Reviewer’s report

Title: Mothers’ satisfaction with care during facility-based childbirth: a cross-sectional survey in southern Mozambique

Version: 0  Date:  10 Feb 2019

Reviewer:  Diederike Geelhoed

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for sharing this paper with me for review. Mothers' satisfaction with childbirth care is an important aspect of quality of care, which is not yet widely studied and documented, especially in low-income countries. However, I suggest this manuscript would benefit from revision before considering publication.

- Major Revisions

Background: The text starts with a statement on maternal and perinatal mortality, attributed to insufficient implementation of evidence-based practice. Subsequently, it focuses on quality of care, including client satisfaction, although it is not made clear whether improved satisfaction might contribute to reduced maternal and perinatal mortality. I would suggest changing the start of this paragraph and also throughout the paper to reflect the fact that quality of care by itself is an important goal when viewed from the perspective of the SDG and UHC (goal 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all). As WHO points out, UHC emphasizes not only what services are covered, but also how they are covered through focusing on people-centred health care and integration of care. (my italics).

Methods: The description of the study setting would be more comprehensive if an idea was given of the sociodemographic and geographic situation. From the subsequent text, I gather that the area is rather densely populated with reasonable health system coverage and transport options (at least within Mozambique), but this information is important to be able to assess whether the study population is a reasonable approximation of all women of childbearing age in the area. It is very well possible that women who live at a large distance/time from the health facilities are predominantly excluded due to lack of access. Women who live further away where somewhat less satisfied, according to table 5. By including mostly women living close to health facilities, the results would be biased to higher satisfaction rates.

Results: It would be useful to provide a short overall impression of the technical (rather meager) quality of care based on a few indicators, such as the very low rate of assisted vaginal births (0.5% only!) and the high stillbirth rate in the study population (23 per 1000 births, if I calculate well). In this study population which per definition had a facility-based birth those are worrisome figures, which need attention too for improvement of client satisfaction, as the key objective of facility based childbirth is a healthy mother and healthy baby. Combined with the information that many women estimated the time
their childbirth took as more than 24 hours, I would question whether respect, dignity, communication and emotional support are really the most important factors to improve for enhancing client satisfaction in all clients, or rather predominantly in women with normal childbirth. Obviously, the small absolute numbers of stillbirths and of assisted births (vacuum, caesarean section) limits the power to detect any reduced satisfaction related to these factors in this study population.

Discussion: I suggest making it clear here that this study refers largely to women with a normal childbirth with quite good physical access to health care, for whom indeed respect, dignity, communication and emotional support may be the most important factors to enhance their satisfaction with the care received. Additional studies may then need to focus on complementing this information with assessments among women with complicated births and adverse outcomes, as well as among those with less good physical access to health care.

'Considering the current debate on the safety of deliveries and the push for them to be conducted in fully equipped hospitals rather than in primary facilities [55], we believe that this finding is of great importance.' I am not sure there is really an overall 'push' towards birth care in hospitals rather than in primary facilities, as there are many publications, also in The Lancet, which advocate for good midwifery care as close to the woman's familiar setting as possible. Your findings support that. Please reflect this in the text, and please note that improving the technical quality of birth care is also possible in primary health facilities (for example, by improving use of vacuum extraction by midwives). WHO has clear guidelines on which interventions each level of health care ought to be able to deliver.

Please adjust abstract and conclusions accordingly.

In general, please unify the location of the figures and tables, as presently some are in the text and other at the end of the document.

Please also unify the use of one decimal in the percentages presented, and ensure these are consistent throughout the text.

Level of interest
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- An article whose findings might be important to those with related research interests

Quality of written English
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- Needs some correction and requires 'spellcheck'.

Statistical review
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- I suggest review by somebody capable to understand the statistics of this study, as I do not feel confident to assess this.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess
Does the work include the necessary controls?  
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?  
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No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?  
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

Quality of written English  
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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