Author’s response to reviews

Title: "It is my mother who makes the decision on what the baby should eat". A prospective cohort study to explore autonomy and infant feeding decision-making among teenage mothers in a rural and urban setting in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

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To the editors: BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth

Thank you very much for the helpful reviewers comments and the opportunity to respond to these. We have responded to each comment from reviewer 2 below and made all the suggested changes, these changes are highlighted in the text. Reviewer two made minor editing changes in the text, all of which we have accepted, these are also highlighted. In addition to the specific points mentioned below, we have updated some of the references and made small corrections to the cohort profile. If there are any further queries do not hesitate to come back to us.

Reviewer 1

1. Abstract L 35 the explanation of the cohort is confusing, as there is obviously a larger study and then the one involving only teenagers. Revise wording to reflect this. i.e "purposively selected to include teenagers, HIV positive, and working pregnant women" is confusing where this is a larger cohort, from which the study sample is drawn.

We recruited a cohort of 31 mothers, and different groups of interest (HIV positive women, teenagers, working women) were purposively selected for inclusion. In this paper we report
findings from the ten teenagers who were included in the larger cohort. We have changed the wording in the methods section of the abstract to make this clearer (L34-36). The change is highlighted in the text.

2. Abstract L 42 "...mothers were not involved" revise to "mothers did not appear from our study to be much involved" or similarly tone down the wording. you don't know that the mothers weren't at all involved.

We have revised the wording in line with this suggestion. The change to the abstract results section is highlighted in the text (L42).

3. Abstract L 49 "mothers have" should be "mothers had"

We have revised the text in line with this suggestion and highlighted the change to the abstract conclusion (L50).

4. Background- define teenage pregnancy at the start (age band considered teenage pregnancy)

A definition of teenage pregnancy has been added to the introduction and highlighted (L80)

5. Methods: this section needs the most work and must be improved to be ready for publication

L 123-124 Revise this wording significantly as it is very confusing: "area had slightly low rate of teenage pregnancy" does this mean lower than the 14% mentioned earlier?

The description of the study site has been revised and more current information about teenage pregnancy rates in the districts where the study was conducted has been added to the text (L124-131). Overall we have revised and strengthened the entire results section to address this comment.

6. L 129 this needs a lot more detail on sampling and purposive design. explain what you mean by purposive, to select what characteristics?? what is the theoretical basis for sampling, saturation??

We selected our participants purposively, based on their ability to provide relevant information to answer the study question and enhance understanding of infant feeding decision making. We
purposively selected working women, teenagers and HIV infected women, because these groups are known to have distinct feeding practices. A note in this regard and relevant references have been added in the text and highlighted (L131-135). Due to the longitudinal nature of the study we were not able to sample to saturation, we therefore used a pragmatic approach to estimate the number of participants required to answer the research questions.

7. It is not immediately understandable why you chose framework analysis rather than a more typical qualitative paradigm and it seems reductionist. can you give more detail or other examples of similar work that used framework analysis to bolster this position?

Framework analysis is particularly useful for applied research, as in this study, which aimed to answer clear pre-defined questions in a relatively short time frame, with a team of researchers from different disciplines working together. We also chose this method to provide coherence and structure, and to facilitate systematic analysis within this large dataset (172 interviews in total). In addition, given the longitudinal nature of the data, this method allows between- and within-case comparisons, and makes it easier for researchers to share the data. Although we used a priori themes from the interview guide during analysis, we also allowed for inductive themes to emerge from the data, so this method provides a systematic way to reduce the data while still retaining the thick description and complexity of data [1, 2]. This approach has been used widely and successfully used by other researchers [3-5]


8. L 162 comparative analysis comparing what to what? was coding done? were themes sought? this all needs much more detail or else will not stand on its own

Analysis was done using coding of themes based on a priori themes (from the interview guide) but also included themes that emerged from the data. The data was coded by two researchers, themes were compared and to ensure consistency of coding and avoid discrepancies, differences were discussed until consensus was reached. Analysis was continued until no further themes emerged from the data. An additional comment has been added to the text in the analysis section to further explain the methods (L177-180).

9. L 163 saturation is usually used in reference to sampling, so not clear how you are using this in analysis. what do you mean by saturation in analysis. is that when you decided it was a theme? Themes are mentioned in Results but not in Methods, which is a problem.

We continued coding until no further themes emerged from the data. This was a very large dataset (172 interviews), with many themes that frequently recurred across many of the participants and at different time points. The analysis was conducted over several months, and at some point as transcripts were reviewed, the analysis focussed on new themes that emerged, rather than coding for those themes that had already been extensively coded. We have added more detail about development of themes to the methods section (L181-183).

10. Discussion: L 369 and subsequent: do not write "Devito' study" but rather "Devito and colleagues found..." or similar phrasing.

We have revised the text in line with the suggestion and highlighted (L392)

11. L 371 remove 90% as it is meaningless in such a small number. explain rural and urban are what you mean by both settings

We have revised the text in line with this suggestion and this is highlighted (L394-395)

12. L 379 see comment for L 369

We have revised the text in line with the suggestion and highlighted (L403)
13. L 388 refers to plural studies and authors but only one is cited. either add authors or revise text

An additional reference has been added in response to this comment (L412)

14. L 417 mention of Alive and Thrive seems quite random. better to cite various nutrition programs

The text has been revised in response to this comment.