

# Gender Analysis of Access to Human Capital in Nigeria: A Case Study of School Enrolment

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**Abstract-** Women and girls account for about 50% of the world's population. However, they have been subjected to arbitrary deprivation in many parts of the world. In developing countries, the most noticeable deprivation that women suffer is related to the access to, and control of assets. This has become entrenched owing to the high rate of illiteracy amongst women, while the males continue to get educated and brighten their life chances. This study aimed at assessing access to human capital among girls/women in Nigeria. This study is based on secondary data on school enrolment which were obtained from several published and unpublished sources. These data were descriptively analysed in simple percentages, and it was discovered that there has been persistent inequality in school enrolment in Nigeria since the country's independence in 1960. This indicates preference for male children in Nigeria, despite being a signatory to several international covenants, agreements and laws that emphasise equal treatment for people irrespective of their gender. Enrolment has been consistently in favour of the male-child from primary school to university level. Since literacy is one major pillar of Human Development Index (HDI), it is clear from this that the human development of women in Nigeria is low (from the perspective of access to education). This study, therefore recommends that priority should be given to female children in admission in order to close the already existing gender-gap; girls should be admitted into specialised programmes and strict penalties should be meted on parents that deliberately refuse to enrol their daughters in school.

**Keywords:** Gender, Deprivation, Human capital, Enrolment, Exclusion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Girl children and women suffer quite a number of arbitrary deprivations in terms of access to livelihood capitals. This may be linked to their poor access to education which is a product of unequal school enrolment they experience because they are females and are erroneously considered less important in many cultures. This absolutely violates Articles 1 and 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 1 stated that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights..." Furthermore, Article 3 emphasised that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." Moreover, many countries including Nigeria are signatories to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These international covenants frown at sex-based discrimination. In fact, [1] included arbitrary deprivation as a fundamental component of violence against women. Thus, inequality and inequity in school enrolment rate among male and females in any place is an indicator of embedded violence against women. It is a technical approach to deprive women of adequate access to human capital required to build their capacity, competence and competitiveness in the male-dominated labour market. Emancipation of women [2] requires that they have the requisite knowledge to compete with the males in the increasingly patriarchal arrangement of societies in developing countries, including Nigeria in general and Niger State in particular.

### 1.2 Statement of Problem

Gender-based evaluation of access to human capital has been studied from various perspectives. Specifically, studies on the issues of girl child education has been studied from the inequality [3,4,2,5] exclusion [6,7] deprivation [8,9,10] and

marginalisation [11,12,13] approaches. One major weakness of these approaches is the fact that girl child education is measured based on marginalisation. This is because school enrolment of girl children is significantly influenced by the philosophical perceptions and opinions of their parents. As a result, marginalisation and deprivation clearly symbolises that there are other underlying factors. A major issue that has received little attention, yet very important in determining the phenomenon of exclusion is the school enrolment rate of girl children. This is the main root of girl child exclusion that requires a comprehensive analysis. Notwithstanding this veritable realisation, little research has been done to disaggregate the gender differentials in enrolment in schools in Nigeria. More worrisome is the fact that gender-based policies are consistently made without adequate attention to this burgeoning issue. It is based on this identified gap that this study seeks to carry out a gender analysis of access to human capital with emphasis on school enrolment in Nigeria.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to carry out a gender analysis of access to human capital in Nigeria, with specific focus on school enrolment. The objectives are to:

1. Obtain the sex disaggregated statistic of school enrolment in Nigeria
2. Carry out a gender analysis of access to human capital in Nigeria

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Gender and School Enrolment

Low rate of girl-child school enrolment rate in relation to male-child's enrolment rate symbolises gender-based inequality in access to and control of livelihood resources, and this definitely translate into inequality in the future. It is, therefore, a violation of the right of women to education, liberty and dignity. The result is that the capacity of women as well as their prospect to reach higher ranks in corporate organisations and skill-based livelihood is limited when compared to the men [14, 5] while analysing the impacts of inequality, argues that "the costs affect society as a whole since increases in the rate of crime correlate with both the poorly educated and inequality". By implication, denying girl children equal access to education is capable of exposing them to criminal and deviant behaviours in the future. Similarly, [15,16,17] opined that inadequate access to education by female children can affect their wellbeing and quality of life, as well as their subjective life satisfaction.

Comprehensive studies by [18,19,20] reinforces the earlier claims by [17,21] regarding the severe cost of exclusion of children, especially girls from adequate and qualitative education. Similar studies by [3,4,6] emphasised that exclusion of girl child from adequate schooling has the capability to undermine the achievement of sustainability on the long run. Although [8]observed that orphanage of girl children is a significant factor behind girl school exclusion and deprivation, it has been discovered by [22,23,24] that the main reason for excluding or depriving girl children adequate access to education is preference for male children over female children in most cultures in developing countries. [4] further maintained the need to ensure equality, or at least equity, in school enrolment between boys and girls if the goals of human development efforts as well as sustainable development are to be attained. They argued that inequality in access to education can be seriously problematic.

