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Structural Inequity in Research Investment and Africa's Readiness for Platform Trials: A Meta-Analysis

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KEY WORDS Africa; Clinical Trial Equity; Clinical trials; trials; meta-analysis; platform trial

Abstract

Platform trials are adaptive, multi-arm, multi-stakeholder studies that necessitate high-level infrastructure, digital data systems, sustained funding, and advanced regulatory frameworks (Clarke NW & James ND, 2023; Duan XP et al., 2024). The successful deployment of the RECOVERY platform trial in COVID proved their value (Vanderbeek AM et al., 2022). However, these are unequally distributed across the African continent due to their dependence on robust research systems which highlights deep-seated investment gaps.

Africa's clinical research methodological architecture and the pattern of platform trial readiness could signal structural inequity in African research investment. A cross-sectional registry-metadata analysis of 23,873 African and 190,644 United States interventional trials on ClinicalTrials.gov through April 2026, were computed to estimate disparities. Even with a 17.1-fold growth in trial registrations, Africa registered 40 relevant trials versus 1,627 in the United States, revealing a 41-fold absolute gap in research volume.

Structural inequities in research investment and methodological capacity gaps limit African clinical research output.

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/methods-systems/dashboards/platform-trial-readiness.html>

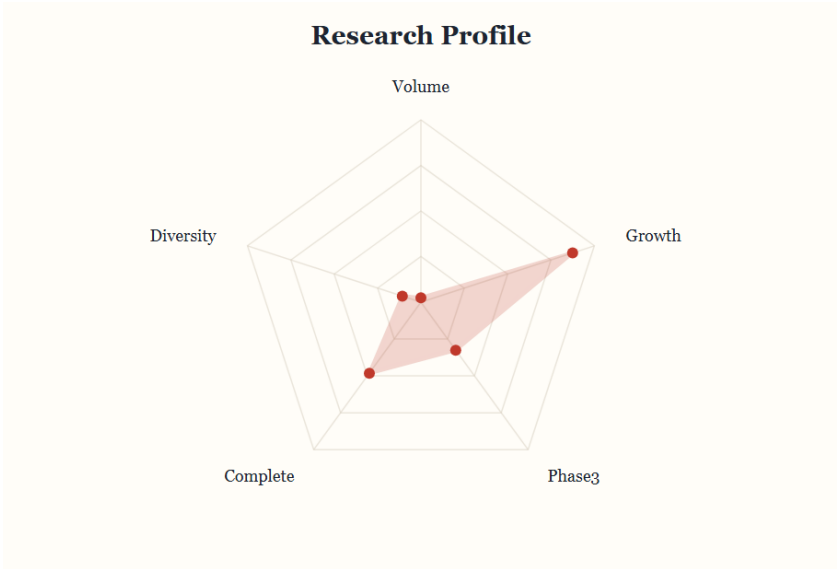


Figure 1. Research Profile Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

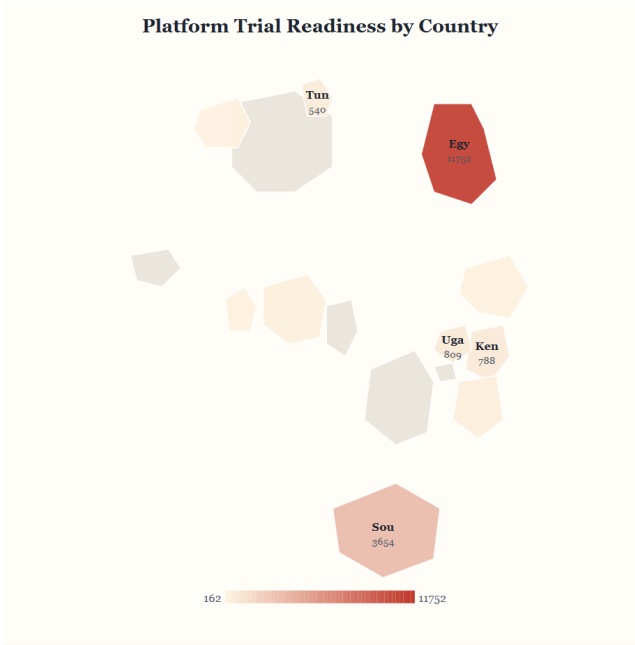


Figure 2. Platform Trial Readiness by Country Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

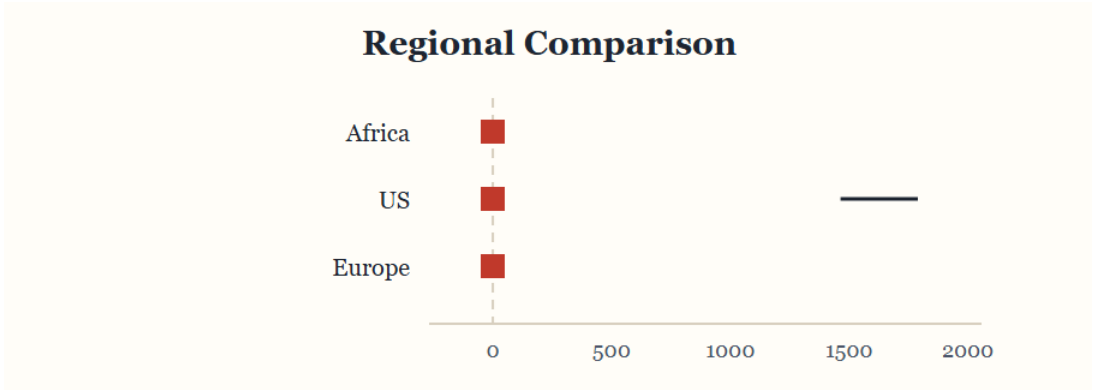


Figure 3. Regional Comparison Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

