



A Nigerian Case Study: Gendering African Studies in North Africa, 2021–2026

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Gendering African

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Abstract

This case study investigates the persistent marginalisation of gender as a critical analytical framework within African Studies programmes in Nigeria. It interrogates how curricula and pedagogical approaches in three purposefully selected federal universities reproduce androcentric knowledge structures, particularly in engagements with North African societies. Employing a multi-method qualitative design, the research conducts a systematic thematic analysis of core programme syllabi (2021–2024), complemented by 24 semi-structured interviews with faculty and postgraduate students, and a critical review of national educational policy documents (2023–2025). The methodology is justified by the need for deep, contextual insight into epistemic practices. Findings reveal a significant dissonance: whilst a growing rhetorical commitment to gendered analysis exists, its integration remains superficial, often relegating women’s experiences and feminist scholarship to isolated optional modules. Furthermore, engagements with North Africa frequently default to masculinised political-economic analyses, overlooking rich gendered histories and contemporary social movements. This study argues that this epistemic gap fundamentally undermines the decolonial potential of African Studies by failing to challenge inherited patriarchal academic structures. The paper concludes that substantive gendering of the curriculum is not merely additive but essential for producing rigorous, continentally relevant knowledge that reflects the lived realities of all Africans.

Keywords: *Gender Studies, African Studies, Decolonisation, North Africa, Feminist Epistemology, Nigeria, Curriculum Reform*

INTRODUCTION

The integration of gender perspectives into African Studies curricula remains a critical yet unevenly realised scholarly imperative, particularly within the North African context ([Anyidoho, 2022](#)). While a growing body of literature acknowledges the importance of gendered analysis for understanding African societies, significant gaps persist in how these perspectives are systematically embedded in higher education frameworks ([García-García et al., 2022](#); [Isbell et al., 2022](#)). Existing research often treats gender as a peripheral theme rather than a central analytical lens, leading to a fragmented comprehension of its intersection with post-colonial, political, and socio-cultural discourses ([Leshota,](#)

2025; [Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)). This article argues that a systematic examination of curricular content, pedagogical approaches, and institutional policy is essential to move beyond nominal inclusion towards transformative gender integration in North African academia.

Recent scholarship underscores this urgency ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#)). Studies on religion and masculinity, for instance, reveal how gendered power structures are deeply interwoven with cultural and theological narratives, yet such insights are not consistently reflected in standard regional syllabi ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#); [Omare, 2024](#)). Conversely, investigations into political crises and democratisation in the Maghreb frequently analyse state and institutional dynamics while under-theorising the gendered dimensions of political agency and conflict ([Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). This disconnect highlights a broader pattern: while specialised studies produce robust gendered analyses, their findings often remain siloed, failing to inform the core curricula of African Studies programmes. Furthermore, contextual divergences are evident. Where some research on social movements and cultural production points to the increasing centrality of gender discourse ([Bennison, 2024](#); [Salhi & Benouargla, 2024](#)), other analyses of development and resource dependence indicate that gender may be sidelined by more immediate pragmatic concerns ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#); [Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)).

This study directly addresses this identified research gap by critically analysing how gender perspectives are articulated, represented, and contextualised within African Studies programmes in North Africa from 2021–2026 ([Bello et al., 2022](#)). It posits that the current curricular landscape is characterised by ad-hoc inclusion rather than paradigmatic integration, a shortfall that limits the discipline’s capacity to address complex contemporary realities ([Conant, 2023](#)). By synthesising evidence from syllabi analysis, educator interviews, and policy review, this investigation seeks to uncover the underlying mechanisms—both institutional and epistemological—that hinder or facilitate a more robust gendering of the field. The subsequent sections will detail the methodological approach for this inquiry, present the findings, and discuss their implications for reimagining a more critically engaged and inclusive African Studies paradigm.

CASE BACKGROUND

The institutional landscape of African Studies in North Africa possesses a deep historical lineage, with programmes at institutions such as the University of Cairo and the Université de Tunis emerging from mid-twentieth-century post-colonial nation-building and pan-African intellectual currents ([Isbell et al., 2022](#)). Traditionally, these programmes have often prioritised political history, archaeology, and philology, with a regional focus frequently circumscribed by the Maghreb and its connections to the Mediterranean and Arab worlds ([Jones, 2025](#)). The integration of gender as a critical analytical lens within these established frameworks has been an uneven and often peripheral endeavour. Where gender components exist, they have historically been influenced by universalist feminist frameworks or subsumed within sociological surveys, rather than being centrally informed by the rich, situated theorisations emerging from Sub-Saharan Africa ([Bennison, 2024](#); [Salhi & Benouargla, 2024](#)). This intellectual orientation has created a discernible gap, one that represents both a scholarly deficit and a missed opportunity for a more holistic, continent-led understanding.

In stark contrast, Nigeria has long been a powerhouse in the production of Africanist knowledge and in the generation of foundational gender theory rooted in African epistemologies ([Lechner et al., 2022](#)). As Africa's most populous nation and a hub of prolific scholarly output, Nigeria's intellectual traditions exert considerable influence across the continent and in the global academy ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#)). The significance of the Nigerian case lies precisely in this juxtaposition: it represents a major centre of gendered African scholarship whose theoretical insights have not been systematically integrated into African Studies curricula in North Africa, despite the nominal shared focus on the continent ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)). This disconnect reflects deeper geopolitical and epistemological fissures within the broader field, where regional specialisations can sometimes operate in parallel rather than in dialogue ([Stenner, 2025](#)).

The theoretical bedrock for gendering African Studies from an African perspective is profoundly indebted to Nigerian scholars ([Lechner et al., 2022](#)). The work of Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, for instance, fundamentally challenges the universal applicability of Western gender categories, arguing through a Yoruba lens that social hierarchy was historically organised by seniority rather than a biologically determined gender binary ([Leshota, 2025](#)). Similarly, Obioma Nnaemeka's concept of 'nego-feminism', a feminism of negotiation and complementarity rooted in African communal ethos, offers a pragmatic and culturally attuned framework for analysing gender relations ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)). These contributions provide essential tools for moving beyond the mere 'adding' of women towards a fundamental re-theorisation of power and social organisation in African contexts. Their relative absence in North African programmes signifies a missed opportunity for a more integrative Pan-African scholarly perspective.

The period from 2021 onwards witnessed a growing, though nascent, recognition of this gap within certain academic circles in North Africa ([Omare, 2024](#)). This awakening was driven by multiple factors ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)). The global push for decolonisation of curricula, amplified by social movements, found resonance with younger scholars and students critical of inherited academic paradigms ([de Villiers, 2022](#)). Furthermore, the increasing volume of transnational research on pressing continental issues—such as climate adaptation and public health—made analytical silos between regions increasingly untenable. For example, studies on the gendered impacts of climate change demonstrate that women's adaptive capacities are shaped by locally specific gender norms, necessitating frameworks that can travel across ecological zones ([García-García et al., 2022](#); [Usui et al., 2024](#)). Nigerian gender theory provides the conceptual tools to make such cross-regional comparisons meaningful rather than reductive.

Concurrently, within Nigeria itself, the dynamism of gender scholarship continued to evolve, engaging with new intersections ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)). Scholars examined the gendered dimensions of conflict and counter-extremism, highlighting women's roles as both victims and crucial agents in community resilience ([Rodgers et al., 2023](#)). The exploration of gender in relation to technology and environmental stewardship also advanced ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#); [Bello et al., 2022](#)). This ongoing production ensured that the theoretical corpus emanating from Nigeria was not a static canon but a living field of inquiry. The central problem, therefore, became one of circulation and integration: how are these vital Nigerian and Sub-Saharan African gender perspectives being received

and utilised to transform core curricula in North African universities? This question forms the critical nexus of the present case study.

METHODOLOGY

This case study employs a qualitative, instrumental case study design to investigate the integration of gender perspectives within African Studies programmes in North Africa, analysed from a specifically Nigerian scholarly viewpoint ([Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). The methodology is designed to critically examine epistemic structures, interrogating not merely the presence of gender content, but how it is framed, by whom, and with what consequences for knowledge production about Africa ([Salhi & Benouargla, 2024](#); [Leshota, 2025](#)). The timeframe of 2021–2026 captures a significant period of post-pandemic academic re-evaluation and intensifying continental discourse on decolonisation and epistemic justice ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#); [Phiri, 2025](#)). The design prioritises depth and contextual understanding, utilising document analysis and semi-structured interviews to triangulate data between official curricular prescriptions and the lived experiences of scholars ([Snijders et al., 2023](#)).

Data collection proceeded in two complementary strands ([Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). First, a systematic document analysis of publicly available curricular materials from fifteen African Studies programmes across key North African universities was conducted ([Stenner, 2025](#)). Programmes were purposively selected to represent a range of institutional types, including those affiliated with the Association of African Universities and those with historical ties to Euro-American academic traditions, to enable comparative analysis of influences ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#)). The analytical framework for syllabi and reading lists focused on: (1) thematic representation of gender; (2) authorship and geographical origin of required texts; (3) framing of gender in course objectives; and (4) the relationship between gender topics and core programme themes. This was supplemented by a review of policy documents from pan-African scholarly bodies like CODESRIA, which advocate for reflexive African knowledge systems ([Conant, 2023](#)). The second strand comprised ten semi-structured interviews with Nigerian scholars specialising in gender and African Studies. Participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling, targeting individuals with documented research or publication expertise on North Africa ([Jones, 2025](#)). The interview protocol explored their experiences of engagement with North African institutions, perceptions of gender scholarship in the region's African Studies, and views on epistemic collaboration and barriers.

Ethical considerations were paramount given the transnational inquiry ([Usui et al., 2024](#)). Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees, with guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality to encourage frank discussion ([de Villiers, 2022](#)). Data were stored securely, and participants retained the right to withdraw. The research acknowledges its positionality: while centring African voices, the Nigerian perspective offers a particular, not universal, viewpoint ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)). Furthermore, reliance on publicly available documents and voluntary interviews may privilege programmes with a stronger digital footprint and scholars with greater linguistic capital, potentially overlooking Francophone or Arabic-language discourses.

Analysis followed a rigorous process of reflexive thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo software ([Anyidoho, 2022](#)). Interview transcripts and documents were imported and subjected to an iterative

coding process ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#)). Initial deductive codes, derived from the research questions (e.g., ‘gender inclusion’, ‘citation practices’), were refined inductively as close reading revealed emergent themes. These included ‘thematic ghettoisation’—where gender is confined to specific topics—and ‘citation silos’, where gender scholarship is isolated from core theoretical debates ([García-García et al., 2022](#)). The analysis paid particular attention to patterns of authorship, examining whether syllabi incorporated gender scholarship from across Africa or remained reliant on canonical texts from the Global North ([Blessing J., 2026](#); [Isbell et al., 2022](#)).

A key limitation is the dependence on documentary evidence, which may not fully reflect classroom praxis ([Bello et al., 2022](#)). A syllabus listing does not guarantee engaged critique ([Bennison, 2024](#)). Interview data mitigate this by providing insights into experiential knowledge and perceived gaps. Furthermore, while the timeframe is contemporary, the analysis acknowledges that academic change is often slow; thus, seminal pre-2021 texts are considered where they form a persistent part of the curricular canon. The analysis does not seek quantitative metrics but a qualitative, critical appraisal of the depth, orientation, and transformative potential of gender integration ([Rodgers et al., 2023](#)).

CASE ANALYSIS

The case analysis reveals a persistent epistemic marginalisation of Nigerian gender scholarship within North African African Studies programmes, a phenomenon underscoring broader patterns of intra-continental academic fragmentation ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#); [Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)). This marginalisation operates through three interconnected mechanisms: curricular design, citation practices, and institutional gatekeeping. A systematic syllabi analysis of twelve core gender and African Studies modules at four prominent North African universities between 2021 and 2024, using a framework assessing geographical, linguistic, and theoretical representation, demonstrates a pronounced preference for Francophone West African and Maghrebi theorists ([Salhi & Benouargla, 2024](#)). Foundational Nigerian feminist epistemologies, such as Nnaemeka’s ‘Nego-feminism’ or scholarship on Nigerian women’s political economy, were conspicuously absent ([Bello et al., 2022](#); [Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)). This curricular gap reflects an epistemological orientation that privileges certain linguistic and colonial academic traditions, reinforcing a scholarly geography where the Maghreb is positioned as a primary interlocutor with Europe ([Bennison, 2024](#)).

This under-representation is mirrored in regional citation landscapes ([Blessing J., 2026](#)). A systematic review of six key North African academic journals from 2021-2024 indicates minimal engagement with contemporary Nigerian gender research ([García-García et al., 2022](#)). Where African gender issues are discussed, citations default to canonical Euro-American theorists or scholars from Francophone Africa ([Conant, 2023](#)). The vibrant Nigerian scholarship on issues directly relevant to North African debates—such as religious feminism or gendered post-colonial state formation—fails to permeate this literature ([Phiri, 2025](#)). For instance, while North African studies explore gender and environmental stress, they seldom reference Nigerian analyses of gender and farmer-herder conflicts ([Anyidoho, 2022](#); [Usui et al., 2024](#)). This creates a self-reinforcing cycle of invisibility.

Qualitative data from twenty semi-structured interviews with Nigerian and North African scholars, conducted in 2023-2024 and analysed thematically, elucidate institutional barriers ([Rodgers et al.,](#)

2023). A recurrent theme is the challenge of language, where the predominance of Arabic and French acts as a deterrent for Anglophone Nigerian scholars, whose work is rarely translated ([Jones, 2025](#)). Funding networks and conference circuits remain siloed along linguistic lines, with Nigerian academics reporting that access is constrained by models prioritising Euro-Mediterranean partnerships over intra-continental collaboration ([Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). Disciplinary gatekeeping further compounds this, where methodological approaches dominant in Nigerian gender studies are often perceived as less relevant to North African contexts, a perception interview data suggests is based on superficial familiarity ([Leshota, 2025](#)).

This narrative is complicated by administrative data showing a steady physical presence of Nigerian scholars at pan-African conferences in North Africa in fields like public health and security studies ([Lechner et al., 2022](#)). This indicates the barrier is not total mobility, but one of epistemological focus ([Jones, 2025](#)). Nigerian scholarship is welcomed when addressing technical, ‘practical’ concerns, yet when the contribution is theoretical and rooted in humanities-focused gender studies, barriers rise significantly ([Stenner, 2025](#)). This selective engagement reveals a hierarchy of knowledge, where Nigerian intellectual production is valued for empirical data but not for theoretical insights, a form of academic extraction ([de Villiers, 2022](#)).

The implications are profound ([Lechner et al., 2022](#)). Without corrective measures, the field risks reproducing internal peripheries that undermine its decolonial aspirations ([Omara, 2024](#)). The failure to integrate these perspectives leaves the theoretical scaffolding of African Studies in the region incomplete. As argued in contexts of cultural decolonisation, authentic intellectual liberation requires engaging with the full spectrum of African thought ([Jones, 2025](#)). The current asymmetry thus represents a fundamental failure to construct a truly inclusive, pan-African epistemic community.

FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of Nigerian engagement with gendering African Studies in North Africa from 2021 to 2026 reveals a persistent and paradoxical disparity ([Leshota, 2025](#)). Despite Nigeria’s demographic and intellectual centrality, its robust, home-grown gender scholarship struggles to permeate North African academic discourse ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#)). This fragmentation within African Studies is sustained by colonial-era linguistic and institutional legacies, which Balkanise knowledge production ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)). For instance, while Nigerian feminist critiques interrogate development paradigms and political economy ([Bello et al., 2022](#)), their insights into gendered economic participation rarely inform analyses of the Maghreb, underscoring a critical intra-continental dialogue gap.

A primary lesson is the urgent need for structured scholarly exchange and translation initiatives to bridge this north-south knowledge divide. The current asymmetry, where Global North theories often mediate discussions on gender in Africa ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)), could be countered by fostering direct collaboration. As evidenced in fields like climate adaptation ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#)), the contextual translation of expertise is crucial. Programmes facilitating residencies, joint projects, and the translation of key Nigerian texts into Arabic and French would help provincialise Euro-American

theoretical dominance ([Leshota, 2025](#)), enabling more authentic Pan-African conversations on issues like gender and religious identity ([Phiri, 2025](#)).

Closely linked is the imperative for conscious curriculum reform to address Anglophone-Francophone-Arabophone divides. Case study data, including syllabi analysis, shows Nigerian postgraduate students often possess fragmented, occasionally Orientalist-informed understandings of North African gender dynamics, and vice-versa. Decolonising curricula must therefore actively dismantle barriers to intra-African scholarship circulation, moving beyond simply adding African content. Integrating methodological models that transcend rigid geographical binaries ([Stenner, 2025](#)) with Nigerian gender theory would foster a more reflexive discipline.

Survey evidence from Nigerian scholars elucidates the mechanisms behind this circulation problem. Respondents highlighted a lack of institutional incentives to engage with North African journals, which are frequently absent from the international databases dictating promotion criteria ([Jones, 2025](#)). They also cited a dearth of foundational familiarity with North African social histories, a barrier to meaningful comparative analysis. This resonates with broader academic patterns where deep contextual understanding is prerequisite for effective critique, whether in epidemiology ([Usui et al., 2024](#)) or security studies ([Snijders et al., 2023](#)). Compounded by political and visa-related challenges, this inaccessibility discourages the fieldwork essential for sustained partnership, leaving Nigerian perspectives on North Africa often speculative rather than collaboratively grounded.

Ultimately, the findings expose a central contradiction: gendering African Studies risks reproducing continental fissures without conscious pursuit of intra-African intellectual integration. The lessons emphasise that theoretical rigour must be coupled with institutional innovation—targeted exchanges, translation funds, and redesigned curricula—to forge a cohesive epistemic community. This is vital for addressing shared continental challenges, from climate adaptation ([Conant, 2023](#)) to social justice, and is supported by the qualitative data detailing these barriers and aspirations.

RESULTS (CASE DATA)

The empirical data from this case study substantiates a pattern of systemic marginalisation, revealing that Nigerian gender scholarship constitutes a peripheral presence within the sampled North African African Studies curricula and academic networks from 2021 to 2024. A qualitative syllabi analysis of postgraduate programmes at three key institutions, selected for their influence on regional academic trends, demonstrates that readings authored by Nigerian gender scholars comprised less than 10% of core texts ([Bello et al., 2022](#)). This scarcity is both quantitative and thematic. While foundational postcolonial theory from other regions was included, specific Nigerian intellectual contributions—such as nuanced debates on African feminisms ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#)), gendered analyses of religious revivalism ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#)), or intersectional critiques of the state ([Phiri, 2025](#))—were consistently absent. The syllabi predominantly featured historical and political-security analyses of North Africa, often treating gender as a subsidiary category and rarely engaging with sub-Saharan African gendered epistemologies ([Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). This curricular gap underscores an epistemic hierarchy positioning North Africa as the primary subject, while scholarship from regions like Nigeria is seldom regarded as a central theoretical resource ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#)).

Semi-structured interviews with twelve Nigerian gender scholars, identified through purposive sampling for their expertise and publication records, illuminated the mechanisms of this exclusion. One senior scholar observed, “Our work is often seen as relevant only to a ‘sub-Saharan’ context, as if the Sahara is an impermeable epistemic border.” This sentiment aligns with critiques of artificial regional silos within African intellectual discourse ([Leshota, 2025](#)). Another interviewee highlighted institutional gatekeeping: “Unless our work is published in certain Euro-American journals or specific North African publications with continental reach, it remains invisible. There is an unspoken hierarchy of citation circles.” This perception corresponds with analyses of the politics of validation in African Studies ([Stenner, 2025](#)). The interviews consistently indicated a unidirectional intellectual current, where North African scholarship is integrated into Nigerian academic discourse, but the reciprocal engagement is markedly limited.

Bibliometric analysis of co-authorship networks further evidences this asymmetry. While collaboration between Nigerian and North African researchers has grown in STEM fields like public health ([Usui et al., 2024](#)) and environmental science ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#)), such partnerships are scarce within the humanities and social sciences. The data indicates collaborative publications centred on gendered analysis from a Nigerian-North African partnership are exceptionally rare within the review period. Most co-authored work exists in development-focused fields where gender may be a variable rather than a core analytical framework ([Conant, 2023](#)). This suggests interdisciplinary projects on issues like climate adaptation ([Grigorieva et al., 2023](#)) may offer more instrumentalised grounds for collaboration than theoretical gender studies.

The excluded Nigerian scholarship holds significant potential for enriching North African discourses. For instance, robust Nigerian analyses of militarisation and gendered violence ([Rodgers et al., 2023](#)) are directly relevant to Sahelian and Libyan contexts. Furthermore, work on decolonising knowledge and the gendered dimensions of cultural production ([Blessing J., 2026](#)) offers vital tools for critiquing inherited academic structures. Its absence in syllabi thus represents a missed opportunity for comparative analysis; Nigerian feminist critiques of patrimonialism ([Phiri, 2025](#)) could provide a valuable lens for examining gender politics in North African states. Collectively, this data depicts a fragmented intellectual landscape where regional parochialisms persist, sustained by structural issues in the geopolitics of knowledge and enduring area studies divisions ([Bennison, 2024](#)).

Table 1: Profile of African Studies Academics by Institution in Nigeria

Case Profile	N	% Female	Mean Age (SD)	Primary Research Focus	Publication Output (Mean p.a.)
University of Ibadan	42	33.3%	38.5 (7.2)	Pre-colonial History	1.8
University of Lagos	38	52.6%	41.1 (9.8)	Gender & Development	2.2
Ahmadu Bello University	35	22.9%	45.3 (11.0)	Political Economy	1.5
University of Nigeria,	29	48.3%	36.8 (6.5)	Cultural Studies	2.5

Nsukka					
Bayero University Kano	27	18.5%	43.0 (8.7)	Islamic Studies	1.2
University of Port Harcourt	25	60.0%	39.4 (7.9)	Migration & Diaspora	2.0

Source: Author's survey of six Nigerian universities (N=196).

DISCUSSION

The evidence reviewed indicates a growing, yet fragmented, engagement with gender perspectives in African studies curricula within North Africa and Nigeria (Bennison, 2024). A significant body of recent scholarship acknowledges the centrality of gender as an analytical category, particularly in studies examining religion, conflict, and political transformation (Manyonganise et al., 2025; Phiri, 2025; Sadiki & Saleh, 2023). For instance, research on religion and masculinity underscores how gendered power structures are interrogated within contemporary African theological discourse (Manyonganise et al., 2025; Leshota, 2025). Similarly, analyses of political crises in the Maghreb integrate gender to critique democratisation processes (Sadiki & Saleh, 2023). This pattern suggests an emerging consensus on the indispensability of gender analysis for understanding complex social dynamics in the region.

However, this synthesis reveals a critical gap between recognition and contextualised integration (Blessing J., 2026). While studies like those of Usui et al. (2024) provide empirical data on gender inequality's impacts, and Bennison (2024) challenges historical epistemologies, their application within pedagogical frameworks often remains superficial. As identified in the syllabi analysis, gender is frequently confined to dedicated weekly topics rather than being woven as a continuous analytical thread throughout course structures. This pedagogical approach risks presenting gender as a niche concern rather than a fundamental lens for engaging with themes like nationalism, as noted by Jones (2025), or historical narratives, as explored by Stenner (2025). Consequently, the nuanced 'contextual mechanisms' linking gender to broader political, historical, and social forces, as highlighted by Lenshie et al. (2023) and Nyanto & Mwendah (2024) in their work on community structures and development, are often left under-theorised in the classroom.

The divergence in outcomes reported across studies further underscores the necessity for more nuanced, context-specific pedagogical strategies (Conant, 2023). The interview data corroborates that educators grapple with reconciling universal feminist frameworks with local gendered realities and knowledge systems. This challenge mirrors academic debates evident in the literature, where analyses of North African murals (Salhi & Benouargla, 2024) yield different emphases compared to studies of body image in global mental health (Rodgers et al., 2023). Therefore, the present study argues that advancing gender perspectives requires moving beyond their mere inclusion. It necessitates a deliberate scholarly and pedagogical practice of situated integration—one that critically engages with diverse epistemological standpoints, from post-colonial critiques (Bennison, 2024) to African feminist thought, to dynamically interpret how gender shapes and is shaped by specific African contexts.

CONCLUSION

This case study affirms that gendering African Studies, particularly regarding North Africa, is an essential project of epistemic justice, achievable only through the deliberate centring of diverse African voices and methodologies ([Manyonganise et al., 2025](#); [Leshota, 2025](#)). The Nigerian perspective, examined through scholarship and curricula from 2021–2026, proves critical not as a representative model but as a vital interlocutor. Its distinct scholarly traditions and gendered realities challenge homogenising narratives and residual Orientalist tendencies within area studies ([Lenshie et al., 2023](#); [Sadiki & Saleh, 2023](#)). The analysis demonstrates that a gendered approach must transcend the additive inclusion of women to fundamentally re-evaluate research questions, authoritative sources, and geopolitical assumptions ([Bennison, 2024](#); [Phiri, 2025](#)).

A paramount finding is the strategic importance of fostering Nigeria-North Africa academic collaboration to dismantle the artificial Sahara divide. Such partnerships generate more nuanced insights on shared challenges, from gendered health outcomes to climate adaptation in agriculture ([Ayilara et al., 2023](#); [Usui et al., 2024](#)). As evidenced in studies of cultural production and community organisations, trans-regional, gendered analysis enriches understanding of African modernities and reduces intellectual dependency on external frameworks ([Rodgers et al., 2023](#); [Omare, 2024](#)). Consequently, this study recommends that institutions institutionalise gender as a core analytical category and create dedicated funding for faculty exchanges and joint supervision. Research funders should prioritise trans-Saharan consortium grants with equitable leadership, while scholarly associations must create inclusive platforms for genuine dialogue ([Nyanto & Mwendah, 2024](#); [Jones, 2025](#)).

The primary contribution of this research is to argue that the ‘gendering’ of African Studies is inextricable from its ‘Africanisation’. By leveraging the Nigerian case, it provides a blueprint for operationalising endogenous theories, showing that intellectual rigour is enhanced by centring African epistemic standpoints ([Bello et al., 2022](#); [de Villiers, 2022](#)). It challenges periphery-centre models by illustrating how Nigerian scholarship can actively shape the study of North Africa. Future research should track the longitudinal impact of collaborative initiatives established in the early 2020s and explore intersections of gender, digital humanities, and scholarly communication across the Sahara. Comparative work on religion and gendered scholarly paradigms in Muslim-majority contexts also presents fertile ground for sensitive inquiry ([Stenner, 2025](#); [Blessing J., 2026](#)).

In conclusion, while the journey towards an inclusive African Studies continues, the period 2021–2026 marks a significant turn. The future of the field depends on embracing internal diversity, fostering trans-continental dialogue where the gendered experiences and intellectual productions of all Africans are recognised as foundational. The task ahead is to consolidate emerging networks, translate collaboration into transformative pedagogy, and cultivate an African Studies that is by, for, and about Africans in all their complexity.

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