Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Using the Theory of Planned Behavior to Explain Birth in Health Facility Intention among Expecting Couples in a Rural Setting Rukwa Tanzania: A Cross-sectional Survey

**Version: 0 Date: 02 Jul 2019**

**Reviewer:** Natalie Hohmann

**Reviewer's report:**

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This is an important and interesting topic in both women's health and rural health.

Abstract: The abstract is well-written. In the abstract, it may be helpful to avoid stating that the reason for male partners having lower birth in health facility intention (compared to pregnant women) was due to financial implications associated with health facility childbirth, since this was not described in the abstract results.

Introduction: The introduction contains many relevant statistics and describes the maternal risks of childbirth well. There is some contradictory information in the introduction that could be clarified for readers, such as on page 4 it states that 5 out of 1,000 live births result in maternal mortality in Tanzania, but also states that 1 out of 44 deliveries result in maternal mortality in Tanzania. It would also be helpful for readers if the purpose of the study was made more clear in the introduction. For example, it would be helpful to include information on access and current use of health facilities for childbirth in the Rukwa region. If use is low, this may clarify the reason for investigating expecting couples' intention to use these facilities, so that effective interventions to improve health facility use can be designed.

Methods: The study design and methodology are appropriate for the question. The community-based recruitment increases the generalizability of results. Use of the TPB provides a sound theoretical basis for investigating intentions. It would be helpful to mention more detail about how the survey was developed. For example, was the readability of the survey tested? Was the survey pre-tested or piloted? It may be helpful for readers to see some examples of the survey questions, or to include a table with the survey questions. It would also be helpful to describe if the survey questions in the TPB domains were analyzed using scale scores.

Results: The sample size is large for a community-based study in a rural region. The adjusted odds ratio (AOR) for the association of pregnant women's attitudes with birth in health facility intention is large; it's possible the AOR is inflated because the number of women who did not intend to use a health facility was small (&lt;10). This can be mentioned in the limitations section of the Discussion.

Discussion: There are several relevant citations and descriptions of previous literature that relate to the results. Since the intention to use a health facility for childbirth was high among both women and male partners, it would be helpful to discuss what the actual utilization of health facilities for childbirth is in the Rukwa region. If utilization is low despite a high intention to use a health facility, it could be helpful to describe barriers to health facility access in the Rukwa region that may contribute to this discrepancy. Readers may use that information to help inform the design of interventions to improve health facility utilization for childbirth. Also, it would be helpful to add a limitations section in the
Discussion that describes study limitations. For example, adding some discussion of how/if social desirability bias may have played a role in the high percentage of respondents who stated an intention to use health facilities for childbirth.

Conclusion: In the Conclusion, it may be helpful to avoid stating that the reason for male partners having lower birth in health facility intention (compared to pregnant women) was due to financial implications associated with health facility childbirth, since this was not described in the Results section, but was part of previous literature described in the Discussion.

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