Author’s response to reviews

Title: Childhood mortality, intra-household bargaining power and fertility preferences among women in Ghana

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Response to comments

Reviewer #1:

Reviewer comments

1. In background section, 2nd paragraph, page 3, line 27, "Aside its economic implications…………………. " Please add some recent work.

We have added an additional citation that is more recent as suggested.

2. In background section, 4th paragraph, page 4, line 4 "Other factors include age…………" Is it the age of women? Specify.

It is maternal age. We have indicated this and provided appropriate references

3. In background section, 5th paragraph, page 4, line 10…. Cite some recent references related to the point that how reproductive behaviour influenced by child mortality?

This has been done.

4. Data and variable description section, page 7, line 21, what was your eligibility criteria for selection of 9396 women?

As indicated on the last line of this paragraph, we only kept women who had children in the final sample. This was because of the measures of fertility preference used in the study.

5. Data and variable description section, page 7, line 22, "In this study, we focus on mothers………. " Are they parous women?
Yes. We have clarified this.

6. Data and variable description section, page 7, line 27, you have two options for first indicators…... more children and otherwise, then why you have created dummy variable? Similarly in case of second indicator 'Net desire' which is continuous variable where you have computed another dummy variable. Specify your criteria to create dummy variables. Furthermore, the variable like 'Extra fertility', is it continuous or categorical variable?

All three indicators of fertility preference were used as dummy variables. In each of them women who are considered to have higher preference for fertility take the value of 1, otherwise 0.

7. Data and variable description section, page 8, line 21, do you use any structured questionnaire to collect data on decision making ability?

As indicated in the paragraph, the DHS (which is the data used in this study) captures variables on decision making at the household. From these questions one is able to tell a woman’s decision-making abilities in the households. We used these variables.

8. Data and variable description section, page 8, line 25 what is bargaining power index?

The index was created from variables that show if a woman makes decision in the household. This include decision on health and household purchases. We then used these variables to create an index using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) technique. We have explained this in the data section.

9. Result section, page 9, line 49, mention the function of your first model.

This has been corrected. The first model doesn’t include interaction while the second doesn’t

10. Page 10, line 15, how do you calculate the composite index?

This is the same as the bargaining power index

11. Discussion section, page 16, line 41…..." women with higher bargaining power were likely to prefer fewer children in the face of child mortality". State the reason behind such type of preference.

We speculate that, these women are economically active women who contribute to household expenditure. Having more children could therefore be a constraint to their activities and hence prefer less. We have explained this further in the text.

Reviewer #2:
This article is well written overall and provides solid footing for additional research on more clear links between bargaining power and fertility preferences and sexual and reproductive health more broadly. The only major concern I have is the use of the term "uncontrolled population growth" as that may be perceived in negative terms. If possible, other phrasing (perhaps "continuing population growth" or similar term) should be used to avoid leaning towards population control language. Other comments and suggestions for minor revisions:

We acknowledge this and have revised the phrase.

- p3, lines 44-50: this trend in increased TFR may also be coming from increased wealth (see "Are Children 'Normal'"? by Black, Kolesnikova, Sanders and Taylor, 2013 & "Do Family Wealth Shocks Affect Fertility Choices? Evidence from the Housing Market" by Lovenheim and Mumford, 2013)

We agree that several factors including wealth could explain the observed trend. We have added these and other references to buttress this point.

- p3, lines 52-53: although the paper is on women's fertility preferences, the sentence should include men as well given the importance statement or else should use couples

This has been done.

- p4, lines 23-24: ...very little evidence existS… --> need to add "s" to exist as currently written

Done.

- p5, lines 58-59:...Following [the] Indian Ocean Tsunami... --> add "the" before Indian Ocean

Done.

- p6, lines 4-5: rewrite phrase as it's unclear

The statement was misinterpretation of the estimated coefficient inn this paper. We have now removed it.

- p7, lines 29-32: ...While this variable captureS fertility preference... --> add "s" to capture; also besides no accounting for number a woman currently has, it doesn't account for the number she wants

This has been corrected. We also agree that the number of children wanted is nuanced in the dummy variable. This is a limitation of using the dummy variables.

- p10, lines 21-27: how does the 0.07 figure compare to other LMICs? might be good to include in the discussion or elsewhere
While we agree this will be interesting to compare, it may also be a misjudgment. This is because the estimate was done by the researcher based on a limited sample. We have not come across any regional estimates that estimate child mortality ratios in this manner.

- although man's fertility preference is included on pp11-12, the article doesn't explicitly discuss the possibly confounding factor of couple dynamics or gender equality. Perhaps as the woman has more bargaining power, she can also force husband to agree to fewer children.

We completely agree that there are interesting dynamics within the household about fertility preferences. In this study we emphasize on the woman. The male fertility preference was included as a control variable. It will be tricky to interpret it as it did not make any statistical difference. We will consider this for future investigation.

- p16, lines47-49: instead of "can't" spell out to match other formatting in text

Done

- p17, ines19-20: inclusion of entrepreneurship seems to come out of nowhere without much introduction in earlier sections beyond term "empowerment"

This has been revised to ensure consistency across the paper.