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AJONBADI, Hakeem, ADEKOYA, Olatunji <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4785-4129>>, MORDI, Chima, ADISA, Toyin and OLOGUNOYE, Oluwatimilehin

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The gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations: A systematic literature review

Hakeem Adeniyi Ajonbadi¹ | Olatunji David Adekoya² | Chima Mordi¹  | Toyin Ajibade Adisa³  | Oluwatimilehin Temitope Ologunoye⁴

¹Department of Management, University of Doha for Science and Technology, Doha, Qatar

²Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

³Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London, London, UK

⁴Faculty of Business, University of Sunderland, Sunderland, UK

Correspondence

Olatunji David Adekoya, Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB, UK.

Email: o.adekoya@shu.ac.uk

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Abstract

Management and organization research has paid limited attention to how gender, time and organizational dynamics intersect, particularly in shaping gender equality and inclusion. The extant literature also remains largely western-centric in its focus on the conceptualizations of time and gendered time use. Thus, the present study examines the complex interaction between gender, time and organizations in a non-western context, specifically in Africa. Through a systematic literature review of 88 articles, we provide insights into the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations. In doing so, we make two key contributions to the literature. First, we develop a conceptual framework that identifies five distinct gendered conceptualizations of time, which offer a culturally grounded lens for analysing inclusion. Second, we highlight the main theoretical perspectives of gendered time use based on our reviewed literature. Furthermore, we also suggest directions for future research to advance research on gender, time and organizations.

INTRODUCTION

In the management and organization literature, the interplay of gender, time and organizations is a crucial area of investigation, given that time is a critical component in how work is experienced, organized and understood, with gender serving as a defining characteristic in these aspects (Odih, 1999; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). The extant literature has also remained largely western-centric in its focus on the conceptualizations of time and gendered time use. Thus, the present study examines the complex interaction between gender, time and organizations in a non-western context, specifically in Africa. The dominant temporal log-

ics embedded in western workplace systems often conflict with Indigenous and local realities, particularly for African women whose experiences of time are shaped by unpaid caregiving, traditional expectations and colonial legacies (Akanji et al., 2020; Chikapa et al., 2024). This tension calls for a contextually grounded understanding of time that is sensitive to how inclusion is perceived and experienced differently across regions.

Grounding this article in a postcolonial framing within organizational studies, we argue that understanding the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations necessitates a systematic review that acknowledges the unique historical and socio-cultural factors at play.

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Therefore, the aim of this systematic literature review is to provide insights into the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations. The review is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the existing gendered conceptualizations of time in African organizations?
2. How do varying conceptualizations of time affect women's experiences of inclusion in African organizations?
3. How do gendered norms and expectations about time use influence the experiences of women in African organizations?

This study makes three key contributions. First, we add to the limited literature on gendered time in management and organizational research by creating a conceptual framework that identifies five distinct ways of understanding time within a non-western context, including demographic time, time as a resource, spatiotemporal time, time as a period of upheaval and time as a historical tapestry. This provides a more contextual understanding of how gendered notions of time influence inclusion in organizations that differ from western settings and fills a gap in understanding the complex relationship between gender, time and organizations in a non-western context. Second, based on these different conceptualizations of time, we deepen our understanding of how gendered time is influenced by unique social and cultural norms and traditional value systems in Africa that sustain gender inequalities and marginalization. Third, we outline several directions for future research to further explore the gendered impact of time on inclusion in organizations. We propose potential research questions and theoretical frameworks that are relevant for building on existing studies, as well as developing new concepts, approaches and theories to enrich the literature.

This article is structured as follows. First, we offer a comprehensive background and context regarding the gendered impact of time use and inclusion, with a particular focus on the African context. Next, we outline our systematic literature review methodology. We then present our findings, including a conceptual framework that identifies five distinct gendered conceptualizations of time and their influence on inclusion. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and suggest directions for future research.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the context of work and family, time encompasses hours spent in each domain, predictability, alignment with

preferences, schedule compatibility, spillover experiences and control over when and how activities occur in each domain (Pocock et al., 2012). Essentially, 'time scarcity' is a significant concern impacting individuals' work and life experiences (Craig & Brown, 2017). It is connected to the social phenomenon of 'time squeeze', which arises from the increasing importance of managing multiple roles across different life spheres (Schor, 1991). This can result in a lack of control over time and a heightened focus on completing tasks more quickly (Peters & Raaijmakers, 1998). Furthermore, the concept of 'timeism' has recently appeared to describe how an abundance of time is used as a standard for selecting sponsorship-worthy (i.e., mentored, promoted or actively supported) workers, potentially excluding those (e.g., women) with commitments outside of work (Georgiadou & Damianidou, 2023). This notion is particularly relevant in our review, as it illustrates how time-related expectations reinforce exclusionary practices in organizational settings.

The literature suggests that men and women often use their time differently due to the gendered nature of work and family life, which is fostered by power dynamics, leading to inequality at work and at home (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2021; Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Leccardi, 1996; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; Stalker, 2014). The experience of time for women is influenced by discursive constructions of femininity, which encourage a relational existence shaped by social relations (Odi, 1999). 'Relational time' refers to time that is shared rather than personal and sensitive to the context and interpersonal relations that shape how women experience time (Odi, 1999). Davies (1989) suggests that male time is perceived as linear, rational and objective. In contrast, female time is viewed as cyclical, relational and subjective, influencing how time is valued in both work and family domains. Thus, understanding these differences can help create more inclusive workplaces.

Although the effort to create inclusive workplaces has led to increasing awareness of the need for work flexibility and flexible arrangements (CIPD, 2019; Shockley & Allen, 2007), providing flexible working options does not always reduce time poverty or promote fairness and inclusion (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Research has shown that remote and reduced-hour workers may experience work intensification, especially due to gender disparities in time use (Lewis & Humbert, 2010; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). Flexible working arrangements may benefit mothers but can also reinforce gender stereotypes and threaten gender equality due to deeply ingrained cultural norms (Rinaldo & Whalen, 2023).

Although there is still no consensus among management scholars on the meaning of 'inclusion', this review adopts Shore et al.'s (2011) definition of inclusion as 'the

degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness' (p. 1265). Therefore, we use this concept of inclusion as a framework for understanding how time is perceived, valued and utilized, which is also influenced by gendered expectations. These expectations can affect women's sense of belonging and their ability to contribute by drawing on their strengths and approaches to work, without feeling pressured to conform to stereotypical norms.

Despite the increasing participation of African women in paid employment and the rising number of studies on women's work-life experiences (Adisa, Mordi, et al., 2017; Jaga et al., 2018; Markwei et al., 2019), there remains a relative lack of focus on the gendered impact of time use in Africa (Dinkelman & Ngai, 2022; Orkoh et al., 2022), particularly within management and organizational literature. The African context shifts the focus away from the predominantly western-centric understanding of the interplay between gender, time and organizations, requiring a more contextual understanding of this phenomenon within non-western settings such as Africa. For example, although patriarchal structures may be present in both western and non-western societies, the unique historical contexts, cultural norms, family dynamics and economic realities in African organizations create distinct experiences for women (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Stumbitz & Jaga, 2020). Additionally, despite the rise of dual-income households in Africa, working women often remain subordinate due to stronger hegemonic masculinity, rooted in the colonial ideology of patriarchy that enforces systemic male dominance in African organizations (Adisa, Osabutey, et al., 2017; Parry & Segalo, 2017), along with a rigid justification system based on strictly assigned gender roles (Adisa, Mordi, Simpson, et al., 2021).

This postcolonial perspective deepens our contextual understanding by demonstrating how colonial legacies redefined Indigenous African notions of time, often through the introduction of linear, individualistic and productivity-driven time structures. In contrast, pre-colonial African societies usually embraced cyclical and communal concepts of time (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994), exemplified by Indigenous caregiving practices within polygamous households (Beauregard & Adisa, 2023) and the philosophical idea of Ubuntu, which highlights relationality and collective responsibility (Diouf et al., 2023). These frameworks provide a culturally grounded lens to understand how gendered ideas of time continue to shape inclusion in African organizations today. They show how the decline of collective caregiving systems and relational time practices has contributed to the disproportionate domestic and caregiving responsibilities now

borne by individual women. For example, societal expectations around domestic duties are ingrained in the marital commitments of many African women. Therefore, even when they contribute financially to their families, their role as working women often faces fewer societal repercussions for neglecting professional duties than for neglecting domestic duties (Pierotti et al., 2022). Moreover, the assessment of women's work often ignores unpaid and informal work and its economic significance (Finlay et al., 2019). As a result, African women often experience more severe time poverty than their western counterparts, due to weaker institutional support, entrenched patriarchal norms and limited work–family balance policies (Adisa et al., 2020; Ajonbadi et al., 2023; Kalemba, 2020; Mordi et al., 2023). These factors commonly influence women's time management in work and domestic spheres and can create barriers to inclusion in the workplace (Lumby & Azaola, 2014; Parry & Gordon, 2021; Titi Amayah & Haque, 2017). Ultimately, this understanding of the specific factors shaping African women's time use underscores the limitations of relying solely on western-centric models and advocates for a broader, more inclusive framework to analyse these dynamics across non-western cultures, particularly within Africa.

It is important to note that although this research examines the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations, we recognize that 'women', particularly 'African women', are broad terms. The studies reviewed may not explicitly distinguish between Black African, White African or women of other ethnicities. For this analysis, 'African women' refers to all women born in Africa and working within African organizations. Additionally, the term 'women' is often seen as an identity shaped by societal expectations and performances, as some scholars have conceptualized gender as a socially constructed idea that reflects power dynamics and functions as a guiding principle within gendered institutions with normative implications (Sjoberg, 2014). They argue that gender should not be regarded as a fixed identity, but rather as one that is perpetually shaped and reinforced through daily life (Wilén & Heineken, 2018), especially where different socially constructed gender identities exist (Cohn, 2013). In this study, we consider women as those who self-identify as such in the reviewed literature, while also acknowledging the limitations of our approach in capturing the diversity of gender experiences across the continent.

METHODS

The aim of this study is to provide insights into the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations

by adopting a systematic literature review. A systematic literature review 'locates existing studies, selects and evaluates contributions, analyses and synthesises data, and reports the evidence in such a way that allows reasonably clear conclusions to be reached about what is and is not known' (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009, p. 671). We adopted the systematic review approach described by Siddaway et al. (2019) to maintain its key characteristics—methodical, comprehensive, transparent and replicable. The authors suggested six key stages of a systematic literature review: scoping, planning, identification, screening, eligibility and study quality.

Literature search and screening process

Prior to conducting the systematic literature review, a scoping review was undertaken to develop our research questions, identify relevant search terms and explore the existing literature on the topic. Thereafter, as Hiebl (2023) recommended, we used a hybrid strategy for our literature search in an attempt to capitalize on the strengths of multiple approaches and mitigate the weaknesses of utilizing a single approach. The hybrid strategy is also supported by recent studies (e.g., Schätzlein et al., 2023). Therefore, in line with our goal of presenting a comprehensive study, we adopted the database-driven approach and journal-driven approach (see Appendix 1).

Database-driven approach

The database-driven approach uses keywords found in a scoping study to search one or more electronic databases (Hiebl, 2023). We used a mix of multi-publisher databases (such as EBSCO and Web of Science) and publisher-specific databases (such as Emerald and Wiley). This allowed us to include in-press articles in publisher-specific databases that may not yet be indexed by multi-publisher databases (Wood & McKelvie, 2015). Siddaway et al. (2019) also recommend searching for the literature in at least two different electronic databases. Following our engagement with existing studies on gender, time and organization and in line with our research questions, all authors in this study identified, discussed and agreed on the search terms to be included in the databases.

Four of the authors acting as independent coders were engaged in the search; two searched the multi-publisher databases, and the other two searched the publisher-specific databases. Our search terms (see Appendix 2) generally focused on key terms, including gender, women, time use, inclusion and Africa. However, because the term 'Africa' seemed broad, we further filtered the multi-

publisher databases to include all listed African countries. We included only empirical peer-reviewed articles published in English and available in full text and excluded reports, magazines, books, book chapters, conference papers and trade publications. We did not set the time limits to cover a wide period span and show the long-term evolution of the gendered impact of time in Africa. Given that the conceptualizations of gender and time are socially constructed (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013), we deliberately filtered subject categories relating to the study of gender, time and organizations, such as gender and women studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, human resource management, social sciences and family studies. This process resulted in 3259 articles.

In an iterative process, the coders looked for thematic relevance in the titles, abstracts and keywords by scrutinizing the articles' abstracts to be certain that they at least touched on the gendered impact of time in organizations, resulting in 537 articles. To prevent missing potentially important and relevant articles, the coders ensured that they included articles rather than excluding them when in doubt. The articles selected were further scrutinized independently through full screening to ensure that they went beyond touching upon, to capturing the gendered impact of time in organizations. During this process, all the coders consulted the fifth author to reach a consensus when they had disagreements about including certain articles. Following a full paper screening and final agreements among the coders, we arrived at 92 articles for the database-driven approach.

Journal-driven approach

Compared to the database-driven approach, the journal-driven approach requires that the search be carried out through a predefined list of journals (Hiebl, 2023). Although similar to our search procedure in the database-driven approach, we searched key terms in journals that were known for having broad or specific aims and scopes that captured gender, time and organizations. We searched for journals in the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Academic Journal Guide (AJG) 2021, renowned for spanning disciplines that are important or crucial to studies in business and management (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021; Hiebl, 2023). We searched for articles under specific journals in the AJG's field, such as 'ENT-SBM', 'ETHICS-CSR-MAN', 'HRM&EMP', 'IB&AREA', 'OR&MANSCI', 'ORG STUD', 'PSYCH (GENERAL and WOP-OB)', 'SECTOR', 'SOC SCI' and 'STRAT'. Given that the earliest study from the remaining papers produced by the database-driven approach was conducted in 1994, we set a time constraint

that began at that point to search for empirical peer-reviewed articles published in English and available in full text. After reviewing the titles of a total of 8670 articles from selected journals using the key terms mentioned previously, we identified 411 articles of interest after screening the abstracts and keywords. We further refined the search by removing duplicate articles identified through our database-driven approach, resulting in 354 articles. Additionally, we revisited the database-driven approach and screened the 92 articles by excluding 35 articles that did not fall within the ABS/AJG categories, leaving 57 articles for the database-driven approach. After fully screening 354 articles from the journal-driven approach, we included 22 additional articles, bringing the preliminary sample to 79 articles. Additionally, we added nine articles following the post-review, as per the reviewers' suggestions and inclusion of articles published after our initial search processes. This brings the total number in our final sample to 88, covering both database-driven and journal-driven approaches.

Analysis

We analysed and coded all 88 articles using a predetermined set of categories. Specifically, data from each article were manually coded using a Google Sheet (an online spreadsheet) created by the first author and made accessible to other authors for simultaneous editing and double-checking of the coding and data inputs. The first set of categories consisted primarily of deductive and descriptive categories, including *author names*, *publication year*, *research geography*, *journal name*, *research method* and *applied theory or model*. The second predetermined categories encompassed more analytical categories, such as *research topic*, *results* and *implications*. The codes under consideration in these categories were derived through an inductive process that involved reading the articles to identify themes that aligned with our research questions, core arguments and concepts (Jones et al., 2011).

We adopted the thematic analysis procedure, an iterative process of identifying patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All authors engaged in the coding process by independently immersing themselves in the material to familiarize with the content, followed by systematically reading and reviewing the 88 articles to identify and code relevant data within the predetermined categories. We used colour coding to generate the first-order codes by grouping similar words, phrases, meanings and texts. This led to generating second-order codes by searching, consolidating and categorizing the data into themes. We adopted pattern-based analysis to find data patterns pertinent to the study's central organizing concept (Braun

& Clarke, 2021), particularly patterns that demonstrate the shared meanings of gender, time use and organizations. Following the identified themes, we reviewed and finalized the themes by naming them to reflect the findings. We ensured that all authors inserted a comment on the spreadsheet wherever disagreements emerged from the coding process and organized regular discussions to agree on including or excluding the codes. These conversations led to updating the codes and themes on multiple occasions until they were finalized. We arrived at two main themes: (1) the gendered conceptualizations of time in African organizations (2) theoretical perspectives of gendered time use.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

To report our findings, we adopt the two-stage report recommended by Tranfield et al. (2003). In the first stage, we present a descriptive account of the literature reviewed, including the research geography and key authors in the field, publication outlets and research methods. The second stage reports the findings of the thematic analysis, identifying and analysing the key emerging themes in relation to the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations.

Descriptive findings

Research geography and key authors

In this section, we identify the geographic distribution of the studies included in this systematic review, as well as the most prominent authors in the field. As illustrated in Appendix 3, in terms of the geographic distribution of the studies, the majority of the studies were conducted in western Africa, with Nigeria as the most researched context; this is followed by studies conducted in Eastern Africa and Southern Africa (predominantly South Africa). Northern Africa was the least researched, whereas our review recorded no studies in Central/Middle Africa. We note that given that some studies conducted a comparative analysis across contexts, six articles included in the review were based on multiple countries (2 or more African countries). In addition, we looked further to provide an analysis of the disparities in the geographical distribution of the studies. We contend that many large and populous countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana, are located in western Africa (Statista, 2023), which could facilitate participant recruitment and data access for researchers in this area. Furthermore, in addition to being the largest region in Africa, Eastern Africa (e.g., Ethiopia and Tanzania) is home

to some of the robust economies (African Development Bank, 2023) and those with advanced research facilities (Scimago Institutions Ranking, 2023); this also includes South Africa. This could make conducting research in these regions more appealing to researchers. Furthermore, many of the countries in Northern Africa have conservative customs, which could make it more challenging for academics to study gender-sensitive subjects (Moodley et al., 2019). The Central and Middle Africa region faces several political instability and security issues (World Bank, 2023), which might make conducting research in this area highly dangerous for researchers. However, it is also important to note that the paucity of studies from specific regions does not imply the absence of research in those regions, as there is a chance that the research conducted in these regions is not being published in scholarly academic journals or listed in the databases used in this study.

In terms of the most prominent authors in the field, our review shows that Adisa, T. A. has published the most studies (12), followed by Mordi, C. (9); other prominent authors are listed in Appendix 4. Most of these authors conducted their research in Nigeria, and the majority of the authors are male, suggesting that although women are the ones most impacted by time use difficulties (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013), the research community is largely dominated by men, particularly in this field. This dominance could reflect broader societal biases in women's participation in research, especially where research has shown that although the gender publication gap is shrinking between men and women (Briggs & Weathers, 2016), African female academics' research productivity is more likely to be affected by house/care work, limited mobility and teaching hours (Beaudry et al., 2023). Consequently, it could potentially lead to blind spots in understanding women's specific experiences with time and inclusion within African organizations.

Publication outlets

As illustrated in Appendix 5, the majority of articles were published in two main ABS fields, namely, 'General Management, Ethics, Gender and Social Responsibility' and 'Human Resource Management and Employment Studies', totalling almost two-thirds of the articles included in our systematic review. Although we had previously highlighted the paucity of research on gender, time and organizations in the management and organization literature (Shipp & Jansen, 2021), we were still surprised to find that only 3.4% of articles in the organizational studies field focused on this topic. This scarcity indicates

potential oversights within the field, suggesting the likelihood that conventional organizational studies frameworks have not adequately considered the intricate interplay of time use and gender dynamics within the African organizational context. This gap limits our understanding of how inclusion unfolds within these organizations and calls for a more nuanced approach that integrates time and gender into future research in organizational studies.

Research methods

Methodologically, the reviewed articles employed various methods in their research. Specifically, 53 (~60%) articles adopted the qualitative research method using interviews, focus groups, diary studies, observational studies and case studies; 29 (~33%) adopted the quantitative research method using surveys, experiments and quantitative secondary data; and 6 (~7%) articles conducted mixed methods using a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is no surprise that the majority of studies adopted the qualitative method, as it has emerged as the predominant approach for examining the complex and multidimensional domain of gender, time and organizations (Eissler et al., 2022; Finlay et al., 2019). Moreover, this preference is often based on the inherent advantages and flexibility of qualitative approaches in tackling the particular challenges and complexities of this field, especially when exploring the depths of human experience and interactions and dissecting the complex narratives, viewpoints, emotions and institutional and contextual factors that shape the gendered experiences of the impact of time in organizations (Imas & Garcia-Lorenzo, 2023; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). Nevertheless, it might be worth conducting more mixed-methods research for future studies on the gendered impact of time in organizations to combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods and mitigate the limitations of both methods, particularly when addressing complex research questions, constructs and narratives (Ogando, Osabutey, et al., 2017; Tiessen, 2004).

Thematic findings

Following the thematic analysis of the data retrieved from the reviewed articles, we divided the main themes into two: (1) the gendered conceptualizations of time in African organizations and (2) theoretical perspectives of gendered time use. Table 1 presents a summary of the data.

TABLE 1 Summary of data.

Time dimensions Conceptualizations of time	Conceptualized meaning	Authors	Theories	Implications
Demographic time	Time is shaped by demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, marital status and parenthood	Adisa et al. (2020), Adisa, Mordi, and Akanji (2021), Burke and El-Kot (2011), Chikapa (2021), Kargwell (2008), Mordi et al. (2023), Mulu et al. (2021), Mushfiqur et al. (2018), Nwagbara (2021), Nwachukwu et al. (2022), Adisa, Mordi, Simpson, et al. (2021), Akanji et al. (2020), Fischer (2014), Masika (2017), Maunganidze and Bonnin (2021), Mousa et al. (2023), Ramguttu-Wong (2002), Tiessen (2004), Wilén and Heinecken (2018), Hallward-Driemeier and Gajigo (2015), Adom and Anambane (2020), Amah (2021), Arora (2015), Baksh et al. (1994), Boakye et al. (2021), Bosch et al. (2012), Chikapa et al. (2024), De Klerk and Mostert (2010), El-Kot et al. (2019), Finlay et al. (2019), Floro and Komatsu (2011), Guma (2015), Hundera et al. (2019), Jaga and Bagraim (2017), Jaga et al. (2018), John et al. (2020), Kattara (2005), Moalusi and Jones (2019), Mordi et al. (2023), Motaung et al. (2017), Munyeka and Maharaj (2022), Nnubia et al. (2023), Owolabi et al. (2023), Palmer and Bosch (2017), Thomason (2022), Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role theory • Institutional theory • Job demand–resource theory • Feminist theory • Organizational justice theory • Social dominance theory • Social role theory • Liberal feminist theory • Eclectic theoretical approach • Stereotype threat theory • Gendered organizational theory • Intersectionality • Life role salience theory • Kaleidoscope career model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender role strain • Gender inequality • Time biases • Time poverty • Gender power dynamics • Disproportionate share of work and nonwork responsibilities • Glass ceiling effect • Gender stereotypes • Financial insecurity • Career stagnation • Sexual harassment • Workplace injustice • Maternal guilt

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Time dimensions	Conceptualized meaning	Authors	Theories	Implications
Conceptualizations of time				
Time as a resource	Time is a commodity and is shaped by the perceived value in gender labour investment	Adisa et al. (2016), Adisa, Mordi, et al. (2017), Adisa, Osabutey, et al. (2017), Adom et al. (2018), Akanji et al. (2020), Groenewald and Odendaal (2021), Lekchiri and Eversole (2021), Maungandize and Bonnin (2021), Nwagbara (2020), Hallward-Driemeier and Gajigo (2015), Adu et al. (2024), Bardasi and Wodon (2010), Bisschoff et al. (2019), Damoah et al. (2021), Eissler et al. (2022), Finlay et al. (2019), Ituma et al. (2011), Pierotti et al. (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role theory • Spillover theory • Role congruity theory • Social role theory • Networking theory • Institutional theory • Role conflict theory • Resource dependence theory • Theory of the allocation of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender inequality • Maternal guilt • Undervalued work • Unproductive time use • Gender discrimination • Flexible work • Autonomy
Spatiotemporal time	Time is a complex interaction between space (or place) and time	Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al. (2021), Akanji, Mordi, and Ajonbadi (2020), Assaad et al. (2022), Bearegard and Adisa (2023), Dancaster and Baird (2016), Delecourt and Fitzpatrick (2021), Imhanrenialena et al. (2021), Markwei et al. (2019), Mashaba and Botha (2023), Moalusi and Jones (2019), Mushfiqur et al. (2018), Neneh and Welsh (2022), Ogando et al. (2017), Owolabi et al. (2023), Semlali and Hassi (2016), Tansel et al. (2020), Uduji et al. (2020), Whitehead and Kotze (2003), Wilén and Heinecken (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional theory • Spillover theory • Boundary theory • Feminist gender theory • African feminist • Eclectic theoretical approach • Gendered organizational theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time poverty • Time squeeze • Occupational gender segregation • Social ostracism • Lack of voice • Gendered vulnerabilities

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Time dimensions	Conceptualized meaning	Authors	Theories	Implications
Time as a period of upheaval	Time is dynamic and transforming, especially in relation to social, political and economic crisis or change	Akanji et al. (2023), Akuoko et al. (2021), Bardasi and Wodon (2010), Mueller et al. (2023), Orkoh et al. (2022), Perold et al. (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social cognitive theory • Conservation of resources theory • Theory of the allocation of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career regression/stagnation • Job and income insecurity • Violence
Time as a historical tapestry	Time is shaped by the continuing influence of historical events, timeframes and structures on contemporary experiences	Imas and Garcia-Lorenzo (2023), Stumbitz and Jaga (2020), Delle et al. (2023), Burnett (2023), Carrim and Nkomo (2016), De Giusti and Kambhampati (2016), Jaga et al. (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern theory • Postcolonial and pan-African feminist theory • Regulatory focus theory • Intersectionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendered division of labour • Time poverty • Gender inequality • Women subordination

Source: Authors' computation.

The gendered conceptualizations of time in African organizations

Our thematic analysis of the literature in African organizations revealed five distinct, gendered conceptualizations of time. These time concepts, rooted in traditional gender norms and expectations, significantly impact women's experiences within the workplace, home and society. This, in turn, profoundly impacts their sense of inclusion (i.e., belongingness and uniqueness) within the workplace, limiting their career prospects, ability to achieve a healthy work-life balance and overall well-being. Across the five themes, we focus on the main ideas based on our analysis of the reviewed articles.

Demographic time

In our examination of the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations, we found that demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status and parenthood significantly influence women's time use and experiences of inclusion. In this study, the adopted definition of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011) encompassing belongingness and uniqueness is a critical lens for understanding how demographic time shapes gendered workplace dynamics. This sense of belonging is crucial for understanding how 'demographic time pressures'—the time constraints and expectations associated with different life stages and social roles—shape workplace dynamics. Our findings reveal that these interactions between demographic characteristics, time use and inclusion are deeply intertwined with traditional beliefs and patriarchal practices that make women's experiences at work unique because these societal norms often reinforce hegemonic masculinity and limit women's control or agency over their time, ultimately hindering their full participation and inclusion in the workplace.

