Author's response to reviews

Title: Maternal depression and malnutrition in children in southwest Uganda: a case control study

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Response to reviewer comments:
Title: Maternal depression and malnutrition in children in southwest Uganda: a case control study.
Authors: Scholastic Ashaba, Godfrey Zari Rukundo, Florence Beinempaka, Moses Ntaro and John Leblanc
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We thank the reviewer for her interest in our manuscript, and for all her helpful comments. Provided below is a point-by-point response describing our attempts to address and incorporate all requested revisions in our manuscript.

Reviewer: Letícia Marques dos Santos

Reviewer's report:
Major Compulsory Revision #1 – done
Major Compulsory Revision #2 – done
Major compulsory Revision #3 - Re-review

The authors improved their analysis model; however, some important information is missing on the manuscript. I believe that the final sentence of the data analysis section would be clearer if it was written as it follows: “Logistic regression analysis was used to estimate OR for each variable. Those which demonstrated an association with the outcome were inserted into a multiple logistic regression model to estimate the adjusted OR of association between maternal depression and malnutrition in children.”

RESPONSE: Thank you for the helpful suggestion and we agree that indeed the final sentence of the data analysis section was not clear and we have adopted
your suggestion. The last two sentences of the data analysis section now reads as “First, we used bivariate logistic regression analysis to estimate OR for each variable. Those that demonstrated an association with the outcome variable were inserted into a multiple logistic regression model to estimate the adjusted OR of association between maternal depression and malnutrition in children.

Major Compulsory Revision #4 (Results I) – Re-review

It is necessary to test if case and control groups are similar or different. I suggest that the authors test if there are differences between the groups and present it in table 1. If there is some group differences, the authors should justify what they have done to control its effects on the association founded.

RESPONSE: we are not clear as to what the reviewer is asking here. If she is asking for hypothesis testing to see if cases and controls are statistically significantly different, this is not considered appropriate for case-controls studies. This is discussed in the STROBE explanation and elaboration document:


“In case-control studies potential confounders cannot be judged by comparing cases and controls. Control persons represent the source population and will usually be different from the cases in many respects.”

and

“Inferential measures such as standard errors and confidence intervals should not be used to describe the variability of characteristics, and significance tests should be avoided in descriptive tables. Also, P values are not an appropriate criterion for selecting which confounders to adjust for in analysis; even small differences in a confounder that has a strong effect on the outcome can be important”.

Never the less we used chi-square analysis to determine if any group differences might be present and in table 1 an extra column was added where by chi-square and p-values recorded. This analysis did not show any statistically significant differences between case and control groups. (Table 1 on page 15 of the manuscript)

Major compulsory Revision #5 (Results II) - Re-review

I believe that the authors repeated the OR for the association between mother depression and malnutrition in table 3 and 4. In table 4, the OR should be adjusted by all other co-variates inserted in the model.

We agree and thank you for the advice. We have revised our tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows crude ORs of maternal depression and other socio-demographic factors associated with malnutrition in children. On the other hand table 4 shows adjusted ORs which we generated by inserting all the other co-variates in the regression model (table 3 is on page 17 and table 4 on page 19 of the manuscript)
Major compulsory Revision #6 (Results III) – Done
Minor essential Revision #1 – Done
Minor essential Revision #2 – re-review

I still suggest that authors include in the table title, all the information that the reader needs to understand that table.

Thank you for pointing this and we agree with the comment. We have revised our table titles and we trust the current titles show what the reader needs to understand the tables.

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published.

We have done language corrections and we believe the manuscript is fit for publication.