Author's response to reviews

Title: Effectiveness of a partial smoking ban in a pro-smoking environment: a cross-sectional study in Lisbon taxis

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To the Editors of BMC Public Health:

Many thanks for raising the queries and comments that improved the quality of the manuscript. Please see the changes we had made, following your comments.

1. Please include some context information in the Background Section of your Abstract.

Answer

Abstract: We included context information in the Background Section of the abstract, as requested.

We substituted “purposive sampling in randomly-selected Lisbon streets” for “purposive sampling in selected Lisbon streets”

2. Section Editor's query: Before going to review, I would ask the authors to clarify their purposive sampling strategy in the paper, particularly with respect to randomly selected streets. Were these truly randomly selected (e.g., based on a drawing from all possible, or some externally defined subset of, streets in Lisbon), or pseudo-randomly selected by the researchers?

Answer

We found difficult to classify the sampling strategy. Actually, the designation of randomly-selected streets is not accurate.

We classified our sampling strategy as a purposive sampling strategy because:

We selected a subset of Lisbon streets using a map of the main streets of Lisbon center. But the selection of the subset of Lisbon centre main streets was not random. Thus our sampling strategy of Lisbon streets is not truly random. We sought to include circulating taxis arriving from different places of Lisbon. The criteria to select this subset of Lisbon streets were as following:
We identified the main streets (larger, busy traffic that intersects the city). Thus the circulating taxis traveling along these streets are not local and repetitive traffic, instead they arrive from all parts of the city. In conclusion, our sampling strategy was not truly random, but it was thought using a coherent method to include circulating taxis arriving from different places of Lisbon.

On the manuscript we substituted randomly-selected streets for selected streets. We describe the sampling procedure on the methods section. See pages 4-5.

Was there a systematic way the researchers approached the cabs?

Were the drivers compensated for their time?

Drivers were not compensated for their time. They were only paid the taxi-ride fare, independently of their acceptance to collaborate on the survey. The procedure for approaching the taxis on the streets was a systematic way, i.e. the interviewers systematically stopped the first taxi available that was circulating on the selected street. However, we were not able to identify a systematic place to attend or stop the taxi, such us the nearest traffic lights, a specific street lane, etc. It is very difficult or nearly impossible to put this in practice in a busy traffic city. We excluded taxis waiting at taxis ranks to avoid systematic sample bias. After stopping the taxi, interviewers indicated the driver their destination ride, as “opportunistic natural clients”. Afterwards, the interviewers would initiate a conversation not related to the study, as natural clients for a couple of minutes. Then interviewers would identify themselves as researchers, and ask the taxi drivers their verbal consent to collaborate on a research survey, explaining the study aims, the institutions involved. The interview would only begin after their permission. If the taxi driver would refuse to be interviewed, researchers would complete their taxi ride until they had reached their destination, as had been settled. We describe the sampling procedure on the methods section. See pages 4-5.

Please do not hesitate in contacting us if should you need any additional clarification

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