



## A Mobile Technology-Driven Framework for Tracking Medicine Sales and Delivery in Fragmentated Supply Chain Networks

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**ABSTRACT** - The complexity of pharmaceutical supply chains in developing and emerging economies is exacerbated by fragmentation, logistical opacity, and inadequate technological infrastructure. These challenges contribute to inefficiencies, medicine shortages, counterfeit drugs, and financial losses. Mobile technologies, particularly smartphones, mobile apps, and SMS-based systems offer a promising avenue for transforming how medicines are tracked, sold, and delivered across these networks. This paper proposes a Mobile Technology-Driven Framework for Tracking Medicine Sales and Delivery (MTF-TMSD) within fragmented supply chains. Relying solely on comprehensive literature review, the paper explores technological, logistical, and policy dimensions shaping medicine distribution. It further synthesizes best practices and case studies to design a theoretical framework adaptable to low-resource environments. The MTF-TMSD aims to enhance visibility, ensure compliance, improve last-mile delivery accuracy, and build system resilience. This research provides a foundation for future empirical implementations and digital health policy innovation.

**Keywords :** Mobile Tracking, Pharmaceutical Logistics, Supply Chain Visibility, Medicine Delivery, Healthcare ICT, Last-Mile Monitoring

### 1. Introduction

The integrity, efficiency, and transparency of pharmaceutical supply chains are crucial for ensuring equitable access to safe and effective medicines [1], [2]. Globally, the pharmaceutical industry is responsible for delivering critical health products to a wide range of healthcare providers, from urban hospitals to remote village clinics [3], [4], [5], [6]. However, in many parts of the world particularly in developing and low-resource settings pharmaceutical supply chains are deeply fragmented [7], [8]. This fragmentation manifests as disconnected systems, lack of inventory visibility, irregular delivery patterns, and insufficient regulatory oversight [9], [10], [11], [12]. These issues not only hamper access to essential medicines but also expose the system to vulnerabilities, including counterfeit drug proliferation, overstocking or understocking of key medicines, and avoidable drug expiries [13], [14].

Fragmented supply chain networks, often found in sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of Latin America, are shaped by various structural and operational constraints [15], [16], [17], [18]. These include poor transportation infrastructure, limited cold chain capabilities, inconsistent data reporting, and a reliance on manual inventory systems [19], [20], [21]. In such environments, traditional enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems and centralized tracking software are frequently cost-prohibitive or ill-suited for implementation [22], [23]. Consequently, public health officials and private pharmaceutical distributors struggle with real-time monitoring and effective demand forecasting [24], [25]. This misalignment creates ripple effects that jeopardize public health outcomes and increase costs for both suppliers and patients [26], [27], [28].

Mobile technology has emerged as a transformative force across numerous domains, including agriculture, banking, education, and increasingly, healthcare [29], [30], [31]. The ubiquity of mobile phones, including basic feature phones and increasingly affordable smartphones, presents an unprecedented opportunity to address longstanding supply chain issues [32]. Mobile health (mHealth) and mobile logistics (mLogistics) solutions have shown considerable promise in enabling last-mile tracking, facilitating electronic proof of delivery, and enabling healthcare workers and delivery personnel to record and transmit data in real time [33], [34], [35]. These innovations align with global health priorities set by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Global Fund's initiatives for improving medicine availability and preventing stockouts [36], [37], [38].

The convergence of mobile technologies with healthcare logistics is particularly pertinent in contexts where supply chains are fragmented and conventional IT infrastructure is lacking [39], [40], [41]. SMS-based alerts for low stock levels, mobile-based data collection apps, and GPS-enabled delivery monitoring are increasingly being piloted and deployed across different regions [42], [43], [44]. In Kenya, for instance, the cStock platform leverages mobile phone SMS reporting to improve inventory tracking for essential medicines [45], [46]. In Nigeria, mobile-based interventions have been applied to track vaccine delivery and reduce wastage in immunization programs [47]. These case studies exemplify how mobile innovations can reshape pharmaceutical distribution by enabling real-time data capture, feedback loops, and enhanced coordination among stakeholders.

Despite these promising developments, most mobile-based solutions in healthcare logistics remain localized pilot projects with limited scalability. Furthermore, there is a lack of a unified framework that integrates various mobile technologies to systematically track medicine sales and delivery across diverse geographies and market structures. While individual applications may address specific pain points such as stock monitoring, GPS tracking, or mobile payment integration they often function in silos and lack interoperability. As a result, the potential of mobile technologies remains underutilized in creating end-to-end visibility and accountability in pharmaceutical supply chains.

This paper proposes a Mobile Technology-Driven Framework for Tracking Medicine Sales and Delivery (MTF-TMSD), drawing from an extensive literature review and synthesizing insights from healthcare informatics, supply chain management, and mobile systems design. The MTF-TMSD is designed to be adaptable to the realities of fragmented supply chains, especially in low-resource settings, by offering modular and scalable architecture. It emphasizes three key pillars: (1) real-time data collection through mobile interfaces, (2) secure data integration and visualization platforms, and (3) decentralized stakeholder engagement through feedback and alert systems.

The rationale for a literature-based study is twofold. First, empirical data collection in fragmented supply chains often faces significant barriers, including lack of access, high variability, and ethical considerations. Second, literature offers a rich repository of theoretical and practical insights, pilot results, and technological evaluations that can inform a robust conceptual framework. By systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing studies, this research aims to fill the conceptual gap and provide a strategic blueprint for future implementation, policy formulation, and academic inquiry.

This introduction sets the stage for a structured exploration into the intersection of mobile technology and pharmaceutical logistics. The subsequent sections unfold as follows: Section 2 presents a detailed literature review, mapping existing knowledge across relevant domains and identifying gaps. Section 3 introduces the proposed MTF-TMSD, outlining its components, operational logic, and intended outcomes. Section 4 offers a discussion that connects the framework to broader themes of scalability, ethical design, and regulatory alignment. Finally, Section 5 concludes with key takeaways and outlines future research directions.

In a world where health crises from pandemics to chronic disease management demand agile and responsive supply chain systems, the role of mobile technologies in bridging logistical gaps is not just promising; it is imperative. This paper contributes to that imperative by offering a structured, theory-driven foundation for deploying mobile tools in tracking medicine sales and delivery across some of the world's most challenging healthcare landscapes.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview of Pharmaceutical Supply Chains in Low-Resource Settings**

Pharmaceutical supply chains, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), are characterized by a web of formal and informal networks, diverse procurement practices, and a lack of centralized oversight [48], [49]. These systems often suffer from inadequate coordination between suppliers, wholesalers, regulatory agencies, and healthcare providers. In nations such as Uganda, Ethiopia, and India, research reveals persistent stockouts of essential medicines at public healthcare facilities, primarily due to erratic demand planning, poor data reporting, and underfunded logistics frameworks [2], [3]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized that fragmented supply chains directly

hinder the attainment of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), as medicine availability is one of its core pillars [4].

## **2.2 Fragmentation and Visibility Gaps in Medicine Distribution**

Fragmentation in medicine supply chains is multifaceted. It arises from the presence of multiple actors operating in silos, varied IT systems (or lack thereof), and opaque procurement arrangements. Without a cohesive system to monitor transactions, deliveries, and consumption, decision-makers often lack real-time visibility into stock levels, expiry dates, and movement of goods. Several studies have identified that this lack of transparency leads to overstocking in some regions and critical shortages in others [5]. In Ghana, for example, siloed databases between national warehouses and district-level health facilities have made it difficult to reconcile delivery logs with patient demand, a challenge echoed across sub-Saharan Africa [6].

## **2.3 Mobile Technology Adoption in Healthcare Supply Chains**

The rise of mobile health (mHealth) initiatives has opened new avenues for addressing visibility and coordination gaps in fragmented pharmaceutical supply chains [50], [51]. Mobile phones, particularly in their application for real-time data collection and transmission, have demonstrated potential for revolutionizing health logistics [52], [53], [54]. According to GSMA, mobile penetration in sub-Saharan Africa reached 46% in 2020, and is expected to rise significantly over the decade, providing a technological backbone for healthcare logistics innovations [55], [56].

In Rwanda and Malawi, mobile phones have been successfully used to collect inventory data from rural health facilities and transmit it to central databases for replenishment planning [57], [58]. The cStock initiative in Malawi uses SMS reporting to track medical commodity stock levels, resulting in better stock availability and reduced lead times [8]. In Nigeria, the Mobile Vaccination Tracker integrates GPS functionality to monitor the movement of vaccines during transportation, improving cold chain compliance and reducing spoilage [59], [60], [61].

## **2.4 Case Studies of Mobile-Driven Pharmaceutical Monitoring**

Several pilot programs and small-scale deployments underscore the feasibility and benefits of mobile-driven pharmaceutical monitoring [62], [63], [64]. The electronic Logistics Management Information System (eLMIS) in Tanzania, while not exclusively mobile, integrates mobile-enabled data entry to streamline reporting from peripheral facilities [65], [66]. Similarly, the OpenLMIS platform, which supports mobile data input, has been implemented across multiple African nations and serves as a backbone for public sector logistics data [67], [68], [69].

A notable example is mTRAC in Uganda, which combines SMS and web-based dashboards to enable healthcare workers to report stockouts and service disruptions. Evaluations of mTRAC highlight increased responsiveness from district health offices and improved stock monitoring [11]. Meanwhile, in Kenya, a

mobile-based application called SMS for Life was used to monitor stock levels of antimalarial drugs, significantly reducing stockouts in remote clinics [70], [71], [72].

## **2.5 Mobile Architecture and System Integration Challenges**

Despite the successes, challenges persist in scaling and sustaining mobile-based pharmaceutical logistics systems [73], [74]. A major issue is the interoperability of mobile applications with existing health management information systems (HMIS). Fragmentation is often exacerbated when mobile platforms do not integrate with central reporting tools like DHIS2, thereby duplicating reporting tasks and increasing workload for healthcare staff [13]. Furthermore, most mobile solutions are donor-driven pilot projects with short funding cycles, making long-term sustainability and local ownership problematic [14].

Another challenge is the digital literacy of healthcare personnel and delivery staff. Studies have found that while mobile phones are widespread, the ability to use data entry apps or interpret dashboard visualizations is often limited in rural areas [75], [76], [77]. Power supply, internet connectivity, and language barriers also pose significant hurdles [78], [79]. Addressing these requires user-centered design, multilingual interfaces, offline capabilities, and consistent training programs.

## **2.6 Theoretical Models Relevant to mLogistics Frameworks**

Several theoretical models inform the development of mobile technology frameworks in health logistics [80], [81]. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) provide foundational perspectives on user adoption, while the Information Systems Success Model offers insights on measuring system performance, satisfaction, and impact [82], [83]. Systems thinking and socio-technical frameworks emphasize the importance of aligning technical solutions with organizational workflows, stakeholder incentives, and local context [18].

The Human, Organization, and Technology-fit (HOT-fit) model, in particular, has been widely cited in mHealth studies for its comprehensive approach to evaluating the success of health information systems [19]. These models collectively stress that the success of mobile frameworks hinges not just on the technological tools themselves, but on their fit with existing processes, regulatory environments, and user capabilities.

## **2.7 Gaps in the Literature and Need for a Unified Framework**

While numerous case studies and pilot evaluations demonstrate the utility of mobile technologies for monitoring pharmaceutical logistics, most are limited in scope and lack generalizability. There is a distinct absence of a unified, theory-driven, and adaptable framework that consolidates best practices and technological principles across different settings. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how these mobile systems interact with policy frameworks, private sector logistics, and informal distribution networks.

Existing literature also lacks a modular view of system components most studies focus on single-point solutions such as stock monitoring or SMS alerts without addressing integration with payment systems,

authentication mechanisms, or performance dashboards. This gap presents an opportunity to develop a comprehensive mobile technology framework that is scalable, interoperable, and tailored for the fragmented nature of pharmaceutical supply chains.

### **3. Proposed Framework: MTF-TMSD**

#### **3.1 Overview of the Framework**

The Mobile Technology-Driven Framework for Tracking Medicine Sales and Delivery (MTF-TMSD) is designed to address the systemic inefficiencies and fragmentation in pharmaceutical supply chains using adaptable mobile technologies. This framework integrates mobile interfaces, cloud-based data management, GPS tracking, and stakeholder coordination to ensure real-time visibility and control of medicine movement from suppliers to end-users.

#### **3.2 Core Components of MTF-TMSD**

The MTF-TMSD consists of six interdependent components:

1. **Mobile Application Interface (MAI):** Designed for use by frontline health workers, pharmacists, and delivery agents, this interface allows real-time data entry for inventory updates, sales logs, and delivery confirmations. The MAI supports both smartphones and feature phones (via SMS) to accommodate varied user contexts [84], [85], [86], [87], [88].
2. **Centralized Cloud Repository (CCR):** A secure cloud database stores all transactional data, enabling synchronization across users and institutions. The CCR ensures consistent availability of data for monitoring, forecasting, and policymaking [89], [90], [91].
3. **Geolocation and Tracking Module (GTM):** Utilizing GPS technology, this module monitors the location of medical deliveries, enabling route optimization and real-time updates on delivery status [92], [93].
4. **Authentication and Verification Engine (AVE):** AVE uses QR codes, barcodes, and secure ID mechanisms to authenticate product legitimacy and verify user credentials at each supply chain node [94], [95], [96].
5. **Analytics and Decision Support Dashboard (ADSD):** This analytics layer transforms raw data into actionable insights through customizable dashboards for different stakeholders central agencies, district managers, and donors [97], [98].
6. **Interoperability and Policy Compliance Layer (IPCL):** This ensures the framework's integration with national health management information systems (HMIS) and adherence to regulatory guidelines [99], [100].

#### **3.3 Functional Workflow**

The proposed MTF-TMSD operates through a structured workflow:

- **Registration:** Health facilities and delivery agents are registered with unique IDs via the MAI.

- Inventory Reporting: Upon receiving consignments, stock details are uploaded using the app or SMS.
- Sales and Dispensation Logging: Sales are logged daily, tagged to batches, and geotagged for location-based audits.
- Delivery Tracking: Medicines dispatched to peripheral clinics are tracked using GTM, with updates automatically pushed to the central dashboard.
- Alerts and Notifications: Stockouts, expiry risks, or delivery delays trigger automated alerts to supervisors.
- Verification: At every handover, AVE verifies product authenticity to reduce counterfeit risks.

### **3.4 Framework Customization for LMICs**

The MTF-TMSD is customizable based on:

- Connectivity Constraints: Enables offline data entry with periodic synchronization.
- Language and Literacy: Interfaces are multilingual and use icon-based navigation for low-literacy users.
- Device Type: Supports both Android devices and SMS-capable feature phones.
- Modular Integration: Can be implemented as a standalone module or integrated with national HMIS systems like DHIS2.

### **3.5 Alignment with Theoretical Models**

The framework incorporates:

- TAM & UTAUT: Ensures perceived usefulness and ease of use by designing intuitive interfaces and demonstrating clear benefits.
- HOT-fit Model: Balances technological capability with organizational structures and human factors.
- Systems Thinking: Maps the end-to-end medicine delivery lifecycle to capture interdependencies and feedback loops.

### **3.6 Anticipated Benefits**

- Improved Visibility: Centralized data repository and real-time tracking reduce opacity in medicine movement.
- Reduced Counterfeit Risk: AVE enhances confidence in drug legitimacy.
- Optimized Deliveries: GTM facilitates efficient route planning and timely distribution.
- Better Decision-Making: ADSD empowers health officials with up-to-date analytics.
- Policy Compliance: IPCL ensures regulatory adherence and interoperability.

### **3.7 Limitations and Considerations**

Despite its potential, MTF-TMSD faces several challenges:

- Infrastructure Dependence: Success depends on mobile network availability and power supply.



- User Training Requirements: Ongoing capacity building is essential.
- Data Privacy and Security: Requires robust data protection protocols.
- Cost: Although mobile solutions are relatively affordable, initial setup and maintenance can be a barrier.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### **4.1 Contextualizing the Framework**

The MTF-TMSD emerges in response to a confluence of global health and supply chain challenges, including increasing demand for real-time supply data, complex medicine distribution landscapes in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and the proliferation of counterfeit drugs. Existing literature suggests that mobile health (mHealth) interventions have demonstrated potential in enhancing pharmaceutical transparency and efficiency [101], [102], [103]. However, the absence of a unified, context-aware framework that accommodates fragmentation in infrastructure and stakeholder coordination has limited impact.

MTF-TMSD addresses this gap by offering a holistic, modular system that aligns with the diverse capabilities of LMIC settings. The dual-layer model (mobile interface and centralized cloud) creates a flexible architecture resilient to infrastructure variability, while ensuring policy compliance and stakeholder collaboration.

##### **4.2 Comparative Frameworks and Innovation**

Compared to existing models such as OpenLMIS or mTrac, MTF-TMSD distinguishes itself by prioritizing delivery tracking, sales logging, and real-time route visibility through geolocation tools. While OpenLMIS emphasizes logistics data, and mTrac focuses on disease surveillance, MTF-TMSD centers medicine tracking in a fragmented distribution ecosystem. The integration of analytics and decision dashboards ensures that not only are data collected, but actionable insights are generated.

Moreover, the inclusion of offline functionality and SMS-based fallback systems enhances inclusivity in regions where smartphone penetration is low. This innovation enables broader reach and deeper system adoption than app-only models that require continuous internet connectivity.

