

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY, AND IMPACT IN AFRICA

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Objective: The quality, productivity level, and impact of research are fundamental indicators for the utility of research in societal development. This paper assessed whether there is a gender difference in indicators of quality, productivity, and impact (QPI) in Africa based on reported perceptions of African scholars.

Methods: The African Science Frontiers Initiatives sent out a questionnaire to African scholars in May 2023 to collect data regarding the current situation of QPI in Africa, including perceived researchers' knowledge, attitude, and practice of QPI among African scholars. At the time of the current analysis, 257 scholars from 23 African countries had responded to the survey.

Results: Of the survey participants, 52.5% were men. Only 5% and 3.5% of respondents perceived that the quality and productivity of research in their countries were excellent, respectively, with most respondents indicating that it was rather average. Whereas 18% of respondents perceived the quality of their research to be excellent, only 3.5% perceived their personal productivity as excellent. Over 80% of respondents agreed that their research outputs have contributed to developing their career, visibility, and ranking of their institutions, solving problems in their local communities, and the progress of their research field. These were contrasted by 30-40% of respondents who indicated that their research outputs have been used to formulate policy and guidelines within their country and their field of research. There was generally no difference in perceived QPI of research between males and females, except for the question regarding whether their research has an impact or not: more males (15.6%) than females (7.4%) agreed that their research has no impact ($p=0.041$). In adjusted logistic regression analysis, men were significantly more likely to rate the quality of research as excellent than women (OR 5.30, 95%CI 1.12-25.22).

Conclusions: African scholars perceive the QPI of research in their countries and their research outputs as marginal, with men perceiving the quality of research as excellent than women. There are no gender differences in perceived productivity and impact.

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