

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF ICT IN CREATING AWARENESS OF GENDER EQUALITY AMONGST YOUTHS IN SOME SELECTED DISTRICTS WITHIN ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL (AMAC), NIGERIA.

Azizatu Oiza Sani⁵

Institute of Strategic and Development Communication

Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

E-mail: azizatusanni@gmail.com

Mobile Phone: 07019239905 or 08038311370

<https://doi.org/10.53982/gtj.2024.0101.03-j>

Abstract

Gender equality has emerged as a paramount focus for the international community since the dawn of the 21st century. This critical issue, prominently featured in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) continues to be a cornerstone of the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with countries worldwide striving to achieve gender parity by 2030. In Nigeria, efforts to address gender disparities have gained momentum in recent years. Nigeria's National Gender Policy, adopted in 2006 and revised in 2021, aims to eliminate discriminatory practices across various sectors. Some progress has been made in areas such as increasing girls' access to education and improving women's representation in governance. Despite efforts to bridge the gender gaps, gender inequality persists. The study assessed the role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in shaping the perceptions of young people on gender equality, in selected districts within Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The study adopted the survey method with a questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The study sampled 100 youths aged 15-40. Findings reveal that youths are very familiar with the concept of gender equality which promotes equal rights and opportunities for all genders. The study also found that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most effective ICT platforms for gender equality awareness. However, there exists the challenge of misinformation about gender issues, and difficulty in verifying information sources. The study recommends the need for the Nigerian government to further invest in digital infrastructure, and the integration of ICT in formal education to enhance gender equality awareness among youths.

Keywords: Youths, Awareness, Gender Equality/Inequality, ICT, Abuja, Nigeria.

⁵ Azizatu Oiza Sani is a PhD Candidate in Development Communication at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Her research interests include gender Equality, women and child rights. She has published several articles on gender related issues.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as a powerful tool for social transformation, particularly in addressing long-standing issues of gender inequality. The role of ICT in promoting gender equality has gained significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and development practitioners worldwide (UN Women, 2021). Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone to sustainable development, yet gender-based discrimination and stereotypes persist worldwide (UN Women, 2020). Gender equality, as defined by the United Nations, refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys (United Nations, 2020). It is a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. As noted by the United Nations:

It is of paramount importance to end the multiple forms of gender violence and secure equal access to quality education and health, economic resources, and participation in political life for both women and girls and men and boys. It is also essential to achieve equal opportunities in access to employment and to positions of leadership and decision-making at all levels (Gender Equality: The Unfinished Business of our Time, UN 2022 p20).

However, despite significant progress in recent decades, gender disparities persist globally, with stark manifestations in developing countries like Nigeria (World Economic Forum, 2023). Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities

between men and women in Nigeria. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, faces significant challenges in achieving gender equality. The country ranked 139th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, indicating substantial disparities in economic participation, educational attainment, health, and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2023). In Nigeria, gender equality is far from being achieved due to social and political factors that cut across generations of both young and old. The deep-rooted patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes in Nigerian society, limit and discriminate against women in all spheres of societal development, especially in politics and the general decision-making process. Global rankings have consistently placed Nigeria within groups of low performers in terms of gender equality, with opportunities for improvement in a wide range of areas. One of these areas includes the sustained use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in championing the course of social reorientation to change youths' perception of gender equality campaigns in Nigeria.

The youths, in particular, can play a critical role in shaping the future of gender equality, including awareness and understanding of gender issues towards a gender-equitable society (UNESCO, 2019). The digital revolution is transforming how humanity lives, works, and relates with one another. The growth and uptake of information and communications technologies (ICTs) have the potential to improve access to information and services or enable collective action for social justice. In recent years, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized the way we access and share information, providing unprecedented opportunities for social change (ITU, 2020). It has also highlighted the relevance of the use of ICT tools in ensuring social reorientation which includes, among others,

addressing and correcting misconceptions of gender equality amongst young people in Nigeria. Hence, the reason for this study that focuses on the role of information and communication technology in creating awareness of gender equality among youths in some selected districts in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC).

Statement of the Problem

In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, ICTs have become an integral part of young people's lives with a high penetration rate of mobile phones, social media, and internet access (NCC, 2022). However, the impact of ICTs on creating awareness of gender equality amongst youths in the FCT remains understudied. Therefore, this study explored the role of ICTs in shaping the perceptions and attitudes of young people toward gender equality, in selected districts in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC).

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

- To assess the level of ICT usage among youths in selected districts within Abuja Municipal Area Council, (AMAC).
- To interrogate the level of awareness of gender equality amongst youths in AMAC.
- To examine the role of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality amongst youths in the research location.
- To analyse the factors that influence the impacts of ICT on gender equality awareness among youths in the study area.
- To identify the challenges associated with the use of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality among youths in the area of study.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically a cross-sectional survey, to assess the impact of ICT on creating awareness of Gender Equality amongst youths in selected districts. The study was conducted in two districts, namely Gariki and Wuse 2, in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The target population consisted of youths (ages 15-40) residing in the selected districts. The sample size of 100 youths was selected using stratified random sampling. For data collection, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data comprising demographic information like age, gender, and education among others. The questionnaire was administered to the selected participants through an online survey while the data collected was analysed using tables and graphs. The study also ensured informed confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

Review of Related Literature/Conceptual Framework

Below is a review of relevant literature and concepts related to this study.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The evolution of ICT can be traced through several key phases, each marked by significant technological advancements and societal impacts.

The early Computing Era (1940s-1970s): This is an era characterized by the development of mainframe computers and the foundation of computer science (Ceruzzi, 2003). The Personal Computer Revolution (1980s-1990s): This era was marked by the proliferation of personal computers and the democratization of computing (Friedman, 2005). The Internet Age (1990s-2000s) was defined by the rapid growth of the World Wide Web and e-commerce (Leiner et al., 2009). The Mobile Revolution (2000s-2010s) era was characterized by the ubiquity of smartphones and

mobile internet access (Goggin, 2012). Then the Fourth Industrial Revolution (2010s-present) marked by the convergence of digital, physical, and biological technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and biotechnology (Schwab, 2017). Each phase has contributed to the increasing accessibility and capability of ICT, shaping its potential as a tool for social change and development.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping societal structures, economic paradigms, and cultural norms. This digital revolution has penetrated every aspect of human life, from personal communications to global governance (Castells, 2010). In the context of social development and equality, ICT has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting awareness, education, and empowerment, particularly in addressing gender disparities (United Nations, 2019). The rapid proliferation of ICT has led to its integration into various sectors, including education, healthcare, commerce, and public administration. This pervasive influence has prompted researchers and policymakers to explore the potential of ICT in addressing pressing social issues, including gender equality (World Bank, 2021). Information and Communication Technology encompasses a wide array of technologies, tools, and platforms that facilitate the creation, storage, manipulation, and dissemination of information. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines ICT as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 3).

Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender (UN Women, 2018). Despite significant progress in recent decades, gender inequality persists globally, manifesting in various forms across different societies and cultures. Gender equality encompasses several key dimensions including equal rights, equal opportunities, equal access, equal responsibilities, and equal representation. Equal rights mean ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal rights under the law and in practice (World Bank, 2020). The United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2019 sees gender equality as “Providing equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation”. Gender equality also extends to “freedom from discrimination and violence: Eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in all forms (UN Women, 2019). Specifically on domestic platforms, gender equality, is “promoting shared responsibilities in household work, children, and community roles (Ferrant et al.,2014). These dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, necessitating a holistic approach to achieving gender equality. The struggle for gender equality has a long and complex history, marked by significant milestones and ongoing challenges. For instance, the suffrage movements that started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw widespread campaigns for women's right to vote, culminating in suffrage victories in many countries (McCammon et al., 2001).

Also, the United Nations Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) affirmed the equal rights of men and women (United Nations, n.d.). The 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence of feminist activism, addressing issues such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination,

and domestic violence (Roth, 2004). The UN World Conferences on Women (1975-1995) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) set global agendas for gender equality (UN Women, 2015). Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): These global initiatives have prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment (United Nations, 2015).

Gender Equality and Information and Communication Technology

Numerous studies have highlighted the significance of ICTs in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment but not much has been done in terms of streamlining it to unravel the impact it has made in developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom in raising awareness on the importance of gender equality amongst the young population where there are equal rights. Ramilo et al (2005) in their study on "Citizen Journalism: A Case Study of the Filipino Online Community" stated that ICT can be a powerful catalyst for the political and social empowerment of women, and the promotion of gender equality (Ramilo et.al. 2005). Garima and Kiran (2015) postulate that the role of ICTs in promoting gender equality and parity in education can be achieved by targeting their efforts not only towards education itself but also towards society's cultural and institutional frameworks. In a study on ICTs and Their Role in Education: A Review in India by Garima and Kiran (2015), the majority of women in India are doing tasks that are not recognized by Indian society as meaningful. Thus, they recommended further research on ICT and gender equality issues at regional, national, and global levels to deepen the understanding of policymakers on the interplay of ICT with gender equality.

Gender inequality remains one of the most pressing issues in both developed and developing nations. Although it affects individuals of all

genders, women are disproportionately impacted by systemic inequalities, including restricted access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and decision-making roles. Women also face significant social, economic, and cultural barriers, making them the primary victims of gender inequality. This paper explores the multifaceted impact of gender inequality on women, drawing upon empirical evidence and academic studies to highlight the gravity of the issue. One of the most prominent arenas where women experience inequality is education.

Despite global efforts to promote gender equality in education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) reports that girls are more likely than boys to be excluded from primary and secondary education, particularly in developing countries. Approximately 130 million girls between the ages of 6 and 17 are out of school globally (UNESCO, 2021). This educational gap not only hinders their intellectual development but also limits their economic prospects later in life. Women who lack formal education are more likely to be confined to low-paying, informal jobs, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and economic dependency. In countries like Afghanistan and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, sociocultural norms prioritize boys' education, leaving girls disadvantaged. The long-term effects of these disparities are seen in income inequality, reduced political participation, and greater vulnerability to exploitation. As Nussbaum (2001) explains in her Capabilities Approach, denying women access to education curtails their ability to achieve their full potential and limits their contribution to society.

Gender inequality in the workforce is a pervasive issue. Women globally earn less than men for the same work, a phenomenon known as the gender pay gap. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023, the economic participation and opportunity gap will take

another 132 years to close. Women, particularly in lower-income countries, are overrepresented in informal, low-wage jobs, with little to no social protection or job security. Additionally, women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) estimates that women perform over 75% of the world's unpaid care work, which contributes to their economic vulnerability. Furthermore, women are less likely to have access to financial resources, credit, and property ownership. In many regions, legal and social barriers prevent women from owning land or accessing credit, limiting their ability to invest in businesses or personal development. The gendered distribution of wealth perpetuates the cycle of poverty among women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

Gender inequality severely impacts women's access to healthcare, especially reproductive health services. In many countries, women face challenges in accessing family planning services, safe abortion, and maternal healthcare. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), around 295,000 women die annually from complications during pregnancy and childbirth, with the vast majority of these deaths occurring in low-resource settings. Gendered norms and power imbalances in households often prevent women from making decisions about their reproductive health.

Moreover, the burden of care in families disproportionately falls on women, affecting their mental and physical health. Women are more likely to sacrifice their health needs to provide care for children, the elderly, or sick family members. In regions affected by conflict or humanitarian crises, women are also at increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and exploitation. Research by True (2012) highlights the gendered

nature of violence in conflict zones, where women are targeted not only because of their gender but also due to their socially vulnerable position. Another critical area where women are most affected by gender inequality is political representation and leadership. Women are underrepresented in political offices globally. As of 2023, women hold only 26.5% of parliamentary seats worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). This underrepresentation limits women's influence in shaping laws, policies, and governance structures that directly affect their lives. The lack of female participation in decision-making bodies perpetuates laws and policies that fail to address women's needs or dismantle systemic gender inequalities.

Women's representation in Nigerian politics has been on a downward slide since 2011, and the 2023 elections in Africa's largest economy confirmed the expectations of poor outcomes for women. The number of women in Nigeria's National Assembly has fallen by 19 percent compared to the last assembly, with women now occupying 3 percent of seats in the Senate and 4 percent in the House of Representatives (Nkereuwem, 2023). Gender quotas have been implemented in some countries to address this imbalance, but women continue to face barriers such as patriarchal political structures, discrimination, and even violence in political spaces. In many societies, traditional gender norms discourage women from entering politics or assuming leadership roles, which further entrenches their political marginalization. Women are also disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (GBV), which includes domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and trafficking. According to the United Nations, 1 in 3 women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, most often at the hands of an intimate partner (UN Women, 2021). GBV is not only a manifestation of gender inequality but also a mechanism that reinforces

women's subordinate status. Women in conflict zones, refugee camps, and marginalized communities are especially vulnerable to violence, with little recourse to justice due to weak legal frameworks and social stigmatization.

The economic and social costs of gender-based violence are profound. Survivors often suffer from long-term physical and psychological trauma, leading to decreased productivity and participation in public life. Additionally, the stigma associated with sexual violence can result in women's exclusion from their communities, further deepening the inequalities they face. The role of ICTs in creating gender equality awareness amongst youth is a relatively underexplored area of research, particularly in Nigeria. A few studies have investigated the role of ICTs in shaping young people's attitudes towards gender equality, with mixed results. For instance, Fehintoluwa and Olayode, (2021) in their work, "Use of ICT in Curbing Gender Inequality and Improving Women Empowerment", opined that the best approach to incorporating gender consideration through ICT is to make sure that women are ICT literate. However, there remain a lot of grey areas on the role of ICTs in promoting gender equality.

National Gender Equality Initiatives

Since the return to democracy in 1999, the representation of women in elected political positions has been far from impressive (Sogbesan, 2015). While women's interest in politics has increased, it has not translated into representation in Nigerian politics. The highest number of women representations in the Senate was achieved in 2007 with only nine women clinching seats out of the 109 available seats, while 2011 saw the highest number of women in the House of Representatives with 26 out of 360 seats won by women (Onyinyechi Eke, 2022). So far, Nigeria has witnessed 27 women Deputy Governors across its various administrations. Only one

woman, Virginia Etiaba, has been governor in Nigeria, however, she was not elected– thus meaning that no woman has been elected Governor to date (Adetayo, 2023).

Nigeria has implemented several key initiatives to promote gender equality. This includes the National Centre for Women Development (NCWD): Established in 1995, which serves as a focal point for women's empowerment programs and research on gender issues (NCWD, 2021). Women's Political Empowerment Office was created to increase women's participation in politics and decision-making processes (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition, 2008). He-for-She Campaign has made Nigeria actively participate in the global campaign, engaging men and boys as advocates for gender equality (UN Women Nigeria, 2020). These national initiatives provide a framework for local efforts, including those in AMAC. However, their effectiveness has been hampered by inadequate funding, poor coordination between different levels of government, and resistance from traditional and religious institutions (Para-Mallam, 2010).

Gender Equality Initiatives in AMAC

The Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) is one of the six area councils in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. AMAC serves as the administrative unit for the urban and suburban areas of Abuja, including the capital city. It was established to facilitate local governance and development within its jurisdiction, and it covers an extensive area that includes both rural and urban populations. AMAC is made up of 12 districts, which include key areas like Garki, Wuse, Maitama, Asokoro, Gwarinpa, Jabi, and Karu. These districts are a mixture of high-density urban settlements and expanding suburban neighborhoods. While the urban districts house most of the administrative and commercial hubs of the capital

city, the suburban and rural districts host a diverse population, including indigenous communities. The population of AMAC is diverse and has grown significantly due to urbanization. The 2006 Nigerian census estimated the population at around 1.5 million, but recent projections suggest that the population could now exceed 3 million people, making it the most populated area council in the FCT.

AMAC has initiated various gender equality programs to promote the empowerment of women and reduce gender disparities. These initiatives include skills acquisition and entrepreneurship training programmes targeted at women, especially those in rural communities, to enhance their financial independence and reduce poverty. Supporting maternal and child healthcare services by improving access to primary healthcare centers, raising awareness about reproductive health, and advocating for family planning services. The council is also collaborating with NGOs and other government agencies to promote girl-child education, addressing barriers that hinder girls from completing their education, such as early marriage and economic challenges. The council has also engaged in various awareness campaigns to fight Gender-Based Violence, GBV, working in conjunction with advocacy groups to offer protection and support services for survivors of GBV.

