Reviewer's report

Title: Conceptual models for Mental Distress among HIV infected and uninfected: A contribution to clinical practice and research in primary-health-care centers in Zambia

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Reviewer: Earlise C Ward

Reviewer's report:

I commend the authors for doing this research as it is very timely and certainly makes a contribution to improving health care provided to a vulnerable population (patients who are HIV+ comorbid with mental illnesses and other chronic physical illnesses.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) In the background section it would be helpful to provide more information about health perceptions in Zambia to give more context for the present study.

2) In the section on Explanatory Models, Mental Distress and HIV Infection, the authors mention "only one study was found that investigated explanatory models for mental health" (Chipimo & Fylkesnes, 2010). However, no details are provided about the Chipimo & Fylkesnes, 2010 study. It would be helpful to provide more detail about the study, which would strengthen the rational/need for the present study. Also, it would be helpful to know the results of that study, in particular, how it informed the present study and how the results of the present study are similar or different from the Chipimo & Fylkesnes 2010 study.

3) In the data collection section no information is provided as to the SRQ-10 cut off score indicating distress or poor mental health ("case").

4) In the data collection section there is brief mention that a "pilot study was conducted to determine the validity of the interview schedule prior to data collection. Results are are provided elsewhere." It would be helpful to provide a brief overview of the results of the pilot in the present manuscript as directing the reader to another article is rather burdensome.

5) In the data analysis section there are no citations to support the rigor of the data analysis in the present study. Appropriate citations to support this method of analysis will help reviewers and readers determine the rigor of the analysis and the credibility of the study results.

6) In the results section there are two "health-seeking and coping strategies" section, but one section indicates among HIV positive individuals. So is the other section specific to HIV negative individuals? Appropriate headings would be helpful.

7) There is no limitations section in this manuscript and it is certainly needed.
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