

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF A FEMALE'S PERSPECTIVE ON HOW CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AIM TO COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITY WITHIN THE UK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Introduction

The construction industry has always been male dominated, however, in recent decades, there has been a clear initiative from construction companies to encourage women in construction. This research aimed to evaluate the female's perspective on how construction companies are working towards combatting the gender inequalities.

There is literature on the effects of training on improving equality and diversity amongst construction workers, but there is little on the specific policies that female construction workers find most impactful. This research intended to discuss a female's perspective on this and understand how successful companies have been in implementing such policies.

This research project not only supports companies seeking to become more diverse, but also highlights the additional benefits sought from a diverse work force. Clerkin and Ruderman (2018) found that gender disproportion within an industry can negatively impact the industry's innovation and creativity. Furthermore, Eastman (2018), highlights how this topic should be prioritised by employees as evidenced by the theory that gender diversity has a positive correlation with profitability.

Research Gap

The secondary data review within the literature review allowed the author to identify the research questions for the study. The research questions aim to establish if women feel fairly represented with UK construction companies, and whether the recruitment process was fair. The research questions also sought to establish if women feel their employer makes a conscious effort to implement policies to attract, retain and satisfy employees.

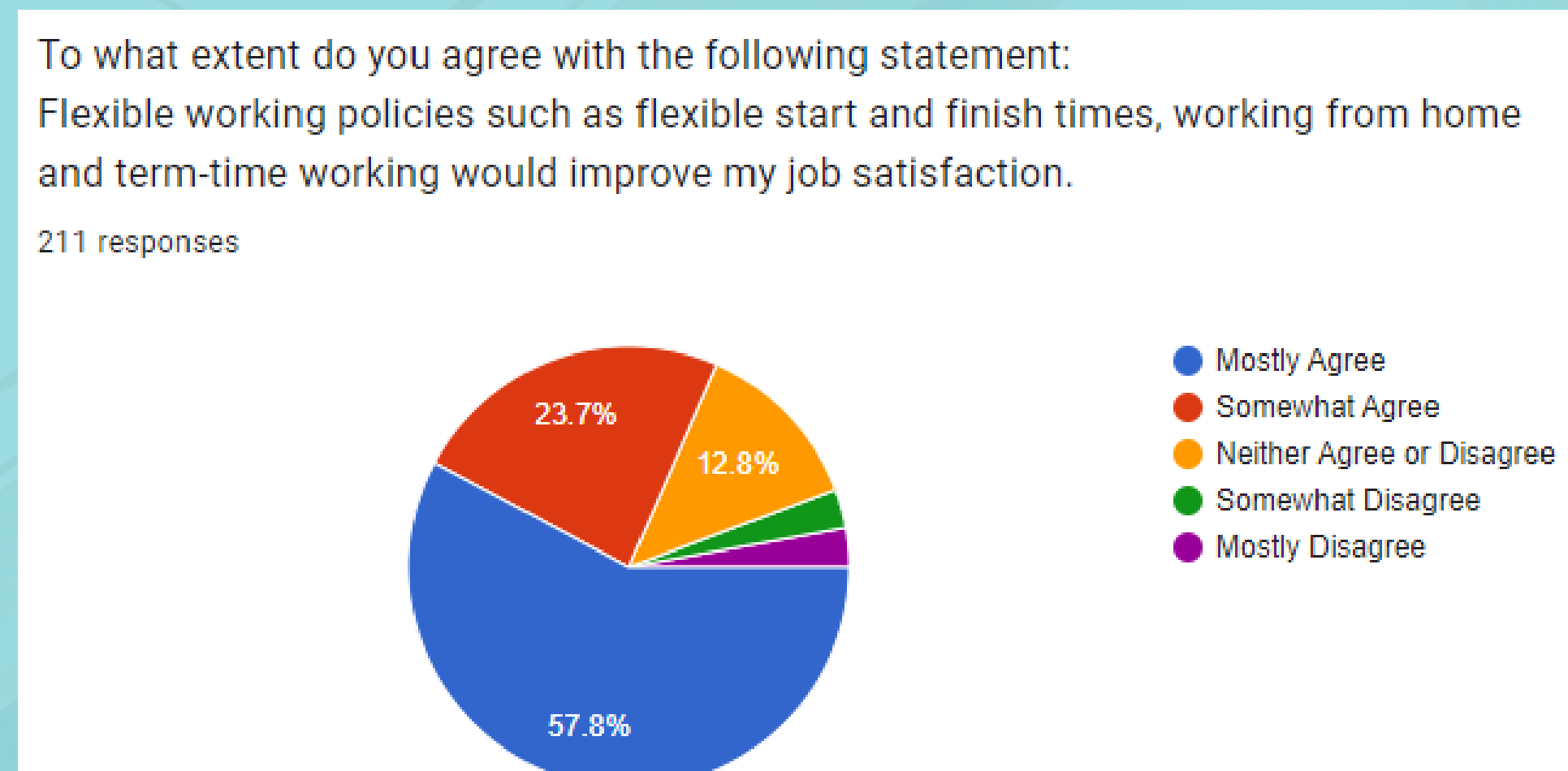
Methodology

The method of research was quantitative data collection through a questionnaire. This method was chosen as the author wanted to reach a large participant group. There were 211 participants in total.

The questions were designed to delve into the participants' personal experiences working within the construction industry, including the reason they joined the industry and why they continue to work in the industry.

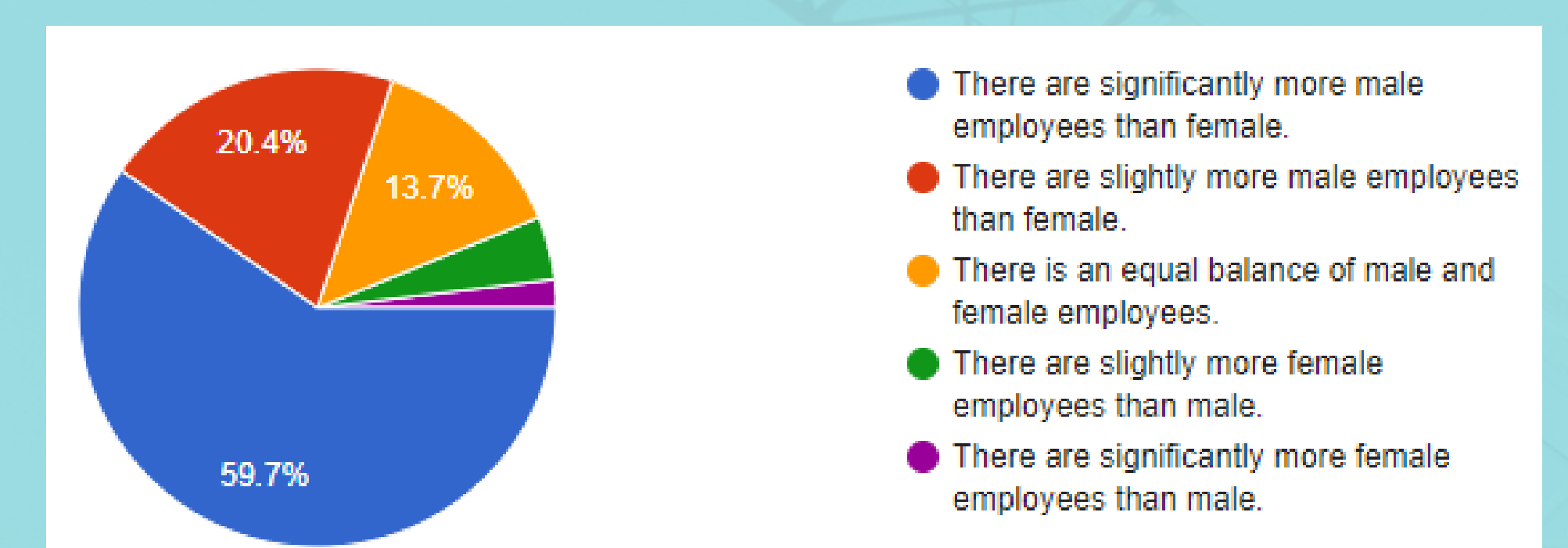
Statistical analysis was used to highlight themes which are most influential in combatting the gender disparities within the construction industry. In order to break existing bias, four key areas have been reviewed; mentoring, leadership development, hiring practices and promoting equal opportunities. These areas were found to positively contribute to the attraction, retention and satisfaction of female employees.

In addition to the aforementioned factors, flexible working was identified as one of the most influential factors in attracting, retaining and satisfying female employees, as shown in the below table with 81.5% of participants agreeing that flexible working policies would improve their job satisfaction.

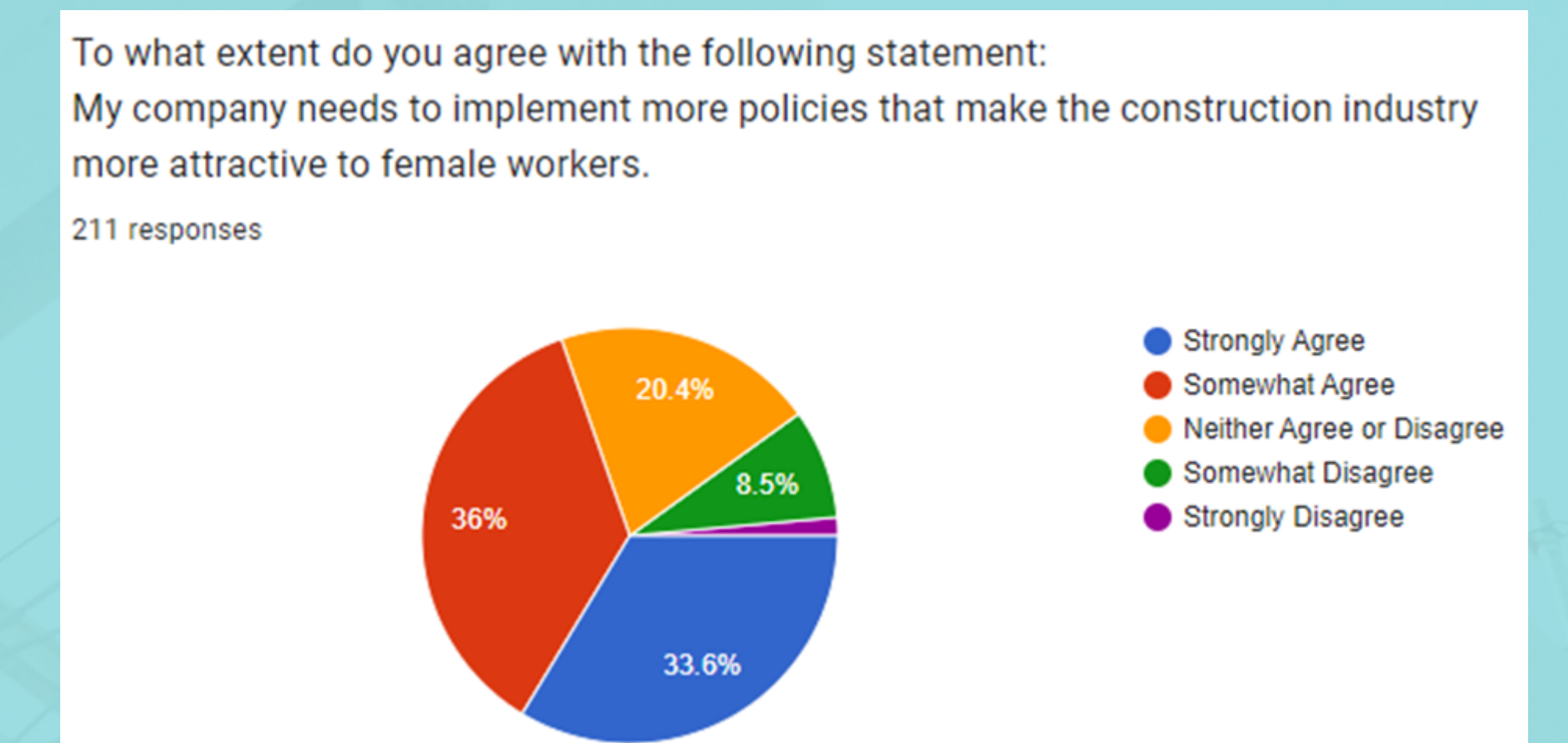


Key Findings

The primary data collection strongly supported the statement that there are significantly more males working in the industry and that the female employees do not feel fairly represented. Although, 78.7% of participants agreed that the hiring process was fair and unbiased as shown in the table below.



The participants of the study agreed that their employer needs to do more to implement attractive female policies such as flexible working with 69.9% of participants agreeing with this, as shown in the table below.



The participants mostly agreed that the hiring process was fair, and that they were not discriminated against when compared with male candidates. The youngest participant age group (18-25-year-olds) were most in agreement with this. The proportion of agreement gradually reduces as the age range increases. This suggests that the industry has transitioned into a fairer environment for female workers.

Recommendations

The author recommends that further research is conducted to understand direct correlations between policies and employee retention to establish how impactful certain policies are in enabling construction companies to satisfy and retain employees.

Research into best practices within the industry will allow future researchers to produce information that is reliable and valuable, which can be utilised by employers to ensure they are implementing policies that satisfy their employees and allow them to remain competitive within the construction industry.

In addition, it is recommended that qualitative research is conducted to gain a greater understanding of the perspectives of female employees in the construction industry and an insight into key motivators for them. This will allow research to be presented that includes a personal element, providing an understanding of both the experiences and opinions of participants. Utilising interviews in addition to questionnaires, provides opportunity for participants to disclose any theories or experiences they have which may not have been considered in the methodology.

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