Author’s response to reviews

Title: Are family planning vouchers effective in increasing use, improving equity and reaching the underserved? An evaluation of a voucher program in Pakistan

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Author’s response to reviews:

Response to reviewers:

Reviewer reports:

Ilene S Speizer (Reviewer 2): The authors have responded appropriately to the comments that I had from my earlier round of review. The paper is now complete and ready for publication with the exception of the paper still needing editorial review. I encourage the authors to get an editor from WHO to do a careful review/correction of the text.

Research Square (Reviewer 3): "STATISTICAL REVIEWER ASSESSMENT:

Is the study design appropriate for the research question (considering whether the analyzed population accurately reflects the design and whether you see any problems with control/comparison groups, e.g., likely confounders)?

Yes - overall design, population, and control groups are appropriate

Are methodologies adequate and well implemented (considering whether assumptions are addressed and whether analyses are robust)?
No - there are minor issues

Are the analyses adequately communicated (considering whether reporting details are adequate and whether figures and tables are well labeled and described)?

No - there are minor issues

Does the interpretation accurately reflect the analyses without overstatement (considering whether limitations/bias are acknowledged and whether accurate descriptors, e.g., 'significant', are used?)

No - there are minor issues

Could an appropriately REVISED version of this work represent a statistically sound contribution?

Probably - with minor revisions

STATISTICAL REVIEWER COMMENTS:

The study was well conducted and well reported. The statistics used were appropriate for the kinds of data collected. Best practices for statistics were met. A few corrections are however required. The use of the word multilevel logistic regression in the title of one of the tables seems inappropriate. Multilevel logistic regression was not done. It didn't appear anywhere else in the paper. The levels of the analysis were not reported. The authors may remove this word from this title or justify its use with the necessary statistics.

Response: Thank you for highlighting the issue. We have made the necessary correction in Table 6.
REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Title of study: Since it is in a question form, there is no need to add: an evaluation of a voucher.

Response: We will consult the editor. If editorially appropriate we would like to keep the statement.

In the results section of the abstract, mean age should be reported with the standard deviation.

Response: We have not reported age in the abstract.

Line 17 of the results section. The first set of odds ratios given should be presented with their corresponding confidence intervals.

Response: Thank you for the comment. CIs have been added (lines 5-6 page 12 under ‘Targeting voucher clients’).

Line 20 to 26 in the results section is too long and clumsy. Three odds ratios were presented in the same sentence without mentioning the reference categories. Authors are advised to recast this sentence.

Response: Thank you for the comment. The sentence has been restructured and the reference category has been added (lines 9-18 page 12 under ‘Targeting voucher clients’).

On equity analysis, more figures and statistics are necessary. What was presented appeared to be too summarized. Authors should endeavor not to discuss the results until the discussion section. On table 2 and other tables, education was presented at both baseline and endline. Is this supposed to change at endline? Table 4: Is awareness also expected to change at endline?

Response: Thank you for the comment. Regarding equity analysis we are of the view that sufficient information has already been provided. We have to be cognizant of manuscript length as well. Text has been edited to remove elements that convey a discussion scenario (lines 9-11 and lines 17-18 page 14 under “Concentration curves and index”).

Table 6: Multilevel logistic regression was not presented. There were no statistics to indicate a multilevel analysis.
Response: Agreed. We have edited Table 6 heading accordingly

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

In the first sample size determination, power was not mentioned. Title of that section should be sample size determination and not sampling. Under stratified sampling, what was described was not sampling but sample size.

Response: Thank you for the comment. Has been edited accordingly. Line 12 page 6.

Binary response should be operationally defined. There appeared to be several response variables: ever use, current use,...etc. Definitions of these response variables are crucial. Sample size was mentioned to detect an odds ratio. More details are necessary here. What does this odds ratio represent? odds of ever use, current use, voucher access.

Response: Thank you for the comments. Definitions of response variables have been added (lines 1-4 page 8). Please note that sample size was calculated to detect a difference in proportions (line 18 page 6). Description for odds ratios has been included (lines 4-6, page 8).

How was the questionnaire administered? Was it self or interviewer administered?

Response: It was structured questionnaire administered face-to-face by trained interviewers. Thank you for highlighting the issue. Edited accordingly on line 25 page 7.

On demographics, only respondent age and husband's age were presented. Were these the only socio demographic variables?

Response: Yes, these were the only socio-demographic variables on which information was collected.

Authors should be consistent; contraceptive use, uptake, utilization? These words were used interchangeably throughout the manuscript.

Response: Thank for the comment. Edited accordingly.
The words intervention versus control or Chakwal versus Bhakkar should also be revised. Authors should be consistent.

Response: Thank for the comment. Edited accordingly.

The main goal of the study was the effectiveness of the voucher, and this was not defined anywhere. Authors are advised to give operational definition of this effectiveness. How was it measured?

Response: Operational definition of effectiveness added on lines 8-10 page 8.

On table 1, are the two locations actually comparable? Are they similar? The authors should justify these as no p values were presented.

Response: This secondary data taken from a previous report. We do not have complete data set to conduct the required tests.

Table 6. first row as OR(95%CI). This should be on the second row under the response variables.

Response: Thank you. Edited.

Knowledge was mentioned in the tables, however awareness was mentioned in the results. Are they the same? The two cannot be used interchangeably. If it was truly knowledge, how was it measured? The methods section should have addressed this.

Response: Agreed. Edited in tables to awareness.

The title of table 6 has both endline and baseline. This is not clear. Were the results merged?

Response: Adjusted for baseline and endline. Added in table legend.
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Declarations

- Ethics approval and consent to participate
- Consent to publish
- Availability of data and materials
- Competing interests
- Funding
- Authors' Contributions
- Acknowledgements

Response: Added the above mentioned aspects