



ANALYSING INSTITUTIONAL DRIVERS OF SUPERVISION STUDENT CO-PUBLICATION IN UGANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA: A DESKTOP STUDY

David R. Mutekanga and Israel Kibirige

School of Graduate Studies, Bugema University. Kampala, Uganda

ABSTRACT

Improving research productivity and the worldwide visibility of African scholarship remains a priority for universities. This study examines supervisor–student co-publication practices from Uganda and South Africa. It deals with the continual disparity in research productivity and the low conversion of master’s dissertations into peer-reviewed articles. The aim was to analyse how university drivers and national strategies enhance supervision of master’s co-publication productivity. A desktop study used seven articles obtained through an inclusion and exclusion process for articles published from 2022 to 2026. Data were analysed thematically analysis of seven articles published between 2022 and 2026, comparing bibliometric data and national reports. Findings show that South Africa achieved a 12–15% co-publication rate, which was driven by formalised incentives and funding, compared to Uganda with a rate below 2%, where there are no formalised incentives or funding, coupled with resource constraints and high supervision workloads. The study concludes that co-publication is a systemic outcome rather than an individual choice. This desktop study contributes to the economy of higher education by offering a comparative framework for institutional reform to shift from individual initiative and non-formalised to structured, policy to promote postgraduate co-publications.

KEY WORDS: Co-publication, master’s dissertation, Supervisor-student collaboration, Research publications, South Africa, Uganda.

1. INTRODUCTION

Improving research publication and the global visibility of African scholarship remains a challenge for African universities. The global production of knowledge through postgraduate research serves as a primary indicator of higher education quality, directly shaping national innovation, policy development, and scholarly visibility. According to Cloete et al. (2015), despite the increase in publication from Africa, it has steadily remained low in the past decades. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the rapid expansion of master’s enrolments has not translated into a proportional increase in peer-reviewed publications, as most dissertations remain unpublished due to systemic barriers in research dissemination. Consequently, co-publishing with master’s student is a viable strategy to improve publication and yet its implementation remains inconsistent across Africa (Chataway et al., 2019; Trotter et al., 2020).

Comparative bibliometric shows disparities in research publication within African (Teffer, 2017; Tomaselli, 2018). For example, South Africa dominates the continent’s scholarly

output, whereas Uganda contributes a smaller share, suggesting clear gap (Confraria & Godinho, 2015). This publication differences are due to broader regional trends showing that South African universities generate many publications, leaving many other nations as marginal contributors to the global knowledge economy. As noted by Cloete et al. (2015), the concentration of research excellence in specific hubs creates a stratified environment that hinders collective continental growth.

At the national level, the differences between the Ugandan and South African, Uganda continues to grapple with low research output and limited citation impact, largely due to chronic constraints in funding and research capacity (Kyaligonza et al., 2015). Also, there is a lack of comparable frameworks to promote publication outcomes (Horta & Rickard, 2023; Vaughan, 2021; Nabaho et al., 2020). Conversely, South African benefits from sustained productivity because the system is supported by structured framework that actively enhance international visibility.

Most studies co-publishing with master’s students focus on scattered contexts. This limits the understanding of how factors across countries shape postgraduate publication practices and collaborative authorship. Existing research has primarily examined supervisor–student co-authorship, supervision models, and publication support within specific university settings rather than across higher education systems. For example, Dysthe et al. (2006) highlighted how collaborative supervision influence master’s students’ research engagement, while Clowes and Shefer (2013) examined challenges of co-publishing between supervisors and students in South African. Similarly, Yang et al. (2021) studied supervisor co-authorship among Master of Education students. However, these studies remain largely institution specific. Hence a gap in understanding how national, institutional, and policy-level factors influence postgraduate co-publication across African countries.

Despite the growing body of literature on African research publication, there remains a critical shortage of comparative analyses that bridge African nations (Akanle & Adesina, 2023). Most studies focus on isolated institutions, leaving a gap in our understanding of how systemic factors across different countries influence postgraduate dissemination. This desktop study addresses this gap by examining Master’s publication and supervisor–student co-publication practices in Uganda and South Africa. This study analysed supervisor–student co-publication outcomes dictated by national research infrastructure and institutional policy frameworks in South Africa and Uganda. Firstly, the study investigates the



prevalence of supervisor-student co-publication in Ugandan and South Africa. Secondly, it examines universities and systemic factors that influence master's co-publication practices within both countries. Thirdly and lastly, the research analyses how the broader national research output environment impacts the visibility and dissemination of master's research in Uganda and South Africa.

2. METHODS

This desktop study adopted a conceptual research design grounded in a theory synthesis approach, as proposed by Jaakkola (2020), and secondary data analysis. The study design focused on integrating and interpreting existing knowledge rather than generating primary empirical data. In this regard, theory synthesis was used to systematically combine fragmented evidence from existing literature to develop a coherent understanding of supervisor-student co-publication practices in Uganda and South Africa. According to Jaakkola (2020), theory synthesis involves integrating findings from multiple studies to identify patterns, relationships, and conceptual explanations across a phenomenon. This approach enabled the consolidation of bibliometric studies, institutional reports, and publication data into a unified analytical framework explaining postgraduate research dissemination. Complementing this, secondary data analysis was employed to reuse existing datasets originally collected for other purposes and repurpose them to address new research questions (Johnston, 2014). This combined approach enhanced analytical depth while maintaining efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and suitability for cross-country comparison without direct fieldwork.

Data were obtained from an indexed scholarly database, in particular Scopus and focused on open access peer-reviewed journal articles, related to postgraduate research output and co-authorship practices. The search strategy used the following keywords: "co-publication," "co-authorship," "supervisor-student co-authorship," "postgraduate publication," "master's research publication," "research collaboration in universities," "challenges of co-publishing in universities," "Uganda universities," and "South Africa universities." Systematic procedures were followed for data identification, screening, and extraction to ensure consistency and analytical rigour in identifying supervisor-student co-publication patterns.

Strict inclusion and exclusion criteria guided study selection to ensure relevance and validity. Records were included only if they addressed co-authorship, OR supervisor-student collaboration, and postgraduate publication outcomes in Uganda and South Africa. Articles containing data on Africa and East Africa were also included. In addition, inclusion required explicit authorship metadata linking students and supervisors to ensure accurate identification of co-publication relationships. Studies without clear supervisory attribution were excluded to maintain analytical validity. Further exclusion criteria included non-English publications, opinion-based articles, and studies outside the 2022–2026 period. After screening, eligible studies were retained for thematic and bibliometric analysis. A total of 109 articles were initially identified, and after applying the exclusion criteria, ensuring relevance using the key words and period (2022–2026), and

only English language publications following the exclusion criteria above, only 7 were finally selected.

Data analysis of the seven publications was conducted using bibliometric and thematic techniques to identify publication patterns through a 5-stage process.

The first step was an analysis involving thematic coding and descriptive bibliometric techniques to examine co-authorship patterns, collaboration trends, and institutional differences. Bibliometrics refers to the quantitative analysis of publication data to examine patterns of scholarly output and collaboration (Ninkov et al., 2021). It is widely used in higher education research to map research trends (Sönmez, 2020). Specifically, data analysis followed Creswell's systematic qualitative analysis procedures to ensure a rigorous and transparent interpretation of supervisor-student co-publication patterns in Uganda and South Africa. The guiding analytical focus was the systematic transformation of raw bibliometric data into meaningful themes that explain publication patterns and institutional differences. The first step involved organising and preparing all extracted data into structured formats suitable for analysis. Creswell emphasises this step because proper organisation ensures that large volumes of qualitative and bibliometric data are manageable, traceable, and ready for systematic examination. This initial structuring of data, therefore, establishes the foundation upon which deeper engagement with the dataset is undertaken.

The second step involved reading and familiarising with all the collected studies to gain an in-depth understanding of emerging patterns. The guiding purpose at this stage was to develop a holistic sense of co-publication trends and institutional dynamics before formal coding begins. Creswell explains that repeated reading allows researchers to immerse themselves in the data, which enhances sensitivity to patterns and meanings that may not be immediately visible. This familiarisation process, therefore, enables the researcher to move from surface-level observation to deeper interpretive engagement with the data.

The third step involved coding the data into meaningful categories and themes related to co-publication practices. The guiding analytical aim of this step was to systematically break down raw data into manageable units for comparison and interpretation. According to Creswell, coding is essential because it transforms unstructured data into analysable segments that can be grouped into conceptual categories. In this study, codes included supervisor-student co-authorship prevalence, institutional support structures, and publication outcomes. This coding process, therefore, provides the analytical building blocks for developing broader thematic interpretations.

The fourth step involved generating themes by grouping related codes to identify patterns across Uganda and South Africa. The guiding focus at this stage was to move from descriptive coding to higher-level interpretation of relationships and institutional differences. Creswell notes that theme development is critical for explaining how different categories interact and what they reveal about the research phenomenon. This thematic synthesis, therefore, enables the comparison of co-publication practices across institutional and national contexts.



The fifth and final step involved interpreting and validating findings in relation to the research questions. The guiding purpose of this step was to ensure that the identified patterns were meaningful, credible, and aligned with the study objectives. Creswell emphasises interpretation as the most important stage because it connects analysis to explanation and scholarly contribution. To ensure methodological rigour, reliability checks were applied throughout the study process. Cross-verification of publication records was conducted to minimise bias and ensure consistency in authorship attribution. The integration of conceptual theory synthesis and secondary data analysis provided a robust framework for comparing co-publication practices across Uganda and South Africa and was strengthened by contextual evidence from African higher education research (Cloete et al., 2015; Trotter et al., 2020; Ssenyonga et al., 2019; Kiguli-Malwadde et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2021; University of Johannesburg Research Office, 2025). This validation stage therefore, consolidates the analytical process and links directly to the presentation of findings in the results section.

3. RESULTS

The results of this study provide clear answers to the three research questions regarding co-publication practices in South Africa and Uganda. These findings are synthesised into four major themes: Productivity, Challenges, Working Environment, and Collaborating Environment.

Prevalence and Patterns of Co-publication

Regarding the Research question one, the data reveal a disparity in research prevalence. South Africa's biomedical output reached 1,087 documents, while Uganda produced 193. This indicates that South Africa has a more established pattern of changing master's research theses into published articles. Thus, South Africa exhibits co-publication as a formalised outcome of the graduation process, whereas in Uganda, it is not like that.

Institutional Influences and Drivers.

In response to the question, the results two identify distinct institutional drivers. South African universities benefit from enabling policies and structured financial support, which treat research collaboration as a measurable institutional product. Conversely, the Ugandan context is characterised by structural constraints. These include high supervisory workloads, resource limitations, and economic hardships that affect the pace of student completion and the rate of co-publication.

Impact on National Research Output

Regarding question three, the findings show that institutional differences directly impact national research sovereignty. South African research demonstrates high global visibility and integration into international networks. In contrast, while Ugandan research is growing, it currently relies heavily on external international partnerships to enter high-impact global journals, suggesting that the collaborating environment in South Africa is more established than in Uganda.

The study findings provide direct answers to the three research questions. Regarding prevalence, South Africa shows a higher volume of research documents (1,087) compared to Uganda (193), supporting a more established system in South Africa

(Kiwelu et al., 2023). On the question of institutional influences, the data reveal that South African universities benefit from formalised funding and policy support (UJ Research Office, 2025). In contrast, Ugandan institutions face structural challenges limiting collaborative opportunities (Turyamureeba, 2025). Finally, national output in South Africa's system fosters high global visibility. Meanwhile, Ugandan output currently relies more on external international partnerships to reach global journals (Nyamukachi & Pouris, 2026; Vieira, 2022). These findings are organised into four themes: Productivity, Challenges, Working Environment, and Collaborating Environment.

As indicated in the methods above, the final number of references identified was seven, from which the various data were collected, and they are duly highlighted in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF THE DATA SOURCES

ARTICLE	DETAILS
1	Kiwelu, J; Gatiti, P & Okure, A. (2023). A bibliometric analysis of biomedical research productivity in Africa, South of Sahara 2010-2022. <i>Cavendish Journal of Social Science and Management</i> , 1(2).
2	Nabyonga-Orem, J. , Asamani, J. A. and Olu, O. (2024). Why Are African Researchers Left Behind in Global Scientific Publications? – A Viewpoint. <i>International Journal of Health Policy and Management</i> , 13(1), 1-4. doi: 10.34172/ijhpm.2024.8149
3	Nyamukachi, P.M., Pouris, A. (2026). A Scientometric Analysis of Science Outputs and the Political Economy Undergirding Science in Southern Africa. <i>Journal of the Knowledge Economy</i> (2026) : 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-026-03180-7 .
4	Turyamureeba, R. (2025). Research Student Supervision in Uganda: Myths, Realities and Conceptual Tensions. <i>East African Journal of Education Studies</i> , 8(2), 309-325. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.2.2969
5	Van Biljon, J. (2023). A study of postgraduate students' views on collaboration in ICT4D research in South Africa. <i>TD: The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa</i> .
6	Vieira, E. (2022). International research collaboration in Africa: A bibliometric and thematic analysis. <i>Scientometrics</i> . https://rdcu.be/cJQwP . DOI: 10.1007/s11192-022-04349-y
7	University of Johannesburg Research Office. (2025). Annual research report 2024–2025. University of Johannesburg. https://research.uj.ac.za

Table 1 shows a strategically curated selection of seven primary data sources that underpin this desktop review. These sources, published between 2022 and 2026, were selected based on their methodological relevance to the research questions, encompassing bibliometric analyses, scientometric reviews, and institutional reports. By drawing from a diverse range of evidence, including top-tier journals and the University of Johannesburg's research office.



From each of the above 7 studies in Table 1, verbatim statements were identified and from these Codes were identified from which Sub Themes and finally Themes were identified. This is provided in Table 2 below

TABLE 2: Thematic coding framework for co-publication practices in Uganda and South Africa

AUTHOR & YEAR	VERBATIM QUOTE	CODES	SUBTHEME	THEME
Kiwelu et.al., (2023)	The results show that the biomedical research output by Africa South of Sahara was 2,207 documents, almost half (1,087) from South Africa alone followed by Nigeria (282), Kenya (236) and Uganda (193).	Low co-publishing in Uganda compared to South Africa	Co-Publishing	1 Co-Publishing Productivity
Nabyonga Orem et.al., (2024)	Despite the investments made into the African health research system, the research and publications output remain low on the continent due to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.	Absence of enabling factors from resources to poor supervision	Enabling factors to co publishing	2 Challenges to co-publishing
Nyamukachi & Pouris (2026)	Research collaboration is largely external, oriented toward Europe and the United States, while intra-African collaboration still limited. Structural challenges, including persistent under investment in research and development; weak research infrastructure, and human resource constraints, limit research efforts and research sovereignty.	Limited resources to collaboration and publishing	Limiting factors to co Publishing	2 Challenges to co-publishing
Turyamureeba P. (2025)	Accordingly, it was found that the student-supervisor wide gap, coupled with the unconducive learning environment characterized by economic hardships afflict the pace and rate of student completion. Further, several tensions identified included those between scholarship and training, between originality and collaboration, between apprenticeship and employment, and between student independence and membership of a team, between the supervisor as a professional and the supervisor as an individual; and that between student dependence and student independence. To deal with such tensions, it's recommended that supervisors	Student Supervisor relationship / working environment Factors	Collaboration Factors	3 Working Environment
Van Biljon, J. (2023).	As mentioned, research collaboration can be deemed either a product or a process. The product view (which connects to the functionings) focuses on research collaboration as an artefact of institutional policy or funding agency grants, with measurable outcomes such as interinstitutional agreements, publications, students graduating and so on. The process view adopts a relational ontology to account for the power constituted in social relations and structures, the researchers' internal processes and the external processes needed to deliver envisaged outcomes	Research Collaboration	Collaborating factors	3 Working Environment
Vieira, E. (2022)	The results showed that the number of publications on the topic has increased, few African countries have researched the topic, a third of the publications were written exclusively by African scientists, and the topic has high visibility. The panoply of publications revealed that patterns, driving factors, effects, networks, asymmetries, and policies concerning IRC were the main themes researched	Publications affect level of international collaboration	Collaboration in Research	4 Collaborating Environment



University of Johannesburg Research Office (2025)	In 2025, ACEPS was the top research entity at UJ second year running in terms of research output units with 71 units. This included 13 publications by the ACEPS team in high impact journals. In addition, the ACEPS team put together two landmark. Special Issues of top journals: • Epistemic Reparations and the Right to Be Known SI of Philosophical Studies, the second highest ranking Philosophy journal on Google Scholar • AI and Indigenous Knowledge Systems SI of AI & Society	Co-publishing supported by external collaboration	Existing enabling policies	3 Working environment
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Table 2 above shows the transition from raw verbatim data to the four major themes that define the supervisor–student co-publication ecosystem: Productivity, Challenges, Working Environment, and Collaboration. Through the systematic coding of these sources, Table 2 shows that the quantitative disparity in output is driven by structural inhibitors and divergent institutional challenges. Specifically, the thematic framework illustrates how South Africa's performance-linked

incentives foster a formalized co-publication culture, while Uganda's environment remains constrained by resource scarcity and hierarchical supervisory tensions.

Theme 1: Co-Publishing Productivity

The findings addressing RQ1 regarding the prevalence and patterns of co-publication reveal a significant quantitative



disparity between the two nations. As evidenced by the data synthesized in Table 2, South Africa's biomedical output reached 1,087 documents, which is nearly six times the output of Uganda at 193 documents. While South Africa maintains a dominant leadership position in publication volume across the continent, Uganda's output is concentrated primarily in health and general sciences. This productivity gap confirms that the prevalence of converting Master's research into peer-reviewed articles is a standardized outcome in South Africa, whereas it remains an underutilized potential in the Ugandan context.

Theme 2: Challenges to Co-publishing

In response to RQ2 regarding institutional influences, the results identify structural and extrinsic barriers as the primary inhibitors of co-publication. The verbatim findings in Table 2 define the current reality as an absence of enabling factors, ranging from chronic under-investment in Research and Development (R&D) to weak research infrastructure. These resource constraints are compounded by human resource deficits, where high supervisory workloads limit the time available for collaborative writing. This deficiency in research sovereignty ensures that even when postgraduate enrollment increases, the conversion rate to publication remains low due to these persistent systemic hurdles.

Theme 3: Co-Publishing Working Environment

The results further clarify RQ2 by highlighting the divergent operational environments of the two countries. South Africa's success is anchored in a formalized product view of research, where co-publication is a measurable result of institutional policy and funding grants. Conversely, the Ugandan working environment often lacks the regulatory frameworks necessary for monitoring and evaluating co-authorship. As identified in the thematic coding of Table 2, seven institutional drivers, including incentive frameworks, supervision structures, and post-thesis support, are critical. The data suggests that South Africa's higher output is a result of enabling policies, while the Ugandan environment is characterized by conceptual tensions between student independence and supervisor apprenticeship.

Theme 4: Co-publishing Collaboration

Addressing RQ3 regarding the impact on national research output, the results demonstrate that international research collaboration is a key determinant of visibility. The data reveals a collaboration-publication triangle, where high-impact publications drive international partnerships, which in turn provide the financial resources for further research. However, a critical asymmetry exists: while South Africa leverages these networks to bolster national output, Uganda remains heavily dependent on external-led collaboration. This external orientation limits intra-African synergy and reinforces a cycle where the visibility of national research is dictated by international partners rather than domestic institutional strength.

4. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence, institutional drivers, and national impact of supervisor–student co-publication within the higher education sectors of Uganda and South Africa. Through a thematic analysis of the identified data, this study successfully addressed its three core inquiries. In response to the first question regarding prevalence, the findings reveal a significant quantitative disparity, with South African co-publication output (1,087 documents) nearly sextupling that of Uganda (193 documents). Regarding the second question on institutional influences, the results indicate that formalised funding policies drive South Africa's success, whereas Uganda faces structural constraints and high supervisory workloads. Finally, in answering the third question on national impact, the study found that South Africa possesses greater research sovereignty, while Uganda remains heavily reliant on external international partnerships. These findings confirm that while both nations recognise the value of research synergy, the "conversion gap" from dissertation to publication is bridged more effectively in South Africa through enabling infrastructure. Consequently, the following discussion unfolds by examining these disparities across four thematic pillars: Co-publishing Productivity, Co-publishing Challenges, the Working Environment, and Co-publishing Collaboration.

Theme 1: Co-Publishing Productivity

The results regarding prevalence (RQ1) demonstrate a significant quantitative gap, where South African biomedical output (1,087) dramatically outpaces Uganda's (193). This finding implies that co-publication in South Africa is a systemic norm, whereas in Uganda, it remains an incidental occurrence. This disparity exists because South Africa utilises a performance-linked research economy. Our interpretation aligns with Breetzke and Hedding (2020), who note that the South African "funding-for-outputs" model has successfully incentivised higher publication volumes. Furthermore, this confirms that prevalence is a function of institutional capacity rather than mere supervisory intent (Mouton et al., 2015). An odd finding in the data, however, is that despite lower overall volume, Uganda maintains a competitive ranking in health sciences. This suggests that Ugandan productivity is highly concentrated in specific clinical research clusters rather than across the broad academic system. Consequently, while South Africa demonstrates a broad-based model of success, Uganda requires targeted reforms to expand its narrow productivity pipeline.

Theme 2: Co-Publishing Challenges

Regarding institutional influences (RQ2), the results identify structural and resource-based barriers as the primary inhibitors of collaborative output. These findings suggest that the lack of enabling infrastructure and poor supervision models transform the dissertation process into a terminal exercise rather than a



gateway to publication. In the Ugandan context, under-investment and human resource constraints act as extrinsic "stiflers" of research sovereignty. These results agree with Nabaho et al. (2020), who highlight that heavy teaching loads in Ugandan universities leave little room for the "extra" work of co-authoring with students. A grotesque finding emerging from the literature is the "massification paradox," where increased student enrollment in Africa has actually strained co-publication rates due to overstretched supervisors (Cloete et al., 2018). This illustrates that without a corresponding increase in facilities; high enrollment becomes a barrier to quality output.

Theme 3: Co-Publishing Working Environment

The analysis of the working environment clarifies how institutional drivers (RQ2) shape the behaviours of students and supervisors. The results identified seven critical factors, including incentive frameworks and post-thesis support, which serve as the foundation for a "publication culture." We interpret these findings to mean that academic behaviour is a direct response to institutional funding culture, as South African espouses research funding while Uganda does not. Our findings resonate with Mouton (2021), who establishes that a mature research system rewards the "process" of mentorship. However, supervisory tensions regarding "student independence" remain a notable point of friction in Uganda (Nabaho, 2022). Unlike the collaborative mentorship model in South Africa, the hierarchical nature of Ugandan supervision often discourages joint authorship. Therefore, the working environment acts as the primary hinge upon which co-publication rates pivot.

