



## Gender Inequality and Girl-Child Empowerment: Harnessing Portraiture as a Feasible Panacea

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### Abstract

*The position of the girl child is dire in Nigeria, where more than 63% of people live in poverty and there is rampant inequality in representation, injustice, rape, sexual abuse, despair, and other problems. Many female youngsters succumb to pressure that could damage their health or perhaps take their precious lives because of their unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. In Nigeria, girls make up more than 60% of the children who are not in school, and additional girls continue to struggle with some sort of illiteracy. In order to mitigate the devastating repercussions of illiteracy on the nation and its economy, it is important to organize alternative methods that would raise the reading level among girl children. This study, which is based on liberal feminist philosophy, promotes portraiture, also known as portrait creation, as a useful profession for both girl and boy empowerment. Making portraits is a branch of drawing, which is a simple profession that can be utilized indiscriminately as a means of financial empowerment for both boys and girls. The results of this study hypothesized the effectiveness of using the Ke-O scaling smartphone application for a layperson to achieve portrait creation effortlessly using a studio experiment with 200 randomly selected students from all 5 schools in the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as a sample. The research made the most of the authors' observations, a literature review, interviews, and studio experiments. It suggested, among other things, that the girl child be strengthened to be autonomous and literate in order to fulfil her divine purpose of complementing the boy child, which is essential to both domestic and international development*

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### Introduction

In Nigeria, girls make up more than 60% of the children who are not in school, and additional girls continue to struggle with some sort of illiteracy. A news story on rape or other social vices that put the fundamental human rights of girls in peril hardly ever disappears in any of the major dailies published throughout the nation. This narrates the terrible suffering that women endure every day, giving many a girl-child a faltering standard of living. Despite the fact that Nigeria is critical, child abuse and gender inequality are thought to occur at every socioeconomic

level, as well as in every religion, ethnicity, and culture (Kelly & Kerry, 2020). In order for the female child to be eye-opened and able to resist and/or stay afloat in every form of physical, emotional, mental, and/or psychological incoherence, it is essential that she gets empowered in all ramifications. This is the main justification for choosing drawing as a skill-acquisition career in this study. Sadly, the Nigerian government reported in November 2022 that 63% of Nigerians were poor, although the World Poverty Clock estimates that 94 million people in Nigeria live in poverty.

More so, while probing the rate of gender equality globally, while Iceland was rated first, Nigeria ranked 122 out of 144 countries in its efforts toward increasing participation and expanding opportunities for women. Nonetheless, women make up 49% of Nigeria's population, yet, they are poorly epitomized in almost all spheres ranging from politics, economy, governance, finance, education, religion, and *et.al.* all of which are to the country's detriment (Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). The ranking of Nigeria as 122 shows the critical need to expeditiously combat the gender inequality pillorying the nation's economy and the only way out is by empowering the girl-child mentally, morally, academically, financially, *et.al.* In these communities, women should maintain a status that is complementary to that of men rather than subordinate to men since it is believed that women's opinions are respected as being essential and precarious factors in communal life (Awe, 1992; Eshiet, 2015; and Anyalebechi, 2016).

Different reasons, such as culture, economics, the rule of law, religion, customs, beliefs, and others, prevent women from participating in important decisions that affect a country. For instance, in certain cultures, it is against the rules for a female to go beyond a certain status quo for fear that it will be sanctioned as their cultures dictate. The traditions of various countries frequently include the harmful vanquishing of women for men, which unflinchingly emasculates the self-esteem of young girls. Agbalajobi (2010); Anyalebechi (2016).

Interestingly, the United Nations announced during the International Day of the Girl Child 2015 (Vision for 2030) that it wanted to promote a policy of "zero tolerance" for physical, psychological, and sexual harassment and violence (Taniya, 2018; vanguard, 2015). As a result, to further strengthen Vision 2030, it is necessary to organize alternative measures that would help further reduce the scourge of gender inequality that the female gender is currently experiencing. Since entrepreneurship is described to be the ability of an individual to make an extra effort to achieve an objective or a goal. Similarly,

entrepreneurship is said to be the process of kick-starting and running a business that avails goods or services to people in exchange for capital (Val, Gonzalez, Irritates Beiva, Lasa and Maite, 2017). Nonetheless, in solving gender inequality globally, especially in Nigeria, there is no doubt that female gender empowerment must be taken with all levels of seriousness; through various vocations that are entrepreneurially inclined. Portrait-making, otherwise known as portraiture, is one of the lucrative vocations deeply embedded into the scope of art. This further authenticates the submission from Ajayi and Seyi-Gbangbayau, (2019) that as far as art is concerned, every module in it is routed towards self-empowerment, wealth creation, entrepreneurship and so on.

