Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding Tobacco Use and Socioeconomic Inequalities Among Men in Ghana and Lesotho

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Reviewer: Ambrose Akinlo

Reviewer's report:

Paper is well-written and concise, it also addresses an important social and public health problem which is smoking. The methodology adopted is adequate. I also like the style in presenting only the results that are of interest rather than bore readers with irrelevant statistics - this has made the paper very compact and limited the tables to just two. More focus was also placed on the discussion of the findings which is commendable.

The authors however need to address a few issues raised below:

Their choice of both Ghana and Kenya (where in their review in lines 4-7 of page 5, the smoking usage is under 2%) is questionable and requires justification. In my opinion, one of these two countries would have sufficed if a comparison between a low-use and high-use country is the aim. I think the focus should have been more, if not entirely on, the countries with high usage.

I am uncomfortable with the opening statement in the presentation of results ("The survey included un-weighted total male population of 4388, 12,818 and 2,028 in the age range 15-59 from Ghana, Kenya and Lesotho respectively"), the weighted totals should be the outcome of interest given the DHS sampling methodology. Although the authors state in the methodology ("The complex design used to collect the data were also built into the analysis to account for the two-stage design"), I cannot resist asking if the results tabulated in Table 1 are weighted or unweighted. The authors need to state this because of the opening statement which suggests they might be analysing unweighted frequencies, which would be wrong.

The presentation of the results (beginning from line 47 on page 6) would have been better if the authors first presented the overall picture for tobacco use among men in the three countries. Instead, for instance, they presented dis-aggregated results for age groups 35-59 in Ghana and Kenya, and for 25-34 in Lesotho. It would have been better to see the picture for the entire study population first (men age 15-59) in each of the three countries. The authors, perhaps in a bid to limit space used, have neglected to directly draw some comparisons among the countries. For instance, in table 1 for Lesotho, the paper highlighted only age 25-34 where tobacco use is 52% thus failing to show that about the same proportion (51%) use tobacco among men age 35-59, it
also fails to show that tobacco use among men is generally high across all age groups in the country and that in contrast, it is relatively low across all age groups in Ghana.

The Tables (1 & 2) are not appropriately titled. At first glance, "background characteristics" in Table 1 suggest it is the simple tabulation of the study population by age, education, religion, etc. that is presented, but reading the paper itself, it shows that the variables (age, residence, etc) have been dis-aggregated by tobacco use. The title should reflect this. The first and last categories of marital status are not different as presently labelled. I guess the first category refers to those "never married", if so, it should be correctly labelled.

Finally, the sections on funding and ethical approval suggests that the govt. of Ghana is responsible for the DHS surveys in all three countries used, if this is not so, then the write-ups should be adjusted.

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