Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Chirk Jenn Ng

Reviewer's report:

This paper focuses on an important topic of masculinity in young men. However, I have concerns about the research methods, particularly the analysis. The research objectives are unclear and, as such, the results and discussion are not focused and, often not based on the study findings.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors need to clarify the research question, which is unclear. Is the paper focusing on masculinity, male role, health related behaviors? The title, objectives, results and discussion appear to have different focus

2. The argument for the importance of this paper is not convincing (Introduction). The authors need to organise the argument more systematically, focusing on the reason for studying educated young men in the context of Malaysia. Suggest to start with the importance of masculinity, followed by definitions, difference in masculinity perception between young and older men, literature on masculinity among young men globally and in Malaysia.

3. The Methods section have severe gaps. The participant selection process is unclear - what are the inclusion and exclusion criteria and why? The context/setting needs to be described more clearly particularly in a qualitative study. There should be more transparency as to who conducted the interviews and provide reflections on how this might affect the data collection, data analysis and interpretation. Language plays a significant role in the context of Malaysia - how did the authors overcome this barrier - if not, this should be discussed in the limitations. How was the interview guide developed? Was it translated? Was there a conceptual framework? All these are necessary to appraise the quality of this paper.

4. The 'Results' section did not seem to emerge from the data using grounded theory as mentioned by the authors. For example, the 'family role' seems to emerge as a 'future' masculinity role rather than what they are experiencing now as none of them are married. The apparently important role of 'religion' did not emerge as a theme. The authors also include the participants' personal and sexual relationships in the Results which is not part of the research objectives on masculinity. This makes the 'Results' rather confusing. The concept of 'Gentleman' is rather confusing. There are two different themes which I feel the authors have merged together (inappropriately). The concepts of 'gentleman' and
'gentle' man - they are different and should be presented as different themes. This reflect the lack of clarify in the analysis process and raise the credibility issue on the analysis process.

5. The 'Discussion' section is poorly written as generalisations were made (which is inappropriately for a qualitative study) and some were not based on the study findings. For example, generalising the participants' views on masculinity to their 'westernised lifestyle' and making conclusions about their sexual behaviour is too simplistic and judgmental. This will require a quantitative study. Other examples include 'concept of gentleman was influenced by ethnicity, traditional norms and expectations of society', 'Chinese culture', the link between masculinity type and health related advantage and disadvantages in Table 4. This study does not allow the authors to make such generalisations. There should be more discussion on how this study findings compare to other studies and explanation of the similarities and differences.

6. The 'Conclusion' is unclear and not based on the study findings. What do the authors mean by 'homogenous' and 'multiple' masculinity - these concepts should be clearly defined earlier, either in the 'Results' or 'Discussion'. The suggestion that education and empowerment programme for young men is premature and this study did not explore the impact of their perception of masculinity on their health behavior.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. This manuscript needs copyediting
2. The title does not reflect the objective and content of the manuscript
3. The authors need to differentiate between 'purposive sampling' and 'snowballing technique'.
4. The authors need to define 'cultural diversity' and explain how this was done.
5. The reason for choosing university students should be explained. Are the researchers only targeting heterosexual young men? If so, please state clearly.
6. The concept of 'muscular' and 'feminine' men should not be combined under the same heading 'muscular man'. Define 'ambiguity code', 'body aesthetic'.
7. The references are only up to 2010. Please include more recent literature between 2011-2013.

Discretionary Revisions: None

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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 know one of the authors professionally and personally.