Globalization, ICT and the Economic Empowerment of Women in Nigeria

Olaoye Ismail Kayode
Department of Economics and Financial Studies
College of Management and Social Sciences
Fountain University, Osogbo
asveducated@yahoo.com ; iklaoye@hotmail.com ; asveducated@gmail.com
08024766669, 08036370779

Abstract

This paper examines the role of ICT in determining the amount of economic freedom enjoyed by women. It is an analysis of the impact of extended education in the form of ICT related knowledge on the competitiveness of female workers in a growing globalized labour market. The study also looked at the challenges faced by women in juxtaposing their roles as wives and mothers in relation to global demand for their skills. Data for the study was gathered through a two-paged structured questionnaire administered to a randomly selected group of working class female respondents, professionals and non-professionals alike. It was discovered that level of education has certain role to play in the determination of women empowerment, but its importance has been eroded by the nature of ICT, which, in some cases, requires only operant abilities to ensure the liberation of women from poverty, subjugation and disease.

Keywords: poverty, globalization, girl-child, infopreneur.

1.0 Introduction

The girl – child through out history has been subjected to varying degrees of deprivations and subjugation. She has been stifled mentally, psychologically and physically by the dictates of male – dominated cultures and traditions that cut across virtually all races of the world. The fact is; she has been so second rated that even an account of her past heroic deeds has been recorded as “his “story”. The World Bank (2001) stated that“…in no region do women enjoy equal legal, social, and economic rights. Women have fewer resources than men, and more limited economic

opportunities and political participation. Women and girls bear the most direct cost of these inequalities—but the harm ultimately extends to everyone. . .Gender inequalities persist because they are supported by social norms and legal institutions, by the choices and behaviours of households, and by regulations and incentives that affect the way economies function". The report went further "A strategy to reduce gender inequalities must address these factors. Foremost among the costs of gender inequality is its toll on the quality of human lives. Evidence suggests that societies with large and persistent gender inequalities pay the price of more poverty, illness, malnutrition, and other deprivations, even death. This makes a compelling case for public and private action to eliminate inequality. Public action is particularly important, since many social, legal, and economic institutions that perpetuate gender inequalities are extremely difficult for individuals to change".

The question, therefore, is how do we eliminate this pervasive inequality? Further more do we have the wherewithal, politically and morally, to ensure that such a solution is entrenched universally? If we do have these, are we ready to do so? And lastly, what would be the expected response from the women, individually and generally to such ground breaking motions? These and many more are the questions that need to be answered before we can actually lay claim to a sincere emancipation of our women and their empowerment for economic independence which will ensure their full participation in the development and growth of our society.

1.1 Conceptual Background

Things however started looking up for the woman in the past few centuries. With the European woman rejection of her socially imposed inability to ride the "penny-farthing" in the 18th century, came a sort of rebirth for the womenfolk. Ever since, women have found their way into virtually all male dominated activities and they have not only thrived, but succeeded tremendously in many instances. Prior to this turn around, many professions were considered the sole preserve of men.

In Africa, generally, and in Nigeria in particular, the girl-child situation has changed but little from what use to operate. The case is not different outside Africa. In Iraq, for example, culture and women are interwoven to such as extent that mathematics was considered the sole preserve of men. One rare credit granted the Sadam Husein regime was that it forced women to go to

school; to the extent that an erring father may be jailed for not ensuring that his daughter go to school. His regime led to the emergence of many female engineers and medical practitioners especially during the Iraq/Iran war (Saraf, 2005).

In Nigeria, the story of the girl-child has been an ever controversial issue. Though the Nigerian constitution recognizes the equality of all citizens irrespective of sex, tribe and status, the reality on ground for the girl-child has always indicated the opposite. The situation, especially in the North and South-Eastern parts of the country, is such that the girl-child is marginalized right from birth. Early adolescence is usually lost to the cultural practice of early marriage. I refer to this phenomenon as cultural practice because the often acclaimed justification for this horrendous practice is unfounded in Islam and given the fact that the South-Western part of the country comprises a significant proportion of Muslims who do not imbibe in this practice. The preponderance of VVF (vesico vaginal fistula) in other parts of the country but virtually non existent in the South-West is a pointer to this fact. So it is more of a cultural thing than religious.

VVF and its sister ailment, vesico-rectal fistula, occur when, as a result of prolonged unrelieved obstructed labour, the baby's head tears through the orifice of the mother, creating an opening between the bladder and the vagina, and sometimes, between the vagina and the rectum. The condition is most often associated with childbirth by young girls or small statured women when the pelvis is small and the baby is large. Usually the baby is almost always stillborn and the woman, if she survives, loses control over her bodily functions and as a result, has urine and sometimes faecal matter, constantly trickling down her legs. It is estimated that there are 400,000 cases of VVF in Nigeria alone. According to the ministry of health, about 10,000 new cases occur annually with about five per 1,000 deliveries (Simeh, 2008). This ailment alone, out of the numerous ailments bedeviling our women , accounts for the lose of a huge proportion of the available active working age population. One of the major solutions to these challenges is the education of the girl-child. As opined by Danladi Mamman, a teacher, quoted by Eze (2008) in her write-up, when he wrote in his article titled "Girl Child and Education", that it is a well known fact that many parents in Africa give preferential treatment to the boys, especially in matters concerning education and that up till now in some societies, girls are still made to live in their (the boys) shadows, denied education and other rights, and socially exploited. He concluded

that “their rights to attain womanhood before going into child bearing are being aborted and abused".

To address this anomaly, respective governments have tried to put in place legislation specifically targeted at the problems of not only the girl child alone, but all marginalized children across the country. The Nigerian National Assembly in 2003 passed into law “the child rights act”, which among other things, seeks to facilitate the realization and protection of the rights of all children in the country regardless of their tribe, gender and parents' status. A major factor in this regard is the compulsory basic education for all children irrespective of gender.

But this laudable legislation is yet to achieve the much needed leverage effect as reported by Eze (2008), that there continued to be a national gender disparity in basic education enrolment, retention and completion against girls. She further pointed out that there are also regional variations in gender disparity in education with girls and women from northern Nigeria and rural communities being the most disadvantaged. Girls in these areas, according to Mamman (quoted in Eze, 2008) have been relegated to low social status as well as denied extra power and wider horizons that education brings. "She is denied an instrument which will empower her to participate in the socio-economic and political life and to make her contribute to the speedy and sustainable development of her community," (Mamman, 2008).

Though cultural beliefs and practices play leading roles in relegating the girl child in relation to her male counterpart, what most effectively ensures that she continue to play this second fiddle role and also bar her from certain socio-economic activities, is non other than the chronic poverty that is constantly associated with lack of educational training. Lack of education, from all indications, leads to poverty and poverty on the other hand restricts access to education. The effect of poverty was so much that the former minister of Education, Mrs Chinwe Obaji was reported to have said “Many parents are so poor that they pull their children out of school for income generating activities, rather than paying for their children's school fees so as to sustain their families".

As the Universal Basic Education (UBE) enacted recently, and which provides for a 9 –year free and compulsory basic education to all Nigerian children to fast-track education intervention at

the primary and junior secondary levels is taking off, gradual access to formal school by girls still remains a hurdle to cross. Statistics available reveal that about 7.3 million children, 60 per cent of which are girls, are not in school. The problem of drop outs is more pronounced at grade six level, where more than 17 per cent children drop out of school yearly (Eze, 2008). Quoting a paper titled "Nigeria's Experience with Girls Education and Linkages with Action on Adult Female Literacy to Impact on Poverty Alleviation" presented by the Nigerian delegates to a conference in China recently, Eze (op cit) noted that “the drop-out issues has multifarious dimensions, the most important of which are; early marriages for girls in the north, boys and girls engagement in income generating activities to supplement house income in the South Eastern and North Eastern parts of the country, respectively, as well as in major state capitals. The poor quality of the education system and perceived weak employment prospects for school and university leavers are also key factors affecting drop-out and low transition from primary to junior secondary schools". This is indicative of the fact that much still needs to be done in this regard.

However, there have been a lot of collaborations between the federal government with bodies like UNICEF, UNESCO to promote schemes such as Girl's Education Project (GEP) and Africa Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) among others. GEP focuses on national awareness on girl-child education and increasing political and financial commitment through advocacy and sensitization of policy makers at all levels, parents, school authorities, other leaders and girls themselves (Eze, 2008). One of such efforts and collaborations was the recent effort of the Educational Trust Fund (ETF) under Professor Mahmood Yakubu, which has helped in bringing to the fore, once again, the relevance of girl-child education especially in some selected states of Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Gombe and others. This intervention has added to the rare-chain, of efforts, in the promotion of girl-child education in Nigeria (Simeh, 2008). Once the issue of education has been settled, the next concern would be the catching up that the girl child still have to make in order to measure up to her male counterpart. One of such areas of catching is in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

2.0 The place of ICT in women empowerment in the Nigerian economy

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a general-purpose technology and as such has a pervasive impact on the economy. It introduces a new paradigm for the configuration of

economic activities radically changing the approach to technology for development (UNCTAD, 2007). The term Information Technology (IT), as a component of ICT, refers to the gadgets with which information is generated and disseminated. It includes such gadgets as the Telephone; analog, digital or GSM, the Television, Radio, Fax and all other emerging technologies that make it possible to communicate ever more conveniently across borders and cultures. With the proliferation of new technologies such as super computers, the Internet, Satellites, etc a communication revolution was unleashed on the world which gradually became a smaller village of a conglomerate of cultures and nationalities. This was aptly termed "globalization", that is, a global village where borders and boundaries are continually being eroded by factors beyond the control of any singular government or cartel.

Mobile telephony has become the most important mode of telecommunications in developing countries. While internet access has become a reality for many businesses and public institutions, and for individuals with higher levels of education and income, for the vast majority of low-income population mobile telephony is likely to be the sole tool connecting them to the information society in short to medium term. Countries like Nigeria were not left out of the ICT blitz. In 2001, Nigeria launched it entrance into the GSM telephony community and ever since then the number of subscribers have continued to surprise GSM analyst professionals.

GSM as a factor of ICT brought about marked improvement in the way many things are done in the country. As stated by Alumanah (2005) ICT manifests in all aspects of our lives, be it health, education, etc, and it is a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which are consistent with Nigeria's National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) instituted in 2004. Most public services in advanced countries are ICT-oriented. Most offices, even homes are equipped with computers. These are expensive in terms of cost of materials, installation and maintenance. Irregular power supply and the relatively underdeveloped communication system are also sources of worry in a country like Nigeria to make efficient and effective the use of ICT. It implies that developing countries in their quest for global integration will have a lot to contend with. In addition, the cost of basic ICT training has been overwhelming ,considering the fact that computer literacy is at the core of most types of training and had positively influenced many forms of training at basic and advanced education

levels. To help children in developing countries, especially the African girl with her peculiar position in our society, meet the challenges of the changing world, there should therefore be positive policies in curriculum development, and education in general.

ICT has proven to be increasingly fundamental for social and economic development. Access to basic ICT infrastructure is a key to increasing the flow of information and improving communications and by extension increasing possibilities and opportunities. It has proven to a great leveler between the developed and the developing countries of the world. A good example in this case is India. India's economy today is basically IT driven and it has attained, through this means, the position of the 4th biggest economy in the world by the end of 2007 (Zenith Economic Quarterly, 2008). One major reason that could account for this phenomenal growth is the empowerment of its citizens, especially women, through diverse ICT programs and training. An example is the "Nabanna" project which is putting a web-based information system to strategic use for the benefit of poor women of Baduria, a rural region in North-24 Parganas district in the Indian state of West Bengal. The project was a collaboration exercise among Change Initiatives, an NGO concerned about the lack of penetration of ICTs among the rural poor people, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), National Informatics Centre, researchers of the London School of Economics and Queensland University of Technology, and the Baduria Municipality. It found that absence of information and an information-sharing mechanism among poor women thwarted their ability to fulfill basic needs, restricted their awareness and blocked their desire to break barriers that limit their participation in society.

In the pilot phase of the project, Change Initiatives discovered that beneficiaries were able to raise their voice within their family; are respected by their husband, in-laws, parents and other family members; are considered knowledgeable persons in their community (since they learn computers); and have become more creative after learning graphic art software programmes. Many of them said that by learning computers, they would be able to approach the job market with greater confidence. Over and above this, is the emergence of solidarity that has resulted through the correct perception of the ICT centres being spaces reserved exclusively for women.

On the other hand, mobile telephony, which has undoubtedly become the numero uno ICT factor in the developing world, has presented the average Nigerian with a means to make ends meet. Since 2001, when GSM was first launched in the country, a large number of unemployed youths have found solace in operating telecentres. Many of these infopreneurs are rural based, while many unemployed urban youths could be seen operating the ubiquitous call centres along most major streets in the cities. Mobile phones are so wide spread in the developing countries that they now account for over 58% of phones in these parts of the world (UNCTAD, Information Economy report, 2007-2008).

Given the fact that of Nigeria's huge population, women constitute 49.96 per cent (1991census) with an estimated average growth rate of 2.4 per cent (ZENITH Economic Digest, 2008) of which women constitutes more than half (50.7%) (International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), 2000), the potential for expansion of the labour force by the utilization of this immense population can not be over-emphasized. The utilization of the potentiality should be predicated on the provision of the Nigerian constitution, which gives equal right to both men and women.

However, one major limiting factor will be the attitude of the women themselves. The acquisition of education is only a means to expose and strengthen the intellectual and psychological resolve of the recipient. Where this fails to happen, inferiority complex and an obvious inability to tackle challenges sets in, thus limiting the ability to elevate oneself beyond the marginal economic and social relevance line. This, to some extent, aptly describes the situation of the collective psyche of most educated women today in the Nigerian society.

It could be argued that this was more as a result of long standing and internalized social stratification culture, an opinion strongly supported by Alumanah (2005), stating that discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream in the girl child. It is important to note at this point that the main perpetrators of these actions on the girl child may not only be male members of her family, but also fellow female members of the family including, in most cases the mother.

In addition the apathy exhibited by the girl-child to activities involving direct beneficial competition with the opposite sex may contribute to women inability to tap given opportunities. In the study carried out by Alumanah (2005), it was discovered that

Girls /women were less inclined to compete for "space" with their male counterparts. In the said study, less than 20 per cent of the total users of computers recorded in the two cyber cafés studied within the town of Nsukka, a university town, are girls and even most of these girls were just sitting alongside boys who were operating the computers. The percentage of attendance at these two cyber cafés (University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the AfriHUB), according to Alumanah, was about 40 per cent girls and 60 per cent boys. This goes to show that, the society may not wholly be blamed for the discrimination against the feminine gender.

According to the survey of contemporary manpower requirements in the Nigerian economy carried out by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) in 2007, ICT is the strongest emerging sector of the economy and it is forecasted to continue to grow in strength in subsequent years. Ranked against various other professions such as pharmacy, medicine and engineering , demand for ICT professionals has been projected to continue to outpace other skills as presented in table 2.0 below:

Table 2.0: Comparism of demand for some major professions

	Year					
Profession	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Total**
Administrators	43	56	67	159	163	**488**
Accountants	32	40	60	57	35	**224**
ICT	130	403	433	65(less NE zone)	56(less NE zone)	**1087**
Medical Doctors	92	83	143	306	282	**906**
Engineers	126	136	153	154	154	**723**

It is quite clear from table I above that the demand for ICT professionals has been projected to surpass that of any of the other professionals. It is in this regard that this study intends to look at the opportunities available for the economic empowerment of women and by extension, its direct impact on the extent of Nigeria's participation in the global labour market.

2.1 The changing trend in women empowerment

The trite expression that when you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman you educate a nation may have engendered the special attention being given to the women folk across the globe today (Simeh, 2008). The Beijing conference of 1995, highlighted areas for the emancipation and empowerment of women to include greater access to education, better health facility, poverty reduction and equitable welfare distribution among others. Further emphasis was made by UNICEF (1993) stating that "women's empowerment should be addressed at the level of basic welfare services, access to resources, conscientization, mobilization and participation, and control over power". This view was further supported by Karl (1995) who defined empowerment as "a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action". Empowerment refers to enabling people towards self-determination. For women, empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decisions and issues that shape their lives. This includes having full access to complete information and to self-discern the quality and credibility of such information in making these decisions.

Empowerment could also be said to be "an upliftment from negative feelings of helplessness to positive feelings of self confidence, and the ability to get on with the process of living" (Alumanah, 2005). It is quite hopeful that ICT could achieve such empowerment for women. To empower women means to understand and address the various dynamics of power and relationships in a particular society which are intertwined with issues of age, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, history and race.

Thus for the future of the girl-child, empowerment would naturally include enlightenment, training and education, possessing the ingredients necessary for actual positive transformation of her psyche and self estimation. With adequate support from micro and macro sectors of the economy, such training and education would help raise her income, improve her nutrition and that of her children. There would also be improvement in her health care and her status within the household and in the society at large. This empowerment will actualize the girl-child's self

esteem, and make progress and positive social and economic growth and sustainable development, achievable features of her society.

3.0 Research Design and Methodology

To understand the extent of the influence of ICT and education on women empowerment, an exploratory research was conducted based on the understanding that ICT is not gender sensitive and education is not the preserve of any sex.

The method used in this study was aimed at eliciting response from women who are participants in the use of the burgeoning ICT technologies. These ICT factors include computer, mobile telephony technology, the internet and other facets of the changing methods and means of communication available to man today.

3.1 Sample and instruments for data collection

A total sample size of 1000 respondents was targeted on a random selection basis across Ogun and Lagos states. The decision to restrict my coverage to these two states was for the sole reason that these states serve as economic melting-pot of the country and for the fact that the GSM revolution started here. Some of the arrears covered in this study could be classified as sub-urban or rural communities. Many women in these rural areas operate telephony services, the minimum educational requirement of which is just the ability to read figures and understand the operation of most commercial handsets.

The objective, as stated earlier, was to solicit response from female user of ICT across professions. Of the 1000 questionnaires prepared, 924 were actually administered and of these, 922 were returned / responded to. This gives a response rate of 99.78% of all administered questionnaires and 92% of the planned sample. Illiterate/semi-literate respondents were assisted in the filling of the questionnaires and this action represents a form of structured interview. The reason for this assistance is to safeguard any kind of deviation from the structure of the questionnaire, the content of which is applicable to all the respondents, and to keep within the objective of this study. The relative proportion (n=317) of this group to the total active sample size (N= 922) may serve as a pointer to the level of literacy/education of the female population.

The questionnaire was designed to extract demographic information about the age, educational level and size of family from the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire was used to elicit information on the use ICT factors, especially the GSM, the level of ICT awareness of the respondents and the primacy of ICT in their careers.

3.2 Data Analysis

The primary source of data for this study was the questionnaire which was supplemented with brief interviews of some respondents. Analysis of this data was predicated on the assumption that the levels of education and ICT awareness represent two correlated dependent variables while all other factors are considered independent. The overall response rate to the questionnaire was 99.78% and the ratio of those interviewed was 28.89% (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Administration of questionnaire and interview

	Questionnaire	Interview	% interviewed
Administered	924	317	27.08
Responded to	922	317	28.89
Difference	2	0	
Response rate	99.78%	100%	

3.2.1 Demography

The focus of the study is the economic empowerment of women through the use of ICT and education, therefore the demography of the study is uni-dimensional, as we have no interest in the male population.

3.2.2 Level of education and age

Almost half of the respondents (409 or 44.36 %) fall within the age bracket of 26 – 30 years and of this, 185 (45%) hold a tertiary certificate. For respondents between the ages of 18 – 25 years, 237 (67.91%) have at least attended secondary school while only 89 (25.50%) have obtained higher qualifications. None in this age bracket, however, possess a postgraduate certificate and all have one form of education or the other. Respondents within the age bracket of 31 – 35 have a

high rate of uneducated women (33.70%) and also one of the highest rates of primary school leaving certificate holders (32.61). The group with the highest rate of uneducated women, however, is the above – 40 age group (50%). Of the whole groups, the 26 -30 age bracket possesses the highest number of post graduates; 60 (14.67%), incidentally, this group also produces the highest number of primary school leavers; 82 (20.05%).

Table 3.2: Level of Education and age

Level of Education\ Age bracket	18 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 35	36 - 40	Above - 40	Total	%
No formal education	---	20	31	23	10	84	9.11
Primary education	23	82	30	10	6	151	16.38
Junior/senior secondary school	237	62	19	11	2	331	35.90
First degree/tertiary education (OND, NCE etc)	89	185	2	6	2	284	30.80
Postgraduate qualifications	---	60	10	2	--	72	7.81
Total	349	409	92	52	20	922	
	37.85	44.36	9.98	5.64	2.17		100

3.2.3 Level of Education and Computer literacy

Ranked against computer literacy, it was discovered that the level of education shows high positive correlation (correlation coefficient = 0.851) with ICT knowledge. ICT in this case is limited to the use of computer and from the study, it was discovered that the higher the level of education, the more likely it is for the subject to be computer literate. All respondents with postgraduate qualifications (7.81%) are computer literate while all respondents with no formal education are computer illiterates. Overall, more than half of the respondents (73.97%) are computer literate.

Table 3.2: Level of Education and Computer literacy

Level of Education\ Computer literacy		Yes	No	% Computer literacy
No formal education	84	0	84	0%
Primary education	151	57	94	37.75%
Junior/senior secondary school	331	280	51	84.59%
First degree/tertiary education	284	273	11	96.13%
Postgraduate qualifications	72	72	0	100%
Total	922	682	240	73.97%

3.2.4 Level of Computer Literacy and Age

It was discovered that age plays a major role in determining the computer literacy of the respondents (correlation = 0.95). The older the respondent, the higher the likelihood of his/her not being computer literate. 88.25% of respondents aged between 18 – 25 are computer literate, while only 21.15% of respondents aged between 36 – 40 are computer literate. The level of computer literacy drop further for above 40 years olds with only 15% having knowledge of computing.

Table 3.3: Age and Computer literacy

Age		Yes	No	% Computer literacy
18 – 25	349	308	41	88.25%
26 – 30	409	327	82	79.95%
31 – 35	92	33	59	33.70%
36 – 40	52	11	41	21.15%
Above 40	20	3	17	15%
Total	922	682	240	73.97%

3.2.5 Private IT business and computer literacy

Only 242 respondents (26.25%) claimed to operate private IT businesses. Of this, 91.74% (N=222) operate telephone call centres, while 8.26% (N=20) operate cyber cafes. None of the respondents operates the other types of ICT businesses. 181 of the telephone business operators (81.53%) and all the twenty cyber café operators (100%) are computer literate. In all, 83.33% of the private IT business operators are computer literate.

Table 3.4 Private IT business and computer literacy

IT business		Yes	No	
Telephone call centre	222	181	41	81.53%
Business Centre	20	20	0	100%
Cyber Café	0	0	0	0
Computer engineering & networking	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	242	201	41	83.06%

Further findings indicate that of the total number of respondents, 696 (75.48%) are married and of this population 501 (71.98%) are computer literate. Of the 222 telephone call centre operators, 60 (27.03%) have less than secondary school education. On earning from their private telecom businesses, 20 (9%) of the telephone centre operators and the 20 cyber café operators claimed to earn between N2,000 – N3,000 a day, totaling anything between N42,000 – N66,000 a month, given a 21 day working month. The remaining 202 (91%) of the telephone operators claimed to earn between N1000 – N2, 000 a day (approximately N21,000 – N42,000 a month). In response to the question on the extent of their computer literacy, 521 (76.39%) of the respondents who claimed to be computer literate, claimed to possess computer skill only up to appreciation level, while the remaining 161 (23.61%) who claimed to be computer literate, have desktop publishing skill. All computer literate respondents wished to upgrade their skill at least to the level of

desktop publishing with graphics. All respondents believed that women could be empowered through ICT and sizable percentage (97%) wished that such empowerment should be made possible through the use of micro-credit loan facilities.

4.0 Recommendations

During the last 20 years, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have provided a wealth of new technological opportunities, with the rapid deployment of both the Internet and cellular telephony leading the way. So rapid have been these developments that the resulting stream of innovation and rapidly dropping prices have generated over a billion subscribers to each. Largely promulgated by private sector investment, these technologies, have invaded every country that is willing to accept them. Skilled human resources have been developed to help these technologies spread in every region of the world (dot-e-comment,2005).

Many developing countries are beginning to understand the beneficial role ICTs can have in reducing high poverty rates in both rural and urban areas. Using ICTs to create small and medium enterprises has resulted in numerous Internet cafés, phone shops and community radio stations. However, these small and medium enterprises are largely owned and operated by men. Women are worst hit by high poverty levels. Access to ICTs provides women with economic empowerment, increased learning opportunities and improved market access for their products. Unfortunately, the majority of women in the developing world have limited access to ICTs, which hinders them from reaping the full benefits (dot-e-comment, 2007). There is no way ICT can totally be separated from education. This study has found that the higher the education level the more likely a woman would be ICT literate. Creating an enabling environment even for the illiterate woman to find her niche in the ICT range will not only empower her but it will also ensure that she contribute positively to the comfort of her family and community.

Countries such as India and Bangladesh have been able to successfully empower the poor (who are mainly women and children) through increased ICT use. As a result of implementing ICT at all levels of the Indian government, citizens now enjoy increased incomes, enhanced health care, improved education and training, and better access to job opportunities. In Bangladesh poverty

eradicating schemes such as the Grameen Bank programme for rural telephony through the use of women, has been recorded to influence average per capita income positively since 1996, when it was first introduced. ICTs have also improved access to government services, enhanced communication both within and without the countries, maximized private sector opportunities, and increased agricultural productivity.

In the case of Nigeria, it is safe to state that ICT has a major role to play in the empowerment of women. The proliferation of GSM call centres and the fact that computer literacy is now an important demand of any skill requirement is a pointer to this fact. The girl-child is gradually assuming that position of competitiveness required elevating women from their present status. In this study for instance, almost all respondents between the ages of 18 to 35 have one form of education or another. The major area to note here is that of all respondents between 18 – 25 none is totally illiterate, as all of them attended primary school and beyond.

This implies that further enlightenment on the benefit of education must be conducted by relevant authorities. Furthermore, financial assistance, or where necessary, scholarship should be made available to women willing to go further in acquiring ICT skills and competence. The liberalization of the communication sector should be maintained, while operators should be guided by a regulatory body, such as the National Communication Commission (NCC) to maintain the standard of service delivery by the operators.

5.0 Conclusion

The advent of globalization is to a large extent predicated on the emergence and continuous development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Globalization as a concept is a process whereby national boarders cease to be an impediment to the movement of products and capital (Grant, 1996). It is the interlinking of national economies into an interdependent global economy and the development of a shared set of global images (Nazombe, 1995). It is also the transformation of the global economy into one in which not only exchange but also production and finance are organized and articulated on a global scale. Gambari (1996) referred to it as “The inevitable wave of the economic future of the world……from which no nation, poor or rich, big or small, could realistically opt out of”. This phenomenon has made it possible

for firms to utilize labour wherever the relative cost is low. This has been aptly termed ***glocalized labour market*** (Olaoye, 2008)**.** The implication here is that while the labour force is being utilized locally, the target of the out come of its utility is global. Though the reason for adopting a glocalized process of production may not solely be the relative low cost of labour, it is never-the-less significantly influenced by it. Other micro-economic determinants such as availability of cheap raw materials, stable political and economic policies and availability of significant technical infrastructure may also be part of this consideration. This process of relocating workplaces in search of employees was aptly termed *out-sourcing* and *off-shoring*. According to Rybinski (2006) out - sourcing means relocating orders, services, production, employment or, in a broader sense, a business process to another company (irrespective of its location), whereas off-shoring means relocating a business process *abroad* (irrespective of whether to another company or within the same enterprise). This is a growing phenomenon which many Asian (especially India) and South American countries (e.g. Colombia) are benefiting from. Available data has shown that sub-saharan Africa is far behind in this regard (see Langfield and Metaloni,2006). This anomaly can only be corrected and the opportunity positively tapped if women are empowered, just as in India, through the dynamic utility power of ICT. For Nigeria to achieve what India and some other countries have achieved in the global labour market, then we must heed the advice of Mr. Tim Akano, the Chief Executive of New Horizon System Solutions, an ICT firm, who in the Punch Newspaper of December 6, 2007, stated that the acquisition of such IT skills as E-business skills, Information Security skills, Networking and Software Engineering skills among several others could make a graduate marketable not only locally but internationally as well. This advice will be best utilized if the women, who formed the country's largest reserve of a yet-to-be-fully-tapped labour, could be empowered and energized to pick up the gauntlet; from basic ICT factors such as the GSM to high-end certification skills.

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