

Gender Bias and Researcher Positionality on Interview Access and Data Quality: The Ghanaian Experience

Sarah Ayikai Okine^{ID}

Business School, Accra Institute of Technology University, Accra, Ghana
Email: okine@ait.edu.gh

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Abstract

Gender bias remains a persistent social challenge affecting representation, participation, and knowledge production in research environments, especially in developing nations. This study investigates how gender bias affects access to scientific research interviews and the quality of data in Ghana. Drawing on Feminist Standpoint Theory, Social Role Theory, and Feminist Methodology Theory, the analysis shows that gender-shaped social positions influence the generation and interpretation of knowledge. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants at five Ghanaian universities to capture diverse perspectives. Thematic analysis identified recurring experiences and patterns of gender bias in research practices. Findings reveal that gender discrimination affects access to research opportunities, shapes participants' responses, and influences the inclusiveness of research outcomes. Interviewees reported barriers to leadership positions within research teams. They also noted that participants' willingness to share information, influenced by gender stereotypes, contributes to marginalization. Further analysis shows that women's perspectives are frequently marginalized in male-dominated research settings. Addressing gender discrimination is essential to ensure comprehensive and equitable access to interviews and high-quality data and to address the existing gaps. The study recommends capacity-building initiatives, gender-responsive policies, and institutional frameworks to promote equal participation and inclusivity in knowledge production. This research is crucial for stakeholders to develop national policies to address marginalization.

Keywords

Gender Bias, Gender Discrimination, Gender Equality, Knowledge Production, Qualitative Research, Research Inclusivity

1. Introduction

Gender discrimination is a pervasive social phenomenon that shapes access to participation, opportunities, and representation across various domains of our society, including academic research. In research, gender-based biases can affect access to interviews, the credibility of findings, and data interpretation. Since qualitative inquiry is fundamentally premised on lived experiences and social interactions, discriminatory practices and gender inequalities can significantly influence knowledge generation (Adjai, 2024). In Ghana, where patriarchal norms are deeply embedded, the dominant gendered social structure continues to affect political representation, employment, education, and research activities (Charway & Strandbu, 2024). Recent investigations indicate that cultural and structural barriers restrict critical areas for economic development, such as community economic participation and decision-making in certain communities, as well as individual choices in life (Omari et al., 2024).

Discrimination in any form creates unequal access to resources and social networks, thereby limiting the diversity of perspectives in any research study (Adjai, 2024; Omari et al., 2024).

The consequences of gender discrimination are particularly profound for methodologies that rely on interviews. To this end, bias influences both reluctance and willingness (Dery & Amoah, 2022; Burke et al., 2023). Investigating the Ghanaian experience is thus necessary to understand how gender discrimination shapes access to interviews and data quality in research practices at higher education institutions and to develop more inclusive research methodologies and gender-sensitive approaches.

Akponeware et al. (2026) state that some of the dynamics stemming from bias, such as research leadership, include lower institutional recognition of research contributions, the entrenchment of power structures that limit sponsorship and mentorship, and institutional cultures that privilege male leadership styles. states that access to research tools and networks fosters progress in development, thereby enhancing efforts to promote a higher standard of living across several areas of society that derive from quality and empirical information. Rosen (2013) focused on gender legal rights in political participation, using education and social structure to highlight the injustices that people worldwide face. Additionally, a review of Rosen's comparative analysis (Rosen, 2013), drawing on data from 168 countries over eight years and highlighting gender imbalance and underrepresentation in scientific research, indicates that scholarly efforts to address gender bias span decades, using data from 1992-2010 to examine gender bias in research. This significantly shows data from 168 of 193 countries, inclusive, even though the study did not cover the entire world.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015 programme and projects aimed to address education, political participation, and employment and wage gaps. However, improved educational enrollment did not translate into equal economic opportunities. Gender equality programmes were treated as a single goal,

which impeded the concept and its implementation rather than fostering cross-sector integration (Heng, 2020; Herbert et al., 2022). This introduced uneven and slow progress in labour market equality and political representation. The era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 seeks to address pending issues and structural barriers (Guaman-Llongo et al., 2026). This includes persistent feminisation of poverty, weak accountability mechanisms, and insufficient financing for gender-responsive development, focusing on sustainable science and gender research to reduce persistent barriers for the marginalised and enhance an integrated agenda.

Guaman-Llongo et al. (2026) and Kennedy et al. (2024) explained that the characteristics of scientific studies, such as reflexivity, access and participation, power dynamics in interviews, ethical considerations, data interpretation, cultural contexts, researcher gender, and intersectional data collection, require in-depth, ongoing, holistic research and analysis to mitigate gender bias. Traditional norms and practices that endorse men as the primary decision-makers persist in many developing countries. In some regions, men are perceived as superior and more capable of making sound decisions, for example, in property acquisition. The culture and traditions in Africa that tend to promote gender bias and reinforce this idea persist. Therefore, the SDGs 2015-2030 promise is an intentional effort to advocate for a change in the narrative about gender bias.

According to Hiebl (2023), the pre-colonial and colonial eras marginalised women, often portraying them primarily as homemakers or caregivers while denying them access to formal education and equality (Nahar & Mengo, 2022). Only a limited number of households allowed girls to receive a quality education. In the 21st century, research and development have driven incremental progress in women's empowerment, particularly through the emphasis on universal primary education in the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, leading to enhanced global support for girls' education and encouraging gender visibility.

Agunyai et al. (2023) explained that some of the challenges of positionality stem from power dynamics and social structures, as well as limited access to mentorship. A lack of privacy and confidentiality compromises people's dignity and safety regarding the lived experiences they share. Fear of power dynamics and patriarchy infringing on a particular sex's rights may also affect people's approaches in the research environment. In particular, people who may not be aware of their legal rights may not know how to safeguard their privacy or confidentiality when those rights are breached. Nahar and Mengo (2022) stated that power dynamics can influence coercion in volunteering and participation among individuals in marginalised areas who seek financial benefits to do things that should be incentivised in other contexts. Vulnerable groups, including children, prisoners, and individuals with disabilities, may be susceptible to exploitation due to economic pressures.

Again, cultural sensitivity may have a profound impact on access in higher learning institutions. For example, people may be more inclined to engage in commu-

nal focus groups and observations to gather high-quality data and outcomes.

1.1. Concept of Gender Bias

Gender discrimination refers to unequal treatment individuals receive because of their gender, resulting in disparities in access to resources, opportunities, outcomes, and participation (Ampim et al., 2022). It surfaces through exclusion, stereotypes, bias, and institutional practices that prioritize one gender over another. Gender discrimination in research environments affects access to field sites, participant selection, and researcher-participant interactions. Gender bias is described as a structural phenomenon embedded in cultural and traditional social systems (Charway & Strandbu, 2024). In Ghana, gender discrimination is embedded in cultural expectations and patriarchal norms, where different roles are assigned to different sexes. This bias influences employment opportunities, educational attainment, and access to resources. According to Adongo et al. (2024), factors such as family structures, cultural practices, and traditional beliefs have continued to bolster gender inequalities despite the increasing policy interventions targeted at fostering gender equity.

1.2. Gender Bias and Scientific Research Interview Data Collection

Gender bias investigations and inquiries seek to understand social realities by thoroughly exploring meanings, perceptions, and experiences. Nonetheless, gender discrimination can affect any stage of the research process, from topic selection and data collection to access to resources, interpretation, and dissemination of findings. Gender biases may shape researchers' assumptions, including psychological torture over which gender is considered appropriate (Adongo et al., 2024; Wadei et al., 2023; Wadei et al., 2024; Banks et al., 2023). A recent study by Yalley (2024) posited that qualitative investigations conducted in patriarchal societies often encounter sexism and gendered barriers, especially when issues related to sexuality, leadership, reproductive health, and women's rights are being investigated by researchers. To this end, researchers may face constraints in accessing participants, while participants may be reluctant to share their experiences for several reasons, such as concerns about privacy, protection, or identity. Adongo et al. (2024) explained that the Ghanaian patriarchal system often restricts women's ability to freely express their experiences within institutional and social settings, thereby influencing the richness and quality of information for community development. A corresponding investigation by Yalley (2024) also found that systemic disparities in rights affect women's willingness to participate in research.

1.3. Gender Bias: The Ghanaian Perspective

Several scientific studies have examined gender discrimination and disparities in access to education, employment opportunities, political representation, and wage gaps. The focus has been on reducing poverty in communities and promoting higher standards of living. However, little research has been conducted on gender

discrimination in higher education institutions regarding access to interviews and data quality in Ghana. Ghanaian lawmakers and agencies have made significant progress in gender equality through affirmative action policies and legislative reforms. However, evidence continues to show that gender inequalities remain ubiquitous across community structures, workplaces, and educational institutions (Omari et al., 2024). Initiatives intended to amplify female inclusion in education, employment opportunities, decision-making, and political representation, including engagement in public debate, have yet to achieve the goal. Barriers persist due to enduring socio-cultural norms and stereotypes.