Challenges to Gender Equality in Nigeria

Nigeria, a country made of 36 states and Federal Capital Territory has not performed well in the gender equality index. Previous studies have identified various challenges. For example, Makama, 2023 stated that religious Cultural, and Religious Norms are some of the main obstacles to gender equality in Nigeria. In the area of Poverty and Economic Disparities, Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, limiting their ability to

benefit from empowerment initiatives (British Council, 2012). Despite improvements, significant gender disparities persist in education, particularly in rural areas and northern states (UNICEF Nigeria, 2018). Women remain severely underrepresented in political offices at all levels of government (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). High rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harmful traditional practices continue to undermine women's rights and well-being (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2018). Women often face barriers to accessing legal remedies for discrimination and violence (Onyemelukwe, 2016). Many well-intentioned policies suffer from poor implementation due to inadequate resources and lack of political will (Ifemeje & Ogugua, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

This study analysis was guided by the Diffusion of Innovation theory.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory, was propounded by Everett Rogers in 1962 and is one of the oldest social science theories, Clay (2023). It originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system Clay (2023). The result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea, behaviour, or product. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible. According to Clay (2023), the diffusion of innovations theory describes how new ideas, behaviours, technologies, or goods spread through a population gradually, rather than all at once. Adoption starts with innovators and early adopters and then spreads through the population to the early majority and late

majority. Laggards are the last ones to adopt an innovation. The diffusion of innovations theory can be applied to fields such as public health, criminal justice, and communications.

Wayne (2022) outlined some of the weaknesses of the diffusion of innovation theory to include that it does not foster a participatory approach to new ideas or technologies. Wayne (2022) also stated that it does not take into account an individual's resources or social support to adopt the new behaviour (or innovation). Nonetheless, it has been used successfully in many fields including communication, agriculture, public health, criminal justice, social work, and marketing to accelerate the adoption of important public programs that aim to change the behaviour of a social system. Since this study is focused on assessing the role of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality amongst young people, the diffusion of innovations theory relates to how ICT can spread messages or posts on gender equality, especially by youths who make up most of the users of ICT platforms like social media and blogs. The DOI Theory can help understand how ICT can be used to align with existing values and beliefs of young people to promote gender equality awareness.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The main data presentation (aside from demographic information) is done in line with the objectives of the study. Data is presented in tabular form, showing the frequency distribution of the variables and percentages. It is pertinent to state that out of 100 questionnaires administered by the researcher, 88 were successfully filled and recovered. In other words, 12 questionnaires were not recovered at the time of collection. Therefore, the data analysis was based on the 88 questionnaires that were correctly filled and returned.

Table 1: Total Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved

Questionnaire Administered	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total Questionnaire returned	88	88
Total Questionnaire not returned	12	12
Total	100	100

Table 1 above indicates that 88% of the questionnaires were returned while the remaining 12 % were not returned. Therefore, the data analyses were based on the 88 questionnaires that were correctly filled and returned.

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Age Range

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
15-20 years	5	5
21-25 years	12	14
26-35 years	20	23
35-40 years	51	58
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 indicates that 58% of the respondents were between the age range of 35-40 years, 23% of the respondents were between 26- 35 years, 14%, were between the age range 21-25 years while the remaining 5% indicated 15-20 years. This shows that those in the age bracket of 35-40 years responded more.

Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Gender

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Male	46	52
Female	42	48
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 indicates that 52% of the respondents were males while 48% were females. This shows that the majority of the respondents were Males.

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Education Qualifications

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Tertiary	69	78
Secondary	17	20
Uneducated	2	2
Total	88	100

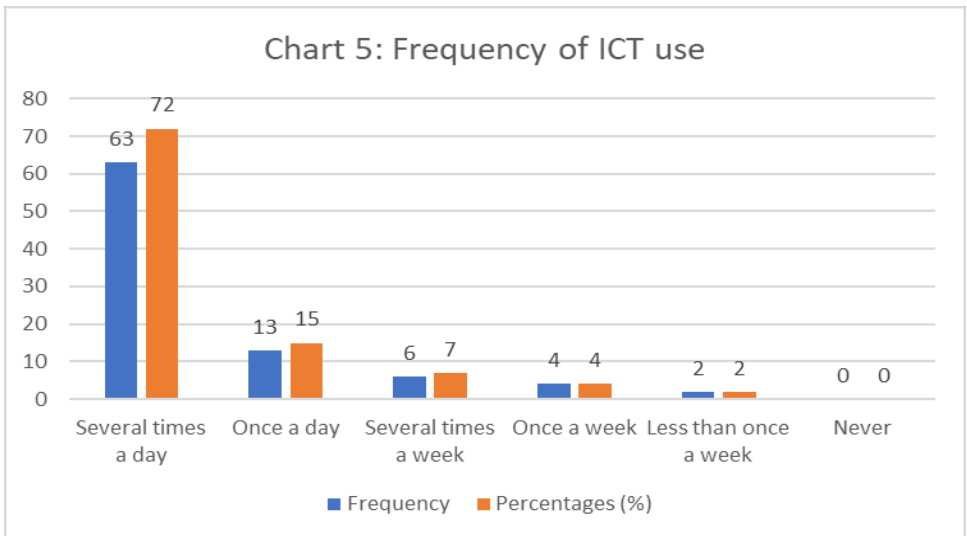
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that 78% of the respondents had attended tertiary institutions, 20% indicated secondary education, and the remaining 2% were uneducated. This indicates that the majority of the respondents have attended tertiary institutions.

Table 5: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Frequency Use of ICT

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Several times a day	63	72
Once a day	13	15
Several times a week	6	7
Once a week	4	4
Less than once a week	2	2
Never	0	0
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 and the following Chart show that 72% of the respondents are using ICT several times a day, 15% indicate once a day, 7% indicate several times a week, 4% indicate once a week, 2% indicate less than once a week while no respondent has never use ICT. This shows that the majority of the respondents are using ICT several times a day.

Table 6: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Average Daily Time Spent Using ICT

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Less than 1 hour	13	15
1-3 hours	16	18
4-6 hours	29	33
7-9 hours	23	26
More than 9 hours	7	8
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that 33% of the respondents spent an average of 4-6 hours daily using ICT, 26% indicated 7-9 hours, 18% indicated 1-3 hours, 15% indicated less than an hour, while the remaining 8% indicates more than 9 hours. This shows that the majority of the respondents spent an average of 4-6 hours daily using ICT.

Table 7: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Types of ICT Devices Used

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Smartphone	29	33
Laptop	18	20
Desktop computer	15	17
Desktop computer	15	17
Tablet	26	29
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 indicates that 33% of the respondents are using smartphones, 29% indicates tablets, 20% indicates laptops, and the remaining 17% indicates desktop computers. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are mostly using smartphones and tablets as ICT devices.

Table 8: Distribution of the Respondents on Familiarity with the Concept of Gender Equality

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Very familiar	43	49
Somewhat familiar	23	26
Neutral	19	22
Not very familiar	3	3
Not at all familiar	0	0
Total	88	100

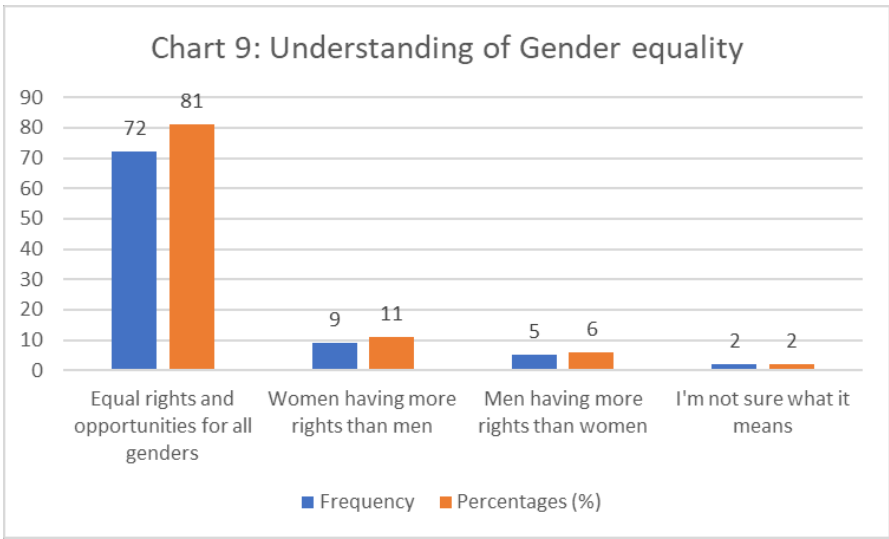
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 shows that 49% of the respondents are very familiar with the concept of gender equality, 26% indicate somewhat familiar, 22% were undecided, 3% are not very familiar, and no respondent was not

familiar. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are very familiar with the concept of gender equality.

Table 9: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Understanding of Gender Equality

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Equal rights and opportunities for all genders	72	81
Women have more rights than men	9	11
Men have more rights than women	5	6
I'm not sure what it means	2	2
Total	88	100



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 9 and Chart show that 81% of the respondents perceived gender equality to be equal rights and opportunities for all genders. 11% indicate women have more rights than men, 6% indicate men have more rights than women, while the remaining 2% were not sure of the meaning. This indicates that the majority of the respondents perceived gender equality to be equal rights and opportunities for all genders.

Table 10: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Understanding of Gender Equality Issues in Education

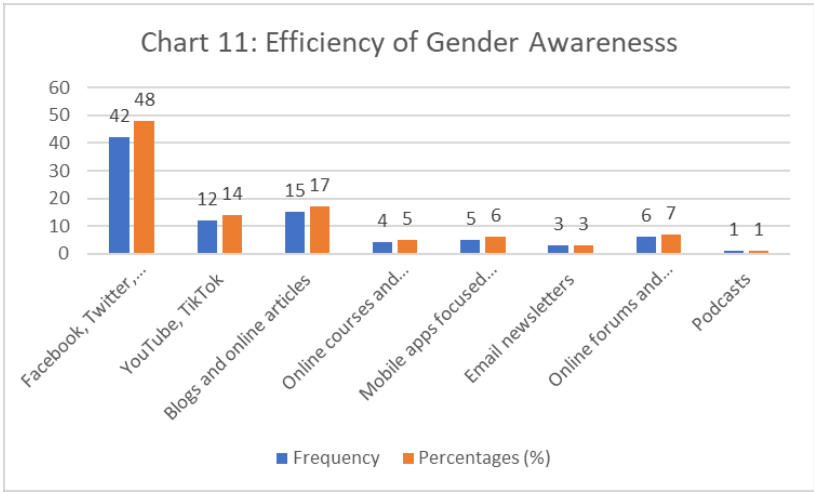
Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Very aware	55	63
Somewhat aware	12	14
Neutral	15	17
Not very aware	6	7
Not at all aware	0	0
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 10 shows that 63% of the respondents are very aware of Gender Equality issues in education, 14% are somewhat aware, 17% are undecided, 7% are not very aware, and no respondent was not aware. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are very aware of gender equality issues in education.

Table 11: Distribution of the Respondents Based on the Most Effective ICT Platforms for Gender Equality Awareness

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	42	48
YouTube, TikTok	12	14
Blogs and online articles	15	17
Online courses and webinars	4	5
Mobile apps focused on gender issues	5	6
Email newsletters	3	3
Online forums and discussion groups	6	7
Podcasts	1	1
Total	88	100



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 11 and Chart indicate that 48% of the respondents indicate Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as the most effective ICT platforms for gender equality awareness. 17% indicates Blogs and online articles, 14%

indicates YouTube, and TikTok, 7% indicates Online forums and discussion groups, 6% indicates mobile apps that focus on gender issues, 3% indicates Email newsletters and the remaining 1% indicates podcasts. This indicates that the majority of the respondents indicate Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most effective ICT platforms for gender equality awareness.

Table 12: Distribution of the Respondents Based on whether ICT has Enhanced their Understanding of Gender Equality

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Greatly increased my understanding	70	79
Somewhat increased my understanding	14	16
No impact on my understanding	3	3
Greatly decreased my understanding	2	2
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 12 shows that 79% of the respondents indicate that the impact of ICT has greatly increased their understanding of Gender equality, 16% indicate that it has somewhat increased their understanding, 3% indicate that it has no impact on their understanding, while the remaining 2% indicates that it has greatly decreased their understanding. This indicates that the majority of the respondents indicate that the impact of ICT has greatly increased their understanding of Gender equality.

Table 13: Distribution of the Respondents Based on the Use of ICT to Share Gender Equality Information

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Frequently share such information	17	19
Occasionally share such information	34	39
Rarely share such information	23	26
Never share such information	14	16
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 13 shows that 39% of the respondents occasionally use ICT to share information on gender equality, 26% rarely share such information, 19% frequently share such information, and the remaining 16% never share such information. This indicates that the majority of the respondents occasionally use ICT to share information on gender equality.

Table 14: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Access to ICT Devices

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Personal smartphone	67	76
Personal computer/laptop	11	13
Shared family computer/laptop	8	9
Public computer	0	0
No regular access to ICT devices	2	2
Total	88	100

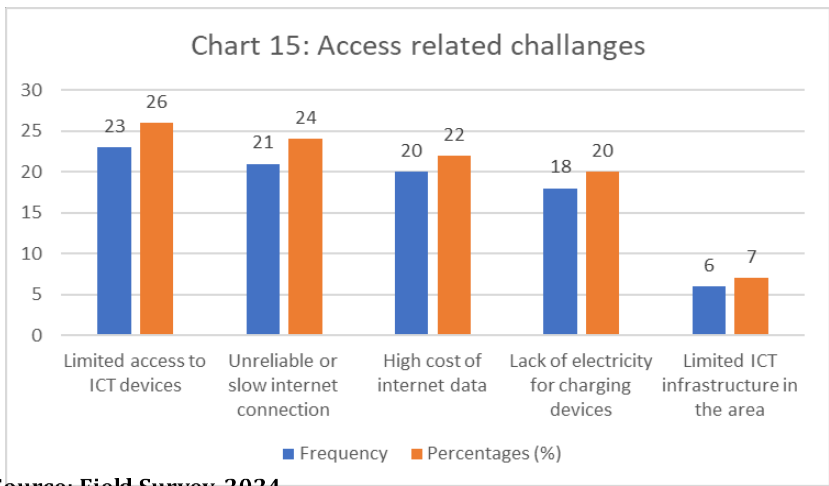
Table 14 shows that 76% of the respondents used their smartphones to access ICT devices, 13% indicated personal computer/laptop, 9%

indicated shared family computer/laptop, 2% said no regular access to ICT devices while no one indicated public computer. This indicates that the majority of the respondents used their smartphones to access ICT devices.

Table 15: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Access-related Challenges

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Limited access to ICT devices	23	26
Unreliable or slow internet connection	21	24
High cost of internet data	20	22
Lack of electricity for charging devices	18	20
Limited ICT infrastructure in the area	6	7
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 15 and Chart show that 26% of the respondents indicate limited access to ICT. 24% indicates unreliable or slow internet connection, 22%

indicates High cost of internet data, 20% indicates lack of electricity for charging devices, while the remaining 7% indicates limited ICT infrastructure in the area. This shows that the majority of the respondents indicate a combination of limited access to ICT, unreliable or slow internet connection, high cost of data, and lack of electricity for charging devices as the access-related challenges associated with the use of ICT in creating awareness on gender equality.

Table 16: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Information Quality Issues

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Misinformation/fake news about gender issues	36	41
Difficulty in verifying information sources	34	37
Information overload	12	15
Lack of locally relevant content	4	5
Language barriers	2	2
Total	88	100

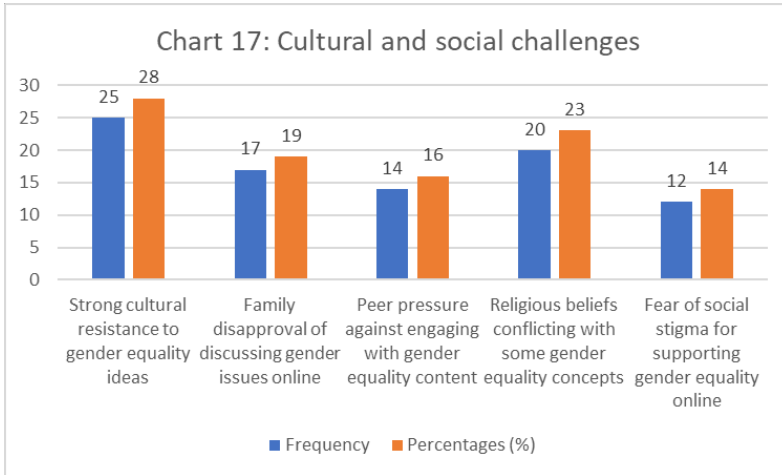
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 16 shows that 41 % of the respondents indicate misinformation/fake news about gender issues, 37% indicate difficulty in verifying information sources, 15% indicate Information overload, 5% indicate lack of locally relevant content and the remaining 2% indicate language barriers. This indicates that the majority of the respondents indicate misinformation/fake news about gender issues and difficulty in verifying information sources as information quality issues.

