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Gender Disparities in Youth Skills Acquisition and Employment Outcomes in Nigeria: A Survey of Ilorin Metropolis Areas of Kwara State

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Abstract
The research aim of this paper is to examine the impact of Gender disparities among youths skills acquisition on employment outcomes in Nigeria. There has being issues of Gender disparity among youths leading to economic vulnerability among women, marginalization, women's disempowerment, income inequality, poverty, poor economic growth and development. Descriptive survey research design, mixed method source of data collection, purposive random sampling, population of 821,618 comprising of Ilorin west, east and south, sample size of 200 and data analysis in simple percentage and thematic forms. Gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment, Gender disparities has effect on economic growth and development, Finance program will enhance Gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes, Government support will contribute to Gender balance and employment outcome, there are differs factors behind gender disparities is skills acquisition and employment outcomes which includes socio-cultural norms and stereotypical expectations; lack of female role models; stereotypes about ability and aptitudes among others. Gender disparity has being a matter of concern among scholars. The issues of Gender disparity as however, in long run transgressed into many problems such as Gender based inequality, Gender based violence and lopsided employment outcomes among other issues; Therefore, there is need for policy recommendations in the other to address the issue of gender inequality and it consequence result on both political, economic and social life. Nigeria government should allocate some percentage of works and appointment to female gender and also encourage women enrolment in schools has been practiced in Rwanda. Government should also increase it budgetary allocation on skills accusation with focus on female gender and improve it monitoring and evaluation process among other recommendations.

Keywords: Gender Disparities, Youths Skills acquisition, Employment outcomes

JEL Classification: 05, E20, G28

Introduction

Issues and topics on Gender-based balance, Gender-based inequality and Gender -based violence, as being a major areas of discuss among scholars and practitioners often in social and management sciences (Kleven & Landais, 2017; Worsdale & Wright, 2020). Therefore, the concept of "Gender" as gain momentum in current studies owing to its imperativeness, and its impacts on every realm of life be it social, political, and economic. Gender base disparities between the two basic sex has different genesis from natural, cultural and to divine basis which however, metamorphosis into issues of Gender base inequality or imbalance (Pathak, 2017, & Azuakor, 2017). Conversely, divers' dynamism prompted the gap in gender-based inequality, such as exclusion by job descriptions, differences in physical edifice, education, skill acquisition, culture, religion, and other contributing factors (Para-Mallam, 2017).

Therefore, this menace, necessitated the consideration and focused of the 5th goal for sustainable development goal (SDG) to be addressed to Gender equality alongside other major government policies and private efforts aimed at tackling Gender based issues. Hence, the quest for Gender equality in education, skills development, and career opportunities buttresses the fundamental of gender balance in sustainable social and economic development.

In developing nations, unemployment is being considered to be one of the most challenging problems bedeviling every government (Adanlawo, Owolabi, & Vezi-Magigaba, 2021). For example, majority of Nigerian's youthful (workforce age) population are unemployed. In a report by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity (2018), the asserted that majority of young people who are unemployed are university graduate. Also, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 72 million young people in Africa are not enroll in schools, employed, or training; and young women dominate the largest portion of this group. The question about Gender inequality further obfuscates the state of employment among African youths where women and girls face additional obstacles to employment, including lower access to education, discriminatory cultural norms, and limited economic opportunities (Esipova & Maybud, 2017). However, Falk and Hermle (2018) posited that Gender inequality negatively impacts the economy. Going further, Rewhorn (2020) avers that Gender inequality is a problematic issue as it lowers wellbeing and is regarded as a form of injustice in the very conception of equity. Owing to this, numerous third world nations are paying more attention to the development of skills acquisition programs due to the widespread acceptance of the role of skill acquisition as an engine of economic growth (Nkomo & Adanlawo, 2023). Economically, developing individual dexterity helps to provide youths and unemployed graduates with alternative employment opportunities (Chaka & Adanlawo, 2023).

Women population in Nigeria is defied by severe barriers to formal work, propelling their economic vulnerability and marginalization in society (Adebayo, 2019). Nonetheless, skills acquisition programs provides a viable answer to these issues by providing women with practical skills in various vocations such as tailoring, catering, cosmetology, and agriculture (Ogunlade & Afolayan, 2020). Facilitating women to effusively participate in the economy is not only growth-promoting mechanism, but rather diversifies the economies, reduces income inequality, mitigates demographic shifts and contributes to financial sector stability (Kochhar, Jain-Chandra & Newiak, 2017). As OECD research shows, educated women are more viable to contribute to the labour force, earn higher incomes and contribute to the health and education of their families, thereby fostering intergenerational benefits. This skills gap, coupled with low levels of basic literacy, further exacerbates gender inequalities, perpetuating the cycle of women's disempowerment (Duflo, 2012). Though, Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also a cornerstone for economic growth, productivity, and societal well-being. The OECD highlights the importance of achieving gender equality as a driver of economic growth and societal well-being (OECD, 2025).

Hence, this study will be guided by the following research objectives:

I. To assess the level of Gender disparities in youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes.
II. To determine factors that contribute to Gender base disparities in youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes.
III. To determine the effects of Gender base disparities in youth acquisition and employment outcomes.

Research Assumptions

H0- There is no relationship between Gender disparities in youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes.

Literature Review

In conformation with the Malthus population growth theory that postulated that, the means of population growth is growing geometrical while the means of subsistence are growing arithmetical; as vividly explain the rationale behind some of the causative factors behind high rate of unemployment in many developing countries. Alongside this, are other numerous factors such as lack of education, technical skills, infrastructural deficit, poor management, corruption and bad leadership and bad governance structures. According to Oluwatosina and Bello (2024), they reported that about 10 to 12 million youth in Africa are released into the labour market. However, only 3 million formal jobs are available, resulting in high rate of unemployment or low paying job in the informal sector of the economy. Arithmetically, it implies that only 2 out of 10 people are employed leaving the

reaming 8 people jobless or to face longtime unemployment.

Basically, the West- African regions in which Nigeria falls has an unemployment rate of 32 percent over the years (OCED, 2024). The reason or factors that constitute theses includes factors such structural challenges, high population density, high levels of inequality, increasing poverty, poor infrastructure, and a high debt burden, which limit their ability to provide employment opportunities. For instance, the West African region has seen an increase in the average budget deficit to over 5.6% of GDP (UNECA, 2023).

Gender inequality is one of the most basic challenges ravaging development across Africa today (Oluwatosin & Bello, 2024). However, the challenges and disadvantages encountered by the female Gender, do not only revolve around education or does it end with schooling. Gender dissimilarity has complicates the employment situation for African youth where women and girls face additional barriers to employment, including lower access to education, discriminatory cultural norms, and limited economic opportunities (Bello & Oluwatosin, 2024). Gender equality is a cornerstone of broader social and economic development. Achieving gender equality is not merely a matter of social justice; it is a catalyst for economic growth and societal well-being. Conversely speaking, Gender disparities in education and skills acquisition, can limit economic opportunities and hinder overall development. The World Bank estimates that closing gender gaps in education and skills acquisition could contribute an additional 1% to annual GDP growth in many developing countries (World Bank, 2022). Other studies have shown that educing Gender-based discrimination in social institutions could lead to an annual increase in the global GDP growth rate of between 0.03 and 0.6 of a percentage point by 2030 (Ferrant & Kolev, 2016).

The Gender gap in labour force participation remains significant, particularly in the West African region where the labour force participation rate for women was 46.16 percent in 2021, 46 percent in 2022, and 46.10 percent in 2023 compared to 72.24 percent, 72.80 percent, and 73.84 percent for men respectively (OCED, 2025). For instance, since 2014, the female labour participation rate has hovered around 53 percent, while the male participation rate has remained steady at around 72 percent up to 2024, resulting in over 20 percent disparity in the labour force over time. This gap highlights the structural barriers women face when transiting into the labour market (ILO, 2024). This report notes that countries have made strides toward closing Gender gaps in education; significant disparities persist across attainment, performance, and career outcomes (OCED, 2025). Countries with greater Gender equality in education and skills acquisition tends to experience improved health outcomes and greater female representation in politics and governance (UNESCO, 2021). These disparities in cognitive and technological skills contribute to broader labour market inequalities and poor economic growth.

Gender gaps in skills acquisition and lifelong learning further reinforce these inequalities, limiting women's career advancement opportunities. Addressing these skill disparities through targeted education, training and workforce development programmes is essential to fostering women's economic inclusion and creating more equitable labour markets across regions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revealed that closing the Gender gap is key to achieving higher growth in the economy, enhancing productivity and greater economic stability (Archibong, 2018; Adegbite and Machethe, 2020). For a nation to develop economically, development policies should focus on Gender equality (Adanlawo and Chaka, 2022). The development of the economy is aided by Gender equality (Manda and Mwakubo, 2014). According to report, 24 percent of men prefer women in their households to have paid jobs, while 51 percent prefer they stay home (Gallup, 2017). For instance, in 2023, UNESCO highlighted this disparity reporting that "almost 16 million girls between the ages of 6 and 11 will never get the chance to learn to read or write compared to 8 million boys, and in sub-Saharan Africa, 9.5 million girls will never set their foot in a class compared to the 5 million boys.

