
Book Review

Joseph Wilson and Nuhu Diraso Gapsiso
Overcoming Gender Inequalities through Technology Integration: Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2016, ISBN 9791466697744 , p324

Reviewed by: Yahaya Abubakar,
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

The level and pace at which human beings and technology interact in the contemporary world have increasingly drawn the attention of scholars and experts to review the usage, access and role of technology in every aspect of human existence. Hence, the proliferation of digital tools and devices mostly supported by internet facility and their relative usage have, showcased different levels of impact on the society, cutting across gender, age, social status etc. A category of the population that is most affected by the emerging technologies (internet, cell phones, tablets, social media apps and platforms e.tc.) as implied in the works of many scholars is the women. There are substantive efforts through research at global level to highlight and address the issue of women and emerging technologies, especially that which suggest marginalization and domination of women in the digital world. Part of this effort is the book series-*Advances in Human and Social Aspects of Technology* (AHSAT) being published by IGI Global in USA to promote interest in technology and scholarship.

Wilson and Gapsiso (2016) have captured a perspective on the trending issues in the digital revolution with a focus on women in their book titled: *Overcoming Gender Inequalities through Technology Integration*. The fifteen-chapter edited book drew intellectual and interesting contributions from different parts of the world-UK, Denmark, Portugal, China, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya and Brazil. The background and composition of the contributors logically and strategically inform and project a global experience of women and technology. The book categorically notes on the back-cover that the publication is to serve as “a critical source for understanding the role of technology adoption within female empowerment and equality in developing nations and beyond.”

This 324-page book contains topics on cultural change, digital divide, female fan identity, feminism, gender equality, human rights, information communication technologies, self-empowerment and social justice. These topics covered most of the challenging issues regarding technology and women empowerment in both developing and developed nations. The subjects were substantially examined and explicated based on empirical studies conducted in the different environmental settings. Findings of the studies represent the reality and experience of women with technology in terms of access, use, influence and adoption. Thus, the book is reviewed in line with the aforementioned key topics:

Cultural Change: At least three articles from the book captured this theme. Oliveira and Jeronimo's chapter on Portuguese rural women and Rukwaro and Bii's chapter on rural women in Kenya; have all advanced the argument that irrespective of the remoteness of location, women should be given access to ICT to enhance a greater connectivity and beneficial utilization of the technology. All the authors acknowledged the role mobile phones plays in rural locations in Portugal and Kenya to keep relationship and strengthen social ties with people living away from the rural area; and relay information on agriculture which appears to be a main occupation in the rural areas. In addition, Agboola's chapter on mothers' use of ICTs for domestic purpose further highlighted the influence of ICTs on domestic affairs.

Female Fan Identity, Gender Equality and Feminism: In a world that is perceived to be dominated by men, active women are more likely to look for several means to empower themselves and project their identity. The digital world presents the needed opportunity through several online platforms such as social media for women to compete favourably with their male-counterpart. Gursimsek's chapter which examined a transgeneric, transmedia television drama that was aired from 2004 to 2010 as a case, has revealed how gender identity is being promoted and negotiated among audiences of fiction materials. Interesting to note under this theme is the chapter: *ICT is not Gender blind* by Ibrahim and Adamu which concluded that ICT gender gap negatively affects the socioeconomic development of women.

Human Rights, Social Justice and Women empowerment: Substantive works in this book have advocated for women rights and empowerment as a way to foster and promote social justice. The argument that women should have equal rights with their male counterpart in the digital sphere is also being pursued. Contributors in this book, mostly Nigerians examined the case of women and digital technologies in a political context. Eze and Enwereuzo see ICT as a greater opportunity to empower women in politics in terms of information, knowledge and engagement. This is also relatively similar to Abdumutallib's chapter on Mobile-based social media platforms and women mobilization for political participation in Nigeria. Though, Abdumutallib's work is not empirical but has touched on relevance and significance of ICT particularly the mobile-based social media in enhancing democratic process. These works have been well complemented by Goncalves and Rosendo's chapter that examined gender relationships and social inequalities online that impact negatively on a society through portrayal of hate speech, porn revenge among others. The authors examined this issue against internet regulation policies and other areas of restriction of women's right to freedom of expression.

Conclusively, all the chapters presented in the book have greatly contributed to the general theme that focuses on gender inequalities and technology integration. However, by implication the contributions pose a challenge to policy makers, technology developers and other stakeholders to enhance technology (in terms of hardware, application, usage, access and interaction)so as to overcome inequality and social

injustice, particularly in relation to online platforms. This has been emphasized in the chapter by Gapsiso and Rahila that clearly calls for gender mainstreaming of technology policies to give a levelled playing field for the women. The chapter by Wilson and Kolo called for a more serious use of the ICT platforms to support women equality efforts, than the more leisure-driven or leisure-based use of the platforms by women. Thus, the technology should be redirected towards empowering women, projecting their identity and providing enabling ground for them to properly utilize digital tools and devices. *Overcoming Gender Inequalities through Technology Integration* challenges the world in the area of digital infrastructure and application to adjust and accommodate all categories of population.

The argument articulated in this work is in line with several theories explaining and describing technology and human interaction for societal and human development. It could be deduced from the works that the general argument is largely tilted towards the propositions of certain technology related theories, such as Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), Technology determinism Theory (McLuhan) and ICT-Push Theory (Wilson & Gapsiso, 2012) that are concerned with change, adoption, access, application and usage. Also, the work could be situated within Knowledge Gap Hypothesis that suggests a category of population is not likely to have equal access to technology or perhaps become marginalized as a result of certain social or environmental factors. Thus, in the case of this work, the argument is that women are being marginalized, constrained to have access to ICTs and not being encouraged to adopt and utilize ICTs accordingly.

Author

Yahaya Abubakar lectures in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri. He earned M.A. and B. A. Degrees in Digital Media and Mass Communications from University of Nicosia, Cyprus and University of Maiduguri respectively. His research interests are on digital media and journalism studies.