

Social participation in Primary Health Care: face-to-face versus remote meetings may influence the conduct of management council meetings

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INTRODUCTION

In Primary Health Care (PHC), one of the main ways to involve health service users is characterized by the engagement mechanism called the Management Council (MC).

AIM

To observe whether the format of the Management Council meeting influenced the outcomes of social participation.

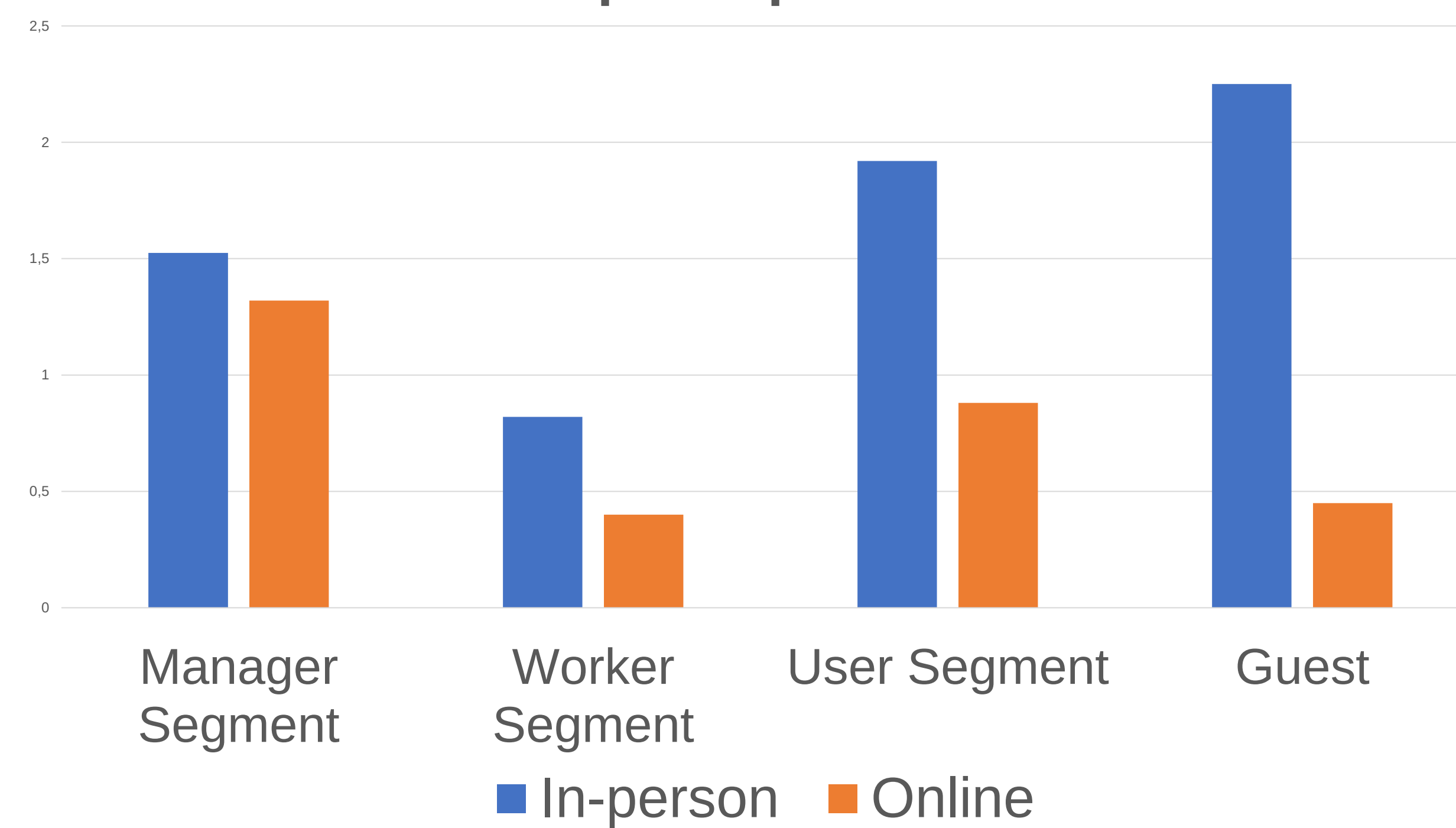
METHOD

- Qualitative approach

- Approved by the Research Ethics Committee
- This study was conducted across five Brazilian Basic Health Units.
 - Document analysis of 106 meeting minutes from MC meetings held over two years;
 - Encompassing one year with face-to-face meetings and one year in an online format.
 - Data extracted and analyzed: data on duration, meeting format (face-to-face or online), participant breakdown by segment (managers, health professionals, and users), active participation of attendees, and meeting agenda.

RESULTS

Average number of Management Council participants



The limitations such as user representatives' access to the internet or unfamiliarity with technology resulted in reduced participation, compromising the principle of equal representation.

There was a notable decrease in the participation of healthcare professionals, which could be attributed to the increased workloads resulting from the pandemic.

The transition from face-to-face to virtual meetings led to a 44% decrease in duration. The number of pages in the minutes has also been reduced.

Difference in the average duration of Management Council meetings

Data	In-person	Online	Difference in averages (%)
Meeting duration (hours)	1:49	1:02	-0.44
Minutes size (pages)	2.02	1.66	-0.18

The transition from face-to-face to virtual meetings altered the meeting dynamics, shifting primarily to an informational forum.

The minutes analysis reveals a consistent pattern: meetings begin with prior minutes' review, followed by complaints, suggestions, compliments, and reports. This indicates that there was no active participation of the users and that the meetings were for information.

CONCLUSIONS

The transformations altered the council, initially intended as a 'participation' level engagement mechanism fostering discussions among stakeholders, turning it into a 'consultation' type mechanism characterized by a one-way flow of communication.

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