Author's response to reviews

Title: Suicidal ideation and associated factors among school-going adolescents in rural Uganda

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Version: 3 Date: 11 October 2007

Author's response to reviews: see over
10 October 2007

Dear Editor,

Title of manuscript: Suicidal ideation and associated factors among school-going adolescents in rural Uganda

We are pleased to submit revised manuscript having considered and incorporated responses to reviewers’ comments. The reviewers concerns and our responses are as below:

Reviewer: Gustavo Turecki

The reviewer wrote: “This paper covers an important subject of public health concern. The paper should be revised in order to improve the quality of the English-language. Major Compulsory Revisions: I would like to point out below major issues that can be addressed by the authors. I think that it might improve the overall quality of the paper:

RESULTS: Numbers presented in Table 1 should be revised: the total number of subjects is not equal to the sum of girls and boys? Males n=784; girls n=676; total should be: 1460; there are 46 missing cases? There is no mention of this into the text. Therefore, the exact percentages about subjects who seriously considered committing suicide within 12 months are not consistent across abstract, Table 1 and discussion section.”

Our response: Table 1 has been revised. This has also necessitated change in abstract and discussion to reflect the new values. Also note that in the Methods section, we have clearly stated that we only conducted complete case analysis. Table one has also now a footnote that indicates that missing values were excluded in the analysis.

The reviewer wrote: “METHODS: There is no mention about Ethic Review Board? Did participants fill a consent form? If so, it should be added to the method section.”

Our response: This information has now been provided under sub-heading “Ethical considerations, within the main Heading of Methods.

The reviewer wrote: “INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION SECTIONS: I would recommend adding recent references to your paper.

• I suggest that you read the Practice Parameters for the assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with suicidal behaviours, from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Association, 2000 (www.aacap.org).

• I also suggest that you add this paper entitled: Proximal Psychiatric Risk Factors for suicidality in youth. Arch Gen Psychiatry, Foley et al., 2006.

• Even before talking about the antidepressant effects on suicidal behaviours, it would be important to cite the main psychiatric risk factors associated with suicidal behaviours like Major Depression, Anxiety
disorders, Disruptive disorders, Substance abuse disorder, etc. Also, in addition to bullying, it would have been beneficial to cite other adverse and stressful life events, like sexual/physical abuse, poverty, etc. Those factors are enumerated in the two previous papers as well.”

Our response: We have been able to improve our manuscript by reviewing and incorporating the ideas that the reviewer had suggested. We have inserted the references where we thought they would further enrich the manuscript. See reference [21] for example.

The reviewer wrote” Finally, it would be of interest for the reader to mention the exact prevalence of the urban Uganda study in the discussion section.”

Our response: Due to the changes we have made, this section has changed and so the discussion pertaining to this has not been included.

We thank the reviewer for their comments.

Reviewer: Esben Agerbo

The reviewer wrote: “ General It is fairly clear and short papers, which, together with the fact that it is conducted in rural Uganda, are the main virtues of this paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions

Table 1 is not informative. The number of study participant who had considered suicide should be shown in each cell in table 1 – how should a reader otherwise evaluate the odds ratios shown in table 2? Moreover, NONE of the counts in the first column sum up to 1506! Just to mention the first three, they add up to 1434, 1460 and 7334. This manuscript is packed with percentages, but the numbers of exposed cases and controls are totally missing – they should even be in the abstract. It is hard to escape the suspicion that this, together with the weighting factors, blurs the actual information in this study.

Our response: We have revised table 1 to take into consideration of the reviwers comments. We have also specified that our analysis was based on complete case analysis and missing values were excluded. We have also stated that we did not carry out imputations for missing values.

It is surprising that the authors didn’t mention some of the several recent papers on suicidal behaviour in Uganda by e.g. Ovuga E, Boardman J, Wasserman D, Hjelmeland H, Kinyanda E, Buga JW or Guwatudde D.
Our response: We have been able to incorporate the recent literature from Uganda. This has resulted in a couple of new references incorporated throughout the text e.g. see [7,13,27]

We thank the reviewer for the thoughtful comments.

Adamson Muula