Reviewer's report

Title: Intimate Partner Violence Against Women Married as Children: A Qualitative Study in Urban Slums of Lahore, Pakistan

Version: 1 Date: 19 March 2015

Reviewer: Ann Warner

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Major Compulsory Revisions:
1) Selection and recruitment of study participants is not clearly described. The practice of using “gatekeepers” is not explained, and introduces questions of potential bias. If informal and personal networks were used to identify respondents, it is difficult to know how similar or different respondents might be to the broader population.

2) One of the main conclusions of the study is that women married as children are more vulnerable to IPV, but this finding is not supported by the methodology. Presumably, the authors mean that the women married as children are more vulnerable to IPV than women married as adults, but there is no such comparison group in this study that could lead them to this conclusion. While it is valuable to have information on the extent and types of violence experienced by this group of women, it is difficult to know to what extent this is attributable to the age at which they married, versus other factors. This conclusion needs clarification.

3) Limitations stated are extremely brief. There should be fuller exploration of potential bias in study due to participant recruitment, as well as acknowledgment of the limitations of the small size of the study.

MINOR Essential Revisions:
1) In the background section, it is stated that "IPV is prevalent in Pakistan, like in other low and middle-income countries," but IPV is common across socio-economic settings.

2) The conclusions on how spousal age gap affects the key outcomes are not clearly stated.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.