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Analysis of the Socioeconomic Impacts of Gender-Based Discrimination on Women, Households, and Community Development in FCT Abuja

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the socioeconomic impacts of gender-based discrimination on women, households, and community development in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Employing a descriptive research design within a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 386 women and girls across six area councils, as well as from key informants, including community leaders, government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organisations. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses. Findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents experience gender discrimination in employment, education, healthcare, leadership, and access to property and inheritance, resulting in restricted economic opportunities, limited livelihood options, and constrained participation in household and community development. Gender-based violence was also reported, further exacerbating vulnerability and social exclusion. Additionally, limited awareness of and access to empowerment programs hinder women's economic and social participation, particularly in peri-urban and rural areas. Despite these challenges, respondents overwhelmingly recognised gender equality as essential for sustainable development. The study concludes that structural, cultural, and institutional barriers continue to impede women's socioeconomic advancement in the FCT and recommends targeted gender-responsive policies, enhanced educational and employment opportunities, community advocacy, and strengthened legal protections to promote equity, empowerment, and inclusive development.

Keywords: *Gender discrimination, socioeconomic impact, women empowerment, community development, Federal Capital Territory*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based discrimination remains a persistent global challenge that undermines social justice, economic efficiency, and sustainable development (Dada et al., 2025). It refers to unequal treatment, exclusion, or restriction based on gender that limits individuals' ability to participate fully in social, economic, and political life (Aminu et al., 2025a). Despite international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), gender inequality continues to shape access to education, employment, healthcare, and decision-making opportunities, particularly in developing countries (United Nations, 2015; Muhammed et al., 2025a). These disparities have far-reaching socioeconomic consequences that extend beyond women, affecting households and broader community development (Magaji, 2002; Muhammed et al., 2025b).

In many societies, discrimination against women manifests through limited access to productive resources, wage gaps, occupational segregation, and unequal educational opportunities (Magaji et al., 2018). Empirical studies have shown that such inequalities constrain women's economic participation and reduce overall productivity and economic growth (World Bank, 2020). When women are excluded from formal employment or relegated to low-paying and insecure jobs, household income levels decline, increasing vulnerability to poverty, substance abuse and limiting investments in children's education,

nutrition, and health (Ibrahim & Sule, 2023; Jummai et al., 2025). Consequently, gender discrimination reinforces intergenerational cycles of deprivation and social inequality.

At the household level, gender-based discrimination influences power relations, resource allocation, and welfare outcomes (Jankoli et al., 2025; Aminu et al., 2025b). Women often bear disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid care and domestic work, which restricts their time for income-generating activities and skills development (ILO, 2018). This imbalance not only affects women's economic autonomy but also household resilience, as families become more exposed to economic shocks when income sources are limited (Magaji & Aliyu, 2007; Ahmed et al., 2024). Research indicates that households in which women have greater economic and decision-making power tend to experience improved child well-being, better health outcomes, and enhanced educational attainment (Duflo, 2012).

Community development is equally affected by systemic gender discrimination (Hafizu et al., 2025a). Communities that marginalise women lose significant human capital and social potential, weakening collective capacity for innovation, governance, and sustainable development (Hafizu et al., 2025b). Women's limited participation in community leadership and local decision-making processes often results in development priorities that do not adequately address social welfare, health, and education needs (UNDP, 2020; Bello et al., 2025). Inclusive development models consistently demonstrate that empowering women strengthens social cohesion, improves service delivery, and accelerates community-level economic growth (Ismail et al., 2025).

In the context of Nigeria, and particularly the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, gender-based discrimination persists despite legal and policy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality. Cultural norms, institutional barriers, and socioeconomic inequalities continue to shape women's access to education, employment, and political participation (Akinwale & Ojo, 2021; Adekoya et al., 2025). As a rapidly urbanising and administratively significant region, the FCT presents a critical setting for examining how gender discrimination affects women, households, and community development outcomes. Analysing these socioeconomic impacts is essential for informing evidence-based policies and interventions that promote inclusive growth, social equity, and sustainable development in Abuja and similar urban contexts in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Socioeconomic

The term *socioeconomic* refers to the interrelated social and economic conditions that influence individuals' and groups' positions within society (Mukhtar et al., 2025). It encompasses factors such as income, education, occupation, social status, and access to resources, which collectively shape life chances and wellbeing (Musa et al., 2024). Socioeconomic conditions determine access to opportunities and services, influence patterns of inequality, and affect development outcomes at individual, household, and community levels (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In development studies, socioeconomic analysis is used to explain how structural inequalities and resource distribution impact social mobility, poverty, and economic growth, particularly in contexts marked by gender disparities (World Bank, 2020).

