Reviewer's report

Title: Adolescent women's use of modern contraceptives in Zimbabwe: A multilevel analysis.

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Reviewer: doortje braeken

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Adolescent women’s use of modern contraceptives in Zimbabwe: A multilevel analysis.
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1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
Yes. It is well defined. It helps to add a new perspective because adds to the discussion of interventions; it is not just about individual behavioural change but we need to look at wider issues and circumstances in the family and the community. This is really an interesting perspective.

2 Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
Yes ; it is only quantitative. For it to become more insightful, it needs further qualitative research. However, the idea that education alone is not correlated to pregnancy and that therefore the community is a decisive factor is an assumption in itself. The study would have been so much more helpful, if it had been linked with qualitative research and interviewing girls themselves as well as community stake holders.

3 Are the data sound and well controlled?
Yes

4 Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
In general yes. However I felt that some of the references may not have been adequate or give the evidence that it was supposed to give. For example Reference 10; this refers to a very old research and not really adequate to back the statement that was given. ( young girls don’t want to be pregnant)

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Discussion is adequate but could include more relevant and thought provoking questions and ideas. It is very interesting to discuss the influence and pressure of the community on adolescent pregnancies. However the conclusions and the discussion remain sometimes unclear.

The issue of sexual union is only discussed in a relationship; what about more
casual sexual encounters? Does a girl feel the same pressure then? This article explains the teenage pregnancy ‘pressure’ only from one perspective.

For example: ‘Adolescents need to be protected by encouraging them to delay getting married. Intervention programs need to emphasize the importance of delaying childbearing by creating an understanding and support to reduce adolescent pregnancy by encouraging them to wait until they are 20 years before they could have a child’ This is a very vague conclusion. It is not clear how and why. The postponement of marriage could be a factor. Who does need to be influenced? How to address social norms in a community? There is no referral to the basic SRH rights of young people to choose. Are all pregnancies among girls unwanted? It seems now that all pregnancies under 20 years of age are seen as a failure, I would have hoped to have a more balanced view on teenage pregnancy itself.

The starting point is the understanding that early pregnancy as a social norm can only be changed through collective agreement – the creation of a new social norm - rather than individual decisions. However, issues which are not enough addressed is the linkage to girls’ and woman’s identity, their full acceptance by society.

It would have been interesting to link this study with new finding on influencing social norms e.g. DFID in Rwanda and Sudan with regard to FGM. These findings argue that the combination of targeted, enabling and catalytic approaches reflects the experience that no single approach will deliver complex change, but that a portfolio of sensitive community level work to directly end the practice (usually led by civil society), social communications, education, information, campaigns, political and social commitment, appropriately timed and implemented legislation (e.g. age of consent accessing services), are all key factors which in combination can be instrumental in bringing about change. Targeted, enabling and catalytic approaches should been used in programming for social change in a range of sectors.

The research gives enough food for thought for interventions and I believe the authors should have given this more attention; these intervention can include different approaches but will be rights-based, with high levels of community involvement and is likely to involve close engagement with traditional and other community leaders alongside women, men, girls and boys.

5 Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title could be a bit more explanatory, referring to the social context

6 Is the writing acceptable?
Especially the conclusion/discussion part should use more thought provoking language. I understand the importance of neutrality in this article, but something about the lack of young women’s’ rights could have been mentioned. How can the voice of young women and girls be brought in to the discussions about pregnancy, wanted or unwanted?
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.