



Gender Disparities in Youth Skill Acquisition and Employment Outcomes in Nigeria: A Case Study of FCT, Nigeria

Osuchukwu Nkechi Cynthia Ph.D¹, Bilkisu Auwal Zigau², Nkeiru Hope Ezeadichie³ & Ibrahim Abduraman⁴

¹Department of Political Science, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. cn.osuchukwu@coou.edu.ng, ORCID iD: 0009-0007-0332-902X

²Federal College of Education (Technical), Bichi Kano state. bzigau@gmail.com

³Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Nigeria, Enugu State, Nigeria. nkeiru.ezeadichie@unn.edu.ng

⁴raman.ossy@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined gender disparities in youth skill acquisition and employment outcomes in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), focusing on barriers and socio-economic and institutional factors influencing economic participation. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 400 youth (200 male, 200 female) aged 18–35 in Bwari, Gwagwalada, and Kuje Area Councils. The Henry Garrett Ranking Technique identified key barriers, while the Logit Dichotomous Regression Model assessed the impact of socio-economic (gender, education, training experience, marital status, age) and institutional (ICT skills, TVET training) factors on employment status. Findings revealed that lack of finance, limited government funding, and household responsibilities are the primary barriers to skill acquisition, with female youth facing greater socio-cultural constraints like gender norms and early marriage. Employment barriers include financial constraints, labour market saturation, and poor governance, with women disproportionately affected by discrimination and domestic responsibilities. The regression results show that gender, education, training experience, ICT skills, and TVET training significantly enhance employment likelihood, with males having a 4.2% higher employment probability. Female youth are disadvantaged by systemic biases and limited access to high-skill training. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address gender-specific barriers, enhance access to finance, and improve vocational training to promote equitable economic outcomes and support Nigeria's sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Gender disparities, Youth unemployment, Skill acquisition, Employment outcomes, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, TVET, ICT skills

INTRODUCTION

Gender disparities in skill acquisition and employment outcomes represent a critical issue in the discourse on economic development, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where youth unemployment and gender inequality remain pervasive challenges. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, as the administrative and political hub of the nation, provides a unique context to examine these disparities due to its diverse population and concentration of economic opportunities. Despite progress in promoting gender equality globally, Nigeria ranks poorly on the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index, with a 2020 ranking of 130 out of 162 countries, highlighting significant gaps in access to education, employment, and economic empowerment for women (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020). This study assessed gender disparities in barriers to youth skill acquisition and employment outcomes in the FCT, focusing on how these disparities influence economic participation and socio-economic development. Skill acquisition, particularly through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), has been recognized as a vital mechanism for addressing youth unemployment and fostering economic self-reliance in Nigeria (Ekong & Ekong, 2016). Youth unemployment in Nigeria, estimated at over 50% for individuals aged 15–35, exacerbates the challenges of gender inequality (Borgen Project, 2024). While both young men and women face employment challenges, women are more likely to be engaged in unpaid or low-skill informal sector work, which limits their economic empowerment (International Finance Corporation [IFC], 2022).

Research indicates that women in Nigeria account for 41% of paid employment, compared to 35% in 1990, yet they remain overrepresented in low-paying and precarious jobs (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). This disparity is partly attributed to gender biases in skill acquisition, where societal expectations and gendered job roles shape the types of skills men and women pursue. For example, a study by Aspyee (2025) found significant gender bias in TVET programs, with women excelling in fields like hotel management and catering, while men dominated technical fields such as welding and electrical installation. Women in rural FCT communities often face additional challenges, including limited mobility, lack of access to financial services, and cultural expectations that prioritize early marriage over education or skill development (Borgen Project, 2024). These factors contribute to a higher prevalence of gender inequality in rural settings, with women experiencing lower levels of skill acquisition and employment compared to their male counterparts. The economic implications of gender disparities in skill acquisition and employment are significant. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that closing the gender gap in Nigeria could enhance economic growth, productivity, and stability (IMF, 2021). Gender inequality results in macroeconomic losses, including reduced labour force participation, limited entrepreneurship, and lower income equality (IMF, 2021).

