Reviewer's report

Title: Food insecurity, school absenteeism and educational attainment of adolescents in southwest Ethiopia: a longitudinal study

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Reviewer: Sharon Kirkpatrick

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper that can make a useful contribution to the literature. The authors seem to have made careful revisions to address the reviews. However, there are a few methodologic issues that are still unclear, in particular the presentation of bivariate and multivariate results. Also, a thorough edit of the manuscript is needed to improve its readability and clarity.

1. Lines 94-95 somewhat repetitive or even contradictory with lines 79-83.

2. The coding of the food security variables is still somewhat confusing - I am not clear as to why one affirmative response was taken to indicate food insecure on the adolescent scale but a severe food insecure categorization was used for the household scale. Inclusion of a rationale for this would be helpful. E.g., did you hypothesize that FI at the household level wouldn't affect adolescents unless it was severe?

3. In the methods, the authors indicate that variable that were significant in bivariate analyses were entered into the multivariate model - but this does not seem to be the case from an examination of table 1 and 2 - e.g., place of residence and part of female headed household are NS in table 1 but are included in the model included in table 2. (Also, please use consistent variable names between the 2 tables). Not clear whether this is also the case for attainment (if univariate results are retained, consider adding a table or reporting bivariate associations with absenteeism more fully in the results).

4. Lines 314-315 - not clear that the models show that the effect of gender on absenteeism is mediated by adolescent FI - couldn't it be any of the other variables in the multivariate model?

5. Table 1 - seems like it might be more interesting to see the proportions down rows instead of across columns - e.g., proportion of absentees vs. non-absentees who are FI rather than proportion of FI who are absentees vs. non-absentees - this seems like a better lead in to Table 2.

6. Figure 2 - please give p value for food secure.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:
No