Author's response to reviews

Title: Sexual behaviour, contraceptive knowledge and use among female undergraduates' students of Muhimbili and Dar es Salaam Universities, Tanzania: a cross-sectional study

Authors:

Michael J Mahande MJM (jmmahande@gmail.com)
Magreat J Somba MJS (magreats@yahoo.com)
Milline Mbonile MM (mmbonile@udsm.ac.tz)
Joseph Obure JO (jobure2002us@yahoo.com)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewer's report
Title: Sexual behaviour, Contraceptive Knowledge and Use among Female University Students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: a cross-sectional study

Authors:
MJS: magreats@yahoo.com
MM: mmbonile@udsm.ac.tz
JO:jobure2002us@yahoo.com
MJM: jmmahande@gmail.com
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Author’s response to reviews: see over
The Biomedical Central editorial Team

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for the invitation to resubmit our manuscript # 9089803301162431 entitled “Sexual behaviour, Contraceptive Knowledge and Use among Female University Students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: a cross-sectional study” by Magreat et al. We also appreciate for the reviewer’s comments; these have given us an opportunity to further improve our manuscript. We have addressed all the reviewers’ comments, and adopted suggestions proposed. We hope the paper is now in acceptable format to allow further peer-review in BMC Women Health Journal. Please find our responses indicated in a red colour. All changes in the manuscript are indicated with track changes

**Reviewers comments** (Peter Gichangi)

There are comments on the paper which also needs to be addressed. This has been uploaded.

**Compulsory revisions:**

**Introduction**

(1) Justification for the study which should be part of the introduction

Yes we agree with the reviewer’s suggestion. We have revised the introduction section, and justification for the study has now been incorporated in the introduction section. See page 4

(2) Clear description of how the sample was selected and questionnaire distributed and state whether they had the right power

We agree with the reviewer comments and suggestion. We have now described how sample was selected and procedure for questionnaire distribution as well as power of the study under the method section page 5, 6 and 7.
Below are minor comments which also need to be addressed.

Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

(3) The question as stated is okay. However, it gives the impression that the study will be
generalizable to Tanzanian female students which is not the case.

Yes, we understand the reviewer’s concern. We have now modified the research
question to reflect the focus the female students in the two institutions (Muhimbili and Dar es Salaam universities) which were studied (page 4). These changes have been incorporated
under the introduction and we have also modified title of the manuscript to accommodate
these changes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

Methods:

(4) The study design chosen is appropriate. However, there is no information given on
whether the sample size chosen, they had 80% power and were 95% confident that
they could answer the question they set the answer.

This is important. We are very sorry for not providing this information in the previous version
of our manuscript. The sample size chosen had 76% power because about 10% (28/281)
individuals did not respond to the questionnaire. This makes the response rate of 90%.
Despite the lower power of our study, still we are to some extent 95% confident that the
participants could answer the questions set because the questionnaire was pretested before
being used and was adjusted accordingly (page 6). We have acknowledged this limitation in
the main text of the manuscript under study limitations.

3. Are the data sound?

Results

(5) The data as presented is okay. However, the authors present almost a very unusual
situation where there was 100% response rate for self-administered questionnaires!
Were there any students who declined to participate and if so, were they different from those who participated?

We are very sorry for this confusion. We have now described this part in the method section (page 6). In short, the self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 281 students who agreed to participate in the study. Of these, 253 participants responded to the questionnaire, and 28 (10%) of the students declined. This makes a response rate of 90% (page 9). Unfortunately we were not able to trace individuals who declined to participate, and therefore we did not study their characteristics. We have now also reflected this changes in the result section and discussed its implications for our finding under the discussion section (page 13).

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The manuscript follows the required standard.

No comments

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Discussion

(6) The discussion is okay. It is notable however that the authors seem to interpret differences in their findings vis-a-vis other studies as discrepancies! There are some data discussed which was not presented in the results section.

We understand the reviewers concern. We have tried to interpret the difference finding with other studies and discuss public and policy implications of our results. We have also noted on the data which was not presented in the result section (overlooked) and now has been presented this information under the result section (page 10)

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Study limitations
(7) The limitation discussed should have been addressed when setting up the study. It is not clear why the authors discuss sample size as a limitation since they should have included the right sample from the beginning.

Yes, we agree the reviewers comment with regard to sample size. We planned to have large sample size in to have sufficient power to elucidate the studied factors, unfortunately due to sensitivity of the study topic the individual willingness to participate was low. Since the participation was on voluntary basis, we did not control over the sample size. Probably this requires rigorous approach to influence high participation rate. We have recommended for future studies should use rigorous recruitment approaches to enhance high participation rate (page 14).

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Introduction (study rationale)

(8) The authors do acknowledge the references. It is however not clear why this study was done to begin with since it does not seem to further what other studies had documented before!

We have noted the reviewers concern. We have described the rationale of conducting this study under the introduction section (page 4). Despite that previous studies have explored on the topic, most of these studies have been conducted outside Tanzania. Therefore, there is scant information about the topic in Tanzania. This topic is important in the study settings since most of the female universities are at their sexual active age which requires knowledge on sexual reproductive health including contraceptive usage to avoid unplanned pregnancy and protect them from sexual transmitted infections including HIV. This study has highlighted the need to conduct large study. However, it is important to understand that different
interventions can work in different cultural settings. Therefore, it is difficult to rely on the finding from other countries to design sexual reproductive interventions in our settings.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Abstract

(9) The abstract covers the content of the paper. However, the title as noted above is not appropriate and should be revised to state the only universities covered.

We agree with reviewer suggestion and we have revised the title to include only the participating universities. The current title read “Sexual behaviour, contraceptive knowledge and use among female undergraduates’ students of Muhimbili and Dar es Salaam Universities, Tanzania: a cross-sectional study”

9. Is the writing acceptable?

(10) There are very many grammatical errors which the authors need to engage a native English speaker to help them improve on grammar.

Yes, we have noted some grammatical and typographical errors in the manuscript. The manuscript now has been revised to accommodate this error as we have noted that, the reviewer pointed out a number of grammatical errors in the discussion section. These have been taken care off.

Additional Comments Found in the Main Text

Abstract

Conclusion

Majority of the respondent were sexually active, with the majority started sexual activity at young age.

Comment:

(11) This information is not in the abstract.

We have added this information in the abstract section under the results
**Introduction**

This underscores the need to understand the sexual risk behaviour, knowledge and pattern of contraceptives use among this high risk group in order to promote proper use of contraception.

Comment:

(12) This section probably should come before the reason for the study.

_We have changed this sentence according to reviewer’s advice._

A study conducted among nursing female students at Calabar University in Nigeria revealed that 55% of students who were sexually active had knowledge of family planning especially condom use (37%) [6]. In a similar study, more than half (51%) of the students who had unwanted pregnancy ended to abortion [6].

Comment:

(13) Are these two different studies?

_We are very sorry for this confusion. We have now addressed this problem by inserting the appropriate reference._

**Methods: study design and setting**

Two universities, one medical University (Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Science) and University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)) which is a non-medical were conveniently selected. From each participating institution we only recruited women undergraduate students (married and unmarried).

Comment:

(14) How does a convenient sample be representative of Tanzania female students. Second, how were the students identified?
We understand the reviewers concern. We have acknowledged under the limitation of the study due the limited study settings (i.e. two universities). We have also indicated in the method section (page 5), how the students were identified and selected.

Methods: Data collection

The questionnaires were distributed to the students and filled out in private.

Comment:

(15) What was the turnaround time? Is it possible that the respondents may have consulted some materials regarding the questions being asked? How were the questionnaires distributed? Please describe this in detail.

We have described the details on this section in page 7. Each participant filled out the questionnaire in private within 15 minutes. Then all questionnaires were collected by the investigator.

Discussion

In the present study, the main reason for using contraception was to avoid pregnancy before graduation (49.2%) while only 17.2% used contraceptive because they feared contracting HIV/AIDS.

Comment:

(16) Not presented in the results section

We are very sorry for overlooking this information. These information have now been included in the results section page 10. we found that fear of pregnancy (49.2%) and fear of contracting HIV/AIDS (17.2%) were the main reasons mentioned to influence the utilization of contraception.

Results

Comment

Only univariate analysis results are presented. Did the authors wish to do logistic regression analysis.
Due to small sample in some groups, it was difficult to perform logistic regression analysis which we believe it could have given the strength of associations for the observed relationships.