

The importance of adopting Public-Private Partnerships as a new managerial practice to enhance the Public Health Institution's efficiency: Obstetric service in Algeria as a model

أهمية تبني الشراكة بين القطاعين العمومي والخاص كممارسة تسييرية حديثة لتعزيز كفاءة المؤسسات العمومية للصحة: خدمة التوليد في الجزائر أنموذجا

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Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the importance of adopting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as a mechanism from New Public Management (NPM) paradigm based on Total Quality Management (TQM) approach, to enhance the efficiency of Public Health Institution and as a collaborative method where both of stakeholders work together to enhance healthcare service's quality. it focuses on obstetric services provided to persons socially insured or their spouses in the state of Batna, within the framework of PPP that has been adopted by Algeria following Executive Decree No 20/60. To meet the study's objectives, the researchers relied on the analytical descriptive method, using interviews and documentary analysis as tools to analyze the legal reference and health indicators in study area for the period (2019-2023). The study pointed out that PPPs play a crucial role in improving the efficiency of public health institutions. However, it is necessary to create adequate conditions for a healthy partnership.

Key words: PPP, NPM, TQM, efficiency, public health institutions, obstetric service.

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لإبراز أهمية تبني الشراكة بين القطاعين العمومي والخاص كآلية من آليات التسيير العمومي الحديث التي تستند على أنموذج إدارة الجودة الشاملة لتعزيز كفاءة أداء المؤسسات العمومية للصحة وكأسلوب تشاركي بين الطرفين للنهوض بنوعية الخدمات الصحية من خلال إلقاء الضوء على تجربة تكفل المؤسسات الاستشفائية الخاصة بخدمة التوليد للمؤمنات وزوجات المؤمنات اجتماعيا على مستوى ولاية باتنة، في إطار الشراكة بين القطاعين التي تبنتها الدولة ضمن المرسوم التنفيذي رقم 60/20. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة اعتمدت الباحثتان على المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي باستخدام المقابلة والمنهج التحليلي للوثائق كأداة لتحليل المرجع القانوني والبيانات المتعلقة بالمؤشرات الصحية للولاية محل الدراسة للفترة (2019-2023). فأبرزت الدراسة أن للشراكة بين القطاعين دور فعال في تحسين كفاءة المؤسسات العمومية للصحة مع ضرورة توفير ظروف ملائمة لشراكة صحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشراكة بين القطاعين العمومي والخاص، التسيير العمومي الحديث، إدارة الجودة الشاملة، الكفاءة، المؤسسات العمومية للصحة، خدمة التوليد.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, countries have been working to achieve Universal Health Coverage, which means health for all including healthcare service at a level of quality that ensures effectiveness, without facing financial hardship that burdens their budgets. This has forced governments to look for alternatives to improve the performance capabilities of their health institutions and enhance their efficiency in the context of policies of rationalizing expenses and the scarcity of financial resources.

According to the World Bank, the health sector includes actors beyond the government, such as formal and informal entities, for-profit and non-profit organizations, that can actively participate in improving the performance of health institutions in public sector, especially the private sector, which is defined as formal, for-profit health service providers (Harding & Preker, 2003), and is considered an untapped resource in achieving Universal Health Coverage (WHO, 2020).

For years, the government have been fully responsible for providing health services, despite the important role played by the private sector in their delivery. The private sector's resources can be utilized to improve public health and enhance the quality of services provided to citizens, as well as expand health coverage. Effective partnerships with the private sector are crucial, and the Public-Private Partnerships model (3P) has emerged as a powerful tool to address the failures of public health institutions. This can help to improve the quality of services and alleviate the administrative and financial pressures faced by governments. International organizations have recognized that this model has three main benefits in the health field: enhancing efficiency improving, service quality, and better resource and risk distribution (Barrios-Ipenza, Calvo-Mora, Velicia-Martín, Criado-García, & Leal-Millán, 2020).

1.1 Study Problem:

Algeria, like other countries that have adopted the paradigm of New Public Management, is working to correct its health system to promote development in general and improve the health service quality in particular. This is particularly important as health is a fundamental pillar that affects and is affected by other development pillars. By adopting methods of New Public Management, the most important and prominent of which is PPPs. Based on what was mentioned above, the problem in this research paper emerges and can be formulated as follows:

How does PPP contribute to improve the efficiency of public health institutions?

1.2 Limits of study:

The study focused on the obstetric service within the health sector. It was conducted following a partnership agreement between the government (social security funds) and the private sector (private obstetric clinics) to provide for persons socially insured or their wives. The agreement came into effect in 2020. As a sample, health indicators associated with obstetric service were analyzed for private clinics and public health institutions in the state of Batna for the period from 2019 to the first half of 2023.

1.3 Study Approach:

The study used a descriptive approach to define the concepts of public-private partnerships and the performance of health institutions by extrapolating New Public Management literature. To clarify the role of this model in improving the efficiency of public health institutions, the study adopted an analytical approach for health indicators related to the obstetric activity of health institutions in the state of Batna.

1.4 Objectives of the study:

This study aims to:

- Highlighting one of the New Public Management techniques: Public-Private Partnerships.
- Examining the role of PPPs in enhancing the efficiency of public health institutions' performance at both quantitative and qualitative levels.
- presenting a case study of clinics in the state of Batna that provide obstetric care for socially insured pregnant women and wives.
- Submit proposals for the successful implementation of PPPs in the context of the Algerian health system.

1.5 Importance of the study:

The study is significant in two aspects: scientific and practical.

Scientifically, it reviews the correlation between the PPPs model and the efficiency of public health institutions.

Practically, it highlights the role of the private health sector as a partner of the public sector in improving the performance of public health institutions. This is accomplished through an analytical study that assesses the obstetric care provided to pregnant women who are socially insured or are wives of socially insured individuals in private clinics.

1.6 Previous studies:

- Fawziah alghamdi Study (2017), entitled The Impact of Partnership between the public and private sectors on the Quality of Health Services in Hospitals (Field Study on Hospitals in Governorate of Jeddah), Master's thesis in Management Sciences, King Abdulaziz University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the researcher relied on the descriptive approach in the theoretical aspect and an analytical approach through a case study using a questionnaire for a sample of employees from King Fahd General Hospital and United Doctors Hospital in Jeddah Governorate, with a response rate of 60.5%. Among its objectives was to clarify the factors that make up the PPPs in hospitals and assess their impact on improving Quality Health Services. One of the significant findings was that activating PPPs is crucial for enhancing quality and promoting the national economy.

-Fernando Barrios Ibonza et al. (2020), Patient Satisfaction with Peruvian Healthcare Services: Validation and application of the HEALTHQUAL scale, an article published in the international Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 17 No. 14. The researchers used a descriptive analytical approach of the HEALTHQUAL scale to measure the quality dimensions of health services. Additionally, a case study of a sample of 250 users of Barton and Kaelin Hospital as model of PPPs by applying PLS model. One of the objectives of study was to assess patient satisfaction in hospitals based on PPPs according to the HEALTHQUAL scale. The study's results showed that the HEALTHQUAL scale was a valid tool for measuring user satisfaction in PPP hospitals.

- The study of Abdelmadjid Sedjel and Faical Mokhtari (2022), entitled Public-Private Partnerships as a tool of modern public management and improving the efficiency of Algeria's health care system, an article published in the Journal of Administrative and Financial Sciences Review, vol. 06 No. 01. An analytical descriptive study aims to clarify what is a public-private partnership and the concept of new public management while highlighting the challenges faced by Algeria's health system due to the traditional model of public administration. The study found that implementing

new public management principles through public-private partnerships allows for a higher quality of health services, rational cost control, and reduced waste and budgetary inefficiency.

- Mohamed Amrani's study (2022), " The Emergence of a New Actor on the Algerian Health landscape and the Contribution of PPPs, New Forms of public-private organization ", article published in the Journal of Commercial Sciences, Volume 21 No. 01, which is an analytical study of the organization of Algerian health system. One of the objectives of study is to demonstrate the need to reconsider the health situation in Algeria after three decades of public sector dominance through the arrangements made by new public management, the economy of creativity and innovation, including public-private partnerships. The study concluded that there is modernization in Algerian health policy, using new forms of openness and rapprochement between the public and private sectors. the study highlights that this convergence does not necessarily have a positive impact on patients or professionals. The researcher emphasizes the importance of this convergence in making the health system fairer and more effective.

- Samiha Manasria (2023), entitled "Public-Private Partnership and its role in achieving universal health coverage", an article published in the Journal of Law and Political Science, Khanshela University, vol. 10, No. 01, which is an analytical study that highlighted the role of public-private partnerships in universal health coverage. However, the researcher points out that the management of the partnerships project has led to increased costs for citizens due to the lack of expertise in this field.

The extrapolation of previous studies demonstrates that the importance of PPPs in healthcare sector is widely acknowledged. Foreign studies, which adopt an applied approach, emphasize the role of PPPs in improving healthcare services quality. Conversely, analytical studies on the Algerian health system lack a realistic and applied aspect that would reveal the impact of the use of such partnerships on the healthcare system. This represented a research gap that the researchers sought to address in the current study. To this end, they utilized the results of previous studies to carry out the current study within the Algerian health system to assess the experience of the obstetric care provided to pregnant women who are socially insured or are wives of socially insured individuals in private clinics through the framework of the partnership between the two sectors and examine its impact on the efficiency of public health institutions.

2- The efficiency of public health institutions

Health sector has a finite supply of resources for producing healthcare. Meanwhile, the health needs of the population are unlimited. Resource scarcity limits health systems' ability to meet all the needs. A fundamental economic problem is how to make the best use of the healthcare resources and avoid waste. In this context, Healthcare efficiency refers to the optimal use of available resources to provide the highest level of healthcare services possible, while minimizing waste(Kirigia, Emrouznejad, Cassoma, Asbu, & Barry, 2008, p. 510).

2.1 Definition of Efficiency

Efficiency is an indication of rational and effective use of available resources. It involves using input resources without waste or loss while maximizing outputs to their maximum in terms of quality and production (Gok & Sezen, 2013, p. 291).

Efficiency is related to the application of limited financial resources and minimal organizational costs in pursuit of target results (Skietrys, Raipa, & Bartkus, 2008, p. 45).

2.2 Definition of Public Health Institutions

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined the health institution as "an integrated part of the social and health organization that aims to deliver full healthcare, both curative and preventive measures, to citizens also extend their services directly to households within their local environments while simultaneously serving as training centers for health service personnel" (Achi, 2017, p. 19).

The definition of public health institutions does not differ from that of health institutions except that they are subject to state ownership and authority, which makes their management mechanisms different from those of private healthcare institutions.

From the foregoing, public health institutions refer to those health facilities owned by the government and managed by its entities according to national legislative frameworks. The principles of the public service shall be applied to them, including continuity of activities, neutrality in interactions with beneficiaries, and equality of all to access its services.

Public health institutions are the cornerstone of the healthcare system, as they possess enormous resources distributed across the national territory and provide free or low-cost health services. Article 297 of Algerian Health law 18/11 defines the Public Health Institution as a privately administered public institution with moral personality and financial autonomy. Its mission is to ensure the development and promotion of all health activities. Additionally, it can provide training and research activities in the field of health.

Algerian legislation classifies public health institutions into four important categories: university hospital centers, public hospital institutions, specialized hospital institutions, and public institutions of local health following Executive Decree No. 97-467 and Executive Decree No. 07-140. However, the article 298 of the same Law abolished public hospital institutions and public institutions for local health and integrated them into the district of Health. It also established an urgent medical aid institution but not yet applied.

2.3 Public Health Institutions Efficiency

Kirigia et al. defined health organization efficiency as providing maximum services using resources that can be obtained or minimizing the use of available resources to produce a certain level of services in the context of hospitals (Kirigia et al., 2008, p. 510).

The efficiency of health institutions is defined as the optimal allocation of the human resources, facilities, equipment, and medical supplies available to any institution to maximize access to healthcare services for the population of a particular region, or minimize resource usage while maintaining a certain standard of healthcare delivery (Achi, 2017, p. 31).

Therefore, the efficiency of public health institutions involves the optimization and efficient use of the human, financial and material resources allocated to them in order to provide the highest quality healthcare services.

3- The Public-Private Partnerships

Since 1993, the WHO has been encouraging the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in advancing global health. One of its initiatives is the

promotion of public-private partnerships. While some scholars argue that the private sector comprises only for-profit organizations, others include non-profit organizations (Ghasemi, Amini-Rarani, Zadeh, & Karimi, 2022, p. 02). It is important to note that the study only examined the private sector within for-profit organizations, and no other sectors were included.

3.1 Definition of Public-Private Partnerships

Based on the theoretical literature, the definition of public-private partnerships encompasses various proposed concepts depending on the point of different perspectives, however, they all function as one of the modern management methods of public institutions. The most significant concepts include:

Table 01: different definition of PPPs

Definition	Dimensions
OECD: "An agreement between government and one or more private partners involves the provision of services by the private partners to deliver them effectively. The success of this agreement also depends on ensuring that sufficient risk is transferred to the private partners"(OECD, 2008, p. 17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement between public and private sectors - Common interest - Risk sharing
IMF: "Those agreements under which the private sector provides infrastructure and services have traditionally been the responsibility of the public sector"(Belfodil, 2022, p. 51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement between public and private sectors -Private sector provision of infrastructure or public service
World Bank: "Arrangements through which the private sector provides assets or services that are traditionally provided by the government"(Alshami, 2023, p. 50)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement between public and private sectors -The private sector's provision of a public asset or service
Public-private partnerships are long-term contractual agreements of public sector entities with private sector entities aimed at building or operating a public facility by a private sector entity or providing a service to the community on behalf of a public sector entity(Lewis, 2001, p. 02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long-term contractual agreement - Building or managing a public facility/providing a public service -On behalf of the public sector
The main characteristic of PPP, compared to the traditional approach to infrastructure provision, is that it combines investment and service provision into one long-term contract. These contracts can last up to 20 or 30 years. The concessionaire manages and controls the assets, usually for a usage fee, which is compensated for investment and other costs and returns to the government after the expiry of the concession contract (Engel, Fischer, & Galetovic, 2008, p. 03)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aggregation for investment and service delivery -Long term contract -Concession
Public-private partnerships are ongoing agreements between government and private sector organizations. The private sector participates in the decision-making process and produce a public good or service that was originally the responsibility of the public sector to provide and in which the risks of production are shared with the private sector(Forrer, Kee, Newcomer, & Boyer, 2010, p. 476)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agreement between the public and private sectors - Production of a public good or service by private sector -Risk sharing

Source: Prepared by the researchers

Based on the above, we conclude that a public-private partnership is an agreement between a government and a partner or group of partners from the private sector to pursue mutually beneficial objectives with both parties sharing opportunities and risks according to their respective contributions. In this type of partnership, the private sector is obliged to provide services or produce goods that are typically the responsibility of the government. This partnership represents a complementary relationship rather than one based on allocation and delegation.

3.2 Principles of Public-Private Partnership

Buse and Walt identified seven key principles for ensuring successful public-private partnerships in their study (Buse & Walt, 2000, p. 704):

- **Clearly defined, achievable common goals:** The objectives of both parties should be clearly outlined and achievable as the partnership is contractual.
- **Defined and agreed roles and responsibilities:** The partnership contract defines the role of each party in the implementation of the partnership project by clearly agreeing on their respective responsibilities.
- **Different and distinct benefits for all parties:** Providing public services that offer value for money to all stakeholders.
- **Transparency:** Honest and clear dealings between partners through a well-defined vision of adopted methods
- **Continuous maintenance of partnership:** As partnerships are long-term agreements, it's essential to define an overall framework adaptable to market forces for implementation.
- **Equal participation:** Establishing a mechanism to achieve balance through fair distribution of returns and risk sharing.
- **Fulfilling agreed commitments:** Both parties commit to implementing agreements as agreed upon, building trust crucial for the success of the partnership.

It is important to note that the success of PPPs relies on transparency in partner relations, flexibility, a sustainable source of financing, mutual commitment, and effective monitoring by the public sector to ensure quality service provision by private entities (Joudyian, Doshmangir, Mahdavi, Tabrizi, & Gordeev, 2021, p. 15).

3.3 The importance of Public-Private Partnerships

International organizations have sought to emphasize the importance of PPPs for development; however, several obstacles hinder their achievement including inadequate government funding to meet the population's needs and the inefficiency in managing public institutions. Additionally, there is a growing gap between the services provided by public institutions and the desired quality. Furthermore, the government is making efforts to involve the private sector in implementing its public health policies under the requirements of the shift towards a market economy. Overall, this partnership's impact encompasses various aspects (Alghamdi, 2017):

- **Reducing costs:** The modern state has started to collaborate with the private sector to execute infrastructure projects and public benefit projects as well as those projects of public benefit. The partnership has the potential to offer new financing sources beyond the public treasury. Additionally, it can also reduce the project implementation period and reduces completion costs to maximize profits through continuous supervision and control of the project at every stage.
- **Risk distribution:** As previously mentioned, the partnership between the public and private sectors is based on the principle of risk sharing. To avoid contractual instability, it is essential to carefully identify and analyze risks in advance to prevent any negative impact on

partnership objectives, such as exceeding cost or timeliness, or the inability to fulfill their inclusion in terms. The contract aims to establish stability between both parties while safeguarding their respective rights in a balanced manner.

- **Development of services:** Public institutions have faced several challenges that have hindered their ability to provide quality services to citizens. PPPs have emerged as a viable solution to improve the quality of public services and meet citizens' needs. PPPs are evaluated based on specific criteria to ensure that they meet the required standards. PPP combines two modes of management: New Public Management adopted by the government and Total Quality Management adopted by the private sector.

- **Achieving efficiency:** One of the requirements of New Public Management is to rely on management methods from the private sector to meet the needs of the public and improve their well-being. The Public-Private Partnership facilitates the transfer of knowledge, expertise, and technology from the private sector to achieve the objectives of government institutions. By integrating the advantages of each party, the PPP leads to the required efficiency.

-**Economic benefits:** The partnership aims to accelerate the country's economic growth by achieving high growth rates, attracting investment, creating new job opportunities, and redistributing roles between the private and public sectors (Bedjekina & Meghiche hama, 2019, p. 390). The partnership also promotes competitiveness and innovation and opens the door for SMEs to enter the market.

3.4 Types of Public-Private Partnerships

The classification of PPPs depends on several factors, including the nature of the contract, the nature of the activity, the type of sector, and the type of organization involved. These factors determine the scope of each party and their level of interaction. The types of partnerships are typically grouped into two categories (Manasria, 2023, p. 434):

* **Cooperation partnerships:** This form of partnership is based on equal decision-making among partners without a single authority figure. Tasks are distributed among partners, albeit without a formal contract (Dlanda & Benamrane, 2020, p. 417).

* **Contract partnerships:** In this type of partnership, a contractual agreement governs the relationship between the parties. The relationship is hierarchical, with one party responsible for task execution and another overseeing and controlling the activities. It has many forms (Alshami, 2023, pp. 52-55):

-**Service contracts:** Within the private sector, companies offer public services in exchange for financial compensation. These services often include maintenance, repair, and enhancement procedures and sanitation systems. The duration of these contracts typically ranges from 1 to 3 years.

-**Management contracts:** The public authority delegates enterprise management responsibilities to the private sector, entailing operational rights rather than ownership rights. These contracts usually span from 3 to 5 years.

-**Lease contracts:** These contracts involve the government granting a private company usage right for a public asset in return for rent payments and profit collection. Unlike management contracts where commercial risks are borne by the government entity, in this case, commercial risks lie with the private company. The contract duration typically ranges from 05 to 15 years, extendable.

-**Concession contracts:** Under these deals, a private company takes on responsibility for operation, management, and investment while the asset remains under public ownership. In exchange for small sums of money, enduring approximately 25 to 30 years.

-Long-term usufruct contracts: The Government requires a private company to finance, build, and operate a facility over an extended period ranging between 20-30 years before transferring it back to government.

-Ownership transfer contracts: The facility is privately owned but regulated by a government institution, which means that the government acts as an observer and regulator rather than the service provider.

- Construction and systems contracts (B.O.T contracts): The government has engaged the private sector to design and construct economically-oriented infrastructure, which the private company will operate and profit from in order to recover the project's costs and achieve a profit margin throughout the license period. At the end of the license period, the private company is obligated to transfer ownership of the project's assets to the government according to the agreed terms.

3.5 The impact of public-private partnerships on the efficiency of public health institutions

With the development of government's activity, it has shifted towards becoming an "Entrepreneurial government". Among the most important fields of management: Total Quality Management and New Public Management, public-private partnerships have emerged as an interactive approach to improve the quality of services provided to citizens. Therefore, countries seek to apply it in vital sectors, particularly in health sector, to alleviate the burden on public institutions and engage the private sector in the promotion of health system.

- Multidimensional partnerships based on Total Quality Management and New Public Management

The pursuit of alternatives to the bureaucratic system has become the focus of everyone's attention to boost the performance of both public and private organizations. From New Public Management, which improves the government organization's efficiency to Total Quality Management, which focuses on maximizing profit through quality and customer satisfaction in private organizations, the PPPs model has emerged.

Public-private partnership is the concept that has emerged as a fusion of elements from New Public Management and Total Quality Management, as it includes high levels of cooperation, coordination, and overlap between public-sector organizations and private-sector organizations (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 66). As government roles have evolved into an "Entrepreneurial government", the integration of Total Quality Management within its institutions, particularly those that provide services, has become a significant development. The adoption of TQM alongside NPM serves, as an effective mechanism, for enhancing institutional efficiency and achieving the required quality. This partnership, with all its components, will be a driving force for enhancing the performance of public health institutions (a key objective of NPM) and for improving the quality of healthcare services (an important objective of TQM).