Table 17: Distribution of the Respondents Based on Cultural and Social Challenges

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Strong cultural resistance to gender equality ideas	25	28
Family disapproval of discussing gender issues online	17	19
Peer pressure against engaging with gender equality content	14	16
Religious beliefs conflicting with some gender equality concepts	20	23
Fear of social stigma for supporting gender equality online	12	14
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 17 and Chart show that 28% of the respondents indicate cultural resistance to gender equality ideas as a major challenge to gender equality. 23% indicate cultural beliefs, 19% indicate family disapproval of discussing gender issues, 16% indicate peer pressure and the remaining 14% indicate social stigma. This generally shows that the majority of the respondents attributed to culture and religion as the most challenging in the progress to equality.

Findings of the Study

Based on objectives One and Two which were to assess the usage and level of awareness of ICT among youths in selected districts within Abuja Municipal Area Council, AMAC, findings revealed that youths are using ICT several times a day and smartphones with an average of 4-6 hours daily, as displayed in Tables 5 and 6, where 75% of respondents use ICT and 33% use it between 4-6 hours daily. This finding took care of objectives 1 and 2, and collaborated with the basic argument of the Diffusion of Innovation theory, by showing that the adaptation of ICT tools by young people contributes to their exposure to new ideas which broadens their worldviews.

Based on objectives Three and Four, which were to examine the role of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality amongst youths, and the factors that influence the impacts of ICT on gender equality awareness among youths, findings revealed that youths are very familiar with the accurate concept of gender equality which is a concept that talks about equal rights and opportunities for all genders. The study also showed that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most effective ICT platforms for gender equality awareness, which has greatly increased their understanding of gender equality. These findings adequately addressed objectives 3 and 4 as 79% of the respondents indicate that the impact of ICT has greatly increased their understanding of gender equality, while 39% of the respondents occasionally use ICT to share information on gender equality. This is displayed in Tables 12 and 13. The frequent use of ICT platforms particularly, social media by young people exposed them to imitation and modeling of content, thereby motivating them to adopt new ideas and social change.

Also, based on objective Four, findings revealed that the factors that

influence the impact of ICT on gender equality awareness among youths are cultural, religious, and social stigma. 28% of the respondents indicate cultural resistance to gender equality ideas, and 23% indicate that cultural beliefs impact their understanding of gender equality while using ICT Platforms. Concerning objective Five, which is the challenges associated with the use of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality among youths in the study area, the finding revealed that the challenges include misinformation/fake news about gender issues and difficulty in verifying information sources. Other challenges are lack of access to ICT platforms, due to unreliable or slow internet connection, high cost of data, and poor electricity supply.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study on the role of ICT in creating awareness of gender equality amongst youths in AMAC showed that ICTs play significant roles in creating awareness of gender equality among youths in the two selected districts in Abuja-Garki and Wuse. The high level of ICT usage, particularly through smartphones and social media platforms, has created an effective channel for disseminating information and fostering discussions on gender equality issues. The study indicates that there is a strong correlation between ICT usage and increased awareness of gender equality concepts and issues. There is a connection between the effectiveness of social media and online educational resources in shaping youth perceptions and understanding of gender equality.

While challenges such as misinformation and the digital divide between men and women persist, the overall impact of ICT on gender equality awareness has been positive. The study concludes that ICT has not only increased access to information but has also created interactive

platforms for engagement, debate, and advocacy on gender issues. Thus, the ICTs, particularly the social media platforms, are significant in creating and enhancing awareness of gender equality among youths in the AMAC. As technology continues to evolve and permeate various aspects of society, its role in shaping social attitudes and promoting gender equality will continue to grow. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of ICT-driven awareness on behavioural changes and societal norms regarding gender equality for inclusive development.

The study then recommends that the Nigerian Government should improve Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure, especially internet connectivity and access in all districts of Abuja Municipal Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory, particularly in underserved areas. It also recommends that the government at various levels should create youth-oriented, culturally sensitive online campaigns about gender equality through popular social media platforms and engaging multimedia content. It also recommends that the National Policy on Education should integrate Information and Communication Technology into Gender Education. This can be carried out by incorporating ICT-based learning tools and resources into formal and informal gender education programmes in schools and community organizations. It also recommends that the Nigerian government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should establish fact-checking mechanisms for information verification. This can be carried out by developing accessible fact-checking resources or platforms to help youths verify information about gender issues online. It recommends that the authorities of AMAC should create opportunities for youths to actively participate in online discussions and initiatives related to gender equality, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement.

References

- Arubayi, D. O., & Arubayi, O. O. (2016). Beyond the MDGs: An Evaluation of Youths' Empowerment Situation in Nigeria. *Social Science Research*, 3(1), 79-99.
- Adetayo, O. (2023). The woman who could be Nigeria's first elected female governor. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/3/18/the-woman-who-could-be-nigerias-first-elected-female-governor>. Accessed 22 October 2024
- Barker, G., Greene, M., Siegel, E., Nascimento, M., Segundo, M., Ricardo, C., Figueroa, J. G., Franzoni, J., Redpath, J., Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., Peacock, D., Aguayo, F., Sadler, M., Das, A., Singh, S. K., Pawar, A., & Pawlak, P. (2011). What Men have to do with it: Public Policies to Promote Gender Equality. International Center for Research on Women.
- British Council. (2012). Gender in Nigeria report 2012: Improving the lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria. British Council Nigeria.
- Ceruzzi, P. E. (2003). *A History of Modern Computing*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Clay, H (2023). *Diffusion of Innovations Theory: Definition and Examples*. Available at <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/diffusion-of-innovations-theory.asp> (Accessed 12 May 2024)
- DFID Nigeria. (2018). Annual Review: Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme. Department for International Development.
- Donnell, A.O., & Caroline S. (2018) "*Introduction: Gender development and ICTs*, Vol 26, No.2,
- Eke, B. O. (2022). Women's Representation in Nigeria's National Assembly. <https://ir.nilds.gov.ng/bitstream/handle/123456789/889/Women's%20representation.pdf?> (Accessed, 22 October, 2024)
- Nkereuwem, E. (2023). *Why Women Haven't been Successful in Nigerian Elections*. Available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/05/why-women-havent-been-successful-in-nigerian-elections?lang=en>. (Accessed 22 October 2024)
- FCT Administration. (2019). FCT Area Councils' Development Report. Federal Capital Territory Administration.

- FCT Health Secretariat. (2020). Annual Health Sector Performance Report. Federal Capital Territory Administration.
- Fehintoluwa E. O, & Olayode M. (2021). *Use of ICT in Curbing Gender Inequality and Improving Women Empowerment*. Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal) Libraries at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6531>
- Garima, M & Kiran U. V. (2015) “*The Role of ICT in Achieving Complete Gender Equality in India*”. International Journal of Technical Research and Application. E-ISSN 2320-8163. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277274938_ROLE_OF_IC_T_IN_ACHIEVING_COMPLETE_GENDER_EQUALITY_IN_INDIA
- Idris, J. (2015). Micro-Finance and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: A Case Study of AMAC, FCT Abuja. *International Journal of Economic Development Research and Investment*, 6(1), 30- 42.
- Ifemeje, S. C., & Ogugua, I. C. (2012). Global Trend towards Gender Equality: Nigeria's experience in focus. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2(3), 51-63.
- IMF, (2016). *Gender Inequality in Nigeria: Microeconomic Cost and Future Opportunities*, Available at <file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/002-article-A003-en.pdf>.
- IMF, (2016). Nigeria: 2016 Article IV Consultation. IMF Country Report No. 16/101. Washington: International Monetary Fund Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). *Women in National parliaments*.
- International Labour Organization. (2018). *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: ILO.
- ITU (2020). *Digital Skills for All: A Recipe for Success in the Digital Age*. International Telecommunication Union.
- Kwame Odakwe “*Information and Communication Technology in Nigeria: Prospect and Challenges for Development*” African Today, Vol 56, No. 4, Pp 95-96 2010
- Leiner, B. M., Cerf, V. G., Clark, D. D., Kahn, R. E., Kleinrock, L., Lynch, D. C., Postel, J., Roberts, L. G., & Wolff, S. (2009). A Brief History of the Internet. *ACM SIGCOMM Computer Communication Review*, 39(5), 22-31.
- Makama, G. A. (2013). Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(17), 115-144.
- McCammon, H. J., Campbell, K. E., Granberg, E. M., & Mowery, C. (2001). *How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S.*

- Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919. *American Sociological Review*, 66(1), 49-70.
- National Center for Women Development (NCWD), (2021). About NCWD. Available at <https://ncwd.gov.ng/about.php>
- NCC (2022). *Nigeria Communication Commission. Mobile Phone Subscribers in Nigeria.*
- Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. (2018). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018. National Population Commission and ICF International.
- Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition. (2008). CEDAW and Accountability to Gender Equality in Nigeria: A Shadow Report. Nigeria NGO Coalition on CEDAW Report.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach.* Cambridge University Press.
- Ojoh, A. C. (2017). Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Local Government Administration: A Case Study of Abuja Municipal Area Council. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 12(1), 96-110.
- Onyemelukwe, C. (2016). Legislating on Violence Against Women: A Critical Analysis of Nigeria's Recent Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. *DePaul Journal of Women, Gender and the Law*, 5(2), 1-56.
- Para-Mallam, O. J. (2010). Faith, Gender and Development Agendas in Nigeria: Conflicts, Challenges, and Opportunities. *Gender & Development*, 18(3), 435-447.
- Roth, B. (2004). *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave.* Cambridge University Press.
- Russell, S., & Norvig, P. (2020). *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Sogbesan, H. (2015). ANALYSIS: The 2015 elections hold no promise for improved women's representation in politics. Premium Times - Nigeria's leading newspaper for News, and investigations. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/568330-heforshe-un-cdd-urge-niger-ian-men-to-promote-womens-participation-in-politics.html?tztc=1>
- Yusuf, K. (2022b, November 30). HeForShe: UN, CDD Urge Nigerian Men to Promote Nigerian Women in Politics: 24 Years After the Return to Electoral Democracy | 24

- True, J. (2012). *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*. Oxford University Press.
- UN. (2016). "Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic." New York: Empowerment Secretariat, UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.
- UN Women (2020). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- UNESCO (2019). *Education for Sustainable Development: A Framework for the Future*. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO, (2020). *Promise of Gender Equality Key Actions 2018-2019*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France© UNESCO 2020.
- UNDP, (2016.) *Human Development Report 2016*. New York.
- UNDP. (2019). Human Development Report 2019: Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century. UNDP.
- UNDP. (2020). Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene. UNDP.
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.
- United Nations. (2019). The Age of Digital Interdependence: Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. United Nations.
- UNICEF Nigeria. (2018). Education.
<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Out-of-school children and youth*. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- UN Women. (2021). *Facts and figures: Ending violence against women*. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org>
- UN Women. (2021). Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice. New York: UN Women.
- USAID Nigeria. (2021). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
<https://www.usaid.gov/nigeria/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>
- Wayne W. L. 2022. *Behavioural Change Models: Diffusion of Innovation Theory*, Boston University School of Public Health. on

<https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mphmodules/sb/behavioralchange/theories/behavioralchangetheories4.html>

World Bank. (2012). *“World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development.”* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2021). *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives.* World Bank.

World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023.* Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA). (2019). *Annual report on the State of women's rights in Nigeria.* WRAPA.

World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023.* Geneva: World Economic Forum.

World Health Organization. (2021). *Maternal mortality.* Retrieved from <https://www.who.int>