[25] observed that deprivation arises when people are incapable of reaching a specified level of functioning or capability. Viewed this way, inability of girls to attain the specified level of capability to compete with the males as a result of inadequate education is a fundamental form of gender-based deprivation. As [26] noted, such kind of deprivation, exclusion and marginalisation is capable of exposing the girls of today and the women of the future to 'vulnerability to poverty and ill-being'. Following this argument of [26,27] maintained that deprived women are poor women. To counteract this vulnerability, it is necessary to build strong human capital base. [28] defined human capital as:

*The labour resources available to households, which have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The former refer to the number of household members and time available to engage in income-earning activities. Qualitative aspects refer to the levels of education and skills and the health status of household members.*

Therefore, this study focuses on the qualitative dimension of human capital. The emphasis on education is well-deserved because, although it is a qualitative measure, it is the most important indicator of human capital in general. Education is a determinant of skills, nutrition, health status and life expectancy [28,29,30].

A major goal of Rio Earth Summit [31] is that everyone must have equal "opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood" irrespective of age, gender, race, religion, class/status or ethnicity. [32], as cited in [33] rightly observed that:

*The livelihoods approach puts people at the centre of development. People—rather than the resources they use or the governments that serve them—are the priority concern. Adhering to this principle may well translate into providing support to resource management or good governance (for example). But it is the underlying motivation of supporting people's livelihoods that should determine the shape of the support and provide the basis for evaluating its success.*

Deprivation of women, especially in terms of education can be disastrous for national development. For example, a study by [34] established a strong correlation between women representation in parliament and a significant reduction in the incidence of corruption. However, it is clear that women require adequate education to be able to represent in the legislature. The implication of gender-based deprivation in access to education is that corruption will become more entrenched. To buttress this assertion, [11,12] argued that women's access to education is a significant determinant of their capability to act as agents of development. He further maintained that education of women is a determinant of their employment, empowerment and emancipation. Similar research carried out in India established a correlation between women's education and economic independence as well as nutritional intake [9]. The same study also established a very strong correlation between women's education/literacy level and a commensurate reduction in infant and maternal mortality [35]. Furthermore, [8] and [10] have reported a significant correlation between women's educational attainment and low fertility rate. School exclusion and deprivation can therefore pose serious problems for human, social and economic development of a nation. It is in line with this that [36] submitted that:

*...health and social problems like violence, mental illness, teenage births and educational failure ... are all more common among the poor than the rich ... almost all the problems which are common at the bottom of the social ladder are more common in more unequal societies.*

Gender, unlike sex, is neither a biological nor genetic attribute. Rather, it is the socially determined roles attached to being male or female in a society. These roles are usually learned, and therefore, can be unlearned. Contrary to the popular welfarists' belief that women are beneficiaries of development, [12] argued from the agency perspective that women are agents of development. Without adequate human capital (in terms of education/literacy level), women stand the chance to continuously be seen as beneficiaries alone since the world is driven by knowledge. Knowledge is power, and thus, illiteracy is powerlessness. Therefore, arbitrarily depriving the girl child of adequate and equitable access to quality education is tantamount to gender-based deprivation, and thus, gender-based violence. In fact, this is capable of engendering intergenerational feminisation of poverty. There is therefore the need for critical gender analysis and consequently gender planning. The ultimate goal, as noted by [2], is to ensure that women attain equality and equity with men by means of self-empowerment.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study relied on secondary data on school enrolment in Nigeria between 1960-2006. The intention is to show the level of disparity between male and female enrolment from primary school to university level. Data were obtained from various published sources. Five years interval was chosen for primary school enrolment; therefore, enrolment data are based on school enrolment rate per five years. Secondary school data and university data were acquired based on availability of data; hence, no interval was chosen for them.

Content and descriptive analysis techniques were used to analyse national school enrolment data. Data presentation follows sex disaggregated statistical approach. Tables were used to present the enrolment data for the purpose of clarity and precision. The choice of use of tables was based on the perception that figures and chart will not show the exact magnitude of gender-based inequality in school enrolment rates.

