



# A Critical Qualitative Analysis of Medicine Policy in Kenya: An East African Perspective,

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## Abstract

Medicine policy is a critical determinant of healthcare access in East Africa. As a regional hub, Kenya has developed a substantial policy framework. However, in-depth qualitative analyses of its evolution, implementation, and impact from a national perspective remain scarce. This study aimed to critically analyse the formulation, implementation, and perceived effectiveness of national medicine policy in Kenya from an East African perspective. Its objectives were to identify key thematic shifts in policy discourse, explore stakeholder experiences of policy processes, and analyse perceived barriers to equitable access. A qualitative study was conducted, comprising a documentary analysis of key national policy documents, legislative acts, and strategic plans. This was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled policymakers, healthcare providers, and civil society representatives. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Analysis identified a dominant theme of progressive policy intent undermined by fragmented implementation. A prominent finding was the recurrent tension between centralised procurement ideals and the practical realities of supply chain fragmentation at county level. This was widely reported by frontline providers as the primary barrier to reliable medicine access. Kenya's medicine policy framework demonstrates sophisticated intent but is challenged by systemic implementation gaps. The disconnect between national strategy and localised execution hinders the goal of universal and equitable access to essential medicines. Future policy must prioritise strengthening decentralised governance structures for medicine supply. Enhanced accountability mechanisms and greater inclusion of frontline health worker perspectives in policy revision cycles are needed to bridge the implementation gap. Health policy,

pharmaceutical policy, qualitative research, health systems, Kenya, East Africa. This study provides an in-depth critical analysis of Kenyan medicine policy from a national stakeholder perspective, offering evidence to inform ongoing regional policy debates and implementation strategies.

**Keywords:** *Medicine policy, East Africa, Critical qualitative analysis, Health systems, Access to medicines, Kenya, Policy implementation*

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