A recurring theme in the literature is the disproportionate time pressure experienced by African women due to unpaid caregiving and domestic labour. Studies highlight how these responsibilities negatively impact women's career progression and sense of inclusion in the workplace (Adisa et al., 2019; Chikapa, 2021; De Klerk & Mostert, 2010; Mushfiqur et al., 2018). Time poverty—stemming from juggling paid employment and extensive household duties—limits opportunities for African women to engage meaningfully at work and achieve visibility in professional spaces (Arora, 2015; Floro & Komatsu, 2011). This imbalance erodes their ability to feel valued and unique, undermining their inclusion. For instance, the unequal distribution of household work often relegates women

to less prestigious work roles, perpetuating stereotypes that associate them primarily with caregiving rather than professional advancement (Padavic et al., 2020). By implication, this diminished perception of their professional contributions can be interpreted as a form of symbolic devaluation, undermining employee self-worth and fostering feelings of exclusion, especially when the pervasive undervaluation of their roles further reinforces the barriers to achieving inclusion.

Further, like in other societies, motherhood in African societies represents a pivotal demographic factor that profoundly reconfigures women's time use and their workplace experiences (John et al., 2020; Mousa et al., 2023). Traditional gender norms frame time in 'cyclical' rather than 'linear' terms for women (Davies, 1989), confining women to recurring domestic responsibilities. The expectation that mothers devote more time to childcare and domestic responsibilities than to their careers not only curtails professional advancement but also compromises their ability to feel part of the organizational community (Baksh et al., 1994; Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022). This cyclical conception of time fosters structural inequalities that deprive women of developmental opportunities. For instance, women who prioritize caregiving are often overlooked for promotions or challenging projects that could elevate their workplace status, further limiting their sense of belonging and uniqueness (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Wilén and Heineken (2018) illustrate how women's time spent in caregiving is often undervalued compared to men's contributions, thereby reinforcing systemic exclusion.

Notably, the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms in Africa, which are more pronounced than in the West, is a critical factor shaping demographic time in African organizations (Adisa et al., 2019; Nwagbara, 2021) and exacerbate gender inequalities, manifesting as the 'glass ceiling' effect. Traditional beliefs confine women to domestic roles, hindering their entry into leadership positions (Groenewald & Odendaal, 2021; Kargwell, 2008; Kattara, 2005; Maungandize & Bonnin, 2021). This marginalization, by denying women opportunities for esteem and unique recognition, directly contradicts the principles of inclusion. Furthermore, societal expectations surrounding motherhood (Hundera et al., 2019; Karakire Guma, 2015; Masika, 2017) and deeply ingrained patriarchal structures (El-Kot et al., 2019; Ramgutty-Wong, 2002) create significant barriers to gender equality and inclusion. These structures, often characterized by 'male ego threat', typically lead to overlooking women for leadership roles despite their attempts to conform to the 'masculine ideal worker' narrative (Fischer, 2014; Jaga et al., 2018; Tiessen, 2004). Although Palmer and Bosch (2017) highlight the positive influence of feminine organizational characteristics

and female leadership, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the persistent challenges posed by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and societal expectations in African contexts. Organizations characterized by hyper-masculinity exacerbate these challenges by normalizing practices that exploit women's time, undervalue their labour and justify rigid gender roles (Adisa, Mordi, and Akanji, 2021; Adom & Anambane, 2020). Such environments foster unequal power dynamics that undermine women's ability to manage their time autonomously, leaving them feeling alienated and excluded.

Despite these challenges, some African women have resisted the constraints of intensive mothering and the normative ideals of femininity that lead to workplace exclusion by seeking a greater balance between work and familial responsibilities and driving social change (Adekoya et al., 2024). The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM), with its core parameters of authenticity, balance and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), offers an insightful lens for understanding how African women navigate these constraints. Within contexts of deeply entrenched gender norms, women often make strategic career decisions that reflect an ongoing negotiation between societal demands and personal aspirations. For instance, those prioritizing balance frequently opt for part-time work, entrepreneurship or roles in the public sector to manage the competing demands of paid work and domestic responsibilities (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021; Hundera et al., 2019). Others may pursue authenticity, seeking roles that align with their values or identities, even if such roles offer less prestige or stability. Meanwhile, some women embrace challenge, striving for career advancement despite the added pressures of managing caregiving and household responsibilities. These patterns illustrate how African women strategically allocate their time to prioritize career goals while managing societal expectations, often using dual-income arrangements or extended family networks to negotiate greater temporal flexibility (Adisa, Osabutey, et al., 2017; Beauregard & Adisa, 2023; Bosch et al., 2012; Chikapa et al., 2024). However, these adaptive strategies are not without cost, as many women experience maternal guilt, marital strain or heightened work-family conflict in the process (Adekoya et al., 2024; Mulu et al., 2021; Thomason, 2022). Thus, the KCM helps reveal the complex trade-offs involved in pursuing inclusion, as women's efforts to assert agency are continually shaped and constrained by demographic time pressures and the broader sociocultural systems in which they are embedded.

Additionally, consistent with previous research conducted in the West, single women face unique challenges related to demographic time, as employers often presume

they have more discretionary time to devote to work (Wilkinson et al., 2018). In African contexts, where marital status significantly influences workplace inclusion (van Rensburg et al., 2019), single women face greater external pressures (Mordi et al., 2023). Time biases reinforce the perception that single women have greater work capacity, leading to inequitable treatment and exclusionary practices, such as favouring married employees for flexible work arrangements (Akanji et al., 2020). By implication, these biases can perpetuate feelings of injustice and diminish the perceived value of single women's contributions to the organization. Moreover, single women often grapple with competing demands that reconstruct traditional masculine roles, further disrupting their work-life balance and well-being. The resulting imbalance negatively affects their ability to engage with and feel included in their workplace communities (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021; De Klerk & Mostert, 2010).

Time as a resource

Time as a resource is a fundamental concept in understanding the intersection of gender, time and inclusion within African organizations. Historically, time (working hours) has been framed as a commodity that can be purchased or sold on the labour market and a resource that may be used or misused (Hjorthol, 2001). This perspective aligns with the traditional notion of time as 'money' and emphasizes its scarcity and value (Weber, 1970). However, this commodification often masks the gendered inequalities in time use and management, particularly in African contexts where societal norms heavily dictate the allocation of time for men and women (Chikapa et al., 2024).

The reviewed literature reveals that African societies maintain a gendered dichotomy in time allocation, where men predominantly occupy the public sphere of paid labour, and women are relegated to the private sphere of caregiving and domestic responsibilities. This division creates stark disparities in how time is valued and perceived. Men's time in the workplace is often linear, compartmentalized and tied to measurable outputs, whereas women's time is cyclical, relational and embedded within caregiving roles (Baksh et al., 1994; Eissler et al., 2022). This entrenched dichotomy not only perpetuates gender inequality but also undermines women's inclusion by limiting their ability to engage fully in the professional sphere. For example, women who allocate significant time to unpaid domestic work often experience time poverty, which restricts their ability to meet organizational demands or participate in decision-making

TABLE 2 Future research directions.

Time dimensions	Potential research questions	Potential theoretical anchor
Demographic time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effects do the intersections of gender, race, class and other social injustices have on women's experiences across age groups in western and non-western organizations? • What unique challenges do women from marginalized groups face at different life stages, and how do these challenges impact their time use, career progression and inclusion? • What are the unique differences in coping mechanisms employed by women from marginalized versus non-marginalized groups, and how do these affect their time use? • How can organizations address the intersectional nature of inequality and promote a more equitable and inclusive environment for women across different life stages? • How can organizations in the global South build more inclusive leadership pathways for women? • What is the role of policy in addressing demographic time poverty? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role theory • Institutional theory • Job demand–resource theory • Kaleidoscope career model • Intersectionality theory • Cultural capital theory
Time as a resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can organizations address the issue of time poverty for women employees at all stages? • What specific time management strategies promote women's progression and inclusion in the workplace? • How do organizational time expectations contradict organizational provisions (e.g., flexibility, autonomy) for promoting work-life balance for men and women? • What are the unique differences in men's and women's conceptualization of time as a productive and unproductive resource? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role theory • Job demand–resource theory • Kaleidoscope career model • Social cognitive theory • Institutional theory
Spatiotemporal time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What gendered effects do the physical location, aesthetics and accessibility of workplaces have on how employees utilize their time? • How do gender variations affect the adoption and use of temporal flexibility arrangements in western versus non-western contexts? • How do women who work with international clients and within a virtual working environment deal with different time zones, and do these affect their time use? • How do women leaders navigate spatiotemporal constraints in the face of gender roles and expectations? • How do women's voice mechanisms shape their time use in male-dominated occupations, and how do these affect women's inclusion? • What effects does women's physical and social proximity to influential decision-makers, mentors and networks have on career progression? • How does time use differ among genders in the private and public sectors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job demand–resource theory • Kaleidoscope career model • Social identity theory • Social capital theory
Time as a period of upheaval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does time use differ for men and women in marginalized groups during times of crises? • In times of crises, what specific coping mechanisms do women use to keep their professional engagement and resilience? • What effects do social movements and activism have on women's organizing and resistance skills, time perceptions and pursuit of gender equality? • What are the effects of technology innovations and disruptions (e.g., automation, digitalization, emerging gig economy) on women's career opportunities, skill development and time use in non-western organizations? • How can organizations promote women's voice and equality during times of upheaval? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaleidoscope career model • Intersectionality theory • Feminist standpoint theory • Role theory • Resource mobilization theory • Technological determinism theory • Socio-technical theory

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Time dimensions	Potential research questions	Potential theoretical anchor
Time as a historical tapestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effects do the historical legacies of patriarchy, colonialism and gendered roles have on women's workplace expectations and time allocation patterns? • How does intergenerational transmission of gendered norms influence women's experiences of time and work-life balance? • How can organizations decolonize their practices and challenge gendered time norms to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminist postcolonial theory • Institutional theory • Kaleidoscope career model • Role congruity theory • Cultural capital theory • Intersectionality theory

Source: Authors' computation.

processes (Arora et al., 2015). This exclusion denies them opportunities to feel valued and uniquely recognized within their workgroups.

Conceptualizing time as a resource also requires understanding the interplay between work-life conflict and resource scarcity. Work-life conflict is a prominent outcome of conceptualizing time as a scarce resource (Skinner & Pocock, 2008). Although women in both western and African contexts experience competing demands between work and family, the burden of domestic labour is often significantly higher for African women. This is exacerbated by the pervasive assumption that the availability of domestic help mitigates the impact of family responsibilities on women's employment, thereby legitimizing employer disregard for the challenges of balancing work and family life (Chikapa et al., 2024). This assumption not only reinforces existing gender inequalities but also exacerbates resource scarcity in time and energy for African women, hindering their professional and personal development (Akanji et al., 2023; Akuoko et al., 2021; Eissler et al., 2022). This dynamic is well explained by the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, which conceptualizes time as both a demand and a limited resource. The model posits that high job demands (e.g., long hours, inflexible schedules and emotional strain) and limited resources (e.g., supportive networks or flexible policies) lead to burnout, disengagement and ultimately exclusion (Bakker et al., 2014). This framework is particularly relevant for African women, who often prioritize familial responsibilities to avoid social criticism or maternal guilt, frequently sacrificing career progression to preserve family harmony (Adisa et al., 2016; Adom et al., 2018; Chikapa et al., 2024). However, such trade-offs, while socially sanctioned, undermine women's sense of belonging and devalue their unique contributions within professional spaces. In organizational settings where formal support systems are absent or inconsistently applied, the JD–R model highlights how time poverty becomes a structural barrier to gender inclusion, reinforcing the unequal distribution of labour and recognition in African workplaces.

Moreover, organizational cultures in many African workplaces exacerbate the challenges women face in managing time as a resource, especially when it is contingent on individuals' perception of time as a productive/unproductive or valuable/valueless labour investment, directly impacting their sense of belonging and the recognition of their unique contributions. For example, rigid work schedules, unsupportive workplace norms and a lack of autonomy diminish women's ability to allocate time effectively (Adisa, Osabutey, et al., 2017; Lekchiri & Eversole, 2021). These barriers often render women's time at work unproductive, as they are excluded from critical decision-making processes and subjected to power imbalances that undermine their participation (Nwagbara, 2020). Groenewald and Odendaal (2021) highlight how women working long hours in male-dominated firms often experience gender bias and unrealistic expectations, leading to perceptions that their time contributions are less valuable than those of their male counterparts. This devaluation of women's time contributions erodes their ability to showcase distinct skills and perspectives, further marginalizing them within organizational settings.

Although some African organizations offer maternity leave and parental support as formal mechanisms to address time challenges (Beauregard & Adisa, 2023; Markwei et al., 2019; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003), these interventions often have unintended consequences. For example, Motaung et al. (2017) found that taking maternity leave can harm women's career trajectories, reinforcing the stereotype that women are unreliable and unproductive. Consequently, many women forgo these benefits to protect their professional standing, further compounding the tension between their roles as carers and professionals. Flexible work arrangements and autonomy over time management could mitigate these challenges by providing women with the resources needed to balance competing demands. However, compared to western societies, such provisions are rare in African organizations (Adu et al., 2024). The limited availability of these resources forces women to navigate systemic barriers without

institutional support, further alienating them from inclusive organizational cultures.

Finally, we contend that the social constructions of motherhood significantly shape how African women perceive and allocate time as a resource. Within the African context, the smooth functioning of households often depends on women's unpaid labour (Pierotti et al., 2022). This social expectation prioritizes maternal duties over professional aspirations (Adekoya et al., 2024), creating a double burden for women who must manage both spheres. For example, Pierotti et al. (2022) argue that although women's financial contributions to their families are acknowledged, societal norms impose fewer repercussions for neglecting paid work compared to domestic responsibilities. This dynamic reinforces the notion that women's primary obligation is to the family, diminishing their ability to assert their presence in the workplace and compromising their sense of belonging and uniqueness.

Spatiotemporal time

The concept of spatiotemporal time in the context of gender and organizations explores the interaction between space (or place), time and social structures, which shapes individuals' workplace experiences and perceptions (Neis et al., 2018; Weinfurter & Seidl, 2019). This framework is particularly significant for understanding how African women navigate the intersection of gendered norms, occupational spaces and temporal constraints, especially in relation to workplace inclusion. In western contexts, women's perceptions of time are intricately linked to physical location and social status, creating a landscape of temporal restrictions and opportunities (Craig & Churchill, 2021; Erel & Ryan, 2019; McKie et al., 2013). Similar dynamics exist in African organizations; however, the intersection of stronger patriarchal norms, occupational segregation and rigid societal expectations adds layers of complexity. Unlike western frameworks, where flexible work policies are more prevalent, African women often face stricter spatial and temporal constraints tied to entrenched cultural roles (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021; Nwagbara, 2021). This divergence highlights the distinct barriers to achieving inclusion for African women.

Occupational segregation remains a significant driver of spatiotemporal inequities in African workplaces. Patriarchal norms dictate that men dominate the public and professional spheres, whereas women are relegated to domestic responsibilities (Burchell et al., 2021). These dynamics create gendered occupational spaces where women in male-dominated industries often encounter systemic exclusion and are viewed as 'lone wolves', subjected

to social ostracism, strained spousal relationships and limited support networks (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021). For example, female doctors endure long hours under 'time squeeze' conditions, reinforcing the ideal worker narrative that disadvantages women (Akanji et al., 2020; Mushfiquer et al., 2018). Similarly, women in the legal field are subjected to discriminatory practices and overt harassment, undermining their ability to assert their presence as equal contributors in these spaces (Maunganidze & Bonnin, 2021). Likewise, in the military, female soldiers' identities as mothers or wives were weighed against their military identities as soldiers (Wilén & Heineken, 2018). Commercial driving is no exception because it is a profession that often perpetuates exclusionary practices, such as being consistently viewed as demeaning to women and enforcing time constraints that disregard the uniqueness of their domestic obligations (Owolabi et al., 2023). Similarly, the mining industry, dominated by men and characterized by long, unpredictable hours, presents significant barriers to women's inclusion, given the lack of female role models, the perception of mining as a 'dirty' job and the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities that further marginalize women in this industry (Mashaba & Botha, 2023; Motaung et al., 2017). Such barriers hinder their ability to feel esteemed within their workplaces, limiting their sense of belonging and recognition.

Further, the informal sector in Africa presents additional challenges for women, where spatiotemporal constraints intersect with power dynamics and institutional barriers. For instance, in the recycling industry, women's contributions are often invisible despite their significant time investment. They face violence, harassment and health risks, further exacerbating their exclusion from equitable work environments (Ogando et al., 2017). Similarly, in the fishing industry, deep-rooted norms, such as hypermasculinity and time biases, force women to rely on male counterparts for access to financial resources and decision-making platforms (Uduji et al., 2020).

These challenges illustrate how spatial and temporal inequalities compound gendered vulnerabilities, undermining women's capacity to achieve inclusion. However, these constraints are not only structural, but they are also experienced at a deeply personal level, prompting strategic adaptations in women's career choices. The KCM offers a valuable lens to interpret these responses, as women make career decisions based on shifting priorities between authenticity, balance and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). In the face of occupational segregation, inflexible schedules and restricted mobility, many African women prioritize balance, opting for public sector jobs, remote work or self-employment to better align with caregiving demands. Others seek authenticity, choosing roles that reflect personal values, even at the cost of

visibility or progression. For those driven by challenge, remaining in male-dominated spaces becomes a form of resistance, as they assert their place despite structural exclusions. These strategic responses reflect an ongoing negotiation between personal agency and structural limitations, revealing how women attempt to reconfigure rigid spatiotemporal conditions to foster a sense of inclusion.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies is often shaped by broader organizational policies and sectoral norms. Public sector roles, with shorter hours and family-friendly provisions, better accommodate women's spatiotemporal needs than private sector or multinational corporations, which often align with restrictive local norms over progressive global policies (Dancaster & Baird, 2016; Tansel et al., 2020). Notably, remote work provides greater autonomy over spatial and temporal boundaries, aligning with the balance and authenticity dimensions of KCM. Yet, this flexibility rarely alleviates domestic burdens; instead, it blurs work-home boundaries and intensifies dual roles, often eroding women's sense of belonging and unique contribution (Akanji et al., 2023; Imhanrenalena et al., 2021). Thus, although the KCM helps explain the dynamic ways African women navigate exclusionary structures, these adaptations remain constrained by enduring organizational and societal expectations.

Time as a period of upheaval

Time as a period of upheaval highlights the dynamic and transformative nature of time during moments of social, political or economic crises or disruptive change. This conceptualization underscores how crises or disruptive change reshape time use. Periods of upheaval often worsen existing gender disparities by disproportionately burdening women with additional responsibilities and reducing their access to resources and opportunities (Dinella et al., 2023; Kreutzer et al., 2023). This unequal distribution of time and labour restricts women's ability to participate fully in professional environments, negatively impacting their inclusion, particularly in Africa, where gendered norms and inequalities are often amplified during such periods. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic provides a salient example of upheaval that disproportionately affected women's time use and workplace inclusion. Akuoko et al. (2021) found that women worked longer hours at home during the pandemic than they would have in traditional office settings. Despite these extended hours, their productivity often declined due to the simultaneous increase in domestic responsibilities, including childcare and housework. These dual burdens negatively impacted women's career progression and reinforced stereotypes about their professional capabilities. Notably, the pan-

demic's lockdown measures intensified patriarchal norms prevalent in African cultures, with women bearing the brunt of additional unpaid labour at home (Mueller et al., 2023; Perold et al., 2023). This led to career stagnation, heightened stress levels and adverse health outcomes, further eroding their sense of belonging and uniqueness within their organizations. Male chauvinism also increased, exacerbating gender disparities in time use and undermining efforts to achieve inclusion (Akanji et al., 2023).

Economic crises similarly exacerbate gendered disparities in time use. Orkoh et al. (2022) emphasize that women in poorer households experience greater inequality in time allocation due to cultural norms that prioritize traditional gender roles. Time poverty is particularly acute for women, as their labour—whether paid or unpaid—often yields limited productivity and income generation (Bardasi & Wodon, 2010). This lack of financial autonomy further marginalizes women, restricting their access to opportunities and diminishing their capacity to feel valued and unique in workplace settings.

Time as a historical tapestry

The concept of time as a historical tapestry encapsulates the interconnectedness of the past, present and future in shaping contemporary experiences (Delle et al., 2023). Within African organizations, this framework underscores the enduring influence of historical legacies—including postcolonial structures, Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural paradigms—on gendered experiences of time use and inclusion (Jaga et al., 2018). Postcolonial theory provides a useful lens to trace how colonialism disrupted Indigenous African conceptions of time, replacing cyclical, relational and communal temporal structures with linear, commodified and individualistic notions aligned with industrial capitalism. It allows for examining the interplay between Africa's unique postcolonial legacies and time poverty, offering insights into how these histories continue to impact inclusion within organizational contexts.

Colonial systems in Africa institutionalized western patriarchal norms, solidifying rigid gendered divisions of labour that persist to this day. Men were positioned as breadwinners and decision-makers, whereas women were relegated to caregiving roles within the domestic sphere. These structures not only deprived women of access to education, political participation and professional advancement but also entrenched time poverty, which continues to constrain their full engagement in organizational life (Hassim, 2005; Morrell, 1998; Tripp, 2015). For instance, Stumbitz and Jaga (2020) argue that maternal subjectivities in postcolonial Africa reflect the

lasting imprint of colonial histories. Western norms introduced during colonization framed caregiving as a central female responsibility, a perception that remains pervasive in African workspaces. Women frequently navigate the dual burden of professional obligations and domestic caregiving, limiting their capacity for career progression and undermining their sense of belonging and uniqueness within organizational settings. This colonial legacy also sustains gendered hierarchies in leadership. The perception of men as inherently superior leaders, rooted in colonial-era ideologies, continues to marginalize women from leadership roles and access to influential networks. These exclusions significantly hinder women's productivity, recognition and overall inclusion in the workplace (Burnett, 2023; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).

Further, postcolonial Africa, characterized by a 'triple heritage' encompassing Indigenous traditions, colonial legacies and the religious influences of Christianity and Islam (Mazrui, 1983), further complicates women's experiences of time and inclusion. Although Indigenous practices historically emphasized communal childrearing and collective family responsibility (Dow, 2019), these values have often been subsumed or reshaped by patriarchal norms embedded in religious teachings. For instance, both Christian and Islamic doctrines have historically prioritized motherhood as a woman's primary role, reinforcing male dominance in both the public and private spheres (Kaunda & Pokol, 2019). This convergence of patriarchal influences restricts women's agency, limiting their ability to balance their roles across familial, social and economic domains.

From the perspective of African indigenous knowledge systems, pre-colonial African societies operated under collectivist principles that emphasized mutual care and interdependence (Isike & Uzodike, 2011). The Ubuntu philosophy, which centres on the idea that 'I am because we are', embodies this collectivist ethos and contrasts sharply with western individualism. Ubuntu fosters inclusion by promoting shared responsibility and collaboration, enabling women to balance work and family roles through communal support systems for childcare (Diouf et al., 2023; Ncube, 2010), resulting in time reallocation to meet work demands. However, current economic realities often compel African women to outsource caregiving responsibilities to domestic helpers or nurseries (Delecourt & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Although this provides some relief, it also underscores the disintegration of Ubuntu-based practices that emphasized shared responsibility.

Additionally, Indigenous African marriage traditions, particularly polygamy, and evolving family dynamics have significantly influenced the conceptualization of time in African societies. In traditional African settings, polygamous households, particularly during the pre-colonial

era, and extended families serve as vital support systems, enabling women to manage their multiple roles (Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2021; Fenske, 2015). Co-wives in polygamous families often shared domestic responsibilities, which allowed individual women to allocate more time to economic or professional activities, a practice that contrasts sharply with the western nuclear family structure that places greater time burdens on individual women (Beauregard & Adisa, 2023). This distribution of labour underscored the communal ethos inherent in African Indigenous traditions, emphasizing collective well-being over individual strain. However, as urbanization and modernization continue to erode these traditional support networks, African women increasingly face challenges in managing their time without the benefit of extended familial assistance, further exacerbating their time poverty (Amah, 2021; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). Despite its historical benefits, polygamy also played a dual and, at times, contradictory role in shaping women's time use. Although it facilitated the delegation of household tasks among co-wives, easing the burdens on individual women, it also perpetuated gendered inequalities. Contemporary critiques highlight that polygamy often exacerbates resource disparities, particularly disadvantaging younger wives, who may bear a disproportionate share of household and caregiving responsibilities (Charles et al., 2023; Nnubia et al., 2023). Moreover, as polygamy declines in prevalence due to economic and cultural shifts, women in monogamous households increasingly carry the full weight of domestic and professional obligations, often without the communal or spousal support systems that once balanced these demands. These evolving family dynamics reflect a broader tension between traditional Indigenous practices and modern individualistic values, with significant implications for how women experience and manage their time in African societies.

Despite the challenges African women face, they have demonstrated resilience and agency in navigating colonial and postcolonial constraints. For instance, the prevalence of African women's participation in paid work challenges the traditional male-breadwinner model and contributes to a shift towards dual-earner households, which is seen as postcolonial development. However, this triggers a new reality of co-breadwinning and homemaking roles for African women and engenders complexity in women's time use patterns (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016). Furthermore, Imas and Garcia-Lorenzo (2023) document the microstorias of female entrepreneurs, revealing how women negotiate historical legacies to create opportunities for themselves. These narratives illustrate the tension between systemic barriers and women's agency, highlighting their ability to redefine their roles within patriarchal structures. However, the persistent influence of colonial

ideologies limits the inclusion of women entrepreneurs. Their contributions are often undervalued, and they face systemic obstacles that restrict their ability to achieve belongingness and uniqueness in organizational contexts. This highlights the need for structural reforms that address the historical roots of these inequities.

Theoretical perspectives on gendered time use

The gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations has been examined through various theoretical frameworks that highlight the historical, social and cultural dynamics shaping women's experiences. From our selected articles, the most commonly utilized theoretical frameworks include role theory, institutional theory, boundary/border theory and spillover theory.

Role theory posits that individuals' behaviours and actions are shaped by the expectations associated with their roles (Biddle, 1986). Within African contexts, patriarchal norms heavily influence the roles assigned to women, with caregiving and domestic duties perceived as their primary responsibilities. This socialization often results in time poverty, work-life conflict and career stagnation (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021; Mulu et al., 2021), ultimately leading to exclusion from full participation in the workplace and a diminished sense of belonging and uniqueness. Although juggling multiple roles may offer opportunities for skill transfer across domains, it also frequently leads to inter-role conflict, particularly for African women who face role overload, ambiguity and external pressures (Lekchiri & Eversole, 2021; Mordi et al., 2023). This constant juggling can further erode their sense of self-worth and hinder their ability to establish a unique professional identity, leaving them feeling marginalized and excluded from the core of organizational life. The fundamental principle of social role theory asserts that societal stereotypes assign gender-specific roles, perpetuating differences in behaviour and expectations between men and women (Eagly, 1997). In African organizations, these expectations are often more rigid than in western contexts due to traditional norms and cultural beliefs about motherhood, which view caregiving as inherently female (Groenewald & Odendaal, 2021; Maunganidze & Bonnin, 2021). This entrenched division not only exacerbates gender inequality but also limits women's ability to achieve inclusion by undermining their sense of belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace.

Institutional theory focuses on the systemic structures and norms that perpetuate gendered hierarchies. In African contexts, 'institutionalized patriarchy' and 'institutionalized gender norms' are pervasive, reflecting the influence of traditional family systems, religious doctrines

and legal frameworks (Nwagbara, 2021). For instance, African family structures often enforce gendered divisions of labour, whereas religious and cultural beliefs legitimize female subordination as a natural order (Ituma et al., 2011; Mushfiqur et al., 2018). These patriarchal institutions have profound implications for women's time use and inclusion. Organizational policies often mirror these societal norms, reinforcing systemic discrimination and limiting women's access to leadership roles, decision-making opportunities and professional resources (Dancaster & Baird, 2016; Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Unlike western contexts, where legal and policy frameworks have increasingly sought to dismantle gendered barriers, African organizations remain deeply rooted in traditional hierarchies, further marginalizing women. This systemic bias erodes women's capacity to feel valued and integrated within their workplaces, impeding progress toward gender equality and inclusion. Future research should explore how institutionalized norms are embedded in organizational structures and how they influence women's ability to navigate time-related challenges in the workplace.

Boundary/border theory examines how individuals manage and negotiate the boundaries between work and personal life. In African organizations, traditional gender norms often blur these boundaries, compelling women to integrate rather than separate their professional and personal roles. This integration is commonly employed as a strategy to manage competing demands, making boundaries more flexible and permeable (Gudeta & van Engen, 2018; Imhanrenialena et al., 2021). Although integration may provide flexibility, it also perpetuates gendered expectations that reinforce exclusion due to the unequal distribution of labour, leading to women feeling constantly 'on' and struggling to establish a clear separation between their personal and professional selves. For instance, Beauregard and Adisa (2023) argue that African women frequently eliminate physical, temporal and psychological borders between work and home to accommodate their caregiving responsibilities, often at the expense of their professional advancement. This contrasts with western contexts, where more defined work-life boundaries and supportive workplace policies provide more opportunities for women to manage these domains more effectively (Feeney & Stritch, 2019; Kossek & Lee, 2021). Thus, we call for a critical re-examination of the concept of border permeability within the African context, considering contemporary African women's evolving roles as both co-breadwinners and homemakers (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016). This re-evaluation can reveal strategies for mitigating the negative impacts of blurred work-life boundaries and enhancing women's ability to achieve inclusion, well-being and professional success within the workplace.

Spillover theory highlights how work and nonwork domains influence one another, with effects that can be either positive or negative (Naithani, 2010). In African organizations, sociocultural factors such as patriarchy and traditional gender norms often lead to negative spillover effects, particularly for women (Akanji et al., 2020). The disproportionate sharing of household responsibilities creates time-based conflicts and role strain, frequently resulting in the transfer of negative emotions, attitudes and behaviours between work and family domains (Adisa et al., 2016; Markwei et al., 2019). This negative spillover is a critical barrier to inclusion, as it undermines women's ability to fully engage and contribute uniquely in the workplace. Unlike western contexts, where workplace policies often aim to alleviate these tensions, African organizations possess limited formal mechanisms that often may not adequately address the evolving needs of contemporary African women due to these mechanisms lacking adequate flexibility (Mushfiqur et al., 2018; Nwagbara, 2020), leaving women to navigate these challenges with limited institutional support. Addressing these spillover effects through culturally sensitive interventions could enhance women's inclusion by reducing the time-related pressures that disproportionately affect them.

DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review synthesizes existing literature to examine the gendered impact of time on inclusion within African organizations. The main contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) that integrates five distinct conceptualizations of time—demographic time, time as a resource, spatiotemporal time, time as a period of upheaval and time as a historical tapestry—with the key influencing factors. This framework provides a nuanced understanding of how these conceptualizations and influences intersect to shape outcomes for gender inclusion, including belongingness, uniqueness, work-life balance, career progression and reduced inequalities. By offering a context-specific lens, the framework highlights the limitations of western-centric perspectives, demonstrating the need to account for cultural, historical and structural specificities in African organizational contexts. The following discussion further elaborates on these contributions by addressing the three distinct but interrelated research questions.

To address the first research question about the existing gendered conceptualizations of time in African organizations, this research identifies five conceptualizations of time. Although these conceptualizations may resonate with broader organizational studies, their specific manifestations in African contexts provide novel insights that

enable us to move beyond conventional linear and dichotomous conceptions of time (Odih, 1999) and investigate how time is gendered, experienced and interpreted in African organizations. For instance, this research expands the understanding of demographic time in African contexts by demonstrating how it intersects with patriarchal norms and societal expectations, particularly the burden of caregiving. Unlike western models, African contexts often rely on informal networks and traditional norms (Bisschoff et al., 2019; Hundera et al., 2019; Jaga & Bagraim, 2017), leading to cyclical time patterns that prioritize family over work, hindering women's career progression and fostering exclusion. Furthermore, this research challenges the western-centric view of 'time as a resource', demonstrating how African women experience time as intertwined with cyclical caregiving responsibilities and communal values (Chikapa et al., 2024; Groenewald & Odendaal, 2021). This divergence from the linear, output-driven model of time prevalent in male-dominated workplaces (Hjorthol, 2001; Miller et al., 2024) devalues women's contributions, exacerbates their time poverty and reinforces exclusion due to the limited availability of flexible work mechanisms in African organizations.

Additionally, understanding spatiotemporal time in the African context provides insights into how occupational segregation, rooted in patriarchal norms, restricts women's access to spaces and opportunities in African organizations. This spatial constraint, coupled with limited temporal flexibility, hinders their ability to assert their uniqueness and achieve inclusion (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021; Maunganidze & Bonnin, 2021; Nwagbara, 2021), contrasting with the increasing emphasis on spatial and temporal flexibility in western workplaces (Erel & Ryan, 2019). Moreover, insights from the African context expand the understanding of time as a period of upheaval by demonstrating how crises like COVID-19 disproportionately impact African women. The pandemic exacerbated women's unpaid caregiving burdens, eroding their productivity. Unlike western contexts with stronger organizational support, inadequate provisions in African settings further eroded women's productivity and reinforced exclusionary practices (Mordi et al., 2023).

Notably, this research contributes to understanding time as a historical tapestry by demonstrating how colonial legacies, indigenous traditions and religious frameworks continue to shape gendered experiences of time in African organizations (Delle et al., 2023; Jaga et al., 2018). Unlike western contexts, where inclusion initiatives often focus on dismantling patriarchal structures, African organizations remain heavily influenced by entrenched norms that limit women's agency. For example, the Ubuntu philosophy, emphasizing collective care, offers a potential counter-narrative but has been diluted by modernization

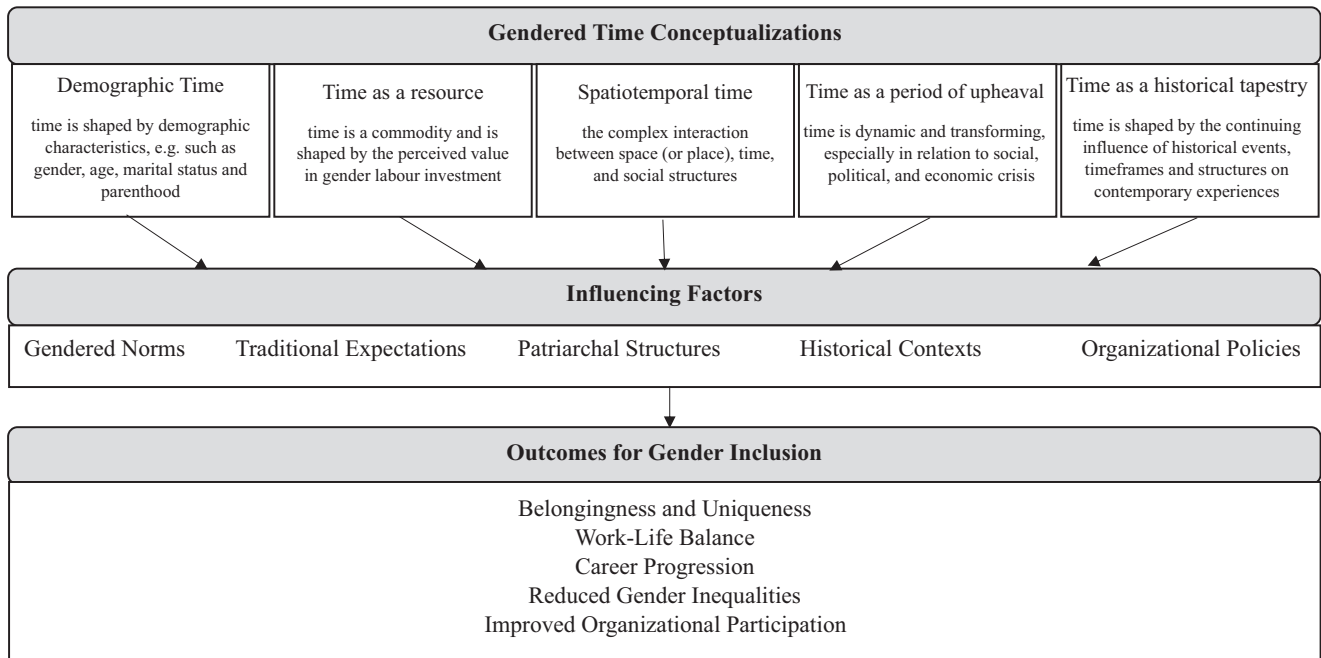


FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework of the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations. Source: Authors' computation.

and economic pressures (Diouf et al., 2023; Ncube, 2010). Furthermore, although western frameworks often overlook the enduring impact of colonialism and prioritize individualistic solutions, our research emphasizes the importance of considering the historical African context. This includes recognizing the significance of informal caregiving networks, such as extended family support and the prevalence of polygamous households, in shaping women's time use (Beauregard & Adisa, 2023). These traditional support systems, often undervalued in western models, have crucial implications for women's inclusion in the workplace.

