



## **BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES DURING DISRUPTIVE TIMES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The higher education landscape across Africa has experienced significant disruptions in recent years due to technological advancements, globalisation, socio-political changes, and the global pandemic. Amidst these changes, an increasing number of women have taken on leadership roles in universities, shaping the direction of these institutions. This bibliometric study aims to quantitatively analyse the research output and impact of scholarly works focusing on women leading African universities during this era of disruption.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The article examines 1917 publications using rigorous bibliometric techniques to analyse relevant publications indexed in major academic databases from 2010 to 2023. Key bibliometric indicators, including publication trends, influential authors, citation patterns, and thematic clusters, were analysed to reveal this research domain's current state and evolution.

**Research Limitation:** This review's drawback is the intrinsic characteristic of the bibliometric analysis, which emphasises quantitative metrics and may not completely encompass the profound qualitative understanding of the influence of scholarly works centred on women leading African institutions during this period of upheaval.

**Findings:** The results indicate a growing focus on women leading African universities during disruption. They highlight key contributors, provide a comprehensive overview of central themes and collaborative patterns, and identify areas where further research is needed.

**Practical Implications:** By shedding light on the contributions of women leaders in guiding African universities through challenging times, this study aims to inform policies and practices that promote inclusive and equitable leadership in higher education institutions.

**Social Implications:** This research can underline the broader social and economic benefits of gender diversity in leadership. It can demonstrate how inclusive leadership practices contribute to more robust and resilient educational systems, which are essential for the socio-economic development of African countries.

**Originality and Value:** The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable development goals, particularly quality education and gender equality.

**Keywords:** *Bibliometric. higher education. leadership. women. Sub-Saharan Africa*



## **INTRODUCTION**

The higher education landscape across Africa has undergone profound transformations in recent years, driven by technological advancements, globalisation, socio-political shifts, and the far-reaching impacts of the global pandemic (Makalanga et al., 2022; Bista et al., 2019). These disruptions have redefined the operational frameworks of universities and influenced the strategic direction of academic institutions across the continent. One notable development in this evolving context is women's increasing presence and influence in leadership roles within African universities (Moodly & Toni, 2017a).

Historically, the role of women in academic leadership in Africa has been limited, with systemic barriers and entrenched gender norms often curtailing their advancement (Johnson, 2019). However, recent years have witnessed a marked change as more women assume pivotal roles in guiding and shaping the future of higher education. This shift is significant not only in the context of gender equity but also in the broader implications for university governance, policy development, and institutional resilience during times of upheaval (Moodly & Toni, 2017a; Airini et al., 2011). Women leaders in African universities face unique challenges, including institutional barriers, cultural biases, and the compounded effects of crises such as economic downturns, political instability, and global health emergencies (Mabokela, 2003). The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the critical role of adaptive leadership in higher education, emphasising the need for diverse perspectives in navigating uncertain times.

Given these changes, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis is essential to understand the scope and impact of research focusing on women leading African universities amidst such disruptions. This study aims to quantitatively assess the volume, impact, and evolution of scholarly work in this domain. By examining academic publications, citation metrics, and research trends, this analysis will provide insights into how the scholarly discourse on women's leadership in African higher education is developing and highlight key contributions and emerging patterns (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Such an investigation is crucial for several reasons. It offers a lens through which to view the progress. It challenges women leaders face in academia, shedding light on the barriers they overcome and their successes (Moodly & Toni, 2017b). Furthermore, it provides valuable information for policymakers, educational administrators, and researchers interested in supporting and advancing women's leadership in higher education. As the African higher education sector continues to navigate these disruptive times, understanding the dynamics of women's leadership becomes increasingly important for fostering inclusive and effective academic environments.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The academic discourse on women's leadership in African universities has expanded significantly, reflecting an increasing emphasis on gender equity, leadership resilience, and



institutional governance during periods of disruption. Disruptions like globalisation, socio-political instability, and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have forced universities to rethink leadership strategies. Women leaders have played an instrumental role in this process. Their evolving contributions highlight opportunities and challenges while uncovering systemic gaps requiring further scholarly attention.

Historically, systemic barriers have curtailed the rise of women in leadership positions within African universities. Mabokela (2003) identify patriarchal norms, entrenched gender stereotypes, and organisational structures as significant challenges that limit women's advancement to senior roles. These barriers manifest as stereotypes that devalue women's contributions and reinforce traditional male leadership norms. Women often report that their leadership styles are undermined or dismissed as inadequate. Moultrie and De La Rey (2003) refer to this as the feminisation of roles, where women's skills are acknowledged but not valued, leaving them frustrated and with limited influence.

Despite these challenges, a noticeable shift has occurred in recent years. Onyinah and Koduah (2024) underscore the pivotal role of women leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. They emphasise women's ability to adapt and implement innovative strategies to guide institutions through crises. Their findings align with Airini et al. (2011), who describe women leaders as resilient, empathetic, and innovative. These qualities are essential for navigating economic downturns, health crises, and institutional restructuring. Nonetheless, systemic barriers persist, as women remain underrepresented in senior academic positions. In South Africa, for example, only six out of twenty-six vice-chancellors were women in 2021, highlighting slow progress despite policy interventions to foster gender equity (Moodly, 2021).

