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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perspectives of Feminism and Gender Relations in Ika Land, Delta State, Nigeria: Evidence from a Convergent Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract
This study examined perceptions of feminism and gender relations in Ika Land, Delta State, Nigeria, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 400 adult respondents selected using multistage sampling from Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas, while qualitative data were obtained from 16 purposively selected key informants, including traditional rulers, women leaders, religious leaders, and community development officers. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis, whereas qualitative interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed statistically significant associations between feminist awareness and perceptions of gender equality, patriarchal cultural practices and women's access to opportunities, and gender-based challenges and perceptions of social development ($p < 0.05$). Four major qualitative themes emerged: cultural construction of gender roles, contested perceptions of feminism, underreporting of gender-based violence, and the empowering role of education. Integration of both datasets demonstrated that while patriarchal cultural practices remain influential, increasing educational opportunities and community advocacy are associated with more positive perceptions of gender equality. The study contributes to African feminist scholarship by providing context-specific evidence on gender relations within Ika Land and recommends culturally responsive interventions that promote gender equality while respecting indigenous community values.

Keywords: Feminism; Gender relations; Mixed-Methods; Patriarchy; Delta State; Ika Land

1. Introduction

Feminism can be seen both as a socio-political movement and as a branch of scholarship. Advocacy for the rights of the woman and the socio-political empowerment of the woman is the primary focus of such scholarship and/or movement. Feminism as a scholarship, movement, and/or ideology, is, in a non-mono-form articulation, a focus of scholarly research due to the multitude of perspectives from various histories, cultures, economies, and politics (Connell & Pearse, 2021). Feminism seeks to understand the power relations that privilege the masculine and feminise all others, and in doing so, seeks to change the relationship altogether. The issues of the social, economic, political, and cultural domains that can be attributed to socially constructed differences between men and women

are referred to as gender issues. The manifestation of gender issues can be seen as the unavailability and unequal distribution of resources, opportunity, and power within a given social order to make choices, and equally within a social order are the norms and practices that discriminate and sustain an unequal distribution of power (UN Women, 2023). These issues are not just women's issues, but rather, developmental issues, social cohesion issues, and issues of social justice. Feminist perspectives and gender studies in the field must, more than ever, be attuned to the specificity of a given context, particularly in African settings where historically and contemporarily framed colonial legacies, customary law, religion, and communitarian value systems interweave with the modern state (Mama, 2020; Tamale, 2020). The African feminist scholarship community has emphasized the importance of indigenously situated perspectives in analysing and articulating gender and its complexities without external qualitative imposition. The Ika Land of Delta State, Nigeria, which includes Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas, is culturally and linguistically grouped with the Igbo ethnic group, although, they possess distinct historical and social profiles. The social structure of Ika Land is organized and stratified into a system of kinship, age-grade associations, and a peasant traditional leadership structure, which, regulates social conduct, and the social stratification of gender (Okolie & Igbinovia, 2022).

Ika, as a society, is characteristically patriarchal, with the consolidation of authority in the male figure as the head of the household, as well as, community, leadership. The social relations of inheritance, land control, and the dominant ascription of lineage to the male, defines women's societal roles, which are primarily, and in the greatest part, restricted to domesticity, subsistence agricultural practice, small-scale trading, and nurturing. In spite of these societal impositions, historically, women have been known to exert authority through informal structures, such as, the association of markets, women's collective forums, and faith-based organisational groups. Activities that include missionary work and colonialism have greatly impacted gender relations in Ika Land. The colonial administration practices that were put in place made the political roles of women in the process more of a peripheral function by incorporating more of the male-centred systems of governance. The Western education system also had a strong bias towards men (Agbaje, 2019). A large number of the prevailing patriarchal systems have remained even though globalisation and post-independence reforms have increased the number of women in the workforce. Ika Land has developed a large number of systems that discriminate against women with respect to education, work, healthcare, and political activity, despite the existence of international and national agreements that promote gender equality. The presence of harmful cultural practices, the economic subservience of women, and the lack of adequate policing of laws designed to promote gender equality all work to increase the system of discrimination. Research that incorporates Ika Land's specific culture and investigates the issues of gender and feminism is greatly lacking, and this study intends to fill that gap.

The study aims to look into the implications of feminism and gender relations in Ika Land, and the consequences of such relations on the community. The objectives of the study are: To understand and analyse how the people of Ika Land define and perceive feminism, to describe the prevailing gender roles and practices that are patriarchal, to assess the primary concerns of gender that affect both women and men in the community, to assess the role of feminism and gender issues in social development, and finally, to suggest gender equality promotion strategies that are culturally appropriate. The study was guided by the following research questions: How do people in Ika Land perceive and understand feminism within their socio-cultural context? What patriarchal gender roles and practice prevail in Ika Land? What major gender-related challenges affected women and men in Ika Land? How do feminism and gender relations influence social and community development in Ika Land? And what culturally appropriate strategies can be adopted to promote gender equality in Ika Land?

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study: H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between feminist awareness and perceptions of gender equality in Ika Land, H_{02}: There is no significant association between patriarchal cultural practices and women's access to education, employment and political participation in

Ika Land and H_{03}: There is no significant association between gender-based challenges and social development in Ika Land.

The hypotheses were evaluated at a 0.05 level of significance to assess if feminist advocacy or gender relational analysis had any notable impact on the developmental result variables. To ensure methodological coherence, Research Questions 1 and 2 were investigated using both quantitative and qualitative data, while Research Question 3 was explored through both survey responses and key informant interviews. Research Question 4 was examined quantitatively through hypothesis testing and qualitatively through thematic analysis. Research Question 5 was addressed primarily through qualitative evidence and the synthesis of quantitative findings. Hypotheses H_{01}–H_{03} correspond directly to the quantitative component of the study, whereas the interview themes provide contextual explanations for the statistical associations identified in the survey. This study is important for gender advocates, policymakers, scholars, and traditional institutions. The study results, which are based on the locals' empirical realities, help feminist scholarship, provide guidance to policymakers, and facilitate gender equity community-based interventions in Ika Land. Beyond addressing an empirical gap in the literature on Ika Land, this study contributes to African feminist scholarship by demonstrating how liberal, radical, and postcolonial feminist perspectives complement one another in explaining gender relations within a culturally distinct Nigerian community. The integration of quantitative survey findings with qualitative community narratives provides a context-sensitive understanding of how patriarchal institutions, feminist awareness, and gender-based challenges interact in shaping perceptions of gender equality. These findings extend existing scholarship by illustrating the importance of analysing feminist theories within specific indigenous socio-cultural settings rather than relying solely on broad national or continental generalisations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Feminist Theories

These are generally four major types of feminism, radical, culture, socialist and liberal feminism. Although feminist scholarship encompasses several theoretical traditions, this study is principally guided by Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, and Postcolonial Feminism because these perspectives most directly explain the educational, institutional, cultural, and historical dimensions of gender relations examined in Ika Land. Cultural Feminism is reviewed to provide broader theoretical context but was not used as a primary analytical framework in developing the questionnaire, interview guide, or interpretation of findings.

2.2 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism believes in the possibility of attaining equality through education, and inclusive political and economic system participation. It advocates for the elimination of discrimination in existing institutions and for the inclusion of women on a meritocratic basis (Blessing & Fred, 2022). In Nigeria, liberal feminist approach has shaped legislation regarding girls' education, women's affirmative action, and political participation.Liberal feminism is evident in Ika Land in the advocacy for women's education, employment in civil service, and participation in community development. More educated women are beginning to oppose the discrimination of women through practices such as the exclusion of women from leadership positions and the denial of inheritance to women, thereby altering the structure of society to allow equal opportunities for men and women.

2.3 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism focuses on the deeply rooted oppression of women, which is present in all aspects of a patriarchal society, including the family, culture, sexuality, and religion. This perspective understands gender-based violence, the enforcement of gendered roles, and ownership of women's bodies as a result of the patriarchal system of society as a whole (Firestone, 2020). This group is termed "radical" because they see the oppression of women as the most fundamental, cutting across boundaries of culture, race and class. Radical feminism argues that patriarchy is embedded within social institutions, cultural norms, and interpersonal relationships that systematically reproduce gender inequality. Rather than attributing women's disadvantage solely to individual behaviour, radical feminist scholars emphasise the structural organisation of power within families, legal systems, religion, and political institutions. Within Ika Land, this perspective provides a useful analytical framework for understanding how customary inheritance practices, gendered expectations, and unequal decision-making structures shape women's opportunities and experiences.

2.4 Cultural Feminism

Cultural Feminism values what makes women unique and different, focusing on their special qualities and encourage them to build women-centred relationship and a shared women's culture (Lewis, 2025). This variety of feminism points out that modern society encourages masculinity. Therefore, cultural feminism believes that the naturing qualities traditionally associated with women is needed in the male-dominated world to provide the right balance for the society to work better.

2.5 Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism examines the intersection of gender and colonial history, taking critique of the universalism of Western feminist thought. African postcolonial feminists maintain that the experience of women is inseparable from the disruption caused by colonisation and the unequal global economy (Mohanty, 2021). Postcolonial feminism critically examines how colonial histories, indigenous cultural systems, race, class, and gender intersect to shape women's lived experiences. Rather than assuming that Western feminist perspectives universally explain gender inequality, postcolonial feminist scholars argue that women's experiences should be understood within their own historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. This perspective is particularly appropriate for analysing gender relations within Ika Land because it recognises both the enduring influence of colonial institutions and the continuing significance of indigenous cultural practices. In Ika Land, postcolonial feminism is useful in articulating the ways in which colonial governance extinguished women's traditional power while amplifying patriarchal power. It also affirms the need to regard culture as a domain of innovative possibilities for engagement, rather than a space of exclusion.

2.6 The Impact of History and Culture on Feminist Thought in Ika Land

In the past, Ika women were involved in economic production and social control. They were influential as leaders in markets, rituals, and group protests. However, the colonial and postcolonial reconfigurations of the Ika Land social order diminished these forms of influence. Today, Ika Land constructs feminist consciousness primarily through education, religion, civil society activism, and global gender discourse. Previous studies conducted in Delta State indicate that customary inheritance practices, unequal access to productive resources, and gendered community leadership structures continue to shape women's participation in social and economic life (Ossai et al,

2024; Okolie & Igbinovia, 2022). Although the intensity of these practices varies across communities, available evidence suggests that cultural norms remain important determinants of women's educational attainment, economic participation, and leadership opportunities within many rural communities of Delta State (Okolie & Igbinovia, 2022). These locally grounded findings provide an important empirical context for interpreting the experiences reported by respondents in Ika Land.

2.7 Main Feminist Issues in Ika Land

2.7.1 Employment

In the informal economy, women are overrepresented in low-paying jobs and are more likely to work in jobs that do not require formal education. They also have less access to land and financial resources, and formal work opportunities are even more limited. Furthermore, women continue to experience occupational segregation and wage gaps (ILO, 2021).

2.7.2 Education

Although there have been increases in the number of females enrolled in schools, there are still gaps in the enrolment at the higher education and vocational training levels. Early marriages, financial hardships, and household tasks continue to limit the number of girls who complete their education (UNESCO, 2022).

2.7.2 Healthcare

Gendered barriers to healthcare are a result of financial dependency, stigma associated with the healthcare system, and a lack of maternal and child healthcare resources in the rural areas (WHO, 2023).

2.8 Issues Relating to Gender in Ika Land

2.8.1 Gender Expectations

There are societal expectations when it comes to gender roles within Ika. Social construction, culture, socialisation, and customary law define and reinforce societal gender roles. Men are socialised to become leaders and are expected to hold jobs to become wage earners, while the women are socialised to perform domestic work and to take care of the children (Eze & Nwankwo, 2020; Muraina, & Ajimatanraeje, 2023).

2.8.2 Effects of Patriarchal Structures

In Ika Land, there is a patriarchal system which puts men on top in the hierarchy of decision making and gives them the most power with regard to inheritance and politics. Legal systems within Ika Land patronise the women when it comes to land ownership and succession rights thereby restricting the economic freedom of women (Ojukwu, 2022).

2.9 Gender Issues in Ika Land

2.9.1 Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Existing national reports identify gender-based violence as an important public health and human rights concern in Nigeria. However, the present study did not measure the prevalence of gender-based violence. Rather, it examined community perceptions, experiences discussed during interviews, and respondents' views regarding the existence, reporting patterns, and social implications of gender-based violence within Ika Land. Cultural beliefs and attitudes concerning the head of the family being the man, and views about maintaining the privacy of the family, discourage violence reporting and accountability (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

2.9.2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a ritual that is being practiced in some communities, although fewer than in the past. Community culture continues to resist and bolster the practice of FGM in the face of legal and health campaign opposition (UNICEF, 2023).

2.9.3 Unequal Remuneration

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that gender-based wage disparities remain an important dimension of labour-market inequality despite improvements in female educational attainment. The International Labour Organization (2021) reported that women continue to earn lower average wages than men globally because of occupational segregation, unequal access to leadership positions, unpaid care responsibilities, and discriminatory workplace practices. Nigerian studies similarly indicate that women are disproportionately represented in informal employment with limited social protection, lower earnings, and fewer opportunities for career advancement. Within Delta State, cultural expectations surrounding domestic responsibilities frequently reduce women's labour-market participation and promotion opportunities. Existing literature therefore suggests that unequal remuneration reflects broader structural inequalities embedded within labour markets rather than differences in productivity or educational attainment. These findings provide an important theoretical basis for examining perceptions of wage inequality and economic participation among women in Ika Land.

2.10 Empowerment through Education and Awareness

One of the most effective means of dismantling gender stereotypes and empowering women is through education. The impact of adult education and community-based sensitisation initiatives on the improvement of gender relations in Ika Land has been documented (Aderemi & Yusuf, 2024), while Ossai et al. (2024); Udoinyang and Homachi (2025) believe education promote gender equality within the Nigeria context.

2.11 Social Change through Policy and Legislation

Policies dealing specifically with gender at both the national and state levels, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, offer the necessary legal protection to women. These, however, need community participation and effective enforcement to work (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021).

2.12 Cultural Preservation and Gender Equality

The promotion of gender equality does not have to involve the loss of culture. The positive, women supportive, and community identity preserving, inclusive, and culturally sympathetic practices could, in fact, be supportive of the women's rights (Tamale, 2020).

Summary of Literature and Knowledge Gap

Existing empirical studies conducted in Nigeria have consistently documented the persistence of gender inequalities in education, employment, political participation, and access to productive resources. However, much of this evidence has been generated at national or state levels, with relatively limited attention devoted to the socio-cultural dynamics of individual ethnic communities such as Ika Land. Furthermore, previous studies have generally examined isolated dimensions of gender inequality rather than integrating feminist theoretical perspectives with community-level quantitative and qualitative evidence. Consequently, the present study contributes to the literature by combining survey and interview data to examine how feminist awareness, patriarchal cultural practices, and gender-based challenges are perceived within the distinctive cultural context of Ika Land.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component consisted of a cross-sectional descriptive survey administered to adult residents of Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas, while the qualitative component comprised key informant interviews with selected community stakeholders. Both datasets were collected concurrently during the fieldwork period, analysed independently using appropriate quantitative and qualitative analytical procedures, and subsequently integrated during interpretation to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of feminism and gender relations in Ika Land. Documentary materials, including government reports and published literature, were consulted solely to provide contextual background and were not treated as an independent research method.

In this study, participants included both male and female adults 18 years and older in Ika North East and Ika South LGAs. From the 2006 National Population Census and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2021, estimated population projections show that approximately 210,000 adults reside in the two LGAs (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). Adults were targeted as study participants because they engage in sociocultural, economic, and political activities and practices that determine the position of each gender in Ika Land. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 400 was estimated. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = required sample size;
N = target population (210,000 adults);
e = acceptable sampling error (0.05).
Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{210{,}000}{1 + 210{,}000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{210{,}000}{526} = 399.24$$

Which was approximate to 400 respondents. To compensate for possible non-response and incomplete questionnaires, 420 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 400 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.2%, while 20 questionnaires were excluded because of non-return.

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, the two Local Government Areas constituting Ika Land (Ika North East and Ika South) were purposively included because together they define the geographical and cultural boundaries of the study area. In the second stage, three major communities were randomly selected from each Local Government Area using a simple ballot procedure, giving a total of six study communities. In the third stage, households within each selected community were identified with the assistance of community leaders and existing household listings. Eligible respondents were adults aged 18 years and above who had resided in the community for at least five years. Gender stratification was subsequently applied to ensure adequate representation of both men and women before respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Of the 400 completed questionnaires analysed, 198 respondents were drawn from Ika North East and 202 from Ika South, thereby ensuring broad geographical representation across the study area.

3.1 Operationalisation of Study Variables

The structured questionnaire consisted of six multi-item constructs measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Feminist Awareness: measured using six items assessing respondents' knowledge of women's rights, gender equality, and feminist advocacy.

Perception of Gender Equality: measured using five items evaluating respondents' attitudes towards equal opportunities in education, employment, leadership, and inheritance.

Patriarchal Cultural Practices: measured using seven items assessing perceptions of traditional gender norms, inheritance practices, decision-making authority, and customary expectations.

Women's Access to Opportunities: measured using six items relating to education, employment, leadership, political participation, and access to productive resources.

Gender-Based Challenges: measured using six items assessing respondents' perceptions regarding gender-based violence, discrimination, wage inequality, harmful traditional practices, and restricted decision-making.

Social Development: measured using five items covering community participation, educational inclusion, household welfare, women's economic participation, and community cohesion.

Higher mean scores represented stronger agreement with each construct.

Women's access to opportunities was operationalised as a multidimensional composite construct comprising three interrelated domains: access to education, access to employment, and political participation. Responses to the relevant questionnaire items were aggregated into a single composite score because these dimensions collectively represent opportunities for women's social inclusion within the theoretical framework guiding the study. Descriptive analyses for the individual dimensions are presented where appropriate, while inferential analysis utilised the composite index to evaluate its association with patriarchal cultural practices.

3.2 Measurement of Social Development

In this study, social development refers to improvements in community well-being arising from inclusive participation in social, economic, educational, and civic life. The construct was measured using five questionnaire items covering community cohesion, household welfare, educational participation, women's economic participation, and civic inclusion. Higher composite scores indicated more positive perceptions of social

development within Ika Land. This operational definition is consistent with the study's theoretical position that gender relations constitute an important dimension of sustainable community development.

The questionnaire was developed following an extensive review of literature on feminist theory, gender equality, and African gender studies. Several items were adapted from previously validated gender perception instruments, while additional items were specifically developed to reflect the socio-cultural realities of Ika Land. The draft instrument underwent expert review and pilot testing before the final version was administered.

A total of 16 key informants participated in the qualitative interviews. The participants comprised four traditional rulers, four women leaders, four religious leaders, and four community development officers, with representation drawn from both Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas. Both male and female participants were included where appropriate to ensure diverse perspectives on gender relations. Participants were purposively selected based on their leadership positions, knowledge of community affairs, and direct involvement in gender-related issues. Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, with no substantially new themes emerging during the final interviews.

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in locations agreed upon by the participants, including community halls, religious centres, and traditional council offices. Interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes and were conducted primarily in English and the Ika dialect according to participants' language preferences. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes. Interviews conducted in the Ika language were translated into English by bilingual researchers familiar with the local dialect, and translated transcripts were independently reviewed to ensure linguistic accuracy and preservation of meaning. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, Department of Arts and Social Studies Education, University of Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria under approval number REC/UA/SOS/027/03/19/2026 before commencement of data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Interviews addressing potentially sensitive issues relating to gender-based violence were conducted privately by trained researchers, and participants experiencing emotional discomfort were provided with information about appropriate local support services where necessary. All personal identifiers were removed from the dataset to ensure anonymity, and electronic data were securely stored with access restricted to the research team.

3.3 Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity of the questionnaire were established through expert review. Three independent experts comprising one specialist in gender studies, one sociologist with expertise in gender and community development, and one measurement and evaluation specialist critically assessed the draft instrument. Their evaluation focused on the relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, cultural appropriateness, and alignment of each questionnaire item with the study objectives and theoretical constructs. Based on their recommendations, ambiguous statements were reworded, repetitive items were removed, and several culturally sensitive expressions were modified to reflect the realities of Ika Land. Since a formal Content Validity Index (CVI) was not computed, the study reports expert validation rather than statistical content-validity indices.

3.4 Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire was pilot-tested among 30 adult respondents from a neighbouring community with socio-cultural characteristics similar to those of the study area but excluded from the final sample. The instrument was administered twice at a two-week interval, and the test–retest reliability coefficient, calculated using Pearson's

Product Moment Correlation, was 0.82, indicating satisfactory temporal stability of the instrument. In addition, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.86, while the coefficients for the individual constructs ranged from 0.78 to 0.89, indicating acceptable internal consistency for all multi-item scales.

Table 1. Demographic Profile and Questionnaire Distribution of Respondents (n = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	190	47.5
	Female	210	52.5
Age	18-29 years	96	24.0
	30-44 years	142	35.5
	45-59 years	108	27.0
	60 years & above	54	13.5
Educational Qualification	No formal education	58	14.5
	Primary education	92	23.0
	Secondary education	104	26.0
	Tertiary education	104	26.0
	Postgraduate education	42	10.5
Selected Clan	Agbor	140	35.0
	Umunede	124	31.0
	Abavo	136	34.0
Questionnaire Status	Distributed	420	100
	Retrieved	400	95.2
	Not retrieved	20	4.8

Note: All tables are based on data generated from the authors' field survey (2026)

Table 1 illustrates that there was a fair distribution of respondents in terms of gender, age, level of education, and clan affiliations in Ika Land. The majority of respondents being in the economically active age group further strengthens the findings on gender and development. The varied levels of education among respondents provided a range of perspectives on feminism. The broad representation from the major clans of Ika Land provided the necessary cultural balance. The high retrieval rate of the questionnaires further supported the credibility and robustness of the research findings.

For inferential analysis, composite scores for each construct were generated by summing respondents' Likert-scale responses across the relevant questionnaire items. To satisfy the assumptions of the chi-square test, respondents were subsequently classified into three ordinal categories based on their composite scores: Low, Moderate, and High. Classification thresholds were determined using percentage score intervals derived from the maximum obtainable score for each construct, with scores below 50% classified as Low, scores between 50% and 74% classified as Moderate, and scores of 75% or above classified as High. This categorisation enabled the examination of associations between categorical variables while preserving the substantive interpretation of respondents' perceptions.

Note: These categories were created solely for the chi-square analysis. Descriptive statistics for the original Likert-scale scores are also presented to minimise information loss.

4. Results and Discussion

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean and chi-square, which is an example of inferential statistics. The qualitative interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-stage thematic analysis procedure. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were repeatedly reviewed to achieve familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated inductively before being organised into broader categories and candidate themes. Related themes were subsequently reviewed, refined, and defined through iterative discussions among the research team to ensure consistency and credibility. Coding was independently undertaken by two researchers, while areas of disagreement were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. NVivo software was not employed because of the manageable size of the qualitative dataset.

Table 2. Perception of Feminism in Ika Land

Perception Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	168	42.0
Neutral	104	26.0
Negative	128	32.0
Total	400	100

n = 400

A large percentage of respondents had positive views of feminism, primarily relating it to the advocacy of women's education and empowerment. However, a considerable minority held negative perceptions of feminism, relating it to erosion of cultural values and destabilization of families. Such perceptions show the friction between advocacy for women's rights and traditional values in Ika Land, stressing the importance of working with culturally defined boundaries in feminist advocacy.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Principal Study Variables

