuals, design, and gastronomy, with terms sensitive to their limited access to collateral.
- 2. Strengthen regulatory oversight for gender equity:** The largely unregulated creative space requires enforcement of gender-responsive standards. Regulatory bodies—including the Actors Guild of Nigeria, the National Film and Video Censors Board, and the Advertising Regulatory Council—should embed gender equity clauses in industry regulations to ensure equal pay, fair access, and protection from harassment.
- 3. Ensure workplace safety and accountability:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, in partnership with guilds in the creative sector, should establish an independent **Ethics Ombudsman** for the creative sector and mandate zero-tolerance anti-harassment policies across guilds and associations, with transparency in hiring and casting processes.

Programmatic Recommendations

- 1. Leverage technology for empowerment:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy, should lead the implementation of digital skills training for women in new media, audiovisuals, and visual arts, and expand access to global markets via digital platforms. Use social media to challenge gender stereotypes and promote visibility for women creatives.
- 2. Foster multi-stakeholder collaborations:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy and the National Economic Summit Group should encourage and coordinate partnerships among government, private sector, and women-led cooperatives, guilds, and unions to improve women's access to resources, funding, and networks.
- 3. Support women's leadership and ownership:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy should develop and fund targeted mentorship and capacity-strengthening programs to increase women's representation in leadership and firm ownership across creative sub-sectors.
- 4. Invest in creative infrastructure:** The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy should prioritize addressing infrastructure gaps by investing in theaters, cinemas, studios, cultural centers, and performance venues to enhance women's ability to monetize their creative output.
- 5. Address socio-cultural barriers:** Civil Society Organizations should partner with religious and traditional rulers to implement community-based advocacy and educational initiatives, particularly in northern Nigeria, to challenge restrictive norms and promote women's participation in the creative economy.
- 6. Improve access to equipment and resources:** Guilds within the creative sector, in partnership with the Bank of Industry, should establish equipment leasing and subsidy programs to offset high equipment costs and enable greater participation by women in creative production.

Conclusion: Nigeria's creative sector holds immense potential but is hindered by systemic gender inequities that undermine women's dignity, career progression, and economic participation. Urgent policy reforms, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions are essential to foster an equitable creative ecosystem, ensuring the sector's full potential is realized for all creatives.

1.0 Introduction

Globally, the creative sector has become a major contributor to economic development (UNESCO, 2022, 2023; Wang, 2025). Despite this promise, gender-based barriers such as unequal access to funding, leadership roles, fair remuneration, technical positions and networks, continue to limit women's ability to thrive in the creative sector (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021a). In Nigeria, these challenges are very pronounced, with widespread systemic biases, cultural taboos, patriarchal norms, and limited female representation in strategic positions (Balogun, 2023; Okocha et al., 2025). Yet, robust, Nigeria-specific sector-wide evidence needed to guide sound policies is limited. For example, a recent desk review of key creative sector policies formulated between 2000 and 2025 in Nigeria showed that only one of them clearly included gender considerations (See Appendix 1). Existing literature highlights broad inequalities and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs broadly speaking (Adesua Lincoln, 2012; Bako & Syed, 2018; Mordi et al., 2010), (Adesua Lincoln, 2012; Bako & Syed, 2018; Mordi et al., 2010), but there is a notable scarcity of creative sector-wide, empirical studies on female creatives' lived experiences, specific inequities in work conditions, access to resources, and their intersection with systemic factors.

This report presents findings of a study that addresses this evidence gap by examining the influence of gender-based inequities in the world of work for Nigeria's female creatives with a view to providing evidence for actionable solutions to the challenges identified.

2.0 Background

In the last decade, Nigeria's creative industry recorded unprecedented growth and shown itself to be an important sector worthy of investment (UNESCO, 2023, 2021b). Available data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicate that creative industry accounted for 2.5% of the GDP in 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2025). The industry records the world's second largest film production, ranking above Hollywood (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021b). It is Nigeria's second-largest employing industry, with over 4.7 million jobs as of 2021 and potential to create an additional 2.7 million jobs by 2025 (Jobberman Nigeria, 2021; Oluwole, 2021). In addition to the economic significance of the industry, Nigeria's creative sector remains a primary avenue of countering the one-way flow of cultural goods from high-income countries to the rest of the world (UNESCO, 2022). Nigeria's creative sector also offers marginalized populations, including rural women, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities employment opportunities more than any other sector (Jobberman Nigeria, 2025).

Nigeria's creative sector is a true reflection of innovation. Nollywood, the country's film industry, produces about 2,500 films annually (Akan, 2022). Beyond the numbers, their quality and global demand have made them popular on Over-the-Top media platforms like Netflix, Amazon's Prime Video, and Showmax. Between 2015 and 2020, cinemas grew by 200% in Nigeria, an indication of the growth of the film industry (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021b). Nigeria's Afrobeats musicians have also increased their visibility on the global scene, with four Grammy Awards since 2020: Burna Boy (2021), Wizkid (2021), Tems (2023, 2025), and several nominations (Awards Nominations & Winners | GRAMMY.Com, n.d.). In the last 10 years, a creative festive phenomenon known as Detty December has been evolving around Lagos. Starting around mid-December, it features events like the "Mrs. Universe Africa," Greater Lagos Fiesta, musical concerts, fashion shows, cultural exhibitions, culinary events, and other creative highlights. Detty December is known for diaspora homecoming and lavish parties that transform the city into a cultural epicenter that generated \$72 million in 2024 (Adigun, 2025). The Calabar Carnival, one of Africa's largest street festivals, held annually in Cross River State since 2004, also boosts the creative sector and the local and national economy by showcasing vibrant cultural performances, music, costume design, and other art forms (Amalu & Ajake, 2012).

With a national median age of 18.1 years, and 28.5% of the population within the 18–35 years age group (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2024), Nigeria has a large youth population who can take advantage of the potential of the creative sector. Evidence suggests that the gender norms, cultural and social barriers that prevent women from benefiting from societal rewards broadly also keep them from maximizing opportunities in the creative sector (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021a). Young females are under-represented in the key sectors of the industry, including the technical areas of audiovisual art. In the sectors where they are more equally represented (for example, film-making), they are restricted to subordinate non-leadership roles (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021a). Entrenched gender-based inequality in remuneration disadvantages women, and stifles their access to funding compared to their male counterparts (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021a). With these challenges, a strong regulatory framework is required to reform the sector and ensure that female creatives thrive optimally.

Nigeria has intellectual property laws such as the Copyright Act of 2022, the Trademarks Act of 2004, and the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015, with sections relevant to the regulation of the creative industry. Nigeria also has regulatory bodies such as the National Film and Videos Censors Board, the National Broadcasting Commission, the Copyright Society of Nigeria, and the Musical Copyright Society of Nigeria. The legal framework has a limited focus on IP protection, enforcement against infringement, and digital regulation, without integrating gender-responsive provisions or mechanisms to tackle systemic barriers like unequal remuneration, under-representation in leadership and technical roles, limited access to funding and networks, harassment, or discriminatory norms. For instance, the Copyright Act 2022 aims to enhance digital protections, fair dealing exemptions, and anti-piracy measures but was not designed to address gender-sensitive incentives, data collection on women's participation, or safeguards against biases that undervalue women's contributions in the creative sector despite the unfair confinement of women to subordinate positions. The Trademarks Act 2004 prioritizes brand registration and enforcement but does not address how gender disparities affect women's ability to monetize creative brands or access markets. By implication, it is blind to the imbalance in the creative sector where women receive less visibility (Parsley, 2025).

The Cybercrimes Act 2015 criminalizes offenses like cyberstalking and child exploitation, which can indirectly relate to gender-based harassment in digital creative spaces, yet it falls short in mandating protection against online gender discrimination, or equitable digital access for women creatives.

Regulatory bodies such as the National Film and Videos Censors Board (NFVCB), National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON), and Musical Copyright Society of Nigeria (MCSN) enforce the laws mentioned above through censorship, and broadcasting standards without clear gender justice mandates. The legal and regulatory frameworks do not provide any guidelines for the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data, and they do not promote women's leadership, or implement anti-discrimination policies. Consequently, the laws remain inadequate for addressing gender-based inequities in the creative sector. The inadequacies of these laws and regulatory bodies have led to efforts to enact more laws and establish frameworks for improved regulation, as shown in the Nigeria Creative Industries Development Bill (2023), the Creative Economy Support Bill, and the Culture Bill. The existing frameworks do not ensure gender justice in the creative sector, and it remains uncertain whether new laws, policies, and guidelines relevant to the creative sector are able to address gender-based inequities in the sector.

UNESCO (2025) provides a blueprint for supporting the creative industry in its 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO).

The convention promotes the integration of culture into sustainable development frameworks, and support for creative ecosystems and access to global markets for creative goods and services from developing countries like Nigeria. The Convention also emphasizes the need for protection of the rights and fair remuneration of creatives,

training and technical assistance for artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and policymakers in the creative space, as well as international cooperation for knowledge exchange. It also advocates for policies that address challenges in the digital environment, including piracy while promoting digital content creation and distribution.

Nigeria's creative sector development framework aligns with the UNESCO Convention, which was ratified in 2007. The Nigerian government approved a Creative Economy Development Fund in 2024 to provide loans to creatives to fund film, music, fashion, and digital content creation projects, using their intellectual property as collateral (Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy [Nigeria], 2025). The federal government also launched an Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises (IDICE) program with the African Development Bank to upscale entrepreneurship in the creative industry (Agence Française de Développement, 2023; Anyanwu, 2024). The IDICE initiative enhances investor confidence in the creative sector and encourages global partnerships with local actors.

Despite its immense potential, the sector faces significant challenges, as it affects female creatives. This study examines how young female creatives are navigating opportunities within the industry while facing systemic gender-related barriers, specifically focusing on the social and cultural factors that have historically disadvantaged women. This research is part of a larger project designed to enhance the creative sector policy environment through partnerships with creatives and policymakers. Accessible evidence is crucial to help stakeholders understand and address the daily challenges faced by young women in the creative industry. The study aims to inform gender-responsive workplace and policy changes, amplify diverse voices—including those of women—and help challenge stereotypes within the industry to improve young people's access to dignified and fulfilling work.

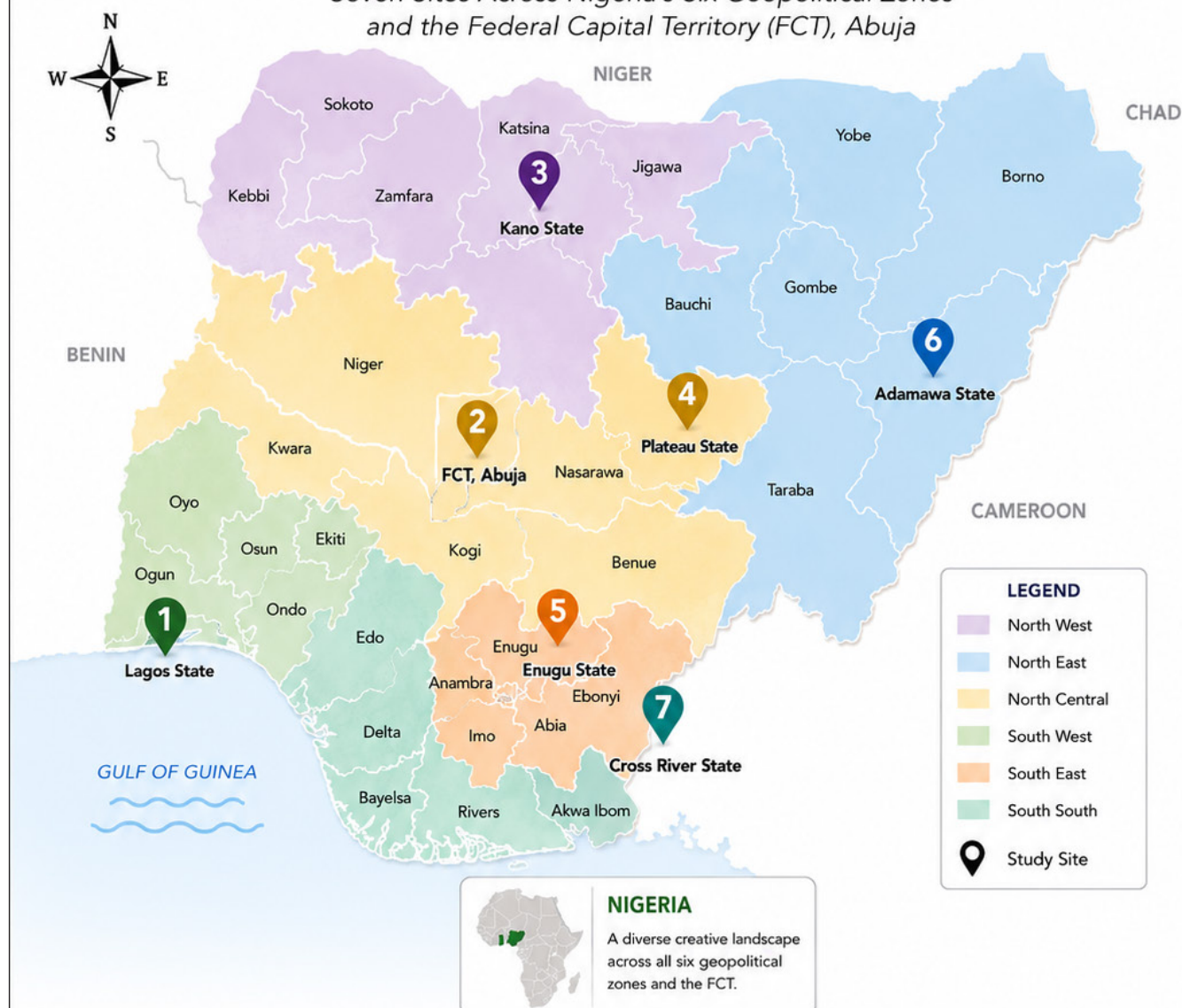
2.1 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Generate evidence on the nature, dynamics, and implications of gender-based inequities experienced by young female creatives in Nigeria.
2. Provide evidence-based recommendations and best practices for key stakeholders that can support gender equity in Nigeria's creative sector.

MAP OF NIGERIA SHOWING STUDY SITES

Seven Sites Across Nigeria's Six Geopolitical Zones
and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja



- 1 LAGOS STATE (SOUTH WEST)**
Commercial, media and cultural capital; hub for Nollywood, Afrobeats, New Media, and Advertising/Marketing.
- 2 FCT, ABUJA (NORTH CENTRAL)**
Administrative and political hub; center for policy-related arts organizations, government-funded projects, and high-level creative services.
- 3 KANO STATE (NORTH WEST)**
Major commercial and cultural center; core hub of Kannywood (Hausa-language film industry) and traditional crafts.
- 4 PLATEAU STATE (NORTH CENTRAL)**
Historical training and production ground for Nigerian film and television; strong in performing arts and audiovisuals.
- 5 ENUGU STATE (SOUTH EAST)**
Historical birthplace and hub for Nollywood and audiovisuals in the South East; major center for media and literary arts.
- 6 ADAMAWA STATE (NORTH EAST)**
Represents North East geopolitical zone; potential for cultural tourism.
- 7 CROSS RIVER STATE (SOUTH SOUTH)**
Key hub for tourism, performing arts, and large-scale creative events; home of the internationally renowned Calabar Carnival.

Note: Boundaries and state names are for illustrative purposes.

3.0 Study Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. The survey of female creatives provided statistical data to measure prevalence of different experiences, while the qualitative methods—in-depth Interviews (IDIs) key informant interviews (KIIs), storytelling, creative representation (use of art forms to tell stories), and photovoice provided narrative evidence of lived experience and systemic barriers in the creative sector. These methods ensured that the quantitative findings were grounded in the lived, personal realities of female creatives.

3.1 Study Site

The study was conducted in seven sites across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja to ensure maximum regional representation. Each location was chosen due to its established status as a primary hub for the creative industry, guaranteeing representative coverage for the research.

Lagos State (South West) was selected because it is the commercial, media, and cultural capital, serving as the primary epicenter for Nollywood, Afrobeats, New Media, and Advertising/Marketing, not only for the South West, but also the nation. The FCT, Abuja (North Central), was included as the nation's administrative and political hub, making it the central site for policy-related arts organizations, government-funded projects, and high-level creative services.

To ensure Northern representation, three states were selected to represent the three geopolitical zones. Kano State (North West) is the major commercial and cultural center of the region, the core hub of Kannywood (the Hausa-language film industry), and a significant center for traditional crafts and commerce-driven creative enterprise. Plateau State (North Central) was included to capture the nuances of the performing arts and audiovisuals sub-sectors, given its historical significance as a training and production ground for Nigerian film and television since the days of the iconic national drama, *Cock Crow at Dawn* in the early 1980s. Adamawa State (North East) was included to represent the North East geopolitical zone, with its potential for cultural tourism (Abdullahi et al., 2023).

In the South East, Enugu State was chosen due to its recognition as a historical birthplace and sustained hub for the Nollywood and audiovisuals industry in the South East, as well as a major center for media and literary arts. Finally, Cross River State (South South) was selected because it serves as a key hub for tourism, performing arts, and large-scale creative events; it is internationally renowned for the Calabar Carnival, which drives significant activity in the design and creative services sub-sectors.

3.2 Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of women aged 18–35 years who are actively engaged in Nigeria's creative sector, specifically within the major creative sub-sectors outlined below. The population is characterized by their roles as creators, entrepreneurs, or professionals in the following sub-sectors:

1. Cultural sites (archaeological sites, museums, libraries, exhibitions, etc.)
2. Traditional cultural expressions (art crafts, festivals, and celebrations)
3. Visual arts (paintings, sculptures, photography, and antiques)
4. Publishing and printed media (books, press, and other publications)
5. Performing arts (live music, theater, dance, opera, etc.)
6. Audiovisuals (films, TV, radio, other broadcasting)

7. Advertising and marketing
8. Design (interior, graphic, fashion, jewelry, and toys)
9. Creative services (architectural, advertising, creative research and development, cultural, and recreational)
10. New media (software, video games, blogging, digitalized creative content)
11. Gastronomy (including celebrity chefs, culinary artists, culinarians, etc.)

Eligibility criteria:

1. Gender and age: Cisgender women between 18 and 35 years old.
2. Creative: Self-identifying as a full-time or part-time creative.

Survey sample size determination

The study adopted the Cochran formula for determining the minimum sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

Z = Z-score (1.96 for a 95% confidence level). This is the power of the estimated sample size.

p = estimated proportion of young female creatives facing gender-based inequities. (We assume half, i.e., 0.5 in the absence of a prior estimate)

e = margin of error or level of precision. We used 5% (i.e., 0.05)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n \approx 385$$

We increased the sample size from 385 to 532 in anticipation of non-response and attrition, and to make room for sub-group analysis which we plan to embark on after the initial reporting of frequencies and percentages. After screening, 513 cases were included for analysis.

3.3. Sampling Technique

The research employed a purposive sampling technique in recruiting female creatives. The team identified key organizations through an rapid review of literature with the aim of documenting major players/institutions in the creative sector in Nigeria. This was followed with visits to identified key organizations working with (female) creatives, and notable individuals within the creative sector. These organizations/individuals linked the research team with potential participants who met the eligibility criteria. Upon getting the contact information of participants, field researchers followed up with in-person visits, telephone calls, emails, and messages on different platforms to schedule interviews.

A major challenge with this technique is that this sampling technique runs the risk of oversampling individuals 'connected' to mainstream institutions and individuals in the creative sector, which under-sampling those not so connected. This skewness has a geographic dimension, resulting in a concentration of participants in Lagos. To address this challenge, we applied quota sampling which gives a minimum of 20 sample slots to one state in each of the geopolitical zones.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using the following methods:

Cross-sectional survey: The survey involved 513 young women creatives. Participants were identified using a purposive sampling technique. The survey tool, which adapted an established gender equality questionnaire, collected data on demographics, work experiences, earnings, career expectations, and experiences of gender inequity. Survey responses were gathered through interviews conducted by data collectors. The survey was deployed using Kobotoolbox, an open-source platform designed for secure and efficient data gathering. The KoboCollect app was utilized for conducting interviews, enabling seamless data entry on tablets, both online and offline. The use of KoboCollect ensured accurate, real-time data capture, with built-in features to maintain data integrity and participant confidentiality, aligning with the study's ethical commitment to anonymity and secure data handling.

For respondents unable to participate in in-person interviews, the research team created a self-administered online version of the survey using Kobotoolbox. The link was shared exclusively with selected respondents, who were required to complete the survey independently and provide evidence of submission. For these respondents, data collectors screened and validated the responses before transferring them to the central database for interviewer-administered survey responses.

Qualitative interviews: We conducted 30 IDIs with young female creatives. The interviews explored their lived experiences, prospects, and opportunities within the creative sector, their challenges and coping mechanisms, and the concept of dignified and fulfilling work. We also conducted 20 KIIs, two of which were group interviews (one with two and the other with four participants), making a total of 24 key informants. The KIIs explored information around the creative sector, its composition, the place of female creatives within the sector, and key challenges and opportunities for improving young female creatives' prospects to thrive within the sector. All interviewees were purposively selected. Field researchers contacted interviewees through key organizations working with (female) creatives, such as the National Museum, Musical Society of Nigeria, and private art galleries' training centers/institutes for creatives.

Photovoice: Eight study participants used photography to represent their personal experiences of gender inequity in the creative sector. These photos were then used to facilitate collaborative group discussions or interviews, with the goal of promoting dialogue and providing deeper insights for creative sector actors. We had one group discus-

sion and three photovoice interviews.

Creative representation: We used creative representation by exploring the application of art forms (digital art and poetry) to tell stories reflecting experiences of gender inequities in the creative sector. This feminist-inspired methodology provided a platform for three women creatives to tell their stories in their own way

Storytelling: Four female creatives narrated their stories of gender-based inequities in the creative sector. We prompted their stories with a typical story of sexual harassment in the creative sector and encouraged them to share their personal stories of challenges and inequities in the creative sector, as well as how they have navigated the creative space.

Focus group discussions (FGDs): We conducted eight FGDs, each with five to seven young female creatives from across different sub-sectors. There were 43 FGD participants in all. The discussions explored experiences of gender-based inequities within the creative sector, barriers and challenges faced by female creatives, coping mechanisms, and the concepts of dignified and fulfilling work.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using STATA (Version 16). Simple frequencies, percentages, graphs, and charts were used to summarize and present key demographic characteristics, experiences of creatives, and other key findings in the study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative interviews/discussions were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and fidelity to participants' voices. Transcripts were reviewed and edited for clarity, removing any identifying information to maintain anonymity in line with ethical standards.

A coding framework was developed based on pre-determined themes from the research instruments and emergent themes. The coding was thematic. The themes used for the analysis include barriers to participation, access to funding, gender-specific challenges in the creative sector, and work-related sexual harassment.

Integration of Findings

Both quantitative and qualitative data informed the analysis and findings in this report. This mixed-methods approach allows for the combination of statistical results from the survey and rich, contextual insights from interviews, FGDs, stories, and photovoice to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study population's experiences.

3.6 Ethics Approval

The study was approved by the University of Lagos Research Ethics Committee, with registration number: UNILAGREC/24/07/010.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Social Demographics

4.1.1 Gender identity

All the survey (513), IDI (30), FGD (43), and Storytelling (4) participants in the study identified as female. Almost all the Photovoice participants are female, with the exception of one male in one photovoice session.

4.1.2 Age groups

The survey included 513 female creatives. About half (49.5%) of the respondents were aged 18–24 years. Persons aged 25–30 years account for 36.8% of the sample, and the 30–35 years category comprises 13.7% of the sample. The mean age was 25.3 years (SD = 4.2 years), with all ages ranging from 19 to 35 years: See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Age distribution of survey respondents

Age categories	Freq.	Percent
18–24 years	254	49.5
25–30 years	189	36.8
31–35 years	70	13.7
Total	513	100.00
Mean age = 25.3 years; SD = 4.2 years; Min = 19 years; Max = 35 years		

4.1.3 Education level

Table 4.2 shows that most of the respondents (54.8%) held a bachelor's degree, while 21.3% had a certificate or diploma, 16.2% completed secondary education, and 7.8% had postgraduate qualifications.

Table 4.2: Educational qualifications of respondents

Highest education level completed	Freq.	Percent
Secondary	83	16.2
Certificate/Diploma	109	21.3
Bachelor's Degree	281	54.8
Postgraduate	40	7.8
Total	513	100.00

4.1.4 Training in the creative sector

Table 4.3 highlights participating creatives' responses on whether they have had formal training related to their artistry. Many (nearly 60%) reported having had such training.