### IV. DATA PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Primary School Enrolment Nigeria by Sex (1960-2006)

Table 1 indicates that since independence, school enrolment for children has remained gender-biased in favour of male children and at the detriment of girl children. Women and girls constitute up to 50% of the Nigeria's population and its workforce [37]. The estimated population of Nigeria is about 204million people. This means that up to 102million people in Nigeria are women. However, despite their population strength, they experience gender-based biases that are either culturally or religiously embedded. This has translated into gender-based inequality in access to basic primary education. Between 1960-2006, there was no point at which the enrolment rate of girls into primary school attained 50% in relation to their male counterparts. This point to another dimension of gender-based inequality: preference for male children over the females; the boys' population continues to dominate the enrolment data. However, it is observed from Table 1 that there is a consistent rise in the number of female enrolment, thereby improving the gender parity in school enrolment ratio between girls and boys.

**Table 1: Primary School Enrolment Nigeria by Sex (1960-2006)**

ENROLMENT YEAR	TOTAL	MALE		FEMALE	
		ENROLMENT	%	ENROLMENT	%
1960	2,912,618	1,829,471	62.81	1,083,147	37.19

1965	2,911,742	1,791,563	61.53	1,120,179	38.47
1970	3,515,598	2,216,000	63.03	1,299,598	36.97
1975	6,165,547	3,540,486	57.43	2,625,061	42.57
1980	13,760,030	7,789,786	56.61	5,970,244	43.39
1985	12,914,870	7,182,552	56.61	5,732,318	43.39
1990	13,007,249	7,729,677	59.43	5,877,572	40.57
1995	15,741,078	8,729,421	55.46	7,134,682	44.54
200/2001	19,041,223	10,583,411	55.58	8,457,812	44.42
2006	23,017,129	12,575,694	54.64	10,441,435	45.36

Source: Computed from [37]

### 4.2 Secondary School Enrolment in Nigeria by Sex (2014-2016)

Table 2 indicates that there is a consistent dominance of male enrolment in both junior and senior secondary schools over females. Similar to the primary school enrolment, at no point did female enrolment attain dominance (or even equilibrium) with the males. It is also interesting to note that contrary to overall senior secondary school enrolment that is fluctuating, junior secondary enrolment in Nigeria is experiencing consistent decline.

Table 2: Secondary school Enrolment by Sex (2014-2016)

YEAR	JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL					SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL				
	TOTAL	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	MALE	%	FEMALE	%
2014	6203094	3311470	53.4	2891624	46.6	4292489	2321183	54.1	1971306	45.9
2015	6180291	3260109	52.8	2920182	47.2	4910944	2629526	53.5	2281418	46.5
2016	5968142	3181810	53.3	2786332	46.7	4475309	2417192	54.0	2058117	46.0

Source: Author’s Calculations from [37]

### 4.3 Ratio of Male to Female Enrolment in Primary and Secondary School in Nigeria

At both primary and secondary school levels, the ratio of male to female enrolment in Nigeria symbolises inequality. As shown in Figure 1, the widest gap in terms of enrolment ratio was experienced in 1984 (for both primary and secondary school). Apart from the male dominance in schooling, there is sometimes a wide margin in the enrolment ratio. Access to education for girl children is not a privilege; it is a right. Therefore, deliberately denying them access to good quality education on the basis of their biological nature of being girls/women is a gross violation of their right to education and welfare. Illiteracy breeds poverty and low human development. Thus, denying girl children equal access to education is tantamount to impoverishing them by force.

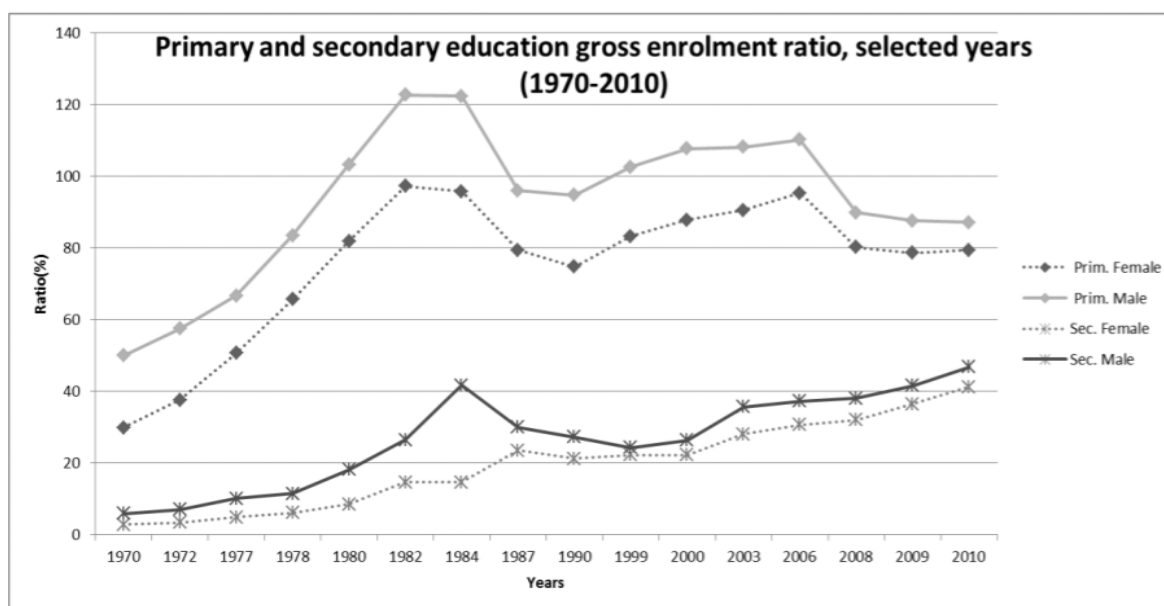


Fig. 1: Ratio of Secondary School Enrolment by Sex

Source: [38]

#### 4.4 Number of Male-Female in Nigerian Universities by Faculty (2003/2004 and 2010/2011) Academic Year

Similar to the result of the primary school enrolment presented in Table 1, the enrolment data presented in Table 3 indicates a gross inequality in university enrolment between males and females. The males consistently dominate every faculty with a very wide margin, except in 2010/2011 session when girls managed to dominate arts with a very narrow margin (girls accounted for 50.22% while boys were 49.78%). This shows that the preference for boy child education is persistent from primary even to university level. In fact, in most cases, girls hardly account for up to 35% of the total students in specialised and professional courses like Engineering, Law, Medicine, Environmental Sciences and Pharmacy. This means that their life chances in terms of their ability to compete is highly limited. As a result of this human capital deprivation, they lack the capacity to exploit their potentials in order to contribute significantly to national development.

**Table 3:** Number of Male-Female in Nigerian Universities by Faculty (2003/2004 and 2010/2011) Academic Year

FACULTY	GENDER									
	2003/2004					2010/2011				
	TOTAL	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	MALE	%	FEMALE	%
ADMINISTRATIO N/ MANAGEMENT	84768	56217	63.32	28551	36.68	99232	57,433	57.88	41,799	42.12
AGRICULTURE	39907	27755	69.55	12152	31.45	50298	30,360	60.36	19,938	39.64
ARTS	74160	48946	66.00	25214	34.00	72822	36,254	49.78	36,601	50.22
DENTISTRY	2400	1560	65.00	840	35.00	1439	849	59.00	590	41.00
EDUCATION	98731	64739	65.57	33992	34.43	119850	62,852	52.44	56,998	47.56
ENGINEERING/ TECHNOLOGY	60939	48332	79.31	12607	20.69	82500	71,584	86.77	10,916	1.233
ENVIRONMENTA L SCIENCE	29735	22813	76.72	6922	23.28	27363	20,055	73.29	7,308	26.71
LAW	33046	20949	63.39	12097	36.61	39879	25124	63.00	14,755	37.00
MEDICINE	41989	27198	64.77	14791	35.23	51011	27,964	54.82	23,047	45.18
PHARMACY	6217	4150	66.75	2067	33.25	8096	4,389	54.21	3,707	45.79
SCIENCE	136671	92065	67.36	44606	32.64	202626	124,496	61.44	78,130	35.89
SOCIAL SCIENCE	108520	72133	66.50	36387	33.50	105506	70,212	66.55	35,294	33.45
VETERINARY MEDICINE	3212	2517	78.36	695	21.64	2683	1,911	71.23	772	28.77

Source: Author's Calculations from [37]

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Human capital is very crucial to the development of nations in general and human development in particular. One of the major indicators of Human Development Index is the literacy level of the citizens, which is based on the number of years spent schooling. It is clear that gender-based inequality in school enrolment is capable of affecting the national development. Yet, there is apparently a persistent bias in school enrolment of girls in comparison to the boys. This may be a pointer to the prevalence of the *culture of preference for male* children over female children. This study found that the rate of enrolment for female children has remained low since 1960, and it is likely to continue if appropriate measures are not taken to curb the trend. This is an obstacle achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as Nigeria's Education for All (EFA) Policy whose aim are to ensure equal and obstructed education to all irrespective of economic, social, biological, religious or racial background.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that priority should be given to girl-child education from primary school to university level. Where possible, they should be placed on scholarship or subsidised education in order to encourage self-enrolment where the parents/guardians are unwilling to enrol them. Strict penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment terms should also be enforced on parents who disallow their daughters from attending school during school hours to serve as deterrent to others. Furthermore, more girls should be admitted into specialised and professional programmes in universities in order to ensure that they have fair representation in most (if not all) professions.

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