Reviewer's report

Title: Association between substance use and psychosocial characteristics among adolescents of the Seychelles

Version: 2 Date: 8 June 2011

Reviewer: Harold D Green

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- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Methods first paragraph: I have a question for clarification... the sampling frame first operates on schools and then on classrooms. However, you say all 13 schools participated and all classrooms within those schools. Does this mean that those schools (and classes) formed the population from which schools and classes were sampled? Or that sampling was avoided because ALL schools and classrooms participated? If they are the population from which your sample is drawn, you need to add a sentence about how many schools/classrooms were actually in the sample. Further, it may be useful to compare the sample to the population on demographics, etc., to prove that the sample was representative.

2. Results/Discussion: One overall point: I had a hard time understanding the structure of the discussion. This may be because of the substantial changes evident in the MS. Suggest making sure the findings are organized so that we know what features are associated with the substance use behaviors across boys AND girls, and then which are specific to boys and to girls. A simple summary table might help quite a lot on this. I am not saying that the information is not there, just that it wasn’t described clearly enough for me to finish the paper with a clear understanding of exactly those things. Seems as if age and truancy are the important predictors. However, when we look at the substance uses themselves, there are other associated characteristics that hold for boys and girls. You might want to clarify that a bit.

3. Discussion... paragraph beginning ‘having several close friends’ (which should now be 'having more than one close friend’... I have a general question: how do you reconcile the finding that having more than one close friend being associated with substance use with the finding that feeling lonely is associated with substance use? I think you should add a sentence explaining how both can operate.

4. Discussion. Final paragraph: I would add a couple more sentences about how this could contribute to intervention development specific to boys/girls in the African context. Do your findings suggest different interventions for boys and girls given the differing results?

- Minor Essential Revisions

Minor issues not for publication
1. Introduction Second paragraph, second line, remove ‘the’… ‘through (the) mass media’

2. Introduction fourth paragraph, fourth line: you study ‘with’ a comprehensive approach, not along a comprehensive approach.

3. Introduction fifth paragraph: rather than ‘currently available data’ I might say ‘the most recent data we could find published’ or something like that…

4. Methods first paragraph, last sentence: I would say something like ‘aims to provide a common methodology…for collecting data on…’

5. Methods second paragraph: just to keep others from being hung up on how questions about drugs and alcohol can be non-sensitive, I would just remove the phrase ‘the non-sensitive nature of the survey’. All the other features justify not needing informed consent. I also think that you can remove the phrase ‘ensuring confidentiality’ because the anonymous nature of the survey allows for anonymity, not just confidentiality.

6. Methods third paragraph: you say the GSHS includes ‘several’ modules. Can you give the exact number? If it is a systematic survey, there should be a set number.

7. Methods third paragraph you translate ‘to’ or ‘into’ a local language.

8. Methods third paragraph: you mention a module on protective characteristics. Are these the same as the psychosocial characteristics you mention in the first methods paragraph? If so, best to keep a common terminology.

9. Methods fourth paragraph: you say cutoffs have been ‘used’ I might say ‘applied’ to make it less casual.

10. Methods seventh paragraph beginning ‘differences in prevalence of baseline characteristics’… what do you mean by baseline characteristics? Do you mean baseline level s of substance use? And I would say you considered the risk behaviors ‘to be’ response variables.

11. Results paragraph two that begins with ‘table 2’, I would rephrase what ‘and the other characteristics’ means here. I think what you mean are all of the predictor variables/independent variables. All those characteristics that aren’t the risk behavior outcomes you are interested in.

12. Results paragraph three: the sentence beginning ‘girls who felt sad’… I would say ‘whose parents rarely checked their homework, understood their problems, OR knew their whereabouts…’

13. Discussion paragraph one: you mention that considering attempting suicide and truancy were positively associated with substance use among both boys and girls. I see from the table that this is for ALL of the substances. I would clarify in the text to make sure everyone knows exactly what you mean.
14. Discussion paragraph one: sentence about family level, you mention ‘risk behaviors’ are those the substance use variables? Use the same terminology so people aren’t confused.

15. Discussion paragraph one: final sentence: you might want to remind the reader exactly what the ‘risk behaviors’ were. Maybe list the substance use behaviors you are talking about.

16. Discussion… paragraph beginning ‘we also found that risk behaviors were associated with…’ instead of risk behaviors say past month substance use behaviors or whatever term you are going to use to be consistent throughout the paper. Also instead of ‘several’ friends, say ‘more than one’ friend.

17. Discussion, paragraph on limitations: first sentence: I think you should rephrase slightly to say ‘may reflect subjective rather than objective perceptions. Second sentence, make sure you add a comma after the ‘i.e.’ in the parentheses. And I think rather than ‘correspond’ use ‘reflect’

18. Tables: maybe not necessary to add ‘ns’ to the table, just the significant p-values.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.