##### **4.3 Stakeholder Roles and System Integration**

Successful implementation of the MTF-TMSD requires alignment across various actors:

- Government Regulators: Provide legal and policy frameworks for digital compliance, particularly around data privacy and drug authentication.
- Pharmaceutical Distributors: Benefit from real-time visibility and optimized delivery logistics.
- Healthcare Workers and Pharmacists: Operate as frontline users of mobile interfaces to update inventory and confirm dispensation.
- Patients and Communities: Indirect beneficiaries through improved medicine availability and reduced counterfeit risk.



The Interoperability and Policy Compliance Layer (IPCL) facilitates alignment with national health information systems (e.g., DHIS2) to ensure MTF-TMSD is not siloed but rather embedded into broader health governance structures.

#### **4.4 Economic and Health Impact Potential**

Economically, MTF-TMSD can reduce medicine loss, improve supply planning, and enhance revenue capture through streamlined sales logging. Health-wise, its ability to support last-mile delivery accuracy can reduce stockouts, improve treatment adherence, and elevate trust in public health systems.

Several studies have highlighted the role of supply chain digitization in improving health outcomes. For example, WHO's Global Benchmarking Tool (GBT) emphasizes digital transformation for pharmaceutical systems strengthening [7]. MTF-TMSD aligns with such initiatives, providing operational structure to implement digital monitoring strategies.

#### **4.5 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

Despite its promise, the framework faces key challenges:

- Digital Literacy Gaps: Addressed through ongoing training and the use of simplified interfaces.
- Infrastructure Limitations: Mitigated by SMS support, offline modes, and solar-powered mobile devices.
- Data Privacy Concerns: Resolved through encryption, user authentication, and compliance with national digital laws.
- User Resistance: Managed through participatory design workshops that involve end-users in customization and rollout.

#### **4.6 Framework Scalability and Future Research**

MTF-TMSD is designed for modular scalability. Its architecture allows phased rollout—beginning with urban distribution centers and expanding to rural outposts. Future research could empirically test the framework in specific LMIC contexts, evaluate impact through randomized control trials, and develop cost-effectiveness models to guide donor and government investment.

Furthermore, integration with emerging technologies like blockchain for tamper-proof drug logs and AI for predictive inventory planning could expand its utility.

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Summary of Key Insights**

This paper proposed the Mobile Technology-Driven Framework for Tracking Medicine Sales and Delivery (MTF-TMSD) to address persistent challenges within fragmented pharmaceutical supply chains in low- and middle-income countries. Grounded in a detailed literature review, the study synthesized global best practices, operational gaps, and digital health innovations. The MTF-TMSD addresses supply chain opacity by integrating mobile data collection, centralized cloud analytics, geolocation tracking, and

interoperable communication with national health systems. The framework targets improvements in medicine visibility, delivery accuracy, stakeholder coordination, and system resilience.

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

The framework holds tangible value for a wide spectrum of stakeholders. For policymakers, it represents a modular, cost-conscious solution aligned with digital transformation goals in healthcare. For supply chain operators, it enhances route optimization and inventory forecasting. For communities, it ensures access to safe, authentic medications in a timely manner. If scaled and institutionalized, MTF-TMSD could redefine how pharmaceutical distribution is monitored and regulated across multiple layers from national warehouses to remote dispensaries.

### **5.3 Limitations**

While comprehensive, this research is conceptual and does not present empirical validation. Its reliance on secondary data precludes evaluation of real-world constraints, user behaviors, or local political dynamics. Additionally, cost structures for deployment and maintenance remain unexplored. Future pilot implementations will be essential to refine the model's components and ensure contextual adaptability.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Researchers are encouraged to:

- Pilot the MTF-TMSD framework in one or more countries to evaluate feasibility, user experience, and impact.
- Explore integration with blockchain technologies for enhanced drug traceability.
- Develop cost-benefit models to guide donor and public sector investment.
- Investigate behavioral economics strategies to improve user adoption.
- Study the interplay between digital health law and mobile supply chain technologies to recommend enabling policies.

### **5.5 Final Reflections**

As health systems across the Global South strive to modernize medicine delivery, technology must play a central role in fostering accountability, equity, and efficiency. Mobile tools offer transformative promise, but only when aligned with local realities and institutional needs. The MTF-TMSD is a step toward such alignment, offering a practical, evidence-informed blueprint for creating visibility, security, and trust in medicine distribution. Its broader adoption will depend on stakeholder collaboration, strategic investment, and iterative, locally-driven innovation.

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