Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring Client Satisfaction and the Quality of Family Planning Services: A Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Health Facilities in Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana

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Reviewer: Heather Bradley

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written, comprehensive examination of public versus private sector family planning services. Increasing privatization of health care services in developing countries means that evaluations like this study are urgently needed, yet they are rarely carried out in a scientifically rigorous way. I have a few concerns, but believe this paper adds important information to the family planning literature.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

Abstract/Intro:

1. The paper is framed in such a way that suggests contraceptive acceptance and/or continuation was examined. Since it wasn’t, less emphasis should be placed on how client satisfaction may or may not improve acceptance or continuation rates.

Methods:

2. It seems that the initial sampling frame should have been limited to facilities offering family planning services, rather than sampling from all facilities and then limiting to those offering family planning services.

3. The groupings of variables could be described more clearly in the ‘operational definitions’ section. More description is needed of why certain indicators were chosen to measure structure versus process, and why it’s important to look at both kinds of measures.

4. I’m not sure about measuring quality of care with injectable provision. Why not just measure whether the client received her/his method of choice?

5. One of my main concerns about the paper is that so many things were measured that it becomes unwieldy. There’s a lot of information in the tables but not room for much description in the text. It would be easier on the reader if variables could be somewhat limited to those that are important in distinguishing between private and public sector facilities. Did the authors look at covariance in the independent variables? One way of simplifying would be eliminating variables that are highly correlated.
6. A related concern is whether some of the client satisfaction variables used to construct outcomes for the regression models are endogenous with corresponding independent variables. For example, how closely related is the average wait time at the facility with whether the client said wait time was a problem? The authors should look at those correlations and think about potential endogeneity.

Findings:

7. It seems like the bivariate findings indicate public facilities are doing better than is indicated in the text. The authors should make sure not to overstate how well private sector facilities are doing relative to public, given that many of the bivariate findings indicate the public sector is doing better in terms of most structural variables.

8. Did the authors try interactions between independent variables and facility type in the regression analysis? Otherwise, it is difficult to know why private facilities score better in terms of client satisfaction.

Discussion:

9. Clients may inherently have the perception that the private sector provides better services, which may not be explained by any of the structural or process variables in the regression model. This possibility should be discussed.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests