Author's response to reviews

Title: Psychological and behavioural factors associated with sexual risk behaviour among Slovak students

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

Many thanks for the additional comments regarding our manuscript ‘Psychological and behavioural factors associated with sexual risk behaviour among Slovak students’. We have revised the manuscript based on these comments. Please find attached an appendix in which we summarize all comments and explain the way in which we responded to these comments.

With kind regards,
Also on behalf of the (co)authors,
Sijmen A. Reijneveld

Reviewer: Donald Langille

Major Compulsory Revisions

2  
R: Methods: Risky occasions. It is still not clear in the text that respondents were asked to respond yes/no to any of the three conditions questions. I would add “to any of the three conditions” after “yes/no” in the first paragraph in “measures” on page 7.

A: We have changed this part following the comments of the reviewer.

We have changed this text into:
Regarding SRB, respondents were asked (1) if they had had sex (penetration of vagina by the penis) after a short relationship or under the influence of drugs or alcohol (yes / no to any of the three conditions);…

3.  
R: Methods: randomization. This is better, but I would suggest adding “from a list of” after the word “selected” at the bottom of page 6.

A: We have changed this part following the comments of the reviewer

We have changed this text into:
Students were recruited from list of randomly selected study groups provided by the faculties concerned and their participation was voluntary.

12.  
R: Discussion: references about reasons for non-participants. The sentence beginning with “problems with a willingness…” (page 14) need to be referenced or removed.

A: We have removed the entire sentence.

We have changed this text into:
This study has several strengths and limitations. Due to possible methodological problems, studies of sexual behaviour in CEE countries are rare. We obtained a very high response rate (94%), by using the setting of lectures, so selection bias is very unlikely to occur. We cannot exclude information bias, however, though we did use specific measures to guarantee confidentiality. These measures have been shown to yield valid outcomes.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. R: I remain confused about the relationship of extroversion to multiple partners in males. The way table 4 is set up, it looks like middle and high levels of extroversion are each being compared separately (as categorical variables) to the referent category (low extroversion), and neither comparison, as judged by odds ratios presented, appears significant. Perhaps there is another interpretation of this, but if there is, it is not apparent and it needs to be explicitly stated in the results. My assumption is that the significance of extroversion in females for the two SRBs relates to the seemingly significant ORs for higher extroversion compared with low, though placing the asterisks next to the referent category is an odd way to indicate this.

A: Regarding the last part of this comment, the reviewer is right that the asterisks next to the reference category indicated the statistical significance of adding all categories of the variable concerned to the logistic model; we have clarified this by a footnote to Table 4. The text of this footnote is:

1 ORs in bold indicate that overall a variable contributes to the logistic model at * p. < .05. ** p. < .01 ***p.< .001.

This also explains why the overall contribution of the variable extroversion is statistically significant, whereas the separate categories do not differ with statistical significance from the reference category (i.e. confidence intervals comprise ‘1’ for each of them). We have clarified this in the Discussion section under the subheading of ‘Methodological considerations’ as follows:

Regarding multiple sexual partners among males, the combination of 95%-confidence intervals of both the ‘middle’ and the ‘high’ categories of extroversion comprising ‘1’ (i.e. are not statistically significant different from the reference category) but at the same time extroversion contributing to the model with statistical significance seems odd. It can be explained by the fact that the associations of the middle and the high categories with the outcome differ quite a lot too. The latter has been taken into account regarding the overall p-value, but not regarding the comparison of these separate categories with the same reference category (i.e. ‘low’) and the resulting 95%-confidence intervals. This holds for any logistic regression in which dummy coding is used for separate categories (like we did).

Discretionary Revisions

1. R: My original suggestions were all looked after in the revision. I have a couple of other suggestions: Spell out the words for “ESPAD” on page 5. Put the word “who” between “adolescents” and “believe” on page 6.

A: We have now spelled out the title of ESPAD in full and have put the word “who” between “adolescents” and “believe”.

We have changed this text into:

The increasing prevalence of alcohol, drugs and tobacco use among Slovak adolescents as reported in the ESPAD (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs) reports of 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007,[9-12] and the lack of scientific studies in this field in CEE countries led us to explore the association among this behaviour and sexual risk behaviour.
A study by Reitman [20] which explored the role of self-efficacy and self-esteem found that adolescents who believe they could take "effective precautionary action to avoid HIV" had fewer sexual partners and reported more condom use than peers who had lower self-efficacy scores [20].