



## Introduction

Unemployment is a major challenge facing Nigerian society with over 23.2 million people who are unemployed<sup>1</sup>. This means that one is lucky to be among the pool of the employed. However, statistics reveal a gender disparity in the narrow pool of the employed with 32.16 million males were employed in the year against 26 million females<sup>2</sup>. 2022 projections put the figures at 33.36 million for males and 27.1 million for females - a much wider gap between males and females in employment.

It is safe to say that young females suffer the brunt of the employment gap owing to that fact that women aged 15 to 34 years constitute more than 55% of women in the Nigerian labor force<sup>3</sup>. This implies that closing the gender gap in employment will guarantee improved economic fortunes for young women in the country. This article will discuss the possible reasons for the gender disparity in employment figures in Nigeria as well as recommendation for closing the gap.

---

<sup>1</sup> Punch Newspaper (2021). Unemployment Rate hits 33.3 percent: 23.18 million Nigerians Jobless.

<https://punchng.com/unemployment-rate-hits-33-3-23-18million-nigerians-jobless-nbs/>

<sup>2</sup> Statista, Number of People employed in Nigerian from 2010 to 2020 by gender

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1288432/number-of-people-employed-in-nigeria-by-gender/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nairametrics.com/2021/03/16/female-unemployment-rate-in-nigeria-rises-to-35-2-in-q4-2020/>



## What Obstacles Limit Women's Employment?

- **A Society Biased Against Women**

In the Nigerian society, employment decisions are made in favor of men than women. This stems from a widespread assumption that men can do a job better than women and that a particular gender performs better in certain roles. The perpetuation of these beliefs in workplaces limits the admittance and advancement of women in the workforce. The manifestation of this belief system prevents women from rising to key positions that will enable them to change their status quo- thus, arguing for more gender-inclusive employment policies in the workplace.

- **The Gender Gap in Education**

According to statistics 62% of Nigeria's out of school children are girls<sup>4</sup>. The absence of education lowers the chances of finding meaningful employment and with more girls out of school than boys it is not surprising to find more women than men in the pool of unemployed.

- **Few Women in Political Leadership**

There are very few women in political leadership in the country. For instance, women constitute only 7 out of 109 senators and 22 out of 360 representatives in the Nigerian National Assembly<sup>5</sup>. The small number of women in these positions constrain them from influencing decisions that could translate to more favorable employment outcomes for women.

## Improving Outcomes for Young Women in the Workplace

- Adopting gender-inclusive work policies by organizations to cater for the needs and sensitivity of women. These policies will ensure that job applicants are not discriminated against based on their gender. In addition, workplace sensitization on gender equality will also go a long way to educating workers on gender neutrality. The implementation of these policies will eliminate employment bias in favor of a particular gender thus paving a way for young women to participate in the labor market unhindered.
- Training on employability skills targeted at young women will go a long way to prepare them for job opportunities. These programmes could focus on imparting on-demand job skills in women that will make them competitive in the labor market. Such interventions should be

---

<sup>4</sup> Iyabo Lawal (2019) 62 Percent of Nigeria's Out of School Children are girls. *The Guardian* <https://guardian.ng/features/62-per-cent-of-nigerias-out-of-school-children-are-girls/amp/>

<sup>5</sup> Damilola Agbalajobi (2021). Nigeria has Few Women in Politics: Here is Why and What to Do about it. *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/nigeria-has-few-women-in-politics-heres-why-and-what-to-do-about-it-159578>



collaboratively implemented by the government, development organizations and the support private sector. It might be useful to target young women in secondary schools, and tertiary institutions.

- Addressing the gender employment gap challenge from the perspectives of institutions. Since gender inequality is a problem present in the various institutions, the government should institute laws that prescribe that a quota of political and non-political positions be allotted for women. The successful implementation of these policies will create opportunities for discussing issues that are of interest to women among key decision-makers in the country. This will create room for the implementation of pro-women policies that will have far-reaching effects in ensuring favorable employment outcomes for women among other benefits
- The government and civil society organizations can work together to create awareness on the rights of girls to education. When girls have access to the education, they will stand a higher chance of securing employment in the future.