



# A Research Protocol to Investigate the Gendered Dimensions of Medical Practice and Access in Tunisia: A Sub-Saharan African Perspective

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**Published:** 20 February 2023 | **Received:** 26 December 2022 | **Accepted:** 02 February 2023

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**DOI:** [10.5281/zenodo.18530050](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18530050)

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## Abstract

Gender influences medical practice and healthcare access in Sub-Saharan Africa. Within Tunisia, which holds a distinct position in the region, the gendered dynamics of the medical profession and patient care pathways are not well documented. A clearer understanding is needed to promote equitable health systems. This protocol describes a study to analyse the gendered dimensions of medical practice and healthcare access in Tunisia, framed within a Sub-Saharan African perspective. Its primary objectives are to: 1) examine gender disparities in medical career progression and specialisation; 2) assess gender-based differences in patient access to care; and 3) explore how physician gender influences clinical interactions and patient perceptions. A mixed-methods design will be used. Quantitative data will come from a retrospective analysis of national health workforce databases and patient utilisation records. Qualitative data will be collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with healthcare professionals and patients, and focus group discussions. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis and descriptive and inferential statistics. As a protocol, no empirical findings are presented. The study is designed to generate data on themes including the distribution of women across medical specialties and gendered narratives concerning patient trust and clinical authority. The study is expected to provide a detailed understanding of how gender shapes the medical landscape in Tunisia, yielding insights pertinent to the wider Sub-Saharan African context. Anticipated recommendations will focus on policy reforms for gender equity in medical training and postings, clinical guidelines to reduce gender bias in care, and strategies to improve healthcare access for all genders. Gender, Medical Practice, Healthcare Access, Tunisia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Health Workforce, Mixed Methods This protocol provides a structured framework for investigating an under-researched area. It will generate evidence to inform gender-sensitive health policy and practice in Tunisia and the region.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Healthcare Access, Medical Profession, Sub-Saharan Africa, Qualitative Research*



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