

## **INFLUENCE OF DEVOLVED HEALTH SERVICES ON AVAILABILITY OF MATERNAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Maternal healthcare entails the health of women from childbirth to the postpartum period. In Kenya, health services, including maternal healthcare, were devolved to county governments to improve coverage and accessibility and reduce inequalities—devolution aimed to enhance service delivery and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates. However, Kenya has not met its maternal mortality reduction targets, with marginalized counties like Isiolo experiencing higher-than-average rates. Despite devolution, health facilities in Isiolo struggle to meet the needs of mothers. Therefore, this study examines the influence of devolved health services on the availability of maternal healthcare services in Isiolo County. The sequential decentralization theorem guided the study. The study adopted a mixed-method, concurrent research design (QUANT +qual.). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) and inferential statistics (ordinal logistic regression), while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic and content analysis. The findings indicate that devolved financing significantly influenced availability with p-value of 0.002. This implies that devolved financing and the workforce are crucial for improving availability of maternal healthcare services. The findings from this study provide important insights for the County Government of Isiolo, highlighting the need to enhance both financing and the workforce dedicated to maternal healthcare to improve availability of maternal healthcare services. Additionally, the study's results are valuable to maternal healthcare consumers in Isiolo County, as they are expected to stimulate discussions on policy-driven resource allocation aimed at improving availability of maternal healthcare services.

**Keywords:** Devolved health services, devolution, service delivery, availability, maternal health, Isiolo.