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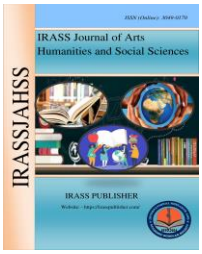

Interrogating the Inclusion of The Female Gender in Medium-Sized Urban Settlements, The Case of Ilaro, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study assessed the inclusion of girls in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs in medium-sized settlements like Ilaro in Nigeria. The study identified areas where TVET activities are taking place, investigate the level of female participation, and explore reasons behind their underrepresentation. It equally proposed sustainable solutions to enhance girls' inclusion in TVET programs. These aims were achieved through identification of schools offering TVET programs in Ilaro; evaluation of the extent of the girl-child inclusion in TVET programs; investigating rationales behind the low participation of girls in TVET programs, and suggestion of measures that would culminate in the enhancement of female inclusion in TVET programs. The study employed the snowball technique to engage 21 stakeholders, including principals and technology-based subjects' teachers from seven government-owned schools. Research revealed that four key obstacles mostly prevent female students from accessing TVET programs in the study area: societal norms, delivery-related challenges, policy and governmental limitations, and geographical constraints peculiar to border regions. It, however, recommends orienting and enlightening parents, especially those from low-income backgrounds, about the importance of gender equality and the potential of TVET programs to empower girls.

Keywords: Girl-Child, Inclusion, Qualitative, Sustainable, TVET.

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Introduction

The goal of technical, vocational education and training, or TVET, is to develop and use applicable practical skills in order to improve society and, in essence, pull people out of economic backwaters (Abubakar, 2021). Since underprivileged groups frequently have restricted access to the skills training offered by conventional technical and vocational training institutes, TVET is frequently seen as an effective way to empower marginalized communities. In the context in which it is being used, disadvantage may be associated with gender, disability, purchasing power, geographic access, and health status (e.g., individuals with HIV/AIDS). UNEVOC-UNESCO, 2022

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals focuses specifically on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in addition to Goal 4, which calls for women from underprivileged groups to be taken into consideration for inclusive, high-quality education. The use of enabling technology, specifically information and communications technology, to support women's empowerment is the focus of Target 5b. Women continue to be disproportionately excluded from TVET despite governments around the world working to domesticate the SDGs in their national development plans and policy frameworks. According to Ngugi and Muthima (2017), women, who make up around half of the world's population, are thought to make up two thirds of the workforce. Ironically, though, they hold a scant one hundredth of the world's real estate and make a pitiful tenth of its income (Adelakun, Oviawe, & Barfa, 2015). According to Udeani and Ejikeme (2011), these disparities can be connected to unequal access to training opportunities.

A lack of basic education credentials, the direct and indirect costs of enrollment, a lack of awareness of the value of training, and other factors are some of the obstacles preventing underprivileged populations from accessing TVET. However, a lot of the obstacles to women's empowerment are more directly linked to the sociocultural customs that have established distinct roles for men and women. Women have been conditioned into a variety of discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices, including limitations that restrict their freedom of movement, behavior, and opportunity (Hussain, 2016). Straitjackets are applied to women's everyday activities, such as choosing what educational levels, destinations, and employment options they can pursue, as well as

their fashion sense and social networks. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the participation of girls in TVET in order to provide long-term strategies for increasing the number of females in TVET-based activities.

Problem Statement

According to a recent estimate by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, there are roughly 21.7 million unemployed Nigerians, of which 12.2 million (56%) are women. (2020, Durojaiye). Ironically, despite severe economic hardship and rising unemployment, foreign workers are displacing native-born people in engineering-based occupations like carpentry, masonry, bricklaying, tiling, and automechanical artisanship—all of which are fundamentally stereotyped as not being feminine. Long-standing gender-based stereotypes, which are partially caused by the perceived difficulty of engineering careers and other issues that border on optics, discourage girls and women from pursuing these careers and prevent the enormous potential skills of a large pool of the female population—which could be used for economic development and self-empowerment—from being fully realized. With some nuances, just a few investigations have validated the above. According to Mafa and Mohammed (2013), cultural bias and religion are among the reasons why women participate in TVET activities at lower rates. Egun and Tibi (2010) have previously linked the low number of female teachers, the high cost of TVET, and the parents' educational attainment to the decreased enrollment of female students in TVET-based cognitive activities. According to a different study, eight factors—interest, enrollment, the masculine perception of science, social hurdles, role modeling, school, teacher, and family factors—preclude women from proportionately engaging in TVET activities (Udeni, 2012). Furthermore, Nwakego (2014) and Suleiman (2012) concur that socially built preconceptions against girls are the root cause of their low participation in technical activities.

It is important to remember that the aforementioned research was conducted in normal metropolitan environments. In the particular setting of the border regions of Western Nigeria, which are a melting pot of various Francophonic and Anglophonic inclinations and cultures, none of the studies had sought to examine gender exclusion from TVET. Additionally, the research used quantitative or explanatory methods instead of qualitative methods to pinpoint the problems' broader circumstances. These gaps, however, present a research opportunity to use a qualitative approach to evaluate the degree of girl-child TVET inclusion in a medium-sized settlement in the western Nigerian border region, with the goal of proposing long-term solutions to increase the number of girls participating in TVET-based activities.

Aim and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the degree of TVET participation among girls in Ilaro, a medium-sized settlement in the western Nigerian border region of Ogun State, Nigeria, in order to provide long-term strategies for increasing the number of girls engaged in TVET-based activities. The particular goals are to:

- Determine which schools in the research area are hosting TVET-related events;
- Examine the extent to which female students are included in TVET;
- Use a qualitative and interactive method to examine the causes of the observed degree of inclusion;
- Make recommendations for improving the study area's TVET enrollment of female students.

Methodology

Geographically, Ilaro is situated in Ogun State's Yewa South Local Government Area in South-Western Nigeria. Latitude-wise, it is situated between 6° 53' 0" North and 3° 1' 0" East of the meridian. Ogun State's Ilaro. The Yewa South Local Government, which borders the Republic of Benin, has its headquarters in Ilaro. It is roughly 100 kilometers from Ikeja, the capital of Lagos State, and 50 kilometers from Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun State.

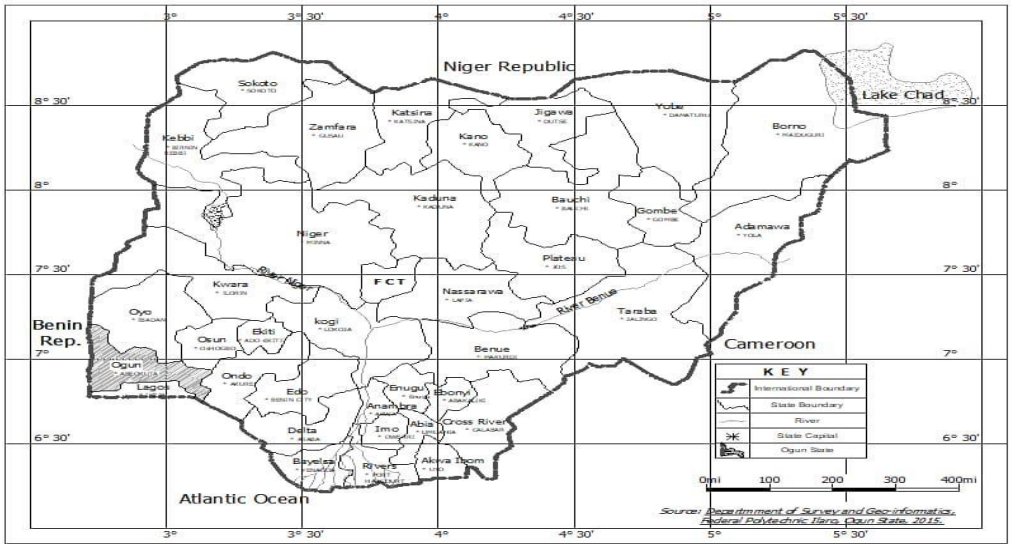

Figure 1: Nigerian map. *Source: Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Department of Survey and Geo Informatics, 2025.*

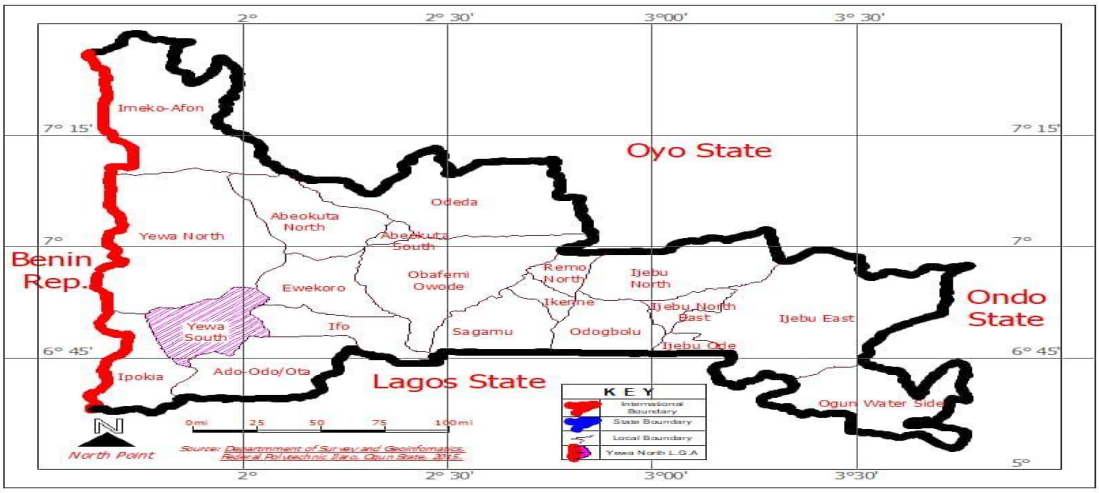

Figure 2: Ogun State map. Source: *Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Department of Survey and Geo Informatics, 2025.*

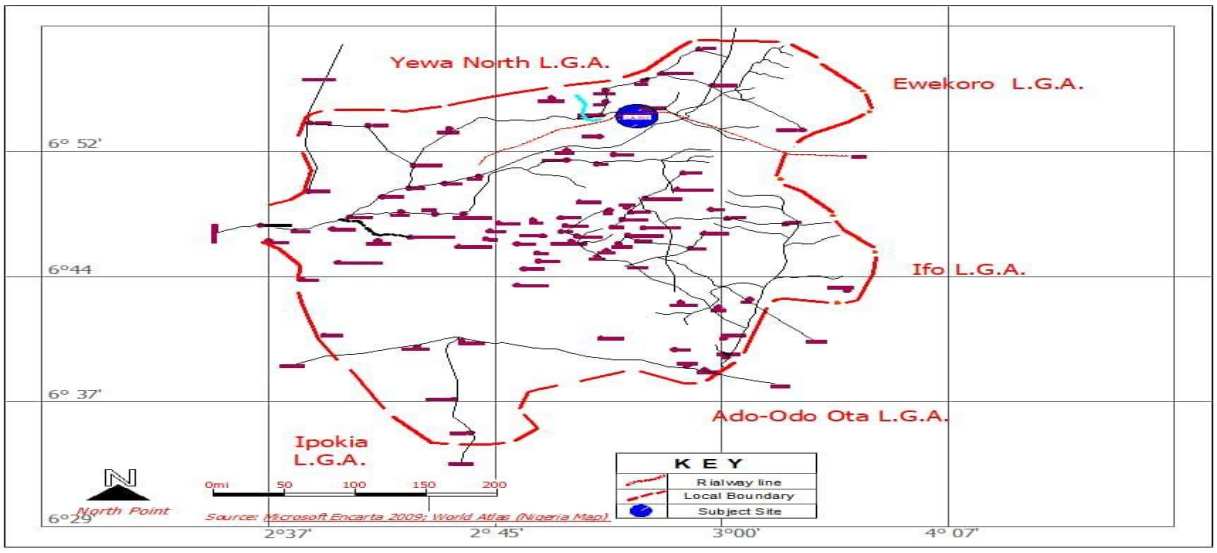

Figure 3: Map of the Local Government Area of Yewa South. *Federal Polytechnic Ilaro (2025)* is the source.

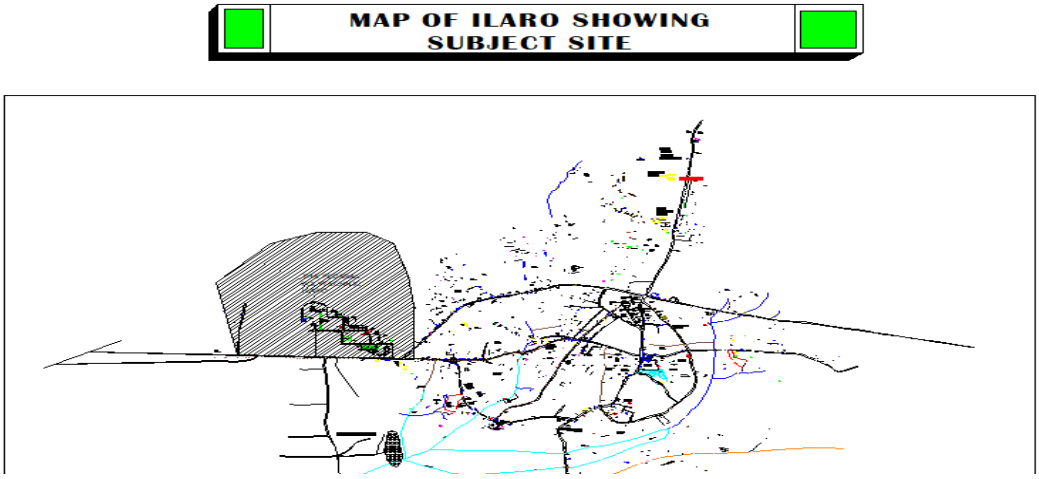

Figure 4: The study area is shown on the Ilaro Town map. *Ilaro Zonal Planning Authority (2025)* is the source.

In order to gather the list of principals and two teachers/instructors of technology-based courses in each of the seven government-owned schools in the Ilaro community, the study used the snowball technique. Baptist High School in Ilaro, Anglican Grammar School in Ilaro, Orona High School in Ilaro, Yewa College in Ilaro, Itolu Community High School in Ilaro, Emmanuel Grammar School, and Ogun State Technical College in Ajegunle are the institutions that have been identified. There are 21 participants and stakeholders involved in all. In order to examine the problems surrounding female inclusion in TVET in the Ilaro community, the study used focused group discussions in a participative manner. In contrast to quantitative approaches, which could only elicit superficial information, the qualitative approach allows for a more thorough understanding of the difficulties from

the operators of the schools where TVET-based subjects are taught. Over the course of three days, two hours were spent each day on the Focused Group Discussion. Over the course of the three days and three sessions, the complete five-person study team participated. Before consensus viewpoints were selected and documented, the Focused Group Discussion's methodology allowed for thorough expressions of every theme that was brought to the forefront for discussion.

Discussion of Findings

First and foremost, the panel concurs that, in general, their schools exhibit a gender-inclusive lack of interest in TVET-based disciplines. However, the TVET-based courses that serve as the foundation for significant skilled occupations like technical drawing, metalworking, woodworking, plumbing, electrical work, etc., are disproportionately denied to female students. The panel categorized the four factors—social barriers, delivery challenges, policy and governmental factors, and the border region factor—after citing a number of reasons for the disproportionate exclusion of female students from TVET-based courses.

Social Barriers

The idea that TVET-based courses are burdensome and that women, who have been socially and religiously constituted as the "weaker vessels," shouldn't pursue them has become commonplace. The obscurity and fashion sense that ought to characterize women's position in society are equally influenced by the religious aspects of the social construct. For example, it's believed that the majority of TVET-based activities might force women and girls to wear trousers, which the religiously minded consider inappropriate. This is in line with Mafa and Mohammed (2013) and Hussain (2016), who attributed the reduced participation of women in TVET activities to cultural bias and religion, although with a more specific context. All of the aforementioned together serve as the foundation for stereotypes directed at women in TVET. Given that various genders are fostered and molded into distinct professions and social responsibilities, it explains why parents in the research area continue to set restrictions on gender skills. In the study area, for example, parents are still accustomed to purchasing dolls for their girls and teaching them how to cook, while their males are subjected to more difficult responsibilities. However, it should be highlighted that low-income demographics are disproportionately associated with the exclusion of the female gender. It has been noted that privileged children and female wards are more represented in TVET.

Challenges of Delivery

The panel concluded that there are many obstacles preventing TVET-based subjects from being taught in a way that disproportionately excludes girls. First of all, the majority of institutions that provide TVET-based subject courses lack qualified instructors as well as the facilities and tools necessary to conduct instruction efficiently. Second, female teachers who should act as role models for the hordes of female pupils, as outlined in Udeni (2012), are underrepresented in schools with qualified and TVET-inclined teachers. Third, there is a lack of training and retraining opportunities for the qualified teachers to stay up to date with new technology and trends. Fourth, there is a lack of mainstreaming of paradigm shifts that can improve the gender inclusion of TVET-based subjects in secondary and tertiary curriculum development.

