

# Gender Inequality and its Impact on Women's Economic Participation in Anambra State: A Feminist Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in Nigeria, particularly in the workplace, where cultural norms and discriminatory practices limit women's career advancement and economic participation. This study focused on female gender inequality in industries in Anambra State. The study examined perceived factors promoting gender inequality in work places and how it affects women economic contribution in contemporary times. Guided by liberal feminism, the study utilized survey research to collect data from 155 feminist women across diverse socio-economic backgrounds using snowball sampling technique. Findings revealed that patriarchy remains the primary contributor to gender disparities, reinforcing the idea that male-dominated structures continue to dictate social, economic, and political dynamics. The study concludes that without deliberate policy interventions, stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and targeted empowerment programs, gender disparities will persist, hindering economic growth and social development. These findings are important as they underscore the urgency of addressing gender inequality to enhance women's contributions to socio-economic development and advocate for broader systemic change.

**Keywords:** Gender, gender inequality, women, feminist, feminism, economic development and Patriarchy.

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Gender inequality is a pervasive issue that affects women's economic participation across the globe, manifesting through various socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers. This inequality not only hampers women's rights but also impedes sustainable economic development. As societies continue to evolve, understanding the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of gender inequality is crucial for promoting equitable opportunities for women. Gender inequality has its roots in historical contexts, often traced back to patriarchal systems that emerged thousands of years ago (Makama, 2013). These systems relegated women to subordinate roles, emphasizing their duties within the domestic sphere while restricting their access to education, property rights, and economic opportunities in many societies. As societies evolved, these deeply ingrained cultural norms were reinforced through legal systems and institutional practices that favored men (Nwankwo, 2025). Consequently, women have historically been marginalized in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and political participation, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence that persist in today's society.

Across different continents, gender inequality manifests in diverse ways, influenced by cultural, economic, and political contexts. In the United States of America, for example, Kochhar (2023) stated that women face challenges related to the gender pay gap, where they earn significantly less than their male counterparts for similar work. In Asia, countries like India and Pakistan experience profound gender discrimination, where cultural practices such as dowry systems and honor killings significantly restrict women's rights and freedoms (Bhamani et al., 2023). In Europe, while many countries have made strides in achieving gender parity, disparities still exist in leadership roles and wage equality, demonstrating that even developed nations grapple with gender inequality (Klasen & Minasyan, 2017). In Latin America, issues such as gender-based violence and limited access to reproductive health care continue to hinder women's economic participation, revealing a pervasive global challenge (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC, 2014).

In Africa, gender inequality is deeply intertwined with cultural practices and traditional norms that often dictate women's roles within society. In countries like Ghana, the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) persists, reflecting harmful cultural beliefs about women's bodies and autonomy (Akweongo et al., 2021). In Nigeria, cultural practices such as the preference for male children and restrictive gender roles are prevalent, particularly among the Igbo community, where women's identities are often linked to their marital status and reproductive roles (Onyebueke et al., 2024; Nduka & Ozioma, 2019). This cultural backdrop exacerbates women's economic marginalization, as they struggle to access resources and opportunities.

It is worth noting that the Igbo community, exhibits unique gender dynamics that illustrate the complexities of gender inequality. In this context, traditional beliefs often prioritize male education and inheritance rights, while women are expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities (Ukaegbu & Oguejiofor, 2022). Despite the significant economic contributions of women in agriculture and trade, their efforts are frequently undervalued, leading to economic dependency. Additionally, practices such as "bride price" and the expectation of women's submissiveness in marital relationships further entrench gender disparities. In Anambra State, these cultural norms seem to still be in existence, as many women face challenges related to limited access to education, financial resources, and decision-making power within their households and communities. This persistence of gender inequality in Anambra State is a reflection of broader socio-cultural and historical patterns that marginalize women's economic participation. Women in the region seems to encounter numerous barriers that hinder their access to education, resources, and opportunities for advancement. It is against this backdrop that the study aims to investigate the impact of gender inequality on women's economic participation in Anambra State from a feminist perspective.

### Statement of the Problem

Gender disparity remains a persistent issue hindering women's economic participation in the global community as a result of socio-cultural norms, biased legal systems, and economic exclusion that are deep-rooted within the patriarchal environments found in most societies. In Anambra State, this inequality manifests itself in the continued relegation of women to the home, discriminatory opportunities for formal employment, poor representation in decision-making positions, and denial of rights to land and inheritance. These barriers collectively repress the economic autonomy of women and reinforce their dependency in rural and urban settings.

