Reviewer’s report

Title: Women’s empowerment and fertility preferences in high fertility countries in Sub-Saharan Africa

Version: 1 Date: 27 Dec 2018

Reviewer: George Odwe

Reviewer's report:

Please include all comments for the authors in this box rather than uploading your report as an attachment. Please only upload as attachments annotated versions of manuscripts, graphs, supporting materials or other aspects of your report which cannot be included in a text format.

Comments
* Overall, the authors have incorporated some of the comments. However, I have a few comments, though, about sections of the manuscript that could be revised or further developed. First, the manuscript needs an edit for grammar and spelling.

Background
* Consider deleting the first paragraph as it is redundant
* The authors should strengthen literature review to make it 'tight', that is, readers should be able to understand the current knowledge and gaps on the association between women's empowerment ideal number of children and ability to achieve that ideal number in the Sub-Saharan African context. Generally, women's empowerment is associated with a desire for fewer children in four Sub-Saharan African countries. In some context, the results are mixed, while in others it's negative. However, the results could be an artefact of data or a reflection of the flaws in the measures of empowerment—these are some of the debates missing in the current paper.
* The first research question appears irrelevant to the current study as it focuses on women's empowerment as the main outcome. However, in the analysis, authors are trying to determine the association between women empowerment and fertility preference (ideal family size), and further to disentangle the role of economic and cultural factors in the 4 francophone countries. The two are different.

Conceptual framework
* The conceptual framework should form part of the background as it is part of the literature review.
* The conceptual framework should also be summarized (maybe to one paragraph) and the authors should ensure that all relevant citations are provided.
* In Figure 1, the main outcome should be fertility preference (ideal family size) & having more than one's ideal number of children

* Avoid indicating etc. in the boxes in Fig1, instead include only the variables that are used in the study and if there are some that are not measured/used, then the authors should indicate which ones.

* Indicate the source of the Conceptual framework and indicate "adapted from (source)". The source should be the authors since we do not have empirical evidence

Source of data

* It is not clear the utility of merging the three datasets considering the unit of analysis-married women 35+

Discussion

* The discussion should focus on the relationship between women empowerment and ideal number of children; and whether such a relationship is explained by family, economic and cultural factors.
* There is some inconsistency in the findings that require more clarification. for example, in Burkina Faso, economic empowerment index have a significant relationship with ideal number of children (Table 4 ); however, it does not matter in the ability to achieve the desired family size- authors should shed more light on such discrepancies

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.

Yes

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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