



Analysis of Urban Basic Services of Importance to Men and Women in Informal Settlements of Lagos and Kano, Nigeria

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Abstract

Urban deprivation in informal settlements is a critical issue facing rapidly urbanising cities of the Global South due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to services, and socio-economic inequalities. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this paper explored the understanding of male and female participants on urban deprivation and how they prioritise urban basic services in selected informal settlements of Lagos and Kano, Nigeria. Primary data were obtained from a structured questionnaire administered on 105 participants involved in PAR work in four selected informal settlements. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), chi-square tests, and binary logistic regression to examine participation in PAR and how inclusion and deprivation are understood and prioritised. Findings show that urban deprivation is largely understood by men and women as lack of basic services. Both men and women prioritise health services, water, sanitation, roads, market, and education as important basic services. However, results indicate that, except for some prioritized basic services, there are no significant gender differences. Nonetheless, some issues such as access to water (boreholes), and socio-cultural issues that cannot be classified, have high male and female differentials reflecting the varied experiences based on gender roles. Despite the spatial divergence of Lagos and Kano, the paper shows that basic needs are similar, while preferences for basic services are influenced by socio-economic and environmental peculiarities. The paper challenges the framing of urban deprivation as either gender-neutral or entirely gendered, proposing rather that a hybrid approach can better capture common vulnerabilities as well as context-specific gendered needs. This calls for participatory, gender-responsive planning and the use of disaggregated data to inform the formulation of inclusive urban policy and basic service delivery.

Keywords

Basic services, Gender, Informal settlements; Nigeria, Participatory action research, Urban deprivation

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1. Introduction

Urbanization, as a global phenomenon, shows that more than half of the world's population living in urban areas and an estimated 160 million households reside in informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2012). By 2050, it is expected that about 68% of these will be found in developing countries as a result of their higher growth rate (UNDESA, 2018). Urbanization across Sub-Saharan Africa continues to outpace resources, governance and development, contributing to the proliferation of slums and informal settlements characterized by insecure tenure, inadequate services and weak infrastructure. These conditions exacerbate urban deprivation, a multidimensional form of disadvantage that is often measured using aggregated indicators that mask differences by location and gender (Chung & Grichting Soldier, 2024). Relative deprivation

theory explains how groups experience deprivation relative to societal standards, shaping frustration, activism or disengagement (Townsend, 1979; Power et al., 2020). The absence of disaggregated data on socio-demographic attributes such as ethnicity, income, religion, education, age and their intersection with gender remains a major constraint for inclusive urban planning and development. While spatial technologies and computational methods of Earth Observation (EO), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Machine Learning (ML) have been widely deployed to map deprivation, these approaches frequently remain expert-led excluding lived experiences and community knowledge, thereby limiting transformative impact (Abscal et al., 2022; Caprotti et al., 2022).

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Moreover, data on deprivation in informal settlements in Nigeria are often missing or inadequate in quality, accessibility and timeliness often undermining effective interventions (Satterthwaite & Barrett, 2017).

Urban deprivation remains entrenched in Nigerian slums and informal settlements despite multiple policies and poverty alleviation programmes (UN-Habitat, 2016). Many interventions remain top-down and pay little attention to gender, local knowledge and lived realities. Aggregated data and technocratic planning processes can misrepresent needs, obscure inequalities, and produce ineffective resource allocation. Urban deprivation therefore requires specific, contextual and targeted approaches that connect priorities to the everyday realities of men and women. Gender roles may shape experiences of deprivation differently. At the core of gender analysis is understanding and ranking urban basic services of importance to men and women, as priorities may differ and require differential responses (Taliep et al., 2020). A strong strand of scholarship argues that deprivation is not gender-neutral; it can amplify women's vulnerability through economic inequality, restricted access to tenure, healthcare, and transportation, and disproportionate unpaid care burdens (Tacoli, 2012; Borsuk, 2021). In informal settlements, poor infrastructure, inadequate access to basic services, and exclusionary planning often intensify these burdens and reproduce gender hierarchies (Borsuk, 2021). Yet, an important empirical and policy question remains: when men and women are asked to prioritize deprivation in specific settlement contexts, do they differ significantly, or do shared material deficits dominate? This question is crucial because a purely "gendered difference" lens can obscure the possibility that deprivation is collectively experienced, while a "gender neutrality" assumption can erase hidden needs and differentiated constraints.

Studies demonstrate gendered disparities in access to basic service such as transportation and highlight the limitations of purely researcher-led participation. For example, gendered transport access studies in Abuja emphasize inequality but often lack action-oriented participatory approaches (Abdullah et al., 2022). Similarly, research in urban transformation shows gendered dispossession and housing impacts, which can reproduce top-down power dynamics when community participation is

weak (Borsuk, 2021). Gender studies often go beyond disaggregating gender into male and female sex categories to investigating their needs and perspectives. This involves bringing together diverse groups of men and women, rather than isolated groups, to deliberate and identify not just disparities, but the social construction of their needs and perspectives. This paper focuses on how men and women understand urban deprivation, prioritise urban basic services, and the strategies for ensuring their provision in the communities. The paper aims to analyse the urban basic services that are important to men and women and assess urban deprivation in selected slums and informal settlements of Kano and Lagos, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Review of Concepts

The concept of gender can be polarized based on identity and political alignments such as liberal and conservative views (Begall et al., 2023). Brechenmacher (2025) discusses the ongoing transformation in gender perspectives which according to Begall (2023) is caused by the shifting global ideologies influenced by the interaction between macro (policies and institutions), mezzo (interpersonal), and micro (individual) views. Gender ideologies go beyond traditional ideologies, rather, according to Hossain & Islam (2023), it refers to the beliefs, norms and values that influence how a society defines masculinity, femineity and gender relations. While this remains relevant, it is often viewed as aspect of cultural structures with strong individual essence (Cheung et. al, 2016, Dasgupta et. al, 2018, & Kroska 2007). Hossain & Islam (2024) submit that it has also influenced traditional social roles of the 'male-breadwinner and female-homemaker' model.

Urban deprivation is perceived as not gender neutral, rather it has a way of exacerbating the vulnerability of the female gender especially those living in slum and informal settlements. There are various dimensions of gendered urban deprivation, such as financial inequality where women earn less with implication for access to tenure security, healthcare, transport and employment. Poor infrastructure and inadequate basic services in slums are linked to gender inequality. Urban deprivation reflects structural inequality at multiple levels of the household, community, and city. It refers to the multidimensional and spatially concentrated disadvantages experienced by residents of deprived

urban neighbourhoods, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Abscal et al, 2022). It not only refers to economic poverty but also to inadequate basic services, housing, public health, education, and political voice. A study in Isfahan, Iran, highlighted how urban morphology shapes patterns of deprivation (Venerandi et al., 2024).

