Author’s response to reviews

Title: Effect of Guided Counseling in Nutritional Status of Pregnant Women in West Gojjam Zone, Ethiopia: A Cluster-randomized Controlled Trial

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewers’ response

For comments given by reviewer2

Comments

Response

The manuscript has plenty of English problems Thank you for this important comment, the manuscript was revised for the correction of grammatical errors.

Revise figure 1

Figure 1 was revised in the main document

For comments given by reviewer3

Comments

Response

All of your comments are essential to improve this manuscript, thank you for all these constructive comments

Use the word undernutrition rather than under-nutrition The word under-nutrition was replaced by undernutrition
what is the need/reason to start the intervention before 16 weeks of gestation?

- Since nutrient requirement increase with increased gestational age, counseling was given based on the trimester of pregnancy. To do so, the ideal time to start counseling is 1st trimester but the majority of women in the rural area were not voluntary to disclose their pregnancy status in the first eight weeks of pregnancy. Hence, we included women in the first 4 months of pregnancy.

why not you are prepared specific place for counselling rather than participants' home? - This is a very important question. Thank you for this. In the proposal stage, we planned to give individual or group counseling by considering the scattered nature of the rural community. But, in real practice, it was difficult to collect the study participants in one place and counsel the women together. Thus, it is difficult to arrange counseling hall everywhere in the cluster because their living arrangement was scattered.

How much you are sure that this reduction of prevalence of under-nutrition is only by your intervention?

1. This study used the control group to prevent confounders.
2. During selecting clusters, we selected equal numbers of control and intervention clusters were selected in each woreda to neutralize variation between woredas.
3. We used a buffer zone/ non selected cluster between sampled clusters
4. We used appropriate analysis technique to control confounders

Taking all these measures, we are sure that the reduction is due to the effect of this intervention.

"Whereas, according to 2016 Ethiopian demographic and health survey (EDHS)" what is the prevalence of undernutrition in 2016 EDHS? The prevalence of undernutrition among pregnant women was 22% in 2016 EDHS. The sentence was revised in the main document.

"The nutritional status of pregnant women can be assessed by body mass index and mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measurement": How much you are sure to measure the nutritional status of pregnant women can be assessed by body mass index? From the literature, scholars suggest using BMI for pregnant women with its limitation and one of the previous reviewers recommends using BMI instead of MUAC if data is collected. We add this to justify the reason why we used MUAC in this study.

How did you exclude the gestational weight contribution during pregnancy? There is a minimum change in MUAC during pregnancy we can’t avoid it but there was baseline data as well as a control group.

"In Ethiopia, there was no study that assessed the effect of nutrition intervention on the nutritional status of pregnant women." Are you sure to say no? Thank you so much for this
valuable question. We conclude as no study on the effect of intervention in the nutritional status of pregnant women since we did not come across a study on the topic using different search engines. Now, we correct as “scars information”

Line 149-180: how did you select the 3 woreda from 15 woreda? There are 15 woredas in the zone. From these 15 woredas, eight had nutrition intervention on complementary feeding practice. Thus, we exclude these eight woredas, from the seven eligible woredas; three were selected using simple random sampling method (lottery).

Line 354: how did you interpret religion?

Almost all pregnant women were orthodox Christians in their religion. This is because the study was conducted in rural settings. In Gojjam and Gondar majority of the rural residents are Orthodox Christians.