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Female Labour Force, ICT and Growth Nexus in Nigeria

Emmanuel Okokondem Okon[1]

[1]Department of Economics, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria
Correspondence: Department of Economics, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria, E-mail: tonydom57@yahoo.com. Tel: +2348023275716

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Abstract
Growth in the labor force is one of the determinants of a nation's maximum sustainable, or potential, rate of economic expansion. However**,** in the period of study in this paper, the relationship between women's participation in the labor force of Nigeria and economic growth is inverse and insignificant. This is attributed to the level of economic development, social norms, education levels, fertility rates and other factors. From policy perspectives therefore educational opportunities for the girl child should be extended to the nooks and crannies of the country so as to enhance socio-economic family planning techniques and methods to reduce the burden of women in the labour force. In the same vein, employers should be encouraged to give all gender equal opportunity and chance to pursue their potentials especially if they have potentials required for a particular job. However, particular attention should be focused on men by enlightening them on the essence of encouraging their spouses on any career they may choose as long as it does not affected the family in any way.

Keywords: Gender, Female Labour Force, Economic Growth, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Gender differentiation and productivity are critical issues that are central the socio-economic life of any country. Women contribute half or more of the country's population but they contribute much less than men towards the value of recorded production both quantitatively in labor force participation and qualitatively in educational achievement and skilled man power (Olukemi,2008). The extent to which these phenomena are discussed varies from country to country. While the developed countries have practically graduated from problems of gender differentiation, their less developed counterparts are still often been looked down upon in terms of their ability to contribute to the economic well-being of their families which invariably has some correlation to a nation's economic growth.

In the case of Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with an estimated population of 177,155,754 people (Index Mundi, 2014),right from the pre-colonial-traditional-Nigeria-society to its modern state, women have often being discriminated upon in affairs that led to deplete their contribution to economic growth (Makuochukwu, 2013).Nevertheless, this paper seeks to empirically investigate female labor force contribution to Nigeria's growth. Specifically, the research question to answer is why are women discriminated upon in participating in labor force in this modern state of Nigeria?This study is pertinent because the influential role of gender equality on economic growth is most directly illustrated in the participation of women in the labor force (News watch times, 2014) and the size of labor force is an asset in a country's capability to enhance productivity and growth.

The paper also looks at the effect of ICT on economic growth since the growth of information and communications technologies (ICT) is changing the way economic and social development occurs in most countries. The introduction of GSM in Nigeria was to expand the teledensity in the country and to make telephone services cheaper and accessible to the common person and the business community. GSM is ICT based telecommunication than can contribute to the growth and development of any nation. These telecommunication networks have created significant effect on the gross domestic product (GDP) of Nigeria in terms of job creation, communication linkages connectivity, security of lives and reduced transport cost among other. This paper attempts to empirically examine

the impact of ICT on the Nigerian economic growth, even though many studies (Ndukwe, 2004; Igwe, 2005) have focused on the challenges and roles of ICT in economic growth of Nigeria

2. Labour Force Participation in Nigeria

The total population in Nigeria recorded was at 166.2 million people in 2012 from 45.2 million in 1960, changing 268 percent during the last 50 years. Population in Nigeria averaged 93.39 million from 1960 until 2012, reaching an all-time high of 166.21 million in 2012 and a record low of 45.15 Million in 1960 (Trading economics, 2015).The estimated population in 2015 is 178 841 235 people (Country meters, n.d.).Table 1 (ADB, 2006) shows that there are more men than women and there is a gradual increase in the rate of growth of males in the Nigerian population.

Table 1 – Nigeria's Population Figures (Male and Female)

ECONOMIC SECTOR	SMALL	MEDIUM
MANUFACTURING	13,442	548
MINNING & QUARRYING	218	33
ACCOMMODATION & FOOD SERVICES	7,130	161
AGRICULTURE	1,424	152
WHOLESALE/RETAIL TRADE	15,248	258
CONSTRUCTION	500	67
TRANSPORT & STORAGE	820	40
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	448	31
EDUCATION	22,141	2,867
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES	2,956	103
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION	251	16
OTHERS SERVICES ACTIVITIES	2,793	64
WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACT	24	1
Total	**67,396**	**4,341**

SECTOR	**2013**	
	NUMBER	**PERCENT**
Agriculture	3,300,778	8.92
Mining and Quarrying	70,443	0.19
Manufacturing	4,887,395	13.21
Sewage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	7,875	0.02
Construction	731,303	1.98
Wholesale and Retail	20,224,627	54.67
Transportation and storage	1,760,932	4.76
Accommodation and Food Services	2,039,517	5.51
Information and communication	335,604	0.91
Administration and support services	213,724	0.58
Education	104,420	0.28
Arts, entertainment and Recreation	390,609	1.06
Other services	2,927,351	7.91
Transport, storage and communication	0	0.00
Hotel and Restaurant	0	0.00
Total	**36,994,578**	**100.00**

Year	Female '000	Male '000	%	% Male

			Female	
1970	26,098.0	25,759.3	50.33	49.67
1975	29,592.3	29,357.4	50.20	49.80
1980	34,191.0	34,256.4	49.95	50.05
1985	39,174.9	39,260.0	49.95	50.05
1990	45,140.3	45,417.0	49.85	50.15
1995	51,677.4	52,236.3	49.73	50.27
2000	58,318.0	59,289.8	49.59	50.41
2001	59,643.4	60,724.6	49.55	50.45
2002	60,967.1	62,167.2	49.51	50.49
2003	62,293.1	63,619.1	49.47	50.53
2004	63,626.6	65,082.4	49.43	50.57
2005	64,971.3	66,558.3	49.40	50.60
2014	88,693.2	90,985.0	49.36	50.64

Source: ADB (2006). Countrymeters (n.d.).

Going through other statistics, however, we note that wherever it mattered, women were negatively impacted upon e.g. in illiteracy rate and in labour force participation rate as shown Table 2 and 3.

Table 2 Adult Illiteracy Rate in Nigeria

Year	Female%	Male%
1970	89.5	69.5
1075	84.0	62.4
1980	78.3	55.3
1985	69.9	48.0
1990	61.6	40.6
1995	52.8	34.0
2000	49.9	27.8
2001	42.3	26.7
2002	40.7	25.6
2003	39.1	24.5
2004	37.4	23.5
2005	35.8	22.4
2005-2011	58.6	38.7

Source: ADB(2006), ADB (2014)

Note that while the illiteracy rate fell for both men and women, the illiteracy rate among the female population is still more than 50% higher than among the male population. The same can also be said for labour force participation rate, which shows the percentage of the population employed. The 2006 data (ADB 2006) show that the female labor participation rate is less than 50% of the male labour participation rate. This has implications for income levels and economic empowerment, especially when this is taken together with the data on participation at different levels for the different genders.Tables 5 indicates that there are hardly any sector where women do not participate in.

Table 3 – Labour Force Participation Rate in Nigeria

Year	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
1970	36.8	73.2
1975	36.2	73.8
1980	35.5	74.5
1985	35.1	74.9
1990	34.6	75.4
1995	35.1	74.9
2000	35.7	74.3

2001	35.7	74.3
2002	35.8	74.2
2003	Na	Na
2004	Na	Na
2005	Na	Na
2013	42.6	Na

Source: ADB (2006), ADB(2014)

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Working Population by Employment Status

	Male Female	Male Female
Regular Employee	17.8	8.8
Casually Employed	3.1	0.9
Unpaid Worker	8.2	15.5
Self Employed	70.9	74.9
Total	100	100

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Table 5: Economic Participation by Occupation and by Sex

Occupation/Sector	Male	Female	Gender Parity Index (GPI)*
Agriculture	41.48	22.41	0.54
Trade & Industry	35.08	44.95	1.28
Oil & Gas	3.77	1.59	0.42
Services	11.32	13.81	1-22
Others	8.36	17.25	2.06
Total	100.2	100	1.00

GPI is the ratio of the female to the male measure of a variable.
Source: Federal Governemnet of Nigeria (2008).

2.1. Telecommunication Information on Nigeria

The total number of subscribers to telephone lines as at the end of December 1986 was put at around 230,000 while Telex subscribers were only 5,300 in number.Total installed capacity for telephone then was 320,834 and telex 11,577. The percentage utilization for telephone therefore was 71.6 per cent while telex was approximately 45.7 per cent. However, modernity in telecommunications has provided facilities that make for new class of service, improved revenue generation with properly reviewed tariff policy. Now, in 1996, the country has almost 1,000,000 subscribers to telephone lines all of which are handled by standard A antennae facing both the Indian and the Atlantic Ocean Regions installed at four (4 NO.) different geographical locations across the country. Nigeria operates a Domestic Satellite System by leasing three (3 No.) transponders from INTELSAT which are accessed by nineteen (19 No.) Standard B earth stations in some state capitals of the Federation. There is a Territorial Manager responsible for Telecommunications Administration in each state except Lagos state where because of the relatively large number of switching centres and subscribers in the metropolis, it was considered prudent to have at least two (2No.) territorial managers.

Nigeria embraced Digital Technology since the 1980s with the introduction of Digital Switches and Transmission Systems (Radio and Optic fibre) into the network. Since the beginning of the 90s, Mobile Telephone Services (Cellular), Paging and Electronic Mail have also been part of the services offered by NITEL (Nigerian Telecommunications Plc). NITEL had an X.25 and X.40 switching facilities in its network. With a population of one hundred million (100m) back then , the figure of more than half a million telephone lines in the country means in effect, a very low telephone density ratio; though the country has the largest number of telephones in any one country in Africa (Alabi, n.d.).

Still, in this present time, ttelecommunication infrastructure remains one of the major issues affecting technology deployment required for growth and development in Nigeria. There has however, been massive improvement in infrastructure over the past few years. Nigeria has certainly left the telecomm state where there were only a few dial-up e-mail providers and Internet service providers (ISPs) and when Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL)

was the only Telecommunications operator. It was a dark era characterized by slow internet links, poor service, high cost, lack of infrastructure and an unprogressive telecoms monopoly. Things have certainly changed.

Deregulation of the telecommunications sector led to the introduction of major Global System of Mobile Communications (GSM), mobile phone providers MTN Nigeria, V-Mobile, Globacom and Mtel (Jidaw (n.d.). Nigeria's government had earlier provided the impetus for liberalization by setting up the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) (http://www.jidaw.com/comm.html). Although NCC became the regulatory body for Nigeria's telecom sector in 1992, it is the present government that dealt with the telecom policy, interconnection agreements and the empowerment of NCC. NCC issues licenses to private telecoms companies providing a variety of telecom services to the Nigerian populace.

3. Empirical Review

Economic literature shows significant attention towards the role played by female labor force in the economic development of nations. The participation of female labour force is desirable for both equity and efficiency reasons. The equity aspect shows that the women's participation in the labor market ultimately improves their relative economic position, increase the overall economic efficiency by enhancing the development potential of the country. Moreover, the increasing integration of women in the economy helps in reducing gender disparities in education, improving maternal health, increasing sectoral share of female employment in different sectors of the economy (Mujahid and Zafar, n.d.).

In her bid to examine the influence of religion on female labor force participation across countries, H'madoun (2010) specified and estimated a probit model with a vector of religious variables among other exogenous predictors. The data for the study were obtained from the 2005 wave of the World Value survey, where 26,711 women in the age range 18 to 55 years in 48 countries were selected for the study. Like many other studies of this nature, the religious women were found to participate less in labor market activities than the non-religious women after controlling for other social and economic variables in the model. The shortcoming of the study, in our view, is the fact that all the 48 countries were lumped together in the analysis without being disaggregated for country-specific peculiarities (Fadayomiand Ogunrinola, n.d.).

Sackey (2005) used data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS4 and GLSS3) to estimate the female labor force participation and fertility models. It was assumed that the two concepts – labor force participation and fertility decisions – are strongly linked and as such they should be studied together. To do this, a probit and a multinomial model types were specified and estimated. Significant contribution of this study is the negative effect of education on fertility while education and reduced family size increase labor force participation rate in Ghana.

Aromolaran (2004) examined the influence of education (both own and husband's) on labor force participation of married women in Nigeria in wage market employment, self-employment and overall labor market participation. The study confirms not only the influence of own education (both bundled and unbundled) on labor force participation, but also that the husband's education positively influence the labor force participation of married women in Nigeria.

A body of theoretical and empirical literature provides evidence that female labor force participation has a positive and strong relationship with economic growth (Tansel, 2002; Fatima and Sultana, 2009).

ICTs constitute an opportunity and a fundamental source of job creation, economic and technological catching up, cost cutting of transactions and the informative distance, improvement of the gains of productivity, the quality of the services and decentralization of the powers and help achieve better coordination, etc.,(Kahouli, 2012).

These positive effects on the economic growth justify the significant investments in ICTs made by different countries and reveal an increasing interest in these technologies. Indeed, at the international level, a significant evolution has been witness in terms of access to these technologies and a liberalization of the ICTs market in most countries. Empirically, several authors confirmed the positive effect of ICTs on productivity and economic growth. Dewan and Kraemer (1998) studied the impact of ICTs diffusion on the productivity for a sample of 36 countries during 1985 – 1993. They explained the annual GDP by the stock of ICTs capital, the stock of capital other than ICTs and annual number of working hours.

4. Methodology

This study employed content analysis and quantitative approaches. It adapted Makuochukwu's (2013) model and augmented it for this analysis. The model is specified as follows:$GDP = \pi + \delta FLE + \chi ICT + \lambda MLF + \psi$

Where: GDP is Gross domestic product; FLE means female labor force employment; ICT is information communication technology (GSM); MLE denotes male labor force employment; ψ is error term used to capture other variables that are not included in the model; π is the intercept of the model; δ, χ, λ are co-efficient of the independent variables. The apriori expectation is as follows: $\delta, \chi, \lambda > 0$.

This study used data covering 1986-2016 mainly from secondary sources for all the variables concerned.Time series characteristics of the variableswere carried before the actual analysis. The data for the analysis is from the Central

Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin.The choice of these secondary sources is based on their authenticity and reliability. The operational methodology adopted for this multiple regression analysis was ordinary least square (OLS) econometric technique. This was necessary in order to determine the nature and extent of the relationship that exists among the variables.The estimates are evaluated for statistical significance based on the relevant statistics of regression output (T– Statistical test, F – Ratio test). The explanatory power of the model as a measure of goodness of fit is decided using R2 and adjusted R2 test.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1 Regression Result

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	prob
FLF	-13340.43	44376.00	-0.300623	0.7668
ICT	1.030238	0.187135	5.505335	0.0000
MLE	-223496.10	28724.33	-0.817986	0.4230
C	2591292	3892754	0.665670	0.5132

R^2 = 0.918272 R^2 adjusted 0.906012 DW=2.150607

Source:Eviews4.0

The analysis was conducted with the use of the Eviews software; the adjusted R-square of 0.906012 depicts a high explanatory power of the model. This means that 90% variation in GDP is as a result of variation in ICTs, MLF and FLF. The F-statistic which measures the overall significance of the regression model shows that the model is significant. The Durbin-Watson statistic shows that the possibility of a serial correlation in the equation is low. This is because the value is above 2.

The result of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) shows thatthe estimates of the model parameters show consistency with the theoretical expectation for the coefficientχ, but δ and λ coefficients have negative signs which are contradictory to the a priori expectation. By implication, for every unit increase in ICTs, GDP increases by 1.030238 units. This coefficient shows statistical significance at 0.01 level of significance. In Nigeria, the noticeable gain from ICT is the increase in productivity which is enabled by easier and efficient communication, facilitated by increased access to telephone and then internet. However, the country has a long way to go, considering such prevailing factors like the limited access to ICT infrastructure, including fixed and mobile telephony services ratio, internet and broadband service penetration.

It is essential to note that ICT growth far exceeds the mass importation and presence of telephones, computers and other ICT devices. Infrastructural content as well as the amount of usage of services by the populace - for instance, the level of telephony density, are factors that are key in grading the country in terms of ICT growth (Compuworld, n.d.).

Furthermore, the regression result reveals an inverse relationship between male labour force and gross domestic product (GDP) during the period that was studied. This implies that a unit increase in the male labour employment leads to a decline in GDP by 23496.10 units. This result is attributed to the unemployment rate during the subsidy removal and minimum wage law period where some industries lay -off their workers in Nigerian. Historically, males have always dominated labour force in the country. However, labour productivity growth has been unsatisfactory in Nigeria. Indeed, there is a huge decline in GDP per worker over the years, this implies low GDP per person (whether male or female)in the country (Umoru and Yaqub, 2013).

The result shows that an increase in female labour force employment (FLF) by 1 unit will slow down growth (GDP) by 13340.43 units. This result aligns with Klasen and Lamanna (2009) who investigated the same relationship for Sub-Saharan African (SSA) and Arab countries and find female share of labour force to be negatively associated with economic growth. However, FLF variable in this study appeared to be statistically insignificant at any of the conventional levels. More so, the magnitude of the decline in GDP caused by female labour force participation is less than that caused by male counterpart. This is because the labour force participation rate of men is higher than those of women in Nigeria. As at year 2010, the percentage of women that participated in labour force is still as low as 40% which is less than half (Nwakeze, n.d.). This is consistent with the view that "women generally have higher rates of unemployment and especially of under-employment and disguised unemployment than men and find it difficult to re-enter employment once they lose their jobs" (Lim, 2002). This is asa result of some militating factors.

5.2 Factors Militating Against Women's Active Participation in Nigeria's Labor Force

Due to huge family responsibilities, it is always difficult to give adequate time to both work and home activities. For instance, pregnancy period and child nursing are very demanding; much is expected from the woman in the home. Even though there is maternity leave there is not enough time to attend to the child.

In the traditional Nigerian society, the female is accorded a low status that leaves her with less choice than to be at the background. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/the World Bank (1994) stated that women's disadvantaged social position which is often related to the economic value placed on family roles, helps perpetuate poor health, inadequate diet, early and frequent pregnancy and a continued cycle of poverty. They explained also that parents may invest less in girls because they perceived them to have less economic potentials since girls often become part of another family at marriage and generally earn less income. They further state that women's low socio-economic status can also expose them to physical and sexual abuse and mental digression

The value and importance of educating women has not been adequately recognized. High illiteracy and low enrolment rates, especially in secondary schools, affect women's ability to acquire the skills needed for income generating activities. More still, they are restricted to certain sectors like agriculture, teaching, nursing, clerical work as well as household and domestic service occupations. In addition, they do not migrate (i.e., constraint to mobility of labour) easily, especially if they are married and have children. These lead to reduction in their participation in the labour force.

Nigerian women are under- represented at high level managerial, executive and legislative bodies in the country, thus limiting the chance of improving the number of female employment.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been accepted as one of the main driving force behind organizational competitiveness in the present day business environment. Though the government of Nigeria has taken several steps to create an environment good enough to attract investment and ventures by entrepreneurs, a lot still need to be done to check the prevailing anomalies in terms of existing infrastructure. in the ICT sector. This paper suggests that:

- There is need for a special incentive programme to induce investment in the ICT sector while at the same time, there is need to promote legislations for the protection of online business transactions, to ensure adequate privacy security and privacy.
- There is need for an increase in the literacy rate in ICT using ICT tools like e-Learning to enhance the usage of ICT tools as well as reduce the cost of gaining access to the computer and internet. As such this paper urges the government to work on policies that affect the ICT sector. The cost of acquiring such tools should be subsidized to encourage acquisition of such tools.
- Growth in the labor force is one of the determinants of a nation's maximum sustainable, or potential, rate of economic expansion. However**,** in the period of study in this paper, the relationship between women's participation in the labor force of Nigeria and economic growth is inverse and insignificant. This is attributed to the level of economic development, social norms, education levels, fertility rates and other factors. From policy perspectives, this paper therefore recommend that:
- Educational opportunities for the girl child should be extended to the nooks and crannies of the country so as to enhance socio-economic family planning techniques and methods to reduce the burden of women in the labour force. In that regard, child care in the form of day care centers, pri-school education etc., should be provided and subsidized.
- In urban areas and most especially in the rural areas in Nigeria, efforts should be geared towards increasing access to ICT education, removing socio-cultural norms that discourage women from studying science and technology, and removing stereotypes that women have towards ICT jobs (Hafkin and Taggart, 2001).
- The general public should be re-oriented and educated that both gender have equal chance of being employed into any sector of the economy. This can be done by creating awareness through seminars, conferences and workshop. In the same vein, employers should be encouraged to give all gender equal opportunity and chance to pursue their potentials especially if they have potentials required for a particular job. However, particular attention should be focused on men by enlightening them on the essence of encouraging their spouses on any career they may choose as long as it does not affected the family in any way. In addition, the society should discourage existing cultural and religious practices which forbid women from taking up paid employment.
- Government of Nigeria should focus on encouraging cottage industries in rural areas where the participation of women can easily be increased due to their cultural and traditional skills. Similarly, public and private partnership in the cottage industries should be explored in order to facilitate industrial expansion to accommodate the unemployed in Nigeria.
- There should be systematic inclusion of gender concerns at the policy, institutional and managerial levels in Nigeria, that way the employment needs of female can be met.

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