Table 4.3: Creative sector training

Creative sector education/professional training	Freq.	Percent
No	214	41.7
Yes	299	58.3
Total	513	100.00

4.1.5 Marital status

Most (84.4%) of the respondents were single/never married, while 13.5% were married at the time of the study, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Freq.	Percent
Single-never married	433	84.4
Married/cohabitating	69	13.5
Separated	7	1.4
Divorced	3	0.6
Widowed	1	0.2
Total	513	100.00

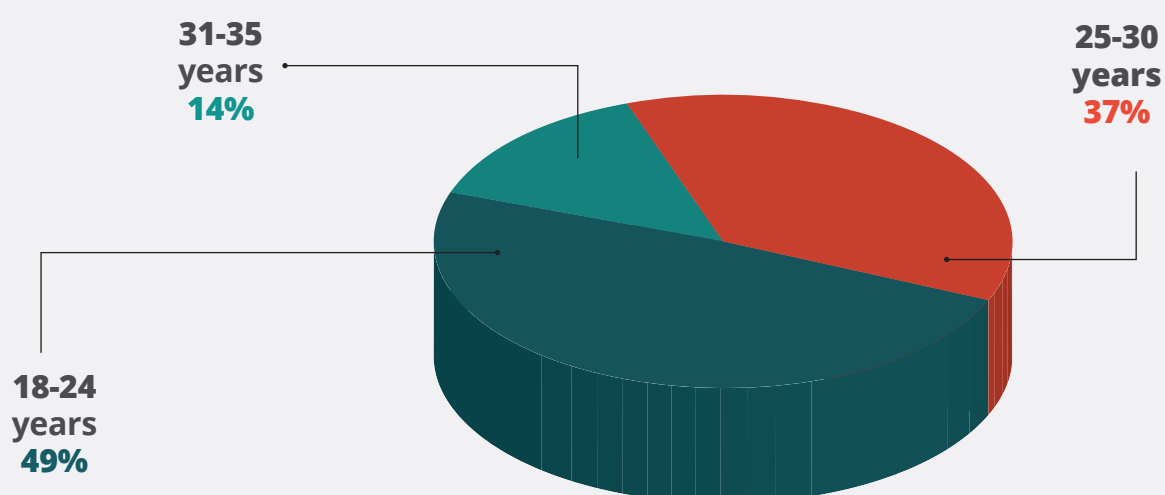


Table 4.5: Age distribution of survey respondents

4.1.6 Number of children

More than one in ten (11.9%) of the respondents had children. Among those, the mean number of children was approximately two ($\bar{x} = 1.9$; $SD = 1.2$), with a range from one to five (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Distribution by childbearing status and number of children

Participants have children	Freq.	Percent
No	452	88.1
Yes	61	11.9
Total	513	100.0
Mean = 1.9; SD = 1.2; Min = 1; Max = 5		

4.1.7 Care responsibilities

For the participants who had children, childcare responsibilities during work were distributed as follows: 41% rely on schools; 27.9% reported that babysitters/nannies provide them with childcare services, and 19.7% mentioned daycare centers as providers of their childcare service.

Table 4.7: Distribution by persons responsible for childcare while at work

Person responsible for childcare while respondents work	Freq. N=61	Percent
I take my children to where I work	7	11.5
Partner/spouse	5	8.2
Babysitter/nanny	17	27.9
Daycare center	12	19.7
My older children	9	14.8
Children are at school	25	41.0
Other	12	19.7

4.2 Perceptions of the Workspace Environment in the Creative Sector

4.2.1 Creative sub-sectors

Respondents were required to indicate their sub-sector(s) of the creative industry, with the possibility of choosing more than one. As shown in Table 4.8 the sub-sector with the highest frequency was new media (e.g., software, video games, blogging, digitalized creative content), which 24% of the respondents selected. This was followed by design (23.2%), performing arts (21.2%), and advertising and marketing (17.2%). Sub-sectors with the least representation are cultural sites (3.5%) and creative services (5.3%).

Table 4.8: Creative sub-sectors

Creative sub-sector	Freq. N=513	Percent
Cultural sites (archaeological sites, museums, libraries, exhibitions, etc.)	18	3.5
Traditional cultural expressions (arts, festivals, and celebrations)	32	6.2
Visual arts (paintings, sculptures, photography, and antiques)	58	11.3
Performing arts (live music, theater, dance, opera, emcee, comedy, etc.)	109	21.3
Audiovisual (films, TV, radio, other broadcasting)	72	14.0
Advertising and marketing	88	17.2
Design (interior, graphic, fashion, jewelry and toys)	119	23.2
Creative services (architecture, creative research and development, cultural and recreational)	27	5.3
New media (software, video games, blogging, digitalized creative content)	125	24.4
Publishing and printed media (books, press, and other publications)	38	7.4
Gastronomy (including celebrity chefs, culinary artists, culinarians, etc.)	31	6.0

4.2.2. Time of work/creative work arrangement

More than half of the respondents (54.4%) work full-time in the creative sector.

Table 4.9: Nature of work (full-time vs. part-time)

Full-time vs. part-time work as a creative	Freq.	Percent
Full-time	279	54.4
Part-time	234	45.6
Total	385	100.00

4.2.3 Use of social media

Nearly all the participants (99%) reported social media use. The most widely used platforms by respondents are WhatsApp (92.7%), Instagram (88.6%), and TikTok (68.3%) as shown in Fig. 4.2. Pinterest and LinkedIn were the least common, mentioned by 42.1% and 44.3% respectively. More than half (54.4%) mentioned that they use social media as their creative work space.

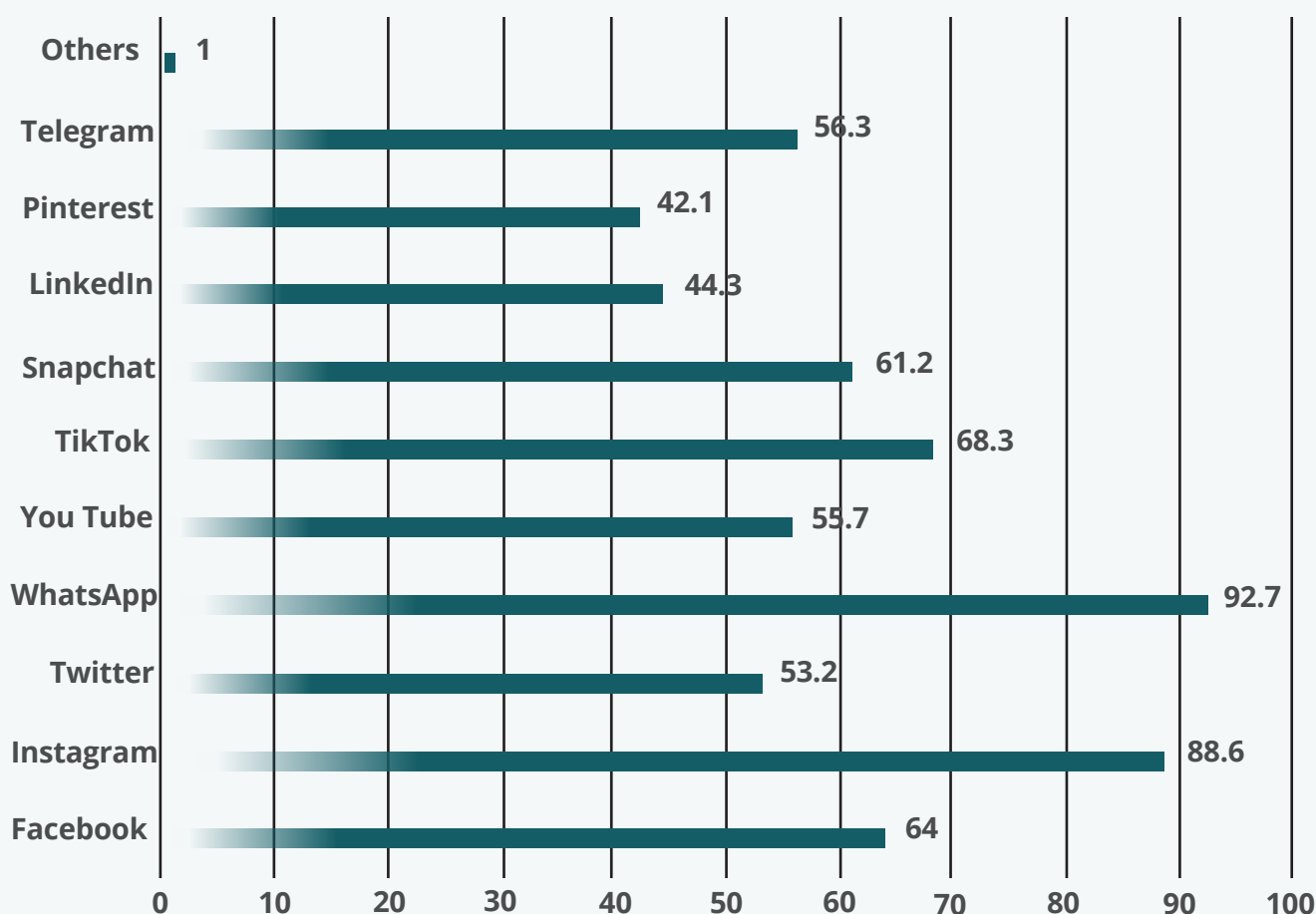


Fig 4.1: Social media types used

Table 4.10 shows social media use, platforms used, and use of social media as creative work space.

Table 4.10: Distribution by use of social media, social media platforms used, and social media use for creative work

	Freq. N=513	Percent
Use of social media	508	99.0
Platforms used	N = 508	
Facebook	325	64.0
Instagram	450	88.6
Twitter	270	53.2
WhatsApp	471	92.7
You Tube	283	55.7
TikTok	247	68.3
Snapchat	311	61.2
LinkedIn	225	44.3
Pinterest	214	42.1
Telegram	286	56.3
Others	5	1.0
Nature of social media platform use		
Recreation	244	48.0
Creative work space	264	52.0

4.2.4 Gender composition of participants' co-workers

Participants were asked about the gender composition of their colleagues. Among the 384 respondents who had colleagues, one-third (33.1%) said their colleagues were mostly women, slightly more than a quarter (25.8%) said "mostly men," and 41.1% said their colleagues were approximately evenly distributed between men and women.

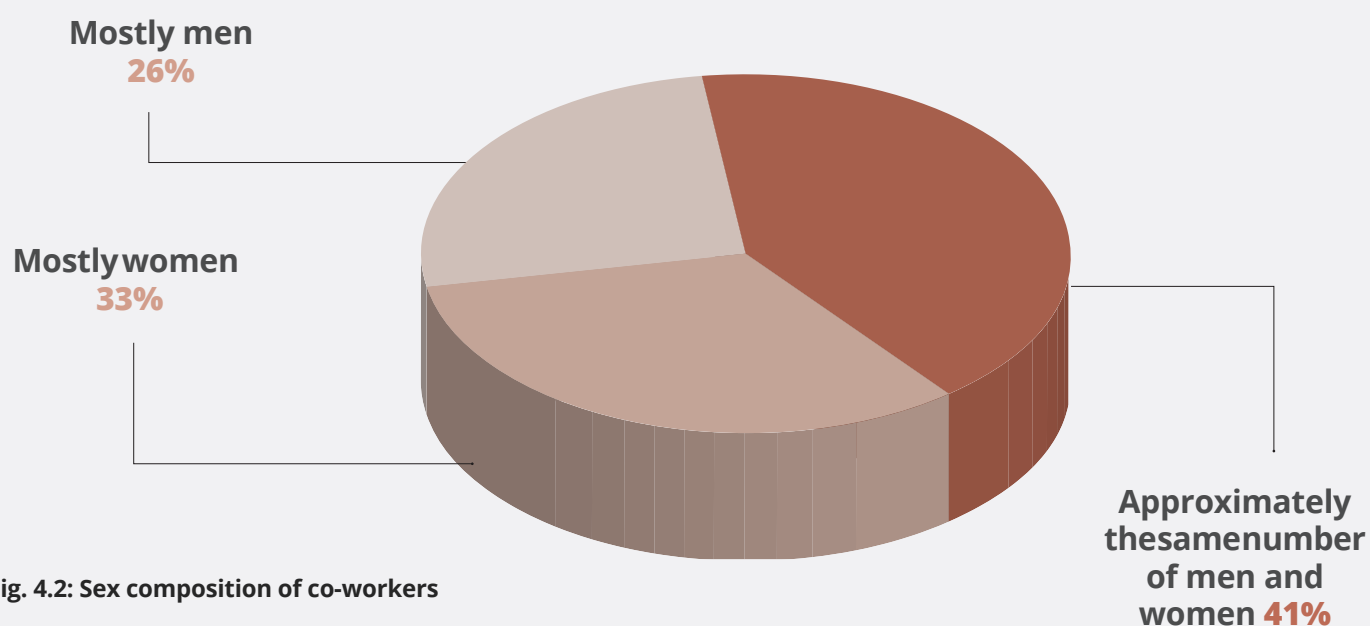


Fig. 4.2: Sex composition of co-workers

Table 4.11: Distribution by predominant sex among co-workers

Are colleagues mostly women or men?	Freq.	Percent
Mostly women	127	33.1
Mostly men	99	25.8
Approximately the same number of men and women	158	41.1
Total	384	100.00

As shown in Fig. 4.3, sex distribution of creatives varies across sub-sectors. Sex distribution of colleagues is relatively even for publishing and print media, new media, audiovisuals, and performing arts. Predominately male colleagues were reported in creative services, visual arts, and cultural sites (which some respondents also reported to be approximately evenly distributed). Those in advertising and marketing, design, and gastronomy reported that their colleagues are mostly women. Data from the qualitative interviews support these findings across sub-sectors.

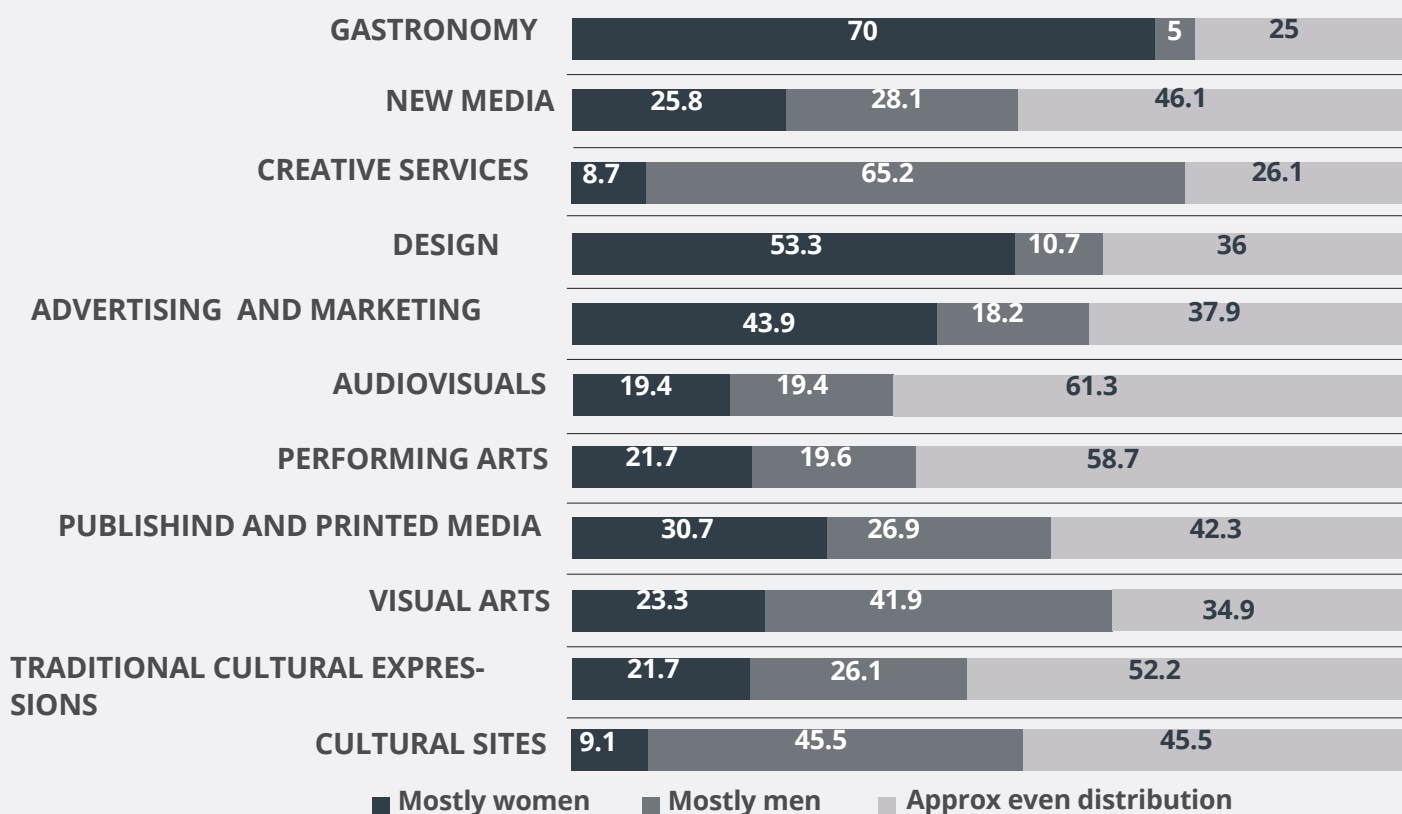


Fig 4.3: Percent saying colleagues are mostly men, women, or evenly distributed by sub-sector

4.2.5 Overall sense of equality and equity in the sector

Participants' experiences of gender-based inequity in the creative sector is presented in Table 4.12 and Fig. 4.4. Majority (92%) felt respected and valued by colleagues for their creative contributions. However, 22% reported having witnessed instances where women's creative ideas were dismissed or not taken seriously, and 17% reported personally experiencing their creative ideas being dismissed because of their gender.

Table 4.12: Distribution by sense of equity within creative sector

Participants reporting experience of respect/gender-based inequity (Responding 'Yes')	Freq. N=513	Percent
Do you feel respected and valued for your creative contributions among colleagues	470	91.6
Ever witnessed instances of women's creative ideas dismissed	113	22.1
Ever had your creative ideas dismissed/not taken seriously because you're a woman	91	17.7
Total	513	100

Despite the survey results on experience of gender inequity, some participants in the qualitative interviews perceive significant gender inequality, with women needing to work twice as hard as men to gain respect and opportunities, as expressed by one female creative: *"You need to work twice as hard to be respected. The male counterparts don't need to prove themselves all the time"* (Female film producer, IDI, Lagos).

Similarly, another participant recounts her experience of explicit disrespect from a male subordinate, and her general sense of reduced respect accorded female creatives:

"...the male. It was just one male and he was respected more than I was and he flouted my orders and there was no punishment, there was nothing [no repercussion], like he just got away with a lot of things that I could not get away with" (Female writer, FGD, Lagos).

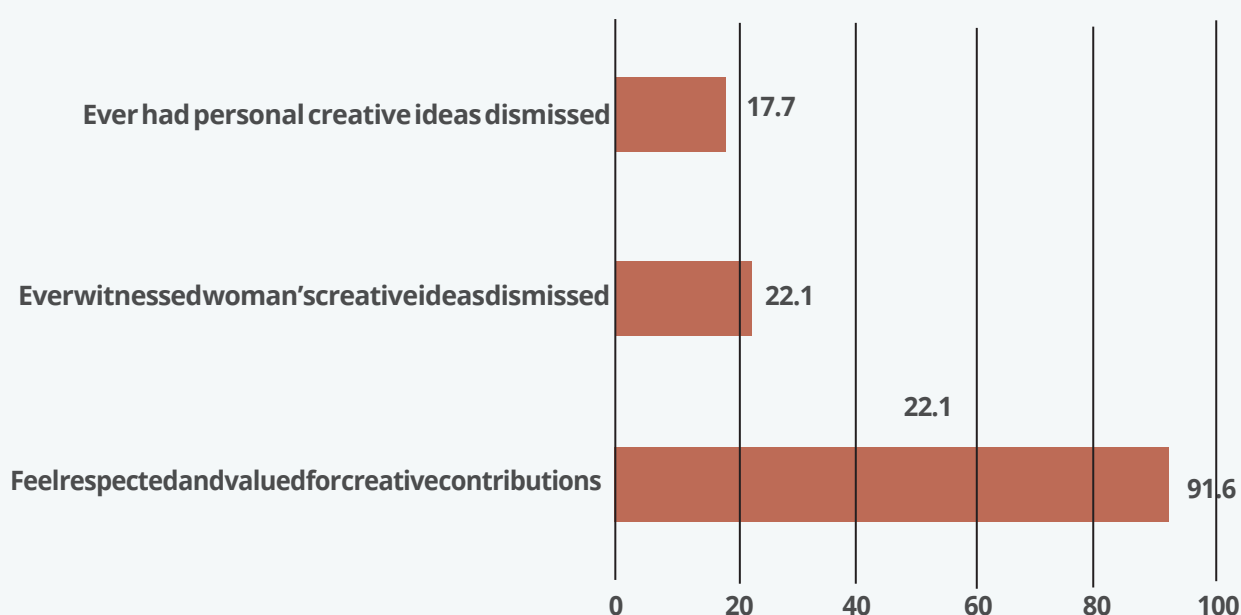


Fig. 4.4: Sense of equity

Some interviewees explained that there are strong social gender norms and stereotypes that assume many creative art works like photography and shoemaking are the exclusive preserve of men, as stated by one participant: *“Some people will say, ‘you woman, what are you doing in photography business?’ ... They think it’s for like just for men only and not for females”* (Female photographer, 28 years, IDI, Kano State).

Similarly, another participant said: *“When somebody learns that you’re a shoemaker, that’s the first impression they have—‘It’s not a woman’s job.’”* (Female shoemaker, 35 years, IDI, Cross River).

Based on responses to nine items on perceived gender equity in the creative sector, an overall gender equity perception score was computed. Each item is a Likert scale questionnaire item with scores ranging from 1 to 5. An average score was computed for each respondent. A total score of 3 represents a neutral score, an overall score above 3 represents a positive gender perception score, while a score below represents a negative gender perception score. The overall perceptions of gender equity among the creatives surveyed are presented in Table 4.12. The results indicate a predominantly positive perception of gender equity, with about 63% of respondents having an overall “positive” perception (mean gender equity perception score > 3). However, a substantial proportion, just under one-third (30.2%), hold a “negative” perception of gender equity.

Table 4.13: Summary of gender equity perception

Gender equity perception	Freq.	Percent
Negative (<3)	155	30.2
Neutral (3)	35	6.8
Positive (>3)	323	63.0
Total	513	100

4.3 Workplace Challenges

4.3.1 Gender-based discrimination

When asked about the challenges faced by young female creatives in the workplace, a significant proportion of respondents reported encountering gender-related barriers as shown in Table 4.14. In this analysis, we combine the Strongly Disagree and Disagree categories in Table 4.14 as suggestive of Disagreement and the Strongly Agree and Agree categories as suggestive of Agreement. Over half (55%) of the women creatives indicated that they had encountered barriers or challenges specifically related to their gender. Despite this, a notable proportion also expressed a sense of inclusion, with 81% feeling included and valued as team members during collaborative projects. Perceptions on adequacy of extant policies and practices to prevent gender discrimination in the creative sector appear mixed, with 34.7% agreeing or disagreeing, and 31% staying neutral on the statement.

Table 4.14: Experience of various forms of gender-based discrimination by survey participants

Indicators of gender-based discrimination (Percentages reported; N=513)	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have not felt discriminated against because I am a woman creative.	4.5	18.9	19.9	33.9	22.8
As a creative, I have encountered barriers or challenges that are related to my gender.	8.6	18.5	18.1	43.1	11.7
The people I work with as a creative do not consider my being a woman in letting me do things.	5.1	24.4	24.0	29.6	17.0
My being a young woman has not influenced my career progression as a creative.	7.8	28.5	21.1	26.5	16.2
My peers/colleagues do not treat me differently because I am a woman.	4.1	13.3	17.4	44.3	21.1
There are adequate policies and practices in place to prevent gender discrimination in the creative sector.	10.7	24.0	30.6	24.8	9.9

I have ever felt uncomfortable or faced harassment or microaggressions based on my gender while working as a creative professional.	10.7	27.3	19.5	31.0	11.5
I feel included and valued as a team member during collaborative projects.	0.6	3.9	15.8	49.7	30.0
From my experience, male and female creatives in this country have equal opportunities for promotion and growth in the creative sector.	8.4	26.5	20.7	25.5	18.9

4.3.2 Career progression challenges

Female creatives mentioned poor access to capital and gender stereotypes that disadvantage women as major constraints to their career progress. A participant argued thus: *“For me, one of my challenges is upgrading. I have not really gone for an upgrade before. Some people go for training to improve their skills. Some people have finished learning but they don’t have a sewing machine at home, and that becomes a challenge. Some also want to go further, to learn more, but they do not have the means... There is no enough financial aid too. For the upgrade.”* (Female fashion designer, 25 years, IDI, FCT Abuja).

Speaking about gender stereotypes, another interviewee stated: *“Everywhere you go women are seen as second fiddle, they [people] feel if you are not a man then you don’t have a say and some think we have to sleep with men to get scenes.”* (Female content creator, 32 years, IDI, Plateau State).

Similarly, an interviewee said: *“In my own field, there’s this idea that it’s not a woman’s job. When somebody learns that you’re a shoemaker, that’s the first impression they have—‘It’s not a woman’s job.’ ... I’ve had customers walk into my shop and say, ‘I can’t have a woman make my shoes.’”* (Female fashion accessories designer/shoemaker, 35 years, IDI, Cross River State).

4.3.3 Policies, practices, and women’s progress in the creative sector

Policies in Nigeria’s creative sector often fail to address gender-specific barriers like limited access to capital and weak intellectual property protection. Consequently, women’s participation remains limited in leadership and ownership of businesses in the sector, although we found that new media appears somewhat self-regulated, providing opportunities for women to thrive. On the other hand, creative sector policies in some parts of the country, particularly those influenced by religious and cultural norms (such as the North West and the less cosmopolitan parts of the south), restrict women’s participation by promoting gender norms that limit women’s creative expression and isolate them from some roles, as suggested by the assertion that *“Women, they’re all isolated [kept in purdah] ... due to the impact of religion in Kano.”* (Male government official, 52 years, Kano).

The study revealed an absence of a robust cultural policy and regulatory frameworks suitable for Nigeria’s present-day creative sector. This, coupled with socio-economic barriers like limited access to funding and cultural restrictions, which is more pronounced in northern Nigeria, (as the quote above suggests), hinders women’s full participation and leadership. A participant noted how outdated policies relevant to the sector are:

“The major regulatory document and framework for the sector is the cultural policy, which unfortunately Nigeria does not have as we speak. The last cultural policy was made—signed into law in 1991” (Male theater producer, KII, Lagos).

4.3.4 Harassment

Different forms of harassment occur regularly for many female creatives. The experience of one creative sheds light on the how harassment shapes women’s experiences in the industry.

“Being a woman makes you prone to unwelcome sexual advances. Women in TV and entertainment face constant pressure to sleep with directors or producers to get roles. I personally had an experience in a TV station where a producer made advances at me. When I refused, he victimized me — took segments of my show away and stopped me from attending events. This kind of harassment makes women lose opportunities, quit jobs, or face moral dilemmas” (Female Performing Artist/TV Presenter, 33 years, Abuja).

Experience of sexual harassment is widespread. Another participant said: *Sexual harassment is definitely a thing, and sadly, it still happens. In fact, I've experienced that too... They use it in a very subtle way, like giving you compliments or speaking to you in a sexual way, and then saying, 'Oh, when can we meet?' or 'What can we do?'... So, in a way, it's still sexual harassment*" (Female TV presenter/media personality, IDI, Lagos).

Explaining how sexual harassment impacts female creatives' career, an interviewee made reference to *'the big names [well established male artists] not wanting to help us, the female creatives genuinely, but wanting to sleep with us and take advantage of us, and once you refuse they forget about you.'*" (Female content creator/actor/musician, 32 years, IDI, Plateau State).

4.3.5 Exclusion from decision-making

Insights from the qualitative interviews reveal that female creatives are sometimes excluded from decision-making and leadership roles across most sub-sectors due to male-dominated ownership of businesses in the industry, women's limited access to capital, and deep-rooted gender stereotypes. One key informant said:

"Ownership is still linked to men because they have more access to the galleries and networks ... it is largely men as usual, yes, due to the capital and assets" (Female Chef/Photographer, KII, Adamawa State).

In the same vein, another participant argued that *'...in terms of business ownership, you also have more men. [...] It's men that dominate the printing and publishing sector, too. The same thing with advertising'* (Female sculptor, KII, Lagos).

In some sub-sectors, however, women are found in positions of leadership, especially where the job is perceived to be meant for women as the quote below shows:

'They feel it is a female thing. It's something your wife can do. Like, if you get to a building, they say, 'Oh, my wife is the one handling it [landscaping]. She will plant it [the flowers] herself...' (Female Landscape Architect, KII, Lagos).

4.4 Gender Pay Gap

4.4.1 Perception on the current state of the gender pay gap

The survey revealed that 45.6% of the participants had witnessed gender-based pay gaps in the creative sector, as illustrated by the quote: *"... clients assume women lack the mental strength for political PR, so they trust men more and pay them better. That bias reduces opportunities and pay for women like me"* (Female in Marketing/Advertising, 33 years, Abuja).

As shown in Table 4.15, 46% of the survey respondents agreed to having witnessed—that is, observed it—unequal pay between women and men in the creative sector.

Table 4.15: Witnessing gender pay gap

Indicators of perceived pay gap	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have witnessed unequal pay between women and men in the creative sector	7.8	26.1	20.5	34.5	11.1

4.4.2 Experiences of gender pay gap

Women reported their own experiences in gender-based pay discrimination, with about 32% saying they had been underpaid for their creativity because they are women, and about 18% saying they are generally paid less than their male colleagues for doing the same creative work.

Table 4.16: Perception of gender-based difference in payment

Indicators of perceived pay gap	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have ever been underpaid for my creativity because I am a woman	10.1	33.1	24.6	23.4	8.8
I am generally paid less than my male colleagues for doing the same creative work	15.2	40w.5	26.1	11.7	6.4

Female creatives shared personal experiences about how they had been underpaid because they are women:

"I was given about 10 audios to transcribe; the list, the shortest was about 56 minutes, so, it's like one hour to one hour, 20 minutes. They gave me 10... I was thinking that if they paid me, at least they would pay me 20,000 naira... I was paid 10,000 naira... I think one perception people have of young female creatives is that maybe they don't need the money. I feel like they feel like oh, you are getting money from somewhere else so, this one is not really [important]... people ...think you don't need the money" (Female writer, FGD, Lagos).

This is further supported by another participant, who said: *"...I think number one, people perceive or think you don't need the money and so, they can pay you anyhow" (Female writer, FGD, Lagos).*

4.4.3 Systemic gender pay gap (by policy, practices, and procedures)

Table 4.17 depicts the proportion of respondents who feel that policies and practices reinforce gender-based discriminatory remuneration in the creative industry. A total of 41% agreed that practices, policies, and procedures in the creative industry are designed to ensure that male and female creatives receive equal pay for similar work. Less than 6 strongly disagree that this is not the case, while 22% disagreed to the statement that practices, policies, and procedures in the creative industry are designed to ensure that male and female creatives receive equal pay for similar work. Almost a third (31%) were neutral on the issue.

Table 4.17: Systemic gender-pay gap

Indicators of systemic gender pay-gap	SD	D	N	A	SA
The practices, policies, and procedures in the creative industry are designed to ensure that male and female creatives receive equal pay for similar work.	5.9	22.4	31.0	27.3	13.5

The study captures entrenched organizational and cultural practices that create and sustain the pay gap. The systemic barriers include in equitable access to capital, male-dominated ownership and leadership, and cultural restrictions/seclusion, especially in the northern states, all of which tend to translate to disparities in earnings and opportunities for women. One key informant described how women's limited access to capital is a systemic factor in their creative sector experience:

"As we speak, as of today, the only bank you have [offering loans to creatives, including female creatives] is the Bank of Industry (BOI). But BOI will tell you that you need to provide 30% equity for whatever you require. And you still present 300% collateral" (Male Producer, KII, Lagos).

This argument is further buttressed by the assertion that the capital needed for participating competitively in some sectors is only available to men as stated below.

'Sectors that require heavy funding, like audio-visual or publishing—yes, they are dominated by men because they have easy access to financing.... As for the ownership [of Performing Arts], it's mostly men... since production companies and record labels... are capital intensive' (Female chef/photographer, KII, Adamawa)

4.5 Career Expectations of Young Women in the Creative Sector

4.5.1 Current career growth in the creative sector

As shown in Table 4.18, more than 53% of the respondents agree that they are thriving in their career as creatives while 30% said they strongly agreed to the statement. In addition, about 46% agreed to being satisfaction with their career progression while 21% said they strongly agreed to the statement on satisfaction with their career progression and opportunities as female creatives.

Table 4.18: Female creatives' career growth

Career growth in creative sector (percentages)	D	SD	D	A	SA
I feel that I am thriving in my career as a creative.	7.4	0.6	8.4	53.2	30.4
I am satisfied with my career progression and opportunities as a female creative.	8.2	5.3	20.3	45.6	20.7

The story of female creatives in Nigeria is that of resilience, determination, and opportunism, as illustrated by these testimonials:

"Despite challenges, I've never let them stop me. For example, when my producer harassed me and tried to sideline me, I didn't stop hosting the show. I became the face of it and he had to leave. I keep thriving and adapting daily" (Female TV presenter, 33 years, FCT Abuja).

"... you can take one interest and make it multidimensional. I was a writer before I ever became a content creator, before I ever thought that I wanted to do spoken word poetry. I just knew one thing [skill] but because of innovations that have gone on over the years, I'm able to say Oh! my writing doesn't have to stop here. I can move into content [creation], I can move into other aspects that I have never known..." (Female writer, content creator, FGD, Lagos).

4.5.2 Equal or unequal opportunities to progress in the creative sector

More than one-third (68%) of the respondents believed that they had been given equal opportunities for career advancement as their male counterparts. Specifically, 46% agreed to this statement while 22% said they strongly agreed to the statement as shown in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Equal opportunities for male and females to progress

Perceived equal opportunities (percentages)	DK	SD	D	A	SA
I have been given equal opportunities for career advancement just like my male counterparts.	10.9	3.1	17.9	45.8	22.2

However, qualitative data present a more nuanced picture of the reality many women still face, as explained by this study participant: *"...if you are a guy they pick you based on your skills and talent, but for a woman they know you have a talent or skill but they always want to go the other way round that for you to get the job or a role, you can always have sex with them, so they overlook your talent or skill"* (Female performing artist/dancer, FGD, Lagos).

Another female creative shared this experience: *"Searching for jobs and I just get to see 'We need only men'. There are particular jobs I applied for and all I see is 'Men only.'"* (Female content creator, FGD, Lagos).

4.5.3 Long-term career expectations

As shown in Table 4.20, a large proportion of the survey respondents (91%) saw a long-term career for themselves in the creative sector.

Table 4.20: Long-term career expectation

Career expectation (percentages)	DK	SD	D	A	SA
I have the goal of a long-term career in the creative industry	3.9	1.0	4.1	42.3	48.7

Female creatives' resolve and their decision to take ownership of key infrastructure in the industry speaks to their long-term career aspiration in the creative sector. One interviewee expressed her optimism for women in the sector: "I think there are a lot of prospects that exist... *I feel like in the creative space, I see myself like here for a very long time regardless of whatever comes...*" (Female creative writer, FGD, Lagos).

Another study participant noted: "... *we are discovering that more women are getting involved, owning galleries*" (Male theater producer, KII, Lagos).

4.5.4 Coping with barriers

Female creatives' strategies for coping with barriers include boundary-setting and maintenance of high professional standards, over-preparation or striving to be twice as good, and mental resilience or toughening up.

"I had to go out of my way to become aggressive... that and other scenarios have occurred where I just needed to act up to ensure that I am not sidelined..."

"For me what has helped me is self-reflection —professionalism is key for me... those are some of my coping mechanisms" (Female tech and product manager, FGD, Lagos).

Masculinization or identity blending is another major coping strategy to handle the challenge of gender stereotypes. Female creatives consciously alter their appearance, mannerisms, and social behavior to align with the dominant masculine culture of the workplace where an art is considered a man's space. This helps them to be taken seriously, as the quote below explains:



Lone female creative in a workstation.

“... this person [female in advertising tech room] here ... I think the only way we can tell she's a female is probably the glass, the bottle, the bag. Well, every other thing, you'd think she's a male—the dreads and everything. So, it's like the person is in a tech space but trying to blend in.... She has to dress the part, look the part. The way she's... she's even aggressive with what she's doing. The mannerisms and everything” (Female dancer, photovoice discussion, Lagos)

4.6 Experience of Harassment in the Workspace

4.6.1 Uncomfortable comments

Table 4.21: Experience of uncomfortable comments

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Comments on appearance or body	28.5	51.5	20	14.6	54.4	31
Advised on how to behave as a woman	18.5	50.7	30.8	12.7	49.7	37.6

In all, 80% of the respondents had experienced unwanted comments on their bodies and 69% had been advised on how to behave as a woman. In the last 12 months, 69% and 62% suffered these forms of harassment by their colleagues, managers, clients, or other persons they dealt with while working. A female radio presenter shared her experience on unwanted sexual comments.

'I have to work with a lot of guys, and you working with people, you should have a cordial working relationship with them. While having or creating a cordial relationship [with them], tend to sexualize you, make sexual comments and you cannot do anything about it' (Female radio presenter, IDI, Lagos).

4.6.2 Sexualized comments, jokes, and communication

Table 4.22: Experience of sexualized jokes

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Suggestive jokes of a sexual nature	14.4	46	39.6	5.9	37.8	56.3

As shown in Table 4.22, 60% of the respondents reported being victims of suggestive sexual jokes and 44% suffered this form of harassment in the hands of their colleagues, managers, clients, or other persons they dealt with while working in the last 12 months. One of the interviews said:

'There are a lots of challenges that I face, but I will mention few, one of which is guys making sexual jokes or sexual comments, even though I have grown a thick skin, but I believe there are other females who will get affected by that' (Female radio presenter, IDI, Lagos).

4.6.3 Persistent sexualized comments, jokes, and communication

Table 4.23 shows survey findings on experience of comments on private/marital life, being referred by a nickname of a sexual nature, and comments on sexual life.

Table 4.23: Persistent sexualized communication

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Comments on private life or your marital status	13.8	52.4	33.7	6.6	46.2	47.2
Refers to you by a nickname of a sexual nature	5.9	27.5	66.7	3.7	23	73.3
Comments on sexual life	6.2	36.1	57.7	3.9	29.8	66.3
Use of obscene gestures or sounds when talking to you	6.2	43.3	50.5	4.1	33.9	62
An email/text message of a sexual nature	4.7	39	56.3	2.5	30.6	66.9
An email/text message (unrelated to your work), that makes you uncomfortable	5.7	51.5	42.9	3.1	40.9	56

Study respondents reported different forms of sexual harassment, including comments on private life or marital status (66%), being called by nicknames of sexual nature (33%), comments on sexual life (42%), use of obscene gestures/sounds during conversations (50%), receipt of emails/text messages of sexual nature (44%), and emails/text messages unrelated to work that made them uncomfortable (57%). A significant proportion of these experiences were perpetrated by their colleagues, managers, clients, or other persons they dealt with while working in the last 12 months.

On the negative impact of sexual harassment on female creatives' career, a culinarian had this to say.

'I had a contract where I supplied snacks for a group of people working in a company. I went there twice a week, and most of my clients then were men. On one of the days, I went to make delivery, I was sexually harassed. The person who gave me the contract did not even believe me because he was also a man. He said it was a normal thing, that since I was "selling market," someone could touch me, and I should just ignore it. I found that very offensive. Now, if I had not ended my contract with that company, I knew that I could have gotten bigger companies based on recommendations. But I had to pull back for my own sanity's sake' (Female culinarian, IDI, Cross River).

4.6.4 Sexual proposition and actions

Experience of unwanted request to 'spend time' together and provocative online messages is common as shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24: Sexual harassment

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regu-larly	Some-times	Never	Regu-larly	Some-times	Never
Unwanted suggestion that you spend spare time with them	8.7	43.7	47.6	2.7	37.2	60
Provocative/offensive online messages	5.5	40.6	54	2.9	33.1	63.9
Touching of intimate parts	2	15.2	82.9	1	11.7	87.3
Touching of other body parts	7.6	46.4	46	5.3	40.4	54.4

4.6.5 Forced sexual propositions and actions

Table 4.25 presents data on unwanted sexual propositions and forced sex.

Table 4.25: Sexual pressure and forced sex

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Sexual proposition/pressure to have sex	3.1	25.7	71.2	1.8	18.7	79.5
Forced/pressured to have sex	1.6	15	83.4	1.8	10.1	88.1

Sexual proposition/pressure to have sex and forced sex were reported by 29% and 17% of the respondents, respectively. About 21% of the respondents reported sexual proposition by colleagues, managers, clients, or other persons they dealt with while working in the last 12 months, while 12% reported forced sex by colleagues, managers, clients, or other persons they dealt with while working in the last 12 months.

4.6.6 Denial of work due to gender

In Table 4.26 data is provided on denial of tasks due to gender.

Table 4.26: Work denial

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Experience in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
	2.5	33.7	63.7	2.1	28.5	69.4

As shown in Table 4.26, 36% of the respondents reported denial of tasks because of gender; 31% reported experience this form of gender discrimination in the last 12 months.

4.6.7 Gendered tasks

Table 4.27: Gendered roles not related to official duties

	Ever experienced in the course of work as a creative			Harassment by someone in creatives' work in the last 12 months		
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Additional unrelated gendered responsibilities	5.7	40.7	53.6	6.2	34.5	59.3

About 46% of the respondents reported being given gendered tasks unrelated to their job, like serving tea and welcoming visitors, and 41% said they experienced this in the last 12 months.

4.6.8 Ever experienced harassment

This section presents the survey findings on experience of any form of sexual harassment.

Table 4.28: Ever experienced harassment

Ever experienced any form of harassment	Frequency	Percent
Yes	477	93.0
No	36	7.0
Total	513	100

More than 90% of the respondents reported experiencing at least one form of harassment, as shown in Table 4.28. Figure 4.6 provides a breakdown of the types of harassment that respondents have encountered.

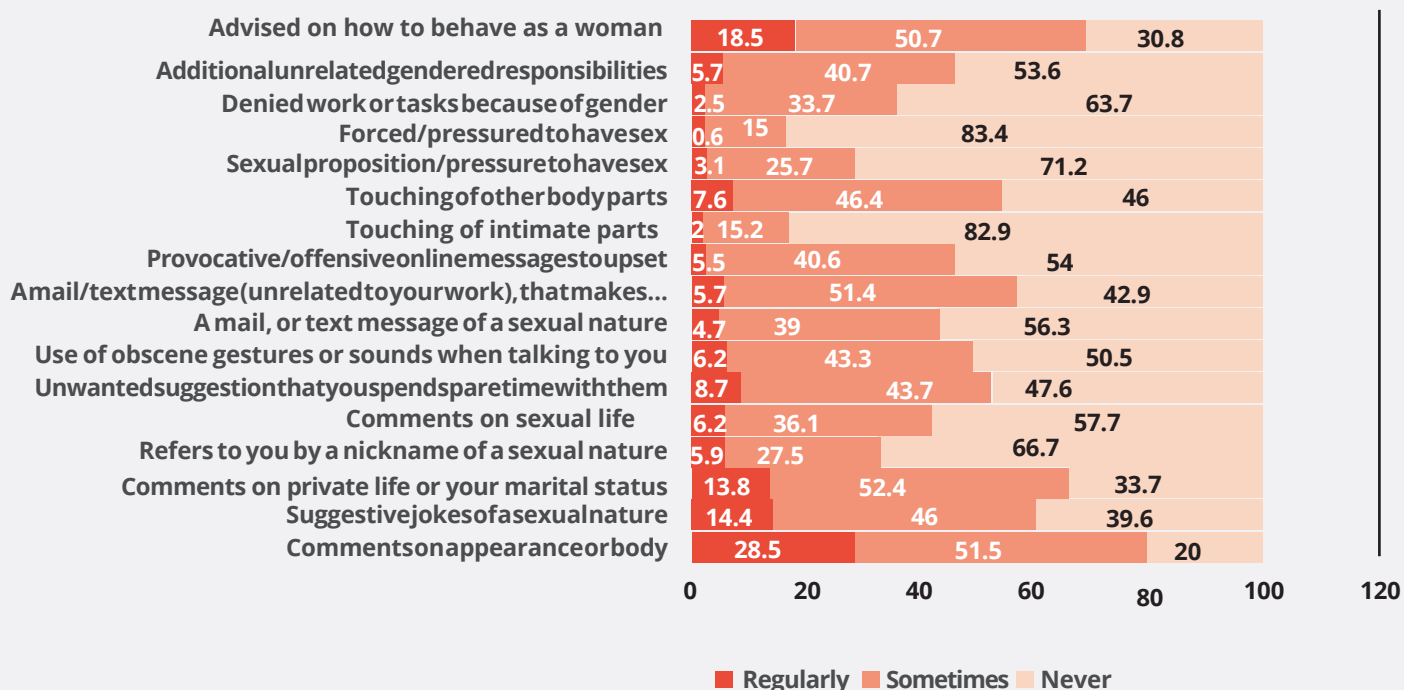


Fig. 4.5: Proportions reporting experience of harassment

4.6.9 Recent experience of harassment

Table 4.29 summarizes the results on recent experience of sexual harassment, that is, experience of harassment in the last 12 months.

Table 4.29: Recent experience of harassment

Experienced any form of harassment in the last 12 months	Frequency	Percent
Yes	440	85.8
No	73	14.2
Total	513	100

About 86% of the respondents reported experiencing at least one form of harassment in the last 12 months. Fig. 4.8 shows how the forms of harassment compare.

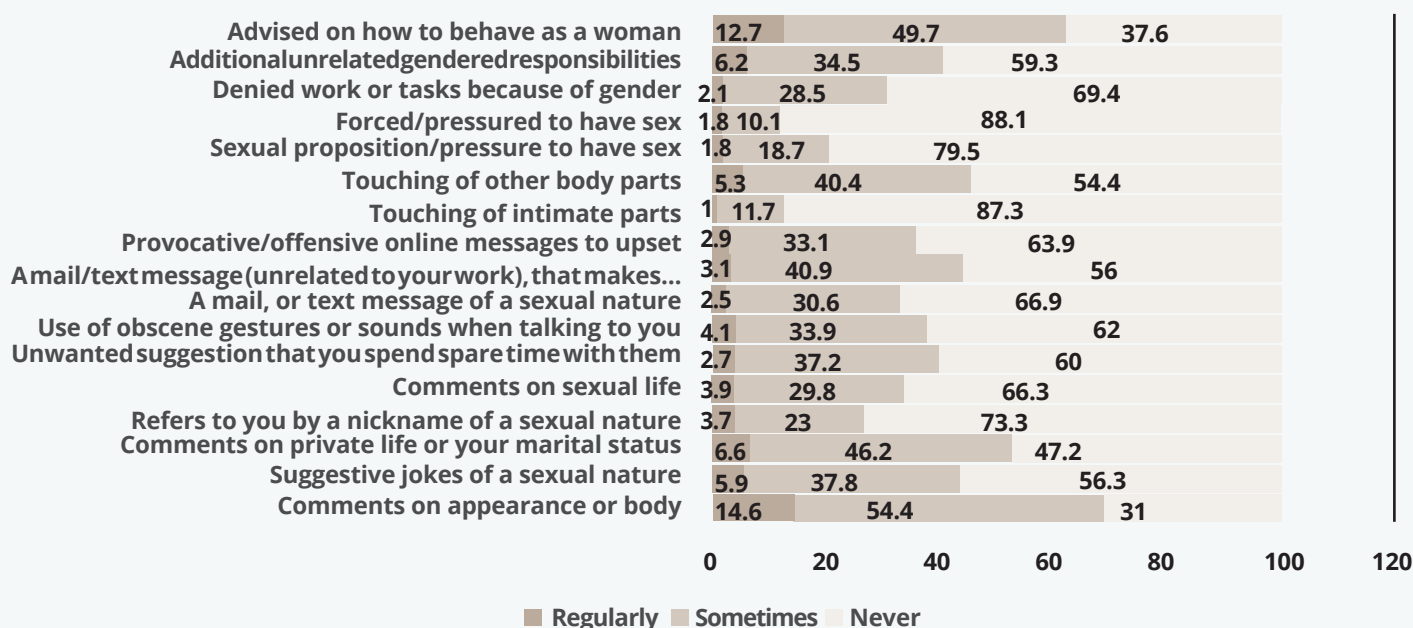


Fig. 4.6: Recent experience of workplace harassment

4.7 Gender Equity and Gender-based Challenges

This section provides the results on gender equity and challenges specifically related to gender discrimination in the creative sector.

4.7.1 Ever experienced discrimination at job interview or opportunity

Table 4.30 shows results on women's experience of gender-biased questions about marital status (60.8%), things unrelated to creative skills, education or experience (51.6%), plans to get married (30.5%), and the number of children they have (25.2%). In addition, 22% reported being asked about the number of children they plan to have. About 55% reported that their creative job applications or project bids had been rejected.

Table 4.30: Gender-related barriers in job interview/opportunity/bid

Have you been asked any of the following in a job interview/opportunity/bid related to creative work?	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Marital status	32.6	60.8	6.6
Plans to get married	59.5	30.5	10.0
The number of children	65.5	25.2	9.4
Plans to have children	69.6	22.0	8.4
Doctor's/medical/expert proof that you are not pregnant	76.2	14.8	9.0
Something else not related to your skills, education or experience	39.6	51.6	8.8
Ever had a creative job application or project bid rejected?	45.2	54.8	

When asked what they believed was the reason for the rejection of their bids/application, 55% did not know. The most prevalent known reasons are lack of experience (27.1%) and high salary expectations (21%). Other reasons include lack of needed skills (11.7%), difference of opinions (10.7%), poor educational qualification fit (9.6%), and age (9.3%). Other reasons include gender, appearance, care responsibilities, pregnancy, and plans to have children, as show in Table 4.30.

Table 4.31: Reasons for rejection

Reasons for not getting the job or bid they applied for	Freq.	%
I don't know	154	54.8
Too high expectations for salary or price	59	21.0
Due to my lack of experience	76	27.1
Due to my lack of skills	33	11.7
Due to my education (mismatch in level or skill)	27	9.6
Due to my difference of opinions	30	10.7
For being pregnant	5	1.8
Due to my gender	21	7.5
Due to my age	26	9.3
Due to my care responsibilities	8	2.9
Due to my plans to have children	3	1.1
Due to my appearance (dreadlock, piercing, weight, tattoos etc.)	16	5.7
Due to my state of disability	2	0.7

4.7.2 Know others who have faced discrimination

When respondents were asked if they knew other female creatives who had experienced gender-based inequity for various reasons, 31.6% said they knew female creatives discriminated against because they refused to have sex with those offering the job. Other reported gender-based reasons for discrimination are being rejected for being a woman (19.1%), pregnancy (18.3%), family care responsibilities (17%), and plans to have children (4.7%).

Table 4.32: Knowledge of others who have experienced gender-based inequity within creative sector

Respondent knows someone denied job/bid in creative sector	Freq. N=513	%
For being pregnant	94	18.3
Due to their gender	98	19.1
Due to their age	130	25.3
Because of family care responsibilities	87	17.0
Due to their plans to have children	24	4.7
Because they refused to have sex with those offering the job	162	31.6
Any other reasons	33	6.4
I don't know	240	46.8

4.7.3 Systemic or organized discrimination

Table 4.33 shows that 65% of respondents had encountered job advertisements with criteria unrelated to skills, education, or experiences needed for the jobs advertised. Respondents reported that they had been prevented from applying, bidding, or working on a creative job for which they are qualified for reasons like late working hours (52.1%), concerns about parental/societal approval (16%), poor pay compared to men (14.6%), concerns that men would be preferred (12.9%), being a woman (10.9%), and childcare responsibilities (6.6%).

Table 4.33: Systemic barriers to women's participation in the creative sector

	Freq. N=513	%
Have encountered job advertisements with criteria unrelated to skills, education, or experience	334	65.1
Ever prevented from applying, bidding or working on a creative job qualified for because of:		
Late working hours/concerns about my safety if I got the job	267	52.1
Being a woman	56	10.9
Childcare/domestic responsibilities	34	6.6
Pregnancy	18	3.5
Husbands/boyfriends	22	4.3
Concerns that men would be preferred	66	12.9
Concerns about being verbally abused offline/online	38	7.4
Poor pay compared to men	75	14.6
Concerns about parental/society approval	82	16.0
Other	150	29.2

Respondents who perceived gender equity in the workspace for a number of specific indicators range from 44.7% to 48.6%, as shown in Table 4.33. The indicator of gender equity with the highest level of agreement was 'men and women have equal opportunities for a wage increase,' with 48.8% agreeing. At the opposite end only 44.7% agreed that 'men and women who perform the same job get paid equally'. Overall, however, a substantial proportion of respondents, ranging from 25% to 30.5%, were neutral across the various gender equity indicators in the survey.

Stereotypes are a major systemic barrier to women's participation in the creative sector. From the creative representation component of the study, we learned of society's low expectations of women and demeaning remarks which are thinly disguised as compliments. One of such "compliment" was reported by a female artist, who was told: *"You paint well for a woman"* (Female artist, creative representation, Lagos) implying that female creatives are inferior to men.

The creative representation further revealed that women are constantly under scrutiny in society, resulting in undervaluing their creative work. A female creative represented this idea in a digital art work "watchful eyes," a creative representation of how society's many "watchful eyes" scrutinize, judge, demean, and undermine women's creativity.

Table 4.34: Perceptions on gender inequities in Nigeria's creative sector

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Men and women have equal opportunities for promotion	6.4	23.2	25.0	21.4	24.0
Men and women who do the same job (who are employed in the same position) get paid equally	5.0	19.7	30.5	23.8	20.9
Men and women have equal opportunities for a wage increase	4.7	18.6	27.9	25.6	23.2
Men and women have equal opportunities for compensation/benefits	4.5	19.0	30.3	24.4	21.9
Men and women have equal opportunities for business	3.9	19.6	28.0	24.1	24.5

On personal experience of systemic barriers (Table 4.34), respondents most commonly reported stereotyping (40.6%). Other systemic barriers reported include harassment and hostile environment (25.5%), poor credit and recognition for work (25.7%), and working in a space with little or no accommodation made for safety (23.6). The least frequently mentioned systemic barrier encountered is working in a space with little or no accommodation made for childcare needs (3.5%).

Major impacts of gender discrimination in the creative sector include low morale at work (mentioned by 45% of the respondents), inability to hold good roles (34.7%), low income (33.9%), and the thought of quitting (31.4%).

Table 4.35: Personal experience of systemic barriers and their effect

	Freq. N=513	%
Personal experience of gender discrimination as a creative		
Pay disparity compared to men	67	13.1
Limited opportunities compared to men	106	20.7
Stereotyping	208	40.6
Harassment and hostile environment	131	25.5
Poor credit and recognition for work	132	25.7
Pressure for sex	75	14.6
Working in a space/project with little or no accommodation made for my safety	121	23.6
Working in a space/project with little or no accommodation made for my childcare needs	18	3.5
I have not experienced any of these	45	28.3
Effect of gender discrimination on female creatives		%
Lost or low wages/income	163	33.9
Inability to have good roles or get big projects	167	34.7
Low morale in your work	218	45.3
Physical violence	37	7.7
Psychological and mental health challenges	140	29.1
Considered quitting the sector	151	31.4

4.8 Dignified and Fulfilling Work

4.8.1 Perception and experience of dignified work

Study participants defined dignified work as integrity and pride that comes from one's own labor or hard work, as captured by this respondent: *"It means something I am proud of, something that, no matter what people say, I can beat my chest and say I am proud of it. It's hard work, not any negative vice that brings shame."* (Female culinary chef, IDI, 35 years, Kano).

In the same vein, participants explained that dignified work provides legitimacy and takes away shame. On the other hand, the study revealed that female creatives' dignity is undermined by objectification, as one photovoice group discussion participant said: *"If she starts looking too beautiful, she will be objectified and then she will not even come across as someone that knows her onions. So, I feel like she can look better. She can present better. So, she is looking like she has let go of herself"* (Female dancer, photovoice, Lagos).

Having to compromise personal values for professional gain also undermines work dignity: *"If I had gone to bed with that man and he had invested with me, I wouldn't have considered it something dignified. It wouldn't have been dignified. In fact, I will feel like I will be spending my money with so much sadness and maybe regret. So, I mean, dignified work means to me that I do not have to compromise my standard, my work ethics. I do not compromise my values and I still get the job done—that work is dignified"* (Female advertising and marketing officer, FGD, Lagos).

In response to the statement, “I consider my work as a creative dignified,” 89% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed. Table 4.36 further shows that 79% of the respondents agreed that they were appreciated and recognized by the people they work with.

Table 4.36: Perceptions on selected indicators of dignified work

Indicators of dignified work	SD	D	N	A	SA
I consider my work as a creative dignified		1.4	9.6	41.6	47.5
I am appreciated and recognized by the people I work with	0.2	2.9	17.7	52.2	27.1

4.8.2 Perception and experience of fulfilling work

Participants defined fulfilling work as passion, compensating work, client satisfaction, recognition, and personal happiness derived from one’s work. It means the joy of creation, the success of the outcome, and the opportunity to express one’s self. In the words of a study participant, fulfilling work is: *“Doing what I love and being paid for what I love”* (Culinary chef, 35 years, IDI, Kano). Another participant said, *“Fulfilling work is achieving client satisfaction. Hearing ‘Good job!’ from clients, knowing my event was not boring, or my voiceover was excellent—that’s fulfilling”* (Female TV presenter, 33 years, IDI, FCT Abuja).

Fulfilling work is undermined by micromanagement. A female creative’s work lacks fulfillment when *“she’s micromanaged more than the average guy... she second-guesses herself, her confidence is not as much... and ... her creativity was stifled”* (Female performing artist, photovoice, Lagos).

As seen in Table 4.37, 88% of the respondents consider their work as creatives to be fulfilling. About 87% of the respondents agreed that they got helpful feedback to improve their creative work; 78% agreed to feeling that people they work with value their unique strengths and talents as creatives. Only about 10% agreed to feeling like quitting their work as creatives.

Table 4.37: Perceptions on indicators of fulfilling work

Indicators of fulfilling work	SD	D	N	A	SA
I consider my work as a creative fulfilling		0.4	1.6	43	45.3
I am content with my work as a creative	0.2	5.7	17.8	40.2	36.1
I feel that the people I work with value my unique strengths and talents as a creative	1	3.3	17.6	42.3	35.8
I get feedback that has helped me to improve my work		2.2	11.1	49.8	36.9
I have the opportunities for professional growth and development that align with my career	0.4	4.1	20.7	46.5	28.3
I feel like quitting my work	29.4	43.8	16.6	8.2	2

4.8.3 Safe workspaces

Slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents agreed to feeling that the people they work with support them to meet their responsibilities. About 68% agreed to always feeling safe with the people they work with, as Table 4.38 shows. Persistent criticisms and allegations from co-workers and not getting along with co-workers are some reasons for not feeling safe in creative workspaces—experiences reported by a significant proportion of the respondents.

Table 4.38: Perceptions on indicators of safe workspaces in the creative sector

Safe workspace indicators	SD	D	N	A	SA
I feel that the people I work with support me to meet my responsibilities and expectations	1	3.7	19.5	46.5	29.3
I always feel safe with the people I work with	1	4.9	26.6	41.5	26
I face persistent criticism from the people I work with	21.9	50.2	20.5	5.7	1.8
I don't get along with the people I work with	22.3	57.2	14.7	4.1	1.8
The people I work with have made allegations against me	32.2	49	11.4	6.1	1.4

4.8.4 Inclusion in workspaces

Table 4.39 shows respondents' perceptions of inclusion in their creative workspaces, based on two statements and their level of agreement. Percentages are shown for each response category. Only 8.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their colleagues ignore their opinions, while 14.6% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel excluded from decision-making processes in their workspaces (see Table 4.37). Overall, most respondents (61–68.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with both statements, indicating relatively positive perceptions of inclusion, though a meaningful minority still report feeling ignored or excluded. Neutral responses were also common (23–24%).

Table 4.39: Perceptions on workspace inclusion

Indicators of inclusion in creative work spaces	SD	D	N	A	SA
The people I work with ignore my opinions	16.2	52.3	23.1	5.5	2.9
I feel excluded from decision making processes	16.6	44.4	24.3	12.1	2.5

4.9 Emerging Issues in the Creative Industry

In this section, key issues that emerged during the analysis of the findings are presented.

4.9.1 Internalized gender bias

A major emergent theme is the internalized gender bias held not only by men, but also by women. The study shows that competence is often unconsciously associated with masculinity or being male, regardless of the creative field. Competence association results in a belief in male competence even in “traditional female fields” like manicure and pedicure, and culinary arts. Males in these fields are assumed to be inherently more meticulous, specialized, competent and professional—a “unicorn in the mix” effect—by female clients. A photovoice participant voiced this belief: “I just assumed that somehow, there's something special about him to be doing nails. So, it's like the unicorn in the mix. And unicorn is always special” (Female fitness instructor, photovoice, Lagos).

Similarly, a female performing artist said: “If I had an option to hire a chef, I'd hire a male chef, not a woman. A chef is male, like it has to be a male... a woman would also want to go to a male chef” (Female performing artist, photovoice, Lagos).

The flip side of this is that female incompetence is assumed in traditional male fields. Women in male-dominated fields like photography or haircutting and styling are often second-guessed and assumed to be less knowledgeable or competent. One participant said: *“I would not go to a female [photographer] because I think they might not really know the job”* (Female model, photovoice, Lagos). Therefore, while male creatives enjoy presumed competence when they venture into women’s spaces, the same is not true when female creatives venture into men’s spaces.

4.9.2 Female-on-female micromanagement

Closely related to the theme of internalized gender bias is the micromanagement of female creatives by other females, an issue that has not received sufficient attention in studies of gender inequities in the creative sector. Gender equity is not guaranteed even when a woman is in a position of power in the creative sector. Female bosses can become unexpected gatekeepers, stifling the creativity of their junior female staff, as this excerpt shows:

“She had a boss who, interestingly, was female, so you’d have expected that because you’re a woman, you should understand me more. But she was still being very micromanaged and she felt like her creativity was stifled” (Female photographer, photovoice, Lagos).

This suggests that institutional structures or industry standards/culture can pressure female supervisors to enforce rigid control, replicating the micromanagement prevalent in the male-dominated industry.

4.9.3 Masculinization of the creative space and female creatives

Much of the creative space is masculinized, that is, dominated by men in terms of numbers, in leadership roles, and in the adoption of typically masculine norms, styles, and behaviors as the standard for professionalism and competence. To survive and thrive, female creatives therefore are faced with the challenge of having to manage their persona by suppressing their femininity and adopting masculinity to gain acceptance, as a discussant suggested: *“You literally have to be like a man if you’re going to [be accepted]... So, it’s a case of you can’t beat them, you join them.”* To blend in, female creatives must absorb and ignore offensive remarks and harassment, treating them as “normal” office dynamics to avoid being sidelined. One participant said: *“And she might feel offended. But might not want to say it out because she doesn’t want to... she doesn’t want them to sideline her.... So, she just has to take it.”*

4.9.4 Creative sector as ungoverned space

A weak regulatory framework, poor coordination, and inadequate infrastructure are major features of the creative sector, an indication of the limited presence of government in the creative industry. The creative sector suffers from inadequate infrastructure—fewer theaters, exhibition galleries, cinemas, and creative hubs than required—limiting opportunities for female creatives to showcase their creative work. A key player in the sector had this to say:

“... One of the problems we have in Nigeria... is more productions are being put together than the number of venues or facilities that can accommodate them, whether in live performance or in films... There are cinemas you walk into, as we speak, and they tell you up to 2027 December, they’re already booked” (Male theater producer, IDI, Lagos).

The implications of the inadequacy of infrastructure include bottlenecks, delay in production, and reduced opportunities for creatives to monetize their work and grow.

Other areas where the absence of government is strongly felt within the sector are in the areas of unreliable power supply, security concerns, and reduced consumer purchasing power, all of which impact creative activities and clientele negatively, as suggested by the assertion: *“Power [electricity] is a major issue. Security is another one. Because the sector really thrives more in the evenings and nights. And so, where people are afraid to be out, it affects... The more people’s earning power is reduced, it will have a negative effect on that sector, because taste will suddenly begin to change”* (Male theater producer, In-depth Interview, Lagos).

The sector is not sufficiently coordinated. The study found that there is no harmonized documentation or “national cultural calendar” of festivals, exhibitions, and other major events in the sector, hindering the promotion of such

festivals and events and limiting tourism and global visibility for the country's creative sector.

These factors have implications for the sector's accessibility and viability.

4.9.5 Technology—a double-edged sword for women creatives

Our study reveals the transformative force of technology in Nigeria's creative sector, enabling broader participation by lowering or removing barriers to entry, and expanding access to markets (local and international) and opportunities, particularly for younger creatives and women in sub-sectors like new media, visual arts, and audiovisuals. This democratization is driven by digital platforms, virtual spaces, and social media (YouTube, TikTok, etc.), which allow individuals to create, market, and monetize their content with minimal resources while bypassing traditional gatekeepers and infrastructure limitations.

While technology may democratize access to the market, the industry in which it is deployed reintroduces barriers related to equipment cost, brand perception, and presentation, and a new hierarchy which is technology-driven. A participant said: *"In photography, discrimination is beyond gender. Class also matters. Now, how do we measure class in photography? Your equipment.... The camera too—'Is this XXX [a Japanese brand with a low entry level equipment value]? Yes, this is XXX.' Among photographers, [it] is known as the lesser [quality] one... I would not walk up to her to take my pictures"* (Female photographer, photovoice, Lagos).

