

ASSESSMENT OF SCARCITY OF WOODWORK ARTISAN IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *Woodwork artisanal scarcity is at alarming rate in Nigeria and in Kwara state in particular. The reason being that most of the available woodwork artisans lack adequate skills demanded for quality Building Construction. Generally, the issue of woodwork artisanal scarcity is not a current one as it dates as far back as the two World Wars. This study is on the causes of the observed scarcity of woodwork artisans in Nigeria and Kwara state in particular. The objectives of the study was to identify the factors increasing woodwork artisanal scarcity in Kwara state, its effect on Kwara state economy and the possible remedies. The study employed the use of descriptive survey design which involve the use of structured questionnaire to collect data from 25 contractors and 35 woodwork artisans in carpentry and joinery. There was no sampling because the population is manageable, hence, the entire population was used. Mean ratings was used to answer research questions. The findings shows that major factors causing the scarcity of woodwork artisans includes; fluctuating payment, low remuneration, low motivation, lack of interest to take-up woodwork trade by youth, technological advancements in tools, equipment and working process. It also identified the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisan on Kwara state economy. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that the Carpentry and Joinery Union of Kwara state should encourage the welfare of its members in order to improve the issues raised by this study.*

Keywords: *Artisanal scarcity, Building Construction Industry (BCI), Carpentry, Joinery, Woodwork artisans*

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment in the context of this study, is the process of ascertaining the extent of availability of woodwork artisans in building construction industries. An artisan is a skilled trade worker especially one that involves making things by hand. Artisans consist of painters, Electricians, Bricklayers, Plumbers, Steel workers, Plasterers, Tillers, woodwork Artisan among several others who work in the informal sector of the economy (Turkman, 2005). In other words artisan is a tradesman who possessed the skills and potentials acquired through the non-formal educational system.

Woodwork artisans are those people who practice the art of wood such as furniture making, wood designing, carpentry, joinery and ornamental design. They are skilled manual workers who make items that may be functional or strictly decorative including furniture, sculpture items and tools that are usually made from wood. The producers of these functional items are referred to by names such as Joiners, Carpenters, Upholsters, Cabinet making, Wood machinist and Ornamental designers (Olomukoro & Mabel, 2012).

Carpenters and joiners use their skills to make structures and fittings such as windows, roofs, floors, walls and doors from wood and wood materials. They use a variety of hand and power tools to cut, shape and join the wood. Carpentry is more on exterior works construction which do not require machining, finishing, and making of proper joint or highly seasoned

timber. While, Joinery is concerned with interior finished works such as construction of furniture items, making panel frames for doors, windows and other joint making works (James, 1990).

Construction is the process or method of building or making something, especially roads, buildings, bridges, and others. A building is an enclosed structure whose primary function is to provide shelter from wild weather conditions and security. It is a container for living, working and entertainment. It must be easily maintained, repaired and replaced. Buildings are constructed for different purposes, such as agricultural, commercial, residential, medical, educational, government, industrial and military buildings (Stephen & Christopher, 2005). Therefore, building construction is process of designing and erecting a structure for habitant use.

The antiquity of scarcity of skilled artisans in the BCI is traced back to the two world wars. According to Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB, 2009), construction of buildings was suspended during the wartime, which lead to the reduction of workforce available in BCI. Moreso, the casualty rate also affected the number of artisans returning to their pre-war building construction trades. CIOB (2009) highlighted further that after World War I, the population of skilled artisans was reduced significantly and there was a similar occurrence at the end of World War II in 1945. Following this scenario, there was highest demand for artisans particularly Carpenter and Joiners.

However, according to Offei, Osei, Fugar and Adinyira (2014) highlighted that the quality of a building construction work depends on the skills possessed by the artisans. It is on these basis that Sumanta and Eno (2006) noted that the utilization of poor construction techniques, unskilled artisans and absence of technical knowledge for the supervision of construction projects makes the quality of work produced by artisan tend to be inferior.

The observation is that it has become difficult to find skilled artisans to be employed in BCI in Kwara state. This observation is in line with Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (2006) which stated that it is difficult to retain the artisans employed by the BCI because over 60% of total labor force in the construction industries is made up of unskilled artisans.

The reality is that majority of the available artisans lack the required skills that are required in BCI (Akplu & Amankrah, 2008). Therefore, the non-availability of skilled artisans is affecting the quality of building construction works in Kwara state. Hence, the necessity for this study is crucial.

1.1 Statement of Problems

The current scarcity of woodwork artisan right from the two world wars was as a result of strong demand for new homes. This accession demanded for competent artisans in carpentry and joinery which is currently devastating. It is in this view that Carliner (1998) observed that the biggest challenge facing BCI is finding skilled artisans. Studies have shown that many woodwork artisans are not employable and cannot even be self-reliant due to lack of needed skills during their apprenticeship and training (Okolie, 2010). It is against this backdrop that this study becomes necessary.

1.2 Objective of the study

The aim of the study is to determine the causes of scarcity of woodwork artisan, while the objectives are to determine the;

- i. Factors contributing to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state.
- ii. Effects of the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy.
- iii. Possible remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state.

1.3 Research Questions

The Following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- i. What are the factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state?
- ii. What are the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy?
- iii. What are the possible remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state?

2. METHODOLOGY

The design employed by the study is a mix-method research design which a descriptive survey is using structured questionnaires accompanied with interview. Mixed-method survey research design was considered most appropriate for this study because it provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population using both questionnaire and interview for data collection with the intent of generalizing respondents' opinion (Fowler, 2009).

The study was conducted in Kwara state, using BCI as the area of study. While the population for the study is 60 respondents which comprises of 25 contractors and 35 woodwork artisans in building profession.

Instrument for data collection contained four (4) sections. Section A, B, C and D. Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents. 15 items regarding the factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state made up section B. Section C provide response to the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on the economy of Kwara state with 10-items. Section D is made up of 10-items on the possible remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state. Four (4) points scale response mode of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point were used.

The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the department of Industrial and Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna. Nigeria.

Sixty (60) copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and was returned at 100% return rate. The returned questionnaires were used for data analyses. The responses from the respondents were tabulated and compared, and descriptive analysis (means and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions. The item mean (\bar{x}) and the criterion mean (2.50) were computed and utilized to measure the level of agreement and or disagreement. The decision employed was that if the item mean (\bar{x}) is greater than or equal the criterion mean (2.50), the option is positively rated (agree); but if the item mean (\bar{x}) is less than the criterion mean (2.50), the option is rated negatively (Disagree).

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Research Question one: What are the factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state?

Table 1: Factors Contributing to the Scarcity of Woodwork Artisans in BCI in Kwara State

S/No	Items	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	\bar{x}_t	SD	Remark
1.	Lack of required skills	3.30	3.13	3.26	0.88	Agreed
2.	Technology development in tools and equipment	2.92	2.95	2.94	0.71	Agreed
3.	Technology development in woodworking process	2.98	3.00	2.99	0.62	Agreed
4.	Lack of knowledge in material selection	2.32	2.41	2.37	0.69	Disagreed

5.	Lack of interest by youth to learn woodwork trades	3.00	3.17	3.09	0.97	Agreed
6.	Negative perception of parents towards job security in woodwork	2.49	2.51	2.50	1.02	Agreed
7.	Employment of woodwork artisans on a casual and temporary basis	2.81	2.75	2.78	0.96	Agreed
8.	Varying working conditions	3.13	3.22	3.18	0.75	Agreed
9.	Utilization of unskilled labor on projects	2.88	2.95	2.92	0.81	Agreed
10.	Lack of skill to handle modern technology	3.75	3.85	3.80	0.77	Agreed
11.	Few woodwork artisans who up-date their skills are expensive to hire	3.49	3.32	3.41	0.74	Agreed
12.	Woodwork artisans' varying wages and low remuneration	3.62	3.49	3.56	0.69	Agreed
13.	Irregular payment of workmanship to artisans	2.92	3.01	2.97	0.82	Agreed
14.	Lack of motivation i.e. rewards and leadership to artisans	3.22	3.36	3.29	0.70	Agreed
15.	Gender inequality in artisanship	4.58	4.63	4.61	0.81	Agreed

The data shown in Table-1 on the factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork Artisans in Building Construction Industry in Kwara state revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items with mean score ranging from 2.50-4.61 except item 4 with mean score of 2.37. This is an indication that lack of knowledge in material selection is not a contributing factor to the scarcity of woodwork Artisans in BCI in Kwara state.

