

EVALUATION OF CURRENT STUDIES ON ECONOMICS AND FINANCING POLICIES IN HEALTH MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: One of the most important elements of health services management is to ensure the sustainability of services. In this context, the economic sustainability of health services and the development of policies for the financing of health services come to the fore. The aim of this research is to identify current research topics in economics and financing policies in health management. Within the scope of the research, open access international articles published in the last five years were searched by searching the keywords "health management" or "healthcare management" or "health care management" or "health administration" or "health care administration" or "healthcare administration" AND "economy" or "economics" or "finance" or "financing" AND "policy" or "politics" in the subject title on the Web Of Science database, and 58 articles that were found to be about economic and financing policies in the field of health management were subjected to content analysis. As a result of the research, it was determined that researches were conducted on "Policy development in health" (16) and "Financing in health" (14) and on the themes of "Economic effectiveness in health services" (11) and "Ensuring Financial Sustainability of Health Services" (8). In the analysed articles, while most of the evaluations are made on the basis of documents, studies on bureaucrats and health administrators come to the forefront in general. Health financing performance is important in terms of providing sustainable resources for health services. The prominence of financing studies for health services as a result of this research supports this situation. Likewise, emphasising the necessity of developing health policies to ensure inclusive service provision in health and to prevent inequality in health reveals the importance of this research.

Keywords: Health policy, Health economy, Health services, Health management, Health financing policy

JEL Classification: I11, I18

Introduction

Health services refer to all services that begin with the protection of the health of the individual, continue with the treatment of disability or illness and post-treatment rehabilitation services, and aim to increase the health level of the entire society. In all service branches evaluated within

the scope of health services, the service must be provided efficiently, effectively and efficiently. In order to achieve all these, the control of resources used in health services is important. The field of health management has emerged to ensure effective and efficient management of health services. In health services, human resources and financial resources are the most important elements. The use of financial resources in health services and the most efficient use of these resources are important for the sustainability of services.

The determination of financial resources to be used within the scope of health services, provision of necessary financing from relevant resources and policies to be developed for these constitute the subject of health economics (Çalışkan, 2008). Increasing costs in the field of health have made it a necessity to meet these costs. This situation is quite challenging for both countries and individuals. In this context, health economics is considered as producing optimum level of health services with the scarce resources allocated to health services and ensuring the fair distribution of this service. Studies in the field of health economics generally focus on ensuring fair access to health services and effective health service delivery. In this context, the basic element of health economics is the prioritization of services to be provided in the use of scarce resources allocated to health services. At the same time, health economics is a branch of science focused on the production, distribution and consumption of health services (Barbu, 2022).

In the report published by the World Health Organization in 2019, it was emphasized that cost effectiveness would decrease the quality of health services and increase resource waste if cost effectiveness could not be achieved (WHO, 2019). In today's conjuncture, inequality in health services has become a significant problem. According to OECD data, access to health services in low-income countries is considerably lower compared to middle and upper-income countries. This situation reveals social inequalities in health services (OECD, 2020). Health management and health economics contribute to the development of the necessary policies to eliminate these inequalities. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that health economics and financing policies have an important role in ensuring the sustainability of health services and ensuring effective health service delivery. While health economics aims to use the scarce resources allocated by policy makers to be used in health services in the most efficient way, financing policies regulate the fair distribution of these scarce resources. Health economics and financing policies work together to meet the costs incurred in health services, to provide effective cost control and to facilitate access to quality health services.

Benefiting from health services is a human right. In this context, the duty of the state is to enable its citizens to live healthily. For this reason, health services should be provided without interruption. Creating economic resources plays a major role in the continuity of health services without interruption. Governments should develop a financing policy that is suitable for both their own budgets and the budget and lifestyle of the citizens and ensure that all citizens have uninterrupted and fair access to health services. Therefore, financing policies in health are an important factor in ensuring access to health services (Lagarde *et al.*, 2018).

Financing models vary between countries, but are generally based on tax-based systems, social insurance programs, or private insurance models. Each model has its own advantages and disadvantages; for example, tax-based systems provide free health services with equity and pursue a financing approach that is in line with the concept of equality. However, since the

entire financial burden is covered by the government budget, it creates difficulties in terms of financial sustainability (Evans *et al.*, 2013). The social insurance model or social health insurance model seems more equitable because the share to be allocated to health services is clearly determined and it is based on the concept of receiving premiums according to income. However, this model can also create negative effects in terms of employment while providing the service. While private health insurances reduce the economic burden of health services on the state, they are a very problematic method in terms of equality and justice. In this model, high-income individuals can benefit from more health services.

The ever-increasing population worldwide also increases the financial burden of health services to be provided to this population. Therefore, policies aimed at creating economic resources in health services are important not only economically but also in terms of human resources and infrastructure for health facilities (Smith *et al.*, 2010). In addition to developing policies for health expenditures, the objectivity and transparency of the developed policy should also be taken into account. If the aforementioned transparency cannot be provided and an accountable system is not established, the perception of trust and quality in health services will weaken (Mills, 2014). Health economics and financing policies are critical for the efficiency and sustainability of health systems. Efficient use of resources, equal access to health services for all and proper management of financing policies will improve the quality and sustainability of health services.

In the light of all these evaluations, the researches on economy and financing in the management of health services and the policies developed will also reveal the future perspective. In this direction, this study aims to analyse the recent scientific researches on economics and finance in health care management, to analyse the current discussion topics in this field, to reveal new research areas and to guide policy makers.

Method

Within the scope of the research, in order to identify current researches in the field of health management regarding health economics and financing policies, the following keywords were searched in the Web of Science database under the topic; "health management" or "healthcare management" or "health care management" or "health administration" or "health care administration" or "healthcare administration" AND "economy" or "economics" or "finance" or "financing" AND "policy" or "politics".

Among the identified articles, open access articles were preferred. The year limitation was set as 2019-2024 (first 8 months). In this context, 58 articles were obtained and included in the sample. Among the articles included in the sample, 5 were removed from the sample because they were published on topics outside the field, and the remaining 53 articles were subjected to content analysis. Within the scope of content analysis, the articles included in the sample were analyzed by creating categories such as subject, theme, research method used in the research and sample.

Findings

As a result of the research and content analysis, it was determined that there have been publications on economic and financing policies in the field of health management in 30 different countries in the last 5 years. There are also publications that concern all countries and are evaluated in general.

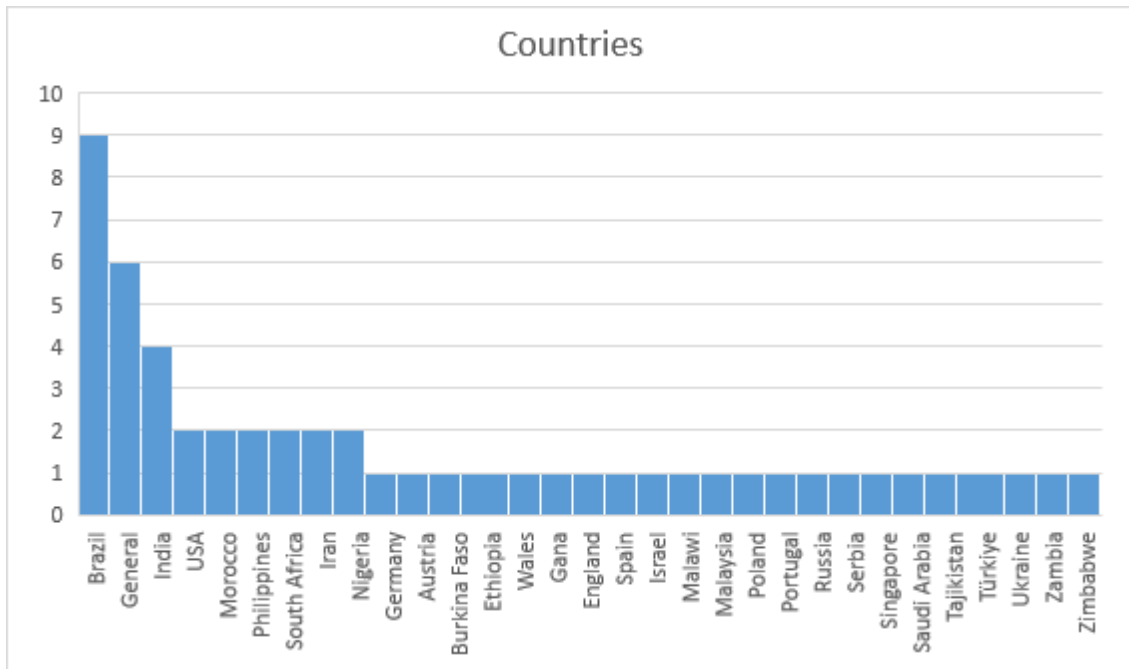


Figure 1 Countries

When the figure above is examined, it is determined that the highest number of publications were made in Brazil (9). Similarly, countries such as India (4), USA (2), Morocco (2), Philippines (2), South Africa (2), Iran (2) and Nigeria (2) are other countries that focus on economic and financing policies in health management. When the relevant countries are examined, it will be seen that developing countries focus more on economic and financing policies in health.

The issues emphasized and highlighted in current research on economic and financing policies in health management are listed in the table below.

