Author's response to reviews

Title: A review of studies of parent-child communication about sexuality and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

Authors:

Sheri Bastien (s.l.bastien@medisin.uio.no)
Lusajo J Kajula (sajokm@gmail.com)
Wilson W Muhwezi (wmuhwezi@chs.mak.ac.ug)

Version: 3 Date: 20 August 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
August 20th, 2011

Dear Editors,

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the reviewers of our manuscript for their thorough review and constructive feedback, which we have used to strengthen our review. Based on their comments, we have extensively revised the manuscript. Below we have aimed to systematically address each of the points raised by the reviewers. To facilitate the review process we have uploaded both a clean version and one with mark-up using track changes to show what amendments have been made to the manuscript. We welcome any further comments and look forward to receiving feedback on our revised draft.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or comments about the manuscript.

Kind regards,

Sheri Bastien
Reviewer 1

Major revisions

1. We have refined our research questions so that the purpose of the review is more clearly stated. This has been useful to help focus and structure our paper. See pages 3/4. In addition, we have extended the literature review to incorporate the reviewer’s comments. Please see pages 2-4.

2. We agree with the reviewer that the categorization of studies as communication outcome studies is misleading. We have reworded the category to ‘Behavioral outcomes associated with parent-child sexuality communication’ which we believe is a more accurate reflection of the content of this section and also modified the sub-category heading and conclusion where sexual health outcomes are mentioned. In addition, we have ensured that the discussion is structured to reflect our research questions in sequence. We have also taken the suggestion to add in 2 sentences related to the question of whether sexuality education and communication increases youth sexual activity in the literature review. Finally, we agree that it is an important finding that given the appropriate supports, parents will talk to their children and this has been lifted up as one of our conclusions from the review.

3. We have moved the statement about studies fitting into both category to the methods section, as suggested by the reviewer.

4. Based on the reviewer comments, we have improved the organization of the review according to the revised research questions. We have quantified statements as requested giving counts (ie. 19 of 23 studies…) and this is also reflected in the sub-categories. We have expanded our definition of process studies to include triggers for discussion and created a new sub-category for it, as we believe this is an important part of the process that has been largely neglected by studies. We have also provided additional information related to the number of studies reporting data in each subcategory. Where applicable, we have described variations in measurement (this was already noted for frequency measurements). We have also revisited each study to ensure that the most important findings have been reported in greatest detail.

Minor revisions

1. Abstract-We have added in the word ‘process’ to indicate that findings were related to this category of studies. The others are appropriately specified.

2. Intro page 3-we have shifted this paragraph and added key references to indicate that these studies have taken place in settings other than Africa (ie United States, Europe, etc). We then discuss studies in Africa and hope that this makes the introduction and literature review more clear.

3. Results-page 5-we have quantified and cited the studies we refer to as requested.

4. Results-page 11-we have revised the wording to reflect that the same population of students was used, not the same dataset as indicated.

5. Results-page 13-we have added references to indicate that these are study findings. We have also added the age range of the young people included in the studies as requested.
6. Results-page 15—we have removed the sentence regarding communication as being the domain of the extended family to reflect the subsequent discussion that there are several reasons why it is not normative for parents to discuss sexuality with their children.

7. Results-page 23. We agree with the reviewer that this study does not fit well with the rest of the studies in the review, particularly in light of the revision of the research question. This study has been removed.

**Discretionary revisions**

1. Table 1—we have included the citation number following each author/date tag in column 1 as requested.

2. Abstract—we have revised the abstract to reflect the fact that as the reviewer points out, the literature is growing and may not be considered as limited.

3. Introduction-page 2—we have revised the sentence as suggested.

4. Results-page 5—the different methods of assessment are already described in the second last paragraph of this sub-category.

5. Results-page 6. We have revised to show that first we discuss studies which focused on communication about HIV/AIDS only and then broaden the discussion to look at studies which examined frequency of other topics related to sexuality.

6. Results-pages 6 &7—we have chosen to structure the results according to topic (first HIV/AIDS then other topics related to sexuality such as condoms, abstinence, etc) and have made this clearer at the start of this sub-category.

7. Results-page 10—we have revised the sentence to reflect the nature of the association.

8. Results-page 15—we have restructured the section to group the findings into parental reports, followed by reports by young people as suggested.

9. Results-page 18—we have specified the name of the intervention and it was already indicated that it has been adapted from a US-based program.

10. Conclusion—we agree with the reviewer that it is an important finding that parents can and will communicate if given adequate support and have added a sentence to reflect this, see page 27.

**Reviewer 2**

**Major compulsory revisions**

1. We specified in the Methods section that we grouped and summarized findings according to the various outcomes of interest. As this review is not a meta-analysis, no statistical procedures were used, rather they were grouped and summarized according to the study objectives. The final table is presented as a summary of this process.

**Minor revisions**
1. We have added in the proportions as requested.

Discretionary revisions

1. We have reviewed the manuscript to identify particularly long sentences and have followed the reviewer’s suggestion to break them down where possible (for instance, the example that was given)  

2. We have not restructured the abstract as per the reviewer’s suggestion given the journal specifications that the abstract be unstructured.