



Women in Law & Leadership

Nigerian Legal Academy



PATTERNS | PROGRESS | PROSPECTS

WOMEN IN LAW AND LEADERSHIP: NIGERIAN LEGAL ACADEMY

Patterns, Progress, and Prospects



Institute for African Women in Law
African Women in Law and Leadership Initiative



The Institute for African Women in Law (IAWL) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization established in 2015. It is committed to supporting the formidable works of women in law across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. Our mission is to be a focal point for addressing issues across the legal and judicial professions. The institute is headquartered in Washington, DC, USA.

This report is a part of IAWL's African Women in Law and Leadership Initiative.

This report is based on research funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research output is part of a four-nation study made possible by the generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) initiative on women in law and leadership. We are grateful for the support received from the BMGF team throughout the grant-making and writing stages. The research was designed by the lead investigator, J. Jarpa Dawuni, Ph.D. We would like to acknowledge the tireless contributions of the Institute for African Women in Law (IAWL) research team consisting of Maame Efua Addadzi-Koom, Esq., Stephen Muthoka Mutie, Ph.D., and Nonhlanhla Hlazo, Ph.D.

This report would not have been possible without the contributions of dedicated in-country consultants. IAWL is grateful for the contributions of Rebecca Badejogbin, Ph.D., Adejoke Oyewunmi, Ph.D., Folake Tafita, Ph.D., and Jane Ezirigwe, Ph.D. We acknowledge the work done by the anonymous peer reviewers who provided input throughout the multiple rounds of editing and peer review.

We extend our special thanks to the female legal professionals who gave us their time and talent for our survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Your willingness to share your time and insights from your lived experience made this report possible. We are thankful for the support from all the government officials, institutional heads, and statisticians who helped us with our data sourcing.

We are forever indebted to the women in law who keep pushing forward, against all odds, to be heard, seen and acknowledged for their contributions to their institutions, even if they are not rewarded with the leadership roles they deserve.

FOREWORD

Nigerian female legal academics who rise through the ranks to become vice-chancellors are few. So, when I was appointed the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research, Innovation, and Strategic Partnerships at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, I did not take it lightly. It was a win for me and all women in the legal academy. It showed that in Nigeria, given the needed commitment and support.

This IAWL report is the first comprehensive overview of women in the Nigerian legal academy. It aims to identify barriers to entry, retention and promotion, points of attrition on pathways to leadership, facilitators of promotion, and progress and trends. It also inspires more research and investment in promoting women's leadership. As an academic, I find the aim of this report stimulating. It is not common for research to be carried out on female legal academics; to have the women who themselves conduct research become the subject of a grand project such as this is both welcoming and revealing.

The report draws special attention to many barriers highlighted by female legal academics. It does so by centering their voices, adding a personal and unique touch. The challenges identified are generally intersectional, making them more complex than they may appear. Nonetheless, the report recognizes these intersecting and overlapping social identities, unpacks the intertwined challenges to provide practical solutions to address them, and proffers several recommendations to institutional stakeholders. It also acknowledges that women have a role in climbing the career ladder. It calls on female legal academics to pay attention to building their personal agency and developing the will to pursue leadership.

I add my voice to this call for women to commit to leadership and believe it is achievable. Women in leadership have much to offer at the decision-making table, so having equal representation is important. This report emphasizes this assertion.

This report clearly lays out female academics' challenges, realities, and prospects. It behooves us as female academics and the institutions where we work to implement its recommendations to realize a legal academy that supports women's leadership.

Oluyemisi Bamgbose, SAN
Professor of Law

FOREWORD

When I started researching African women in law in 2015, I was frustrated by what I have consistently characterized as the arid desert of information on the topic. As my research continued, I likened seeking literature to the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack. The challenge was enormous, but rather than give up, I decided to make it my mission to build this field of knowledge. This mission led to my co-edited book, *Gender and the Judiciary in Africa: From Obscurity to Parity?* (Routledge, 2016), the first book to cover the topic of gender and judging in the African context. Its success spurred me on and inspired the second book, *International Courts and the African Woman Judge: Unveiled Narratives* (Routledge, 2018), which used the power of oral narratives to center the experiences, achievements, and challenges of African women who had served on international courts and tribunals. Other books followed, which included the World Bank project *Gender and Judging in Africa: Selected Studies* (Routledge, 2021) and *Intersectionality and Women's Access to Justice in Africa* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2022).

The first two books brought two major findings to my attention –the paucity of research on African women in law and the challenges they face in accessing training and leadership skills, contributing to their underrepresentation in leadership. These two findings led me to merge my scholarship with activism to address these challenges. The Institute for African Women in Law (IAWL) was born from my passion for women's empowerment and research. By concentrating on its four main goals, IAWL has positioned itself as a leader in promoting women's development through research, training, mentoring, and advocacy. Today, IAWL is a leading hub for research on African women in law through an exhaustive digital archive that includes research reports, women's narratives, and a Legacy Project on the subject.

This report forms part of the four-nation priority countries of Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa, a series of reports under the IAWL-commissioned Women's Excellence in Law and Leadership (WELL) Initiative. The overarching goals of these reports are to examine women's access to positions of leadership in the legal professions; review their retention and intersectional challenges and barriers that lead to attrition from the profession; and provide recommendations on interventions that can promote and facilitate their representation in leadership roles, with the goal of meeting UN SDG #5 on gender equality. The initiative provides a blueprint and recommendations for interventions by policymakers, gatekeepers within the profession, civil society organizations, bar associations, judicial authorities, funding agencies, and other bodies interested in promoting women's leadership in law.

This report highlights the need for more research on several questions about women in law in Africa. I am hopeful that more investments will be directed toward providing empirically rich and theoretically grounded research, as seen in this report. Beyond research, what is needed is a comprehensive portal of current data on women in the legal professions across Africa—a project that IAWL is already spearheading.

FOREWORD

I hope this report provides some glimpses of hope that the problems women in law face can be addressed by adopting the multipronged approaches provided here. To borrow from popular parlance—*you cannot fix a problem if you cannot measure it*. I invite you to support our continued efforts in amplifying women's voices in law and enhancing their capacity for positive societal change and development. Thank you.

J. Jarpa Dawuni, Esq., Ph.D.
Executive Director
Institute for African Women in Law

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAFORD	Association of African Forum for Research and Documentation
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IAWL	Institute for African Women in Law
IDIs	In-Depth Intentions
NIALS	Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SAN	Senior Advocate of Nigeria

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Executive Summary










The legal system plays a unique role in addressing gender-based discrimination. Therefore, it is crucial for women to be well-represented in the legal sector. Based on their unique perspectives, women's participation and leadership in the justice system can play a valuable role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically #5 on gender equality. This goal can be achieved by ensuring that women's specific interests and priorities are represented in decision-making processes. The mere presence of women in a legal decision-making role can counteract actual bias and perceptions of gender bias. For this reason, it is critical to document the existing quantitative and qualitative data that identifies women's representation in the legal profession in general and analyze it to assess the points of attrition in the pipeline, barriers to retention, facilitators of promotion, and progress and trends over time.

This report adds to the scant literature on women's leadership in the legal sector across Africa. It serves as a foundation for a better understanding of the dynamics of gender inequality and obstacles that impact the retention and advancement of women to leadership in the legal professions—bar, bench, and academy—in four priority countries, including Nigeria.

The theoretical framework for this report is based on intersectionality, which explains the nature of the multiple social categories, identities, and contexts that influence women's ascent to leadership in Nigeria's legal academy. Data for this report were collected using qualitative and quantitative methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and a survey questionnaire. Participants and respondents were drawn from women in the legal academy. One state was selected per geopolitical zone to reflect the country's sociocultural composition and provide the needed representation in the sample for easy generalization.










A purposive sampling method was used to select the six states for the qualitative study and ensure each state had a federal university with a law faculty. Oyo State was selected from the South-West, Enugu State from the South-East, and Edo State from the South. Sokoto State was selected from the North-West, Kwara State from the North-Central, and Borno State from the North-East. Data were also collected from Lagos State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) because they are cosmopolitan and contain key academic institutions, such as the Nigerian Law School and the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS). The survey generated 40 responses from women in universities nationwide and at different ranks within the legal academic structure.

By combining the rich qualitative responses from interviews with the quantitative data, the report provides a broad overview of women's underrepresentation in leadership. The findings from this study highlight the impact of intersectional challenges and key barriers to women's rise to leadership. These challenges affect the entire pipeline, leading to low retention in the academy and high attrition from the leadership pipeline.

	The major challenges and barriers identified include the following:
	Changing hiring and entry requirements
	Intersectional discrimination in hiring practices
	Negative stereotypes about women's leadership abilities
	Women's different negotiation and networking skills
	Family demands and work–life balance
	Lack of institutionalized mentoring opportunities
	Women's limited capacity to engage with leadership demands, and
	Negative impact of COVID-19 on women in the legal academy.

Using action-oriented and solution-driven approaches, the study draws on the research analysis and participants' suggestions to provide robust and bold recommendations on interventions that can lead to positive outcomes for women in the academy.



	The following facilitators of promotion to leadership and recommendations for supporting women were identified:
	Providing transparent and equal opportunities for women's promotion and leadership
	Addressing institutional gender biases and discrimination
	Institutionalizing support for female legal academics at all institutions
	Enforcing disciplinary measures against gender-based harassment
	Building a strong pipeline and early start to women's leadership capabilities
	Increasing funding for research and professional development
	Providing leadership development skills, training, and support; and
	Nurturing women's personal agency and the will to succeed.

Women in the Nigerian legal academy are forging ahead, despite the challenges and barriers. This study identified the following general trends and patterns: First, the long-standing barriers and discrimination against women are gradually waning. Second, women's rise in the legal academy is not too hopeful as most seem stagnated at the lower ranks. Lastly, the trend in ascent shows regional patterns. The entry and ascendance of women in the legal academy have an intriguing mix of trends. Although women's experience in the earlier periods was tedious, current trends show that the improvements are generally slow, especially in the North.

The findings from this study indicate the need for multipronged approaches to addressing the intersectional challenges women face in the legal academy. These solutions will require key actors and actions from the government, legal professional organizations, civil society actors, women's groups, and male allies in the profession. The role of philanthropic organizations and governmental funding agencies is vital to pushing SDG #5 forward to provide women equal and complete access to decision-making.

The report's findings indicate the need for more research and data collection on women in the legal academy and investment in relevant leadership-boosting initiatives because of the significant role of the legal academy in shaping the drivers of the law and providing entry points for women's access to justice in society.

1 | INTRODUCTION



Universities play a significant role in national development as graduates are expected to contribute to nation-building (Odejide, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative to ensure fair gender representation among faculty members and students. For decades, women in Nigeria have found a place and impacted higher education. For example, Grace Alele-Williams was the first woman to obtain a Ph.D. in mathematics (from the University of Chicago) in 1963 and become a vice chancellor in a Nigerian university (and in sub-Saharan Africa) in 1985. Felicia Adetoun Ogunseye was the first woman to earn the rank of professor of library and information science in 1973. Women's representation in higher education institutions has been growing steadily.

In the different legal professions, Stella Jane Marke (nee Thomas) became the first female lawyer in Nigeria and West Africa in 1935. This milestone was 56 years after Sapara Williams was the first indigenous lawyer in Nigeria (Adewoye, 1977; Badejogbin, 2018). In addition, Jadesola Akande was the first female professor of law and the first female legal academic to be a vice-chancellor for a state university. She was also the first female chair of the Federal University of Technology Council, Akure (Atueyi, 2019). It is evident that women have made commendable strides in the Nigerian legal profession.

The legal profession is at the forefront of advancing the cause for justice and defense against repression. Therefore, it is important to create a suitable platform to defend and maintain women's rights to dignity and self-actualization within the different sectors of the profession. Placing women in legal academic positions allows them to use their unique perspectives to address issues that affect women specifically.

Studies have shown that education is necessary for women's development and emancipation (Ohia & Nzewi, 2016). According to Omoruyi and Omofunmwan (2005, p. 1), "education is a tool for national development, the single most powerful weapon against poverty" and the defense of human rights. They further identified the lack of education as a vital institutional barrier to women's empowerment. The right to education is the crux of the drive to advance women as legal academics. This drive seeks to advance women's economic, social, and political development. It promotes policies that create favorable conditions for women to not only access education but also have higher education careers. These policies are fostered by the needs on the ground and the conventions and treaties of international and regional organizations to which Nigeria is a signatory (Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015).

This report is divided into the following sections: Part one is the introduction. Part two provides a review of existing scholarship on women in higher education. Part three discusses the theoretical framework. Part four explains the methodological approaches. Part five presents the main findings from the research, divided into four key areas—women's entry and promotion, retention, attrition and challenges in the academy, facilitators of promotion, and general trends and patterns. Part six concludes the study.



2

WOMEN AND THE LEGAL ACADEMY IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW



Nigeria, with an estimated population of over 200 million, formally became a colony of Britain in 1861. British law was introduced but worked parallel with customary and religious laws, creating a plural legal system (Adegoke, Badejogbin, & Onoriode, 2014; Adewoye, 1977). People who practiced law were required to be trained in the United Kingdom. Before gaining independence in 1959, Nigeria created a committee chaired by the Attorney General of the federation, which aimed to assess the future of legal education and practice. The committee's recommendations were adopted and implemented. For example, the committee recommended that Nigeria establish its legal education system (Adewoye, 1977; Dawuni & Badejogbin, 2021). The Council of Legal Education and the Nigerian Law School were created. A law faculty was established at the University of Lagos, preceded by the regional University of Nigeria Nsuka (Dawuni & Badejogbin, 2021).

Currently, legal education in Nigeria is two-tiered: a 4–5-year study at university, where substantive law is taught, and a 1-year program at the Nigerian Law School for vocational professional training. Nigeria's federal, state and private universities have 55 accredited law faculties and seven campuses in all geopolitical zones. The increased number of law faculties has resulted in an increase in male and female staff and faculty members in Nigeria. However, the number of female academics is still hampered by intersectional challenges. The severity of the challenges differs by regional zones. This report seeks to identify and address these intersectional challenges.

Emerging research has highlighted the issues affecting women in higher education in Nigeria but overlooked women in the legal academy. This report seeks to fill this gap. It draws on fieldwork through surveys and interviews and extrapolates from the literature on female academics in Nigeria. The dearth of women in higher academy positions in certain parts of Nigeria has been tied to sociocultural and economic factors. For example, the policies of the British colonial administrations in the 1800s established schools that were usually exclusively for boys. In addition, female enrollment decreases in the higher academy partially due to discriminatory social norms, such as the traditional roles accorded to women and enforced by parents and society. These norms often impede girls and young women from pursuing higher education (Badejogbin, 2018; Olaogun, Abayomi, & Oluyemo, 2015). Furthermore, the economic choices of families with limited resources often prioritize male children, leaving the girl child at a disadvantage (Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015).

The enrollment rate in the Nigerian higher academy has improved greatly. Of the 1.8 million undergraduates registered in universities for the 2018–2019 academic session, it is estimated that 790,000 (44%) were women (Statista, 2022). However, this improvement did not substantially affect the legal academy except for a few universities which had acquired additional academic staff.

Olaogun, Abayomi, and Oluyemo (2015) found a significant imbalance in the number of female academics in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Bola and Olasunkanmi (2015) found that male academics accounted for 82%, and the ratio of males to females in senior ranks was 88% to 12%, with some of the few women in leadership positions serving in acting capacities. These figures corresponded with another study that found that in 2017, female university professors represented a paltry 15.43% (Newman, 2021). Furthermore, only about 20 female vice-chancellors had served nationwide, despite the high number (about 200) of universities (Igiebor, 2021). The data in the general university system also apply to most law faculties. Data collected for this report indicate that the situation in 2022 at the Nigerian School of Law (37.9% female) and NIALS (58.8% female) was somewhat better. Of the 29 female senior advocates of Nigeria (SANs), only two were legal academics (IAWL, 2021). Women were overwhelmingly underrepresented, making up only 4.1% of SANs (IAWL, 2021).

A career in higher education is demanding for everyone. However, sustaining optimal output and progressing toward leadership is even more challenging for women. Adesinaola (2012, p. 26) addressed how marital roles affect the careers of female academics in selected universities in Lagos and Ogun States. By using the role theory in social psychology, she concluded that “[the] social positions people have (for example, teacher, mother, and customer) and [the] behavior associated with that position may promote feelings of security, status enhancement, and ego gratification.” In other words, despite pursuing higher education, certain intersectional constraints, such as being expected to be wives, mothers, caregivers and homemakers, impact women's performance. This expectation, in turn, adversely affects their career progression (Ohia & Nzewi, 2016; Popoola, Oyinloye, & Oginni, 2011). These sociocultural challenges affect women's academic responsibilities and output, such as research, teaching, service engagement, and conference attendance. Female academics are further inundated by “long hours of work, overcrowded job schedules, inadequate working facilities, family and domestic responsibilities, teacher-student ratio...” Simply put, it is more difficult for women to balance their family and work responsibilities (Aluko, Adewusi, & Kalejaiye, 2017, p. 64). According to Ohia and Nzewi (2016), these intersectional challenges are tough for younger women.

Nigerian universities generally face challenges such as “inadequate infrastructure, lack of enabling research environment, the disparity in salary and allowances; inconsistent policy implementation between Federal and state governments” (Aluko, Adewusi, & Kalejaiye, 2017, p. 64). In addition to the sociocultural demands discussed above, these challenges result in women not excelling in their work. This, in turn, results in women's overrepresentation at the lower levels of the academic ladder and underrepresentation at the higher levels.

The underrepresentation of women in higher education is a global phenomenon. Attempts have been made to address it through global and regional programs, such as the SDGs, including SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality (Adesinaola, 2011).

At a regional level, this problem is addressed by the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, the 2001 New Partnership for African Development, and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003 (Maputo Protocol) (Adesinaola, 2011).

