

Reviewer's report

Title: Women's autonomy in decision-making for healthcare; a demographic study in Nepal

Version: 2 Date: 20 April 2010

Reviewer: Samira Haddad

Reviewer's report:

This is a well conducted and written manuscript on women's health, especially addressing the United Nations' 3rd Millennium Development Goal. Studying demographic aspects of countries like Nepal, where several social and cultural characteristics may impair women's empowerment, contribute to promote strategies to achieve gender equality.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1- The title and the beginning of the first paragraph give the sensation that this study examined the correlation between socio-demographic factors and women's autonomy to decision making on issues related to health care, and especially to reproductive health care, such as choice of contraceptive use, choice of method, number of children desired or choice to access to health services. As well, they suggest a correlation between some aspects of gender inequality and maternal and infant outcomes.

Empower women and enhance their autonomy undoubtedly lead a better reproductive health outcome. However, the data analyzed showed a correlation between socio-demographic factors and women's autonomy in decision-making in general health issues (own health care) and mainly in other essentially social aspects within the household (making major household purchases, making purchase needs for daily household and visits to her family or friends). Although healthcare may have a broad sense, within the definition of health as bio-psycho-social well-being, its use in the title and the focus given early in the first paragraph can change the attention from the aim of the study analysis.

The conclusion shows clearly the focus on the women's autonomy for decision-making within the social-family field, including the proposal of measures to improve its position within the family and reduce the dependency over the other family members. The abstract of the paper reinforces the idea of analyzing the influence of demographic factors in the women's household autonomy in decision-making, in a far more social aspect than healthcare itself.

As a suggestion, delete "for healthcare" from the title and start the background from "Autonomy is the ability ...", changing the place of the first 3 sentences of the first paragraph.

2- The first two paragraphs of "Methods" best fit as the last two paragraphs of the

background session, because they contain the basement for the objective of the study and the objective itself. The methods session really starts on the phrase: "So, a backward-stepwise (BSTEP)..."

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests