Author’s response to reviews

Title: Sexual Practices among Adolescents in Tanzania

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Author’s response to reviews:

RESPONSES TO REVIEWERS

REVIEWER (1): Kåre Moen

Dear Moen,

Thank you very much for your comments and all inputs to make our article more appealing. All comments were valid and you provided us with very constructive suggestions. Before indicating what we did on every point you rose, we would like to humbly apologize that some of the comments you pointed out are valid. We initially overlooked to them because of limited space. In this revised version, we have tried to address them directly or to you form more clarifications. The following are point by point how we addressed your comments and suggestions.

Overarching comments

1. We have mentioned and cited our previous article in the current submission. The main difference is that the previous article was looking at predictors of risky sexual behaviours among adolescents while this work is exploring sexual practices among adolescents.

2. It is true that in the current paper, one group considers UNMARRIED adolescents. These are out-of-school adolescents. The in-school adolescents are automatically unmarried (in Tanzania school system, primary school students are not allowed to marry). So both groups (in- and out-of-school are unmarried.

3. Refer to point 3 above

4. Since all study participants were unmarried, there is no need to mention ‘pre-marital sex. This mix up has been corrected. Thank you

5. Despite the explanation given to item 2 and 3 above, there are some differences between the two papers. Separating the in- and out-of-school is based on experience of peer influence among in-school adolescents especially in the current paper because there is no question of marital status. The 14.8%
having multiple sexual partners is true and in the previous paper, and in the previous paper about 15% of sexually active adolescents reported the same behaviour

Re: Abstract

6. The expression ‘adverse sexual behaviors’ has been corrected to reflect sexual practices that are risky

7. The sexual practices informants were asked about were vaginal, masturbation, oral and anal sex. It has been stated in the text

8. The conclusion has been amended to reflect only the most important findings from this study

9. Item 8 covers this comment

Re: Background

10. The example (a reference number 7) gives what has been documented from Zimbabwe. We agree that this article is not a representative of all African countries, but just an example. We could not access the 2006 study carried out in Tanzania. Certainly, homosexual and bisexual behaviors exist. We aimed to show that homosexual was considered among rare sexual practices (by then 1990s).

11. ‘Homosexual and heterosexual anal intercourse’ term has been used

12. We didn’t think that it was so important to describe how the ELCT (Lutheran Church in Tanzania) operated in this study area. However, this study was conducted in the catchment area of the ELCT as a way to gather baseline information for subsequent evaluation after they (ELCT) have introduced a reproductive health program among adolescents.

13. The expression has been adjusted. The word ‘needs’ has been erased

14. Primary schools in grade 1 up to 4, on average, have pupils less than 10 years. Therefore, it was thought wise to include upper (5, 6 and 7) grades. Also, form 3 and 4 were our targets to obtain upper age of the adolescents. We have not so far established if there was a bias introduced by selecting upper secondary school grades and excluding lower primary school grades.

15. We have stated how confidentiality was assured

Re: Results

16. None of the adolescents declined to participate. Few of the questionnaires were not clean; and this is the reason for having different denominators quite often
17. It is very unfortunate that we do not have data for the skipped form 1 and 2 to validate if there were imbalances in reporting sexual practices. The distribution of age among the current study participants is only tagged by the standard deviation (we don’t think in this descriptive study we need to indicate the measures of skewness and kurtosis).

18. It is true that there may be differences between large grouping, for example, between 10 and 19. Our objectives was not towards indicating differences within the group; otherwise, selection the sample should have stratified based on age.

19. The number of non-responding participants to the questions of having vaginal sex, masturbation and anal sex ranged between 25 and 38 and were ALL girls.

20. We concur with you that among the limitations to this study are that the questionnaire lacks follow-up questions, for example, were anal sex receptive or insertive and whether the partner was of the same sex or the opposite sex.

21. The percentage of adolescents reporting rape have been reviewed.

22. The sentence has been re-written fro clarity.

23. The expression has been changed to make it more meaningful.

24. The denominator behind the reported proportions have been indicated in the text.

25. The denominators refer to only adolescents who reported penetrative sex.

Re: Discussion

26. A small discussion to mention a previous study and comparing some results has been inserted.

27. Suggestion accepted that we talk of dangers of unprotected sex rather than dangers of anal sex.

28. Authors have no authority to implicate or disclose any agenda of the ELCT and Dan Church Aid with results indicated in this paper.

Re: Conclusion

29. The entire conclusion has changed to reflect main findings from this study.

Language: To the best of ability, we have revised the language.

REVIEWER (2): Elizabeth E. Faxelid

Dear Faxelid,

Thank you very much for the good comments and suggestions to improve our
All comments are valid and all suggestions have been included in our second submission. Thank you very much. The following are point by point indicating how we addressed each of your comments and suggestions.

**Background**

1. The second sentence that was too long and needed re-wording has been fixed.
2. We have changed Sub-Saharan to sub-Saharan (African or countries).
3. With Ref 7, we agree with you completely that this is a very specific report from one country, Zimbabwe. However, our aim was to indicate historical (1990s) perspective at least from the available literature that only vaginal sex was deemed the main (common) practice.
4. All suggestions have been taken on board.

**Methods**

1. It is true 133 is not ABOUT. Corrected!
2. We have added adolescents in class 5, 6 and 7. Those in form 3 and 4 have also been added together.
3. ‘Randomization’ has been briefly and clearly explained.
4. Yes, sub-villages were randomly selected. We have briefly indicated so.
5. Yes, we have re-worded invited to asked to participate.
6. The suggestion re-word ‘as well as from’ has been included.
7. We have changed ‘was done’ to ‘was given’.
8. Administration of questionnaire for the in-school adolescents has been explained in the text.
9. We have put together the sentence ‘Out-of-school adolescents were interviewed…’ together with administration of questionnaire.

**Results**

1. Since all study participants were unmarried, it meaningless to talk of pre-marital sex. Your suggestion has been included.
2. We have made a meaningful category of penetrative and non-penetrative sex.
3. The suggestion has been included and the sentence is now clear than before.
4. The denominators have been disclosed.
5. We have included and explained the denominators used in presenting the
percentages

6. The last paragraph in the results section is now clearer after indicating the denominators. Also condom use has been referred to as sexual activity to penetrative sexual acts only

Discussion

1. The bracket in the first sentence has been fixed
2. The reference in the last sentence of the first paragraph has been inserted
3. The full stop has been inserted
4. Anal sex may be more risky for HIV transmission than unprotected vaginal sex, a ref has been inserted
5. The sentence with a previous ref 21 has been elaborated
6. The source of underestimating reports on sexual activity and sexuality, especially sexual abuse has been explained
7. Females reporting older male partners at first sexual debut has a backing from previous literature
8. The sentence is now made clearer
9. The elaboration has been made
10. We have added qualifiers of the sentence

Conclusion

The conclusion has been re-written to reflect important findings from our study

Table 1: ‘Other or no religion’ has been accepted

Table 3 and Figure 1: n has been indicated

Language: To the best of our ability, we have revised the language.