Author’s response to reviews

Title: Does women’s caste make a significant contribution to adolescent pregnancy in Nepal? : A study of Dalit and non-Dalit adolescents and young adults in Rupandehi district.

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Response to Reviewers

Rajendra Karkee (Reviewer 1):

1. Abstract:

Which is appropriate caste or ethnicity; caste and ethnicity? Although both terms are related; they can have distinct origins and meanings. I suggest choosing one: Dalit and non-Dalit are primarily caste based system in Nepal.

Response: Thank you for highlighting this. We agree with your suggestion to use the term ‘caste’ and have amended the text to reflect this throughout the paper.

2. Introduction:

What is the context of including Erikson de-constructed model in the background? How this is related to the problem statement?

Response:

Thank you for asking for clarity on this. We felt that referring to Erikson was a helpful additional way to recognize and describe the different stages during adolescence, the influence of internal and external factors, and vulnerabilities associated with these changes.

3. Methods:
What is the caste composition of the study area? It is good to explain the health facility setting in 'study design and setting'.

Response: A detailed description of the study district population composition, including caste breakdown is now added in the Study Design and Setting (Page 4 & 5).

4. What is the reason behind dividing variables into external and internal because the primary study variable is caste/ethnicity?

Response: The study set two objectives (Page 4): They were: to examine the association of caste and ethnicity with adolescent pregnancy; and to investigate other factors influencing early pregnancy among Dalit and non-Dalit women. Although the primary study variables are caste and ethnicity, we categorized other socio-demographic, economic and individual factors into two broad categories as external and internal variables following “The development assets framework” developed by “Search Institute” to understand it clearly, and now referred to more explicitly on Page 4.

5. How is the wealth index calculated? Principal component analysis would have been good.

Response: Thank you for your suggestion for developing the wealth index using principal component analysis. For this study we used household facilities and possessions such as utilities, materials, animals etc. and dichotomized all variables except for house roofing and source of water indicators assigning the score Yes=1 and No=0 for developing the wealth index with a total score of 24. In the case of roofing materials, the household was assigned the weight 1 with natural/non-durable roofing, 2 with durable roofing (tin/Jasta/Tile) and 3 for those with concrete roofing. Similarly, household using surface water or shallow well were given the score 1, those using tube well were assigned 2 and who were using pipe water were given 3 score. The sample was then divided into quintiles from one as poorest to five the richest. However, the lowest two and highest two groups were collapsed to make three categories of wealth ranking in order to have enough cases in each category for analysis (Please refer page 6). Thus the wealth index was calculated for this study. As per your suggestion, we will try with principal component analysis method to calculate wealth indices for future studies.

6. In the title, the caste has been posed as Dalit and Non-Dalit; but in table with four categories.

Response: Primarily the study focus was on caste (Dalit, and non-Dalit), however there are several distinct non-Dalit caste groups in the district. Therefore, it was felt appropriate to disaggregate and present the findings for the main caste groups.
7. Is there any measurement indication of often/sometime drinks alcohol; goes to movie; or attends fair club?

Response: No there were no specific measurements to define often/sometime and we recognize that this is prone to subjective interpretation.

8. What is the definition of adolescent pregnancy? Is it pregnancy below 18 or 20 years?

Response: As defined by WHO ‘adolescent pregnancy’ means pregnancy in a woman aged 10 – 19 years. It is further defined as younger adolescents for those aged 10 – 14 years. However, this study combines into one group and defined adolescent pregnancy for those pregnancies below 20 years of age.

9. Discussion:

Why is there contradiction? A comparative discussion is necessary.

In bivariate association, there is association of caste but in multivariate not. What can be the reasons need to be discussed.

Response: It could be due to all the factors did not work independently. It would be important for policy makers or programmers that they should focus multiple factor while making policy or program.

Jalal Safipour (Reviewer 2):

1. This paper is addressing a very important health subject about adolescent pregnancy in Nepal. I have only one main concern about the age of study participants and the study focus. In the background section the adolescent's age refers to age 15-19 and the legal age of marriage in Nepal stated as age 18. However, in this study data were collected among 14 to 24 years old women. At this point I don’t see any argument about why this age group selected for this study. In the data analysis section (table 3, 4), the data was analyzed based on pregnancy under the age 20. It is not clear why age 20 was selected as a cut-off point (why not under age 18).

Response:

Thank you for asking about this. A cut-off point of 20 years was set because the study sought to understand more about pregnancy during adolescence, which is defined by the World Health Organisation as pregnancy in a woman between the ages of 10-19.