Name: Fatima Sharif

Question: **In your own words, what is the role of gender in discussing the digital generation in Nigeria**

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN DISCUSSING THE DIGITAL GENERATION IN NIGERIA

Gender is an important consideration in development. Men and women are made to co-exist, no development occurs without both. It is a way of looking at how social norms and power structures impact on the lives and opportunities available to different groups of men and women. Globally, more women than men live in poverty.

Gender plays a big role to digital generation in Nigeria. Girls and women have less access to technology and the internet compared to boys and men. The gender digital divide in access to the internet remains largest in the world's least developed countries at 32.9%, yes I've done my research on that. Most women are not educated, girls get married off as young as the age of 9. Some barely finish Junior secondary school. Nigerians have a stereotype of grooming girls just to be wives, how they're expected to act, speak, dress and conduct themselves based upon their gender.

From my understanding, all these stereotypes are mostly caused by illiteracy. Sometimes geographical restrictions, social and religious beliefs, culture and customs or low income levels and poverty. In Nigeria though it's mostly men's mentality. In their own point of view, women are made to serve them. Till date there are some men who only want a housewife, some do not even want a smart wife in a way, they prefer a slave

portrayed as a servant. From my experience in secondary school, girls are always smarter than the boys. It never matters if boys were smart or not though, they'd still be superior in some way. No matter how smart a girl is, even the teachers will taunt her about getting married after school. At this point some girls just give up and think that it wouldn't matter.

Women in Nigeria are less likely to know how to operate a smartphone, navigate the internet, use social media. There is a huge gap from the lowest skill proficiency levels such as using apps on a mobile phone to the most advanced skills like coding computer software to support the analysis of large data sets. Gender gap is more severe to women who are older, less educated, poor or living in rural areas and developing countries. This is mostly due to the struggle to access public ICT facilities due to unsafe roads, limits on their free of movement maybe due to religious or cultural beliefs or maybe the facilities are considered unsuitable to women . Women may not have the financial independence to get a smartphone or pay for internet, sometimes when available they might be monitored by men. Fears concerning safety and harassment (both online and offline) also may stop girls and women from benefiting from the internet.

Helping women and girls develop digital skills means stronger women, stronger families, stronger communities, stronger economies and better technology. To me, digital skill is basically an essential life skill. To increase girls' and women's

digital life skill involves early, varied and sustained exposure to digital technology. Some skills learned today may not be relevant in 5 to 10 years anyways, it requires updating to prevent women and girls fall further behind. In my opinion, women and girls digital skills development are strengthened by: Embedding ICT in formal education, supporting engaging experiences, encouraging collaborative and peer learning, creating safe spaces and meet women where they are, recruiting and training gender-sensitive teachers and bringing parents on board.

It will be very hard to stop gender inequality and female discrimination in Nigeria, but I believe it could be possible. Let's make Nigeria comfortable for young girls and women.