

**GENDER BALANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE FEDERAL  
CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA – NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The notion of gender inequality and discrimination against the female gender in education motivated this research. The study sought to investigate the gender structure in respect to secondary school enrolment and graduation in the FCT to verify the claims of discrimination against women in education. It adopted a qualitative and descriptive research approach using primary and secondary sources of data. The study hinged on the post-structuralist theory for its theoretical framework. It found out that although available statistics showed clear gender discrimination against women, the results obtained from the selected schools did not support that claim. Rather, it disclosed that more females were on enrolment and graduation statistics than their male counterparts. The study recommended amongst others that the FCT Administration and the Federal Government of Nigeria should sustain the current efforts that have achieved positive results for girl child education as well as begin the campaign for boy child education in order to reverse the sliding trend and reduce the literacy gap in the FCT and the country.

**Keywords:** Balance, Discrimination, Education, Gender, Inequality, Literacy

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, the issues of gender have increasingly become highly controversial and debatable. The most contentious issue of gender is the definitions or perspectives of that term which is no longer as simple as the male and female sexes. The term gender is a social construct of how men and women view different types of structures about themselves and their thought processes that diverge in content and form(Giddens, 2001). Feminists view gender from three perspectives: liberal, socialist and radical feminist perspectives. Liberal feminist argues for the equal treatment of both males and females. They advocate that the female gender should be allowed to develop their talents as much as the male gender and should not be decided on who to marry and how to live their lives. The socialist feminists on the other hand see gender from Karl Marx's socialist perspective. They believe that each gender should collectively act to overthrow the capitalist control of the means of production. Although they have no quarrels with patriarchy which is considered male dominance over the female, the socialist feminists are concerned about overthrowing the traditional means and

ownership of the means of production and replacing it with modern means of ownership such that both males and females can demand equal rights to the ownership of the means of production. The radical feminists argue that both the liberal and socialist feminists' perspectives are flawed as they promote patriarchy and male dominance over the female gender. They are of the view that the female gender should be able to stand on their own and fight for their rights. They advocate that females should be able to decide when and who to marry and also decide who to father their children. The main thrust of their argument is that male folks should have no dominance over female folks in society (Bryson, 1992).

The sociological perspective of gender stems from the writings of Talcott Parson's structural-functionalism theory. It is believed that both males and females are an integral part of a system and each part functions to socialize the other and complement what the other does. It explains the roles of the male folks who function as heads of the system and are so prepared through education and training. The female folks are seen as caregivers and are prepared to efficiently undertake such roles of childbearing and child upbringing. Many argue that this particular role of caregivers is what has been responsible for denying women their educational rights and developing their potential by most families because they consider that they would soon be married out and function mainly at home (Oakley cited in Haralambos and Holborn 2004). This view is what has given rise to many advocacy and women's rights groups pushing for gender equality and women's rights to education so they can aspire to any office or profession they have the capacity to attain.

Whatever definition or perspective of gender is adopted by any school of thought, the fact remains that there are two categories of individuals on earth. You are either a male or a female and were born either a male or a female. Even those who by the accident of nature was born with both male and female organs (hermaphrodites), do consider themselves among the sex that they have the dominant organ and characteristics. The notion of gender equality is a highly contested and controversial subject of debate. Except in terms of recognition, honour and remuneration, it is difficult to explain the term equality in gender. Among the female folks, all are not born equal but all have the same features which is termed equity. Some women are tall, others are short; some are big-sized, others are very slim; some consider themselves well-endowed, others feel deficient in front or behind and so require some form of augmentation. Since nature does not deal with everyone's equal attributes and characteristics, how then would it be possible to achieve gender equality on earth?

What probably is most appropriate to explain should be the equitable treatment of both the male and female gender. For instance, after several years of advocacy, the United States Soccer Federation after their female team defeated the Nigerian Super Falcons in Washington on 6 September 2022 by two goals to one, agreed to pay their female soccer team the same allowances and remuneration as they pay their male soccer team. There has also been a similar clamour for equal pay to male and female competitors in the Lawn Tennis Associations. All these establish the case for equity, not equality because, by physiological endowment, there are things a man can do that a woman cannot do and vice versa.

The focus of this paper is to contest the notion of gender inequality in the education sector. As espoused above, the notion of gender equality in education could be seen from the perspective of a ratio of one male to one female in the class. This would mean that if the

capacity of an educational institution in any country is for ten million students, then five million must be males and five million females. This is very simplistic and achievable if the population of all those in school age in that country exist on that ratio of one to one amongst male and female. In Nigeria, the advocacy of this gender equality in the education sector sparked the curiosity to investigate closely the trends in the structure of males and females in the secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja – Nigeria. The curiosity arose also against the backdrop that in many courses offered at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in most of the tertiary education institutions around the FCT, the females outnumber the male students by far yet, the cry of gender inequality still persists. The demographic structure of the population of Nigerians especially in the FCT is estimated to have more females than males. If that is the case, should one be looking at gender equality or gender equity in the education sector?

It is against this backdrop that this paper sought to investigate the gender balance in secondary schools in the FCT. The goal of this paper is to provide empirical findings on gender balance in secondary school enrolment and graduation. The study examined the trends in gender enrolment among selected secondary schools in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. Using data from 2009 to 2021, the study examined trends in gender enrolment and graduation among secondary school students and determined whether there is a balance or imbalance in gender in the FCT. The paper is organized into six segments. The first segment introduced the background of the study. In Section Two, the adopted methodology of the research is discussed whilst the literature review and theoretical framework are dealt with in Sections Three and Four respectively. The data presentation, analysis and findings of the research are given in Section Five while Section Six concludes and presents the recommendations of the research work.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The study is qualitative research that adopted a descriptive design approach. The population for the study comprised male and female students in both junior and senior secondary schools in the FCT. However, the sample population is from six secondary schools comprising three junior and three senior secondary schools randomly selected from the six Area Councils in Abuja. The selected secondary schools were from the Abuja Municipal, Kuje and Gwagwalada Area Councils because of proximity and accessibility. So, the study locations for the data collection was one junior and one senior secondary schools from each of the selected Area Councils.

The period of the study was from 2009 – 2021 and the data collected was on the school enrolment and graduation statistics in each school covering the period of the study. In addition, unstructured interviews were conducted with either the principals or the Vice Principals in those selected schools to ascertain the factors that could have contributed to the trends in the graduation statistics of both males and females in those schools. The study also relied on secondary data obtained from journals, books, and internet resources. It is to be noted that collecting the data from those schools was not an easy thing as the schools would not attend to the researchers except with written approval from the school's management board. The process to secure the approval letters from the two boards for junior and secondary schools was tortuous and time-consuming. It was with the intervention of a senior

management staff FCT Administration that the letters were secured after over six weeks and by that time, the schools had all closed for vacation. The data given from the schools are not published in any document for public consumption as such, the veracity cannot be guaranteed and other researchers may not be able to obtain the same data figures that were given from those schools for a similar study.

### 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is an important cornerstone and a potent, virile and dynamic instrument for not only national development and social transformation, but also the means to improve the status of women in every civilized society. In the African context, children are regarded with pride and deemed the greatest value and assets that society possesses which is why they are most cherished and protected from all forms of hazards and abuse. However, when it comes to education, many rights advocates and groups do not think that female children are protected and encouraged to gain an education. They argue that the girl child is discriminated against in the pursuit of education because of their gender. Obanya (2007) observe that the girl child's educational attainment is low as records have shown that fewer girls go to school than boys. Offorma (2009) agreed and noted that this is so because the girl child has not been lucky to be cherished, protected and loved in Nigerian society due to certain traditional practices, stereotyping, and cultural and religious beliefs which put her at risk of abuse and neglect.

Gender inequality, discrimination and violence are considered to be anathema to human existence, healthy relationships and development. However, many scholars and rights advocate groups still contend that the issue of discrimination against the girl child has remained an unresolved case and a major concern in the academic discourse. Igube (2004) and Asare (2009) have noted that the general inferior economic, social and political status of the girl child are staggering and that recent studies have disclosed that these conditions were impacted on her existence from the formative infancy stage through youth to the adult stage of her life. They submit that this gender discrimination against the girl child education is contrary to fundamental human rights, equity, natural justice and good governance. Although, Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, provides for the freedom from discrimination on the grounds of ethnic group, origin, gender, religion, circumstances of birth, disability or political opinion; Alabi and Alabi (2012) identified child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy, broken home, engagement of children as house helps, as factors or the clog in the wheel of children's access to education.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE, 2012) in its report stated that the fact that two thirds of the world's non-literate adults are women is a striking example of gender discrimination and shows the pervasive denial of the human right to education experienced by women and girls across the globe. They state that "there are multiple and diverse links between gender equality and the fulfilment of the human right to education" (GCE, 2012:3). There have been a number of international treaties that affirm the human right to education and non-discrimination yet GCE observed that States and the international community still largely treat education as a development goal and not as a right. For instance, along with the clear expression of a universal right to education in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the provisions on gender-equitable education in the Committee on