Policy and Governmental Factors

The majority of the schools in the research area were fundamentally not constructed for the purpose of teaching TVET-based courses, as evidenced by the lack of workshops, equipment, and TVET-based teachers. As a result, the panel concluded that the current educational policy did not favor TVET. The panel also concurred that competent educators in schools need more training and retraining than government employees in regulatory offices, who appear to receive more government funding for training. The local community's attitude on the perceived inferiority of TVET-based initiatives is influenced by the emphasis on certificates and dichotomy in Nigeria's university sector, as well as the resulting limitations in the upward mobility potential of graduates of tertiary TVET institutions. This deters the majority of parents from introducing their kids—especially the girls—to the realm of technical and vocational education.

Border Region Factor

The panel concluded that, in the broader context of an intolerable macroeconomic environment, which is primarily supported by youth unemployment, border regions are a melting pot of various negative tendencies brought on by the porous nature of borders and the dynamics of cultural exchanges among migrating demographics. The panel concurs that any kind of erudition is distracted by the smugglers' operations in the border region and the gaudy showiness that goes along with them. In a similar vein, it is well recognized that cybercriminals have lifestyles that undermine the fundamentals of education. The most susceptible to these inclinations are teenage females from low-income families who are enrolled in secondary schools that teach TVET-based subjects or are undertaking vocational training. The majority of them are seduced and seduced by the glitz and glamour of luxury, finally fall pregnant, and have their aspirations for school dashed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The argument for girls' exclusion from TVET was made at the beginning of the paper. In order to extract broader yet more detailed explanations for the disproportionate exclusion of women from TVET in the research area, a qualitative approach was taken. However, after lengthy deliberations, the panel categorized the disproportionate exclusion of female students from TVET-based subjects into four groups: the Border Region Factor, Policy and Governmental Factors, Social Barriers, and Delivery Challenges. The following suggestions for improving the involvement of women in TVET within the research area were also unanimously accepted by the panel. First, the panel suggests that various TVET interest organizations educate and orient parents—particularly those in the low-income group—about the gender-neutrality of talents. Customized gowns that adhere to cultural norms can address the problem of dresses' cultural appropriateness. Second, curriculum development must incorporate paradigm shifts that support the improvement of female inclusion in technical and vocational education. Three, as they may act as role models for the hordes of girls, the Ogun State government should give preference to women when hiring qualified female teachers. By providing sufficient facilities and resources for the training and retraining of qualified TVET-based instructors, the government should also renovate the schools to accommodate mainstream TVET. Fourth, in order to help with endowments, which can take the form of teacher training or facility donations to enhance learning outcomes, schools must collaborate with outside parties such as industry,

community-based organizations, and tertiary TVET institutions in their areas. Five, in order to engage female students and provide the delayed gratification construct with real-world application, a concerted effort must be made to introduce accomplished TVET-based role models from the industry or academia. This may serve as a means of protecting their minds from the numerous outside influences that shorten their dreams.

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Statements and Declarations

- **Competing Interests**: The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.
- **Ethical Approval**: Not applicable.
- **Consent to Participate**: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.
- **Data Availability Statement:** the field data that formed the basis of the study's results can be made available upon reasonable request.
- **Author Contributions**: All authors were involved in the production and writing of the manuscript. Conceptualization was done by Olusegun Aluko, Olasunkanmi Olapeju, Babajide Soyemi, Olubunmi Banjo and Olubusayo Irivboje. Data collection was coordinated by Olusegun Aluko, Olasunkanmi Olapeju, Babajide Soyemi, Olubunmi Banjo and Olubusayo Irivboje. Formal analysis was performed by Olusegun Aluko, Olasunkanmi Olapeju, Babajide Soyemi, Olubunmi Banjo and Olubusayo Irivboje. Olusegun Aluko, Olasunkanmi Olapeju, Babajide Soyemi, Olubunmi Banjo and Olubusayo Irivboje.were involved in investigation. Methodology was ideated by Olasunkanmi Olapeju and Babajide Soyemi. The writing of the original draft was done by Olasunkanmi Olapeju. Review and editing were performed by Olusegun Aluko, Olasunkanmi Olapeju, Babajide Soyemi, Olubunmi Banjo and Olubusayo Irivboje.

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