

# A SCOPING REVIEW OF NEURODIVERSE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN FEMINIST RESEARCH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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## Abstract

This scoping review investigates representation of neurodiverse women in feminist research across Sub-Saharan Africa revealing a significant gap in the comprehension of the interplay between gender, neurodiversity, and cultural context. This study is underpinned by the Feminist Disability theory and Ubuntu philosophy. The analysis encompassed publications from two international and two regional databases: Scopus, EBSCO, the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) Online Repository (AfriRep), and the African Disability Rights yearbook. Peer reviewed journals across multiple disciplines from the Taylor and Francis Group's online platform were also analyzed. Our systematic search indicates a lack of African feminist research on women with Neurodevelopmental conditions (NDCs), despite an expanding body of literature concerning women with sensory and physical disabilities. The review pinpointed several factors contributing to this dearth in NDCs research in African contexts: limited research on gender-specific challenges related to NDCs diagnosis and intervention, over reliance on foreign-developed knowledge body and diagnostic tools for NDCs, African cultural and societal perspectives on NDCs and limited local data on generated on NDCs. These findings highlight the pressing need for culturally relevant research methodologies that incorporate Ubuntu epistemologies for conceptualizing the nature of NDCs and support of neurodiverse individuals. Funding is essential to develop local research capacity and creation of new local relevant knowledge on NDCs.

**Keywords:** neurodiverse women, neurodevelopmental conditions, neurodiversity, feminist research, feminist disability studies, Sub-Saharan Africa.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this review is to investigate the extent, to which women with neurodevelopmental conditions (NDCs) have been represented in Sub-Saharan African feminist scholarship. NDCs are conditions that impact the development and functioning of the nervous system, particularly the brain. Such conditions emerge during early childhood and often persist throughout an individual's life span. NDCs manifest through various patterns of communication, cognitive or behavioral differences. Key examples of these conditions include Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia; Dyspraxia; Communication disorders, such as Developmental Language Disorders (DLD) and Tourette disorder. Although there is a significant rise in feminist disability studies (FDS) literature from the Global South, a considerable portion of this research is

based on conceptual, theoretical, and philosophical frameworks that originate from the Global North. In addition, FDS has predominately addresses concerns about women with physical and sensory disabilities, frequently overlooking experiences of women with NDCs. The paper begins with the conceptualization of FDS and NDCs in Sub-Saharan African context. A conceptual framework underpinning the review will follow. In the study methodology, five stages that were followed in the scoping review are outlined presenting results from four databases: Scopus, EBSCO, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) Online Repository (AfriRep) Africa Disability Rights yearbook and the Tylor & Francis group's online platform.

### **1. 1. Conceptualizing Feminist Disability studies in Sub-Saharan African context**

In the contemporary era of the 21st century, feminism cannot be easily defined. There exists a multitude of definitions, reflecting the diverse perspectives of feminists, shaped by their unique beliefs, histories and cultural influences; nevertheless, the aspiration for gender equality is a common thread that connects all feminists [1]. Feminism encompasses a diverse array of political movements, ideologies, and social initiatives that collectively aim to define, establish, and attain equality among the sexes in political, economic, personal, and social spheres [2]. It represents a collective initiative, initiated by women from diverse backgrounds, aimed at eliminating all manifestations of oppressions, misrepresentation, imposed by men within patriarchal societies [1]. In the wake of this global women's movement that gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, a distinct feminist research methodology and specific research objectives began to take shape in the academic discourse from early 1980s to the 1990s [3].

Feminist research is defined as an investigation that seeks to provide a platform for women voices and experiences that have been historically overlooked, allowing them to articulate their lived realities and perspectives within the context of their daily lives. The primary concerns of the feminist researchers have included oppression and marginalization of women, the exploration of identity and difference, the importance of subjective experiences and a clear departure from reductionist scientific approaches [3]. Feminist research is characterized by three fundamental features, as articulated by [4]. The first feature emphasizes the recognition of diverse forms of knowledge, which serves to establish new foundations for understanding and facilitate genuine social transformation [4]. Feminist research is rooted in the principles and beliefs inherent in feminist ideologies, integrating feminism into its methodological approaches. It seeks to construct and enhance knowledge while focusing on research analysis and strategies on the interpretations women assign to their lived experiences [4]. Furthermore, the practices of feminist research vary, employing multiple methodologies and evolving in response to issues that acknowledge and represent women, positioning them as subjects rather than mere objects of study and recognizing them as active agents in their own lives and communities [4].

Feminists operating within African contexts are dedicated to fundamentally altering the imbalanced gender dynamics that remain a widespread aspect of social realities in Africa. In this context, this review discusses Africa in the context of the sub-Saharan region, which is home to over 3000 tribes, each possessing distinct sub-cultures. This area extends from the Nubian Desert to the Cape of Good Hope, and from Senegal to Zanzibar [5]. African feminist researchers analyze the establishment of institutions that recognize and affirm the personhood of women [4]. Several African feminists' researchers highlight the cultural distinctions among women, encompassing the diverse dynamics that shape their lived experiences, the influence of patriarchal principles, and the acknowledgement of the necessity for pertinent African feminists' methodologies that empower women to express their voices [6].

Feminist Disability Studies (FDS) represent a field of academic research that integrates the disciplines of women gender and feminist studies with the study of disability [7]. Historically, feminist researchers often ignored issues of disability. The previous analysis by feminists excluding disabled women was the thought that inclusion would perpetuate stereotypes that women needed dependencies [8]. However, it was later realized that combining disability research with gender investigation enables improved understanding of gender dynamics and social care commitments as well as disability realities and justice systematic models [8]. FDS seeks to articulate how gender operates as a regulatory framework affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities [9]. By examining aspects related to the body, such as reproductive technologies, sexual accessibility, and societal standards of beauty and perfection, FDS investigates the interplay of various systems of

oppression; namely ableism, sexism, racism, classism, and heteronormativity, within the experiences of disabled women [9].

Literature focusing generally on women with disabilities in African contexts is evolving, with much attention on physical and sensory disabilities. A study by [10] capture the experiences of women with disabilities in rural settings in Zimbabwe. [11] evaluate the wellbeing and experiences of women with disabilities in South Africa in accordance with relevant policies. [12] explore life stories and leadership experiences of women with disabilities in leadership. The study explored life stories and leadership experiences of seven female disability leaders from Tanzania, Ghana and Kenya. [13] examine challenges, faced by visually impaired women to be accepted as being fit for motherhood in Zimbabwe. [14] explore structural violence in the context of disability and poverty in Zimbabwe. [15] explored narratives of women living with disabilities in a rural community in South Africa. The study focused on visually impaired women. [16] examines African indigenous norms on disability and their bearing on women living with disabilities in Zambian Chewa society. The study focused on women with physical disabilities. An opinion paper by [17] explored violence against women with disabilities in Africa. A study by [18] sought to understand the differences in maternal care providers for women with and without disabilities. [19] examines whether the current South African legislative framework relating to women with disabilities in the workplace recognises multiple discrimination and takes steps to eliminate it. [20] conducted a study in Cameroon and Burundi to assess the burden of the drivers of sexual violence among women with disabilities. A study by [21] sought to gain insights into the communication experiences of women who are deaf or Hard of Hearing when accessing healthcare services in hospitals in South Africa. [22] explore the lives of women living with HIV and disability in vulnerable contexts in South Africa regarding their food security. Furthermore, a study by [23] examine the intersectionality of poverty, disability and gender as a framework to understand violence against women with disabilities in South Africa. [24]'s study explores the experiences of women with disabilities in KwaZulu Natal province in accessing public maternal healthcare services. Four women with physical impairments, four women with hearing impairments and four women with visual impairments were participants in the study. [25] sought to examine gender challenges facing women and persons with disabilities within community-based tourism in Africa.

