



### Advancing gender equality and women empowerment in academia: The case of Lagos State

Lead Authors:

**Shedrack  
Mobolaji  
Esther**

Affiliation:

Centre for  
Gender,  
Humanitarian  
and  
Development  
Studies  
(CGHDS),  
Redeemer's  
University,  
Osun State,  
Nigeria.



**Abstract**

Advancing gender equality is now a widely accepted and recognized fact. The success of national development goals has also been noted as being critically dependent on gender issues. In actuality, achieving gender equality is not only considered as a means in and of itself, but also as a catalyst and prerequisite to the realization of sustainable development. Using enrollment in primary, secondary, and higher education as three key indicators, this research aimed to measure the extent of gender parity and women's empowerment. It made use of useful secondary sources of data. The study contends that the Lagos State government's action quandary, which has made it more difficult to increase the capacity level needed to better accommodate the varying needs of both male and female gender, is at the root of the problem of gender disparity in Lagos State. It also claims that the achievement of gender equality in Lagos State, which is already time-barred, will be a mirage due to multidimensional constraints. This essay, which went on to argue that the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment depends on the desirability and necessity of a pragmatic strategy, comes to a reasonable resolution.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, women empowerment, pragmatic approach, higher Education, academia, research and development, Lagos State



## **Introduction**

The global recognition and acceptance of the importance of gender equality have become evident. The Millennium Development Goals, a set of internationally agreed-upon goals aimed at promoting gender equality and enhancing opportunities across all sectors of the global economy, align with the framework for human development as established by the UNDP in 2012. The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and ratified by 180 states, including Nigeria, underscores women's rights, equality, and freedom from discrimination, particularly during a time when Lagos served as the Federal Capital Territory.

The advancement of gender equality is crucial for overall human development, enabling individuals to lead fulfilling lives and realize their potential. This progression is vital for safeguarding fundamental human rights. Recognizing the significance of gender equality is especially pertinent for the well-being and development of children and the flourishing of communities, societies, and nations.

Gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but also a catalyst for societal, economic, and environmental progress, as highlighted by the UNDP in 2012. Universities hold immense importance in society, serving as hubs for scientific research and intellectual growth, and shaping future leaders. Consequently, the study of gender equality and women's empowerment in academia is a crucial area of research.

The objective of this study is to assess the changes in gender equality and women's empowerment within Lagos State academia over the past decade. The research specifically aims to explore the relationship between subjective and objective indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment. The composition of the gender population significantly influences women's empowerment, a notion thoroughly examined through established theories and statistical evidence. However, achieving gender parity in academia does not necessarily equate to women's empowerment in higher education and research, much like the distinction between women in politics and feminist influence.

The study focuses on both students and academics engaged in higher education, acknowledging potential variations between different groups such as doctoral scholars, postdoctoral researchers, undergraduates, and graduates. While both groups are examined

---

concurrently, the study places greater emphasis on the former due to limited available research and literature.

Most existing research on gender empowerment primarily centers on primary and secondary education levels. Though some work touches on the role of higher education, there is a lack of integrated studies with both objective and subjective indicators in the context of Lagos State. Thus, a new index is developed to comprehensively analyze empowerment in Lagos State, encompassing not only higher education but the entire state. Additionally, the study explores the link between academic and state-level empowerment.

The historical context and socioeconomic institutions are presented to provide background information and delineate the scope of the study. While Lagos State was an early advocate for legislative gender equality, progress in this regard has faced setbacks over time, particularly within the academic community. Gender roles in Lagos State have led to disparities in development and leadership, despite the state's relatively favorable position within Nigeria.

Education-wise, the love for education in Lagos State has resulted in significant adult enrollment since 1921. The Department for the Welfare of Women has played a role in supervising education among women. While adult literacy is at 100%, postsecondary enrollment was relatively high at 49% in 2011. However, concerns persist regarding the quality of education. Lagos State's legal framework now provides equal rights to men and women, although certain flaws exist, such as the absence of a clear definition of gender discrimination.

