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Mapping out Regional Disparities of Reproductive Health Care Services (RHCS) across Pakistan: An exploratory spatial approach

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Although Pakistan has reduced maternal mortality ratio by 57% over the last two decades, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) unmet maternal mortality targets are a matter of concern to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Provincial level maternal mortality data suggested large disparities and inequalities within the country. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to identify the national and provincial level spatial inequalities regarding access to reproductive health care services. Exploratory Spatial Data Analysis (ESDA) was used to leverage the information of spatial clusters and outliers based on the Reproductive Healthcare Services (RHCS) index of 2004 and 2014. Growing high-high clusters were only found in the North-east Punjab Province and neighboring Khyber Pakhtun Khawa Province. Conversely, lowlow clusters increased in North Baluchistan and neighboring districts south of Khyber Pakhtun Khawa and southwest of Punjab. The present study is one of the first attempt to investigate the national and provincial level variations for access to reproductive healthcare services across Pakistan. The findings provide valuable insights for the government and policymakers regarding the dimensions of clusters to address reproductive healthcare issues in vulnerable districts. These results also revealed many questions that need further investigation to uncover the determinants of these geographical clusters and outliers in reproductive healthcare services. Keywords: Maternal mortality, Reproductive healthcare services, Provincial spatial inequality, Spatial analysis.

Biography

 Aiza Sarwar is a doctoral student and a scholar of a women's leadership program to promote well-being in Asia sponsored by the Japanese Government MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology). She earned her master's degree at Nagoya University and completed three months internship at the regional office of UNFPA Bangkok. She is a member of the Pan-Pacific Association of Input-Output Studies (PPAIOS) and a research collaborator of the Quantitative Regional and Computational Science (QuaRCS) Lab. Regrading professional experience, she worked as a research assistant at the PAPAIOS center and a Teacher assistant at Nagoya University.