Thematic analyses within the literature reveal a strong link between women's leadership styles and institutional transformation during disruptive times. Women in leadership are widely recognised for prioritising collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability in their decision-making processes. Hozien (2022) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep-seated institutional weaknesses while showcasing the leadership potential of women. Similarly, Reardon (2024) highlights the transformative impact of inclusive leadership frameworks, which challenge traditional hierarchies and promote democratic governance. This evidence demonstrates the value of women's leadership in fostering institutional resilience and adaptability.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain embedded within institutional structures. Women leaders often experience dual pressures from societal expectations and professional responsibilities. Studies by Ramohai and Marumo (2016) emphasise the leaky pipeline effect, where women's representation diminishes as they move into higher levels of academic



leadership. This phenomenon is exacerbated by a lack of mentorship opportunities and exclusion from critical leadership networks, such as the old boys' club, where informal decision-making often occurs (Shinbrot et al., 2019). Existing mentorship programs in African institutions remain underdeveloped and fail to address the unique challenges faced by women.

The literature also highlights a methodological gap in existing research. Much of the available scholarship focuses on qualitative analyses of individual experiences, offering valuable but fragmented insights. There is a noticeable lack of comprehensive, data-driven studies that analyse research trends, collaboration patterns, and thematic developments in the field. A bibliometric review is essential to address this gap. Such an approach provides a quantitative framework for mapping the evolution of scholarly discourse, identifying key contributors, and highlighting underexplored areas. Zupic and Čater (2015) argue that bibliometric methods allow for a more holistic understanding of research landscapes, which can inform policies that foster inclusive and equitable leadership within higher education institutions.

Additionally, intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of women leaders in African universities. Black women, in particular, face compounded challenges arising from historical racial inequalities, societal norms, and limited access to professional resources. Hlatshwayo et al. (2022) note that while Black women have made significant strides in educational attainment, their representation in senior academic leadership remains disproportionately low. These findings underscore the need for policies that address both gendered and racialised barriers to leadership.

Furthermore, mentorship and professional development are widely recognised as critical tools for supporting women leaders. Moodly and Toni (2017a) highlight the importance of structured mentoring programs that equip women with the skills, networks, and confidence needed to navigate institutional hierarchies. However, Theron (2023) observes that these programs are non-existent or underdeveloped in many African universities. The lack of formal support structures leaves women to navigate career challenges in isolation, further widening the leadership gap.

In conclusion, the literature emphasises the critical role of women's leadership in navigating African universities through disruptive times. Their contributions extend beyond institutional governance, fostering inclusivity, resilience, and gender equity. However, significant challenges remain due to systemic barriers, limited mentorship, and exclusion from informal decision-making spaces. A bibliometric review is essential to address existing research gaps, as it provides a data-driven perspective on trends, challenges, and opportunities for advancing women's leadership in African higher education. Such studies can inform policies and practices



that drive transformative change by amplifying African voices and uncovering underexplored areas.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Data Sources

This study aimed to quantitatively analyse the research output and impact of scholarly works focusing on women leading African universities in the era of disruption. The study collected data from the Scopus database, which researchers widely used for literature searches. Scopus is considered a central database that covers various scientific fields (Aghimien et al., 2020). Since its introduction in 2004 by Elsevier Science, Scopus has become a popular choice for literature searches and is widely used in review works (Chadegani et al., 2013; Vieira & Gomes, 2009). Thus, this study specifically focused on research from Scopus, a more recent and rapidly growing database recognised by scientific researchers (Chadegani et al., 2013). The search string used was:

*"((woman OR women OR female\* OR gender\* OR "she" OR feminin\*) AND (leader\* OR leadership OR executive\* OR president\* OR chancellor\* OR rector\* OR provost\* OR dean\* OR director\* OR administrator\* OR manager\* OR govern\* OR "decision maker\*" OR "policy maker\*") AND (universit\* OR "higher education" OR college\* OR academia OR campus\* OR "tertiary education" OR "post-secondary" OR faculty OR school\* OR institut\*) AND (Africa\* OR "Sub-Saharan Africa" OR Algeria OR Angola OR Benin OR Botswana OR "Burkina Faso" OR Burundi OR Cameroon OR "Cape Verde" OR "Central African Republic" OR Chad OR Comoros OR Congo OR "Cote d'Ivoire" OR Djibouti OR Egypt OR "Equatorial Guinea" OR Eritrea OR Ethiopia OR Gabon OR Gambia OR Ghana OR Guinea OR "Guinea-Bissau" OR Kenya OR Lesotho OR Liberia OR Libya OR Madagascar OR Malawi OR Mali OR Mauritania OR Mauritius OR Morocco OR Mozambique OR Namibia OR Niger OR Nigeria OR Rwanda OR Senegal OR "Sierra Leone" OR Somalia OR "South Africa" OR "South Sudan" OR Sudan OR Swaziland OR Tanzania OR Togo OR Tunisia OR Uganda OR Zambia OR Zimbabwe) AND (disrupt\* OR change\* OR transform\* OR crisis OR pandemic\* OR technolog\* OR digital\* OR innovat\* OR global?\* OR reform\* OR challenge\* OR adapt\* OR resilience OR agil\* OR "COVID-19" OR coronavirus OR conflict\* OR war OR "climate change" OR sustainability OR "social justice" OR equality OR equity OR inclusion OR diversity))"*

### Dataset Pre-Processing and Refinement

The study conducted a preliminary search on July 27, 2024, and a final retrieval yielded 5,657 documents. A systematic pre-processing protocol was employed to ensure relevance and manageability, resulting in 1,917 documents pertinent to the research scope. Filtration criteria included temporal scope (2000-2023), document types (peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, reviews, editorial books, and conference proceedings), and keywords (20 terms reflecting multidimensional aspects of crises). The corpus was confined to English language publications. The PRISMA flow diagram presents the studies included:

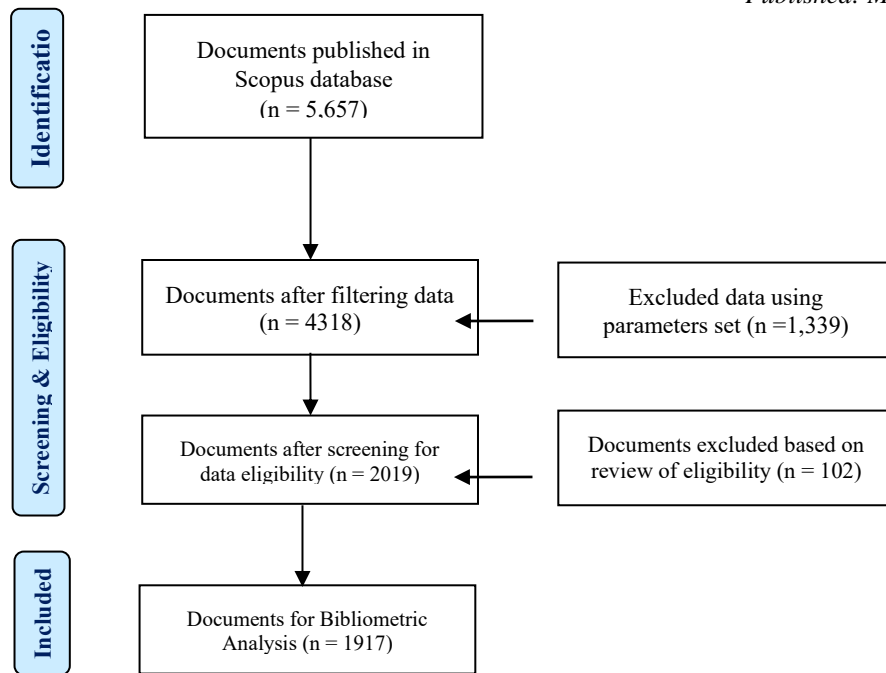


Figure 1: Processing of Documents eligibility based on PRIMA guideline

## RESULTS

This section presents summary statistics for the whole dataset of 1917 documents produced between 2010 and 2023. It identifies the top 10 influential authors, papers, sources, research organisations, and countries linked to the study on women's leadership in African universities throughout turbulent times. Finally, it displays the study's bibliometric networks, which include lexical, spatial, and citation source networks.

### Annual Publication Volume

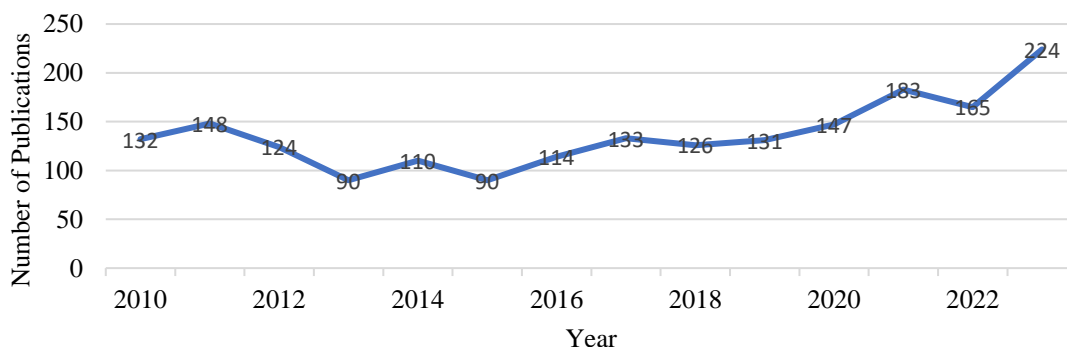


Figure 2: Annual Publication Volume on Women's Leadership in African Universities During Disruptive Times (2010-2023)

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The evolution of publications on women’s leadership in African universities during disruptive periods shows a modest growth between 2010 and 2015, with a peak of 148 articles in 2011, followed by a decline to 90 in 2013 and 2015. This decline reflects a limited global focus on gender and leadership in African academia at the time. However, from 2016 onward, research output resurged, reaching 224 publications by 2023, driven by gender equality initiatives and responses to global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. A 60% increase in publications between 2015 and 2019 signals growing academic interest in leadership resilience. The sharp rise after 2020 highlights how crises have catalysed scholarly focus on women’s leadership and their role in overcoming institutional challenges. This trend underscores a broader commitment to gender inclusivity and leadership resilience in African universities during turbulent times.

*Table 1: Top ten authors\* (documents ≥ 3).*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Names of authors</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>CoA</b>	<b>TP</b>	<b>TC</b>	<b>TC/TP</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
1	Perumal, Juliet	0	5	5	46	9.2	University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.
2	Burnet, Jennie E.	4	0	4	299	74.8	Georgia State University, USA
3	Derman, Bill	0	4	4	9	2.3	Norwegian University of the Life Sciences, Norway
4	Moorosi, Pontso	3	1	4	33	8.3	University of Warwick, UK
5	Tausch, Arno	3	1	4	4	1	University of the Free State, South Africa.
6	Aaldering, Hillie	0	3	3	16	5.3	University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.
7	Adams, Melinda	2	1	3	6	2	James Madison University, USA.
8	Arieff, Alexis	1	2	3	0	0	Congressional Research Service, USA.
9	Arnot, Madeleine	0	3	3	44	14.7	University of Cambridge, UK.
10	Binagwaho, Agnes	0	3	3	57	19	University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda.

*Source: Scopus datasets, 2023. \*Note: SA = No. of single authored papers; CoA = No. of co-authored papers; TP = Total publications; TC = Total citations.*

### **Top authors, papers, journals, organisations, and countries**

The analysis of the top authors in women's leadership research in African universities during turbulent times reveals that Juliet Perumal from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, leads with five publications and an average of 9.2 citations. Other notable authors include Jennie Burnet, Bill Derman, Pontso Moorosi, and Arno Tausch, representing institutions such as Georgia State University, the University of Warwick, and the University of the Free State, with four publications each and varying citation rates. Hillie Aaldering, Melinda Adams, Alexis Arieff, Madeleine Arnot, and Agnes Binagwaho rank next with three publications each, representing institutions like the University of Amsterdam and the University of Global Health Equity. Their mean citation rates range from 2 to 19, indicating the significant influence of their



work. The findings highlight that while some authors may publish fewer papers, their work garners substantial impact, underscoring the importance of research quality over quantity (figure 3).

Table 2 highlights the most influential papers on women’s leadership in African universities during disruptive times. Dudziak (2011) tops the list with 1,322 citations for her seminal work on civil rights and democracy, significantly shaping discussions on leadership and governance in academic institutions. Aristovnik (2020) follows with 1,095 citations, reflecting the heightened focus on leadership resilience in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other highly cited papers by Anderson (2010) and Morley (2014) explore themes of societal integration and gendered leadership challenges, reinforcing the field's multidisciplinary nature. These influential works indicate that while the volume of publications may vary, their impact on leadership studies is profound, highlighting the relevance of these contributions to ongoing debates on gender and institutional leadership during crises.

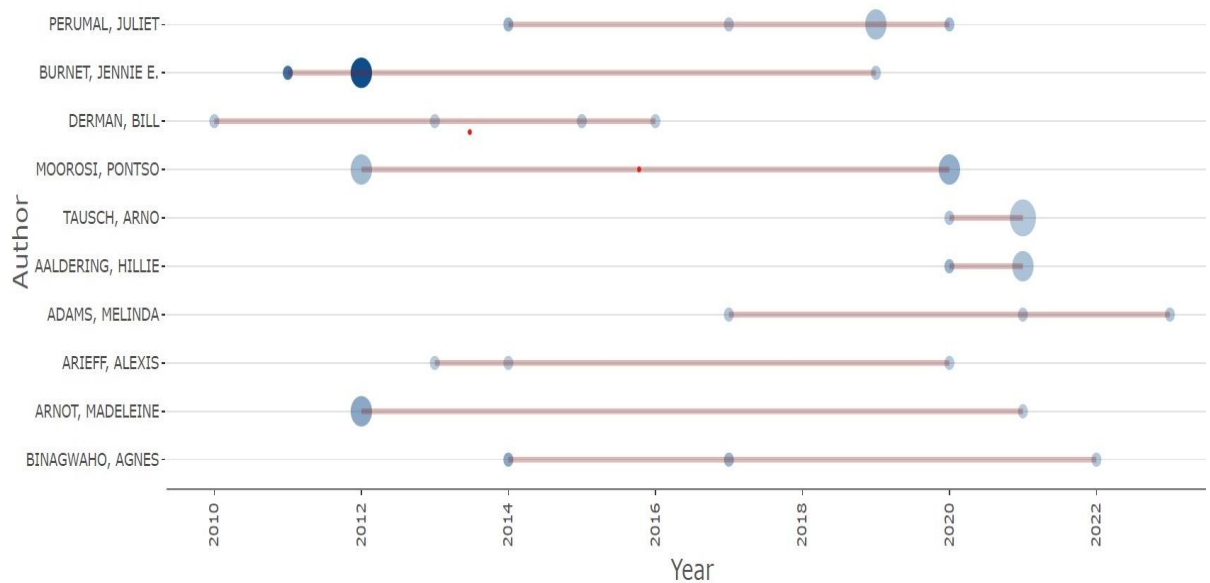


Figure 3: Top ten authors’ production over time. Source: Scopus datasets, 2023

The most prominent journals, as shown in Table 3, include *Social Science and Medicine*, *Agenda*, and *Sustainability*. *Social Science and Medicine* leads with 23 publications and a significant average citation rate of 38.43, underscoring the cross-disciplinary interest in the intersection of health, social science, and leadership during crises. With an average citation rate of 58.5, sustainability emphasises the growing linkage between sustainable leadership practices and managing institutional challenges in disruptive contexts. The presence of diverse journals highlights that the topic of women’s leadership in African universities extends across various





academic disciplines, ensuring broad dissemination of research findings and their application in both scholarly and policy-making spheres.

Table 2: Top ten cited papers and their authors (citations ≥ 180).

Rank	TC	Authors	Sources	References
1	1322	Dudziak, M. L. (2011)	<i>Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy.</i>	Dudziak, (2011)
2	1095	Aristovnik, A. (2020)	<i>Sustainability</i>	Aristovnik, (2020)
3	650	Anderson, E. (2010)	<i>The Imperative of Integration</i>	Anderson, (2010)
4	461	Wood, N. (2014)	<i>The Globalizers: The IMF, the World Bank, and their Borrowers.</i>	Wood, (2014)
5	253	Wickham, C.R (2013)	<i>The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement.</i>	Wickham, (2013)
6	244	Meagher, K. (2010)	<i>Identity Economics: Social Networks and the Informal Economy in Nigeria</i>	Meagher, (2010)
7	226	Morley, L. (2014)	<i>Higher Education Research and Development</i>	Morley, (2014)
8	218	Reuben, R. C., Danladi, M. M., Saleh, D. A., & Ejembi, P. E. (2021)	<i>Journal of Community Health</i>	Reuben et al. (2021)
9	180	Perry, K. K. Y. (2013)	<i>University of Minnesota Press</i>	Perry, (2013)
10	180	Jehu-Appiah, C., Aryeetey, G., Spaan, E., De Hoop, T., Agyepong, I., & Baltussen, R. (2011).	<i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i>	Jehu-Appiah et al. (2011)

Source: Scopus datasets, 2023. Note: TC = Total citations

Table 3: Top ten journals (documents ≥ 10).

Rank	Sources	TP	%	TC	TC/TP	Impact factor 2023
1	Social Science and Medicine	23	13.94	884	38.43	1.95
2	Agenda	22	13.33	74	3.36	0.18
3	Sustainability (Switzerland)	22	13.33	1287	58.5	0.67
4	Human Resources for Health	20	12.12	372	18.6	1.58
5	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	18	10.91	77	4.28	0.14
6	Journal of International Women's Studies	16	9.70	79	4.94	0.23
7	BMC Medical Education	12	7.27	124	10.33	0.94
8	Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies	12	7.27	10	0.83	0.14
9	Cogent Social Sciences	10	6.06	25	2.5	0.38
10	The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies	10	6.06	5	0.5	0.00

Source: Scopus datasets, 2023. \*Note: TP = Total publications; TC = Total citations.

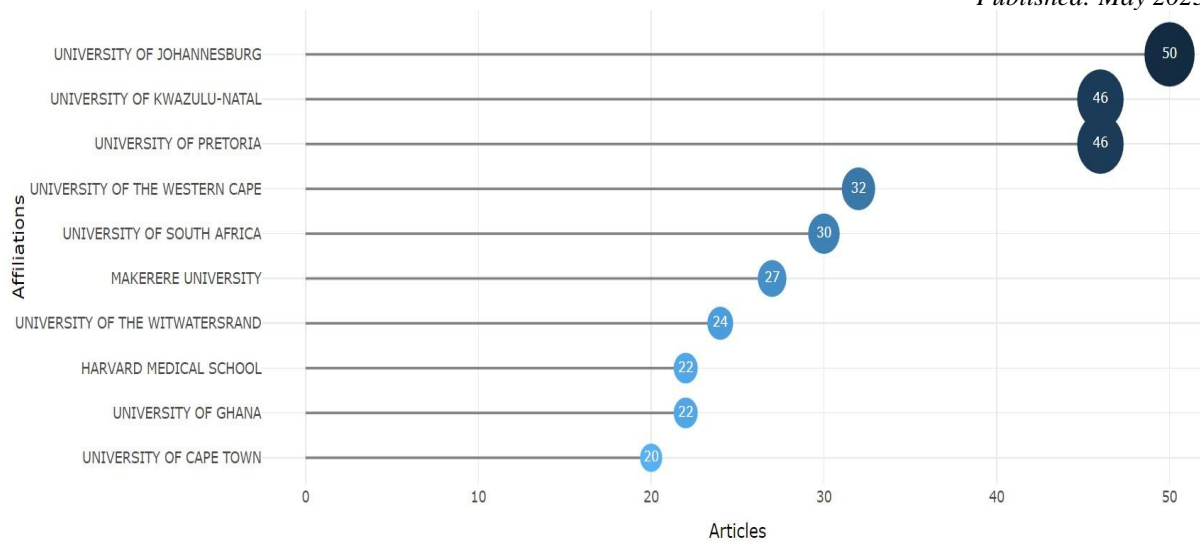


Figure 4: Top ten organisations and the number of publications across different periods (documents  $\geq 20$ ). Source: Scopus datasets, 2023

This figure shows that African and international institutions are major contributors to the research on women’s leadership. Leading organisations such as the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), the University of Cape Town (South Africa), and Georgia State University (USA) are key players. The increasing number of publications post-2015 suggests a growing focus on leadership resilience, likely spurred by global gender equality movements and institutional responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The active involvement of both local African institutions and global universities highlights the importance of international partnerships in advancing this field of study.

The United States dominates this field with over 1,300 publications, followed by the United Kingdom and South Africa. Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia are the leading African countries in research output. The increase in publications after 2015 aligns with global initiatives that promote gender equality and leadership resilience, particularly in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The significant contributions from African countries demonstrate a rising academic interest in addressing the unique leadership challenges faced by women in African universities. However, there remains a need for stronger regional collaboration to advance this research area further.

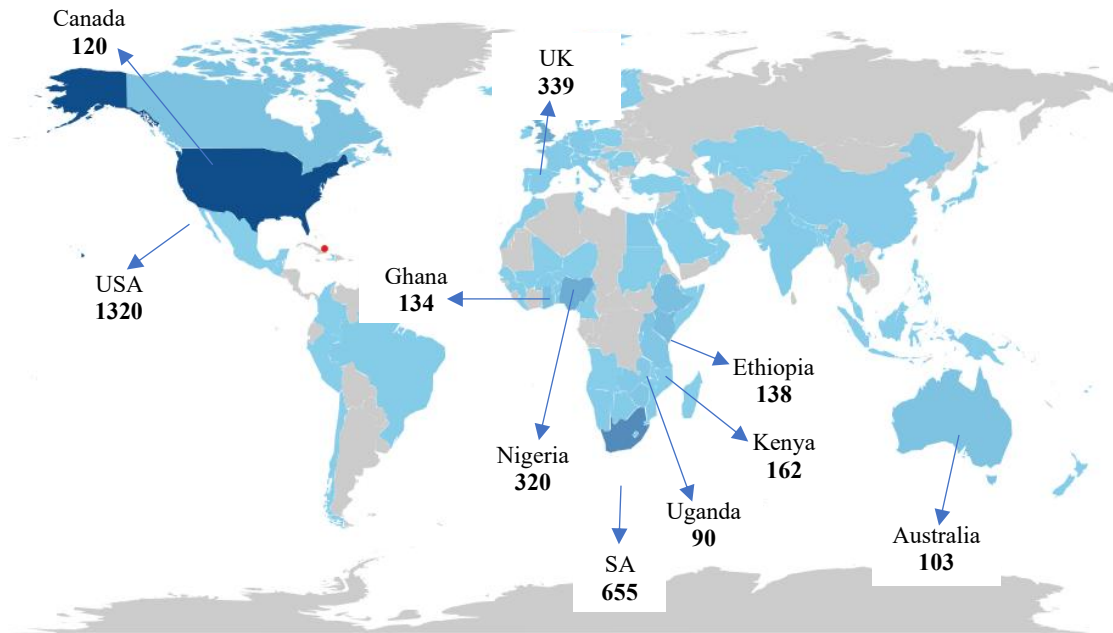


Figure 5: Top ten countries and the number of publications across different periods (documents  $\geq 90$ ). Source: Scopus datasets, 2023

### Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis reveals that "female" (255 occurrences) and "education" (108 occurrences) are central themes, reflecting a strong focus on gender perspectives in leadership within the educational domain. Additional themes such as "leadership," "organisation and management," and "resilience" highlight the critical role of women in navigating institutional governance and managing crises in African universities. The frequent mention of regions like "South Africa," "Ethiopia," and "Kenya" suggests a regional concentration of research. These themes collectively emphasise the importance of policy frameworks that enhance women's leadership roles, particularly in guiding educational institutions through challenging times.

Table 4: Thematic Network of Women's Leadership in African Universities During Disruptive Times Research

Rank	Occurrences	Total link strength
Female	255	2600
Education	108	661
Leadership	107	612
Organisation & management	41	472
South Africa	97	448
Gender	169	407
Ethiopia	60	334
Africa	68	271
Decision making	38	271
Kenya	53	267



The co-occurrence of keywords such as "leadership," "gender," "education," and "resilience" illustrates the multidisciplinary nature of research in this field. The strong associations between these terms highlight the critical intersections of gender and leadership within crisis management. The prominence of terms related to crises, such as "COVID-19" and "resilience," indicates a growing scholarly interest in how women leaders in African universities navigate institutional challenges during disruptive times. This network also underscores the necessity of incorporating resilience and crisis management into leadership frameworks within the academic sector.

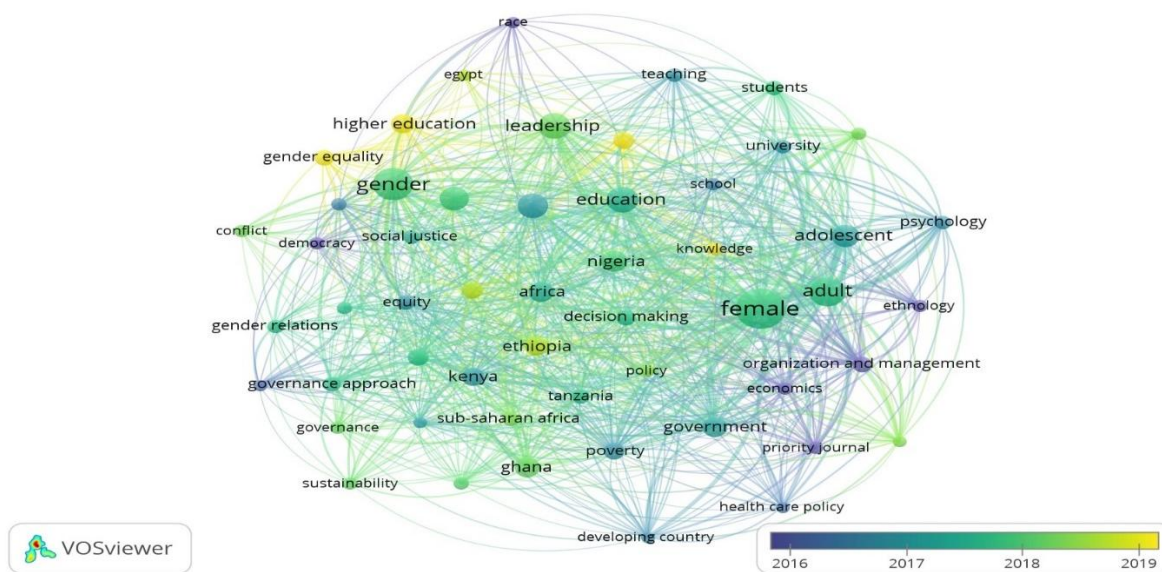


Figure 6: Network of co-occurrence of keywords in literature.

### Collaboration Patterns and Networks

Table 5 illustrates the international collaboration patterns, with the United States emerging as the leading contributor with 657 documents and 11,052 citations, followed by the United Kingdom and South Africa. The strength of collaboration between these countries demonstrates the global academic community’s commitment to addressing women’s leadership challenges in African universities. However, the relatively lower levels of regional collaboration among African countries indicate an opportunity for strengthening intra-African academic partnerships. These findings underscore the need for more robust collaborative efforts within Africa to address women's unique leadership challenges across the continent’s universities.



Table 5: Global Collaboration Dynamics on Women's Leadership in African Universities During Disruptive Times

Country	Citations	Documents	Total link strength
United States	11052	657	203
United Kingdom	3534	198	176
South Africa	2731	369	151
Nigeria	1146	139	86
Kenya	836	71	74
Germany	565	42	62
Ghana	999	70	55
Canada	787	74	54
Ethiopia	734	59	54
Uganda	581	48	52

As shown in Figure 7, the visualisation of collaboration patterns highlights significant academic collaborations between researchers from the United States, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. This collaboration network reflects the increasing importance of international academic partnerships in addressing women's leadership challenges in African universities. The involvement of African and international scholars in these collaborations is crucial for advancing knowledge and developing strategies that support women's leadership in higher education during disruption.

