Author’s response to reviews

Title: Process evaluation of text-based support for fathers during the transition to fatherhood (SMS4dads): mechanisms of impact

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Responses to reviewers’ comments

Reviewer 1 Comment

Abstract: In the Introduction it is stated that fathers received 182 text messages (not 184).

Author response: The number is accurate as the first and last are the Welcome and Goodbye texts. The number in the introduction has been corrected to avoid confusion

P.3, L.48: It is unclear what is meant by "meta-analysis rate". Please elaborate or rephrase.

Author response: Sentence reworded to “A meta-analysis of 43 studies with 28 004 participants found prenatal and postpartum depression was evident in 10% of fathers [24].

P.4, L.10: What type of risk are you referring to here?

Author response: Sentence reworded to “Therefore, novel ways are needed to engage men as they transition to fatherhood.”

P.4, L.14: Bracket of reference is missing.

Author response

Added

P.5, L.23: The statement to identify "drivers of behavioural or cognitive change" is unclear. From the current paper it is not obvious whether or not "change" was assessed in the SMS4dads
study and if yes, how. Liking the current paper a bit more to the previous publications would strengthen this part and provide readers with the necessary background knowledge. Similarly, before going into the details of the Methods, it is important to provide readers with more information about the program outcomes relevant for the SMS4dads study. Some information is presented at the beginning of the Result section but could better be introduced here.

Author response: In the paragraph immediately preceding the methods section there is the statement “At the conclusion of the messages, 101 fathers completed an online survey indicating high approval of the program: 92.9% found the messages helpful; 83.3% said they felt less isolated as a result of the program; 80.9% found the messages helped their relationship with their partner, and 65.4% with their infant [41].” These are the changes that are referred to in the first sentence of the methods section.

P.10, L.35: There is a formatting error.

Author response: I am not sure what the specific error is referred to by the reviewer. Perhaps it is the line spacing prior to “1. Evidence-based information synced to the paternal perinatal experience” or maybe the indentation? No change has been made but this is a matter that might be picked up during production.

P.14, L.14: Is there a reason "safety net" is presented in bold?

Author response: Safety net has now been unbolded.

P.16, L.48: Is "entering a set of new practices" the best word choice?

Author response: Thank you to the reviewer for noting the readability of this line. We have revised it so that it now says: “At the instant of conception, men enter a new state of fatherhood, and soon engage in a set of new fathering practices.”

Table 1: When were those characteristics measured? At the same time as the interviews were conducted (i.e. conclusion of receiving the messages)? Add statistical tests used to compare interviewed dads and those not interviewed. Test statistics are presented in the text (page 5) but not currently referred to in Table 1.

Author response: Characteristics were measured on entry to the study. We have indicated this now by changing the table title to, “Baseline sample characteristics by interview condition”. A column has now been added to the table to include statistical tests.
Reviewer 2 comment

1. Check for typos throughout the manuscript

2. Author response: Done

   - Sentence Background p3: line 48 needs reworking "a meta-analysis rate of 10.4%........ mental health" (not a full sentence and is unclear)
   
   Author response: Reworded to “A meta-analysis of 43 studies with 28 004 participants found prenatal and postpartum depression was evident in 10% of fathers [24].”

   - p4 line 4 - father's lack of availability to attend clinics and programs - this puts all the onus on the father's and suggests they are not interested in attending - this could be reworded to indicate that often clinics and programs are not scheduled at times and days that enable attendance without disrupting work commitments
   
   Author response: Reworded to “Fathers’ lack of access to clinics and programs, often due to work commitments,”

   - p 4, line 14 - via mobile phones at more convenient times
   
   Author response: Added

   - Check for overuse of capitals e.g research assistant, psychology
   
   Author response: Corrected

3. p 4, line 14 - Sentence" there is accumulating evidence...." this needs references

   Author response: References added

4. Methodology - NVIVO is not an analysis tool but rather a data management tool - suggest entered into NVIVO for data management and subsequent analysis

   Author response: Text added for data management and subsequent analysis

   - Were the father's given the opportunity to add to or change anything in their transcripts?

   Author response: Text has been added to the manuscript: A copy of the interview was offered to all fathers interviewed, 19 requested a copy, and no fathers subsequently requested revisions to their transcripts.

4. Results
I am a bit nervous about calling the results "outcomes" this implies some sort of measurement - was this the case in the feasibility study? Is this referring to changes in the DASS and Audit C or Kessler? Perhaps consider a difference word to "outcomes" and/or softening the language e.g potentially contributing to positive and then be explicit (positive mood, role construction etc) I would like to see the figure be a little more explicit - what is the connection between the structural features and psychological processes? Currently the arrow for the program is pointing away from the outcomes. Consider whether you need the figure at all of if the structural features and psychological processes can be summarised in a table. The outcomes referred to were reported statistics of % of fathers agreeing to a set of post-survey questions (Table 6 in Fletcher et al., 2017 [ref #41]).

Author response: The manuscript text has been edited to more clearly indicate this:

“Four positive outcomes of SMS4dads were identified in the post-program survey in the feasibility study discussed above”

The figure represents the program and the outcomes within their respective shapes, however, the authors see how there could be a lack of clarity here. The figure has been replaced by a table (Table 2) that lists these attributes. Exemplars of links between the structural features and the psychological processes are given.

5. Discussion/limitations

It would be good to have some discussion on literacy (both reading/writing and health) - the intervention assumes a base level of both and this is potentially a limitation.

Author response: Sentence added “Although the messages were screened and if necessary reworded to ensure that they required a literacy level below Year 9 [58] the literacy demands of the program may also have excluded some fathers” and new reference added Flesch R. A new readability yardstick. Journal of applied psychology. 1948 Jun;32(3):221.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion has a number of reference to "we" - we also... we emphasise... our study - this language has not been used throughout and so perhaps changing to "the study"

Author response: This has been corrected in the text.

Table 1

Only one decimal place for mean age
Author response Corrected

References

- formatting needs to be checked against journal guidelines (in particular capitalisation of journal names)

Author response : The capitals have been corrected as indicated.