ABSTRACT

Healthcare Service Utilization Following Free Specialist Care in Maratua, a Remote Island of Berau Regency

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Background: Equitable access to specialist healthcare remains challenging in island areas (DTPK), where distance, travel time, and costs restrict referral care. Maratua residents rely on Maratua Community Health Center. Referral to Dr. Abdul Rivai Regional Hospital in Tanjung Redeb takes three hours and adds transportation costs. The Berau Regency Health Office introduced free specialist services at the health center to improve access.

Objective: This study compared healthcare service utilization before and during implementation of the free specialist healthcare program at Maratua Community Health Center.

Methods: This quantitative study used a comparative descriptive design. Data came from health center records for July and August 2026, covering service utilization before and during program implementation. A statistical test assessed differences in utilization.

Results: A total of 84 patients attended: 45 internal medicine patients and 39 patients receiving maternal and child health and family planning services. Satisfaction increased from 4.0476 to 4.6071. The significance value was 0.000, indicating a statistically significant difference between services before and during implementation. The correlation coefficient was 0.445, indicating a moderate relationship between implementation and improved service experience.

Conclusion: Free specialist services were associated with greater patient participation and higher satisfaction at Maratua Community Health Center. Bringing specialist care closer to island communities may reduce significant financial barriers. Long-term evaluation is needed to assess sustained effects and health outcomes. The findings indicate improved service experience but do not independently establish reductions in maternal, infant, or mortality.

Keyword : : specialist healthcare; healthcare access; service utilization; remote island; DTPK; primary health care