Beyond respondents' general perceptions of feminism, descriptive statistics were computed for the principal study variables. Feminist awareness recorded a relatively high overall mean score (M = 3.81, SD = 0.74), indicating moderate-to-high awareness of gender equality issues among respondents. Perception of gender equality also produced a positive mean score (M = 3.67, SD = 0.79), suggesting general support for equal opportunities despite persistent cultural reservations. Patriarchal cultural practices recorded a mean of 3.54 (SD = 0.82), reflecting respondents' acknowledgement of continuing traditional gender norms. Women's access to opportunities recorded a mean of 3.26 (SD = 0.76), while gender-based challenges recorded a relatively higher mean score (M = 3.72, SD = 0.81). Social development recorded a mean score of 3.48 (SD = 0.77), indicating moderate perceptions of community development. These descriptive findings provide important context for the inferential analyses presented subsequently.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses (Chi-Square Analysis)

Hypotheses One

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the awareness of feminism and the perceptions of gender equality in Ika Land.

Table 3. Chi-Square Test of Feminist Awareness and Perception of Gender Equality

Variables	X^2 Calculated	Df	X^2 Critical (0.05)	p-value	Decision
Feminist Awareness x Perception of Gender Equality	18.47	4	9.49	<0.001	Reject H_0

Note: Association significant at $\alpha = 0.005$.

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant association between feminist awareness and perceptions of gender equality in Ika Land ($X^2 = 18.47$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This finding indicates that respondents' level of feminist awareness is significantly associated with their perceptions of gender equality.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: There is no significant association between patriarchal cultural practices and women's access to education, employment and political participation in Ika Land.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test of Patriarchal Practices and Women's Access to Opportunities

Variable	X^2 Cal	df	X^2 Crit (0.05)	Decision
Patriarchal practice & Women access	22.61	6	12.59	Reject H_0

Table 4 indicates the computed value of chi-square (22.61) is greater than the critical value (12.59), which allows us to reject the null hypothesis. This finding confirms that in Ika Land, women's educational, occupational, and political participation is significantly limited due to the patriarchal cultural practices. This illustrates the systemic facet of gender inequality and buttresses feminist theories on structural exclusion.

Hypothesis Three

H_{03}: There is no significant association between gender-based challenges and social development in Ika Land.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test of Gender-Based Challenges and Social Development

Variable	X^2 Calculated	df	X^2 Critical (0.05)	p-value	Decision
Gender-Based Challenges x Social Development	16.89	4	9.49	0.002	Reject H_0

Table 5 indicates that there is a statistically significant association between gender-based challenges and social development in Ika Land ($X^2 = 16.89$, df = 4, p – 0.002). This is because the p-value is lower than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_0) IS REJECTED. This result suggests that respondents' perceptions of gender-based challenges are significantly associated with perceptions of social development within the study area.

4.3 Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm the applicability of liberal, radical and postcolonial feminist theories to the study of Ika Land. From a liberal feminist viewpoint, the gradual improvement of women's agency is attributed to the increased liberal access to education and the job market, a finding that is consistent with previous research linking education to the empowerment of women in Nigeria (Blessing & Fred, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). The quantitative findings demonstrate a statistically significant association between feminist awareness and positive perceptions of gender equality. The qualitative findings similarly indicate that many participants regarded education and community awareness as important factors influencing attitudes toward women's rights. These interpretations are directly supported by both strands of evidence presented in this study. Interview participants generally perceived that incidents of domestic violence are frequently underreported because of social stigma, fear of family conflict, and cultural expectations surrounding marriage. These findings represent participants' perceptions rather than direct estimates of the prevalence of gender-based violence. On the other hand, postcolonial feminist theories have an integral role in understanding the local divergent responses to the feminist movement. Mohanty (2021) and Tamale (2020) state that feminist theories that do not adopt the local context of the ideas are deemed to be cultural imperialism. The study's findings on the divergent responses to feminism illustrate the importance of postcolonial feminist theories that are sensitive to the context of Ika Land and its social systems.
As a result, the findings give testament to the growing body of African feminist scholarship, calling for context-specific frameworks addressing the participatory nature of the struggle for gender equality (Mama, 2020).

4.4 Thematic analysis of qualitative data

The qualitative data of key informant interviews were analysed thematically the following four main themes were identified:

4.4.1 Theme 1: Cultural based Constructions of Gender Roles

Respondents stated that cultural and traditional frameworks profoundly impact the definition and practice of gender roles.
"The family teaches boys that they have to lead and inherit, while girls are taught to support and obey. It is how our culture trained us." (Community Elder, Ika North East)
This exemplifies the way that cultural norms and socialisation practice and teach the reproduction of patriarchy.

4.1.2 Theme 2: The Perception of Feminism as a Cultural Threat or Opportunity

Feminism has been viewed as both a positive and negative phenomenon.
"Feminism has helped ladies go to school and speak, but some people don't like it, they think it will destroy our traditions." (Women Leader, Ika South).
This shows a conflict between looser feminist ideology and the preservation of culture.
"Respecting our traditions does not mean denying women opportunities. Communities can preserve their culture while allowing women to contribute fully to development." (Community Development Officer, Ika South)
These contrasting viewpoints illustrate that perceptions of feminism within Ika Land are neither uniformly supportive nor uniformly resistant. Rather, respondents negotiated the relationship between cultural preservation and gender equality in diverse ways, reflecting the complexity of local feminist discourse.

4.1.3 Theme 3. The Underreporting of Gender-Based Violence

Domestic violence is well-known but greatly underreported.
“A woman is expected to endure in silence because reporting your husband is seen as disgraceful.” (Religious Leader)
This encapsulates the family as the site of power and control that radical feminists have focused on.

4.1.4 Theme 4: The Power of Education

All the interviewees noted the potential that education has.
“Once a woman is educated, she knows her rights and can challenge injustice respectfully.” (Teacher, Ika Land)
This is also strongly aligned with the liberal feminist theory.
Integrated Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings
The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates substantial convergence between both strands of evidence. The quantitative results revealed a statistically significant association between feminist awareness and perceptions of gender equality, while interview participants consistently attributed changing attitudes towards gender equality to increasing educational opportunities, community sensitisation, and advocacy by women's organisations. Similarly, the significant association between patriarchal cultural practices and women's access to opportunities was reinforced by qualitative narratives describing customary inheritance systems, gendered household expectations, and male-dominated leadership structures that continue to restrict women's participation in education, employment, and community decision-making. Furthermore, participants' accounts of the underreporting of gender-based violence provided contextual explanations for the quantitative finding that gender-based challenges were significantly associated with perceptions of social development. Overall, the qualitative findings complemented the statistical results by explaining how and why these observed relationships occur within the socio-cultural context of Ika Land, thereby strengthening the credibility and completeness of the study's conclusions.

5 Conclusion

This study examined perceptions of feminism and gender relations in Ika Land using a convergent mixed-methods approach. The findings indicate statistically significant associations between feminist awareness and perceptions of gender equality, patriarchal cultural practices and women's access to opportunities, and gender-based challenges and perceptions of social development. Qualitative evidence complemented these findings by demonstrating how cultural norms, educational experiences, and community leadership shape local understandings of feminism and gender relations. While patriarchal practices remain influential, respondents also recognised the importance of education, advocacy, and inclusive community dialogue in promoting gender equality. Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of associations and community perceptions rather than causal relationships.
Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed: Community-based gender education programmes should be strengthened to improve public understanding of gender equality within culturally appropriate frameworks; traditional institutions, religious organisations, women's associations, and youth groups should collaborate in promoting inclusive community dialogue on gender relations; local government authorities should strengthen the implementation of existing gender-related legislation while improving community awareness of legal rights and available support services; policies promoting women's access to education, employment, leadership, and productive resources should be expanded to reduce structural barriers

associated with patriarchal cultural practices; and finally, future studies should adopt longitudinal or comparative designs to examine changes in gender perceptions over time and across different communities within Delta State.

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Consent to participate: Informed consent was obtained from all participant before the distribution of the survey and participation was voluntary.

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Authors' contribution: Juliet N. Ossai: Introduction, literature review, data analysis, discussion, recommendation. Carol C. Ohen: Methodology, data analysis, conclusion, data collection, manuscript drafting.

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