Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence and determinants of unintended childbirth in Ethiopia

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Subject: Submission of REVISED research article for publication

Dear Editor

We are enclosing herewith a manuscript entitled “Prevalence and determinants of unintended childbirth in Ethiopia” for publication in “BMC Journal of Pregnancy and Childbirth” for possible evaluation.

With the submission of this revised manuscript we would like to acknowledge the comments forwarded by the Referees and we also appreciate for taking part of their busy time to review our article. We are grateful for the critical comments forwarded by the two referees and we have revised the article based on the comments. The comments have helped us to see the article with more depth and make adjustments accordingly. The changes that are made on the manuscript are indicated in detail as follows in line with each of the Referees’ comments. Please let us know if any more is needed from our end to improve the content of the article. We declare we have no conflict of interest.

Referee-1:

Abstract: conclusion part refined and made more focussed as per the specific findings.

Introduction

Paragraph 1: Africa 5.2 million corrected as 6.2 million.

Paragraph 4: 2015 in this context refers to the last year of the MDG period (1990-2015) which is in G.C. but not in Ethiopian calendar. Hence we maintained it as it is.

Last paragraph: corrected accordingly as per the suggestions. Almost all of the previous studies focused on unintended pregnancy but not on unintended childbirth. We have included them and also highlighted the differences (limitations) accordingly.

Methodology

Regarding the terms used to define the outcome variable, the authors preferred the use of “intended=0 vs unintended=1” instead of “wanted or unwanted” for the following reasons:

- Though the term “intended” has an equivalent meaning to “wanted” in this context, “unintended” and “unwanted” do not carry the same meaning. According to EDHS, “if
the birth or pregnancy was wanted then, it is considered to be planned. It is considered to be mistimed if it was wanted but at a later time, and considered to be unwanted if it was not wanted at the time of conception”. When we considered a dichotomous variable, using the term “unwanted” instead of both mistimed and unwanted births would be confusing which would bring different understanding from that of the EDHS report. Hence, to harmonize this, we preferred to use the terms “intended vs unintended”. We didn’t intend to give an operational definition which would bring a different meaning to that of the EDHS report. Unintended childbirth in this case refers to the last birth that was not wanted or that was mistimed at the time of conception or it refers to the proportion of births resulting from unintended pregnancies.

- Many previous studies used the terms “intended vs unintended” and yet respondents were asked same kind of series of questions used in the DHS.
- We believe using the terms “wanted or unwanted” as a whole would seem judgmental on the approach of the analysis.

However, we would appreciate for any further advice on this regard so that we can harmonize the different views to make the article more informative.

Results: The results section is summarized again and the unadjusted (chi-square) significance levels are included in the revised version. Details are reduced as the findings are available in the tables and figures.

Discussion:

Paragraph 7: EDHS 2011 report presents both the Total Fertility Rates and the Total Wanted Fertility Rates by region. EDHS has assessed the level of unwanted fertility among women age 15-49 through a series of survey questions asked about each of the children born to them in the preceding five years (including current pregnancy). This was done by asking women whether each of the previous births or current pregnancies was wanted then, wanted later or unwanted at the time of conception. The total wanted fertility rate (TWFR) is calculated in the same manner as the total fertility rate (TFR) but excludes unwanted births from the numerator.

The authors tried to analyze the association between women empowerment and unintended childbirth by indexing a decision-making autonomy variable using some of the questions used to assess women’s decision-making autonomy on large household purchases, healthcare, visit to relatives…. Even we checked by each individual variable. However, we got huge missing values which would affect the interpretation of the results in the logistic regression model. It would reduce the sample size by at least 15%. However, we have added other independent variables related to healthcare (knowledge of any method of contraceptives, contraceptive use and history of abortion).

Minor essential revisions:

- The article was revised and shortened from around 6700 to 5800 words.
- We have tried to include evidences regarding religiosity and women empowerment to support our findings (last paragraph under the DISCUSSION section)
Referee 2:

Abstract:

Background: Shortened by a few words  
Method: sample size included  
Result: We agree with the comments and done accordingly.

Introduction:

As much as possible, we have tried to include study results and survey reports about childbirth in Ethiopia. Articles and surveys that are accessed were referred. The main limitation is that almost all of the previous studies were done on unintended pregnancies rather than unintended childbirth.

Result:

- The suggested variables including exposure to mass media, knowledge and practice of family planning, history of abortion are included in this revised version.
- Multicollinearity was also checked and stated in the analysis section of the Methodology.
- In the logistic model part, we have included values of goodness of fit tests and the pseudo R2 values as per the suggestion (Paragraph 3 under the METHODS section).

Quality of written English: Language edition made further during the revision by a native speaker (one of the authors).

Other changes made by the authors:

- The paragraph for “limitation of the study” moved from DISCUSSION section to the METHODS section so that readers can take these into account before reading results.

- The number of words under the BACKGROUND section reduced from 992 to 637 words after revision.

- Formatting of the article done as per the BMC author’s checklist.

Regards,

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