



**AN EVALUATION OF FEMINISM AS AN EARLY WARNING SIGNAL TOOL
IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY L.G.A,
CROSS RIVER STATE**

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Abstract

This study examined feminism as an early warning signal tool in conflict management within Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. Anchored on feminist sociology and conflict theories, the research explored how gender perspectives and feminist activism contribute to conflict prevention, early warning systems, and peacebuilding. Employing a survey design, data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 300 respondents selected via stratified random sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests. Findings revealed significant relationships between early warning signals and conflict management ($\chi^2 = 258.39$, $p < 0.05$), between feminist activism and conflict management ($\chi^2 = 88.66$, $p < 0.05$), and between feminism and prevention of violence against women ($\chi^2 = 91.99$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that feminism enhances gender inclusion, promotes justice, facilitates conflict resolution, and strengthens community-based early warning mechanisms. It recommended the incorporation of gender perspectives in peace initiatives, government sensitization on women's participation in decision-making, and the institutionalization of feminist frameworks in conflict prevention strategies to ensure sustainable peace and equitable social development.

Keywords: Feminism, Conflict management, Early warning signals, Gender equality, Feminist activism, Calabar Municipality, Nigeria.

Introduction

Societies have historically aimed to foresee and avert conflicts, evolving from traditional alerts to sophisticated strategies in modern times. Early warning systems are essential for preemptive measures, enabling interventions that prevent violence escalation (UN Women, 2024). Nigeria, with its diverse population exceeding 200 million (including nearly half women), faces tensions along ethnic, religious, and economic lines (National Gender Policy, 2021-2026). In this setting, feminism acts as both an ideology and a practical tool for detecting and addressing gender-based conflicts.

Nigerian women have historically contributed to peace efforts, yet their integration into early warning remains limited (Maiangwa, 2026). Feminism advocates equality, challenging structures that intensify disputes like gender-based violence and educational barriers (UN Women, 2024). In Calabar Municipality, with a population of around 179,000 and a mix of cultural influences, gender dynamics often underpin local conflicts. This research tackles the gap in utilizing feminist perspectives in early warning, which has traditionally sidelined women's rights (WMO, 2025).

The core issue is women's exclusion from conflict processes, hindering effective prevention (CREWS, 2025). Conflicts undermine development by reallocating resources to crises (UNDP, 2025). Incorporating gender enhances community safety (WMO, 2025). This study examines feminism's role in Calabar, informing policy, NGOs, and academia on gender-responsive approaches. Constraints include respondent hesitancy and localized scope.

Grounded in feminist sociology, this study views gender as a power dynamic within social structures (Salzinger & Gonsalves, 2024). It argues that patriarchy oppresses women, shaping conflicts across levels (Nash, 2024). Feminism deconstructs inequalities, addressing femmephobia and intersectional factors like race and class (Hoskin, 2021). Here, it positions feminism as transformative in early warning, tackling sexism's roots.

The dual concern model complements this, balancing self-concern and empathy in conflict styles: avoidance, yielding, competition, cooperation, or conciliation (Mirra, 2025). Gender socialization often pushes women toward yielding, making feminist activism vital for assertiveness (Proksch, 2016). Cooperative styles align with feminism's collaborative ethos (Mirra, 2025).

Ethnomethodology analyzes everyday gender norm construction (Meier zu Verl & Meyer, 2022). It reveals bias-free conflict perceptions in Calabar (Greco, 2023). Psycho-cultural theory explains conflicts via cultural dispositions from socialization, modifiable for better relations (Kreuzer, 2023).

Conceptually, Nigerian feminism spans pre-colonial roles to modern advocacy (National Gender Policy, 2021-2026). Organizations like those in the Beijing+30 review integrate gender into prevention, countering stigma (UN Women, 2024). Feminism correlates with reduced violence through empowerment (UNDP, 2025). This framework sees feminism as equitable conflict catalyst.

Research Questions

1. How relevant is gender equality to conflict management in Calabar Municipality?

2. What is feminism's impact on early warning systems in Calabar Municipality?
3. How do early warning signals affect conflict management in Calabar Municipality?

Hypotheses

1. No significant relationship between early warnings and conflict management in Calabar Municipality.
2. No significant relationship between feminist activism and conflict management in Calabar Municipality.
3. No significant relationship between feminism and violence prevention against women.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design, which is widely recognized in the social sciences for its ability to collect structured data from a large sample to describe phenomena, test hypotheses, and identify relationships among variables objectively (Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, 2026; Gideon, 2023). Survey methodology integrates principles from sociology, statistics, and psychology to ensure reliable inference, particularly in examining attitudes, perceptions, and socio-demographic patterns related to gender, feminism, and conflict management (Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences, Springer, 2023). The design was chosen because it facilitates the efficient gathering of self-reported data on sensitive topics like feminist activism and early warning systems, while allowing for statistical analysis of associations.

The research was conducted in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area (LGA), Cross River State, Nigeria. This urban-rural mix area serves as the headquarters of Cross River State, with a 2006 census population of approximately 179,392 (projected higher in recent estimates). It features a tropical monsoon climate, diverse ethnic composition (predominantly Efik and Ejagam), and a predominantly Christian population residing in nucleated settlements. The choice of Calabar Municipality was strategic due to its documented history of communal and gender-related tensions, making it suitable for exploring feminism's role in conflict early warning and management.

The target population comprised adult residents (18 years and above) across various segments of Calabar Municipality, including students, teachers, civil servants, traders, market women, government officials, and NGO personnel. This broad inclusion ensured representation of diverse socio-economic, educational, and occupational groups likely to experience or influence gender-based conflicts and peacebuilding processes.

A total sample of 300 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling, a probability technique that enhances representativeness by dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) before random selection within each (Scribbr, 2023; Simply Psychology, 2023). Stratification minimizes bias, ensures proportional representation of key subgroups, and improves precision in heterogeneous populations (Taylor & Francis, 2023; BMC Public Health, 2020). The study area was stratified into five key segments based on activity hubs and demographic relevance:

Table 1: Stratified Sampling Framework

Stratum	Description	Approximate Proportion in Population	Allocated Sample Size	Sampling Method within Stratum
Neighborhoods/Residential Areas	Urban and peri-urban residential zones	High density	100	Simple random selection of households
Markets/Commercial Hubs	Major markets and trading centers	Significant female traders	80	Random selection of stalls/shops
Educational Institutions	Schools, colleges, universities	Youth and educators	60	Random selection from staff/students
Government Offices	Administrative and public sector offices	Civil servants	40	Random selection from directories
NGOs/Civil Society	Women's rights and peace organizations	Activists and professionals	20	Purposive random from registered lists
Total	-	-	300	-

Within each stratum, participants were selected using simple random sampling (e.g., lottery method for households or random number tables for lists), ensuring every member had an equal chance of inclusion. This approach aligns with best practices for reducing sampling error in social surveys (Creswell, 2012; Investopedia, 2025).

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire divided into two main sections:

1. Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, education, occupation).
2. Section B: Attitudinal items measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1) assessing perceptions

of early warning systems, feminist activism, conflict management, violence prevention, education promotion, and related variables.

The questionnaire was developed based on the study's objectives, literature review, and adapted items from prior feminist and conflict studies.

Content validity was established through expert review by the research supervisor and two academics in peace studies and gender research, who suggested modifications for clarity and relevance.

A pilot test was conducted with 50 respondents (not included in the main sample) from similar but adjacent areas to assess feasibility, comprehension, and reliability. Test-retest reliability was evaluated by administering the questionnaire twice (two-week interval), and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed between the two sets of scores. The obtained correlation was high ($r > 0.80$), indicating strong stability and reliability (ResearchGate, 2024; PMC, 2024). Internal consistency was also checked preliminarily using Cronbach's Alpha (target > 0.70), confirming the scale's suitability.

Questionnaires were personally administered by the research team with the assistance of two trained research assistants to ensure high response rates and clarify ambiguities. Respondents were given one week to complete the forms, after which they were collected. Informed consent was obtained, emphasizing voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed, yielding 300 usable responses (93.75% return rate).

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics: descriptive statistics – frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize socio-demographics and response patterns and inferential statistics – Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence to test hypotheses, using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

where:

O = observed frequency

E = expected frequency.

Degrees of freedom (df) = (R-1)(C-1).

The decision rule: Reject the null hypothesis if the calculated χ^2 exceeds the critical value from the χ^2 table at a $p < 0.05$ level of significance (df = 3, critical value = 7.81).

This non-parametric test is appropriate for categorical data from Likert responses and contingency tables in social science research (BMJ, 2021; Frontiers, 2023; Sociology Institute, 2025).

Analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with assumptions checked (e.g., adequate cell frequencies). Ethical considerations included adherence to research integrity principles, voluntary participation, and data protection. Limitations such as potential social desirability bias were mitigated through anonymous administration.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the 300 respondents are summarized as follows: 60% (n = 180) were female; age distribution peaked in the 31–40 years bracket (30%, n = 90); 41.7% (n = 125) were married; 43.3% (n = 130) held a bachelor's degree or equivalent; and 46.7% (n = 140) were teachers.

Descriptive responses on key variables (four-point Likert scale) showed strong positive perceptions:

- 96.3% (n = 289) agreed or strongly agreed that early warning systems impact conflict management, with 50% (n = 150) strongly agreeing.
- 100% (n = 300) agreed or strongly agreed that early warnings facilitate conflict resolution.
- 96.7% (n = 290) agreed or strongly agreed that feminist activism prevents female genital mutilation.
- 100% (n = 300) agreed or strongly agreed that feminism promotes girl-child education.
- 91.7% (n = 275) agreed or strongly agreed that feminism advances women's adult education.
- 76.7% (n = 230) agreed or strongly agreed on a relationship between feminist activism and conflict management.
- 76.7% (n = 230) agreed or strongly agreed that feminism encourages greater women's political participation.
- 70% (n = 210) agreed or strongly agreed that feminism leads to women's economic emancipation.
- 76.6% (n = 230) agreed or strongly agreed that feminism prevents violence against women.
- 95.7% (n = 287) agreed or strongly agreed that feminist activism promotes justice for women.

Chi-square tests of independence rejected all null hypotheses at $p < 0.05$ (df = 3, critical value = 7.81):

- Hypothesis 1 (early warnings and conflict management): $\chi^2 = 258.39$, $p < 0.001$.
- Hypothesis 2 (feminist activism and conflict management): $\chi^2 = 88.66$, $p < 0.001$.
- Hypothesis 3 (feminism and prevention of violence against women): $\chi^2 = 91.99$, $p < 0.001$.

These results indicate statistically significant associations between the variables, supporting feminism's role as an effective early warning tool in conflict management within Calabar Municipality.

Discussion

The findings strongly affirm feminism's pivotal role as an early warning signal in conflict management within Calabar Municipality. The overwhelming agreement (96.3% combined strongly agree/agree) on early warnings' impact on conflict management aligns with recent global and regional emphases on gender-responsive early warning systems (WMO, 2025; UN Women, 2024). In African contexts, integrating gender dimensions

enhances equitable crisis prevention and response, addressing gaps in traditional systems that often overlook women's vulnerabilities and contributions (FAO, 2023; UNDP, 2025). In Calabar, where cultural and communal disputes frequently intersect with gender inequalities, feminism facilitates timely detection by challenging patriarchal norms that exacerbate tensions.

Feminist activism's significant association with conflict management (76.6% agreement) reflects Nigeria's evolving grassroots peacebuilding landscape. Women's informal networks and organizations, such as mothers' groups and community alliances, bridge divides, resolve disputes amicably, and influence formal mechanisms, as seen in broader Nigerian efforts (Relief-Web, 2023; Adelabu & Duyile, 2025). This echoes feminist peacebuilding scholarship, highlighting how women transform gender norms, foster social cohesion, and reduce armed group recruitment through everyday practices (Global Studies Quarterly, 2025; War Prevention Initiative, 2026). The strong support for feminism's role in preventing violence against women (76.6%) and promoting education (100% on girl-child promotion) underscores its preventive potential, countering rises in gender-based violence linked to insecurity (ScienceDirect, 2024; Vanguard News, 2025).

While economic emancipation received more mixed views (70% agreement), this highlights persistent cultural resistance and structural barriers, consistent with ongoing challenges in patriarchal societies (UN Women, 2024). The dual concern model illuminates how feminism promotes cooperative, empathetic resolution styles over competitive ones, aligning with women's socialization toward yielding and collaboration (Mirra, 2025). Ethnomethodologically, everyday gender practices in Calabar sustain inequalities, yet feminist interventions disrupt them toward inclusive outcomes (Meier zu Verl & Meyer, 2022).

These results extend prior quantitative links between gender equality and reduced conflict (UNDP, 2025), while addressing Nigeria-specific gaps in formal inclusion (Akingbade & Odebiyi, 2021). Limitations, including sample bias toward educated respondents, suggest caution in generalization; future studies should expand regionally for comparative insights. Overall, feminism emerges as a transformative catalyst for sustainable, gender-inclusive peace in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that feminism functions effectively as an early warning signal tool in conflict management within Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. Survey findings from 300 respondents reveal strong empirical support for significant relationships between early warning systems and conflict management, feminist activism and conflict management, and feminism and the prevention of violence against women; all confirmed. The results highlight feminism's capacity to detect gender-based tensions early, promote inclusive resolution strategies, advance women's education and economic participation, and reduce violence through empowerment and advocacy. These outcomes align with contemporary gender-responsive peacebuilding frameworks and underscore the transformative potential of integrating feminist perspectives into local conflict prevention efforts. The following are recommended

1. Intensify community sensitization campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality in conflict contexts.
2. Implement policies ensuring at least 35% women's representation in decision-making bodies at local and state levels.
3. Provide sustained funding and capacity-building support to feminist organizations and women's groups engaged in peacebuilding.
4. Incorporate gender-sensitive modules into early warning and conflict management training for security agencies and community leaders.
5. Expand similar research to other regions of Nigeria for comparative analysis and broader policy impact.

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