Author's response to reviews

Title: A qualitative exploration of the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Melbourne, Australia

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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TO: Nawsheen Boodhun, Executive Editor, BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth

Re: ‘A qualitative exploration of the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Melbourne, Australia’.

Dear Nawsheen, Dominique, and Co-editors,

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and submit our manuscript to BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth. We have completed the revisions, and provided a response to all of the comments put forward by the reviewers. Revisions have been made directly into the manuscript. Under each of the reviewers’ comments, we have directed the editors to the lines in the manuscript that correspond with that revision.

We appreciate the time the reviewers have taken to provide valuable feedback on our article. We have made every effort to ensure that our revisions are comprehensive, and we look forward to hearing the outcome of the review process.

Yours sincerely,

Alana Russo
Burnet Institute
Response to reviewer’s reports

Summary of Changes

Response to Referee 1: Dr Alison McFadden

*Minor discretionary revisions*


As suggested, the title of the manuscript has been redrafted to ‘A qualitative exploration of the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Melbourne, Australia’. The revised title more accurately reflects the specific focus of the research reported in this article.

2. Provide more detail on sampling processes.

Within the methodology section, ‘Sampling, recruitment, and participants’, additional detail has been included on the sampling process. Please refer to line 154 – 164.

*Minor essential revisions*

3. Provide details of the 6-item theme list.

The manuscript now includes more information related to data collection and procedures, including details of the 6-item theme list (line 191 – 196).

4. Clarify the role of the bicultural research assistant.

More information has been added to emphasise and explain the role of the bicultural research assistant; see line 145-151. The bicultural research assistant’s role within data collection has also been clarified in line 202 – 207.

5. Provide more details of the data analysis procedures.

Additional detail has been included on the data analysis procedures. Please refer to section ‘Data analysis’, line 219 – 234 in the manuscript.
6. Provide an overview of the major themes of the data set.

The analysis framework included eight major themes. As common within qualitative research, these were not discrete, but rather, were overlapping and interrelated. Themes included:

- The cultural transition process;
- Experience with health services;
- Perceptions of patriarchy;
- Significant relationships;
- Sociocultural practices relating to the mother;
- Experiences and understandings of mental health;
- Resilience and acceptance, and;
- Recommendations for action.

The reviewer’s interest in the major themes is appreciated and acknowledged. The authors feel that, within the constraints of this paper, it is not possible to do justice to every theme. Accordingly, we have selected several key themes as the focus for the current article. We would prefer to omit the additional detail above given the current length of the manuscript. But, we will be guided by the editor’s view on this issue.

7. Place the findings re perinatal emotional wellbeing in the context of the wider population in the discussion.

The discussion now places several key findings within the context of the wider population. Please refer to line 633 – 643.
Response to Referee 2: Dr Shuby Puthussery

Within Dr Putussery’s report, the following points were identified.

1. Difficult to identify the exact focus of the research question.
   The wording of the research objective has been redrafted and simplified to enhance clarity of the research focus. Please refer to line 124 – 126.

2. The theoretical framework sounds ambiguous and broad.
   We appreciate the reviewer’s comment regarding the theoretical framework. While Reviewer 2 considered the theoretical framework ambiguous, Reviewer 1 believed it to be clear and appropriate. This paragraph has been modified, and we hope this adds further clarity. Please refer to line 112 – 122 of the manuscript.

3. More information is required about the conduct of the interviews and focus group discussions. For example, what were the themes used in the interview schedule? What are the socioeconomic characteristics of the participants? How many participants were in each of the group discussions? How was the analysis conducted?
   We have redrafted the methods section to provide a stronger, clearer description of the steps taken to conduct the interviews and focus groups, and also those taken to establish methodological rigour. The theme list guiding the interviews has now been included (line 191 - 196), and the number of participants in each focus group has been added (line 173 - 174). Additional detail related to the process of data analysis has been included (line 219 - 234). In relation to the participants, this section has been redrafted to ensure that the sample and their characteristics have been described in further detail. The reviewers comment related to the socioeconomic characteristics of the participants is addressed under point 5.

4. Some claiming statements not adequately supported by the data.
   Modifications have been made. Please refer to lines 291- 293 and 301-302.
5 Limited information on the socio economic characteristics of the participants; this hinders the readers ability to contextualise the experiences with individual circumstances that can have a major impact on experiences.

Our research team acknowledge the omission of the participants’ socioeconomic characteristics. However, we do not feel that the absence of this information undermines the value of the presented findings. This study focuses on the experiences of a specific group; Afghanistan born, Hazara women of refugee background who have arrived in Australia within six years from the point of data collection, and have young children. We have noted this limitation as identified by Reviewer 2 in the ‘Strengths and limitations’ section of the article, line 677 - 678.

6. Unclear how the study extends the existing evidence.

Please refer to the following lines which highlight how the current study complements and extends the existing evidence base: 102 - 109; 538 - 542; 605 - 612; and 644 - 648.

7. Limitations not adequately explored.

The limitations have been expanded. Please refer to line 670 - 681 in the manuscript.

8. The literature review requires a better grounding in international literature, both in terms of what is already known and what the study would potentially add.

We will be guided by the editor on this issue. If required, we are willing to expand the introduction/background of the manuscript accordingly. However, given the current length of the article, we are concerned that further information may hinder accessibility by making it unnecessarily cumbersome. Please advise if you wish for us to further pursue this recommendation.

9. The title is problematic.

In response to this feedback, the title of the manuscript has been redrafted to ‘A qualitative exploration of the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan
living in Melbourne, Australia’. The revised title more accurately reflects the specific focus of
the research reported in this article.

10. The abstract needs to be more inline with the actual text.
Several changes have been made directly to the abstract. In addition, we hope that the
changes made throughout the manuscript have helped align the content more closely with the
abstract.