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SP5.2.6 The Challenges Experienced by Female Surgeons in Africa- A Review of the Existing Literature

Damilola Jesuyajolu1, Charles Okeke2, Otomi Obuh3

1Surgery department, First Graceland Hospitals, Abijo, Lagos
2Surgery department, EYN Primary Healthcare Center Mubi, Kwarhi, Hong, Adamawa State, Nigeria
3Vascular Surgery, Imperial College Healthcare Trust, UK

Aims: There has not been any comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by female surgeons in Africa on a continental scale. These challenges, when brought to the forefront, can be tackled by the necessary stakeholders to increase the participation of women in surgery. This article will review the existing literature, across the African continent, to highlight the challenges experienced by female surgeons.

Methods: We conducted a search using keywords ‘Challenges’ ‘Female’ ‘Surgeon’ ‘Africa’ and ‘Bias’ on PubMed, Google Scholar, and AJOL from inception till 21st of January 2022. We then searched these keywords on Google in addition to the names of each of the individual countries. 10 papers satisfied the eligibility criteria by discussing the specific challenges that female surgeons faced in practice.

Results: There was a paucity of data from most of the individual African countries, highlighting the need for more research in this aspect. Out of the 10 published papers that were eligible, problems with work-life balance was the most common challenge with underrepresentation being second. Harassment, insufficient support, disrespect from colleagues, exclusion from activities, and stereotypes were also part of the challenges identified.

Conclusion: Despite the increasing participation, female surgeons continue to face different challenges ranging from the unfavorable work environment to the pressures put on them by society. This narrative review serves as a stimulant for major health stakeholders in global surgery to promote gender inclusivity in the African surgical workforce; a feat that will ultimately benefit the people who need access to quality surgical care.