

Review of: "Exploring Perceptions on Sexual Empowerment Among Heterosexual Black Women in Braamfontein, Johannesburg"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. I recommend major revisions to address and/or strengthen several issues. For example, improve the integration of the facts and evidence used in relation to current literature on sexual empowerment, and why it is a critical issue to explore among young women in an S. African context. Also, when drawing on literature from a different African nation, it is necessary to explore relevance, applicability, and compatibility with the S. African context (multicultural, location-urban to rural diversity). There are some instances where assumptions are implied but supported with weak and/or previous, not current, evidence, e.g., S. Africa "being one of the unequal countries in gender" and a "patriarchal society where females are in general dominated by males". Without a balanced view of instances where literature says that some women do have a voice and characteristics that enhance agency and power among women, one may end with a biased view that may not show diverse perspectives on sexual empowerment.

If the authors are looking at sexual empowerment in the context of sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR), then it is important to strengthen ways of integrating theory, practice, and how existing policies/cultural practices either enhance or hinder sexual empowerment among women. A coherent and sound scholarly argument on the connection between SRHR, healthy sexuality-sexual education, female sexuality-sexual empowerment, culture, and healthy sexuality-sexual empowerment, including religion, and healthy sexuality-sexual empowerment, is necessary to advance this work. I find it surprising that the cultural conversation does not integrate Ubuntu; instead, there is a generalization of cultural practices such as "lobola" being a barrier without substantiating this with evidence.

It is important to distinguish between perceptions vs. perspectives of sexual empowerment, provide a background on the study setting, e.g., age of consent, existing national statistics on SRHR, and sexual abuse cases in the area in comparison to S. Africa, and tell us more about the language used in the study in relation to the population of interest. Data analysis also needs to be refined so that it is clear why only data from a subset of the sample is used without unveiling existing patterns among eight participants. Finally, I recommend that additional editing support is sought or done to improve the flow and quality of this work.