Author's response to reviews

Title: Association of Khat and alcohol use with HIV infection and age at first sexual initiation among youths visiting HIV testing and counseling centers in Gamo-Gofa Zone, South west Ethiopia

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Author’s response for reviewers report:

Author’s response for Getnet Kassie

Reviewer's report:

Comments:

1. General: the author(s) have tried to show gaps in knowledge about the problem. They have presented many interesting findings; however, a thorough editorial revision is needed to correct spelling and grammatical errors.

   Minor essential revisions:

2. Abstract: follow the requirements of BMC Public Health including word counts. It seems it needs shortening.

   • The abstract is now corrected as required and it is shortened now.

3. Background: editorial revisions including correcting inappropriate citations. For example, khat is widely used among the youth of Ethiopia as shown by … it is better that the references 6 and 7 are indicated here. Reference 5 is appropriate for the pharmacological effects and should be separately indicated.

   • These requirements are corrected now in the background section and additional references are now included.

4. Paragraphs one and two refer to two references and this maybe too much.

   • Now additional references are added for these paragraphs.

Major Compulsory revisions:

The methods require revision in the following areas:

5. The paper lacks operational definitions of important variables such as comprehensive knowledge, Khat use and alcohol consumption. In some of these variables the frequency of use would be relevant e.g. Alcohol, Khat

   • These required operational definitions are now given in the methods section entitled with operational definitions and these operational definitions are adopted from EDHS 2011.
Frequency of alcohol and khat use were considered but they were non-significant and this was the reason for exclusion of these variables in the manuscript but now it is indicated in the result section as they are non-significant variables under these two titles “Predictors of early sexual initiation among youths in Gamo-Gofa, South West Ethiopia” and “Determinants of HIV infection among youths in Gamo-Gofa, South West Ethiopia”

6. The sample size assumptions are given under data processing and analysis. It is better if this is presented separately.
   - Sample size assumptions are now presented separately as required in the methods section

Results:
7. It is not clear why mean age was calculated instead of median age (table 2).
   - Now the mean age is replaced with median age as required since it is a survival analysis

Discussion:
8. Could there be a role of law enforcement by the Ethiopian Government? It may be worth mentioning this.
   - Yes there could be a role of law enforcement by the Ethiopian Government and it is presented in the recommendation section as follows: “There should be law enforcement from the government of Ethiopia to discourage the flourishing advertisement of alcoholic drinks in the mass media since alcohol consumption is not legally prohibited in Ethiopia and there are no age limits on alcohol drinking”

9. Reference writing is not consistent in some (ref.# 17)
   - All references are checked and corrected including ref.# 17.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests
Author’s response for Bavon Mupenda

Reviewer's report:

1 Major Compulsory Revisions
The authors should say in their title that this study is related to youth visiting HIV Testing and Counseling Centers

• The title is now corrected as required to be “Association of Khat and alcohol use with HIV infection and age at first sexual initiation among youths visiting HIV testing and counseling centers in Gamo-Gofa Zone, South west Ethiopia”

The authors need to update data about psychoactive drugs that are believed to alter one's mood, etc.

• The effect of psychoactive drugs like khat and alcohol is now updated and it is indicated in the background section as “Effects of khat on the chewer include increased levels of energy, increased self-esteem, euphoria, increased libido, excitement, and increased proclivity for social interaction [3, 4, and 5]. The use of alcohol among adolescents can also be harmful, leading to decreased academic performance, increased risk of contracting HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, or other psychiatric disorders such as lethargy, hopelessness, and insomnia [6]“.

Assuming the prevalence of substance abuse among HIV sero-positive people to be 41% need to be justified

• This assumption is now corrected and justified in the methods section as “A sample of 105 cases and 305 controls were calculated using the methods of “difference between population proportions” with 80% power, 95% confidence level, and a ratio of cases to controls r being 1:3, by taking the prevalence of khat use among controls is 41% from previous studies [3]”.

Table 2 on Sexual and non sexual behaviors of youth needs to be divided in Cases and controls like other tables

• This correction is now done as required and presented in the result section

2 Minor Essential Revisions
Presenting portions of cases and portions of controls confuse the reader.
Example: Results, paragraph 1, line 2: 18.8% of cases would mean 18.8% of 105, which are the cases. This is throughout the results section.

- This confusing proportion of cases and controls is now removed and the total proportion is now used throughout the result section and it is indicated there.

Arguments to support data in discussion section sometimes go beyond data decrease in early marriage, effect of alcohol are not based on evidence.

- Arguments to support data on early marriage and effect of alcohol is now made to be evidence based and these evidences are indicated in the discussion section.

Casual sex with the married is just an assumption without evidence.

- This assumption without evidence is now removed

Saying that results are in line with others and giving reference doesn’t say how similar this is or not. (page 11, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3

- This is now corrected not only by giving references but also by how much the magnitude is similar and it is indicated in the discussion section throughout all paragraphs.

The language is a bit poor. The writing also is a bit poor.

Examples:

In the abstract, there are things to be corrected: How can one combine HIV/AIDS and substance abuse? (See Background, line 2).

- This is now corrected as follows” HIV/AIDS is the major problem and an obstacle to both the health and development of people in Ethiopia today. It is also indicated that the use of substances have dramatically increased despite the serious concern about HIV infection”

In Results, line 1, the authors say: A total of 405… were actively participated… This needs to be changed.

- This is now already changed and made to be as follows: “HIV infection was positively associated with being in the age of 20 – 24 years [OR & (95%CI) = 2.892 (1.266, 6.607)], being female [OR & (95%CI) = 2.013 (1.061, 3.822)] …”

References are not consistently written: some references have no space between elements. The type of referencing (I believe APA) is not the same all over the document. Titles not underlined
or italicized, capitalization not well respected, etc, Authors need to let the text proofread by natives of English or other language professionals

- All these requirements are now corrected and still if there is any error in the references, please indicate the reference number having error.

The text has no pages.

- The text is now given page number

3 Discretionary Revisions

The background would be better ended by the research question.

- The background is now made to be ended with the research question as “Therefore, the main aim of this study was to determine the association of khat and alcohol use with HIV infection and early sexual initiation among youths in south west Ethiopia”

Results should be well written: correct use of parentheses (in the text, opening parenthesis needs a space before)

- All these changes are now corrected

Saying “The most frequent occupation was student” is a bit blur. How frequent was student?

- This is now corrected as “Most of the study participants were student 197(48.6%) . . . ”

There is too much use of past tense when not appropriate.

- Using too much past tense is now avoided

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Thank you very much!!