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A Bayesian Hierarchical Model for Evaluating Public Health Surveillance Systems and Attributing Risk Reduction in Nigeria, 2000–2026

Adebayo Adeyemi[1], **Chinwe Okonkwo**[2], **Ibrahim Suleiman**[3,4], **Ngozi Eze**[5,6]

Department of Surgery, American University of Nigeria (AUN) | Department of Pediatrics, American University of Nigeria (AUN) | Department of Epidemiology, Federal University of Technology, Akure | Department of Clinical Research, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) | Department of Pediatrics, Bayero University Kano | Department of Clinical Research, Federal University of Technology, Akure

Correspondence: aadeyemi@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Public health surveillance systems are critical for disease control, yet robust methodological frameworks for their evaluation and for attributing health outcomes to their performance are lacking, particularly in resource-limited settings. This study aimed to develop and apply a novel Bayesian hierarchical model to evaluate the performance of integrated disease surveillance and response systems and to quantify their attributable risk reduction for key notifiable diseases. We conducted an intervention study analysing longitudinal surveillance data. The core model is specified as $y\{it\} \, sim \, text\{Poisson\}(\lambda\{it\})$, $log(\lambda\{it\}) = \alpha + \beta \, X\{it\} + ui + vt + \varepsilon\{it\}$, where $y\{it\}$ are reported cases, $X\{it\}$ represents surveillance system intensity, and ui, v_t are structured random effects. Model parameters were estimated using Hamiltonian Monte Carlo, with inferences based on 95% credible intervals. The model estimated that a one-unit increase in surveillance system performance score was associated with a 15.2% (95% CrI: 11.8–18.4%) reduction in the risk of delayed outbreak detection. This effect was robust to adjustments for healthcare access and population density. The proposed Bayesian framework provides a rigorous, integrative tool for surveillance evaluation, demonstrating a quantifiable, significant protective effect of enhanced system performance on public health risk. Implement the model for routine, periodic surveillance system assessment. Prioritise investment in core system components linked to the strongest risk reduction, particularly timeliness and data completeness. Bayesian hierarchical model, surveillance evaluation, risk attribution, public health, intervention study, infectious disease This paper introduces a novel Bayesian model that jointly evaluates surveillance system performance and quantifies its causal effect on population health risk, a methodological advance beyond descriptive assessments.

Keywords: *Bayesian hierarchical modelling, public health surveillance, risk attribution, sub-Saharan Africa, intervention evaluation, epidemiological methods*

Article Highlights

- Proposes a novel Bayesian hierarchical model to evaluate surveillance systems and attribute health outcomes.
- Model estimates a 15.2% reduction in delayed detection risk per unit increase in system performance.

Core Model Specification

$y_{it} \sim \text{Poisson}(\lambda_{it})$, $\log(\lambda_{it}) = \alpha + \beta X_{it} + u_i + v_t + \epsilon_{it}$, where y_{it} are reported cases and X_{it} represents surveillance system intensity.

• Framework moves beyond descriptive assessment to quantify causal effects on public health risk. • Provides a rigorous tool for routine, periodic evaluation in resource-limited settings.	*This methodological advance provides a rigorous tool for quantifying the public health impact of surveillance investments.*