Table 2 Example of the construction of one table

Issues	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Policy Development in Health	16	30,19
Financing in Health	14	26,42
Cost of Health Services	7	13,21
Health Services Management	4	7,55
Access to Health Services	3	5,66
Health Education	2	3,77
Health Service Delivery	2	3,77
Health Economics Education	1	1,89
Health Entrepreneurship	1	1,89
Digitalization in Health	1	1,89
Management of Decision Making Processes in Health	1	1,89
Sustainable Development Goals	1	1,89

When Table 1 is examined, it is determined that health policy development (16) and health financing (14) are the most researched and discussed topics. In addition, Cost of Health Services (7), Health Services Management (4), Access to Health Services (3), Health Education (2), Health Service Delivery (2) are other prominent topics. In this context, it is seen that current

research focuses on developing new policies for the use and increase of financial resources in health, creating new financing for health services, controlling costs and ensuring individuals' access to health services. In this context, it is seen that current research focuses on developing new policies for the use and increase of financial resources in health, creating new financing for health services, controlling costs and ensuring individuals' access to health services. When we look at the details of the topics focused on in current studies, we see that there are studies in 20 sub-themes related to these topics.

Tablo 2. Themes

Themes	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Economic efficiency in health services	11	20,75
Ensuring financial sustainability of health services	8	15,09
Effectiveness of health policies in times of crisis	5	9,43
Capacity utilization in health services	5	9,43
Reflections of politics on health	4	7,55
Equal access to health services	3	5,66
Improvement of emergency health services	2	3,77
Performance-based payment system	2	3,77
Elderly health and its place in health policies	2	3,77
Primary health care services	1	1,89
The economic burden of employee health	1	1,89
Awareness of e-health practices	1	1,89
Public private partnership	1	1,89
Decision support systems	1	1,89
Graduate education in health economics	1	1,89
Privatization in health services	1	1,89
Ensuring affordable access to health services	1	1,89
Introducing economic policy to health care	1	1,89
Health insurance	1	1,89
Public expenditures on health	1	1,89

The issues examined in current studies on economic and financing policies in health management have been evaluated on the themes of economic effectiveness in health services (11), ensuring financial sustainability in health services (8), capacity utilization in health services (5) and effectiveness of health policies in times of crisis (5). In this direction, it is possible to say that studies on economic and financing policies in health emphasise the effective use of resources allocated to health services and the transfer of financial resources to services without interruption. In addition, since the focused date range (2019-2024) within the scope of this research covers the Covid-19 pandemic period, it has been determined that the studies focused on the economic sustainability of health services in times of crisis, the effective use of existing capacity and the development of policies appropriate for crisis moments. The preferred sampling distribution in the articles examined within the scope of the research is given in the table below.

Table 3. Sample

Sample	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Documents	21	39,62
Bureaucrats	5	9,43
Health Managers	4	7,55
Academics	2	3,77
Patients	2	3,77
Entrepreneurs	1	1,89
Policy Makers / Politician	1	1,89
Health Information System Data	1	1,89
Health Service Users	1	1,89
Health Organization Representatives	1	1,89
Health Professionals	1	1,89
Local citizen	1	1,89

According to Table 3, researches conducted on documents (21) are more common in the articles subject to the research. The reason for this is the focus on statistical data on economy and finance. In addition, there are articles based on research conducted on bureaucrats (5) because they are policy makers, health managers (4) because they manage financial resources in health, academics (2) because they help establish the scientific infrastructure, and patients (2) because financial and administrative situations are likely to be affected.

The table showing the research methods used in the analysed articles is given below.

Table 4. Methods

Methods	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Quantitative	23	43,40
Qualitative	14	26,42
Literature Review	10	18,87
Mixed	6	11,32

The majority of the articles included in the evaluation consist of studies utilising quantitative (23) research methods based on numerical data and statistical evaluations. In addition, there are articles in which qualitative (14) research method is used in which the opinions of various sample groups are utilised. In addition, there are some studies using literature reviews (10) and mixed (6) methods.

Conclusion

As a result of the research, it has been determined that current studies on economic and financing policies in the field of health management have been conducted on the effective and efficient use of financial resources. Likewise, it has been observed that current studies focus on obtaining financial resources to be used in health services and ensuring their financing. In addition, it was concluded that the policies developed and to be developed on these situations were included. This makes it possible to say that the new trend in health care management today is policy development for the creation and management of financing resources. In addition, studies have shown that there are countries with relatively weak economies that are generally

classified as developing countries. This situation is an indicator of the problems these countries face in financing health services. It is recommended that future research focus on access to health care, health inequalities and financial sustainability in developing countries.

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