# Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Manufacturing Firms in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The overall goal of development is improvement in human welfare. Nigeria's economic transformation blueprint in guaranteeing the wellbeing and productivity of her people, indicate determination to promote gender equality and women empowerment as a veritable tool for sustainable development. This study examined gender equality and sustainable development in the manufacturing sector. Objectives were to investigate the relationship between gender equality and economic growth, and market sustainability. The radical feminist and cultural feminist theories were adopted. 150 respondents from three manufacturing firms in Rivers State were purposively selected for the study. The structural equation model (SEM) – Amos version 21 was used to test and analyze the structural relationship of model fitness of data. Findings of the study reveal that gender equality significantly affects both economic growth and market sustainability. It revealed further that more males exist in these manufacturing firms that when gender equality goes up by 1 standard deviations, Economic growth goes up by 0.238 standard deviations, Market sustainability goes up by 0.025 revealed the extent to which gender equality is necessary for sustainable development. The study recommended that more women should be added to participate in the workforce of the manufacturing firms.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Women empowerment, Sustainable Development, Economic Growth and Market Sustainability

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### Background to the Study

Gender is an essential consideration in development of a nation. Nigeria has identified Gender issues as critical to the attainment of national development goals, by launching an authentic blueprint Vision 20:2020 which is a stretch target to transform the lives of the people and to be among the Top 20 economies in the globe. Among the three pillars of the blueprint which represent the building blocks of the future Nigeria desires is "Guaranteeing the productivity and wellbeing of the people" as pillar one. Out of the highlighted strategic objectives, a striking issue is to promote gender equality and empower women. The aforementioned are basic rights that lie at the heart of equitable development. Government realized that women are faced with low representation in critical decision-making structures due to poorly developed legal and policy frameworks for women. Strategy for pillar one will be systematic gender mainstreaming in all sector policies, and organizational cultures in Nigeria to forestall Discrimination Against Women by year 2020, increase women's access to paid employment and other productive resources by 80% by the year 2020 etcetera.

Despite the rich cultural endowment and abundant human and natural resources, Nigeria was ranked 158 out of 177 economies on the Human Development index (HDR, 2008). This worrisome situation defines the critical development challenges Nigeria is facing and the measures outlined to address the issues of wellbeing and productivity is in line with international standards or prescriptions. However, analysis of labour participation rates (male versus female) in industry sector (2000 versus 2018) according to Nevin (2020), male participation in 2000 was 11.8% and 11.2 in 2018 while female participation recorded 12.3% in year 2000 and 12% in 2018. Participation of female in the industrial sector fell rapidly between 2000 and 2018. In the Assessment of Women's participation and representation in private sector, female board members made up 19% of the total board composition across the various sectors listed on the stock exchange and the female management team members made up 23% of the total board members composition across the various sectors listed on the Stock Exchange. The conglomerate financial services and construction sectors had the largest composition of female board members.

Female play key role in the development of any nation, because female engage in very many economic activities to sustain their families. Harriet et al (2014) insist that women in society perform several roles that are categorized into reproductive, productive or economic and community management. Women, Sethna (2019), asserts that for sustainable and effective development, the needs of all people must be considered. In terms of development, gender becomes an important consideration as a way of focusing at how social norms and power structures impact on the lives and opportunities open to different groups of men and women, and how economies and societies are improved without compromising the wellbeing of the future generation.

### Statement of Problem

There are benefits of economic empowerment. According to Kelvin (2020), empowering women in the economy is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) where Goal 5 is to achieve gender equality, Goal 8 is to promote full and productive empowerment and decent work for all including Goal 10 targeted on reducing inequalities. Furthermore, Kelvin indicates that when more women work, economies grow and that women's economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes. However, Enfield (2019), reveals that in Nigeria, marginal improvement in economic growth yet delivered a positive impact on employment levels with just 8% of the adult population employed in the formal sector. Some work several jobs and do not earn enough to escape poverty.

Women face torrential storms in climbing the career ladders. Aderemi and Alley (2018), argued that gender pay differential in the public and private sectors is an ongoing concern. In Nigeria, the gender pay gap; discrimination and women selection bias are prominent factors in the private sector. Women population is slightly less than 50% of Nigeria's population but account for more than 70% of those in extreme poverty. Obuikwi (2019), notes that poverty is a gender issue restraining potential development and what the country needs now is a society that is more supportive and less discriminatory in how it treats and caters to their well-being, goals and aspirations.

Casualization practice is widespread and more than half of the workforces in manufacturing firms are made of temporary employees whereas in Nigeria casualization is characterized by job insecurity, low wages and dehumanization. The indecent nature of employment remains a source of concern for employees and organizations. The highlighted number of issues are in a deplorable state indicates that so much work is required to be done.

Aim of the study is to examine the relationship between gender equality and sustainable development in manufacturing firms in Rivers State. Objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between gender equality and economic growth, and women empowerment and sustainable development.

Research questions were raised in accordance with the objectives. Hypotheses formulated to answer the questions are below stated;

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Gender equality does not affect economic growth

Women empowerment does not affect market sustainability Ho<sub>2</sub>:

#### Theoretical Framework

Feminist theories focus on male domination of the social institutions and present a vision of a just world based on gender equality (Hutchinson, 2008). Macionis (2007), explains feminism as the advocacy of social equality for women and men in opposition to patriarchy and sexism. Feminism refers to beliefs and actions that support justice, fairness, and equality for all women. For Anderson and Taylor (2004) feminist theories refer to analysis that seeks to understand the position of women in the society for bringing about liberating social changes. This study adopts cultural feminism and radical/feminism.

Cultural Feminism: Is a typology of contemporary feminist theory organized around answers to descriptive questions about gender differences. Proponents argued that in State governance, society needed such women's virtues as cooperation, caring, pacifism and nonviolence of conflicts. Ritzer and Stepnisky (2014), indicate that this tradition has continued to the present day in arguments about women's distinctive standards for ethical rudiment. The theory has wide popular appeal as it suggests that women's ways of being and knowing may be a healthier template for producing a just society than those of an androcentric culture.

Radical Feminism: Is a major framework developed for purposes of generating change on behalf of all women. It explains issues regarding gender inequality. Radical feminists see most basic stratification arrangement systems of domination and subordination, the most fundamental of which according to Ritzer and stepnisky (2014) is patriarchy the first structure of domination and subordination as the most pervasive. Central to this analysis is the image of patriarchy as violence practiced by men and male dominated organizations against women. Once patriarchy is in place, Ritzer and Stepnisky argued economic, ideological, legal, and emotional power resources can be marshaled to sustain it. To defeat patriarchy, Villalon (2010) states that it must begin with a basic reworking of women's consciousness so that each woman recognizes her own value and strength; rejects patriarchal pressures to see herself as weak, dependent, and second-class; and write with other women to establish sisterhood of trust, support, appreciation, and mutual defense.

Gender Equality: Under International standards, both men and women are to have equal rights and opportunities to everything particularly to participate fully and in all aspects at all levels of economic political and social processes. Gender equality becomes a central theme in global treaties and declarations with the understanding that it is a catalyst to sustainable development. To promote gender equality is a strategic objective entrenched in pillar one of vision 20:2020 for guaranteeing the productivity and wellbeing of the people as a building block of the future that Nigerians desire. Gender equality can enable and accelerate the achievement of all the sustainable development goals but one of the major setbacks for economic development as Orisadare (2019) identified in recent times is the exclusion of women in politics. Enfield (2019) reveals that women in Nigeria are less likely to be active in the labour market, more likely to be in lower-earning opportunities and earn less for a given level of education and experience than men of the same level.

Aderemi and Alley (2019), averred that gender pay differential in the public and a private sector in Nigeria is an aspect of gender inequality that is often neglected. According to Rex (2019) marginalization of women in politics is most glaring where women are deemed by many as having no business with politics. Ogbonna (2016) remarks the disparities in social and economic opportunities between men and women have never been addressed. Harriet et al (2014) assert that women all over the world contribute substantially to the economic roles of women in society are crucial in reducing poverty, why do they not have the same level of playing grounds as their male counterparts they asked.

**Women Empowerment:** Women contribute substantially to the economic survival of their nation's economy and their families. In recent times, the issue of women empowerment has

occupied a central position of international and national debates calling for greater opportunities for women. Nevin (2020), highlights benefits of economic empowerment closing gender gaps in the world of work. That when more women work, economic grow and women's economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification, income equality and other positive outcomes. Ejumudo (2013), states the benchmark for assessing the level of attainment of gender equality and women empowerment includes enrolment in education at the various school levels, employment as well as political decision making.

**Economic Growth:** It is the growth of national income or output of goods and services per head of population. Economic growth depends on how the increased output is used, and by whom. Economic growth has historically been pursued aggressively by nation-states and according to Scott and Marshall (2005) as a means of satisfying basic material needs and providing the resources necessary to improve quality of life more generally. However, most forms of economic growth make demands on the environment by using natural resources and generating waste or pollution that jeopardizes growth for future generations. The strategic objectives for pillar two of Nigeria Vision 20:2020 were to significantly increase production of processed and manufactured goods for export, and to strengthen linkages between key sectors of the economy.

Manufacturing is described and accepted as catalyst for economic growth and development globally. According to Banjoko et al (2012) it is reputed to be the engine of growth and a catalyst for sustainable transformation and national development. However, GDP in Nigeria 2020 as Varrella (2021) reported, amounted to 152,32 trillion Naira over 400 billion U.S. dollars. About 13% of the GDP was generated by the manufacturing sector and the largest contribution was from the food, beverage, and tobacco sector which accounted for 4.75 percent. Presently, the world Bank Development Indicators revealed that majority of Nigerians suffer from abject poverty living on less than \$2 per day. Afolabi and Laseinde (2019) blamed the extreme poverty experience to the mono-economic practice and underutilization of resources especially in the manufacturing sector that has the potentialities of boosting employment opportunities and economic development of the nation.

Banjoko et al (2012) in their analysis of growth trend and retrogression showed that our penchant for high imports necessitated rationing among manufacturers and the resultant effect was the collapse of many industries. It led to how capacity utilization consequently, serious economic crisis fully enveloped the manufacturing sector and thereby restrained its potentials to create wealth, generate employment as well as enhance poverty alleviation. Furthermore, Banjoko et al remarked that the manufacturing sector as at today has not contributed substantially to the country's GDP or to employment generation despite the series of economic reforms.

**Market Sustainability:** Manufacturers need to be agile in today's competitive market, the most cost-effective, most durable or reliable, high quality, with superior service and support (Thomas, 2020). More major players are driving toward a sustainability goal. Studies show

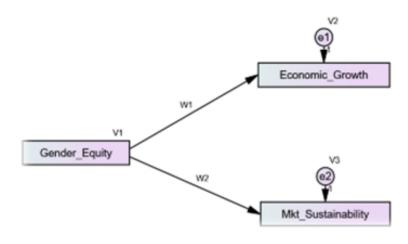
that green organizations experience faster growth than their less eco-conscious counterparts. In the contemporary production environment, manufacturing operations must consider environment and social not only profit. Woodbury (2020) indicates "green marketing strategies" to effectively market sustainability initiatives by using inbound and outbound marketing messages that focus on your company's sustainability.

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development: Integrating gender equality and Sustainable Development requires profound conceptual understanding of both concepts and their inter-linkages. Sustainable Development has become a popular catch phrase in contemporary development issues. The three dimensions of sustainability are environmental, economic and social as three separate sections of a braid that interweave, and intersect becoming one. The braid of the three spheres or domains is a symbol of strength and interconnections and this alludes to a comprehensive approach to sustainable development. This as a whole is a representation of a woman, reminding us that a commitment to gender equality and the realization of woman and girls human rights is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. Corruption is a bane of the society. Okobia et al (2016) assert that reactivating Nigerian norms and values are essential ingredients in the transformation of the nation, and the lacuna that is breeding moral decadence in the society.

#### Materials and Methods

Survey research design was adopted. The study area was Port Harcourt in Rivers State Population of the study was 150 from three manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Fifty respondents from each firm were purposively selected as representative of the target population. Questionnaire was administered including interview and observation as the primary source of data while journals, internet facilities, magazines and textbooks were used as secondary data sources. Structural Equation Model (SEM)-Amos/version 21 was used to test the relationship of model fitness of data.

Figure 1: Operational Framework



Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in figure 1 is used to analyze survey data. I have the source of dimensions and source of measurement. Measures of sustainable development are Economic Growth and Market Sustainability; SEM output is generated from AMOS version 21. It is a combination of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) for demographics and AMOS for evaluation of models the RM model for and model fitness which includes Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and chisquare indicator/statistics (CMIN).

### Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indorama	50	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Newclime	50	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Pabod Breweries	50	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

**Source:** SPSS version 21

For this study, 50 copies were randomly distributed to three manufacturing companies in River's state namely Indorama, Newclime and Pabod breweries. Each represented 33% respectively.

**Table 2:** Gender Representation in the Companies

		NAME OF MA				
		Indorama	Newclime	Pabod Breweries	Total	
GENDER	MALE	44	35	39	118	
	FEMALE	6	15	11	32	
Total		50	50	50	150	

Source: SPSS Version 21

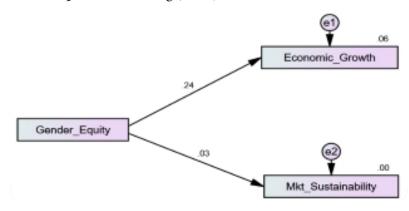
In cross tabulating the gender of respondents to each of the manufacturing firms as in table 2 above, we realized that for Indorama, we had 44 males and 6 females, for Newclime, 35 males and 15 females while for Pabod breweries we had 39 males and 11 females. This reveals that we had more males than female respondents.

**Table 3:** Analysis of Educational Qualification in the Manufacturing Firms

	Male					Female				
EDUCATIONAL	Indorama	Newclime	Pabod	Frequency	Percent	Indoroma	Newclime	Pabod	Frequency	Percent
QUALIFICATION			Breweries							
FSLC/SSCE	16	21	18	55	36%	2	10	7	19	13%
DIPLOMA	20	11	13	44	29%	3	3	4	10	7%
DEGREE	6	2	5	13	9%	2	Nil	1	3	2%
POST GRADUATE	2	1	3	6	4%	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 3 reveals that male with FSLC/SSCE are 36% while female with the same qualification is 13%. Male with diploma is 29% whereas female is 7%. For first degree, male are 9 percent while female are only 2 percent. Male postgraduate had 4% whereas female is Nil. It shows gender inequality at the educational levels of Male and Female in the firms.

**Fig 2:** Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)



# Gender equality does not affect economic growth

Our structural model as shown in figure 2 reveals a regression weight of approximately 0.24 for our first hypothesis which is positive. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative.

## Gender equality does not affect market sustainability

Our structural equation model as shown in figure 2 also reveals another positive but weak effect of gender equality on market sustainability. We also reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. These results are further explained below.

**Table 4:** Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Economic Growth < Gender equality	.318	.082	3.889	***	W1
Mkt_Sustainability < Gender equality	.034	.083	.404	.686	W2

**Source:** SPSS Version 21

When Gender equality goes up by 1, Economic growth goes up by 0.318. The regression weight estimate, .318, has a standard error of about .082.

Dividing the regression weight estimate by the estimate of its standard error gives z = .318/.082 = 3.889. In other words, the regression weight estimate is 3.889 standard errors above zero.

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 3.889 in absolute value is less than 0.001. In other words, the regression weight for Gender equality in the prediction of Economic growth is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level (two-tailed). On the other hand, When Gender equality goes up by 1, Market sustainability goes up by 0.034.

The regression weight estimate, .034, has a standard error of about .083. Dividing the regression weight estimate by the estimate of its standard error gives z = .034/.083 = .404. In other words, the regression weight estimate is 0.404 standard errors above zero.

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 0.404, in absolute value is .686. In other words, the regression weight for Gender equity in the prediction of Market sustainability is not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

**Table 5:** Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

		Estimate
Economic Growth <	Gender equality	.238
Mkt_Sustainability <	Gender equality	.025

When Gender equality goes up by 1 standard deviation, Economic growth goes up by 0.238 standard deviations. When Gender equality goes up by 1 standard deviation, Market sustainability goes up by 0.025 standard deviations.

**Table 6:** Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Gender equality	6.805	.606	11.225	***	V1
el	11.461	1.021	11.225	***	V2
e2	11.807	1.052	11.225	***	V3

The variance of Gender equality is estimated to be 6.805. The variance estimate, 6.805, has a standard error of about .606.

### Critical ratio for variance:

Dividing the variance estimate by the estimate of its standard error gives z = 6.805/.606 = 11.225. In other words, the variance estimate is 11.225 standard errors above zero.

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 11.225 in absolute value is less than 0.001. In other words, the variance estimate for Gender equality is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level (two-tailed).

Table 7: RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.504	.404	.612	.000
Independence model	.319	.261	.381	.000

RMSEA = .504 for the Default model.

With approximately 90 percent confidence, the population RMSEA for the Default model is between .404 and .612.

PCLOSE = .000 for the Default model. Under the hypothesis of "close fit" (i.e., that RMSEA is no greater than .05 in the population), the probability of getting a sample RMSEA as large as .504 is .000.

RMSEA = .319 for the Independence model. With approximately 90 percent confidence, the population RMSEA for the Independence model is between .261 and .381.

PCLOSE = .000 for the Independence model. Under the hypothesis of "close fit" (i.e., that RMSEA is no greater than .05 in the population), the probability of getting a sample RMSEA as large as .319 is .000.

Table 8: CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	5	65.008	1	.000	65.008
Saturated model	6	.000	0		
Independence model	3	79.858	3	.000	26.619

The Default model has a discrepancy of 65.008. Assuming that the Default model is correct, the probability of getting a discrepancy as large as 65.008 is .000. For the Default model, the discrepancy divided by degrees of freedom is 65.008 / 1 = 65.008.

The Independence model has a discrepancy of 79.858. Assuming that the Independence model is correct the probability of getting a discrepancy as large as 79.858 is .000. For the Independence model, the discrepancy divided by degrees of freedom is 79.858/3 = 26.619.

The finding of this paper reveals that gender equality significantly affects both economic growth and market sustainability. it reveals that more males exist in this manufacturing equality than females. It further reveals that When Gender equality goes up by 1 standard deviation, Economic growth goes up by 0.238 standard deviations. When Gender equity goes up by 1 standard deviation, Market Sustainability goes up by 0.025 standard deviations. This shows the extent to which gender equality is necessary for sustainable development.

# Conclusion

The study examined gender equality and sustainable development in manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Government realized that gender equality and women empowerment are veritable tools for sustainable development. To this effect, government indicated determination to promote gender equality and women empowerment through economic transformation policies and implementation. Other agencies or groups have gained awareness to join forces yet, gender inequalities, low female participation, discrimination, low-capacity utilization, casualization, poor industry performance and increasing poverty persists. Empirically, we have seen that gender equality affects sustainable development. During downsizing in the manufacturing sector, female employees are first to exit and more families are affected. Performance level of the manufacturing sector is very low. More commitment to gender equality and women empowerment are sine qua-non, to sustainable development.

#### Recommendations

- Government should reactivate norms and cultural values which are critical ingredients but a lacuna in the system that is breeding moral degeneration in the society.
- ii. Enhance women participation in the industry at decision making level in the manufacturing sector and be more committed to gender equality and women empowerment strategies

- iii. Provide enabling environment to boost employment opportunities
- iv. Shun exclusion of women in politics and be more determined to interconnect the spheres or domains of sustainable development.
- v. Embrace the economic diversification measures by strengthening other sectors of the manufacturing industry other than the foods, drinks and beverages/tobacco sector.

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