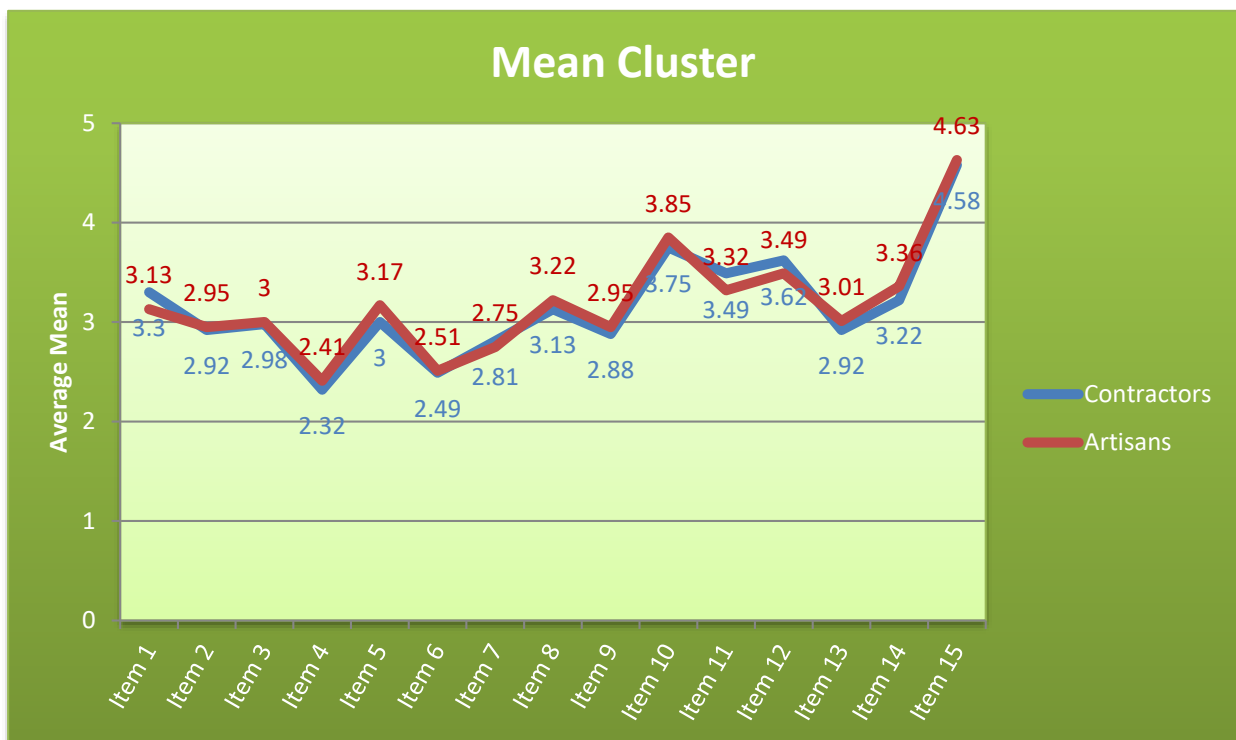


Figure 1: Mean Response of Contractors and Artisans on factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara State

Figure-1 shows that the mean response of respondents on factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state are cluster. This implies that the respondents have similar opinions in their responses.

Research Question two: What are the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy?

Table 2: The effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara State economy

S/No	Items	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	\bar{x}_t	SD	Remark
1.	Reduction of quality skill artisans in building construction	3.22	3.15	3.19	0.69	Agreed
2.	Diminishing of quality building construction work	3.41	3.38	3.40	0.74	Agreed
3.	Failure and malfunction of a finished building work	2.91	3.10	3.01	0.65	Agreed
4.	Loss of materials	2.41	2.37	2.39	0.85	Disagreed
5.	Utilization of higher unskilled labor on projects	3.34	3.40	3.37	0.61	Agreed
6.	Reduction in job creation	3.47	3.65	3.56	0.51	Agreed
7.	Reduction in the rate of productivity	3.52	3.60	3.56	0.65	Agreed
8.	Increase in the level of poverty	3.62	3.52	3.57	0.63	Agreed
9.	Rise in the cost of housing	3.28	3.36	3.32	0.56	Agreed
10.	Reduction in the skill acquisition rate	3.17	3.18	3.18	0.66	Agreed

The result shown in Table-2 on the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy revealed that the respondents disagreed with item 4 as effect of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy. However, agreed with items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 with mean score ranging from 3.01-3.57.

