

Legal Challenges Limiting Women's Rights to Research Scholarship: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria, Uganda and Indonesia

Paul Atagamen Aidonojie¹, Kelechi Jude Onwubiko², Mercy Osemudiamme Okpoko³, Uzoho Kelechi⁴, Obieshi Eregbuonye⁵

^{1,2}School of Law, Kampala International University, Uganda

³Faculty of Law, University of Bradford, United Kingdom

⁴Hutton School of Business, University of the Cumberlands, United States

⁵School of Law, Edo State University, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: paul.aidonojie@kiu.ac.ug

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ABSTRACT

It suffices to state that women are key stakeholders in meaningful development and sustainable growth. Concerning this, in education, women possess the capacity and potential to conduct scholarship research, teach, inspire, and mentor students. However, certain factors limit women's academic rights in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia, thereby negatively affecting scholarship and research. Hence, the study adopts a doctrinal approach, and the data obtained were analysed using descriptive and analytical methods. The study found that women in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia play crucial roles in sustainable education through research, scholarly teaching, nurturing, and mentoring. The study further found that several factors often limit women's rights to quality education and research scholarship. Some of these factors include limited resources, an ineffective legal framework in championing the cause of women, most especially in Nigeria, cultural and social norms that tend to subject women to domestic housework, and a lack of an academic institutional support system. The study therefore concludes and recommends that to curtail these challenges, women's rights to academic freedom in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia. There is a need to reform tertiary institutional policies to support women's academic career development. Provide sufficient funding for women in academic, training, and mentorship programs. This study aims to address significant legal and systemic barriers to women's participation in academia in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia. The contribution of this study is a regulatory model designed to promote the fulfilment of women's rights in research and scholarship.

Introduction

According to UNESCO's 2022 Global Report on Gender Equality in Science, it was stated that ensuring women's full and equal participation in research and scholarship is both a matter of justice and a fundamental requirement for societal

progress.¹ Alas, this remains a distant goal. Despite barriers to entry, flourishing, and leadership permeating the globe, especially in developing nations, women continue to be excluded from academic and research institutions.² A somewhat staggering statistic regarding women worldwide.

Widely, there exist fewer than 30% researchers in the world, fewer of them in senior academic appointments, and fewer still able to contribute to high-impact scholarly publications.³ Perhaps individual choices contribute to the underrepresentation, yet a broader array of legal, structural, and sociocultural factors governs academic life.⁴ In these countries, such as Nigeria, Uganda,⁵ and Indonesia,⁶ while overt discrimination serves as a barrier to the full participation of women in research and scholarship even more insidious set of systemic, legal, and policy challenges exists, limiting women's rights to academic research and scholarship. Nigeria provides, yet the few actual Nigerian constitutional provisions relating to gender equality are very detached from the grassroots implementation of these principles in academic areas.⁷ In Nigeria, legal provisions governing employment, maternity, and promotion generally fail to safeguard or promote the interests of women researchers adequately.⁸ In Uganda, persistent institutional leadership, single motherhood, and academic networks have often posed challenges for women pursuing academic scholarship and research.⁹ Indonesia, meanwhile, although

¹ Zakaria Elouaourti, Imane Elouardighi, and Aomar Ibourk, "Bridging the Gender Gap in African Scientific Publishing: Insights From Web of Science Indexed Journals," *Learned Publishing* 38, no. 2 (April 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.2007>.

² Caitlin Meyer and Du Baogui, "Utilizing Classification as a Tool to Address Gender Equality Issues in Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy," *SAGE Open* 15, no. 1 (January 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251322615>.

³ Foluke Oluyemisi Abimbola, Stanley Osezua Ehiane, and Roman Tandlich, "Women's Rights in Nigeria's Indigenous Systems: An Analysis of Non-Discrimination and Equality under International Human Rights Law," *Social Sciences* 12, no. 7 (July 2023): 405, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070405>.

⁴ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie and Ong Argo Victoria, "The Societal and Legal Missing Link in Protecting a Girl Child Against Abuse Before and Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria," *Jurnal Hukum* 38, no. 1 (May 2022): 61, <https://doi.org/10.26532/jh.v38i1.18412>.

⁵ Bernard E. Igiri et al., "Focused Research on the Challenges and Productivity of Researchers in Nigerian Academic Institutions Without Funding," *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics* 6 (October 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2021.727228>.

⁶ Ella Prihatini and Wendy Prajuli, "Gender in Academic Journals: Experience from Indonesia," *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2022): 43–59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-0068>.

⁷ Uchendu Eugene Chigbu, "Masculinity, Men and Patriarchal Issues Aside: How Do Women's Actions Impede Women's Access to Land? Matters Arising from a Peri-Rural Community in Nigeria," *Land Use Policy* 81 (February 2019): 39–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.10.033>.

⁸ Toyin Ajibade Adisa et al., "Social Dominance, Hypermasculinity, and Career Barriers in Nigeria," *Gender, Work & Organization* 28, no. 1 (January 2021): 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12537>.

⁹ Loyce Allen Asire, "Stakeholders' Interventions in Addressing Financial Constraints Restricting Women Refugees Access to Higher Education: The Case of Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda," *East African Journal of Education Studies* 6, no. 3 (December 2023): 335–50, <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.6.3.1606>.

forging ahead on policy reforms,¹⁰ continues to wrestle with patriarchal traditions and religious norms that affect institutional behavior and academic expectations.¹¹

Regarding the above, it suffices to state that the central issue is the interface between legal frameworks and systemic institutional constraints that impede women's rights to research and scholarship.¹² These obstacles are seldom in isolation, but are a component of a wider tapestry of gender inequalities that include cultural stereotypes, family obligations, lack of mentorship, sexual harassment, unequal pay, and promotion barriers.¹³ On paper, such gender-equity-promoting policies exist, but their implementation has been patchy, and accountability mechanisms remain weak.¹⁴ Thus, it is an environment in which women academics often have to surmount greater obstacles in historiographical recognition and influence than their male counterparts. It is essential to be aware of and tackle such obstacles as they are symptomatic of much larger developmental issues, both for gender justice and for national and global development.¹⁵ The advances in health, education, technology, and governance are aided by research and innovation.¹⁶ If women are systematically barred from contributing to scholarly knowledge, societies lose out on diverse perspectives, innovative solutions, and equitable policymaking.¹⁷ In addition, keeping women at the margins of research will continue to keep male narratives dominant in academia, thereby questioning the very validity and inclusiveness of intellectual discourse.¹⁸

¹⁰ Dina Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744568>.

¹¹ Abdul Rahim Hakimi et al., "Legal Policy for Women Workers in Indonesia: A Review of Contemporary Islamic Law," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 1 (April 2024): 66, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i1.9023>.

¹² Hilary Nwaechefu et al., "The Prospects and Challenges in Adopting Artificial Intelligence Toward Effective Legal Education," *Kampala International University Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (December 2024): 152–62, <https://doi.org/10.59568/KIULJ-2024-6-2-08>.

¹³ Opeyemi Obisesan Olawunmi et al., "The Incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice in Uganda: Prospects and Socio-Economic Issues," *Kampala International University Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (December 2024): 163–88, <https://doi.org/10.59568/KIULJ-2024-6-2-09>.

¹⁴ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie et al., "The Causes of the Rising Incidence of Domestic Violence in Nigeria: Proposing Judicial Separation as a Panacea," *Jurnal Hukum* 38, no. 2 (July 17, 2022): 99, <https://doi.org/10.26532/jh.v38i2.21592>.

¹⁵ Shifa Shami, "Gender Narratives and the Function of Digital Humanities in Enhancing the Experiences of Nigerian Women: Empowering Voices," in *Digital Crossroads: Integrating Humanities, Science and Technology Edition 1* (India: BP International, 2025), 12–20, <https://doi.org/10.9734/bpi/mono/978-93-48859-10-5/CH2>.

¹⁶ Jonans Tusiimire et al., "Impact of Global Health Scholarship Programs in the Faculty of Medicine at Mbarara University of Science and Technology," *International Medical Education* 3, no. 3 (June 24, 2024): 190–211, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ime3030017>.

¹⁷ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie et al., "Legal and Socioeconomic Issues Concerning the Nigeria Higher Institution Loan Act 2023," *Jurnal Legalitas* 17, no. 1 (April 24, 2024): 17–37, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jelta.v17i1.23143>.

¹⁸ Yordan Gunawan, Amarta Yasyhini Ilka Haque, and Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, "Police Brutality as Human Rights Violation: A Study Case of Black Lives Matter," *Varia Justicia* 19, no. 1 (April 29, 2023): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.31603/variajusticia.v19i1.6588>.

There has been growing research on women's participation in work, education, and scholarship, with a widening awareness of structural and systemic barriers to women's participation. At the same time, much of the literature continues to reflect Western and developed country research contexts. Traylor et al.¹⁹ argue that, despite calls for culturally diverse research, women's work research is heavily contextualised in developed societies and raises ten blind spots in the understanding of barriers affecting women researchers. These included training access, gender-based discrimination, pay inequities, and a lack of legal protections. Once again, this identified a gap in research on the local cultural, institutional, and legal contexts that shape women's practices and experiences in work and education. In a similar vein, Woldeesenbet Beta, Mwila, and Ogunmokun²⁰ claim that their work in African women entrepreneurship is also mainly descriptive, fragmented and under-theorised. Their review identifies the need to examine how family context and customary practices, poverty, and divisions between formal and informal institutions shape women's entrepreneurial decision-making and outcomes. Thus, socially and legally embedded factors fundamentally shape women's opportunities and agency in Africa.

Research conducted with specific African contexts in mind, particularly Uganda, has demonstrated the intersectionality of socio-cultural and institutional impediments. Saad,²¹ for example, reports on her investigation of Ugandan Muslim women, illustrating how religion and culture and stubbornly upheld gender norms interacted with educational policies, specifically affirmative action and structural inequalities, to constrain women through the regulation of their aspirations, actions and access to education. Similarly, Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, and Osirim²² discuss monodisciplinarity (methodologically) in research on women and gender studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, paying insufficient attention to the significance of institutional, legal, and governance frameworks. The study by Berchin et al. shows that HEIs are the main actors in the field of sustainability through their teaching practices, advanced research, capacity building, and community outreach, underscoring the need for heightened institutional vigilance and participation to shape pathways of sustainable development. This accords with Susanti and Sari's argument that education is a basic right and a means of improving socioeconomic conditions, particularly for the underprivileged, thereby requiring the government to ensure equitable distribution by investing in social and educational programs for the

¹⁹ Allison M. Traylor et al., "Expanding Research on Working Women More Globally: Identifying and Remediating Current Blindspots," *Journal of Social Issues* 76, no. 3 (September 2020): 744–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12395>.

²⁰ Kassa Woldeesenbet Beta, Natasha Katuta Mwila, and Olapeju Ogunmokun, "A Review of and Future Research Agenda on Women Entrepreneurship in Africa," *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 30, no. 4 (April 2024): 1041–92, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-10-2022-0890>.

²¹ Fatihiya Migdad Saad, "The Underrepresentation of Muslim Women in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Causes and Opportunities for Change in Uganda" (University of Leicester, 2014).

²² Akosua Adomako Ampofo et al., "Women's and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa," *Gender & Society* 18, no. 6 (December 2004): 685–714, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204269188>.

poor. At the same time, the gender-related inequalities and global gaps in access to education and training, as noted by Adeosun et al.,²³ reflect how structural barriers still inhibit women's earnings and development, underscoring the need for inclusive educational policies. The impact of education also extends to the grassroots level, as shown by the study by Savari et al.²⁴ They state that rural women are strongly encouraged to improve their households' food security through educational channels, thereby linking learning to practical, community-level sustainability outcomes. These studies collectively show that the education sector's role in the sustainable development process is multifaceted: HEIs must not only be knowledge producers but also integrate equity, gender inclusion, and community-focused strategies to participate in the societal transformation effectively sought.

Together, these studies identify a research gap: while research on education, work, and entrepreneurship is expansive, there is a comparative neglect of legal and structural frameworks that restrict women's rights to conduct research and engage in scholarship, particularly in developing contexts. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the role of legal and structural frameworks for women's access to research and scholarship in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia. The novelty of this study, and what makes it unique, is that it offers a comparative cross-jurisdictional analysis of legal and structural restrictions to women's agency in the academy, which informs policies and institutional change for gender justice in ways that education and employment studies do not.

In this regard, the study argues that, while each country has a distinct socio-legal context with common threads of institutional patriarchy, religious and cultural barriers, Nigeria appears to have experienced weak legal protections, recognition, and promotion of female academic scholarship and research. In response, the paper will first present a conceptual framework and then provide an overview of the legal and policy frameworks in each country. The comparative analysis will then identify shared challenges and differing approaches, leading to a consideration of possible best practices. The final section will conclude and make policy recommendations to strengthen legal protections, institutional reforms, and gender-inclusive research environments. Through such a comparative analysis, the study will add value to global advocacy for gender equality in education and research.

Methods

Given that the study examines the legal and other systemic challenges that often constrain women's scholarship and academic research, it adopts a doctrinal method,

²³ Oluyemi Theophilus Adeosun and Kayode Ebenezer Owolabi, "Gender Inequality: Determinants and Outcomes in Nigeria," *Journal of Business and Socio-Economic Development* 1, no. 2 (October 2021): 165–81, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBSED-01-2021-0007>.

²⁴ Moslem Savari, Hamed Sheykhi, and Mohammad Shokati Amghani, "The Role of Educational Channels in the Motivating of Rural Women to Improve Household Food Security," *One Health* 10 (December 2020): 100150, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.onehlt.2020.100150>.

relying on research from primary and secondary sources.²⁵ The study relied on the constitutions and statutes of Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia, as well as secondary sources, including scholarly literature by renowned scholars from these countries.

The data obtained were in-depth examined and analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method. The essence of relying on a doctrinal method of study is to pursue critical and logical theorising of the concept of women's academic scholarship, while accounting for the legal and systemic challenges that often constrain women's efforts and active participation in academic research and scholarship in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia. Furthermore, tabular and graphical data were used to present the study and to facilitate clear submission and discussion.

Discussion

Conceptual Issues on Women's Academic Research Funding in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia

Human rights are regarded as rights that are sacrosanct and apply to all humans.²⁶ Over the years, these rights have been recognized globally as those that need to be safeguarded, promoted, and adhered to by all nations.²⁷ Given the peculiar nature of human rights, these rights have been categorized into three: civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, and solidarity rights.²⁸ It must be noted why the first and third categorisations of rights are considered relevant. However, it suffices to state that, without economic, social, and cultural rights, the other categories of human rights cannot be effectively realized.²⁹ This concerns the recognition that economic, social, and cultural rights include the fundamental right to quality education.³⁰ The right to quality education encompasses the right to access objective, high-quality education necessary for individual intellectual development.³¹ It also involves the right to receive adequate funding and

²⁵ Matthew Mitchell, "Analyzing the Law Qualitatively," *Qualitative Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (January 4, 2023): 102–13, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-04-2022-0061>.

²⁶ J. Scott Long, "The Presence and Participation of Women in Academic Science and Engineering: 1973–1995," in *Equal Rites, Unequal Outcomes. Innovations in Science Education and Technology* (New York: Springer, 2003), 145–74, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0007-9_7.

²⁷ Paola Giuri et al., "The Effects of University-Level Policies on Women's Participation in Academic Patenting in Italy," *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 45, no. 1 (February 2020): 122–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-018-9673-5>.

²⁸ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie et al., "A Facile Study Concerning the Legal Issues and Challenges of Herbal Medicine in Nigeria," *The Indonesian Journal of International Clinical Legal Education* 4, no. 4 (December 2022), <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijicle.v4i4.61641>.

²⁹ Rosemary Morgan et al., "Gender Dynamics Affecting Maternal Health and Health Care Access and Use in Uganda," *Health Policy and Planning* 32, no. suppl_5 (December 2017): v13–21, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czx011>.

³⁰ Tunde A. Abioro, "The Legislature, Subnational Governments, and Child's Education Rights in Nigeria's Fourth Republic," in *The Legislature in Nigeria's Presidential Democracy of the Fourth Republic* (Cham: Springer Cham, 2023), 229–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24695-1_16.

³¹ María Ferrer-Estévez and Ricardo Chalmeta, "Integrating Sustainable Development Goals in Educational Institutions," *The International Journal of Management Education* 19, no. 2 (July 2021): 100494, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100494>.

support for academic development to foster the society's sustainable economic and social development.

It suffices to state that in Nigeria and Uganda, these rights are provided for and recognised legally.³² Although these rights are considered core rights in Uganda and Indonesia, they are not fundamental or enforceable in Nigeria, as they are contained in the Fundamental Objectives and State Policies of the Nigerian Constitution.³³ However, they provide for obligations that must be observed. Given these, the Nigerian, Ugandan, and Indonesian governments have played vital roles in improving and funding education at all levels, including tertiary institutions, particularly by sponsoring academic research and scholarship among teachers and lecturers. For example, in 2019/2020, the Ugandan government, through the Research and Innovation Fund, allocated USD 8.1 million to support innovation and research.³⁴ Furthermore, in 2023/2024, 49.2 billion Uganda Shillings were distributed to several Ugandan universities to support research, innovation, and scholarship.³⁵ Additionally, the government is committed to funding a Ph.D. research grant of approximately 1.5 billion Uganda Shillings at Makerere University to foster national sustainable development.³⁶ In Nigeria, the government has been committed to supporting research through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND). In this regard, 3.9 billion naira,³⁷ 7.5 billion naira, and 4.7 billion naira were distributed to various public institutions in 2019, 2020,³⁸ and 2023, respectively, as grants to aid research and academic scholarship.³⁹

³² Danwood M Chirwa and Christopher Mbazira, “Constitutional Rights, Horizontality, and the Ugandan Constitution: An Example of Emerging Norms and Practices in Africa,” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 18, no. 4 (December 2020): 1231–53, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moaa081>.

³³ Afe Babalola and Damilola S. Olawuyi, “Advancing Environmental Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education in Nigeria: Current Challenges and Future Directions,” *Sustainability* 13, no. 19 (September 29, 2021): 10808, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910808>.

³⁴ Ronald Jjagwe et al., “The Drivers and Barriers Influencing the Commercialization of Innovations at Research and Innovation Institutions in Uganda: A Systemic, Infrastructural, and Financial Approach,” *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* 13, no. 1 (October 2024): 78, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-024-00435-y>.

³⁵ Ronald Jjagwe et al., “National Innovation System for Resilience, Transformation and Sustainable Development in Uganda: Contextual Analysis of the Factors, Actors, And Associated Linkages,” *International Journal of Innovation Science*, December 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIS-09-2023-0197>.

³⁶ Jjagwe et al., “The Drivers and Barriers Influencing the Commercialization of Innovations at Research and Innovation Institutions in Uganda: A Systemic, Infrastructural, and Financial Approach.”

³⁷ Igiri et al., “Focused Research on the Challenges and Productivity of Researchers in Nigerian Academic Institutions Without Funding.”

³⁸ Ifeyinwa Ijeoma Obianyo et al., “Overcoming the Obstacles to Sustainable Housing and Urban Development in Nigeria: The Role of Research and Innovation,” *Cleaner Engineering and Technology* 4 (October 2021): 100226, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clet.2021.100226>.

³⁹ Charles Eryenyu, Dennis Zami Atibuni, and David Kani Olema, “Illusions of Meritocracy in the Ugandan Higher Education Students’ Financing Schemes: Reinforcement of Resilience for Equity,” *Journal of Educational Studies* 2024, no. si2 (September 2024): 40–63, <https://doi.org/10.59915/jes.2024.si2.3>.

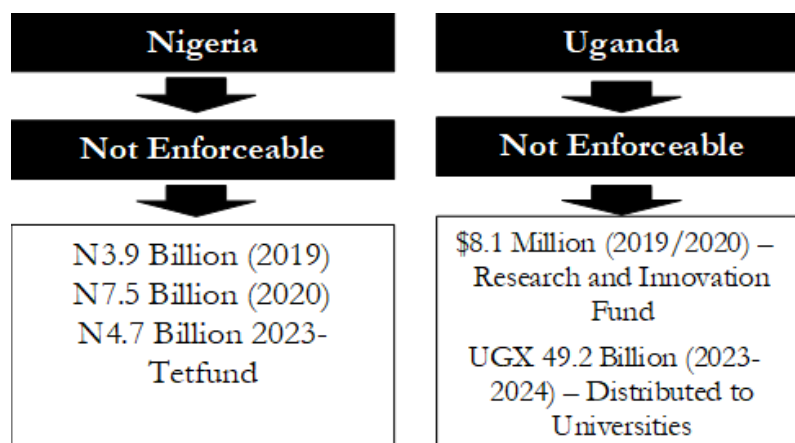


Figure 1: showing academic scholarship and research funding in Nigeria and Uganda
Source: Design by authors

In Indonesia, the right to education is enshrined as a fundamental and enforceable right under the 1945 Constitution.⁴⁰ It states that every citizen shall have the right to education and that the state shall be obligated to finance basic education. These constitutional provisions signify the state's commitment to providing education to all its citizens. To give effect to that, the government of Indonesia, through various programs, has implemented such initiatives, primarily through the Endowment Fund for Education of Indonesia (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan, LPDP).⁴¹ In 2011, under the Ministry of Finance, LPDP was established to manage a substantial endowment fund to support higher education and research.⁴² As of 2023, a total of IDR 2.232 trillion (approximately USD 150 million) has been channelled through the LPDP to award scholarships to approximately 35,000 master's and doctoral students in programs both domestically and abroad.⁴³ In addition to scholarships, an amount of IDR 349.69 billion (approximately USD 23 million) was disbursed as of 2023 for research, constituting 84.01% of the target disbursement for that fiscal year. Complementarily to LPDP's programs, the program of Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia (BPI), which is operated jointly by LPDP and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, provides scholarships for diploma, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies to develop human resources in Indonesia by funding higher education for innovation and sustainable development.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Arrie Budhiartie et al., "Digitized Education Delivery in Indonesia: Constitutional Right or Vacuous Sophistry?," *Jambe Law Journal* 8, no. 1 (June 2025): 197–228, <https://doi.org/10.22437/home.v8i1.401>.

⁴¹ Arnaldo Pellini, *Knowledge, Politics and Policymaking in Indonesia*, ed. Arnaldo Pellini et al. (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0167-4>.

⁴² Muhammad Hali Aprimadya, "Understanding Policy Changes: Dilemmas of Funding Reform in Indonesian Higher Education," *Critical Policy Studies* 19, no. 4 (October 2, 2025): 574–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2024.2428658>.

⁴³ Unita Werdi Rahajeng, Wiwin Hendriani, and Pramesti Pradna Paramita, "Navigating Higher Education Challenges: A Review of Strategies among Students with Disabilities in Indonesia," *Disabilities* 4, no. 3 (September 2024): 678–95, <https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities4030042>.

⁴⁴ Kieve Stone Saling, "The Valuable Coordination of Sponsored International Education in a Modern Developmental State," *Higher Education*, November 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-025-01542-9>.



Figure 2: Scholarship and Research Funding in Indonesia 2023

Source: Design by authors

These initiatives reflect Indonesia's strategic investment in education as a means to promote national development and align with constitutional mandates to ensure the right to education for all citizens.⁴⁵ In 2024, LPDP would have granted scholarships to approximately 10,000 students, with an allocation of around IDR 10 trillion (roughly USD 650 million) to various scholarship programs, including those directly conducted by LPDP or alongside various partners such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.⁴⁶ Complementing the LPDP programs, the Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia (BPI) program, a joint program between LPDP and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, also provides scholarships for diploma, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies.⁴⁷ BPI 2024, particularly for prospective lecturers for accelerated degree programs (fast track) for master's and doctorate overseas education, has expanded its scope of application. The application period for BPI 2024 for international programs ran from May 2 to May 31, 2024, for international programs and from May 2 to June 15, 2024, for domestic programs.⁴⁸

Regarding the above, it suffices to state that despite substantial funding for academic research and scholarship, there appear to be few, if any, female beneficiaries, participants, or contributors.⁴⁹ The poor involvement of females in academic research and scholarship is considered a setback to national sustainable development.⁵⁰ This is concerning the fact that the potential of most females in the

⁴⁵ Fahdiansyah Putra, Abdul Rahman, and Azhar Kasim, "Evaluation of the Scholarship Program by the Education Fund Management Institute in Indonesia," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 13, no. 5 (October 2024): 3321, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i5.26195>.

⁴⁶ Saling, "The Valuable Coordination of Sponsored International Education in a Modern Developmental State."

⁴⁷ M. Aulia Rachman, "Scholarship for Catching Up? The Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) Scholarship Program as a Pillar of Economic Development Policy," *International Journal of Educational Development* 96 (January 2023): 102701, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102701>.

⁴⁸ Putra, Rahman, and Kasim, "Evaluation of the Scholarship Program by the Education Fund Management Institute in Indonesia."

⁴⁹ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie et al., "Curtailing Male Rape in Nigeria: Legal Issues and Challenges," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)* 2, no. 3 (September 24, 2024): 287–303, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v2i3.43>.

⁵⁰ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie et al., "Advancing Gender's Balance Rights Through Constitutional and Legal Reforms: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and Uganda," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 2, no. 1 (2025): 60–83, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71239/jicl.v2i1.47>.

academic sector is grossly and poorly harnessed and utilized. Hence, the essence of this study is aimed at examining and interrogating the factors that often limit female participation and involvement in academic scholarship.⁵¹

It must be noted that several academic scholars have contributed immensely as it concerns human rights and education. In this regard, it will be relevant to examine some of these scholars' views as follows: In examining the relevance of females in academic participation in research and scholarship, Scott in his study stated that since 1960, when women began to take an active part in academics and various workplaces, it has significantly led to a dramatic and effective change in the development of society. According to him, he further stated that women's involvement in academics, such as in all fields in the academic professional sector, has led to the breeding and training of quality scientists, engineers, doctors, and other fields of study in academia. Hence, they suggested that for more sustainable development through quality teaching and training of tertiary institution students, there is a need to continue to allow equal participation of males and females in academic research and scholarship in the educational sector for effective and quality education delivery. Similarly, Moslem et al.,⁵² in their investigation of how female active involvement in education and scholarly research could aid in improving household food security.

Their study sample focused on 368 females from Sirvan County in Iran, and questionnaires were distributed to these respondents. The data obtained was analysed relying on SPSS18 and LISREL8.54 software packages. Their findings reveal that over 80% of the area under study suffers from food insecurity as a result of the low involvement of female in the education sector, which would have sharpened their knowledge concerning the improvement and sustainable food security. The relevance and importance of female involvement in academic scholarship and participation by Scott and Moslem et al. were further corroborated in the study of Porter and Serra. According to their research, they explore female participation and involvement in university economics education. Their findings reveal that having more female lecturers in that field led to more females registering for the course.⁵³ In essence, this reveals that female academicians have the potential to improve and influence female participation and involvement in academia and scholarship.

⁵¹ M. Sharpe and S. Namusobya, "Refugee Status Determination and the Rights of Recognized Refugees under Uganda's Refugees Act 2006," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24, no. 3 (October 2012): 561–78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/ees036>.

⁵² Tamar Melanie Heijstra, Finnborg Salome Steinhorsdóttir, and Thorgerdur Einarsdóttir, "Academic Career Making and the Double-Edged Role of Academic Housework," *Gender and Education* 29, no. 6 (September 19, 2017): 764–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1171825>.

⁵³ Catherine Porter and Danila Serra, "Gender Differences in the Choice of Major: The Importance of Female Role Models," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12, no. 3 (July 2020): 226–54, <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20180426>.

However, despite the roles and importance that female academicians possess, they have the potential to influence national sustainable development and influence other female involvement in academic participation. There seem to be very few women participating in academic research and scholarship. Grant and Knowles are examining the level of involvement of women in academic writing and study in New Zealand.⁵⁴ Their findings reveal that fewer women participate in or are interested in academic research and writing than men. Hence, it has resulted in low and poor development in enhancing the competence and experience of female academicians in research and scholarship. According to Ceci et al.,⁵⁵ stated that a lot has been written for over two decades concerning women's involvement in academic activities, the findings in most of these studies reveal that there has never been equal opportunity between females and males in academic research, scholarship, and position, that women are mostly underrepresented as academician and professoriate most especially in engineering, physical science, economics, geoscience, mathematics and computer science, and in other field. Furthermore, the view of Eden corroborated the findings of Grant and Knowles, Ceci et al., who reported in their study that, across an academic year encompassing about 56 conferences held in Israel, with a total of 997 participants, male participation was three times that of female participants. According to them, they stated that the result of female poor participation in academic activities is a result of gender discrimination and male male-dominated military social agenda to suppress the female counterpart in Israel.

However, several dilemmas often mitigate and affect female participation and involvement in academic research and scholarship. Herrmann et al.,⁵⁶ their research findings stipulated that academic disciplines such as science, mathematics, technology, and engineering have fewer female academicians as a result of a lack of mentorship, role models, and teaching assistance. Hence, the fact that there is no mentorship or guidance for most females in some of these complicated academic fields has resulted in few females in interested, thereby reducing the number of females interested in that area of research and scholarship. Also, in Tomas et al.,⁵⁷ in their research study, identify some of the challenges and barriers that often limit women's participation in academic research and scholarship. In their findings, they identify that organisation structure and culture that promote male dominance over females is one of the major causes limiting female participation in academic research

⁵⁴ Barbara Grant and Sally Knowles, "Flights of Imagination: Academic Women Be(Com)Ing Writers," *International Journal for Academic Development* 5, no. 1 (January 2000): 6–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/136014400410060>.

⁵⁵ Stephen J. Ceci et al., "Women in Academic Science: A Changing Landscape," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 15, no. 3 (December 2014): 75–141, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100614541236>.

⁵⁶ Sarah D. Herrmann et al., "The Effects of a Female Role Model on Academic Performance and Persistence of Women in STEM Courses," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 38, no. 5 (September 2016): 258–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2016.1209757>.

⁵⁷ Marina Tomas, Jose Manuel Lavie, Maria del Mar Duran, and Cristina Guillamon, "omen in academic administration at the university", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 38 (4), 487-498, 2010

and scholarship. Furthermore, Obers in his findings, he identifies low professional self-esteem, inadequate funding, and family responsibilities as affecting female involvement in academic research and scholarship.⁵⁸ Hence, this often results in low output in research and scholarship among females, thereby resulting in low self-esteem.

Regarding the above, it suffices to state that several scholars have made substantial contributions to our understanding of female participation and involvement in education in general. Most of these scholars are from various jurisdictions such as South Africa, India, and Iran,⁵⁹ New Zealand, and several other countries. Furthermore, their focus is on various disciplines and on identifying the social factors that limit female participation in education. However, this study appears to examine the legal and social factors that limit women's scholarship in academic research, with Nigeria and Uganda as case studies. Hence, the above review of the literature will be relevant to this study by providing relevant details and data to support its findings.

Legal Framework on Women's Rights to Academic Research and Scholarship in Tertiary Institutions

In Nigeria, Indonesia, and Uganda, constitutions and legislations concern the upholding, respecting, and promoting of human rights. However, by implication, there are several provisions of the constitution and legislation that provide for quality education and recognition of gender inclusiveness and equal opportunity in these respective countries. In this regard, it will be relevant to examine and consider some of these laws in Nigeria, Indonesia, and Uganda as they concern the recognition and promotion of women's rights in academic research and scholarship.

In Nigeria, the constitution is considered the grundnorm of all laws, which compels the government and the governance to respect and observe at all times. In this regard, several provisions tend to recognise quality education as a major concern. Section 18(1) and (3) of the Nigerian Constitution reiterate the relevance and importance of education and further require the Nigerian government to promote and provide equal and adequate opportunities for both genders through its policies and practices.⁶⁰ Furthermore, section 42 of the Nigerian constitution prohibits any form of discrimination or denial of rights of Nigerian citizens on the grounds of sex or gender issues. In essence, it suffices to state that the Nigerian constitution mandates the Nigerian government to promote and provide quality education and forbid any form of discrimination against females from actively participating in

⁵⁸ Marina Tomàs et al., "Women in Academic Administration at the University," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 38, no. 4 (July 2010): 487–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143210368266>.

⁵⁹ Ladan Rahbari, "Women in Higher Education and Academia in Iran," *Sociology and Anthropology* 4, no. 11 (November 2016): 1003–10, <https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2016.041107>.

⁶⁰ Grace Ayodele Arowolo, "Protecting Women from Violence Through Legislation in Nigeria: Need to Enforce Anti-Discrimination Laws," *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 20, no. 4 (December 2020): 245–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229120971953>.

academic research and scholarship.⁶¹ However, a major challenge of the Nigerian constitution as it concerns section 18 is that the said provision is contained in chapter 2 of the Nigerian constitution, which is termed as fundamental objectives and principles of state policy.

In this regard, every provision in the chapter is considered not enforceable by section 6(6)(c) of the Nigerian constitution. Hence, quality education as term under section 18 of the Nigerian constitution is not a fundamental right, but a mere privilege which the Nigerian government could decide to respect and refuse to commit to promoting and providing.⁶² However, several other legislations in Nigeria also deal with and promote women's rights in academic research and scholarship. It must be noted that though education sponsorship, education grant, fellowship and loan are not a core fundamental rights that warrant Nigeria's attention. However, the Nigerian government has, through legislation such as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act, sought to promote and fund major academic activities.⁶³

This is concerning the fact that section 3(1) of the Act stipulates that the tertiary education trust fund should be channelled in funding educational activities, including research and publication. Section 20 of the act further stipulates that the fund shall be disbursed based on the guidelines stipulated by the board of trustees created by the act. Concerning this, it suffices to state that section 20 of the act and the entire act seem to be silent on gender equality in the disbursement of the funds in educational activities. Furthermore, Sections 1(b) and 5 of the National Education Act, Cap N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, stipulate that the Nigerian government must ensure equal opportunity in education at all levels. The said provision also stipulates that all forms of gender bias as it concerns the provision of academic opportunities, such as research grants, fellowships, and other academic opportunities, should be eliminated. In essence, this provision seems to secure, protect, and promote women's participation in academic research and scholarship. Furthermore, Section 4(1) of the Federal Character Commission Act, Cap F7, LFN 2004, reiterates the need for the Nigerian Federal Character Commission to ensure the equitable distribution of positions and resources across social strata.⁶⁴ This provision further strengthens the recognition of equal treatment of males and females in all fields, including academic. In this regard, it suffices to state that the legal framework concerning women's rights in academic research and scholarship in

⁶¹ Chinwe U. Nnama-Okechukwu et al., "Challenges That Limit Educational Opportunities for Girls in Enugu State, Southeast Nigeria: Need for Social Work Intervention," *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 10, no. 1 (December 2024): 124–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-024-00358-4>.

⁶² Babafemi Odunsi, Ogbale Ogancho O, and Oreoluwa Omotayo Oduniyi, "Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the Nigerian Constitution: Re-Examining the Non-Justiciability of Socio-Economic Rights," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 2, no. 3 (October 2025): 274–98, <https://doi.org/10.71239/jicl.v2i3.191>.

⁶³ Muwaffiq Jufri et al., "The Legal Issues Concerning Nigerian's Student Education Loan Act: A Lesson from Uganda Perspective," *Jurnal Hukum Novelty* 16, no. 1 (2025): 101–19, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26555/jhn.v16i1.29327>.

⁶⁴ Muwaffiq Jufri et al.

Nigeria appears weak and insufficiently direct in addressing the challenges that limit women's active participation in research and scholarship.

It must be noted that Indonesia, as a country, has done very well in securing and ensuring equal opportunities and treatment of gender as it concerns educational activities. This is concerning the fact that the Indonesian government has, through its constitution and several laws, addressed issues as they concern female rights to academic scholarship and research. The Indonesian Constitution, as stipulated in Article 31, provides for the rights of education of every citizen, requiring the state to ensure every citizen of Indonesia has equal and fair treatment as it concerns education activities, which include research and scholarship.⁶⁵ However, Article 28 C (1) further stipulates that every person possesses the right to self-development and the fulfilment of their basic desires, which in essence involve quality education. Furthermore, paragraph D (1) of the said section 28 stipulates that the government must provide equality and fair treatment at all costs. In this regard, Indonesia seems to recognise and promote equal opportunities as it concerns educational activities that also include research and scholarship. Also, it must be noted that through statutory laws, the Indonesian government has also addressed issues of promoting academic scholarship and research among females. One of such notable statutory laws includes Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 5(1) stipulates that there is equal opportunity and rights to education for all Indonesian citizens.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Article 11(1) of Law No. 20 of 2003 requires the Indonesian government to provide educational facilities and services to ensure quality education and ensure equal access for both genders. Furthermore, Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education though not specifically stating or mentioning females, its provisions seem to strengthen the principles of non-discrimination as they concern higher education in Indonesia.⁶⁷ This is concerning the fact that Article 6(a) of the Law No. 12 of 2012 prohibits any form of discrimination in higher education. Furthermore, Article 12 of the law stipulates that the provision of academic services and support to students of higher education should be based on equality. Hence, this provision recognises the need to promote equal opportunities in academic scholarship among males and females.⁶⁸ Concerning this, it suffices to state that one major challenge of the Indonesian constitution and statutory laws is that it does not specifically mention women, but rather stipulates “every citizen,” which in essence

⁶⁵ Andrew Rosser and Anuradha Joshi, “Courts and the Right to Education in Indonesia,” in *Education in Indonesia. Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), 153–67, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1878-2_9.

⁶⁶ Ija Suntana and Tedi Priatna, “Four Obstacles to the Quality of Constitutional Law Learning in Indonesia,” *Helijon* 9, no. 1 (January 2023): e12824, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helijon.2023.e12824>.

⁶⁷ Lea Simek and William H. Stewart, “International Student Recruitment and Support in Indonesia: A Systematic Review of Literature from 2012–2022,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 28, no. 5 (November 2024): 818–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153241235706>.

⁶⁸ Ima Apriliani and Lina Miftahul Jannah, “Implementation of Affirmative Scholarship Policy by Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education,” *Greenation International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (June 2025): 55–65, <https://doi.org/10.38035/gjilss.v3i2.377>.

refers to both male and female with no special relation to females. Furthermore, the constitution and the laws concerning the right to education hinge on equality;⁶⁹ however, if the concept of equality is strictly applied as envisaged by the Indonesian constitution and laws, certainly, females will be affected and marginalised. This is because the true interpretation and meaning of equality means giving everyone (both male and female) the same resources or opportunities, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances.

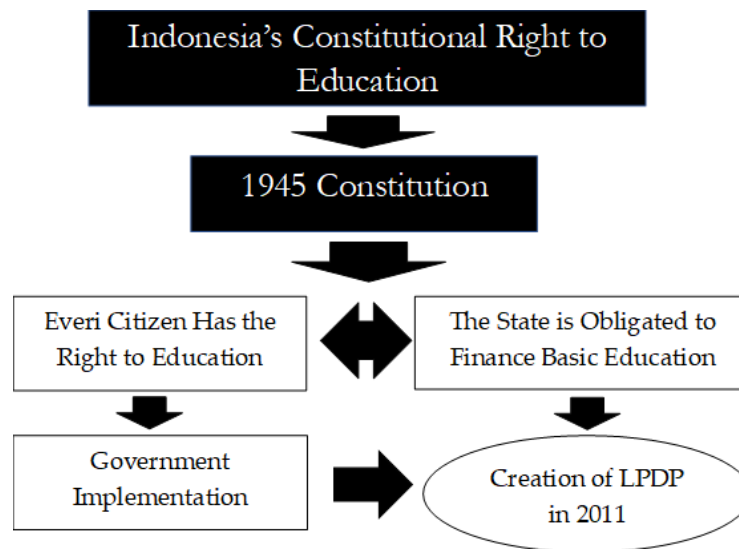


Figure 3: A diagrammatic flow of education rights in Indonesia

Source: Design by authors from data obtained from existing literature

Uganda's framework for championing women's rights, most especially as it concerns women's treatment in academic research and scholarship, seems to be very encompassing. This is concerning the fact that both the Uganda constitution and legislation seem to address most of the system barriers that often limit women's rights to scholarly research and other academic activities. Article 21 of the Uganda constitution affirms that all Ugandan citizens are considered equal and no one should be discriminated given its sex or gender affiliation. In essence, the provision of Article 21 of the Ugandan constitution strengthens the need for both men and women to be treated on an equal basis. However, article 33(1) seems to specifically call out the Uganda government to ensure that females are accorded equal dignity as same with men. In achieving this, section 33(2) of the Uganda constitution requires the government should provide the necessary facilities and opportunities to improve the welfare of female to enable them to attain the advancement of their potential. These facilities contemplated by article 33(2) of the Uganda constitution include the provision of education facilities that could enhance female participation in academic research, scholarship, and other activities.

⁶⁹ Hardiyanti Pratiwi et al., "Between Shortcut and Ethics: Navigating the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Writing Among Indonesian Doctoral Students," *European Journal of Education* 60, no. 2 (June 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.70083>.

Relevant in the Uganda constitution as it concerns promoting females' rights in academic scholarship and other academic activities is Article 33(4) and (5), which provide that women shall possess equal rights and treatment with men. Furthermore, the provision also stipulates that females possess the right to affirmative action to address any imbalance and inequality created by tradition and history.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Article 32(2) of the constitution further stipulates that the Ugandan government should take necessary affirmative action in protecting any marginalized group on the grounds of gender, disability, and age as a result of cultural and historical imbalance. The said provision further prohibits and restricts any religious laws, customs, and traditions that limit the dignity and welfare of women. To give meaning and effect to the provisions of the Uganda constitution that promote women's rights and welfare, Article 32(3) of the Uganda constitution further created the Equal Opportunity Commission to oversee and implement the provisions and spirit of the Uganda constitution.

These provisions of the Ugandan constitution collectively mandate and require the Ugandan government to ensure that women enjoy equal opportunities in education, including higher education, research, and other academic activities. Furthermore, the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act further strengthen and promote women's right to active academic scholarship and research.⁷¹ This is concerning the fact that section 24(1)(b) of the Act mandates the National Council for Higher Education to ensure equal opportunity to access to education through effective policies. Section 79 of the Act stipulates that the council must through policies ensure that in the allocation of scholarships, research grants, and academic positions, women are not disadvantaged. Furthermore, the Equal Opportunity Commission Act establishes the Equal Opportunities Commission for effective compliance in ensuring equal opportunities as stipulated by law. In this regard, section 14 of the Act mandates the Commission to investigate and address system challenges resulting in inequalities to education and academic development. This Act complements the Uganda constitutional provisions by providing for an institutional body that addresses institutional and systemic barriers within tertiary institutions that may restrict women's access to research and scholarship opportunities.⁷²

Concerning the above, it suffices to state that collectively, the legal instruments of Nigeria, Indonesia, and Uganda provide a basis for the advancement and protection of women's rights to academic research and scholarship in the higher education sector. However, it suffices to state that the Ugandan laws seem to be more direct and comprehensive in addressing systemic and institutional challenges

⁷⁰ Muwaffiq Jufri et al., "The Legal Issues Concerning Nigerian's Student Education Loan Act: A Lesson from Uganda Perspective."

⁷¹ Winnie V. Mitullah et al., "Assessing Women Participation in Higher Education Leadership: Case Studies of Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda," *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, no. 45 (June 2024): 130–47, <https://doi.org/10.5944/reec.45.2024.40066>.

⁷² Geoffrey Odaga, "Affirmative Action and Women in Uganda's Public University Education," *Higher Education Policy* 35, no. 1 (March 2022): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-020-00189-8>.

that may limit women's rights to academic research and scholarship. However, despite these laws that exist in these countries, there are fewer women involved in scholarly academic research and scholarship. Which, in essence, means there are still several legal and systemic challenges that often limit women's rights to academic research and scholarship. In this regard, it will be relevant to address these legal and systemic challenges.

Legal Challenges Limiting Women's Rights to Academic Research and Scholarship

It suffices to state that, though there are constitutional provisions and several laws that guarantee academic and quality education in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia. However, several legal challenges still exist that tend to affect and limit female active participation in academic research and scholarship. These challenges are presented in a tabular format below:

Table 1. Legal Challenges that Limit Women's Active Participation in Academic Research and Scholarships

Aspect	Nigeria	Uganda	Indonesia
Constitutional Guarantees	Seems to recognise rights to education, but contained in Chapter 2 of the constitution, which is not justiciable and often overridden by customary law.	The Constitution provides for rights to education and equal opportunity; weak implementation and political interference may limit its effect.	The constitution supports gender equality; however, Religious and local customary practices often limit its effect.
Legal Framework on Discrimination	There is an existence of anti-discrimination laws, however, the majority are outdated and poorly implemented or enforced in the academic domain.	Uganda is commendable for gender-focused policies, but institutional implementation may pose challenges.	There exists a gender equality law (such as Law No. 7/1984), but remote areas seem not to be well beneficial in enforcement.
Religious/Customary Law Influence	Sharia and Customary norms and practices, mainly in the Northern part of Nigeria, often undermine women's legal rights.	In some rural parts of Uganda, customary laws are still influential in female academic pursuit, sometimes contradicting statutory laws.	Sharia law in Adat and Aceh provinces often serves as an obstacle to women's academic research and scholarship.
Legal Access and Awareness	There seem to be very low legal programs on literacy and awareness of rights among	There are low legal literacy programs that raise awareness	Legal education is limited in rural provinces; women rarely seek legal redress.

Aspect	Nigeria	Uganda	Indonesia
	women, especially in rural areas.	of female academic legal protections.	
International Laws Championing women's rights	There is a constitutional limitation, in essence, they are considered not enforceable until the fulfillment of constitutional consideration	There is a constitutional limitation, in essence, they are considered not enforceable until the fulfillment of constitutional consideration	There is a constitutional limitation, in essence, they are considered not enforceable until the fulfillment of constitutional consideration

Source: Compiled by the author based on several references

When a comparative assessment of constitutional rights and liberties, pertaining to women's rights to engage in research and scholarship in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia, is undertaken, it is clear there is a disconnect between the legal framework and socio-cultural realities. Although all three constitutions provide for entitlement to education and equality of rights based on gender, the relevant jurisdiction of the above rights will depend upon the relevant jurisdiction of the applicable rights. For instance, in Nigeria, the constitutional guarantees articulated in Chapter 2 are non-justiciable and violate customary law and other laws, such as Sharia law, to a greater extent in the northern sections of the country, thus limiting women's effective access to educational opportunity and engagement in research. In Uganda, while the expressly provided for education obligations promise equality in educational opportunity, not having the institutions to back these promises up, political manipulation, and local customary laws in rural regions make the practical implementation of rights to education and gender equality ineffectual. Indonesia also has educational rights and guarantees for women's university access that promote gender equality; however, the continued existence of Sharia law in some provinces and customary practice in general reduces the burdens of rights guarantees, in terms of granting women full educational access.

In all three jurisdictions, there are anti-discrimination laws, yet the laws either lack implementation, are ineffective, or older and less transformative legislation is in effect, which points to a gap between stating that these laws exist and the way they operate in execution. Furthermore, the low levels of legal literacy and awareness of their rights among women, especially in rural and remote contexts, further restrict access to redress or protection, and international human rights instruments that support women's rights in academic or research practices are more symbolic than practical, as constitutional limitations only serve to slow their enforceability.⁷³ The narrative concludes with the observation that while constitutional and legal

⁷³ Onyeka C Okongwu, "Are Laws the Appropriate Solution: The Need to Adopt Non-Policy Measures in Aid of the Implementation of Sex Discrimination Laws in Nigeria," *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 21, no. 1 (March 22, 2021): 26–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229120978915>.

frameworks have established a formal basis for women's rights in research and scholarship, systemic, cultural and institutional barriers to women's practical rights persist, which means that reform is required to accommodate and combine rights-based norms with enforceable domestic rights infrastructure and empowerment programs for awareness.

Systemic Challenges Limiting Women's Rights to Academic Research and Scholarship

These systemic and institutional issues in women's participation in academic research and scholarship are embedded in institutional structures, administrative practices, and socio-cultural attitudes.⁷⁴ In Nigeria, this begins with unequal access to higher education. Despite assertions that there may be equity in enrollment between males and females, apparent inequities persist in fields classically dominated by males.⁷⁵ Female academics often lack support in pursuing postgraduate and doctoral studies, a requirement for their research careers.⁷⁶ Also, Nigerian academic institutions mostly lack gender-sensitive policies and structures such as child-care facilities, flexible working arrangements, and dedicated mentorship schemes, which ultimately hinder women from balancing their work and social lives. The more or less slightly different but equally alarming systemic issues emerge from Indonesia. The traditional gender roles and religious-cultural expectations still prevail in academic institutions, despite gender equity having considerable attention in public discourse and policy.⁷⁷ Women are steered towards certain "acceptable" disciplines such as education, nursing, or home economics, which are grossly underfunded and underappreciated.⁷⁸ Structural hierarchies within universities continue to favor male researchers in funding opportunities, publication recognition, and promotion.⁷⁹ Even with gender policies, the implementation is often a major challenge and usually fails to involve women's voices, resulting in tokenistic involvement. In all three countries, women researchers are also allocated more teaching and administrative workloads given their capacity to perform well, leaving them with little time to

⁷⁴ AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm, "Breaking Barriers: Muslim Women's Scholarship and Engagement in Higher Education Leadership in Nigeria," *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 6, no. 2 (March 2025): 14–26, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jems.00027>.

⁷⁵ Olajumoke O. Alabi et al., "Reexamining Gender Inequality in Accessing Resources and Education Stance in Reducing Masculine Gender Hegemony in Nigeria," *Heliyon* 10, no. 19 (October 2024): e38636, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e38636>.

⁷⁶ Folasade Hunsu, "Women's Studies in Nigeria: A Critical Perspective," in *Transformations in Africana Studies* (London: Routledge, 2022), 218–35, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003293897-17>.

⁷⁷ Oluwakemi Igiebor, "Women, Academic Leadership and the 'Constricting' Gender Equity Policies in Nigerian Universities: An Integrated Feminist Approach," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 43, no. 4 (July 2021): 338–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2020.1836569>.

⁷⁸ Lorretta F. C. Ntoimo and Uche Isiugo-Abanihe, "Patriarchy and Singlehood Among Women in Lagos, Nigeria," *Journal of Family Issues* 35, no. 14 (December 2014): 1980–2008, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X13511249>.

⁷⁹ Aidonojie et al., "Legal and Socioeconomic Issues Concerning the Nigeria Higher Institution Loan Act 2023."

conduct research and writing.⁸⁰ This often creates a gap where fewer women are required to produce publication or project requirements required for promotion or other academic enhancement, therefore resulting in women's underrepresentation among top academic ranks or scholars.⁸¹

Furthermore, conventional gender stereotypes and cultural values are central forces often limiting women from undertaking scholarly academic research work in Nigeria, Indonesia, and Uganda. In most societies in these countries, women are expected to place higher importance on home responsibilities such as marriage, childbearing, and caring for dependents compared to professional or academic pursuits.⁸² In Nigeria, for instance, cultural expectations continue to place the homemaker role at the centre of women's lives, often discouraging women from pursuing postgraduate studies or embarking on careers as long-term researchers. Similarly, in the majority of Ugandan societies, girls are raised from an early age to assume subservient roles, and the desire for learning is seen as secondary to shouldering family duties. This strong internalized cultural socialization demeans women's faith and aspirations to pursue academic research. In Indonesia, although the nation has gender equality policies, schools in the rural or religious provinces are administered based on local cultural traditions (*adat*) that uphold patriarchal practices.⁸³ These tend to prevent women from pursuing further education and careers in academics after marriage.⁸⁴ Moreover, religious officials in some societies have a strong influence on women's value of education and social norms, and their approval or disapproval can empower or disable women's educational endeavors.⁸⁵ Even in societies with liberal institutional policy, cultural pressure to conform to the traditional is usually adequate to discourage women from taking advantage of available academically in male disciplines.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Souad Ezzerouali, "Expanding the Authority of Muhtasib to Protect Consumers: A Comparison between Moroccan Law and Islamic Qanun of Aceh," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 7, no. 2 (2025): 161–91, <https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v7i2.29151>.

⁸¹ Ajibade Adisa et al., "Social Dominance, Hypermasculinity, and Career Barriers in Nigeria."

⁸² Fida Yus Faizah, M Falikul Isbah, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Understanding Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training in Indonesia: Gendered Transition in the Changing Cultural Context," *Young*, June 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/11033088251345645>.

⁸³ Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, Dina Afrianty, and M. Hilali Basya, "The Hermeneutical Approach in Indonesia's Contemporary Campaign for Gender Equality by Indonesian Progressive Muslim Women Scholars," *Contemporary Islam*, September 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-025-00587-y>.

⁸⁴ Nor Ismah, "Women's Fatwa-Making in Indonesia: Gender, Authority, and Everyday Legal Practice," *International Journal of Islam in Asia* 4, no. 1–2 (April 2024): 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25899996-20241073>.

⁸⁵ Yudi Rusfiana and Dewi Kurniasih, "The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Promoting Social and Political Change in Indonesia," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (August 2024): 187–206, <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2154>.

⁸⁶ Qorinah Estiningtyas Sakilah Adnani, Andrea Gilkison, and Judith McAra-Couper, "A Historical Narrative of the Development of Midwifery Education in Indonesia," *Women and Birth* 36, no. 1 (February 2023): e175–78, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2022.06.007>.

Religious beliefs and interpretations also have a profound influence on the educational opportunities for women in such regions.⁸⁷ In the predominantly Muslim regions of Nigeria and Indonesia,⁸⁸ religious books have been employed to shape conservative interpretations that have been employed to legitimize women's movement, contacts, and leadership roles.⁸⁹ For instance, in Northern Nigeria, women's participation by Islamic groups in certain communities puts cultural obstacles to women's enrolment in co-educational institutions or in educational settings where they can freely mix with men.⁹⁰ Even though such practices are not uniformly practiced and promoted by all Islamic scholars,⁹¹ their existence in local cultures discourages women from applying for research opportunities, especially those that entail traveling, public speaking, or engaging in mixed-gender academic seminars.⁹²

Also, in all three countries, women academics who defy cultural and religious expectations to pursue academic careers are likely to be socially stigmatized, ostracized, or attacked by their communities.⁹³ Women who go abroad to attend conferences, pull late hours in laboratories, or carry out research abroad can become the objects of suspicion or blame for having deserted their customary roles.⁹⁴ In some cases, this cultural pressure often frustrates women to leave research careers too soon or to accept lower-grade employment that allows them to maintain family or social approval.⁹⁵ Fear of being labeled "too ambitious" or "unfeminine" continues to influence choices made by women regarding research opportunities.

⁸⁷ Emeka Okafor and Monica Ewomazino Akokuwebe, "Women and Leadership in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects Sociology View Project Self Sponsored View Project," *Developing Country Studies* 5, no. July 2015 (2015): 1–11.

⁸⁸ David Kloos and Nor Ismah, "Siting Islamic Feminism: The Indonesian Congress of Women Islamic Scholars and the Challenge of Challenging Patriarchal Authority," *History and Anthropology* 34, no. 5 (October 2023): 818–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2023.2249495>.

⁸⁹ Intan Erwani and Anisa Suryani Siregar, "The Role of Women in Islamic Sacred Texts: A Critical Study of Women's Narratives and Authority in Islamic Tradition," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 106.1 (December 2024), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.6>.

⁹⁰ Omonye Omoigberale, "Navigating the Fault Lines: The Paradoxes of Majoritarian Democracy and Minority Rights in Nigeria's Multi-Ethnic Polity," *Peace Review* 37, no. 2 (April 2025): 271–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2025.2493662>.

⁹¹ Yumi Zuhani Has-Yun Hashim, "Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 2025): 126–31, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v10i1.699>.

⁹² Nur Faizah et al., "The Role of Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) in the Search for Gender Equality-Based Islamic Law," *Al-'Adalah* 21, no. 2 (December 2024): 323, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v21i2.23698>.

⁹³ Adeyemi Balogun, "Guiding Muslim Women in the University: The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria Women's Programmes in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 2023): 268–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2023.2238267>.

⁹⁴ Hassan Malami Alkanchi et al., "The Role of Muslim Women Education in National Transformation for Human Development," *Fabima* 3, no. 2 (July 2024): 171–91, <https://doi.org/10.54622/fabima.v3i2.319>.

⁹⁵ Mohammad Fahri Husaeni, Aceng Kosasih, and Udin Supriadi, "Challenging Gender Mainstreaming Through the Narrative of Islamic Youth Organization: A Case Study on PERSIS in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 2023): 97–120, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2023.2186631>.

Cultural and religious norms, when unaddressed, thus serve as effective systemic barriers that cannot be eliminated through institutional policies.

The challenge is also compounded by restricted mentorship and professional training. In Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia, women scholars routinely report a lack of senior female mentors to guide them through the complexities of academic advancement. Wherever mentoring programs exist, they are usually informal and lack structure. Further, workplace evaluations apply gender-biased performance metrics that fail to account for gendered experiences, such as career interruptions due to childbirth or domestic care work. These systemic gaps in oversight undermine the competitiveness of women academics and discourage long-term participation in research professions. In this regard, systemic problems facing women in academic scholarship and research in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia are intricate and interconnected.⁹⁶ They transcend institutional leadership, access to funds, professional support, and socio-cultural norms.⁹⁷ While all countries have made some level of progress in acknowledging these issues, gaps remain in the structural adjustments required to build equitable research milieus.⁹⁸ It requires deliberate, collective efforts by governments, universities, and civil society bodies to dismantle biases within institutions, enforce gender-insensitive policies, and create a scholarly culture that is equally nurturing of women's contributions.

Conclusion

The study reveals that whereas women in Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia have demonstrated their capacity to contribute to research and scholarship, their rights to academic freedom remain severely constrained by combined constellations of legal lacunae, institutional inadequacies, and socio-cultural impediments. These restrictions are not only detrimental to the individual's self-actualization and professional growth but also counter the broader objectives of inclusivity and sustainable national development. Poor enforcement of existing laws, an institutional culture that ignores gender disparities, and age-old cultural litanies that claim the woman belongs in the kitchen rather than in classrooms are a few examples of existing factors that block the path to gender equality among higher levels of education and research contexts. If this trend continues without intervention, women will continue being marginalized in academia, thus depriving the said countries of much-needed diverse viewpoints and innovativeness to compete

⁹⁶ Anne C. Campbell, Erin Kelly-Weber, and Chelsea Lavalley, "University Teaching and Citizenship Education as Sustainable Development in Ghana and Nigeria: Insight from International Scholarship Program Alumni," *Higher Education* 81, no. 1 (January 2021): 129–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00484-3>.

⁹⁷ Oluwakemi D. Udoh, Sheriff F. Folarin, and Victor A. Isumonah, "The Influence of Religion and Culture on Women's Rights to Property in Nigeria," ed. Emmanuel O Amoo, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 7, no. 1 (January 2020): 1750244, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1750244>.

⁹⁸ Alexis Zickafoose et al., "Barriers and Challenges Affecting Quality Education (Sustainable Development Goal #4) in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030," *Sustainability* 16, no. 7 (March 2024): 2657, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16072657>.

globally. Given the systemic and legal challenges outlined above, the study offers several recommendations. Foremost, the study recognizes that gender equality laws and their implementation in academic institutions require comprehensive legal reforms across all three countries, without delay. Alongside this, reforms in educational policies and institutional practices should cohere around the central framework of gender mainstreaming, creating safe and inclusive environments and ensuring maternity protection and flexible working arrangements. Further to this, governments must channel funding into women's research projects, academic study grants, and capacity-building initiatives. Mentorship and leadership training programs should also be initiated to support women to ascend to senior academic positions. Changing gender norms requires cultural orientation campaigns that tap religious and community leaders to advocate for women and their contributions to academic work. Only integrated reforms will provide an academic rights framework that is equitable for women, thereby fully enabling them to advance society.

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