Slums and informal settlements represent not only the spatial limitations of African cities but also the socio-political and gendered exclusions that shape lived experiences. UN-Habitat (2021) estimates that nearly 55% of urban dwellers in Sub-Saharan Africa live in informal settlements marked by poor infrastructure, insecure tenure, and lack of urban governance. This is corroborated by Oyeboode et al. (2024) who noted that slums are informal urban spaces marked by overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, insecure tenure, and limited access to basic services. Though these settlements have become permanent fixtures, they often remain excluded from government database and intervention.

2.2 Theoretical Review

There are a number of relevant theories which relate to urban deprivation but this paper will assess the Stakeholder, Gender Structure and Relative Deprivation theories. Stakeholder theory by Freeman (1984) describes stakeholders as active participants thus critical actors in urban governance. The trust, equity and fairness generated from stakeholders makes the theory relevant in urban deprivation as corroborated by Bridoux & Stoelhorst (2022) who noted that strategy is about building the fair and durable relationships among stakeholders that are essential to making a change in an organization. The Gender Structure Theory Risman (2018) in the context of slum and informal settlements in Nigeria, exposes how gender norms shape personal identities, lived experiences and access to urban basic services. The theory of Relative Deprivation as expanded by Merton, Runciman and Townsend (1979), asserted that individuals and groups experience deprivation relative to societal standards as well as urban disparities in how children and adolescents experience urban deprivation in Lagos and Kano (Delamonica et al., 2024) and participatory data modelling and mapping of urban deprivation in Lagos and Kano (Ideamaps, 2022-2025).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Gender and Urban Deprivation

In the study of 36 European countries, Begall et al (2023) explored the complex and ambivalent nature of gender ideologies across Europe and examined how macro, interactional, and micro-level mechanisms influence these ideologies. The study revealed that although multidimensional ideologies dominate, there are gender and class intersections as well as macro-level predictors. Although, the study being cross-sectional cannot track how gender ideologies have changed over time. The study was limited by failing to capture different urban contexts.

Similarly, on using the gender lens to understand urban deprivation, Abdullah et al. (2022), assessed gender disparities and gendered access in the use of urban transportation in Abuja, Nigeria. The analysis compared male and female responses to challenges of equitable access to public transportation. The study is a clear gendered disaggregation, inequality, spatial marginalization in the use of public transportation, as well as the dearth of empirical studies on gendered transportation. The lack of action beyond problem diagnosis and thorough engagement of the participants as change agents and knowledge co-creators in the study is a missing gap.

A study on the Kadifekale Urban Transformation Project (KUTP) in Turkey carried out on 30 participants by Borsuk (2021) revealed the gendered implication of slum redevelopment impacts, lived experience of the people especially access to basic services, dispossession and housing rights. The study revealed how urban deprivation could impact on and result in economic deprivation, the amplification of women's voices as well as the revelation of multiple inequality using the gender lens.

Gupta et al. (2023) using purposively selected sample of 100 women examined how gender and urban informality determined access to basic services in New Delhi. The study revealed the intersection of gender with ethnicity and collaborations with relevant stakeholders. It also revealed how initiatives such as 'Mahila Sabhas' and other participatory activities empowered women to influence decision making. Overall, the analysis exposed limited gender-disaggregated data in the study of urban deprivation in a spatial urban context which is the gap this paper seeks to fill.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Study Area

Nigeria exemplifies these dynamics of urban deprivation and gendered exclusion in rapidly expanding cities. Both Lagos and Kano, two of the country’s largest urban centres, contain extensive informal settlements and slum communities where socio-economic deprivation remains persistent (UN-Habitat, 2024). The spatial locations of the cities are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Lagos is a coastal megacity characterized by extensive lagoon and coastal water systems, high population density, and complex settlement patterns. Its urban economy is strongly influenced by informal sector activities that shape livelihoods and everyday urban life (Uduku et al., 2021). Population estimates for Lagos vary considerably between national and state sources, reflecting the politics and methodological challenges of demographic data in rapidly urbanizing contexts. For example, the 2006 national census conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics reported a population of 9,013,534 for Lagos State (NBS, 2016), whereas the Lagos State

Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget estimated the population at 17,552,942 for the same period (MEPB, 2013).

In contrast, Kano is a large inland urban centre located in northern Nigeria with ecological proximity to the Sahel region. The city is characterized by high population density and a distinctive socio-cultural context that significantly shapes gender norms, community structures, and patterns of participation. According to the 2006 national census by the National Bureau of Statistics, Kano State had a population of 9,383,682 (NBS, 2006).

For this paper, the informal settlements of Ajegunle–Ikorodu and Okerube in Lagos, and Rimin Kebe and Dorayi Karami in Kano, were purposively selected to examine spatial disparities, governance contexts, and socio-cultural variations that may influence men’s and women’s understanding of urban deprivation. These variations include religion, language, customs, and social practices that shape participation and lived experiences within informal settlements.

