Reviewer's report

Title: Sexual behaviours and determinant factors among students at Bahir Dar University. A cross sectional study

Version: 2  
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Reviewer: Virginia Fonner

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Summary: This paper reveals interesting data about sexual behaviour among university students in Ethiopia. The paper would be strengthened by justifying what new information it adds to the literature in the introduction section, elaborating on the methods used, substantiating claims made in the discussion section, and thoroughly checking the paper for grammatical and typographical errors.

1. Is the question posed original, important and well defined?
   The research question is well defined; however, the importance and originality of the manuscript’s purpose is debatable. For example, in the introduction authors claim that although numerous studies exist on sexual risk behaviour among youth in Western countries, “detail analysis has been rare in Ethiopia especially among university students.” A quick search of PubMed with the search terms “sexual behaviour in Ethiopia” yields 184 hits, many of which look at sexual behaviour among university students in Ethiopia. Therefore, it would be helpful to describe previous studies on sexual risk behaviour that have taken place among youth, especially university students, in Ethiopia in the introduction and explain what new information this study adds to the literature. This is a major compulsory revision.

2. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   Please see below. More elaboration is needed in the methods section before a conclusion about the soundness of the data can be drawn.

3. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?
   The methods are appropriate, but more detail is needed. For example, what variables in the bivariate analyses were retained for the multivariate analysis? For example, were only variables significant at p<0.1 retained for further analysis? What method was used to input variables into the multivariate analyses? What was controlled for in the multivariate analysis? Also, were any interactions examined? What about collinearity? The methods section also mentions that “descriptive statistics to describe the magnitude of sexual behaviour,” but does not provide further elaboration. Further details are needed. This is not clear in the tables. This is a major compulsory revision.

   Additionally some key variables and response choices are not well defined. For
example, the main outcome is “ever had sexual practice.” What does this mean? How was this explained to participants? Does this mean penile-vaginal penetration only, or does it also include anal and oral sex too? The authors also mention that “true sexual desire” was a reason why males reported having multiple sex partners. What does this mean? How was it explained to participants? The authors report that “failed to love” was a reason females reported not using condoms. What does this mean? The authors also mention having sex with “much older individuals.” How much older were these individuals? This is a major compulsory revision.

4. Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?

The discussion section contains many unsubstantiated claims. Below are a few examples (unsubstantiated claims in italics):

a. “Engaging in risk behaviours such as Khat chewing, drinking alcohol, going to night club and watching porno videos were independently associated with an elevated likely hood of ever had sexual experience (P<0.05). This might be because of loss of track in mind induced by sexual desire and used substances.”

b. “According to this study, compared to female students, male students were more likely to have had multiple sexual partners. The reason could be substance use such as khat and alcohol were more common in males. It also might be because of cultural support, having more than one sexual partner is considered more acceptable for male students than for females.”

c. “Watching porn video was also significantly associated with gender (P=0.00) and level of education (P=0.006) difference. Significant association was also found between ethnic difference and watching porn video (Table 5). This might be associated with existence of sub cultural difference.”

d. “Male respondents 2.2 times to attend night club than females. This might be associated with males feel more freedom and comfort to attend night club than the counters because of cultural influence.”

Additionally, the conclusions of the paper are unsupported by the paper’s results. Based on their findings, the authors suggest that the university should try to keep students in their dorm rooms at night and should not let students watch porn. The connection between these policies and reducing HIV/STI-related risk is unclear, and no supporting evidence is given that such policies would reduce risk.

Finally, the paper makes a few troubling claims. The first occurs in the introduction section when authors seem to say that (all?) sexual behaviour in youth affects adulthood negatively (direct quote; “Sexual behaviour among the adolescent and the youth is the core of sexuality matters because it affects adult life negatively.”). The second occurs when the authors equate watching porn as a risky sexual practice in the discussion section. I think many would have issues equating an activity that technically has no HIV/STI-related or pregnancy risk as a risky sexual behaviour. These are all major compulsory revisions.

5. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
6. Is the writing acceptable?

The writing could use some improvement. An overall thorough read for grammatical and typographical errors would be beneficial. Below are a few examples of sentences in need of revisions:

a. From Methods section: “Authors guided data collection process was done.”

b. From Discussion: “It was also supported by study done in Ghanaian adolescents.”

c. From Discussion: “…Bahir Dar University has been started regulation mechanism that might limits the students from attending night club.”

Additionally, the discussion section reads like a continuation of the results section at times. It would be helpful to report all results in the results section and leave the discussion section solely for highlighting and interpreting findings. This is a discretionary revision.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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