Reviewer's report

Title: A community development approach to support the emotional wellbeing of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Melbourne, Australia

Version: 2

Date: 27 March 2015

Reviewer: Alison McFadden

Reviewer: Alison McFadden

A community development approach to support the emotional wellbeing of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Melbourne, Australia

This is an interesting and important paper that explores the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan living in Australia. The findings will be of interest to researchers and practitioners concerned with perinatal mental health of vulnerable migrants in a wide range of contexts.

The title is slightly misleading. Although the findings of the study conclude with a recommendation relating to community development approaches and the authors say the study was underpinned by community development values and principles – community development was not the main focus of the study as reported here. I suggest the title be changed to better reflect that this study was a qualitative exploration of the emotional wellbeing and support needs of new mothers from Afghanistan.....

The authors provide a clear objective for their study. The theoretical framework is clearly described and the methods were appropriate, rigorous and for the most part well-described. A little more detail on the sampling could have been explained e.g. within the broad purposive criteria, was there any attempt to recruit for maximum diversity in relation to any of the participant characteristics e.g. age of child, length of time in Australia etc. It would be helpful to elaborate on the 6-item theme list that guided the interviews (line 174). Could the authors also clarify what they mean by the interview being ‘interpreted’ by the bicultural research assistant? Do they mean and English-speaking researcher posed the questions with the research assistant interpreting the questions and answers concurrently or did the bicultural research assistant conduct the interviews in Dari and then transcribe and translate them? There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches but the latter is generally agreed to be more robust when seeking in-depth views and experiences which may be difficult to interpret in real time. The authors could engage with this debate in the limitations section of the discussion. More detail about how the research material was analysed would also be helpful to confirm the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings presented. For example how many researchers were involved, how were the themes identified, was the same approach used for the focus group transcripts as the one-to-one interviews? (see COREQ reporting guidelines for further guidance).
The findings are clear and the quotes illuminating and relevant. On page 7 it would aid transparency to list all of the major themes from the data so that themes that are reported are seen in context of the whole data set.

The discussion addresses the major issues from the findings and addresses the main limitations. It would be helpful if the authors could place these findings in the context of such issues among the wider population in Australia and elsewhere. For example resistance to seeking psycho-social support because of cultural stigma around mental health (line 545) –especially perinatal mental health, does not only affect women from Afghanistan.

Minor discretionary revisions
1. Change title
2. Provide more detail on sampling processes

Minor essential revisions
3. Provide details of the 6-item theme list
4. Clarify the role of the bicultural research assistant
5. Provide more details of the data analysis procedures
6. Provide an overview of all of the major themes of the data set
7. Place the findings re perinatal emotional wellbeing in the context of the wider population in the discussion

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

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