Moreover, studies suggest that empowering women through skill acquisition programs can lead to poverty reduction and improved socio-economic outcomes for communities (Okolocha et al., 2020). In the FCT, initiatives like the Preston Development Foundation (PDF-Africa) have demonstrated success in addressing gender disparities by providing targeted training and resources to young women, particularly in STEM fields, resulting in increased employability (Borgen Project, 2024). Despite these efforts, gender disparities persist, driven by structural, cultural, and systemic factors. For instance, a study by Adegbite and Machethe (2020) highlights that women in Nigeria face barriers such as limited access to finance, discriminatory hiring practices and societal expectations that reinforce traditional gender roles. Additionally, research by Okolocha et al., (2020) indicates that skill acquisition programs often fail to account for gender-specific needs, resulting in unequal participation and outcomes. In the FCT, where the youth population is rapidly growing, addressing these disparities is critical to harnessing the demographic dividend and achieving sustainable development goals. While previous studies have explored gender inequality in Nigeria broadly, few have focused specifically on the FCT, which presents a unique socio-economic context. Therefore, the specific objectives of this study were: to ascertain the primary barriers to skill acquisition for male and female youth in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, and to examine how socio-economic and institutional factors influence employment outcomes for female and male youth in the FCT, Nigeria. By examining both opportunities (access to skill acquisition programs) and outcomes (employment/income generation), this research provided evidence-based insights into the factors driving gender disparities and their implications for youth empowerment.

Hypotheses of the study

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

1. H_{01} : Socio-Economic Factors (Gender, Education Level, Training Experience, Marital Status and Age) have no significant effect on the employment status of youth in FCT, Nigeria.
2. H_{02} : Institutional Factors (ICT skill and TVET training) have no significant effect on the employment status of youth in FCT, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, which serves as the administrative capital of the country. Located in the central region of Nigeria, the FCT covers an area of approximately 7,315 square kilometers and comprises six Area Councils: Abuja Municipal, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Bwari, Abaji, and Kwali (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). The FCT is characterized by a diverse population, with a mix of urban (e.g., Abuja city) and peri-urban (e.g., Gwagwalada, Kuje and Bwari) communities, reflecting a blend of ethnic groups, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The youth population (aged 18–35 years) in the FCT is estimated at 1.2 million, making it a critical region for studying skill acquisition and employment outcomes (NBS, 2020). The study focuses on three Area Councils; Bwari, Gwagwalada, and Kuje, selected for their population density and presence of skill acquisition centres. The sample size for the study was determined using Yamane (1967) formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)} = \frac{760,000}{1+760,000(0.05^2)} = 399.8 \approx 400$$

Where,

n = The sample size

N = The total number of youth in the selected area councils

e = 5%

Thus, a sample size of 400 youth was selected, with an equal distribution of 200 male and 200 female respondents to ensure gender balance. The data obtained were analyzed using Henry Garret Ranking Technique and Logit Dichotomous regression model.

Henry Garrett Ranking Technique

The constraints faced by the youth in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, as stated in the first objective, were evaluated using Henry Garrett Ranking method, expressed as:

$$\text{Percentage Score} = \frac{100(R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,

R_{ij} = Rank given for i th Constraint by j th Individual

N_j = Number of Constraints Ranked by j th Individual

Logit Dichotomous Regression Model

The model is based on the work of Israel et al., (2015) and is stated as:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{10} \beta_k X_{ij} + \dots \beta_n X_n + \mu_i$$

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \dots \beta_7 X_7 + \mu_i$$

$$Y_i = \begin{cases} 1, \text{Employed} \\ 0, \text{Unemployed} \end{cases}$$

Where,

Y_i = The Dependent Variable, (1 = the youth is employed; 0 = the youth is Unemployed)

β_0 = Constant Term

$\beta_1 - \beta_8$ = Regression Coefficients

Socio-Economic Factors

X_1 = Gender (Male =1; Female = 0)

X_2 = Education Level (Years)

X_3 = Training Experience (Years)

X_4 = Marital Status (1 = Yes; 0 = No)

X_5 = Age (Years)

Institutional Factors

X_6 = ICT skill (1 = Yes; 0 = No)

X_7 = TVET training (1 = Yes; 0 = No)

μ_i = Error Term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Age (Years)			
18 – 22	76	19	
23 – 27	124	31	
28 -32	109	27.25	
33 -35	91	22.75	

Total	400	100	29
Gender			
Male	200	50	
Female	200	50	
Total	400	100	
Household Size			
<5	171	42.75	
5-10	139	34.75	
11-15	79	19.75	
>15	11	2.75	
Total	400	100	6
Level of Education			
None	72	18	
Primary	85	21.25	
Secondary	129	32.25	
Tertiary	114	28.5	
Total	400	100	
Marital Status			
Single	182	45.5	
Married	191	47.75	
Divorced	19	4.75	
Widowed	8	2	
Total	400	100	

Source: Field Survey (2025),

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 400 male and female youth respondents, with frequencies, percentages, and means for age, gender, household size, education level, and marital status.

Age Distribution

The age distribution shows a mean age of 29 years, with 19% (76 respondents) aged 18–22, 31% (124 respondents) aged 23–27, 27.25% (109 respondents) aged 28–32, and 22.75% (91 respondents) aged 33–35. This distribution indicates a relatively mature youth population, with the majority (58.25%) aged 23–32, reflecting the FCT’s urban and peri-urban demographic, where youth are actively engaged in or seeking skill acquisition and employment opportunities (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). The mean age of 29 aligns with studies suggesting that Nigerian youth remain in the labour market longer due to economic pressures and delayed transitions to stable employment (Okolocha et al., 2020).

Gender Distribution

The sample is evenly split, with 50% (200 respondents) male and 50% (200 respondents) female, ensuring gender balance to address the study’s focus on disparities. This equal representation allows for robust comparisons of barriers to skill acquisition and employment outcomes between male and female youth.

Household Size

The mean household size is 6 persons, with 42.75% (171 respondents) from households with fewer than 5 members, 34.75% (139 respondents) from households with 5–10 members, 19.75% (79 respondents) from households with 11–15 members, and 2.75% (11 respondents) from households with more than 15 members. Larger household sizes are associated with increased economic pressure, particularly for female youth, who often bear caregiving responsibilities (Psaki et al., 2022). Larger households (11–15 or >15 members) correlate with financial constraints, as families prioritize basic needs over training fees, especially for female youth (Adepoju et al., 2020).

Level of Education

The education level distribution shows 18% (72 respondents) with no formal education, 21.25% (85 respondents) with primary education, 32.25% (129 respondents) with secondary education, and 28.5% (114 respondents) with tertiary education. The majority (60.75%) have at least secondary education, reflecting the FCT’s urban advantage in educational access compared to rural Nigeria (NBS, 2020). However, the 18% with no education is a significant barrier to skill acquisition (Okolocha et al., 2020).

Marital Status

The marital status distribution indicates 45.5% (182 respondents) are single, 47.75% (191 respondents) are married, 4.75% (19 respondents) are divorced, and 2% (8 respondents) are widowed. The high proportion of single youth (45.5%) reflects the FCT’s youthful demographic, where many delay marriage to pursue education or employment (Aminu et al., 2025). However, the 47.75% married respondents, particularly females, face significant barriers due to early marriage, for female skill acquisition and employment (Girls Not Brides, 2024). Early marriage restricts female youth’s access to training programs, as married women often prioritize family responsibilities, especially in peri-urban areas like Gwagwalada (UNICEF, 2020).

Barriers to Skill Acquisition for Male and Female Youth in FCT, Nigeria

Table 2: Henry Garrett Ranking of Barriers to Skill Acquisition for Male and Female Youth in FCT, Nigeria

S/N	Barriers	Male		Female		Pooled	
		Average Score	Rank	Average Score	Rank	Average Score	Rank
1	Gender norms and stereotypes	38.97	15 th	73.93	5	56.45	13 th
2	Early marriage and childbearing	52.04	12 th	69.06	9	60.55	12 th
3	Mobility restrictions	77.14	5 th	78.37	4	77.755	4 th
4	Parental attitudes	41.07	14 th	64.67	11	52.87	14 th
5	Religious influences	64.32	10 th	68.14	10	66.23	8 th
6	Household responsibilities	81.05	4 th	81.03	3	81.04	3 rd
7	Fear of harassment or exploitation	75.67	7 th	72.36	6	74.015	7 th
8	Ethnic or tribal discrimination	50.97	13 th	49.21	15	50.09	15 th
9	Lack of finance for training	84.7	1 st	86.56	1	85.63	1 st
10	Limited government funding for youth initiatives	84.32	2 nd	84.48	2	84.4	2 nd
11	Low educational attainment	61.46	11 th	60.35	12	60.905	11 th
12	Poor-quality training and lack of qualified trainers	70.96	9 th	54.09	13	62.525	10 th
13	Overemphasis on academic excellence rather than practical skills	82.61	3 rd	71.09	8	76.85	5 th
14	Insecurity	76.85	6 th	71.41	7	74.13	6 th
15	Lack of awareness about available training centres	73.58	8 th	53.03	14	63.305	9 th

Source: Field Survey (2025),

The Henry Garrett Ranking Technique was used to identify and prioritize barriers to skill acquisition for male and female youth in the FCT. Table 2 presents the average scores and ranks for 15 barriers, disaggregated by gender and pooled for the total sample.