Eradication of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the most significant expressions of these rights are found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) and the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. Governments further committed themselves to ensuring gender equality in education in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), which stated that “the most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation” (UNESCO, 1990:5). Therefore, “GCE believes that a clear rights-based understanding of education is crucial to overcoming gender discrimination and to re-orienting education towards the promotion of greater gender equality in society as a whole” (GCE, 2012:3).

Gender is considered as a socio-economic variable for analysing the roles, responsibilities, and needs of both men and women in a society (Ezekwe and Enweani, 2019, Klasen, 2002). Gender is also seen as the social and cultural constructs that a particular society assigns to the behaviour, attributes, and values ascribed to men and women (Ezekwe and Enweani, 2019). Gender constructs are often shaped by ideology, history, religion, and ethnic, cultural, religious, and economic factors. These factors then lead to social, economic, and political inequality, where men's activities and gender traits are seen as better than those of women (Sanda and Kurfi, 2013).

From the opinions of many scholars and advocacy groups, one may admit that there is gender imbalance or inequity in Nigeria. The gender imbalance in education as measured by school enrolment and graduation has been in the direction of proving that the female gender is discriminated against when it comes to accessibility to education. At each stage of their formal education, young women in Nigeria encounter challenges that are very tough to overcome.

In spite of all the steps taken by the Federal Government to give equal gender opportunity in education, such as the provision of Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE), the female gender is still lacking in education, and this has many implications for the social-economic status of the females in the nation. For instance, the gender gap in education is usually not in favour of the female population as they are often excluded from competitive and high-paying jobs since they do not possess the high-quality education required for these high-paying jobs (Ngwoke, 2020). The implication of this is that women will usually be at a disadvantage when it comes to wealth distribution within society. Little wonder, Odozi (2012) stressed that the level of gender inequality in education, which prevents a good number of females from being educated, can be very harmful to national development and progress. Also, Ngwoke (2020) asserts that the difference between men and women in Nigeria in terms of educational opportunities and completion is based on gender and can be explained by things like family background and socioeconomic status, among other things.

The importance of education in the life of an individual cut across different facets of life, including social, economic, and even political. No doubt, Ugwu (2015) asserts that when an

individual can develop his potential by being educated, such an individual will be able to perform a specific task or job that will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the individual's welfare and to society at large. Within the context of education, gender inequality refers to a situation where girls are faced with an unequal opportunity to be educated because of their gender (Klasen and Lamanna, 2008).

Some authors have also argued that several countries have tried to close the gap in gender disparity in education for both boys and girls through the introduction of free education, especially at the primary level. However, the systemic gap in education between boys and girls is becoming more pronounced at the secondary level (Ostby, Urdal and Rudolfson, 2016). According to Etim (2021), quality education represents a gateway through which social justice can be guaranteed and gives individuals the opportunity to engage themselves in productive economic activity while making it possible for their voice to be heard in society. However, in most developing countries, women are usually at a disadvantage in several aspects, including social, political, and economic, as they constitute a significant proportion of individuals in low or poorly paid informal jobs that lack social protection (Ezekwe and Enweani, 2019). This must change by ensuring that women, like their male counterparts, have access to economic opportunities and high-quality means of subsistence that will allow them to improve their situation and maximise their potential. Similarly, according to a report by the World Bank, educating girls is a very strategic developmental priority. They stressed that women who are well educated are more likely to be healthier, participate more in formal economic activity, earn good wages, have lower fertility levels, and also tend to marry at a later age relative to the child marriages associated with uneducated girls. The cumulative effect of all these is that they help to lift the individual, household, and the country at large out of poverty (Etim, 2021).

Some empirical studies (Cooray and Potrafke, 2011; Hadjar, Krolak-Schwerdt, Priem and Glock, 2014; Heyder and Kessels, 2013; Dollar and Gatti, 1999) have reported that one of the most effective ways to combat poverty and achieve increased economic growth is by educating girls. The desire to close the gender inequality gap between boys and girls has no doubt been on for decades. For instance, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Number 3 sought the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by the Year 2005. Unfortunately, this goal was not achieved. Thus, this necessitated the need to emphasize this goal in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which seeks to ensure that by 2030 there is equality in primary and secondary school education for both boys and girls. The Year 2030 is fast approaching and yet, evidence around us obviously casts a doubt as to whether the goal will be achieved, especially in Nigeria.

