

# Gender Equity, Women Education and National Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Gender equity in education generates a push force that accelerates progress across sectors and goals; thus, sustainable development. Gender equality constitutes central position in both national and international programmes as an accelerator for achieving development. Women's place in national development appears subordinated. Thus, this study examined gender equity in education in Nigeria and the impact on national development. Specifically, the study sought to find out the degree of women access to education, ascertain the impact of women education on socio-economic development and discuss the factors that constitute barriers to women education in Nigeria. The study discovered that educated women serve as stabilizing factor in national development and recommended 'soft competition technique' as the approach that will grant women the needed equity in national development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Gender Equity, Access, Women education, Impact, National development.

## 1.1 Introduction

Beyond the legal semantics of gender equality, Nigeria and any other developing country treading the path of development are expected to demonstrate realistic gender mainstreaming in access to education. Gender equity in Education is not just a privilege but a fundamental right of every Nigerian child hence citizens are legally guaranteed to have access to education irrespective of sex, race and religion. Gender equity in education is value laden because it drives sustainable global and national development. Education opens door for enhancement capacity and potential needed for people to succeed and to contribute to national progress. Therefore, in the real sense of it, governments ought to make gender equity in education part of their value system and not to prioritize it because priorities can change at any time but values do not. Values and beliefs drive culture and behaviours (Mehnert, 2019).

In Nigeria gender equity in education intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographical location. According to Amadeo (2019), there are two dimensions to equity in education: first is fairness, i.e making sure that personal and social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving educational potential. Examples include gender, socio-economic status, or ethnic origin. The second is inclusion, i.e to ensure a basic minimum standard of education for all. For example, everyone should be able to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. However, Mehnert (2019) noted that gender equity is not just a social issue; it is a massive economic opportunity. Secondly, gender equity is not a synonym for women's rights - women are half the conversation and men are the other half. Gender equity therefore, is the process of allocating resources, programmes and decision-making fairly to both males and females without any discrimination on the basis of sex... and addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to males and females (CAAWS, 2019).

The concept of gender equity recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (CAAWS, 2019). In the context of this study, gender equity is a means while more access to education by women is the end and development is the outcome. Gender equity in education does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities guaranteed by equal education are obtainable not depending on whether one was born male or female. Even when there are differences, it should not be equated with inferiority or superiority (Eister, 1987), for no human is less of the other. Therefore, women education is defined as the education that would make a woman become aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her to become functional in society (Afebendeughe in Ugwu, 2001).

Women education is synonymous with women empowerment. According to Aja-Okorie (2013), an educated woman is an empowered woman and more marketable in terms of employment; better employment implies more earnings for the family as well as improved wellbeing all of which contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. The Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 succinctly acknowledged education as an instrument of parity for excellence in national development. In 1971, the United Nations gave the following as factors for national development: equal living standard for all, equal share of all in profit, similarly equal distribution of income and capital, expansion of facilities regarding education, health, shelter and social welfare and

preservation of the environment (Pamnani, 1993). National development in the context of this study is the mobilization and articulation of the human resources potentials in Nigeria through education irrespective of gender and exploiting them for the wellbeing of all.

More access to education by women is a necessary condition for women empowerment and national development. It will enable more women to become socio-economic, cultural and political change agents. According to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA (1994), capacity-building efforts should pay particular attention to the needs of women in order to ensure that their skills and experience are fully used in decision-making at all levels which implies that the education and contribution of women to global and national development is indispensable. To undermine that in any development process amounts to an unsustainable development. That's why the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (4) target by 2030 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Throughout history, the central role of women in society has ensured the stability, progress and long-term development of nations (globalvolunteers.org). According to Roy (2019), for every 10 per cent increase in gender equity towards parity, there is a 1 per cent to 2 per cent increase in revenue. Unfortunately, gender equity in access to education is still a debatable issue across the globe. Women had remained on the sidelines of socio-economic operations despite huge efforts to streamline gender equity in education; hence the goal of this study is to re-examine gender equity and impact of women education on national development in Nigeria.

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarification

**Gender equity:** recognizes the differences in the needs and abilities of women and men as equal humans. These differences are identified and addressed in a manner considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.

**Women and Men:** in this study implies Female and Male of school age, as well as working age.

**Women education:** is the education that empowers a woman for self-awareness, self-reliance and functionality in society.

**National development:** is the mobilization and articulation of the human resources potentials of a country through education irrespective of gender and exploiting them for the wellbeing of all.

### 2.2 Theoretical Approach

The building-block of interpretation for this study is based on 'Smart Economics' of gender. Smart economics is the practice of taking women into consideration in every government policy as equal stakeholder in the plan and execution of national development plans and programmes. Today, reaching sustainable development is no longer feasible without smart Economics. According to Robles (2020), the idea of 'Smart Economics' dates back to 1970s when the term 'Women in Development' (WID) was coined. The WID movement advocated for gender equality; however, its central and more popular discourse was based on economic efficiency arguments, also known as the "gender efficiency approach." Smart Economics, therefore, is an off-shoot of gender efficiency approach. This approach as noted by Robles, was based on the idea that when women have access to education, jobs, credits, and assets, they are able to contribute substantially to society's economic growth and catalyze its development process. Thus, as per this logic, achieving gender equality is in society's collective interest; this is why it is depicted as smart economics.

According to World Bank Development Report (2012), gender equality is smart economics: it can enhance economic efficiency and improve other development outcomes in three ways:

First, removing barriers that prevent women from having the same access as men to education, economic opportunities, and productive inputs can generate broad productivity gains—gains all the more important in a more competitive and globalized world. Second, improving women's absolute and relative status feeds many other development outcomes, including those for their children. Third, leveling the playing field—where women and men have equal chances to become socially and politically active, make decisions, and shape policies—is likely to lead over time to more representative, and more inclusive, institutions and policy choices and thus to a better development path.

Smart Economics and indeed the 2012 World Bank Development Report propositions are well captured in Nigeria National Gender Policy (2006) and its 35% Affirmative Action popularized by the Beijing declaration of 1995. The vision of the National Gender Policy is the achievement of a just and gender equitable society and economy where women and men contribute their optimal quota to development at all levels of governance and has control over and benefit from all development interventions (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2006). Though, the Affirmative Action as enshrined in the National Gender Policy of Nigeria is yet to have a legislative backing, but various political administration from 1999 till date have used the 35% Affirmative Action both as a political manifesto and governance approach. For instance; President Buhari during his campaign pledged 35 percent affirmative action for women in governance in line with the National Gender Policy while his party All Progressive Congress (APC) manifesto also promised equitable gender inclusiveness (Ajayi, 2015). The previous administration also had women occupying about 33 percent of the cabinet, yet there were calls to make it up to 35 percent as obtainable in some African countries (Ajayi, 2015). All the administrations demonstrated peculiar interest in appointing women as ministers of finance, just as they all had fighting financial corruption as an all-important agenda. As such, the Federal Ministry of Finance from 1999 till date had been headed by women more than men as ministers of finance. Therefore, their performance in terms contribution to national development have become central in this study. Throughout history, the central role played by women has ensured the stability, progress and long-term development of nations (Guardian Editor, 2021). As such, the involvement of women in nation-building is an inalienable right, as well as

inescapable reality for a holistic and comprehensive political, economic and social advancement in the modern world (Guardian Editor, 2021).

Upon the return of democracy in 1999, Nigerian government through signing up international gender treaties and implementation of various national gender policies made significant efforts towards mainstreaming gender equality in governance for sustainable national development. According to Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2006), Nigeria is a signatory to all international treaties on gender equality. This to a large extent depicts Nigeria's level of gender sensitivity.

### 2.3 Method of study

Documentary research method was adopted for this study. Qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from national and international organizations, such as: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), British council, United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, Federal Ministry of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, etc. Simple percentage was used to analyze quantitative data while thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data.

