Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 20 June 2012

Reviewer: Michael Johnson Mahande

Reviewer’s report:

Minor essential revisions

General
There quite few sentence with repetition of words and use of number after the full stop, this need to be addressed
It will be important to hear from the authors if the questions on sexual behaviour were included in the questionnaire (number of sexual partners, condom use et.). This is useful to correlate with the VCT practice.

ABSTRACT
1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 North west Ethiopia.
4. 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.
5. 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,

DATA COLLECTION (main text)
The authors have to indicate if the questionnaire pretested for validity or was adopted from other studies?

RESULTS (main text)
1. The authors need to what to report (mean and standard deviation if age is
normally distributed) otherwise report median and interquartile range if age distribution is skewed.

In the same paragraph, avoid short sentences like “about 61.8% had had in the past”.

2. The authors have to report the proportion of married participants, (marital status)

Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

1.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 ......

2. 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.

General knowledge of the respondents about HIV/AIDS

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

Knowledge of the respondents about VCT

Use a standard symbol for the chi square test (#) instead of X. and fix the nearest decimal place for p-value (P<0.001).

Attitude toward VCT

1. 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).

2. The authors also could have explored the association between perceived risk of HIV and preference/willingness to take VCT.

Practice on VCT

1. Rephrase the subheading to be “Practice of voluntary counseling and testing for HIV”

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

3. The authors also have overlooked to report the association between gender and practice on VCT (table 4).

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

REFERENCE: The authors need to read this reference which has reported some contrast findings with the present study:

Major Compulsory Revisions

BACKGROUND SECTION

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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?

METHODS SECTION

Sample size and sampling techniques

1. 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.

2. What was the inclusion and exclusion criterion?

3. 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?

4. How was the sample size estimated?

   - The authors need to describe the underlying assumptions to arrive at the desired number of participants.

DATA COLLECTION

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?

DATA NALYSIS

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.

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.

RESULTS

General knowledge of the respondents about HIV/AIDS

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.

Knowledge of the respondents about VCT
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?

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.

Attitude toward VCT
The authors need to explore the association between perceived risk of HIV and preference/willingness to take VCT.

DISCUSSION
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.

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'