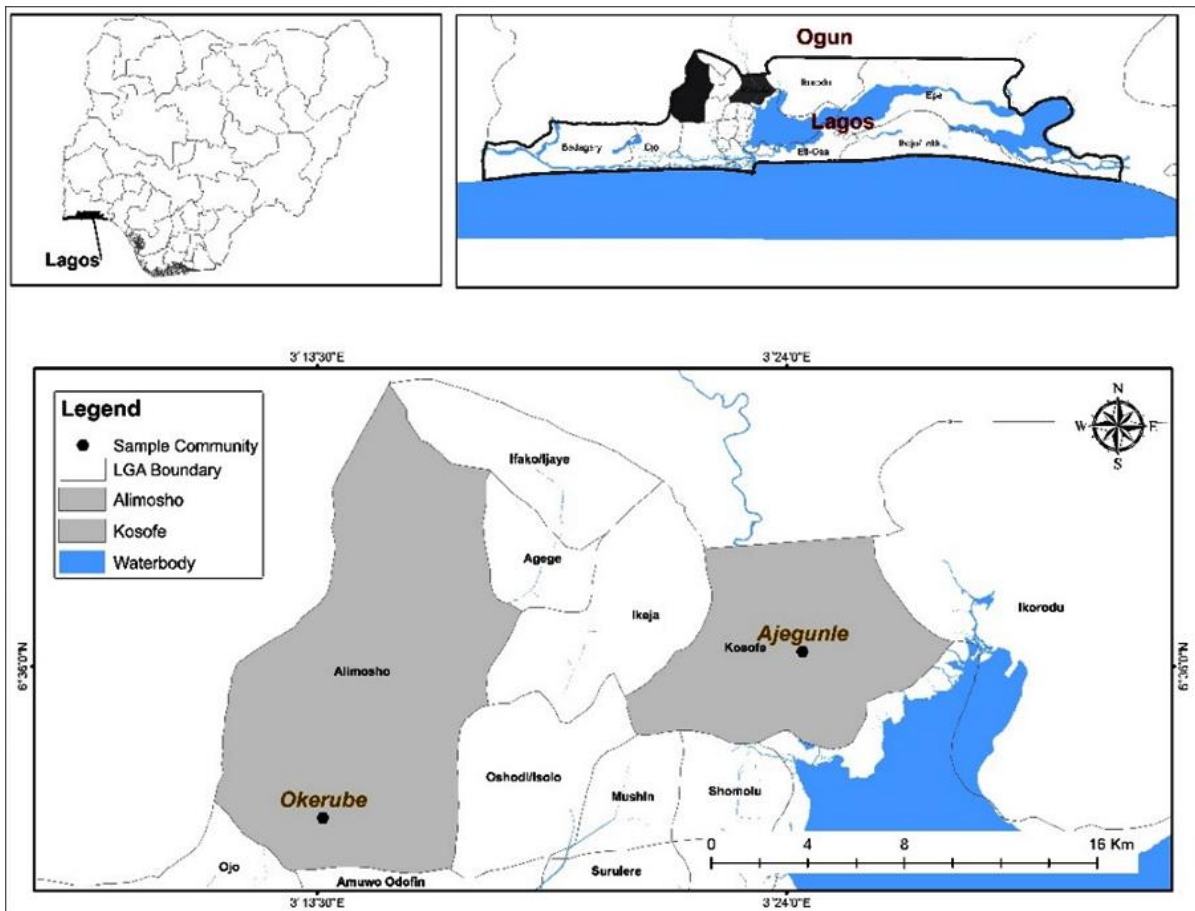


Figure 1: Administrative map of Ajegunle and Okerube Settlements, Lagos State, Nigeria

Source: World Map (Assessed August, 25,2025)

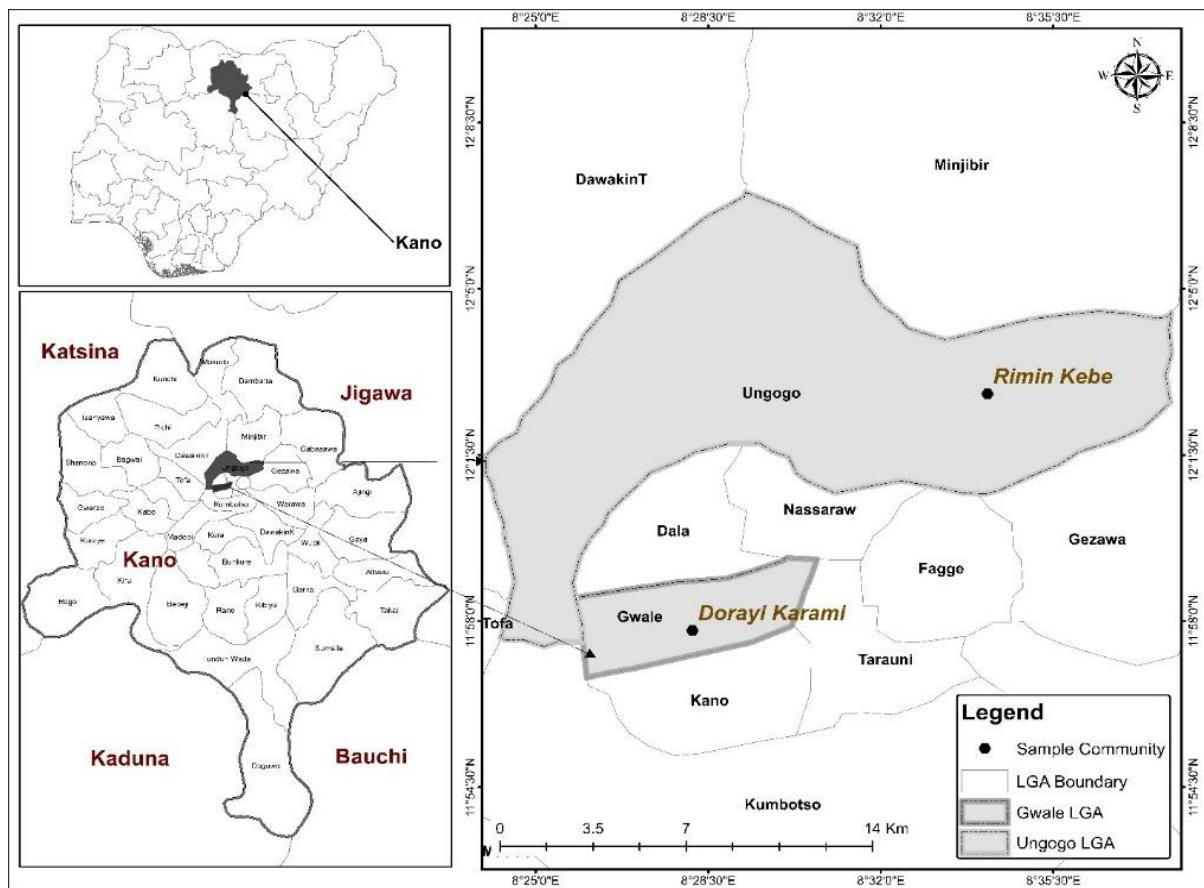


Figure 2: Administrative Map of Dorayi Karami and Rimin Kebe, Kano State, Nigeria

Source: World Map (Assessed August, 25,2025)

The selected communities exhibit significant socio-economic, demographic, and spatial characteristics associated with informal urbanization in Nigeria. Ajegunle-Ikorodu and Okerube in Lagos are characterized by rapid urban expansion, dense populations, inadequate infrastructure, informal housing development, and diverse migrant populations. In contrast, Rimin Kebe and Dorayi Karami in Kano are shaped by strong cultural and religious structures, persistent poverty, housing deficits, and limited access to basic services. Collectively, the four settlements provide a comparative context for examining how regional, cultural, and socio-economic factors influence gender-responsive participation in Participatory Action Research (PAR) within informal settlements in Nigeria.

3.2 Research design

A quantitative design was employed to analyze gender, participation, inclusion factors, and how participants prioritise features of deprivation in PAR. The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and reliability before being administered in English and local languages. The questionnaire captured socio-demographic variables, participation patterns,

perceptions of inclusion, and prioritization of features of deprivation.

