

A Technical Paper Presentation
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Theme: Professional Women and the Society

Topics: An innovative woman

Over the years, the patriarchal society too often perceives women as being too delicate, non-creative and so less inventive. This trend, among many other deeply-seated and unconscious gender biases, forces potential women innovators to withdraw into their shells. Yet, women possess inherently strong attributes that can help them to think, actualize their thoughts and make the difference in the technological world. It will interest you to know that even God realized the creative/innovative power or ability He puts in a female gender and He said the woman should help the man put things in place for sustainable development of the society.

Innovation:

When we speak of innovation, we often conjure images of groundbreaking discoveries, revolutionary technologies, and disruptive ideas, innovation is not confined to laboratories or boardrooms—it permeates every facet of our lives, driven by individuals who dare to

dream and think outside the box. According to Cristina Junqueira's quote "I want my daughters to grow up in a world where they can dream of being whoever they want to be—and you can't dream of what you can't see". Innovation knows no bounds—it transcends industries and disciplines, manifesting in unexpected ways.

Who is an innovative woman?

An innovative woman embodies these qualities and more. She is a creative individual, a catalyst for change, a trailblazer, unafraid to venture into uncharted territory and chart her own path. She sees opportunities where others see obstacles, leveraging her creativity and resourcefulness to turn challenges into triumphs. They possess a visionary mindset that transcends the present. They see beyond immediate challenges, envisioning a future where possibilities are limitless. Innovative women are unafraid to challenge norms, and explore unconventional solutions. Innovative women exhibit a remarkable ability to adapt to change and bounce back from setbacks. They approached challenges as puzzles waiting to be solved, using creativity and strategic thinking to find solutions. Their life style encourages open communication and the sharing of ideas. An innovative woman possesses a keen analytical mind and a tenacity to tackle complex challenges. They foster inclusive environments, value diverse perspectives, and understand the collective power of teamwork. Often venturing into entrepreneurial endeavors, embodies an entrepreneurial

spirit. They are proactive, resourceful, and possess the ability to turn ideas into tangible outcomes, often founding ventures that drive positive change. Their resilience in the face of challenges fuels their capacity to continuously innovate and redefine possibilities. What sets the innovative woman apart is not just her ability to think differently, but her unwavering commitment to turning ideas into action. She is a catalyst for change, inspiring those around her to embrace new possibilities and challenge the status quo. Her courage, resilience, and determination serve as a beacon of hope in a world that is constantly evolving. Whether she is an entrepreneur launching a groundbreaking startup, an artist pushing the boundaries of creative expression, or a community leader driving social change, the innovative woman leaves her mark wherever she goes.

Challenges:

Surveys have identified “creative thinking” as the ability valued most in employees and one of the most important skills for the future. However, stereotypical expectations of men and women’s creativity shape how creativity is judged and acknowledged. Authors reported that creativity itself is more strongly associated with stereotypically masculine characteristics and that a man’s work is more likely to be deemed creative. The research also finds that men’s ideas are more often deemed “ingenious” than women’s, even when it’s on the same topic. In particular, supervisors assess their female employees as less creative—

even when they are exhibiting more of the stereotypically masculine behaviours associated with creativity. Again, according to UNESCO Science Report 2021, one in three researchers in science globally is a woman. In Africa, 30% of science professionals are women and female enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses is rising. However, women and girls are still underrepresented. Globally, only 12% of the members of science academia are women and they comprise only a quarter (28%) of tertiary graduates in engineering and 40% of computer sciences graduates. More needs to be done to bridge the country's gender gap in STEM, in order to have more women innovators. Women in science are real agents of change. Given the opportunity, women and girls can effectively contribute to development by providing solutions and fresh perspectives to existing challenges.

Impact of professional women innovators:

Professional women today are not only making significant strides in their respective fields but are also actively contributing to the innovation and progress of society as a whole. Women in the technology sector are breaking barriers, leading innovations in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software development. Their contributions not only drive advancements in technology but also challenge gender stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated fields. Yet, the innovative woman often remains unsung, her contributions overshadowed by societal norms and

systemic barriers. Educating girls in STEM enables them to achieve their potential and play an effective role in addressing development challenges via innovation. Beyond the boardroom, innovative women leverage their skills and resources to address pressing social issues, driving positive change in their communities and beyond. Some names such as Marie Curie and Ada Lovelace are widely known, many other women have been active inventors and innovators in a wide range of interests and applications, contributing important developments to the world in which we live. Jane Doe, founder of a tech startup, revolutionized the industry with her groundbreaking innovations in artificial intelligence, empowering women in STEM and reshaping the future of technology. Rebecca Enonchong: A tech entrepreneur and advocate, the founder and CEO of AppsTech, a leading global provider of enterprise application solutions. She is also a vocal supporter of technology education and entrepreneurship in Africa. Dr. Ola Orekunrin: A medical doctor and founder of Flying Doctors Nigeria, Dr. Orekunrin has been at the forefront of leveraging technology to provide emergency medical services and air ambulance transportation across Nigeria. Funke Opeke: As the founder and CEO of MainOne, Funke Opeke has played a pivotal role in the development of undersea fiber optic cable infrastructure in West Africa, providing reliable internet connectivity.

Way Forward:

As we look to the future, let us draw inspiration from the innovative women who have come before us. Let us harness the power of innovation to tackle the pressing challenges of our time, from climate change and global inequality to technological disruption and social injustice. And let us continue to champion the innovative woman, recognizing her as a driving force for positive change in our world.

This paper therefore calls for starting young, targeting women, and investing more in women-led research. By starting young, we can encourage, equip, and mentor girls to inspire them to take up STEM courses and careers. Secondly, the government must support women in science, to stay in science, provide professional support to women scientists through scholarships, mentoring programmes and gender-friendly policies and funding so that women innovators can thrive.

Having more women in science is a key driver for the achievement of Africa's commitment to sustainable development through science technology and innovation as captured in the African Union's Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024. Together, we can narrow the gender gap in this field, especially those with 'a seat at the table', having an opportunity to exert their influence and power to encourage a levelling of the playing field and open doors for the next generation of female scientists, researchers, inventors and creators.

Conclusion

Innovation often involves taking risks. Be open to calculated risks and step outside your comfort zone. Calculated risks can lead to breakthroughs and opportunities that contribute to your innovative journey. Remember, innovation is a journey rather than a destination. By cultivating these habits and adopting an innovative mindset, you can pave the way for continuous growth, creativity, and success in your professional and personal endeavours. In summary, the effect of innovative women on the advancement of a nation is transformative and far-reaching. Their influence spans economic, technological, social, and cultural dimensions, contributing to a more vibrant, equitable, and progressive society. Empowering and supporting innovative women is not only a matter of gender equality but a strategic investment in a nation's overall development and prosperity.

Innovation thrives on continuous learning, and innovative women are lifelong learners. Let us embrace new technologies, stay informed about industry trends, and actively seek opportunities. Commitment to learning triggers our capacity to remain at the forefront of innovation. This ability to dream big and chart a course for the future is a hallmark of **an innovative woman.**

In closing, let us learn to celebrate an innovative woman—not just today, but every day. Let us honor their contributions, amplify their voices, and empower them to continue to shape a future that is brighter, more inclusive, and more innovative than ever before.