Author’s response to reviews

Title: Comparing the reasons for Suicide from Attempt Survivors and their Families in Ghana

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Author’s response to reviews:

The Editor
BMC Public Health.

Dear Editor

We are resubmitting our paper titled Comparing the reasons for Suicide from Attempt Survivors and their Families in Ghana. To the best of our knowledge we have addressed all the comments raised in the manuscript and highlighted those areas in red colour.

Generally the review has been very critical and useful. We think that it has improved the overall quality of the manuscript.

It is our hope that you find this new revision acceptable in your journal.

Thank you.

Joseph Osafo

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RESPONSE TO REVIEWER COMMENTS

Reviewer 1 comments and response;

Comments 1: The interview schedule also add concerns...for instance, the interview schedule was not designed to investigate similarity and differences between the reason for attempting suicide reported by attempters and family members (e.g., questions: How prevalent do you think suicide is in Ghana today? Do you think it will change in the future? Do you think suicide can be prevented?). Maybe this paper is a secondary analysis of data collected for other purposes? Of course, this is perfectly acceptable, but it should be clearly stated.

Response 1: The interview schedule was designed to understand the experiences of suicide attempters and their families. Hence questions were designed with this aim. We asked each (i.e., attempt survivors and family folks) questions about the reasons for the act. This was one major objective for the study. Thus this paper was not secondary.

Comments 2: Also, the interview schedule contains a lot of closed questions (yes/no questions, such as "In general do people talk about suicide?") and most worryingly - inductive questions, such as: "So did you feel sad, guilty, depressed?" For the first point, the author may want to clarify which questions actually provided qualitative data, but for the second issue, I am afraid nothing can be done at this stage.

Response 2: The interview schedule contained questions for the purpose of asking comprehensive questions about knowledge of suicide, reasons for the suicide attempt, emotions following suicide attempt etc. For the purpose of this paper, the inductive questions do not form part of this current paper and was not stated in the results section. The narratives provided the qualitative data used for this current paper. The question asked to elicit the quotes from the narrative is "Why did you engage in the suicidal behaviour?". This question was also posed to the family folks: "Why do you think your relative attempted suicide?"

Reviewer 2 comments and response;

Comment 1: The authors have heeded recommendations and added significantly to the manuscript. My only remaining concern is the results table that has been added. I recommend that the table summarize the perceived reasons for the suicide more succinctly (given that full quotes are already provided in the text).

Response 2: This has been addressed in table 2 and short phrases have been stated to summarise themes
Editor Comments and response:

Comments 1: While it is clear that the authors have attempted to address the concerns raised by the reviewers, I am concerned that the analysis still remains largely superficial. The aim of thematic analysis is to describe common themes observed in the data, yet many of the themes described by the authors in the paper appear to have only been raised by a single participant, and hence appear to represent case studies more so than common themes in the data. I do not believe that the analysis at this stage represents a comprehensive thematic analysis. The results section should, therefore, be revised to focus on common themes among participants.

Response 1: Although we do not disagree with comments on the themes developed, for the choice of the specific themes the authors believe that our choice in deciding on what a theme is, is not necessarily dependent on how many participants are reporting that particular theme. But rather the themes were chosen because it captures something important in relation to the overall research question that was asked (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes that have been discussed captures an important element of the way suicide is viewed in the Ghanaian context. The participants were 10 suicide attempters and 10 family members; therefore the reasons for the attempt differs across individuals and effort has been made to highlight the similar reasons and different reasons by both relatives and attempters. We, therefore, conducted an inductive thematic analysis without trying to fit into any pre-existing coding frame. Our thematic analysis is therefore purely data-driven and explained in light of suicide studies in Ghana.