#### 3.1 The Degree of Women Access to Education in Nigeria

Globally, women account for about two-thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate adults and there has been no change in reducing this share since 1990 (UNESCO, 2014). In Nigeria, access to reliable and complete information on education has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for education statistics has been slow and various data generating agencies (including the Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics) often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, different modes of disaggregation and definitions of indicators. The absence of rudimentary data at school and local levels in many areas is often viewed as a crisis inhibiting the development of effective education planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making (British Council, 2014). To that effect, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in 2008 equally observed that gender disparity was largest in the rural areas and poor households. The nature of these rural areas and poor households, and the current general insecurity are part of the fundamental reasons for variation of data on gender and women education in Nigeria. That notwithstanding, there are reliable statistics that show acceptable data on women education in Nigeria.

According to National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria population in 2010 is estimated at 193 million people, women constitute 49.2 per cent and men 50.8 per cent, sex ration remained 102 men to 100 women, etc (Adejokun, 2019). According to (NPC, 2009) in (British council (2014) 40 per cent women and 28 per cent men have never attended school. The Net Enrollment Rate at primary school level is 56 per cent for girls and 61 per cent for boys (UNESCO, 2014). For National Bureau of Statistics (2016) in (UNESCO, 2014) the percentage of girls' enrollment in primary school was less than 50 per cent, it was 48.6 per cent in 2014 but decreased in 2015 and 2016 to 47.4 and 47.5 respectively, the completion rate for girls in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary for 2016 were 64.8 percent, 38.9 percent and 33.2 per cent respectively, literacy rate among young women and men aged 15-24 years in 2016 was 59.3 per cent and 70.9 per cent respectively.

According to World Bank Education Data (2013), the number of girls enrolled in primary school increased from 79 per cent to 92.3 per cent between 2008 and 2013. Enrollment of boys also rose from 89 per cent to 95.2 per cent, continuing to remain slightly higher than that of girls (Dunn, 2018). In 2008, 64.1 per cent of girls and 75.3 per cent of boys completed primary schools, in 2010, the figures rose to 68.9 per cent and 78.4 per cent respectively (Dunn, 2018). Despite the above estimated progress made, the Federal Government through the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Education, Adamu Hussaini disclosed in 2017 that 10.5 million children were out of school (BBC, 2017). However, the Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission, Hamid Bobboyi argued that the number of out-of-school children had increased from 10.5 million to 13.2 million, between 2010 to 2015. The United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) in 2018 estimated that 69 per cent of the children are in Northern Nigeria, just as 60 per cent of them are girls. According to Adamu, those mostly affected were girls, street children and children of nomadic groups. He stressed that economic prosperity can only be achieved with an "inclusive and functional education system". On the other hand, Jimeh Saleh, BBC Hausa editor insisted that the failure in our education system is due to lack of government funding, rather than any cultural factors as suggested by the Ministry of Education. Jime reiterated that government funded schools in Nigeria have practically collapsed over the years because of poor funding, leaving children from poor homes with nowhere to go but the streets. Further estimation on girls/women access to education in Nigeria is shown in the tables below:

**Table 3.1: Distribution of Enrolment of School-Age in Primary Education by Year and Sex**

Year	M	F	% F	% M
2014	13,255,789	12,545,408	48.6	51.4
2015	13,393,310	12,049,225	47.4	52.6
2016	13,435,940	12,155,241	47.5	52.5

Source: Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics, Federal Ministry of Education

**Table 3.2: Distribution of Enrolment in Junior Secondary School by Year and Sex, 2014 - 2016**

Year	M	F	% F	% M
2014	3,311,470	2,891,624	46.6	53.4
2015	3,260,109	2,920,182	47.2	52.8
2016	3,181,810	2,786,332	46.7	53.3

Source: Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics, Federal Ministry of Education

**Table 3.3: Distribution of Enrolment in Senior Secondary School by year and Sex, 2014 - 2016**

Year	M	F	% F	% M
2014	2,321,183	1,971,306	45.9	54.1
2015	2,629,526	2,281,418	46.5	53.5
2016	2,417,192	2,058,117	46.0	54.0

Source: Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics, Federal Ministry of Education

Looking at the percentage differences in male to female enrollment in Junior and senior secondary schools, the lowest percent difference is the (2.8 percent) in Table 3.1 of the primary school enrollment. The highest is (8.3 per cent) in Table 3.3 of the senior secondary school enrollment. The range of the differences of male to female is (5.5 per cent) indicating that the gap between women and men in education is not widening.

