Comparative Analysis of Gender Segregation in Internet Utilisation: A Case Study of Abuja Municipal Area Council

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ABSTRACT

This study examined gender segregation in internet utilization in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), focusing on the primary factors that sustain disparities and the influence of socio-cultural norms. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining a structured survey of 100 respondents (88 valid) with two focus group discussions involving 16 participants. Quantitative analysis using regression modeling tested the influence of gender-based segregation and socio-cultural norms on internet use, while qualitative thematic analysis provided insights into lived experiences across urban and semi-urban/slum contexts. Findings revealed that socio-cultural expectations and household power dynamics shape how women engage with the internet, often restricting them to socially sanctioned uses such as communication and family-related activities. However, regression results showed that neither gender-based segregation ($p = 0.906$) nor socio-cultural norms ($p = 0.190$) significantly predicted overall internet utilization. This suggests that structural barriers, such as affordability and digital literacy, may exert a stronger influence on access and use. The study concludes that bridging gendered digital gaps requires targeted literacy programs, affordable access initiatives, and policies that challenge restrictive socio-cultural norms, thereby advancing progress toward SDGs 5 and 10.

Keywords - Gender segregation, internet utilization, digital divide, socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, educational disparities, rural-urban disparity, digital literacy

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has transformed how people communicate, learn, do business, and participate in society, but these benefits are unevenly distributed across regions and social groups. A persistent and consequential form of this inequality is the digital gender gap, systematic differences in access to, control over, and meaningful use of the Internet between men and women (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014; Peláez-Sánchez et al., 2023). In Nigeria, where rapid urbanization coexists with entrenched socioeconomic disparities, this gap reflects the combined effects of affordability constraints, education and skills deficits, and gendered social norms that structure everyday life. Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), is a revealing case because it concentrates world-class infrastructure and elite neighborhoods alongside semi-urban and slum settlements that face chronic service deficits. The same city thus contains the hardware of digital progress and the social conditions that limit who can use it, how often, and for what purpose (Adedeji, 2023; Obiadi et al., 2019; Eneh, 2020).

Nigeria's internet penetration has expanded with mobile broadband growth and cheaper, mass-market devices; for instance, the Nigerian Communications Commission reported continuous year-on-year gains in subscriptions, underpinned by a steady rise in broadband coverage (NCC, 2019). Yet headline connectivity masks stubborn divides, especially for women and for residents of low-income settlements. International evidence underscores the scale of exclusion: women in developing countries remain substantially less likely than men to be online, and when they are connected, their usage is often more constrained, less autonomous, and less oriented toward economically enhancing activities (ITU, 2020; Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). In Abuja's metropolitan districts, higher smartphone penetration and better networks coexist with social pressures that police women's time online and decisions about what is "appropriate" digital behavior. In semi-urban and

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slum communities, those gendered constraints intersect with poverty, weaker infrastructure, and lower educational attainment, amplifying disadvantage (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Bhatia & Singh, 2019; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014).

Affordability remains a binding constraint. The cost of data bundles and internet-enabled devices still absorbs a large share of income for low-income households, and women, who are more likely to be economically dependent or concentrated in the informal sector, disproportionately bear the consequences (Shah & Krishnan, 2023; Goedhart et al., 2019). Evidence on Nigeria shows that the price of 1GB data relative to income remains above global affordability benchmarks for many users, a reality that pushes households to ration connectivity or prioritize the devices and data needs of male members (Ehimuan et al., 2024). These material barriers are not merely about being online or offline; they shape the frequency, autonomy, and productivity of women's internet use, with knock-on effects for education, livelihoods, and civic voice.

Education and skills compound the affordability problem. Higher education and digital literacy are strongly associated with more diverse and productive internet use, yet gendered gaps in schooling and skills persist in Nigeria and are generally wider in semi-urban and slum areas (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014; Enyioko, 2021; Psaki et al., 2022). In Abuja, women's lower average educational attainment translates into reduced confidence and capability in navigating online platforms for learning, job search, entrepreneurship, and public services, especially where training opportunities are scarce and devices are shared (Obafemi & Raji, 2022). Although federal policy has recognized these constraints, through the National Broadband Plan and the National Digital Literacy Framework, implementation gaps and the everyday realities of household bargaining, caregiving responsibilities, and localized gender norms often blunt their impact (Ehimuan et al., 2024).

At the core of Abuja's digital gender gap are socio-cultural norms that prescribe women's roles and circumscribe their autonomy. Across communities, persistent expectations that women prioritize domestic work and modest public presence restrict time, mobility, and discretion around technology use (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2019; Tamunomiegbam & Arinze, 2024). These norms influence who owns devices, who pays for data, when and where women can connect, and which online activities are sanctioned. They also shape how families and peers interpret women's online visibility, with stigma and surveillance dampening engagement even when connectivity exists. In affluent districts, such norms may be subtly negotiated but still limit independent, skills-building use; in semi-urban and slum areas, where poverty intensifies trade-offs and infrastructure is weaker, the same norms work in tandem with material scarcity to narrow women's digital horizons (Mashapure et al., 2022).

This complex terrain situates the study's problem and focus. Despite rising connectivity in the FCT, women, particularly in semi-urban and slum communities, remain less likely to access, control, and productively use the Internet. Crucially, the drivers of this segregation are multi-layered: affordability and educational deficits interact with gendered power relations within households and communities, producing patterned disadvantages that are not solved by infrastructure alone. What is under-specified in existing Abuja-focused work is the relative salience of the primary factors that contribute to gender segregation in internet utilization and the specific pathways through which socio-cultural norms shape men's and women's online behaviors in different neighborhood contexts. Addressing these blind spots matters for policy: without clarity on which factors most constrain women's meaningful use and how norms operate in practice, interventions risk over-investing in supply-side connectivity while under-investing in the social and economic conditions that determine whether connectivity translates into opportunity.

Guided by this gap, the present paper concentrates on two objectives that speak directly to the problem. First, it identifies and analyzes the primary factors that contribute to gender segregation in internet utilization in the FCT, paying attention to how affordability, device access, education, digital skills, and neighborhood infrastructure interact. Second, it examines the influence of socio-cultural norms on internet usage among men and women, exploring how household decision-making, normative expectations, and community-level surveillance shape access, autonomy, and the purposes for which the Internet is used. By situating these objectives within Abuja's distinctive urban–semi-urban/slum contrasts and aligning the inquiry with Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities), the study moves beyond a simple access narrative to interrogate the social foundations

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of digital inclusion. In doing so, it provides an evidence base for policies and programs that not only extend networks but also expand women's capabilities to use the Internet meaningfully for education, work, and participation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Strategy

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine gender segregation in internet utilization in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The design was chosen to generate both context-specific insights into how socio-cultural norms shape digital engagement and statistical evidence on the broader factors that contribute to gender disparities.

Two focus group discussions (FGDs) and a structured survey were employed. The FGDs provided narrative depth on lived experiences and cultural influences surrounding internet use, while the survey established measurable patterns and relationships. Integrating both approaches allowed for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Data Collection

Focus Group Discussions: Two FGDs were conducted with a total of 16 participants (8 per group), purposively selected to reflect diversity across gender, age, socioeconomic background, and residential location (urban versus semi-urban/slum areas). Discussions were semi-structured, guided by open-ended questions that probed how gender roles, household decision-making, and community expectations influenced internet use. The group format encouraged participants to share and compare perspectives, making it possible to uncover both common themes and contrasting experiences.

Survey: A structured survey was administered to 100 respondents, achieving an 88% response rate (n = 88). Respondents were drawn from both urban and semi-urban/slum areas to capture the FCT's socioeconomic diversity. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, designed to assess internet use patterns, access to devices, and the influence of socio-cultural factors on usage. Data collection was conducted in person and online to improve accessibility and participation across demographic groups.

Sample Size and Sampling Strategy: Purposive sampling was used for the FGDs to ensure inclusion of participants with varied demographic and social characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. For the survey, random sampling was applied to increase generalizability of the results. The chosen sample sizes (n = 16 for FGDs and n = 88 for the survey) were deemed sufficient for both thematic depth and statistical analysis in a mixed-methods design.