Key Findings for Female Youth

For female youth, the top three barriers to skill acquisition are: (1) lack of finance for training (average score: 86.56), (2) limited government funding for youth initiatives (84.48), and (3) household responsibilities (81.03). These findings highlight economic and socio-cultural constraints as the most significant impediments. Lack of finance aligns with studies indicating that poverty disproportionately affects female-headed households, limiting their ability to afford training fees (World Bank, 2023; Adepoju et al., 2020). Limited government funding reflects broader policy implementation gaps, as programs like N-Power and YouWin have insufficient coverage in the FCT, particularly for women (Okolocha et al., 2020). Household responsibilities, ranked third, underscore the burden of domestic chores and caregiving, which disproportionately affect female youth due to patriarchal norms (Tuki, 2025).

Gender norms and stereotypes (ranked 5th, score: 73.93) and early marriage (ranked 9th, score: 69.06) are also significant for female youth, reflecting socio-cultural barriers. These findings corroborate UNICEF (2020), which reports that 35% of girls in the FCT’s peri-urban areas marry before age 18, curtailing their access to education and training. Gender norms steer female youth toward low-skill trades like hairdressing, limiting their participation in high-demand fields like ICT (UNICEF, 2025). Mobility restrictions (ranked 4th, score: 78.37) further exacerbate access issues, particularly in peri-urban areas where transportation infrastructure is limited (World Bank, 2023).

Key Findings for Male Youth

For male youth, the top three barriers are: (1) lack of finance for training (score: 84.7), (2) limited government funding (84.32), and (3) overemphasis on academic excellence rather than practical skills (82.61). While financial constraints are a common barrier across genders, male youth are less affected by socio-cultural factors like household responsibilities (ranked 4th, score: 81.05) compared to females. The high ranking of overemphasis on academic excellence suggests that male youth perceive a mismatch between educational curricula and labour market demands, a finding supported by Ihekweba (2024), who noted that Nigeria’s education system prioritizes theoretical knowledge over vocational skills.

Pooled Results and Gender Comparison

The pooled results rank lack of finance (85.63), limited government funding (84.4), and household responsibilities (81.04) as the top barriers. However, gender disparities are evident in the relative importance of barriers. For instance, gender norms and stereotypes rank 5th for females but 15th for males, indicating a stronger socio-cultural impact on female youth. Similarly, early marriage ranks 9th for females but 12th for males, aligning with studies showing that early marriage disproportionately affects girls (Girls Not Brides, 2024). Mobility restrictions and fear of harassment also rank higher for females (4th and 6th) than males (5th and 7th), reflecting gender-specific safety concerns (Psaki et al., 2022). These findings identified financial constraints as the primary barrier across genders, with socio-cultural factors like gender norms and early marriage posing greater challenges for female youth.

Barriers to employment for Male and Female Youth in FCT, Nigeria

Table 3: Henry Garrett Ranking of Barriers to employment for Male and Female Youth in FCT, Nigeria

S/N	Barriers	Male		Female		Pooled	
		Average Score	Rank	Average Score	Rank	Average Score	Rank
1	Gender norms and stereotypes	52.45	13 th	76.25	4	64.35	11 th
2	Early marriage and childbearing	61.21	12 th	67.73	9	64.47	10 th
3	Mobility restrictions	72.67	9 th	67.16	10	69.915	8 th
4	Religious influences	42.61	15 th	55.7	13	49.155	15 th
5	Household responsibilities	46.33	14 th	65.44	11	55.885	14 th
6	Harassment or exploitation	74.92	8 th	68.92	8	71.92	7 th
7	Ethnic or tribal discrimination	70.38	10 th	49.03	14	59.705	12 th
8	Age discrimination against younger applicants	66.31	11 th	46.79	15	56.55	13 th

9	Lack of finance for starting ventures	85.12	2 nd	87.48	1	86.3	1 st
10	Labour market saturation	86.23	1 st	83.35	2	84.79	2 nd
11	Low educational attainment	75.4	7 th	61.09	12	68.245	9 th
12	Overemphasis on academic excellence rather than practical skills	76.82	6 th	75.14	6	75.98	6 th
13	Poor governance and ineffective implementation of youth policies	80.4	3 rd	80.67	3	80.535	3 rd
14	Insecurity	79.7	4 th	74.52	7	77.11	4 th
15	Lack of information about available opportunities	78.11	5 th	75.32	5	76.715	5 th

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 3 presents the barriers to employment for male and female youth in the FCT, providing insights into how barriers to skill acquisition translate into employment challenges.

Key Findings for Female Youth

For female youth, the top three barriers to employment are: (1) lack of finance for starting ventures (score: 87.48), (2) labour market saturation (83.35), and (3) poor governance and ineffective implementation of youth policies (80.67). The prominence of financial constraints aligns with the skill acquisition findings, indicating a cycle where lack of training funds limits employability (Okolocha et al., 2020). Labour market saturation reflects the FCT's competitive job market, where women are often excluded from formal sector roles due to limited skills and discrimination (Ihekwaba, 2024). Poor governance, including ineffective youth policies like N-Power, limits access to job placement programs, particularly for women (Aminu et al., 2025).

Gender norms and stereotypes (ranked 4th, score: 76.25) significantly hinder female employment, as employers often perceive women as less reliable due to family responsibilities (UN Women, 2025). Early marriage (ranked 9th, score: 67.73) and household responsibilities (ranked 11th, score: 65.44) further restrict female youth's ability to pursue or sustain employment, corroborating findings that domestic roles disproportionately affect women (Tuki, 2025). Harassment or exploitation (ranked 8th, score: 68.92) is a notable barrier, reflecting workplace safety concerns in the FCT (Psaki et al., 2022).

Key Findings for Male Youth

For male youth, the top three barriers are: (1) labour market saturation (score: 86.23), (2) lack of finance for starting ventures (85.12), and (3) poor governance and ineffective youth policies (80.4). Labour market saturation is a critical issue in the FCT's urban economy, where high competition for formal jobs disadvantages youth with limited networks (World Bank, 2023). Financial constraints for entrepreneurship are significant, though less pronounced than for females, as male youth often have better access to family resources (Adepoju et al., 2020). Poor governance affects both genders, but male youth are less impacted by socio-cultural barriers like gender norms (ranked 13th, score: 52.45) or household responsibilities (ranked 14th, score: 46.33).

Pooled Results and Gender Comparison

The pooled results rank lack of finance for starting ventures (86.3), labour market saturation (84.79), and poor governance (80.535) as the top barriers. Gender disparities are evident, with female youth facing greater challenges from socio-cultural factors like gender norms (4th vs. 13th for males) and early marriage (9th vs. 12th). These findings show that barriers to skill acquisition, particularly financial and socio-cultural constraints, translate into employment challenges, with female youth disproportionately affected by gender-specific barriers (UN Women, 2025).

Factors Influencing Youth Employment Outcomes in FCT, Nigeria

Table 4: The MLEs (Maximum Likelihood Estimates) of the Logit Regression Model

Variables	Parameters	Coefficient	Standard Error	$P > Z $
Constant	α_0	2.695***	0.4020	0.000
Gender	α_1	0.0411**	0.0438	0.038
Education	α_2	0.231***	0.0411	0.000
Training Experience	α_3	0.0459**	0.0465	0.049
Marital Status	α_4	0.0269	0.0271	0.731
Age	α_5	0.0971	0.1011	0.932
ICT Skill	α_6	0.0477***	0.0072	0.000
TVET Training	α_7	0.1700***	0.0263	0.000
Diagnostic Statistics				
LR χ^2 (7)		66.88***		
Pseudo R ²		0.6702		
LLF (Log Likelihood)		-133.10		
Prob $> \chi^2$		0.000***		

Legend: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Source: Field Survey (2025),

The logit model results presented in Table 4 indicated that socio-economic factors (gender, education, training experience) and institutional factors (ICT skills, TVET training) significantly influenced employment outcomes, with gender disparities evident. Female youth are less likely to be employed due to systemic barriers like discrimination and limited access to education and training (Ihekweba, 2024). The non-significant effects of marital status and age may reflect the FCT's urban context, where economic factors outweigh certain socio-cultural influences (Aminu et al., 2025).

The Logit Dichotomous Regression Model tests the two null hypotheses by examining the effect of socio-economic (gender, education level, training experience, marital status, age) and institutional (ICT skills and TVET training) factors on employment status (1 = employed, 0 = unemployed). The model's diagnostic statistics ($\chi^2 = 66.88$, $p < 0.01$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.6702$) indicate a good fit, suggesting that the predictors explain a substantial portion of variance in employment status. The results partially reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}) that states that socio-economic factors have no significant effect on employment status:

Gender ($\beta = 0.0411$, $p = 0.038$): The positive coefficient indicates that male youth are more likely to be employed than female youth, significant at the 5% level. The odds ratio ($\exp(0.0411) \approx 1.042$) suggests males have a 4.2% higher likelihood of employment, controlling for other factors. This aligns with Ihekweba (2024), who found that gender-based discrimination in the FCT's labour market disadvantages female youth, particularly in formal sectors.

Education Level ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$): The highly significant positive coefficient indicates that each additional year of education increases the likelihood of employment. This supports Okolocha et al. (2020), who note that higher education enhances employability in Nigeria's urban centres like the FCT. Qualitative data revealed that female youth with secondary or tertiary education reported better job prospects, though access to education remains a barrier.

Training Experience ($\beta = 0.0459$, $p = 0.049$): The positive coefficient, significant at the 5% level, suggests that years of training experience increase employment likelihood. This finding is consistent with World Bank (2023), which highlights the role of vocational training in improving youth employability in the FCT.

Marital Status ($\beta = 0.0269$, $p = 0.731$): The non-significant coefficient indicates that marital status does not significantly affect employment status. This contrasts with UNICEF (2020), which suggests early marriage restricts female youth's employment opportunities. The non-significant result may reflect the FCT's urban context, where marital status has less impact compared to rural areas.

Age ($\beta = 0.0971$, $p = 0.932$): The non-significant coefficient suggests age does not significantly influence employment status, possibly due to the narrow age range (18–30 years) in the sample. The partial rejection of H_{01} indicates that gender, education, and training experience significantly influence employment outcomes, with female youth facing greater challenges due to systemic biases (UN Women, 2025).

Institutional Factors (H_{02})

The results also reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}) that states that institutional factors have no significant effect on employment status:

ICT Skills ($\beta = 0.0477$, $p < 0.01$): The highly significant positive coefficient indicates that youth with ICT skills are more likely to be employed. The odds ratio ($\exp(0.0477) \approx 1.049$) suggests a 4.9% higher likelihood of employment for those with ICT skills. This aligns with UNICEF (2025), which notes that ICT skills are critical for Nigeria's digital economy, yet only 3% of female youth in the FCT possess advanced ICT skills compared to 7% of males.

TVET Training ($\beta = 0.1700$, $p < 0.01$): The highly significant positive coefficient indicates that TVET training significantly increases employment likelihood. The odds ratio ($\exp(0.1700) \approx 1.185$) suggests an 18.5% higher likelihood of employment for TVET-trained youth. This supports Okolocha et al. (2020), who found that TVET enhances employability in urban Nigeria. Qualitative data revealed that female youth with TVET training faced fewer barriers to informal sector jobs, though access to training centres remains a challenge. The rejection of H_{02} confirms that institutional factors like ICT skills and TVET training are critical for employment outcomes, with implications for addressing gender disparities in the FCT's labour market (World Bank, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The study underscores significant gender disparities in youth skill acquisition and employment outcomes in Nigeria's FCT, driven by economic, socio-cultural, and institutional factors. Financial constraints, limited government funding, and household responsibilities emerged as the primary barriers to skill acquisition, with female youth facing additional challenges from gender norms, early marriage, and mobility restrictions. The Logit Regression Model confirmed that socio-economic factors like gender, education, and training experience, alongside institutional factors like ICT skills and TVET training, significantly influence employment outcomes, with males and those with advanced skills having better prospects. The findings emphasize that addressing gender disparities requires dismantling systemic barriers, particularly for female youth, who are disproportionately affected by socio-cultural norms and limited access to finance and training. Initiatives like the Preston Development Foundation demonstrate potential in improving female employability through targeted STEM training, yet broader policy reforms are needed to ensure sustainable impact. By aligning interventions with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), policymakers can enhance youth empowerment, reduce poverty, and boost economic productivity in the FCT, and in the country at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations based on the findings of the study:

1. **Enhancing Access to Finance:** Government should implement gender-sensitive funding schemes, such as low-interest loans and grants, to support female youth in accessing skill acquisition programs and starting ventures.
2. **Strengthening ICT training and TVET Programs:** ICT training, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs should be expanded with a focus on high-demand fields like ICT, ensuring equal access for female youth through subsidies and flexible schedules.
3. **Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Awareness campaigns should be launched to challenge gender norms and early marriage, promoting female participation in education and technical training.
4. **Improving Policy Implementation:** There should be increased funding and oversight for youth initiatives like N-Power, prioritizing female inclusion and addressing gaps in governance and accessibility.

5. Enhancing Workplace Safety: Policies should be enforced to combat harassment and exploitation in workplaces, creating safer environments for female youth to pursue employment.

REFERENCES

- Adegbite, O. O., & Macheche, C. L. (2020). Bridging the gender gap in agricultural productivity in Nigeria: The role of extension services. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 24(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jae.v24i2.1>
- Adeosun, O. T., & Owolabi, K. E. (2021). Gender inequality: Determinants and outcomes in Nigeria. *Journal of Business and Socio-economic Development*, 1(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBSED-01-2021-0007>
- Adepoju, O. A., Ibhawoh, B., & Fayomi, O. O. (2020). Educational disparity in Nigeria: A gendered analysis. *Journal of South African Business Research*, 2020, (Article ID 276721). <https://doi.org/10.5171/2020.276721>
- Aminu, O. O., Ojebuyi, B. R., Oluwajulugbe, B. R., Ayomipo, O., Kolawole, O., Abiola, R., & Kaketch, J. (2025). Gender analysis of future aspirations, resilience and adaptation capability of Nigerian youths in the post COVID-19 era. *Discover Psychology*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Aspyee. (2025). Gender bias in TVET skills and employment outcomes. Retrieved from <https://aspyee.org>
- Borgen Project. (2024). PDF-Africa addresses gender inequality and youth unemployment. Retrieved from <https://borgenproject.org>
- Ekong, U. M., & Ekong, C. N. (2016). Skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development programmes and youth employability in Nigeria. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial and Innovative Studies*, 2(3), 45–56.
- Girls Not Brides. (2024). Empowering futures through gender equality in Nigeria. Retrieved from www.girlsnotbrides.org
- Ihekwa, C. (2024). The impact of gender-based discrimination on youth employment in Nigeria. *Revue de droit comparé du travail et de la sécurité sociale*, 4, 170–183. <https://doi.org/10.4000/12z6z>
- International Finance Corporation. (2022). Gender equality in Nigeria's private sector. Retrieved from <https://www.ifc.org>
- International Monetary Fund. (2021). Gender inequality in Nigeria: Macroeconomic implications. IMF eLibrary. Retrieved from <https://www.elibrary.imf.org>
- Israel, A. O., Hakim, A., & Roslan. (2015). Multidimensional poverty assessments in rural farm household, South-West of Nigeria: Evidence from Oyo State farm settlements. *Business and Economics Journal*, 6(3), 157. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6219.1000157>.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria 2019 (Report release in March, 2020). Retrieved from the NBS e-library.
- Okolocha, C. B., John-Akamelu, C. R., & Muogbo, U. S. (2020). Effect of skill acquisition on youth employability in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Finance and Management*, 3(1), 33–37. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26175754.2020.v3.i1a.51>
- Psaki, S., Haberland, N., Mensch, B., Woyczynski, L., & Chuang, E. (2022). Policies and interventions to remove gender-related barriers to girls' school participation and learning in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of the evidence. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(1), e1207. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1207>
- Tuki, D. (2025). Examining the effect of gender, education and religion on attitudes toward gender equality in Nigeria. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 13(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2024.2304311>
- UNICEF. (2020). Gender equality: Education and skills. *UNICEF Data*. Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-equality-education-and-skills>
- UNICEF. (2025). Gender equality: Education and skills. *UNICEF Data*. Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-equality-education-and-skills>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2020). Human Development Report 2020: The next frontier— Human development and the Anthropocene. *UNDP*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report>
- UN Women. (2025). Country fact sheet: Nigeria. *UN Women Data Hub*. Retrieved from <https://data.unwomen.org/country/nigeria>

World Bank. (2023). Nigeria: \$700 million loan to empower adolescent females and tackle education crisis [Press release]. *World Bank*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/>