Increased participation of women in the education sector is also visible at the University level. When Nigeria gained independence in 1960, only 7.7 per cent of Nigerian University students were female. By 2001, the number had skyrocketed to 41.7 percent and it continues to rise. In 2009, 45 percent of all university students in Nigeria were females (Dunn, 2018). According to Okebukola, Chairman Governing Council, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) it is gratifying to note the increasing number of enrollment of women in NOUN, second semester registration indicated 58% of those taking examination in NOUN are female (Odunsi, 2019a).

**Table 3.4 Total Number of Undergraduate Student Enrolment and Graduate Output as at 2011, 2012, 2013, AND 2015, 2016, 2017, UNN**

Year	Undergraduate Enrollment		Total
	Male	Female	
2011	12010	9370	21380
2012	14480	12063	26543
2013	13461	11801	25262
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,952</b>	<b>33,234</b>	
Year	Graduate Output		Total
	Male	Female	
2015	6105	8805	14911
2016	3431	4751	8182
2017	2025	1643	3668
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,561</b>	<b>15,199</b>	

Source: Academic Planning Unit, UNN.

The implication of the preceding data, from primary to university is that while gender parity may not have been achieved in education in Nigeria, the disparity between male and female is not widening. That is to say that the effort of government and non-state actors like Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) is yielding positive results except in areas with peculiar challenges like the boko haram insurgency in the northern part of the country.

Another significant indicator in Table 3.4 is the graduate output for female. In 2015 and 2016, female graduate output was more than the male by 5.1 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively. Some social and economic indices such as peer pressure within the context of dating, partying, cultism and indigence had been identified to influence male undergraduates more than female undergraduates during their years in the university. However, the sum of the difference in female graduate output for 2015 and 2016 (5.1 per cent +1.6 per cent) i.e 6.7 per cent is equal to the male difference in 2017. This shows the likelihood of achieving gender parity in education in the long-run. For the world Economic Forum, it will take 170 years to reach gender equality globally (Roy, 2017).

#### 4.1 Factors that Constitute Barriers to Women Education

From existing literatures, there is a plethora of barriers to women education such as poverty, religion, socialization, insecurity, culture, etc. However, brief emphases are on culture and attitude of government towards education in Nigeria.

**i. Culture:** The cultural belief about women in Africa as men's chattels, who should be heard and not seen beyond the family front, is a fundamental barrier to women education. For instance, the belief that a girl child born into a family is in transit and her final destination is the husband's family is a major cultural barrier. It is for this reason that the male children who are considered the heir

are usually better equipped for the future through education and other necessary means. This may not be the case of the educated and wealthy families who educate their girl child. However, the cultural limitation still manifest, in the organized socio-economic and political systems of our society in which women are usually seen to play the second fiddle to men. The effect of culture on women education in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, is complex. Complex in the sense that generally, culture appears to limit women but there are specifics with regards to region, tribe, etc. In Northern Nigeria, which is dominantly Muslims, education is yet to liberate the women as much as their counterpart in the south who are dominantly Christians. In the North, there is no separation between culture and religion but in the south it exists. Culture reinforces religion and when there is no separation between the two, it constitutes barrier to education especially when it is not a civilized culture (Mahdi, 2011 in British Council, 2012) & (Abdulkarim, 2009 in British-Council, 2014).

**ii. Government attitude towards education:** How civilized, modernized, liberalized or developed a society/country is, is a function of education, particularly that of women. Government attitude towards education has the capacity to either sustain the already existing barriers or whittle down their effect to create a gender balance in education and bring about national development by liberating women through education. According to, Nigeria Minister of Transportation, liberating the society will help reduce the level at which women face economic challenges (Odunsi, 2019b). Invariably, liberating women through education and giving them equal opportunities to thrive within the socio-economic and political system will translate to economic empowerment of women and national development. On the other hand, if the women are not liberated, our society cannot claim to be liberated and an un-liberated society cannot experience sustainable development.

The general attitude of government towards education, expressed through budgeting, is not encouraging and does not demonstrate the fact that education is the basis of all civilization. According to Iyoha (2019), the annual government budget is a mirror into the culture of a country. Therefore, anyone who desires to understand the culture of a country should take a look at the annual budget and especially the education component thereof. This is because education is one of the objects of the highest importance to the welfare of any society. There is no country that can rise above the quality of the education it provides. He further reiterated that in the quality of education of a country lies the answer to the miasma that beclouds the sensitivity of people in all areas of life. As such, he averred that in Nigeria, there is no meaningful development that can take place unless and until the education sector is redeemed from the present state of chaos. Issues concerning education in Nigeria are currently at the short end of national discourse.

Budgetary allocation for education in Nigeria has continuously fallen below the 15-20 per cent minimum of the entire budget recommended by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Nigeria in 2017 budgeted N550 billion (i.e, 6 per cent) for education; in 2018, it was N496.9 billion but it was later raised to about N605.8 billion (i.e, 7.04 per cent) by the National Assembly. Incidentally, the budget was later cut as part of the virement for the Independent National Electoral Commission to prepare for the last general elections (Ameh & Aluko, 2019). In the 2020 budget of N9.45 trillion, education is expected to be allocated N652.94 billion, representing 6.9 per cent of the budget (Adamu & Osagie, 2019). According to the National Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Biodun Ogunyemi, education budgets indicate the ruling class in Nigeria do not prioritize education (Ameh & Aluko, 2019). A cursory look at the education budget in Nigeria indicates that it sometimes reflects the perception of the regime involved or the idiosyncrasy of the man at the helm of control.

#### 4.1.2 Consequences of women's low access to education

- i. **Population Explosion:** The 10.5 million out of school children are all given birth to by women and the ratio of the women to the children was not given. If the 10.5 million children are not cared for, by educating them, the girls among them in the near future will become women and the chances of repeating the cycle are glaring. The implication of such is grave for Nigeria. The population explosion of such class of people will have inherent socio-economic consequences on the country. According to Soludo, by 2050, there will probably be 400 million Nigerians; all these people will need water, education, hospitals and jobs. Consequently, with an urbanization rate of 5 per cent, the conflagration that might ensue when hundreds of millions surge to the cities but can't find jobs, housing, water, and food can only be imagined. Soon, the rich won't be able to sleep because the poor, homeless and angry are awake (Jannah, 2019 & Opejobi, 2019).
- ii. **Anti-state sentiment:** As expressed in the Family-Nation Theory, when families are able to positively nurture their children to adulthood, they naturally rise in defense of their families when occasion demands that; if for no other thing, the benefits and security they enjoy or derive from that immediate environment. Likewise, when the Nigeria State is unable to improve the condition of poor women and children through education, the State indirectly builds anti-state sentiments against itself by a cohort with unimaginable consequences. For instance, according to Chukwumerije Dike in Channels TV, Sunrise Daily, when the citizens lose faith in the State, they take solace in the tribe. It is for this reason and similar ones that the Nigerian State wobbles with high tendencies of tribalism and ethnicity in its national affairs. Here lies the question begging for an answer; how can one convince poor children or women who do not believe in their country to have faith in the country, when the country itself is incapable of making such convictions through service (education) provision and protection? There is no doubt that the 60 per cent of the 10.5 million out-of-school children from the north are girls and as well vulnerable to recruitment by the Islamic insurgents.

#### 5.1 The Impact of Women Education on Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

Women education is a humanitarian business that commands social, cultural, moral and economic values; dictates the growth, stability and development of the country; and boosts confidence of international partners and investors. It makes a country predictable

on the path of development, as such; gender sensitivity has become an indicator of a civilized or developing nation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. The empowerment of women and the improvement of women’s social, economic and political status are essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

Over the years, Nigeria had been challenged by poor public accountability and financial corruption which perhaps informed the decision of every administration to appoint women more than men as the head of the finance ministry. Statistically, crime data shows that women are less prone to crime than men. For instance; the available data from the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) indicated that about 2 per cent of prisoners/inmates between 2012 and 2016 were female. During the same period, prison admission for stealing was 95 per cent male and 5 per cent female (NBS in Adejokun, 2019). The current Corruption Perception Index for public sector ranked Nigeria 154 out of 180 countries surveyed, placing Nigeria as the second most corrupt country in West Africa (Sanni, 2022), and also, the poverty capital of the world, with 93.9 people living below the poverty line (Uzoho, 2021). This poverty status is occasioned by nothing more than stealing and mismanagement of public fund. In this light, President Buhari stated thus:

*Placing women in strategic positions of my government, like the financial sector, is to ensure effective management of limited resources available, and promote a stronger sense of inclusiveness. As such, my administration handed the nations’ treasury to women. Even at household level, you hand over the money to women to manage. It can be taken to the level of managing the country’s treasury as well. I have consistently given it to women. It is strategic (Premiumtimes, 2019).*

The table below is an illustration of Male and Female Ministers of Finance, Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999-2022.

**Table 5.1 Female/Male Ministers of Finance Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999-2022**

Political Party in Power	Years in power	Ministers of Finance	Gender		Cumulative years in Office	
			M	F	M	F
PDP	16 (1999-2015)	7	4	3	8	8
APC	7 (2015 till date)	2	Nil	2	Nil	7
Total	23	9	4	5	8	15
Percentage					34.8%	65.2%
PDP: Peoples Democratic Power						
APC: All Progressive Congress						
Sources: Nigerian current Affairs (2017), Francis (2022)						

Deducing from table 4.1, PDP in their 16 years rule had seven Finance Ministers, 4 were male while 3 were female. In their cumulative years in the office, each gender had 8 years. For APC in their 7 years and counting, the party had never appointed any male finance minister. The 2 finance ministers appointed were female. Total number of finance ministers appointed from 1999 to date were 9 (male 4 and female 5). Cumulative years in office for the male finance ministers is 8 representing 34.8% of the years while female is 15 years representing 65.2%. The above data shows the dominance of female finance ministers from 1999 to date.

Promoting and allowing equitable representation and participation of women in all the sectors of the economy have gone beyond the issue ticking the gender box just to indicate the number of women accommodated. Much as the number is important, impact is crucial as the only validity that women are co-stakeholders and indispensable in the quest for sustainable development of any kind. Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have numerous data on gender participation and involvement, for instance; in Federal MDAs, women in the civil service constituted 34.67%, 35.08% and 32.79% for 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively (NBS in Adejokun, 2019). However, this study isolated ministers of finance from the ministry of finance, appointed by various political administration since 1999 due to the consistency and seeming competition between the administrations in appointing women to the position and obvious impact recorded that cut-across MDAs.

From 1999 till date, the impact of woman Ministers of Finance have shown that educated women can hold the ace for national development as much as the men, if given a level playing field. The reforms introduced by one of them has successfully curtailed financial corruption and leakages in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government. The reforms outlived the administration that introduced them and have been maximally applied by successive administrations irrespective of political party affiliation. The economic reforms include the introduction of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), and Treasury Single Account (TSA).

According to Isa (2019), in the face of losing huge funds to ghost workers through unsubstantiated salary wage bills, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in 2007, under the watch of former Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala introduced two information technology driven payment mechanisms- the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), and Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), for budget management and accounting in the public sector. Also introduced as part of the reform measures across MDAs for prudent financial management was the Treasury Single

Account (TSA) of which its implementation took off in 2015. From April 2007 when these reforms were introduced and February 2018, over 288 Billion Naira was saved as a result of the difference between the amount government would have released to MDAs and the actual amount released through IPPIS payment scheme (Isa, 2019). According to the Accountant General of the Federation, the Federal Government between 2017 and 2018 has saved N273,809,842, 071.99 on the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) platform, monies that otherwise would have been lost to ghost workers and leakages (Agabi, 2019). The Accountant General of the Federation further noted that prior to 2015, the total number of Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) on the IPPIS platform was 288 with a total staff count of 235,858, but as of today the total MDAs on IPPIS platform is 561 with a total staff count of over 755, 422.

This robust and magnificent development in the wage bill system of the Federal Government of Nigeria is the unquestionable contribution of a female minister to the National Development of Nigeria. Since 1999, till date there seems to be no other obvious reform that has cut cost, curtailed financial theft and promoted public accountability that transcended administrations beyond political party lines.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and indeed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning (FWCW, Beijing, 1995) in (United Nations Population Fund, 1994).

