Reviewer’s report

Title: Girl child marriage, socioeconomic status, and undernutrition: Evidence from 35 countries in sub-Saharan Africa

Version: 0 Date: 07 Jun 2018

Reviewer: James Berkley

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-conceived analysis and topic is obviously important for numerous reasons. However, the potential personal and societal risks posed by early childbearing and incomplete education are substantial and I wonder why these are not included within a broader title since the question is clearly framed with these aims at the end of the introduction.

Abstract: '…was associated with increased/decreased odds of …" would be more appropriate than "…increased/decreased the odds of…" to avoid implied causality.

Use of a common model with pooled data and EA fixed effects is appropriate. The rationale for choosing the base model to be conditional on primary education (rather than say childbearing which may more directly affect nutritional status) should be clarified. Use of cluster-robust standard errors suitably addresses differences in intra-cluster variance. However, it assumes that clusters themselves are independent, this could be mentioned.

In Results, please give how many women were excluded to achieve the 'final sample'? For readers to assess the final dataset, please give a table in an appendix with the numbers excluded as known to be pregnant, never married, and missingness in exposures and outcome by country.

Figure 4 appears selective since many other countries have M5 estimates overlapping with the four borderline significance countries shown. I suggest replacing it with a Forrest plot from appendix E to provide more complete data.

Discussion: at the top of page 7, are there are societal factors that link marriage and nutritional status? For example, is there a possibility that men's preference for better-nourished brides could be a confounder in some areas (e.g. Prev Chronic Dis. 2013 Dec 19;10:E212; Br J Psychol. 2009 May;100(Pt 2):313-25)?

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.
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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