

# Publication practices of Cochrane authors in sub-Saharan Africa: a qualitative study

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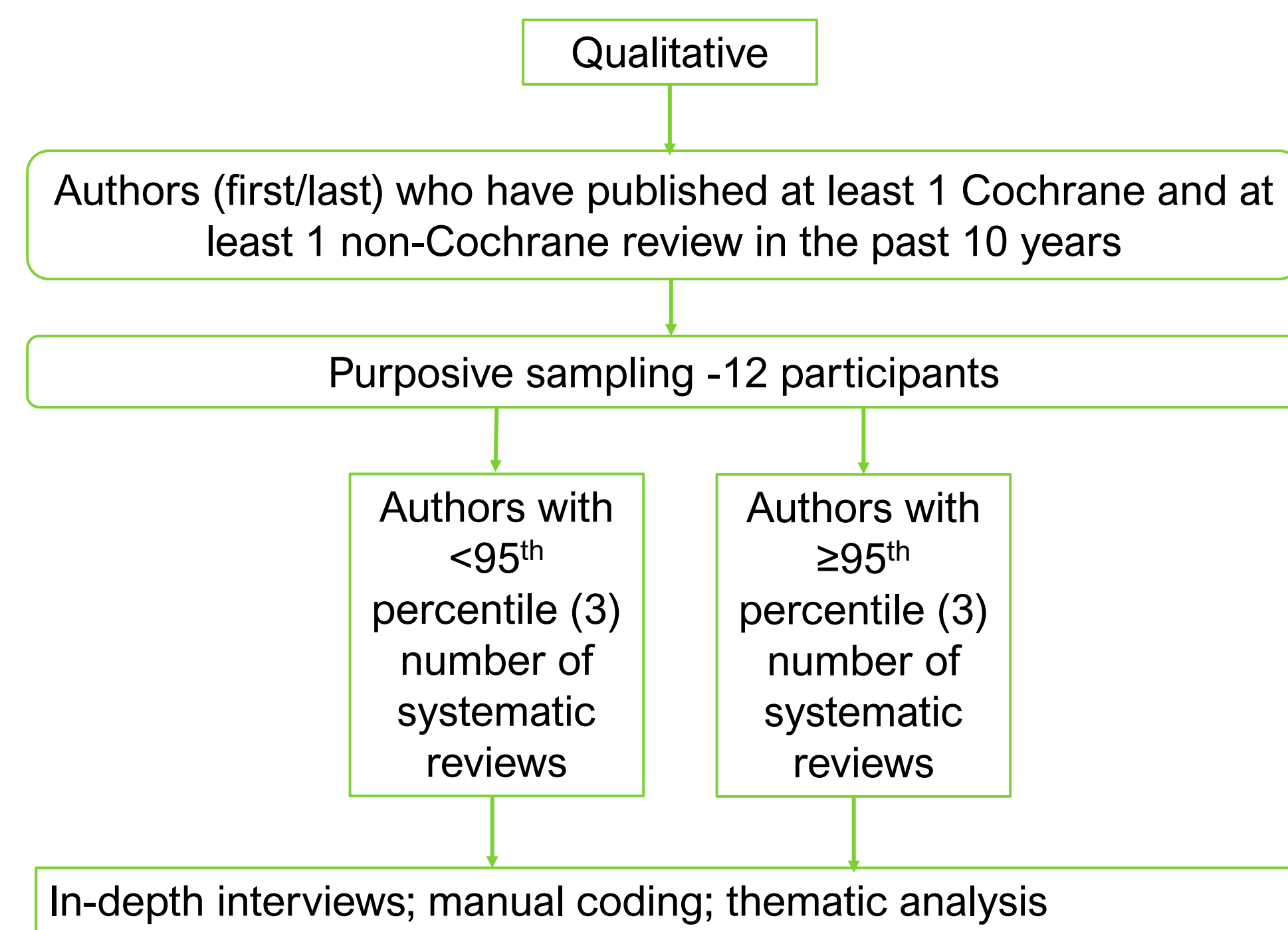
"Making evidence-based healthcare functional in Africa"

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## Background

- Authors in sub-Saharan Africa can enhance the local relevance and applicability of Cochran reviews [1-4].
- Fewer Cochrane authors are publishing Cochrane reviews [5].
- This qualitative study, which is part of a mixed-methods approach [6-8], explored sub-Saharan Cochrane author publication practices.

## Methods



## Ethics

Ethics approval: Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board; participants' informed consent

## Results - Facilitators to publish with Cochrane

### Theme 1: High-impact factor, rigorous research process and visibility

"The visibility of the Cochrane reviews because I think for many people Cochrane is a kind of a trademark which carries a lot of weight and tends to be the first place that people look for evidence" (Participant 11, Botswana)

### Theme 2: Good support, training and mentorship

"What we gain from Cochrane, publishing Cochrane, our budget is free, free training, and free mentorship and a lot of resources, and actually developed I mean, we grew from the Cochrane collaboration" (Participant 2, Nigeria)

## Results - Barriers to publish with Cochrane

### Theme 3: Protracted time to complete Cochrane systematic reviews and high research output demands

"Factors that influence me to do a non-Cochrane review is that they don't take so much time unlike the Cochrane review" (Participant 1, Kenya)

"It is the output within academia... if we don't produce that output it looks like I'm not doing anything. So that is why we have shifted to other journals" (Participant 5, South Africa)

### Theme 4: Complex title registration process and inconsistencies between different review groups regarding editorial practices

"I think when somebody registers a topic it blocks other people from registering that topic, and then you do not really have the time..." (Participant 7, Uganda)

"I also found that between different review groups, there's often different methods of doing things and sometimes the expectations are a bit different" (Participant 8, South Africa)

## Results - Barriers to publish with Cochrane

### Theme 5: A Lack of transparency in the writing process and lack of recognition in research collaboration

"To review the protocol...is a process that reduces the freedom of expression...a lot of strong dictation to how the protocol should be written or should go" (Participant 2, Nigeria)

"Many people that I have spoken to in sub-Saharan Africa have felt disrespected, ignored, not supported" (Participant 12, South Africa)

## Results - Future publication preference

### Theme 6: Cochrane preferred based on impact-factor and mentoring opportunities

"Cochrane is extremely important as a brand and a contributor to healthcare...there is a very important synergism...that are needed for the WHO guidelines...in turn have a huge impact on practice worldwide" (Participant 11, Botswana)

"I mentor a lot of students, masters, PhD students and a lot of researchers...So I'm still involved in Cochrane workshops, protocol development workshops, and systematic review workshops" (Participant 2, Nigeria)

## Participants' suggestions for the way forward

- Increase academic freedom in the writing process
- Allow a balance between rigor and speed
- Increase review staff
- Centralize editorial processes
- Provide oversight and support the functioning of review groups

## Conclusion

- Preliminary analysis has highlighted key facilitators and barriers to publishing Cochrane reviews and opportunities to enhance the involvement of sub-Saharan authors.
- Future work will include an electronic survey to determine the generalisability of our findings.

## Acknowledgements

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