OPEN PEER REVIEW

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Peer Review Report for "Participation Status of Charities in Iran's Health System"

Author(s): Raana Gholamzadeh Nikjoo, Nasrin Joudyian, Yegane Partovi

Review Timeline:

Submit Date: 6 Dec 2020
Revised Date: 31 May 2021
Accepted Date: 9 Jul 2021

Revision (0)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

Ramazan Mirzaei: EIC | Revision (0) 3 Jan 2021

Dear author,
After sending this article to the journal's editorial board meeting, the article has been accepted as a short article for reviewing process, please correct the article in the format of short communication (rapid communication).
Thanks.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

10 January 2021

HEALTH SCOPE

International Quarterly Journal

Re ID: Participation Status of Non-Governmental Organizations in Iran’s Health System

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the comments from you and respected reviewers, which provided us with the opportunity to improve our manuscript. We are pleased to inform you that we prepared the manuscript within the format of short communication (rapid communication).

We would hope that you will find these changes up to your satisfaction and look forward to hearing your decision in due course.

Yours truly,

Corresponding author and on behalf of all co-authors,

Nasrin Joudyian

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (1) 9 Feb 2021

Dear AE,
This is a good subject. The following should be considered in the revision of the manuscript:
1- In some cases, there are ambiguities in the written text. These include:
a- Abstract, third line: the word data must come after the word "required'.
b- Abstract, last line: The sentence "The NGOs could be a very valuable opportunity but adopting strategies and practical solutions to solve challenges" is vague and incomplete.
c- Introduction, end of the third line: It seems that the word "deprived" should not be an adjective.
d- Table 1, it seems that the phrase "pharmaceutical companies and equipment" needs to be corrected.
2- In the first line of Table 1, it is best to start the target groups with the phrase "individuals with".
3- In the second paragraph of the Methods section, it is stated that a researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect the study data. However, it is not properly explained how and by what method the reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed.
Thanks.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (1) 19 Feb 2021

Dear AE,
it seems the manuscript was reviewed before and reviewers wanted authors to prepare short communication format.
1- author should present the sampling formula and in details for editor in chief. it seems the sample (n=40) is very limit.
2- please give us more information about the questionair. for example number of questions, dimensions and etc.
3- I think appendix1 is too long and authors should provide a summary of the table.
Thanks.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (1) 27 Feb 2021

Dear AE,
Overall, the paper requires major revisions in terms of language, structure, and narrative. It is difficult to read, and it lacks important detail on how the study was conducted. Finally,

the whole manuscript has to be rewritten
Title:
• The title of the study is irrelevant with the purpose of the study
Abstract
• Follow the journal's instruction for the format of abstract (structured abstract).
• In abstract- method. It is very vague. Write about population and sampling, tools, analysis method, and software,…
• In abstract: Conclusions are not based on research findings.
• In keywords: write keywords based on the MeSH system
Introduction:
• What was the main problem and what question did you answer in this study? State clearly in the introduction.
• Please describe the result of similar (Foreign) studies.
• At the end of the introduction, the purpose of the study should be explained clearly.
Method:
• Complete the method of research (population and sampling, tools by details, analysis method, and software,…). The study method should be rewritten in detail.
• You used three different methods to collect data. Didn't that affect the quality of your data? How can you report these differences between data quality?
• The reliability of the questionnaire hasn't been reported Please write about the validity of the questionnaire? Such as face validity, content validity, and so on. Explain these in detail.
Results:
• Your study is a cross-sectional and quantitative study, but your findings are mostly had reported qualitatively. All of the results were rewritten based on the purpose of the study.
Discussion
• There need to include more references in this section for comparing different studies' result with the current ones.
• Strength points and limitations of the study are not mentioned. Please Write this and Explain in more detail what you did to overcome these limitations in future studies.
• The Conclusion needs to be further strengthened with sharp messages
• The manuscript suffers from poor English (few spelling and grammatical errors)
References:
• Some of the used references are very old and so need to be updated.
• Please correct the references in accordance with the guidelines of the journal.
Thanks.

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (1) 2 Mar 2021

Dear EIC,
According to the reviewers' comments, the manuscript need Major revision.
Best,

Ramazan Mirzaei: EIC | **Revision** (1) 4 Mar 2021

Dear Author
According to reviewers' comments, the manuscript needs “Major revision”.
Best Regards

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Dear Editor,

We sincerely thank you for your constructive comments, which helped us to improve the manuscript. And we are very appreciative to have been given the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We carefully considered the comments which have been offered. We would like to extend our appreciation for taking the time and effort

On behalf of all co-authors,

Corresponding author

Reviewers' Comments:

Reviewer 1

1- *Author should present the sampling formula and in details for editor in chief. It seems the sample (n=40) limit.*

Response: We had to delete the details of the sampling formula due to the limited number of words in the short article format. With reference to the statistical calculations and the Cochran formula for sample size determination, i.e., ($n=\frac{Nz^2pq}{Nd^2+z^2pq}$ *), and with regard to the 15% margin of error, 40 charities were randomly selected as the study samples at three levels (namely, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation) to collect the required information.*

2- *Please give us more information about the questionair. For example number of questions, dimensions and etc.*

Response: We had to delete the details of the information about the questionair due to the limited number of words in the short article format. The given questionnaire included demographic characteristics information about the NGOs, lists of health care services, methods of service delivery, sources of funding, methods used for quality assessment of services, together with a number of open-ended questions about challenges facing charities and ultimately further suggestions for better service delivery.

3-I think appendix1 is too long and authors should provide a summary of the table.

Response: Yes, it was corrected and the table was summarized.

Reviewer 2

1- In some cases, there are ambiguities in the written text. These include:

a- Abstract, third line: the word data must come after the word "required'.

Response: Yes, it was corrected (To collect the required data, the Iranian Charities Portal (ICP) was thoroughly searched).

b- Abstract, last line: The sentence "The NGOs could be a very valuable opportunity but adopting strategies and practical solutions to solve challenges" is vague and incomplete.

Response: Yes, it was corrected (The NGOs could be a very valuable opportunity but adopting strategies and practical solutions to solve challenges are essential).

c- Introduction, end of the third line: It seems that the word "deprived" should not be an adjective.

Response: Yes, it was corrected (All health care systems are drawn against the challenge of insufficient resources and even capacity deprivation to provide all services demanded by the public).

d- Table 1, it seems that the phrase "pharmaceutical companies and equipment" needs to be corrected.

Response: Yes, it was corrected (Pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies).

2- In the first line of Table 1, it is best to start the target groups with the phrase "individuals with".

Response: Yes, it was changed (Covered population groups was used instead of the target groups).

3- In the second paragraph of the Methods section, it is stated that a researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect the study data. However, it is not properly explained how and by what method the reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed.

Response: Yes, method the reliability of questionnaire has been explained.

Reviewer 3

Overall, the paper requires major revisions in terms of language, structure and narrative. It is difficult to read, and it lacks important detail on how the study was conducted. Finally the whole manuscript has to be rewritten

Title:

• The title of the study is irrelevant with the purpose of the study

Response: Yes, it was corrected (Participation Status of Charities in Iran's health system).

Abstract

• Follow journal's instruction for format of abstract (structured abstract).

• In abstract- method: It is very vague. Write about population and sampling, tools, analysis method and software…

• In abstract: Conclusions are not based on research findings.

• In keywords: write key words based on MeSH system

Response: Yes, All items were corrected .We had to delete the details of the method and conclusions due to the limited number of words in the short article format.

Introduction:

• What was the main problem and what question did you answer in this study? State clearly in the introduction.

• Please describe the result of similar (Foreign) studies.

• At the end of introduction the purpose of study should be explained clearly.

Response: Given the valuable potential of charities, our study aimed to examine the participation of these organizations different levels of Iran's health system and the purpose of study is mentioned in the last paragraph. We had to write a summary due to the limited number of words in the short article format.

Deleted text from the introduction due to word limitation in the short article format:

The main approach adopted by these organizations has been towards relieving human sufferings, raising interests and abilities of the poor, protecting the environment, developing and enhancing social services for general benefit, promoting quality of life, and most importantly, helping build a better future. The term non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was first coined in 1949 by the United Nations (the UN) for voluntary non-profit groups of global citizens formed locally, nationally, and internationally to meet a wide variety of sociocultural, charitable, professional, and guild purposes. The most outstanding feature of such organizations has been their voluntary nature influenced by environmental and social conditions.. Likewise, these organizations have been recognized as the first effective supporting associations working for alleviation of poverty and social harms. Accordingly, groups, guilds, and social classes are being organized in NGOs based on collective interests and a purposeful and valuable movement is then established in line with emotional and religious motivations. With reference to the Fourth and the Fifth Development Plans as well as the Health Care System Development Plan in Iran, reducing health-related costs imposed on people has been accentuated. Given the costly nature of its activities, the health care sector has been always assisted by NGOs and public participation. In fact, funding has been one of the biggest challenges facing top managers of the health care

system. To achieve this goal, taking advantage of potential donors to finance part of the costs in the health care system has been of utmost importance and purposeful contributions by NGOs have been regarded as sources to finance this sector. The necessity of exploiting the capacities of charities in the health care system becomes much more evident once the long history of charity in the cultural and religious beliefs of Iranian people is taken into consideration. Accordingly, the number of Iranian NGOs has grown from 2,000 cases in 1999 to approximately 10,250 in 2007 and above 17,000 organizations in 2011.

Method:

• *Complete the method of research (population and sampling, tools by details, analysis method and software...). The study method should be rewrite by details.*

• *You used three different methods to collect data. Didn't that affect the quality of your data? How can you report this differences between data quality?*

• *The reliability of the questionnaire hasn't been reported Please write about the validity of the questionnaire? Such as face validity, content validity and so on. Explain about these by details.*

> *Response: Yes. We did not present our purpose correctly. All the mentioned items were corrected and explained clearly.*
>
> *We had to delete the details of the information about the questionair due to the limited number of words in the short article format. The given questionnaire included demographic characteristics information about the NGOs, lists of health care services, methods of service delivery, sources of funding, methods used for quality assessment of services, together with a number of open-ended questions about challenges facing charities and ultimately further suggestions for better service delivery.*

Results:

• *Your study is a cross-sectional and quantitative study, but your findings are mostly had report qualitatively. All of results rewrite based on purposes of study.*

Response: The quantitative results of the study are mentioned both in the table and in the text of the article. (Evaluation of health care service delivery by these charitable organizations revealed that 63% of the given organizations were using direct (i.e., service delivery) and indirect (namely, financial support) methods to provide services to target populations. In 60.6% of these organizations, the most important sources of funding were related to public donations.94% of the charities were evaluating the health care services).

The study questionnaire also had two open-ended questions about challenges facing charities and ultimately further suggestions for better service delivery, and qualitative results were extracted from the information in this part of the questionnaire.

Discussion

• There need to include more references in this section for comparing different studies' result with current one.

• Strength points and limitations of the study are not mentioned. Please Write this and Explain in more detail what you did to overcome this limitations in future studies.

• The Conclusion needs to be further strengthened with sharp messages

• The manuscript suffers from a poor English (few spelling and grammatical errors)

Response: Strengths and limitations were added. We had to write a summary of discussion due to the limited number of words in the short article format.

Deleted text from the discussion due to word limitation in the short article format:

NGOs operating in the fields of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation provide their services in the form of educational-preventive services (community-based), medical and pharmaceutical services for patients, rehabilitation-welfare-supportive services (financial and legal services), educational services and patient follow-ups (patient-centered), equipment and infrastructure development services, as well as construction of health infrastructure and research services. Unlike the investigation by Nekouei Moghadam, wherein the main activities of charities had

been focused on treatment and support, the present study, examining the activity of NGOs in the ICP, revealed that majority of charitable organizations were providing services to target populations at all three levels of the health care system, i.e., prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. It was thus a very valuable opportunity for Iran's health care system to take advantage of the potentials of such charities to bridge the gaps at all three levels. It is of note that charitable organizations have also realized the importance of their roles in prevention and rehabilitation in addition to treatment costs. Together with these three levels, research activities by charities have been significant and valuable, consistent with the findings of the study by Delisle. Moreover, charities utilize a variety of methods to provide services to their target populations. The estimates in the present study showed that 63% of the given NGOs were using direct (i.e., service delivery) and indirect (namely, financial support) methods to provide health care services to their target populations. In fact, these charities were trying to cover such populations from all dimensions, as expected, with respect to the nature of their existence. From a long-term perspective, parallel work challenges between government agencies and charitable organizations and possibility of continuing activities by charitable organizations to provide comprehensive support for individuals were among some barriers. Besides, developing the culture of dependence and over-reliance of individuals on such organizations, as well as loss of independent thinking and sometimes establishment of grounds for financial abuse of the given approach had created obstacles to realization of the goals in such NGOs, especially if this approach had been accompanied by no strategic plan. The capacity of these organizations can be thus positively used to synergize the health care system with a series of activities in the form of a coordinated set, but not separate activities. So organizations need to reflect on empowering individuals, instead of merely providing financial support, and adopt specific activities coordinated with the health care system to fill gaps in their planning and operational plans.

According to the study findings, in 60.6% of these organizations, the most important funding sources were public donations and after that contributions by NGOs. Due to lack of resources and rising costs imposed on the health care system, it is accordingly very important to exploit the potentials of donors to provide part of the costs, since their targeted assistance is a financial aid to cover some expenses. However, from the point of view of charitable organizations, they are always facing the challenge of inadequate resources and budgets along with increasing medical and pharmaceutical costs. Economic fluctuations have also caused numerous problems in the

way of providing services and consequently charitable organizations have become unable to play a supporting role for the government and even manage themselves. Such NGOs might be also dissolved after a while. Therefore, both charities and the government should design programs to create sustainable sources of funding, budget allocation, and sufficient endowment for specific diseases, as well as charitable support and subsidy programs. Accordingly, charitable organizations can take growing steps in this direction through adopting methods such as developing an operational plan to achieve the goals in organizations with a focus on attracting sustainable financial resources as well as planning to empower NGOs to generate revenues through marketing and sales services to the government and the private sector. Therefore, all the capacities of these organizations and their financial self-reliance to achieve goals in the future will flourish.

One of the main steps for future planning in these NGOs is to evaluate their activities, so it is possible to take the right path in the direction of the set goals through analysis and pathology of programs. As cited in the study by Masoudipoor, in the final ranking of damages to charitable affairs, issues related to monitoring and evaluation of such organizations had been ranked first, and the importance of this issue had become clearer than ever. The results of the present study showed that 94% of the charities were evaluating the health care services. In 29.03% of cases, the given organizations were also using three methods of internal evaluation, external evaluation (viz. monitoring and control), and customer satisfaction survey to assess the services.

It should be noted that the issue of evaluating the performance of charities is a complex process. (16). Considering the uncertainty of the social status of these organizations in the health care system, it seems that there is a lot to do for moving towards achieving goals in such organizations, so the health care system needs to design a comprehensive and coordinated evaluation system. Other challenges facing charities include low awareness at community level and in patients and their families about the nature and the activities of such organizations, lack of comprehensive written laws for charities, and poor coordination between government agencies and charities, which supported the results of previous studies. Comprehensive efforts are also needed to address these challenges and to strengthen the effective presence of charities. In order to use the capacities of charitable organizations, the government must provide a suitable platform for their presence and acceptance by society. Additionally, it is possible to introduce charities to the society, using the capacity of public media. Charities can also exploit

this space to create a platform for familiarity and promotion of information and even community awareness about the nature of charities and diseases by designing various advertising templates. In order to reduce parallel work and inconsistency between governmental agencies and NGOs, it seems that development of common principles and rules can help such organizations move away from self-centeredness and separate activities as a comprehensive system. In this regard, it is suggested to involve charities in planning processes and give them advisory and sometimes supervisory positions in advancing the goals of the health care system. It is also possible to create a suitable space for reaching consensus, expressing concerns, and adopting solutions using specialized committees comprised of governmental agencies and NGOs at the level of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

References:

• *Some of the used references are very old and so needs to be updated.*

• *Please correct the references in accordance with the guidelines of journal*

Response: Yes, the references were checked and updated.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (2) 24 May 2021

Dear AE,
Comments for the authors:
- Kindly Use of abbreviations correctly. Write complete sentence in the first. E.g. NGO
- Abstract: service or services? Kindly check the manuscript and edit it.
- Results: 63% of the organizations….., Do not start the sentence with a number or write the numbers in letters.
- Line 47, Of the 40 charities selected as the study samples… check the manuscript by a native English Language expert.
- Use more resources and new papers in the introduction.
- Line 36, which random method was selected? Simple random, systematic or others?
- Indicate ethical code of the project.
- Discussion section: indicate main findings of the study, then compare with other literature and interpret.
Best,

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (2) 24 May 2021

Dear EIC,
The manuscript needs Minor Revision.
Sincerely,

Ramazan Mirzaei: EIC | **Revision** (2) 27 May 2021

Dear Author
According to reviewer comments, the manuscript need “Minor revision”.
Best Regards

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (3)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Dear Editor,

We sincerely thank you for your constructive comments, which helped us to improve the manuscript. And we are very appreciative to have been given the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We carefully considered the comments which have been offered. We would like to extend our appreciation for taking the time and effort

On behalf of all co-authors,

Corresponding author

Reviewers' Comments:

1- *Kindly Use of abbreviation correctly. Write complete sentence in the first. E.g. NGO.*

Response: Yes, it was corrected.

2- *Abstract: service or services? Kindly check the manuscript and edit it.*

Response: Yes, it was edited (40 charities involved in health care services delivery).

3- *Results: 63% of the organizations….. Do not start the sentence with a number or write the numbers in letters.*

Response: Yes, it was corrected. (Direct and indirect methods of service delivery were used in 63% of organizations.)

4- *Line 47, Of the 40 charities selected as the study samples… check the manuscript by a native English Language expert.*

Response: Yes, it was corrected (Of the 40 charities that were selected as the study samples, 33 cases completed the questionnaire).

5- *Use more resources and new papers in the introduction.*

Response: Yes. It was done

6- *Line 36, which random method was selected? Simple random, systematic or others?*

Response: Active charities in the fields of health care services divided into three categories of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, then, samples were randomly selected from each category by stratified sampling method.

7- Indicate ethical code of the project.

Response: Yes, it was added.

8- Discussion section: indicate main findings of the study, then compare with other literature and interpret.

Response: Yes, it was added. (The NGOs were providing health care services to the target populations at three different levels with direct and indirect methods of service delivery.)

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (3)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (3) 25 Jun 2021

Dear AE,
The manuscript is changed according to reviewers' comments. It is acceptable for publication.
Best regards

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (3) 25 Jun 2021

Dear EIC,
The manuscript entitled: Participation Status of Charities in Iran's health system" has revised based on the reviewer's comment. It could be published in the journal.
Best,

Ramazan Mirzaei: EIC | **Revision** (3) 9 Jul 2021

Dear Author
Your article has been accepted for publication.
Best regards