Author's response to reviews

Title: Knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards Voluntary Counseling and Testing among University Students in North West Ethiopia: a cross sectional study.

Authors:

Zelalem Addis (zelalemaddis@ymail.com)
Yityal Shiferaw (yitayalsiferaw@yahoo.co.uk)
Abebe Alemu (yanbule@gmail.com)
Wubet Birhan (yeshmebetessey@gmail.com)
Biniam Mathewos (fikirbinny@yahoo.com)
Aregawi Yalew (aregawi.yalew@yahoo.com)
Belayenseh Tachebele (belayenesh@gmail.com)

Version: 2 Date: 13 December 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
Cover letter

Dear reviewers and editors, we are very much grateful to thank you for your invaluable and constructive comments on our manuscript. By now we have tried to accommodate all of the comments given and act accordingly. All the comments given by the reviewers are corrected accordingly in the revised manuscript. Please find it. Editorial comments are also taken and corrections were made accordingly.

Reviewer: Tarja Suominen

Abstract

Comments: I would like to see here also when the data were collected.

Revision: Period of data collection is indicated.

Introduction

Comments: I would like to see more updated statistics here, newer information exists. When you write like many studies (add here references). You may add text what previous literature tells to us about knowledge, attitudes and practice. You are investigated these. Now you have written just limited information of these which you are also studying.

Revision: modified based on comments

Comments: You are now writing which campuses participated in this study, please delete this kind of information through the text, we should be careful in ethical issues.

Revision: deleted

Comments: Try also to write more advanced reason for this study, not just that the topic has not been investigated in this certain area. We have lot of areas and we cannot investigate everywhere.

Revision: Additional justification is added
Methods

Comments: Delete here the names of the campus and university.

Revision: The campus name is deleted but not university (We left it because it help us to indicate nature of study participant)

Comments: The sampling is not clear here. So, start with the total 2900 and what happened after that. You are writing about the list of voluntary students. So did you first create a list of voluntary students? Which kind of sampling it was? It seems you had participants from all the departments, was that amount dependent on the total student amount in the department or did you ask same amount from all departments or how.

Revision: As per the given comment and questions raised the sample size and sampling technique were modified. Please see the new version.

Comments: The structure of the instrument is not presented. So, how was the structure? Was it: knowledge, attitudes and what? In the title of this article you write about knowledge, attitudes and practice. But here you have concepts like awareness and service utilization. The structure of the instrument should be presented. Which kind that was and how many questions and items and how asked? Validity and reliability aspects should also be discussed.

Revision: All the raised questions and comments are incorporated in the new version. Please find it.

Results

Comments: This part is not possible to comment before the structure of the instrument is presented. Now here is a new concept: general knowledge. So, the structure of the questionnaire should be presented. Also the structure of the results would be helped whether you write clear research questions also in this article and then you can create the subtitles of the results section
based on the research questions. You have now several subtitles including knowledge. How this first knowledge-title is related to the research questions and the structure of the questionnaire? I am sure this results section is easier to structure after you present clearly research questions and the structure of the used instrument.

**Revision:** The result parts re-organized in more soundable fashion based on comments.

**Discussion**

**Comments:** Here you have again a new conceptual thinking “overall awareness”. So, have you measured knowledge or awareness?

**Revision:** We measure the level of knowledge, but we previously thought that the two terms can be used interchangeably. This now avoided by taking only knowledge.

**Conclusion**

**Comments:** This should be rewritten. The four first lines are appropriate, but after that there is repetition of the results, more advanced conclusion is possible to be created.

**Revision:** Modifications were made on the conclusion and re-written as per the given comment.

**References**

**Comments:** Some references need to be updated.

**Revision:** Updated references are included.

**Tables**

**Comments:** From table 1, please delete the name of the campus and the university

**Revision:** The name of the campus is deleted
Reviewer: Michael Johnson Mahande

Minor essential revisions

General

Comments: There quite few sentence with repetition of words and use of number after the full stop, this need to be addressed.

Revision: modified

Comments: It will be important to hear from the authors if the questions on sexual behavior were included in the questionnaire (number of sexual partners, condom use etc.). This is useful to correlate with the VCT practice.

Revision: Questions on sexual behavior were not included in the study

ABSTRACT

Comments: In the background section of the abstract the authors have reported much information on the magnitude of HIV/AIDS. It would be important to indicate the importance and benefits of VCT among the studied group.

Revision: The importance and benefits of VCT among the studied group is included in the abstract.

Comments: The 1st sentence of the abstract should be rephrased and read like: The HIV/AIDS pandemic is highly spread..........with a total of 33.2million people reported living with HIV/AIDS, of these about……follow under reproductive age group.

Revision: The statement is deleted and the abstract is modified.

Comments: In the objective section of the abstract: remove the word hence; and rephrase the objective “The objective of this study was to assess the level of knowledge, attitude and practice
of Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) for HIV/AIDS among university students in Northwest Ethiopia.

Revision: Modified as per the comment.

Comments: In the method section of the abstract: There is inherent problem of the methodology from the main text, especially on how the study subjects were selected. This need to be addressed from the main text”. There is also a need to describe how the numerical and categorical variables were summarized.

Revision: Correction was made. The sample size and sampling technique as well as data analysis is described in more elaborated way in the main text.

Comments: in the result section of the abstract: the 1st sentence, remove the word “from the respondent of the study” it should read, about 66.1% of the participants were male,

Revision: modified

DATA COLLECTION (main text)

Comments: The authors have to indicate if the questionnaire pretested for validity or was adopted from other studies?

Revision: These issues were re-addressed now in new version

RESULTS (main text)

Comments: The authors need to what to report (mean and standard deviation if age is normally distributed) otherwise report median and inter-quartile range if age distribution is skewed. In the same paragraph, avoid short sentences like “about 61.8% had had in the past”.

Revision: The description of age is corrected using mean and standard deviation. Short sentences are modified

Comments: The authors have to report the proportion of married participants, (marital status)
Revision: It is incorporated as per the given comment.

Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Comments: Rearrange: Table 1 represent the characteristics of the study participants. A total of ……About 218(66.1%) were male, and their mean age was X (SD) years. More than half (51.5%) of the participants were ……

Revision: modified.

Comments: The total number of the participants on the sex variable in table 1(430) does not correspond to what is reported in the main text (330). The authors need to reconcile these figures.

Revision: corrected

General knowledge of the respondents about HIV/AIDS

Comments: 2nd subsection Rephrase general knowledge of the respondents about HIV/AIDS to knowledge and attitude of the respondents about HIV/AIDS

Revision: modified

Comments: Use a standard symbol for the chi square test ($\chi^2$) instead of X. and fix the nearest decimal place for p-value (P<0.001).

Revision: The chi square symbol ($\chi^2$) is used and p-value is fixed to the normal decimal.

Attitude toward VCT

Comments: The authors should consider to collapse some variables such as age and religion as some of the cell have zero count which cannot allow any comparison (table 3 and 4).

Revision: We collapsed the variables with zero count and comparison was made accordingly.

Comments: The authors also could have explored the association between perceived risk of HIV and preference/willingness to take VCT.
Revision: Since the perceived risk of HIV is not assessed we cannot explore its association with VCT uptake.

Practice on VCT

Comments: Rephrase the subheading to be “Practice of voluntary counseling and testing for HIV”

Revision: Rephased as per the given comment

Comments: The authors should try to assess the association between knowledge and or attitude on VCT and practice of VCT.

Revision: We have assessed the association between general knowledge about HIV/AIDS, knowledge about VCT and attitude about VCT on practice of VCT for HIV/AIDS and indicated in table 4.

Comments: There is a need to collapse some categories for age and religion to improve for statistical power.

Revision: Such variables were computed according to the given comment.

Major Compulsory Revisions

BACKGROUND SECTION

Comments: In the 1st paragraph, the authors reported the magnitude of HIV/AIDS without quoting any reference. The authors need to cite the reference and rephrase the whole paragraph to enhance logical coherence of the information.

Revision: Reference is cited.

Comments: In this section the authors need reorganize the flow of the information (for example: magnitude of HIV/AIDS and consequences, different approaches been done to address the problem and its outcome then narrow down to VCT as selected intervention.
Revision: reorganized based on the comments.

Comments: The authors also need to indicate the importance of VCT among the studied community? Why this study is important among the selected group of students?

Revision: Justification on the need of the study in the target group is added at the end of the background.

METHODS SECTION

Sample size and sampling techniques

Comments: The authors described that, 339 students were randomly selected for this study. To me this look likes a multistage sampling technique. The authors need to intensively describe in this section, how did they arrived to 339 figures from 2,900 students.

Revision: All issues regarding sampling and sampling procedure re organized in detail in the new version. Please find it.

Comments: What was the inclusion and exclusion criterion?

Revision: We had no any inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study participants were involved in a voluntary basis and all the students were eligible to be study participants.

Comments: How the sampling frame was constructed given the diversity/ range of discipline in the selected faculties? This may create some baseline differences, how do you deal with bias such an approach may raise?

Revision: These issues are addressed in the above comments.

Comments: How was the sample size estimated? The authors need to describe the underlying assumptions to arrive at the desired number of participants.

Revision: How sample size was determined now explained in this version. Please find it in methods section.
**DATA COLLECTION**

**Comments:** Under this section, the authors need to describe how was the knowledge being scored (ranges for knowledge or no knowledge); and which questions were asked?

**Revision:** corrected

**DATA NALYSIS**

**Comments:** In this section it would be important for the authors to report what was the outcome of interest and other variables that were analyzed. The section is too brief, it does not justify to all the results that have been presented.

**Revision:** modification was made

**Comments:** The authors need also to describe how different variable were summarized, testing for association between categorical variables and tested for significant by using the chi square test or fishers exact test.

**Revision:** Data management and analysis are reconstructed. Please find it in last paragraph of the methods section

**RESULTS**

**General knowledge of the respondents about HIV/AIDS**

**Comments:** In this section, the authors could have provided information on the sexual behaviours of participants/risk assessment (e.g. use of condom during sexual intercourse for prevention of pregnancy or HIV, number of sexual partners). This information is important in assessing participant knowledge and attitude about HIV/AIDS.

**Revision:** Sexual behavior of the participants/ risk assessment was not made. The intention of our study was just to assess KAP of participants and its relation with some of the sociodemographic variables.
Knowledge of the respondents about VCT

**Comments:** The authors reported in the method section that a series of questions were asked about this subject. However, it is important for the authors to indicate what kinds of questions were asked (either under the method section or in this section) to the participants regarding this section in order to guide readers. What was the scoring range (scoring weight) for knowledge?

**Revision:** The system of scoring is now incorporated in the methods part of the revised manuscript.

**Comments:** There some variables such as number of sexual partners, marital status, and participants’ awareness of the HIV risk could have been also explored under this section.

**Revision:** Number of sexual partners and participants’ awareness of the HIV risk were not explored. But the marital status was assessed and found insignificant that is why we omit from the sociodemographic data.

Attitude toward VCT

**Comments:** The authors need to explore the association between perceived risk of HIV and preference/willingness to take VCT.

**Revision:** Perceived risk of HIV was not assessed so we can’t associate with willingness to take VCT.

**DISCUSSION**

**Comments:** The authors need to report/acknowledge for the possible limitations of their findings. For example; issues related to study design, sampling method, validity of the questionnaire. Information bias, some participants might feel uncomfortable with some questions related to HIV testing practice or some might have misunderstood some questions about VCT.

**Revision:** Limitation of the study is now included.