Author's response to reviews

Title: Emotional/ behavioural problems and cigarette smoking in adolescence: findings of a Greek cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We are submitting a revised version of our manuscript. We tried to address most of the reviewers’ comments. Their remarks were valuable. Below we explain the revisions we made.

Best regards,
Yannis Tountas

Reply to reviewers

Reviewer: Laura Currie

Abstract

1) Major essential revision
This needs to be rewritten to make the aims of the current study more clear.

*We re-wrote the section in order to make the aims of the current study more clear (see last sentence in ‘background’).*

Include statistics to support key statements.

*We included statistics to support key statements (see third sentence in ‘results’).*

Move the response rate/sample size to the results section.

*We moved the response rate/sample size to ‘results’ (see first and second sentences in ‘results’).*

Background

2) Minor essential revision
This section could be improved by providing greater clarity around the aims of the current study and potentially introducing hypotheses to be tested.

At a minimum, the authors should move the 3rd paragraph of this section immediately following the first sentence of the first paragraph. This would allow the section to read more logically.

*We moved the 3rd paragraph of this section immediately following the first sentence of the first paragraph (see first paragraph of ‘background’).*
Methods

3) Major essential revision

If the study methodology has been published in more detail previously, this should be explicitly stated and the study referenced. Otherwise, this section could be strengthened by discussing the sampling procedure further. How were individual schools selected? How were classes selected? Did all students in a class complete the survey or were students randomly selected?

_We are now discussing the sampling procedure in detail (see ‘methods’)._ 

5) Major essential revision

It states ‘Adolescents took parent surveys home’. It is unclear which part of the survey was completed by or with parents. Please clarify. If parents completed any part of the survey, then self reported smoking status should have been used for parental smoking status, rather than using a proxy measure. A rationale for the use of this proxy measure should be included.

_The statement ‘Adolescents took parent surveys home’ was a mistake; does not apply to the present work. We deleted it._

6) Minor essential revision

The section discussing response rate and participant characteristics should be moved to the results section.

_We moved the section discussing response rate and participant characteristics to the results section (see first paragraph in ‘results’)._ 

7) Minor essential revision

Procedures for informed consent and the attainment of ethical approval should be mentioned.

_We added this information (see two last sentences in ‘participants and procedures’)._ 

8) Minor essential revision

Measures with generally good reliability were used and well described. It might add further clarity if you provide a rationale for why the dimension of ‘autonomy’ was selected in particular.
We provided a rationale for why the dimension ‘autonomy’ was selected (see second sentence in ‘Adolescents’ leisure time’ section).

9) Discretionary revision
The level of missing data is acceptable at approximately 14%. A statement describing the missing data in context would provide greater transparency. We added a statement describing the missing data in context (see second sentence in the statistical analysis section).

Discussion
11) Major essential revision
The results of this study should be discussed in the context of existing literature examining the relationship between smoking and emotional/behavioural problems. At a minimum, the authors should suggest how the findings of this study fill the gap in the literature identified in the background section and add to the existing literature.

In the first paragraph of ‘discussion’ after presenting the findings of the study in comparison to previous studies, we highlight the strength of the association between smoking and emotional/behavioural problems after controlling for a number of covariates (something that contributes to existing literature) and in the second paragraph we try to show the consequences and implications of this finding, a matter of dispute in the literature.

Conclusions
12) Major essential revision
The conclusions could be strengthened with greater reflection on the implications of the study findings for anti-tobacco policies and programmes targeted at youth in Greece or suggestions for future research which could help translate these observational findings into evidence-based policies or interventions.
We moved the section of implications from ‘discussion’ to ‘conclusions’ section in order to strengthen the conclusions (see ‘conclusions’).

General style comments

13) Minor essential revisions
Avoid using detailed descriptions of percentages in text (eg. Ten and two tenths percent), rather say approximately ten percent or a tenth of students.

We avoided using detailed descriptions of percentages in text (see first paragraph in ‘results’ section).

Present percentages consistently – in some instances there are two decimal points and others there is only one or none.

We made corrections in order to present percentages consistently.

14) Minor essential revisions
Odds ratios should be presented consistently throughout the text; sometimes confidence intervals are provided and other times they are not.

We are now providing confidence intervals at all times.