3.3 Data sources

Primary data for this paper were obtained through a structured questionnaire survey administered to participants involved in PAR activities in Ajegunle-Ikorodu and Okerube in Lagos, and Rimin Kebe and Dorayi Karami in Kano.

3.4 Sampling strategy and participants

The target population comprised men and women involved directly or indirectly in PAR activities in the selected settlements, with at least six months residency and lived experience of deprivation.

3.5 Instrument design, translation, and ethics

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (A) socio-demographic characteristics and involvement of participants in PAR activities (21 items); (B) key drivers and features of gender inclusion in PAR processes (13 items); and (C) deprivation priorities through multi-response items. They were administered in accessible community places, such as community centres, mosques, and public open spaces.

3.6 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis included both descriptive and inferential techniques. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and the pattern of their participation were analyzed using descriptive statistics like means, frequencies, and standard deviations. The summaries of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) were used to structure and interpret multi-dimensional survey responses covering priorities of deprivation. The inferential analysis included chi-square tests to examine differences in deprivation prioritization and perceptions between groups. Then, binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictors of participation and the inclusion of gender in the PAR processes. Further model diagnostics were run to test the robustness of the regression results with a Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test, omnibus test of model coefficients and Nagelkerke R^2 statistic.

The Hypotheses tested were:

H₁: There is no significant difference in urban features of importance to men and women in PAR.

H₂: There is no significant difference in the understanding of urban deprivation between male and female participants.

4. Results

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Table 1, reveals significant differences between Lagos and Kano and their respective slums and informal settlements, Ajegunle Ikorodu and Okerube; and Rimin Kebe and Dorayi Karami with men (51.4%) and women (48.6%) participants. Lagos, had women participants (57.9%) than men (42.1%) compared to Kano with fewer women participants (37.5%) and men participants (62.5%). Okerube had more women participants (70%) than male (30%) compared to Ajegunle-Ikorodu with fewer women participants (44.4%) than men (55.6%). Rimin Kebe women (42.7%), men (57.1%); women (33.3%) men (66.7%) Dorayi Karama. The analysis suggests the possible influence in cultures and spatial location where women in the north are generally not to be seen participating freely or vocalising their views in combined male and female activities.

Further analysis revealed Okerube and Ajegunle age groups 20–30 (26.7% and 23.3%), 31–40 (16.7% and 18.7%), 41–50 (26.7% and 11.1%), 51–60 (20.0% and 7.4%), 60+ (6.7% vs 22.2%). Rimin Kebe and Dorayi Karami age groups 20–30 (45.2% and 29.6%), 31–40 (42.9% and 33.5%), 41–

50 (14.6% and 18.5%), 51–60 (14.1% and 3.7%). Overall, Kano has younger PAR participants than Lagos, likely due to digital-literacy requirements

Overall, the marital status of participants in Lagos (54.4%) were, married (51.4%) and single (45.7%) while Kano had more single participants (50%). Okerube had the highest number of married participants (56.7%) and the least recorded number of single participants (36.7%). There are insignificant number of divorced participants in the two cities while Lagos had more separated and widowed participants.

Table 2 presents the occupation, education, income distribution, and household size of participants. The findings revealed that self-employment as the most common occupation in both cities (40%) with Lagos (59.6%), suggesting a thriving informal economy while Kano has more artisans (27.1%) and civil servants (25.0%) compared to Lagos (8.8% and 1.8%, respectively). Farming recorded a higher proportion in Kano (6.3%) than in Lagos (1.8%), reflecting rural-urban occupational differences. The number of unemployed recorded is higher in Lagos (15.8%) compared to Kano (8.3%) which is typical of the huge burdens in slums and informal settlements.

Overall, participants revealed relatively high basic literacy, with about 48.6% having tertiary education and secondary education also widely represented, though educational attainment was stronger in Kano (62.55) than in Lagos (36.8%). Very few had no formal education (1%), while technical and vocational training (2.9%) remained limited, pointing to gaps in practical skills development. Income analysis shows that most participants earned below ₦50,000 monthly below the extreme poverty line of USD\$3 per person per day, with low-income levels more prevalent in Lagos (70.2%) than in Kano (45.8%). Only a very small proportion earned above ₦250,000, revealing stark income inequality. Kano had a stronger middle-income group, suggesting relatively better economic conditions than Lagos. The findings indicate widespread economic vulnerability among PAR participants in Lagos.

Further analysis of the household size reveals that 45.7% of households have 1-5 members, making it the most common household size. Larger families (6-10 members) are more common in Kano (45.8%) than Lagos (38.6%) while those with 11+ members are rare but slightly more frequent in Kano. Irrespective of the income earned by the participants, large household size may confine them to residing in slum and informal communities.

Table 1: Gender, Ages and Marital Status

		Survey Location												Total	%
		Lagos						Kano							
		Okerube		Ajegunle-Ikorodu		Subtotal		Rimin Kebe		Dorayi Karama		Subtotal			
Gender			%		%		%		%		%		%		%
	Male	9	30	15	55.6	24	42.1	12	57.1	18	66.7	30	62.5	54	51.4
	Female	21	70	12	44.4	33	57.9	9	42.9	9	33.3	18	37.5	51	48.6
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100
Ages	< 20years	1	3.3	2	7.4	3	5.3	-	-	4	14.8	4	8.3	7	6.7
	20-24years	3	10	5	18.5	8	14	5	23.8	4	14.8	9	18.8	17	16.2
	25-29years	5	16.7	4	14.8	9	15.8	4	19	4	14.8	8	16.7	17	16.2
	30-34years	3	10	4	14.8	7	12.3	1	4.8	5	18.5	6	12.5	13	12.4
	35-39years	2	6.7	1	3.7	3	5.3	8	38.1	4	14.8	12	25	15	14.3
	40-44years	2	6.7	2	7.4	4	7	2	9.5	5	18.5	7	14.6	11	10.5
	45-49years	6	20	1	3.7	7	12.3	1	4.8	-	-	1	2.1	8	7.6
	50-54years	3	10	2	7.4	5	8.8	-	-	1	3.7	1	2.1	6	5.7
	55-59years	3	10	-	-	3	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2.9
	60-64years	-	-	3	11.1	3	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2.9
	65years +	2	6.7	3	11.1	5	8.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4.8
		Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105
Marital Status	Single	11	36.7	13	48.1	24	42.1	9	42.9	15	55.6	24	50	48	45.7
	Married	17	56.7	14	51.9	31	54.4	11	52.4	12	44.4	23	47.9	54	51.4
	Separated	1	3.3	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Divorced	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.8	-	-	1	2.1	1	1
	Widowed	1	3.3	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 2: Occupation, Education, Income and Household Size

