



Replicating the Policy Impact of Medical Research: A 2016 Case Study from São Tomé and Príncipe

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Abstract

The translation of medical research into health policy remains a critical but often inefficient process in African settings. A prior influential study from São Tomé and Príncipe proposed a model for rapid policy impact following a specific research project. This replication study examines the applicability and generalisability of that model within the same national context. This study aimed to replicate the methodological approach of the original case study to verify its conclusions regarding pathways for research-informed policy change in a small island African state. The objective was to assess the replicability of the identified impact model and to identify contextual factors influencing the process. This qualitative replication study employed a similar case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants from the Ministry of Health, research institutions, and non-governmental organisations. Policy documents and research reports were analysed thematically to trace the influence of the specified medical research on subsequent policy decisions. The replication did not fully corroborate the original study's model of direct and rapid policy uptake. While policymakers acknowledged the research, its direct translation into formal policy was limited. A key theme was that competing budgetary priorities and health system capacity constraints presented more significant barriers than previously reported, substantially affecting implementation in the majority of proposed policy areas. The process of translating medical research into policy in this context is more complex and less linear than the original model suggested. Systemic and structural factors within the health system play a more decisive role than the availability of research evidence alone. Future research-to-policy initiatives should incorporate robust, ongoing health system strengthening as a core component. Researchers should engage in earlier and more sustained dialogue with policymakers to align research questions with feasible policy options. research utilisation, health policy, knowledge translation, replication, São Tomé and Príncipe, Africa This replication study provides a critical examination of a proposed model for research impact on health policy, highlighting the substantial influence of systemic constraints. It underscores the necessity of contextual analysis and health system readiness for effective knowledge translation in similar settings.

Keywords: *Knowledge translation, Health policy, Sub-Saharan Africa, Research utilisation, Replication study, Implementation science*

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