





LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES



NEEDS ASSESSMENT RC1001°t







LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES



Report Report









FAECARE FOUNDATION

LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES (LADIWDD) NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT INTRODUCTION

Leadership and digital skills play a crucial role in shaping modern societies. Leadership, at its core, is the ability to influence and guide individuals towards a shared vision. In today's digitalized world, digital skills encompass the ability to use digital tools, evaluate digital content, and create and share information online.

For women with disabilities, acquiring digital and leadership skills is critical for enhancing their participation in social, economic, and political spheres. However, they face multiple barriers, including accessibility challenges, gender norms, and socio-economic disparities, which hinder their digital inclusion and leadership growth. This report provides an in-depth analysis of these issues with a particular focus on Nigeria, integrating global and country-specific research, and offers recommendations for a more inclusive digital and leadership landscape.

The Needs Assessment for the Leadership and Digital Initiative for Women with Disabilities (LADIWDD) was conducted by FAECARE Foundation with support from the US Consulate, Lagos. This project aims to empower women with disabilities by enhancing their leadership capabilities and digital literacy skills. The assessment utilized a self-administered questionnaire to collect data on digital proficiency, leadership potential, socio-demographics, and other critical factors affecting women with disabilities in Nigeria.

The Leadership and Digital Initiative for Women with Disabilities (LADIWDD) is a project spearheaded by the Freky Andrew-Essien Care Foundation (FAECARE Foundation) with support from the US Consulate, Lagos. This initiative aims to empower women with disabilities by providing leadership training and digital skill development. The project seeks to:

- Build the capacity of women with disabilities through leadership and digital skills training.
- Provide digital literacy and skills to enhance opportunities or wom







with disabilities.

 Address societal stereotypes that hinder the progress of women with disabilities into leadership roles.

A needs assessment was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire to gather data on digital and leadership skills among women with disabilities in Nigeria.

A needs assessment using a self-administered questionnaire was conducted among persons with disabilities in Nigeria to determine their digital and leadership skills, along with other demographic information for women with disabilities. This report presents the findings and compares them to global and national data on digital and leadership skills.

BACKGROUND

Leadership, at its core, is the ability to influence others to follow a vision or direction. It has been an integral part of human societies, shaping organizations, politics, and social movements. Leadership, especially in contemporary discourse, is understood not merely as a position of authority but as a dynamic practice that involves decision-making, collaboration, and adaptability.

Digital skills, on the other hand, refer to the ability to find, evaluate, create, and share information using digital devices such as computers, smartphones, and other technological tools. These skills range from basic internet navigation to advanced competencies in cybersecurity, programming, and data analysis. The increasing reliance on digital technology across various sectors has made digital literacy an essential component of modern life, impacting employment, education, and civic participation.

Women with disabilities face a unique set of challenges that arise from the intersection of gender and disability. They often encounter discrimination, exclusion, and lack of access to opportunities, which hinders their participation in leadership roles and digital spaces. In Nigeria, these barriers are exacerbated by cultural norms, inadequate policy implementation, and limited infrastructural support for persons with disabilities.

Promoting leadership and digital skills for women with disabilities is crucial in fostering their social and economic inclusion. With adequate training and support, they can advocate for their rights, participate in decision-making







processes, and leverage digital tools to enhance their independence and economic prospects.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership and digital skills are essential competencies for individuals in today's increasingly digital and interconnected world. For women with disabilities, these skills hold even greater significance as they empower them to overcome societal barriers, advocate for their rights, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Despite progress in gender equality and disability inclusion, women with disabilities in Nigeria and globally continue to face systemic challenges in accessing leadership opportunities and digital resources. Addressing these issues requires a multidimensional approach that includes policy reforms, digital accessibility, and leadership training tailored to the unique needs of women with disabilities.

Leadership And Women with Disabilities

Leadership, in its simplest definition, is the ability to influence and inspire others toward achieving a common goal. Traditional leadership theories, including trait theory, situational leadership, and behavioral theory, have evolved over time to accommodate diverse leadership styles and approaches (Northouse, 2021). However, leadership for women with disabilities is often impeded by societal stereotypes, discrimination, and exclusion from decision-making processes (Shakespeare, 2018).

Women with disabilities often navigate dual discrimination—both as women and as persons with disabilities. They are frequently perceived as dependent and incapable of leadership roles, reinforcing societal biases that hinder their participation in governance, business, and community leadership (UN Women, 2020). A UNICEF report highlights that gender inequality in leadership is mirrored in the digital space, where women, especially those with disabilities, face significant barriers in acquiring digital competencies (UNICEF, 2022).

