

REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN RESEARCH FUNDING SUCCESS IN AFRICA

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Objectives: Funding success may vary between disciplines, institutions, and countries. This study assessed the variations in funding success among the regions of Africa.

Methods: As one of its research programs, ASFI distributed a questionnaire to African scholars between May and August 2023. The current analysis was based on preliminary data from 170 respondents. Simple descriptive statistics, Pearson chi-square and binary logistic regression were used to analyse the data.

Results: Of the survey respondents, 32.4%, 9.4% and 58.2% were from North-East, Southern and West-Central Africa, respectively. Of these, 41%, 69% and 56% have ever applied for grants in each region, respectively, with grant success rates (i.e. won at least one grant) being 69%, 54% and 34% ($P=0.015$) in North-East, Southern and West-Central Africa, respectively. Of those who had ever won a grant, 10%, 41%, and 49% did so as mentees, co-principal investigators (PIs), and PIs, respectively, with roughly 50% in each region being a PI. Among those who won grants as PIs, only 30%, 17%, and 8% had won a cumulative total of >\$50,000 in North-East, Southern and West-Central Africa, respectively, while the corresponding estimates for co-PIs were 33%, 33%, and 12%. In adjusted logistic regression models, scholars the likelihood of scholars winning a grant was lower in Southern (AOR=0.79, 95%CI 0.13-4.92) and West- Central Africa (AOR=0.25, 95%CI=0.07-0.84) than those from North-East Africa.

Conclusion: Although more grant applications are submitted in Southern and West-Central Africa than in North-East, the success rate was greater in North-East than in Southern and West-Central Africa. The disparity between application and success rates could be a result of structural, institutional, and individual level factors. There is need for interventions to address this problem for better scientific productivity.

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