Author's response to reviews

Title: Impact of Training of Teachers on Their Ability, Skills, and Confidence to Teach HIV/AIDS in Classroom: A Qualitative Assessment

Authors:

Haribondhu Sarma (hsarma@icddrb.org)
Mohammad Ashraful Islam (aashraf@icddrb.org)
Rukhsana Gazi (rukhsana@icddrb.org)

Version: 2 Date: 13 August 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Date: August 13, 2013

To
Ms Rita Aguirre
Journal Editorial Office
BioMed Central

Subject: Submit a revised manuscript for publication in your journal

Dear Aguirre,

Thank you for reviewing our manuscript (MS 3999415919525439 Impact of training of teachers on their ability, skills, and confidence to teach HIV/AIDS in classroom: a qualitative assessment). As per reviewers comments we have revised our manuscript and response to the reviewers accordingly. The details changes that we have made in the manuscript are highlighted in blue color in texts of the revised manuscript. Following are point-by-point descriptions of the changes made in the manuscript and response to the reviewers’ comments:

**Response to the reviewer 1:**

**Major compulsory recommendations**

1. The authors(s) have written a qualitative article in a quantitative way and this reads very awkwardly. It is not common to analyse the control group for example in a qualitative study. There is not enough evidence presented from the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups; it would be necessary to list the questions asked and give an indication of the checklist; trustworthiness has not been established. I suggest a rewrite removing all mention of control group – if they wish to compare the two, then much more evidence must be given and the themes should reflect the differences/similarities and this is not the case.

**Response:** The first author is an Anthropologist by training and has more than ten years experience in the field of qualitative health research, and he is comfortable in narrative writing which is commonly followed in qualitative papers. However, authors agree with reviewer’s concerns related to quantitative influence in writing the report. This style was followed because there are many experts in the field of public health who prefer qualitative findings to be presented in such form, in these instances reviewers are interested to know ‘what does it mean by phrases like; “most of the respondents” ‘some’ or ‘few”? However, in response to the reviewer comments we dropped all the numbers mentioned in the text. Again, in response to the reviewer comments we also revised the manuscript considering the findings from teachers who received training on HIV/AIDS and the teachers who didn’t receive training as a comparison group but avoided terms; intervention group and control group. Additionally, as part of added evidences and ensuring trustworthiness of the findings, we added some verbatim in relevant areas in page 12. We have added key issues covered in the data collection tools for further clarification on nature of investigation.
2. The language is very poor and it needs a complete edit by an English speaker.  
**Response:** Authors considered this issue seriously; the manuscript has been edited by a professional English editor.

3. References and literature consulted are out of date - there are many studies on teaching and HIV in developing countries post 2008 at least.  
**Response:** In order to incorporate new evidences, authors added new references in page 3, 19-21 & 23-25.

Minor essential revisions
1. I have made comments on pdf and these should be addressed. I have highlighted in yellow to indicate poor use of language.  
**Response:** All the comments on pdf have been addressed and highlighted in blue color in the texts of revised manuscript.

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 I have no competing interests
Response to the reviewer 2:

1. Define the specific randomly-selected districts
Response: The ‘randomly-selected districts’ means the districts were selected based on random selection procedures from the list of eligible districts where there are relevant programs, now this is clarified under study sites in method section in page 6.

2. Define the total number of sites selected in each arm
Response: In each arm, three upazilas or sub-districts (having 200,000 to 300,000 population in each) were selected, thus a total of six upazilas were identified for study sites, please see in page 6 & 7.

3. Define how flexible the semi-structured interviews were - how did you maintain fidelity between interviewers?
Response: The interviews were conducted based on semi-structure interview guidelines that were developed based on review of existing tools available in the regions and internationally. All drafted data-collection tools were piloted through a rigorous field-testing procedure in similar setting prior to application in field. Additionally, the interviews were conducted by trained and skilled research staff (interviewers), who have relevant academic qualifications, and have three-five years of relevant work experience. During training and field testing, the investigators of the study have emphasized on importance of maintaining fidelity in the field research particularly during data collection. One training session (for data collectors) was devoted to discuss about research ethics. Spot checking was done as a part of data quality control. During data collection the field-notes and the field dairy were regularly reviewed by the senior investigators. The interviewers met the Principal Investigator at least once a week to review the status of data collection and preliminary results to determine the next steps for improved field activities.

4. State how the interview tools were vetted for content or piloted
Response: All the interview tools were developed based on review of existing tools available regionally and internationally. All the tools were piloted through a rigorous field testing in local setting prior to field application for data collection.

5. Define the number of questions/length of the interviews
Response: Based on the objective of this study a series of subtopics/issues were covered that have been mentioned under data collection in method section in page 7, 8 & 9. On average each in-depth interview took about 40-60 minutes and FGD took about 60 to 90 minutes.

6. Define the number of people who received each form of the interview tool
Response: In total, 36 in-depth interviews, 12 FGDs and 12 observations were conducted in the two study sites, now we have mentioned it in page 11.

7. Define the number of interviewers and their training
Response: A skilled and experienced field research team (4 members) was formed, comprising a Research Officer (RO), two Senior Field Research Assistants (SFRAs), and a Field Research Assistant (FRA) of icddr,b for collecting data in the field. The research team was further trained on the study contexts (rationale, objective and methodology), how to conduct qualitative data-collection techniques including in-depth interview, FGD and observation, sampling procedures, data compilation and thematic analysis. The overall quality of data-collection was monitored by the Principal Investigator (the first author) at a regular basis.

8. Define the number of observers and their training - observer effect should be noted in the limitations
Response: Relevant information provided in page 7. We discussed the issues on potential limitation of direct observation under the limitation section in discussion in page 21.

9. Define how internal reliability/validity were maintained using these methods
Response: To ensure data quality we used data triangulations; we triangulated data among different sources, used a number of data collection methods/techniques, and reviewed previous literatures for checking similarity or contrasts in terms of results.

10. State who did the thematic review and their training
Response: During data collection the initial thematic review done by the research team members with direct guidance from Principal Investigator (PI) of the study. The study member received intensive training on how to do coding, compilation, and conduct content analysis. However, data-display and data summary process was conducted by PI at the end after all data had been collected.

11. Define parent consent process (student assent only noted)
Response: The interviewer took written consent from the respondent prior to each interview. This issue has been addressed in the text in page 11 under Ethical aspect.

12. Define whether or not this went through a local IRB
Response: Yes, this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of icddr,b (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh), comprising two committees: Research Review Committee and Ethical Review Committee. This mentioned in the text in page 11.

13. Describe in much greater detail the training of teachers in the experimental arm - there seems to be little fidelity between teachers raising questions about the intervention itself, specifically about addressing teachers’ nervousness/anxiety about the content (as that was raised by the authors as a major obstacle to implementation)
Response: We added a paragraph that detailed-out the procedures of teacher training in page 5.

14. Remove gender biases in quotes on page 12 (remove the word "female" from the second one)
Response: We removed the word "female" in page 16.

15. State the average age of first sexual experience in Bangladesh for context
Response: A survey conducted in 2004 reported that the average age of first sexual experience is 14 among adolescents in Bangladesh

16. State why drug use factors are not addressed, as injection drug use is a major route of transmission in Bangladesh

Response: We agree with the reviewer that drug use is a major route of HIV transmission in Bangladesh, which also adequately addressed in the HIV/AIDS curriculum. However, our research objective was to understand the effects of the teachers’ training on curriculum-based HIV/AIDS-education programme on the ability, skills, and confidence of teachers to teach HIV/AIDS in the classroom. Therefore, we emphasized on teachers’ ability, skill and confidence to teach HIV/AIDS rather than the contextual issues of HIV transmission and prevention.

17. State why 35-minutes is an adequate amount of time for an HIV/AIDS intervention - I argue it is insufficient for the content, especially given the cultural issues the authors' raise

Response: The allocation of class time is an administrative issue. Teachers need to accommodate with allocated class time. The trained teachers were skilled in managing to deliver required contents within a speculative time period compare to the teachers who didn’t receive training.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
Define plans for summative evaluation based on this methodology
Response: Yes, the design of this evaluation can be identified a summative evaluation as it was assessed the usefulness of teachers training programme while the program activities are to be fine tuned and modified according to study findings.

Refine hypothesis/research statement - it currently contains too many variables in one sentence. Focus the statement to the specific outcome you hoped to achieve or the specific scientific question you intended to ask.
Response: In particular, this analysis was intended to explore the subjective understanding of teachers about effects of training on curriculum-based HIV/AIDS-education programme on the ability, skills, and confidence of teachers to teach students on HIV/AIDS.

Remove Roman numerals and replace with narrative (ex. VI should be sixth)
Response: We changed accordingly in page 4, 11, 15.

Define an "upazila"
Response: Upazila is a local administrative unit (sub-district), having on an average 200,000 to 300,000 population in each. We defined it in the manuscript text in page 7.

Discussion section pages 18-20 is one long paragraph - add structure here to lead the reader through
Response: We modified the paragraph accordingly in page 19, 20.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
Define the global implications of this study beyond Bangladesh
Response: Globally, there are a few examples that HIV/AIDS information has been provided to the young people through the formal education system. The findings generate new thoughts in implementing HIV/AIDS education programs in a low-epidemic country, like Bangladesh where open discussion on HIV/AIDS issue is perceived as highly sensitive matter in terms of the local sociocultural and religious contexts.

Consider adding more literature to show why middle school is too young to discuss sexual health

Response: Justification provided and relevant references added.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated to review the revised manuscript and you necessary action for publication.

Sincerely yours,

Haribondhu Sarma

Assistant Scientist
Centre for Nutrition and Food Security, icddr,b
Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212
Bangladesh
Telephone: 880-2-8860523-32/2543
Email: hsarma@icddrb.org