Data Analysis

FGD data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo software. The analysis followed four steps: familiarization with transcripts, coding of significant statements, grouping of codes into themes, and interpretation in relation to the study objectives. Themes focused on identifying the main factors contributing to gender segregation in internet utilization and the specific socio-cultural norms that reinforced these disparities.

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and gendered patterns of internet use. Inferential techniques, including regression analysis, were applied to assess the extent to which socio-cultural factors significantly predicted differences in internet utilization between men and women. This combination of methods provided both breadth and depth in understanding the determinants of gender segregation in internet use.

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Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. All participants provided informed consent and were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw at any point. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by assigning codes instead of names and securely storing all data. Findings are presented in aggregate to avoid identification of individual participants.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which posits that social categories such as gender and socioeconomic status intersect to produce unique forms of disadvantage. In the digital context, intersectionality illuminates how cultural norms, economic realities, and location collectively shape internet access and usage patterns. Gender was the central axis of analysis, with attention to how socio-cultural norms and urban - semi-urban divides created layered experiences of digital exclusion. This framework enabled a nuanced understanding of the structural and cultural roots of the digital gender gap in the FCT.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Participants

The following chart (Figure 1) provide an overview of the demographic characteristics of the focus group participants. The FGD participants represented a diverse mix of urban and rural residents in Abuja Municipal Area Council, with differences in education, income, and age. Among urban participants, most had higher education (3) or post-secondary education (4), while only one had pre-secondary schooling. Rural participants had lower educational attainment, with just one having higher education, four completing post-secondary education, and two stopping at pre-secondary school. This educational gap likely influenced digital literacy and internet access.

Socio-economically, rural participants were predominantly low-income (5), with only one in the middle-income bracket and none in the high-income group. In contrast, urban residents had a more balanced distribution, with three in the low-income category, four in the middle-income group, and one classified as high-income. Age distribution showed that rural areas had more older participants (2 above 50), while urban respondents were mainly between 26-50 years old. Gender representation was equal, with four males and four females from both urban and rural settings, ensuring a balanced discussion on gender disparities in internet use.

Fig. 1: Demographic Characteristics of FGD Participants

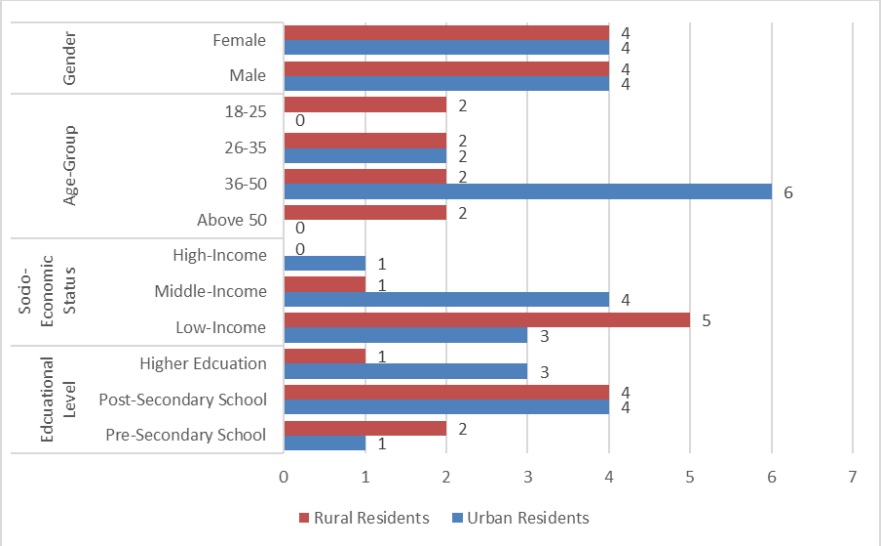

Figure 2 below presents the demographic characteristics of the survey (questionnaire) participants. The survey comprised 54.5% male and 45.5% female respondents, ensuring a relatively balanced gender representation.

