Reviewer's report

Title: "Children are a blessing from God" — A qualitative study exploring the socio-cultural factors influencing contraceptive use in two Muslim communities in Kenya.

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Comfort Olorunsaiye

Reviewer's report:

I would like to sincerely commend the authors for the innovative idea implemented in this research. The research topic is not only interesting but a very important one in our bid to understand potential barriers and enablers of contraceptive acceptance and use.

That said, I have some serious concerns about the scientific quality of the study and some more general comments on the writing and presentation of the paper as indicated in the comments below:

1. Plain English summary, page 3, line 25 is missing a word after "family."

2. Page 4, lines 10-15 should be revised for clarity

3. Page 4, line 10: the definition of unmet need for family planning should be moved up to page 3, line 56 where the term is first used.

4. Page 4, line 35, should read "knock-on"

5. Page 4, line 46: the statement referring to specific recommendation that mothers breastfeed for two complete years should be cited.

6. Page 5, lines 19-23: The authors reference verses from the Quran without including what the verses say. What is the argument used to oppose contraception based on these verses? At a minimum, the authors should summarize what the verses say

7. Page 5, lines 29-37: Besides the differences in contraceptive prevalence rates reported in both counties, are there other factors that informed the choice of these two counties in Kenya? Have previous studies assessed contraceptive use or other reproductive health outcomes in these areas? What could be inferred from the literature that may have informed the authors' choice of these two areas?

8. Page 6, line 10: revise sentence and use punctuations as needed
9. Page 6, line 25: the CPR cited for Lamu is not consistent with page 5, line 35

10. Methodology: I have serious concerns about the study methodology

A. Study setting should include more background information on the study population

B. Study participants and sampling procedure: a lot more clarity and detail is warranted.
   - How many participants were recruited from each county? How do these numbers break down in each county by sex, age, and role in the community?
   - Of the total 11 FGDs, how many were conducted in each county? What was the composition of the focus groups? Were participants grouped according to certain characteristics? If so, what were these characteristics?
   - Was parity taken into consideration in participant selection and in focus group composition? One would expect contraceptive intention and behavior to be significantly influenced by parity
   - Regarding IDIs, I have similar questions to the above: What participants took part in in-depth interviews? Of the total 13 IDIs, what is the breakdown by county?
   - Overall, more men than women participated in the study. What was the rationale for recruiting more men than women? Were women less willing than men to participate? The authors should discuss the reason for this difference.

C. Data Collection:
   - What was the average duration of the FGDs and also the IDIs?
   - Who collected the data? By "the team" do the authors mean they collected the data? This should be explicitly stated

D. Ethical consideration:
   - Is there a reason informed consent was verbal and not written? Could participants not have provided thumb prints in lieu of signatures since most have no education?
   - Page 7, line 46: Please include, in parenthesis, what you mean by emancipated minors. The term may not be known to all readers
D. Data analysis

- Page 7, line 58: briefly describe the review process used to validate the accuracy of transcripts. Where there were differences between the two transcribers, how were these handled?

11. Results

- The results section should begin with a summary of participants' background characteristics to help the reader contextualize the findings described

- Page 11, lines 4-10: This should come up earlier in description of the study setting or introduction

- Page 12, lines 11-13: Who is the quote from? The authors should provide some context about this participant- sex, role

- Page 12, lines 19-28: both sentences should be revised for completeness (sentence 1) and clarity

12. Discussion

- The unique contribution of this study to the literature should be highlighted in the first paragraph of discussion. What is unique about this study? How does the current study extend the literature on contraceptive behavior?

- The discussion fails to adequately analyze the findings from this study in relation to existing literature. The authors need to do a better job of triangulating their findings with the literature, including highlighting similarities and/or differences between current study population and those from previous studies.

- Arguably, fertility preference and gender dynamics reported in the current study are not necessarily limited to Muslim populations. The authors need to make a stronger case for why these themes are important considerations in this population

- What are the limitations of the study? These should be discussed

- The authors should address the implications of their findings for contraceptive acceptance and use in this population

- What are the recommendations for future research in this area? What do the authors wish they had done differently that may inform future research efforts?
13. Conclusion

- Page 18, line 51: first sentence in the conclusion should be contextualized - include the study population. Also, the sentence needs revision.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal