

Peer Review Report

Review Report on Maternal and child health service utilization during Covid-19 in Eastern Ethiopia.

Original Article, Int J Public Health

Reviewer: Sarina Till

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EVALUATION

Q 1 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

This study employed statistical methods such as one-way ANOVA and Traditional Expert modeling to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on MCH service utilization before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that while hospital visits increased, child immunization and post-natal care services sharply declined. The paper further states that this decline in access of these crucial services will lead to missed MCH problems which are likely to pop up again in the future.

Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

This paper addresses an important topic: MCH in Africa and other LMIC countries has always been a struggle. Further limitations in access to these services (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) will introduce problems that the health systems in these countries will need to deal with at a later stage. The results are clearly stated; this article has many grammatical errors and odd sentence construction. This does, however, not make it hard to understand the data presented in the paper. It would be good if the paper is language edited. The background and introduction contains relevant information that helps to paint the research question as well as the need for this research. The discussion needs a lot of work. It is no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted service utilization. What the results of these disruptions are and how they play out on the MCH stage would have helped strengthen the discussion, which currently only states that there was a drop in utilization.

Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

This paper addresses such an important topic. It is crucial for LMIC health systems to have a better understanding of how the MCH service disruptions manifest now that the pandemic is over. While it is well known that the pandemic resulted in MCH service disruptions, it is important to understand how these disruptions will play out and impact the already strained health systems in LMIC countries. The paper can however be strengthened by the following:

Please read the below as only my opinion and as an attempt to help strengthen the paper. There may be things I have missed or mis-understood, so please only ever see my comments as constructive.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Line 24 is is hard to read, maybe start with Key health indicators include rather than the word And ?

Line 31 perhaps state that immunizations fell by a substantial amount, the current wording is a bit hard to read.

Lines 93-95 : Maybe make it clear that the rise in health service visits are because of the pandemic, the current wording does not make this clear and can be read as a general increase in MCH service utilization.

METHODS:

It might be useful to be more specific about which eastern regions of Ethiopia was selected for the study. Line 126 is currently awkward to read, perhaps try and rephrase it. I also found myself wondering which methods were used to randomly select the health facilities used for the study. Please provide more clarification on how the health facilities were selected.

Line 133, please provide more details on what the structured check list you mention is and how exactly it was used?

Line 134 – perhaps provide a footnote to the website of the tool (Kobo Toolbox) used for data collection. Also please describe exactly how this tool was used to compare hospital records ? As some one who is from Africa but not Ethiopia I wonder how the medical rosters or registers were accessed ?

The paper further mentions that the records were cleaned, please state if any records were removed, and the reasons for removing these records and provide more details on how the data was cleaned.

RESULTS:

I am not sure if the journal asks that the images and charts are kept at the bottom of the document and inserted later ? This made it quite hard to go through the results as I had to scroll down to find the relevant table. The results are well written and clear, it will be a lot easier to read when the graphics and tables are inserted.

Line 150–152 – Once again, make it clear that the increase in hospital visits was COVID-related.

Line 166 Please explain what is meant by an observable fall.

Line 184 – This sentence starts awkwardly perhaps add the word The . "Then the data..."

Line 185 – The paper currently states there was a 2% increment – is this meant to be an increase ?

Line 193 – I think this sentence just needs to be rounded off, perhaps something like " We next computed the ..."

DISCUSSION:

The fact that the COVID-19 pandemic led to MCH service disruption is already known and well-understood. Is it possible to unpack what these disruptions mean and how they could impact health systems in the future using data from other pandemics in other countries? One could look at SARS, H1N1, etc, and see how the disruptions in the health services played out and what Ethiopia can expect in the future. I find that the discussion currently only unpacks the findings, it does not delve really deep into what the findings mean and what the impact of the findings are.

DISCUSSION:

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

Yes the title is fine

Q 5 Are the keywords appropriate?

Yes the keywords are fine

Q 6 Is the English language of sufficient quality?

The paper requires some editing, as there are grammatical errors and some odd sentence construction. That should however not deter from the quality of the science in the paper.

Q 7 Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

Q 8 Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

Yes

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 Originality

Q 10 Rigor

Q 11 Significance to the field

Q 12 Interest to a general audience

Q 13 Quality of the writing

Q 14 Overall scientific quality of the study

REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

Major revisions.