Reviewer’s report

Title: Determinants of male partner participation in skilled antenatal care in peri-urban Gulu district, Northern Uganda

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Reviewer: Adamson Sinjani Muula

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Determinants of male participation in skilled antenatal care in peri-urban Gulu district, northern Uganda

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review the manuscript. My comments and concerns, which I consider essential are as follows:

The first observation is that while many authors and researchers use the description “Determinants”, strictly speaking the factors that are reported in this study, i.e. a cross sectional study and the type of analysis are really associations and not determinants. Determinants suggest a cause and effect relationship, which, although could be suggested by a study like the present one, would be more suitable for a different design and/or analysis.

The authors have reported the maternal mortality ratio of Gulu and Uganda in general. It would be interesting, if the figures are available, of other nearby districts in Uganda. This may give more context than is provided. This information is not really mandatory but could be useful.

The authors report that they controlled for factors and they looked at “biological plausibility” etc. My sense is that there was plausibility that the factors could be confounders but also that it was not really biological plausibility rather may be, social plausibility.

Within the manuscript, the authors refer to Tables as “on page x”; while that information could be helpful from the word document as was created, this labeling on Table as on page x or y is unhelpful as the page numbers will be jumbled up once formatting happens.

It was interesting that knowledge of more ANC services was associated with increased attendance. The authors have largely interpreted this as that more knowledge leads to more attendance. Of course, the alternative explanation is that more attendance leads to more knowledge. And so, even the final conclusion of the manuscript (see the last two paragraphs) could be problematic.

Similarly, the authors also suggest that having obtained health information from health professionals was associated with increased ANC attendance. The interpretation could also be that those that attended are then more likely to get health information from health professionals (as well as the mechanism of relationship the other way round).
The author reported that couples who were “legally married (spiritually or culturally); I would suggest replacing spiritually with religious and culturally with traditionally. There are significant differences between spiritual and religious. It would be interesting if the authors were to give some indication why the ANC male attendance via HIMS was different from the survey. Certainly HIMS may be incomplete but could be more realistic may be that survey results which is reported information.

Based on the pdf that I had, on page 8 last paragraph, sentence 2 is complex

The authors suggested that “In case of HIV discordance, preventive measures such as condoms can easily be introduced” if males participate. Do we know that condoms can EASILY be introduced?

I was wondering if Reference 26 is complete.

I would be happy to see the manuscript again for me to make an opinion on suitability for publication.

Adamson Muula

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests