Author’s response to reviews

Title: A study of Health Problems of Nepalese Female Migrants Workers in the Middle-East and Malaysia

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Author’s response to reviews:

To,

Editor

BMC International Health and Human Rights

Title: A study of Health Problems of Nepalese Female Migrants Workers in the Middle-East and Malaysia (IHHR-D-16-00066)

We wish to resubmit the above paper for consideration for publication in BMC International Health and Human Rights.

We have addressed all of the comments by the reviewers. Here are the responses to each of the reviewers’ comments.
Reviewer #1:

This study addresses a topic of potential interest to readers, that is, health issues of migrant workers. The stated aim of the study was to explore health issues of Nepalese women migrants working in Gulf countries. The report is well-organized and generally clearly written, although thorough copy editing for language use and punctuation is required. Study procedures are appropriate to the study question, but not adequately described. Results are clearly communicated; tables support the reporting of results. Some questions and suggestions are offered here in the interest of strengthening the manuscript.

Comments: p. 4, L 42 An estimated 2.5 M *Nepalese* women?

Please include data re: scope of problem, e.g., number of Nepalese women working in Middle East.

Response: Thank you for positive comments and acknowledging that the research is in important areas and a topic of potential interest to readers. We have thoroughly edited the manuscript with the help of native English Speaker for language use and punctuation. All the changes made are highlighted in the RED.

Comments: P. 6 Consider banishing the word accidents, which suggests an unpreventable situation. Consider replacing with work-related injuries.

Response: We agree. We have replaced the work-related accidents to work-related injuries (see page 5 in revised manuscripts)

Comments: P. 6 L 30 awkward sentence

Response: We have rewritten this sentence.
Comments: Detailed information about measures is needed, e.g., origin of instruments, sample items, and evidence of reliability and validity. It is not clear whether subjects consented to participation in the study.

Response: We have rewritten the methods section. Study respondents were interviewed at the NGO who provide shelter to women returnee migrants.

Most of the study questionnaires were adopted from previous migrants’ surveys which were used in similar settings of the study districts in Nepal. They have been adapted to be culturally appropriate for the Nepali context which ensures that they are, to a degree, valid and reliable. Data were double entered and cross-checked, in order to enhance reliability.

Comments: P. 6 L 55 Readers will be unfamiliar with Nepalese castes and geography; need to explain these.

Response: We have highlighted that Dalit is lower caste.

Comments: P. 7 L 21 It is unclear how these remarks fit with the paragraph.

The phrase, medical report failed, is unclear.

The variables named in the result section are not defined.

P. 8 L 35 It is unclear why this section appears under the heading socio-demographics, rather than health status.

P. 9 L 48 What is paid conditionally?

P. 9 L 6 A graphic displaying your model would be helpful.
P. 11 Some results reported are not supported by data, e.g., L 42; it is not clear how this sentence contributes to the paragraph.

Response: We have a number of changes in revised manuscripts which are highlighted in the red.

Comments: Limitations of the study are not addressed.

Response: We have added a new section on strength and limitations of the study.

This is first kind of study which has accessed women returnee migrants from the Middle-East, in Nepal. This study was limited however by only accessing registered returnee women migrants in Paurakhi [a national level NGO], which may limit its generalizability. It is possible that Paurakhi was a centre which housed women who were unable to travel directly to their homes, and thus our sample may have been over-weighted by returnees with health problems. Since we used data from subjective reports, often without verification, the reliability and validity of the information collected should be treated with caution, and we recommend that further systematic study in this extremely important research topic in international health should be undertaken.

Reviewer #2:

This is an interesting paper about a topical subject of which we know very little. However much more information is required about the methods of the study so that the reader can adequately assess your findings.

Detailed comments follow.

Comments: Title - Typo in title (femalemigrants workers)

Response: corrected.

Comments: Methods: More information about who the study participants are is required. Who are these women? Why are they living in an emergency shelter? How representative are these women to all women who migrate out of Nepal for work? Are your results generalizable? What
is the aim of this study? What is your research question? What is your hypothesis/es? You have not defined any of your variables - you should define all variables you include in your analysis - either in a table or as text in the methods section. Specifically you need to define your outcome variable - what do you mean by health problems? More detail on your statistical analysis is needed - what method did you use to determine your multivariate models?

Response: Most of these comments are similar to the comments from reviewer #1 and already responded earlier. We have made changes in methods section. Due to words limit, we are unable to write in details.

Results
Paragraph 3. This paragraph is difficult to follow because you are discussing occupational health issues as health problems, e.g. abuse at work is not a health problem but an occupational health and safety problem, similarly as is torture in the workplace. It is not clear what are your dependent and independent variables? It would be clearer if you separated out health problems from occupational health and safety problems and discussed them separately.

Multivariate analysis - what did you adjust for in your models? What do you mean by those working for unlimited periods of time (all these variables should be defined in your methods section). Similarly, what does paid conditionally mean?

Response: We agree. We have made changes in result section.

Discussion
This discussion needs to have more structure - it is difficult to follow as it is. I have listed a source below that describes how to set out a discussion for a scientific paper The case for structuring the discussion of scientific papers" The BMJ www.bmj.com/content/318/7193/1224 by M Docherty - 1999.

First paragraph of your discussion should summarise the main findings of your study.
When you make statements like "there has been significant increase in the number of permits acquired by Nepalese women over the years" - we need to know what time frame you are talking about - and what the increase has been.

Response: Thank you for suggesting the important reference. We have edited the discussion section and incorporated the comments.

Comments: You have not discussed the strengths or limitations of the study - in particular how the limitations may have impacted on your findings.

Response: We have added new section (heading) on strength and limitations of study.