2.1.2 Gender-Based Discrimination

Gender-based discrimination refers to practices, norms, and institutional arrangements that result in unequal treatment or exclusion of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in socially constructed gender roles and power relations that privilege one gender over another, often disadvantaging women and girls. This form of discrimination manifests in unequal access to education, employment, property rights, healthcare, and political participation (United Nations, 2015). Gender-based discrimination undermines human rights and economic efficiency by restricting the full participation of women in productive and decision-making processes, thereby limiting overall development outcomes (ILO, 2018).

2.1.3 Women

Women, as a social group, play critical roles in economic production, social reproduction, and community development. Beyond their participation in formal and informal economic activities, women are often primary caregivers and key contributors to household welfare and social cohesion. However,

structural inequalities and discriminatory norms frequently limit women's access to education, income, assets, and leadership opportunities (Duflo, 2012). Recognising women's roles and addressing the barriers they face is essential for achieving inclusive development, as evidence shows that empowering women yields positive spillover effects on household wellbeing and community advancement (UNDP, 2020).

2.1.4 Households

A household is commonly defined as a group of individuals who live together and share resources, responsibilities, and consumption patterns. Households serve as fundamental units of economic production, consumption, and socialisation, where decisions regarding labour allocation, income use, education, and health are made (Becker, 1981). Gender relations within households significantly influence resource distribution and welfare outcomes, as unequal power dynamics often affect women's access to income and decision-making authority. Equitable household structures are therefore central to improving socioeconomic outcomes and reducing vulnerability to poverty (World Bank, 2018).

2.1.5 Community Development

Community development is a process in which community members collectively identify needs, mobilise resources, and implement strategies to improve their social, economic, and environmental conditions. It emphasises participation, empowerment, and local capacity building as key drivers of sustainable development (Phillips & Pittman, 2015). Gender-inclusive community development recognises the importance of women's participation in leadership and decision-making, as inclusive approaches enhance social cohesion, service delivery, and long-term development outcomes. Communities that actively address gender inequalities are better positioned to achieve equitable growth and resilience (UNDP, 2020).

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Gender Inequality Theory

Gender Inequality Theory is highly relevant to this study as it explains how socially constructed norms, institutional arrangements, and power relations systematically privilege men over women, resulting in unequal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making authority. The theory posits that gender disparities are embedded within social, economic, and political structures, leading to persistent disadvantages for women in education, employment, income, and civic participation (Ridgeway, 2011; Magaji, 2002). In the context of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, this theoretical framework helps to explain how discriminatory practices at societal, household, and community levels translate into adverse socioeconomic outcomes for women, families, and community development. By highlighting the structural nature of gender-based discrimination, Gender Inequality Theory provides an analytical lens for understanding how unequal power relations constrain women's productivity, weaken household welfare, and limit inclusive community development, thereby reinforcing broader patterns of socioeconomic inequality (Lorber, 2010).

2.3 Empirical Reviews

Kabeer (2016) conducted an empirical study examining the relationship between gender discrimination, women's empowerment, and household welfare outcomes in selected developing countries using survey-based secondary data. The findings revealed that discriminatory social norms significantly constrained women's access to education, paid employment, and financial resources, thereby limiting their economic autonomy. The study further established that households where women experienced lower levels of discrimination recorded higher investments in children's health and education, underscoring the broader socioeconomic costs of gender inequality on family wellbeing and development outcomes (Kabeer, 2016).

A quantitative study by Ferrant, Pesando, and Nowacka (2014) assessed the economic and social impacts of gender-based discrimination across multiple countries using time-use data and national development indicators. The results demonstrated that women's disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work reduced their labour market participation and income-generating opportunities.

This imbalance was found to affect household productivity and slow community-level economic growth negatively, highlighting how entrenched gender inequalities undermine inclusive development and socioeconomic progress (Ferrant et al., 2014).

In a Nigerian-based empirical study, Aderemi, Lawal, and Oyelami (2018) investigated the effects of gender discrimination on women's economic participation and household poverty levels using a cross-sectional survey design. The study revealed that discriminatory practices in employment and access to credit significantly reduced women's contributions to household income. Consequently, families with economically marginalised women were more vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity, indicating that gender discrimination has direct and measurable implications for household socioeconomic stability (Aderemi et al., 2018).

Duflo and Udry (2014) empirically examined intra-household resource allocation and gender disparities using household-level data from sub-Saharan Africa. The study found that gender-based inequalities in decision-making power influenced how household resources were allocated, often to the disadvantage of women and children. The results showed that empowering women economically improved household welfare outcomes, including nutrition and education, thereby reinforcing the argument that gender discrimination at the household level has wider socioeconomic consequences (Duflo & Udry, 2014).

An empirical assessment by UN Women (2020) analysed the impact of gender inequality on community development outcomes using mixed-methods data across urban centres in Africa. The study found that communities with low female participation in leadership and economic activities experienced weaker social cohesion and poorer development indicators. Conversely, reducing gender-based discrimination enhanced women's participation in community governance, improved service delivery, and strengthened local economic development, demonstrating the critical role of gender equality in sustainable community advancement (UN Women, 2020).

2.4 Gaps in Literature

Despite extensive empirical evidence demonstrating that gender-based discrimination adversely affects women's economic participation, household welfare, and community development, notable research gaps remain. Most existing studies adopt cross-country or national-level analyses, which limit their ability to capture context-specific dynamics of gender discrimination at the subnational or urban level. In particular, empirical research is scarce on the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, where rapid urbanisation, socioeconomic diversity, and institutional concentration may shape gender relations differently from those in other regions. Additionally, many prior studies emphasise either household-level or macroeconomic outcomes, with limited integration of women-, household-, and community-level impacts within a single analytical framework. There is also insufficient empirical attention to how cultural norms and institutional practices interact to influence gender-based discrimination in urban Nigerian contexts. Addressing these gaps, the present study provides localised, integrated evidence on the socioeconomic impacts of gender-based discrimination on women, households, and community development in FCT Abuja, thereby contributing to more context-responsive policy and development interventions.

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design within a mixed-methods framework to examine the socioeconomic impacts of gender-based discrimination on women, households, and community development in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The descriptive design was considered appropriate as it enables systematic and objective documentation of prevailing conditions, patterns, and relationships associated with gender inequality and its socioeconomic consequences (Bryman, 2016; Kothari, 2004). To ensure a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, both quantitative and qualitative methods were integrated. Mixed-methods research combines numerical data with qualitative insights to provide a more comprehensive understanding than reliance on a single methodological approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to women and girls, while qualitative data provided more profound insights into lived

experiences, institutional constraints, and social norms influencing gender relations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was adopted, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and integrated during interpretation. This design allowed the strengths of both approaches to complement each other in explaining the socioeconomic implications of gender-based discrimination. Quantitative analysis focused on measurable indicators, including employment status, income levels, access to education, and participation in community development initiatives. Qualitative data were obtained through key informant interviews (KIs), which captured first-hand accounts of women's experiences with discrimination and barriers to socioeconomic participation. The qualitative component explored underlying social norms, institutional practices, and contextual factors shaping women's roles within households and communities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Sources of Data

Data for the study were obtained primarily from primary sources through the administration of structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. These methods were employed to capture responses from individuals who might face challenges expressing themselves in written form and to generate detailed insights into systemic gender discrimination. Participants included women and girls, community leaders, policymakers, civil society actors, educators, and gender advocates across the FCT. The use of multiple respondent categories enhanced objectivity and minimised bias arising from limited sample representation. Secondary data were sourced from reports of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the FCT Statistics Office, policy documents, and existing datasets on gender equality and socioeconomic indicators relevant to the FCT.

3.3 Study Area

The study is situated within the interdisciplinary domains of Gender Studies, Development Studies, and Socioeconomic Policy Analysis, with a geographic focus on Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. The FCT, with Abuja as its capital city, serves as Nigeria's administrative and political hub. Established in 1976 to replace Lagos as the federal capital, Abuja officially became the seat of government in 1991 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Geographically located at the centre of Nigeria, the FCT covers approximately 8,000 square kilometres and shares boundaries with Niger, Kaduna, Kogi, and Nasarawa States. The territory is administered by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), headed by a Minister appointed by the President, rather than an elected governor. The FCT is characterised by cultural diversity, rapid urbanisation, and the presence of key national and international institutions, making it a suitable context for examining gender-based socioeconomic dynamics.

3.4 Population of the Study

The study population comprised women and girls residing within the six area councils of the FCT, namely Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and Abaji. Participants were drawn from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and occupational groups across both urban and rural settings. In addition, key stakeholders, including female community leaders, educators, civil society representatives, and local government officials involved in gender-related initiatives, were included. This diverse population enabled the study to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences regarding gender discrimination and its socioeconomic implications. According to the 2006 National Population Census, the FCT had a population of 1,406,239, while more recent estimates place the population at approximately 1.69 million as of 2022. However, disaggregated gender data remain limited (National Bureau of Statistics & National Population Commission, 2022).

3.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents with direct knowledge or lived experience of gender-based discrimination in the FCT. This technique ensured the inclusion of participants who could provide relevant and informed insights into the study objectives. The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula, which provides a statistically acceptable sample size based on the total population

and a 95 per cent confidence level. This approach enhanced the representativeness and reliability of the quantitative data collected.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, draft questionnaires and interview guides were subjected to expert review by the researcher's supervisor and other academic specialists. Feedback from these experts led to revisions that improved clarity, relevance, and consistency of the instruments. This process helped minimise measurement errors and enhance the credibility of the collected data.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns, trends, and relationships among key socioeconomic variables. A socioeconomic impact assessment approach was applied to examine the extent of gender discrimination and its association with indicators such as income, education, employment, health, and access to resources. Qualitative data from interviews and key informant discussions were analysed thematically to uncover recurring themes and underlying issues. The integration of structured questionnaires, interviews, and KIIs facilitated a deeper understanding of perceptions, lived experiences, and institutional dynamics surrounding gender discrimination and community development.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to established ethical standards for social research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after the purpose of the study and their rights were clearly explained. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by protecting respondents' identities and securely handling all data. The principle of non-maleficence was upheld to ensure that participation did not expose respondents to harm. Throughout the research process, objectivity and neutrality were maintained to minimise bias in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

4.0 Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis of Results

This section presents and analyses data obtained from structured questionnaires and interviews administered to women and girls across the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, as well as key informants comprising community leaders, government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organisations. The analysis focuses on the socioeconomic impacts of gender-based discrimination on women, households, and community development in the FCT. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 386 were completed and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of 77.2 per cent. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, while qualitative responses from interviews were examined through thematic analysis to complement and enrich the quantitative findings.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This subsection presents the demographic profile of the 386 female respondents, covering age, marital status, educational attainment, employment status, and area of residence.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Under 18	38	9.8
18–25	94	24.4
26–35	106	27.5
36–45	88	22.8
46 and above	60	15.5
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.1 indicates that respondents aged 26–35 years constituted the most significant proportion of the sample at 27.5 per cent. This age group is typically economically active and socially engaged, making their experiences critical for understanding how gender discrimination affects employment, income, and household responsibilities. Respondents aged 18–25 years accounted for 24.4 per cent, representing young women transitioning through education, early employment, or entrepreneurship, whose experiences often reflect barriers to entry into opportunities. Those aged 36–45 years comprised 22.8 per cent and offered perspectives on cumulative gender-related disadvantages affecting career advancement and economic stability. Participants under 18 years (9.8 per cent) and those aged 46 years and above (15.5 per cent) report experiences related to early-life gender constraints and long-term reflections on changing gender norms. Overall, the distribution reflects broad age representation, enhancing the robustness of the study's findings across life stages.

Table 4.2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Single	142	36.8
Married	194	50.3
Divorced/Widow	50	12.9
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

As shown in Table 4.2, married respondents constituted the majority of the sample, accounting for 50.3 per cent. This suggests that many participants simultaneously navigate family responsibilities and economic activities, providing insight into how gender discrimination affects household decision-making, labour participation, and economic independence. Single respondents accounted for 36.8 per cent, primarily reflecting women in education or early career stages whose experiences of discrimination may relate more to access to schooling and employment. Divorced and widowed women constituted 12.9 per cent of the sample, a group often exposed to heightened socioeconomic vulnerability due to limited institutional support, inheritance restrictions, or social stigma. Collectively, the marital status distribution allows the study to examine how gender discrimination intersects with family structure and socioeconomic outcomes.

Table 4.3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency Percentage (%)	
No Formal Education	42	10.9
Primary	58	15.0
Secondary	120	31.1
Tertiary	124	32.1
Postgraduate	42	10.9
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.3 reveals that respondents with tertiary education constituted the largest group, at 32.1 per cent, indicating relatively high educational participation among women in the FCT. Those with secondary education closely followed at 31.1 per cent, representing women transitioning into employment or further training, where gender-based barriers may restrict progression. Respondents with primary education (15.0 per cent) and no formal education (10.9 per cent) represent groups facing limited socioeconomic opportunities and heightened vulnerability to poverty and exclusion. Notably, 10.9 per cent of respondents held postgraduate qualifications, demonstrating that even highly educated women may continue to encounter discrimination in professional and leadership spaces. The data underscores the persistent influence of educational disparities on women's socioeconomic participation.

Table 4.4: Employment Status of Respondents

Employment Status	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Unemployed	108	28.0
Self-employed	104	26.9
Formally employed	74	19.2
Informally employed	68	17.6
Student	32	8.3
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.4 shows that unemployment was highest among respondents at 28.0 per cent, reflecting structural barriers such as discriminatory hiring practices, skills mismatch, and inadequate support systems. Self-employment accounted for 26.9 per cent, suggesting that many women engage in entrepreneurship, often as a coping strategy in response to limited access to formal employment. Formal employment represented 19.2 per cent, indicating persistent obstacles to stable, secure jobs, while informal employment (17.6 per cent) highlights engagement in precarious work characterised by low wages and limited protection. Students constituted 8.3 per cent of the sample, representing future labour market entrants. Overall, the employment distribution illustrates how gender discrimination shapes economic participation and livelihood opportunities.

Table 4.5: Area Council Distribution

Area Council	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Abuja Municipal	94	24.4
Gwagwalada	72	18.7
Bwari	64	16.6
Kuje	58	15.0
Kwali	50	12.9
Abaji	48	12.4
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.5 indicates that Abuja Municipal Area Council recorded the highest number of respondents (24.4 per cent), reflecting its urban concentration, population density, and access to services. Gwagwalada followed with 18.7 per cent, influenced by urban growth and tertiary institutions. Bwari and Kuje accounted for 16.6 per cent and 15.0 per cent, respectively, representing peri-urban areas where traditional norms and modernisation coexist. Kwali and Abaji recorded the lowest proportions, reflecting their rural nature and limited infrastructure. The distribution demonstrates that gender discrimination affects women across all councils, though its form and severity vary spatially.

4.3 Experience of Gender-Based Discrimination

Table 4.6: Experience of Gender-Based Discrimination

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Yes	276	71.5
No	110	28.5
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.6 shows that 71.5 per cent of respondents reported experiencing gender-based discrimination, indicating that inequality remains pervasive across the FCT. This suggests widespread structural, cultural, and institutional barriers affecting women's access to education, employment,

leadership, and public services. The 28.5 per cent who reported no experience of discrimination may reflect varying levels of empowerment, education, or localised interventions. Overall, the findings confirm that gender discrimination remains a critical socioeconomic issue requiring sustained policy and community-level responses.

Table 4.7: Areas of Gender Discrimination (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Domain	Frequency
Education	168
Employment	202
Healthcare	94
Leadership/Politics	112
Property/Inheritance	138
Others (e.g., marriage)	48

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.7 illustrates that employment-related discrimination was the most frequently reported domain, followed by education and property or inheritance rights. This indicates that economic and asset-based inequalities are central to women's marginalisation. Discrimination in leadership and political participation further highlights women's exclusion from decision-making processes, while healthcare-related discrimination affects well-being and productivity. Collectively, the data demonstrate that gender discrimination in the FCT is multidimensional, affecting nearly all aspects of women's lives.

4.4 Perception of Economic Impact

Table 4.8: Gender Discrimination and Economic Opportunity

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Strongly Agree	156	40.4
Agree	124	32.1
Neutral	46	11.9
Disagree	36	9.3
Strongly Disagree	24	6.2
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.8 indicates that a combined 72.5 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gender discrimination restricts economic opportunities. This reflects widespread recognition of the adverse effects of gender bias on employment, income, and career advancement. Neutral and dissenting responses may reflect individual circumstances or localised empowerment initiatives. Overall, the findings emphasise the need for policies that address structural economic barriers facing women.

Table 4.9: Denial of Public Services Due to Gender

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Yes	178	46.1
No	208	53.9

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.9 shows that nearly half of the respondents reported being denied access to public services due to gender. This underscores persistent institutional barriers in areas such as land ownership, credit access, education, and healthcare. While slightly more respondents reported no denial, the proportion affected remains substantial, highlighting systemic inequities in service delivery.

Table 4.10: Experience of Gender-Based Violence

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Yes	144	37.3
No	242	62.7
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.10 reveals that 37.3 per cent of respondents had experienced gender-based violence, indicating significant safety and well-being concerns. Although the majority reported no experience, underreporting remains likely due to stigma and fear. The findings highlight the link between violence, economic instability, and limited participation in development.

4.5 Socioeconomic Consequences

Table 4.11: Impact on Livelihood

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Very High	112	29.0
High	130	33.7
Moderate	84	21.8
Low	36	9.3
No Impact	24	6.2
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.11 indicates that 62.7 per cent of respondents perceived a high or very high impact of gender discrimination on their livelihoods. This demonstrates that discriminatory practices significantly constrain income generation and economic security for most women in the FCT.

Table 4.12: Access to Quality Education

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Yes	158	40.9
No	186	48.2
Not Sure	42	10.9
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.12 shows that nearly half of respondents believe women and girls lack equal access to quality education, reflecting persistent barriers such as cultural norms, poverty, and early marriage. This reinforces education as a critical pathway through which gender discrimination affects long-term socioeconomic outcomes.

4.6 Policy and Program Awareness

Table 4.13: Availability of Empowerment Programs

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Yes	140	36.3
No	180	46.6
I do not know	66	17.1
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.13 indicates limited availability and awareness of empowerment programs, with nearly half of respondents reporting no access to them. This reflects gaps in policy implementation, outreach, and program sustainability.

Table 4.14: Contribution to Community Development

Response	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Greatly Limited	128	33.2
Somewhat Limited	144	37.3
Not Limited	78	20.2
I do not know	36	9.3
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.14 shows that over 70 per cent of respondents perceive their contributions to community development as limited due to gender inequality, emphasising the loss of women's potential in local development processes.

4.7 Gender Equality and Sustainable Development

Table 4.15: Perceived Role of Gender Equality in Sustainable Development

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	162	42.0
Agree	144	37.3
Neutral	38	9.8
Disagree	26	6.7
Strongly Disagree	16	4.2
Total	386	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4.15 shows a strong consensus among respondents that gender equality is fundamental to sustainable development, with nearly 80 per cent agreeing. This highlights widespread recognition of the linkage between equity, economic growth, and social sustainability in the FCT.

4.9 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that gender-based discrimination remains pervasive in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, with significant socioeconomic implications for women, households, and community development. A substantial majority of respondents reported experiencing discrimination across multiple domains, particularly in employment, education, and access to property and inheritance. These disparities are reflected in high levels of unemployment, concentration in informal and self-employment, and limited access to public services and empowerment programs. The results further show that gender-based violence affects a considerable proportion of women and girls, compounding economic vulnerability and undermining personal safety and well-being. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that discriminatory social norms and institutional practices continue to restrict women's access to opportunities, limit income-generating capacity, and weaken household resilience in the FCT.

In addition, the study establishes a strong perceived link between gender equality and sustainable development outcomes. Most respondents agreed that gender discrimination negatively affects economic opportunities and livelihoods, while over two-thirds indicated that their contributions to community development are constrained by gender inequality. Limited awareness and availability of empowerment programs further exacerbate these challenges, particularly in peri-urban and rural area councils. At the same time, the high level of agreement on the importance of gender equality for sustainable development suggests growing awareness and potential public support for inclusive policies. Overall, the findings underscore the need for targeted, gender-responsive interventions that address structural barriers, expand access to education and employment, strengthen protection against gender-based violence, and enhance women's participation in community decision-making as a pathway to inclusive and sustainable development in the Federal Capital Territory.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has demonstrated that gender-based discrimination remains a critical barrier to the socioeconomic empowerment of women and girls in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The findings indicate that discriminatory practices permeate multiple domains, including employment, education, access to property and inheritance, political participation, and public services. Such discrimination limits women's economic opportunities, exacerbates vulnerability to poverty, and constrains their ability to contribute effectively to household and community development. Additionally, experiences of gender-based violence further undermine women's well-being and participation in sustainable development initiatives. The study also highlights that, despite varying educational and age profiles, most women perceive gender equality as essential to broader socioeconomic progress, signalling awareness of the critical link between equity and sustainable development outcomes.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Federal Capital Territory Administration and relevant stakeholders implement targeted gender-responsive policies and programs that enhance women's access to education, employment, and leadership opportunities. Efforts should include expanding awareness and coverage of empowerment initiatives, strengthening legal frameworks to prevent gender-based violence, and ensuring equitable access to public services and resources. Community-level interventions, such as advocacy campaigns and capacity-building workshops, should be designed to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote gender-inclusive participation in decision-making processes. Finally, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess the effectiveness of these interventions, ensuring that women and girls in all area councils of the FCT can fully exercise their rights and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

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