From this literature we note a generalization trend of disabilities, where most studies are examining the experiences of women with disabilities in general. We also note that most studies focus on physical and sensory disabilities. Moreso, most of studies have been conducted in South African context, noting dearth in research in some sub-Saharan countries. We notice limited feminist research focusing on women with NDCs the African contexts. Only two research studies, one conducted in South Africa and one in Zimbabwe have included neurodiverse conditions. A study by [26] examine the livelihoods of young women with and without disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal during COVID -19. The study included 37 black women without disabilities and 35 black women who were deaf, visually impaired, with physical disabilities and with mild-intellectual conditions. [27]'s study investigates how women with disabilities navigate and mitigate poverty in both rural and urban Zimbabwean settings. The participants varied in age and of the twelve participants, nine had physical disabilities, two had multiple disabilities and one had hearing impairment and neurodiverse condition. It must be noted that the terminology, used to refer to these neurodiverse conditions does, not represent a neurodiversity paradigm shift to viewing neurodevelopmental conditions.

### **1. 2. Contextualizing Neurodevelopmental conditions in the Sub-Saharan Context**

NDCs occur due to disruptions in the development of the central nervous system, potentially impacting on an individual's memory, language abilities, motor skills and their capacity for learning, social interaction and self-control. These conditions frequently occur together and may result in considerable functional challenges in adulthood [28, 29]. Included among these conditions are Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia; Dyspraxia; Communication disorders, such as Developmental Language Disorders (DLD) and Tourette disorder [30].

These conditions are acknowledged as being encompassed within the neurodiversity field. The field of neurodiversity has developed significantly over the past 25 years, highlighting the necessity for research that adopts a strengths-based perspective, emphasizing the functional benefits of individuals

with neurological conditions [31]. It refutes the existence of a ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ brain and the idea of a ‘right’ approach to neurocognitive functioning. Although each neurocognitive condition presents unique behavioral and cognitive traits, they are all linked to distinct ways of perceiving and experiencing reality [30].

FDS literature is predominately influenced and dominated by the scholars and research originating from the Global North, where theories and concepts are developed [32]. Likewise, the conceptualization of NDCs is also influenced by Eurocentric perspectives that are intertwined with medical progress, associated with the conditions [33]. There is a notable increase in literature on physical and sensory disabilities in Global South, and this represents a societal understanding of such disabilities within the Sub-Saharan contexts. However, understanding of NDCs in sub-Saharan Africa is still limited. Conceptualizing NDCs has been shaped by a combination of foreign biomedical explanations, beliefs in witchcraft, violations of societal taboos, divine punishment and interpretations of divine will [32]. NDCs are perceived as caused by past misdeeds, such as alleged transgressions, including practices, such as witchcraft, violations of ancestral customs, adultery and specific behaviors like mocking or laughing at a person with a disability, or a father-to-be killing an animal without cause during his wife’s pregnancy [12]. Several researchers have asserted the importance of engaging with indigenous frameworks and recognizing local contexts, cultural aspects, economic and political factors when investigating issues of disability in African contexts [32]. The concepts of culture and context are fundamentally interconnected and essential for comprehending NDCs. They carry significant implications for assessing individual functional impairments, support requirements and overall quality of life [34].

Research on NDCs in Africa remains limited and most communities fail to understand its importance [35]. The Sub-Saharan region lacks detailed information about NDCs [1] and studies specifically focusing on gender-based experiences of adult with NDCs remain scant [36]. The current landscape of disability feminist research in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by both significant progress in the study of women with sensory and physical disabilities and notable gaps in documenting issues concerning women with NDCs. This oversight is problematic, and it neglects the unique experiences of neurodiverse women who navigate both societal expectations and the challenges, posed by their neurodivergent identities. This gap is critical, as it obscures the unique experiences, faced by neurodiverse women. It is against this background that this scoping review aims to illuminate existing research on the extent, to which women with NDCs are represented in African feminist research.

### 1. 3. Conceptual framework

This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: feminist disability theory (FDT) and Ubuntu philosophy. These frameworks facilitate an exploration of the intersection between neurodiversity and feminism, particularly in relation to the distinct experiences of women with NDCs in sub-Saharan contexts. FDT perceives disability as a pervasive cultural framework that categorizes various forms of bodily differences. Similar to the concept of femaleness, disability represents a narrative, constructed by culture regarding the body [37]. Feminist research represents a collaborative and interdisciplinary investigation, serving as a deliberate cultural critique that examines the ways, in which the systems of representation related to gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality and class interact, influence and sometimes conflict with one another [38]. Within this broad multifaceted domain, FDT brings the ability/disability concept into focus as a significant category of analysis. FDT promotes nuanced comprehension of the cultural history surrounding the body. By examining the wide range of feminist issues, including the experiences of the lived body, the politics of physical appearance, sexuality, the social construction of identity and the dedication to integration as a cohesive representation of womanhood [38].

The Ubuntu philosophy is an African indigenous worldview that values equality in the sense that people are not defined by their differences, such as race, abilities or gender. The philosophy of Ubuntu, originating from the Zulu and Xhosa languages, is accurately translated into English as “humanness”. The complete meaning of this concept appears in the Nguni expression “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” which translates to “a person is a person through other people” [39]. Ubuntu reflects an ethical system that guides individuals toward altruistic actions for protecting the total good of humanity. This principle applies to all knowledge creation and validation approaches and procedures, which need to benefit society while avoiding harm to the community [5].

The FDT helps researchers identify essential analytical methods for understanding gender and neurodiversity together. This study gains enrichment through the incorporation of Ubuntu philosophy, which implements African epistemic viewpoints that value equality and unite with collective responsibilities in communal environments. The use of FDT allows researchers to complete a comprehensive analysis of how gender and neurodiversity relate through a deep study of academic writing documenting the experiences of neurodiverse women in the sub-Saharan region. Through this theoretical framework, this review critically assesses how voices, experiences and perspectives of neurodiverse women from sub-Saharan Africa are either acknowledged or marginalized in feminist studies. Thus, this study sought to address the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: To what extent does feminist research studies unveil the lived experiences of women with neurodevelopmental conditions.

RQ2: What is the effect of geographical distribution of studies focusing on neurodiverse women in Sub-Saharan Africa on feminist research and our understanding of neurodiversity in various cultural contexts.

## 2. Materials Methods

We conducted this review consistent with Meta-Analysis extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) as a guideline framework [40]. The protocol was made up of five stages that were followed in the scoping review as follows:

### *Stage 1: Identifying and articulating the main research question*

The purpose of this scoping review was to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity on representation of neurodiverse women in feminist research in the Sub-Saharan Context.

*Stage 2: identifying relevant studies.* Quantitative and qualitative studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- a) focus on the experiences or perspectives of women with NDCs as defined by the DSM-5;
- b) The studies were feminist in nature;
- c) Studies, published in English;
- d) research studies within the period of 2014 to 2024;
- e) research studies with the following keywords were included: feminism, disability, gender, women, representation, women with disabilities, neurodevelopmental conditions;
- f) studies, published in the sub-Saharan region;
- g) studies must be scientific articles that report empirical results (i.e., systematic reviews, meta-analysis, editorial material, book chapters, books, bibliographic studies, conference papers were excluded).

*Stage 3: search, data management and review.* The review process followed a systematic approach to identify relevant literature. First, all three authors independently reviewed and refined the provisional selection criteria to ensure consistency in the screening process. We then conducted a comprehensive search of four major academic databases: Scopus, EBSCO, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) Online Repository (AfriRep), Africa Disability Rights yearbook and Tylor & Francis group. Three of them were international and two were regional databases. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of multidisciplinary feminist and disability literature. The initial search strategy employed a combination of terms related to feminism and neurodiversity. We constructed search strings using the terms "neurodiversity" and "feminist research". Upon findings, four databases yielded no results except for the Taylor and Francis database. We then conducted a preliminary analysis that revealed limited use of neurodiversity terminology in feminist research. Hence, we had to refine our search strategy. We broadened our search terms to include "women with disabilities" and "feminism" to capture potentially relevant literature that might discuss NDCs within a broader context of disability. Two reviewers independently screened the title and abstracts of identified articles against the inclusion criteria. A third reviewer was consulted to solve any disagreements. Standardized data extraction form was used to maintain consistency in the review process and all the screening decisions were documented using shared spreadsheets to ensure transparency of the selection process.

*Stage 4: Extracting and charting data.* The Scopus database search identified 225 records, while EBSCO yielded 946 records as presented in **Fig. 1**. In Scopus, 217 records were excluded based on the



following: 93 studies fell outside the year range, three were in languages other than English, 113 were from other journal sources and 11 were other in other document types. This left eight studies for screening. All eight were excluded due to their focus on physical and sensory disabilities. Similarly, the EBSCO search yielded 946 results. 926 studies were excluded: 81 results were outside the year range, 236 focused on other subjects, 352 were from other journal sources, and 257 were other document types. Twenty remaining records were analyzed for eligibility. However, all were excluded for being outside the study context.

A review of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) Online Repository (AfriREP), disability rights and disability studies collection, produced six results, all of which were subsequently excluded. Three of these results were dismissed due to their emphasis on sensory and physical disabilities. One additional result was excluded because it fell outside the specified year range and concentrated on visual impairments. Furthermore, a research study that examined children with cerebral palsy was also excluded, along with another study that addressed an aesthetic approach to resisting oppression based on perceptions of bodily unattractiveness.

The systematic review process for the African Disability Rights yearbook identified four results. All results were excluded. Two studies had generalized focus on women with disabilities. One article focused on children with disabilities. Then, another study focused on women with severe mental disabilities in South Africa. The study focuses on the South African Choice on Termination of pregnancy Act 92 of 1996 for a person with severe mental disability. This paper is noteworthy as it discusses mental disability and human rights. The paper does not directly focus on neurodiversity; it is an example of how legal frameworks intersect with disability and gender in African contexts.

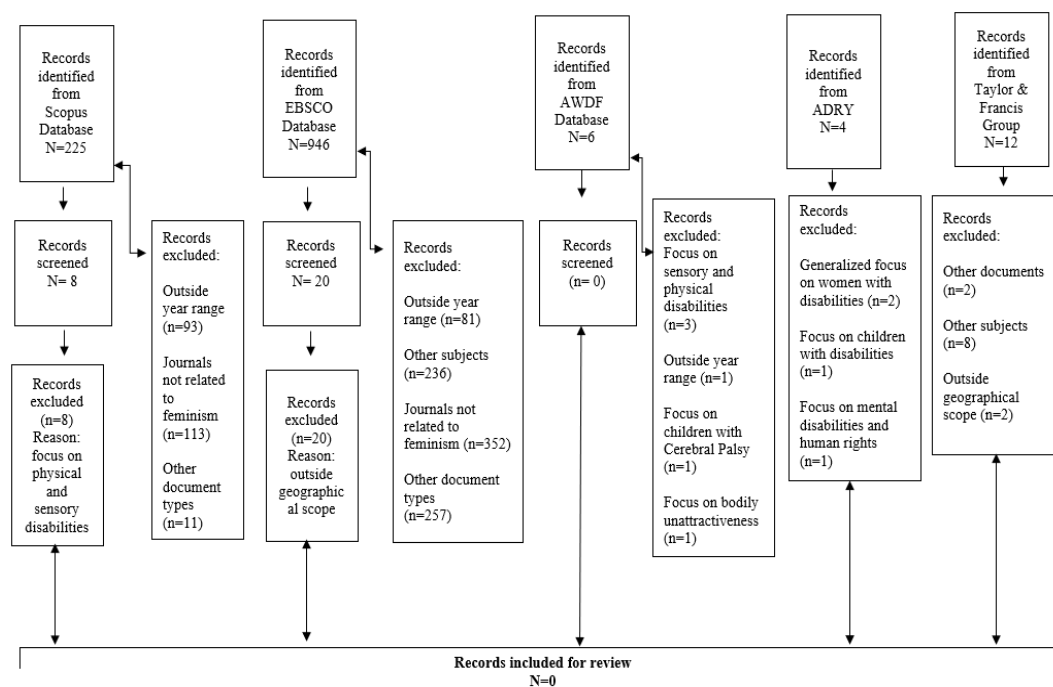


Fig. 1. The PRISMA ScR flow chart

The systematic process for the Tylor and Francis platform yielded twelve studies. In the first screening phase, two non-article documents were excluded. The remaining articles underwent subject-matter screening. Studies focusing on Arts, Education, Language and Literature, and behavioral sciences were removed. Two articles from the Disability and Society Journal specifically addressed women with NDCs. However, these two articles were ultimately excluded as they fell outside the geographical scope of the study. This screening process, conducted alongside other database searches, resulted in no articles being included in the final review. The result of zero included studies from the four databases and Taylor and Francis Group platform underscores a critical gap in the literature regarding the representation of neurodiverse women in feminist research within the Sub-Saharan context.

### 3. Result and discussion

The Feminist disability studies emphasize prioritizing different perspectives from women in contexts where historical mistreatment and ignorance of disabled women persists [8]. However, while the field of feminist research in sub-Saharan Africa has achieved some progress in documenting experiences, faced by women with physical and sensory disabilities as shown by researchers, such as [10, 11] and [13], knowledge on women with NDCs is limited. There is a notable gap in feminist disability scholarship in the representation of neurodiverse women in African contexts. This disparity reflects a broader pattern in feminist literature that, despite its commitment to inclusivity, the experiences of women with NDCs have been overlooked [41]. One of the principles of Ubuntu philosophy is the application of knowledge creation and validation approaches and procedures, which need to benefit society while avoiding harm to the community [5]. Thus, limited documentation on neurodiverse women affects knowledge production that is meant to change the societal perspectives of neurodiverse women. Limited local knowledge production may limit the society's understanding of neurodiverse conditions, and neurodiverse women go through life struggles in isolation and distress.

There are possible factors limiting extensive research in NDCs in African contexts. These are complexities around diagnostic processes and intervention, cultural and social factors and the general limited data on NDCs, generated in African contexts. The diagnosis of NDCs can be particularly challenging, as the existence of various co-morbidities tends to be a standard characteristic rather than an anomaly within the population, affected by these conditions [42]. For instance, Autism diagnosis becomes complicated because Autism frequently exists together with other NDCs, such as ADHD, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD). The combination of Autism with other related conditions makes diagnosis more difficult [43]. The diagnostic process faces additional challenges because identical diagnoses contain similar phenotypes (observable characteristics) whereas individuals share varying levels of functioning symptoms [42].

Additionally, in African contexts, diagnostic processes encounter major challenges as explained by [44] because established tools remain not well relevant to the contexts. [44] purport that diagnostic instruments have been developed and validated within the purview of European nations and the United States of America (USA). Most tools used to diagnose NDCs are in English and internationally originated and have limited sensitivity to local cultural backgrounds [45]. On the other side, most African societies are multilingual, hence diagnosing NDCs, such as DLDs, can be challenging due to limited diagnostic and assessment tools in different languages, like in South Africa where they are eleven official languages [46]. In some cases, like in Zimbabwe, these international diagnostic tools are translated into different languages, and this affects the credibility and effectiveness of the tool. These issues further limit and complicate understanding and intervention of NDCs in African contexts.

Furthermore, while the criteria that defines an individual with ADHD or Autism is well understood by researchers and scientists, the impact of gender on the diagnosis, treatment, and experiences of living with the conditions is frequently disregarded [47]. The statistical prevalence of NDCs usually shows higher numbers in males [48]. It is documented that NDCs, such as Autism and ADHD, displays higher prevalence among males [49]. The gender-specific aspects of NDCs particularly ADHD result in substantial differences for identification procedures as well as therapeutic protocols. When women display symptoms of Inattentiveness, medical staff tend to misinterpret them as being inefficient while male symptoms of hyperactivity lead to more rapid diagnostic processes and intervention [47]. ADHD medication response is hindered by biological factors of women's experiences due to the impact of hormonal fluctuations particularly how estrogen affects brain pathologies [47]. The combination of hormonal changes throughout a woman's life cycles each month and at various stages and during menopause creates possible negative impacts on treatment outcomes and brain performance [47]. Thus, regular adjustments of medications become essential because of this situation. Therefore, the male-centred diagnostic criteria fail to accommodate neurodiverse women, and this affects women psychologically and socially. Limited understanding of the impact of gender in diagnosis and treatment of NDCs further narrows the understanding of NDCs in local contexts and undermines the livelihood of women.

Traditional African views about NDCs employ different cultural and social perspectives and that also limit its scientific research. Historical beliefs about NDCs origins in sub-Saharan Africa include both medical explanations and religious perspectives, witchcraft beliefs and cultural taboos violations,

divine retribution and God's revelation [32]. These cultural perspectives perpetuate stigma, associated with NDCs. Women are mostly affected by these perspectives more than men. The social complications of NDCs affect sub-Saharan African women in a unique manner due to their dual struggle with gender obligations, combined with cultural rules [47]. Women who handle multiple duties throughout their family and community life face judgment of their cognitive and organization skills, which receives harsher criticism from society than male counterparts [47]. The social judgment against women who have ADHD generates both deeper self-esteem problems and increased frequency of anxiety disorders and mood disorders thus resulting in widespread underdiagnosis and under-treatment [47].

Multiple factors strongly influence African feminist studies on NDCs. The medical research into NDCs treatment and intervention remains limited for poor communities particularly among Sub-Saharan African ethnic minority groups. [50–52]. A lack of locally collected data has forced the healthcare sector to depend on foreign diagnostic tools and assessment methods, which completely fail to fit the African healthcare environment. Local-based data deficiency creates a problem for proper documentation regarding the unique experiences of people with NDCs during adulthood. Limited research typically affects women more substantially because NDCs display gender-specific characteristics, which remain undocumented. The research findings demonstrate an existing critical knowledge gap and immediate need for analytical theories, which can properly explore the relationships between gender and neurodevelopmental conditions alongside African cultural and societal contexts.

**Limitations.** The scoping review faced several methodological constraints. Our focus on academic databases might have excluded valuable insights from grey literature, policy documents and community-based research. Also, the review time frame might have excluded some research representing the experiences of neurodiverse women in African contexts. In addition, database selection was also limited to the first authors' affiliated institution's accessibility. Finally, limiting our search to English-language based publications, we may have missed relevant published research in other languages common in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Prospects for further research.** For neurodiverse women to express their lived experiences at the nexus of gender, neurodiversity, and cultural contexts, African feminist scholars must embrace participatory approaches that give priority to their perspectives. Such studies may provide important new information for the development of policies. Additionally, conducting comparative studies in various Sub-Saharan African contexts may help clarify how various social, cultural, and economic factors influence the lives of neurodiverse women. Collaborations that bring together feminist scholars, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and neurodiverse communities would enhance the quality of research while ensuring that findings lead to impactful support systems.

#### 4. Conclusion

This review demonstrates how feminist research about women with neurodevelopmental disorders lacks extensive coverage in African contexts. Research, dedicated to understanding the unique perspectives of neurodiverse women, remains limited despite significant advancements by feminist disability studies regarding physical and sensory disabilities. This gap reflects wider challenges in the study of NDCs in Africa, including diagnostic intricacies, cultural attitudes, and a lack of local data. The review illustrates how the convergence of gender, neurodiversity, and cultural contexts presents unique challenges that are not sufficiently captured in contemporary feminist research.

This scoping review highlights several critical areas requiring attention in understanding experiences of women with NDCs in African contexts. There is an urgent need for funding of gender specific studies on NDCs to enhance our understanding of women's unique experiences across different life stages. Local research capacity expansion depends on both training investments and funding for researchers and partnership platforms between neurodiverse women and researchers. The creation of culturally acceptable diagnostic tools emerges through comprehensive research platforms. Research, conducted in the local contexts, will improve understanding of NDCs throughout regional communities and promote evidence-based policy development. This will limit exportation of knowledge and policies, which may not be applicable in African context.

Current methodologies that broadly categorize "women with disabilities" do not adequately consider the distinct challenges, encountered by women with conditions, such as neurodevelopmental



tal ones. “One size fit all” approach tend to disadvantage groups of women with rare conditions, pushing their specific needs to the margins of discourse and policy development. Some conditions like NDCs remain widely misunderstood in African contexts, which compounds their invisibility in research and support framework. Therefore, Feminist Disability scholars should move beyond broad categorizations and develop targeted research that acknowledges the distinct experiences of women with different conditions. This level of specificity is crucial for establishing meaningful support systems and advocacy initiatives that tackle the unique challenges, faced by women.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this paper, as well as the published research results, including the financial aspects of conducting the research, obtaining and using its results, as well as any non-financial personal relationships.

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The study was performed without financial support.

### Data Availability

Data will be made available on reasonable request.

### Use of Artificial intelligence

The authors have used artificial intelligence technologies within acceptable limits to provide their own verified data, which is described in the research methodology section.

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