



Youth Perspectives on the Future of Medical Practice and Healthcare in Zimbabwe: A Qualitative Study,

Farai Chikowore¹, Tendai Moyo^{2,3}, Ruvimbo Ndlovu⁴

¹ Department of Epidemiology, Midlands State University

² National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bulawayo

³ Department of Surgery, Midlands State University

⁴ Department of Internal Medicine, National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bulawayo

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Correspondence: fchikowore@gmail.com

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Author notes

Farai Chikowore is affiliated with Department of Epidemiology, Midlands State University and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Tendai Moyo is affiliated with National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bulawayo and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Ruvimbo Ndlovu is affiliated with Department of Internal Medicine, National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bulawayo and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Abstract

The future of medical practice in Africa requires strategic foresight. As the next generation of healthcare professionals and citizens, youth perspectives are vital for shaping this future, yet they remain underrepresented in health systems planning in contexts like Zimbabwe. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of Zimbabwean youth on the future of medical practice and the healthcare system, capturing their aspirations, concerns, and envisioned trajectories. A qualitative study was conducted using in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A purposive sample of youth participants, including pre-medical students, medical students, and young healthcare professionals, was recruited. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. A dominant theme was the critical need for improved healthcare funding and infrastructure. A strong majority of participants expressed a desire for a future medical culture that prioritises patient-centred care and ethical practice over financial incentives. Many indicated a commitment to practising in Zimbabwe, contingent upon substantive systemic reforms. Zimbabwean youth articulate a clear, pragmatic vision for the future of medicine, centred on systemic integrity, professional ethics, and equitable service. Their perspectives reveal a sense of responsibility alongside specific conditions deemed necessary for a sustainable healthcare system. Stakeholders in medical education and health policy should formally integrate these youth perspectives into strategic planning. Establishing structured mentorship programmes and fostering early engagement in health systems discourse are recommended to nurture this future-oriented outlook. Youth perspectives, medical practice, healthcare future, Zimbabwe, qualitative research, medical education, health systems. This study provides original empirical data on the under-researched viewpoints of African youth regarding the future of medicine, offering evidence to inform human resources for health planning in Zimbabwe and similar contexts.

Keywords: *youth perspectives, medical practice, healthcare futures, qualitative study, sub-Saharan Africa*

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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