Portraiture is a facet of fine art that deals with the rendition of human images usually giving attention to the realistic rendition of a person's bust/face with the use of pencil, paint, pen, *et.al.* In understanding the concept of portraiture Lawrence-Lightfoot, (2005) in Paula, (2013), inspired by her experience of sitting for two portraits, theorized portraiture as a technique of inquiry to arrest the institutional character and culture. Also, Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, (1997) in Paula, (2013), described the techniques of portraiture and its precincts, and its usage as a mode of autopsy intended to create a connection and interchange between science and art. Consequently, this research will be contributing to the knowledge of using portrait-making to empower the girl-child. By creating diverse measures for self-empowerment and entrepreneurship, it will stir more entrepreneurs among the female child (male-child inclusively) and enable wealth creation which is needed to spark the country's economy.

The materials required to start a portrait-making business are infinitesimally small, and inexpensive, compared to other vocations. The materials required are pencils, an eraser, cardboard, a craft knife, masking tape, etc. With all the tools listed above, all of them will not cost up to N2000 with present market values. A pencil costs N100, buying 5 different pencils makes it N500, white Cardboard costs N50, a craft

knife costs N200 while masking tape is N500. The subtotal is N1, 850.00. It means with about N2000 to start, this vocation is cost-effective and profitable.

To make a portrait of 12x16 inches, having had all the required materials listed above to start the vocation, the only art medium to buy is cardboard. A cardboard costs N100, and at least 2 pieces of 12x16 inches size can be acquired from full cardboard. It means only a sum of N50 will be spent to execute the portrait. Therefore, if the portrait is done at the rate of at least N3, 000.00 (usually more than that) and with the outline drawing made so far by few female-child without any knowledge of art, if the shading wants to be a problem, the outline can be taken to a nearby artist or artisan, for finishing touches which may be done at a giveaway price; as a way of encouraging him/her (depending on the contracted artist). Assuming a sum of N500 is paid for the artist consulted for shading, it means N550 will be spent and a sum of N2, 450 will have profited from a 12 x 16-inch portrait size. Meanwhile, the market prospects for portrait drawing vary, depending on the location of such an artist. For example, as a student, the market prospect for such a person would be his/her co-students, teachers/instructors, neighbours, church/mosque members, *et.al* Portrait drawing are usually used as a gift for birthdays, the celebration of an achievement, Valentine celebration, wedding, promotion, *et.al*.

Creating a portrait, as a beginner, might be frightful and backed up with a touch of naïve feelings. It is all good, this is a new hobby/skill you are about to be launched into and, perhaps make it your new point of interest and an activity that may turn out to be habitually done or practised for the rest of your life. Give no room for disbelieving yourself, you can do it! The portrait drawing can be done either by free hand or through the use of grid/scale or if the drawing is to be done on cardboard, the image can be photocopied (enlarged into bigger size) and traced on the cardboard before detailing the traced image into a complete handmade portrait. The freehand technique is usually adopted by a well-improved artist that is proficient at

drawing, and may not need a scaling tool before drawing a portrait to resemblance; while the scaling and tracing techniques are usually recommended for beginners and intermediate artists to enable accuracy while drawing a portrait. As a beginner, be rest assured that with the use of a scaling tool you are already over 60% guaranteed accuracy in your portrait drawing. The use of a scaling tool helps you to render the drawing with a touch of accuracy.

Asides from improvising with transparent nylon that will be covered with grid lines using a needle with slight pressure, the computer age has made almost everything easy. In lieu of going through the stress of gridding transparent nylon, some smartphone applications can equally be downloaded to serve as the grid scale. Examples of such smartphone applications are: Drawing grid for the artist, Drawing Grid Maker, Grid Drawing, Grid Maker, Ke O, Grid Maker for Drawing, Grid Drawing -Draw4all, etc. All of these can be downloaded on the play store for android phones and a few of them are also operational for iPhone users.

The existence of Liberal Feminist Theory serves as the foundation for this study. This hypothesis is related to Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*. Following its introduction in the early 1960s in the United States of America, this idea developed into the most widely practised and acknowledged social philosophy among feminists. According to this idea, since there are no biological differences between men and women, their procreative gap is eliminated by their shared humanity (Lorber, 2001; Ogwezy-Ndisika, *et.al* 2020; Mackinnon, 2001). The proponents of this view concur that there are similarities between the male and female genders and defend them. This theory's main contribution is to fight against the various forms of prejudice that women face in the modern world. This study, which promotes the necessity of empowering women as a means of reducing the inequity the female gender now experiences, appears to be based on the notion that serves as the premise stated above.

## Methodology

Being an exploratory cum experimental research, this study maximized the use of primary and secondary data to examine the cause-effect relationships, differences, and uniqueness of various media usable for portraiture and establish the portraiture's effectiveness as a means of girl-child empowerment. A laboratory experiment was carried out to test the efficacy of the use of the scaling tool (*Ke O*) in order to inform the efficiency of the tool in fostering portrait-making for a layman. Hence, the author's observations, experiences, literature review and studio experiments were adopted for this study. In probing if the use of the drawing scale can give a neophyte meaningful resemblance accuracy, 200 students representing 5 schools of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro (40 from each school) were exposed to the use of the scaling tool. There was a deliberate decision to only involve students from departments different from art and design. The students were exposed to pragmatic tests at the ratio of 5 students per day, hence

a total of 40 non-consecutive days were used to carry out the test. The researchers engaged them in a studio experiment to craft a simple portrait using a drawing scaling tool to authenticate if truly a layman in the art could use a scale to achieve a good drawing. At the end of the hands-on experiment, all the works were assessed and the overall performances are shown in table 1.

## Studio Experiment

To test the possibility of a layman with no art experience being able to use the scale to do a portrait and get a reasonable resemblance, 200 students were randomly selected from the non-art departments within the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, after interviewing their level of knowledge in art and having found out from the close examination cum interactions that they do not know art, hence they were engaged in the studio experiment; at the unstructured sequence of 5 students per day for 40 days. The following plates give an account of how one of the samples engaged for the studio experiment performed.



Plate 1a: Image of a portrait

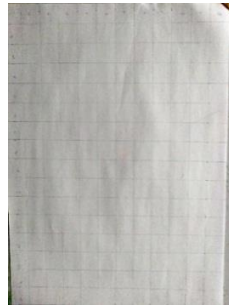


Plate 1b: A gridded cardboard.

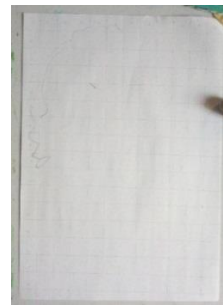


Plate 1c: Starting stage of her drawing

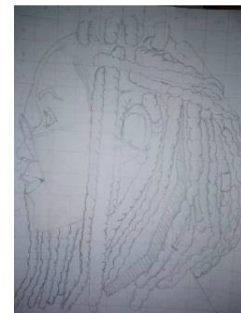


Plate 1d: A full drawing of Plate 1a without shading

**Table 1: Demographic Features of Respondents/Performance**

Physiognomies		Details	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Performance Analysis (%)
<b>Gender</b>		Male	100	50	63%
		Female	100	50	67%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>School</b>		Environmental Studies	40	20	62
		Management Studies	40	20	53
		Communication & Info. Tech.	40	20	58
		Pure & Applied Sciences	40	20	57
		Engineering	40	20	59
		<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>57.8%</b>
<b>Levels of respondents across the five schools</b>	ND 1	50	25	69	
	ND 2	50	25	57	
	HND 1	50	25	61	
	HND 2	50	25	55	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	

After all the respondents were exposed to the hands-on experiment of testing how efficient a scaling tool is for a layman to be able to embrace portraiture as a vocation for empowerment, all the respondents were made to use a smartphone scaling application called Ke-O and all the drawings of the students were assessed accordingly.

### Findings and Discussion

From the foregoing, table 1 informs the analysis of the physiognomies of the 200 respondents used as a sample for this study. The two genders (male and female) were used for the experiment, with a ratio of 50:50. That is to say, 100 male respondents and 100 female respondents were captured as a sample for this study. Also, the table informs that the 200 students were from all 5 schools of the polytechnic; with each of the schools representing 20% of the sample. Meanwhile, the analysis of the levels that the respondents represent indicates that all the respondents were randomly selected with 50 (25%) students representing each of the four levels; that is, ND 1, ND 2, HND 1, and, HND 2 respectively.

However, on the flip side, the overall performance of the 200 respondents was 57.8%. In breaking down the overall performance index and categorizing it by level, it was amazing to find out that the ND 1 students had the highest performance with 69% followed by HND 1 (61%) while ND 2 came third with 57% and the HND 2 had the lowest performance with 55%. ND 1 students having the overall best performance could also be a viable reason to say that portraiture is a skill that does not require adulthood; as it is crystal clear that the ND 1 students are teenagers and few other ones in other levels could be older.

From table 1, it can be deduced that the female gender occupying 50% of the sample used for this study, actually ended up outclassing their male counterparts with about a 4% gap; as the overall performance of the female respondents was 67% while the overall performance of the male students was 63%. Also, in probing the overall performance rate of each of the schools that were represented in the experiment, it could be deduced from table 1 that the school of environmental studies had the highest performance

rate with 62%, followed by the school of engineering with 59% while the overall performance of the school of communication and information technology was 58%; the school of pure and applied sciences had 57% overall performance and the school of management studies had 53% overall percentage. This implies that none of the schools performed below average even with the fact that the respondents did not have any art background; falling under the layman category.

The plate 7a is however the overall best portrait photograph that was done by one of the respondents in ND 1 from the school of environmental studies who happened to come from a science discipline (at secondary school); which means she never did anything related to art all through her secondary school days. Her overall performance index was 72% and she was just 19 years as at the time she executed the drawing.

In contrast, it behoves to note that Plate 7a was gridded with a smartphone app called Kë-O and it was the gridded photograph that the girl used to render the portrait on a gridded cardboard (Plate 7b).

Needful to note that, the intention of the studio experiment was not to see a completely shaded drawing but to check the accuracy of getting the complete outline/outlook of the image/person in the photograph to a considerable standard from someone who has no art background. Hence, with the above results from the studio experiment, it can be deduced that the scaling tool otherwise known as the grid is a tool someone without art experience can vividly use to draw a good outlook of a portrait. However, if such a person will undergo training for at least 1-2 months (s) as an apprentice to a better fine artist or practice drawings and shading tirelessly, using some previously done portraits by a professional artist(s), perfection is plausible. Something about drawing is that once there is consistent practice, there is accuracy; consequently, there is assurance that the shading skill will be refined; and in a short time a new portrait artist will emerge and he/she can do portraits without being

scared by the shading aspect; till a level where the use of grid will no longer be needed.

The existing technology of having many smartphone application that enables image gridding for artists as a replacement for the manually created gridding tool with transparent nylon further reiterates the submissions of Ajayi and Seyi-Gbangbayau, (2020) as well as Ajayi and Siyanbola, (2020), regarding the fact that art, science, and technology revolve around one another and they are three entities that must be allowed to coexist without giving recourse to one at the detriment of the other two entities.

In a bid to foster a seamless experience, the use of smartphone applications was adopted to ease the stress of creating a physical scale for drawing portraits. This will mean that the picture will be scaled and can be viewed on the phone using a mobile app while drawing. It also means with the grid application(s) on the artist's phone, irrespective of the location he/she is, once the vocation is mastered, portraits could be done seamlessly anywhere by just buying a piece of cardboard and pencils (if pencils were not taken along).

All the above-analyzed data are sufficient to theorize that the portraiture skill is a viable and easy-to-acquire skill for either gender; as it was revealed that the female gender performed better than their male counterparts and the fact that the overall best portrait came from a young female gender who had no art background.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In line with the findings, it was established that the use of a scaling application is effective to foster a seamless portrait drawing for a layman. It was also uncovered that portrait-making is veritable and it is a cost-effective vocation which can be used to empower both male and female genders irrespective of their background. Similarly, with less than a sum of N2000 to buy the necessary materials, the vocation can kick-start. Meanwhile getting all the materials are optional, with 2-3 pieces of pencils (even one), an eraser, and cardboard, portrait-making can be executed

seamlessly. Thus, once the girl-child can be empowered through the cost-effective portrait-making vocation, it will increase her involvement in entrepreneurial activities which will serve as an eye-opener to enable her to be financially fortified and aspire for more achievement and involvement in socioeconomic activities that would further resuscitate the country from the present economic dwarfism.

Since this vocation is cost-effective, it is recommended that it should be inoculated as part of the vocations used in teaching entrepreneurship at all levels of tertiary education. This will open employment opportunities for many an artist to have the opportunity to further impact societies while the training will empower both female and male genders to be exposed to another effective way of being financially equipped and entrepreneurially engaged.

To further strengthen the proficiency of whoever wants to venture into the vocation, it is hereby recommended that such a person should either embrace apprenticeship for some period, while during the apprenticeship, he/she can kick start the vocation by getting different people to canvass to draw at a cheaper rate while the trainer will use the opportunity to correct every drawing he/she does, which will quicken the trainee's mastery.

If the young girl who didn't have any art experience could have gone that far to have an almost accurate rendition of the photograph in Plate 7a, it means this vocation is less complex and can be easily learned and used to further empower the girl-child, hence the ministry of women affairs across all the States in Nigeria can also absorb the vocation at all their training/empowerment centres to teach as many girl-child cum male-child as possible for financial empowerment.

Also, with the rate of girl-child involvement in crucial responsibilities in the country, there is a need to empower the girl-child to be literate and independent to fulfil her divine purpose of complementing the boy-child for national growth and global development. Various scholarship initiatives for girl-child should be

further promoted by the government, Non-Government Organizations and other stakeholders, all in a bid to ensure the literacy level of the female gender in the country improves.

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