



A Case Study of Youth Engagement in Medical Practice and Policy in Zambia

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Abstract

Youth engagement in African healthcare systems is considered important for sustainable development. In Zambia, a substantial youth population encounters distinct reproductive health challenges, but their involvement in medical practice and policy has been limited historically. This case study explores the role of young people within Zambia's medical sector. This study aimed to document and analyse the mechanisms, successes, and barriers to meaningful youth participation in Zambian medical practice and health policy. It sought to identify effective engagement models and to understand the impact of this involvement on service delivery and policy. A qualitative, single-case study design was used. Data were collected through a review of programme documents and policies, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including youth advocates, healthcare practitioners, and policymakers. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns. Analysis indicated a positive trajectory in formalising youth engagement, though progress was inconsistent. A central theme was the necessity of moving beyond tokenistic consultation to embedding youth in decision-making structures. A noted outcome was the integration of youth-led peer education into national adolescent health strategies, which was associated with improved service uptake in pilot areas. Systematic and institutionalised youth engagement can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of medical practice and policy in Zambia. While progress is evident, sustained effort is needed to address persistent structural and cultural barriers to full participation. Medical institutions should establish formal youth advisory boards with clear terms of reference. Policymakers must allocate specific funding for youth-led health initiatives. Training programmes for healthcare workers should include modules on intergenerational partnership and youth-centred communication. Youth engagement, adolescent health, health policy, Zambia, case study, medical practice, participatory governance This case study provides a detailed, contextual analysis of youth engagement mechanisms in a Zambian medical context, offering evidence for practitioners and policymakers seeking to institutionalise participatory approaches.

Keywords: *Youth engagement, Adolescent health, Health policy, Sub-Saharan Africa, Participatory action research, Sustainable Development Goals, Health systems strengthening*



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