Reviewer’s report

Title: Transgender Women in Malaysia, in the context of HIV and Islam: A qualitative study of stakeholders’ perceptions

Version: 0 Date: 08 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Sara Davies

Reviewer's report:

An important issue that needs to be better documented, and it's wonderful to hear some of the voices of transgender people. This is an important piece of work, however it needs some revision to make it fully clear to the reader.

The construction of gender in Malaysia seems to be different from the terms used in English (eg transgender, intersex), and this should be acknowledged. We have three competing identity paradigms: the views of gender identity in Malaysia that existed historically, the terms used in English, and the view of gender promoted by the rising Islamic conservative viewpoint. Authors should clearly articulate the differences between these early on, and explain why they focus on transgender women exclusively and do not address transgender men; there is some passing discussion of Khunsa (seems to be related but different to the notion of intersex) which should be more clearly explained.

Authors should reference UNAIDS Gap Report which shows much higher rates of HIV prevalence among trans women than are cited in this article (1 in 3 trans women are estimated to be living with HIV globally). It would also be helpful to cite the PAHO position on transgender identity and the Being LGBT in Asia reports may have some useful data also, eg. from Indonesia.

Is the criminal law enforced? How many arrests and convictions have there been?

Please also provide more background on the sources and positions on Islamic condemnation of transgender people, as this part of the paper was brief and was difficult to follow.

Authors should also try to help clarify the meanings of the direct interview quotes. Some of them are quite hard to understand, and they seem very important for the reader to understand, so the authors should either provide more polished translations, or explain anything that may be unclear in the quotes. Terms that are unfamiliar to an English speakers (eg Khunsa, JAKIM, Muhayam, Ustads) need to be more clearly explained.

Overall important work and look forward to seeing it in print.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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