Reviewer’s report

Title: A Retrospective Cohort Study Investigating Individual and Community Determinants of Facility Delivery in Rufiji, Tanzania

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Reviewer: Cheryl Moyer

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have presented a well-written article exploring 10 years of HDSS data regarding the social and community factors associated with place of delivery in Tanzania. This manuscript is interesting to read, uses innovative methods to explore HDSS data, and adds a new perspective to the discussion of 'social influences' on facility delivery.

That said, I had a few comments that, if addressed, might strengthen the manuscript.

1) First, the background section includes 8 good references regarding factors associated with facility-based delivery, but does not give mention to any of the review articles that have included 70+ articles. These include Say and Raine (2007); Gabrysch and Cambell (2009); and Moyer and Mustafa (2013). It seems like it might be worthwhile to reference these works.

2) Second, I found Figure 1 particularly telling - there does not appear to be much change within villages, despite huge variability across villages, in FBD rates and the change in those rates over 10 years. It would be helpful to add a paragraph in the discussion addressing this observation. Why do the authors think rates are so resistant to change?

3) Third, the authors don't speculate on why the community’s average years of schooling among females might be negatively associated with facility delivery - even though this is a counter-intuitive finding.

4) Fourth, the final paragraph in the conclusion could be strengthened. The authors conclude that "interventions designed to increase facility delivery must acknowledge these (social) factors to effectively promote health services utilization." How? What might that look like? What do these results really mean for programs and policies? I humbly push the authors to think a bit more about the implications of their findings.

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