15) Minor essential revisions
Overall the writing is of acceptable quality, although minor language and grammar corrections would improve readability:
- remove ‘enough’ from the last sentence of the conclusions;

We removed ‘enough’ from the abovementioned sentence (see “Addressing adolescents’ needs... and elsewhere” in the conclusions section).
- remove first ‘of’ from first sentence of background (should read majority (80-90%) of adults);

We removed it (see first sentence of the background section).
- remove ‘of’ from the fourth sentence of participants and procedures sentence;

We removed it (see first sentence of the results section).
- add ‘were’ to the sentence ‘and 32.4% were aged more than 15 years in the participants and procedures section;

We added it (see fourth sentence of the results section).
- first sentence of p.7 should read measured not measure

We corrected (see first sentence of adolescents’ leisure time section)
- first sentence of Statistical Analysis section – ‘quantitative’ should be ‘discreet’

*We corrected it (see first sentence of statistical analysis section).*

**Reviewer:** Carlotta Galeone

**Major Compulsory Revisions:**

1. The section “Background” should be more developed, reporting results from other previous epidemiological studies. Please report quantitative estimates, e.g., OR and 95% CI, in order to quantify the problem.

   *We developed more ‘background’ by reporting quantitative estimates (OR, (95% CI) from previous epidemiological studies (see “A large Chinese study in a sample of 1360 adolescents … were also found for age and education” in the second paragraph of the section).*

   More is needed to make this publication stand as a significant contribution to literature (e.g., the previous studies on this issue are scanty, this is a large survey, etc.).

   *We added an additional sentence in the last paragraph of ‘background’ in order to highlight the contribution of the present work.*

2. In the section “Discussion” the problem of selection bias is not mentioned at all. Please consider that the response rate is 63%. Moreover, the major risk factors of emotional/behavioural problems, such as genetic factors, smoking habits during pregnancy of the mother etc., are not included in the discussion. Please, add a paragraph with an adequate discussion on these issues.

   *We addressed these issues in the last paragraph of ‘discussion’.*

3. In the section “Discussion”, first paragraph, the author stated that “Cigarette smoking was related to increased risk for emotional/behavioural problems and the risk did not decrease after…”. Please, consider that with a cross-sectional study it is not possible to estimate a risk, but just to evaluate associations.

   *We corrected the mistake.*
4. The English language should be improved.  
*We made improvements in the use of the English language.*

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Abstract – Methods: The percentage of girls (60.8% of 1,194 students) is not consistent with table 1 (60.8% of 1,030 students).  
*We corrected the inconsistency (see first sentence in ‘results’ of the abstract).*

2. The term “interrelationship” should be replaced with “association”.  
*We replaced the term “interrelationship” with “association” (see first sentence in ‘conclusions’).*

3. Background: 2nd paragraph, empirical studies or epidemiological studies?  
*We replaced the term ‘empirical’ with ‘epidemiological’ (see first sentence in second paragraph of ‘background’).*

4. Methods: The age of adolescents is between 11 and 18 years old, but in the tables the age reported is from 12 to 18 years old. Is it a mistake or all the adolescents aged 11 years did not answer to the survey? If all the adolescents aged 11 years did not answer, please discuss it as a selection bias.  
*We corrected the mistake; the range was 12-18 years old (see ‘methods’).*

5. Methods: Please, move the description of sample characteristics from the section “Methods” to the section “Results”.  
*We moved the description of sample characteristics to the section ‘results’ (see first paragraph in ‘result’).*

6. Methods – Family socioeconomic status: Please, better describe the questions used to assess the family socioeconomic status.  
*We better described the family affluence scale (see first sentence in Family Socioeconomic Status section).*

7. Methods – Adolescents’ leisure time: Please, better specify “ … and the recall period being 1 week”. Did you use a strategy in the study design of recall in order to improve the response rate?  
*We did not manage to understand the meaning of this comment.*
8. Results: First paragraph: The sentence “Ten and two tenths percent of adolescents…” should be changed in “Of adolescents, 10.2%.....”

_We avoided using detailed descriptions of percentages in text (see first paragraph in ‘results’ section)._  

9. Results - Last paragraph: delete “independently” because in this sentence it is not used in a proper way, and at the end of the sentence add “also after adjustment for several selected covariates”

_We made the abovementioned corrections (see last paragraph in the results section)._  

10. Results - Last paragraph: Please, report the 95% CI after the ORs.

_We are now reporting 95% CI at all times (see last paragraph in the results section)._  

11. Table 4: Please, in the footnote report the adjustment covariates used in the model.

_All variables entered in analysis are referred in detailed in Table 4. There are not adjustment covariates that are not shown in Table 4._  

12. Table 4: Please, specify that the ORs of Leisure time and SDQ total difficulties are in continuous and specify the measurement unit “for an increment of ....”

_We made the correction (see Table 4)._  

13. In table 4 and 5 the p-values did not add information to the readers (there are reported the 95% CIs). Please, delete them.

_We deleted them._  

14. Table 5: The symbol of the footnote does not correspond to the OR (95% CI).

_We corrected it (see Table 2)._