



An Ethnographic Study of Youth Perspectives on Medical Futures in Namibia,

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Abstract

There is a need to understand how young people in Africa conceptualise the future of medicine within evolving healthcare landscapes. This study focuses on Namibia, where a youthful demographic, historical health challenges, and contemporary medical developments intersect. This ethnographic study aimed to explore the perspectives of Namibian youth on the future of medicine. Its objective was to analyse how they imagine, critique, and aspire towards future medical systems and their potential roles within them. A multi-sited ethnographic approach was employed, combining participant observation in urban and peri-urban settings with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of young Namibians aged 18–30 from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds participated. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Analysis revealed a dominant theme of cautious optimism, tempered by scepticism towards top-down health initiatives. A key finding was that most participants desired medical futures that integrated biomedical and traditional healing practices, viewing this as a progressive form of holistic care. Their visions emphasised community-based care and technological accessibility over centralised hospital expansion. Namibian youth hold complex, nuanced visions for the future of medicine, rooted in local context and a critical awareness of past health system shortcomings. Their perspectives are vital for shaping responsive and sustainable health policy. Health policy planning in Namibia should actively incorporate youth perspectives through formal consultation. Medical education and health promotion strategies should engage with youths' integrative views on healthcare models. Further research should explore how these perspectives influence career choices and health-seeking behaviours. Medical anthropology, youth, futures, healthcare, Namibia, ethnography This study provides an ethnographic account of youth perspectives on medical futures in Namibia, contributing to broader discussions on decolonising healthcare and participatory health policy in Africa.

Keywords: *Medical Anthropology, Youth Perspectives, Sub-Saharan Africa, Healthcare Futures, Ethnographic Methods, Postcolonial Medicine, Biopolitics*



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