Author's response to reviews

Title: Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews:

We would like to thank all reviewers and editors of BMC Public Health for investing their expertise and time and for providing substantive comments to our manuscript. Based on your recommendation we have revised and edited the manuscript line by line and the response for each reviewer is stated below.

Reviewer's report

Title: Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia

Reviewer: Lucio G Oliveira

Reviewer's report:

This study aimed to describe the prevalence of drug use and the associated variables among college students in Ethiopia. The issue is current. If the manuscript is approved, its findings will be of great value to those with closely related research interests. The targeted population is of special interest, since college students seem to be especially vulnerable to the engagement in health risk behaviors. However, the manuscript has some weaknesses that should be addressed by the authors, as follows:
I. Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. First of all, the authors are encouraged to carry on the language editing of the entire manuscript, since the text is compromised by grammatical and typographical errors.
# The language of the entire manuscript is edited by an English expert
2. The authors should be more concise throughout their manuscript. In this regard, a large amount of data was described in the manuscript, leaving the reading a little tiring. Thus, I strongly suggest that the authors should focus their manuscript in some of the reported drugs (khat, alcohol or tobacco use), in order to describe its prevalence of use among the college students and its associated variables.
# The entire manuscript is critically reviewed and some of the duplicated ideas are corrected. The unnecessary graphs, tables, sentences and paragraphs are removed.
3. As a large amount of data was described, the discussion became shallow.
# The discussion part is reviewed and edited. Some duplicated sentences with the result part are modified and overall we tried to focus entirely on our objectives.
4. Also, it is important to note that most of the data are duplicated, i.e., much of the data from tables and figures were re-stated in the text of the manuscript.
# The unnecessarily duplicated graphs and tables are removed.
5. Some of the journal's guidelines were not precisely attended by authors. In this regard, I suggest them to especially review the manuscript title, the illustrations (that were embedded in the text) and the reference list that is not according to BMC Public Heath reference style.
# Every part of the manuscript is reviewed and we tried to follow the recommended guideline

II. Minor Essential Revisions: My suggestions, section-by-section, are stated as follows:
(a) abstract: should be reviewed, especially the results section;
# The abstract is reviewed; especially the result part is edited and shortened.

(b). Background:
1. The authors have stated that drug use is a rising public health problem worldwide (first and second paragraphs), however, this idea was supported by regional studies. In this regard, I strongly suggest that the authors use reports such as the “World Drug Report”, by the “United Nations Office on Drug and Crime” and the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2011 by the World Health Organization that provides a worldwide frame about the issue.
• The provided information is supported by many national and international
reports like WHO and World Drug Report.

2. Some details about “khat” use in Ethiopia and Africa are necessary (first paragraph).
# We didn’t provide detail description about the substances in Ethiopia to avoid lengthening of the background, however it is edited accordingly.

3. The terms “drug use” and “drug abuse” seemed to be used with the same meaning in the background.
# Our objective is to assess drug use not drug abuse and we reviewed the background critically to make consistent with our objective.

Please, this should be reviewed;

(c) Methods:

1. The authors did not mention previous studies to support the procedures adopted for sampling design in their research (second and third paragraph).
# Multi-stage sampling design is one of the commonly used sampling designs and there is no problem in using it as far as it is justified. It is the right sampling design if we use two or more sampling stages.

2. The sampling stratification is unclear. I did not understand if the sampling stratification was carried out according to field of study, academic year or both of them.
# The stratification is based on the year of study of the students by assuming duration of campus stay will affect substance use and it is clearly stated under sampling procedure part.

3. The fifth and sixth paragraphs seem to be misplaced inside the methods section.
# We have corrected the arrangement of the methodology based on your recommendation.

4. The authors commented that the research instrument was planned according to previous studies (seventh paragraph), but no references were made for those studies.
# We have reviewed and provided the references.

5. There are no references about the software used for database building and neither about the one taken for data analysis.
# We have reviewed and provided the references. We took it from CDC.

6. Data analysis needs some clarification (eighth paragraph).
# Initially bivariate analysis was done and variables with p>0.2 was included in the multivariate analysis.

