

Review of: "The Effect of Group-Based Family Orientation to Community Mental Health Services"

Ivan Marbaniang¹

¹ McGill University

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Introduction

1. The introduction could be organized a little better, for the readers to understand the objective behind this evaluation. For example, the authors could introduce the concept of recovery-oriented mental health services first before going into the details from a Canadian aspect. As a reviewer, I was not aware of what these were and the quote from the MHCC as the first paragraph does not help me understand the concept any better.
2. It would also be more informative for the reader if the authors directly addressed what aspects of recover-oriented mental health services they are tackling in this manuscript. The paragraph on patient education is confusing. On one hand the authors argue that patient education by itself has relatively short effects, but do not elaborate on how pre-admission orientation services are in anyway different. Aren't patients being provided education in the orientation services too? Is the difference only the timing of when the education is provided?

Local context

1. A lot of this paragraph has been repeated in the introduction.

Setting

1. How many clinics were involved? Are facilities in all clinics similar? Are these clinics also associated with mental health issues associated with development?
2. It would be informative if the authors could succinctly describe what are some of the mental health conditions that these clinics cater to. The management of conditions especially among children may be very different and the level of confidence in the success of the intervention would be low if there is a lot of heterogeneity in the conditions. For example, does this intervention work better for some conditions than others? It would be difficult to be confident that the intervention works equally well for all conditions.

Data

1. Similar to point 2 above, having the diagnosis of the condition would also be useful for readers.
2. How were the variables categorized, were all scores of the scales used as continuous variables or were these categorized any other way?

Study design and Analysis

1. This section is **extremely unclear**. The authors need to write this section keeping in mind that the study could be replicated following the procedures explained in this section.
2. The time frames are unclear (is the natural experiment set up between 2008 – 2016 and then 2016- 2022?), did the authors attempt a difference in difference? If so, perhaps a figure would help significantly.
3. The authors state that this is a natural experiment. Were the families that underwent the recovery-oriented mental health intervention chosen completely at random or based on certain criteria? If they were not chosen completely at random, the point of this being a natural experiment is invalid.
4. Table 1 shows that there were no participants in groups 0 and 3 from year 2017 onwards, how can they state then that this is a natural experiment, if post intervention there were no participants in the control group? If this is a pre-post intervention analysis, the authors should call it that and not refer to it as a natural experiment, as the conditions are inadequate to call it a natural experiment.
5. Were any controls made at all? If the authors have not controlled for variables (confounders), then they need to show the readers that their study approaches a randomized controlled trial in that the characteristics between the exposed and unexposed groups are comparable.

Conclusion

1. Family education, retention of information provided to the family was never measured in this study. The authors seem to assume that all families are similar in the amount of information that they would retain, and this is the reason for the effectiveness of their intervention. This is an extrapolation beyond the data presented and invalidates the conclusion.

Final verdict

1. The evaluation of the intervention is not fully valid in its current form to support the conclusions made. If this is a pre-post intervention evaluation, the authors should call it that and not refer it to as a natural experiment, unless they justify their position of calling it a natural experiment. **This manuscript should not be published in its current format**