**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Rethinking obstetric violence and the “neglect of neglect”: the silence of a Labour Ward milieu in a South African district hospital

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 07 Jun 2019

**Reviewer:** Reddy Bhavya

**Reviewer's report:**

The authors’ central, two-fold argument that (a) silence and the absence of interaction represent more subtle forms of obstetric violence and (b) can coexist with high quality clinical care, is a very important one. You also demonstrate that the absence of mistreatment does not constitute respectful or compassionate care. While your paper can make a valuable contribution to our current understanding of obstetric violence, it needs to be revised to meet standards for publication. My major concerns are in the following areas:

1. **METHODOLOGY**
   a. The authors cite four research methods (these appear to be a mix of methods and sources of data), but primarily draw from one of the four (IDIs with staff) to report findings
   b. Findings from IDIs with women are not reported or discussed. How were they analysed with your findings from staff? How did they influence your conclusions?
   c. It is not explained how some secondary data (clinical notes from nurses and doctors, and the author's own clinical notes) were used. How did they help with triangulation?
   d. Approach to data analysis is only explained for IDIs, not the other sources of primary or secondary data

2. **STRUCTURE:** The paper could benefit from a tighter structure that builds on arguments systematically
   a. Findings are discussed across different sections from the introductory sections (pg 5, line 10-20) to the conclusion
   b. There isn't a clear enough distinction between how the literature is discussed in the introduction and the conclusion (say, to support the research objective vs. to situate findings)
c. The authors could reconsider the inclusion of the explanation of psychoanalysis (pg 8, line 43-54) and quote by Hollway and Jefferson (pg 11)--they are lengthy and can feel like deviations to the reader

d. Some language could be simplified - for example Pg 5, the first sentence could be written more succinctly and directly given its importance in explaining the basis for your research

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMING AND INTERPRETATION:

a. Authors should ensure that any theoretical concept introduced is clearly linked with arguments and/or findings

b. Page 3, Line 5-8: I disagree with the authors' interpretation of this cited work. I believe Sadler and Bohren understand the reality of childbirth in different institutional settings, but are making the case that all women have the right to feel safe and cared for during childbirth, and that health systems should be working towards that ideal.

4. ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS

a. The first author is also a healthcare provider in the hospital and refers to a supervisor having access to the data. If this was a clinical/hospital supervisor, it puts the research participants (particularly other clinical staff) at risk. This is not adequately discussed or addressed

b. Informed consent processes for IDIs are not explained. Whether or not informed consent for participant observation was taken is not explained/justified

Other questions: How does silence prevail in a labour ward where women would normally express pain. Do the IDIs with women shed light on this? Are women afraid to express themselves? How do staff maintain this silence?
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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