Reviewer’s report

Title: Neonatal, Infant, and Child Mortality Among Women Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in East Africa: A Multi-Country Analysis

Version: 0 Date: 04 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Angela Taft

Reviewer's report:

Response to authors

This is a reasonably well-written paper about a very significant public health issue of the links between exposure to intimate partner violence and subsequent neonatal infant and child mortality.

My suggestions aim to improve clarity and readability. Please add page numbers

ABSTRACT

1. Background - please use 'low-middle' income countries rather than 'developing' (and in body of text)

2. Methods - you do not need to describe the format of variables in an abstract nor say that they were extracted from a database. However, for your major exposure variable - IPV, you do need to say whether it included physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse.

3. You do not need to say what software package (STATA) you used in the abstract. You do need to describe what analytic method you used - multivariable logistic regression to generate your adjusted ORs and preferably what you adjusted for

4. Did you check for modelling with goodness of fit testing, given the complexity of the model across countries and number of variables? If so, this should be stated. If not, why?

5. Results - start with your primary outcomes not with SES and other data. So begin with your final sentence and report the other factors that also remained significant after the regression modelling. Suggest you do not include BMI as higher or lower than an BMI of 18 seems quite arbitrarily low and you do not justify, especially in Africa.

6. Conclusion - suggest 'preventing and reducing IPV should be considered etc.'
BACKGROUND

7. Penultimate paragraph, suggest you alter sentences that say By 2030, all forms of discrimination, gender mutilation, and all forms of VAW 'will be eliminated' to 'By 2030, it is hoped that all forms of etc…'

8. Final para, 'change 'the reflection of mother upon child' to 'the impact of mothering on child development' or similar.

METHODS

9. Suggest DHS study design first or just describe the DHS before your methods of secondary data analysis. Explain that each country may have different years that they conduct DHSs.

10. Please have a separate section describing how the DHS's include a module on IPV and describe how IPV is measured (generally use version of the WHO instrument), as it is your primary exposure variable.

11. Sample size and sampling techniques - this is where you need to explain that often only married women were interviewed for the IPV section and by women and in private (if this is true) or describe the differences. Please say whether all surveys included the IPV subsection. Please use country name first and then n= for the number of women. Please include these in the tables, so that we can see the proportion of women who were abused in the sample. Did you mean that criteria for women included were based on exposure variable (i.e IPV or outcome variables of reproductive outcomes? This needs to be clear.

12. Conceptual framework and study variables. This section is confusing - I suggest that you begin with the framework, and then describe how you define the study outcome variables. I also strongly recommend you do not use 'success' as a neonatal death (it sounds a little insensitive, but I suspect this is a second language issue) but use 'present' and 'absent'.

13. With the IPV variable, you need fewer words if you explain that three questions were asked and then list them. You should then explain how you constructed your variable, do you include any incident as IPV being present?

14. You do not explain why you have included BMI in this study (yes, relates to birth outcomes but reference) and also explain why you chose under or over 18, as this seems very low and you should have at least three levels (≤18, 19-25, ≥26?).

15. Please comment on levels of missing data for your major variables.
Results

16. Please put the n for each country at the top of Table 3 and give more prominence to the proportion for IPV - place at top of maternal factors and make bold. This exposure variable is fundamental to your research question. Note that it increases with age of child, as well as birthweight of child.

17. Table 4. Add Pearson Chi2 instead of 'test statistic' as value and only give number and p-value in columns. It is a very large table and could be omitted and a description of major significant factors made.

Discussion -

18. State that the WHO multi-country study measured intimate partner and sexual violence against women.

19. You mention your findings on BMI - how do they compare with other studies?? Please cite and reference.

20. I am surprised that you don't mention the obvious implications from your study, being that health providers (especially midwives and TBAs) require regular training and support to identify IPV and that the health system around the providers need to be IPV ready. See Garcia-Moreno et al in the LANCET.

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)61837-7/fulltext

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:

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