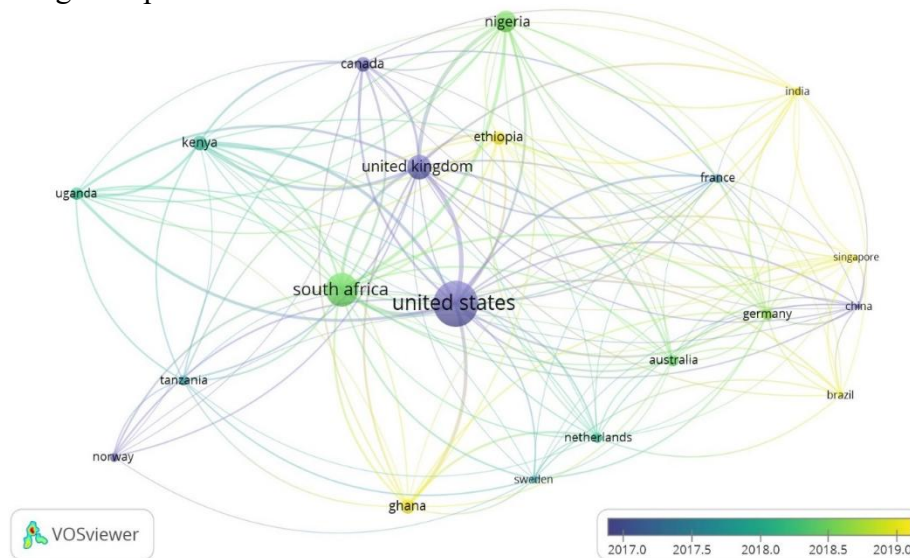


Figure 7: Network Visualisation of Collaboration Patterns

## DISCUSSION

The bibliometric analysis of women's leadership in African universities during disruptive times (2010-2023) reveals significant trends and highlights the growing scholarly interest in this area. The annual publication volume shows an upward trajectory, particularly post-2015, suggesting





increased academic attention toward gender equity in leadership, likely driven by socio-political changes and the impact of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This period has heightened the focus on leadership resilience, adaptability, and women's specific challenges in African higher education institutions. These findings align with existing literature, affirming the growing recognition of women's critical contributions during turbulent times.

The analysis of top authors and organisations underscores the contribution of African institutions, such as the University of the Witwatersrand, alongside global players like Georgia State University. Authors like Juliet Perumal have been instrumental in advancing the discourse on women's leadership, with sustained contributions and significant academic impact. This study corroborates these observations, identifying a marked increase in academic output post-2015, coinciding with global gender equality movements and the impact of crises such as COVID-19. The presence of African and international institutions and scholars reflects a collaborative effort to address leadership challenges unique to African universities while incorporating global perspectives.

The thematic focus on resilience and adaptability resonates with Airini et al. (2011), who emphasise the critical role of adaptive leadership in navigating institutional challenges. The thematic analysis of keywords, including terms such as "leadership," "education," "gender," and "Africa," indicates that the research is multidisciplinary. This field intersects with broader discussions on educational reform, gender equality, and crisis management. Furthermore, the network visualisation of collaboration patterns reveals strong international partnerships, particularly between the USA, UK, and South Africa. These collaborations are vital for knowledge exchange and capacity-building, ensuring that African universities actively participate in the global academic discourse on leadership. However, while the literature often frames women's leadership styles as inherently collaborative and empathetic, this study suggests a more nuanced understanding. It highlights the intersectionality of gender, culture, and institutional contexts, challenging monolithic perceptions of women leaders.

Conversely, some findings diverge from existing research. For instance, while Moodly and Toni (2017a) stress the importance of mentorship in advancing women's leadership, this study reveals a limited focus on mentorship programs in the analysed literature. This gap highlights an area for further exploration, particularly in understanding how mentorship frameworks can be tailored to the unique needs of African women leaders. The study also draws attention to the underrepresentation of regional collaborations among African researchers. This observation aligns with Zupic and Čater (2015), who advocate for stronger intra-African academic partnerships to address the continent's unique leadership challenges. The relatively low levels

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of regional collaboration underscore the need for a more localised approach to research and policy development in this domain.

The growing research output and collaboration patterns underscore the critical role of women's leadership in navigating disruptive times. However, continued investment in research capacity within African institutions is necessary to advance this field further and ensure that African voices remain central to the discourse on leadership in higher education. Future research can better support women leaders in overcoming systemic barriers and driving institutional resilience by addressing mentorship and regional collaboration gaps.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study provides valuable insights into the evolving discourse on women's leadership in African universities during disruptive times. Analysing publication trends, thematic focuses, and collaboration patterns highlight the growing recognition of women's critical contributions to institutional governance and resilience. These findings have several practical and social implications. For policymakers, the study underscores the need to invest in inclusive leadership frameworks that leverage the unique strengths of women leaders. This includes creating supportive environments through mentorship programs, leadership training, and policies that address systemic barriers.

Socially, the study contributes to broader gender equity initiatives, emphasising the role of women leaders in driving inclusive development and institutional sustainability. By showcasing their contributions during times of crisis, it challenges traditional notions of leadership and advocates for more diverse representation in governance structures. The novelty of this study lies in its bibliometric approach, which quantitatively captures the scope and impact of research on women's leadership in African universities. Identifying key trends, contributors, and literature gaps provides a foundation for future research and policy development. This innovative methodology enhances our understanding of the field and offers practical tools for advancing gender equity and leadership resilience in higher education.

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