**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Acceptability of screening for pregnancy intention in general practice: a population survey of people of reproductive age

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 19 Dec 2019

**Reviewer:** Treasure McGuire

**Reviewer's report:**

Thank you asking me to review this study. Successful preconception health promotion has potentially important health implications and it is useful to understand the planned preconception health behaviours and attitudes towards being asked about pregnancy intention by a general practitioner (GP) among people of reproductive age in Australia.

Essentially, this is a paper based on results of a survey commissioned by Your Fertility and conducted by The Australian National University, Social Research Centre, with the participants members of Life in AustraliaTM,

My main concern is that the results of this study are based on the premise that the population surveyed is truly representative of a matched Australian population. This may well be the case, but representativeness of the study cohort is not justified by results presented in the submitted manuscript.

**Under Study Population:**

Line 72: The manuscript talks about participants being "the most methodologically rigorous online panel in Australia and exclusively uses random probability-based sampling methods".

However, the paper does not justify this by providing a socio-demographic (SEIFA, ARIA or similar) comparison between the survey cohort and the Australian population. Table 1 does not provide an Australian Bureau of Statistics (or epidemiologically similar comparison of the participant cohort with the Australian population of this specified age range in terms of gender ratio, age ranges, ARIA, socio-economic status, being in a relationship, parental status, health and health behaviours.

Without such a comparison being made explicit to the reader, the authors cannot justify that "the profile of respondents relatively closely matched the population for gender and residential
location. However, there was some underrepresentation of people aged 18 to 25 and an overrepresentation of those aged 35 to 45 in the sample" (in results) or that "The strengths of this study include that the study population closely resembled the general population of people of reproductive age in Australia" (in the Discussion Line 182).

Under Results

"A total of 965 active panel members were invited to take part and 716 (74.2%) completed the survey."

However what proportion of the data repository (male and female aged 18 to 45 years), does 965 invited participants represent? Is it the total data repository in the specified age range or a smaller sample? If the latter, how were these participants chosen to be invited into the study? This needs to be explicit.

Line 77: Participants were "randomly recruited via their landline or mobile telephone (rather than being self-selected volunteers)".

I would argue that there are self-selection biases in individuals who actively choose participate in such surveys that need to be acknowledged as well as any implications for potential impact on their behavioural intent.

Also, as per the Life in Australia website (https://www.srcentre.com.au/our-research/life-in-australia-study) under participant information FAQ it states: Participants receive a $10 to $15 reward for completing each monthly survey as either via PayPal, Coles/Myer gift card, Coles e-card, or the amount can be donated to a charitable organisation.

None of this information is disclosed about the study participants in either the methods section or as a study limitation. I therefore disagree with Line 138: This is not a population-based study, it is a consenting sample of people surveyed in a relevant age range. Please amend or provide the epidemiological comparison.

These participant representativeness issues need to be adequately addressed before the paper can be considered for publication.
Secondly, this study is about "behavioural intent". However, there are many peer reviewed publications that discuss the large gap between intention and behaviour. I realise that the intent of the study was not to measure behaviour. However, it would be extremely remiss to fail to discuss the limitation of study findings in relation to the intention-behaviour gap. After all, who would not respond positively to questions such as "eat healthier" or "getting fitter", when asked a question of changing behaviour if planning to have a child. Please review the literature on intention-behaviour gap and consider the potential impact of this positive bias on participant responses in the discussion.

Overall, while the study intent is clear, the findings, as presented, appear superficial and rely on assumed representativeness for validity. However, no evidence of representativeness is provided in the paper and potential study limitations and biases are not addressed.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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