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

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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:

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Editorial Revisions: E.g. first paragraph under background: words such as deferent and reliving should be checked in relation to the intent (first sentence); Page 3, last paragraph under sample size…r…should be taken off. Under results section, paragraph 2, first sentence… (Grammar).
   - The words “deferent” and “reliving” are corrected as “different” and “relieving”
   - The letter r is now taken off
   - Result section paragraph 2, first sentence is corrected as “Most of the respondents 197 (48.6%) were student by occupation followed by government employed 73(18%)”.

2. Reference writing: Requires correction in regards to maintaining consistency and in accordance to the Journal’s recommendation. For example references 2 and 3 are not written accordingly and not consistent with other references with Ethiopian names as authors. Use the same standard for all
   - The references are now corrected using the journal style and all these queries are corrected

Discretionary revisions
3. It is good if the authors include the objective of the study in the abstract
   - Now the objective is included in the abstract as “Objective: The 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”

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
   - All required corrections are now done

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' below

Author’s response for Bavon Mupenda

Reviewer's report:

Comment:
The authors have shown good understanding of comments by reviewers. They have substantially improved their text. However, I have final comments before giving them a nice go ahead. My comments are as follows

1. Major compulsory:
Make the abstract attract readers by a look at a glance. This means for me:
Methods: Please start with a Capital letter the word 'Unmatched? 
- All these changes are accepted and corrected

Line 3: Copy paste error. = The author said 'Stratified sampling technique was used to select the study units in each health institution, but no institution has been mentioned before. Please fix
- This is now corrected as “Unmatched case control study was conducted in South West Ethiopia using a sample of 105 cases and 305 controls. Multivariate logistic regression was used to assess the degree of association between dependent and independent variables” to make the abstract short and one page

Results. Please use spacing between words appropriately. For example 95% CI intead of 95%CI.
Page 2,
- This is now corrected as required

Conclusion, Line 1: The author said ?The prevalence of alcohol and khat use was higher among HIV sero-positive Youths?. My question is : higher than what?
- This is corrected as “Strategies should be designed to control the use of alcohol and khat which were found to be predictors of HIV infection and early sexual initiation in this study” to make the abstract short and one page
Most importantly, it would be better to have the abstract on one page and start the Main body of the article on a new page. Please cut again a bit more. That is how it works. But keep the text “talk appropriately.

- This is now done as required and now the abstract is short and made to be one page

2. Minor essential revisions

Page 2 on Background

Line 2: Use the verb to relieve instead of to relive

- This is accepted and corrected as required

Page 3 on sampling procedure

Line 7: It is not appropriate to say “those people with HIV seroposives”. Either these people are seropositive or they are with HIV positive serostatus. Use the same for negative serostatus.

Last paragraph on sample size determination, Line 1. A sample ?. Was calculated and not were?

You didn’t calculate people but sample size.

Line 3 of this paragraph has a blur sentence: “by taking the prevalence of khat use among controls is 41% from previous studies”. Please make this sentence have a sense.

- This is now corrected as “A sample size of 105 cases and 305 controls were determined using the methods of “difference between population proportions” with 80% power, 95% confidence level, a ratio of cases to controls being 1:3 and by assuming the proportion of khat use among controls is 41% which is taken from a previous study conducted in other parts of Ethiopia [3]”

Page 4

Posttest counseling! I would better have used “post test counseling”.

- This is accepted and corrected.

On operational definitions

Line 3: The authors need to apply the use of parentheses appropriately. Please look at the whole document and consider the following: There is a space between a word and the opening parenthesis but no space between the opening parenthesis and the words in brackets. There is no space between the last word of the brackets and the closing parenthesis; but just after the closing parenthesis, there is a space before a following word. Example: There were 96 people (15%) who used khat in Addis Abeba yesterday (two of them were admitted in hospital).
Line 9 of this paragraph, please use appropriate conjugation: ?Have you ever chewed? and not ?have you ever chew?

- This is now corrected as required

Page 5 on Ethical consideration
Line 2: Say each facility and not each facilities

- This is accepted and corrected

Please write consistently the word serostatus: sero status, sero-status. Choose one and use it all over the text.

- The word sero-status is chosen and used throughout the text

Page 5 on results
Paragraph 1, Line 3: Please write ?Two hundred respondents (68.1%). Remember the rule about parentheses. Please write figures in the body of the text.

- This is accepted and corrected

Page 7: Not every reader knows what birr is, please say that it is your currency and also express it in its equivalence in one of the most known currencies; say dollars or euros?

- This is now corrected by expressing in Ethiopian currency and dollar

Page 8: Please make table 3 and table 4 fit the page into the same margins. You may squeeze texts titles of the column.

- This is done as required

Page 9. Did you say that you found determinants of HIV infection?? I suspect association does not easily lead to determinants. I may be mistaken?

- Now the word association is used instead of determinant and it is corrected

Page 10 on discussion
Please rearrange the sentence in the fifth line. ?Another possible explanation could be AIDS-related campaigns to delay first sexual intercourse may have had an inhibiting effect.? Try the following sentence ?: Another possible explanation could be that AIDS-related campaigns to delay first sexual intercourse may have had an inhibiting effect.?

I would avoid giving recommendations in discussion section.

- The correction is accepted and corrected and recommendation in the discussion is avoided now
Page 10, Paragraph 2, Line 4-5 the authors said: “This is true even despite the concern about HIV infection because alcohol decreases self control and sexual negotiation skill of adolescents?.

If this is true, please show evidence or references on existing studies.

• Now the explanation without evidence is removed

Paragraph 3: You said that “Youths who are khat users were also found to be seven times more likely to initiate sexual intercourse earlier than their counterparts. This finding is also supported by studies from Dessie town and Butajira where khat chewers were three times and two times at higher risk to initiate sexual intercourse earlier than non chewers in Dessie and Butajira respectively? I believe that 7 times vs. Three and two times should be a somewhat notable difference. Please say something about it.

• This is now corrected as “Youths who are khat users were also found to be seven times more likely to initiate sexual intercourse earlier than their counterparts. The association of khat use with sexual initiation in this study is stronger than the result obtained from other studies in Dessie town and Butajira where khat chewers were three times and two times at higher risk to initiate sexual intercourse earlier than non chewers in Dessie and Butajira respectively [10, 11]. This difference might be due to the fact that our study is conducted in urban areas and the studies conducted in Dessie and Butajira are in rural areas indicating the difference of age at sexual initiation and khat utilization in rural and urban setting....”

Please revisit the references as follows

• Accepted and corrected

Ref 2: Deressa and Azahz should have First names. Unless they are like Plato or Aristotle

• Now corrected as required

Ref 4 and others. Please choose one style and keep consistent = Initial letter and Surname of First name and surname or inverting name position...

• Now all references are corrected using the journal style

Ref 9: BMC is italicized where is other journals are not in the text
• Corrected by avoiding the italic

How come that some volumes of journals are bold and others are not?

• Now Bolding is avoided

Ref 11: Is this a one page article? if not, please mention pages appropriately.

• Now Pages are mentioned appropriately.

Ref 12: Please write A Cross-sectional and not Across ectional.

• Accepted and corrected

Ref 17: Please capitalize appropriately

• Done as required

Ref 19: Please say when the online document were retrieved.

• Done as required

**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

• All required changes are corrected

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

Thank you very much!!