Reviewer's report

Title: Migration experiences, employment status and psychological distress among Somali immigrants: A mixed-method international study

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Reviewer: Touraj Ayazi

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Migration experiences, employment status and psychological distress among Somali immigrants: A mixed-method international study
Nasir Warfa et al
Re-reviewer: Touraj Ayazi

The manuscript has been considerably improved. The diagram in the Methods was very helpful. There are however some major and minor issues which need clarification + some corrections:

Page 9:
“How did you feel when you first arrived in the UK?”
- Should be: UK/USA

Number of focus groups in UK and USA?
According to The diagram (Page 7):
5 London qualitative focus groups (2001)
3 Minneapolis focus groups (2003-2004)
- While in Table 1A and 1B: 6 focus group in UK and 2 in USA.

Qualitative Data Analysis
Page 11:
“This process of thematic identification was repeated using [13], a qualitative software package..”
- The name of the software package should be mentioned? (especially since SPSS is rightly mentioned for quantitative analysis)

Quantitative Survey Design (sampling & methodological challenges)
Page 14:
“To maintain the validity and reliability of the original instrument, a scientific steering group was set up to guide the translation process [9]. … questionnaire was adopted [20].”

- The author should consider the necessity of giving a detailed account here. Reference on details of this process ([9] and [20]) would be enough.

Page 14:
“… This offers a comprehensive and accessible system for analyzing quantitative data.”
- The sentence can be omitted.
- It is desirable to mention the specific SPSS version which was used.

Qualitative Results & Discussion
The aims of the study are stated as the following:

Page 5:
This study aims to compare two samples of Somali refugees drawn from two urban settings in the UK and USA. The analyses investigate the similarities and differences in the perceptions and levels of socio-economic and psychological problems among these two samples of Somali refugees.

Page 7:
However, cross-national comparative studies can improve our understanding of which local factors are mediating or moderating influences on health status, as these conditions often vary in different countries.

Page 7:
We wanted to know if Somali refugees living in the UK and USA face the same social and mental health problems, as well as examining if or how contextual and environmental differences between the UK and USA would have any effects on the levels of social and mental health problems of the two samples of Somali refugees living in these two countries.

The short summary at the end of “Qualitative Results & Discussion” section (page 21) is helpful.
It seems that the UK and US participants’ experiences and their understandings are very much similar to each other. This is interesting and should be stated even more clearly.

The authors should explicitly deal with these similarities (lack of differences?) in the Discussion: what does it mean that Somalis in the both locations have similar perceptions of their experiences? (despite of the differences in the risk factors /mental health statuses among the two locations (page 27))
Survey results

The quantitative part of the study follows the aims of the study more clearly: it compares the two locations on their MINI results and variables associated to having a mental disorder diagnosis.

- Page 22: The results here are presented uniformly from the top of the Table 2. I suggest that the authors prioritize the most important results (for instance, the difference between UK and USA groups in the level of employment, length of stay, and immigration status, seeking asylum on the entree), bring these forward in the text so at the more important results can be built upon in the next part of the article.

“…higher proportion of employed participants from Minneapolis were doing manual jobs (67% vs. 8%, \(=73.2, P<0.000\)"

- Details (the values) of the variable “employment” are not presented in the Tables /text. If the authors chose to have the above sentence, more information needs to be added. Or clarify that the variable “employment” was dichotomized.

Prevalence & Predictors of psychological problems

Page: 23. “The prevalence rates of current major depression, suicide ideation and current agoraphobia were higher among the London respondents compared with the Minneapolis participants (27% vs. 7%, \(=8.23, P<0.004\); 8% vs. 11%, \(=5.24, P<0.022\)); and 11% vs. 0%, \(=5.24, P<0.022\)."

- Suggestion: all statistically significant differences should be included in the Table 2: please add in agoraphobia.

The rates of Major Depression and PTSD are extremely high for both groups (according to table 2). These extreme rates have not been mentioned in the Discussion. The authors should try to explain the unusual high rates of these diagnoses, and discuss these in the Discussion and probably in the Limitation (any issues with the reliability of the use of MINI here?).

Table 3:

The following is my main concern which influences my understanding of the results and discussion related to this part of the study:

I find this table not so very reader-friendly. I struggle in making sense of the presented results of the regression analysis in the text as well (see table 3 at the end of this attached document).

- I assume that all data from the two locations has been entered to one set of regression analyses (as opposed to having two sets two sets of (identical) regression analyses have been carried out, one for UK and one for USA?

- The processes behind the regression analysis /analyses should be clarified (more than what is done in the present text / table). The reader should be (easily)
able to read:

a) A list of all explanatory and outcome variables which were included in the analysis.

b) If some variables are not included in the analysis at all, an explanation needed for why this variable is left out. For instance the variable “Seeking asylum on entry” does not seem to have been included in the regression analysis.

c) Variables which were entered at each stage of the regression analysis.

d) For each stage of the analysis: the consequences of entering a variable (group of variables) on the association with the outcome variables (in form of odd ratio).

What about interaction effect(s) of the explanatory variables on the outcome variables? Length of stay and legal status, for instance?

Regression analysis:

Page 24:

“When we added marital status, education status, experience of family separation and legal status in models predicting the association between location and major depression and then aggregated mental disorders, the odds of major depression were still higher among the London group, and so were the odds of aggregated mental disorders. However, the odds of major depression and aggregated psychological disorders among the London participants were attenuated and no longer statistically significant when we controlled for whether the respondents were employed and for length of stay in the host country.”

- Employment and length of stay were entered at the final step? From the note under Table 3, I understand that marital status, education status, experience of family separation and legal status together with employed and for length of stay were entered in one step (the final step). (Please refer to my previous point about the variables in the regression analysis).

Page 26: “After adjustment for sex, age and marital status, Somali refugees living in London were five times more likely to report major depression and four times more likely to have any mental disorder.”

- Should be “After adjustment for sex and age, Somali refugees living….”. According to the note under Table 3, only sex and age are being adjusted here and not marital status.

- An almost identical sentences are found in the Result section (page: 24: “When adjusted for sex and age, participants living in London were….“). The authors should consider omitting the ones in the Discussion.

Page 29: “The professional focus groups and the Minneapolis lay discussion participants combined men and women and this may have influenced the content”.

- In which way?
- Or: the lay focused groups contained only of men/women: reason and how this may have influenced the content?

The following two presentations from qualitative and quantitative part of the study appear inconsistent with each other and need explanation:

- “The narratives of the participants suggest that it was not only the unemployed or those with language problems and limited skills who .....risks of psychological distress” (page 25)

- “This supports the notion that employment is a key determinant of psychological wellbeing for refugee populations.” (page 26)

Page 27/28:
“Country-specific integration policies help to .... been awarded, the individual can then access the same welfare and support systems as British citizens.”

This has little/no relevance to the “Limitation” section.

Page 28: “For example, once in the....systems as British citizens”
Page 28: “For example, compared with the Somalis .....an alien culture.”

These two paragraphs are account of the policies in the two locations (with no references given). It has a propagandistic tone. The matter is complicated and I suggest that it should be omitted.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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