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

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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 Jimna 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:


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. 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? 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.

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 ($f^2$).

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?

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.

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?

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.

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.

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).

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?

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.

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.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

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

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests