

The *South African Journal of Science* follows a double-anonymous peer review model but encourages Reviewers and Authors to publish their anonymised review reports and response letters, respectively, as supplementary files after manuscript review and acceptance. For more information, see [Publishing peer review reports](#).

### Peer review history for:

Lynch I, Middleton LE, Fluks L, Isaacs N, Essop R, van Rooyen H. Catalysing gender transformation in research through engaging African science granting councils. *S Afr J Sci.* 2024;120(7/8), Art. #17434. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/17434>

#### HOW TO CITE:

Catalysing gender transformation in research through engaging African science granting councils [peer review history]. *S Afr J Sci.* 2024;120(7/8), Art. #17434. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/17434/peerreview>

#### Reviewer A: Round 1

**Date completed:** 08 March 2024

**Recommendation:** Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Decline

**Conflicts of interest:** None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?

Yes/No

Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?

Yes/No

Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?

Yes/No

Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Yes/No

Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?

Yes/No

Are the methods described comprehensively?

Yes/No

Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**/Not qualified to judge

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?

Yes/Partly/No

Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field

Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone

**Excellent**/Good/Average/Below average/Poor

Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?

Yes/No

Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?

Yes/No

The number of tables in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

The number of figures in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

Please rate the manuscript on overall quality

Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?

Yes/No

Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?

Yes/No/Not applicable

If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?

Yes/No

Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

Yes/No

Select a recommendation:

Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Decline

With regard to our policy on '[Publishing peer review reports](#)', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.

Yes/No

#### **Comments to the Author:**

The manuscript meets the journal's definition of a research letter. It is an up-to-date account of a novel and noteworthy project that was conducted in the period 2020–2023 [the Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI) Gender Equality and Inclusivity (GEI) Project]. The project's key findings are also briefly reported. The topic of gender transformation in the research-funding space has wider than specialist interest and the significance of the research problem justifies publication of the manuscript. The topic and language are appropriate for the scope and readership of the journal, although the brevity of the manuscript sometimes leads over-generalisation and jargon. It is a pity that this manuscript is only a letter, as more detailed results would have been useful.

The abstract and points of significance are appropriate and representative of the content, but the title may be somewhat misleading for a research letter. The focus should be more on the research problem and the project rather than its findings (or "insights"), as the methods cannot be described comprehensively and therefore cannot be thoroughly assessed. However, based on the brief description of the methods, they seem sound.

The potential body of literature that the authors could referred to, is vast, but the authors have managed, in their brief account, to select the most relevant and up-to-date ones for their purpose. I would suggest that the authors take note of (and perhaps include) only one addition source, namely "Gender-disaggregated data at the participating organisations of the Global Research Council: Results of a global survey"

([https://globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin/documents/GRC\\_Publications/Survey\\_Report\\_\\_GRC\\_Gender-Disaggregated\\_Data.pdf](https://globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin/documents/GRC_Publications/Survey_Report__GRC_Gender-Disaggregated_Data.pdf))

In terms of presentation, the manuscript requires very little improvement: the language is clear and concise, and while the language, grammar and tone are scholarly, they are suitable for a non-specialist. The content is well structured.

I could not identify any evidence of scientific misconduct, and the authors have provided an explicit statement of approval by an institutional ethics committee, although details were removed by the journal administrator for anonymisation purposes.

In addition to the two recommendations above (related to the title and an additional source), I would like to raise what a few relatively minor issues with the manuscript. (1) I am unsure why the authors deliberately chose the term "research and innovation", rather than only "research". If possible, could this be clarified? (2) The statement, "Once in research careers, women encounter ongoing marginalisation, comprising only 30% of researchers [...]" seems to de/reduce the issue of women's representation to

marginalisation (a lack of clarity in writing, perhaps?). “The causal intricacies of studying gender bias in science” (<https://www.leidenmadtrics.nl/articles/the-causal-intricacies-of-studying-gender-bias-in-science>) would be useful to consult. (3) The phrase “unequal gender beliefs” (l. 34) is not quite logical (a result of truncation). (4) The sentence in lines 38–41 is too general, considering the objectives of the manuscript. (5) The link between the section on gender equality and inclusivity in research content and design and women’s participation in research is not clear. Is the underlying argument that women researchers would, by reason of their gender, include a gender dimension in their research? (6) A related point is that there are at least two units of analysis: researchers and staff at science granting councils. How would, for example, maternity and childcare programmes for organisational staff at science granting councils lead to gender integration in research?

