Reviewer’s report

Title: PRENACEL Partner - Use of Short Message Service (SMS) to encourage male involvement in prenatal care: a cluster randomized trial

Version: 0 Date: 27 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Mezgebu Yitayal

Reviewer's report:

Abstract
1. Background, Aim, Methods, Results, and Conclusion shall start at new line.

2. Line 72: What are some criteria?

Background
3. The background section focused only on partners' role on maternal health. This might be good to understand the role of the partners. However, the authors fail to come up with evidences that indicate the use of SMS and/or other technologies on male involvement in prenatal care or other health services.

4. In addition, the author did not address why they wanted to conduct this study i.e. what is unknown about the topic. Is their lack of evidences on the use of SMS on partners' involvement? Or Is there any methodological flaw in the existing evidences?

Methods
Design and setting
5. Some of the information described under study design and setting section of the methods (Lines 231 -236) could be data collection instruments section.

6. Similarly, the information described in paragraph 2 of the same section methods (Lines 237 -241) could be moved to ethical approval section. In this section, it may be enough to describe the study design and some information about the study area such as the number of health facilities.

Study population
7. I wonder why partners and pregnant women who attended prenatal care at health units that were not selected were considered as exclusion criteria (Line 256-257). Exclusion criteria should be related to the study participants and the contexts. Here, in the process, some might be selected and some might not be selected and that is not part of exclusion criteria.

Study period
8. I do not think the study period section deserves a standalone title. The period could be described under study design and setting section.

9. All the information described in this section should have the sub-title or be moved to data collection procedures.

Sample size
10. The sample was obtained by convenience. Why did you use convenience? Randomized control
trial is one of the strongest designs for evidence generation, and sample size determination should be based on reasoning and considering the assumptions in sample size determination.

Result
11. In the result section, I expected interpretation of results that could be understood by readers easily. For example, simply saying partners in the intervention group were more frequently present at birth, favoring childbirth companionship is not enough? It should be describe in number with its interpretation.

Discussion
12. In discussion section, authors tried to compare and contrast their findings with previous studies. However, I believe it needs additional evidences that support or refute the current study, and the authors are expected to give rationale or argument why this current study is in line with or contrary to other studies.

13. Finally, this type of study is prone to bias because it is a community level trial in which the feasibility (ethical as well as financial), information contamination, counterfactual problems, etc. are the major concern. The authors are expected to address all these issues and how they managed it.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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I declare that I have no competing interests.

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