Author's response to reviews

Title: Khat and alcohol use and risky sex behaviour among in-school and out-of-school youth in Ethiopia.

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Chief Editor,

MBC Public Health

Please find a revised manuscript 'Khat and alcohol use and risky sex behaviour among in-school and out-of-school youth in Ethiopia', which was prepared according to the comments of the two reviewers.

We would like to thank both reviewers for their constructive reviews.

We have made the following changes to the ms (tracked on the ms for your reference)

Reviewer 1 (WRB)

1. Re: Title need to reflect more broadly the issue of substance use as implied by the analysis performed

We have now modified the title to include both alcohol and khat use and to focus on risky sex behaviour.

2. Re: The manner of administration of the instrument needs to be explained

We have now included paragraphs detailing the administration of the instrument.

3. Re: Comparing in-school and out-of-school youth on the same age basis would be better

We agree that the age differential between the two groups would make comparison of the two groups problematic. That is why we employed a logistic regression to adjust for age and in/out-of-school status. We feel that this analytic method is more superior than the restriction method for adjustment for confounding because it would use all available study subjects and thus more efficient.

4. Re: Spell out the practical details of the sampling procedure for out-of-school youth

For both in-school and out-school youth the sampling details are now included.

5. Re: Table 4 is not properly presented in the results

Table 4 is now omitted from the paper as it its subject matter does not focus on risky sex behaviour
6. Re: Include association of Khat use with other substances

The primary objective of the paper is to describe the association of Khat and alcohol use with sex behaviour. We agree with the reviewer that we did not pursue the potential interaction between the use of the various substances. This was because of the data limitations to support analysis of interactions.

7. Re: Discussion of mental disorders. .. is not appropriate

We agree with the reviewer. These are now deleted from the text.

8. Re: Alcohol issue receive a fair amount of attention (not only Khat use)

That is an appropriate comment. We have now altered the title to take that into consideration.

Reviewer 2 (CFY)

1. Re: Include more descriptions about the process of data collecting.

These are now included.

2. Re: Describe more about 'segmentation methods'

These are now described in the methods.

3. Re: Inclusion of 'multiple sex partners' in the abstract

This was done by mistake. It is now deleted.

4. Re: Include more explanation for nature of 'other substances'

The other substances that are mentioned in the tables are properly described as footnotes of each of the two tables.

5. Re: More explanation on 'residual confounding'

We initially included this as one potential explanation for the observed association. However, we now feel that it is difficult to substantiate and have thus withdrawn the statement.

6. Re: The possibility of underlying behavioural problems accounting for the associations observed

This issue has also been raised by reviewer 1. We agree with both reviewers that it is unsubstantiated. We have thus withdrawn the statement.

7. Re: Errors in footnotes to tables 2 and 3.

Now corrected.

We hope the revision would be satisfactory to you.

Thank you and best regards,

Sincerely,

Atalay Alem