



University of St.Gallen

School of Medicine

Theses

supervised by the chair of Health Care Management

Master thesis «Comparative study of the influence of pharmaceutical multinational corporations on the governance of access to medicine in Sub-Saharan Africa», Rahel Erlemann, MIA, 2021

Abstract:

Studies indicate that access to medicine can be undermined by the lack of good governance, an issue particularly pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa. Multinational pharmaceutical corporations are increasingly entering this region, raising the question on how they can influence governance in this geographical context. As the existing literature provides little evidence to answer this question, this thesis aims to study how multinational pharmaceutical corporations influence the governance of access to medicine in Sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, it aims to narrow the research gaps in the governance, business power, and corporate social responsibility literature. The study uses a qualitative comparative approach. Governance of access to medicine and corporate political activities of four multinational corporations are investigated in selected Sub-Saharan African countries (Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana), based on a pharmaceutical system assessment, a review of aggregated indices and expert interviews. The results show a lack of good governance of access to medicine, particularly in Kenya and Nigeria, despite high transparency in their pharmaceutical systems. The results also document informal corporate attempts used by several multinational pharmaceutical corporations to influence the governance of access to medicine. Moreover, multinational corporations influence governance through business practices involving bribery, and corporate responsibility initiatives, including supply chain capacity building initiatives. The findings indicate that pharmaceutical corporations both positively and negatively affect the governance of access to medicine in all surveyed countries. Finally, the thesis offers recommendations to strengthen good governance of access to medicine and foster responsible corporate activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Further research can analyze the influence of collective corporate attempts on governance of access to medicine.