Reviewer's report

Title: A quantitative exploration of the sociocultural context of teenage pregnancy in Sri Lanka

Version: 1 Date: 29 July 2014

Reviewer: Sunita Bandewar

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1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Yes, the research question is relevant. However, I would like to indicate two areas that require attention. It would help to strengthen the piece and enhance the relevance of the topic of enquiry (research question). They are:

(a) the data collection since took place between the years 2007 (July) and 2009 (June), it warrants reporting of relevant empirical and theoretical work in the recent past. A quick review references reveals that the most recent publication quoted/sourced is from the year 2011. I suggest that authors respond to this gap by updating the literature or stating in response to the editor that there is nothing relevant to source from the year 2011 onwards to date on the topic of enquiry and allied themes.

(b) Authors justify the relevance of the work by saying it would help feed into the state policies or by saying “…teenage pregnancy is attracting increasing policy attention in Sri Lanka because of the risks it poses to maternal and infant health as well as to social and economic well-being.”. However, there is almost nothing sourced that would shed light on the current policies and approaches of the Shri Lankan government, and as to how it is constrained in absence of either no or limited empirical evidence on the topic. The reference sourced is that of the WHO (Ref no 1) but not that of the actual govt policies even if they might be only in making.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The ‘method’ section is rather ambiguous. It requires clearer presentation relating to some of the key aspects as below:

(a) It would be helpful to state up front and at the outset that it is a clinic based study (which has inherent limitations of its own)

(b) It is not clear how the 50% estimated figure about the teenage pregnancy amongst married girls is arrived at. Sourcing any documents/reports that mentions these estimates will be necessary.

(c) Does this mean that only married girls were included in the study? It seems so. Again, if so, it will be helpful to state it upfront.

(d) Not clear if the clinics (179 - area + 21 – estate) included in the study to draw
the sample are private or public or both. Please state it clearly given the international audience of the journal.

(e) Also, since it is a clinic based study, it is logical to talk about how these 200 clinics were selected? What is the universe, that is, how many clinics in the district of study?

(f) It appears that about 1 - 3 women per clinic were picked up to be included in the study. If so, it would be appropriate to describe how the clinics were selected from the universe of clinics (area + estate)? And what was the procedure to pick up women/teen age pregnant women to be included in the study? It is not clear how women from these clinics were selected?

(g) It is stated that the upper limit of eight women to be recruited from any one clinic was set. Once again, not clear if one goes by the numbers above (200 clinics, and 450 sample size) as how was this done. If this has been the case, it would mean the number of clinics actually included in the study would be much much less. Please clarify.

(h) It is also not clear as to how random sampling was achieved. It is essential to clarify else the current articulation is suggestive of ‘purposive sampling’ and will have bearing on the appropriateness of statistical tests applied.

(i) Consent seeking: It is stated that girls/teenage pregnant girls were approached via midwives. Does this mean service providers (doctors) did not have any role to play in the consent seeking processes?

(j) MOH Records: are they robust enough? And most importantly, needs to be mentioned the year of MoH records used for the sampling purposes.

(k) The description of methods probably doesn’t befit the ‘random sampling’ of women at the clinic.

(l) Data analysis: It is stated that the responses to the open ended and direct questions were categorised for the analysis purposes. It will be helpful to clearly state as what guided this categorisation; if any seeming contradictions, if any, in the data set were handled; and if data were revisited and/or handled in an iterative manner as a way of making the data analysis robust and validated internally.

(m) Analysis restricting to 409 cases only of the total 450: It is not clear as to why analysis of 409 cases for further analysis justified on the grounds that they were the cases of first pregnancy. If so, this should have been the eligibility criteria? In any case, it is not clear enough the rationale behind this rationale. It also suggests that data collected from other 41 girls was only marginally utilised.

To me, this is a rather weak section in terms of its presentation assuming that methods employed had been sufficiently sound. And reworking along the aforesaid points would be essential to make it sound and clear.

3. Are the data sound?

Yes with a caveat that stems from the aforesaid clarifications sought relating, particularly to the sampling.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
To a great extent except that it will be appropriate and essential, as mentioned earlier in response to Q no 1 above, to update the work/lit review over these past three years, and sourcing material relating to the current policy status and overall trends of thinking amongst policy makers over the past couple of decades as reflected in the policies relating to teen age pregnancy. This might have been reflected in the overall SRRH framework or other relevant policies of the Shri Lankan government.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
A minor point: Please edit sentences those begin with numbers. In such instances, numbers are to be written in words, as a norm.

- Major Compulsory Revisions
The points I made relating to methods and suggested revisions are essential.

**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:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.