Reviewer's report

Title: Realities of, attitudes towards and barriers to male involvement in newborn care in rural Ghana, West Africa: a qualitative analysis

Version: 2 Date: 25 February 2014

Reviewer: Abigail Hatcher

Reviewer's report:

This paper represents a nice addition to the “male involvement” field in that it explores the context of men's involvement in pregnancy and childbirth responsibilities. The paper has several strengths, including its use of interviews with both women and men to explore male involvement. It is a well-written manuscript that does a nice job of synthesizing the literature on this topic.

However, several aspects require strengthening to prepare it for publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Background: on page 4, lines 69-72 (starting “Several exploratory…”) it would be useful to explain the key findings of the papers cited.

2. Methods: Please add a bit more detail about how the qualitative data were managed and analyzed. For example, what did the final coding framework look like? Were data managed in a word processor or computer-aided qualitative analysis software? Who coded the data?

3. Results: On page 14, I was curious if another focus on the gendered norms was perhaps somewhat repetitive of earlier sections of the Results? If there is a new angle explored here, it needs to be highlighted (perhaps using an italicized sub-heading). If this section is indeed repetitive, it can perhaps be brought up to earlier sections about ‘areas closed to men’ and ‘no physical help’.

4. Discussion: Kindly add citations to page 16, lines 398 and 400 when ‘other studies’ and ‘elsewhere’ are noted.

5. I was uncertain about how the Results presented in this paper led the authors to conclude that negative consequences (decreased women’s decision making and increased violence) might occur? I believe this is an interesting point that is supported by some extant literature (see Krishnan et al. 2010 Social Sci Med, for example). Yet, it needs additional support from the findings of this study if it is to be made such a prominent point in the Discussion.

6. I agree with the Conclusion that “male involvement alone should not be an outcome measure,” but it would be nice to have a bit more information about why the authors believe this is the case. Perhaps just pointing back to the portion of the study findings that suggest male involvement is not sufficient on its own.

Minor Compulsory Revisions
7. Methods: The authors used purposive sampling to identify participants with a wide range of socio-demographic. In Table 1, it would be helpful to illustrate how the purposive (or stratified?) sampling occurred. For example, add in the number of women that were considered older and younger. And/or, add a bit more detail on parity, ethnicity or education.

8. Results: In the first sentence, perhaps rephrase “the potential for and challenges of…” to read: “the promises and limitations of…”. In this introductory paragraph, it would be helpful to tell a bit more of a story about what you found. What should the reader be alert to as they read the Results?

9. On page 9, line 191 – 194 (starting “Some women are lazy…”) kindly add age to the quote attribution.

10. Worth noting that alternative masculinities could also positively influence men’s use of violence in pregnancy (see Hatcher et al. 2013 Culture Health Sexuality).

11. Add to the Limitations that quotes were not recorded verbatim and thus limited the ability to analyze the nuance of participant voices.

Discretionary Revisions

12. In Figure 1, I do not believe the citations are necessary in the title. The theoretical aspect is interesting, but perhaps not supported by the study findings. Would consider limiting this to cultural, economic, and institutional aspects and perhaps illustrating these findings using a figure.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.