

Medical Tourism in the Era of Populist Conservatism: Is Nigeria in a Crossfire?

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Abstract:

This study presents a rigorous qualitative examination of how the global rise of populist conservatism—marked by nationalist policymaking, healthcare protectionism, and immigration restrictions—reshapes medical tourism dynamics for Nigeria as both a source country and potential regional healthcare destination. Through critical discourse analysis of policy documents, stakeholder interviews, and economic data from 2016–2023, the research reveals how Western healthcare nationalism creates paradoxical pressures: while visa restrictions and cost inflation limit patient mobility, Nigeria's chronic healthcare deficiencies perpetuate dependence on foreign medical systems. The analysis demonstrates that these tensions reflect deeper structural inequities in global health governance, where restrictive policies in core nations exacerbate peripheral countries' medical dependency without addressing root causes of health system weakness.

Key findings illuminate Nigeria's precarious position at the intersection of deglobalizing health policies and domestic institutional failures. The study identifies three critical takeaways: first, that current medical tourism patterns replicate colonial-era resource extraction through financial outflows and brain drain; second, that populist health policies function as biopolitical filters privileging economic elites; and third, that strategic responses require simultaneous domestic investment and South-South health partnerships to build sovereignty. By exposing these dynamics through methodical policy tracing and stakeholder analysis, the research contributes both empirical evidence and theoretical framing for understanding medical mobility in an era of geopolitical reordering. The conclusions offer policymakers a balanced framework for addressing immediate patient needs while pursuing long-term health system transformation.

Keywords:

Medical tourism, populist conservatism, healthcare disparities, deregulation, Nigeria, global health policy, deglobalization.