



Promoting Gender Equality through ICT: A Pathway to Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The continuing existence of disparities in access and control over resources between men and women, as well as overt discrimination against women, has been identified as a potential clog in the wheel of sustainable development in many countries, including Nigeria. Nigeria achieved strong progress in the gender equality-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); however, the goal was not met. Thus, the country needs to urgently address these issues to make meaningful progress toward attaining the ongoing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While studies have highlighted the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to accelerate gender equality, not much has been discussed about the concrete approach that can be used to achieve sustainable development goals. Using a narrative review approach, this paper examines gender equality and sustainable development issues in Nigeria. It also identified effective ways ICT could be used to promote gender equality, as well as the strategic roles of libraries and information professionals in achieving gender equality towards the attainment of sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Gender equality; sustainable development goals; information and communication technologies, library; information professionals.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an extraordinary outpouring of studies, research, and advocacy on gender equality. This is because gender equality is now widely acknowledged as a universal movement throughout the world, and it has become a burning issue at the center of human rights and United Nations values. Attaining gender equality is inextricably linked to all other sustainable development goals and their targets, such as poverty reduction, good health and well-being, inclusive and equitable quality education, and so on. Meanwhile, countries with significant gender inequality have been shown to have significant poor indicators in growth and well-being, including poor nutrition, high maternal mortality rate, high infant mortality rate, high poverty rate, low life expectancy, low level of literacy, and high HIV/AIDS prevalence. The direct and indirect effects of these challenges affect women more than men, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Aina, 2011; Williams, Väisänen & Padmadas, 2022).

Women are known to play an important role in socio-cultural and economic activities in many low and middle-income countries, particularly where micro and low-income-generating businesses are common.

Hence, women's economic inclusion in all spheres of activity is critical to supporting economic growth and sustainable development. Women's economic participation, driven by empowerment, has a ripple effect that benefits their entire constituency—children, families, communities, and the nation as a whole. Unfortunately, unlike their male counterparts, women and girls frequently bear the burden of working in insecure, low-paying jobs with few opportunities, responsibilities, and access to services. One of the identified ways to bridge this gap is through the engagement of information and communication technologies (Wamala, 2012). Danjuma, Onimode and Onche (2015), in their study, suggested that specific attention needs to be given to women's inclusion to achieve gender-positive results in ICT.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as the Internet, digital gadgets, cell phones, and wireless networks, are fundamental to the functioning of our societies and have offered incredible opportunities to fight gender inequality. Considering the many benefits of ICTs, Olumide and Anazia (2019) asserted that the advancement of ICTs presents significant opportunities for women, who should be integral components and key actors in the information society. Nonetheless, this is not true in many under-developed countries, including Nigeria. Unless women are actively involved in the planning and use of technologies, there is a risk that ICTs will serve to reinforce rather than overcome gender inequalities (Wilson & Lawan, 2015). From the various literature reviewed, it can be seen that ICT has the potential of advancing gender equality and achieving sustainable development goals. It is against this background that this paper aims to discuss and elaborate on effective ways to use ICTs to promote gender equality. Thus, the discussion would be done under the following sub-headings: gender equality and sustainable development goals, a theoretical perspective from the lens of gender, identified ways to use ICT as a tool to promote gender equality, as well as the strategic role of library and information professionals.

2. Gender Equality and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Gender equality refers to a situation where both men and women are treated equally and are not subjected to any form of discrimination based on their gender. According to Chinwokwu and Arop (2018), gender equality “implies that there should be no discrimination of any individual on the basis of sex with regard to the allocation of economic resources, political positions or access to social services.” Equality here does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities, duties, and opportunities will not be determined by whether they are born male or female. This also means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights in contributing to, and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development (IncludeGender, 2016; Mishra & Kiran, 2015; UNESCO, 2003).

Historically, advocacy for gender equality traces back to the time of Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, when women were regarded as weak, cautious, and suited only for domestic roles, while men were deemed strong, independent, bold, active, and rational (Lawal, Ayoade, & Taiwo, 2016). Regrettably, this is still the norm in many societies today. Empirical research undertaken to examine the influence of gender equality on sustainable development revealed that gender inequality has a devastating negative impact on sustainable development in both developed and developing countries (Gbadebo, Keshiro, Sule, Adeyemi & Yemi, 2018). Gbadebo, et al. (2018) findings showed that gender equality has a significant positive relationship with sustainable development.

