

CHALLENGING THE AGE-LONG STEREOTYPES: ADVANCING FEMINISM AS AN ANTIDOTE TO PATRIARCHY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Feminism is a concept that has been grossly misunderstood in many parts of the world, and in particular, Nigeria. The concept sparks feelings of contempt in many quarters and, surprisingly, among the womenfolk who are the intended beneficiaries of it. This misconception is no doubt due to ignorance of the concept and its purpose. This paper seeks to elucidate the concept of feminism as a movement primarily advocating for equity and its benefits as an antidote to the deep-rooted menace of patriarchy. The research methodology adopted in this paper is the doctrinal methodology, which involves the collation of information to validate a legal hypothesis. The paper delves into the concept of feminism to unravel its efforts at challenging the existing status quo on gender stereotypes. It expatiates the discourse surrounding feminism while seeking to articulate the inherent benefits of the movement. The paper concludes that Government participation is fundamental in ensuring inclusiveness and equity in all facets of Nigerian society.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Gender Stereotypes, Gender Equality

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Research reveals that feminism began as a philosophical movement in the United States of America and the United Kingdom back in the 18th century. Thus, it is a novel movement in Africa, especially, Nigeria. Nonetheless, feminist scholars universally agree that Nigerian women suffer injustices, prejudices, and oppression. This discrimination has been traced to the existing patriarchal structure inherent in Nigerian society.¹ Feminism, therefore, is a movement passionately dedicated to confronting patriarchy and challenging the existing status quo with a view to instigating the desired changes from the subjugated position in which the Nigerian woman finds herself in society. It is committed to promoting equality between men and women concerning social, economic, and political opportunities.

Over the years, African countries have gained an unrivalled reputation as countries where the rights of women are non-existent or even where existent, they are severely undermined. Nigeria is no different as the customary beliefs empower men over women and put women “under the feet” of the men in society. Despite the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Nigeria, the inherent struggles of the women battling with a deeply entrenched patriarchal system leave so much to be desired. This system of patriarchy is characterized by male dominance and female subjugation and oppression which pervade every facet of the Nigerian society, from family dynamics to insignificant political representation and workplace structure. Feminism on the other hand, is a movement advocating for gender equality and offers a powerful antidote to this deeply entrenched patriarchy, thus challenging the status quo and paving the way for a more equitable and balanced society.

¹ Kester Nnaemeka Dibia ‘Nigerian Feminist Agenda and The Dynamism of Revolution: A Study of Selected Nigerian Plays’ <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajtns.v.14.1.1>. assessed 5 March 2025

Hitherto the mere mention of women's rights was taboo in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, let alone the acknowledgement of her feelings. Sadly, culture and religion have in no small way contributed to validating these misogynistic traditions which have been handed down from generations to generations. The evolution of women's rights has traversed from the era of non-existence to, part recognition and even now is still the subject of passionate debates and debacles globally, just because; God forbid that a woman be seen as a whole being just like a man? Though this paper recognizes the diversity of perspectives on feminism, this paper strongly affirms that feminism is a movement focused on equity across board. It advocates for and emphasizes on the need for a more inclusive and fairer environment for all, irrespective of gender. What better way to enable inclusiveness than to create the opportunities for women participation? Women's representation leads to a more encompassing inclusion in policy-making as well as implementation.² This is what feminism movement is all about- Making room at the table for women to participate! When women are at the table, it enables a diversity of perspectives, leading to more effective and practical solutions. This inclusion should be apparent in all facets such as politics, workplace and even family life.

The subject matter will be discussed in five parts- Part I is the introduction, Part II will give conceptual clarification, Part III will discuss the challenges of patriarchy, Part IV will discuss the benefits of Feminism, Part V will discuss the misconceptions and challenges surrounding the endorsement and acceptance of feminism and

² Olasimbo Yeside Aminat, Special Assistant on Women Affairs to the Speaker of the House of Representative. Founder of the Bridge her Gap Initiative. <https://yesideolasimbo.com/about-me/#:~:text=My%20work%20spans%20women%20and,Harassment%20in%20Tertiary%20Institutions%20Bill>. assessed 21 March 2025.

conclude with recommendations to tackle these challenges and misconception.

2. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

2.1. Patriarchy

This is a system of society or government in which the men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. It is a system in which relationships, beliefs and values embedded in political, social and economic systems boost gender inequality.³ The word “patriarchy” has been recreated over the last two decades to describe the origins of men’s oppression of women.⁴ It was originally used to describe the father’s power as the head of the house. It eventually evolved around the early 1960s to describe male dominance and female subordination.⁵ Therefore, a patriarchal society is any system that implements a structure that accords men undue advantage over women.⁶

Women have limited access to development and rarely enjoy freedom of choice in Nigeria, and this is largely due to the existing patriarchal system.⁷ Significantly, this is one of the major travesties bedeviling African women, whereby they are constantly subjected to prejudice

³ Rajshree Naidu ‘Patriarchy & Womanhood’ (2023) *International Journal of Futuristic Innovation in Arts, Humanities and Management (IJFIAHM)* 2, 2, 84; 91 assessed 21 March 2026.

⁴ Makama, Godiya Allanana “Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward” *European Scientific Journal* June 2013 edition vol.9, No.17 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857, 7431.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jane L. Parpart ‘Gender, Patriarchy and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwean Case’ (1995) <https://gencen.isp.msu.edu/files/6914/5202/7078/WP254.pdf> assessed 27 June 2026

and oppression.⁸ In typical African traditional societies, the quest to retain autonomy over their bodies has been a consistent battle for women. In reality, African men take advantage of women majorly because of the authority which the society accords to African men as a result of the Patriarchal cultural practice which is traditionally entrenched within the African society. Patriarchy has directly and indirectly affected the economy as well as the power structure in African society.⁹

2.2. Feminism

In the past, it was believed that any discussions about women and their bodies or their sexual rights, was the exclusive preserve of feminists and feminist advocates. However, this paper believes that a clear and unbiased understanding of feminism and what it stands for will create awareness that reproductive rights are beneficial rather than detrimental to the society, as it is widely believed. What then is feminism? One writer profoundly puts it succinctly thus; “*Common sense and basic human decency! Extend all the rights and privileges accorded men to women and don’t deprive women of their basic human rights because of their gender*”.¹⁰ Tragically, in a patriarchal society like Nigeria, with conservative moral standards and diverse religions, the Feminist Movement is greatly disparaged. This naturally encourages assumptions and misconceptions about people who take on the title. Long before the advent of feminism in Nigeria, feminists like

⁸ Dr. Theophilus Nwano & Dr. Lilian Akhirome-Omonfuegbe ‘Recognizing patriarchy at the Core of Gender Discrimination in Nigeria’ *International Journal of Law, Justice and Jurisprudence* 2024; 4(1): 108,115

⁹ Joyce Olowoniyi ‘Patriarchal Influence On The Right Of Women Over Their Bodies’ <https://acjol.org/index.php/aquino/article/view/2511> assessed 12 March 2025

¹⁰ Amarachukwu Nnoli ‘Perceptions of feminism in Nigeria’ <https://www.afritondo.com/afritondo/perceptions-of-feminism-in-nigeria> assessed 5 March 2026

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who has been very vocal since the early 2000s about her feminist ideals, received and still receive backlash from society.¹¹ This aggression towards feminism is largely due to a lack of understanding on the subject.

It is therefore important to distinguish the concept of feminism from feminists. Feminism is defined as a branch of study that emphasizes the gender inequality existing in society. At the same time, feminists are scholars, women who condemn and question the discrimination, oppression, and exploitation of women in society.¹² A profound question will be, “Can men be feminists?” Interestingly, some scholars will answer the question in the negative. It is believed that it is impossible for men to fully comprehend and appreciate the oppressive patriarchal institutions entrenched in society, and men also do not directly suffer the experiences of oppression and subjugation.¹³ However, it is believed that men can be pro-feminists if they have an understanding of gender inequality and as such, can desire and push for gender equality and neutrality.¹⁴ To clarify the concept of feminist jurisprudence, Feminist theories can further be classified into the following categories: Legal Feminist theory, Liberal Feminist theory, Radical Feminist theory, and Dominance feminist theory.¹⁵

a. Legal Feminist Theory: This one provides insight and guidance into a comprehension of the divergent components of gender discrimination. He quotes that this theory seeks to make the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Yinka Olomojobi *Human Rights, On Gender, Sex and The Law in Nigeria* (2nd edn Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co. 2021). 7

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Yinka Olomojobi (n 12)

nomenclature “woman” – “a name of a way of being human, as against a name of a way of being different from a man.”¹⁶

b. Liberal feminist Theory: This is modelled after the belief that women, as well as men, are rights-bearing, autonomous human beings. Implicitly, equal rights and opportunities, in addition to the right to individual choices, are key components of liberal feminist theories.¹⁷ He elucidates that liberal feminist theory advocates for equality of rights for women. It focuses on women's equality in the public sphere and not just behind closed doors. He calls for equal rights of women in terms of education, work and political representation. This paper thus condemns the belief that certain professions and politics is for men only. Today we see increased participation of women in “manly” professions like engineering, as well as increased participation in politics- though Nigerian politics still leaves room for more to be done. In furtherance of his point of view, women should have equal rights and opportunities in terms of education, work and political participation- thus it behooves on the State to engender this equality at all levels in the public domain. Succinctly put, “the States are duty bearers and the women are rights holders.”¹⁸

c. Radical feminist theory: It is believed that proponents of the theory blame the oppression of women on the patriarchal nature of society. Radical feminists believe that sex differences are the bane of discrimination against women. This theory strongly argues that the

¹⁶ Richard Rorty and Catherine MacKinnon *Feminism and Pragmatism* (1991) 9
https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/issue-files/rp59_article1_feminismpragmatism_rorty.pdf 9 accessed 28 June 2026

¹⁷ Patricia Cain, ‘Feminism and the Limits of Equality’ in Kelly D.(ed) *Feminist Legal Theory: Foundations in Feminist Legal Theory*: (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993) 235, 247

¹⁸Yinka Olomjobi *Human Rights, On Gender, Sex and the Law in Nigeria* (2nd edn Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co. 2021) 7

subjugation and oppression of women is the worst form of oppression known to mankind. Proponents of this theory rank this form of oppression above racism, ethnic discrimination, and ideological bias.¹⁹ He concludes that radical feminists cannot be reduced to a simplistic biological determinist argument.²⁰ One focal point of the radical feminists' argument is that the subjugation of women in Nigeria is generally not in relation to their ability to be productive, but rather the prejudice is based on the fact that women are believed to be basically good for only reproductive purposes. Hence, it is not surprising that the belief that “women belong to the other room” holds sway in several quarters.

d. Dominance feminist theory: This purports that women are victims of male dominance over several centuries. Proponents of this theory believe the legal system to be substantially oppressive to women as well as a tool for male domination over women.²¹ From the point of view of this theory, the law serves no other purpose but as an instrument for the expression and enabling of men's domineering and vile attitude towards women in society. Proponents of this theory view men as continuously brutal, vile and mean to women. This paper posits that the effect of this type of view is that it induces over-sensitivity, and justifies male hatred. Succinctly put, these types of feminists are the ones regarded as anti-male in society. Hence proponents of this view are constantly battling to overcome oppression which sometimes may even be imagined, considering the indoctrination they have received over time that all men are vile and wicked towards women. As expected, critics of this theory denounce the proposition that all men are raucous in nature and barbaric.²²

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Ibid

²¹Ibid 17

²² Ibid

In Africa, the concept of feminism began around the 1990s. African feminism is built on the ideology that African women culturally differ from their counterparts in the Western world.²³ The theory of feminism in Africa explores the social, political and economic factors engendering female subjugation and oppression. Primarily, Africans generally and particularly the women exhibit an unnatural subjection and devotion to religion and culture. This explains why in churches and Christian crusades, women account for the vast majority of attendees. This paper further posits that this religious devotion also accounts for why many women in Africa have endured centuries of oppression, believing that it is what religion or culture expects of them, and for them to behave otherwise will be tantamount to blasphemy, sin or taboo which is punishable.

The work of the renowned Diedre Badeji²⁴ provides great insight on African Feminism. She posits that there are three essential elements of African feminism and these are:

- (i) First, we must understand the chronological path through which the women of Africa have been.
- (ii) Second, we must understand that women of Africa are now at the core of global conversations.
- (iii) Lastly, there is need to review the influence of African culture and heritage on the relationship between its men and women.²⁵

She argued further that a study into African feminism will undoubtedly lead to questioning the impact of external forces like

²³Yinka Olomajobi *Human Rights, On Gender, Sex and the Law in Nigeria* (2nd edn Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co. 2021) 26

²⁴ Diedre Badeji 'African Feminism: Mythical and Social Power of Women of Africa Descent' *Research in African Literatures*, (1998) ,29(2), 94, 111

²⁵Ibid

colonialism and how it has affected gender roles in Africa. She puts it succinctly thus, “the principles of traditional African values that see gender roles as complementary, parallel, asymmetrical and independently linked in the continuity of the human race.”²⁶ She further argues that the traditions bequeathed on African societies by the Western world has no doubt induced an internal overhaul of the social systems in many parts of Africa. Today, women are seen to embark on more challenging roles in society and no longer relegated to the background. Notwithstanding, many women still have to grapple with the realities of being an African woman, which include challenges of motherhood, financial dependence.

Although African feminism is gaining ground and the proponents of this movement are actively contending with the plight of African women and the subjugation, oppression, and injustice she has had to contend with for centuries, not all feminists agree on all issues. Many women in Africa, especially in Nigeria, are afraid to be labeled as feminists. This is because many feminists, either for lack of adequate information, have assumed the role of aggressors in society, and thus proponents of feminism have been generally labeled as men-haters. The label attracts backlash and thus many shy away from it. In some quarters, the name feminist has been attributed to lesbians and “loose women”. Many now choose to be regarded as female activists²⁷ in a bid to attract empathy, sympathy to the plight and the cause of the Nigerian women. This research submits that viewing feminism in Africa from a clearer and unbiased angle, one will assuredly find that the hub of feminism is to propagate the gospel that men and women can give equal value and engender progress in the society if they allow

²⁶Ibid

²⁷Yinka Olomogboji *Human Rights, On Gender, Sex and the Law in Nigeria* (2nd edn Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co. 2021) 31

equality and equity in their relationship and conduct of affairs both domestically and publicly.

Contrary to widespread misconception about feminism, Feminism advocates for the rights of women based on the equality of the sexes. It strives to address issues such as gender discrimination, reproductive rights, equal pay, and violence against women. Feminism is not about devaluing men or a campaign on “man hate”; rather, it strives to create an equitable society where both genders have equal access to opportunities and equal rights.

3.THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE EXISTING PATRIARCHAL LANDSCAPE OF NIGERIA

It is interesting to note that though patriarchy has always been in existence in Nigeria, it may be quite different now from what it was in the pre- colonial and colonial era. Studies show that even though Nigeria has always been male dominated; the women also played significant roles which were recognized and respected. The position of women in pre-colonial Nigeria varied according to the diverse ethnic groups. The key determinants of these variations were the kinship structure and the role of women within the economic structure of the individual ethnic group and societies. Irrespective of the ethnic group, however, the women were saddled with “the domestically oriented jobs along with other economic activities exclusive to women.”²⁸ It is believed that women in pre-colonial Nigeria complemented the men very well in spite of the existing patriarchal structure of the society.²⁹ Prior to colonization, women in southern Nigeria, which is made up of the Igbo and Yoruba communities, were known to have been more

²⁸ Sefinatu Aliyu Dogo ‘The Nigerian Patriarchy: When and How’ University of Exeter, the United Kingdom. *Cultural and Religious Studies*, Sep-Oct. 2014, 2, No. 5, 263,275

²⁹ Ibid

politically aware and active than those in the northern part of the country.³⁰

The Igbo women were renowned for their expertise in agriculture and sales of agricultural produce. They planted their own crops and sold the surplus. They also handled the management of the village market, which was the community's hub of commerce.³¹ The women in the Igbo and Yoruba societies were known to have political roles within "dual-sex systems"; women were part of associations and groups that were based on trade, age and kinship.³² The Aba women's riot of 1929 is proof that women also played significant roles in politics. These women protested against the oppressive colonial government.³³ This also cements the feminist belief that women in power is a positive addition to any society. In pre-colonial Yoruba society, women were also known to occupy certain positions among the king makers and among the council of elders who helped the Oba to rule.³⁴ In northern Nigeria, on the other hand the Islamic influence between the 15th and 18th centuries as well as the resultant introduction of the *sharia* law (which advocates the practice of *pudah* and the isolation of women from public life and activities) women participation in public activities significantly declined.³⁵ Nevertheless, studies show the existence of female monarchs at certain times in Hausa history. Monarchs like

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Sefinatu Aliyu Dogo citing Okonjo (2002) 'The Nigerian Patriarchy: When and How' University of Exeter, the United Kingdom. Cultural and Religious Studies, Sep-Oct. 2014, 2, 5, 263, 275

³² Ibid

³³ Anonymous "The Aba Women's Riot" <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=160512§ion=2.7> assessed 5 March 2025

³⁴ Sefinatu Aliyu Dogo (n28)

³⁵ Ibid

Queen Amina of Zaria and Tawa of Gobir, in the 16th and 18th century.³⁶

Notwithstanding these recognized roles, the women in pre-colonial era exercised their rights within set boundaries. The existent gender relations revealed a clear case of division of labor. This division of labor was clearly a gendered one which clearly reinforces gender stereotypes which places the men as the dominating gender and leaders of the family and society, saddled with decision making and while the woman was a subordinate partner.³⁷

The advent of colonization, significantly altered the nature of gender relations in the Nigerian society. The introduction of cash crop farming as a way of meeting the demand for raw materials being shipped abroad by the colonialists, caused a change in the economic structures. Men dominated the farming of cash crops which were needed for the international market and were therefore of more importance and focus than other crops, while women were confined to the growing of food crops which attracted little returns.³⁸ Thus the men became cash crop farmers and became the center of focus. The complex formalities involved in further advancing agriculture reinforced the segregation of economic roles of men and women that had earlier complemented each other.³⁹

The grip of Patriarchy in Nigeria is manifested in diverse forms. It creates disparity and unequal access to varying platforms which have over time confined women to domestic roles, while men are viewed

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Sefinatu Aliyu Dogo 'The Nigerian Patriarchy: When and How' University of Exeter, the United Kingdom. *Cultural and Religious Studies*, Sep-Oct. 2014, 2, 5, 263, 275

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

primarily as breadwinners and as such sole-decision-makers in the family dynamics. This undoubtedly has led to widespread misogyny and disparity which reflects in diverse forms such as:

- i. **Misogynistic Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** Cultural and religious beliefs exert one of the greatest influences in Nigerian societies. These practices undoubtedly validate gender stereotypes and typically suppress women.⁴⁰ Imbalance in power dynamics between men and women can be traced to cultural influence over time. Religious teachings further influence the general attitude towards women. Some of these religious practices include such as early marriage, child betrothal in Muslim religion. In Christendom we see constant teachings of “the man is the head of the home and the woman must be a subordinate” thereby undermining the true essence of marriage which is a union where two become one- even as advocated by the same Christian religion.⁴¹ Discriminatory cultural practices include, widowhood rites, and limited land ownership for women, non- inheritance by female children etc. All of these are clearly discriminatory against women in Nigeria and further validate gender stereotypes.
- ii. **Gender Based Violence:** Gender Based violence is without a doubt one of the major contributors to the infringement and abuse of women rights globally. Violence against women and girls is undoubtedly the most significant indicator of the imbalance of power between men and women in the African society- suffice it to say the issue of gender violence is not restricted to Africa, however studies show that patriarchy and ‘male superiority’ complex are contributory to the scourge of gender based violence in Africa.⁴² Many scholars agree that GBV in Nigeria is greatly influenced by cultural and

⁴⁰Ibid

⁴¹ Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:8, and Ephesians 5:31.

⁴² Yinka Olomajobi *Human Rights, On Gender, Sex and the Law in Nigeria* (2nd edn Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co. 2021). 77

religious factors, as well as the societal imbalance which gives men greater economic and leadership powers above the women.⁴³

- iii. **Gender Discriminatory Laws:** Though Nigeria has experienced significant improvement in the area of laws against gender discrimination, she has ratified a number of international instruments such as Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979 and enacted several domestic laws such as the VAPP Act 2015. Nonetheless, the existence of gender discriminatory laws leaves much to be desired. Laws like the Labor Act 1974 which constrains women from certain types of jobs,⁴⁴ the Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria 1999(as amended) which conveniently omits to make provision for citizenship for a foreign man married to a Nigeria women whereas it provides as such for a foreign woman married to a Nigerian man.⁴⁵ Without a doubt Nigeria is taking giant strides in making significant changes to some of these laws, for instance the recent pronouncement by the AIG of Police, that the provision of Section 127 of the Police Act which dismisses a pregnant unmarried police woman has been expunged.⁴⁶ This demonstrates government's willingness to enforce equality and shows prospects for gender equality in Nigeria.
- iv. **Lack of Political Representation:** Women are significantly underrepresented in political leadership positions, limiting their ability to influence policy decisions that affect their lives. Findings from the figures collated from the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from 2003 to 2011 general elections, reveals that a total of 7160 candidates (men and women)

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴ Labor Act 1974, s 56

⁴⁵ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s 26

⁴⁶ Newswire Law and Events 'Law Sacking Unmarried Pregnant Policewomen Expunged'
<https://newswirelawandevents.com/law-sacking-unmarried-pregnant-policewomen-expunged-aig/> assessed 13 March 2026

contested in the April elections. Of this number, only 628 women participated.⁴⁷ Out of the 25 candidates that participated for the office of the President, only 1 is a woman while only 5 women contested for the office of the Vice President.⁴⁸ In recent times, Nigeria has undoubtedly witnessed significant increase in female political participation, in line with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing- which advocates 30% affirmative action. However, the National Gender Policy (NGP) still advocates for a more inclusive representation of women in elective political positions as well as appointive public service positions.⁴⁹ The poor participation of women in Nigerian politics is exacerbated by the inherent patriarchal culture of the Nigerian society.⁵⁰ The return of democracy no doubt stimulated women's interest and participation in Nigeria politics.⁵¹ Nevertheless, research on Nigerian politics has consistently highlighted the marginalization of women as a core obstacle to their political participation. The few women, who have braved it to the political scene, face constant harassment and oppression from the men folk. Previous studies have revealed how the intersection of socio-economic and cultural norms leaves women on the margins of politics.⁵²

⁴⁷ Makama, Godiya Allanana 'Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward' *European Scientific Journal* (2013) 9, 17 ISSN: 1857, 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857, 7431

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mrs. Oloyede Oluyemi 'Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria' Paper presented at the National Bureau of Statistics <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria_paper.pdf> accessed 29 March 2025

⁵⁰ Lilian Akhirome- Omonfuegbe 'International Migration Out of Nigeria: The Impact on Women's Rights' (2024) *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal* 20

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Etteh Mercy, Akpan- Obong Patience et al 'Negotiating Access and Privilege: Politics of Female Participation and Representation in Nigeria' *Journal of Asian and African Studies* <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00219096221084253>> accessed 29 March 2026.

4. FEMINISM AS AN ANTIDOTE

Feminism, in its diverse forms, offers a critical lens through which to analyze and challenge these patriarchal structures. It advocates for:

- i. **Challenging existing Gender Stereotypes:** Feminism is dedicated to dismantling distasteful gender stereotypes that restrict women's potential and limit their choices. It promotes the idea that women are capable of achieving anything men can, and that their contributions are equally valuable.
- ii. **Advancing the Empowerment of Women:** Feminism focuses on the importance of empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and access to resources. Education and awareness are key to understanding rights and knowing how to enforce and insist on those rights. Empowered and independent women are also better equipped to challenge existing patriarchal norms and advocate for gender equality.
- v. **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Feminists actively advocate for and may lobby for legal and policy changes that promote gender equality, dismantle gender stereotypes. They also actively call for laws prohibiting and punishing gender-based violence, un-equal inheritance rights.
- vi. **Promoting Diversity and Inclusion:** Including women in key decision making promotes diversity of perspectives leading to more effective and practical solutions. This inclusion should be apparent in all facets such as politics, workplace and even family life.

5. CONCLUSION

Feminism, therefore, is not a foreign or negative movement; it is not a “man-hate” movement. It is not a movement to “overthrow” men, rather it is a key instrument for dismantling the patriarchal structures that hinder Nigeria's progress. By embracing feminist principles and gender equality, Nigerians can create a society that boosts growth and

progress for all, regardless of gender. Conclusively, education and re-orientation are essential to fully embrace and accept feminism in all its glory. Feminism if properly understood and harnessed, is without a doubt a potent panacea against gender discrimination and inequality in Nigeria. Therefore, Government participation is fundamental in enabling and ensuring inclusiveness and equity in all facets of Nigerian society.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE EXISTING CHALLENGES TO FEMINISM

1. Education of men and women on the intricacies and benefits of feminism is crucial for challenging patriarchal customs and promoting positive change. Male Participation in the feminist movement is crucial in the fight for equality. Engaging men as allies is essential for promoting change and dismantling the age-long patriarchal structures.
2. Cultural and Religious reforms should be encouraged to promote gender equality and eliminate insensitive and oppressive positions.
3. There is need for legislative reform, to strengthen the legal framework and enact more comprehensive laws promoting and protecting women's rights as well as eliminating gender discrimination and inequality.
4. Empowering Women Economically is key to unlocking their potentials and encouraging confidence to challenge existing gender stereotypes. Empowered and independent women are also better equipped to challenge existing patriarchal norms and advocate for gender equity.