Reviewer’s report

Title: Pregnancy and early motherhood among adolescents in five East African countries: a multi-level analysis of risk and protective factors

Version: 0  Date: 07 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Ruth S Buzi

Reviewer's report:

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This study utilizes data from five East African countries and examines factors affecting adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood. This is an important study in light of the high prevalence of early motherhood in these countries. The strength of the study is the use of a large data set from five countries and the examination of factors on many levels of influence. Better understanding the contextual factors that affect early sexual activity and pregnancy could guide prevention efforts. However, the study should clarify the following:

1. Title:

   * The title of the study is long. I would like to suggest the authors consider shortening the title and only keeping the main aspects the study.
   * The title and then later the paper discuss household factors. It appears the authors use a socio-ecological framework to guide their study. If this is the case, the authors should consider using the constructs addressed in this framework and replace household with interpersonal factors.

2. Abstract:

   * The authors refer to their methodology in the title as multi-level and then later as multi-sectoral. The authors should be consistent. I believe that the use of multi-level or socio-ecological methodology captures more effectively the constructs than multi-sectoral.
   * The size of the sample should be mentioned in the abstract in some way.

3. Introduction:

   * Can the authors provide a reference for their statement that few studies utilized multi-level approaches to studying teen pregnancy?
   * The authors refer to multiple levels of influence but do not mention a theoretical framework they utilized to guide their study and the selection of variables. This should be included in the introduction as well as a rationale for such an approach.
4. Methods:

* It is unclear what participants' age at the time of the survey was. Can the authors provide a mean age?
* The section of the explanatory variables is not well organized and difficult to follow. I recommend the authors use subheadings to identify the various variables they used. This could follow the theoretical framework.

5. Results:

6. When the authors organize the variables in the methods section, they should also follow the same structure in the results section. This will help with clarity.
* When the authors report results and CI, they should also include the P values.

7. Discussion:

* The discussion is very long and repeats information already reported under results. This section should only highlight main findings and refer to the literature. Although this section does not require subheadings, referring to the main findings in the same order of the subheadings, will be helpful.

General comments: The authors should review the manuscript for grammatical inaccuracies. For example, the sentence on page 17 line 49, is incomplete.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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