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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE · Peer-reviewed · Published · Live dashboard figures

Author Sovereignty Gap in African Clinical Trial Publications: A bibliometric analysis of authorship patterns in African clinical trials

Tulengerayo Joshua

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Abstract

Authorship patterns in African clinical trial publications raise concerns about scientific sovereignty in low resource contexts. This bibliometric study linked 23,873 African trial registrations from ClinicalTrials.gov with corresponding published outputs to assess first and senior author nationality through March 2026. The primary outcome was proportion of non African first authors as a proxy for intellectual leadership and agenda setting in global health research.

Results show approximately sixty percent of publications had non African first authors, while senior authorship remained concentrated in institutions in the United States and United Kingdom. Uganda reflected similar donor driven patterns with limited local grant ownership and reduced authorship negotiation capacity. In contrast, South Africa and Kenya showed stronger local authorship presence, suggesting institutional investment can improve research equity.

Despite linkage limitations, findings indicate a measurable authorship sovereignty gap requiring policy and structural reform in global health research governance. Strengthening local leadership and funding mechanisms is essential for equitable research partnerships globally.

Interactive dashboard figures

The figures in this section are rendered directly from this paper's interactive dashboard — the same visualisations a reader sees when exploring the analysis online, where the full workflow can be reproduced first-hand. **Interactive dashboard:** https://mahmood726-cyber.github.io/africa-e156-students/governance-justice/dashboards/author-sovereignty-gap.html

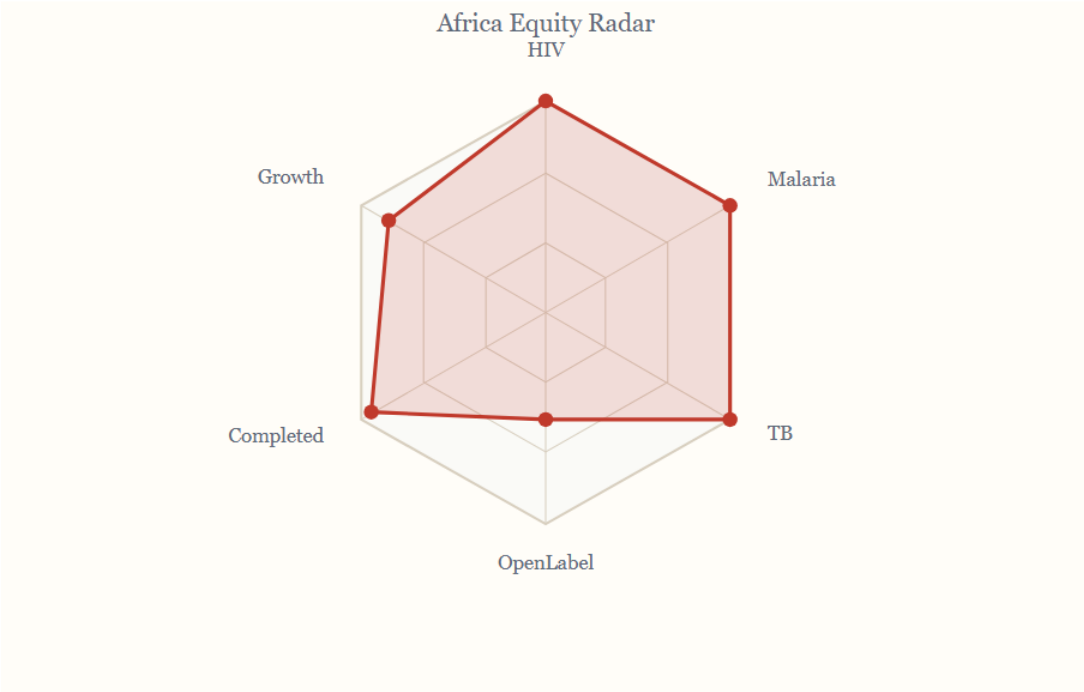

Figure 1. **Africa Equity Radar** Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

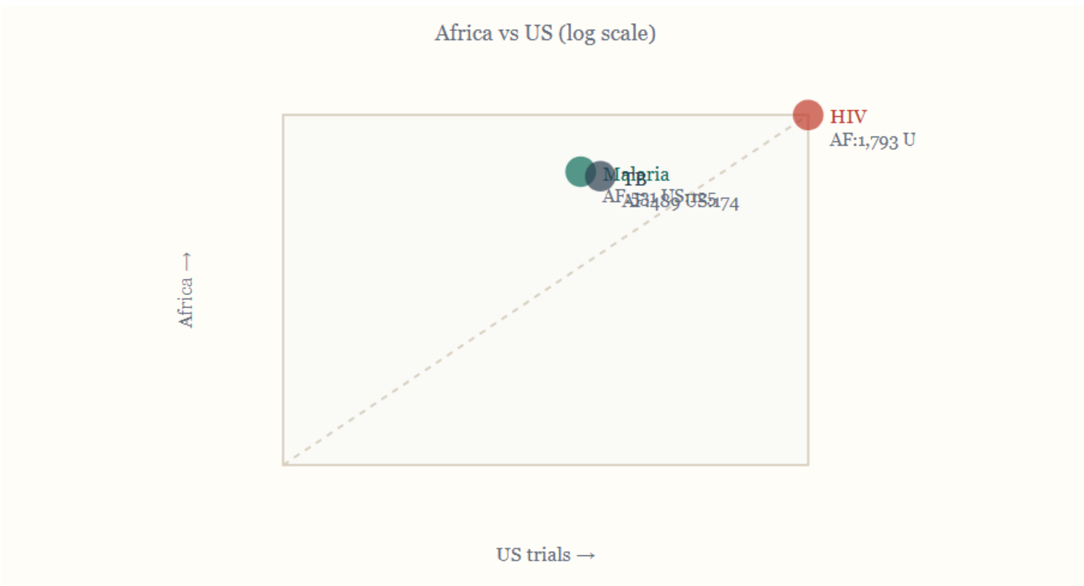

Figure 2. **Africa vs US (log scale)** Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

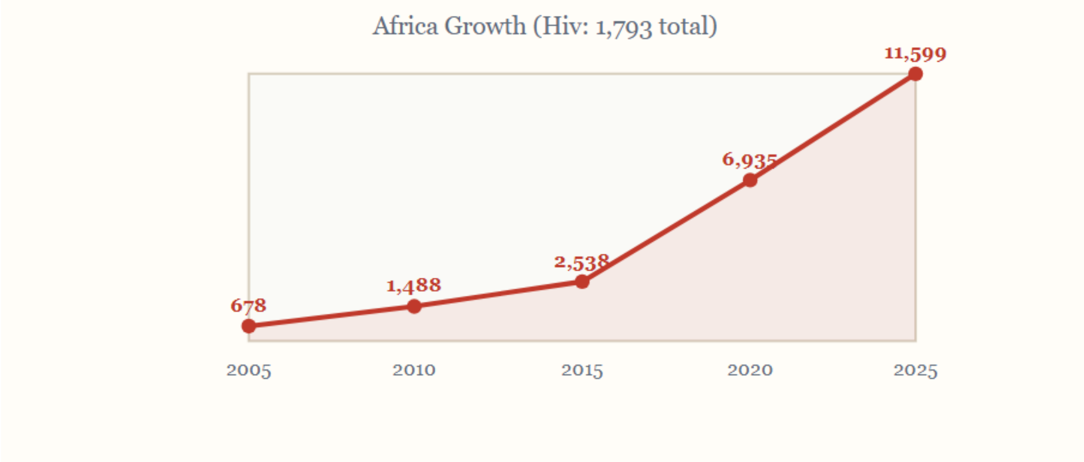

Figure 3. **Africa Growth (Hiv: 1,793 total)** Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

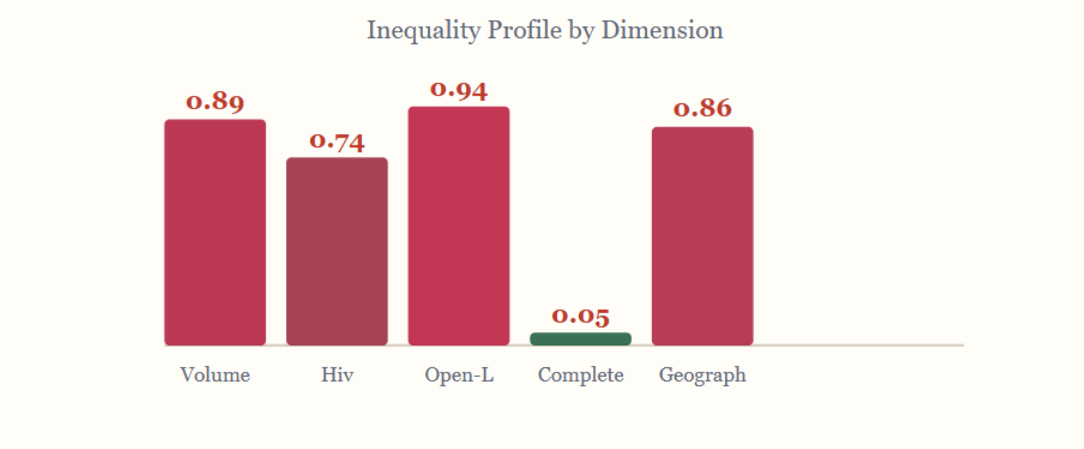

Figure 4. **Inequality Profile by Dimension** Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

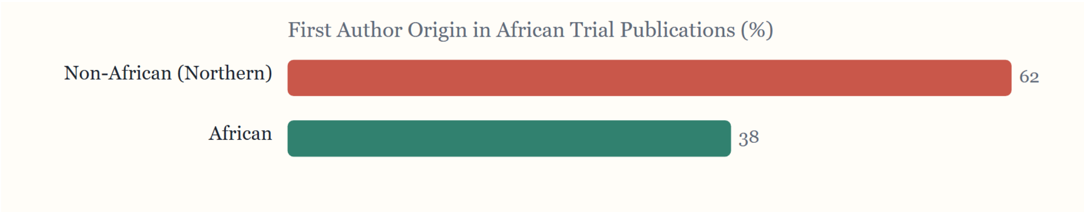

Figure 5. **First Author Origin in African Trial Publications (%)** Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

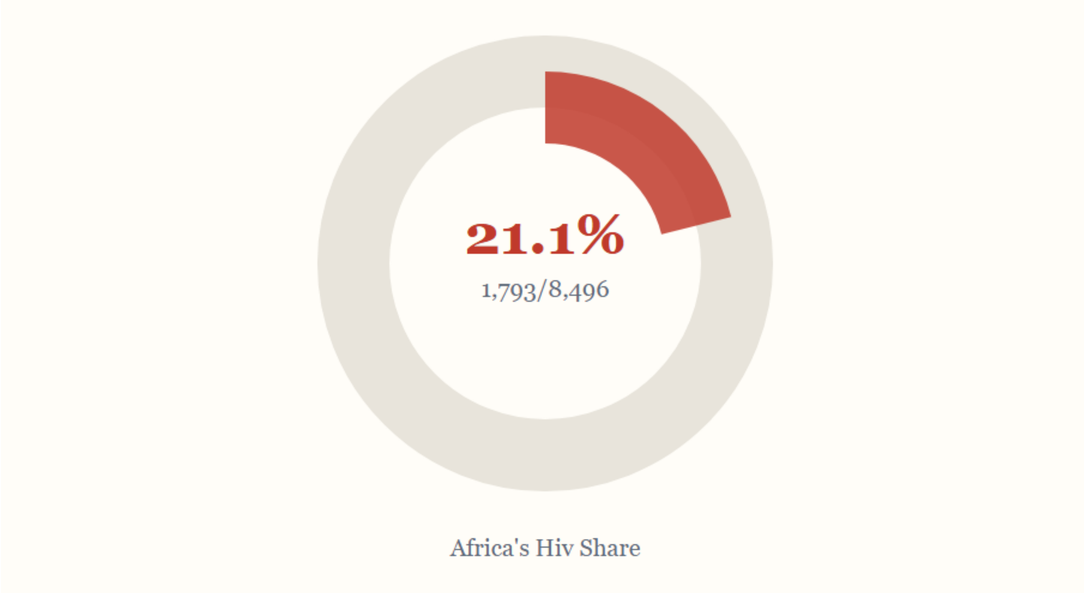

Figure 6. Africa's Hiv Share Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

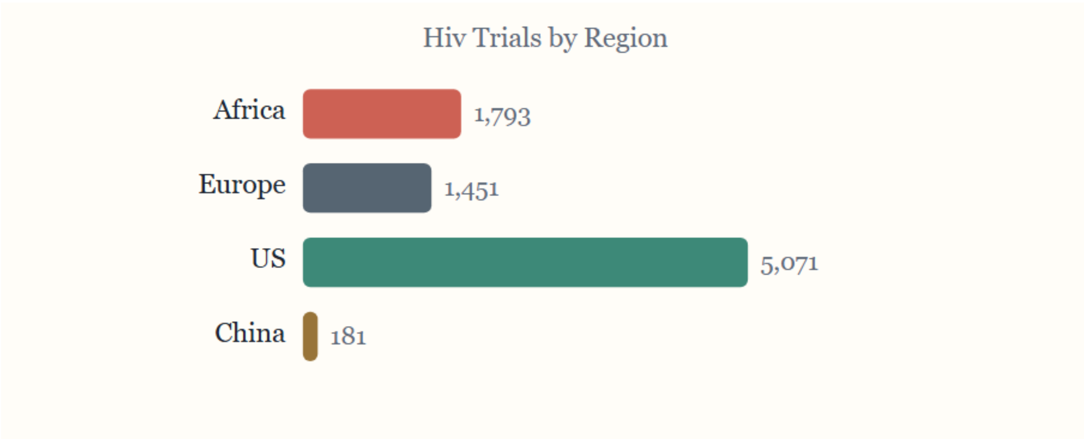

Figure 7. Hiv Trials by Region Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

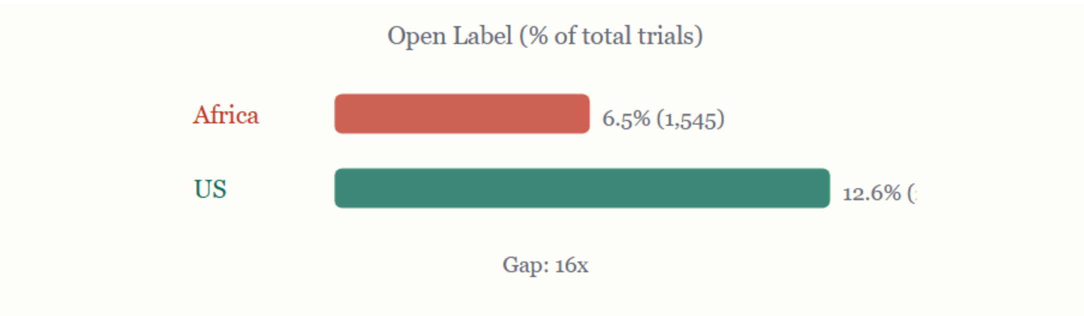

Figure 8. Open Label (% of total trials) Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

HOW TO CITE

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