



Investigating the Influence of Gender Equality on The Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Lagos State Education District II, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of gender equality on the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 5: Gender Equality) in public senior secondary schools within Education District II of Lagos State, Nigeria. The objective is to determine how gender equality in participation, leadership, and resource allocation affects students' academic achievement and the realization of educational goals. The research adopted a descriptive survey design using both quantitative approaches. The population consisted of students, teachers, and administrators from public senior secondary schools in Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu Local Government Areas. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select representative respondents across the district. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, data were analyzed using inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation and regression analysis. The findings revealed persistent gender disparities in participation, subject choice, and leadership representation despite policy interventions. Girls were underrepresented in science and technology subjects and often excluded from high-status leadership roles, while boys faced stigma in non-traditional subjects. Infrastructure deficiencies particularly inadequate sanitation and overcrowded classrooms, also contributed to absenteeism among female students. The study concluded that gender inequality in schools continues to hinder progress toward SDG 4 and SDG 5 by limiting inclusive participation and equitable educational outcomes. It recommended that the Lagos State Ministry of Education strengthen gender-sensitive policies, ensure equitable access to resources, promote teacher training on gender responsiveness, and expand mentorship and leadership programs for both genders.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Sustainable Development Goals, Education District II, Leadership, Academic Performance.

1. Introduction

Education is universally regarded as a cornerstone of human development and a key driver of sustainable progress. It is not merely a tool for knowledge transfer but a fundamental human right and a catalyst for promoting empowerment, reducing inequality, and fostering inclusive economic growth. The United Nations' adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 emphasized this role, with SDG 4 focusing on inclusive and equitable quality education and SDG 5 targeting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (United Nations, 2015). These goals are mutually reinforcing: without gender equality, education cannot be inclusive, and without education, gender equality cannot be achieved. Globally, education has been strongly linked to a wide range of development outcomes. Gender equality in education is associated with improved social indicators, including reduced fertility rates, lower maternal mortality, and increased female participation in the labor market. Societies which close gender gaps in education witness enhanced innovation and productivity, since diversity of thought contributes to economic competitiveness. Kabeer (2017) further emphasizes that education expands women's agency, enabling them to participate more effectively in political and civic life.

Education in Africa occupies a central role in the continent's development agenda, yet gender inequality remains one of its most enduring challenges. Despite numerous policy frameworks and interventions,

millions of African children especially girls are still excluded from formal education. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) place education at the heart of the continent's long-term development vision, recognizing its potential to transform economies and empower citizens. However, entrenched cultural norms, poverty, and weak policy implementation continue to perpetuate disparities. Education systems across Africa remain "highly stratified," with outcomes shaped not only by economic inequality but also by gendered and cultural hierarchies that limit access for girls. The statistics are sobering. UNESCO (2020) estimated that sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over half of the world's out-of-school children, and girls are disproportionately represented in this figure. While primary enrollment has improved in recent decades, secondary school access remains deeply unequal, with boys more likely to transition than girls. Socio-economic pressures such as the need for child labor, domestic responsibilities, and early marriage intersect with poverty to restrict female education UNESCO (2020). In some regions, parents prioritize boys' schooling under the assumption that sons are future breadwinners, while daughters are expected to marry early and contribute to the household through unpaid care work.

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and its largest economy, faces unique opportunities and challenges in advancing education and achieving gender equality. Despite numerous policy initiatives, including the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the National Policy on Education, and Nigeria's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), significant gender disparities remain across different levels of education. These disparities are most visible at the secondary level, where girls are disproportionately excluded due to socio-cultural and economic factors. UNICEF (2020) reports that Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children globally, with nearly 10.5 million children excluded from education. A disproportionate number of these are girls, particularly in northern regions where cultural norms and practices such as child marriage, *pardah* (seclusion of women), and household responsibilities impede female education (Okeke, 2021). Scholars like Adebayo and Olanrewaju (2019) argue that patriarchal norms and deeply rooted gender stereotypes continue to prioritize boys' education over that of girls, as sons are perceived as future providers while daughters are viewed through the lens of domesticity and marriage.

Even in urban centers where access to schooling is relatively higher, challenges persist. Although Lagos,

Abuja, and Port Harcourt have better educational infrastructure, girls still lag behind in retention and completion rates compared to boys. This suggests that structural inequalities are not confined to rural areas but are embedded in Nigeria's educational and cultural fabric. In addition, gender-based violence in and around schools remains a significant barrier. Harassment, bullying, and insecurity discourage many girls from attending school or lead to premature withdrawal. One of the most pressing issues is early marriage, which continues to truncate educational opportunities for Nigerian girls.

The Nigerian government has made attempts to address these issues through policies and international commitments, but implementation gaps remain. Ojo and Akintoye (2021) observe that while Nigeria has signed onto major frameworks promoting gender equality, including CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), enforcement of policies at state and local levels is weak. Corruption, inadequate funding, and lack of political will undermine progress. Consequently, despite rising enrollment rates, the quality of education remains low, and gender gaps persist. The effects of these disparities extend into Nigeria's broader development trajectory. When girls are denied education, they are excluded from the formal labor market, leading to lost potential and a less diversified economy. Furthermore, educated women are more likely to engage in political participation, community development, and decision-making processes. Thus, excluding women undermines democratic governance and civic engagement.

Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial hub and the most populous state in the federation, occupies a unique position in the national education landscape. With its cosmopolitan population and relatively advanced infrastructure, Lagos has historically been viewed as a leader in educational reforms. However, beneath this progress lies a persistent challenge of gender inequality in education, particularly at the secondary level. The state government has made significant strides in expanding access to education. The introduction of free basic education under the Lagos State Universal Basic Education programme has improved enrollment, and recent reforms have focused on integrating technology into classrooms. According to Adeoye and Salami (2020), these interventions have helped reduce the number of out-of-school children in Lagos compared to the national average. Nonetheless, gender-related challenges remain entrenched. Female students, in particular, face multiple barriers that hinder their full participation in education. For instance, socio-cultural expectations often push girls

into domestic responsibilities, limiting their time for study and school attendance.

Education District II of Lagos State, which covers Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu Local Government Areas, offers an important setting for exploring how gender equality affects educational outcomes. Like other urban districts in Lagos, it is characterized by rapid population growth, diverse communities, and mounting pressure on public infrastructure. The secondary schools in this district serve thousands of students, yet many face challenges such as overcrowding, limited resources, and gender-based disparities that directly influence students' experiences and achievements. One of the most visible challenges is overcrowding. Many public secondary schools in Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu struggle to accommodate their growing student population. Large class sizes often reduce teachers' ability to give personalized attention, and girls are more likely to be disadvantaged in such environments. Poor access to sanitation facilities further complicates matters, as inadequate toilets and hygiene systems often discourage female students, especially during menstruation, from attending regularly. Studies in Lagos have shown that lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure can contribute significantly to absenteeism and, in some cases, school dropout among girls (Adeoye & Salami, 2020).

1.1 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

HO₁ There is no significant relationship between gender equality in participation, and students' academic performance.

HO₂ There is no significant relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership opportunities.

HO₃ There is no significant relationship between school resources and gender equality in Education District II.

HO₄ There is no significant relationship between gender inequality in schools and the attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

HO₅ There is no significant relationship between gender inequality in schools and the attainment of SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Gender Equality

Gender equality is one of the most discussed concepts in global development and educational discourse. It

refers to a condition in which men and women, boys and girls, have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities across all aspects of life including education, employment, leadership, and social participation (UN Women, 2023). It does not imply that men and women are the same but that their opportunities, access to resources, and decision-making powers should not be determined by gender. Within the educational context, gender equality entails fairness in access, participation, treatment, and outcomes for both male and female learners (UNESCO, 2021).

The global commitment to gender equality is rooted in several international conventions and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). These documents frame education as a human right and call for equal access for both genders. In 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further reinforced this commitment through Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 4 (Quality Education), recognizing education as both a driver and outcome of gender equity (United Nations, 2015).

It is important to note that gender equality is not only a moral and legal obligation but also a strategic investment in national development. When girls and women have equal access to education, labor markets, and leadership opportunities, societies benefit from improved innovation, productivity, and social stability. Conversely, persistent gender inequality undermines social progress by restricting half of the population from contributing fully to development processes (Kabeer, 2017). Therefore, achieving gender equality is central to both social justice and economic transformation.

In educational settings, gender equality encompasses three interrelated dimensions access, participation, and outcomes (UNESCO, 2021).

Access: This refers to the right of both boys and girls to enroll and remain in school without discrimination.

Participation: This includes classroom engagement, leadership opportunities, and decision-making involvement.

Outcomes: These involve academic achievement, life skills, and future opportunities derived from education.

Furthermore, gender inequality in schools often extends to leadership and participation. Boys tend to dominate high-status leadership roles like prefects and

sports captains, while girls are relegated to welfare or support positions (Olayinka & Okonkwo, 2019). This not only limits girls' early exposure to leadership experiences but also reinforces the social belief that leadership is a male domain. Gendered expectations also influence teachers' attitudes. Research shows that teachers often have lower expectations for girls in science-related subjects and may unconsciously encourage boys to take academic risks while urging girls to be cautious and obedient (Omotosho & Adeleke, 2020).

In Lagos State's Education District II, which includes Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu, these challenges take on distinct forms. The district's urban diversity brings both opportunities and inequalities. While some communities enjoy access to modern educational infrastructure, others face overcrowded classrooms and limited resources. Cultural attitudes continue to shape how boys and girls are socialized toward different roles, and economic pressures often push students particularly boys into informal work or street trading, affecting school attendance. Thus, achieving gender equality in such contexts involves addressing both social and economic constraints.

In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality serves as both a goal and a catalyst. Progress on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) reinforces SDG 4 (Quality Education), and vice versa. When education systems are equitable and inclusive, they produce empowered individuals capable of challenging stereotypes, participating in leadership, and contributing to sustainable development. For Lagos State and Nigeria as a whole, gender equality in education is not merely about fairness it is a strategic imperative for achieving national development targets, economic diversification, and social cohesion.

2.2 Gender Equality in Educational Participation

Educational participation refers to the extent to which learners are enrolled, attend, engage, and complete schooling successfully. It encompasses the entire learning experience from access and attendance to classroom involvement, leadership participation, and academic completion (UNESCO, 2021). Gender equality in educational participation, therefore, means that both boys and girls have equal opportunities to take part fully in every aspect of education without discrimination or bias. It ensures that gender does not determine who learns, how they learn, or the extent of their achievement (UN Women, 2023).

Globally, significant progress has been made toward improving girls' participation in education. According to UNESCO (2023), the global gender parity index for

primary and lower secondary education now stands close to 1.0, indicating near equality in enrollment. However, disparities remain more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, where cultural norms, poverty, and early marriage continue to limit girls' participation (UNESCO, 2021). The United Nations (2022) reports that over 130 million girls worldwide are still out of school, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for more than half of this figure. These challenges highlight that improving participation requires more than expanding access; it demands addressing the socio-economic and cultural barriers that sustain inequality.

In Nigeria, gender disparities in educational participation remain significant, particularly at the secondary level. UNICEF (2022) estimates that over 10 million Nigerian children are out of school, with girls representing a disproportionate share, especially in northern states. While the southern and urban regions have achieved relatively higher enrollment parity, gender gaps persist in retention, classroom participation, and subject specialization (Ojo & Akintoye, 2021). The reasons are multifaceted ranging from cultural expectations and poverty to inadequate infrastructure and gender-based violence.

2.3 Gender and Leadership Opportunities in Schools

Leadership within the educational context refers to the capacity of individuals students, teachers, or administrators to influence others, make decisions, and take responsibility for achieving common goals. For students, leadership roles such as class representatives, prefects, club executives, and team captains are not merely ceremonial; they form a crucial part of personal development, confidence building, and preparation for civic participation in adulthood (Ajibade & Adegoke, 2021). When leadership opportunities in schools are distributed unequally between boys and girls, the inequality extends beyond the school walls into society, reinforcing stereotypes about gender and authority. Hence, gender equality in leadership is central to both educational empowerment and sustainable development.

Globally, leadership equality has gained recognition as a fundamental aspect of gender equity. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 emphasizes women's and girls' full and effective participation in decision-making at all levels, including educational institutions (UN Women, 2023). Schools serve as microcosms of society where leadership norms are first practiced and internalized. When girls are given equal opportunities to lead, they develop confidence, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities

that extend into professional and political domains later in life. Conversely, when leadership is dominated by boys, it perpetuates gender hierarchies and limits girls' visibility and voice.

Teacher expectations and administrative practices play a critical role in reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes in school leadership. Olayinka and Okonkwo (2019) found that teachers often unconsciously favour male students for leadership roles due to assumptions that they are more disciplined, vocal, or capable of handling responsibility. Girls who exhibit assertiveness or leadership ambition are sometimes labeled as "proud" or "disrespectful," discouraging them from participating. These biases mirror broader societal expectations and limit the emergence of balanced leadership cultures in schools. Promoting leadership equality therefore requires re-examining selection criteria and classroom cultures to ensure that leadership opportunities are merit-based rather than gender-biased.

Empirical evidence suggests that equal leadership representation benefits not just individuals but the entire school community. Ajibade and Adegoke (2021) observed that schools with gender-balanced prefect systems tend to have higher levels of student engagement, improved peer mentoring, and lower rates of bullying and absenteeism. Female leaders often serve as role models, motivating younger girls to pursue excellence and aspire to leadership. Moreover, mixed-gender leadership teams bring diversity of thought and approach, fostering cooperation and inclusiveness in school governance. Such environments prepare students for life in pluralistic societies and mirror the democratic ideals promoted under SDG 5.

Promoting gender equality in leadership aligns directly with both SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG5 (Gender Equality). Equal participation in school leadership contributes to quality education by nurturing inclusive learning environments where all voices are heard. It also prepares students for active citizenship and shared leadership in adulthood, laying the foundation for more equitable political, economic, and social participation in the future (UN Women, 2023). For Lagos State, fostering balanced student leadership in public schools contributes to a pipeline of confident, skilled young women and men equipped to drive innovation and governance reform.

2.4 Concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 5)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal framework adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to guide global efforts toward ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all by the year 2030. They consist of 17 interconnected goals and 169 targets that collectively represent a comprehensive roadmap for inclusive and sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). Among these, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) are particularly relevant to education systems, as they directly address the intersection between learning, empowerment, and equality. The relationship between these two goals is symbiotic: progress in education promotes gender equality, while gender equality enhances educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2021).

2.5 Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education

SDG 4 seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." It emphasizes not only access but also the quality and relevance of learning. The goal recognizes education as a fundamental driver of human development, social justice, and economic growth. SDG 4 consists of ten targets, covering areas such as universal primary and secondary education, affordable higher education, gender equality in education, literacy, skills development, and education for sustainable development.

Globally, SDG 4 reflects a shift from mere enrollment toward meaningful learning. In the past, development efforts often focused on increasing school attendance, but the SDGs broaden this vision to include equitable learning environments and measurable learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2023). This means ensuring that children not only attend school but also acquire essential knowledge and skills to contribute productively to society. The goal further stresses inclusivity, calling for education systems that accommodate marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds.

In Nigeria, SDG 4 has been incorporated into national education policies through initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2020). However, implementation challenges persist. Ojo and Akintoye (2021) observed that while Nigeria has improved enrollment at the basic education level, issues of

quality, gender disparity, and inequality in resource allocation remain. Many public schools lack adequate facilities, trained teachers, and learning materials, particularly in low-income areas of Lagos State. As a result, educational outcomes remain uneven across gender and socio-economic lines, undermining the vision of inclusive quality education.

2.6 Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality

SDG 5 focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It recognizes that gender inequality remains one of the most pervasive forms of discrimination worldwide, limiting access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making (UN Women, 2023). SDG 5 has nine specific targets, addressing issues such as ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, eliminating harmful practices like child marriage, ensuring equal participation in leadership, and recognizing unpaid domestic work.

Within the educational context, SDG 5 emphasizes the need for equal access to learning opportunities, equal participation in school governance, and the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence in schools. Gender equality in education is viewed not only as a moral imperative but also as a catalyst for achieving other SDGs. Educated girls are more likely to marry later, have healthier families, earn higher incomes, and contribute to the economy. Conversely, when girls are denied education, entire communities suffer from intergenerational cycles of poverty and underdevelopment (Kabeer, 2017).

In the Nigerian setting, progress toward SDG 5 has been mixed. The country has adopted gender policies and strategies, such as the National Gender Policy (2006) and the Girls' Education Project (GEP3) implemented in collaboration with UNICEF and DFID, aimed at promoting female education and leadership. Yet, barriers such as poverty, early marriage, cultural beliefs, and inadequate infrastructure persist (UNICEF, 2022). In Lagos State, although gender parity in school enrollment is nearly achieved, participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) remains unequal, with boys dominating these fields (Adeoye & Salami, 2020).

2.7 Interconnection Between SDG 4 and SDG 5

The relationship between SDG 4 and SDG 5 is both direct and reinforcing. SDG 4 provides the educational foundation that enables individuals to achieve personal

development and economic empowerment, while SDG 5 ensures that these opportunities are equitably distributed across genders. According to UNESCO (2020), education acts as the "engine" of gender equality because it equips women and girls with the knowledge, confidence, and agency to challenge discriminatory norms. At the same time, gender equality enhances the quality of education by promoting diversity, inclusiveness, and democratic participation in schools (UNESCO, 2021).

For instance, when girls are encouraged to participate equally in school leadership, classroom discussions, and extracurricular activities, they develop critical life skills that translate into better academic outcomes and community involvement. Similarly, when boys are exposed to gender-sensitive education, they grow into allies who challenge stereotypes and advocate for fairness and inclusion. Thus, achieving SDG 4 and SDG 5 simultaneously produces a multiplier effect on other goals such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (United Nations, 2023).

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Lagos State's Education District II Gender equality and sustainable development are two interlinked pillars of progress that cannot be pursued in isolation. Sustainable development requires that all members of society men and women alike have equal opportunities to access education, participate in leadership, and contribute to economic, social, and environmental transformation. In Lagos State's Education District II, which encompasses Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu Local Government Areas, achieving gender equality within the education sector is essential for realizing the broader vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of respondents to describe and interpret existing conditions, opinions, and perceptions without manipulating any variables. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a descriptive survey helps in systematically obtaining factual information concerning prevailing situations and drawing logical conclusions based on empirical evidence. The design enabled the researcher to explore teachers' perceptions of gender equality and its relationship with sustainable educational development within Lagos State Education District II.

The population of this study comprised all teachers in public secondary schools within Lagos State Education District II, which includes Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu Local Government Areas (LGAs). These districts were selected because they represent a cross-section of urban and semi-urban schools in Lagos State and reflect the diversity in educational access and gender representation. As noted by the Lagos State Ministry of Education (2023), teachers within this district play a crucial role in implementing gender-inclusive education policies and influencing classroom practices. The total estimated teacher population in the district is approximately 2,150, covering various subject areas and administrative roles.

A total of 200 teachers were selected as respondents for the study. The sample size was considered adequate to represent the population based on the recommendations of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), who suggested that for a population above 2,000, a sample size of around 200 is statistically sufficient for generalization. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure equitable representation across the three LGAs (Ikorodu, Kosofe, and Somolu) and across different school categories (junior and senior secondary levels). This method was chosen to avoid sampling bias and to ensure that respondents reflected a balanced gender distribution and teaching experience range.

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed based on the objectives and research questions of the study and divided into two sections. Section A elicited demographic information such as gender, years of teaching experience, and school location, while Section B contained items related to teachers' perceptions of gender equality and its influence on sustainable educational development. The instrument was structured using a four-point Likert scale ranging

from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). This format was used to capture respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences in a quantifiable manner, consistent with similar gender-related education studies (UNESCO, 2021; Olaniyan & Lawal, 2023).

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted using 20 teachers from Education District I (not part of the main sample). The responses were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is considered acceptable for social science research. Therefore, the instrument was deemed reliable for use in the main study.

Data were collected directly by the researcher with the assistance of trained field officers. Permission was obtained from the principals of the selected schools before administering the questionnaires. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and their participation was voluntary. The questionnaires were distributed in person and collected immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate.

The data obtained were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and percentage were used to summarize the respondents' demographic data and responses to the research questions. These tools helped to describe trends and perceptions regarding gender equality and sustainable educational development. For hypothesis testing, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between gender equality indicators and sustainable educational outcomes. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The use of PPMC was justified as it is suitable for examining relationships between continuous variables in educational research (Field, 2018).

4. Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between gender equality in participation, and students' academic achievement

Table 1: Pearson’s Correlation on Significant Relationship Between Gender Equality in Participation, and Students’ Academic Performance

		Gender Equality in Participation	students’ Academic Performance
Gender equality in participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Students’ Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.612**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) **

Table 1 presents the summary of correlation results testing the five hypotheses formulated for the study. Each hypothesis sought to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between selected gender-related variables and educational outcomes within Education District II. The correlation coefficients (r-values) and their corresponding significance levels (p-values) reveal that all relationships tested were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that each null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that meaningful relationships exist among the variables studied.

For Hypothesis One (H_{01}), which stated that there is no significant relationship between gender equality in participation and students’ academic achievement, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.612$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a strong positive relationship. This suggests that as gender equality in participation increases, students’ academic achievement also improves. Schools that promote equal participation of male and female students in classroom learning, extracurricular activities, and leadership roles are more likely to record better academic outcomes. The significant relationship implies that gender balance in participation fosters collaboration, enhances motivation, and contributes to overall educational excellence.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership opportunities

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation on Significant Relationship Between Gender Stereotypes and Leadership Opportunities.

		Gender stereotypes	Leadership Opportunities
Gender stereotypes	Pearson Correlation	1	.524**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Leadership Opportunities	Pearson Correlation	.524**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) **

For Hypothesis Two (H_{02}), which posited that there is no significant relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership opportunities, the result ($r = 0.524$, $p = 0.002$) shows a moderate but significant positive relationship. This indicates that the reduction of gender stereotypes enhances access to leadership opportunities within schools. In other words, when teachers, administrators, and students challenge stereotypical beliefs that associate leadership with a particular gender, both male and female students are equally empowered to take on leadership positions. This finding underscores the importance of promoting inclusive leadership development to achieve equitable school environments.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between school resources and gender equality in Education District II.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Showing Significant Relationship Between School Resources and Gender Equality in Education District II.

		School Resources	Gender Equality
School Resources	Pearson Correlation	1	.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Gender Equality	Pearson Correlation	.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Three (H₀₃) tested the relationship between school resources and gender equality. The result ($r = 0.586$, $p = 0.000$) reveals a strong and significant positive relationship, implying that adequate and equitable allocation of school resources contributes significantly to gender equality. Schools with balanced distribution of instructional materials, laboratories, and learning aids between boys and girls tend to foster more inclusive participation and improved performance among both genders. This aligns with earlier descriptive findings showing that resource fairness is a major driver of gender balance in education.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between gender inequality in schools and the attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Showing Significant Relationship Between Gender Inequality in Schools and The Attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education)

		Gender Inequality	SDG 4 (Quality Education).
Gender Inequality	Pearson Correlation	1	.671**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
SDG 4 (Quality Education).	Pearson Correlation	.671**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For Hypothesis Four (H₀₄), which examined the relationship between gender inequality and the attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education), the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.671$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a very strong positive and significant relationship. This suggests that minimizing gender inequality is directly associated with achieving the targets of SDG 4. Schools that prioritize inclusivity and eliminate discrimination between male and female students are more likely to provide quality, equitable education for all. This finding highlights that gender equality is not only a human rights issue but also a critical factor in improving the quality and accessibility of education.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant relationship between gender inequality in schools and the attainment of SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Table 5: Correlation Analysis Showing Significant Relationship Between Gender Inequality in Schools and The Attainment of SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

		gender inequality	SDG 5 (Gender Equality).
gender inequality	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
SDG 5 (Gender Equality).	Pearson Correlation	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Finally, Hypothesis Five (H₀₅) examined the relationship between gender inequality and the attainment of SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The result ($r = 0.702$, $p = 0.000$) indicates the strongest positive relationship among all tested variables. This finding

confirms that addressing gender inequality in schools substantially promotes the realization of SDG 5. It implies that educational institutions serve as powerful platforms for advancing gender equity by shaping

attitudes, values, and opportunities that extend beyond the school environment into the broader society.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence on the relationship between gender equality, school practices, and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Education District II. The results are consistent across all research questions and hypotheses, showing that gender-related factors such as participation, resource allocation, leadership opportunities, and inclusive policies significantly influence educational outcomes and the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

5.1 Gender Equality in Participation and Students' Academic Achievement

The study revealed a strong positive relationship between gender equality in participation and students' academic achievement ($r = 0.612$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that when both male and female students are equally encouraged to participate in class discussions, extracurricular activities, and leadership roles, their collective academic outcomes improve. This finding aligns with the assertion of Mohammed et al. (2020), who found that equitable participation among students promotes inclusivity, enhances motivation, and improves academic performance. Similarly, the result supports UNESCO (2019), which emphasized that equal learning opportunities contribute directly to academic success and help eliminate gender disparities in educational attainment.

5.2 Gender Stereotypes and Leadership Opportunities

The result of the second hypothesis ($r = 0.524$, $p = 0.002$) established a moderate but significant relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership opportunities. The findings suggest that when gender stereotypes are minimized, both male and female students gain fair access to leadership roles and decision-making opportunities within schools. This agrees with Okeke (2021), who noted that persistent gender stereotypes often restrict female students from participating in leadership and governance structures in schools. The present study thus reinforces the need to dismantle traditional gender norms and promote leadership inclusivity as a means of achieving gender balance in educational settings.

5.3 School Resources and Gender Equality

The correlation between school resources and gender equality ($r = 0.586$, $p = 0.000$) further confirms that equitable distribution of educational materials enhances fairness and inclusivity. Descriptive results (Table 3) also showed that respondents agreed resources were fairly distributed, though subtle biases still existed. This is consistent with the work of Olanrewaju and Bello (2020), who asserted that equitable access to resources such as laboratories, libraries, and instructional materials enables both genders to perform effectively. The implication is that adequate resource allocation not only promotes gender equality but also ensures improved quality of education.

5.4 Gender Inequality and Attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education)

Findings from Table 5 and Hypothesis Four ($r = 0.671$, $p = 0.000$) demonstrated that gender inequality significantly affects the attainment of SDG 4. The strong correlation indicates that reducing gender bias in schools enhances inclusivity, quality, and learning outcomes. This supports the United Nations (2020) framework, which positions gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving quality education worldwide. The result also corroborates Adebayo (2022), who found that eliminating gender discrimination in education promotes higher retention, participation, and performance rates among both male and female students.

5.5 Gender Inequality and Attainment of SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

The strongest relationship observed in this study was between gender inequality and the attainment of SDG 5 ($r = 0.702$, $p = 0.000$), signifying that efforts to eliminate gender disparities in schools directly promote gender equality objectives. This finding is in agreement with earlier research by UN Women (2021), which highlighted education as the most effective tool for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The descriptive data (Table 6) also confirmed that gender-sensitive policies, equitable participation, and teacher attitudes significantly influence the achievement of SDG 5. Thus, schools play a pivotal role in translating policy frameworks into practical outcomes that advance equality in society.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that gender equality is not only a human rights issue but also a vital mechanism for achieving quality education and sustainable development. The evidence from this research shows that schools that uphold gender inclusiveness tend to produce better academic outcomes, greater student participation, and more equitable leadership representation. In contrast, environments characterized by discrimination, stereotyping, and unequal resource allocation impede the intellectual and social development of learners.

Furthermore, the study concludes that gender inequality poses a significant barrier to achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 4 and SDG 5, which are foundational to all other goals. By ensuring gender equity in educational participation and management, schools contribute to national and global progress. When boys and girls are given equal opportunities to learn, lead, and thrive, societies experience broader economic growth, improved governance, and sustainable peace.

In a broader sense, the conclusion of this research highlights that gender equality in education transcends school boundaries it shapes values, attitudes, and social norms that sustain equality beyond the classroom.

7. Recommendations

Arising from the conclusions of this study, several recommendations are made:

- Educational authorities should strengthen the implementation of gender-responsive policies that guarantee equal participation, fair treatment, and balanced access to educational opportunities. Teachers should be trained regularly on gender sensitivity and inclusive pedagogy to eliminate bias in classroom management and assessment.
- Government and school administrators should ensure equitable allocation of learning resources, ensuring that both male and female students have access to facilities, materials, and extracurricular activities. Schools should also create platforms for shared leadership where both genders are encouraged to participate actively in decision-making processes.
- Public enlightenment campaigns should be organized to sensitize parents and communities on the importance of gender

equality in education, as social norms and parental expectations often influence children's learning experiences.

- Education Districts should institute continuous monitoring and evaluation systems to measure progress on gender equality indicators and assess contributions toward the achievement of SDG 4 and SDG 5.

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