According to Newiak (2018), for Nigeria, we have conducted specific analysis to show that if Nigeria reduced gender inequality both in the labour market and in political representation, in education, in legal rights and also by improving health outcomes for women, the economy could grow on average by as much as 1.25 per cent points or more. Just to put it in context, the 2017 growth outcome of the economy showed that it grew by 0.8 per cent, in that context, 1.25% points on average is large". Therefore, promoting gender sensitive policies is not only the right thing to do, but it's also smart economics and will address a lot of Nigeria's challenges (Newiak, 2018).

Specifically, in education, Edufun Technik, a pro-female education organization, is focused in STEM education for children and youth from 3-18 years old in underprivileged and underserved communities in Eastern Nigeria, and also ensures that 60 per cent of their students and clients are girls. Currently Edufun Technik has covered over 500 classes of STEM curriculum since 2014, trained 1, 200 pupils and 2, 100 students in after-school STEM workshops and in-class activities (Ugwu, 2019). Edufun Technik trained five Nigerian girls who won Junior Gold at the 2018 Technovation World pitch in Silicon Valley, Sanfransisco, United States. The Forum of African Women Educationists (Nigeria) attracted partnership with Microsoft to train 360 girls on IT skills, life skills and coding skills and champions' the Girl Centre Initiative (GCI) in Nigeria. STEM and IT skills are soft based and are not gender bias and drives both local and international development.

## 5.2 Findings

Specific findings of the study include:

- I. The disparity in education between male and female in Nigeria is not widening.
- II. The data in Table 3.4 shows that gender parity in education could be achieved in the long run.
- III. More female graduate output irrespective of more male undergraduate enrollment had been attributed to male peer pressure (dating, partying and cultism) and indigence.
- IV. There is a growing consciousness to expose the females early enough to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics-STEM for competitive advantage in the labour market and contribution to national development.
- V. Poverty reduction: Prioritizing women education by the government will serve as a short-cut to poverty reduction. It is self-empowering and the economic impact will rub off on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) especially for the fact that women constitute 42.9 per cent of the population of the country.
- VI. Population control: Any development plan that is not in tandem with the population and its growth projections is equal to retrogressive development. Women illiteracy is a recipe for early marriage, uncontrolled birth and over population. However, women education and the consequent awareness enable women to control birth processes and thereby engender population control for adequate and sustainable development.
- VII. Educated women serve as stabilizing factor in national development. For instance, no government can achieve population control without women, so women are central to reaching development plan target.

## Conclusion

From Nigeria experience, and how one of the women finance ministers made huge impact in tackling one of Nigeria's greatest governance obstacle (financial corruption) is a pointer to the fact that issues of gender inequality have become a developmental problem and a yard stick for measuring how developed a country is. Women in various spheres of life around the world have demonstrated that they are not less human to men in terms of common areas of strength. The conversation about gender inequality for now ought to shift to gender partnership because gender equity is not women's issue, but an economic issue. Women and men are opposite sides of the coin of development. By nature, and demonstration, women have proved to be partners in progress and stabilizing factor in development in every level of society. It is on this note that this paper concurs with the United Nations' assertion that investing in women and respecting their rights is the surest way to uplifting communities, organizations and countries, as well as achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Given the level of Nigeria's gender sensitivity by signing up to all

international treaties on gender equality, the nation is on course for gender equity and sustainable development. Deriving from the findings, the study recommends thus:

1. **Cultural rebirth:** This involves educating women and re-educating men about women as equal stakeholders in national development. This can be done through the introduction of gender studies in all levels of education system.
2. **Education with “New content”** –We need a transformed education system that is consistent with our social, economic and cultural realities; that relates to the life, needs and aspirations of Nigerians, thereby making it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of personal, group and national goals. Such education system should be driven by entrepreneurial, scientific and technological innovation, which will produce free, independent and productive women for over-all national development.
3. **Soft competition technique:** Soft competition technique is the use of emotional intelligence and soft skills within the spectrum of professionalism to gain leadership advantage through performance both in private and public spheres. These skills are not gender inherent, they are developed and whoever masters them sets the pace for others to follow.

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