

Action Research for the co-production of public health services: Stakeholder collaboration in improving the quality of maternal and child health services at community health centers

Ridwan and Tutik Rachmawati

Abstract: This study examines the application of co-production in public health services, focusing on improving maternal and child health (MCH) services at Community Health Center (CHC) in Indonesia. Utilizing an action research methodology, the study underscores the significance of stakeholder collaboration in addressing health service delivery challenges. It explores four critical stages of co-production: problem identification, intervention planning, intervention implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The findings indicate that integrating co-production principles with participatory action research fosters stakeholder empowerment, enhances service delivery processes, and significantly improves the quality of MCH services. This research contributes to the expanding discourse on co-production as a transformative approach to public service innovation. It also provides a model for strengthening community health centers through stakeholder collaboration.

Keywords: Health services, co-production, action research, maternal and child health, community health center.

Investigación-acción para la coproducción de servicios de salud pública: colaboración de las partes interesadas para mejorar la calidad de los servicios de salud materno-infantil en los centros de salud comunitarios

Resumen en español: Este estudio examina la aplicación de la coproducción en los servicios de salud pública, centrándose en la mejora de los servicios de salud materno-infantil en los Centros de Salud Comunitarios en Indonesia. Mediante una metodología de investigación-acción, la investigación enfatiza la colaboración entre las partes interesadas para abordar los desafíos en la prestación de servicios de salud. Explora cuatro etapas críticas de la coproducción: identificación del problema, planificación de la intervención, implementación de la intervención, y monitoreo y evaluación. Los hallazgos revelan que la integración de los principios de coproducción con la investigación-acción participativa fomenta el empoderamiento de las partes interesadas, optimiza los procesos de prestación de servicios y mejora significativamente la calidad de los servicios de salud materno-infantil. Esta investigación contribuye al creciente debate sobre la coproducción como un enfoque transformador para la innovación en los servicios públicos y proporciona un modelo para fortalecer los centros de salud comunitarios mediante la colaboración entre las partes interesadas.

Palabras clave: Servicios de salud, coproducción, investigación-acción, salud materno-infantil, centro de salud comunitario.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the practical application of co-production in public services in Indonesia through health services complaint surveys and the establishment of service improvement commitments to enhance the quality of MCH services by utilizing an action research approach. A robust public service involves the active participation of the community, giving service users a role in its development. This heightened level of involvement leads to more significant commitment, enhanced care, and augmented problem-solving creativity (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013). This collaborative effort in public services is referred to as co-production. Collaboration between service providers and users is a valuable strategy for improving public services, particularly within the health sector (Bate & Robert, 2006).

Understanding and improving the quality of public services, specifically in health centers, is a multifaceted task that necessitates a profound comprehension of the needs and expectations of the service users, i.e., the community. Hence, identifying deficiencies in health center services enables a swift response to address critical issues and the solution to enhance the quality of services (Donabedian, 1988). One effective approach to gaining insight into the dynamic needs of service users is to build meaningful and sustained interactions between the service providers and the community. This collaboration is crucial as it allows service providers to comprehend the community's needs better and tailor their services accordingly (Osborne et al., 2016).

Co-production of public services denotes a collaborative process involving the government and the community in the design, development, and delivery of public services (Bovaird, 2007). In co-production, the government no longer functions as the exclusive provider of public services; rather, the community is empowered to contribute and assume responsibility in delivering enhanced public services (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013). Co-production emphasizes a collaborative effort between government as the public service providers (government) and the community as the service recipient aimed at achieving specific outcomes. This collaboration is centered on empowering the community to contribute non-financial resources (Pratiwi, 2019.).

Research in the co-production of public services to improve the quality of MCH services is still relatively limited. The approach undertaken in this context focuses on the healthcare services implementation, thus it is more appropriately classified as co-production. This study aims to explore the implementation effectiveness of co-production in a local context, particularly in MCH services. It is further anticipated that this study will be a model for improving the management of community health centers throughout Indonesia by employing a co-production public service provision.

This study selected action research as the methodological approach. This decision was made considering the action research's inherent ability to foster collaborative interactions among researchers, service providers, and service users through iterative and participatory processes (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). In MCH services, action research is vital for stakeholders to engage in substantive dialogue, share experiences, and collaboratively devise pragmatic solutions to prevalent challenges. This approach is paramount, as the interactions between healthcare providers and the community significantly influence the quality of MCH services. Furthermore, it can facilitate a nuanced understanding of the unique needs and obstacles that mothers and children encounter when seeking adequate care. Moreover, action