Reviewer’s report

Title: ‘Birds of the same feathers fly together’: Midwives’ experiences with pregnant women and FGM/C complications - A grounded theory study in Liberia

Version: 0 Date: 21 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Owolabi Bjalkander

Reviewer’s report:

A very interesting and topical piece of research on health professionals' experience of FGM/C and its complications from West Africa.

A few points:

INTRODUCTION

1. Instead of saying that FGM is legal, why not say instead that there is no law against the practice. It is not the whole truth to say that it is "legal", it's just that there is no legislation against it. I don't think it's the same thing

2. A bit more structure in the background would be appreciated:
   a. What is FGM - definition as per WHO and types
   b. Health risks
   c. Girls at risk and numbers of women living with FGM
   d. FGM in Liberia - context in which it happens
   e. You could mention level of medicalization if you think this is relevant
   f. Mention of midwives receive any FGM training

You talk about feminist grounded theory, can you explain what this is in the Introduction?

Give us some idea of how many women have access to midwives (as opposed to TBAs or others) during delivery

As you finish the Introduction, tell us why you think the results of the study are important.
METHODS - how many midwives did you recruit? Perhaps a small table of informants for indepth interviews, how long they had been working, age range would be useful. Had any of the midwives undergone FGM themselves?

RESULTS - perhaps you could start the results section with a figure of the themes, sub themes and patterns that you identified so that it would be slightly more structured and easier to follow in the body of the results. As it stands, it is not clear why you mention these particular headings in the results.

CONCLUSIONS - you mentioned the health harm risk of FGM and at the same time that the population appreciates the traditional instructions given during initiation into Sande. How do you suggest that you can "square the circle"? Do you have any suggestions, ideas based on your results on how you can remove the health harm and keep the tradition?

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