Reviewer’s report

Title: Maternal undernutrition as proxy indicators of their offspring's undernutrition: Evidence from 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey

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Reviewer: Cecilie Svanes

Reviewer’s report:

This is a useful paper, based on a large Ethiopian database, using appropriate sampling and analytical techniques (to the extent I can evaluate that). The research question is relevant. The data are well analysed and the results well presented. The methods and samples size are solid enough to give a useful negative conclusion.

1. The introduction seems illogical - first suggesting that maternal undernutrition is an important predictor of offspring nutritional status, then suggesting that this is not well investigated and therefore we need this study. I suggest starting with the importance of assessing child undernutrition, and the need for simple assessment methods, and thereafter introduce the possible potential to use maternal measurements. The aim of study could be extended to include exploring (1) maternal predictors of child undernutrition, in addition to (2) whether maternal BMI/height/weight can be used to assess child undernutrition. The results adequately address both these topics.

2. Terminology: I suggest to state directly "maternal BMI/height/weight" rather than "maternal undernutrition" - probably the measurements only partly reflect true maternal undernutrition?

Interpretation:

3. How well does maternal BMI and height/weight reflect maternal undernutrition? This needs to be discussed.

4. The paper clearly states that the results are mainly negative. The discussion (and abstract-results) of subgroups in which maternal measures better predict offspring undernutrition, could be less extensive of the subgroups that still give weak findings.

5. The discussion of methodological considerations could better address potential effects of selection of the cohort - how can restriction of the study population have influenced the results?

Editorial:

6. Tables 1-4 are placed at the end of the manuscript while tables 5-6 are embedded in the text.
7. Abstract, Background, is missing some of the text.

8. The language is somewhat colloquial, and needs some revision.

**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 recommend additional statistical review

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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