Author's response to reviews

Title: Spousal concordance on contraceptive use and fertility decision among married couples in Jimma zone, Ethiopia

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Version: 2 Date: 24 November 2013

Author's response to reviews:

Reviewer's report

Reviewer 1

Reviewer's report:

Title:

Spousal concordance on contraceptive use and fertility decision among married couples in Jimma zone, Ethiopia

Version: 1 Date: 28 August 2013

Reviewer: Francis Obare

Reviewer's report:

Spousal concordance on contraceptive use and fertility decision among married couples in Jimma zone, Ethiopia

The authors examine spousal concordance/discordance regarding family planning in Jimma zone in Ethiopia. They find that spouses generally concurred that family planning is beneficial although lower proportions of men than women were practicing contraception. However, the paper has several shortcomings that should be addressed before it can be considered for publication in Reproductive Health.

A. MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

1) Introduction

It is not exactly clear how the paper contributes to our understanding of couple dynamics regarding fertility in general and family planning in particular. The authors did not review sufficient literature on the subject to be able to identify the gaps to justify the contribution of their paper to existing knowledge. Quite a bit has been written on couple dynamics regarding fertility, family planning, and
HIV/AIDS that the authors should have reviewed in order to identify gaps in existing literature. Their claim that “limited research has been conducted on the concordance and discordance between husband and wife within couples” (fourth paragraph of the introduction section) is therefore not true. Examples of existing literature on couple dynamics include:


Response: Thank you for your valuable comment. We tried to include some of the literatures commented. For example we highlighted orange which we incorporated within the document.

2) Methods

a) The description of the methods should be strengthened. For example,

the authors state in the second paragraph that a multi-stage sampling design was used with districts as the primary and localities as the secondary sampling units. They do not, however, tell us how many districts and localities were sampled from i.e. the sampling frame.

Response: Thank you, we included now in paragraph “..... three districts (locally woredas) as primary sampling units (PSU), and six localities (locally geres) ....”.

Moreover, we tried to show the sampling frame in words that starting from Jimma zone to the household. But what we did not write was the census conducted to select couples at the household level based on the eligibility criteria. Now we included in the method section.

Second, there is no description of how exactly couples were identified on the ground. The authors note that households were randomly sampled from the selected localities. Given that there are forms of households that do not necessarily comprise couples (e.g. child-headed, female-headed and single-person households), how were households with couples identified?

Response: We accepted it and similar point with the above. As we mentioned before it is after census was conducted.

Third, the authors state in the third paragraph that the questionnaires had different questions for men and women. Why were the questions different if the interest was to determine concordance/discordance between couples? The implication of their approach is that discordance between couples could simply be due to the different questions and it would be impossible to determine concordance.

Response: We appreciated the point asked. Because our aim was to check for concordance we used similar questions with separated questionnaires. Because we wanted to get individual response from both and also to keep privacy. Sorry for the way we put the sentence now we made it clear.

b) Given that the sample size is large (>800 couples), one wonders why the authors did not do multivariate analysis to determine whether the relationships hold after controlling for couple characteristics. Results based on bivariate analysis may be affected by confounding especially if differences in outcomes are due to differences in couple characteristics. In addition, I am not sure if it is a formatting issue but the notation for Cohen’s test that the authors present (a box) is different from what is known ($\chi^2$).
Response: We appreciated the comment given. We used Cohen’s Kappa test using wide data to compare their agreement level. This statistic is used to assess inter-rater reliability between husband and wife. We considered using kappa to be an improvement to evaluate this type of reliability. Sorry it is not a box, now we put the corrected symbol i.e K to imply for kappa. It is not Cohen’s $f^2$ to measure for association.

Moreover, as literature showed Kappa can provide more information than a simple calculation of the raw proportion of agreement (Viera J and Garrett M; 2005 Understanding Interobserver Agreement The Kappa Statistics Fam Med 2005;37(5):360-3).

3) Results

a) The manner in which the results are presented is difficult to comprehend. The write-up is crowded with numbers—some of which are already provided in the tables—that are difficult to understand. The authors simply describe the results without providing any interpretation of what the numbers mean. This begs the question: so what?

Response: Thank you we rephrased the sentences to made it clear.

b) Although the authors state at the beginning of the results section that information was obtained from 811 couples (under respondent characteristics), the denominator keeps changing throughout the results section with no explanation as to what is going on. For example, the denominator for some indicators under ‘Fertility preferences’ is given as 586 couples.

Response: Thank you, now we put note why it is 586 than 811. The reason is from 811 couples only 586 couples wanted to have additional children among concordant couples. The other 325 did not agree on the need for more children. (for detail please see Table 2).

c) In the last paragraph under ‘Fertility preferences’, the authors make reference to ‘some’ and ‘true’ discordance. What is the difference between the two given that there is no description of the how the two forms are measured in the methods section?

Response: We specified it; it was to show the discordance level, anyhow just to made it clear for the reader we rephrased the sentence “…in 26 (6%) couples of which 22 (5.1%) consisted of the husband desiring a boy and the wife desiring a girl respectively discordance was found…”

d) Perhaps, the paper could have focused more on concordance/discordance between couples and its implications for contraceptive use. However, the results based on concordance/ discordance in relation to the likelihood of contraceptive use are poorly presented.
Response: We accepted the feedback.

4) Discussion

a) The authors state in the first paragraph that research on determinants of family planning use has often overlooked the importance of husbands and couples. However, as already noted, there is quite a bit of literature on the topic. It just shows that the authors did not make enough efforts to do comprehensive literature review on the subject. The authors further state in the same paragraph that the study aimed at exploring the level of concordance/discordance among couples. However, this in and of itself may not be interesting to the reader as it raises the question: so what? A more interesting question would have been how concordance/discordance affects family planning use.

Response: We wrote correctly. (see paragraph one page 10)

b) Some of the findings presented in the discussion section (for example, in the second and third paragraphs) should be in the results section. The discussion should instead focus on summarizing what the major findings are (without repeating the results) and discussing the implications of the findings for practice (i.e. policies, programs and research).

Response: ok, we have done it.

c) The authors argue in the third paragraph that some of their findings are not consistent with those from elsewhere. Why should the results be consistent when the settings are entirely different?

Response: Ok we add some with similar setting but as it is important looking for more too. Yes Rwanda and India, which is not exactly similar setting but as they are developing countries we tried to compare the results too.

d) There is need to discuss how the limitations alluded to in the last paragraph are likely to influence the findings of the study. It is not just enough to list the limitations.

Response: Yes we accept it and have modified it.

5) General comment

It is difficult to discern the take-home message(s) from the paper in its current form. The authors should strive to concisely and clearly present their arguments. Several statements should be rephrased for clarity throughout the paper; hence it was difficult to list all of them.

Response: Thank you we have done corrections.

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Response: we have tried to edit the language thoroughly.
Reviewer 2

Version: 1  Date: 13 November 2013

Reviewer: Hammad Qazi

Reviewer's report:

INTRODUCTION:

There were lot of statistics and important arguments in first couple of paragraphs in the Introduction section, but no references are provided.

Response: We accepted it and included references. For example the first paragraph, second paragraph.

Note 1 is not adequate and should be removed, not sufficiently supporting the argument.

Response: Thank you! we did it.

Rationale of Research is not satisfactorily addressed. The last paragraph should summarize the main arguments and address what is known in literature, what is the gap, and how the planned research will address the identified gap. These arguments should be coherently addressed to increase the worthiness of the issue and study.

Response: We have tried to put it clearer. Such as the last paragraph before methods part.

METHODS:

What about psychometric properties of the semi structured questionnaire.

Response: Sorry our objective did not included psychometric issues. It is beyond our study scope. May be we can include it in limitation part recommendations for further study.

Primary and secondary objectives should be clearly stated.

Response: We accepted it and modified accordingly.

Further information regarding questionnaires used what are the questions included and need along with clear outcomes and operational definitions, particularly in relation to this manuscript should be provided. Some information related to questionnaires is provided, but is not sufficient considering this study
as part of other studies and abstract themes and outcomes.

Response: Thank we add some questions for example: “… fertility preference (questions such as Do you want to have additional children? If yes do you want a boy or a girl?), … contraceptive practice (questions like Have you ever used anything or tried in any way to delay or avoid having child?)”

And there are operational definitions like male involvement now we add for definition for discussion about family planning.

There are two selection criteria provided in 2nd and 4th paragraph, confusing the reader.

Response: Sorry if we misunderstood the point raised but what we realize from that paragraphs, informed consent is added as a criteria rather than ethical part. Hence we moved it to the ethical section.

RESULTS:

It seems authors have categorized results under themes, how these themes were generated and what type of thematic analysis was performed was not shown.

Response: Yes just for clarification we put the result in sequence. We performed the thematic;

- Demographic characteristics
- Fertility preference
- Family planning(knowledge and practice) – linking with other factors
- Spousal communication(discussion about family planning and decision making on family planning)
- Male involvement in family planning
- Finally we tried to look on factors association with contraceptive use.

That is how we put the result.

The result section contain lot of information and analysis; however, it was not clear whether this apriori or post hoc?

Response: Thanks for the point, but as we described in the method section it is a cross-sectional study not a study which included intervention. What we compared is data collected from husbands and wives at one time.

Further relevance of these findings and analysis was not addressed in objectives and methods section. It seems these results were part of other studies and not particularly to this study. This information is also needed in order to assess use of appropriate statistical procedures.
Response: We accepted the comment and tried to add in the objective par rather than thronging them because we use appropriate procedure and we believe the results are from our own data. We are sure enough to say the results are ours.

DISCUSSION:

Limited discussion considering the results and many of the findings and arguments could be further stretched and discussed.

Response: Thank you we have done correction.

Again it seems discussion was based on themes, but how these themes were generated (inductive or deductive analysis) was not shown.

Response: We appreciated, we used deductive way as our conclusions are derived from our quantitative results/findings.

CONCLUSION:

It was very large, could be shorten.

Response: We have done accordingly.

Study limitations should be separate from conclusions.

Response: Thanks we did it

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Response: We have tried to edit the language thoroughly.