In Nigeria specifically, the continued efforts by intergovernmental organizations and advocacy by women's rights groups, individuals, and nongovernmental organizations led to the adoption of a National Gender Policy by the Nigerian government in 2006. This policy improved the number of women in the higher academy (Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015).

Despite the changes brought by this policy, studies confirm a “gender equity gap” relating to staff, policies, and programs in Nigeria's higher education (Adesinaola, 2012; Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015). Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, and Afolabi (2015, p. 315) identified the gender policies on education at the federal and state levels. They concluded that although these policies have resulted in some improvements, gaps remain. These gaps are especially the case in the higher academy relating to “knowledge transmission, students' enrolment and staff recruitments, promotions and appointments in Nigeria.” They prescribed strategies on how to bridge the gaps, such as equipping women with “requisite training and skills to compete in the workplace; ...creating equal opportunity ... in the workplace ... through access to opportunities and training; value difference ... between men and women, ...re-vision of work culture” to appreciate women (Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015, p. 323).

Ogbogu (2016) examined the research development of women in academia in southern Nigeria and explained that, despite the increase in women in the labor force in the country generally in the past few years, academia had not had a proportional increase due to several factors. These factors include low bargaining power, low influence at the decision-making levels that would foster positive policies for enhancing women's chances, and minimal support for research. She added that women in academia are concentrated at the lower level, which is common in other countries (Neumann, 2000). Ogbogu's findings also confirmed the low research output by Nigerian female academics. Drawing from the Ghanaian legal academy, Dawuni (2021) identified intersectional challenges responsible for women's slow progression in the legal academy, such as mandatory academic degrees, heavy workload, limited accessibility to support networks, and limited access to necessary organizational information. Although some of these challenges may be common, they influence women more due to additional factors such as marital status, family responsibilities, social roles, and a culture of marginalization and exclusion.

The exact ratio of male to female lecturers in law in Nigerian universities and faculties of law is unknown. Olaogun, Adebayo, and Oluyemo found that as of 2015, the ratio of men to women in the law faculty at Ekiti State University in the South-West of Nigeria was 76.3% to 23.8%. While this is just one out of 55 law faculties approved/accredited by the Council of Legal Education and the National Universities Commission as of 2020 (Nigerian Universities Commission, 2022), these ratios may be used to reflect all law faculties. Moreover, a recent study showed that in 2019, out of 1,669 legal academic staff, lecturers at the rank of professor were 240 men and 44 women (15.5% female; Statista, 2022).

Despite the challenges in accessing positions in the legal academy and academic leadership specifically, some remarkable women are changing the narrative about women's leadership capability. The legal academy, in particular, has seen some women advance, such as Emily Alemika, the first female law professor at the University of Jos from Kogi State. Before she enrolled in primary school at 13, Emily was a victim of child labor and had worked for 12 families in 33 villages (Abusite, 2019). Emily is a clear example that women can excel when given a chance. Another example is Oluyemisi Bamgbose, a criminal law and criminology professor at the University of Ibadan. She is the first female head of a department and the first female academic to earn the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 2018 (IAWL, n.d. a, b; Peters, 2019).

Women have contributed immensely to the development of the Nigerian legal academy. Female academics work as much as and sometimes more than their male colleagues. They review and assess postgraduate research at master's, doctoral, and professional levels, act as external examiners, and become visiting scholars sharing their expertise within and outside the country. Women have also informed government policies by serving as chairs or members of government committees on the reforms of laws and representing the country in other international organizations and fora. Women at all levels of the legal academy have made vital contributions in diverse ways that have enriched scholarship in their areas of expertise.

An analysis of relevant literature identified significant gaps in the knowledge about women in the legal academy and the issues to be addressed regarding their ascension to leadership in its different sectors. Empirical data and research on the topic are insufficient to support evidence-based interventions. This report provides the first comprehensive overview of women in the Nigerian legal academy to identify ways to inspire more research and investment in promoting women's leadership. However, the researchers faced the following challenges. First, the size of the country made it impossible to study women in all law faculties. Second, there were difficulties in accessing quantitative data on the female-to-male ratio of lecturers and professors, which complicated a comprehensive nationwide overview.



3 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



To understand the nuanced experiences of Nigerian women in the legal academy, this research draws on the intersectionality theory. This theory was originally conceptualized by black feminist scholars in the United States to explain how black women experience racism and other forms of discrimination. This theory was popularized by black feminist and socio-legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). It explains how the discrimination and exclusion experienced by Black women within the legal frameworks do not capture the varied ways in which their gender intersects with other factors, such as race, class and sexual identity, to produce multiple disadvantages (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013).

Intersectionality examines how social systems and identities are connected, mutually reinforcing, and interdependent on different and simultaneous social categories (Bauer, et.al, 2021). Such interconnectedness and dependency can lead to layers of discrimination and exclusion for groups and individuals (Atewologun, 2018). Intersectionality addresses similar concepts, such as “triple oppression,” also known as “triple exploitation” and “double jeopardy,” which explains that various forms of oppression, such as class, gender, and race, are linked with one another and should be addressed simultaneously (Giddings, 1984; King, 1988; Lynn, 2014). Intersectionality seeks to achieve social justice, which encompasses a fair distribution of opportunities, resources, and privileges among the population (Ayala, Hage, & Wilcox, 2011).

Scholars of social development practice have used this theoretical framework to interrogate situations from diverse perspectives for deeper comprehension of the realities that confront people in these circumstances (Anjali, 2018). One phenomenon interrogated through the lens of intersectionality is the entry and progress of academics based on demographics of race, ethnicity, and gender in higher education (Anjali, 2018). Higher education is acknowledged worldwide as a means to advance knowledge and societal well-being. Therefore, admittance to higher education has become “a highly contested arena” with “intersectional objectives and mandates” (Anjali, 2018).

At the international level, intersectional categories include the impact of distinct historical factors, such as colonialism. Colonial and postcolonial identities are relevant to this report, given that they influence women's access to and promotion in the Nigerian legal academy.

By utilizing the intersectionality theory in their research on higher education, Nichols and Stahl (2019) concluded that gender was often left out as a category of identity upon which other dimensions of intersectional differences were predicated.

Women in the higher academy in sub-Saharan Africa are also plagued by slow career progression. With the premise of intersectionality, studies have found that “intersections between gender roles and social power relations of gender within the family, wider society and academic institutions” were responsible for the slow career progress of women (Liani, Nyamongo, & Tolhurst, 2020, p. 262). Through a detailed theoretical investigation of empirical data, this report seeks to understand how the “underlying social, cultural and institutional drivers and processes” explain variations between men and women in the legal academy (Liani, Nyamongo, & Tolhurst, 2020, p. 262). These findings will guide institutional undertakings and policy frameworks in identifying avenues to address the challenges women in the academy face.

One of the guiding principles of this report is understanding the situatedness of power relations at the institutional, structural, and individual levels. The intersectionality theory is a valuable framework for confronting the challenges and setbacks experienced by women in accessing and ascending to leadership positions. Therefore, it is best suited to illuminating how the multiple and interlocking identities of gender, marital status, motherhood status, ethnicity, religious affiliations, and geography intersect to determine women's career pathways and progression to leadership (Runyan, 2018).

The intersectionality theory is used globally across disciplines to interrogate systems of discrimination and oppression. Scholars have made valuable contributions to the scope of its application. This theory is an analytical and exploratory tool to probe factors contributing to intersectional inequality. In particular, it has been used to research higher education concerning how ethnic and black minorities access and perform in leadership and how various intersectional factors, such as race, class, and gender, enable or detract from such progress. These studies have shown that the subjects' experiences are determined by inbuilt intersectional factors contributing to their challenges (Showunmi, 2020).



4 | METHODOLOGY



A mixed methodological approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis tools. Surveys, in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to assess the general climate in the legal academy and the specific experiences of the representation of women in leadership positions. This report forms part of a larger study on women in law and leadership in Nigeria (the other two focus on the bar and the bench). A general survey was sent out to women in law in Nigeria, generating a total of 449 responses, and out of this survey, 58 respondents, representing 13.5% of the respondents, were academics. In order to generate specific responses from the academy, a second survey was deployed specifically to women in the legal academy to understand their cross-sectional experiences. This second survey generated forty responses from women in universities nationwide and at different ranks within the legal academic structure. In total, the survey responses from the legal academy had 99 respondents.

To provide in-depth, descriptive data, the study used IDIs and FGDs. Participants and respondents were drawn from women in the legal academy from different regions in the country. The focus groups had 24 participants, and the in-depth interviews had 16 participants. In order to ensure that the data reflected the country's sociocultural composition and provided the needed representation in the sample for easy generalization, one state was selected per geopolitical zone. A purposive sampling method that ensured each state had a federal university with a law faculty was used to determine the six states for the qualitative study. Oyo State was selected from the South-West, Enugu State from the South-East, and Edo State from the South. Sokoto State was selected from the North-West, Kwara State from the North-Central, and Borno State from the North-East. Respondents were drawn from the focus areas in each state, considering diversity in age, experience, and ethnicity. Data were also collected from Lagos State and the FCT because they are cosmopolitan and contain key academic institutions, such as the Nigerian Law School and NIALS.

For the quantitative data, an online survey was developed and self-administered by female participants nationwide. The link to the survey was widely shared on different online platforms, including the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers and smaller professional online platforms comprising law researchers, faculties of law lecturers, alumni groups, etc. Secondary data was obtained from a literature review and official websites of relevant offices, newspapers, and archival materials.

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and the quantitative data and statistics were presented using tables and graphs. Most empirical data were collected from January 15, 2022, to April 27, 2022.

Individual interviews were used to elicit personal experiences, and group interviews and FGDs were used to understand the dynamics around gender representation in the legal academy and issues relating to leadership. The interviews were anonymous. The same topics were used for individual interviews and FGDs for each group to ensure data triangulation. The data analyses used the intersectionality theory to explain the persistence of gender inequality and women's access to leadership. All ethical protections were considered, including ensuring the confidentiality of interview participants by de-identifying and coding responses and ensuring the analyses did not contain references to names and their universities. All interviewees and FGD participants were informed study's purpose and their right to end the interview at any time in the process.

The research had a few limitations arising from challenges during the data collection process, and these challenges affected the sample size of the interviews and focus groups. First, security challenges in the country made it difficult to access all the research sites to conduct interviews in all the states, requiring the research team to rely on technology such as Zoom to conduct interviews and focus groups. Data and internet connectivity were major challenges to how long people could stay on for the interviews. Second, bureaucratic challenges arose when acquiring data from educational institutions, including multiple layers of approvals and letters that had to be sent multiple times. Third, considering the challenges with data accessibility and poor recordkeeping, the study could not acquire all the data needed from the study areas. Fourth, given the dearth of existing literature, the time and budget allotted were too restrictive to allow for an in-depth, countrywide analysis of the prevailing situation of all female academics in Nigeria.





FINDINGS



5

ENTRY, RETENTION AND PROMOTION



Interviews and FGDs were conducted with women in the legal academy to validate the survey responses. This section discusses a combination of the general survey findings and interviews. When reading this section, the data from the academy-specific responses are those presented in the graphs with a sample size of 40, while the responses from the interviews are shown by presenting direct transcripts. Presenting the direct responses of interviewees is a qualitative approach to center the voice of the speaker and reduce researcher reflexivity.

5.1. Entry into the academy

Generally, the minimum requirements for employment as a lecturer are:

- i. Bachelor of Law (LL.B.) degree with a good grade,
- ii. Council of Legal Education Certificate evidencing successful completion of the Nigerian Law School program,
- iii. Certificate of call to the bar issued by the Body of Benchers, and
- iv. One-year compulsory national service under the National Youth Service Corps.

However, some law faculties may not require the two certificates. A master's degree and doctorate in law give an additional advantage and may determine whether a candidate is hired at a higher rank. Career progression (for both men and women) is determined by several factors, which include additional academic qualifications, publications, and teaching experience. Table 1 shows the sex-disaggregated data and rank of women and men in the six faculties and the FCT covered in this study.



Table 1 | Sex-disaggregated data on representation in six law faculties

Location	Male lecturers	Female lecturers	Male professors	Female professors	Total female representation
Edo State	38	34	17	5	41%
Enugu State	36	25	3	4	42%
Oyo	13	10	2	2	14%
Lagos (school of law only)	33	24	14	3	36%
Kwara	43	11	14	1	17%
Borno	37	8	8	1	16%
Sokoto	26	4	6	0	16%
Total	226	116	64	16	18.9%

Data source: Offices of the university faculty administrators, 2022

From the figures above, female law academics in the six law faculties make up only 18.9%, which diminishes by advancing academic rank, with women at only 20% of full professors. Despite the findings that employment requirements are similar for both men and women, more men enter the legal academy. The margin is not so wide in states such as Edo, Enugu, Lagos, and Oyo, as they have seen an impressive improvement. The states with higher representation are all in the South—Edo, 41%; Enugu, 42%; and Lagos, 36%. However, the margins remain wide in the northern states (Borno and Sokoto), each one at 16%. The lower recruitment rate of women may be due to a number of factors linked to intersectional challenges.

The regional disparity may be due to the prevalence of socio-cultural norms that make access to and advancement in the legal academy more difficult for women in the North. The data also indicate that far more men than women are full professors in all six institutions. This suggests that the sociocultural factors that impede women cut across all six geopolitical zones. However, this is more severe in the North (the institution in Sokoto has no women at all). This finding suggests that in addition to geographically determined sociocultural gender expectations, there is an intersectional challenge of religion that hinders women's access to and progression in academia.



Table 2 | Nigerian school of law (six campuses)¹

Men (all ranks) (%)	Women (all ranks) (%)
54 (57%)	39 (43%)

Data source: Nigerian Law School, 2022

Attempts to get data disaggregated by the different law school campuses and the different ranks within each university were unsuccessful. The data presented in Table 2 are the number of instructors on all campuses, disaggregated only by sex.

Table 3 | Data on the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Abuja

Position	Men (%)	Women (%)
Research professors	7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)
Associate research professors	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)
Senior research fellows	5 (26%)	14 (74%)
Research fellows	23 (33.8%)	45 (66.2%)
Total	37 (36%)	67 (64%)

Data source: NIALS, 2022

The data from the Nigerian Law School and NIALS show an impressive improvement from the situations of most law faculties. The law school data indicate that women form 43% of the academic staff. At NIALS, although women form 64% of the total number of researchers, they tend to be concentrated at the lower levels as research associates (66.2%), senior research associates (74%), and associate research professors (66.7%). Women are least represented as research professors (36.4%). Two plausible factors explain the higher numbers at the NIALS. First, the perception is that research is less attractive to men, who prefer private practice to make more money. On the other hand, women are averse to the risks and uncertainties of private practice and prefer the security of paid employment, regular working hours, and benefits, such as maternity leave and health insurance.

Second, NIALS and the Nigerian School of Law are federally owned, offering better work conditions than state-owned and privately owned institutions. Thus, the perception of men seeking better work conditions may be a weak explanation.

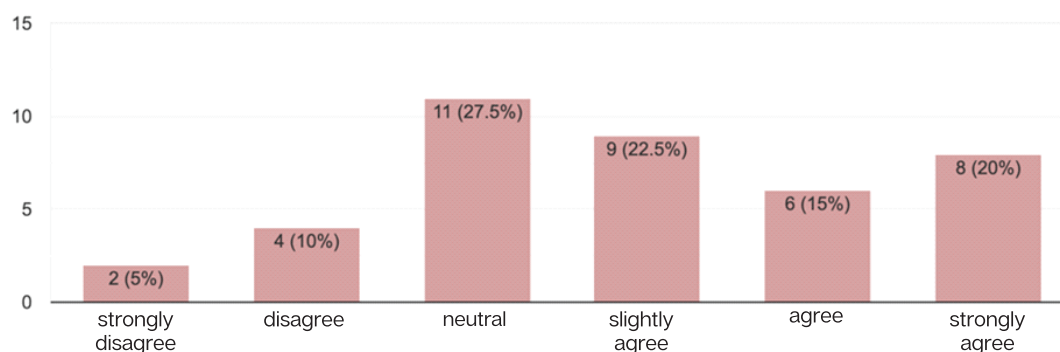
¹ For many years, the Nigerian School of Law had six campuses, located at Abuja (headquarters), Kano, Yola, Enugu, Lagos, and Yenegua. A seventh campus was recently added in Port Harcourt but is yet to be operational.

However, compared to other avenues of legal practice, men may find professional opportunities for advancement beyond what an academic or research career may provide. This reason also appears weak; after all, men are the majority in most legal academies in Nigeria. A second explanation is that a former director general of the NIALS recruited women who were qualified for the position. While this was not a deliberate effort, it led to more women within the institutions.

Figure 1 | Equal opportunities for women and men

Women have equal opportunities as men to engage in tasks that can lead to promotion to leadership positions

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Thirty-six percent agreed that women have equal leadership opportunities; 15% disagreed, and 27% are neutral. The high number of women who disagreed could indicate that they have not tried for leadership positions. However, the findings from the qualitative component did not corroborate these data. Several reasons were identified for the qualitative result. For example, it was suggested that male academics have better employment and career advancement opportunities due to the high number of men in leadership and decision-making positions. A participant in an FGD among university lecturers in Abuja noted that “the opportunity is not the same because the growth pattern is not the same.”

The unequal availability of opportunity may be due to intersectional reasons. For example, the ability to take on such opportunities, which may be tied to, for instance, having a young family and being unable to accommodate the impact of long absences from the home, may affect performance and ability to meet promotion criteria.

Although women may believe there have equal opportunities, the favorable terms and conditions enjoyed by men may be enhanced by the higher number of men in leadership and decision-making positions who can advocate for them.

The response from a female academic indicates this point:

“

the males always feel superior, and they don't carry us along at all in choosing leadership. They don't even involve us.

”

5.2. Changing hiring and entry requirements

Much like in Ghana (as described by Dawuni, 2021), women's entry into the Nigerian legal academy falls into several categories. Some women were self-motivated, some were recruited due to their outstanding academic performance, and others invariably responded to the “demand and supply-side dynamics” (i.e., more enrollment of women would require more available positions to be filled by them) (Dawuni, 2021; Schultz, 2021). Under these categories, these women often join the academy at the outset of their careers. They can advance through the ranks, meeting promotion requirements (these ordinarily are additional academic qualifications, publications, and teaching experience). Female academics can ascend quickly when these requirements are met and challenges are surmounted. However, these categories of women usually get married and start a family. They must grapple with intersectional challenges, such as marriage, motherhood, and other sociocultural expectations and institutional barriers often impeding their growth (Dawuni, 2021).

Additional qualifications, such as a master's degree and doctorate, a common requirement in common law jurisdictions (Schultz, 2021), demand great commitment, focus, and determination. Combining these with motherhood, especially for young children, and other culturally normative obligations will take its toll. These additional responsibilities test the ability of women to cope with building a career (Pant, 2020). Before the 1990s, when academics could ascend to the rank of professor without a doctorate if other requirements were met, the pressure was no doubt less and progress less demanding. The requirement for Ph.D. in the legal academy in commonwealth countries developed in recent decades (Schultz, 2021), and many factors determine the actualization of the desire to obtain it. Obtaining funding, demands on time, and even separation from family to earn a degree abroad are daunting for a young academic and may seem insurmountable. Not achieving this on time may keep the women on the lower academic levels for longer than necessary or cause unplanned exits. Women who have surmounted this have done so with substantial support from immediate and extended family and their immediate social group.

Despite these challenges in pursuing higher education, one respondent noted how women are committed to improving their professional trajectory:

I believe that women are now wiser as opposed to what was formerly obtainable. If you observe them, you will notice that some of them come to work with their kids. Hence having a child is not an excuse. Women are now very eager for success. Some of these women even take up part-time courses in order to obtain promotions. The main barrier most women face is access to funds, and I know of many women who take loans in order to further their education.

Another respondent underscored the issue of higher education when asked at what point female legal academics tend to stagnate (early or middle career level, etc.) and what factors influence this:

“

The major issue is the academic degrees. Many women come into academia at the lower level. For those who come in at the lower level, you have to get your masters and Ph.D., then [there are] family obligations, they are so heavy on some people that they cannot see their way forward. For me, I was a full-time student, I wasn't working, and I wasn't married, but it is very rare to see women in full-time masters, she has some kind of work or family issues, so all those things hold them back. Ladies are now feeling more entitled, they feel they should be given things on a platter of gold. I will help, but I need to see that you are capable, not that you come and are lazy, using your baby as an excuse. The issue of stagnation is going from one lectureship level to another, the qualifications and papers written. So you might start hearing that there are conflicts between work and family obligations. They have a baby, they can't write and things like that. The advice is for women to make an effort.

”

A respondent linked the entry requirements to attrition in the pipeline:

There was a time having a Ph.D. was mandatory, or one would not get to a senior lecturer position, not to talk of a professorship. At that time, we saw [a] huge exit of women. The major challenge is publications because if they don't publish and they don't advance or finish their Ph.D. program, opportunities might be closing up on them, and they may be forced to leave the system. When the impact factor was introduced at UNN [University of Nigeria, Nsukka], it also affected women. This is a problem because it is not a standardized promotion requirement, but UNN created its own yardstick and uses the benchmark rigorously. Hence, there was an initial difficulty, however, now there is a slight improvement.

From these data, it is evident that the introduction of higher academic qualifications for career advancement has been a point of attrition for women that has caused some stagnation, given the high percentage that remains in the lower ranks, and sometimes led to some departing from the academy. Sociocultural factors and economic factors, including taking on other tasks, such as research consultancies, to make ends meet and earn a decent living, intersect to slow women in pursuing a doctoral degree. Women are learning to address these challenges head-on where possible, but that does not make the problems less arduous.

5.3. Women and access to leadership in the legal academy

Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. Table 4 presents the data on female leaders from this study's focus areas.

Table 4 | Data on women's past and current representation in leadership positions

Location of law faculty	Women in leadership positions
Edo State	The dean is female; she is the first substantive female dean.
Enugu State	The dean is male, but the immediate past dean was female.
Oyo State	The dean is female; one woman has been dean in the last five years.
Lagos	The dean is male; one woman has been dean in the last five years.
FCT (Nigerian Law School)	No woman has ever been director general. Among the deputy directors general/heads of campus, it is 4:2 (male to female).
Kwara State	There has been no female dean of the faculty of law and no female professor in the faculty until 2019.
Borno State	The dean is male; no female dean has ever been appointed. There is only one female full professor.
Sokoto State	The dean is male; no female dean has ever been appointed. There are no female full professors. The most senior woman is an associate professor.

Data source: Data sourced from individual departments and law schools, 2022

Table 5 | Sex-disaggregated data on leadership at Nigerian school of law

Leadership position	Women	Men
Head of academic departments	4	2
Secretary to Council of Legal Education	The first woman appointed to the position was Elizabeth Max Ubah.	Seven men have held the position.
Director General of the law school	No woman has ever held the position.	Nine men have held the position.
Deputy director general of the law school	2	4

Data source: Nigerian School of Law, 2022

The data from the Nigerian Law School, NIALS, and the six law faculties surveyed reveal that the former barriers preventing women from occupying leadership positions in all the institutions (except the Law School) have been broken. However, much work remains to be done. Women are given a chance where competence and qualifications and all advancement requirements in particular institutions are met. A deviation from meritocratic appointments will be glaring and may be widely condemned. These factors may explain some of the appointments listed in the data. For example, the heads of academics at the campuses of the law school were the most senior academics available on their respective campuses and, therefore, could not be overlooked.

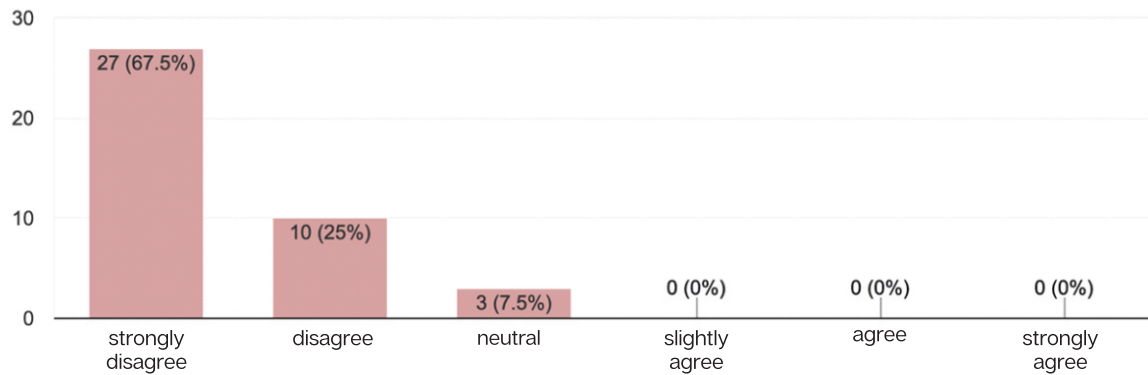
Men might consider alternatives to government jobs, such as federally owned academic institutions, for several reasons. For example, men choose legal practice to make more money. As employment patterns shifted in the 1990s, men were drawn into more financially gratifying ventures. However, women were drawn to work that supplied some form of security of tenure and built a career for themselves in government institutions. Some men who did not realize their dreams reconsidered the legal academy, by which time, the women had advanced in rank. The study asked whether leadership positions in the legal academy were meant for men without family commitments (Figure 2).



Figure 2 | Leadership roles and men without family commitments

Leadership roles are meant for men who do not have family commitments

40 responses



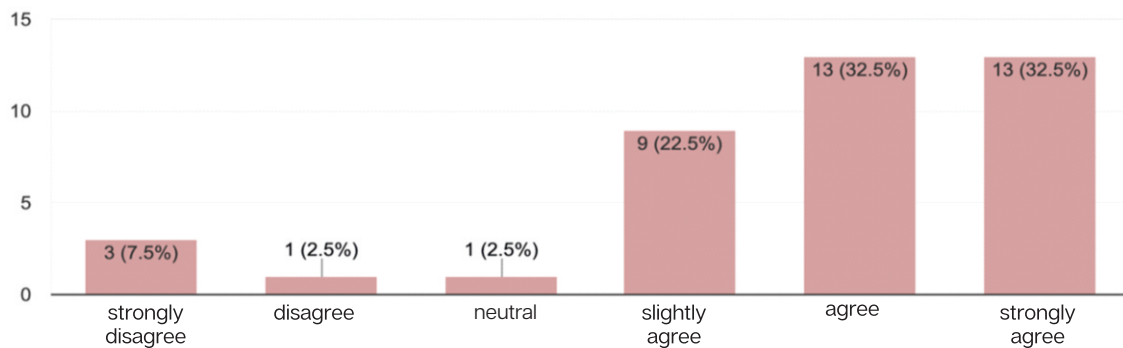
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

A majority of respondents (92.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing that women do not see their caregiving roles as ruling them out of leadership opportunities.

Figure 3 | Ease of advancement in the academic career

It is easier for men than it is for women to advance to leadership positions in academia

40 responses



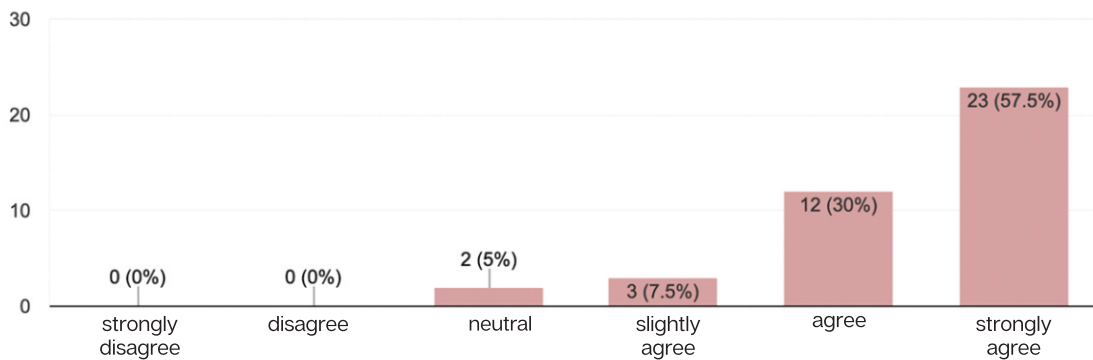
Source: IAWL survey, 2022



Figure 3 indicates that 87.5% of respondents do believe that it is easier for men to advance in leadership roles. The factors for this perception are evident in women's intersectional challenges, which converge to limit upward mobility. However, 39 respondents (95%) believed women could still advance to senior positions. This finding demonstrates that women are willing to commit to career progression despite their institutional, structural, and personal challenges. The study also asked respondents whether they would take advantage of leadership opportunities, and 95% indicated they would if given the opportunity (Figure 4).

Figure 4 | Women applying for leadership positions

Women would apply for leadership positions if the opportunity arose
40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

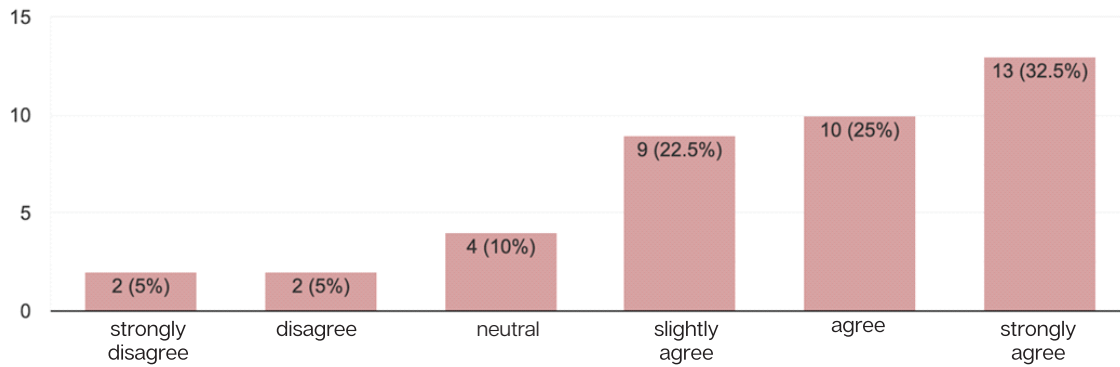
The study also addressed the barriers women face (Figures 5 and 6); 80% agreed that women had a more challenging time advancing beyond a certain level. The explanations for these observations are explored in detail below and include sociocultural gender stereotypes and perceptions about women's leadership capabilities—with 90% in agreement over the sociocultural demands of caregiving—and the challenges to research and publication that are essential to promotion.



Figure 5 | Women and challenges in career progression

Women experience challenges in advancing beyond a certain level in their career (glass-ceiling phenomenon)

40 responses

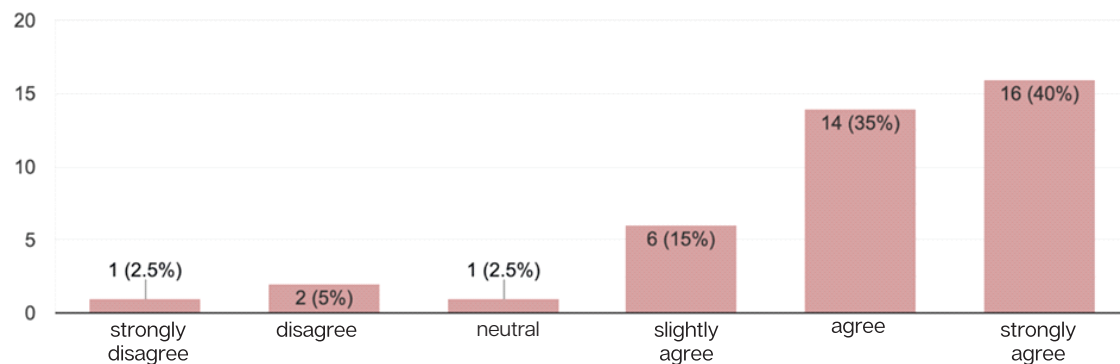


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 6 | Sociocultural gender stereotypes and perceptions

Gender stereotypes may prevent women from reaching leadership positions

40 responses



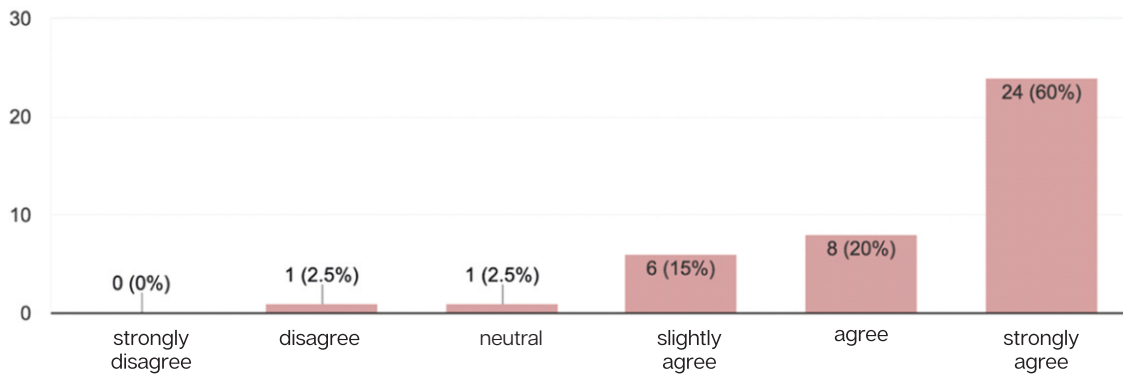
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

The study also addressed the impact of men and male networks, perceptions, and attitudes toward women's leadership roles and capabilities. Figures 7 and 8 show that 82.5% of respondents believed that women's leadership is not always accepted by men, and 95% believed that cultural beliefs affected men's acceptance of women's leadership.

Figure 7 | Men accepting women's leadership

Cultural beliefs make it difficult for men to accept women leaders

40 responses



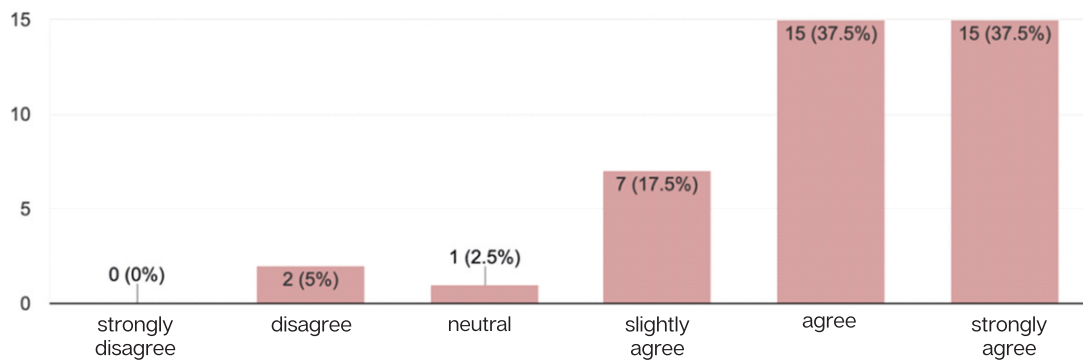
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 8 shows that 92.5% of respondents believed men often challenged women in leadership, likely because of gendered cultural perceptions about women's leadership capabilities.

Figure 8 | Men challenging women's leadership

Women leaders are often challenged by male colleagues

40 responses



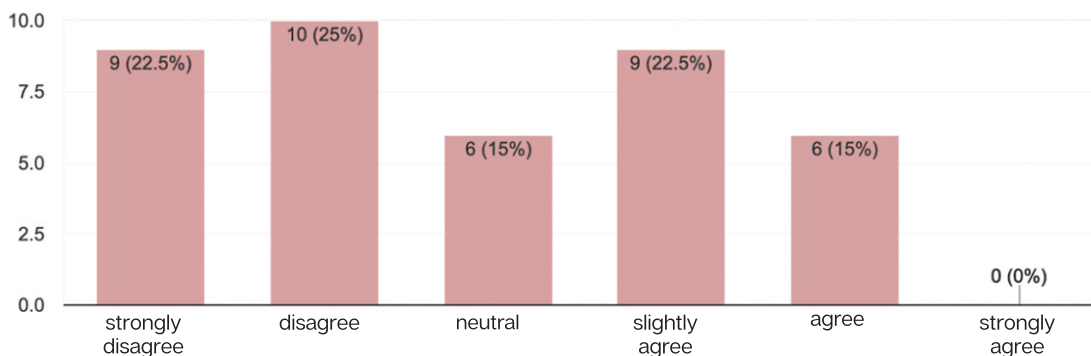
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Evidence from the survey suggests that women have not given up trying despite being denied advancement opportunities: 62.5% disagreed that women would not give up, and 37.5% believed that repeated denials had an impact on women trying for leadership positions.

Figure 9 | Impact of denial of advancement opportunities on women

Women have given up on trying to advance in their careers because they are denied advancement opportunities continuously

40 responses



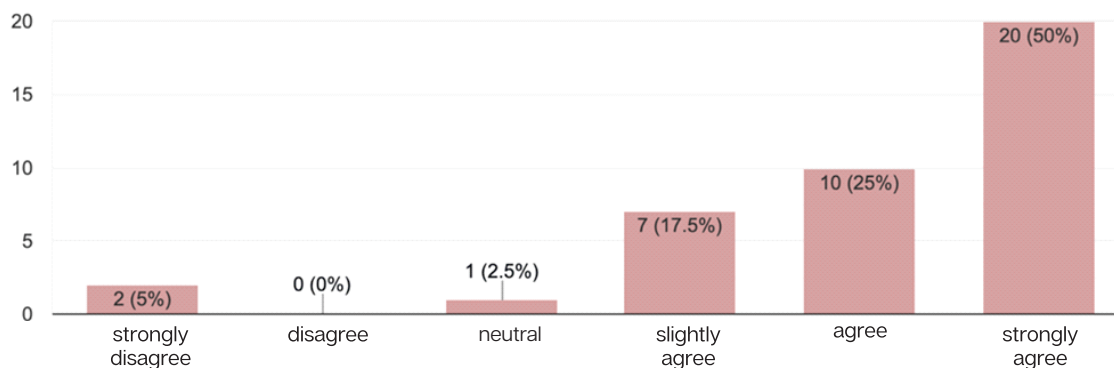
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

More in-depth research is needed to understand what factors led to these responses. From the interviews, some women indicated that the challenges associated with female leadership style (being less aggressive) and refraining from engaging in the politics of campaigning for elected office are factors that dissuade women from applying for leadership positions. Last, respondents were asked if women would take advantage of opportunities to advance their leadership skills: 92.5% agreed.

Figure 10 | Opportunities to develop leadership skills

Women will take advantage of opportunities to develop their leadership skills

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

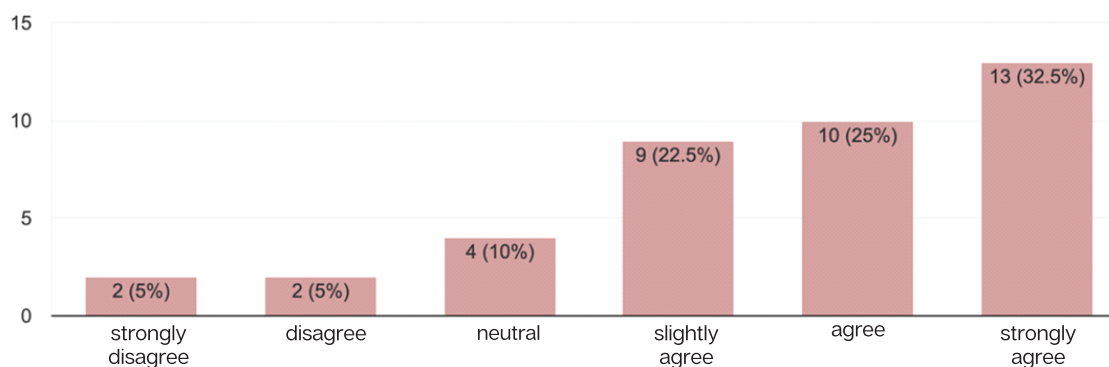
5.4. Work conditions and promotion requirements

Eighty percent of respondents believed it took much work for women to advance beyond a certain level.

Figure 11 | Challenges in advancing beyond a certain level

Women experience challenges in advancing beyond a certain level in their career (glass-ceiling phenomenon)

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

This finding reflects the disadvantaged position of female academics, that women are getting less support and encouragement and must work harder to achieve the same results. They need not necessarily work less but should be acknowledged when they put in as much effort as men. With more women in leadership positions, female academics will get the support and leverage they need to earn results commensurate with their effort. This is not a plea for favors but a chance for a level playing field for all, as women in leadership in the legal academy will better understand inequality.

Academic work conditions are not always favorable to women. In addition to caring for children and elders, some women still have to cope with gender stereotypes about perceived incompetence from male students and colleagues. The first women in the legal academy worldwide have faced the challenge of balancing an academic career with family and other sociocultural demands. This may, according to Schultz (2021, p.8), have even been more “demanding and time and energy consuming,” since they did not have the ease of “modern technical aids.” The early women surmounted these challenges, as are a growing number of female academics in Nigeria, hopefully without compromising their personal and family obligations.

The inequalities that affect women's work conditions and promotion can be further broken down into two factors that are not mutually exclusive. First, income disparities regarding more earning opportunities, such as nominations for leadership roles, are an issue. Salary grades are usually uniform for both male and female lecturers.

The challenge is concerning other opportunities for economic benefits and career advancements that are available but at the discretion of the leader. Some have expressed that discretion is often exercised in favor of men. Heads of departments and deans show sympathy to men. This bias stems from the assumption (sometimes untrue) that men are breadwinners. Although this may impede some women, some have taken it in their stride and taken advantage of other opportunities, such as applying for consultancies, research grants, and paid publications. The explanation may be that younger women, although not trailblazers, benefited from the glass ceilings that their predecessors shattered.

Second, employment and advancement opportunities appear to be unequal. As explained in this report, women's advancement is fraught with intersectional challenges peculiar to women. However, once women produce substantial publications and attain higher degrees, advancement is quite a level playing field. Sometimes, in positions that require voting, women also fare quite well. More men occupy top roles, such as dean or vice chancellor. Therefore, splitting their votes between several male candidates against one woman would leave them at a disadvantage. Conversely, women tend to reserve their votes for the female candidate, resulting in her victory.



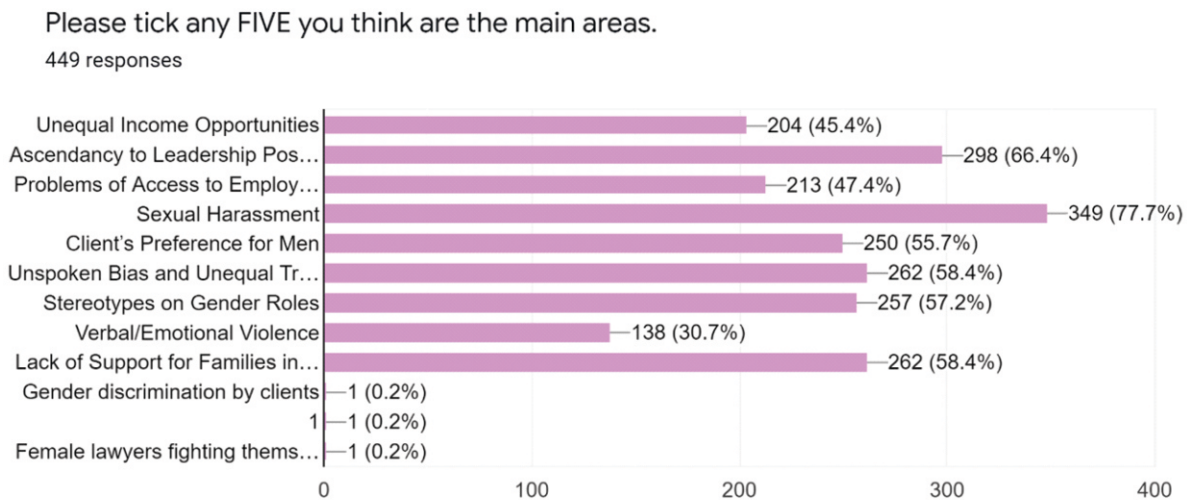
6

BARRIERS, CHALLENGES AND POINTS OF ATTRITION



This section presents the findings on the challenges, barriers, and factors determining attrition in the legal academy. Figure 12 provides a visual snapshot of the challenges and barriers identified. The data in Figures 12 and 13 are drawn from the general survey conducted on all women in Nigeria's legal, judicial and academic sectors.

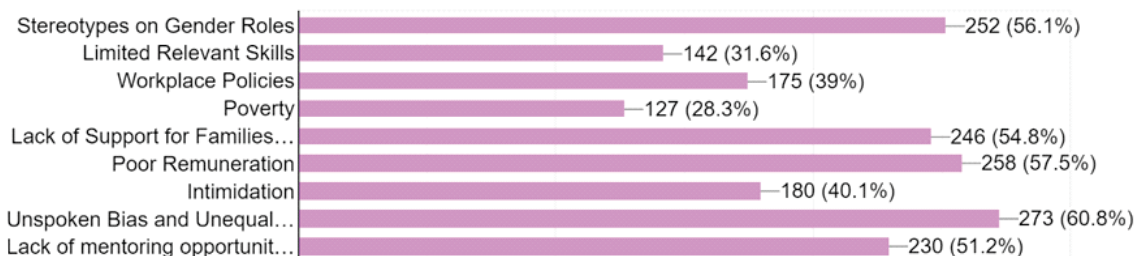
Figure 12 | Major challenges affecting women in the legal academy



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 13 | Challenges women encounter in advancing their career in the legal academy

4. What are the challenges women encounter in advancing their career in your workplace? Please tick ALL that apply
449 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

6.1. Intersectional discrimination in hiring practices

The experiences of women in the legal academy cannot be linked to just one category of oppression or discrimination. As Figure 12 shows, intersectional discriminatory practices are mutually reinforcing in producing multiple layers of exclusion. This exclusion begins with the hiring process, where some gatekeepers see presumed femininity as a “handicap.” Different identity categories, such as gender, marital status, and projections of motherhood, converge to limit women's entry opportunities.

One interviewee expressed that during recruitment, certain conversations are heard:

“

So, she is single and not married! They are going to say she will get married and go on maternity leave. She comes for an interview pregnant, the first thought would be that she would soon put to bed and be unavailable. So, you find that there are issues at the entry-level. I have overhead things like that, and I imagine that it is probably more widespread... It's like, “we have four females in the department and if we employ another female now... the last time, two of them at the same time were pregnant.” I have seen at interviews how it forms an unspoken prejudice, and it may not be aired out at the point of selection, but you see how it weighs on the decision. So yes, there are access barriers.

”

The implication is that women are not merely being considered on merit at entry; considerations tied to their femininity, such as getting married and having babies, are sometimes used to deny them entry.

6.2. Changing entry and promotion requirements

To some extent, each university determines its minimum requirement for recruitment and promotion. However, the past 15 years in the Nigerian legal academy have seen more stringent recruitment and promotion requirements (i.e., additional academic qualifications, such as a master's and particularly Ph.D.). According to the research data, these requirements led to the exit of many women, mainly because they found it “difficult to combine studies and family” (Sokoto state, Academics 2). When women choose to remain in the legal academy, they either stagnate or move very slowly to higher positions due to family demands. Dawuni (2021) recounted a similar context in Ghana. The entry requirements may have also kept some women interested in pursuing an academic career in law from doing so.

A respondent observed that the point of attrition occurred at specific stages:

Between lecturer one and senior lecturer position, and the majority was family based ... another similar one was lecturer two, who also had to exit. Most of the reasons for exiting the university were majorly family related.

From this view, family obligations and the challenge of balancing them with demands at work may contribute to attrition. This attrition is more emphasized given that most women begin their academic careers when they are just starting a family and must contend with home and work demands on their time. This finding aligns with Ohia and Nzewi's (2016) findings that younger female academics are much more affected by such sociocultural challenges in their academic output and careers. Being young, they may be just beginning to see how they can grasp these intersectional challenges that older female academics have survived and acquired the necessary skills to navigate. In their words, these women are “in the childbearing age and are not yet so well established in their marriages as to take personal decisions in regards to their movements... [it] is especially difficult for young mothers as they lack the support networks which mothers, grandmothers or other extended family members provided in traditional settings” (Ohia & Nzewi, 2016, p. 247).

Another category that should not be ignored is women who have risen to leadership positions and must handle those challenges and family demands. These intersectional challenges would require a multifaceted solution, and how they manage them can positively affect other women in the legal academy (Dawuni, 2021).

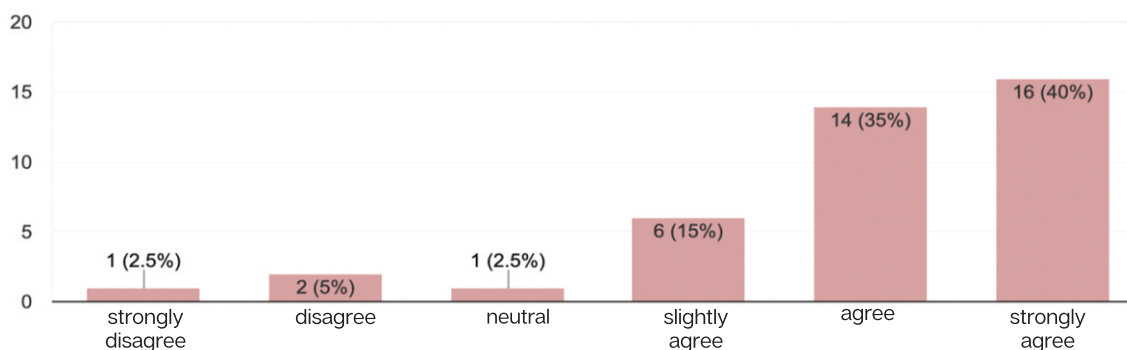
6.3. Negative stereotypes of women's leadership abilities

The stereotypes women have to grapple with regarding their leadership abilities can be daunting. These stereotypes are born from the historical pattern; men have headed these institutions, and cultural biases exist about female competence (Figure 14).

Figure 14 | Impact of gender stereotypes on women in leadership

Gender stereotypes may prevent women from reaching leadership positions

40 responses



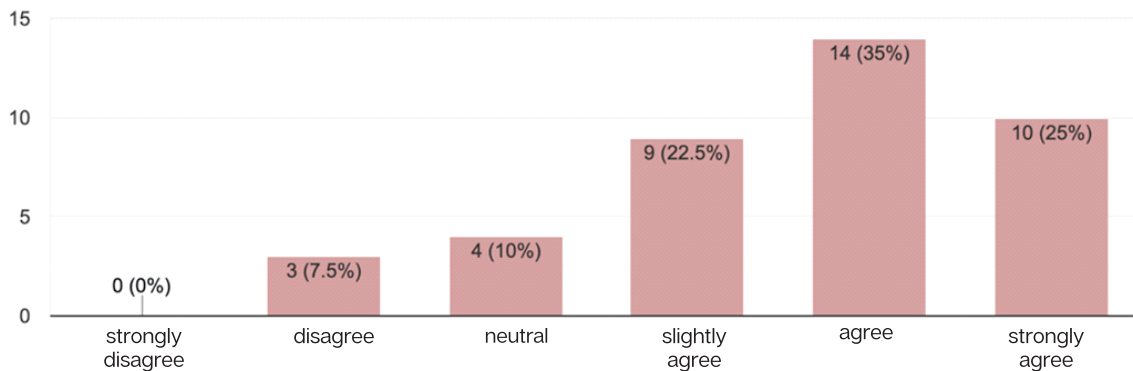
Source: IAWL survey, 2022

A majority of the survey respondents (90%) believe that gender-based stereotypes explain women's low representation in leadership. These stereotypes are expressed through comments and other aggressive behaviors toward women who seek leadership positions. The study sought to understand how men perpetuate masculinities through their networks and the impact of such networks on women's career progression (Figure 15).

Figure 15 | Impact of the old boy networks on women's career progression

The 'old boy network' is a barrier to the progress of women in the academy

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

With more women ascending to these positions and delivering well, the stereotypes are being challenged. However, 82.5% of those surveyed believe the old boy networks still operate as barriers that exclude women from opportunities and negatively affect their career progression.

A respondent highlighted the biases women face:

“

The barriers are ushered in by a larger societal bias about women's ability to excel in certain roles. The hurdle is twice as hard or more for a woman. For instance, the position of chancellor, which has for so long been held by men, somewhat feels like their prerogative. There is also bias regarding course leadership and even course introduction. In my experience, it is difficult for a young female academic to be taken seriously in introducing a course or serving as an editor-in-chief of a journal. These usually stem more from a perception of inability to carry out such roles than a tested failure. Sometimes, young female academics set their minds on other career development endeavors such as publishing, presenting at conferences and strengthening their networks, rather than vying for these positions with negative implications for the profession.

”

The data confirm these biases but, fortunately, present a positive response from the victims, who are adopting new strategies to refocus their career trajectory by acquiring new skills, focusing on research, and strengthening their networks. These strategies will help women advance and be better qualified to be considered for promotion. The downside to this strategy is that by women avoiding the old boy networks and not fighting against entrenched institutional male cultures, the patriarchal institutional cultures will persist and continue to oppress women.

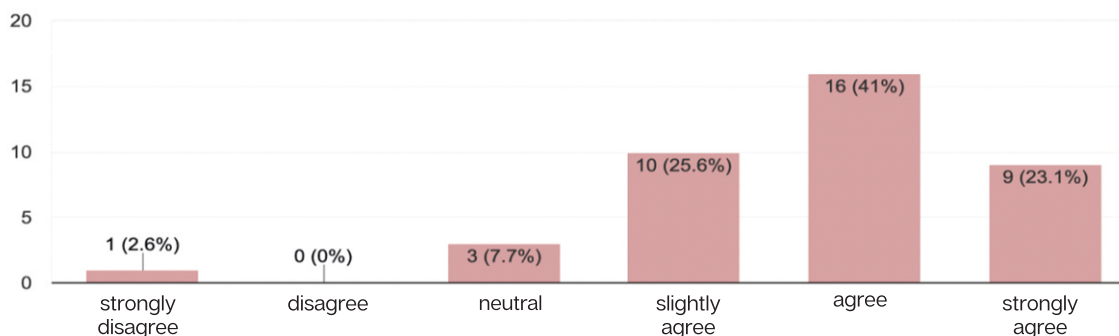
6.4. Intersectional challenges at the workplace

Intersectional discrimination faced by women in the legal academy extends beyond simply gender, including age, ethnicity, marital status, religion, and class. As previously stated, younger women are discriminated against based on their age. This further disadvantages young married women with children and/or other family or community caregiving roles.

Figure 16 | Impact of caregiving roles on women's careers

Women with children and caregiving roles will find it harder to advance in their careers

39 responses

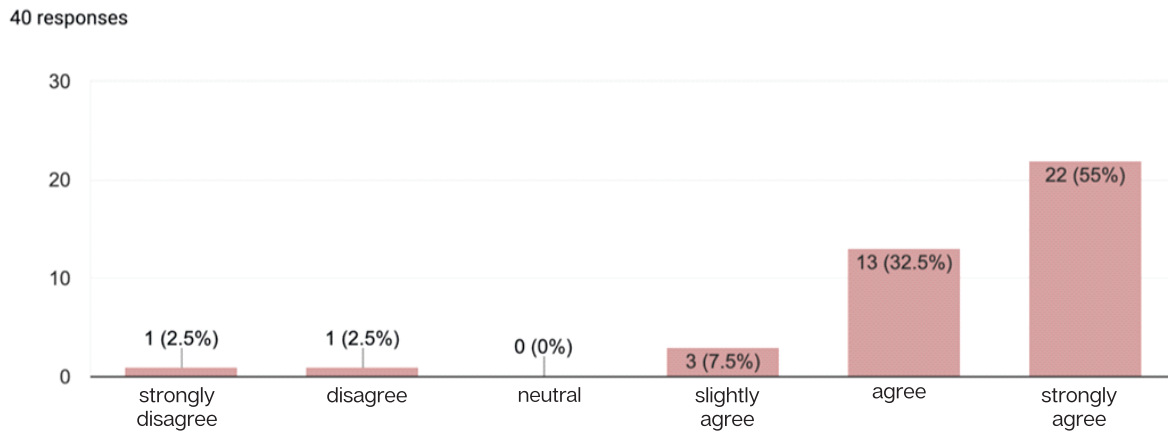


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

The survey data confirm the research on the challenges women with childcare duties face in their careers. Several respondents (89%) agreed that these obligations affect women and their career advancement. Figure 17 shows that regardless of these challenges, 95% of respondents still believed women could achieve leadership positions. This finding stresses the importance of women's agency and belief in their abilities to rise against all odds.



Figure 17 | Women desire to advance to senior positions despite family commitments

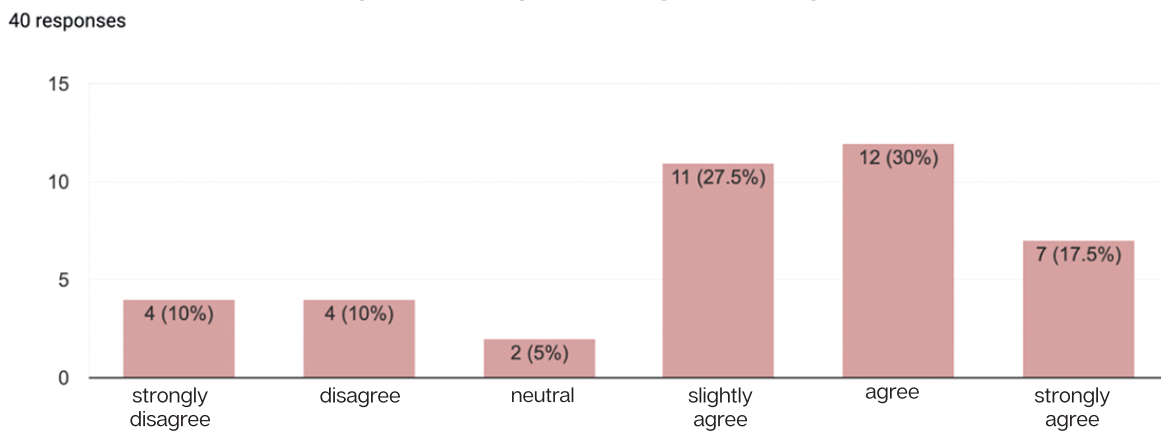


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

The study found that women who stand at the intersection of ethnicity, religion, and class are discriminated against, despite their competence and track records of efficiency. Ethnic minorities may be rejected during recruitment because the gatekeepers are from a different ethnic group. Figure 18 shows that 75% of respondents agree that ethnic minority women face tougher challenges in becoming leaders in academia.

Figure 18 | Ethnic minority women and challenges of leadership in the academy

Ethnic women minorities in Nigeria face tougher challenges becoming leaders in academia



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Ethnicity appears to be a strong explanatory factor for women's progress. A good example is when a woman who married cross-culturally is denied promotion because she is from a different ethnic group from her husband, regardless of her contributions to the institution of her husband's ethnicity.

Such discrimination frustrates women, which may explain premature attrition. In addition, the data from the two universities in the North indicate a much lower number of female academics and the absence of women in leadership positions. The intersection of gender, religion, and ethnicity, therefore, creates very unfavorable outcomes.

Discrimination comes in various forms, including neglecting women in the appointment to leadership positions. For example, the Nigerian Law School has not had a woman serve as director general since its inception about 60 years ago. Another form of discrimination that is felt in subtle ways is standardized salaries and allowances. Women also suffer disparities in access to income-generating opportunities within and outside the institutions.

When asked about equality in leadership opportunities, a respondent was emphatic:

There is massive disparity! There is no doubt the burden of childcare and homemaking makes it significantly challenging. You do not think in terms of catching a meeting at 7 pm when you have a young family, even when you have a much older family, you are less likely to be setting up a meeting at 7 pm. You still have cultural limitations... Women hold back, and that is why until recently, you would rarely find active women's clubs, or active old girls' associations, whereas the men would catch up with themselves, and it is easier for them to call up a colleague, a former classmate to share an assignment with.... It is a reality that the disparity is huge. Let me tell you, in the Constitution review exercise of the National Assembly, the Senate Technical Committee was made up predominantly of about 90% lawyers, and what was outstanding was that there was not a single female member. In nominating about 50 experts, the National Assembly, howsoever, didn't appoint any female technical expert. It just tells you that when they're thinking about giving opportunities, the leverage that men have had continues to disadvantage us for all those reasons. It's like you call your friends to the table, and your friends are like the ones that are like you and not the ones that are like the others.

Another academic added:

Institutional challenges include bullying, at various degrees, by male colleagues (seniors or contemporaries). Some men still see women as species for intimidation whose place should be in the home—specifically the kitchen and bedroom—and should have no place to compete with them in the office. The situation is further aggravated by religious and cultural fundamentalism that hinders women from attaining their potential.

Thus, depending on women's ethnicity and the cultural disposition of their (male) colleagues that condones bullying or undermines women, they may experience additional layers of barriers in the workplace.

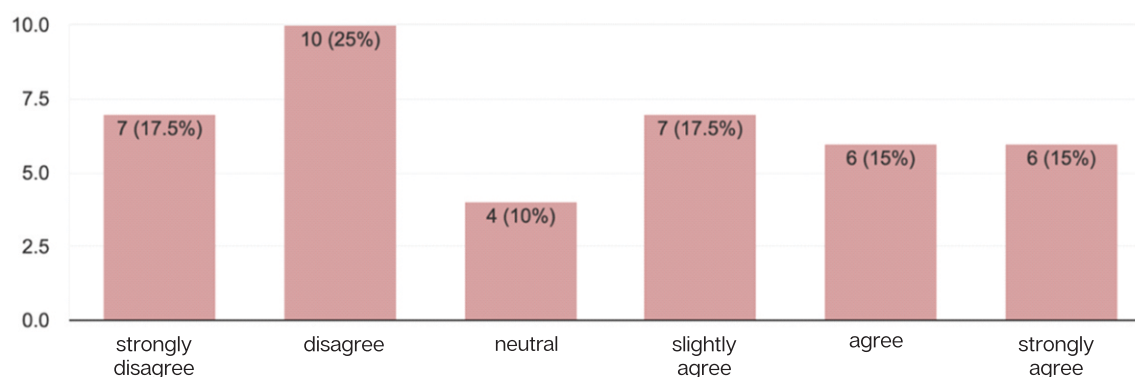
6.5. Sexual harassment in the academy

Figure 19 shows that the responses are split on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the academy: 47.5% agreed, and 42.5% disagreed. This split could be because senior academics may not face as much harassment as junior academics. In addition, some women are socialized to believe that certain actions that may constitute sexual harassment are culturally acceptable interactions.

Figure 19 | Sexual and gender-based harassment in the academy

Women face sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination in my university

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022



From the general perspective of workplace harassment, one respondent observed:

“ In my experience harassment is covert and aligns with society's lack of empathy for women. Asking a female colleague why she is not married or does not have children is disrespectful, particularly when it comes from male senior colleagues who are neither friends nor mentors. Doing this in public and expecting a polite answer or smile is even worse. We need to teach this to everyone. Again, asking women to cater to culinary concerns or to serve at faculty events is not only debasing to women but also re-emphasizes that women are not equal to their male colleagues at work. This is a critically demotivating factor. These kinds of covert harassment are difficult to fight and are masked under seniority and culture to the detriment of women. More awareness and empathy [are] needed. ”

These data also confirm these intersectional workplace discriminations, which are both overt and covert. According to Ogbogu (2016), the challenges responsible for slow progressions, such as discrimination, are real and peculiar to women.

6.6. Different negotiation and networking skills

The findings from the data confirm the literature stating that women lack networking and aggressive negotiation skills that help to recognize and enhance opportunities for advancement.

An interviewee aptly expresses this:

“ We don't even negotiate well, we don't bargain hard, we just don't do it. I think there are those psycho-social factors, we've internalized the fact that we're females, so we're not aggressive in the pursuit...Men learn early to know that networking is the only way business is done. Women hold back, and that is why until recently, you would rarely find active women's clubs, or active old girls' associations, whereas the men would catch up with themselves, and it is easier for them to call up a colleague, a former classmate to share an assignment with. Male colleagues would give opportunities to other males because they felt that they needed to lend a helping hand to them because they bear the obligations... he is male, he needs more money; she is female, she doesn't need it because she is being cared for. It is a reality that the disparity is huge. ”

The research reveals an intersectional angle to women seeking opportunities. The consensus from the FGDs is that women usually do not aggressively pursue opportunities due to socialization that limits them compared to men, who are socialized differently.

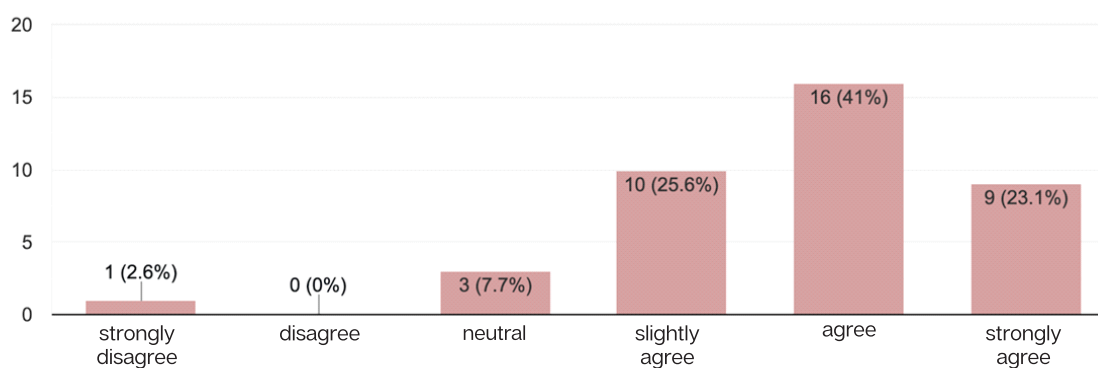
6.7. Family demands and work balance

For women, the challenge is coping with the productivity demands of teaching and research amid family demands. Dawuni (2021) identified the flexibility of working around domestic and familial roles as one reason certain categories of women joined the legal academy in Ghana. This is also why some young married women make choices that may not enhance their career progression, such as deciding not to study abroad, attend fellowships or conferences.

Figure 20 | Effect of caregiving roles on women's careers in the legal academy

Women with children and caregiving roles will find it harder to advance in their careers

39 responses



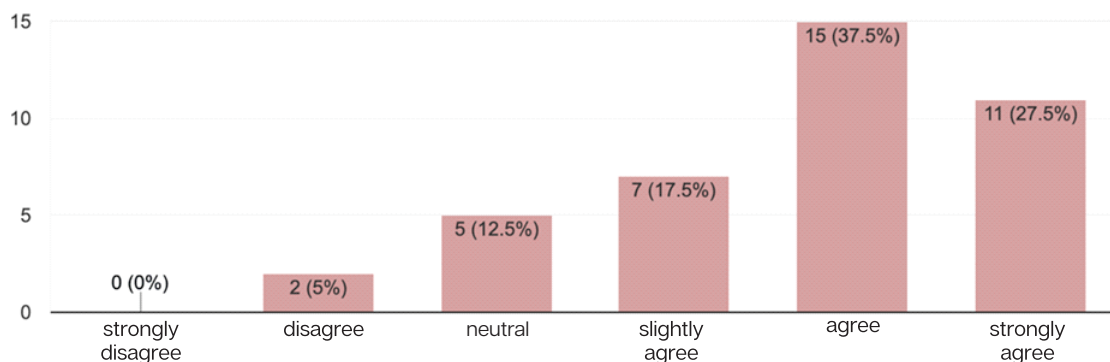
Source: IAWL survey, 2022



Figure 21 | Work-life balance in a demanding career

Achieving a work-life balance is a big challenge if you have a demanding career

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 21 shows that a combined total of 82.5% agree that family responsibilities impede career progression. Specifically, women with children and caregiving roles will find it harder to advance. Some respondents felt that women with family responsibilities are not always accommodated; meetings were often scheduled after hours, without considering school runs and other childcare responsibilities.

One respondent addressed the question, “at what stage do women stagnate or are forced to leave their careers because of the challenges they face?”:

“When one gets frustrated as a result of not progressing, the best option is to exit. The major factors responsible for women's slow progression in academia are traceable to their social responsibilities. These responsibilities don't give you the kind of time the man has. I don't believe that a woman progresses slowly because a man is oppressing her. We have had three deans in the faculty of law who have effectively represented the faculty's interests. Every woman makes a choice that can be likened to an opportunity cost. If one decides to become a career woman strictly, her family suffers, and if she decides to be a family woman strictly, her career suffers. However, a good balance of both is possible with good planning.”

One respondent, therefore, suggested that women's participation in administrative and other roles that prepare them for leadership should be safeguarded by ensuring that “senate, faculties, departmental and committee meetings, should as much as possible be held during office hours or on days, such as Fridays when lectures end early.”

A respondent highlighted other points of stagnation and attrition in the career pipeline:

“Stagnation among young lecturers happens after childbirth for many, as this takes a toll on productivity. Since academia preaches publish or perish, women's chances at promotion wane and could be discouraging when their male colleagues begin to surpass and even hold leadership positions. Without promotion, other faculty obligations such as teaching, marking, supervision and administrative chores become too daunting to sustain women's interest. At this point, some decide to quit. In addition, some quit upon completing a postgraduate degree. With the ongoing brain drain in the country, coupled with low pay for lecturers, some decide to pursue other higher-paying jobs with their newly acquired degrees.”

For federal academic institutions with campuses across the country, such as the Nigerian Law School, posting women (especially those married with young children) to a different campus affects their output because their attention will be divided between their work responsibilities and the family they left behind. Institutions or universities may not fully benefit from their optimal abilities. Women may leave for a more favorable employment opportunity that provides a semblance of work-life balance. When such women remain in the academy, advancement may be slowed due to low research productivity.

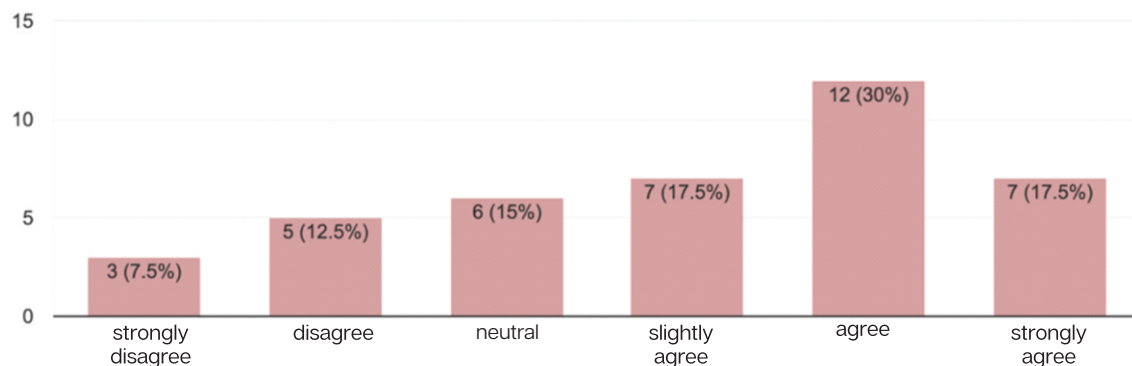
6.8. Lack of institutionalized mentoring opportunities

Generally, mentorship is a key ingredient in professional advancement (Badejogbin, 2020; Dawuni, 2021). The challenges women face in professional development would require mentoring. From the quantitative data, 65% of respondents agreed that their university had support and mentoring, 15% were neutral, and 19% disagreed. The quantitative data appear to diverge from the qualitative experiences, which could result from the interviews allowing respondents to seek clarification on the type of support or mentoring discussed. Thus, for most women, support systems with other women were considered mentorship, but this study sought to examine the presence of institutional mentorship and support systems for women.

Figure 22 | Availability of support and mentorship

Women have support and mentorship in my university

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

A respondent stated:

We have a lot of challenges with respect to mentorship because women tend to be more reserved by their very nature, and so we find that on the whole, we don't seem to have mentorship. The men seem to find a way to meander into places, they have a lot of outlets, places to interact, relax etc. But if women are found meeting up in this particular area, there's a challenge. This challenge is also because of the nature of our society, culture and religion. There is a way in which a woman will begin to go toward another person, maybe to seek mentorship, and it will be misinterpreted, and that will just give a bad name to the person. There are few female seniors from whom female lecturers can get mentorship. I found that throughout my career, I had no mentor, I was just drifting on my own.

This response is quite insightful, revealing intersectional inhibitions to women mentoring women. Women may also be reluctant to take advantage of these opportunities due to cultural expectations of appropriate behaviors (Dawuni, 2021). The few women ascending to higher ranks may be too overburdened to take on much mentoring, especially with their other family commitments. The kind of mentorship differs from that prevalent in civil law countries, a formal arrangement required for academic advancement (Schultz, 2021). As indicated by most FGDs, mentoring is informally practiced, but its effect is not far-reaching.



A respondent stated:

And the kind of politics that has entered academia is quite high and women don't know how to do that. Then sometimes women are more withdrawn, we don't use authority to the extent we are supposed to, which is necessary sometimes because people would come begging, and then we use motherly instinct. So naturally, women are quite fair.

Another respondent added:

“

Well personally, I don't know of any general mentoring or career network for women in academia, but, I know for a fact that over time, I have been able to mentor a lot of my junior colleagues, even when it seems like they are not motivated enough to do certain things. I remember a particular occasion when I told a female member of my department that you don't have to have big money to be able to go to conferences. I asked her, “what about your gold earrings? What about your gold necklaces and chains? You can sell that and use it to fund your travel.” Sometimes we even get funding, and they end up not having to spend their money, but I have tried as much as possible to take most of them under my wings. Now not all of them are ready to do the work, but for the ones that are ready to do the work, I have been able to mentor them.

”

Mentorship may be formal or informal, but a semi-formal or informal relationship may be more effective. An FGD respondent agreed that mentorship is usually informal rather than structured or deliberate:

There is no formal structure with respect to mentorship. It is largely informal, where colleagues influence you through their achievements and the way they have gotten to the point you aspire to be at. I don't know if it is because most women are already saddled with many responsibilities aside from work, so it is difficult to find a time that works for everybody. We need to be more intentional with respect to creating a structure.



Another respondent identified some mentoring networks for young female lawyers and noted that mentees would only remain in such networks if they were benefiting.

There's none right now for female lawyers. It's good it's coming a little late for people like us, but for the young ones coming, that should be the mentoring platform that they need, and one of the things about mentoring is that when people feel like they are not getting anywhere, that is when they leave.

Another respondent advised young women to be proactive and seek out mentors:

Many young ladies entering the public sector are first-generation academics in their families, so there is no mentorship. So they need to meet with senior colleagues and get themselves mentors. That was also what I did.

6.9. Underrepresentation in leadership positions

Ordinarily, with more women in leadership, they would better understand the plight of upcoming female academics and curb bias against them, as they have been there themselves. Findings from the study revealed that although women are increasingly achieving leadership, the percentage is still low in several institutions, so the effect of their interventions remains minimal. Their impact will be better felt as their number increases. When asked about a deliberate policy to have a minimum percentage of women in leadership in the profession, a respondent expressed this view:

Well, affirmative action is like positive discrimination... When it comes to leadership positions, I won't advocate that because it may not be good for the system for positions like Deanship and Vice-chancellor, but when it comes to committees, I don't see a reason why a senior lecturer with Ph.D. should not be able to head. A deliberate policy can be made to ensure gender equity within the system, but if gender equity will reduce quality, then I will not subscribe to it because the university is a place where excellence is the watchword. So apart from the committees that I have mentioned and the institutes that are specialized in women in those special fields available, women should really work hard for other positions, and I can assure you that women are working hard. I don't see why one should become the dean of a faculty on quota bases or even an HOD [head of the department] position.

Promoting an affirmative action policy does not imply a request to reduce standards for women. Instead, it is an effort to create opportunities for competent women who may have been previously overlooked or marginalized. Some analysts, such as Badejogbin (2021), argued that despite advocacy by notable organizations, groups, and legal frameworks to enhance academic opportunities and career progression, 50/50 gender parity should not necessarily be the goal. Instead, adequate representation of both genders should be pursued.

This sense of adequate means a “sufficient, satisfactory, and acceptable number of male and female [academics] to maintain... legitimacy,” without there being either a male or female majority (Badejogbin, 2020, p. 138). This is determined contextually without compromising standards, as a number of factors determine such appointments (Badejogbin, 2020).

Another female academic interviewed stated:

In my opinion, what is happening in the academia reflects what is happening in the country. Acquiring 30% leadership and governance role that has been enjoyed by men over a long period of time ... will not easily be retrievable. There has to be an intentional, gradual and patient “takeover.” We must understand that no effort to put women in leadership positions is wasted. We need to start the conversations and be relentless. Women must also be prepared, meeting the requirements and getting involved in office politics. There should be qualified women ready to take up any leadership opportunity as soon as the chance presents itself. We can't wait for men to gather and decide to give us power. In addition, women in leadership positions must pave the way... create an environment that makes it easier for other women to advance.

The target for women should not necessarily be to “take over” but to receive equal opportunities to participate on equal footing when they qualify. This can only be addressed on a multifaceted level, given the intersectional factors. Figure 23 shows that an overwhelming number of respondents (97.5%) find leadership positions appealing; 92.5% also reported that they were encouraged to take up leadership positions at their institutions (Figure 24). This outcome means women will take advantage of such opportunities if given the right environment, training, and preparation. The pipeline for women occupying leadership positions can be expanded if women are interested in and have career opportunities for leadership and if their intersectional challenges are addressed.

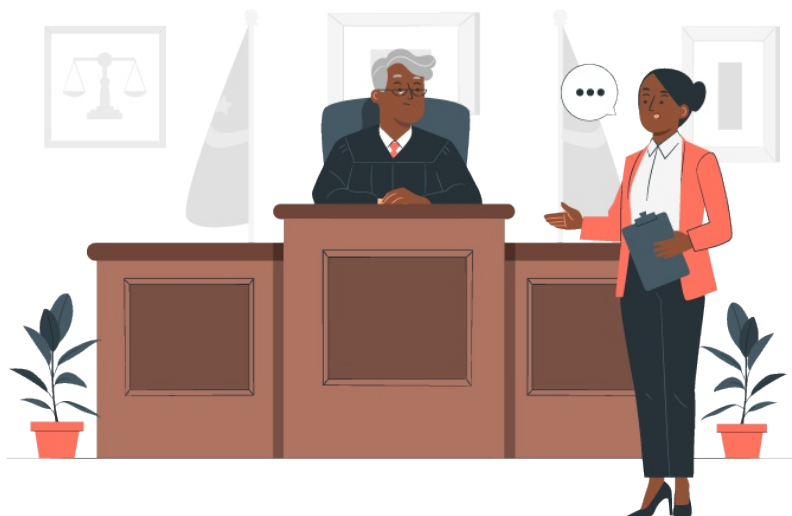
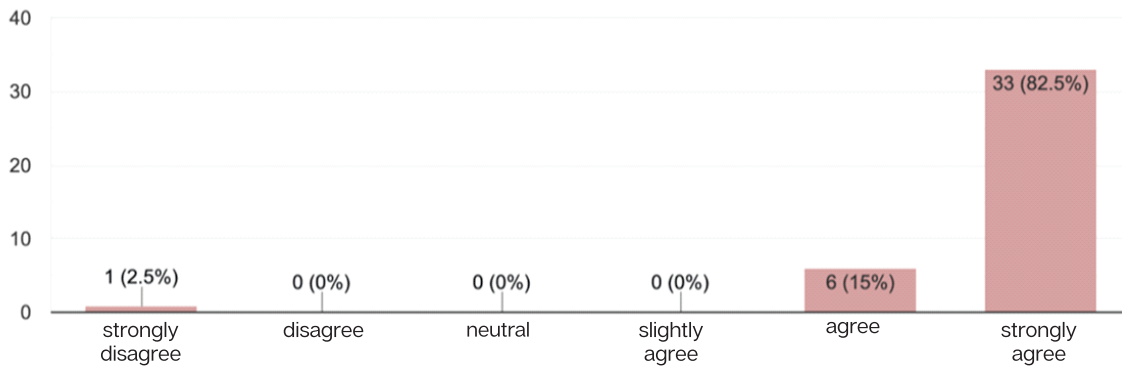


Figure 23 | Interest in taking a leadership position

Attaining a position of leadership is appealing to me

40 responses

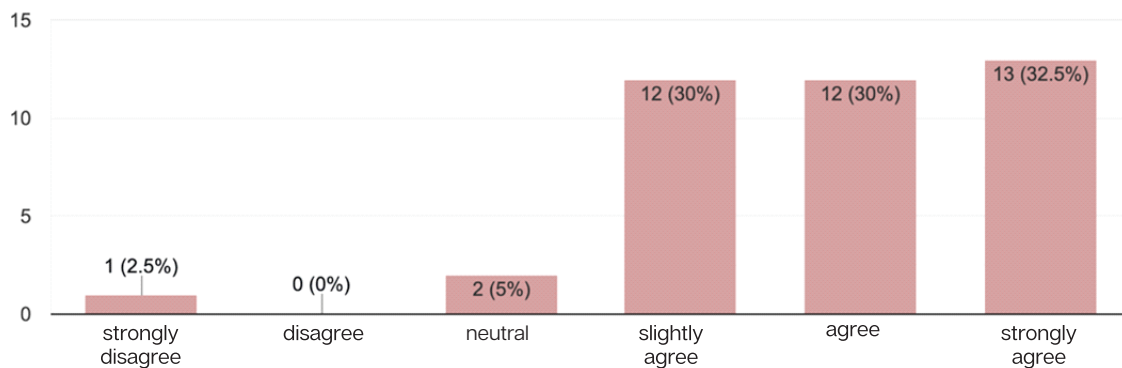


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 24 | Availability of leadership opportunities

Women taking up leadership roles is encouraged in my organization

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

6.10. Limited capacity to engage

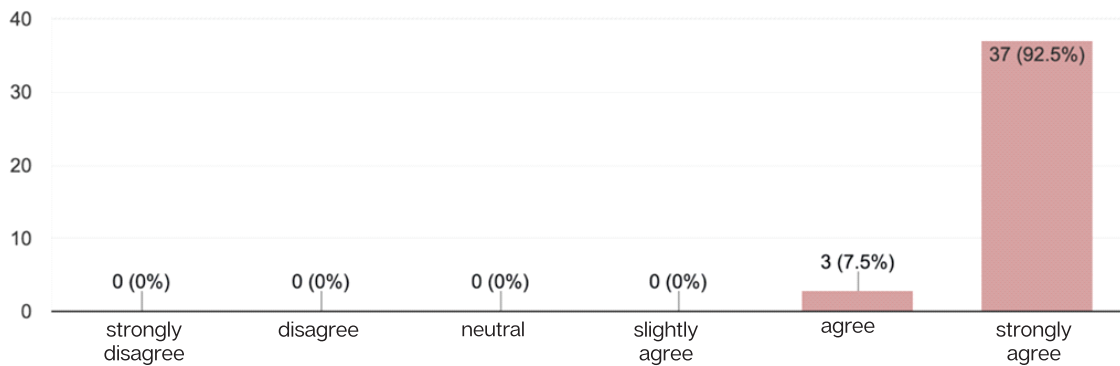
Findings from the qualitative study underscored the need for women to build skills and the capacity to hold leadership positions, including undertaking the engagements required for occupying elective positions, such as deanship. Although academia appears to be more flexible in assigning roles to qualified women, it is believed that women often withdraw when it comes to [institutional] politics.

This perception affects the number of women in leadership, as some of these positions involve elections and campaigns for votes. For women's voices to be heard at the decision-making table and their issues to be addressed, they should be trained to engage at different levels. Women bring different perspectives based on their experience and expertise, such as their unique talents and competencies. Figures 25 and 26 present the results on perceptions and capabilities of women in leadership.

Figure 25 | Women's ability as leaders

Women can be successful leaders

40 responses

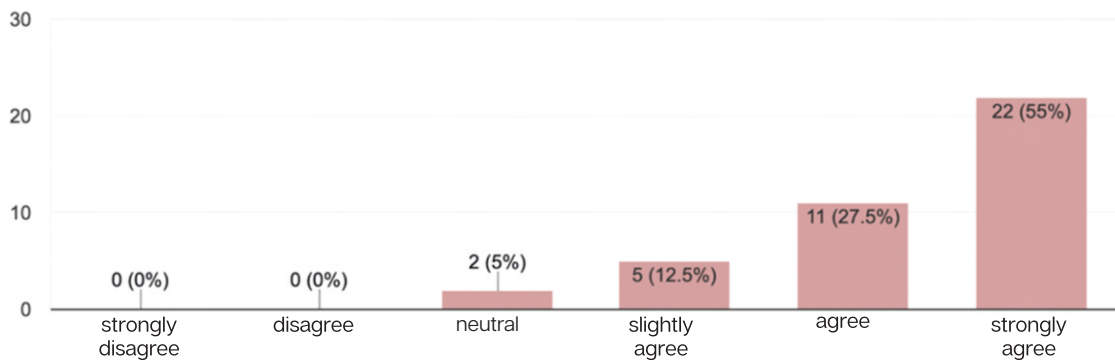


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 26 | Women's ability to advance to leadership positions

Women in academia are able to advance to the topmost leadership positions

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022



From these data, 100% believe that women can be successful leaders and take the opportunity to grow in their careers; 95% believe that women can advance to the highest echelons. Women understand what they want and are willing to invest their time and talent if given the opportunity. Disinterest in politics should not be allowed to stand in the way of leadership pursuits; institutions should adopt measures not tied to political maneuverings.

6.11. Impact of COVID-19 on women in the legal academy

In the wake of the global impact of COVID-19, which led to a death toll of millions and the shutting down of economies and institutions, many institutions had to adjust (Koninckx, Fatondji, & Burgos, 2021). Although Africa recorded the least severe caseloads, the shutdown was also felt in its economies and institutions (Nwokocha, 2021). Many saw opportunities to take advantage of the resources and technology available to sustain legal institutions and engage students in ways that would forestall a total collapse of the systems. Only 29% of African higher education institutions could move to online teaching, as opposed to over 70% from developed economies (Koninckx, Fatondji, & Burgos, 2021). Due to other challenges of funding and access to quality and adequate technology, only 8% of these institutions recorded that they were highly effective in using technology to teach remotely (Koninckx, Fatondji, & Burgos, 2021).

Therefore, online engagement to maintain social distancing was welcome but had its challenges. These challenges included the availability of equipment and, where it was available, students' ability to access both equipment and the internet. Female academics suffered challenges at the institutional and personal levels, such as teaching with the limited availability of technological resources while juggling their career and domestic responsibilities, which were more demanding for those with young children.

As an interviewee recounts:

With children out of school, it deepened the socioeconomic stress as the demands of children while out of school became more. The issue of social distancing required you to keep your distance from family and colleagues, while economically, prices of everything skyrocketed...It also affected me psychologically, being an asthmatic patient, I was always scared.

The mental health implications differed among respondents, emphasizing how women were placed at different intersections of challenges.



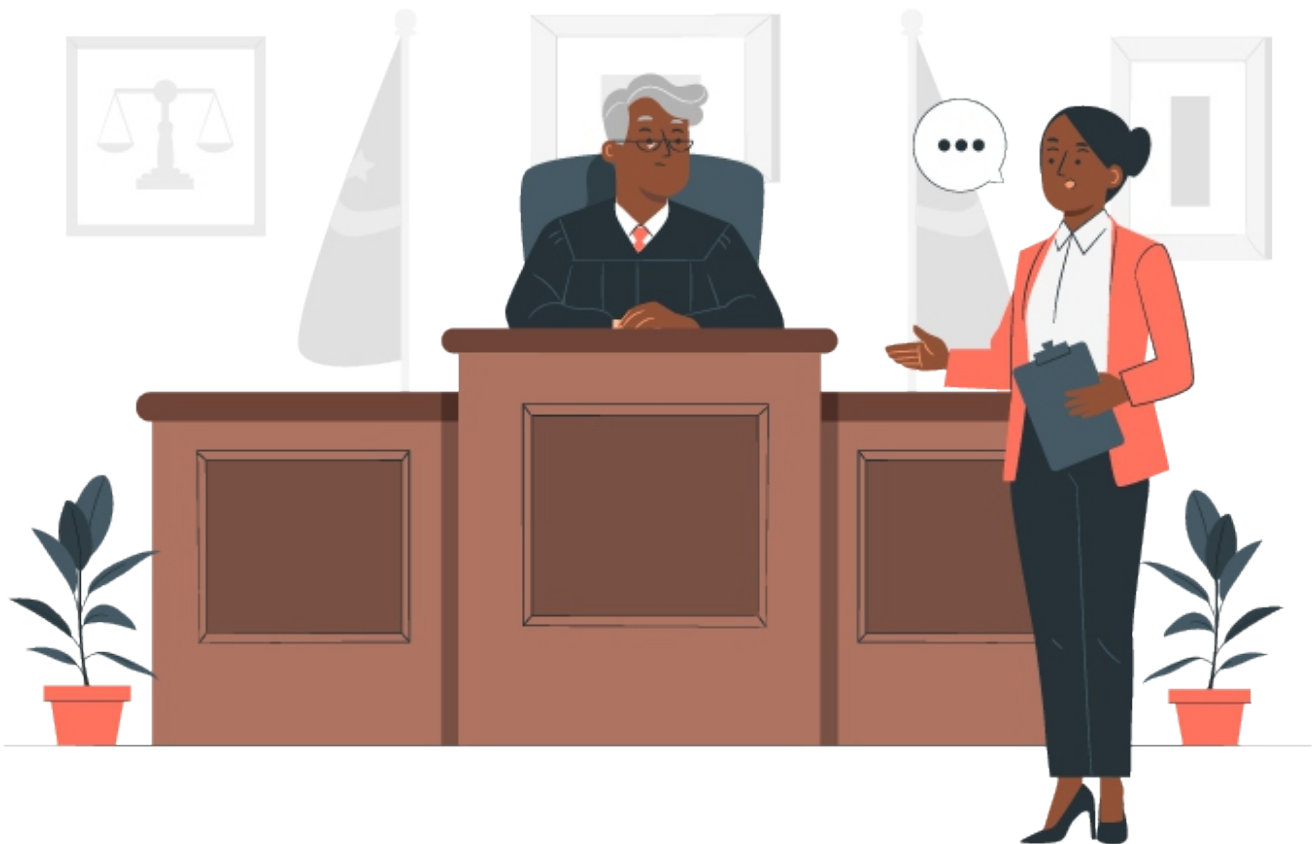
Another respondent explained:

“

The lockdown affected my work negatively as being cooped up at home affected my zeal to work on my research. It was a struggle getting myself in the right frame of mind to work. Online meetings/webinars were also a struggle because it was not conducive enough for me, being at home with the kids, juggling their online classes with my online classes/webinars was difficult. The background noise from the kids and neighbors' generators made it difficult, especially when recording a lecture. I had to resort to recording at night when everywhere was quiet. However, it was also positive because, though challenging, it forced me to adapt and hone my IT skills. It opened up more possibilities to acquire knowledge from a distance. I discovered websites that offered online courses and that was really helpful.

”

The situation for these female academics hugely impacted their output in terms of delivery and publications, which are crucial for progress. Nevertheless, many respondents demonstrated personal resilience and adopted strategies to overcome the hurdles.



7

FACILITATORS OF PROMOTION/RECOMMENDATIONS



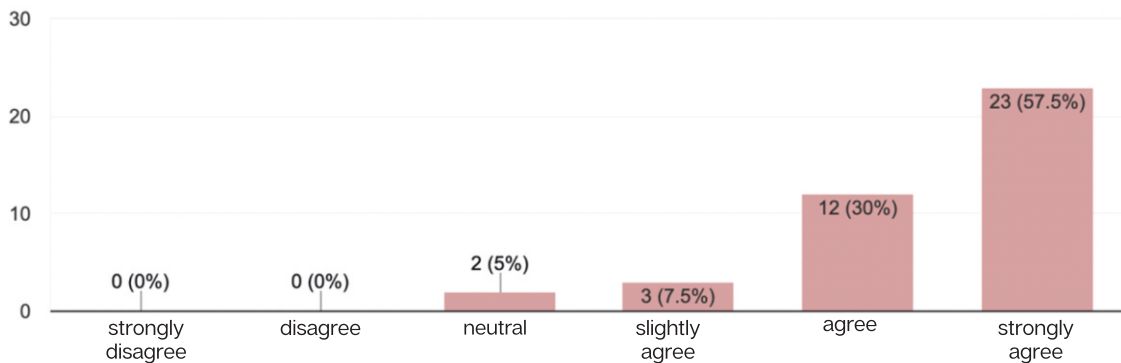
7.1. Transparent and equal opportunities for promotion and leadership

The gender gap appears to be closing significantly in academia, with some universities, especially in the South, having an increasing number of female lecturers. However, the same cannot be said of those at the highest echelon (professors); the gap remains very wide in most universities sampled. Women in the South have had more opportunities to occupy leadership/deanship positions, although their ascension to dean is still a relatively recent phenomenon. Acting deanship is by appointment, but deanship is by election and has certain mandatory qualifications, such as being a professor. The data reveal that women are ready to take on these leadership roles and would apply if given the opportunity. The data also show that more women believe that women have equal opportunities for tasks that can lead to promotions, but about 42% think otherwise. Their responses may be due to personal experiences related to their intersectional challenges, which must be addressed to bring about a level playing field.

Figure 27 | Leadership opportunities for women in the legal academy

Women would apply for leadership positions if the opportunity arose

40 responses

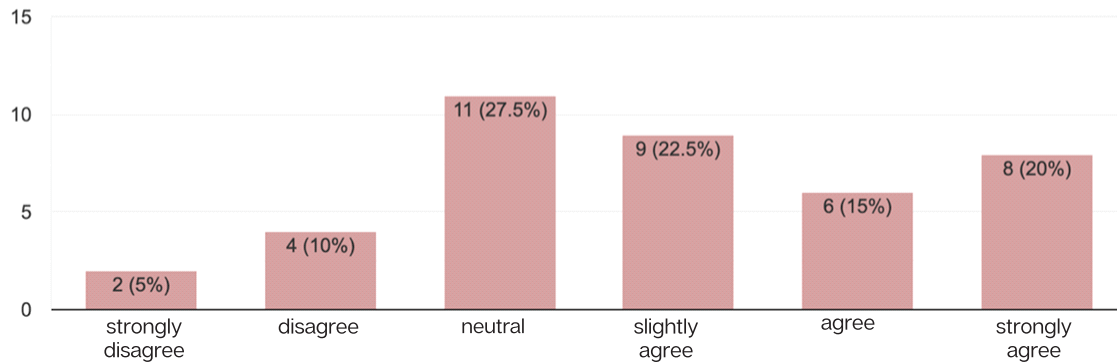


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Figure 28 | Equal opportunities for tasks leading to promotion

Women have equal opportunities as men to engage in tasks that can lead to promotion to leadership positions

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Perhaps only a few women are elected or appointed as leaders due to skepticism about their ability to deliver appropriately. This skepticism has been challenging even across continents (Farley, 1996). It is clearly a misunderstanding, and the data confirm this.

As succinctly expressed by one of the interviewees,

...many women feel leadership positions is how a man would do it like the authoritarian way, but no, I've learnt that there's something called soft power and that can work and women are very good at it, but some women don't even have that confidence in themselves. ... What I'm saying in essence, is that a woman has good things to bring to leadership positions. She has a unique perspective, this soft power, this emotional intelligence, giving corrections without being harsh and finding ways to benefit other people you are working with. So it's just that we need to have more confidence in ourselves and find ways to present our idea.

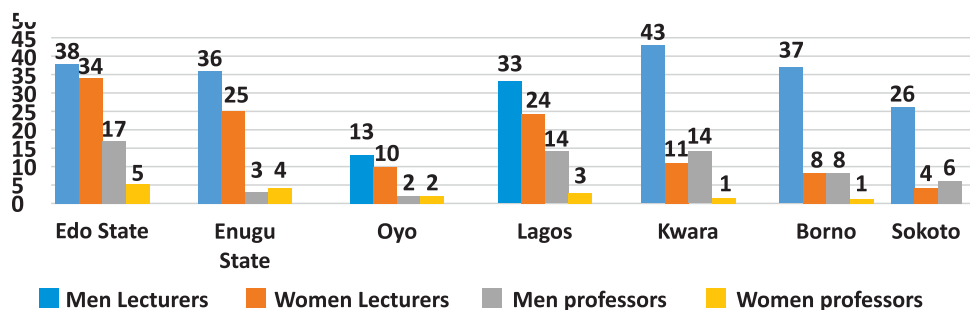
Women who have assumed leadership in Nigeria have proven otherwise, as they exhibited very good leadership qualities and made significant contributions to the academy and beyond. A good example is the legendary Alele-Williams. Her effective leadership drastically reduced cultism at the university (Ogbogu, 2021). Another example is Jadesola Akande, the first female professor and female university vice chancellor from the legal academy. She was also the founder and executive director of the Women, Law and Development Center Nigeria, which promoted extensive academic research. She championed women's movements in Nigeria and beyond. She served in leadership positions in several organizations, including the Association of African Forum for Research and Documentation and the Forum for African Women Educationalist Nigeria.

She advanced “legal education, university administration, constitutional review, and development in human rights activism... reforms” (Guardian, 2019).

Another example is Bamgbose, who was appointed as the deputy vice chancellor of Research, Innovation, and Strategic Partnership at the University of Ibadan. She is the director of the Women's Law Clinic at the faculty and the chair of the Nigerian Bar Association Women's Forum, created to enhance “the interest and welfare of the female lawyers” (Peters, 2019). Bamgbose also served as a member of the National Committee on the Reform of Discriminatory Laws Against Women in Nigeria, chaired the Constitutional Review Committee for Oyo State Nigeria, was a member of the Technical Working Committee of the National Human Rights Commission/Ford Foundation Project “Fair Trial and the Right to Effective Participation in Governance,” and is making useful contributions to the advancements of women's affairs at the Nigerian Bar Association (Peters, 2019).

Figure 29 presents the ratio of male to female lecturers and professorships in the institutions researched. The data show that the gaps are still vast, so more interventions will be needed.

Figure 29 | Sex-disaggregated data on representation in six law faculties



Data source: Data collected from the respective university administrators, 2022

The data revealed substantial disparities in the North, where the ratio is quite low compared to the South. In the North, the dimensions of sociocultural practices and religion, among others, contribute to the wider gender gap. Of the three states from the North, none has ever had a female dean, and two have only one female professor each; the third is yet to have any. The data from Oyo State reveal a 50:50 ratio of male and female professors, and Enugu State has three men to four women, which is quite impressive for both. Perhaps when women apply themselves to developing their credentials and abilities, it is more difficult to ignore their qualifications despite sociocultural inhibitions. More research will be needed to understand why some states have better representation.

7.2. Addressing institutional gender biases and discrimination

The strategies adopted to address institutional gender biases and discrimination in the legal academy will be useful for everyone as they reflect the situation in the higher academy in Nigeria generally. Ogbogu (2016) confirmed that these biases and discriminations are real. In addition, other research in Africa and across continents also confirms these challenges (Dawuni, 2021; Schultz, 2021). The findings indicate the prevalence of sexual harassment, with 65.9% of respondents reporting that their workplace had no sexual harassment policy. Institutions also need to make arrangements that will help women manage certain intersectional challenges, such as having a crèche for nursing mothers within the institution. Only 25.2% of respondents stated that their workplace had a maternity policy that supports exclusive breastfeeding for six months.

Flexible working arrangements would go a long way to enhance women's productivity, enabling them to navigate their responsibilities. Respondents confirm this; 91.9% recommended flexible working arrangements (home/work). Even though 59% believed that the COVID-19 pandemic introduced adequate flexibility in working arrangements that allow women to advance in their careers, 41% disagreed. Although flexible hours would help, that will be more effective with other interventions, such as a workplace crèche.

According to Onokala and Onah (1998), adopting a strategy for equal gender career opportunities is integral to developing higher education. Several corrective measures have been proposed (mechanisms applied in other jurisdictions), such as gender mainstreaming, to achieve a gender policy reorganization in the structures of institutions and systems (Adesinaola, 2012). Adopting a deliberate mentorship culture will be very useful to young female academics, but these have their challenges. Although some would prefer a formal mentorship structure, some feel otherwise.



A respondent provided recommendations:

There is a lot that academic institutions could do to support women. First, the faculties need to be a place to motivate continuing learning by young academics. Secondly, the creation of research circles and mentorship relationships should be formal and intentional. One institution I know in the health sector assigns young doctors to consultants upon enrolment in the residency program to guide them through the course of their training. These mentors support academic, clinical, professional and personal needs of their mentees. Academia could benefit from this innovation. To deal with the exit that stems from low pay, young academi[cs] can be taught within their research circles how to write project grants and source funding for their research, conference attendance and publications. As ... research databases such as Heinonline and Westlaw are expensive and may not be subscribed to by the Faculty, young academia can be informed of fellowships within other schools that they could get involved access these crucial resources.

Considering the multidimensional and intersectional nature of these challenges, solutions must be tailored to fit each context. However, overarching policies to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment can be applied to all institutions. Specific interventions may also need to be developed for women at different career levels, such as mentorship for junior faculty and leadership training for senior faculty.

7.3. Institutionalize support for female legal academics at all institutions

Clear-cut institutional support would help provide leave and flexible working hours to aid maternal care. Legal institutions are run by the federal government, states, or private institutions, which have uneven maternal policies. For almost a decade and a half, women working in federal institutions have enjoyed maternity leave for about 16 weeks with full pay after giving birth. Women are also allowed to leave work earlier until the baby turns one. State and private-owned institutions do not match these benefits, as their policies are based on the owners' prerogatives. Having such a structure in place creates a conducive environment for female academics to care for their families with reduced stress, apply themselves to work to the best of their ability, and progress in their careers. Such structures and policies will help women cope better and discourage premature exit. This may explain the high number of female academics in certain federal government institutions, such as the NIALS (64% women).

In responding to whether the legal academy should support women to stay full-time because most women continue to be primary caregivers, a respondent stated that:

Sometimes, the legal academy can be challenging. Then without having the proper system of crèche facilities, it may be difficult for some of them. It will also be helpful if these women are given opportunities to access grants and scholarships that would enable them to hire assistants. Because assistants help with preliminary research, and one would be able to publish more.

A female respondent who had reached the zenith of her academic career shared her experiences addressing the work-family balance in her younger years:

“

I was the first female Head of Department (HOD) in my faculty... Just when I got promoted to the level of HOD, I got pregnant with a surprise baby. It was so shocking... My male colleagues thought I wouldn't be able to handle the job and some told me that they would help me handle it but I had to stand my ground, and I insisted that the fact that I was pregnant was not a disease, so whenever I had meetings, and I needed to see to my baby even if it was with the vice chancellor, I would request some time and tell the VC that I needed to go and breastfeed my baby. I never covered up with any excuse like I want to go to the toilet or something else to erase my agency as a mother. I demanded my right to express my reproductive health rights without apology because it is a part of me, and even if I would come back again to this life I would still come as a woman. Even now that I traveled to take care of my grandchild, during a lot of the meetings that I held or that I had to be in, I would back the baby [carry the baby on her back] and others would just laugh on the zoom meeting and say “Ha! Grandma!!” But that is also part of demanding my right to be a grandmother at the same time and still be at the top of my career.

”

This illustrates that women sometimes have had to assert themselves in the workplace to be reasonably accommodated and not expect that such accommodations will ordinarily be available to them as required by law or logic.

7.4. Enforce disciplinary measures against gender-based harassment

Given the prevalence of gender-based harassment in the legal academy, there is a need for recommendations on how to address it. Clearly, this problem will persist for as long as it is left unaddressed, contributing to women's attrition and stagnation; 93.1% recommended awareness/education/training, and 45.4% recommended establishing a disciplinary committee to penalize offenders. If these suggestions are adopted, offenders will be held in check. Creating awareness will educate people about the implications of their behavior, and the penalty will hopefully deter abusers.

7.5. Build a strong pipeline and early start to women's leadership capabilities

Building capacity for leadership must begin early. The data on the low number of women in leadership means that attention must be paid to building the pipeline. A good place to start would be with female students, as they will become the women who take up careers. A similar disparity exists in the leadership ranks among law students in the universities studied, although it is more prevalent in the North. Enrollment at the law faculties has significant female representation. However, the North has substantially less. This Northern paucity could be due to cultural and religious inhibitions. The improvement noted in the southern law faculties indicates that low enrollment in higher education for women in Nigeria has changed (Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi, & Afolabi, 2015) and should therefore result in their engagement as lecturers. According to West (2018), achieving adequate recognition and eliminating discrimination has promoted increased female student enrollment, which could lead to more women pursuing careers in the legal academy.

The low numbers remain a challenge in both regions regarding leadership positions as students. Female students have been leaders at the association level, but these are usually supportive positions, such as vice president, treasurer, or welfare officer, and hardly ever as president or secretary. Hence, female law students should be encouraged and mentored at these early stages to work toward being engaged in leadership positions if they exhibit such abilities. Other strategies to build a strong pipeline include investing in an early start to women's leadership through offering scholarships and bursaries to women to mentor younger women as research assistants. Public awareness campaigns for young women about the possibility of academic employment could also help, especially in the North, where representation is particularly low (Odejide, 2003). Women should therefore be available to provide such mentorship to young female students.

7.6. Increase funding for research and professional development

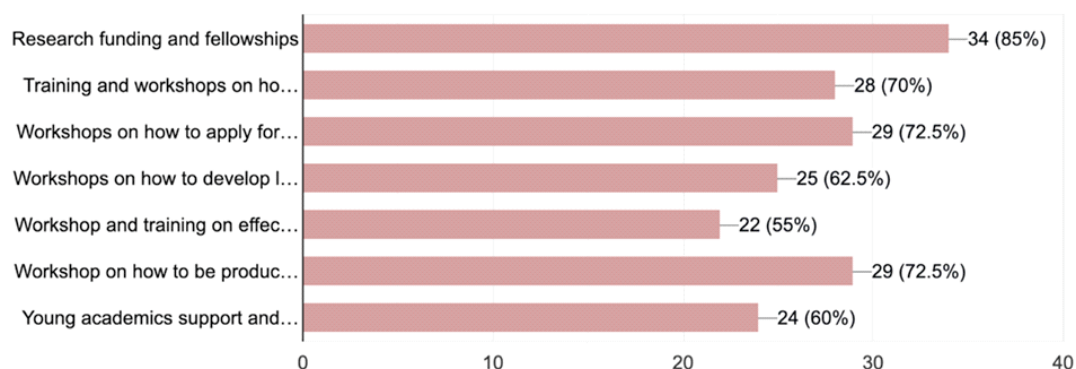
The drastic reductions in funding, resulting in poor governance, contribute to the underrepresentation of women and their professional development in higher education institutions. Odejide (2003, p. 455) explained that these “have made gender issues appear less urgent,” along with inflation, economic recession and the loss of university autonomy. If female academics can apply for and access funds, they will be less dependent on universities for career advancement. Convincing funders of their abilities would mean developing a track record of competence, which may entail working very hard, despite their intersectional hurdles.

The survey asked respondents which areas they needed support (Figure 30); most (85%) asked for research and fellowships, indicating that female academics know and value the role of research in their career advancement, but a majority need support to achieve that goal.

Figure 30 | Support systems to help women in the academy

How can IAWL best support you? Please select all that apply

40 responses



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

One respondent explained that it would be helpful to provide opportunities to access grants and scholarships to hire assistants for preliminary research so that they could publish more. Female leaders can also encourage younger women as this can boost their confidence in their ability to apply for and receive grants to enhance their research and output. Women should also adopt collaborative approaches by co-authoring to reduce publishing demands alone.

7.7. Leadership development skills, training, and support

From Figure 30, 62.5% of respondents requested workshops on developing leadership skills and capabilities. Other important support requests included training and workshops on how to apply for grants (72.5%), training on research productivity (72.5%), training and mentorship for young academics (60%), and training on developing effective negotiations and networks (55%).

Addressing these challenges requires several initiatives focused on providing support and mentorship for early- and middle-career women. Some will require women to collaborate in building networks and strategies to enhance their research outputs and for universities to adopt intentional measures, such as extended leave periods for research, to enable women to be more productive because their intersectional challenges may cause them to take a bit longer to accomplish some tasks (Ogbogu, 2016). Research productivity contributes to women's eligibility to climb the leadership ladder.

According to interviewees, the strategies to surmount these challenges include training in relevant research skills, providing relevant facilities and grants, and the necessary support for attending conferences and short-term foreign externship exchanges. Women should also aim to publish their research discoveries in high-impact journals, serving as springboards for their careers. Enhancing these will build women's competencies for leadership roles, whether through appointment or election.

Women also indicated that attaining such levels of competence and eligibility would include efforts to build networking and collaborative systems to access funds and role models to look up to. It will also include the academic institutions creating enabling environments for flexible teaching schedules and allocating teaching/administrative workloads to academic staff to nurture and build leadership skills. Gender-friendly policies that account for women's multifaceted roles would also enhance their research development (Ogbugo, 2016).

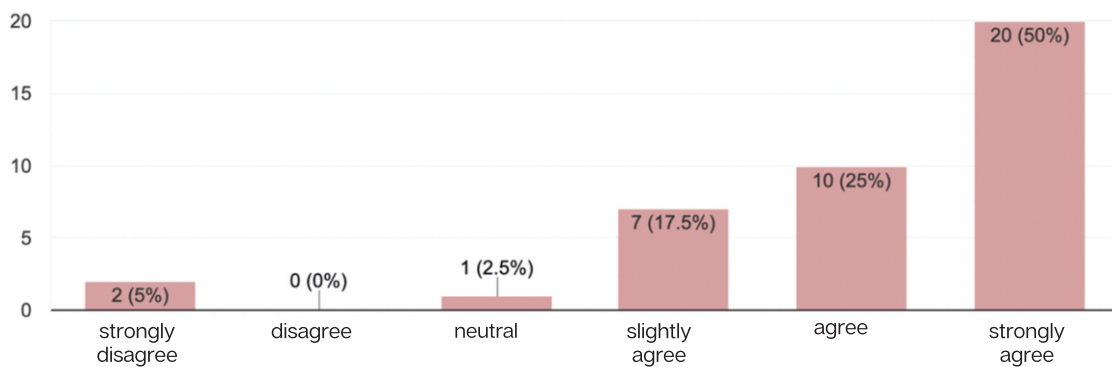
7.8. Personal agency and the will to succeed

Women also have a personal role in career advancement. However, that presents a dilemma, given that their personal and individual level challenges are affected, controlled, and largely determined by institutional and structural factors beyond their control. Nevertheless, when asked if women will take advantage of opportunities to develop their leadership skills, a majority (92.5%) agreed (Figure 31).

Figure 31 | Women will take advantage of opportunities to develop

Women will take advantage of opportunities to develop their leadership skills

40 responses

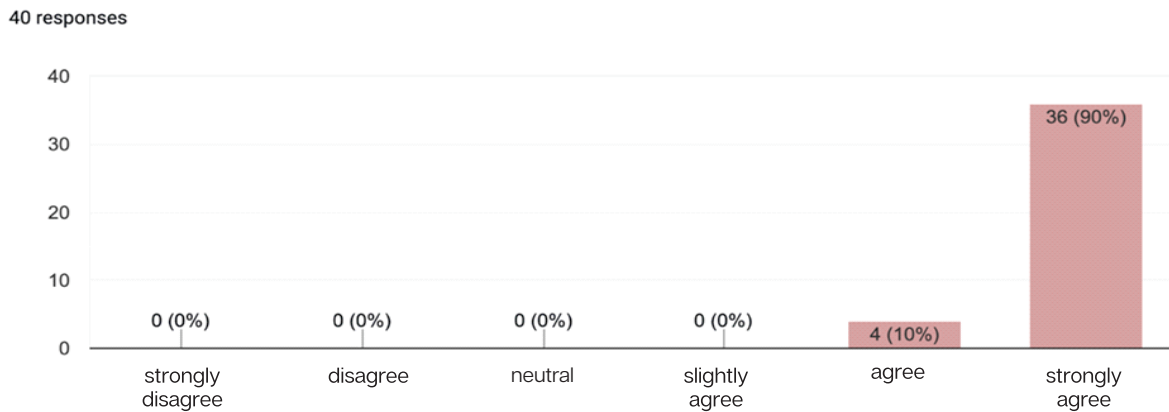


Source: IAWL survey, 2022

As an expression of their determination to succeed, 100% of respondents agreed that the opportunity to grow in their career was highly important to them. These two data points indicate that women are interested in developing their research skills and, most importantly, believe they can grow professionally when given the right conditions and support.



Figure 32 | The opportunity to grow in my career is of utmost importance to me



Source: IAWL survey, 2022

Despite this situation, the importance of personal agency is crucial, as it has been identified as a factor in women's advancement in a legal career (Badejogbin, 2018, 2020).

A respondent noted:

Each woman in the legal academy must exercise personal agency and have the will to succeed; otherwise, she may be discouraged at the different levels of intersectional hurdles she will be confronted with. These must be present to maneuver the various demands of marriage, motherhood and other sociocultural expectations while facing academic, teaching, research, publications and other faculty responsibilities.



Respondents were asked about diversity in the academy concerning women in leadership, with particular reference to the positions of HOD (by appointment) and deanship (by election):

“

Right now, my HOD is a woman, then I was the HOD.... So it is how forceful the woman is, like I said there are a lot of things holding women back. The advantage I had is that I'm partly Yoruba and I was brought up by my parents not to say gender, but for some people it was a real problem. And the thing is that women need to have confidence because if they don't have confidence, somebody will pressure them. It is very rare for a woman to say I want to be this, although I didn't say I want to be this, but I just went through life and somehow or the other God, in His infinite mercy, made me shine. So I don't think it is any kind of discrimination. I think if you show that you have capacity, you will succeed.

”

Responding to the question about the growth of female academics in the faculty and whether they are competing on a balanced level, an interviewee stated that:

Definitely, they are not competing well, and I think this also depends on the individual. I believe that we ought to have younger people competing favorably, but this is not happening as we wish. One thing we ought to know is that to succeed in academia, you need to burn the midnight oil. I think that because of job scarcity, more women are going into academia, where ordinarily, it wouldn't have been their choice of work.

From these data and responses, institutional interventions, though helpful, are not sufficient; a woman must also have personal agency and the will to succeed. This agency and will to succeed entails going the extra mile but makes it possible to surmount the intersectional challenges.



8

GENERAL TRENDS AND PATTERNS



This discussion has shown that women remain underrepresented in the legal academy, especially in leadership. Some primary factors have been explored to explain this. The general trends and patterns are drawn from the six law faculties examined to lead to certain generalizations.

8.1. Hope on the horizon or the impact of critical mass?

Data from the qualitative study revealed that despite women's experience of different forms of discrimination and biases, the narrative about representation is gradually changing for the better:

It is the normal socio-cultural and religious barriers, it is difficult to overcome because they are societal issues and for you not to be affected, you have to be an icon, a rebel or someone whose family is very supportive to get away with it, otherwise, there is a price to pay. Those are the barriers... In academia, it is the same thing. Remember the issue of bail in those days when women could not stand as surety to bail anyone...only men. Thank God it is not that way again. These things are also in academia, but it is getting better... For you to be a woman in a man's world, it becomes difficult ... to be feminine, that is the problem, the way we do politics is different from the way men do politics, men's politics is all out, but we tend to be softer.

This response indicates that the bleak situation is giving way to a brighter and hopeful future in which the long-standing barriers and discrimination are torn down. Generally, as explained by the scholarship on women's recruitment into higher education, the requirements are ostensibly even for both male and female aspirants; data from the southeast region in this study confirm no overt gender discrimination against women in terms of employment eligibility or criteria.

One of the interviewees expressed that:

I've had the privilege to serve as a member of the accreditation team that looked at the qualifications of lecturers in the faculty and have also spent my sabbatical leave in another university. I didn't see any discrimination against women in terms of entry or appointment because universities have criteria for appointment... Before you can be a lecturer, you must have a good university degree, [and] the required grade point.

Another respondent was asked how women are faring in the academy:

“

Women in academia are doing quite well. There are more female professors, heads of departments and deans. In some institutions, the vice-chancellors are female. This serves as motivation for younger women to aim for the sky. However, years of male leadership mean that the numbers are still skewed in favor of men. This calls for consistency by women to even this out.

”

8.2. Women in leadership—What the trends signal for the future

At the outset, institutions in the South and North both had no female academics in leadership positions; the trend has shifted for a high number of institutions, albeit more slowly in the North due to the intersection of religious and sociocultural factors. A few women have recorded impressive improvements, but they are all in the South. The current trend of women's rise to leadership is not too hopeful. To achieve SDG 5, more will need to be done.

8.3. Women in the lower ranks of the academy—Is there room at the top?

The common trend for the institutions covered in this report shows that women are heavily populated at the lower ranks, similar in other African jurisdictions, such as Ghana, and the United Kingdom and the United States (Dawuni, 2021; Tiscoine, 2019). The reasons for this are the intersectional challenges; however, more women are surmounting these institutional, structural, and individual challenges. Data from the Nigerian Institute for Advanced Legal Studies indicate 14 female versus five male senior lecturers and four female versus five male associate professors. This trend could signal that the pattern is improving. Nonetheless, there is still room for women to move up the academic ranks if the promotion facilitators presented in this report are implemented, measured, and evaluated for their effectiveness in achieving the end goal.

8.4. Regional patterns

There is an intriguing mix of trends to the entry and ascendancy of women in the legal academy. Although women's experience in the earlier periods was tedious, current trends show that the improvements are generally slow, especially in the North. The South shows marked improvement: for entry and ascension, women are slightly lower than men, at par, or rarely the majority, such as the NIALS. These regional trends result from colonial policies that limited education to mostly the South, coupled with the dominance of religious beliefs and practices in the North, which limits access to formal education for all, especially girls.

8.5. Women and leadership—the need for robust investment in capacity building, skill development, and support for research

This report demonstrates that to improve the ascension of women in the legal academy into leadership positions, all the institutions researched would require targeted and robust investments in capacity building for the acquisition of skills, experience, and qualifications. Such investments must include creating opportunities to access education and training, the environment to conduct research and publish in reputable journals, access grants for research, and exposure to administrative and academic responsibilities. Collaborative efforts by women to support these measures coupled with a personal agency are also required.



9

CONCLUSION



This report presents the first empirical and robust study on women's experience in the Nigerian legal academy. It adopted both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study was contextualized by intersectionality theory as it applies to the challenges faced by these women. The main objective was to identify women's entry, retention, and points of attrition in the pipeline and the facilitators of promotion. The research finds that women have experienced various forms of discrimination due to several intersectional challenges. These include institutional and structural stereotypes and biases, work-life balance, availability of funds, and opportunities for research and personal agency, the effect of intersectional factors, such as the requirement for additional academic degrees, heavy workload, inaccessible support networks, and limited access to relevant organizational information.

These factors intersect with personal status and identities, such as marital status, family responsibilities, social roles, the culture of marginalization, and the exclusion of women from decision-making networks. These factors explain why few women are recruited into the academy and fewer make it into leadership positions. The research finds that despite these factors' slow progression and prevalence, more women are being recruited. However, women are severely underrepresented in leadership positions, more needs to be done.

Based on analyses of the qualitative and quantitative data analyses, the report identified facilitators of promotion. It provided recommendations, including transparent and equal opportunities for promotion, addressing institutional gender biases and discrimination, institutionalizing support for women at all institutions, mechanisms to enforce disciplinary measures against gender-based harassment, building a strong pipeline and investing in an early start to women's leadership capabilities, increasing funding for research and professional development, acquiring leadership development skills and training, and personal agency and the will to succeed.

The general trend and patterns across the institutions in the six geopolitical zones and the FCT and Lagos reveal hope on the horizon. However, more needs to be done to help women achieve leadership positions. In order to change the trend of underrepresentation, it is essential to make substantial investments in enhancing capacity, developing skills, and providing research support.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR YOUR KIND ASSISTANCE

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The survey requests for feedback on your knowledge and experience with regard to the dynamics of advancement of women to leadership in the legal profession in Nigeria.

The Purpose of the research

The goal of this research project is to map women's representation in the leadership of the different categories of legal practice in Nigeria and where applicable, characterize the underlying causes of inequality in women's representation.

Kindly assist by completing this questionnaire to enable us to achieve appropriate outcomes. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Consent Request

We would like to confirm your willingness to participate in this survey. It should take about **15 minutes**.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. There are no anticipated risks and you are free to drop out of the study if you feel uncomfortable.

You must be **18years** and above to participate. Your answers **will not be traceable to you**, as it is for research purposes only.

There is no direct benefit of this research to you except that the results will be geared towards policy reforms to safeguard the interest of women. There are no anticipated financial costs to you.

Your response to the questions will constitute the required consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Consultants

Respondent

SECTION ONE - BIO-DATA

Please circle the correct option

- 1.** How many years post call do you have?
 - a.** 0-5 years
 - b.** 6-10years
 - c.** 11-15years
 - d.** 16-20years
 - e.** 21 years and above

- 2.** What is your highest level of academic qualification?
 - a.** PhD
 - b.** LLM
 - c.** LLB
 - d.** BL

- 3.** Please indicate your marital status?
 - a.** Married
 - b.** Single
 - c.** Widowed
 - d.** Separated
 - e.** Divorced

- 4.** Please indicate your religious affiliation?
 - a.** Christian
 - b.** Muslim
 - c.** Traditional Religion
 - d.** Others

- 5.** Please indicate your ethnic group:

- 6.** What is your employment status?
 - a.** Self- employed
 - b.** Employed
 - c.** Housewife
 - d.** No employment
 - e.** Student

7. Please indicate your age bracket?
 - a. 18 – 27
 - b. 28-37
 - c. 38- 47
 - d. 48 – 57.
 - e. 58 and above

8. Do you have any form of physical disability?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

SECTION TWO: WOMEN EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION

9. Below is a list of possible areas where women in the legal profession in Nigeria experience discrimination?

Please **CIRCLE ANY 5** you think are the main areas.

- a. Unequal Income Opportunities
- b. Ascendancy to leadership positions
- c. Problems of Access to Employment
- d. Sexual harassment
- e. Client's preference for men
- f. Unspoken bias and unequal treatment
- g. Stereotypes on gender roles
- h. Verbal/emotional violence
- i. Lack of support for families in the legal workplace (Poor Work/Family Balance)
- j. Others: Please specify.....

SECTION THREE – PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH GENDER BIAS OR PREJUDICE WITHIN YOUR WORKPLACE

10. Have you ever been or seen someone sexually harassed (inappropriate sexual jokes, questions, gestures or looks) in your workplace or within a law related setting, e.g court?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

11. Is there a sexual harassment policy in your workplace?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

12. Does your workplace have a maternity policy that supports exclusive breastfeeding till 6months?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

13. What are the challenges women encounter in advancing their career in your workplace?

Please circle all that apply.

- a. Stereotypes on gender roles
- b. Limited relevant skills
- c. Workplace policies
- d. Poverty
- e. Lack of support for families in the legal workplace
- f. Poor remuneration
- g. Intimidation
- h. Unspoken bias and unequal treatment
- i. Lack of mentoring opportunities
- j. Any other.....

SECTION FOUR – RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14. What do you think that the Nigerian Legal Academy can do to improve gender equality and diversity within the legal profession?
 - a. Nothing/Not Much Can Be Done
 - b. Awareness/ Education/Training
 - c. Set up a disciplinary committee to penalize offenders
 - d. Others (specify please)

- 15. Do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced flexibility in the working arrangement for women in the legal academy to advance their careers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND COOPERATION!

In-Depth Interview Schedule

- 1. What kind of women support network exists for women in academia for mentoring and career development?
- 2. What access or other barriers and implicit bias do women in academia face in Nigeria?
- 3. Which stage in the pipeline is the leak/exit most obvious for women lawyers leaving/stagnating in their professional/academic legal career? What factors influence this?
- 4. How can we get academic institutions to commit to consider at least 30 percent of open leadership and governance roles in law faculties for women?
- 5. How can the legal profession support women to stay full time within academia, as most women lawyers continue to be the primary caregiver for children? Give examples please

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Women in Law & Leadership

Nigerian Legal Academy