An investigation found that female children are continually hindered in accessing quality education, and women continue to struggle to advance to higher levels in their careers, taking into account the management pyramid. Furthermore, studies by Omari et al. (2024) and Agunyai et al. (2023) revealed that women encounter gendered, exclusionary social networks that discourage and hinder their access to resources of any kind. Inequalities of this kind extend to knowledge production and research participation and frequently marginalize women's voices. A similar study by Yalley (2024), conducted among artisanal and small-scale miners in Ghana, found gender inequalities despite the tremendous efforts to promote SDG 5, "Gender Equality." This shows that, in every area of the community, the female child or a woman is subjected to discrimination or bias. The study further concluded that structural barriers continue to restrict women's participation and influence their roles as citizens (Yakovleva et al., 2022). Arising from the foregoing arguments, the following questions were raised: 1) What are the factors influencing gender discrimination in qualitative research within the Ghanaian landscape? 2) What constitutes constraints to effective data gathering for qualitative investigations within the Ghanaian Landscape?

2. Theoretical Framework

I drew upon three theories: the feminist standpoint, the feminist methodology, and the social role framework, to develop and conduct the open-ended interview and to examine the participants' lived experience of gender bias related to interview access and data quality. The Feminist Standpoint Theory by Hartsock (1983) and Harding (2004) focuses on exploring participants' lived experiences and knowledge of gender discrimination within their roles as researchers and participants. Feminist Methodology (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Harding, 2004) supported the conversation between the researcher and the participant, ensured reflexivity, fostered an ethical interviewing setting, and enhanced participants' confidence to tell their stories. Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Smith, 1987) provided a lens through which the interviewees explained how socially constructed gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes influence the university environment.

1) Feminist Standpoint Theory was primarily developed by Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, Dorothy Smith, and Patricia Hill Collins. The theory holds that knowledge production is shaped by social location and that women's experi-

ences are a crucial source for understanding power relations and social inequalities. According to [Eagly and Wood \(2012\)](#), the theory challenges conventional notions of objectivity by advocating strong objectivity, which requires researchers to critically examine how power structures and social positions shape knowledge. In a similar vein, [Smith \(1987\)](#) argues that women's everyday experiences provide an alternative perspective from which social and institutional processes can be more clearly discerned. This theory is pertinent to this study, as women's voices in Ghana may be silenced by discrimination, thereby restricting their participation in qualitative research and influencing the interpretation of lived experiences ([Van der Tuin, 2016](#)). By adopting this theory, the present study acknowledges that women, as well as other marginalized groups, are invaluable sources of knowledge for understanding how research inquiries and knowledge production are shaped by gender discrimination in the Ghanaian context.

2) Feminist Methodology theory emphasizes inclusiveness, power-sharing, reflexivity, and the elimination of hierarchical relationships between researchers and participants. The theory champions research practices that enable women and other marginalized groups. [Amegah \(2022\)](#) contends that Ghanaian educational policies will continue to reproduce gender stereotypes that limit the participation of females in STEM-focused programmes, demonstrating how participation and access to knowledge can be shaped by institutional structures. Social Role theory holds that societies allocate roles based on prescribed expectations for men and women. These socially constructed roles significantly affect interactions, thereby shaping who can speak, who can participate, and what kinds of information can be revealed. Women in Ghana are expected to assume caregiving and domestic roles, which limit their autonomy and participation in research ([Asante & Attom, 2022](#)).

3. Method

The overall objective of this study was to explore gender discrimination in qualitative research, using the Ghanaian experience as a reference point. Premised on the aforesaid, two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The first question inquired about the factors influencing gender discrimination in qualitative research within the Ghanaian landscape, while the second question queried what constitutes constraints that affect data gathering for qualitative investigations within the Ghanaian landscape. This qualitative study was conducted at public and private universities in Greater Accra, Ghana. Participants were aged 25 and 45 years and above. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to ensure that participants were knowledgeable and invested in the topic. I carefully selected and recruited 20 participants.

3.1. Participants

In recruiting for the study interview, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were em-

ployed. This was necessary to ensure that the right participants were recruited for the study.

The inclusion criteria for this study were based on academic, research assistants, senior, and postgraduate students from the five (5) selected institutions in Ghana. They were recruited on the basis of how knowledgeable they are in terms of their experience with the subject. These comprised individuals who are researchers and academics.

Recruiting Participants and Criteria for Ensuring Diversity:

Participants for both the focus group discussion and in-depth interview were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling across five selected institutions. The researcher obtained permission from both management and the relevant departments of each institution. Participants were thus identified via departmental heads, faculty administrators, research units, and students' associations based on their experiences and knowledge concerning gender issues in qualitative research. In order to ensure representativeness and diversity, the following were adopted in the study:

1) In order to obtain multiple perceptions and viewpoints, the study included participants from diverse backgrounds.

2) Age and Socio-Cultural Background: The study included participants from different age groups, socio-cultural contexts, and ethnic backgrounds to capture diverse perceptions and experiences of gender discrimination.

3) Disciplinary Diversity: The study selected participants from diverse academic disciplines, including the humanities, the social sciences, business studies, and health sciences.

4) Gender Diversity: Efforts were geared toward achieving balanced representation; as such, the study included both male and female participants.

5) Institutional Diversity: The study recruited participants from all five (5) selected institutions.

Employing both purposive and snowball recruitment across the five (5) selected institutions allowed the sampling to reflect a broad range of perspectives and experiences, which helped enhance the richness, transferability, and credibility of the qualitative findings.

3.2. Developing Initial Codes into the Four Themes

Analysis of the data was done using an iterative thematic analysis process, which follows the transcription of each participant's account. Each account was repeatedly read to gain familiarity with the data. Thus, meaningful segments that related to the research questions were accentuated and given initial codes. Primarily, the coding was inductive, which means that the codes were generated and derived from the actual accounts of participants rather than being imposed on them from preconceived categories.

The initial codes were compared later across the identities of participants to identify familiarities, divergences, and recurring patterns. Codes that were closely

related were clustered into candidate categories. These categories were subsequently compared against the completed codes to ascertain the internal coherence of the responses.

Based on the above, the analysis progressed through four (4) stages:

- 1) Initial coding: under this stage, the researchers coded relevant statements line by line by keeping the codes close to the language of the participants.
- 2) Clustering of Codes: codes that were similar and conceptually related were grouped into broader categories.
- 3) Development of Themes: categories were examined for an underlying pattern capable of explaining pertinent aspects of participants' experiences. From these patterns, interview themes were developed.
- 4) Refinement of themes and naming: Themes were reviewed against both coded extracts and the full transcripts. The final themes were provided to capture their central connotation. Represent higher-order interpretations that were developed through the examination of relationships among multiple codes, which helps determine what broader meaning and experience these codes represented collectively.

Example of the Analytic Path

A brief example of the progression is stated below:

Participant Statement:

Since my engagement in qualitative research, I have had my fair share of discrimination, but I also feel that the patriarchal nature of the African setting is a significant contributing factor.

3.3. Procedures for Trustworthiness

Member Checking: After the development of the preliminary interpretation, participants were provided with a concise summary of the findings, especially the interpretations associated with their experiences. They were asked to provide confirmation as to whether the summaries reflected accurately their intended communication and also whether any crucial meaning had been omitted or misunderstood. Where clarification or correction is requested by participants, the relevant interpretation of the transcript and coding were reviewed in the establishment of the final themes.

Triangulation: This was conducted using comparisons of evidence across data, participants, sources of data, and relevant forms of evidence employed in the study. Accounts relating to the same phenomenon were compared across participants rather than mere reliance on the experience of a single respondent.

Audit Trail: The researchers maintained a systematic audit trail throughout the process of the analysis. All stages were documented from the raw transcripts, initial codes via code groupings, highlighted extracts, candidates' themes, revision of themes, and final thematic decisions. Decisions that have to do with splitting, merging, renaming, or exclusion of codes and themes were recorded alongside the reason for each decision. This provided a transparent record via which another re-

searcher could follow and replicate how the findings were obtained from the original data.

Reflexive Journaling: The researchers maintained a reflexive journal throughout the process of data collection and analysis to document the assumptions, expectations, and the reactions to the accounts of participants, the methodological decisions as well as potential sources of any interpretive bias. After the interviews and during the coding stage, reflective notes were made about concerns that are likely to influence interpretations. The researchers revisited the reflections during the development of themes so that personal assumptions were then distinguished from patterns that actually support the participants' accounts. Thus, reflexivity functioned as a process that is ongoing rather than a one-time statement of a researcher's personality.

Altogether, these procedures allowed for the four themes grounded in data, transparent in their derivation, systematically developed, and credible from the perspectives of the participants, while also ensuring the acknowledgement of the researcher's role.

4. Data Analysis

Data were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data using the six-step method proposed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), which includes: familiarization with data, coding, generation of themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The employment of thematic analysis facilitated the identification of recurring meanings and patterns concerning the influence of gender discrimination on qualitative research in Ghana. Steps taken to ensure inter-coder reliability and mitigate bias from the researcher during thematic analysis.

In ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of this thematic analysis, the researchers implemented several measures to minimize researchers' bias and enhance inter-coder reliability.

Independent Coding: The interview transcripts were independently coded by two researchers using a combination of sorting and labeling. This process paved the way for themes to be identified without any form of undue influence from the perspective of a single researcher. **Development of Codebook:** The development of a standardized codebook that contains inclusion and exclusion criteria, and operational definitions of codes and illustrative excerpts was ensured, and it was continuously modified and refined throughout the analysis. This was maintained to ensure consistency in coding decisions within and across researchers.

Inter-Coder Agreement: The researcher compared the independent coding results to identify areas of disagreement, and after member checking, the appropriate themes were selected in consideration of the theoretical framework and the scope of the research topic. **Reflexivity and Bracketing:** The researcher maintained reflexive journals as a means of documenting assumptions, experiences, and research bias throughout the study. Bracketing techniques were used to consciously

set aside preconceived notions in order to reduce subjective interpretations. Peer Debriefing: The researcher conducted regular debriefing sessions to critically and extensively examine coding decisions, refine thematic categories, and challenge interpretations. Member Checking: The researcher shared preliminary findings and thematic interpretations with selected participants so that they could verify whether their experiences and perspectives were accurately reflected by the themes. Audit Trail: The researchers maintained detailed records of the coding procedures, analytical decisions, and theme development and revisions to ensure transparency and to allow for external review of the analytical process. Altogether, these procedures enhanced the dependability, credibility, trustworthiness, and confirmability of the thematic analysis by ensuring that the findings were established on the narratives of the participants rather than the subjective biases of the researchers.

5. Ethical Consideration

In ensuring trustworthiness, the study employed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through audit trails, member checking, reflexive journaling, and triangulation. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Accra Institute of Technology University (Ref: AITU-ABS-0645-2026), and participants' anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent were strictly maintained throughout the study.

6. Result

Participants' Demographic profile:

A total of twenty (20) participants were purposively selected for the study. The participants comprised eight (8) academic researchers, five (5) postgraduate students, four (4) research assistants, and three (3) qualitative research participants who had either observed or experienced gender discrimination during qualitative research data collection.

In reference to gender distribution, twelve (12) participants representing (60%) were female, while eight (8) participants representing (40%) were male.

Age distribution showed that six (6) participants representing (30%) were between 25 and 34 years, eight (8) participants representing (40%) were between 35 and 44 years, and six (6) participants representing (30%) were 45 years and above.

Distribution, according to educational attainment, indicated that fifteen (15) participants representing (75%) possessed postgraduate qualifications, while five (5) participants representing (25%) had undergraduate degrees.

6.1. Thematic Analysis

Four major themes were generated through thematic analysis, which served as responses to the two research questions raised: 1) What are the factors influencing gender discrimination in qualitative research within the Ghanaian landscape? 2)

What constitutes constraints to effective data gathering for qualitative investigations within the Ghanaian Landscape?

6.2. Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the factors influencing gender discrimination in qualitative research within the Ghanaian landscape?

Theme One: Restricted participant Accessibility

Of the 20 participants, sixteen (16), representing (80%), reported that patriarchal practices and gender norms constrained women's accessibility as well as their willingness to participate in qualitative studies. Participants also revealed that in some communities, women require permission from family heads or spouses before participating in focus groups and interviews.

A female researcher (P4) retorted that:

"There were instances where women showed the willingness to participate, but their husbands always insisted that they must not attend such interviews until they are given approval."

Correspondingly, a postgraduate student (P11) stated that:

"Some women were scared of being judged by their households and communities for discussing issues of a sensitive nature with researchers."

The above findings highlighted that gender discrimination significantly influences participants' recruitment and their inclusiveness in qualitative research.

Theme Two: Individual Perception and Reflexivity

Fourteen (14) participants, representing (70%), suggested that a researcher's gender affects access to information and responses from participants. Female researchers experienced numerous difficulties in gaining access to environments dominated by males, while male researchers often encountered difficulties discussing gender-sensitive issues with female participants.

A research assistant (P8) stated that:

"Female respondents find comfort discussing their personal experiences with female interviewers rather than male researchers."

Another participant (P16) observed that:

"Some male community leaders do not take female researchers seriously during data collection exercises and processes."

These findings bring to light that researcher-participant interaction is shaped by gender dynamics, which may introduce biases into qualitative investigation.

Research Question Two: What constitutes constraints to effective data gathering for qualitative investigations within the Ghanaian Landscape?

Theme Three: Compromised Data Quality and Representation

Seventeen (17) participants, representing (85%), reported that gender discrimination led to underrepresentation and incomplete narratives of women's experiences. Participants expressed that cultural expectations, fear of stigmatization, and unequal power relations inhibited women from publicly sharing their experiences.

A participant (P6) added:

“Women often hold back and retain information about violence or discrimination due to fear of repercussions.”

A researcher (P18) remarked:

“The credibility and richness of qualitative findings are affected by the inability to gather candid responses from women.”

The findings infer that data quality is compromised by gender discrimination and limits the robustness of qualitative evidence.

Theme Four: Ethical Challenges in Qualitative Research

Fifteen (15) participants, representing (75%), suggested that studies that include gender inequality and discrimination raise significant ethical dilemmas and concerns. It was highlighted by participants that issues of emotional vulnerability, confidentiality, participants' protection, and informed consent.

A participant (P2) noted:

“Culturally sensitive approaches must be adopted by researchers because discussing gender issues can expose participants to danger and social risks.”

Another participant (P20) retorted:

“Some participants became emotional when sharing their experiences of discrimination and inequality, and they need reassurance regarding confidentiality.”

The finding indicates that gender-sensitive ethical protocols are necessary to protect participants while preserving the integrity of qualitative research.

The above analysis indicated that data quality and representation, which is 85%, appeared as the most prominent and notable influence of gender discrimination on qualitative inquiry, followed by restricted participants' accessibility, which is 80%, ethical challenges recorded at 75%, while researcher positionality and gender bias recorded at 70%. These findings signify that gender discrimination significantly influences credibility, conduct, and outcomes.

7. Discussions

The study focused on examining the influence of gender discrimination on qualitative research from the Ghanaian point of view. Two research questions were posed: Research Question One: What are the factors influencing gender discrimination in qualitative research within the Ghanaian landscape?

Restricted participants' accessibility, researcher positionality, and gender bias were found in response to the question raised. This finding is in agreement with the study by [Asante and Attom \(2022\)](#), which revealed that patriarchal structures and cultural expectations significantly limit women's participation in public engagement and governance in Ghana. Correspondingly, the finding agrees with the study by [Agalga et al. \(2022\)](#), which observed that power structures and social norms affect community participation and determine whose voices should be included in the process of decision-making. The finding is also in congruence with studies on gender hierarchies in Ghana, which highlight that opportunities for participation and expression among women are shaped by social expectations. Consequently, access to diverse participants can be constrained by gender discrimina-

tion and undermine the inclusiveness of qualitative research.

This finding aligns with the position of [Creswell and Poth's \(2023\)](#) arguments, which asserted that the positionality and reflexivity of researchers significantly influence qualitative inquiry. The finding also agrees with the study by [Adu-Bonsaf-foh et al. \(2022\)](#), which discovered that women's willingness to disclose experiences of maltreatment within the Ghanaian landscape is influenced by gender power relations. Findings from the study also support the conclusion by [Mfoafo-M'Carthy and Grischow \(2022\)](#), whose study argued that social inequalities and hierarchies in Ghana influence the relationship between researchers and participants, which affects the processes of data generation.

Research Question Two: What constitutes constraints to effective data gathering for qualitative investigations within the Ghanaian Landscape?

Compromised data quality and representation and ethical challenges in qualitative research were responses obtained in relation to the study. This finding corroborates the study by [Yalley \(2024\)](#), which discovered that women who experience obstetric violence in Ghana always feel reluctant to divulge or reveal their experiences due to social and institutional inequalities. The finding also supports the study by [Yakovleva et al. \(2022\)](#), which remarked that women remain marginalized in both governance and decision-making processes in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining, which culminates in the inadequate representation of their perspectives and experiences. Findings also agree with the position of the research by [Dery and Amoah \(2022\)](#), which accentuated that within the Ghanaian landscape, gendered identities demonstrate that hegemonic masculine norms and social expectations shape whose experiences are excluded from public discourse, as well as the voices that are perceived as legitimate.

The above analysis indicates that compromised data quality and representation, which is eighty-five (85%) percent, appeared as the most prominent and notable influence of gender discrimination on qualitative inquiry, followed by restricted participants' accessibility, which is eighty (80%) percent. Ethical challenges were recorded at seventy-five (75%) percent, while researcher positionality and gender bias were recorded at seventy (70%) percent. These findings signify that gender discrimination significantly influences the credibility, conduct, and outcomes of qualitative inquiry in Ghana.

8. Limitations

Several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the study findings are outlined below:

1) Context-Specific Findings: Institutional, cultural, and socio-economic elements that are unique to the selected institutions may have had an impact and shaped the perspectives and experiences of participants. Thus, we may not be able to transfer the current study findings to other nations or educational settings with diverse institutional arrangements and gender norms.

2) Limited Institutional Coverage: This study employed five (5) institutions in

Ghana. Even though these institutions provided diverse insights, they may not fully represent perceptions, nor capture in their entirety all Ghanaian higher institutions, especially technical, private, or rural universities.

3) Purposive and Small Sample: The selection of participants was done using purposive sampling, with metrics measuring their experiences with gender discrimination and qualitative research. This sampling strategy might have introduced selection bias and excluded other relevant perspectives.

4) Qualitative Research Design: Employing the qualitative approach emphasizes depth of understanding rather than mere statistical representativeness. As a result, findings cannot be generalized to capture the entire Ghanaian population of students and researchers in a statistical sense.

5) Self-Reported Data: The study relied on the perceptions and personal experiences of participants, which may be affected by recall bias, subjective interpretations of gender discrimination, and social desirability bias.

9. Future Directions

In order to broaden the scope and understanding of gender discrimination in qualitative studies, future investigations should focus on these areas:

1) Comparative Institutional Studies: An examination of how gender discrimination presents itself across diverse types of higher education institutions, regardless of whether they are private, public, rural, or technical universities, should be conducted to identify its context-specific challenges and best practices.

2) Cross-Country Comparative Investigations: Comparative studies should be conducted across African nations to assess and understand how gender discrimination in qualitative research is shaped by differing legal, cultural, and institutional contexts.

3) Disciplinary Differences: There is a need to assess the variation in gender discrimination across academic disciplines such as health sciences, social sciences, humanities, and engineering, and to examine how qualitative inquiries are affected by these differences.

4) Effective Institutional Interventions: Future studies should assess the effectiveness of mentorship programs, gender-sensitive policies, anti-discrimination initiatives, and ethics training as measures for reducing barriers facing researchers.

5) Impact on Knowledge Production and Research Quality: Studies should be conducted to evaluate the extent to which data quality, methodological choices, participants' engagement, dissemination, and the credibility of research findings are influenced by gender discrimination.

6) Intersectionality and Multiple Identities: Exploration of how gender intersects with elements like ethnicity, age, disability, socio-economic status, academic rank, and religion shapes discrimination experiences during qualitative research should be launched.

7) Longitudinal Studies: Investigations should be centered on how gender experiences of discrimination evolve over time, as well as how researchers' experi-

ences and research outcomes are influenced by institutional reforms.

8) Mixed-Methods and Larger Samples: New investigations should use a mixed-methods approach by employing a more representative and larger sample to complement insights and improve the broader applicability and transferability of findings.

These areas of investigation would provide a more robust, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of gender discrimination in qualitative research and generate evidence-based strategies for the promotion of inclusive knowledge and gender equity in Ghana and beyond.

10. Conclusion

The study concluded that gender discrimination significantly affects both the quality of data collection and the outcomes of qualitative inquiry. Gender-based biases influence the quality of data collection, researchers' access to participants, interpretation of findings, and the willingness of participants to share experiences. Female researchers, most especially, encounter institutional and cultural barriers that limit fieldwork and constrain equitable participation in knowledge production. Hence, gender discrimination compromises and erodes the methodological rigor, credibility, and inclusivity of qualitative research. Therefore, addressing these disparities is necessary for the promotion of representative, ethical, and gender-responsive research practices in Ghana.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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