Reviewer's report

Title: Household Food Insecurity and Mental Distress among Pregnant Women in Southwestern Ethiopia: A cross sectional study design

Version: 3 Date: 16 March 2015

Reviewer: Simone Honikman

Reviewer's report:

Abstract
• Conclusion – the final sentence: consider that the relationship between food insecurity and mental distress may be bidirectional (comment made in original review, and addressed in your limitations) - suggest you simply add ‘and/or’ in line 23 instead of just ‘or’.

Introduction
• Line 29 – ‘show’ and ‘concern’ should be in the singular
• Use of current tense and past tense when reporting the literature is not consistent.
• I will leave the substantial requirements of correction of grammar and language throughout the rest of the paper to the authors or the editorial team.
• Line 48 - replace ‘maternal mental depression’ with ‘maternal depression’
• Paragraph 4: this literature should be reported in a more logical manner. Reference 30 appears twice unnecessarily. Physical health outcomes associated with food insecurity should be separated from mental health outcomes. The description of key mental health outcome literature should be expanded slightly.
• It is not clear whether the authors appreciate the degree to which mental distress and disorder are constructs on the same continuum.
• Question (2) does not make sense. Suggest changing to ‘Is there any association between food insecurity and mental distress among pregnant women?’

Methods
• Line 106-8 does not make sense.
• No references have been given for the sentence starting in line 109.
• Sentence starting line 111 is unclear.
• Line 116 does not make sense with ‘cutoff point’ in the plural. The rest of the language should also be corrected. ‘Levels of symptoms’? There is missing information in this sentence too – sensitivity and specificity for what, tested against what gold standard?
• Line 125 – the word ‘access’ is missing
• Line 130 – requires language correction
• Questionnaire to measure household food insecurity – it is still not clear in the paper itself how the status of food secure vs. insecure was derived

Results
• Table 4 missing!
• Certain significant and interesting findings, with respect to possible pathways to food insecurity, were not discussed
  o Age >= 35 has a high AOR for mental distress
  o Potential protective factors for mental distress: being married; being a govt employee

Discussion
• Better use of paragraphs may improve readability
• Lines 196-197 are still ambiguous. Do the percentages refer to anxiety and depression respectively, or maternal and paternal symptoms respectively
• The long discussion on mental distress and depression rates could be shortened. Care needs to be taken not to compare screening or distress studies with diagnostic studies.
• I do not suggest the authors’ include the hormone hypothesis, with out reference to any literature, to suggest explanation of the difference in rates of maternal mental health problems compared to the general adult population. In settings of socio-economic adversity, there is far more substantial evidence for the relationships between intimate partner violence, lack of social support as well as poverty, with maternal mental health problems.
• The discussion around intimate partner violence is not adequate with respect to possible causal pathways to food insecurity. My major compulsory revision with respect to gender, education and violence and referral to other literature on this, has largely been ignored.
• There is inadequate referral to how these findings may impact future policy or service design recommendations.
• Paragraph starting on line 265: language is not clearly understood and thus I cannot provide comment.

References
• There is a lack of consistency of referencing style