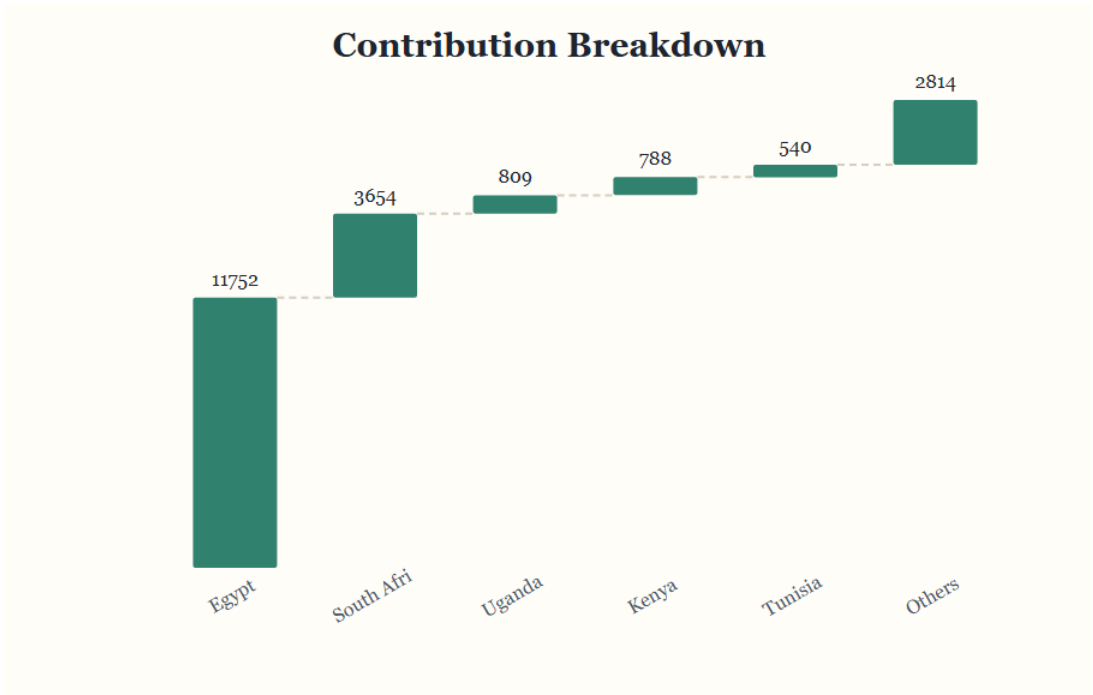


Figure 4. Contribution Breakdown Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

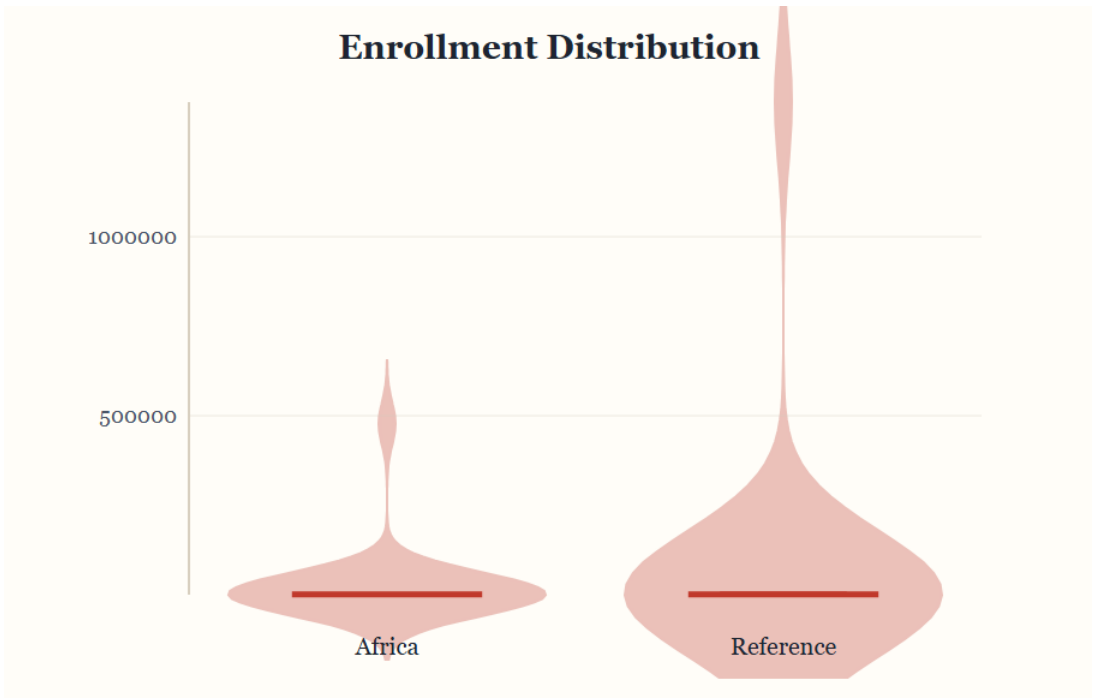


Figure 5. Enrollment Distribution Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.



Figure 6. Growth 2010-2026 Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

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