Author's response to reviews

Title: Correlates of consistent condom use among recently initiated and traditionally circumcised men in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

Authors:

Anam Nyembezi (anyembezi@hsrc.ac.za)
Robert A.C. Ruiter (r.ruiter@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Bart van den Borne (b.vdborne@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Sibusiso Sifunda (ssifunda@mrc.ac.za)
Itumeleng Funani (funanihealth@gmail.com)
Priscilla S Reddy (preddy@hsrc.ac.za)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Natalie Pafitis

We thank you for the positive evaluation of our manuscript titled “Correlates of consistent condom use among recently initiated and traditionally circumcised men in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa” (MS: 1693712641110663).

You have suggested revisions to the paper. We have now worked on your comments and added the new information requested. Below we provide point-by-point description of changes made. We hope that you agree with us that the quality of the paper has improved and look forward to seeing your decision on possible publication in the BMC Public Health.

With kind regards, also on behalf of the co-authors,

Sincerely,

Kind Regards,

Dr Anam Nyembezi (PhD)
Population Health, Health Systems and Innovation (PHHSI)
Human Sciences Research Council
Private Bag X9182, Cape Town, 8000
Tel: +27 21 - 466 7873
Fax: +27 21 - 461 1255
Email: anyembezi@hsrc.ac.za
Web: www.hsrc.ac.za
MS: 16937126411106631 – response to reviewers

1. Both reviewers asked about the convenience sample - though the word convenient was also used - I believe the term is usually convenience sample - but at any rate the authors need to be very clear on the limitations of this approach and give any indications in the results that their sampling approach did in fact yield a relatively representative sample of respondents - the sheer numbers imply that this is likely, but the authors need to state clearly how representative their sample might be and what biases there might be - for example, one reviewer raised the issue of interviewers coming from the area and thus having their own opinions about TMC - but also did that familiarity also influence whom they selected to interview. What was don’t in training the interviewers to reduce bias. Also having 40 interviewers, while helping get the job done faster, introduces more inter-observer bias. Again these are points to note in the methods please.

While all the nations in the province were sampled, some nations have more populace compared to others. Therefore, we sampled more local chiefs from those nations to ensure that we have relatively representative participants. We have now added this information (see under “Method”, p. 8, l. 6-9 from bottom). Our results confirm that the majority of the participants belonged to the amaXhosa nation, which is the majority nation in the province. We agree with the editor, our sample was biased towards those participants who have undergone initiation and traditional circumcision. “Participants were conveniently sampled and eligible to participate if they were isiXhosa or seSotho speaking, living in the rural areas at any of the five districts, and had to have undergone initiation and TMC in the previous 12 to 24 months” (see under “Method”, p. 8, l. 2-5 from bottom). Our interviewers were trained to recruit based on this bias and we cannot overemphasize this point. The interviewers purposefully selected our study population. However, recruitment of participants was not based on their opinions about TMC. Data was collected from January to May 2010, we have now added this information (see under “Method”, p. 9, l. 4). The first author supervised the 40 CRAs to avoid inter-observer bias, we have now added this information (see under “Method”, p. 9, l. 3-4 from bottom).

2. It is good that the authors considered a theoretical model in their study - theory of planned behavior (aka theory of reasoned action) is quite appropriate for considering the influence of social norms. That said, it is not clear that the authors actually used the TBP elements as key study variables and thus in the development of their instruments. Ideally in a survey one would let understanding of a potentially relevant theory or theories guide survey development - this is not open ended grounded theory research where theories arise from data, but a survey that has initial objectives - so please explain possible in the introduction about how and IF TPB actually guided the study or was only brought in as an afterthought”

We thank the editor for the suggestion. We have now explained in the introduction how TPB guided the study. “Based on the TPB, the aim of this study was to predict the intention to consistent condom use and associated factors among recently initiated and traditionally circumcised men in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province of South
Africa. According to the TPB, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control would predict intention to use condom consistently. In this study, measures of attitudes referred to men’s perceptions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using condoms. Subject norm referred to men’s perceived social pressure (sexual partner, men, family and community member) to use or not use a condom. Perceived behavioural control measures referred to men’s perception of whether or not they are confident to use a condom, and whether or not they have control on condom use. We hypothesized that within the constructs of the TPB, attitudes would be affected by knowledge of condoms and perceived control, that perceived opinions of community, family, men, peers and sexual partner would play an important role in intention to use condoms consistently, and that barriers such as cost would limit access to condoms” (see under “Introduction”, p. 7, l. 9-21).

We would also like to bring to your attention that in the introduction, we have already mentioned that “As conceptual framework for the present study we used the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which has been shown to predict consistent condom use and a wide range of other behaviours” (see under “Introduction”, p. 6, l. 1-3 from bottom).

“Furthermore, to explore the influence of the cultural context in explaining consistent condom use, guided by TPB, we included measures related to the cultural and traditional belief system of initiation and TMC as a part of a rite of passage from boyhood to adulthood in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, that also contributes to the reinforcement of ethnic identity. Traditionally circumcised men are prepared for new roles as adults and are taught about essential family and community responsibilities. Therefore, it was prudent to measure beliefs about TMC, attitudes and subjective norms towards being a responsible man, perceived self-efficacy to uphold traditional values, self-esteem and ethnic identity” (see under “Introduction”, p. 7, l. 1-4 from bottom and p. 8, l. 1-4).