Leadership and Its Importance

Leadership is a crucial skill that enables individuals to inspire and mobilize others towards achieving a common goal. Leadership is an essential aspect of human interaction, with historical roots dating back centuries.

LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES







different leadership theories have been developed, to provide insight into the dynamics of effective leadership:

Trait Theory: Suggests that certain innate characteristics, such as confidence, resilience, and integrity, make an individual a natural leader.

Behavioral Theory: Focuses on modeling positive behavior that others can follow.

Situational Leadership Theory: Proposes that effective leadership depends on the context and the readiness of the followers.

Transformational Leadership: Focuses on inspiring and motivating others to achieve higher levels of performance and personal development.

Servant Leadership: Prioritizes the needs of the group and community over personal gains.

For women with disabilities, leadership is particularly important in breaking barriers, advocating for inclusivity, and influencing policy changes that enhance accessibility and equal opportunities.

The Importance of Leadership Development for Women With Disabilities Empowering women with disabilities as leaders can yield multiple benefits:

Improved Representation: When women with disabilities assume leadership roles, they bring lived experiences that shape inclusive policies and practices (Goggin & Newell, 2003).

Economic Empowerment: Leadership skills increase employment opportunities and financial independence (ILO, 2021).

Social Change Advocacy: Women leaders with disabilities can advocate for disability rights, inclusive education, and workplace diversity (WHO, 2019). Despite these advantages, there is a need for structured leadership training programs tailored to the specific challenges faced by women with disabilities in Nigeria. Research indicates that leadership education should focus on

LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT







negotiation skills, emotional intelligence, assertiveness, public speaking, and problem-solving (British Council, 2023).

Digital Skills And Inclusion For Women With Disabilities

Digital skills are increasingly recognized as a fundamental aspect of leadership in the modern era. Leaders who possess digital competencies can leverage technology to enhance communication, decision-making, and strategic planning. Digital skills enable women with disabilities to:

- Participate in online advocacy campaigns.
- Access remote work opportunities.
- Engage in e-learning and professional development.
- Network with peers and mentors in leadership spaces.

Digital skills refer to the ability to find, evaluate, use, and create content using digital technologies. Digital skills encompass a wide range of abilities required to effectively use digital devices such as computers, smartphones, and tablets. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) classifies digital skills into three levels: These skills are classified into three levels:

Basic Digital Skills: Operating digital devices, using the internet, and basic software applications.

Intermediate Digital Skills: Content creation, cloud computing, and evaluating digital tools.

Advanced Digital Skills: Data analytics, cybersecurity, coding, and programming (ITU, 2022).

For women with disabilities, digital skills are crucial in breaking barriers to education, employment, and social participation. However, the gender digital divide disproportionately affects them, making it harder to access and utilize technology (GSMA, 2020). Studies indicate that women with disabilities are less likely to own or use smartphones due to affordability issues, lack of accessible features, and limited training on digital literacy (Awino, 2023). According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), by 2027, 42% of jobs will be automated, making digital skills increasingly essential for employment and economic participation.









Challenges Faced by Women with Disabilities in Leadership And Digital Inclusion

Women with disabilities encounter multiple barriers that hinder their leadership aspirations and digital engagement:

Societal and Cultural Barriers

Gender norms in Nigeria often dictate that women should assume domestic roles, limiting their access to leadership opportunities. The stigma surrounding disability leads to negative perceptions of the capabilities of women with disabilities.

Digital Access and Usability Issues

The gender digital divide is more pronounced among women with disabilities, who have lower access to digital devices and internet services. Many digital platforms and tools are not designed with accessibility in mind, making navigation difficult for individuals with visual, auditory, or physical impairments.

Economic and Educational Limitations

The high cost of assistive technologies and internet services makes it challenging for women with disabilities to engage with digital platforms. Limited opportunities for digital education and training further widen the digital skills gap.

Limited Access to Digital Devices

High costs and financial constraints make digital technology unaffordable. Many cannot afford smartphones or computers due to economic constraints.

Lack of Accessibility Features

Digital tools are often designed without adequate accessibility considerations, such as screen readers and voice commands.

Usability and accessibility issues

Many digital products are designed with men as the default user, ignoring accessibility features required by women with disabilities.

Gender Norms and Social Stigma

Some cultural perceptions discourage women from using mobile bhones or

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engaging with digital spaces. Gender norms often restrict women's access to digital technology, particularly in conservative communities.

Safety and Security Concerns

Women with disabilities face increased risks of cyberbullying, online scams, and data breaches (UNESCO, 2021). Lack of awareness on safeguarding personal information.

Limited Digital Literacy Programs

There is a gap in educational programs that specifically target digital skill development for women with disabilities.







GLOBAL AND NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES ON DIGITAL AND LEADERSHIPSKILLS FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Empirical Studies on Digital and Leadership Skills for Women with Disabilities

Leadership is fundamentally about influence, and while historically associated with hierarchical positions, modern leadership theories emphasize adaptability, problem-solving, and inclusivity. Digital skills, on the other hand, are essential for participation in contemporary economies, encompassing basic competencies (e.g., internet use), intermediate skills (e.g., content creation), and advanced proficiencies (e.g., coding, cybersecurity). According to the World Economic Forum, digital transformation is reshaping employment, with 42% of tasks expected to be automated by 2027, necessitating robust digital literacy. International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) advocate for the digital and leadership inclusion of women with disabilities. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize gender equality and innovation as pathways to inclusivity (United Nations, 2011).

Globally, women with disabilities encounter significant digital exclusion. The UNICEF report on the gender digital divide highlights that women and girls, irrespective of disability, lag behind men in digital adoption. Women with disabilities face even greater barriers due to accessibility challenges, affordability issues, and limited opportunities for digital literacy. The "Default Male" paradigm, as discussed by Caroline Criado Perez in Invisible Women, underscores the systemic exclusion of women from technological design, further exacerbating these inequalities.

Studies from international organizations such as the UN, UNICEF, and the World Economic Forum highlight the disparities in digital and leadership opportunities for women with disabilities. Research indicates that women with disabilities are underrepresented in leadership roles across various sectors.

Digital skills training programs tailored for women with disabilities have significantly improved their economic independence and social participation in countries with strong policy frameworks. Assistive technologies, when integrated into digital platforms, enhance accessibility and usability for persons with disabilities.

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In Nigeria, organizations such as the British Council, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) have initiated programs aimed at bridging the digital divide. However, these programs often fail to specifically target women with disabilities, highlighting the need for tailored interventions (British Council, 2023).

Research has shown that women with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed due to societal biases and lack of access to skill development programs. Digital literacy initiatives targeting marginalized groups have yielded positive outcomes but remain insufficient in reaching women with disabilities. Government policies on disability inclusion exist but are poorly implemented, limiting their effectiveness.

CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Several initiatives provide insights into effective strategies for empowering women with disabilities through digital and leadership skills:

Kenya's Digital Skills Training Program: A targeted initiative providing mobile-based digital literacy training for women with disabilities (GSMA, 2020).

Rwanda's Women in Tech Initiative: Focuses on mentoring and capacity-building for women in technology, including those with disabilities (ITU, 2022).

Nigeria's Women in Digital Advocacy Project: Seeks to improve digital literacy and access among marginalized groups, including women with disabilities (British Council, 2023).

RESULTS LADIWWD NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHY

Table: Gender Distribution

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	237	94%
Female	15	6%

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Chart: Gender Distribution

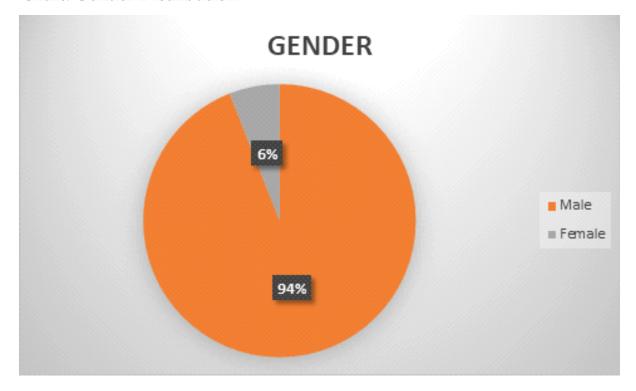


Table: Age and Gender Distribution

Age Range	Gender			
Age	Female	Male	%	
			Female	% Male
18 - 25	46	4	18.25	1.59
26 - 30	62	4	24.60	1.59
31 - 35	52	3	20.63	1.19
36 - 40	34		13.49	0.00
40 - 45	22	2	8.73	0.79
46 - 50	11	1	4.37	0.40
50 - 55	7		2.78	0.00
56 - 60	1	1	0.40	0.40
Above 60	2		0.79	0.00







Chart: Age and Gender Distribution

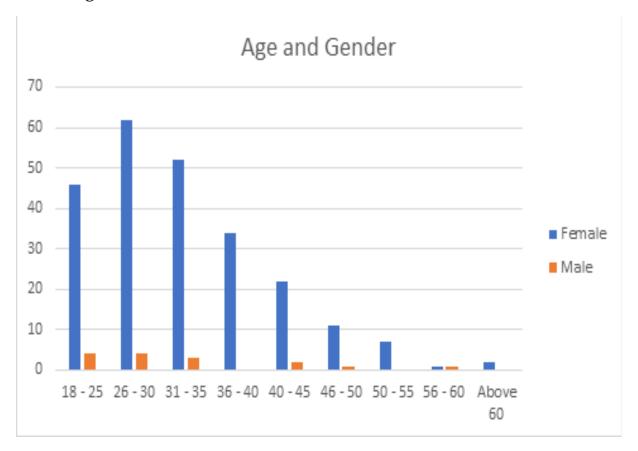


Table: Type of disability

Disability Type	Count	Percentage
Intellectual/learning disability	5	2%
Physical Disability	146	58%
psychosocial disability	4	2%
Sensory Disability (Hearing / Visual/	78	
Speech)		31%
No disability	19	8%







Chart: Type of disability

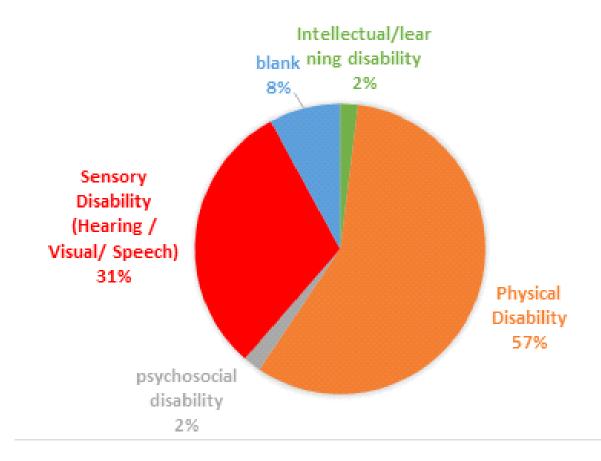


Table: Level of Education

Level of Education	Count	Percentage
Higher Education (Diploma, University, etc.)	183	72.6%
Primary School only	3	1.2%
Primary School only, Secondary School,		
Vocational Training	1	0.4%
Secondary School	56	22.2%
Secondary School, Vocational Training	1	0.4%
Vocational Training	7	2.8%
Vocational Training, Higher Education		
(Diploma, University, etc.)	1	0.4%







Chart: Level of Education

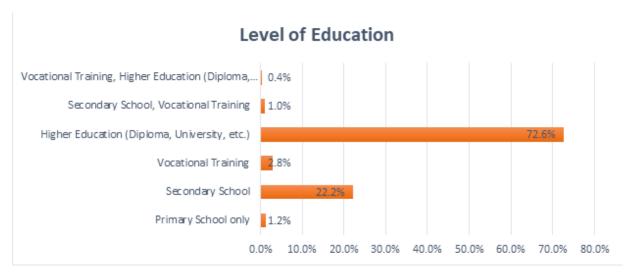
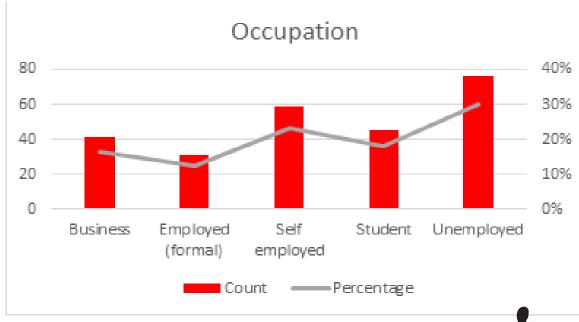


Table: Occupation Distribution

Occupation	Count	Percentage
Business	41	16%
Employed	31	
(formal)		12%
Self employed	59	23%
Student	45	18%
Unemployed	76	30%

Chart: Occupation Distribution



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NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT









DIGITAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Table: Internet Use Frequency

Internet Use	Count	Percentage
Always (Daily)	152	60.32%
Never	21	8.33%
Occasionally (once or twice a month)	12	4.76%
Regularly (several times a week)	67	26.59%

Chart: Internet Use Frequency

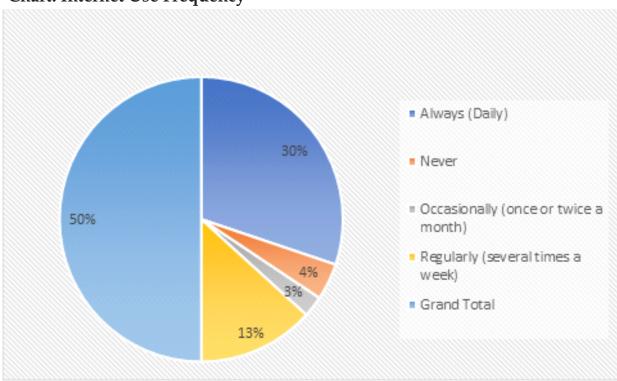


Table: Internet Use

What do you mostly use the internet for		
Social media (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook)	194	
Banking and financial transactions	69	
Business purposes (e.g., selling products online)	69	
Learning and education	124	
Entertainment (e.g., videos, games)	49	







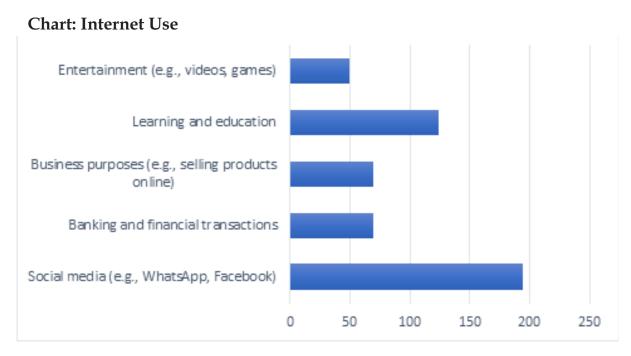


Table: Internet Use vs Occupation and Gender

Occupation	Gender	How frequently do you use the internet?	
	Female	Always (Daily)	26
.	Female Female	Never Occasionally (once or twice a month)	2
Business	Female	Regularly (several times a week)	8
	Male	Always (Daily)	1
	Male	Regularly (several times a week)	1
	Female	Always (Daily)	19
Employed	Female	Never	2
(formal)	Female	Occasionally (once or twice a month)	1
	Female	Regularly (several times a week)	9
	Female	Always (Daily)	39
	Female	Never	3
Self employed	Female	Occasionally (once or twice a month)	3
	Female	Regularly (several times a week)	11
	Male	Always (Daily)	3
	Female	Always (Daily)	16
	Female	Never	8







Student	Female	Occasionally (once or twice a month)	1
	Female	Regularly (several times a week)	17
	Male	Always (Daily)	3
	Female	Always (Daily)	41
	Female	Never	6
Unemployed	Female	Occasionally (once or twice a month)	4
Ollempioyeu	Female	Regularly (several times a week)	18
	Male	Always (Daily)	4
	Male	Regularly (several times a week)	3

Chart: Internet Use vs Occupation and Gender

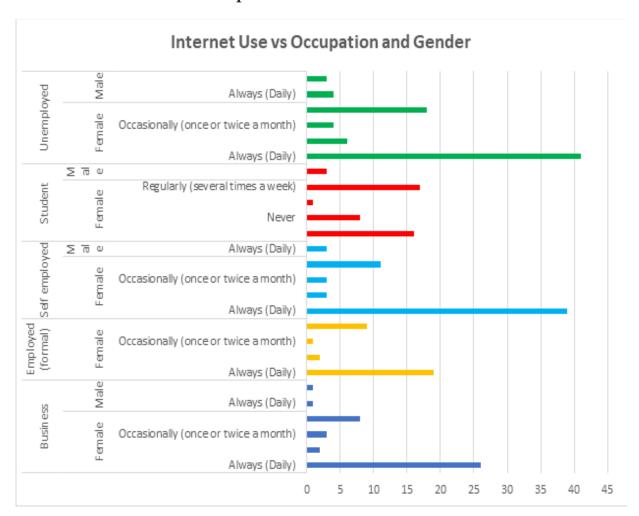








Table: Digital Skills Interest

Using Accessibility Features	22
Online banking and financial transactions	28
Coding or programming	42
Safety and Security while using Digital Devices	43
Internet navigation and research	47
Social media	49
Cyber Security and you	53
Digital Advocacy	59
Application software (Apps)	60
Graphic design	63
E-commerce (buying and selling online)	81
Basic computer skills (using a computer, sending	
emails)	103
Digital marketing	110

