



A Theoretical Framework for the Policy Implications of Medical Research in Lesotho: An African Perspective,

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Abstract

Medical research in Africa frequently does not translate into health policy, especially in resource-limited settings such as Lesotho. This gap between evidence and policy undermines improvements in maternal and reproductive health outcomes. This article aims to construct a theoretical framework for analysing the policy implications of medical research in Lesotho. It seeks to identify the key actors, processes, and contextual barriers that influence research utilisation within the health sector. The framework is developed through a critical synthesis of existing policy analysis models, adapted via a review of literature on health systems and research utilisation in sub-Saharan Africa. It is then contextualised specifically for Lesotho's health policy landscape. Key insights: The framework proposes that successful translation depends on a triad of factors: researcher engagement, policy actor capacity, and institutional mechanisms. A central finding is the critical role of local research leadership, with studies led by in-country investigators being more likely to inform policy drafts than externally led projects. The framework offers a structured lens for understanding the complex journey from medical research to health policy in Lesotho. It underscores that research translation is a multi-stakeholder process embedded within specific socio-political contexts. Future research should apply this framework empirically. Funders and institutions should prioritise capacity building for local researchers and establish formal knowledge brokerage platforms to sustain dialogue between researchers and policymakers. health policy, knowledge translation, theoretical framework, research utilisation, Lesotho, maternal health This article provides a context-specific theoretical model for analysing the policy impact of medical research in an African nation, moving beyond generic models of research uptake.

Keywords: *Knowledge translation, Evidence-based policy, Health systems research, Sub-Saharan Africa, Implementation science, Research utilisation, Health policy analysis*

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