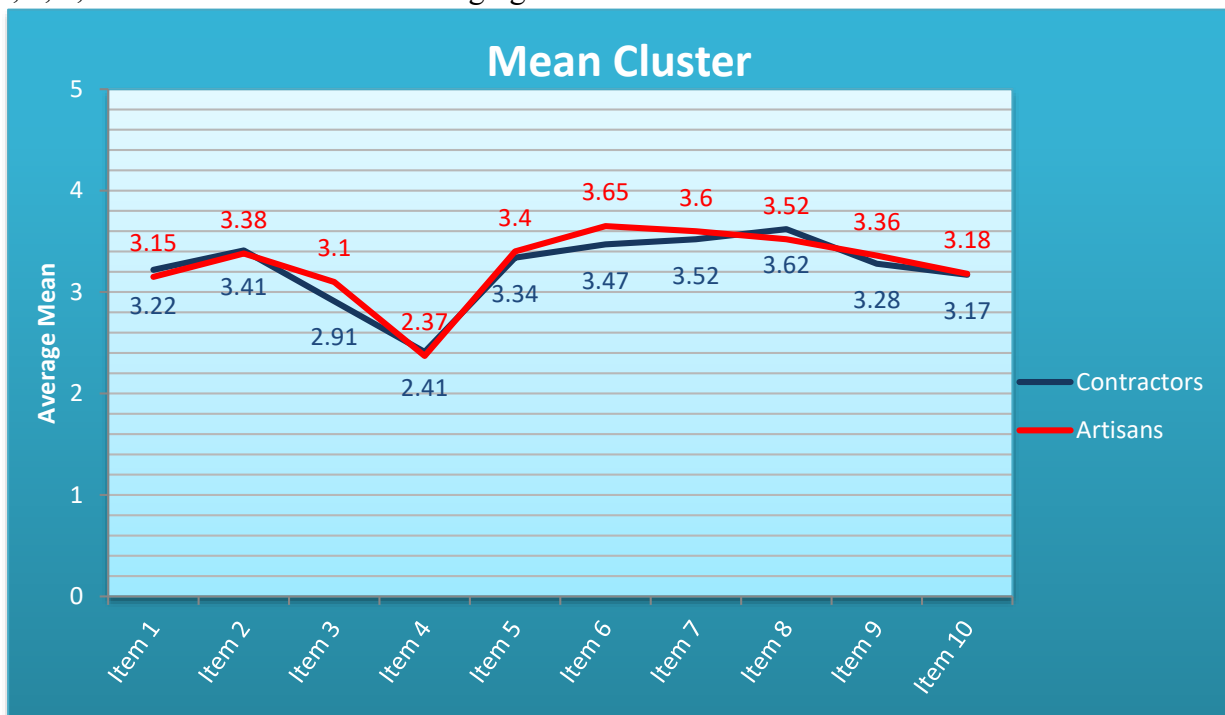


Figure-2: Mean Comparison of the response of respondents on effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in Building Construction Industry on Kwara state economy

It was shown in Figure-2 that the Contractors and Artisans were cluster in their responses. This is an indication that all respondents have similar opinions on the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy.

Research Question Three: What are the possible remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state?

Table 3: Remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state

S/No	Items	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	\bar{x}_t	SD	Remark
1.	Society to discourage the racialization and gender inequality in artisanship	3.51	3.60	3.56	0.68	Agreed
2.	Better working conditions to be made available for artisans	3.43	3.46	3.45	0.61	Agreed
3.	Career development opportunities to be put in place by the government and other private sectors	3.24	3.28	3.26	0.75	Agreed
4.	Government to create a re-training center for artisans	3.33	3.30	3.32	0.54	Agreed
5.	Effective retention strategies should be stimulated by the government	3.20	3.25	3.23	0.76	Agreed
6.	Artisan re-training course should be aligned to the Building Construction Industry needs	3.43	3.39	3.41	0.61	Agreed
7.	Fairness and equity should be created between artisans and other employees in terms of wages and remuneration.	3.11	3.40	3.26	0.74	Agreed
8.	Woodwork artisans should be restricted to working in their professional areas	2.84	2.76	2.80	0.62	Agreed
9.	Parents should be oriented towards professional careers of the youths	2.92	3.00	2.96	0.63	Agreed
10.	Building Construction Industry to employ Artisans as permanent workers	3.28	3.33	3.31	0.56	Agreed

The analysis of the result in table III on the remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state showed that the respondents agreed with all items as the possible remedies to curtail the scarcity of woodwork artisans. In another development, the result in table 3 indicated clearly that all the presented items are agreed to be remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans. Figure-3 shows that the mean response indicating the opinions of the respondents were cluster. In other words, the respondents' shares closely related opinions on the remedies to curtail the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state.

Findings from the study on factors contributing to the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state revealed that lack of skill required, lack of interest by youth to learn woodwork trades, lack of skill to handle modern technology, gender inequality in artisanship, varying wages and low remuneration, ill motivation, among others are factors enhancing the scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state. This finding is supported by the findings of Erkelens and Van Egmond (2007), that lack of interest by the youth to take up trades, increase in technological advancement and low and irregular wages, among others are problems compounding the unavailability of artisans. Onyenekenwa (2010) also corroborate this finding that younger people (youths) were keeping away from technical apprenticeship and services provision as careers. Also, the finding of Owo (2010) supported the finding of the present study that technical apprentices and artisan services providers were predominantly male.

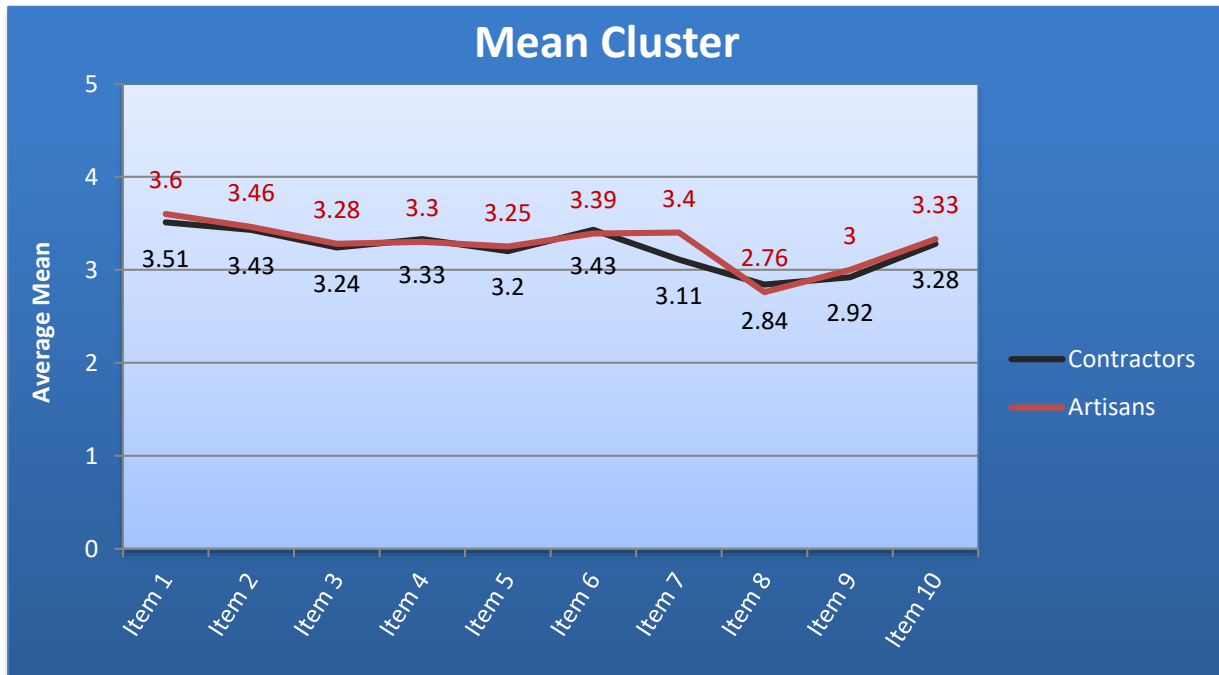


Figure-3: Mean Comparison of the response of Contractors and Artisans on Remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state

Findings on the effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI on Kwara state economy disclosed that 90% of the presented items are all possible effects of scarcity of woodwork artisans on the economy of Kwara state. Some of these effects as revealed in the study include the reduction in job creation, increase in poverty level, rise in the cost of housing and diminishing of quality building construction work. This finding is supported by the finding of Onyenekenwa (2010) that clear and consistent reduction in artisan apprenticeship practice and artisanal products and services in Nigerian cities and suburbs constitutes a poor economic development.

Findings on the remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state showed that all the highlighted items are regarded as remedies to curtail scarcity of woodwork artisans. This is an indication that the following, among others, are remedies to scarcity of woodwork artisan; career development opportunities to be put in place by the government and other private sectors, better working conditions to be made available for artisans, society to discourage the racialization, gender inequality in artisanship and building construction Industry to employ Artisans as permanent workers. The finding of the present study is corroborated by the finding of Van Rooyen, Du Toit, Botha, and Rothmann (2010) which highlighted that factors that influence the retention of artisans include remuneration, development opportunity, recognition and management, among others.

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that scarcity of woodwork artisans in BCI in Kwara state is vibrant. The study indicated that woodwork artisans are scarce because youths are not interested in learning woodwork trades, majority of artisans do not possess required skills to handle modern tools and equipment as a result of technological development, fluctuating wages and low payment, ill motivation among others. Moreso, the scarcity that plagued the economy of Kwara state includes increase in the level of poverty and cost of

housing, diminishing of quality building construction work and reduction in the rate of productivity.

The study recommends that better working conditions should be made available for artisans, government should create a re-training center for artisans, Artisan re-training course should be aligned to the needs of Building Construction Industry, effective retention, fairness and equity should be created between artisans and other employees in terms of wages and remuneration and society should discourage the racialization and gender inequality in artisanship among others.

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