## 4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the post-structuralist gender theory. According to Bonnie (2019), Joan Scott in 1986 issued a manifesto about gender in her work "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis". She asked historians to transform social scientific understandings of gender by adding Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction (a philosophical theory showing the difficulties in assigning definite meanings or truth to texts), and Foucauldian-Nietzschean definitions of power. In Scott's view, the Marxist, anthropological, and psychological understanding of gender had reached a dead end

because they see male and female as having essential or enduring characteristics. She argues that the rigidity of male-female categories in any of those thoughts, especially in the work of those who sought out women's "voices" and "values" kept gender from being as useful as it could be (Scott, 1986).

Scott posits that Lacanianism and all the psychic variation it involved were one key to understanding gender as an exigent, inescapable relationship. Also, Foucault's theory of power when seen as a field in which all humans operated offered another valuable insight. She suggested that using Foucault allowed for the introduction of gender issues into political history, thus overcoming the separation that historians had maintained between women's history and the political foundation on which most historical writing rested. She explained that gender could be a category or subject of discussion through which power operated. Gender meant differentiation because it distinguishes the better from the worse, the more important from the less important. Additionally, gender explained or assigned meaning to any number of phenomena, including work, the body, sexuality, politics, religion, cultural production, and an infinite number of historical fields (Smith, 2019).

This study finds relevance in Scott's Post-Structuralist Gender Theory because education falls into the infinite number of historical fields that gender explains. In the study of gender equity or gender balance in the secondary schools in the FCT, the theory helps to differentiate if the number of male or female is more or less in the enrolment or graduation from secondary schools during the period of the study.

## 5.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data were collected from two schools – junior and senior secondary schools in each of three Area Councils in the FCT: Kuje, Gwagwalada and Abuja Municipal Area Councils. The data presentation showing enrolment and graduation statistics of male and female students are given in Tables 1 – 3 respectively. There is a lag of three years between the enrolment data and the graduation data. This is because when a set of students are enrolled for studies, it takes three years before they graduate from either the junior or senior secondary schools. The data obtained were crunched into simple percentages for ease of comparison.

**Table 1: Enrolment and Graduation Data for JSS/GSS Kuje Area Council.**

Serial	Year	JSS KUJE Male (%)		JSS KUJE Female (%)		GSS KUJE Male (%)		GSS KUJE Female (%)	
		Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation
1.	2009/2012	56	50	44	50	49	43	51	57
2.	2010/2013	49	50	51	50	47	50	53	50
3.	2011/2014	50	52	50	48	46	48	54	52
4.	2012/2015	47	48	53	52	49	50	51	50
5.	2013/2016	46	47	54	53	50	50	50	50
6.	2014/2017	44	47	56	53	50	59	50	41
7.	2015/2018	44	46	56	54	48	52	52	48
8.	2016/2019	41	45	59	55	43	50	57	50
9.	2017/2020	49	49	51	51	45	45	55	55
10	2018/2021	48	47	52	53	49	47	51	53

From the enrolment data given in Table 1 for JSS Kuje, it can be noted that except in 2009 that the percentage of male students enrolled was 56% which means 6% more than the percentage of female students, and in 2011 when there was even percentage (50%) of both male and female students, all other years showed the female students were more on enrolment than the male students. These statistics debunk the insinuation of discrimination or unequal treatment in favour of boys and against the girl child as far as enrolment into JSS in Kuje is concerned. Consistently, one can observe that there is gender balance and gender equity with regards to JSS admissions in Kuje Area Council of the FCT. A similar trend is observed in the graduation statistics. There is parity in the percentages of graduates in 2012/2013 and a drop by 2% of the female graduates in 2014. Then consistently, there percentages of female at graduation were higher than their male counterparts between 2015 and 2021.

In GSS Kuje, except in 2013/2014 that the enrolment percentages of male and female students were at par, the female statistics were consistently higher than their male counterparts. From the graduation statistics in GSS Kuje, except in 2017/2018 that the female percentages dropped by 9% and 2% respectively, the female graduates were consistently higher than their male counterparts. This buttresses the fact that there is gender equity and gender balance in schools enrolment and graduations at both the junior and senior secondary levels in Kuje Area Council. The notion of gender imbalance or inequity against the girl child in school admissions as peddled by many advocacy groups is unfounded.