7. There was no description about the method of variable selection used during the carrying out of the multivariable logistic model. Was it by backward stepwise elimination? or by forward selection?
# Since we have enough significant variables in the bivariate analysis, we used
back ward logistic regression in the multivariate analysis.

8. The study was approved by the University of Gondar but was carried out in the University of Axum. Is that correct? (ninth paragraph);

# We have corrected it. Institution Research Review Boards, Institute of Public Health at the University of Gondar and Axum University.

(d) Results:
1. Among the sampled college students, what was the rate of participation denial?

# Since we have described the response rate, the non response rate is known by default.

2. Most of the data are duplicated, i.e., much of the data from tables and figures were re-stated in the manuscript text. Therefore, reading was a little tiring. As mentioned above, authors are encouraged to be more concise. Illustrations are unnecessary. On the other hand, the table content should be reviewed for typo errors.

# We have critically reviewed and edited the whole manuscript

3. In the description of the multivariable regression model results for khat, alcohol and tobacco use (paragraphs 13 to 20), the authors decided to investigate only for the measure of drug use in the last 12 months. However, all results have been presented according to lifetime and current drug use. Please, is there any reason that supported that choice? Also, only the variables that reached p<0.05 in the bivariate analysis were included in the logistic regression models. Maybe some of these excluded variables did not reach statistical significance due to the confounding effects of significant variables. Did the authors thought about the possibility of including in the model all variables that reached at least p<0.20 in order to control such confounding effects?

# The prevalence of substances use in the last 12 month and lifetime is equal by default. Hence, we decided to investigate for the measure of drug use in the last 12 months to make more sensible. In the result section we used the lifetime instead of using both lifetime and the last 12month because the prevalence is the same.

# Variables with p<0.20 were included in the model.

4. Finally, it is important to note that, at the end of the introduction section, the authors reported that this manuscript aimed to describe the prevalence of drug use among college students in Axum University. However, the drug use measures reported in the methods section refers only to khat chewing, alcohol and tobacco use. Following, in the results section, the authors used the shisha use and hashish use as explanatory variables in the multivariate logistic models. These results about shisha use and hashish use were not explicitly reported in the methods and neither in the results. It sounded a little bit confusing. Therefore, I suggest that the authors should briefly refer to the other drug uses - besides khat, alcohol and tobacco use - among students in the methods and results sections.
Our objective is to measure the prevalence of substances (khat, alcohol and cigarette) use and associated factors. We didn’t focus on the other drugs because the other drugs are not common in Ethiopia. The manuscript is reviewed and edited critically.

(e) Discussion:
1. In few words, the authors compared the prevalence of drug use between college students and adolescents, as well as between college students from Axum University and others from other institutions. I believe that maybe the discussion would be enriched by the comparison of drug use prevalence between the college students of Axum University and other young adults from the general population in Ethiopia.

2. The authors should be aware not to emphasize data that are not consistent with their manuscript aims. For instance, in the paragraph 11, the authors made the following statement: “this indicates adolescent age group is at higher risk for experimentation of psychoactive substance use and urgent intervention is needed during this period”.

3. The authors re-stated much of the findings already described in the results section. Also, authors transcribed the results of other studies (for instance: OR IC95%) whose outcomes were consistent with the manuscript. I believe that it is unnecessary.

4. Especially in this section, there were too many grammatical and typographical errors, I suggest the authors should carry on the language editing.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests

Reviewer’s report
Title: Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia
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Version: 2 Date: 30 April 2013

Author's response to reviews:

We would like to thank all reviewers and editors of BMC Public Health for investing their expertise and time and for providing substantive comments to our manuscript. Based on your recommendation we have revised and edited the manuscript line by line and the response for each reviewer is stated below.

Reviewer: Amy Jeffers

Reviewer's report:

“Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia”

In general, I found this paper interesting as it addresses an important public health concern in an under-studied area. Some comments/suggestions are noted below.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The manuscript is unnecessarily long and could be streamlined. A few suggestions are provided. The Methods section could be shortened. Both the sample size formula and the operational definitions are not needed. However, these definitions should be replaced with a description of the measures as is customary to include in a Methods section. In the Results section, there are places with redundant statistics. For example, a sentence in the first paragraph reads “Among the study subjects, 444 (58.8%) were males and the remaining 312 (41.2%) were females.” It is unnecessary to use both values as listing one group’s statistic implies the value of the other. This type of language happens throughout the entire Results and Discussion sections. Further, it is unnecessary to duplicate information that’s provided in the text with information provided in the tables. It would be helpful to list only the most meaningful values in the text. Finally, the Discussion section should focus on implications and many of the statistics, including both frequencies and percentages, p-values, and odds-ratios, that were listed in the Results section do not need to be repeated. For example, one sentence in the discussion reads “Being male [AOR: 1.96, 95CI: (1.25, 3.080], Muslim in religion...” Similarly, these statistics don’t need to be included for the additional studies mentioned in the Discussion section.

# Generally, the overall manuscript is revised, edited and shortened according to your substantive recommendation. We have edited it line by line to avoid duplication and other problems. The operational definition is modified and the statistical redundancy is corrected.

Minor Essential Revisions:
2. Although the manuscript is understandable, it would be very helpful if an English speaker edited it.

# The manuscript is reviewed and edited by an English expert to correct grammatical, spelling and flow errors.

3. Please be consistent when using the terms “substance use” versus “substance abuse” as they have different meanings as defined by the ICD-10.

# Our objective is to assess substances use not substances abuse. So, we revised and corrected such consistency problems.

4. In addition to including a description of the measures in the Methods section, please include references for the measures. Also, if there’s evidence for reliability and validity, please include appropriate statistics.

# We have taken the measures and software’s like EPI-INFO and SPSS from well recognized organization CDC. And they are Valid and Reliable. They are commonly used in our country.

Discretionary Revisions:

5. Figure 4 (pie chart) seems unnecessary as all of the related statistics are mentioned in the text, and it is easy to visualize such percentages.

# Some of the unnecessary graphs, figures and tables are removed

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.

Reviewer’s report

Title: Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia

Reviewer: Kristina Brache

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Author's response to reviews:

We would like to thank all reviewers and editors of BMC Public Health for investing their expertise and time and for providing substantive comments to our manuscript. Based on your recommendation we have revised and edited the manuscript line by line and the response for each reviewer is stated below.

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
The information contained in the manuscript is interesting and informative. However, the presentation of the information could use a lot of work. The manuscript is much too lengthy and contains less relevant graphs and information.

# The manuscript is critically edited and shortened according to your substantive recommendation.

The content needs to be reduced and the writing needs to be more concise. For example. Page 5: Definitions are likely not needed in this format, perhaps only a short comments on how current use is being considered (past 30 days);

# Much of the contents are reduced (especially unnecessary graphs and tables in the result section are reduced).

Much of the Methods section could be reduced; The number of tables in the Methods section needs to be reduced. Figure 4 could be deleted and simply written in one sentence;

# We critically reviewed and reduced the methodology section

The discussion is excessive and uses odd examples for comparison (e.g., Sweden, pg 26?); discussion gives way too many examples for comparison and does not get to the point. More space needs to be given to the limitations of this study. Overall, this manuscript would greatly benefit from being pared down.

# Like the other sections, the discussion part is edited and we reduced it by removing some odd comparisons and repetitions

# The potential limitations of this study are provided just after discussion part.

Minor Essential Revisions

Spelling and Grammar must be revised throughout.

# We revised and corrected the grammatical errors throughout the manuscript.

Some use of strong language should be changed (e.g., pg. 2: leading causes of human suffering).Page 2: psychiatric disorders should be changed to psychiatric symptoms as they are not examples of disorders.

# Some strong words are used to get more emphasis on the impact of substances use. We used it not to under estimate the negative consequence of substances use.

Page 10, occasionally should be defined. "First use" should replace the use of
the term "starting time." Page 9, The minimum age in Ethiopia should be specified.

# The manuscript is modified according to your substantive comments.

# To get the minimum age for substances use in Ethiopia we need additional study, since there is no adequate study on this area.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

none