Gender-specific barriers in business activities are common across African countries due to traditional views and limited access to resources. Men's migration, while important for the economy, has varying effects on women's empowerment, with some studies suggesting increased empowerment for women left behind, while others argue against such empowerment.

In conclusion, gender equality's increasing importance is acknowledged globally, and its role in various aspects of society, including academia and socioeconomic development, is being explored. The study seeks to understand how gender equality and women's empowerment have evolved in Lagos State academia over the past decade and investigates the relationship between different indicators of empowerment.



## **Theoretical Considerations**

This article is guided by several key theoretical frameworks that help analyze and understand the complexities of gender equality and women empowerment in the academia of Lagos State, Nigeria. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the underlying factors contributing to gender disparities and offer strategies for promoting a more inclusive and empowering academic environment for women.

**Social Role Theory:** Social role theory posits that societal norms and expectations shape gender roles and behaviors. It suggests that gender disparities in academia are a result of traditional gender norms that assign different roles and responsibilities to men and women. Women are often perceived as better suited for caretaking roles, while leadership positions are seen as more fitting for men. This theory helps us understand the gender biases and stereotypes that influence career choices and opportunities for women in academia (Eagly, 1987).

**Intersectionality Theory:** Intersectionality theory recognizes that gender intersects with other social identities such as race, ethnicity, class, and religion, resulting in unique and interconnected experiences of oppression and privilege. In the context of Lagos State academia, this theory helps us understand how gender disparities are influenced by multiple factors, including cultural norms, economic status, and access to educational opportunities (Crenshaw, 1989).

**Glass Ceiling Theory:** The glass ceiling theory refers to invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing to top leadership positions in organizations. In academia, the glass ceiling can hinder women's access to administrative and decision-making roles, limiting their ability to influence institutional policies and practices (Morrison et al., 1987).

**Work-Life Balance Theory:** Work-life balance theory emphasizes the importance of supporting employees' ability to balance work and personal responsibilities. In the academic context, addressing work-life balance challenges can be crucial for retaining and empowering female faculty members and researchers (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

**Feminist Theory:** Feminist theory advocates for gender equality and challenges patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender disparities. It highlights the need for institutional changes to promote women's rights, opportunities, and leadership positions in academia (Hooks, 1984).

.

**Lagos State**

Lagos State, located in Nigeria's Southwest geopolitical zone, is the country's most populous and smallest state by size among the 36 states. It shares borders with Ogun State to the northeast and the Bight of Benin to the south, including an international border with Benin. Established on May 27, 1967, from the Western Region and the former Federal Capital Territory, Lagos State derives its name from Africa's largest city, Lagos.

Water dominates Lagos State's geography, covering nearly a quarter of its land area. Notable water bodies include the Lagos and Lekki lagoons, fed by the Ogun and Osun rivers. These are found inland along with various rivers and creeks, vital for transportation. The state also encompasses tropical lowland forests, home to species like the mona monkey and African bush elephants. Offshore, diverse marine life thrives, including fish populations, African manatees, and crocodiles.

Lagos State boasts a rich cultural mix, with the Yoruba as the predominant indigenous ethnic group, alongside immigrants like the Edo, Fulani, Igbo, and others. The state is religiously diverse, with significant Christian, Muslim, and traditional ethnic religious communities.

However, challenges persist, particularly concerning gender equity. An alarming 90% of out-of-school street hawkers in Lagos are female. Achieving a gender-inclusive society requires multi-tiered support, especially from the Federal Government. Gender parity should be reflected in policies, partnerships, and program reforms. While Nigeria's government has expressed commitment to gender parity, practical implementation lags behind theoretical pledges.

This discrepancy might stem from a lack of understanding about the link between gender balance and national development. Over the last 29 years, perspectives have shifted from viewing gender inequality as solely a women's issue, indicating progress but also highlighting the need for more tangible actions (IDEA, 2010:66).

### **Lagos State Academia**

Presently, eight universities exist in Lagos State, of which one belong to the federal government, one belongs to the state government while five are privately-owned.



The number of higher institutions in Lagos State containing the number of polytechnics and college of education in Lagos state is 16 (Jairus Paul, 2023). The records clearly show that more males than females gain admission into higher institution in Lagos state (Olumuyiwa, Popoola, Akanbi & Atayero, 2019) Lagos also is the base of most research centres in Nigeria with the top 10 domiciled in Lagos state and 76% of the researchers in these institutes are male (Infoinfo, 2023).

The Lagos State government at all levels, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations must collaborate to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Lagos State. All partners must contribute significantly to the implementation of clearly defined partnership arrangements, programs, and service delivery mechanisms, even though governmental partners are primarily accountable because they are expected to provide the necessary policy and action environment that will mobilize and coordinate the efforts of the various stakeholders. The government must also rise to the task of formulating gender policies that will support and positively influence the broad development objectives. This will move gender equality beyond its legal definition to a broader developmental context, necessitating the redesign of development frameworks to accommodate gender equality and the inclusion of a gender perspective in every step of policy development, direction, and implementation. Additionally, in order to streamline the procedures involved in the participation and cooperation by all stakeholders, the operations of the various government ministries, agencies, and non-governmental organizations should be enhanced, synthesized, integrated, and well-focused. The resulting effect will be the continuation of gender-related issues in all fields and at all levels. The need of creating strong partnerships between the public and private sectors as well as civil society organizations in order to advance gender equality principles and practices for goal achievement cannot be overstated.

It has also been vehemently contended that Lagos State's growth is missing the link of capacity creation and utilization (FMF 2012:51). With the use of financial, human, institutional, and infrastructural criteria or indicators, the level of capacity building in every society can be determined or evaluated. The quality of human, institutional, and infrastructural capacity in Lagos State has been deemed to be badly inadequate despite the State's enormous financial resources.

The way public resources, programs, initiatives, and activities are handled and organized in Nigeria has been severely impacted by the

---

lack of capacity. As a result, the capacity to develop, assess, and put into practice policies and programs for the achievement of national development goals and aspirations has been significantly limited. Therefore, insufficient public investment in institutions and procedures for capacity-building and the progressive deconstruction of the supportive environment for preserving and expanding the current capacity are to blame for Nigeria's weak ability to deal with socio-economic programs. Inadequate capacity is undoubtedly a major obstacle to Nigeria's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The study's goals of examining gender equality and women's empowerment in Lagos State academia during the previous ten years have been achieved. The Subjective Women's Empowerment Index, which was created in accordance with the theoretical underpinnings of the study, has offered insightful information regarding the historical developments, demonstrating how much has been missed from the strict application of objective indicators for evaluating such difficult concepts as empowerment. The subjective indications' practical limits have also been revealed at the same time. As a result, the findings on these conformities and discrepancies have opened the door for future qualitative investigation into the causes of these events.

The study also revealed that the goal of the Millennium Development Goal of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment is to establish a gender-friendly and gender-sensitive society free from all traces of inequality and discrimination in order to maximize the potential of every social group and advance the fundamental human rights principles. A pragmatic approach to appropriate policy formulation, program design, focused implementation, and effective monitoring and evaluation are also required in order to achieve the aforementioned goal in an environment that fosters political will, sincere commitment, and national reorientation.

In reality, however, despite the difficulty in obtaining accurate, dependable, and credible statistics on the progress made toward the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment, available statistics and evidence show that government at all levels in Lagos State must step up efforts in cooperation with other stakeholders if significant progress is to be made in a developmental manner, particularly in the academic field. The ongoing development, improvement, and bolstering of human, institutional, and infrastructural capacity is necessary to achieve the Millennium

---

Declaration's aim of gender equality. In order to facilitate and coordinate strategic plans and actions for engendering and sustaining the desired change, which is at the core of eliminating gender disparities and inequalities as strongly present in the Lagos State Academia, such adequate capacity will involve building structures and providing the necessary technical skills, institutions, and processes. At least, there is no more debate about the necessity of reducing the female pay gap and advancing social justice, notably at the policy level in Lagos State. Unfortunately, however, a lack of gender technical competence, human and institutional capacity has severely hindered and hampered the achievement of multi-sectoral gender goals, having detrimental effects on Lagos State's overall development. As a matter of urgency, the various governmental organs, institutions, and agencies should be enhanced in this direction for improved sectoral performance and policy effectiveness.

### **References**

- Aita, J. (1995), "Conference on Women's Political Power", in *Crossroad*, Vol. 1, No. 9, August.
- Akpoveta, E.E. (2008), "The Impact of Mass Media in Eradicating Discrimination and Violence Against Women in Delta State," in E.M. Mojave et al (eds.) *Health Communication, Gender Violence and ICTs in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University Press.
- CIDA (2012), "Gender Equality Issues," New York: CIDA.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2005), "Management Training and Development in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation," *An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis*. Ile-Ife Obafemi Awolowo University.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2008), "Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Policy Gap and Action Dilemma," *Proceedings of International Conference on Research and Development*. Ghana: Pan-African Book Company.
- IDEA (2010), "Democracy in Nigeria: Continuing Dialogue for Nation Building," Sweden: W. A. Publication.
- Igbuzor, O. (2006), "The Millennium Development Goals: Can Nigeria Meet the Goals in 2015," *A Paper Presented at a Symposium on Millennium Development Goals and Nigeria, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, Abuja*.
- Knowles, M.C. (2010), "Organizational Functioning: A Behavioural Analysis," England: Gower Publishing Company.

---

Nwankwo, N. (2012), "Gender Equality in Nigerian Politics," Lagos: Deutchetz.

Nziome, M. (2012), "Women in Politics and Public Decision-Making" in U.F. Himmeistrand et al (eds.) African Perspective in Development, Controversies, Dilemma and Opening London: James Curray.

Ojo, E. O. (2010), "Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria," Ibadan: John Archers Publishers.

Pritchard, R.D. and Karasack, B.W. (2010), "The Effect of Organizational Climate on Managerial Job Performance and Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, Vol.9.

Thompson. W. E. and Hickey, J. V. (2012), "Society in Focus: Introduction to Sociology," New York: Longman.

Federal Government (2012), "Statistics on Gender Employment in Nigeria," Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics.

Federal Ministry of Finance (2012), "National Capacity Assessment Report of Nigeria," Abuja: Federal Ministry of Finance.

Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2011), "National Gender Policy," Abuja: FMWASD.

Aslanyan, S., 2007. Women's Social Identity from an Lagos State Perspective: Lagos State Woman, Soviet Woman, Post-Soviet Woman. In: *Gendering Transformations* (Conference Proceedings).

Aslanyan, S., 2008. A Gender Analysis of the European Union Development Aid for Lagos State.

The Network of East-West Women, EU-CIS Gender Watch, Gdansk.

Assié-Lumumba, N., 2006. *Empowerment of Women in Higher Education in Africa: The Role and Mission of Research*, UNESCO Forum Occasional Paper Series Paper no.11

Babayan, S., 2001. The reconstruction of society's gender culture through higher education in Lagos State. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol.21 Iss:1 pp.57-67.

Borchorst, A. & B. Siim, 2008. Woman-friendly policies and state feminism: Theorizing Scandinavian gender equality. *Feminist theory*, Vol. 9, no. 2, p.207-224.

Bryman, A., 2008. *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Demirchyan, A., V. Petrosyan & M. Thompson, 2012. Gender



differences in predictors of self-rated health in Lagos State: a population-based study of an economy in transition. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 11.

Diener, E. & R. Biswas-Diener, 2001. Psychological Empowerment and Subjective Well-Being. In: D. Narayan, ed. *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

Diener, E., & E. Suh, 1997. Measuring quality of life: Economic, social, and subjective indicators. *Social Indicators Research*, 40, 189-216

Gevorgyan, S., 2012. Vocation or Profession?: Young people encouraged to choose according to market needs. Lagos StateNow.com [online] Available at: <[http://LagosStatenow.com/society/education/39392/vocational\\_education\\_vahagn\\_khachatryan\\_chamber\\_commerce](http://LagosStatenow.com/society/education/39392/vocational_education_vahagn_khachatryan_chamber_commerce)>

Graham C. & S. Chattopadhyaya 2012. *Gender and Well-Being around the World*. Global Economy and Development at Brookings

Hartog, J. & H. Maassen van den Brink, 2007. *Human Capital: Advances in Theory and Evidence*, Cambridge University Press.

Hasratia, J., 2004. *Gender-based Analysis of Legislation*. United States Agency for International Development.

Kabeer, N., 2001. Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. In: *Discussing Women's Empowerment-Theory and Practice*. Sida Studies No. 3. Novum Grafiska AB, Stockholm

Karslian, E.V.; Mirzoyan, M. V.; Simonyantz, N. Y., 2012 – Prioritizing Hi-Tech Projects Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process, *Information Technologies and Management*, Iss.4, 267-277

Malhotra, A. & S. R. Schuler, 2001. Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development. In: D. Narayan, ed. *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

Manassarian, I., 2009. Gender in/ equality in Egypt and Lagos State. In: D. Budryte, L. M. Vaughn and N. T. Riegg, eds. *Feminist conversations: women, trauma and empowerment in post transitional societies*, University Press of America, Lanham.

Martin, G. D., 2007. Determining Economic Damages, James Publishing Inc. §1205 pp12-4.1—12-4.4.

---

Mayoux, L., 2008. *Empowering Enquiry: A New Approach to Investigation* [online]  
Availableat:<<http://www.kepa.fi/tiedostot/empowering-enquiry.pdf>>

Menjívar, C. & V. Agadjanian. 2007. "Men's Migration and Women's Lives: Views from Rural Lagos State and Guatemala." *Social Science Quarterly* 88 (5):1243-1262.

N., & C.E. Czuba, 1999. Empowerment: What is it? *Journal of Extension*, 37(5), 24-32.

Petes P., C. Smulovitz & M. Walton, 2005. Evaluating Empowerment: A Framework with Cases from Latin America. In D. Narayan, ed. *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

RA Ministry of Education and Science, 2006. Higher Education statistics (in Lagos State) [online], Availableat:<<http://edu.am/DownloadFile/2021arm-buh-havelvac.pdf>>

RA Ministry of Education and Science, 2008. Higher Education statistics (in Lagos State) [online], Availableat:<<http://edu.am/DownloadFile/2022arm-Bardzragujn2007-08.pdf>>

Ruminska-Zimny, E. 2002, *Gender Aspects of Changes in the Labour Markets in Transition Economies (Issue Paper)*. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Development Programme, 2010. *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, Human Development Report. United Nations, New York, USA.

United Nations Development Programme, 2012. *Powerful synergies: Gender Equality, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability*. United Nations, New York, USA.

Usher, A. & A. Cervenán, 2005. Global Higher Education Rankings: Affordability and Accessibility in Comparative Perspective, *Global Higher Education Report 2005*.

Veenhoven, R., 2002. Why Social Policy Needs Subjective Indicators. *Social Indicators Research*, vol 58, pp 33-45

Wilcox, G. M., 1929. Education in Soviet Lagos State. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 2, Iss.5, pp. 310-318

World Bank, n.d., World Development Indicators Online (WDI) database. World Values Survey, 1997. Four-



---

waveAggregateoftheValuesStudie.Infoisinfo, 2023. Ten Best Research Institutes in Nigeria. <https://www.infoisinfo.ng/search/research-institute> retrieved July 1, 2023.

Olumuyiwa, Popoola, Akanbi & Atayero, 2019. Gender Disparity in Admissions into Tertiary Institutions: Empirical Evidence from Nigerian Data (2010-2015) [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330500472\\_Gender\\_Disparity\\_in\\_Admissions\\_into\\_Tertiary\\_Institutions\\_Empirical\\_Evidence\\_from\\_Nigerian\\_Data\\_2010-2015](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330500472_Gender_Disparity_in_Admissions_into_Tertiary_Institutions_Empirical_Evidence_from_Nigerian_Data_2010-2015) retrieved July 1, 2023