- Advantages of Public-Private Partnerships in health

A. For the public sector

- *Reducing the burden on public institutions to provide quality patient care.
- *Efficient use of public resources, whether human, material, or financial.
- *Enhancing the quality of essential public healthcare services.
- *Cost reduction and increased efficiency through strategic collaboration with suitable private partners.

* Leveraging the expertise, skills, and resources of the private sector, particularly specialized medical professionals.

B. For the private sector

* Ensure continuous revenue flows.

* Better investment in medical specialties, expertise, and medical technology.

* Activating teamwork and cooperation and participation.

* Encouraging innovation and medical advancements as well as competition between various health institutions and the search for excellence.

* Continuous improvement of the healthcare service to attract citizens to benefit from its services.

C. For citizens and society

* Meeting citizens' health needs by the required quality standards.

* The citizen's choice to go to public or private health facilities, which is considered a form of democracy and transparency.

* Improving citizens' physical, mental, and psychological well-being as well as social conditions.

A successful partnership between these sectors is set to offer wider coverage, higher-quality diverse services, and lower costs, resulting in increased satisfaction levels (Tabrizi, Azami-Aghdash, & Gharaee, 2020, p. 02).

4- Analytical study of the public-private partnerships related to obstetric services in Algeria

The Algerian government aims to improve the quality of healthcare for women and child, also to alleviate the burden on public sector due to the high number of annual births, particularly in recent years. To achieve this, the government has turned to the private sector for assistance. Article 265 of the Health Law 18/11 states that the regulation of national health system is based on, inter alia, the integration of the public and private sectors in healthcare services. Also, the Executive Decree No. 20/60 has been implemented as a legal framework to regulate obstetric services for socially insured individuals and their spouses, with plans to expand the program to other groups.

4.1 Critical Review of Executive Decree No. 20/60

Executive Decree No. 20/60, issued on March 14, 2020, defines the model agreement between social security funds and private clinics to support obstetric services. This decree regulates the partnership between the public sector (social security funds and public hospitals) and the private sector (private clinics) in providing obstetric services to women covered by social insurance and their partners.

The decree outlines the specific obligations of each party involved in this partnership. Private clinics seeking to provide maternity services within the framework of this agreement, a file must submit guaranteeing their legal license from the Ministry of Health to practice obstetric and maternity care along with details about their human resources. Article 5 stipulates that these facilities must employ professionals with expertise in obstetrics and gynecology. The activities must be overseen by a full-time doctor specialized in these fields. Compliance with international health standards is also required, along with adherence to regulations related to workplace safety and hospital prevention measures aimed at upholding service quality.

Private clinics are prohibited from requesting beneficiaries to make additional payments as per Article 13, since the government fully covers service expenses. Social security funds are required to cover service costs based on predefined tariffs in the Executive Decree that closely align with actual costs. These amounts may be adjusted with the approval of the Minister responsible for social security, per Article 25. The Decree highlights the importance of preventing private individuals from performing cesarean sections solely for financial gain. It includes measures to protect beneficiaries from excessive charges by private entities. Conducting a cesarean section requires approval from the fund and a proposal from the attending physician, especially if it is necessary due to health complications during childbirth. Additionally, there is post-monitoring of the reasons for resorting to this procedure.

The Convention will be in effect for one year and implicitly renewable for a similar period. Revocation of the license to operate the private hospital by the Ministry of Health constitutes a serious violation of the law. Alternatively, termination can occur with prior notice from either party as specified in the decree.

The electronic management distinguishes this process by adopting 'Al-Shifa' digital system for contractual relations. This system aims to save time and reduce effort for all parties involved.

4.2 Analysis of health indicators related to the obstetric service in the state of Batna for the period 2019-2023

- Distribution of specialist doctors between the public and private sectors:

Table 02 and Figure 01 show the distribution of doctors specializing in obstetrics and gynecology between the private and public sectors. The data reveals a significant imbalance, with 88% of these doctors concentrated in the private sector. This is due to the financial incentives offered by the private sector, as well as the absence of shifts and medical urgencies that can exhaust doctors in public institutions. The public authorities entered into this partnership due to the large number of doctors specializing in this field who are active in the private sector. This makes the private sector better equipped to provide quality care for childbirth compared to the public sector, which has a significant deficit in this specialty.

Figure 01: Distribution of Gynaecologists and obstetricians between the two sectors in the state of Batna

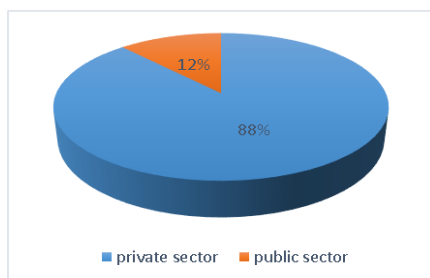


Table 02: Distribution of doctors specializing in obstetrics and gynecology and midwives during the first semester of 2023

Number of Employees until 30-06-2023			
Public sector		Private sector	
Gynaecologists and obstetricians	midwives	Gynaecologists and obstetricians	midwives
10	484	74	18

*Source: Report of the Directorate of Health *Batna* for the first semester of 2023*

- Health indicators for obstetrics and gynecology services of the public and private sectors after the conclusion of the partnership:

It is noted from Table 03 that the activity of public obstetrics institutions is double the activity of private clinics. It is important to note that only 04 clinics have been licensed to provide obstetrics and gynecology services within the framework of the partnership, all of which are located in the state headquarters.

Upon closer analysis of data, it is evident that public sector doctors prioritize natural childbirth over cesarean deliveries. Cesarean sections are viewed as an alternative solution in cases where complications arise, affecting the health of either the mother or fetus, necessitating surgical intervention, according to statements from doctors. In 2022, there were 5,361 cesarean sections compared to 22,349 normal deliveries in public sector. This suggests that for every 4 women who undergo a normal delivery, one woman undergoes a cesarean section.

Table 03: Number of births in the public and private sectors in the state of Batna during the years 2021 and 2022, the first semester of 2023.

	2021		2022		first semester of 2023	
	normal deliveries	caesarean deliveries	normal deliveries	caesarean deliveries	normal deliveries	caesarean deliveries
Public sector	24426	5375	22349	5361	5065	1123
Private sector	6085	3944	6622	4039	2104	1235

Source: Reports of the Directorate of Health of Batna for the years 2021, 2022, and the first semester of 2023

It is also noted that there has been a gradual increase in the private sector sponsorship of childbirth, possibly due to partnership agreements that allow women the right to choose between public and private healthcare facilities for giving birth, especially with the government covers the costs of hospitalization and childbirth for socially insured individuals or their spouses.

However, there is cause for concern. The statistics show a significant surge in cesarean deliveries in private clinics during the first semester of 2023. This may be due to the demand for painless delivery and plastic surgery, but it is also possible that these interventions are undertaken not out of medical necessity or patient preference but as a lucrative procedure due to its higher cost compared to normal birth, especially considering the primary profit-driven nature of the private sector.

- Obstetric Health Indicators in the Public Sector: A Comparison Before and After Partnership

The health statistics of public hospital specialized in obstetrics and gynecology in Batna indicate that it is the most dynamic and receptive public facility catering to pregnant women in the region.

Table 04: Medical activities of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Specialized Public Hospital, Meriem Bouatoura, Batna

Indicators	2019	2020	2021	2022
the number of Medical Exams	41333	35306	36616	34075
Daily Average Medical Exams	113	97	100	93
Number of obstetric Exams	28153	25735	20534	22725
number of admissions	17976	15777	14518	14555
Number of hospitalization days	47074	55780	78729	34626
Hospital bed occupancy	107%	127%	198%	79%
Bed turnover rate	150	131	121	121

Source: Reports of the Specialized Public Hospital, Meriem Bouatoura, for the years 2019, 2021, 2020 and 2022.

Table 04 shows a slight decrease in the institution's activity when comparing the data from 2019 to subsequent years following the implementation of Executive Decree 20-60. This was also confirmed by the institution's managers. According to their statements, it should be noted that these data may not be an accurate reflection of reality, as they coincide with the period of combating the Covid-19 virus. The institution's activities have been impacted by various external factors, such as state-imposed precautionary measures that have led to restrictions on events like weddings and enforced social distancing. Additionally, concerns about infection within health facilities have also had an impact.

Private sector involvement has reduced pressure on public institutions, particularly in obstetric care. This is due to their inability to accommodate pregnant women and inadequate service provision, which led to distorted reports of public institutions specialized in obstetrics. It is worth noting that the rate of bed exploitation has decreased. Each woman now receives appropriate hospitalization without having to share beds with multiple others. Table 04 shows a decrease in bed exploitation from 107% in 2019 to 79% in 2022, and a drop in participation in bed turnover from 150% in 2019 to 121% in 2022.

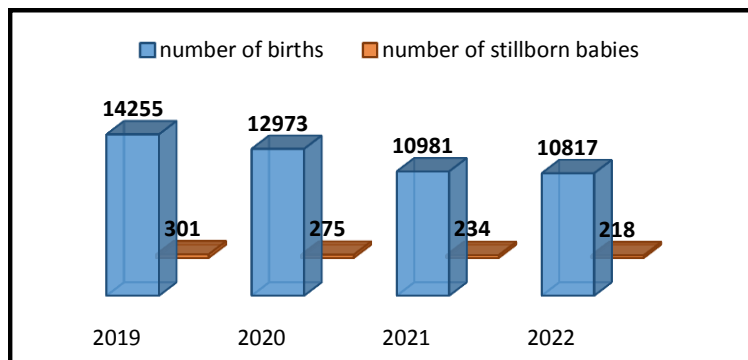
Table 05: Medical activities of the obstetrics bloc at the Specialized Public Hospital Meriem Bouatoura, Batna

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of maternal deaths	4	7	4	1
Maternal mortality rate	28.06□	35.85□	36.42□	9.24□
Neonatal mortality rate	20.66‰	20.71‰	20.88‰	19.68‰
Average daily births	39	35	31	30

Source: Reports of the Specialized Public Hospital, Meriem Bouatoura, for the years 2019, 2021, 2020 and 2022

Table 05 presents key indicators concerning maternal and fetal health. It shows a significant decrease in maternal mortality rate from 36 per 100,000 women in 2021 to just 9 women per 100,000 in 2022. This reduction serves as a positive signal regarding the efficiency of public health institution. Similarly, while neonatal mortality rates remain low, it is important to recognize that most neonatal deaths are attributed to natural factors rather than shortcomings in institutional performance.

Figure 02: Number of births and stillborn babies in the obstetrics department of the Specialized Public Hospital Meriem Bouatoura, Batna.



Source: Prepared by researchers based on reports from the Specialized Public Hospital, Meriem Bouatoura for the years 2019, 2021, 2020 and 2022

Based on Figure 02, it can be observed that the involvement of the private sector in delivering healthcare services reduced the availability of pregnant women to public institutions. The number of recorded births decreased from 14,255 in 2019 to 10,817 in 2022, despite an overall increase in births. There was also a decline in number of stillborn babies, possibly which may be linked to a decrease in birth numbers and increased focus on maternal and fetal health by medical professionals. This could be due to reduced pressure on public institutions.

5- CONCLUSION

The study attempted to clarify the importance of adopting PPPs as an effective means to improve the efficiency of public health institutions and accelerate development. The following results and recommendations were reached:

Results:

-The current study demonstrates the PPPs as an effective tool to increase the efficiency of public health institutions and to improve the healthcare services quality. It allows for the relieving of pressure on them, helps to rationalize public expenditures and seeks to draw on private sector expertise and resources to meet citizens' health needs when conditions exist for a health partnership between the two sectors.

- There is a strong political commitment to involve the private sector in the health system and expand its role in the promotion of many areas of public health by gradually expanding the list of healthcare services that were the responsibility of government hospitals only.
- Encouraging private investment in efficient health systems focused on social security rather than solely profit-driven practices.
- Reducing pressure on public obstetrics and gynecology public hospitals to increase their efficiency and improve healthcare quality.
- Public-private partnerships in the health sector may deviate from its primarily humanitarian path to a profit-making orientation on the part of the private sector if control is not carried out seriously and strictly.

Recommendations:

- Develop a coherent strategy to facilitate the implementation and supervision of PPPs in the health sector, aimed at addressing pertinent challenges.
- It is essential to analyze and adopt successful international practices in PPPs within the health sector, ensuring alignment with Algeria's specific health system.
- Enhance the legal framework by instituting legislation that facilitates the transition to PPPs in healthcare.
- Bring about a shift in organizational culture by moving away from bureaucratic principles towards embracing new values focused on quality standards in service delivery.
- Raise social consciousness and leverage media channels for disseminating updates to support collaboration between the public and private sectors.
- Establishing accessible and transparent digital health systems as an enabling climate for PPPs. Promote information literacy among citizens for their active participation in partnership initiatives.
- Establish an official central non-governmental agency responsible for conducting feasibility studies, project selection, planning, support, monitoring, and oversight of partnership contracts.
- Develop well-defined criteria for selecting suitable partners, emphasizing evaluation factors aligned with equitable access, service quality, and cost-effectiveness within the healthcare domain.
- Authorize the establishment of private agencies at the local level consisting of specialized professionals to evaluate the quality of services offered by both public and private hospitals impartially and objectively.

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