Reviewer’s report

Title: Male Reproductive Health Challenges: Appraisal of Wives' Coping Strategies

Version: 1 Date: 28 Apr 2016

Reviewer: Phillip Tabong

Reviewer’s report:

General Comments

I wish to thank the authors for their careful attention to the points that I have raised about this paper. The revisions have considerably strengthened the paper, particularly the methods. Particular thanks for the additions to the methods section - these are very central to understanding the quality and contribution of the research overall. However, there are a number of outstanding points listed in my comments below which need to be addressed to make the manuscript suitable for publication. There are also still several grammatical and typographical errors in the paper that need a further careful read through. Referencing is still a problem despite the fact that authors said they use a reference manager (Zotero)

Abstract

Objectives

This sentence does not read well. Consider revising. It could be revised to "The study examined the coping strategies used by women whose husbands had reproductive health challenges in two of the five states with highest proportion of divorced/separated in Nigeria" The sampling should be moved to methods subheading in the abstract.

Methods

The abbreviations "FGD" and "LGA" should be written in full.

The sentence "The wives were recruited from a quantitative couple-study on 'men's sexual health problems and conjugal relationship' among the couple where husbands reported currently/ever experienced any sexual problems" does not read well. In my understanding it could be revised to "The women were recruited from a quantitative couple-based study where the men have experienced any sexual problem". The title of the study (men's sexual health problem and conjugal relationship) can be sent to the main manuscript

Introduction
Page 2, line 14, STIs should be written in full. The e.g. in the brackets should be removed. The author should also remove the phrase "just to mention but few" because the next sentence is still listing disorders.

Line 18: Prostate specific antigen (PSA) is not a disorder and should be deleted. When the PSA is high, it could imply benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH).

Line 43: change "death rates" to mortality rates. Though "death" and "mortality" are synonymous, in epidemiology we prefer the term "mortality". This should apply throughout the manuscript

Line 51: The author should insert the word "cancer" after the prostate.

Line 54: The in-text citation (K. Suzuki, 2009) is inconsistent with earlier in-text citations.

Line 58: The statement "The men's sexual health problems are myriads needless to mention the spread of HIV/AIDS/STIs among men which were not captured in this study" does not read well and should be revised. May be the authors can begin the sentence with "Men" The authors should only mention STIs because HIV is also transmitted through sexual routes or they could mention STIs including HIV if they intend to highlight HIV. AIDS is not transmissibly, it is a syndromic state caused by HIV infection. Which is why in recent times, we encourage people to write "HIV and AIDS" instead of "HIV/AIDS" So if you use the term "spread" and you add AIDS to the list, it will be incorrect because you cannot spread AIDS.

Page 3, line 16: Remove one of the brackets at the beginning of the in-text citation. There is still a problem with that in-text citation (inconsistencies). In those in-text citations, some author's names are written in full, in others, only surnames, arrangement of the citation does not follow any order (author names, alphabetical, year of publication etc). The references style are also inconsistent with editorial policy of the journal. The authors should read about how to prepare manuscript for submission to BMC series and convert all the referencing to conform to the requirements.

Line 37: change the word "incidences" to "prevalence"

Line 49: The word "could" should be changed to "can"

Line 51-53: The sentence should be revised to "The main interest in this paper is to provide systematic evidences on how women cope in a situation where their husbands have reproductive health challenges"

I consider the last sentence which is talking about a goal unnecessary. The use of the word "goal" and "template" are inappropriate. Are the authors suggesting that "goals" are the same as "objectives" In my opinion, this study does not provide any template for enduring conjugal relationship as being suggested here? The will be over interpreting the qualitative study. This has been alluded to by authors themselves in the section on limitations.
Methods and Material

The authors should insert a section on type of study or study design. Readers need to be informed early in the method section what type of study it was i.e. qualitative and specifically the qualitative approach that was used: phenomenology, narrative, case study, ethnography, grounded theory etc. I indicated in my previous review that authors should add a RATS checklist to ensure they address all issues bordering on rigour in qualitative studies. If they had subjected the manuscript to that checklist, this important omission wouldn't have occurred. This should come before the research location. The authors should also state when the study was conducted. This is an important omission.

Research Location

Page 4, line 8: The authors should replace the "authors' institution" with the actual name of institution.

The authors should check this citation "National Population Commission, 2006" In the previous version I reviewed the year is "2009" which is correct?

Recruitment of participants

This section has sufficiently addressed by concerns. However, the authors should replace "authors' institution" with actual name of the institution in line 42.

Data Collection

The authors have stated that only four FGDs were possible per state which could be interpreted as eight FGDs were conducted in the entire study. It has been stated in the section on research location that the study was conducted in two states (Lagos and Osun). The authors need to clarify this.

Page 5, line 4: An average cannot be reported as a range. 8-10 participants/FGDs is a "range" and not "average" and should be corrected.

Page 5, line 5: The sentence should read "….wives whose husbands have or have had reproductive health problems..." This is because it has been stated earlier that the partners of the women should either have experienced a reproductive health challenge or should be currently experiencing reproductive challenge.

Page 5, lines 10-11: The authors should just write that "Pidgin English was also used intermittently by some participants" Describing Pidging English as an abridged version of English is not right in linguistics.
The sentence "In the FGD, as indicated, only the wives whose husbands have reproductive health problems participated" should be deleted. The authors have made this clear earlier.

Line 15: The word "range" should be changed to "ranged"

Line 25: This sentence "Respondents were finally requested to make suggestions that help other couples who are facing or may face similar circumstances" is unclear. It should be revised.

The authors need to add the age groupings during data collection (<35 years and ≥35 years) and provide an explanation for the groupings. Also, state the number of FGDs per group. In the previous version, it was stated that two FGDs were held per group but this has been deleted in the revised version. It is an important information which should not be deleted.

The authors have still not justified why they conducted four FGDs. Just as we compute sample size in quantitative research, researchers are expected to provide reasons for ending a study after recruiting a number of people into a qualitative study. I provided a cue in my previous review report. I also referred authors to the RATS guidelines to provide them with more information on this issue. Why did they end the study after conducting four FGDs? You need to provide a justification for ending the data collection. It is an important consideration in determining if the number selected is adequate and acceptable for the women whose husbands had reproductive health challenges in the period the study was conducted.

Data Analysis

This have been well-written. The authors should note that "Green & Thorogood, 2004" is missing in the reference list at the end of the manuscript. What has be listed is "Green & Thorogood 2013"

Results

Coping strategies

Page 6, line 18: The phrase "and the like" should be deleted. In doing so, the authors should introduce the word "and" before the word "separation"

Page 6, Line 38/39: The statement "This could be due to the level of confidence reposed on the family doctor" is discussion and should be moved to discussion. If the author elicited responses on this, then it should be reworded to reflect that it is results. As it stand now, it is interpretation from the authors and therefore suitable for section on discussion.

Page 7 line 4: The authors should check the word "Koran" which is used to refer to the holy book used by people who adhere to the Islamic faith. Which is the right word "Koran" or "Quran"? I am not sure if both terms are correct.
The illustrative quotes are still a problem. Listing several quotes and attributing that to "all FGDs" is unacceptable. Even though it was group discussions, individuals took turns to speak to questions that were asked. So quotes are attributable to individuals. In transcribing FGDs, you identify the individual respondents and their responses to questions. Same is done during coding of the transcripts which was done manually using MS word. So the authors need to separate the quotes and identify the respondents appropriately. We need to know who is speaking, what type of reproductive health challenge the husband has. As alluded to by the authors themselves in discussion (page 9 paragraph 3), the coping strategy adopted depends on type of reproductive health challenge of the husband. So the authors should identify the respondents. The authors are able to tell us the number of people who adopt a particular strategies, so it should not be a challenge to link respondents to their quotes" (Refer earlier review report). In qualitative data analysis, these are attributes of cases (respondents) and very important in presenting the results.

Page 7, Line 27-30: The sentence "Approximate one-third of the respondents that affirmed that they have inadvertently sought for extra-marital affairs ("concubinage") while few one were not forthcoming on this question" is unclear" especially after "concubinage"

Page 7: Several issues raised in paragraphs 1-4 without single illustrative quote to support. As I stated in my earlier review, the illustrative quotes are the data (evidence) in qualitative research. When these quotes are absent, one is not able to justify if indeed the narratives emanated from the data. The authors need to provide illustrative quotes to support these claims. Again, this comment was highlighted in my previous review report. The authors need to provide a point-by-point responses to the issues raised during review with references to pages and line numbers of where the issues have been addressed as has been done in this report. This is the only way to ensure that every point has been sufficiently addressed.

Reasons for enduring husband sexual challenges

Again, authors must identify the respondents accordingly

Reporting level of husband's sexual defects

Page 9, line 19, the word "wives" should be changed to women. It does not read well with the presence of word "wives" It is clear from the onset that the women interviewed were "wives" so you can always substitute the word "wives" with "women" to improve flow.

Discussion

The authors must try to maintain balance in reporting the findings of their study. They need to avoid over emphasis of points in this manuscript. In the background, they were so emphatic that no study has been done in this area when several studies especially regarding coping strategies of women in unions with involuntary childlessness exist, unless the authors are suggesting infertility is not a reproductive challenge. In this discussion, the same claim is being made in this statement " It is specifically a bold step delving into under-research issue in the traditional African context especially in regions where sexuality discussions are sacred" This statement is a
typical example of over emphasis of the relevance of their study. This should be left to readers to judge.

Page 10: It is fair to maintain a balance in the discussion. For example, in paragraph 2, the authors made this statement "Among the profound findings of this study is that conjugal relationship can be sustained despite the sexual health problems of the husband not necessarily by resigning to fate approach but by seeking appropriate help from the health practitioners especially through the family doctors and by open discussion (husband-wife communication) between the spouses" This finding is not novel as several studies have reported this in the past in the area of infertility even in studies in Nigeria. This is a qualitative study with several limitations, so to be making such emphatic statements amounts to over interpretation of findings. It is possible to still present your findings in a balance manner by avoiding language that portray over emphasizing of points. I commented on this in my first review and it has received less attention in this revised manuscript.

Page 10, paragraph 3: "While the effectiveness of the strategies identified was not tested, corpus of evidences from wives that were living together with their spouses across the two age groups could be likened to confirmation that their approaches are working" This is another instance that the authors need to maintain a balance and not over interpret the findings of their study. This is a qualitative study conducted with few participants, so trying to generalize things is problematic. The authors must try to rewrite the discussion to reflect a balance and should try to utilize the word "may" to reflect some level of uncertainty as the results of the study suggest.

Page 10, line 29: The authors should change the word "form" to "from"

Limitation of the study

The opening sentence "A major limitation of this study is that there are no known public/international standard data on wife coping strategies in this regard hence the use of primary data source for the study" is not a limitation of this study and should be deleted. Also the statement "Also, the ethical strictness that prevents the medical personnel from disclosing relevant information that we would have required also open the study to bias" is problematic. Which type of information are the authors referring to and what way does it result in bias? What type of bias?

Ethics Statement

Well noted and an important addition

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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