		Survey Location												Total	%
		Lagos						Kano							
		Okerub		Ajegunle-Ikorodu		Subtot		Rimin		Dorayi Karam		Subtotal			
Occupation/Profession			%		%		%		%		%		%		%
	Artisan	3	10	2	7.4	5	8.8	5	23.8	8	29.6	13	27.1	18	17.1
	Farming	1	3.3	-	-	1	1.8	3	14.3	-	-	3	6.3	4	3.8
	Trading	5	16.7	2	7.4	7	12.3	2	9.5	6	22.2	8	16.7	15	14.3
	Civil Service	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.8	4	19	8	29.6	12	25	13	12.4
	Unemployed	5	16.7	4	14.8	9	15.8	4	19	-	-	4	8.3	13	12.4
	Self-employed	16	53.3	18	66.7	34	59.6	3	14.3	5	18.5	8	16.7	42	40
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100
Education	No formal Education	1	3.3	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Quranic School	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.8	1	4.8	-	-	1	2.1	2	1.9
	Primary School	3	10	1	3.7	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3.8
	Secondary	16	53.3	12	44.4	28	49.1	6	28.6	7	25.9	13	27.1	41	39
	Technical	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9.5	1	3.7	3	6.3	3	2.9
	Tertiary	9	30	12	44.4	21	36.8	11	52.4	19	70.4	30	62.5	51	48.6
	Vocational Training	1	3.3	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Others	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.8	1	4.8	-	-	1	2.1	2	1.9
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100
Monthly income	Less than N50,000	22	73.3	18	66.7	40	70.2	11	52.4	11	40.7	22	45.8	62	59
	N50,001-N150,000	4	13.3	8	29.6	12	21.1	10	47.6	10	37	20	41.7	32	30.5
	N150,001-N250,000	2	6.7	1	3.7	3	5.3	-	-	6	22.2	6	12.5	9	8.6
	N250,001 +	2	6.7%	-	-	2	3.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.9
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100
Household family size	1-5	22	73.3	9	33.3	31	54.4	7	33.3	10	37	17	35.4	48	45.7
	6-10	6	20	16	59.3	22	38.6	12	57.1	10	37	22	45.8	44	41.9
	11-15	2	6.7	2	7.4	4	7	1	4.8	2	7.4	3	6.3	7	6.7
	16 and above	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.8	5	18.5	6	12.5	6	5.7
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100

Source: Authors, 2025

The analysis of the religion, ethnicity, length of stay and migration patterns of participants as presented in Table 3 plays a crucial role PAR. The analysis of the religion of participants revealed a strong regional difference where Christianity is the dominant religion, with Lagos (71.9%), while Islam is overwhelmingly prevalent amongst participants in Kano (97.9%). A negligible percentage of participants in Kano identified as Christians (2.1%), highlighting a highly homogenous religious landscape. This means that the contrast in religious composition of participants reflects the regional religious divide in Nigeria where the South is predominantly Christian and the North is largely Muslim. It could be inferred that Lagos with a higher religious diversity provides a platform to foster tolerance, whereas in Kano which presented a near-uniform religious affiliation suggests strong cultural homogeneity. The ethnic distribution of participants has a clear North-South divide and it is found that Lagos is dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group (86.0%), followed by the Igbo ethnic group (5.3%) while in Kano is almost exclusively Hausa (89.6%), with a 8.3% Fulani representation. It could be noted that ethnic diversity in Lagos is greater, while Kano remains ethnically homogenous. It could be drawn

from here that Lagos' higher ethnic diversity reflects its status as an economic hub that attracts migrants from various regions, whereas Kano's ethnic homogeneity suggests a more insular community structure. This could pose some challenges such that in Lagos, cultural diversity may lead to challenges in governance and community consensus-building, requiring inclusive dialogue frameworks while in decision-making, but may also limit external perspectives and innovation in participatory urban development. The migration trends measure the length of stay of participants in their respective locations (Lagos & Kano). Findings reveal that over 70% of participants in both Lagos and Kano have lived in their communities for more than 10 years while the recent migrants (less than 10 years) account for only about 43.9% in Lagos and 12.5% in Kano, indicating low short-term migration in Kano than in Lagos. The high percentage of long-term residents suggests that these slums are stable communities rather than transient settlements. In Kano, lower recent migration could be due to cultural and economic factors that discourage mobility, while Lagos' slightly higher rate of newcomers reflects its role as an economic hub attracting job seekers.

Table 3: Religion, Ethnicity and Length of Stay/Migration

		Survey Location												Total	
		Lagos						Kano							
		Okerube	%	Ajegunle-Ikorodu	%	Subtotal	%	Rimin Kebe	%	Dorayi Karama	%	Subtotal	%		
Religion	Christianity	19	63.3	22	81.5	41	71.9	-	-	1	3.7	1	2.1	42	40
	Islam	11	36.7	5	18.5	16	28.1%	21	100	26	96.3	47	97.9	63	60
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100
Ethnicity	Yoruba	25	83.3	24	88.9	49	86	-	-	1	3.7	1	2.1	50	47.6
	Fulani	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	14.3	1	3.7	4	8.3	4	3.8
	Hausa	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	85.7	25	92.6	43	89.6	43	41
	Igbo	3	10	-	-	3	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2.9
	Others	2	6.7	3	11.1	5	8.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4.8
		Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105
Length of stay in this community	< 10years	15	50	10	37	25	43.9	-	-	6	22.2	6	12.5	31	29.5
	11-19years	4	13.3	6	22.2	10	17.5	3	14.3	6	22.2	9	18.8	19	18.1
	20-29years	5	16.7	4	14.8	9	15.8	10	47.6	11	40.7	21	43.8	30	28.6
	30-39years	6	20	3	11.1	9	15.8	7	33.3	2	7.4	9	18.8	18	17.1
	40-49years	-	-	2	7.4	2	3.5	1	4.8	1	3.7	2	4.2	4	3.8
	50years +	-	-	2	7.4	2	3.5	-	-	1	3.7	1	2.1	3	2.9
	Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 4 examines the different capacities in which participants were engaged in the study of urban deprivation in Lagos and Kano. The results reveal that the community mobilisers make up the highest percentage of participants (45.0%) with Lagos

accounting for 50.8% and Kano 37.5% respectively. Similarly, the analysis reveals that overall participants who came from academia accounted for 15.3% with higher proportion in Lagos (17.5%) than Kano (12.5%). Also, participants who were

community leaders accounted for 14.4% generally with more proportion of participants in Lagos (17.5%) than Kano (10.4%).

In Lagos, 50.8% of participants identified as community mobilisers, with Okerube (59.4%) having the highest representation while in Kano, only 37.5% of participants played this role, indicating a lower reliance on mobilisers compared to Lagos. There is a moderate representation of community leaders which constitute 14.4% of the total participants with Lagos having higher proportion (17.5%) of community leaders compared to Kano (10.4%) while it was noted that in Dorayi Karama (Kano), no community leaders were recorded. On the role of academia, they account for 15.3% with a much stronger presence in Lagos (17.5%) than Kano (12.5%). Ajegunle-Ikorodu (25.8%) in Lagos shows a strong involvement of

academics, whereas Rimin Kebe (0.0%) in Kano has none. Considering low representation of city managers was reported and they only account for 3.6% of participants, making them the least represented category. Kano (6.3%) has a higher proportion of city managers than Lagos (1.6%) while Dorayi Karama (7.4%) records the highest percentage of city managers. There is a minimal involvement from CBOs/NGOs accounting for only 1.8% of total respondents. In Lagos, only Ajegunle-Ikorodu (6.5%) had some engagement from this category, while all other areas recorded 0.0% while others account for 19.8% which skewed Kano. This indicates that that mobilisers are more central to PAR in Lagos with a stronger community leadership due to the level of academic education of participants while engagement in Kano is shaped by unique, informal roles.

Table 4: In what capacity are you engaging in the study of urban deprivation?

Community Engagement	Survey Location												Total	%
	Lagos						Kano							
	Okerube	%	Ajgunle-Ikorodu	%	Subtotal	%	Rimin Kebe	%	Dorayi Karama	%	Subtotal	%		
Community Leader	6	18.8	5	16.1	11	17.5	5	23.8	-	-	5	10.4	16	14.4
City Manager	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.6	1	4.8	2	7.4	3	6.3	4	3.6
Community mobiliser	19	59.4	13	41.9	32	50.8	12	57.1	6	22.2	18	37.5	50	45
CBO/NGO	-	-	2	6.5	2	3.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.8
Academia	3	9.4	8	25.8	11	17.5	-	-	6	22.2	6	12.5	17	15.3
Others	3	9.4	3	9.7	6	9.5	3	14.3	13	48.1	16	33.3	22	19.8
Total	32	100	31	100	63	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	111	100

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 5 analyses the understanding of the concept of urban deprivation and its relevance to PAR activities by men and women participants. Generally, the results reveal that most men and women participants largely understand urban deprivation to be associated with lack of basic services (29.2%), unequal access to basic services (22.7%), lack of opportunities for economic empowerment (28.2%), and denial of rights and respects (18.2%). At the city-level, men and women participants in Kano described urban deprivation to mean lack of basic services (30.7%), unequal access to basic services (20.2%), lack of opportunities (28.1%), and denial of rights and respects (16.7%) compared to 28.2%, 24.3%, 28.2%, and 19.2% respectively in Lagos. The emphasis on lack of basic services and opportunities for economic empowerment suggests that the participants in both

cities associate urban deprivation with deficiencies in basic services and income-generating opportunities. Similarly, the moderate percentage of men and women participants who described urban deprivation as unequal access to basic services highlights the fact that urban deprivation beyond absolute lack may also connote different levels of access.

On the relevance of the study of urban deprivation to men and women participants in PAR activities, a large majority (83.8%) considered it very relevant, with Kano (85.4%) having a higher proportion. In contrast, 1.0% of male and female participants found it not relevant, with 1.8% of participants in Lagos agreeing which suggest that only a small proportion of the participants see the irrelevance of studying urban deprivation in PAR. On whether the involvement of men and women in

PAR and study of urban deprivation in selected slum and informal communities are equitable, it was found that the overall, majority (64.4%) of participants were in agreement of equitable involvement which is significantly more in Kano (79.2%) than in Lagos (51.8%). Similarly, a moderate proportion of participants (20.2%) reported a strong agreement of equitable involvement of men and women with significantly higher proportion in Lagos (30.4%) than in Kano (8.3%). The results show only an insignificant portion (4.8%) were in disagreement. The reason for the high proportion of participants who mentioned that the study of urban deprivation is very relevant may be because of their level of awareness and participation in similar activities.

The analysis of important roles women should play in the study of urban deprivation, participants named mobilizer/organiser (21.8%), with more

responses in Kano (23.5%) than Lagos (20.5%). Likewise, another important role women should play in the study of urban deprivation named by the participants is advocacy (20.7%) and fieldwork (20.4%) respectively with higher proportion in Kano (23.5%) than Lagos (18.6%). In addition, 15.2%, 12.1% and 9.9% reported that women should play the role of facilitators, decision-making and validation respectively. Comparatively, Kano has higher proportion (16.3%) than Lagos (14.3%) for facilitator while Lagos has higher proportion (17.6%) than Kano (4.6%) and Lagos have higher proportion (10.5%) than Kano (9.2%) respectively. This result is a reflection of the composition of participants in the PAR, the structure of PAR activities as well as the recognition of the critical leadership roles of women in the informal settlements of the two cities which prioritises active women participation.

Table 5: Understanding Urban Deprivation

		Survey Location												Total	
		Lagos						Kano							
		Okerube	%	Ajegunle-Ikorodu	%	Subtotal	%	Rimin Kabe	%	Dorayi Karama	%	Subtotal	%		
What do you understand by urban deprivation?	Lack of basic services	26	28.9	24	27.6	50	28.2	14	30.4	21	30.9	35	30.7	85	29.2
	Unequal Access to basic services	23	25.6	20	23	43	24.3	9	19.6	14	20.6	23	20.2	66	22.7
	Lack of opportunities for economic empowerment	26	28.9	24	27.6	50	28.2	13	28.3	19	27.9	32	28.1	82	28.2
	Denial of rights and respects	15	16.7	19	21.8	34	19.2	8	17.4	11	16.2	19	16.7	53	18.2
	None of the above	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4.3	3	4.4	5	4.4	5	1.7
	Total	90	100	87	100	177	100	46	100	68	100	114	100	291	100
How relevant is the study of urban	Very relevant	26	86.7	21	77.8	47	82.5	18	85.7	23	85.2	41	85.4	88	83.8
	Relevant	3	10	6	22.2	9	15.8	2	9.5	3	11.1	5	10.4	14	13.3
	Somewhat relevant	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.7	1	2.1	1	1
	Neutral	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	4.8	-	-	1	2.1	1	1
Not relevant	1	3.3	0	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Total	30	100	27	100	57	100	21	100	27	100	48	100	105	100	

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The results of the analysis of ways features of importance to men and women can be provided in the community is shown in Table 6. The results reveal that the use of diverse data collection methods is the most mentioned by 22% of the participants with a higher proportion in Kano (22.3%) than in Lagos (21.8%). Overall, 18.2% of the participants cited empowering local women leaders as one of the ways to ensure features of importance to men and women are provided in the community with a higher proportion in Kano (16.3%) than Lagos (14.7%).

Similarly, recognising the uniqueness of each gender was mentioned by 20.1% of the participants with a higher proportion in Lagos (20.6%) than Kano (19.3%). Also, 20.9% of the participants named regular feedback and validation as one of the ways to ensure that features of importance to men and women can be provided in the community. Wider stakeholders' consultations (17.9%) are the least preferred method for ensuring that features reported among other important features to men and women in their communities with a higher proportion in

Kano (18.7%) than Lagos (17.6%). Generally, participants in Lagos and Kano did not show marked differences in their preferred methods for ensuring that features of importance to men and women can

be provided in their communities which may be a clear endorsement and/or acceptance of all the identified methods. This shows the relevance of all the stated methods in PAR activities.

Table 6: Strategies for Ensuring Provision of Urban Basic services of importance to men and women in communities

	Survey Location												Total	%
	Lagos						Kano							
	Okerube		Ajegunle		Subtotal		Rimin Kebe		Dorayi Karama		Subtotal			
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Utilize diverse data collection methods	21	22.3	23	21.3	44	21.8	15	22.1	22	22.4	37	22.3	81	22
Empower local women leaders	18	19.1	22	20.4	40	19.8	10	14.7	17	17.3	27	16.3	67	18.2
Recognize the uniqueness of each gender	19	20.2	23	21.3	42	20.8	14	20.6	18	18.4	32	19.3	74	20.1
Regular feedback and validation	20	21.3	20	18.5	40	19.8	15	22.1	22	22.4	37	22.3	77	20.9
Through wider consultations with relevant stakeholders	16	17	19	17.6	35	17.3	12	17.6	19	19.4	31	18.7	66	17.9
Others	-	-	1	0.9	1	0.5	2	2.9	-	-	2	1.2	3	0.8
Total	94	100	108	100	202	100	68	100	98	100	166	100	368	100

Source: Authors, 2025

As shown in Table 7, urban basic services have clear spatial and gender variations of priority in informal settlements as they lack access to basic services such as hospitals, market, road, schools, water etc. The similarity in the two sets of data indicates that essential needs of men and women are the same. This highlights the importance of these services in dealing with urban deprivation in informal settlements. In addition, the settlements of Lagos have a wider spectrum of services given priority, especially in Okerube and Ajegunle-Ikorodu. Such services encompass community halls, libraries, internet, sports centres, drainage etc. The implications of this pose a relative exposure to social infrastructure and a possible increased demand for services that educate, recreate and digitalize. The inclusion of churches and playgrounds indicates a socio-cultural community-oriented choice.

Conversely, the priorities of Kano settlements reflect culture, the features of importance to men and women in Dorayi Karama include mosques, traditional/ political houses, plaza and security-related services such as streetlight and security office. In the local cultural context, Rimin Kebbe and Dorayi Karama event centres and restaurants are highlighted to showcase their popularity among the people. Also, sanitation and security services are not equally distributed. While Ajegunle-Ikorodu places most emphasis on sanitation (value = 4), the security

infrastructure is more observable in Kano. Environmental and safety concerns differ between these cities and states. The findings suggest that basic or essential infrastructure needs are alike for people across the cities but priority-setting for other additional services is influenced by local socio-cultural context, gendered needs, and level of urban development.

4.2 Spatial variability in socio-demographic characteristics and roles of participants in PAR

Participants in PAR in these settlements have pre-assigned roles as facilitators, community mobilizers, data collector, community leader roles and these are presented in Table 8 below. Overall gender composition was relatively balanced in the two cities (Mean \approx 1.49; SD \approx 0.50), suggesting near parity of participation. However, socio-demographic attributes displayed spatial variability across settlements.

Age diversity was wide (Mean \approx 4.77; SD \approx 2.67), marital status indicated more married than single participants (Mean \approx 1.60; SD \approx 0.66), and employment patterns were diverse across informal and formal categories (Mean \approx 4.98; SD \approx 2.24). Education levels were moderate-to-high (Mean \approx 5.00; SD \approx 1.26), supporting the proposition that education enhances comprehension and contributions to PAR.

Table 7: Urban Basic Services of Importance to Men and Women for Analysing urban deprivation

	Lagos		Kano	
	Okerube	Ajegunle-Ikorodu	Rimin Kebe	Dorayi Karama
Agricultural land/Food	X	0	0	0
Bank	0	X	X	0
Church	X	0	0	0
Community Hall	X	X	0	0
Cosmetic shop	0	0	0	1
Drainages	X	X	X	0
Electricity infrastructure	X	X	X	0
Event centre	0	0	X	5
Flyover Bridge	0	X	0	0
Football field	X	0	0	X
Fuelling/Gas station	0	X	0	0
Healthcare Centre/Hospital	X	X	X	X
Healthcare Centre/Medicine Store	0	X	0	0
Hub (Café, industrial training/empowerment centre, internet/digital facility, Tech)	X	X	0	X
Internet service	X	0	X	0
Library	X	X	X	0
Market	X	X	X	X
Mosque	0	0	0	X
Open spaces	X	0	X	0
Playground	X	0	0	0
Plaza	0	0	0	X
Police station	X	0	X	X
Recreation centre	X	X	X	X
Restaurant	0	0	X	X
Road	X	X	X	X
Sanitation	0	4	1	0
Schools (including Adult, Daycare/creche, Educentre, Quranic, Skill acquisition, vocational centre)	X	X	X	X
Security (Streetlight)	0	0	0	X
Security office	0	X	X	X
Social amenities	0	0	X	0
Sport centres	X	X	0	0
Toilet	X	0	0	0
Traditional/Political house	0	0	0	X
Water	X	X	X	X

Source: Authors, 2025

Income indicators suggested economic vulnerability (Mean \approx 1.53; SD \approx 0.74), a condition typical in informal settlements where livelihood insecurity interacts with service deficits (Abscal et al., 2022). Ethnicity showed moderate variability (e.g., Kano Mean \approx 2.13; SD \approx 1.19), implying that ethnic identity may not be a dominant barrier to trust or language in PAR. Length of stay showed mixed residency duration (Mean \approx 2.56; SD \approx 1.33), indicating that local knowledge and lived experience are not strictly functions of long-term residence. PAR roles were unevenly distributed: leadership roles were minimal (community leaders Mean \approx 0.12), while data collection roles were prominent (Mean \approx 0.52), reflecting purposive selection and the operational structure of PAR activities.

