Author's response to reviews

Title: Oral and Anal Sex Practices among high School Youth in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Authors:

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

This is to resubmit a manuscript entitled “Oral and Anal Sex Practices among high School Youth in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”, manuscript number MS 5597512344931507. The review process was educative. I benefited a lot from the reviewers and editors comments to improve the manuscript. I want to express my heart felt thanks to the reviewers for their relevant comments and advice.

Please find my responses to the comments of the reviewers in the manuscript with track changes. Please also see the response enclosed with this letter for the detailed response to the comments.

With best regards,

Amsale Cheire

Corresponding author

Response to the reviewers

Reviewer: Christine Markham

Comment 1: One additional concern raised in re-reading the manuscript is the large age range (15-24 years) with about 900 (24%) of participants ages 19-24, which appears incongruent with the title “high school adolescents”. If the authors want to retain this wide age range, it might be more appropriate to change the title and focus to talk about prevalence and determinants of oral and anal sex among “youth” instead of “high school adolescents”. Presumably most of the older youth are enrolled in vocational schools rather than what would typically be considered “high schools”? This needs to be clarified.

Response 1: The word adolescent is changed to youth please see the title and the text. In the Ethiopian education system after completing grade 10 students either join the vocational high schools or the academic high schools. There is no age difference between academic and vocational students since they are from the same source.

Comment 2: p.7 Line 12-13. “Respondents were also asked about age of their partners in the past 12 months’ oral/anal sex. Responses included “younger”, “same age”, or “older.” Presumably the question asked about “usual age of partners” but this needs clarification. It’s possible that a participant could have responded differently for different sex partners.

Response 2: The question was asked in the same way. Because it is confusing, this result is removed from the study.
Comment 3: p.8 Analytical procedures. Explain how open-ended responses for reasons to engage in oral/anal sex were coded into the categories that are included in the tables.

Response 3: Please see last line of page 6 and first line of page 7

Comment 4: p.14 Discussion, lines 4-6. “Involvement in oral and anal sex for the purpose of preventing a pregnancy is an indirect indicator of unmeet sexual and reproductive service needs of adolescents.” This statement is overstating conclusions that can be legitimately drawn from the current data and should be edited or deleted.

Response 4: Comment well taken, the statement is removed, please see page 13 paragraph 2

Comment 5: References. Check that all references cited are complete. Several (e.g., #11, 12, 17, 27, 32, and 35) appear to be missing authors’ last names.

Response 5: Corrected please see references 11, 12, 17, 26, and 31

Comment 6:

Minor essential revisions

The authors seem to have misinterpreted a previous comment:

“Abstract/Results: Here and in Results section in main manuscript, put both the number and % of subjects in parentheses, e.g., The prevalence of oral sex was higher among heterosexuals (n = 148, 4.1%), than male to male oral sex (n = 42, 1.2%).”

Numbers should only be placed in the parentheses if they appear after the subject, not as currently appears in the abstract and results: “Overall, (n=190, 53%) students ever had oral sex…” This should be revised to read, “Overall, 190 (53%) students ever had oral sex…”
Response 6: Corrected Please see the abstract and result section

Comment 7: p. 6 Subheading and other places. Be consistent in the order in which “oral and anal sex” are presented. Here and in other places, the authors switch to “anal and oral sex behaviors” which becomes confusing.

Response 7: Corrected

Comment 8: p.11 Lines 12-14. Presumably there is an error in this sentence, “Attitude about sex was significantly associated with oral sex (AOR, CI), where students who has favorable attitudes about ANAL sex were more engaged in oral sexual activity.” ANAL should read as ORAL?

Response 8: Thank you, corrected please see page 9 paragraph 4

Comment 9: Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Response 9: Language edited

Reviewer: Method Kazaura

MAJOR COMPURSORY REVISIONS

Comments on the abstract

Comment 1: (1) Abstract (Results)

(i) When quoting the percentage, authors should begin with percent then a number in brackets. For example, 5.3% (190)

Response 1: Corrected please see the abstract

Comment 2: (ii) Authors should understand the word ‘prevalence’ is a reserved for disease. Oral and anal sexual practices are not considered disease. Therefore, use ‘proportion’. Also, see Page 5, last line “... and prevalence of condom use among...”

Response 2: Corrected please see the abstract

Comment 3: (iii) Authors should also understand that these are REPORTED (not observed). Therefore, it better always to say “The overall proportion of reported ever having
oral sex was ....“

Response 3: Corrected please see the abstract

Comments on the background

Comment 4: (i) Delete number of sections and sub-sections

Response 4: Corrected

Comments on the subjects and methods

Comment 5: (i) Separate: Study Design, Setting and Sampling

Response 5: Separated please see page 5

Comment 6: (ii) On the third line, 21 private (for profit), 22 Religious (not for profit). This is because religious schools are also private

Response 6: In Ethiopia students learning in religious schools also pay they are for profit organizations

Comment 7: (iii) On data collection procedure, add a sentence on who were research assistants (qualities, etc).

Response 7: Added please see page 6

Comment 8: (iv) Variables: it is a good approach to show main dependent and independent variables and they were measured. Just make a summary. It seems to be this is too much descriptive

Response 8: Corrected please see page 6

Comment 9: (v) Analytical procedures: A reader should know how logistic regression works. No need to mention reason of using the procedure

Response 9: Corrected please see page 7

Comment 10: (vi) Ethical considerations: How did you deal with ‘minors’? Is it allowed in Ethiopia to interview children (< 18 years) without parents consenting?

Response 10: Corrected please see page 7
Comments on the result section

Comment 11: (i) Again, follow the format, % (n). For example, 44.2% (84)
Response 11: Corrected

Comment 12: (ii) Mean (SD=xx). No need to have #SD
Response 12: Corrected please see pages 8 and 9

Comment 13: (iii) Avoid using ‘prevalence’
Response 13: Corrected

Comment 14: (iv) Authors could use a figure indicating reasons for adolescents engaging in oral/anal sexual activities (sample given)
Response 14: The sample is well taken please see figure 1

Comment 15: (v) On Individual variables: First line, use 1 decimal point.
Response 15: Corrected please see page 9

Comment 16: (vii) A proposed layout of tables is given.
Response 16: The proposal is well taken Please see tables 1,2,3,4 and 5

Comment 17: (viii) Table 2, “Number of lifetime anal sex partners in the past 12 months”. Lifetime partners means EVER. So you cannot have lifetime and past 12 months simultaneously.
Response 17: Corrected please table 3

Comment 18: (ix) Again, same table 2, “Age of the past 12 months anal sex partner”. What does it mean??
Response 18: This result is taken out from the study

Comment 19: (x) Table 4 and Table 5: Change Gender to Sex
Response 19: Changed please see tables 4 and 5

Comments on the discussion and conclusion section
Comment 20: (i) Do not repeat results. You may refer, that is, “about 20% of respondents report to have first anal sex before the age of 10”... (No n=30 and no longer 19.5%)

Response 20: Comment well taken please see the discussion section

Comment 21: (i) The conclusion must show MAJOR findings. This study has several major findings. Write them here and if possible some implications.

Response 21: Included please see conclusion section

Comment 22: Authors should seek a language expert! A lot has to be done.

Response 22: Language edited

Thank you so much,

Amsale Cherie