Next, to address the second research question about how the varying conceptualizations of time affect women's experiences of inclusion in African organizations, our findings demonstrate that conceptualizations of time are deeply intertwined with women's inclusion, particularly in how they shape perceptions of belongingness and uniqueness. Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles allocate time in ways that disproportionately burden women, marginalizing their contributions and excluding them from decision-making processes. For example, the cyclical conception of time associated with motherhood reinforces stereotypes that women are less committed to their careers (Baksh et al., 1994; Eissler et al., 2022). This diminishes their visibility and access to developmental opportunities, eroding their sense of belonging within professional spaces (Adisa et al., 2024; Chikapa et al., 2024; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Similarly, the undervaluation of women's time contributions perpetuates systemic exclu-

sion, as their work is often deemed less valuable than that of their male counterparts (Groenewald & Odendaal, 2021). This symbolic devaluation contrasts with western contexts, where there are better policies that attempt to address such imbalances. The intersection of spatiotemporal constraints and occupational segregation further limits women's ability to assert their unique contributions. For example, African women in male-dominated industries frequently face systemic barriers, including exclusion from leadership roles and limited access to influential networks (Akanji et al., 2020; Wilén & Heinecken, 2018). These challenges undermine their capacity to feel recognized and valued, inadvertently leading to a feeling of being excluded.

Finally, to address the third research question, this research expands our understanding of how gendered norms and expectations about time use influence women's experiences in African organizations. Gendered norms dictate the allocation and valuation of time, reinforcing inequalities that disproportionately impact women. Patriarchal structures in African organizations normalize rigid gender roles, relegating women to caregiving and domestic responsibilities (Adisa, Gbadamosi, et al., 2021). This division not only perpetuates time poverty but also limits women's ability to achieve a balance between work and family life. Unlike western societies, where workplace cultures increasingly challenge traditional gender norms, African organizations often mirror societal expectations, creating additional barriers to inclusion. For instance, the lack of formal support systems

for managing time forces African women to rely on informal coping mechanisms, such as extended family networks. Although these networks provide some relief, their erosion due to urbanization and modernization further exacerbates the challenges women face (Delecourt & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Additionally, the interplay of colonial legacies and Indigenous traditions shapes how time is gendered in African contexts. Historical structures, such as polygamy and communal caregiving, once allowed for a more equitable time distribution (Stumbitz & Jaga, 2020). However, as these traditions diminish, women increasingly shoulder disproportionate burdens without adequate institutional support. This shift highlights a critical gap in current organizational practices, which fail to address the evolving needs of contemporary African women.

Theoretical and practical implications

In this section, we highlight the theoretical implications of our findings by addressing gaps in the existing frameworks used to examine gender, time and inclusion within organizational contexts. Although established theories such as role theory, institutional theory, boundary/border theory and spillover theory provide foundational insights, they remain predominantly western-centric and often fail to account for the sociocultural and historical nuances of African workplaces. Integrating additional theoretical perspectives such as the JD–R theory, the KCM and Ubuntu philosophy enriches our understanding of the complex interplay between gendered time use and inclusion in African organizations.

First, the JD–R theory is instrumental in conceptualizing time as a resource, highlighting how job demands and available resources influence employees' well-being, engagement and work-life balance (Bakker et al., 2014). In African organizations, women frequently experience high job demands alongside inadequate formal support systems, which exacerbate time poverty and limit inclusion. Applying the JD–R framework illustrates how women proactively use social support networks or reactively adjust career aspirations to navigate these challenges. This perspective extends the theory by situating it within a context where informal networks often substitute for institutional resources, providing insights into culturally specific strategies for managing gendered time constraints.

Second, the KCM adds depth to understanding how women in African organizations navigate non-linear career trajectories shaped by caregiving, societal expectations and professional aspirations (Chikapa et al., 2024). The parameters of authenticity, balance and challenge

explain how women reorganize roles and priorities in response to shifting demands (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Simmons et al., 2022). For example, women seeking balance may strategically leverage extended family support systems to manage work-life integration, whereas others embrace challenges to assert agency in male-dominated industries. Integrating the KCM into conceptualizations like demographic time and spatiotemporal time reveals how women adaptively structure their careers in the face of entrenched patriarchal norms, offering a more dynamic understanding of gendered career paths in African contexts.

Lastly, incorporating Ubuntu philosophy bridges established theories with Indigenous knowledge systems. Ubuntu emphasizes interconnectedness and communal values, shedding light on how collective decision-making and participatory leadership influence women's time use and inclusion (Gyekye, 1995; Mbiti, 1969). This perspective challenges individualistic approaches dominant in western theories, highlighting how communal support networks and shared responsibilities shape gendered organizational dynamics (Murove, 2023). By integrating Ubuntu, this study broadens the theoretical landscape to include culturally grounded approaches to gender equity and organizational inclusion in African workplaces.

Our study has significant practical implications for organizational policies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusion in African organizations. By understanding the diverse ways women conceptualize and experience time within the African context, organizations can design culturally sensitive initiatives that directly address the challenges women face. One key implication concerns time poverty, a major barrier to women's career advancement. Flexible work arrangements, childcare support programmes and workload redistribution strategies that consider both paid and unpaid work can alleviate this burden. For instance, organizations could explore core working hours that accommodate school pick-up times or offer compressed workweeks (Campbell & van Wanrooy, 2013).

Furthermore, our research emphasizes the importance of respecting and incorporating local knowledge systems when developing interventions, which makes the 'one-size-fits-all' solutions unlikely to be effective. Hence, consulting with employees, understanding local cultural norms and partnering with existing community initiatives can all contribute to designing interventions that resonate with the specific needs of African workplaces and communities (Ogachi, 2011). This collaborative approach can lead to more effective and sustainable strategies for promoting gender equality and fostering a more inclusive work environment for all employees.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In line with our stated objectives, this systematic review article has synthesized existing literature on the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations. Our review sheds light on five distinct gendered conceptualizations of time within an African setting, including demographic time, time as a resource, spatiotemporal time, time as a period of upheaval and time as a historical tapestry. It demonstrates that gendered norms and societal expectations about time use strongly condition and often influence women's experiences of inclusion in African organizations.

We acknowledge the potential limitations in our systematic review and conclusions. First, despite adopting a hybrid strategy for our literature search, we cannot guarantee the completeness of the literature sample, especially as we also restricted our search to specific subject categories relating to the study of gender, time and organizations. Future research can broaden the search parameters to capture other subject areas absent from our review. Second, having excluded non-English articles, unpublished articles, reports and non-empirical papers, we acknowledge that we may have omitted some important contributions that such papers might have offered. Therefore, we suggest that future research could include these papers. Third, despite our attempts to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the reviewed literature, we make no claims regarding the generalizability of our findings beyond the reviewed literature, even within the African context. Future research can investigate the regional similarities and differences in the gendered impact of time on inclusion in African organizations. This approach will offer nuanced perspectives on how cultural, societal and organizational factors uniquely influence women's experiences of time use and inclusion across different African regions. These limitations are important to be considered and reflected upon by scholars when interpreting our conclusions.

Ultimately, we identify several avenues for future research (see Table 2) to move forward the debate on the gendered impact of time on inclusion in organizations. Based on the five conceptualizations of time, we suggest potential research questions for future research to identify gaps in knowledge and areas that need further investigation regarding time conceptualizations and stimulate new ideas and approaches to examine gender, time and organizations in western and non-western contexts. Additionally, although it is not an exhaustive list, we suggest some theoretical frameworks that may be relevant for exploring the different time conceptualizations. As previ-

ously mentioned, future research may also consider new theoretical frameworks that are context-specific, including those that challenge western theories and perspectives. Moreover, exploring indigenous healing practices could provide deeper insights into the psychological dimensions of time use among African women in organizational contexts. Indigenous healing practices often emphasize holistic approaches to health and well-being, integrating physical, mental and spiritual dimensions (Mbiti, 1969). Research could investigate how these holistic perspectives influence women's coping mechanisms, resilience strategies and subjective experiences of time management amidst organizational demands.

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ORCID

Chima Mordi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1921-1660>

Toyin Ajibade Adisa  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5317-6606>

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Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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