So, gender intersects with creative field "class," as this quote shows: *"... I'm not just discriminating against her because she's a female. I'm also discriminating based on her class [because of the quality of her camera]."* (Female photographer, photovoice, Lagos).

5.0 Discussion

This study set out to examine gender inequities within Nigeria's creative sector. The data gathered on systemic barriers, workplace harassment, and the coping strategies of female creatives largely aligns with themes previously explored in the literature (Adebayo & Scriver, 2026; Wang, 2025). Our findings reveal major challenges such as the persistent deeply entrenched cultural norms and gender stereotypes and severe structural/systemic and economic exclusion, as well as the resilient response of female creatives.

A major finding is the prevalence of harassment, with over 90% of respondents reporting at least one form of abuse, and 36% confirming the denial of opportunities to female creatives who refused sexual propositions. This finding, while disturbing, is not totally unexpected within the context of the Nigerian media landscape considering what previous studies have shown (Akpambang, 2022; Briggs & Namene, 2019).

The experiences female creatives align with the arguments made by Nyamkoh and Ngwa (2021), whose work on power and gender representation in Nollywood highlights how pervasive patriarchal ideology structures the industry. The “need to sleep with directors or producers to get roles” is a direct consequence of the skewed power dynamics Nyamkoh and Ngwa describe, where women are routinely objectified and their professional success is tied to transactional relationships rather than talent or skill. Our study confirms that this exploitative culture is not anecdotal, but systemic, resulting in tangible career blockages and profound distress.

The structural barriers identified in this study—the gender pay gap, exclusion from decision-making, and male-dominated ownership—are stubbornly persistent economic constraints that female entrepreneurs across Nigeria must contend with. The finding that many female creatives experience unequal pay and those female creatives lack access to capital due to the impossible collateral requirements of financial institutions confirms the systemic issues detailed by Adetiloye et al. (2020) and Njideka and Arinze (2023). These works focus on the sustainable financial access and autonomy of female entrepreneurs in micro, small, and medium enterprises (Adetiloye et al., 2020; Njideka & Arinze, 2023). Our research provides evidence on how this affects the creative sector: When women are blocked from accessing capital, they cannot own businesses, and when they cannot own businesses, men remain the gatekeepers and decision-makers, setting pay scales and perpetuating the pay gap.

Furthermore, the general workplace challenges, such as the social stereotypes that dismiss creative jobs like shoemaking or photography as “not a woman's job”—a finding supported by Alese and Hassan's 2011 work on women's creativity in the informal sector (Alese & Hassan, 2011)—reinforce the belief that women are not serious career professionals, justifying why they are underpaid or excluded from leadership, as confirmed by our study.

Perhaps the most concerning finding is the presence of internalized gender bias, leading to the “unicorn in the mix” effect where male competence is assumed even in traditional female spaces (like culinary arts), while female competence is questioned in male-dominated ones (like photography).

This resonates strongly with Wang's analysis, which links gender inequality directly to stifled innovation in the creative industries (Wang, 2025). When women feel their ideas are dismissed, they are micromanaged (even by female bosses), or they feel compelled to masculinize their persona to be taken seriously, their unique creative perspectives may be suppressed. The high emotional cost of over-preparation and identity blending becomes the price of entry and acceptance in the creative space, leading to an overall loss of creative diversity in the sector.

Our data present something of a paradox with respect to technology's impact on empowering women creatives. On one hand, new media is a major sub-sector of the industry, and social media use is near-universal. This demonstrates that female creatives are actively leveraging the digital space as an alternative, seemingly “self-regulated” workspace. This aligns with previous research on gender innovation in the digital economy, confirming that digital platforms provide a crucial avenue for women to build autonomy and express their resilience and determination (Nwoba & Nwuzue, 2024).

However, this resilience operates in the presence of weak or nonexistent institutional support. Our study's finding that some

of Nigeria's regulatory frameworks may be obsolete, coupled with the lack of infrastructure and poor coordination, confirms the same core arguments Olanrewaju (2024) made. (Olanrewaju, 2024).

Nigeria's policy vacuum creates an "ungoverned space" that allows harassment to flourish and leaves women vulnerable to deeply entrenched cultural restrictions, particularly in the more traditional northern states.

Our study contributes empirical evidence to the literature by demonstrating that gender inequity in the Nigerian creative sector is a compounding challenge driven by forces like patriarchal power dynamics, restrictive financial structures, and an obsolete regulatory framework. The relative success of women in the new media space offers a glimmer of hope, but it also serves as a stark testament to the individual adaptability, fortitude, and resilience required to thrive in a system fundamentally designed to exclude them.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the nature and extent of gender inequities, systemic barriers, and workplace challenges experienced by women in Nigeria's burgeoning creative sector. While the sector is often hailed as a major engine for economic growth and youth employment, this research reveals a profound dichotomy for women creatives: though they exhibit immense resilience and professional ambition, they operate within an ecosystem fundamentally structured by patriarchal norms, financial exclusion, and a culture of impunity. This study generated insights on lived professional experiences of women across diverse creative domains, moving beyond the frequently studied Nollywood segment to capture realities across 11 key sub-sectors, including the new media, design, performing arts, and advertising/marketing.

The findings confirm that gender-based challenges form a consistent pattern across these creative fields. Our data paint a picture of women who are not passive participants but active agents of creative products. Their high representation in new media and near-universal reliance on digital platforms (99% use social media for work) highlights a profound emerging reality: Women are leveraging the self-regulated digital sphere to build autonomous careers and bypass traditional gatekeepers. Respondents (91%) see a long-term future for themselves in the sector, showcasing deep professional resolve and determination.

However, this massive involvement of female creatives comes at a cost, defined by some overarching realities. First, despite feeling valued for their creative contributions, over 90% of women experienced some form of harassment, including unpleasant sexual jokes. This represents the larger culture of objectification of female gender that undermines dignity and obstructs career progress for female creatives in Nigeria. In addition, systemic exclusion persists in the creative sector. The study shows that 46% witnessed a gender pay gap and that low access to capital fuels male-dominated ownership and leadership in the creative sector. This financial barrier is a systemic mechanism that ensures women remain in subordinate roles, limiting their ability to shape policy, set standards, or demand equitable compensation.

Finally, the study revealed that both men and women are internalizing cultural norms, leading to a pervasive internalized gender bias. This manifests as the "unicorn in the mix" effect, where men are presumed competent even in female-dominated fields, while women are second-guessed in male-dominated spaces. To cope, women often resort to masculinization strategies, suppressing their femininity just to be treated as professional equals with male colleagues.

In summary, this study documents a creative sector that is resilient, diverse, and commercially powerful, but fundamentally inequitable. The individual instances of misconduct shared by women reflect broader systemic, cultural, and institutional challenges. The policy vacuum, underscored by the lack of a current cultural policy, exacerbates a permissive environment for these inequities to flourish.

The study points to the need for urgent action. Policy reform is crucial, but so too is a cultural shift. The sector must prioritize accountability mechanisms to combat harassment and enact targeted interventions to dismantle the financial barriers that exclude women from leadership and ownership. This study reminds all stakeholders that gender equity is not just a moral imperative, it is an economic necessity for unlocking the full potential of Nigeria's creative sector.

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish gender-focused targeted funding mechanisms. Women have limited access to capital compared with men due to high collateral requirements. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy, in partnership with agencies like the Bank of Industry and the Development Bank should introduce low-interest loans, microfinance schemes or grants specifically for women creatives. Such initiatives should strengthen microfinance schemes or grants for women in sub-sectors like audiovisuals, design, and gastronomy. Such loans or grants should be sensitive to women's reduced access to collateral and their low likelihood to service high interest loans.

2. Strengthen regulatory oversight for gender equity. The creative space is largely ungoverned and poorly regulated. Relevant regulatory bodies, including the Actors Guild of Nigeria, the National Film and Video Censors Board, and the Advertising Regulatory Council, could enforce gender-fair practices to ensure women are not marginalized in male-dominated sub-sectors like film production. Copyright laws and union regulations could also include gender equity and inclusion clauses. There is an opportunity to strengthen bodies like the Actors Guild of Nigeria and relevant regulatory agencies (like the National Film and Video Censors Board, and the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria) to promote the inclusion of gender equity requirements, ensuring fair access to opportunities and protection against discriminatory practices (including paying women less than men for the same work) and harassment.

3. Strengthen workplace safety and accountability for women creatives. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, in partnership with guilds in the creative sector must establish an independent Ethics Ombudsman for the creative sector, and creative guilds and associations must enforce mandatory zero-tolerance anti-harassment policies and transparency in hiring and casting processes.

Programmatic Recommendations

1. Leverage technology for training, market access, and to challenge cultural norms. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy, should lead the implementation of digital skills training for women. There is opportunity to implement digital skills training programs for women in new media, audiovisuals, and visual arts, and improve access to the international market through platforms like Instagram and YouTube for content creation and marketing. Social media platforms can also be tools for challenging gender stereotypes that associate incompetence with being female.

2. Promote all-round collaborations. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy and the National Economic Summit Group should encourage and coordinate partnerships among government, private sector, and women-led cooperatives, guilds, and unions. Such public-private partnerships and collaborative efforts should involve creative sector investors to improve female creatives' access to resources.

3. Support women's leadership and ownership of firms in the creative sector. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy should develop and fund targeted mentorship and capacity-strengthening programs to increase women's representation in leadership and firm ownership across creative sub-sectors. Women are currently underrepresented in leadership and ownership in many sub-sectors. Training and mentorship programs can empower women to take on these roles.

4. Enhance creative sector infrastructure. The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy should prioritize addressing infrastructure gaps by investing in theaters, cinemas, studios, cultural centers, and performance venues to enhance women's ability to monetize their creative output. At present, creative sector infrastructure is inadequate, and there are opportunities for investment. Theaters, cinemas, production studios, cultural centers, and performance spaces are viable investments that can improve female creatives' chances of monetizing their creativity.

5. Address socio-cultural barriers from all angles. Civil Society Organizations should partner with religious and traditional rulers to implement community-based advocacy and educational initiatives, particularly in northern Nigeria, to

challenge restrictive norms and promote women's participation in the creative economy. Cultural and religious restrictions, particularly in northern Nigeria, persist, limiting women's participation. Community-based advocacy campaigns/workshops and educational programs (in-school and out-of-school) could challenge stereotypes and promote women's participation in the creative sector.

6. Improve access to equipment and resources. Guilds within the creative sector, in partnership with the Bank of Industry, should establish equipment leasing and subsidy programs to offset high equipment costs and enable greater participation by women in creative production. The high cost of equipment is a barrier for women in the creative sector. Female creatives may not be able to afford professional grade equipment, for instance. Subsidized equipment programs could enable women to participate more fully. There are opportunities for establishing equipment leasing or subsidy programs for women to reduce barriers associated with access to equipment or funding.

Appendix 1: Key Creative Sector Policies in Nigeria (2000-2024)

Legal/Policy Document	Core objective	Gender considerations
National Tourism Development Master Plan (2006)	Develop tourism as a tool for economic growth and cultural promotion.	No gender considerations
National Information Technology Development Agency Act 2007	- Create a framework for planning, research, development, standardization, application, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and regulation of IT practices, activities, and systems. - Provide guidelines to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of appropriate IT systems and applications. - Develop guidelines for electronic governance and monitor the use of electronic data interchange,	No gender considerations
National Policy on Culture (2008)	- Preserve and promote Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage. - Encourage cultural participation. - Harness culture for economic development.	No gender considerations
Bank of Industry's Nolly Fund (2015)	Provide financial support for Nollywood filmmakers to improve production quality and enhance Nigeria's film industry	No gender considerations
National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030)	- Ensure 70% broadband penetration by 2030. - Accelerate the digitalization of government processes and improve service delivery, transparency, and accountability. - Attract and grow digital jobs across all sectors of the economy.	No gender considerations
Disability Inclusion in the Creative Industry Policy Framework (2021)	Promote the inclusion of persons living with disabilities in Nigeria's creative industries by addressing barriers and providing equal opportunities.	No gender considerations

Legal/Policy Document	Core objective	Gender considerations
Nigeria Creative Industries Development Bill (2021-2023)	Provide a framework for the growth and regulation of creative industries.	Emphasizes inclusivity and fair representation, including a commitment to creating equitable opportunities for women and marginalized groups.
Nigeria Startup Act, 2022	- Provide a legal and institutional framework for the development of startups. - Provide an enabling environment for the establishment, development, and operation of startups. - Provide for the development and growth of technology-related talents. - Position Nigeria's startup ecosystem as the leading digital technology center in Africa.	No gender considerations
Intellectual Property and Copyrights Policy for SMEs in Nigeria (2023)	- Enhance the use of intellectual property rights to support small and medium enterprises. - Protect the work of creatives through copyright enforcement.	No gender considerations
Creative Economy Development Fund (2024)	Provide financial support and investments in creative industries.	No gender considerations
The Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises Program	- Aims to harness the youth talent pool and equip them with technological and creative skills to increase their employability. - Seeks to foster innovation and support the emergence of more entrepreneurs. - Support the enactment of enabling regulatory frameworks and policies for new businesses and innovative ventures.	No gender considerations

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