

Research Article

# The Economic Blockade Crisis and Its Negative Impact on Dental Services in Yemen

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## Introduction

Yemen's health system, tracing back to the late 19th century under British influence and further shaped by mid-20th century upheavals, has faced severe challenges [7]. The unification of Yemen in 1990 attempted to harmonize disparate health care systems, but substantial disparities remained [6]. The ongoing conflict has decimated Yemen's health infrastructure, severely limiting access to basic medical services and leaving only 45% of hospitals operational [11]. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports that over 80% of Yemen's population now requires humanitarian aid, including food, fuel, clean water, and medical care.

Yemen's economy, historically reliant on foreign aid, remittances, and dwindling oil extraction, has been further strained by political instability since 2011 [13]. This instability has led to infrastructure damage, rising unemployment, and high inflation [1]. The country's GDP has plummeted, with a notable contraction in economic activity since the escalation of conflict in March 2015 [10]. By 2018, the GDP had declined by approximately 2.6%, following a 5.9% drop in 2017, exacerbated by the blockade's impact on both supply and demand sides of the economy [5].

## Abstract

**Objective:** This study aims to empirically assess the performance of dental services in public health facilities before and after the imposition of the economic blockade on Yemen and the significance of the impact of blockade.

**Materials and Methods:** This descriptive analytical study uses a quantitative approach. Data was collected through a questionnaire. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to dentists working in selected public hospitals and dental centers in Sana'a, Yemen.

**Results:** The study found that the blockade economic crisis, which destroyed health infrastructure and caused lack of medical and operation supplies and suspension of salaries, has negative impact on dental services in public facilities (basic dental care, surgical dental care, and continuous dental care).

**Conclusions:** Based findings of this study, it is suggested some recommendations to Yemeni Ministry of Public Health, Population and Yemeni Dental Association.

## Problem Statement

The economic blockade imposed on Yemen has severely disrupted the country's health care system, particularly affecting dental services in public health facilities. This study aims to empirically assess the performance of dental services before and after the blockade and to quantify the blockade's impact on these services.

## Research Objectives

This study is no less than an eye-opener for the public healthcare professionals and the people of Yemen. It provides a critical analysis of how oral health problems have been exacerbated by this crisis, which has affected a substantial part of the Yemeni population, and that these problems continue to afflict Yemenis even if the current situation were to improve. This article will also serve as a reference to WHO and other healthcare organizations to understand the current situation in Yemen and draft policies for the betterment of the healthcare system. This article concludes with suggested remedial actions to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on oral health and dental services in Yemen.

### The Specific Objectives of this Study are:

1. To evaluate the performance of dental services in Yemen's public health facilities before and after the economic blockade.
2. To assess the significance of the economic blockade's impact on dental care delivery.
3. To provide recommendations to improve dental services in the face of ongoing economic challenges.

### Methodology

This study employs a descriptive analytical approach using quantitative data [4]. A questionnaire was distributed to 200 dentists working in public hospitals and dental centers in Yemen (APPENDIX 1). The collected data were analyzed to assess the impact of the economic blockade on dental services [8]. The study compares the performance of dental services before and after the blockade, providing a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced and potential solutions [2].

### Results

The study found that the economic blockade has had a devastating impact on dental services in Yemen. The destruction of health infrastructure, lack of medical supplies, and suspension of salaries have significantly hindered the provision of basic, surgical, and continuous dental care. The blockade has led to a critical shortage of essential dental materials and equipment, exacerbating the challenges faced by dental professionals.

The study found that the economic blockade has significantly disrupted dental services in Yemen. Key findings include:

- A marked decrease in the availability of basic and surgical dental care due to shortages in medical supplies and equipment.
- A significant reduction in the number of operational dental services due to the suspension of salaries and the financial instability of public healthcare facilities.
- A negative impact on the morale and performance of dental professionals due to financial constraints and inadequate support from the government.

### Discussion

The blockade has not only crippled the health infrastructure but also escalated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen [9]. The significant reduction in operational health facilities and the lack of essential supplies have made it nearly impossible to maintain adequate dental services [12]. The economic downturn has further strained the health sector, limiting the availability of funds necessary to support health care operations and personnel [14].

The economic blockade has led to a multifaceted crisis in Yemen's dental health services [3]. The lack of medical supplies, coupled with financial instability, has severely impacted the ability of dental professionals to provide adequate care (Novita, no date). This situation is compounded by governance issues and the inefficiency of the health system's current decentralized structure [15].

### Conclusion

The economic blockade has had a profound negative impact on dental services in Yemen's public health facilities. To mitigate

these effects, it is crucial for international organizations and local authorities to collaborate on restoring health infrastructure, ensuring the supply of essential medical and dental materials, and stabilizing the economic conditions to support health care workers. Immediate and sustained efforts are necessary to address the ongoing health crisis and improve the overall well-being of the Yemeni population.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. To the Ministry of Public Health and Population:
  - Ensure the continuous supply of dental materials and medical supplies to government hospitals.
  - Facilitate the import process for health supplies to make them more accessible and affordable.
  - Provide consistent salaries to healthcare professionals to ensure the stability of dental services in public facilities.
2. To the Yemeni Dental Association:
  - Establish a fund supported by private sector dentists to assist public sector dental services.
  - Encourage recent graduates to volunteer in public hospitals to gain experience and support the existing staff.
3. To the International Community:
  - Provide humanitarian aid and support to improve the healthcare infrastructure in Yemen.

Assist in the rebuilding and stabilization of Yemen's healthcare system to ensure the availability of essential medical supplies and services.

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