4.3 How men and women participants prioritise features of deprivation

Table 9 shows no significant gender differences for most deprivation priorities. Perceptions about

prioritizing gender-specific concerns in PAR were not significantly different between men and women ($\chi^2 \approx$ 1.116, $p \approx$ 0.291). Health care ($p \approx$ 0.982), water ($p \approx$ 0.116), sanitation ($p \approx$ 0.569), and recreation ($p \approx$ 0.464) showed no gender difference in prioritization, indicating broadly shared deprivation experiences.

Two exceptions were important:

- i. "Other" concerns differed significantly by gender ($p \approx$ 0.014), implying uncaptured needs that may be culturally or socially gendered; and
- ii. Borehole access among "important but not present" features differed by gender ($p \approx$ 0.048), suggesting water access may carry differentiated burdens, consistent with gendered domestic expectations highlighted in the literature (Tacoli, 2012).

The result of the hypothesis which sought to state there is no significant difference in urban features of importance to men and women in PAR (H1) is accepted.

Similarly, the result of the second hypothesis (H2) which states there is no significant difference in the understanding of urban deprivation between male and female participants is accepted.

Overall, evidence supports H₁ and H₂: men and women largely converge on how they prioritise features of deprivation, while localized gender-differentiated concerns remain significant for planning purposes.

Table 8: Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis comparing the sociodemographic characteristics of participants in PAR

Variable	Score Range	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	1-2	1.49	0.502
Age	1-11	4.77	2.668
Marital Status	1-5	1.6	0.659
Occupation/Profession	1-7	4.98	2.236
Education	1-8	5	1.256
Religion	1-4	1.6	0.492
Monthly Income	1-4	1.53	0.735
Ethnicity	1-5	2.13	1.193
Length of Stay in Community	1-6	2.56	1.33
Household Family Size	1-4	1.72	0.826
Familiarity with Participatory Research	1-2	1.03	0.167
Facilitator Role	0-1	0.11	0.312
Community Mobilizer Role	0-1	0.27	0.448
City Manager Role	0-1	0.03	0.17
Data Collector Role	0-1	0.52	0.502
Community Leader Role	0-1	0.12	0.324
Others (Field mapper, Supervisor, Treasurer and member)	0-1	0.08	0.27

Source: Authors, 2025

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Table 9: How men and women participants priorities feature of deprivation

Question	Deprivation Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	DF	p-value (Sig.)
Specific Concerns	Are there any specific concerns related to men and women that should be addressed or prioritized in PAR activities?	1.116 ^a	1	0.291
	Health care	.001 ^a	1	0.982
	Water	2.475 ^a	1	0.116
	Sanitation	.324 ^a	1	0.569
	Recreation	.536 ^a	1	0.464
	Others (below)	5.983 ^a	1	0.014
Features of Importance to Men and Women	Hospital dispensary	6.991 ^a	4	0.136
	Library	4.312 ^a	4	0.365
	Patent/Medicine Store	.011 ^a	3	1.000
	Daycare/Creche	7.183 ^a	4	0.127
	Other Recreation Centre	1.753 ^a	4	0.781
	Market/ stalls	4.265 ^a	4	0.371
	Water point	2.051 ^a	3	0.562
	Livelihoods	2.398 ^a	4	0.663
Features of importance not present in the settlements	Street name	.745 ^a	1	0.388
	Education	.915 ^a	1	0.339
	Creche/Daycare	1.926 ^a	1	0.165
	Religion	.815 ^a	1	0.367
	Market)	.126 ^a	1	0.722
	Health	.035 ^a	1	0.852
	Recreation	.023 ^a	1	0.880
	Library	.325 ^a	1	0.569
	Road	.011 ^a	1	0.916
	Gas station	.592 ^a	1	0.442
	Hub	3.270 ^a	1	0.071
	Bus stop	.005 ^a	1	0.943
	Waterpoint	.165 ^a	1	0.684
	Borehole	3.927 ^a	1	0.048
	Bank	2.917 ^a	1	0.088
	Town Hall	.003 ^a	1	0.954
	Sanitation	2.231 ^a	1	0.135
	Traditional Features	.425 ^a	1	0.514
Political Constituent Office	1.926 ^a	1	0.165	
Security Post	.211 ^a	1	0.646	

^aDependent variable

Source: Authors, 2025

4.4 Discussion of Findings

Findings suggest deprivation is widely experienced similarly by men and women with respect to basic services of health, water, and sanitation, reinforcing the reality of deficits in informal settlements (Abscal et al., 2022). Yet significant differences in borehole access and uncategorized “other” priorities indicate that gender differentiation emerges around specific infrastructural and socially mediated burdens often hidden in aggregated categories. This partially challenges claims that deprivation is always uniformly differentiated by gender while also cautioning against concluding “gender neutrality” in a way that erases differentiated burdens. In this sense, the results speak to tensions noted in the literature, where some analyses insist deprivation reproduces gender inequality (Letsoko et al., 2025), while local evidence may show convergence on priorities in contexts of severely shared deficits. The policy implication is not to choose one narrative but to design planning systems that capture both shared needs and gender-specific exceptions.

5. Conclusion

The paper utilized a PAR approach to examine the ranking of basic services by men and women in selected informal settlements in Lagos and Kano. The analyses reveal that urban deprivation in these contexts is primarily defined by shared lack of basic services. Men and women broadly agree that basic services, such as health care, water, roads, markets, and education, are crucial needs. The convergence shows that, at a basic level, deprivation is experienced together, which signifies the seriousness and universality of infrastructural deficits in informal settlements.

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Despite this convergence, the study shows important variations that are context-specific and gender-sensitive. Differences in the order of need in sanitation and security infrastructure, which may be indicative of prioritization of needs. Furthermore, differences in water access, particularly boreholes suggest that while need may be similar, the lived and experiences and burden of deprivation among participants are not entirely similar. The socio-cultural roles, spatial context, and local development conditions exert an influence on these variations as reflected in Lagos and Kano. Consequently, urban deprivation cannot be understood through a wholly gender-neutral or a wholly gender-differentiated lens.

The need for hybrid and context-responsive planning should be taken as an implication of these results. Strategies for urban development must make room for adequate and essential infrastructure to address more gendered vulnerabilities that might be concealed in collated data.

This implies that there should be a follow-up question to remove any ambiguity. PAR needs to be strengthened so that they include decision making in such an approach in men and women to help in the identification and prioritization of needs. In addition, it is necessary to institutionalise collection and harnessing of gender-disaggregated and community-level data to make planning more accurate and responsive. Enhanced basic infrastructure investment must go hand in hand with targeted measures in services such as water, sanitation and safety with gendered burdens. Ultimately, strengthening community governance structures, in particular by enhancing the leadership and decision-making roles of women, is crucial for sustainable urban development.

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