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the basic needs of the current generation in a way that will not affect the ability of the future generation to meet their needs (Borowy, 2013). Gender equality serves as an essential building block for this kind of development. Recognizing the interdependence of gender equality and development, 193 United Nations Member States signed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. They pitched gender equality (Goal 5) as both a standalone goal and a key component of attaining an inclusive and sustainable development agenda by 2030. It aims at ensuring that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere, and in order to achieve this, women must have full and equal participation in decision-making and policy development. More so, it

is often identified as a key issue in the economic development of emerging economies; thus, Goal 5 is considered to be critical to the success of all other SDGs.

In the era of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that preceded the SDGs, it was reported that though Nigeria achieved strong progress in gender equality-related areas, the goal was not met (Office of the Senior Special Assistant, 2015). It is important to note that the success or failure of achieving the MDGs varied among countries. Nigeria, like many other countries, faced challenges in meeting the MDGs by 2015 due to many factors such as economic conditions, policies and budgets, leadership, social issues, and governance, amongst others (Oluwagbemi, 2017; Inamura & Kumar, 2022). Recently, the progress evaluation conducted in 2024 shows that the world is well behind schedule in achieving the 2030 SDG Agenda. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, further alluded that only 17 percent of the SDG targets are on track, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over one-third has stalled or even regressed (United Nations, 2024).

In most developed countries, gender equality has largely been given due recognition, and many laws have been enacted to give women and girls equal rights like their male counterparts. On the contrary, in developing countries like Africa, the consciousness and fight for gender equality seem to have been recognized, but the patriarchy of men has not allowed women and girls to enjoy equal rights. Chinwokwu and Arop (2018) argued that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless women are given unrestricted access to fully realize their natural potentials. The effects of these issues have short and long-term economic implications. Any process of growth that fails to improve the economic status of women, experiences the greatest hardship. In the long run, the low status of women is likely to translate into lower rates of economic development (Asuru, 2017). As a result, to close this gap, women all over the world can leverage information and communication technologies to promote gender equality, access to quality education and jobs, empowerment, and provide access to basic healthcare-related information. The linkage between technology and women's rights is also highlighted in SDG 5, specifically in target 5. B, which explicitly emphasizes the importance of leveraging technology and ICTs to promote women's and girls' empowerment.

In summary, this review highlights the crucial role of gender equality in economic development and its essential contribution to achieving the SDGs. The identified gap emphasizes that achieving sustainable development in Nigeria requires equal opportunities for women. Therefore, urgent intervention is needed to leverage the potential of ICTs to attain gender equality and position women at the forefront of sustainable development.

3. Theoretical framework: Conflict Theory

This paper is anchored on a conflict theory perspective. The groundwork for the theory was laid by Karl Max and Friedrich Engels. The conflict paradigm posits that every society is characterized by inequality caused by social disparities between the dominant group and subordinate groups. According to this theory, society is a battle for supremacy between social classes (bourgeois and proletariat) competing for limited resources. The dominant group always strives to maintain their dominance and control the resources at the expense of the subordinate groups (FasterCapital, 2024). In the context of gender, conflict theory explains that gender inequality came to exist because the men are trying to maintain power and privilege at the cost of the women's benefit. However, contemporary conflict theorists argue that as women enter the workforce and become wage earners, they can gain power and challenge existing power dynamics while creating a more inclusive and equitable society. This theory provides a useful framework for understanding how gender inequality is perpetuated in society and the efforts that can be taken by women to effect social change (Conerly, Holmes & Tamang, 2021). This social change can be achieved by leveraging ICTs for empowering women, creating opportunities and advocating for their rights. This perspective supports the idea that social change is possible through collective action and mobilization.

4. Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a Tool to Promote Gender Equality in Nigeria

The evolution and widespread adoption of information and communication technologies has permeated every aspect of human endeavour. The advancement of ICTs has created new opportunities for men and women to obtain and share knowledge (Melhem & Tandon, 2009). Cummings and O'Neil (2015) describe ICTs as a broad term that covers various devices used for generating and communicating information. These devices encompass traditional technologies like radio, television, and video, as well as modern devices such as computers, mobile phones, and the Internet. The concept of ICT refers to both technological developments and the convergence of ICTs, which contributed to what is more commonly referred to as the information society. This evolution has brought about changes in social interactions, economic and business practices, political participation, health, education, and entertainment. ICTs have also become widespread and influential tools for social and economic development, enabling people to access, store, share, transfer, and utilize information in their daily activities (Heyns, Probert & Borden, 2015; Lawal, Ayoade & Taiwo, 2016).

While there is a general recognition of the possibilities of ICT to advance gender equality and empower women, a "gender divide" continues to exist, with significantly fewer women utilizing these technologies compared to men (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2002). Of course, it is impossible to overlook the existing gap in ICT use between men and women. In those countries with disproportionately lower income, women face greater constraints on access and use of ICTs. The root causes of this inequality include high costs, low digital skills, rural-urban divides, a dearth of relevant and empowering content for women, and barriers to women's capacity to speak freely and discreetly online, among other factors (Garten, 2017). Where ICT facilities are available in many societies, including Nigeria, various factors have hindered their effective utilization among women. These include inadequate gender involvement in information and technology, inaccessibility to the internet, dearth of functional libraries or information centres in rural areas, language barriers, and the shortage of educational resources. Other factors include domestic responsibilities and their associated lack of time; facility location, unsuitable content, and socio-cultural norms. For instance, the ICT sector is currently more active in urban areas, resulting in wide regional disparities in the distribution of ICT facilities (Danjuma, Onimode & Onche, 2015; Ponge, 2016).

Several studies have been conducted across the globe to evaluate the participation of women in ICTs. Some focused on gender issues, such as the under-representation of women in ICTs. Ojokoh, Zhang, Oluwadare and Akintola (2013) did a comparative study on the extent to which women in Nigeria and China use ICTs. The result shows that women in both countries recognize the importance of ICTs, but those in Nigeria were constrained from full utilization of ICT benefits due to electricity supply problems, financial constraints, and inadequate training for ICTs. Abubakar and Dasuki (2018) studied how ICTs influence women's empowerment, with a special focus on WhatsApp usage by women in Kano, northern Nigeria. The analysis shows that mobile phones have aided the use of WhatsApp among women, hence supporting their empowerment by allowing participation in developmental activities. However, various contextual factors impede women from fully capitalizing on the developmental opportunities that WhatsApp offers. Despite the resources invested in gender and ICT initiatives, the benefits for women in local communities have often been minimal.

On the benefits of ICT use among women, Nikulin's (2016) findings confirmed that the adoption of ICTs has a favorable impact on women's engagement in the labor market in developing countries. Therefore, ICTs can be effective tools to overcome gender inequalities for women and girls, as well as empowerment tools more generally (Cummings & O'Neil, 2015). Gurusurthy and Chami (2014) further averred that ICTs can be used as tools to challenge gender inequality and promote women's towards achieving sustainable development. Practically, ICTs can be used to promote gender equality towards achieving sustainable development goals in the following ways:

4.1 Promotion of Information Literacy and Digital Education:

Information literacy and digital education are increasingly perceived as critical components in achieving SDGs at all levels. In Nigeria, it has been noted that fifty percent of girls are out of school for reasons such as domestic violence, pregnancy, child labour, insecurity, and hunger, among others (Punch, 2023). Every girl child has the right to education (Kaguara, 2012). As such, the importance of promoting information literacy and digital education towards achieving gender equality cannot be overstated in today's rapidly evolving world. During the fourth United Nations Conference, Beijing Platform for Action, emphasis was placed on the crucial role of education in advancing the status of women, affirming its centrality to gender equality and women's empowerment. The Platform for Action also specifically called for the elimination of gender discrimination in education at all levels. It also called for the eradication of illiteracy among women and emphasized the need to improve access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education (Aina, 2011; Mezie-okoye, 2018).

