Reviewer’s report

Title: Sexual Life and Fertility Desire in Long-term HIV Serodiscordant Couples in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A Grounded Theory Study

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2012

Reviewer: Md Shahidul Islam

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract
The structure of BMC Public Health-journal has not been followed in the abstract. Use “Background”, “Results” and “Conclusion” instead of “Introduction”, “Findings” and “Conclusions & Recommendations” as per the requirement. “Objectives” should go with the background.

Background
The background discussion could easily be made more informative by reviewing extensive relevant literature. In the introduction, the justification of the research has not been well articulated. The concepts “sexual life” and “fertility desire” have not been clarified. Three paragraphs, in the background discussion, have been discretely presented and need more connectivity. Critical review of the literature could provide conceptual foundation for this research.

In the second paragraph, although it has been mentioned that desire to have child among PLHIV has increased due to ART and PMTCT, there are some other reasons i.e., age, sex, number of living children, spousal, familial, societal and cultural influences, stigma, gender and ethnicity that may influence the behavior of the informants positively or negatively, have not been considered. A more complete comparison with the data from similar settings could help the readers to get an overall idea about the importance of the research.

Methods
Methods, Study participants: It has not been clarified well about the importance in selecting the key informants as participants for this research. It has not been also explained the rationale for selecting minimum age for the participants. In methods, it is not clear what sorts of processes/techniques were followed to communicate with the health care providers and the participants and, more particularly, what kind of ethical considerations was undertaken for them?

Methods, Data collection and analysis, Second paragraph: Although authors reported that they collected data from health care providers first, they did not clarify justification for this. Though they mentioned that health care providers were composed of different health professionals, they did not outline what are those professionals and justification of selection elaborately.

Last paragraph: Although the process of data analysis for grounded theory has
been discussed, these are generic.

Results

Emphasis has given more on the narratives of key informants (health care providers) compared to serodiscordant couples. For example, 8 quotes have been used from 28 from serodiscordant couples compared to 6 quotes from 8 key informants.

One of the key components of grounded theory research, constant comparison, has not been rigorously followed. The use of pseudonym of the participants could provide a good comparative picture for grounded theory research.

Results: 4. “Our Cosmo”: Couple’s living circumstances- Context

In the fourth paragraph, although the concept “gender” has been mentioned, this has not been discussed with the support of participant's narratives. Similarly, authors statements “The desire to have children in case of couples who already have children was relatively low compared to those couples who don’t have one” and “the presence of the children is another big reason for couples to maintain their relationship despite other challenges they have” are looked like a generic and not supported by the statements of the participants.

Grounded theory analysis strategy “actions/interactions” have been reportedly used in the results section. Once you are using grounded theory, it really should be a way of understanding and framing the data rather than reminding the strategy “actions/interactions” every time in analyzing and interpreting the data. Some of the quotes in the results do not necessarily represent the link to core category. Alternatively, incorporation of some other cultural issues could represent better information in support of the explanation. For instance, in some societies, cultural contexts play an important role in the decision of fertility desire. In some societies, child value is so high due to economic liability and support in old age. Having child especially male child is considered very important to continue the lineage. This is also related with respect of the family in the community. Therefore, PLHIV felt pressure from the extended family members to produce child even with this life threatening situation.

Stigma could be an important factor that can influence on the fertility desire of the serodiscordant couples especially in the context of Ethiopia but it is missing in the discussion.

Political consideration has not been included in the discussion. Even the policy in many countries discourages HIV infected people from having child in order to reduce the burden of HIV contraction in the society.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract

Abstract, second paragraph: First letter of each word in a sentence should be capitalized. You should be careful of using “&” in academic writing.

Methods

In the first paragraph, full stop (.) has not been used after completing the
sentence. Similar kinds of mistakes need to be revised in other parts of the text.
Total number of participants selected for this research has not been mentioned in
the discussion in lieu of having them in abstract.

Results
Maintaining the relationship – Core category 1, Third paragraph: Spelling mistake
“figur 1” needs to be revised.
In the figure, Causal conditions “Entering In To A Transition”: Last bullet point
needs to be completed.
In the sub themes “Tested by Coincident” capital letter “C” needs to be replaced
with small letter “c” in the word “Coincident”. Similar kinds of mistakes need to be
revised in other parts of the text. In the same sub themes, in second paragraph,
the representation of the participant statement “But when I know my negative
status It was when I was pregnant” looks incomplete and does not make any
sense.

Discussion
Repetition happened in two cases. Fifth paragraph has been repetitively written
from the last portion of first paragraph. Similarly, ninth paragraph has been
repetitively written from the last portion of seventh paragraph. Although some
issues have been incorporated within the body of discussion, these have not
been outlined in the results section. For example, although the concepts ageing
and gender have been mentioned in discussion, these issues have not
been clarified contextually with participant’s narratives in the results section.
Eighth and ninth paragraphs with a single sentence do not look good for
academic writing. Even, in the eighth paragraph, the sentence started with “And”
does not look suitable for academic writing and similar type of error can be seen
in some other cases as well. In twelfth paragraph in the first sentence word
“coupes” has not been used appropriately. In some cases it needs to fix
grammatical errors.

Conclusions
The limitations of the research have not been outlined in the body of discussion
except a little in the abstract.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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