Despite numerous policy directives instituted for promoting gender equity such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), national gender policies, and local empowerment programs like the National Gender Policy (2006) and microfinance schemes, there remains an endemic failure to adopt feminist approaches to diagnosing and repairing the roots of economic marginalization for women. Feminist critique has considerable critical explanatory value regarding ideologically and structurally grounded models for gender-specific oppression, and they are continually excluded from mainstream developmental discourse and state-level economic planning. As a result, interventions usually address symptoms, rather than causes, focusing on skill acquisition or microcredit programs without deconstructing socio-political norms that limit women's participation in the first place.

This omission continues to exclude women, as their voices and lived experiences remain inadequately represented in policy debates and economic reforms. In the absence of a feminist analytical framework, which challenges and seeks to dismantle the power relations and cultural assumptions sustaining inequality, making efforts to enhance women's economic participation risk being superficial and short-lived. The exclusion of such critical analysis reinforces a development paradigm that is blind to intersectionality, overlooking how factors such as class, age, marital status, and education intersect to intensify economic marginalization among diverse groups of women.

Therefore, the problem that this study seeks to offer a response to is not just the fact of gender disparity in economic endeavor but also institutional failure to draw on feminist scholarship in dealing with the ideological origin of the same in Anambra State. It asks if the omission of feminist discourse in economic policy is one of the reasons why women are still inferior and empowerment interventions ineffective. Through critical exploration of gender disparity through a feminist lens, this study aims to identify the unseen power relations

that sabotage inclusive economic growth and pursue more revolutionary models for women's integration into the economy.

In terms of research gap, existing studies such as Nnoje (2024), Sibani (2017) and Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) have explored gender inequality at the national level, focusing on its economic impact, its impact on women development and its various outcomes in Nigeria. However, there is limited research on the specific socio-cultural factors affecting women's economic participation in Anambra State from a feminist perspective. This gap necessitates an in-depth investigation into the systemic barriers hindering women's economic empowerment in the state and the effectiveness of existing interventions in addressing these challenges.

## Research Objectives

1. To examine the perceived level of gender inequality by feminists in Anambra State.
2. To ascertain the perceived factors promoting gender inequality in work places in contemporary times in Anambra State.
3. To evaluate how gender inequality impact women economic contribution in work places in Anambra State.
4. To find out how gender equality can be achieved in the work place in Anambra State.

## Research Questions

1. What is the perceived level of gender inequality by feminists in Anambra State?
2. What are the perceived factors promoting gender inequality in work places in contemporary times in Anambra State?
3. How does gender inequality impact women economic contribution in work places in Anambra State?
4. How can gender equality be achieved in the work place in Anambra State?

## Study Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between level of gender inequality and women economic contribution in the work place in Anambra State.

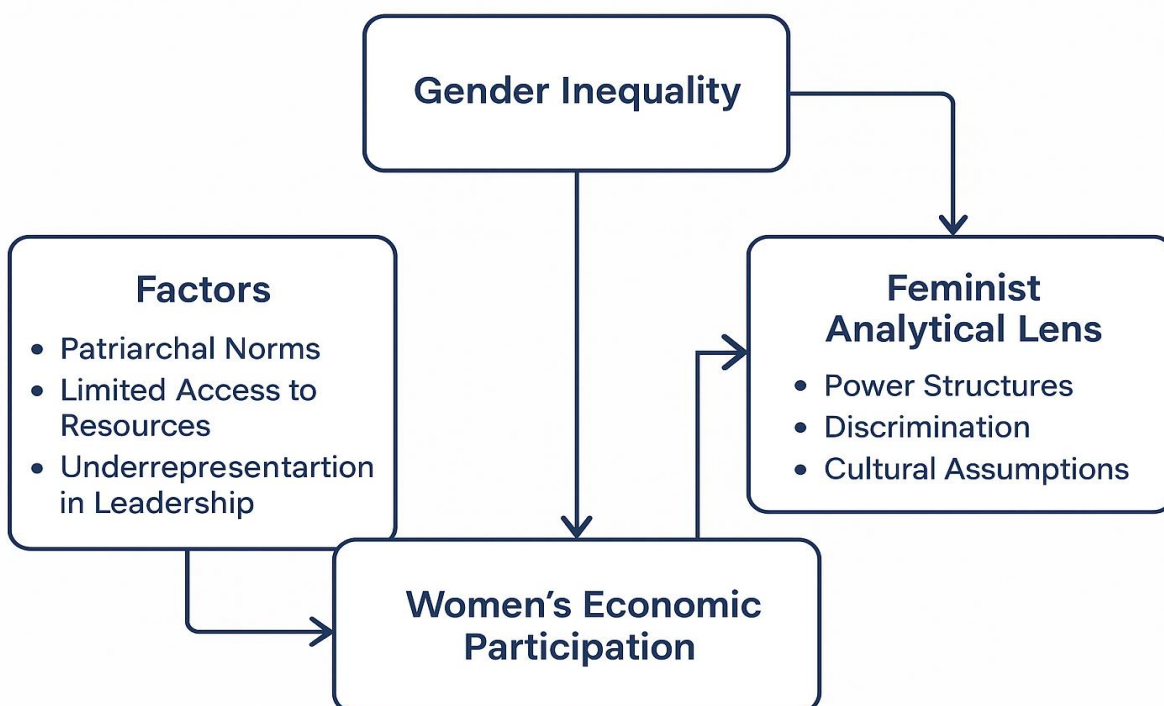


Fig 1: Analytical Model

The analytical model underpinning this study illustrates how patriarchal structures and socio-cultural norms in Anambra State serve as the root causes of gender inequality, limiting women's work, property, and economic opportunities. These discriminatory structures manifest in unequal wages, occupational segregation, and underrepresentation of women in leadership. A key gap identified in this model is the exclusion of feminist perspectives from policymaking and economic reforms. Without the critical lens that feminist analysis provides—particularly its emphasis on power relations and intersectionality—interventions aimed at improving women's economic participation tend to be superficial and unsustainable. This omission perpetuates a development model that fails to address how variables like class, age, and marital status intersect to intensify women's economic marginalization.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Feminist Theory: Liberal Feminist Theory**

Liberal feminism emerged in the early 19th century as a response to the exclusion of women from political and economic rights, with key contributions from thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), John Stuart Mill (1869), and Betty Friedan (1963). Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, argued that women were not naturally inferior to men but were denied education and opportunities, which kept them in a state of subjugation. Mill, in *The Subjection of Women*, further advanced this idea, advocating for equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of life. By the 20th century, liberal feminism had gained significant momentum, particularly with Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which criticized the societal expectation that women should be confined to domestic roles. This period saw legal advancements such as voting rights, workplace equality, and anti-discrimination laws, all of which were central to the liberal feminist agenda.

At its core, liberal feminist theory is built on several key assumptions. First, it posits that gender inequality arises from discriminatory laws, policies, and social norms that systematically disadvantage women. Unlike radical feminism, which attributes women's oppression to deep-seated patriarchal structures, liberal feminism argues that institutional reforms and policy interventions can eliminate gender disparities. It assumes that providing equal access to education, employment, and economic opportunities will enable women to compete on equal terms with men. Another fundamental assumption is that individuals should be judged based on merit rather than gender, advocating for a system where ability, effort, and competence determine success rather than societal expectations rooted in gender roles. Additionally, liberal feminism assumes that government intervention is necessary to address systemic biases, pushing for laws that promote gender equity in the workplace, governance, and economic participation.

In explaining the present study, liberal feminism provides a relevant theoretical framework by highlighting the structural barriers that limit women's full participation in the economy. Anambra State, like many regions in Nigeria, experiences gendered economic disparities, where women often face challenges such as limited access to capital, lower wages, and underrepresentation in decision-making positions. From a liberal feminist perspective, these inequalities stem from discriminatory policies and traditional gender norms that restrict women's economic agency. For instance, many women may struggle to access financial credit due to land ownership restrictions, which serve as a common requirement for securing business loans. Additionally, gender biases in hiring and promotion processes often limit women's upward mobility in professional fields, reinforcing economic dependence and inequality. It is worth noting that liberal feminism not only identifies these structural limitations but also proposes solutions, advocating for legal reforms that ensure equal pay, promotion opportunities and financial inclusion for women.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Concept of Gender**

The concept of gender has undergone significant transformations over the years, evolving from a simplistic biological determination to a complex and multifaceted social construct. This section of this paper provides a comprehensive review of the concept of gender, exploring its historical development and contemporary debates. The concept of gender has its roots in ancient Greece, where philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE)



distinguished between "male" and "female" based on biological differences. In his book the "Generation of Animals", Aristotle argued that the male provides the "form" and "soul" of the offspring through his sperm (seed), while the female contributes only the "matter" necessary for growth. He believed that the male principle was active and authoritative in reproduction, whereas the female was passive and subordinate. Aristotle also suggested that males were the natural outcome of reproduction, while females resulted from a deficiency or an environmental imbalance during conception. (De Ribera-Martin, 2018). However, it wasn't until the 20th century that the term "gender" gained widespread use, particularly in the fields of sociology and psychology (Payne, 2023).

The distinction between sex and gender is a crucial aspect of understanding the concept of gender. While sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as male, female, or intersex (Fausto-Sterling, 2000), gender refers to the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of being male, female, or non-binary (Lorber, 1994).

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain the concept of gender, including:

- **Social Constructionism:** This framework posits that gender is a social construct, created and maintained through cultural norms, values, and institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).
- **Symbolic Interactionism:** This framework emphasizes the role of social interactions and symbolic communication in shaping gender identities and roles (Mead, 1934).
- **Feminist Theory:** This framework critiques the social and cultural constructs of gender, highlighting the ways in which patriarchal societies perpetuate gender inequality (Millett, 1970).

In conclusion, the concept of gender is complex and multifaceted, influenced by historical, theoretical, and contemporary debates.

### **Patriarchy: History of Gender Inequality**

Patriarchy in simplest terms is a system of social organization in which men hold positions of power and authority. It has been a pervasive and enduring feature of human societies throughout history. This system, according to feminists has perpetuated gender inequality, relegating women to subordinate roles and limiting their access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. Ali and Naylor (2013) explained that patriarchy is an ideology that upholds men's systemic dominance over women, justifying male superiority and rejecting equal structures in both public and private spheres of life. It involves the belief that men should hold power in the family and society, leading to the acceptance of violence against women as a means of maintaining male control (Ali & Naylor, 2013).

The origins of patriarchy can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where men's control over women's bodies, labor, and reproductive rights became a cornerstone of social organization. Although, the exact mechanisms and reasons for this development are still debated within academic circles. In ancient civilizations, men held dominant roles in politics, economy, and culture, while women were confined to domestic and reproductive roles. During the Middle Ages and early modern periods, patriarchal norms were also reinforced through religious and cultural institutions (Perales & Bouma, 2018). The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and individual rights did little to challenge patriarchal norms, as women were largely excluded from education, politics, and economic opportunities.

The Industrial Revolution on the other hand, brought significant changes to women's lives, as they entered the workforce in large numbers. However, this newfound economic independence was tempered by the persistence of patriarchal norms and the lack of access to education, property rights, and reproductive autonomy (Evans, 2022). In response, feminist movements emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advocating for women's suffrage, property rights, and reproductive freedom (Burkett, 2020).

In conclusion, patriarchy has been a pervasive and enduring feature of human societies throughout history, perpetuating gender inequality and limiting women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making

power. While significant advances have been made in recent decades, ongoing struggles and systemic barriers to equality remain.

### **Gender Inequality: Influencing factors in work participation**

Gender inequality in work participation is a pervasive issue that affects women's participation in the labor market globally. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women's participation in the labor market is lower than men's in almost all countries, with an average global gap of 26 percentage points (ILO, 2020). This gap is attributed to various factors, including social and cultural norms, education and training, economic factors, and lack of infrastructure and resources.

From a global perspective, social and cultural norms play a significant role in limiting women's participation in the workforce. Women are often expected to prioritize their domestic and caregiving responsibilities over their career aspirations (Hochschild, 1989). This is exacerbated by the lack of access to education and training, which restricts women's opportunities for career advancement and better-paying jobs (World Bank, 2022). Economic factors also contribute to the gender gap in work participation. Women are often employed in the informal sector, which is characterized by low wages, limited job security, and lack of access to social protection (ILO, 2020). This perpetuates the cycle of poverty and inequality, as women are unable to access better-paying jobs and career advancement opportunities.

In Nigeria, the situation is not different since the country operates mostly on patriarchal structures. These structures institutionalize male dominance and reinforce societal norms that position women primarily as caregivers and homemakers, rather than as active economic agents (Uchendu, 2022). As a result, women's roles in the workforce seem to be undervalued and underpaid. According to Udoh Folarin and Isumonah (2020) and Etim-James (2024), cultural beliefs, reinforced by religion and tradition, place limitations on the types of work considered appropriate for women, confining them largely to the informal economy, where legal protections and job benefits are minimal. These patriarchal norms manifest in both urban and rural settings, albeit with varying intensity. Women in rural areas, in particular, face more pronounced barriers due to limited access to formal education, poor infrastructure, and deeply rooted cultural expectations that discourage female labor market participation beyond subsistence farming or petty trading. Even in urban centers, women encounter gender discrimination in hiring practices, wage disparities, and limited opportunities for leadership roles in both public and private sectors.

Education and training, though improving, are still marked by disparities in access and outcomes. Many girls drop out of school due to early marriage, unintended pregnancies, or economic constraints, thus entering adulthood with limited qualifications and employability (Melesse et al., 2021). This restricts their chances of participating meaningfully in the formal labor market, locking them into cycles of economic dependence and vulnerability. Furthermore, Nigeria's labor laws and policy frameworks often lack strong enforcement mechanisms to address gender-based discrimination or promote equal employment opportunities. Even where gender-sensitive policies exist, their implementation is frequently hampered by a lack of political will, resource allocation, and institutional capacity (Adams & Jenyo, 2016). This creates a disconnect between policy intent and actual outcomes, leaving many women behind in terms of economic participation.

The underrepresentation of women in political and economic decision-making spaces compounds the issue. Without a critical mass of women advocating for gender-responsive policies, many of the structural barriers to women's labor force participation remain unchallenged. This is where feminist perspectives become crucial. A feminist lens shows how intersecting factors such as class, education, and family status create different layers of disadvantage for women. Yet, such perspectives are often marginalized or completely excluded from mainstream economic planning and workforce development programs in Nigeria.

### **Feminism: Gender equality in Contemporary times**

Feminism, as a movement advocating for gender equality, has evolved through distinct historical waves, each addressing specific societal challenges and injustices faced by women. The origins of feminism can be traced back to the first wave in the 19th century, which primarily focused on legal rights, particularly women's

suffrage. The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, marked a significant turning point by producing the "Declaration of Sentiments," which demanded equal rights for women, including the right to vote (National Archive, 2017). This advocacy culminated in the ratification of the 19th Amendment in the United States in 1920, granting women the long-awaited right to vote. However, while legal rights were a major focus, deeper gender disparities persisted, paving the way for further feminist movements.

The second wave of feminism, spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, expanded the struggle beyond suffrage to issues such as workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and systemic gender inequalities. Betty Friedan's publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 ignited widespread discourse on the dissatisfaction many women felt with traditional domestic roles, catalyzing the emergence of a more radical feminist consciousness. This era witnessed the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, which sought to bring women into full participation in mainstream society (Doherty, 2020). Legislative breakthroughs such as the legalization of abortion in the U.S. through the *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973 further underscored the increasing momentum of the movement.

By the 1990s, feminism had evolved into its third wave, characterized by a rejection of the rigid categories established by its predecessors and a growing emphasis on individuality and intersectionality. Recognizing that women's experiences are shaped by factors such as race, class, and sexuality, third-wave feminists challenged the mainstream feminist movement's tendency to prioritize the experiences of middle-class white women (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). This era welcomed diverse expressions of gender identity and sought to break down the binaries that had long defined feminist thought.

With the advent of the digital age, feminism entered its fourth wave in the 2010s, leveraging online platforms to amplify its message and combat issues such as sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture (Hammoud, 2023). The #MeToo movement, which gained global traction in 2017, became one of the most influential feminist campaigns of recent times, exposing the widespread prevalence of sexual misconduct and demanding accountability from perpetrators. Through social media, feminism became more accessible, allowing marginalized voices to participate in shaping its discourse.

Feminism in contemporary times continues to evolve, addressing both longstanding and emerging challenges. The movement has become increasingly intersectional, acknowledging that the fight for gender equality must consider the ways in which race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender. This recognition has led to a more inclusive and diverse feminism that seeks to ensure equity for all marginalized groups. Economic dimensions of gender inequality have also become central to feminist discourse. A 2024 United Nations report estimated that the global economy loses approximately \$10 trillion annually due to inadequate investment in women and gender equality, highlighting the urgent need for systemic reforms. The persistent gender pay gap, barriers to leadership positions, and disparities in unpaid care work continue to hinder progress, making economic justice a crucial feminist concern.

In conclusion, feminism has undergone significant transformations, adapting to the evolving challenges of each era. From securing legal rights to advocating for workplace equity, reproductive autonomy, and digital activism, the movement has consistently sought to dismantle systemic barriers to gender equality. As contemporary feminism navigates complex debates on intersectionality, identity, and economic justice, its commitment to inclusivity remains paramount. The struggle for gender equality is far from over, but the continued evolution of feminism ensures that new generations remain equipped to challenge the structures that perpetuate inequality.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design situated within a feminist research framework that prioritizes women's lived experiences and agency. This framework informed the design and implementation of the study, allowing the researcher to explore gender inequality through the lens of those directly affected by it. The research relied primarily on quantitative data, which was collected through structured questionnaires administered to selected participants. These questionnaires were designed to capture measurable variables

related to women's economic participation, experiences of inequality, and the impact of structural barriers. To enrich the findings and establish a broader context for the study, secondary data was also consulted. This included scholarly journals, published articles, organizational reports, and newspaper accounts addressing gender inequality, feminist movements, and economic participation in Nigeria and, more specifically, Anambra State. These sources helped to inform the development of the questionnaire and supported the interpretation of findings by situating them within existing literature and debates.

The study employed the snowball sampling technique to reach 155 feminist-identified women across Anambra State. Initial participants were drawn from the Anambra Women Development Center, including those actively engaged in gender advocacy groups or known to participate in feminist-related initiatives. These women were then encouraged to recruit other feminist participants from diverse sectors such as academia, civil service, financial institutions, and other professional fields. To ensure spatial diversity and regional balance, participants were specifically urged to recruit colleagues from major urban centers including Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, and Ekwulobia. Data collection was carried out using face-to-face administration of the structured questionnaire, with assistance from a trained research assistant to ensure clarity and consistency in responses. This method also helped to build rapport and increase response accuracy, especially considering the sensitive nature of gender discourse in traditional settings. Following data collection, responses were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The primary analytical technique involved descriptive statistics, presented through simple frequency tables to summarize participant characteristics and response patterns. In addition to descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing was conducted using chi-square inferential statistics allowing the researcher to examine significant associations between key variables such as economic participation and perceived experiences of gender inequality. This analytical model supported the validation of the study's assumptions and contributed to drawing evidence-based conclusions. In conclusion, this methodological framework allowed for a structured yet context-sensitive investigation of gender inequality and its impact on women's economic participation. By integrating feminist theory with empirical data collection and analysis, the study not only captured numerical trends but also underscored the necessity of including feminist perspectives in understanding and addressing gender-based economic disparities in Anambra State.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

**Research Question 1:** What is the perceived level of gender inequality by feminist in Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents' perception on the level of gender inequality in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Very high	47	30.3
High	86	55.5
Low	10	6.5
Very low	12	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the level of gender inequality in Anambra State. The table shows that 86 respondents (55.5%) rated the level of gender inequality as high, while 47 respondents (30.3%) perceived it as very high. This indicates that a combined 85.8% of the respondents acknowledge a substantial presence of gender inequality in the state. Conversely, only a small fraction of respondents expressed a lesser concern about gender inequality. 10 respondents (6.5%) rated it as low, while 12 respondents (7.7%) believed it to be very low. This implies that only 14.2% of the sample perceives gender inequality as a minor or negligible issue. Overall, the findings shows that the majority of respondents recognize gender inequality as a significant problem in Anambra State.



**Research Question 2:** What are the perceived factors promoting gender inequality in contemporary times in Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents' views on the factors promoting gender inequality in the work place in contemporary times in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Cultural norms and beliefs	49	31.6
Patriarchal system	73	47.1
Discrimination against women	-	-
Gender role assigned to women through socialisation	33	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 2 presents respondents' views on the factors promoting gender inequality in the work place in contemporary times in Anambra State. The table shows that the patriarchal system is the most cited factor, with 73 respondents (47.1%) identifying it as a key contributor to gender inequality. This suggests that traditional male-dominated structures continue to shape gender relations in the state. Additionally, 49 respondents (31.6%) attributed gender inequality to cultural norms and beliefs, highlighting how deeply ingrained societal values reinforce unequal gender roles. Another 33 respondents (21.3%) pointed to gender roles assigned through socialization, suggesting that learned behaviors and expectations significantly influence gender disparities. Interestingly, none of the respondents identified discrimination against women as a standalone factor. This implies that respondents view discrimination as a consequence of broader systemic issues such as patriarchy and cultural norms rather than an independent cause. Overall, the findings suggest that patriarchy is the major factor driving gender inequality in the workplace in contemporary time in Anambra State.

**Research Question 3:** How does gender inequality impact women economic contribution in workplaces in Anambra State?

Table 3: Respondents' views on how gender inequality impact women economic contribution in work places in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Limitation of women to unimportant tasks	27	17.4
Unequal pay (women are paid way less)	21	13.5
Exclusion of women from leadership roles	88	56.8
Limited promotion opportunities for women	10	6.5
Lack of maternity support	9	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 3 presents respondents' views on how gender inequality impacts women's economic contributions in workplaces in Anambra State. The table indicates that the most significant issue is the exclusion of women from leadership roles, as reported by 88 respondents (56.8%). Additionally, 27 respondents (17.4%) highlighted the limitation of women to unimportant tasks. Unequal pay, where women receive significantly lower wages than men for similar roles, was identified by 21 respondents (13.5%).

Furthermore, 10 respondents (6.5%) pointed to limited promotion opportunities, reinforcing the notion that workplace structures may not favor women's career advancement. Lack of maternity support was noted by 9 respondents (5.8%). Overall, the result in Table 3 indicates that gender inequality in Anambra State's workplaces is deeply rooted in leadership exclusion and affects women's ability to contribute fully to the economy.