Information and technologies have helped to increase literacy rates all over the world. For example, the Internet has become an important aspect of the learning process, especially with the availability of online and offline resources. Studies have proved that there is a digital divide existing between women and men in both urban and rural settings (Nikulin, 2016). It must be noted that women in poor countries, especially in rural areas, do not have adequate access to education and technological skills to utilize ICTs efficiently. However, the digital divide is gradually narrowing due to the increasing access to mobile phones and the Internet. Technologies, particularly those in the global ICT revolution, give women many opportunities for economic advancement and learning opportunities. In order to enhance life opportunities for women in developing countries, the internet and ICT tools can help ease physical barriers to education and learning. This is particularly possible with the upward thrust of high-quality free courses in diverse disciplines that can be delivered via the Massively Open Online Course (MOOC) (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). It is not enough to simply have access to ICTs; women also need the skills and resources necessary to use them effectively (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). There is substantial evidence suggesting that education is a key solution to addressing illiteracy and poverty among women. A woman who has completed at least secondary school has both the ability and the desire to engage with the possibilities that the Internet and information technologies offer, while an uneducated woman is more likely to conform to traditional gender roles and avoid technology, regardless of her access to it (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). But without the skills to use the technologies, women can remain at the lowest levels of the economic ladder (Ponge, 2016). It can be inferred that promoting information literacy and digital education can help mitigate the gender digital divide, thereby advancing opportunities for women and contributing to broader social and economic development goals.

4.2 Networking and Advocacy to Promote Gender Equality:

ICTs have emerged as an effective tool for social mobilization and development, particularly for women and those working with organizations dedicated to promoting gender equality (Plou, 2003). ICT can be used to create a group dedicated to discussing and organizing women's movements and campaigns for equality both locally and internationally, as well as reaching out to those in authority. With this platform, there can be easy partnerships and collaboration between women, inter-governmental agencies, non-governmental bodies, and other stakeholders, which can result in increased networking, awareness-raising, mobilization, and knowledge sharing regarding matters pertaining to the status of women and girls in society. Many of the meetings, conferences, and symposiums about women's gender equality via online and webinars have been very useful in that they discussed and highlighted issues concerning women, which led to many resolutions and guidelines to improve the well-being of women and girls. The information generated and gathered during these meetings could provide a growing body of evidence to reflect on the social, economic, and political status of women. These can encourage the democratization of policy processes, which can translate to a universal voice for a particular course. For one, it would encourage solidarity, support, and emphasize shared experiences as well as togetherness in championing a universal call. Furthermore, this approach would foster

advocacy for policy changes, promote the development of inclusive and intersectional leadership, and stimulate collective action to advance global gender equality. It can be inferred that ICTs could play a crucial role for crafting inclusive networks, sharing knowledge, and mobilizing collective action, which are essential for driving meaningful social change and policy reform.

4.3 E-governance and Women's Access to Public Information:

ICTs are increasingly being used to deliver e-governance and service delivery, with the aim of providing public services online and improving government procedures and services for citizens and businesses. This has allowed consultations and dialogue with the citizenry to source for policy-relevant ideas and information, therefore, improving their performances.

E-government provides an opportunity for gender equality because it has the potential for policy that can fundamentally alter existing power structures. This shift has already started to transform the government's capacity to strengthen its relationship with citizens. Hence, it provides an occasion for women to participate in governance, institutions, and processes, and most importantly, it has opened new avenues for women to engage in public discussions and contribute to decision-making, thus reinforcing their position and social status in society. This could significantly improve women's involvement in social and political spheres as well as their economic empowerment. As earlier discussed, a gender gap persists in economic and political participation between men and women; as such, for women to achieve democratic participation, respect for their human rights, and equal representation in the public sphere and governance, access to ICTs, information sources, and communication channels is essential (Siochru, 2003). From the above discussion, it can be inferred that the incorporation of ICTs into governance holds considerable potential for advancing gender equality by improving access to governance, increasing participation, and empowering women economically and socially. Addressing the gender gap in political participation and ensuring equal access to digital resources are key to leveraging these opportunities effectively.

4.4 Enhanced Capacity-building for Women's Empowerment:

Developments in ICT capabilities for women and girls provide ample opportunities and can create an enabling environment to support their self-determination and economic empowerment. This is especially important given the high rate of unemployment and struggle for survival in a male-dominated world (Akomolafe & Adeola, n.d.). Ladokun et al. (2013) noted that ICTs have the potential to advance the core business processes of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Motilewa, Onakoya and Oke (2015) carried out qualitative research to examine the influence of ICTs in tackling the gender-specific challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Nigeria. It was found that through traditional and modern ICTs, women entrepreneurs are now afforded new opportunities to comparatively establish and expand their businesses despite cultural, financial, and educational constraints. It was also observed that female entrepreneurs acknowledged the role of ICT tools in shaping their businesses, yet their adoption of these tools was slow.

According to Singh, Singh, and Kumar (2018), ICTs have the potential to alleviate some of the challenges faced mainly by women, such as illiteracy, time constraints, hindrances to mobility, and cultural and religious taboos. This means that ICTs can provide unlimited opportunities to promote equal opportunities to obtain educational entrepreneurship, information technology literacy, economic development, as well as social engagement through new innovative thinking and tools. With a Google search, female entrepreneurs gain access to thousands and millions of possible funding organizations (Melhem & Tandon, 2009). At various levels, even though at a low rate, women and girls are now being provided training on the use of ICT-related job opportunities, skill enhancement, career growth, and greater work efficiency. Access to relevant business information through the Internet can boost women's income and increase their sense of empowerment and equity, which can consequently contribute positively to economic growth and development as well as improve livelihoods and quality of life (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kithatu-Kiwেকে, 2017).

Commenting on the impact of ICT training for women in Bolivia and Kenya, Wamala (2012) reported that the training has led to an increasing number of female leaders being able to gain key political positions and self-empowerment, courtesy of social media such as blogs and Skype, which made it easier and cheaper to connect, which in turn advanced their confidence and unity in discussing issues most pertinent to them. Beyond just having internet access and related technologies, women need the knowledge and resources to leverage this access effectively. More so, women at the grassroots level can use ICTs to expand their businesses and promote their products. For instance, rural women can leverage ICTs and the internet to access the agri-business supply chain and promote their products in both local and global markets. This access can enhance their sales, boost their earnings, and improve their competitive position, leading to greater wealth and economic development. However, it must be noted that access to technology alone is not enough; women need skills and resources to use ICT effectively. This suggests that training and support are essential for optimizing the benefits of technology. Addressing these gaps could provide a more meaningful prospect to maximize the possible opportunity.

4.5 Campaigning and Dissemination of Women's Rights-based Information:

ICT can be a transformative tool for women to overcome discrimination and attain full equality, well-being, and active involvement in decision-making processes that impact their lives and the future of their communities. ICTs have opened up a direct window for women to the outside world (Ponge, 2016). According to Cummings and O'Neil (2015), ICTs are capable of helping women and girls make more informed decisions, as it is well known that they are unduly affected by information inequality.

Information is one of the critical forces that drive development, which can be derived from education and lifelong learning. Without any doubt, ICT has helped in so many ways to reduce the limitations obstructing access to information for all. ICTs have helped to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge sharing, increase accessibility, and create a platform for exposure to the traditions, values, norms, and practices of different cultures and societies. This has in turn increased awareness of issues surrounding gender inequality and changed the wider negative perception about the roles of women. The information shared can be seen in the emerging ideas of rights-based development issues relating to information about working papers, guidelines, laws, and legal procedures for attaining gender equality. The current issues surrounding the international human rights of women raised by other political and civil rights activists need to be communicated and involve all other women in their local communities. Added to this, information shared and knowledge gained can enable women to make more informed personal decisions and build a sense of confidence in their community and society at large.

4.6 ICT as an Amplifier of Women's Voices and Perspectives:

Another pathway to gender equality is using ICTs to critically engage and amplify the voices of women and girls. Leach (2016) asserted that one of the fundamental reasons we have not yet attained gender equality across all areas is the frequent exclusion of women's and girls' voices from global and national decision-making processes. One possible mechanism for amplifying women's voices is social networking sites, which encourage and foster self-expression. The arrival of mobile phones has given birth to faster and easier access to up-to-date information on different social media platforms. This technology enables women to connect with others across geographical boundaries, gain insights into global perspectives, and critically reflect on their own positions within the broader world. Through social media connections, women can discover new opportunities and broaden their horizons (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014).

According to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2002), ICTs, especially the Internet and social networking sites offer the potential to facilitate a diverse, inclusive globalization, with increased opportunities for women and others presently excluded. The role of the new media in the information society is crucial because today's media play a decisive role in the building of the public agenda

and have opened a new frontier for women's rights, thus enabling the articulation and propagation of their interests (Powell, 2018).

In addition, there are numerous blogs and web pages owned by or dedicated to women's organizations or alternative media outlets that address women's issues and concerns. Today, many women and girls are utilizing social media such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) to champion gender equality, thus raising sensitive gender issues and influencing their society. It has become a platform for putting out rights-based information for all. For instance, social media is advancing the interests of women and girls when they are ill-treated, discriminated against, or abused by men. They can communicate with the masses and have an impact due to the depth of messaging and their reach; hence, most of their pressing challenges can be addressed a lot quicker and influence the global community. It can be deduced that effectively harnessing ICT tools (new media) can offer a transformative pathway for addressing pressing issues, advancing women's rights, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

5. ICT for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development: The Strategic Involvement of Library and Information Professionals

Libraries and information resource centres are one of the leading educational institutions that preserve and present knowledge and materials to all categories of users. Hence, they are major partakers in all forms of development. Accordingly, the key role of libraries in driving sustainable development reinforces the idea of developing practical and appropriate services. Libraries and professional librarians' roles are evolving around the world. They have evolved from passive book custodians and preservers to facilitators of knowledge and continuous learning opportunities, identifying user needs, focusing on services, and communicating solutions (Eghworo, Ogo & Ayomanor, 2015).

Primarily, libraries and information professionals, especially in public libraries, can help bridge the digital gap between men and women by providing free access to ICTs, particularly Internet facilities. Some women still remain unaware of the Internet and its benefits, while others lack the technical skills or knowledge to navigate it effectively. Libraries, through their outreach community programs, can help provide digital literacy training and workshops to bridge this lack. Generally, public access to ICTs empowers people to make informed decisions and access information that can improve their lives, and that is why communities with timely and relevant information are better equipped to tackle poverty and gender inequality. Therefore, libraries and information professionals can facilitate access to ICTs for women in communities where infrastructure is rarely available.

Where ICT facilities are not available, information professionals can champion and advocate for the provision and establishment of digital centres for women and girls in their community. This can be achieved through advocacy and collaboration with local authorities, traditional rulers, and philanthropists who might be willing to write their name in gold in their community. Atuase (2018) asserted that, in Ghana, libraries contribute to bridging the inequality gap in community skills training programmes and partner with non-governmental organizations and other gender advocacy institutions to promote development.

Moreover, where ICT facilities are available, libraries and information professionals can ensure that ICTs and the skills to use them are offered to everyone, making them critical institutions for all in the digital age (Twesigye, 2017). Transforming the lives of women through targeted ICT training can be particularly effective in areas where they are lacking. Unless women have improved access to training and skills in scientific and technological fields, a greater proportion of them might be left behind as technological advancements continue to evolve. So, the training can be introduced to focus on computer literacy programs through workshops and community development programs, etc., with an emphasis on how to use computers and the Internet in transacting business and improve every facet of their lives. Consequently, when women make effective use of technology, there will be an improvement in their political, multi-cultural, social, and economic empowerment, as well as their quality of life. Thus, libraries and information professionals need

to make concerted efforts by making information technology facilities accessible, easy to comprehend, and useful to women towards attaining the SDGs.

6. Conclusion

Gender issues are sensitive and, as such, should not be trivialized or paid lip service to. Gender equality can be said to have been achieved when women, like their male counterparts, have equal rights, equal opportunities, and the ability to make decisions in their own lives and contribute meaningfully to society. From the discussion above, it has become clear that ICT can play a significant role in the advancement of gender equality. If the gender dimensions of ICTs are identified and harnessed effectively, ICT can be a powerful tool to promote gender equality and a catalyst for the political and social empowerment of women. Therefore, urgent action is needed to adequately harness the power of ICTs in order to put women at the forefront of sustainable development goals.

Government agencies in the ICT sector need to invest more resources towards developing human capital and fostering an enabling environment that supports women and girls. In addition, governments around the world need to create and implement legal and regulatory frameworks that drive ICT adoption among women and girls. Inclusive policies are essential to ensure that digital platforms offer valuable and relevant content, thereby enhancing access to and utilization of essential services for women. This study is not without some limitations. The study was not grounded on empirical data and is constrained by the researcher's programmatic assumptions. More so, the study did not fully address the practical challenges to implementing ICT-based solutions for promoting gender equality. Factors such as infrastructure limitations, resistance to change, and socio-cultural context could impact the effectiveness of adopting suggested strategies. Therefore, the identified approaches being canvassed should be executed with caution. Future studies could use a quantitative approach to test the assumptions. This could involve cross-sectional studies or longitudinal research to assess the broader applicability.

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