Reviewer’s report

Title: Counting the non-existing: causes of death of undocumented migrants in Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium), 2005 -2010

Version: 0 Date: 15 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Tariku Dejene Demissie

Reviewer’s report:

Abstract

The stated objective in the abstract section of the article indicates that the study is of descriptive nature; however, the method followed attempts to compare the mortality pattern among groups. It needs refining. From line 3-5:-"The objective of this study is to determine the causes of death among undocumented migrants in the Brussels-Capital Region ...".

Methods:

On data sources consulted, the authors indicated that "Death certificate data cover years 2006 to 2010". Yet, in the method section "The residents group refers to all individuals with a Belgian nationality of birth who died in the Brussels Capital region in the period 2005-2010." Why did the authors include the death records of 2005 for the residents group after promising to use death records that cover years 2006-2010?

The data taken from the second source, that is, the Belgian census of 2001, has not been utilized or the result has not been shown in the analysis of the present work.

What is the purpose of the additional analyses in the two linked groups unless comparison is made with the result of the undocumented migrants? -"The other source is the Belgian census of 2001. Again for the official population only, census and death certificates are linked, allowing cross-validation plus extra information for additional analyses in the two linked groups."

Result

Authors stated "Descriptive analysis of the study sample: graphical description & numerical descriptives"; however, NO GRAPHS were used in the entire article.

The age at death distributions of the groups have different standard deviations. Thus, a simple descriptive comparison may NOT suffice to declare difference between groups unless the authors make some statistical tests.
Discussion

If the authors failed to find a statistically significant difference between female undocumented migrants and Belgian women/documented migrants for the underlying causes of deaths, why do they call it important gender differences? It should rather be a similarity.

"In contrast to male undocumented migrants we do not find statistically significant differences between female undocumented migrants and Belgian women/documented migrants for most underlying causes of death. There are several possible explanations for these important gender differences..."

Conclusion

Conclusion should be the contribution of the authors. You have cited here the works of others. I suggest a revision here.

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