

Author Sovereignty Gap in African Clinical Trial Publications

Authorship patterns in African clinical trial publications raise concerns about sovereignty in scientific leadership and knowledge production across low resource settings. This bibliometric analysis linked 23,873 African trial registrations from ClinicalTrials.gov with published outputs to assess the nationality of first and senior authors through March 2026. The primary measure was the proportion of non African first authors as an indicator of intellectual control and agenda setting in global health research. Approximately sixty percent of publications listed non African first authors, with senior authorship heavily concentrated in institutions from the United States and United Kingdom. In Uganda, similar patterns reflect donor dependence, limited grant ownership, and constrained authorship negotiation capacity among local researchers. However, South Africa and Kenya demonstrate stronger local authorship, suggesting institutional investment can shift this imbalance. While linkage limitations exist, the findings highlight a measurable authorship sovereignty gap requiring policy and structural reform.

Outside Note Block:

Dashboard: https://github.com/joshua_256/author-sovereignty-dashboard

Code: https://github.com/joshua_256/author-sovereignty-analysis

This study evaluates authorship distribution in African clinical trials to quantify inequities in intellectual leadership and research governance

References

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 2. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Recommendations for authorship and publication ethics.
 3. Pisani E, AbouZahr C. Sharing health data: good intentions are not enough. Bulletin of the WHO.
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