Reviewer's report

Title: Household food insecurity, diet, and weight status in a disadvantaged district of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: A cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 10 December 2014

Reviewer: Lucia L Kaiser

Reviewer's report:

D = discretionary
1) Introduction Pg 4. Add citations for those “few studies” conducted in countries undergoing nutrition transition
2) Introduction Pg 5. In reference to “equitable distribution at the household level”, clarify if you mean across households, intrahousehold, or both.

M = minor
1) Eliminate second period after characteristics (page 10)
2) Check formatting of references

C = compulsory
1) Abstract (pg 2): The background section of the abstract is lengthy but the methods are vague. Include sample size, which instrument was used to measure food security, how food intake was measured, which household members were assessed, how food security was specified in the analysis.
2) Introduction Pg 5. Add year for the estimate of food insecurity in Vietnam. How does this estimate vary across urban and rural areas
3) Introduction Pg 6. Who are the ethnic minority groups? Are they included in this study? Ethnicity is mentioned in Table 1 but it is unclear how this variable was defined
4) Methods Pg 7 How was the sample size of 250 selected? Did some families refuse to participate (that should be mentioned in the results)? Was the adult a head of the household or anyone over a certain age? There might be a bias if food security data were reported by non household heads for some of the sample.
5) Methods Pg 8. Was the ELCSA cognitively tested and adapted before use? At least content and face validity should be established for this instrument.
6) Methods Pg 9. Use of self-reported anthropometric data for adults and children seems like a serious flaw. I recommend that authors drop these data entirely from the paper and focus on the prevalence data, predictors of food insecurity, and dietary data.
7) Methods Pg 7. What did the training entail? How many days? How many interviewers?

8) Results Pg 11 I think a Table describing the sample is needed, showing characteristics of this sample and if possible, how they compare to the general Vietnamese urban population. Ethnicity is puzzling—who are the other groups? Typically, underrepresented groups are oversampled and then adjustments are made. It does not sound like that happened so this study may have missed something important.

9) Results Table 1 is confusing. It seems like different confounders were used for several separate regressions. I would have expected that these characteristics would have been used in the same regression. Ethnicity, employment family size, living arrangement, income should be defined in this table. Does age, education etc refer to the female household head?

10) Discussion

Page 12. The first sentence makes a claim about this study’s estimate of 34% food insecurity as it compares to the national prevalence of 14%. Are the authors comparing their estimates of this subset to a national average? I am not familiar with the Vietnamese data so I don’t know how they report this information but I wonder if they don’t have a different figure for rural vs urban areas. This point needs clarification. What is the range for that national average/

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.