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### Author response to Reviewer A: Round 1

The title may be somewhat misleading for a research letter. The focus should be more on the research problem and the project rather than its findings (or “insights”), as the methods cannot be described comprehensively and therefore cannot be thoroughly assessed. However, based on the brief description of the methods, they seem sound.

AUTHOR: Thank you for this feedback. We have made the following change to the title: “Catalysing gender transformation in research through engaging African science granting councils”

The potential body of literature that the authors could referred to, is vast, but the authors have managed, in their brief account, to select the most relevant and up-to-date ones for their purpose. I would suggest that the authors take note of (and perhaps include) only one addition source, namely “Gender-disaggregated data at the participating organisations of the Global Research Council: Results of a global survey”

([https://globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin/documents/GRC\\_Publications/Survey\\_Report\\_\\_GRC\\_Gender-Disaggregated\\_Data.pdf](https://globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin/documents/GRC_Publications/Survey_Report__GRC_Gender-Disaggregated_Data.pdf))

AUTHOR: Thank you for this suggestion. We included a citation of the report in the following sentence to guide researchers to the report’s conclusion that diversity beyond gender remains insufficiently attended to: “Additionally, attention to intersecting marginalised identities beyond gender is limited (16)”.

I am unsure why the authors deliberately chose the term “research and innovation”, rather than only “research”. If possible, could this be clarified?

AUTHOR: This choice is based on participating science granting councils’ own use of the term (they are positioned in national systems of research and innovation, with a corresponding mandate).

The statement, “Once in research careers, women encounter ongoing marginalisation, comprising only 30% of researchers [...]” seems to de/reduce the issue of women’s representation to marginalisation (a lack of clarity in writing, perhaps?). “The causal intricacies of studying gender bias in science” (<https://www.leidenmadtrics.nl/articles/the-causal-intricacies-of-studying-gender-bias-in-science>) would be useful to consult.

AUTHOR: Thank you, we rephrased the sentence as follows to clarify that we are highlighting the lack of gender parity and not commenting on the reasons underlying this:

“Once in research careers, gender disparities persist, with women comprising only 30% of researchers on the continent and with gender parity notably lacking in leadership and decision-making roles”.

The phrase “unequal gender beliefs” (l. 34) is not quite logical (a result of truncation).

AUTHOR: We rephrased as follows: “Overwhelmingly, social norms assigning disproportionate caregiving responsibilities to women remain the most common structural barrier to women’s career progression”.

The sentence in lines 38–41 is too general, considering the objectives of the manuscript. (“The continent is falling short of meeting gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If current trends continue, an estimated 81.1 million women in sub-Saharan Africa will live in countries lacking comprehensive workplace equality legislation by 2030”)

AUTHOR: Thank you. We agree and deleted the sentence.

The link between the section on gender equality and inclusivity in research content and design and women’s participation in research is not clear. Is the underlying argument that women researchers would, by reason of their gender, include a gender dimension in their research?

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AUTHOR: We revised the heading of the relevant section from “Gender equality and inclusivity in research content and design”, to “The gender dimension in research content and design”.

We also edited the following content in that section: “Gender inequalities in research and innovation extend beyond the workforce; research methods and content remain impacted by the legacy of gender bias, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate findings”, changed to “The lack of attention to gender considerations in research and innovation extends beyond the workforce. Research methods and content still lack adequate integration of a gender lens, leading to incomplete or inaccurate findings”.

A related point is that there are at least two units of analysis: researchers and staff at science granting councils. How would, for example, maternity and childcare programmes for organisational staff at science granting councils lead to gender integration in research?

AUTHOR: We added the following sentence: “Further, by addressing bias and unequal practices within their own organisations, councils were better equipped to promote similar changes through their grant-making policies and practices.”

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### **Reviewer C: Round 1**

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