An individual youthful age is an acute stage between transitions from childhood to adulthood. It is period in which youth endure physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes as a preparation towards their future. At this stage, many youth affianced their self to a particular routine activity either schooling or engaging in a vocational skills learning job with the ultimate aim of attaining knowledge or skills that will propels their individual growth and future careers (Mmuozoba, 2023). Skills acquisition is asserted as the mechanism of acquiring new knowledge, abilities, and competencies which could improve individual dexterity. However, these skills are gained through the process of training, education, and practical experience. Individuals skills acquisition depends on personal area of interest

which he or she wishes to develop is skills and abilities.

Performance in skills acquisition remains a major concern. Skills transform lives, generate prosperity and promote social inclusion (OCED, 2025). Research, from international assessments indicate that individuals with weaker foundational skills are more likely to experience poorer health, perceive themselves as having little influence on political processes, and refrain from engaging in community or volunteer activities (OECD, 2023). Muhammad and Aliyu (2023) highlighted that women who completed vocational training had a 50% higher likelihood of obtaining formal employment. As a result, several developing nations are paying more attention to the development of the private sector due to the widespread acceptance of the role of skill acquisition as an engine of growth (Nkomo and Adanlawo, 2023). However, Adeniyi (2022) defines a skill as an organised series of actions that have been masterfully performed and are typically displayed in a flexible but systematic temporal pattern. Going further he buttress that along with knowledge, practical skills, dexterity, and tact are also included. According to Adanlawo and Chaka (2022), they submitted that, one is considered skilled when a procedure is carried out perfectly, successfully, and with an eye toward results. Similarly, Adeniyi (2022), a skill is the habit of acting, thinking, and behaving in a certain way so frequently or repeatedly that it becomes second nature to the person.

Therefore, addressing the issue of skills acquisition and basic literacy for women empowerment requires inclusive strategies and interventions. It involves improving access to quality education, reducing gender-based discrimination and violence, promoting gender-sensitive curricula, providing vocational training and creating supportive environments that encourage women's participation. It encompasses social, economic, and political dimensions, aiming to address gender inequalities, promote gender justice, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for women United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP, 2010). By empowering women, we can build a more prosperous, inclusive, and equitable world for all (Richa, 2014).

Research Methodological Approach

The research design for this study is the descriptive survey method, while the mixed method which consist of both qualitative and quantitative approach was the data sourcing method. The quantitative method will be used to address the first research objective, while the qualitative method will be used to answer the second and third research objective. For the population of study, the 2006 national census in Kwara state stood at two million, three hundred and sixty-five thousand, three hundred and fifty-three (2,365,353). The population of Kwara State was used in the investigation of this study. However, with focus on Ilorin Metropolis, comprising three local government areas (Ilorin South, Ilorin East and Ilorin West) their population combine stands at 821,618 (NPC, 2006.)

The population will basically comprised of male and female who are currently undergoing any skills acquisition program and also those who have undergone skills acquisition. The sample techniques for the study was the purposive random sampling method while the sample size of 200 respondents comprises of male and female adults of 18 years and above. This was derived from the minimum sample size has been calculated using the following formula (Araoye, 2004) $N = Z^2Pq /D^2$; N = minimum sample size required; Z = standard normal deviation set at 1.96 which corresponds to the 95% confidence level; P = expected prevalence rate (%) = 15%; q= 1-p. (1 - 0.15 = 0.85); d= degree of accuracy desired set at 0.05. The method of sample size determination was as follows:

TABLE 1: Kwara State: Population and Sample Size by Local Government Areas

Local Government	**Population**	**Sample Size**
Ilorin South	429,300	100
Ilorin East	306,716	65
Ilorin West	85,602)	35
TOTAL	821,618	**200**

Source: National Census, 2006

The research analysis for objective one will be presented in simple percentage, while the second and third objectives will be analyze using literatures on subject matters which were sourced from journals, articles, government publications and internet.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 2 Section A: Demographic Data of Respondents

A. Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	103	51.5%
Female	97	48.5%
Total	200	**100%**
Age		
18-27	57	28.5%
28-32	97	48.5%
33- Above	46	23%
Total	200	**100%**
B. Qualifications		
Primary /O Level	99	49.5%
National Diploma	79	39.5%
Degree/HND	20	10%
Others	2	1%
Total	200	**100%**
C. Skills acquisition status		
Currently undergoing Skills acquisition	117	58.5%
Have once undergone skills acquisition	83	41.5%
Total	200	**100%**
D. Sector of Skills acquisition		
Agriculture	60	30%
Manufacturing	90	45%
Service	50	25%
Total	200	**100%**
E. Employment Status		
Employed	19	9.5%
Unemployed	110	55%
Self- employed	71	35.5%

Total	200	**100%**

Source: Fieldwork: 2025

Section B: Questionnaire Responses.

The tables below present questioner responses and the percentage distribution of each question.

Question One: Does Gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment outcome?

Table 4. 1

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	108	54%
Disagree	92	46%
Total	200	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From the table above, 108 which is 54% of the respondents agrees that Gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment outcome, while 92 which is 46% of the respondents disagree hat Gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment outcome. Therefore, the majority of respondents are of the opinion that gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment outcomes. Echoing this, over the years, research works have shown clearly that there is an imbalance in gender allocation in society and sectors of the economy at large (Ndubuisi, 2017)

Question Two: How can you rate the effects of Gender disparities on employment outcomes?

Table 4.2

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
High	86	43%
Average	69	34.5%
Low	45	22.5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 4.2 above shows that 86 which 43% of the respondent concludes that the effect of gender disparity on employment outcomes is high, were by 69 (34.5%) believe that the effect of gender imbalance on employment outcomes is at average, and 45 (22.5%), passive the effect as low. Therefore, the majority of the respondents concludes that, the effect of gender disparities on employment outcomes is high. Buttressing this finding, the Africa Gender Index report emphasises the gender disparity with a 70 percent vulnerable unemployment gender gap, revealing that women are disproportionately represented in precarious, low-paying, and vulnerable unemployment than men (AGI, 2023)

Question Three: Does Gender imbalance have effect on economic growth and development?

Table 4.3

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	93	46.5%
Neutral	68	34%
Disagree	39	19.5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The above represents the respondent's perception on the effect of gender imbalance on economic growth and development. 93 which is 46.5% of the respondent agrees that gender imbalance has effect on economic growth and development, 68 which is 34% of the respondent are neutral, while 39 which is 19.5% of the respondents disagrees. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agrees that gender disparities has effect on economic growth and

development. Buttressing this, Owolabi (2021) posit that, participants in skill-acquisition programmes gain transformative abilities that will support socioeconomic growth

Question Four: What additional support will enhance Gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes?

Table 4.4

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Financing program	137	68.5%
Mentorship program	43	21.5%
Networking opportunities	20	10%
Total	200	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 4.4 above represents respondent response on additional support needed to enhance gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes. 137 (68.5%) of respondents selected financing the program, while 43(21.5%) of the respondents goes for mentorship program, and 20(10%) goes for networking opportunities. Therefore the majority of respondents agree that the financing the program will enhance gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes.

Question Five: What factors will contribute to Gender balance in skill acquisition and employment outcomes?

Table 4.5.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Government support	97	48.5%
Funding from NGO	45	22.5%
Community support	19	9.5%
Private – Public Partnership	39	19.5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From the table above 97(48.5%) of respondents agree that government support will contribute to gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes, while 45(22.5%) of the respondent agrees that funding from non-governmental organizations will contribute to gender balance and employment outcome, 19(9.5%) of the respondent agrees that community support will contribute to gender balance and employment outcome and 39(19.5%) of the respondent agrees that Private Public Partnership will contribute to gender balance and employment outcome. Therefore, the majority of the respondent agrees that government support will contribute to gender balance and employment outcome.

Research Objective 2: **To Determine Factors that Contribute to Gender Base Disparities in Youth Skills Acquisition and Employment Outcomes.**

In attempting research objectives (2), qualitative approach was employed which will entail literature review of matters relating to the research question two (2).

Literatures has shown that there are diverse factors that contributed to Gender disparities among youth in skills acquisition and employment outcomes. These factors include socio-cultural norms and stereotypical expectations; lack of female role models; stereotypes about ability and aptitudes; gender-biased classroom interactions; gendered marketing and media; peer pressure and self-perceptions; and digital inequalities (UNESCO, 2023). In developing countries, Women's productivity levels remain low due to a lack of access to education and other opportunities (Ahmad, 2022). Furthermore, logistical barriers, such as lack of childcare and mobility issues, prevent women from enrolling and completing these programs (kaur, eta al 2018). Also, there is attributional gender bias, where boys' successes in life are attributed to ability, while girls' successes

are attributed to effort. Conversely, boys' failures are seen as a lack of effort and girls' failures are viewed as a lack of ability (Espinoza, Arêas da Luz Fontes and Arms-Chavez, 2014). In the study by Suleiman et al. (2023) they reported that 68% of women consider cultural norms as significant obstacles. In another study, Kadir et al. (2023) found that 72% cited financial limitations as prohibitive. Going Further, Abdullahi and Ahmed (2022) noted the societal stigma associated with traditionally male dominated trades, limiting women's participation. Inadequate infrastructure, as also discovered by Musa et al. (2022), affects 61% of vocational institutes, while health concerns, including safety in training venues, were reported by 47% of women (Aliyu and Jibril, 2022). Child Marriage Prevalence, Barriers to Female Education, Stigmatization and Gender Stereotypes, Discrimination and Bias. Political and Legal Frameworks are also some associated factors fostering gender disparities among youths and employment outcomes. Such as segregation by occupation and industry, differences in physical structure, education and skill acquisition, contributing to differences in earning (Para-Mallam, 2017). Obanya (2003) also asserted that the societal attitude ascribe towards the girl-child resulted in the dismal level of girl child education in Nigeria.

Research Objective 3: To Determine the Effects of Gender Base Disparities in Youth Skills Acquisition on Employment Outcomes.

The effects of Gender base disparities on youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes are multifaceted. These issues have profound implications for the continent's social, economic, and political development, and could pose significant barriers to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals (Oluwatosin & Belo, 2024).The effects of Gender disparities in youths skills acquisition has many negative impacts studies revealed that gender inequality negatively impacts the economy. Going further, Gender inequality is a problematic issue as it lowers wellbeing and is regarded as a form of injustice in the very conception of equity (Falk and Hermle, 2018, Rewhorn, 2020). These barriers also hinders upward movement in social classes through income and wealth crystallization. To Adedokun (2010), female without adequate education suffer from lack of information or are prone to misguided information on how to take necessary first aid on how to prevent diseases which will allow them enjoy and have necessary access to medical facilities and other health care service. Low girl-child education and skill acquisition hinders positive sustainable transformation in societies which will in long run increase the rate of poverty and close greater opportunity to the female gender in contributing to sustainable development (Hadiza, 2017). Going further Bukar (2004) also affirmed that if the ratio of boy-child to girl-child education is closed, gender imbalance will fade away and consideration of women in schools and employment will be realistic in participating in paid work. In the view of Idoko (2009) he believed that investing in girl-child education is likely to record more success on development indicators by according benefit to individuals, families, and the general society. However, the female contribution to the society is greater in terms of poverty reduction, sympathy, less extra vagrant nature and economic sustainable development (Abdul, 2023).

5. Summary of findings

1. Gender has effect on skills acquisition and employment outcomes.
2. Gender disparities among youths has effects on skills acquisition and employment outcomes.
3. Gender disparities has effect on economic growth and development.
4. Finance program will enhance Gender balance in skills acquisition and employment outcomes.
5. Government support will contribute to Gender balance and employment outcome.
6. The study discovered that there are differs factors behind gender disparities is skills acquisition and employment outcomes these includes socio-cultural norms and stereotypical expectations; lack of female role models; stereotypes about ability and aptitudes among others.
7. The study also discover that there are myriad effect of Gender disparities among youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes these effects are of social, economic, and political in scope among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender disparity in youth skills acquisition and employment outcomes as being a matter of concern among scholars. The issues of Gender disparity as however, in long run transgressed into many problems such as gender inequality and gender based violence. The study discovered that gender has effects on skills acquisition and employment outcome, it was also discovered that gender disparities has effect on social, economic and

political development. The study also find out that factor such as social, religious, political, stereotype, and physical edifice serve as the factors that contributed to gender disparities among youths and its resulted effect on employment outcomes. The paper recommends that Nigeria government should allocate some percentage of works and appointment to female gender and also encourage women enrolment in schools has been practiced in Rwanda. Government should also increase it budgetary allocation on skills accusation with focus on female gender and improve it monitoring and evaluation process.

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