

COMMENTARY

Co-creation strategies for identifying abortion research gaps in Nigeria towards research capacity strengthening for early to mid-career abortion researchers

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Abstract

This paper highlights the significant gaps in research skills and capacity within the field of abortion research in Nigeria. Abortion research in the country remains marginal in terms of outputs and policy engagement. In Nigeria, the abortion discourse is embedded in a complex legal and cultural landscape, fostering a value system that hampers innovative research and critical engagement with unsafe abortion and post-abortion care. This value system further contributes to the lack of comprehensive research, exacerbating the dearth of skills and knowledge necessary for a thorough analysis of the abortion situation. This paper outlines a co-creation process and framework that addresses these skill and knowledge gaps, essential for a critical examination of abortion issues and for generating research outputs that can influence policy. The co-creative approach detailed in this paper involves collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders. This collaboration aims to map the current research landscape and identify areas that require deeper investigation. By integrating the Nominal Group Technique with key interviews, the study fosters collaborative dialogue and idea generation, leading to an enhanced understanding of abortion-related issues. Our findings indicate significant deficiencies in the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively analyse the impacts of socio-cultural stigma about abortion, restrictive abortion laws and limited access to safe abortion services on the physical and mental health of women. The paper discusses the methodologies used in identifying these gaps and the challenges faced in abortion research in Nigeria, with an emphasis on providing actionable insights for policymakers and healthcare providers. These insights are intended to address the critical health and social issues related to abortion in Nigeria, moving beyond academic discourse to effect real changes in abortion-related programs and policies. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2024; 28 [3s]: 15-23).

Keywords: Co-creation; gaps; abortion; research; capacity strengthening; Nigeria

Résumé

Cet article met en évidence les lacunes importantes dans les compétences et les capacités de recherche dans le domaine de la recherche sur l'avortement au Nigéria. La recherche sur l'avortement dans le pays reste marginale en termes de résultats et d'engagement politique. Au Nigéria, le discours sur l'avortement s'inscrit dans un paysage juridique et culturel complexe, favorisant un système de valeurs qui entrave la recherche innovante et l'engagement critique en faveur de l'avortement à risque et des soins post-avortement. Ce système de valeurs contribue en outre au manque de recherches approfondies, exacerbant le manque de compétences et de connaissances nécessaires à une analyse approfondie de la situation de l'avortement. Cet article décrit un processus et un cadre de co-création qui comblent ces lacunes en matière de compétences et de connaissances, essentielles pour un examen critique des questions d'avortement et pour générer des résultats de recherche susceptibles d'influencer les politiques. L'approche co-créative détaillée dans cet article implique la collaboration avec diverses parties prenantes, notamment des professionnels de la santé, des décideurs politiques et des dirigeants communautaires. Cette collaboration vise à cartographier le paysage actuel de la recherche et à identifier les domaines qui nécessitent une enquête plus approfondie. En intégrant la technique du groupe nominal à des entretiens clés, l'étude favorise le dialogue collaboratif et la génération d'idées, conduisant à une meilleure compréhension des questions liées à l'avortement. Nos résultats indiquent des lacunes importantes dans les compétences et les connaissances nécessaires pour analyser efficacement les impacts de la stigmatisation socioculturelle concernant l'avortement, des lois restrictives sur l'avortement et de l'accès limité aux services d'avortement sécurisé sur la santé physique et mentale des femmes. Le document discute des méthodologies utilisées pour identifier ces lacunes et les défis rencontrés dans la recherche sur l'avortement

au Nigéria, en mettant l'accent sur la fourniture d'informations exploitables aux décideurs politiques et aux prestataires de soins de santé. Ces idées visent à aborder les problèmes sanitaires et sociaux critiques liés à l'avortement au Nigéria, en allant au-delà du discours universitaire pour apporter de réels changements dans les programmes et politiques liés à l'avortement. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2024; 28 [3s]: 15-23).

Mots-clés: Co-création ; lacunes; avortement; recherche; renforcement des capacités ; Nigeria

Introduction

Abortion, a complex and multifaceted issue, occurs across different social categories and contexts. It is a pregnancy outcome that reflects the interplay of systemic, cultural, community, and individual factors that influence behaviours related to childbearing among women and their partners. Although it is stigmatized, abortion is relevant to individuals from all walks of life, including adolescents, young adults, and older adults, who may consider experience or obtain an abortion at different stages in their lives, irrespective of their socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. In Nigeria, abortion is legally accessible only to save a woman's life¹. Yet the incidence of induced abortion is notably high, and the majority are unsafe, posing significant public health and social concerns². Several studies have documented an upward trend in abortion incidence, from an estimated rate of 25 induced abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age in 1998 to up to 45.8 per 1,000 WRA in 2018, two-thirds of which were considered unsafe³⁻⁵.

Particularly concerning is the prevalence of unsafe induced abortions. Due to legal restrictions and social stigma in Nigeria, women often resort to clandestine procedures or self-manage terminations with non-recommended methods outside the formal healthcare system⁶. In environments with restrictive laws and societal stigma surrounding abortion, access to quality healthcare and safe abortion care becomes increasingly inequitable, disproportionately affecting young girls and women from low socioeconomic backgrounds or impoverished households. Similarly, the disproportionate impact of adverse outcomes of unsafe abortions on the most vulnerable – younger and unmarried women, and those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds – are well documented^{4,7,8,9}.

To address the dominant narratives around induced abortion and mitigate against the consequences of unsafe-induced abortions, targeted homegrown research, based on a deep understanding of the cultural context, effective evidence communication, and appropriate policy

interventions are imperative. The World Health Organisation underscores the importance of capacity building as essential in addressing the increasing burden of sexual and reproductive health challenges in low- and middle-income countries. Nigeria, however, grapples with a lack of skills, capacity, and partnerships necessary for adequately conducting research that can reshape policies and perceptions surrounding abortion. This deficiency significantly contributes to Nigeria's role in the regional and global burden of unsafe abortions and other sexual and reproductive health issues. Building and strengthening research capacities in this field represents an effective and sustainable approach to tackling these persistent and complex health challenges¹⁰. Additionally, there is a conspicuous absence of intergenerational dialogue among early-career researchers, and established scholars in sexual and reproductive health who have worked on this topic. These gaps, coupled with the deep societal stigma related to the subject of abortion, perpetuate knowledge and skill deficiencies in abortion research in Nigeria^{11,12}.

Our project was, in part, designed to fill in the aforementioned gaps by enhancing the capabilities of multidisciplinary, early to mid-career scientists in Nigeria to conduct rigorous abortion research. This component of the project focuses on conceptualising, conducting, and disseminating abortion-related research, and leveraging this research as evidence to influence policy through comprehensive training, skill-building, and mentoring programs. This paper documents the crucial initial steps in identifying gaps in abortion research in Nigeria, utilising a co-creation approach. The process was collaboratively developed by the Academy for Health Development (AHEAD), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and the Centre for Research Evaluation Resources Development (CRERD), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, in partnership with and with sponsorship from the Guttmacher Institute, New York, USA. This initiative marks a significant stride towards building a robust body of knowledge and expertise in abortion research, which is vital for informing policies and practices that can mitigate the adverse impacts of

unsafe abortions and improve reproductive health outcomes in Nigeria.

The approach

The project was guided by a community-based participatory approach. This approach to research capacity building and strengthening is anchored on a co-creation philosophy that centers stakeholders' views, experiences, expectations, and assessments of germane sexual and reproductive health issues, especially abortion in Nigeria. The approach provided a unique opportunity to target postgraduate students, early, mid, and established researchers, health practitioners, community and policy engagement experts. We drew upon stakeholders' unique perspectives and expertise to collaboratively identify the key thematic issues related to abortion research in Nigeria, the gaps in skills and knowledge among early and mid-career abortion researchers, and how to bridge these gaps to strengthen the quality and impact of abortion research in Nigeria.

An iterative process was followed throughout the various stages and phases of the project to promote active participation of the critical stakeholders and to denounce asymmetrical power relations between and among the stakeholders. The promotion of equitability among stakeholders fostered a shared sense of ownership and buy-in among participants and improved the decision-making process at each phase of the implementation. Details on each process and stage are described below.

Identifying abortion research gaps in Nigeria through a co-creation approach

The process of identifying abortion research gaps in Nigeria through a co-creation approach is a vital step towards advancing the understanding and management of abortion issues within the country. The co-creation process commenced with a quest to refine and classify thematic areas of abortion research gaps in Nigeria. This goal necessitated the adoption of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT)¹³. By operation, NGT is a structured, multistage group technique that is facilitated to generate consensus among participants. Its adaptation for this project involved serial panel discussions designed for virtual consensus building among experts from various related fields who share an interest in abortion in

Nigeria. The technique begins with individual idea generation, followed by a round-robin feedback session, discussion and clarification of ideas, and finally, a voting process to prioritise ideas. By structuring the discussion in this way, the NGT ensures that every participant can contribute equally and reach a consensus on the most significant ideas.

The rationale behind using the NGT lies in its effectiveness in fostering collaborative discussions and idea generation. This technique is particularly beneficial in areas such as abortion research, where diverse perspectives and expertise are crucial. The NGT also promotes the aggregation of a wide range of insights and experiences, ensuring that the identified research gaps are comprehensive and relevant to the subject of discussion. The method proved especially beneficial as the inception of the project occurred at a period when social distancing was enforced to curtail the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria. The shift to a virtual platform allowed the inclusion of a wider array of experts who might have otherwise been unable to participate due to logistical constraints.

Selection of stakeholders and facilitation of the NGT

First, a virtual survey was conducted with carefully selected experts, and mid to senior level scholars to gauge the state of abortion research and identify pressing issues and gaps in abortion studies in Nigeria. The survey sought their perspectives on what they considered to be the critical gaps and issues related to abortion in Nigeria. The respondents were selected based on their experience in abortion research evidenced through publications. After the survey, an invitation-only meeting conducted via Zoom served as the first panel discussion with the goal of identifying key thematic issues related to gaps in abortion research skills and knowledge. It aimed to provide further depth to the issues identified in the survey and formed the basis for the discussion. Findings from the survey were grouped into field-specific categories – programme and practice, policy, law, gynaecology, sociology, and public health. One expert was carefully selected from each of the seven identified fields based on their experience and publication history to lead the conversation at the first panel discussion. The diverse gender, professional, and geographical backgrounds of the panelists created a rich milieu for

idea generation. The participants were a mix of scholars at various stages of their career, experts in the sexual and reproductive health field, policymakers, advocates, and enthusiasts interested in abortion research in Nigeria.

In keeping with the goal of fostering innovative thinking, panelists, and participants were not restricted in their discussions and encouraged to leverage their experience and knowledge to address all identified gaps. A leading expert in sexual and reproductive health issues moderated this session, ensuring a focused yet open dialogue. We qualitatively analysed the slide presentations, discussions, and chat room comments from this session to identify the prevailing thematic issues in abortion research gaps in Nigeria. The thematic issues were highlighted in a report shared with the panelists ahead of subsequent panels. We synthesized the findings from this panel to inform the focus of subsequent panels.

After the first panel discussion, we invited these professionals to participate in another e-mailed, open-ended survey where they commented on ways to advance conversations on the issues identified in the first panel. The survey also inquired about their interest and availability to participate in subsequent panel discussions, both as panelists and participants and in a planned capacity-building project as mentors. This stage was crucial in gathering initial insights and gauging the willingness of these experts to engage further in the project.

The panel discussions: Operationalizing the NGT approach

Experts in the NGT facilitated and moderated the discussions to ensure a respectful and productive dialogue. Each session began with a presentation of the current state of abortion research in Nigeria related to that topic, highlighting known challenges and areas of limited knowledge. Next, participants engaged in an individual ideation phase, where they listed their perceived research gaps without influence from others. This phase plays a crucial role in the NGT by preventing the domination of the discussion by more vocal participants and ensuring a wide range of ideas are put forward. We then compiled these survey results into a framework for discussion. We shared this framework with the respondents as part of an invitation to participate in the first panel discussion, which we scheduled one

month after the survey. The research team conducted a qualitative analysis of the survey responses. The responses were categorised based on their field-specific leaning and thematic preoccupation. This analysis focused on identifying emergent, convergent, and divergent opinions on gaps in abortion research in Nigeria. By grounding the panel discussion in the real perspectives and experiences of the experts, this approach ensured an authentic and meaningful conversation.

Following the individual ideation phase, the round-robin phase of the NGT commenced. Here, each participant shared their ideas in turn, providing brief explanations and answering any clarifying questions from other participants. This phase was instrumental in building a shared understanding of the various perspectives and challenges in abortion research in Nigeria. It also allowed for the emergence of themes and patterns across the different ideas presented.

The discussion phase that followed was an opportunity for participants to delve deeper into the ideas presented, exploring their implications, feasibility, and potential impact on abortion research in Nigeria. This phase was particularly vibrant, with participants engaging in lively discussions, challenging each other's assumptions, and building upon each other's ideas. The facilitators played a crucial role in this phase, ensuring that the discussion remained focused and that all participants had the opportunity to contribute.

The voting phase enabled participants to prioritize the generated ideas. Participants allocated points to the ideas they felt were most important through a structured voting process. A ranked list of research gaps emerged from this process, representing a consensus view on the most pressing issues to address in abortion research in Nigeria.

Key themes and gaps in abortion research in Nigeria

1. Stigma and Gaps in Socio-cultural and Religious Perceptions of Abortion

The panel discussions highlighted that social stigma, particularly in the context of abortion, manifests in various dimensions. Firstly, clients utilizing abortion services frequently experience self-stigma. This phenomenon can lead to challenges in data collection efforts as it can skew responses towards

social desirability or deter clients from participating in abortion research at all. Additionally, prevalent negative religious and socio-cultural attitudes toward abortion and related terminologies significantly diminish interest in abortion research.

Another critical aspect noted was the potential bias among researchers themselves, as many share these negative perceptions of abortion and abortion services. This bias is often rooted in the dominant religious view within Nigeria, which uniformly interprets abortion as akin to murder, and involves debates around the viability age of a pregnancy.

Community stigma further compounds these issues, as it leads women to avoid sharing their experiences, fearing they will be perceived as having committed an act equivalent to murder. This stigma extends to researchers who are hesitant to engage in this field, wary of being perceived as “promoters” of abortion and thereby conflicting with their faith and cultural beliefs. Consequently, this widespread stigmatization of abortion researchers, providers, and clients contributes to the lack of reliable abortion data.

A notable research gap identified within the social context of abortion pertains to the disproportionate focus on women as the sole clients of abortion services. This focus neglects the crucial roles of male involvement and the broader social structures influencing women’s decision-making processes regarding abortion. Experts advocate for the inclusion of indicators to assess social context and the potential influence of stigma in future abortion research.

2. Gaps in legal interpretation in abortion practice and research

In Nigeria, abortion laws are notably restrictive, permitting abortion solely when the woman's life is at risk. There are significant gaps in the interpretation of this legal provision. Furthermore, there is an apparent oversight in acknowledging the legal defences provided in existing laws. This creates a heightened legal sensitivity surrounding abortion issues for researchers, providers, and clients. Researchers often steer clear of the legal complexities associated with the widespread belief that abortion is categorically illegal in Nigeria, significantly contributing to the gaps in abortion research.

In the realm of law, policy, and abortion, there is a pressing need to enhance understanding of the existing laws and policies. Additionally, it is vital to develop innovative methodologies capable of navigating the legal landscape and addressing the existing legal constraints. Furthermore, exploring avenues for the liberalization of abortion laws, improving abortion care, and enhancing post-abortion family planning are also considered essential approaches.

3. Methodological and skill gaps in abortion research in Nigeria

In the field of abortion research in Nigeria, experts have identified several methodological and skill gaps that need addressing. Current studies on abortion are predominantly quantitative, hospital-based, and focus mainly on the incidence of abortion and postabortion complications, rather than assessing complexities around people’s perceptions and experiences of undergoing abortions. A critical gap noted is the lack of qualitative research methods, including ethnographic studies. There is also a pressing need for innovative approaches in estimating the prevalence and incidence of abortion using longitudinal studies. Additionally, there is an imperative to critically assess existing methodologies for potential weaknesses and to develop strategies for enhancing them to yield higher-quality data.

Regarding data collection approaches, experts suggest the adoption of third-party reporting methods, such as the confidante methodology¹⁴, and recruiting participants at service locations like patent medicine vendor outlets¹⁵. Leveraging technology, for instance through mobile apps, is also recommended to improve confidentiality and the quality of the data collected, especially direct report of abortion experience. Furthermore, research designs should incorporate gender methodologies and behavioural science approaches, as well as utilize secondary data sources to draw inferences on abortion issues.

A notable concern is the identified lack of necessary competencies among researchers for conducting and disseminating credible abortion research in Nigeria. These competencies include qualitative data collection and analysis skills, the ability to integrate mixed methods, proficiency in data mining, reporting, and visualization, as well as

a deep understanding of the ethics involved in abortion research. Additionally, advanced skills in statistical analysis and modelling are lacking. There is also a need for expertise in translating research evidence into policy, particularly by effectively communicating research data in ways that resonate with policy and social audiences. This could involve transforming data into compelling stories and utilizing non-traditional platforms for research dissemination.

Current research efforts are largely focused on documenting the burden of abortion. However, there are gaps in understanding the relationship between contraception and abortion in Nigeria which has a low contraceptive prevalence rate for example, why people do not use contraceptives to prevent unintended pregnancies. Another critical area that requires exploration is the values of service providers in relation to abortion practices, especially considering the perceived legal and social consequences. Furthermore, the impact of abortion on mental health and wellbeing, and the demography of women who undergo abortions, are areas that have not been sufficiently explored and understood. Addressing these gaps would not only enhance the quality and scope of abortion research in Nigeria but also contribute significantly to the development of informed policies and practices in reproductive health care.

4. Gaps in service provision as opportunities for research

Respondents have identified several significant gaps in service provision related to abortion care, both pre- and post-abortion, where research data could substantially influence practice and programming. One prominent gap highlighted is the access to quality abortion care, encompassing both comprehensive and post-abortion care. This includes concerns about the capacity of healthcare personnel to effectively manage patients seeking abortion-related services.

Several other gaps were identified through the responses. These include the need for telemedicine support for abortion services, the unmet need for contraception, the epidemiology of abortion, and the relationship between abortion laws and morbidity. Additional gaps noted are the impact of COVID-19 on abortion services, the longitudinal effects of forced motherhood due to the

criminalization of abortion, and challenges in data availability and measurement. Moreover, the unclear designation of public facilities as providers of abortion-related services often leads to clandestine procurement of these services, thereby excluding many clients from being included in research data.

5. Gaps in abortion policy, data sharing, and data use

There is a notable disconnect between abortion research and policy, highlighting the necessity for the government to better translate theoretical research into practical action. Several factors impede the translation of research into abortion policy action. These include funding gaps, as much of the abortion research is currently self-financed by researchers. Furthermore, existing policy positions often promote stigmatization as they align more with publicly espoused cultural and religious values but do not reflect Nigeria's public health reality pertaining to abortion. Political apathy towards abortion research is also evident, with the government not prioritizing data collection efforts on abortion across different age groups and societal levels.

There is an urgent need for nationally, regionally, and locally representative data on abortion. This could be achieved by integrating abortion research into national surveys like the NDHS (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey) and NARHS (Nigeria AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey), or through independent funding for periodic, routine national surveys on abortion. Currently, abortion research tends to occur within one-off studies, leading to haphazard policies based on these fragmented data.

To address these gaps, it is crucial to involve policymakers in abortion research and foster collaboration among major stakeholders in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. This includes community-based organizations, private sector service providers, religious leaders, the educational sector, youth, and development actors. Such a multi-sectoral approach is necessary to leverage the unique roles of these different sectors in facilitating the collection of reliable facility and community-based abortion data. Building this capacity, creating a national data sharing, use, and quality check policy, and establishing a platform for abortion research are essential steps. They ensure

that research efforts are not only complementary but also contribute effectively to the formation of informed and practical abortion policies.

Training programmes for medical practitioners in post-abortion care, for instance, have shown promising results in improving care quality and reducing maternal mortality rates, as noted by Ogu *et al.* in 2012¹⁶. These models include training healthcare providers in safe abortion techniques and post-abortion care and conducting comprehensive community-based research to understand the socio-cultural aspects of abortion, as per Ganatra *et al.* in 2017¹⁷. Nigeria could benefit from successful models used in other countries, where capacity-building in abortion research has led to improved health outcomes.

There was a consensus among the stakeholders that robust evidence, when adequately generated and appropriately disseminated, could stimulate policy reforms. This would create a more conducive environment for abortion research, foster partnerships between academic institutions, healthcare providers, and NGOs, and enhance research capacity for innovative approaches to safe abortion and post-abortion care in Nigeria.

Curriculum development and formation of a network of researchers and professionals

The discussions and insights from the virtual convening were integral to the co-creation of knowledge on abortion research gaps. Participants actively engaged in debates, shared their experiences, and proposed innovative approaches to address the identified gaps. This collaborative process was not just about identifying challenges but also informed the development of a training and mentoring curriculum for young scholars in abortion research. The curriculum aimed to address the specific needs and gaps identified during the virtual convening. The curriculum was comprehensive, covering a range of topics from critical thinking, research methodologies and ethical considerations to policy analysis and advocacy strategies. The curriculum also emphasised the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, recognising the multi-faceted nature of abortion research. The developed curriculum was used to train and mentor a cohort of 24 research fellows through the process of abortion research leading to the production of publishable research articles by most of the fellows.

Another significant outcome was the suggested need for the establishment of a network of professionals committed to advancing abortion research in Nigeria. The process of co-creation fostered a sense of collaboration and shared purpose among participants, laying the groundwork for future partnerships and joint research initiatives.

Discussion

The initiative to identify and engage early-to-mid-career abortion researchers in Nigeria represents a crucial step in strengthening research capacities and addressing the significant gaps in abortion research in the country. The organizers were intentional in the design of this process to engage researchers who are currently involved in abortion research or have a keen interest in this field. The approach involved an open call for participation, screening of responses, and a unique virtual co-creation session to identify gaps in abortion research skills and knowledge, develop and implement a training and mentoring curriculum for young scholars in abortion research in Nigeria.

The application of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) in this context demonstrates a unique method to collaborative problem-solving in medical and social research. The NGT's ability to gather a diverse range of insights provides a thorough and contextually appropriate identification of research gaps, which is vital in the complex field of abortion where cultural, religious, and legal considerations play a significant role¹⁸. This is consistent with the claim made by Van de Ven and Delbecq¹⁹ that NGT is helpful in facilitating consensus in group situations, especially where there is a need for varied perspectives.

The utilisation of the NGT in a virtual setting, as a strategic measure to address the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and geographical limitations, highlights the significant contribution of digital platforms in facilitating research collaboration²⁰. The transition to a virtual environment not only prioritised the safety and convenience of participants but also enhanced the project's scope, facilitating the engagement of a wider range of experts. Online engagement tactics play a crucial role in promoting international collaboration, as shown by Ayre *et al.*²¹.

The engagement of a varied group of specialists, including healthcare practitioners, policy analysts, legal academics, and representatives from non-governmental organisations, guaranteed a comprehensive method in finding deficiencies in abortion research. This interdisciplinary collaboration adheres to Siedlok and Hibbert's²² principles of interdisciplinarity in health research, enabling a thorough investigation of topics such as socio-cultural aspects, legal structures, and public health ramifications associated with unsafe abortions. The significance of employing a comprehensive and diverse methodology in abortion research is reinforced by the findings of studies conducted by Ganatra *et al.*¹⁷ and Juma *et al.*²³.

The primary focus of this project is to overcome the obstacle of insufficient connection between abortion research and the implementation of policies. This is a crucial step towards enhancing the quality of abortion care and services²⁴ and promoting women's health and survival (Bankole)²⁵. Engaging policymakers in research debates is in accordance with Turner *et al.*'s¹⁸ suggestions for integrating policy and research practises, promoting a more unified approach to abortion matters.

The project establishes a model for future research endeavours, showcasing the efficacy of collaborative and multidisciplinary methods in tackling intricate health and social problems. The creation of a training and mentoring programme for young scholars is in line with international demands to enhance research capabilities in low- and middle-income nations²⁶, while also tackling local health issues.

Overall, the utilisation of the NGT to identify gaps in abortion research in Nigeria represents a notable progress in collaborative research methods. This approach enables a thorough comprehension of issues related to abortion and establishes the groundwork for future research and policy interventions that are influenced by a range of viewpoints and local circumstances.

The initiative to engage early to mid-career researchers in the co-creation of knowledge on abortion research gaps in Nigeria represents a significant advancement in the field. By bringing together a diverse group of researchers and facilitating an open and interactive discussion, the project not only identified critical gaps in abortion research but also laid the groundwork for a robust

training and mentoring program. This programme promises to equip young scholars with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct meaningful research and contribute to informed policymaking in Nigeria. This project, therefore, stands as a model for other countries and research areas, demonstrating the value of collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to addressing complex health and social issues. The future of abortion research in Nigeria looks promising, with a clear path laid out for continued exploration, understanding, and improvement in this critical area of public health and social justice.

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