Chart: Digital Skills Interest









Table: Digital Device Use

Digital Device Use	Count
None of the above	6
Personal Computer/Laptop	19
Smartphone	113
Smartphone, Personal Computer/Laptop	52
Smartphone, Personal Computer/Laptop, Tablet	53
Smartphone, Tablet	8
Tablet	1
Grand Total	252

Chart: Digital Device Use

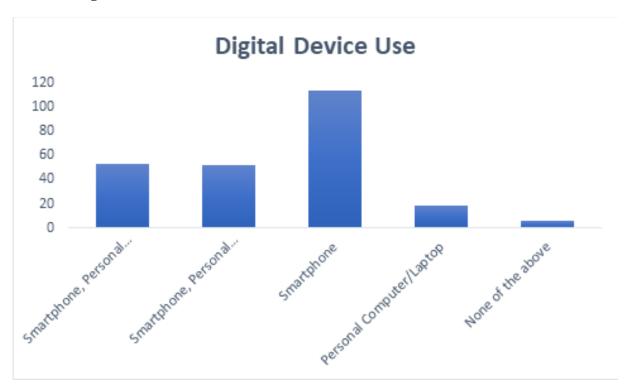


Table: Digital Device Use Proficiency

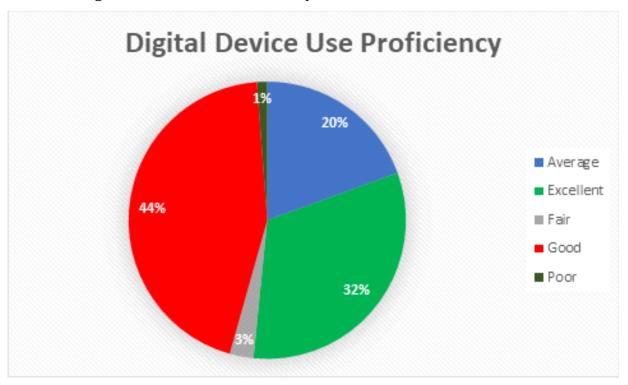
Digital Device Use Proficiency	
Average	49
Excellent	81
Fair	7
Good	112
Poor	3







Chart: Digital Device Use Proficiency



LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Table: Leadership Perception

Can a woman with disability be a		Percentage
leader?	Count	
No	7	3%
yes	253	97%

Chart: Leadership Perception

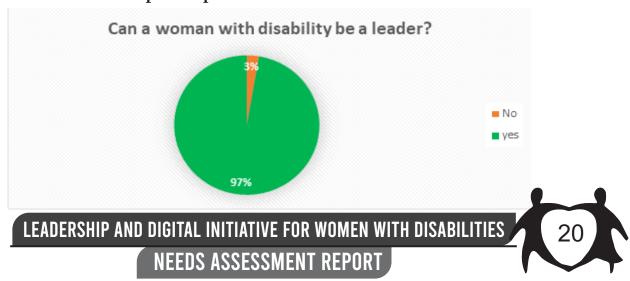








Table: Can a woman with disability be a leader vs Gender

Can a woman with disability be a		
leader?	Gender	
No	Female	7
yes	Female	237
yes	Male	16

Chart: Can a woman with disability be a leader

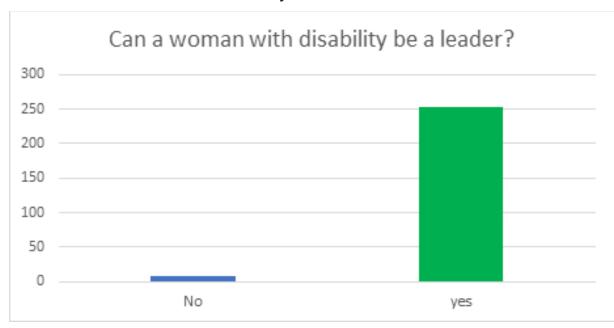


Chart: Can a woman with disability be a leader vs Gender

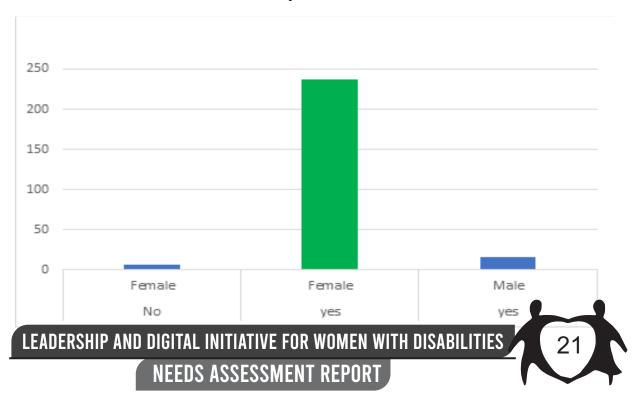








Table: Would you describe yourself as a leader?

Maybe	40	16%
No	7	3%
Yes	205	81%

Chart: Would you describe yourself as a leader?

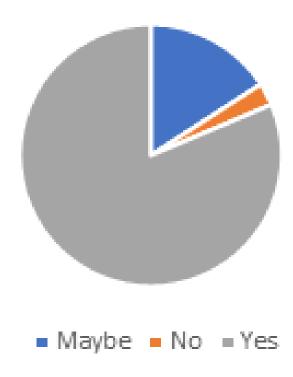


Table: Would you describe yourself as a leader vs Gender

Would you describe yourself as a		
leader?	Gender	
Manufac	Female	38
Maybe	Male	2
No	Female	7
Yes	Female	192
	Male	13







Chart: Would you describe yourself as a leader vs Gender



Table: Leadership Skills to Learn

Top Leadership Skills to learn	Frequency
Negotiation skills	36
Assertiveness	45
Emotional intelligence	74
Growth mindset	74
Social skills	74
Critical thinking	81
Creativity	92
Problem solving	130
Public speaking	131







Chart: Top Leadership Skills to learn



Table: Leadership Qualities to Learn

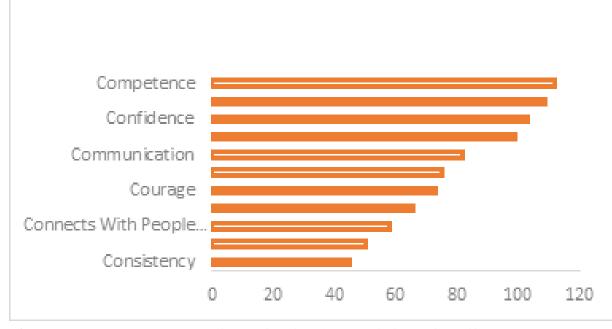
Top Leadership Qualities	
Consistency	45
Continuous Learning	50
Connects With People	
(networking)	58
Contributes back to society	66
Courage	73
Commitment	75
Communication	82
Care and Compassion	99
Confidence	103
Character	109
Competence	112





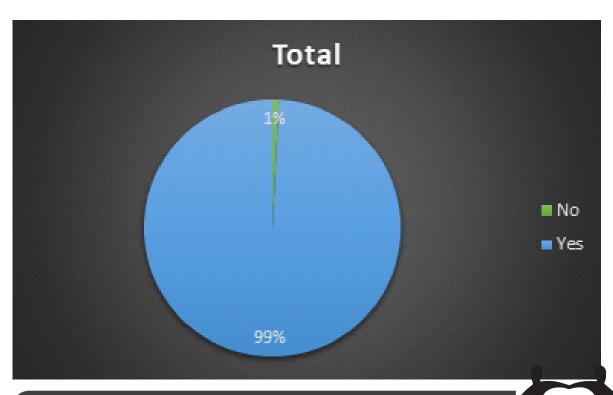


Chart: Leadership qualities to learn



If given an opportunity to learn leadership and digital skills, would you make time to participate?

No	2	1%
Yes	250	99%



LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT







DISCUSSION

Gender Distribution

The survey included 252 respondents, of whom 94% were male and 6% were female. This indicates a significant gender disparity in participation, which is unusual given the focus on women with disabilities.

Age and Gender Breakdown

The highest representation came from women aged 26-30 (24.6%) and 31-35 (20.63%), suggesting that the majority of respondents are in their prime working-age years.

Type of Disability

58% of respondents reported physical disabilities, followed by 31% with sensory disabilities. Only 2% had intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. These figures highlight the need for digital and leadership training that considers accessibility needs for these groups.

Educational Level

Education levels varied: 72.6% had higher education, while only 1.2% had primary school education. 22.2% completed secondary school and 2.8% had vocational training. This indicates that despite educational achievements, disability-related barriers persist in employment and digital access, pointing to barriers in employment opportunities for women with disabilities.

Employment and Digital Engagement

Employment Status showed 30% were unemployed. 23% were self-employed, 18% were students and 16% were business owners.

These findings align with global trends where women with disabilities often face higher unemployment rates due to societal biases and lack of accessibility in workplaces.

Internet Use and Digital Device Proficiency

60.32% of respondents use the internet daily, 8.33% never use the internet and 26.59% use the internet several times a week.

Most respondents use smartphones - 80% used smartphones, while only 19% had personal computers. This highlights the importance of modile-based

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digital literacy training.

Digital Skills of Interest

Respondents expressed strong interest in learning digital marketing, basic computer skills, E-commerce, application software usage and cybersecurity. Given the high unemployment rate, it is essential to provide digital entrepreneurship and online business skills training.

Leadership Perception and Skills Development

97% affirmed that women with disabilities can be leaders. 81% identified as leaders, yet only 16% were uncertain about their leadership potential. These positive perceptions indicate a strong willingness among women with disabilities to take up leadership roles if given the right opportunities.

Key leadership skills sought were **problem-solving**, **public speaking**, **critical thinking**, **and creativity**, **emotional intelligence**, **and social skills**.

This indicates a readiness for leadership development, provided that systemic barriers are addressed. Leadership training programs should focus on these key competencies to build confidence and effectiveness among women with disabilities like **competence**, **character**, **confidence**, **communication**. This aligns with global leadership frameworks that emphasize competence, confidence, and effective communication.

Despite 97% of respondents agreeing that women with disabilities can be leaders, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. The main obstacles include:

Stereotypes and biases – Women with disabilities are often seen as dependent rather than as potential leaders.

Lack of leadership training – Few opportunities exist for women with disabilities to develop leadership skills.

Inadequate mentorship and networking – Leadership is often developed through networks and mentorship, which many women with disabilities lack access to.

This survey's findings align with global patterns of digital and leadership exclusion for women with disabilities, some unique challenges stand out:

Limited Access to Digital Devices – Unlike developed economies where accessibility features are widely available, many Nigerian women with disabilities lack smartphones or computers, limiting their digital participation.

Affordability Challenges – High device costs and disability-related expenses hinder technology acquisition, reinforcing digital marginalization.

Gatekeeping and Gender Norms - Social expectations restrict wo hen's us

LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES







of digital devices, often limiting their leadership and economic opportunities. **Education vs. Employment Disparity** – Despite high educational attainment, many women with disabilities remain unemployed or underemployed, signaling a skills-to-employment gap.

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of participants (97%) believe that women with disabilities can be leaders.
- 60% of respondents use the internet daily, while 30% are unemployed.
- Most respondents (72.6%) have higher education qualifications.
- Basic computer skills, digital marketing, and e-commerce are the most sought-after digital skills.
- Leadership skills such as public speaking and problem-solving rank high among learning interests.
- There is a significant interest in digital and leadership training among women with disabilities.
- The majority are educated but face employment challenges.
- Most use smartphones for digital access, emphasizing the need for mobile-based learning solutions.
- Most common digital skills women with disabilities were interested in learning: Digital marketing, Basic computer skills, E-commerce and Cybersecurity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Develop targeted digital literacy programs, provide structured courses on digital marketing, e-commerce, and cybersecurity.
- 2. Enhance leadership training, emphasizing public speaking, problem-solving, and confidence-building, communication, and problem-solving.
- 3. Employment Support Initiatives: Collaborate with businesses to create job placement opportunities for women with disabilities.
- 4. Increase advocacy efforts to reduce societal biases against women with disabilities in leadership roles. Educate society on the leadership potential of women with disabilities to combat stereotypes.
- 5. Boost learning of digital accessibility tools
- 6. Provide training on the safe use of mobile devices
- 7. Encourage mentorship and networking opportunities to connect women with disabilities with successful leaders.
- 8. Implement and enforce policies supporting digital inclusion ar







leadership for women with disabilities.

By implementing these strategies, Nigeria and the global community can create a more inclusive society where women with disabilities are equipped with the necessary digital and leadership skills to thrive in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

There is a digital and leadership divide that exists for women with disabilities in Nigeria. The intersection of gender, disability, digital skills, and leadership presents both challenges and opportunities. Empowering women with disabilities to thrive as digital citizens and transformative leaders, through leadership and digital skills training is essential for fostering inclusivity, economic independence, and social participation. Addressing the barriers they face requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy enforcement, capacity-building initiatives, and technological advancements.

In Nigeria, there is a pressing need to enhance digital access and leadership opportunities for women with disabilities to ensure their full participation in society and the digital economy. The survey showed that Nigerian women with disabilities demonstrate a strong willingness to lead and engage digitally.







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