Author's response to reviews

Title: The use of mobile phones as a data collection tool: A report from a household survey in South Africa

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

Here are our responses to the comments from the reviewers:

**Reviewer 1**
*The authors have appropriately addressed most of the reviewers concerns.*

We are grateful for the positive comments from the reviewers on our paper and its conclusions and implications.

*On page 4 - Background: Reference 10 is focused on developing countries, please correct.*

We have removed this reference

*On page 4 - First paragraph. Authors refer to the "Millennium Villages Project." Please add a reference.*

We have added a reference


We have replaced Reference 21 with the one mentioned by the reviewer.

*Figure 3: Not sure if the person that appears in the database (column "agent") is real. If so, you need to protect her name.*

All names are pseudonyms.

*On page 12, second paragraph: It says: "the a mobile phone" It should say: "a mobile phone"*

We have corrected this

**Reviewer 2:**
*I recommend the publication of this manuscript. The manuscript is well-written and the topic is relevant to the readers of BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making. The intent and implementation of the study are straightforward and the findings are interpreted appropriately. The study provides modest evidence that mobile phones might be used for consumer health informatics/public health-related survey research and data collection. The setting is imaginative and important as a diffusion model for other low and middle income nations -- and perhaps elsewhere. The authors have made significant revisions to the manuscript’s literature review, explanation of methods, interpretation of findings, and conclusion sections.*

Thank you for these positive comments
I think the manuscript would be more useful if the authors provided some brief suggestions for future research. I believe a pioneering study presents an opportunity to provide suggestions about how to advance the literature in the field as well as evaluate the relative advantages of a technology’s implementation. As a result, I hoped the authors might address how future researchers might conceptually frame and implement more comprehensive, comparative research to assess how mobile phones are a viable (or superior) method of data collection for consumer health informatics/public health survey research within middle, or low income nations. Also, I wish the authors better addressed how the use of mobile phones for data collection may contribute to the complex reliability and validity issues inherent in field, survey research data collection within a developing nation. While the current version of the paper introduces this topic (especially in terms of double data entry, data fabrication, and employee monitoring), I hoped to read more about how the use of mobile phones might or might not address other well-established data validity and reliability issues that include: household access, selecting a population sample that is highly similar to overall population characteristics, random sampling of domiciles (dwellings, or a unit of analysis), clustered sampling to reflect population statistics, ensuring the respondent is an adult and only one person is a respondent, question design and bias, readability, and providing reliability and validity checks within an instrument.

In response to this we have added two new paragraphs – the one is the last paragraph of the discussion section and the second one can be found at the end of the conclusion section of the paper.

I should note that the copy of the manuscript I received did not contain the four figures or inserts that the authors intended to provide within the narrative. Hence, I cannot critique the accuracy or pertinence of these inserts.

We are not sure how this could have happened as they were submitted. We assume that the other reviewer was able to access the figures. We are attaching them and they are significantly clearer.