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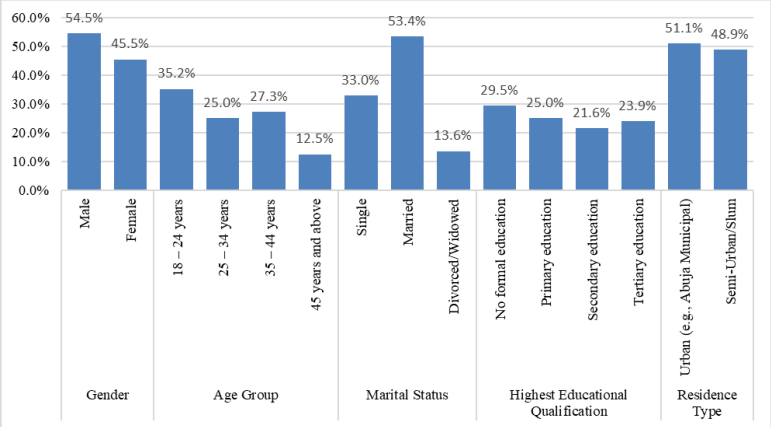
Age distribution varied, with 35.2% aged 18–24 years, 25.0% between 25–34 years, 27.3% in the 35–44 age group, and 12.5% aged 45 years and above. In terms of marital status, the majority were married (53.4%), while 33.0% were single, and 13.6% were either divorced or widowed, providing a diverse social background.

Education levels were mixed, with 29.5% having no formal education, 25.0% attaining primary education, 21.6% completing secondary education, and 23.9% reaching tertiary education. The residential distribution was nearly even, with 51.1% living in urban areas and 48.9% in semi-urban/slum areas, ensuring diverse representation for analyzing gender disparities in internet usage.

Fig. 2: Demographic Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents



Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Primary Factors Contributing to Gender Segregation in Internet Utilization

Findings Based on Urban Data

1. **Economic Barriers:** Women in urban areas struggle with affording internet services and digital devices. In the first FGD, a participant highlighted, "The cost of data is a major hindrance for many women, especially those who are not financially independent." This aligns with the observation from the second FGD, where Respondent 8 noted that "Even when women can afford data, they may lack the necessary devices. Smartphones and laptops are expensive, and priority is often given to male siblings when purchasing such devices."
2. **Socio-Cultural Norms:** Gender expectations continue to restrict women's internet usage, with many discouraged from frequent online engagement. A participant in the first FGD stated, "In my community, women are expected to focus on home and family, and using the internet is often seen as a distraction." Similarly, Respondent 4 from the second FGD added that "In many homes, internet access is prioritized for boys because they are expected to pursue careers, while girls are often discouraged from excessive internet use to prevent 'bad influences.'"
3. **Educational Disparities:** Higher educational attainment facilitates greater internet usage among urban women, empowering them to access online resources and opportunities. A first FGD participant emphasized, "Higher educational attainment, of course, entails higher internet utilization." This is echoed by Respondent 1 from the second FGD, who noted that "Education increases internet use because students need to conduct research and complete assignments. However, the disparity arises because fewer girls pursue higher education compared to boys."

Findings Based on Semi-Urban/Rural Data

1. **Economic Barriers**: Limited infrastructure and affordability hinder women's internet access in rural areas. One respondent stated, "Even if access improves, affordability remains a barrier. Many people in these areas prioritize food over data subscriptions." Another pointed out, "Rural women often depend on male family members for financial support. If a husband or father does not see internet use as a priority, access becomes limited."

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2. **Socio-Cultural Norms**: Deep-rooted traditional values further limit women's engagement with digital technology. A participant remarked, "In rural and semi-urban areas, women face social restrictions and are hesitant to engage in online discussions due to cultural norms that expect them to be modest and reserved in public discourse." Another added, "ICT education is prioritized for boys because it is believed they need digital skills for their future careers, while girls are expected to focus on domestic responsibilities."
3. **Educational Disparities**: Lower levels of education in rural areas significantly reduce digital literacy and internet utilization. One participant noted, "If girls have lower access to education, their digital skills will be equally limited, making it harder for them to use the internet effectively." Another observed, "Many women in rural areas do not have the same encouragement as men to explore technology, which limits their confidence in using digital tools."

Combined Insights

1. **Economic Challenges**: Across both urban and rural areas, financial constraints remain a primary barrier, with women facing difficulties in affording internet access and digital devices. The issue is more pronounced in rural areas due to lower economic opportunities.
2. **Socio-Cultural Constraints**: Gender roles and societal expectations significantly impact women's internet usage. While urban women face restrictions, rural women experience more severe limitations, including discouragement from digital engagement and limited ICT education.
3. **Educational Gaps**: Education plays a crucial role in increasing digital literacy and internet use. However, rural women face compounded disadvantages due to lower access to education, fewer opportunities to develop digital skills, and a lack of confidence in navigating online platforms.

Table 1: Summary of Responses on Primary Factors Contributing to Gender Segregation in Internet Utilization

Theme	Urban Insights	Semi-urban/Rural Insights
Economic Barriers	High cost of internet and devices, financial dependence on male family members	Limited infrastructure, affordability issues, priority given to essential needs over data
Socio-cultural norms	Gender roles restrict women's digital engagement, discouragement from excessive internet use	Strong traditional views limit ICT access for women, social norms discourage public online participation
Educational Disparities	Higher education correlates with increased internet usage and confidence in digital tools	Lower education levels limit digital skills, girls have less encouragement to explore technology

Influence of Socio-Cultural Norms

Findings Based on Urban Data

1. **Societal Scrutiny**: Women in urban areas face societal pressure and judgment for being active online. In the first FGD, a participant stated, "Women who are active online are sometimes judged harshly; people think they are not fulfilling their roles at home." This scrutiny discourages many women from fully engaging with the internet. This concern was echoed in the second FGD, where Respondent 4 noted that "Girls are often discouraged from excessive internet use to prevent 'bad influences.'" This suggests that societal expectations regarding appropriate female behavior extend beyond rural areas and affect urban women as well.
2. **Traditional Gender Roles:** The persistent belief that men are the primary breadwinners while women should focus on domestic duties limits women's online activities. A first FGD participant explained, "There's this general opinion that men are the breadwinners, and women should focus on domestic

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responsibilities, which limits their online presence." This aligns with the second FGD, where Respondent 4 also highlighted that "In many homes, internet access is prioritized for boys because they are expected to pursue careers." These traditional roles contribute to the gender divide in digital access and literacy.

Findings Based on Semi-Urban/Rural Data

1. **Cultural Barriers**: Traditional norms in semi-urban and rural areas strongly limit women's participation in online spaces. The first FGD included the statement, "In my village, women are discouraged from using the internet; it's seen as something that is not for them." This aligns with the second FGD, where Respondent 5 observed that "Women face social restrictions and are hesitant to engage in online discussions due to cultural norms that encourage modesty and silence in public discourse." Such restrictions create an environment where rural women feel less confident in exploring digital opportunities.
2. **Reinforced Gender Expectations**: In rural communities, deep-rooted beliefs about a woman's place being confined to the home discourage internet usage. A participant in the first FGD stated, "In many rural communities, the belief is that a woman's place is in the home, and engaging with the internet is often viewed as stepping out of that role." This was further supported by the second FGD, where Respondent 4 mentioned that girls are often discouraged from using the internet due to societal fears about external influences.
3. **Fear and Misinformation**: The perception that the internet is a dangerous or inappropriate space for women further discourages them from engaging online. In the first FGD, a participant highlighted, "There are women who are afraid of the Internet and the things that happen there, even when they have no reason to be afraid." This concern was mirrored in the second FGD, as Respondent 5 pointed out that rural women are hesitant to engage in public discussions online due to social pressures and expectations of modesty.

Combined Insights

1. **Cultural Stigma**: Across both urban and rural areas, societal norms create a stigma around women's internet usage, either by discouraging their participation outright or by creating judgment around their online presence.
2. **Traditional Gender Roles**: While more pronounced in rural areas, the belief that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities persists in both settings, shaping their internet habits and limiting their participation in digital spaces.
3. **Impact of Fear**: Fear of societal judgment, as well as misconceptions about online risks, significantly contribute to gender segregation in internet use. Women, particularly in rural areas, may avoid the internet due to concerns about safety, reputation, or cultural restrictions.

Table 2: Summary of Responses on Influence of Socio-Cultural Norms

Theme	Urban Insights	Semi-urban/Rural Insights
Societal Scrutiny	Women judged for being active online; internet use seen as a distraction from household duties	Women discouraged from online participation due to cultural norms emphasizing modesty and silence
Traditional Roles	Internet access prioritized for men due to career expectations; women expected to focus on family	Women's roles confined to the home, making online engagement appear unnecessary or inappropriate
Fear and Confidence	Women may feel conflicted or guilty about internet use due to societal expectations	Fear and misinformation about the internet discourage women from participating in digital spaces

Test Of Hypotheses

From the model summary (Table 3), the R-value of 0.143 indicates a very weak positive correlation between the predictors (GSIU and socio-cultural factors) and internet utilization. The R-squared value of 0.020 shows

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that only 2.0% of the variance in internet utilization can be explained by the independent variables. The adjusted R-squared value (-0.003) suggests that the explanatory power of the model is negligible after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate (2.95004) indicates considerable dispersion in actual internet utilization scores relative to predicted values, implying that other unmeasured factors likely play a more substantial role in shaping internet usage.

Table 3 - Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.143[a]	0.020	-0.003	2.95004

a. Predictors: (Constant), Socio Cultural Norms, GSIU

The ANOVA results (Table 4) indicate that the overall model is not statistically significant (F = 0.882, p = 0.418). This suggests that the combined effect of gender-based segregation in internet utilization and socio-cultural norms does not significantly predict internet usage levels in the FCT at the 0.05 significance threshold.

Table 4 - ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.347	2	7.673	0.882	.418[b]
	Residual	739.733	85	8.703		
	Total	755.080	87			

a. Dependent Variable: Internet Utilization

b. Predictors: (Constant), Socio Cultural Norms, GSIU

Examining the individual predictors in Table 5:

- **Gender-Based Segregation in Internet Utilization (GSIU)**: The coefficient (B = 0.012, p = 0.906) is positive but not statistically significant. This indicates that gender segregation, as measured in this study, does not have a meaningful effect on overall internet usage patterns in the FCT.
- **Socio-Cultural Norms**: The coefficient (B = -0.151, p = 0.190) is negative, suggesting that stronger socio-cultural restrictions are associated with lower levels of internet utilization. However, this relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that while the trend is suggestive, it cannot be generalized from the sample data.

Hypothesis Testing

- H_0: There is no significant relationship between gender segregation and internet utilization in the FCT. Fail to reject H01. Gender segregation (GSIU) does not significantly affect internet utilization (p = 0.906).
- H_0: Socio-cultural norms do not significantly influence internet usage patterns among men and women in the FCT.Fail to reject H02. Socio-cultural norms show a negative association with internet utilization but are not statistically significant (p = 0.190).

Table 5 - Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.474	2.035		8.096	.000
	GSIU	.012	.099	.013	.118	.906
	Socio Cultural Norma	-.151	.114	-.142	-1.321	.190

a. Dependent Variable: Internet Utilization

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DISCUSSION

The analysis of primary factors contributing to gender segregation in internet utilization in the FCT indicates that while gender disparities in access and use exist, they are not directly explained by gender alone. Regression results showed that the gender segregation in internet utilization (GSIU) variable had no statistically significant effect on overall internet usage ($p = 0.906$), suggesting that other contextual factors carry more explanatory power. Nonetheless, evidence from the FGDs highlighted that women, particularly in semi-urban and slum areas, face indirect disadvantages tied to shared device use, dependency on male relatives, and limited decision-making power regarding internet resources. These qualitative insights align with Kashyap et al. (2020) and Mariscal et al. (2019), who emphasized that women's constrained digital participation reflects broader structural inequities in society. Thus, even though gender was not significant in the regression model, the lived realities of participants confirm persistent exclusionary dynamics. This finding underscores the importance of considering social structures that mediate women's ability to translate internet access into meaningful use.

The absence of statistical significance for gender-based segregation suggests that internet use patterns may be more strongly influenced by external barriers than gender identity itself. FGDs revealed that women's reliance on male household members for financial support often limited their autonomy in digital spaces, echoing Falola et al.'s (2020) observation that patriarchal norms intersect with economic constraints to marginalize women. Furthermore, urban women reported greater device ownership and internet penetration but remained subject to expectations of using the internet primarily for social or family communication. This reflects Kolhar et al. (2021), who found that men often dominate professional and economic uses of the internet, while women's use remains domestically oriented. The statistical insignificance of gender, therefore, does not erase lived disparities but highlights the difficulty of capturing complex social dynamics in quantitative models. These findings point to the need for interventions that empower women within households and communities to redefine access as not just physical connectivity but also meaningful autonomy.

The influence of socio-cultural norms on internet use in the FCT was also examined, with regression results showing a negative but statistically insignificant association ($B = -0.151$, $p = 0.190$). This indicates that while stronger socio-cultural restrictions are linked to lower internet use, the effect is not strong enough to be considered predictive at the population level. However, FGDs provided richer insights, revealing that cultural expectations around women's domestic roles discourage extended or professional internet use. Participants noted that families often perceive women's online activities as secondary or unnecessary, especially in semi-urban and slum settings where resources are limited. These findings are consistent with Adisa et al. (2020) who argue that cultural prescriptions in Nigeria reinforce male dominance in digital spaces. The contrast between non-significant regression outcomes and strong qualitative narratives suggests that socio-cultural norms influence the quality and purpose of use rather than overall frequency, which may explain their limited statistical visibility.

In urban areas, socio-cultural norms were reported to moderate the ways in which women engage online, with greater emphasis on communication, family-related activities, and socially acceptable content. Similar to findings by Dutse (2025), women described reluctance or prohibition from engaging in online learning or entrepreneurial ventures due to perceptions that such activities threaten traditional roles. In rural contexts, restrictions were even stronger, with participants citing discouragement from male relatives who viewed women's internet use as inappropriate or disruptive to household responsibilities. This resonates with Eboyem (2024), who highlighted how entrenched cultural expectations in Northern Nigeria shape unequal access to education and digital literacy, further widening gender divides. The failure to reject H02 in the regression model does not negate these patterns but rather highlights that cultural factors often operate subtly, shaping behaviors in ways not easily quantifiable. Taken together, the findings suggest that challenging restrictive socio-cultural norms requires community-level awareness, digital literacy initiatives targeted at women, and interventions that reframe internet use as beneficial to households and communities.

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CONCLUSION

This study examined gender segregation in internet utilization in the Federal Capital Territory, with a focus on the primary factors that sustain the digital divide and the influence of socio-cultural norms on usage patterns. Findings from both regression analysis and qualitative insights demonstrate that while gender segregation in internet use is evident in daily practices, gender itself was not a statistically significant predictor of internet utilization. Instead, socio-cultural norms and household power dynamics continue to shape women's access and the purposes for which they use the internet, particularly in semi-urban and slum areas where patriarchal expectations are stronger. These barriers operate alongside infrastructural gaps and financial dependency, reinforcing limited digital autonomy for women. Overall, the findings highlight that addressing gendered disparities in internet use requires tackling the structural and cultural roots of exclusion rather than focusing solely on geography.

To address these challenges, policy responses should adopt a multi-dimensional approach. First, awareness campaigns and community dialogues can challenge traditional gender roles that restrict women's online participation, supported by gender-sensitive policies at federal and local levels. Second, targeted interventions are needed to reduce affordability barriers, including subsidized data plans and device financing schemes for low-income women. Third, digital literacy initiatives should be expanded, particularly in underserved areas, through community learning hubs and integration of digital skills into educational curricula. Finally, investment in broadband infrastructure and public internet access points in semi-urban and slum settlements will help to reduce the infrastructural divide. Together, these measures can create an enabling environment where women are empowered to engage meaningfully with digital technologies, advancing progress toward gender equality and inclusive development in Nigeria.

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