Reviewer’s report

Title: Maternal overweight and obesity and the risk of caesarean birth in Malawi. Analysis of population-based surveys

Version: 0 Date: 24 Jul 2018

Reviewer: AF Minsart

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting paper.

Data are clearly presented. The statistical methods, although lacking some details and analyses, are also clearly presented. The conclusion is straightforward without redundant information. The limitations are relatively adequately addressed.

Here are my comments:

English summary Page 4 Line 16 the end of the sentence is missing.

Background page 5 line 5: „Up to 50% of the populations are classified as overweight or obese” : I would add something like : in certain areas, up to 50%...

Page 6 Line 17-18: How accurate was the information on maternal age and children’s age ? In some areas women can't recall their exact age.

Page 6 line 9: How accurate was the number of antenatal visits since the survey took place several years after delivery

Page 9 line 6 : was the trend in increasing prevalence of obesity and cesarean section statistically significant over the three time periods? You don't mention the tests you have used either.

Page 9 line 16-18 :" Furthermore, in all cohort years, overweight and obese mothers who had secondary education and above, from richest households, with one child, adequate ANC, resided in urban and central regions had increased risk of caesarean birth."

I don't understand where you can find these stratified analyses (obese mothers with secondary education from richest household versus : obese mothers and mothers with secondary education and mothers from richest household)

Page 9 Line 20 : where is the statistical analysis and result for this?
Page 10 Line 1-16: no need to repeat all that is already in the table, you could just report the main findings. Moreover, For overweight mothers - 2015 in the tables it is written 1.36, and 1.35 in the text, and for 2004-2015, it is written 1.35 in the table and 1.36 in the text.

For women with 1 child, it is written 3.11 in the text without reference to any period of time, same for Northern region, 1.40 without reference to any period of time.

Table 2 and page 10 line 23: you write that there « was a clear dose-response relationship” but while the numbers are increasing, it is not « clear » from your table that the relationship and the trend were statistically significant (statistical threshold does not seem to be reached?)

Page 11 line 7: you don't mention pregnancy complications such as diabetes and hypertension that might be related with obesity and are known risk factors for cesarean section.

Page 12 line 2 do you have an explanation for Northern women being more likely to have a cesarean section?

Just a few corrections are needed (page 6 line 6 « utilised data from three the waves of nationally », page 6 line 15 « measure the measurements »)

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