Reviewer's report

Title: Perception of masculinity and health related behaviors: an Explanatory research on Malaysian young men

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Reviewer: Seng Fah Tong

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The paper described a study in Malaysia among young urban men exploring their concept of masculinity.

The study is well conducted but some of the details in methodology and result require compulsory revisions. The research question is well defined.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

- In the Introduction: Generally well written and successfully justify the need for this study. However the authors may want to elaborate on the “Different models of masculinity have different effects on men’s health behaviors.”, and where appropriate, to provide references.

- In the conclusion

I believe that to indentify masculine concepts among Malaysian general population requires qualitative approach rather than quantitative approach as suggested by the authors.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

- Non-

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Methods

I am not clear as to what analysis methods that authors have embarked on. Thematic analysis was mentioned along with grounded theory. These are two different methods. How did the authors reconcile these? Looking at the result section, I don’t see how grounded theory methods were put into effect, such as theoretical sampling, substantive coding, theoretical saturation, theoretical coding and selection of core category. The results merely summarized the themes. No relationships among the themes were mentioned, and no inter-link relationship can be identified from the result.

Substantial details were lacking in the methods section. Although the authors have stated using grounded theory, no justification was made for using grounded
theory. Is the author attempt to construct any theory grounded to the data –as what grounded theory is advocated for? If the authors wished to “identify the concepts of masculinity grounded in empirical data”, grounded theory is not needed as most of qualitative analysis is grounded in the empirical data. Hence the authors need to be clear whether they wish to use grounded theory methodology for the purpose constructing theory or use some of GT methods. The following details are needed:

1. How were the participant selected?
2. How did the authors get in contact with the participants?
3. What were the criteria used to sample the participants?
4. Where were the interview held?
5. Was theoretical sampling used (if grounded theory is truly adopted)
6. How did the authors address the issue of rigor?
7. Was the analysis carried out by one or two authors or all of the authors?

In the result section:

Overall, the classification of terms seems confusing. In the 3rd “theme”, the authors have used the term “type” of masculinity. I wonder what is the different between the “theme”, “category”, “type” and attributes. Within this paper, these terminologies were used inconsistently. Did the authors attempt to portray 3 types of masculinities or a set of characteristics for a typical masculine image? In the first paragraph of results: the authors have mentioned the major attributes of masculinity. Perhaps the authors are trying to describe the attributes of a typical masculine image. The authors need to clarify this point. Similarly in table 3 and table 4, the consistency of the terms needed to be clarified. In table 4, masculine type is described.

In the first theme of “the muscular man”

The last quote did not portray the theme of “muscular man”

“So far, if I would count as a relationship...let’s say about eight partners... My relationships did not go very well... they couldn’t trust me, a kind of trust issue...some of them felt that I just wanted to have sex with them”. 24 years old Indian

What was the question asked prior to this response? This quote portrays relationship issue. A different quote is needed to support the argument of “muscular men”

The theme could be more appropriate as the “changing picture from muscular man to aesthetic body” to portray the spectrum of young man’s perception on body image.

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' below.