Reviewer's report

Title: Why Muslim women in northern Ghana do not use skilled maternal healthcare services at health facilities: A qualitative study

Version: 2
Date: 3 December 2014

Reviewer: Lucia D'Ambruoso

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   YES
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   YES
3. Are the data sound?
   YES
4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
   n/a
5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   YES
6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   YES
7. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   YES
8. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   YES
9. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   YES
10. Is the writing acceptable?
     YES

OVERALL COMMENTS

This is a very well presented and clearly written paper, with a novel application of the AI method and with a well-defined conceptual basis. The literature could be updated, in some places few of the references provided have been published after 2010 and the grammar could use an overall check (removal of & and
replacement with ‘and’ for example). Some more attention to the ethical dimensions of the methods would improve the paper, as would some more information on how the thematic analysis relates to the conceptual framework, sampling/recruitment strategy and on what the analysis sought to achieve. The following are all minor essential revisions.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. Page 5, lines 61-63. It might strengthen this statement to indicate the Africa is a region. The reference [3] is also quite old and could probably be supplemented with a more recent estimate 2. Page 7, line 110: that “reality itself is socially constructed” sounds quite absolutist and would be more accurately introduced as a position or epistemological stance. A reference would also be useful to support the viewpoint.

METHODS


4. Page 10, paragraph 2: please provide a reference for these data

5. Page 10, line 186: please change ‘women in reproductive age’ to ‘women of reproductive age’

6. Page 10, paragraph 2: it would strengthen this passage to provide a table with the comparison described in the text

7. Page 10, ethics: it would improve this sub-section to include a description of measures the researchers took to minimise harm to the research participants e.g. through the anonymisation of identities in reports that reproduced people’s narratives and/or measures taken to deal with the sensitive subject matter during the data collection.

8. Page 12, line 242: please change ‘advice’ to ‘advise’

9. This section would be improved with some reference back to the conceptual framework. How did the analysis relate to this? What did the analysis aim to do? Was it descriptive? Explanatory? Both?

DISCUSSION

10. Page 26, line 600: please change ‘access and use of’ to ‘access to, and use of’

11. Page 32, lines 727-9: the limitations on access to, and utilisation of, delivery care services should be noted with reference to the study setting, otherwise the passage reads as quite generalist while the study design lends itself to contextualised analysis (even acknowledging references to supporting findings from New Zealand, Canada + UK).

12. It might be useful to lift up the religio-cultural framework throughout the arrangement of the results and discussion sections. The results are also not discussed with regard to the purposive sampling strategy – was any attempt made to identify trends in the geographic stratifications, i.e. urban versus rural
and with health facility versus without?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'