**Research Question 4:** How can gender equality be achieved in the work place in Anambra State?

Table 4: Respondents' views on how gender equality be achieved in the work place in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Review of existing cultural laws to support gender equality	7	4.5
Sensitisation on the need to eliminate gender role	11	7.1
Strict punishment for those who discriminate against women in the work place	19	12.3
Review of work place policies to be more inclusive and less patriarchal based on feminist perspectives	24	15.5
Work place support for women's right	18	11.6
All of the above	76	49.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 4 presents respondents' views on how gender equality can be achieved in workplaces in Anambra State. The table shows that 7(4.5%) of the respondents indicated reviewing of existing cultural laws to support gender equality as the measure gender equality can be achieved in the work place in Anambra State. 11(7.1%) of the respondents indicated sensitisation on the need to eliminate gender role, 19(12.3%) of the respondents indicated strict punishment for those who discriminate against women in the work place, 24(15.5%) of the respondents indicated review of work place policies to be more inclusive and less patriarchal as well to reflect feminist perspectives, 18(11.6%) of the respondents indicated work place support for women's right while 76(49.0%) of the respondents indicated all of the above. The result in table 4 shows that a combination of all proposed strategies including legal reforms, workplace policy changes, sensitization, and strict punishment for discrimination is necessary to promote gender equality in work places in Anambra State.

### Test of Hypothesis

The study hypothesis is tested at .05 level of significance

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between level of gender inequality and impact of gender inequality on women economic contribution in the work place in Anambra State.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation and Chi-square test of level of gender inequality and its impact on women economic contribution in the work place

Level of gender inequality	Impact of gender inequality on women economic contribution in work places					
	Limitation of women to unimportant tasks	Unequal pay	Exclusion of women from leadership roles	Limited promotion opportunities for women	Lack of maternity support	Total
Very high	9	7	27	2	2	47

High	12	11	53	4	6	86
Low	3	1	5	1	-	10
Very low	3	2	3	3	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>155</b>

$$\chi^2 = 13.32, df = 12, p = 0.35$$

The chi-square test of the hypothesis showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the level of gender inequality and how it affects women's economic contribution in the workplace in Anambra State. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 which is the level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that gender inequality remains a deeply entrenched issue in Anambra State, significantly affecting women's economic participation. The overwhelming majority of the study participants acknowledged the prevalence of gender inequality, with more than 85% perceiving it as either high or very high. This widespread recognition shows the systemic nature of gender disparities and suggests that women continue to face substantial barriers in their economic pursuits. This finding supports the

A closer examination of the factors driving gender inequality in Anambra State suggests that patriarchy remains the dominant force shaping gender relations. Respondents overwhelmingly pointed to the patriarchal system as the primary contributor to gender disparities, reinforcing the idea that male-dominated structures continue to dictate social, economic, and political dynamics. Cultural norms and beliefs further exacerbate these inequalities, as they define rigid gender roles that limit women's access to opportunities. The role of socialization in sustaining gender inequalities is also evident, as many respondents linked the problem to deeply ingrained societal expectations that condition women to accept subordinate positions. The finding of this study supports Hochschild (1989) who explained that the domestic responsibility and caregiving roles expected of women contribute to gender inequality. The finding of the study also supported Folarin and Isumonah (2020) and Etim-James (2024) who explained that cultural and religious beliefs as well as tradition, enforces gender inequality. Interestingly, none of the respondents identified discrimination as a standalone factor, which implies that gender bias is perceived as a byproduct of broader systemic structures rather than an independent phenomenon. This finding aligns with the liberal feminist perspective, which argues that institutional and legal frameworks reinforce gender imbalances rather than treating them as isolated instances of discrimination.

In the workplace, gender inequality manifests through a combination of exclusionary leadership practices, discriminatory work assignments, and structural barriers that limit women's economic contributions. The majority of respondents identified leadership exclusion as the most significant challenge, reinforcing the idea that gender biases in decision-making positions remain a persistent issue. The restriction of women to unimportant tasks further highlights how workplace norms devalue female employees' contributions, limiting their ability to participate in meaningful economic activities. Additionally, unequal pay continues to disadvantage women, as a notable proportion of respondents reported that women receive significantly lower wages than men for similar roles. This wage disparity reflects broader systemic inequalities that restrict financial independence and professional growth for women in Anambra State. Limited promotion opportunities and inadequate maternity support further compound these challenges, underscoring how institutional policies may not adequately accommodate women's career progression. The findings suggest that gender inequality in professional settings is reinforced by deeply rooted workplace structures that disadvantage women at multiple levels. These systemic barriers align with the perspectives of liberal feminists, who argue that gender inequality persists due to discriminatory workplace policies and societal norms that favor men over women. The findings also support Adams and Jenyo (2016) who pointed institutional structures as the factor driving gender inequality in the work place.

The study also highlights the importance of multi-faceted approaches to achieving gender equality in the workplace. While individual measures such as reviewing cultural laws, enforcing anti-discrimination policies, and workplace support for women's rights were identified as potential solutions, the majority of respondents believed that a combination of these strategies is necessary. This reinforces the argument that addressing gender inequality requires legal, institutional, and cultural reforms rather than isolated interventions. Liberal feminism supports this view by advocating for systemic changes, including policy reforms, gender-sensitive workplace policies, and equal access to economic resources. The emphasis on strict punishment for workplace discrimination further aligns with the liberal feminist belief in legal interventions as a means of achieving gender equity.

The study through its tested hypothesis found no statistically significant relationship between the level of gender inequality and how it affects women's economic contribution in the workplace in Anambra State. This finding contradicts the Liberal Feminist perspective, which posits that structural inequalities such as unequal access to job opportunities, leadership roles, and fair wages significantly hinder women's economic empowerment and participation in the workforce. The implications of this hypothesis test shows that despite the high perception of gender inequality among feminists, it may not necessarily mean it affect the economic contribution of females in Anambra State.

The findings of this study strongly support the relevance of liberal feminism as a theoretical framework for understanding gender inequality in Anambra State. The study's revelations about the structural barriers women face in their economic participation mirror the liberal feminist argument that gender disparities stem from discriminatory policies, workplace inequalities, and exclusionary practices. The limited access to financial resources, unequal treatment in professional settings, and cultural restrictions on women's career growth all reflect the need for systemic reforms. From this perspective, gender inequality in Anambra State is not simply a result of individual bias but a product of entrenched social and institutional norms that must be actively dismantled. By applying the principles of liberal feminism, it becomes clear that achieving gender equality requires more than just awareness—it demands legal protections, policy changes, and institutional reforms that create an enabling environment for women's economic participation. Increased investment in education and financial empowerment programs for women will help level the playing field, while strict enforcement of anti-discrimination laws will ensure that women have equal opportunities in the workforce. The study's findings provide a compelling case for integrating feminist perspectives into policy-making processes in Anambra State, emphasizing the need for structural changes that support women's economic agency and challenge the deeply rooted inequalities that continue to hinder progress.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the persistence of gender inequality in Anambra State underscores the deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers that continue to limit women's economic participation. The findings show how patriarchy, rigid gender norms, and discriminatory workplace practices reinforce these disparities, making it clear that gender inequality is not merely an issue of individual bias but a systemic problem embedded in social and institutional frameworks. The study affirms the relevance of liberal feminism in understanding and addressing these challenges, emphasizing that meaningful progress requires comprehensive legal, institutional, and cultural reforms. Without deliberate policy interventions, stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and targeted empowerment programs, gender disparities will persist, hindering economic growth and social development. Therefore, achieving gender equality demands a concerted effort from policymakers, employers, and society at large to dismantle oppressive structures and create an inclusive environment where women have equal opportunities to thrive.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings, the study recommends that

1. State government and legislative bodies through legislative reforms, should review and amend cultural laws that reinforce gender inequality, ensuring alignment with national and international gender rights frameworks. Community engagement programs can also be introduced to promote awareness and



acceptance of these legal changes as this will create a more inclusive society, reducing systemic discrimination and increasing women's participation in economic activities.

2. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders, and educational institutions should carry out awareness campaigns, educational programs, and media advocacy to challenge traditional gender roles and promote equitable opportunities for both men and women. Also, schools and workplaces can integrate gender equality training to reshape societal perceptions from an early stage as this will foster a shift in societal attitudes, leading to greater acceptance of women's economic and leadership roles.
3. Government labor agencies and human rights commissions should mandate strict penalties, including fines and job dismissals, for individuals or organizations found guilty of workplace discrimination against women. Again, regular audits and anonymous reporting channels should be established to monitor compliance and ensure accountability. This will create a deterrent effect, reducing workplace discrimination and fostering a fairer work environment that enables women to contribute meaningfully to economic development.
4. Employers, corporate organizations, and labor unions should conduct policy reviews to eliminate gender biases in leadership appointments, promotions, and work assignments, ensuring a merit-based system. This will lead to a more diverse and equitable workplace that will in turn, lead to increased productivity and innovation through the inclusion of women in decision-making roles.
5. Employers, labor unions, and government regulatory agencies should provide structures such as maternity leave, childcare support, and equal pay policies to create a more supportive environment for female employees as this will enhance workplace conditions will improve job retention and career progression for women, contributing to long-term economic stability and growth.

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