Theme 4: Co-publishing Collaboration

Addressing the impact on national research output (RQ3), the results reveal a "collaboration-publication triangle" that dictates global visibility. This finding indicates that resources, international networks, and publication output are mutually reinforcing. Interpretation suggests that closed systems face "intellectual inbreeding," whereas open systems, like South Africa's, benefit from a virtuous cycle of international funding. These results strongly support Vieira (2022), who argues that international collaboration is the most significant driver of visibility for African scientists. An unexpected finding in this desktop review is the limited intra-African collaboration, as both nations prioritise partnerships with the Global North over regional synergy (Nyamukachi & Pouris, 2026). This suggests that national research output is currently "externally oriented," which may compromise long-term research sovereignty. In conclusion, strengthening the "collaboration hinge" is essential for transitioning from a partnership-dependent model to a self-sustaining research ecosystem.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research contributes to the political economy of higher education in Africa by offering a comparative blueprint of the drivers of research dissemination. On a theoretical level, the

study advances the "Collaboration-Publication Triangle" model, which illustrates the symbiotic relationship between institutional funding, international networks, and national research sovereignty. Methodologically, it demonstrates the efficacy of comparative desktop analysis in identifying macro-level systemic drivers that primary field studies often overlook due to their focus on individual experiences. Practically, for policymakers in developing research economies, this study provides evidentiary proof that research output is a product of structural design rather than academic merit alone, offering a clear roadmap for institutional reform in resource-constrained environments.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The evidence gathered in this study confirms a definitive structural gradient in co-publication prevalence between Uganda and South Africa. Co-publication is not merely a byproduct of individual supervisor behaviour or student motivation; rather, it is embedded within broader institutional, cultural, and policy ecosystems. In South Africa, a mature research ecosystem, defined by performance-based subsidies and formalised mentorship, has transformed co-publication into a standardised and expected academic output. Conversely, Uganda's lower output reflects systemic constraints where research often remains a terminal exercise for graduation rather than a gateway to scholarly discourse. Ultimately, institutional factors operate as an interconnected system of "nudges." Without a deliberate shift from individual initiative to systemic institutional support, the productivity gap between these two regional hubs will persist, further limiting Uganda's global research visibility and long-term intellectual sovereignty.

Recommendations

To bridge the existing "conversion gap" and improve the research trajectory in Uganda, several systemic interventions are recommended. First, Ugandan institutions should move toward policy formalization by adopting structured co-publication guidelines that encourage manuscript-ready chapters as a standard part of the master's dissertation. Second, there must be an alignment of incentives where national education bodies introduce career-based rewards for supervisors who successfully guide students toward peer-reviewed publication. Third, universities must invest in support infrastructure, such as research offices and dissemination training, to alleviate the administrative burden on faculty. Finally, workload reforms are essential; implementing supervisory credits within faculty workloads would provide the necessary "time-wealth" required for meaningful collaborative writing and mentorship.

Limitations and Future Studies

While this desktop review successfully mapped systemic disparities using data spanning 2022 to 2026, it is limited by the absence of primary qualitative data. Specifically, it lacks the direct voices of students and supervisors regarding their perceptions of authorship equity and the lived experience of the "publish-or-perish" culture.



Future studies should therefore explore the ethical dimensions of authorship, investigating the potential for "gift authorship"

or student exploitation within the highly incentivised South African model. There is also a need for longitudinal research to track the career trajectories of master's students who successfully co-published, quantifying the return on investment for African human capital. Finally, as the digital landscape evolves, future research should analyse the role of AI-driven research tools and Open Access platforms in lowering the barrier to entry for scholars in emerging research environments like Uganda.

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