Reviewer’s report

Title: Analysis and exploration of infertility policies in Iran: A study protocol

Version: 0 Date: 26 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Gitau Mburu

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this protocol, which concerns an area of importance. I have few comments which require a substantial revision of the article, and therefore I did not read the entire article with an intention to provide detailed feedback, as the paper could change significantly.

Major comments

Objective 1: Review of infertility policies in selected countries and Iran: What type of a review are the authors reviewing? This objective needs to be a proper systematic literature review of infertility policies. As it is it is currently, it is unsystematic and prone to bias. Which countries will be included? Clear criteria for geographic countries that will be involved, services (is it IVF, ART, ICSI or all of these?) outcomes of interest, search strategy (a bit of this is presented), data that you will extract, measurable indicators that you will compare, methods of synthesis and comparison (narrative or quantitative) etc should be strengthened. I suggest that 1) the authors look at the review recently conducted by researchers at oxford such as Hirsch and James Duffy to see an example of policy review, and 2) to refer to appropriate guidelines for reviewing literature - e.g. PRISMA guidelines.

Stage II: Infertility policy analysis of Iran: After conducting the above literature review and synthesis, authors propose to use Walt and Gilson framework, by contacting and interviewing people and actors. Sp the authors will compare epistemologically different sets of research results. Given the parameters that the authors want to measure in Objective 1 above (e.g. equity, proportions covered by insurance, availability, affordability etc), how will the authors compare these parameters with qualitative themes --- which are essentially people's opinions and perspectives regarding fertility policies? This is a significant methodological mismatch which needs to be addressed. In my view the second objective should be a review of the actual published policies and guidelines documents in Iran to identify their context, contexts and actors (including institutions) that are prominent / have a role in these policies. Then, and only then could the authors then decide to conduct interviews etc, to respond to the PERCEIVED reasons as to why Iranian fertility policies are as they are. and that perhaps needs to be the third objective of this doctoral study.

I hope that the authors find this suggestion useful.
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An article of importance in its field

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Needs some language corrections before being published

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