It is also to be noted from the data that in some cases, the percentages of students at graduation were more than the stated percentages at enrolment. This was explained during the interview that there were inherited students who were repeating that class and sometimes transfers from other schools that added to the initial number that were enrolled.

**Table 2: Enrolment and Graduation Data for JSS/GSS Gwagwalada Area Council.**

Serial	Year	JSS G'LADA Male (%)		JSS G'LADA Female (%)		GSS G'LADA Male (%)		GSS G'LADA Female (%)	
		Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation
1.	2009/2012	0	44	0	56	54	45	46	55
2.	2010/2013	0	51	0	49	57	46	43	54
3.	2011/2014	43	48	52	52	54	47	46	53
4.	2012/2015	51	51	49	49	55	49	45	51
5.	2013/2016	48	52	52	48	53	48	47	52
6.	2014/2017	51	49	49	51	49	48	51	52
7.	2015/2018	52	45	48	55	51	45	49	55
8.	2016/2019	49	50	51	50	47	43	53	57
9.	2017/2020	45	47	55	53	51	43	49	57
10	2018/2021	51	45	49	55	49	48	51	52

The statistics obtained from JSS Gwagwaladain Table 2 showed that there were no enrolment in 2009/2010 sessions but there were graduations after three years. The explanation given was not very cogent because the students that were later admitted on transfers from other schools ought to have been documented as enrolment against those years. Nevertheless, the data showed an alternating high and low trend in the percentages at enrolment between male

and female. A similar trend can be seen in the graduation statistics only that the percentages of the female were higher in most cases than that of male.

In GSS Gwagwalada, the data showed that except for 2014, 2016 and 2018 sessions, the percentages of male students at enrolment were consistently higher than their female counterparts. However, despite having higher numbers on enrolment, the graduation statistics showed the females were consistently higher in percentages than their male counterparts. It was explained during the interview that most of the male students dropped out of schools to support their families in farming and petty businesses whilst some others were forced to marry early because of culture and have to drop out of school to fend for their young families. The other explicable factor may be that Gwagwalada is a high population density area of the FCT and the sub-urban population tend to protect their female population than the male. Also, most of the male students do not have able sponsors to support the payment of their tuition fees through school so, many dropped out to hustle and support their sisters to complete their education. The statistics again in this instance counters the notion of gender imbalance or inequity against the girl child education in the FCT.

**Table 3: Enrolment and Graduation Data for JSS/GSS Abuja Municipal Area Council.**

Serial	Year	JSS GOSA Male (%)		JSS GOSA Female (%)		GSS GARKI Male (%)		GSS GARKI Female (%)	
		Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation	Enroll	Graduation
1.	2009/2012	0	52	0	48	36	38	64	62
2.	2010/2013	52	52	48	48	43	31	57	69
3.	2011/2014	47	57	53	43	44	37	56	63
4.	2012/2015	49	45	51	55	38	45	62	55
5.	2013/2016	51	63	49	37	35	28	65	72
6.	2014/2017	53	61	47	39	46	32	54	68
7.	2015/2018	54	52	46	48	35	28	65	72
8.	2016/2019	52	53	53	47	44	32	56	68
9.	2017/2020	49	52	51	48	40	49	60	51
10	2018/2021	52	48	48	52	43	35	57	65

The data obtained from JSS Gosa, in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), in Table 3 showed that there was no enrolment in 2009 but there was graduation three years after. Except in years 2011, 2012 and 2017 that the male enrolment were lower than the female, the percentages of the male students at enrolment were mainly higher than their female counterparts. The graduation statistics also showed male dominance consistently except in 2021 when the female had 2% more graduates than their male counterparts. It should be noted that the data at graduation were in many instances higher than the enrolled statistics because of carry-over and transfer students that joined that set. Apparently, from the data there was some consistency in the percentages of the female at graduation except for years 2016 and 2017 when the number that dropped out were significant. It was explained that early marriages and pregnancies were mostly responsible for the female drop out from school besides the non-affordability of tuition and WASC/WAEC fees.

However, the scenario was completely different in GSS Garki, in AMAC. The enrolment data showed clear dominance of the female enrolment and graduation statistics when compared with that of the male students. The school is located in the heart of Abuja and a low

population density area. Only the affluent in the society can afford accommodation within that area. Those parents are not only well to do but are literate enough to make sure that their girl child is given education. Most of the young boys that reside within the area that are not children of the affluent are servants that can only gain education at the mercy and benevolence of their masters. This may therefore explain the low numbers of male students at enrolment and graduation in GSS Garki. Besides, the spatial demographic distribution of the area may indicate more of the young female population than their male counterparts. Again, the data does not support the notion of gender imbalance or inequity against the girl child rather the discrimination should be seen against the male child in this instance.

## 6.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study found out that the hue and cry of scholars and advocacy groups against gender inequality and discrimination against women are truly supported by existing empirical data (GCE, 2012). However, these statistics were obtained from the accumulated discriminatory practices in the past against women and the girl child. In contemporary times, the notion of gender imbalance against the girl child with regards to education in secondary schools as stated by GCE 2012, Obanya 2007 and Offorma 2009 is unfounded from the results of the study in Kuje, Gwagwalada and Abuja Municipal Area Councils in the FCT. What has become very apparent from the findings is that more girls are gaining secondary education than their male counterparts.

Crucial amongst the factors responsible for the drop out of both boys and girls from secondary education is the issue of their inability to pay the tuition and WASC/WAEC examination fees. This was aptly pointed out in the literature by Alabi and Alabi 2012 as well as Sanda and Kurfi 2013. They argue that lack of sponsorship was one of the key barriers of children gaining an education. Although, the Federal Government may pronouncement on free primary and secondary education in the country, there is no implementation of such policy. In the United Kingdom for instance, basic education is not only free but compulsory up to the senior secondary school level. If there is an effective implementation of the free education up to senior secondary schools level in Nigeria, it might keep many children in schools and reduce the literacy gap in the society.

Lastly, the study finds that many young boys and also girls have dropped out from schools because they have to work for their masters to earn a living. They are still children and should not have been subjected to child labour. Even though, Nigeria has signed many conventional treaties against child labour, there is no enforcement against such practices. Except child labour is completely discouraged which means that alternative provisions are put in place to cater for orphans and indigent children, the literacy gap in the country cannot be reduced or eradicated.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The research study set out to investigate the gender structure with regards to enrolment and graduation from secondary schools in the FCT. Three Area Councils were selected for the study namely: Kuje, Gwagwalada and Abuja Municipal Area Councils. Two schools – one junior and one senior secondary schools from each of the Area Councils were picked for the study. It was a qualitative research using primary data and unstructured interviews to generate

the necessary data for analysis. The figures collected from the schools were crunched into simple percentages for ease of comparison. The post-structuralist theory was adopted for the theoretical framework of the study.

Some existing literature on the subject were discussed and it was established that they all predominantly stated that there is gender inequality and discrimination against women and the girl child as far as education was concerned. This view was actually supported by available statistics from previous studies which is a clear fall out of accumulated neglect and bad cultural practices against women in the past. However, the result from the research conducted and available evidence in contemporary times have shown that there are more females currently in both secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria than was the case previously. If there is any cry of discrimination worth it currently, is the fact that the male gender appear to be on the receiving end and experiencing discrimination in schools enrolment and graduation than the girls. Therefore, the notion of discrimination against the girl child education in the FCT is currently not supported by available statistics on enrolment and graduation from the secondary schools.

It is suggested that the efforts that have yielded positive results to have more of the female gender in schools should be continued and priority should be given to the male gender to achieve the required balance of literacy in the country. Also, the provision of free basic education to all children needs to go beyond mere public pronouncement to full and effective implementation by the government at all levels in the country. If education up to senior secondary schools level was made compulsory with adequate provisions to cater for orphans and indigent children, child labour will be discouraged and the literacy gap in the society will be reduced and eventually eradicated.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends the following:

1. The FCT Administration and the Federal Government of Nigeria should continue the enlightenment efforts that have yielded positive results for the female gender school enrolment and graduation in the FCT and the country.
2. The FCT Administration and the Federal Government of Nigeria should begin the enlightenment campaign to increase the male gender school enrolment and graduation in the FCT and the country.
3. The FCT Administration and the Federal Government of Nigeria should implement free education policy up to senior secondary education level for both the male and female gender to reduce the literacy gap in the FCT and the country.
4. The FCT Administration and the Federal Government of Nigeria should make adequate provisions for orphans and indigent children to gain education up to senior secondary education level to discourage child labour and reduce the literacy gap in the FCT and the country.

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