

Reviewer's report

Title: Middle Eastern mothers in Sweden, their experiences of the maternal health service and their partners involvement

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Reviewer: ann thomson

Reviewer's report:

'Middle Eastern mothers in Sweden, their experiences of the maternal health service and their partners' involvement – focus group discussions and individual interviews' by Pernilla Ny, Elisabeth D Karlsson, Lars Plantin and Anna-Karin Dykes – submitted to Reproductive Health Review

General comments

This is a study of the views of immigrant women on their experiences of maternal-child health services in their country of immigration. The women migrated from the 'middle east' into Sweden. Studies of this nature are important because all too frequently immigrants have higher mortality and morbidity than those of the population in the country that they move to. There is anecdotal evidence that this is because the immigrants do not use the available services, but there is also anecdotal evidence that they are not made aware of the available services. Therefore, studies such as this one assist practitioners to understand how the immigrant views the services so that service provision can be altered to best meet immigrants' needs.

Unfortunately I do not understand the justification for the research methods used in this study. It appears that if the women did not understand Swedish they took part in a focus group, otherwise they had a persona interview. What was the methodological justification for this, if my interpretation is correct? Only eight women took part in three focus groups. Therefore, there can only have been two women in one 'group'. Did this constitute a focus group? If so then this must be justified.

I hesitate to comment on the use of the English language by those whose first language is not English but attention needs to be paid to sentence construction, grammar, spelling and punctuation. The language used in the previously published papers by these authors (Ny et al, in press) is qualitatively different to that in this paper.

Specific comments

Page 4, last para, line 3 up from bottom – what is 'MHC'?

Page 7 – please give a definition within the paper of 'Middle East' (it could go in a box) in case any readers do not have access to this reference.

Page 8, para 1, middle – so only one woman was working outside the home for financial gain? As written it is not exactly stated.

Page 11, top – what was the result of the translation by an independent translator? Did she check a proportion of all translations, if not, why not, please look at the literature in this area.

Page 11, the list of main categories are satisfactory in the body of the paper but it would be better to have the list of them and their sub-categories in a box.

Page 11 - middle sub-category under 'Useful counselling' is not the same on page 15.

In the Results section numbers and letters are used after quotes, but the reader is not told what they refer to. It is not possible to ascertain from what I surmise is a transcript from a focus group whether comments are from different women or the same woman (eg see pages 16 & 20).

Page 18, top – for clarification for the reader it would help to understand the nature of being supported by social welfare. Does this mean that the women were not supported by their partner, or their partner was either not employed or was not earning enough money to support the family?

Page 21, middle – it is stated that the women in Focus Group A had a discussion, but there then appears to be a quote from only one woman.

Page 21, last line – did the authors individually analyse the data and then get together? If so this should be stated in the Methods section as I did not glean that when reading that section.

Page 22, first para – please address issue of whether two participants constitute a focus group.

Page 22, here and elsewhere in the paper, please check the spelling of the surname of the first author of reference 24.

Page 23, para 3 – it is stated that the women had seen other women suffer in various circumstances but there is no mention of this in the Results section. New material should not be introduced in this part of the

paper, unless it has been published elsewhere and can be referred to.

Page 26, bottom – again new material here, not presented in the Results section.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions