Author's response to reviews

Title: The relationship between mentoring on healthy behaviors and well-being among Israeli youth in boarding schools: A mixed-methods study

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editor:

Thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to improve our manuscript. We have provided responses and the corrections as follows. Enclosed are two versions, one with yellow-highlighted changes and the other without.

Editor Comments

1. **Remove the ages from the included quotations.** We have made these revisions.

Reviewer: Roger Thomas.

1. **Missed Important Reference** – Fernandez-Hermida et al., 2012
   We had noted the limitations of generalizability in a sample with a two-thirds response rate. This statement is now supported by the aforementioned reference. See page 25 lines 4-5.

2. **No definition of mentoring** – Thomas et al., 2013
   We have added this systematic review to further and more specifically define mentoring. See page 6, lines 3-5.

3. **No definition of violence including other variables found in the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey.** The Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey is sponsored by the World Health Organization and is administered in 43 countries including Israel (we have added that citation) on page 11 lines 2-3. The questions we used were specific to bullying (as a victim or perpetrator). The manuscript has been amended to reflect that definition of violence. The first mention of bullying (as a victim or perpetrator) was on page 13, line 10.

4. **Sampling concerns-refusals.** The potential number of students was 272. The boarding school staff administered the survey to available students (e.g., those not working or outside the grounds). Since the boarding school staff conducted the surveys, we do not have information on those who did not participate. We have noted on page 10, line 10-12 that "The boarding school decided the days and times to administer the survey. Some students may have been unavailable due to work or being off the campus off the campus grounds."

5. **Confidence Intervals in Abstract.** All confidence intervals were 95%. This correction has been made in the abstract.
6. **Jaccard Coefficient needs more explanation.** For continuous variables, there are many cluster techniques. Far fewer are available for categorical and binary data. The Jaccard Coefficient has been assessed by different statisticians as being the most robust. This information has been added on page 12, lines 10-13.

7. **Smoking prevalence is not clear.** We have clarified in the discussion that both students and mentors believed there was a high prevalence of smoking, but that mentors explained that decreasing smoking was not their first priority. See page 23, lines 19-21.

8. **Two groups were isolated: heavy alcohol users and low alcohol users.** This indeed is an interesting finding. We have added the statement to that effect. See page 23, lines 21-23, page 24 line 1.

9. **Cross-sectional for a single time interval.** Yes, this is a cross-sectional study with only single point-of-time responses. A longitudinal study is indicated in this area.

10. **Differences by type of student accommodation.** Students live in groups of six but have a living room for two to three groups. No additional information is available at the observation-level.

11. **Covert behavior.** Please see responses to #7 and #8.

12. **Balance of quotes.** We followed content analysis methodology to find the most representative and repeated themes. By using this methodology, we aimed at presenting a balanced view.

13. **Limitations.** Please see response to #4.

14. **Typos and Language.** We have reread the manuscript and tried to correct all typos and English language errors.

**Reviewer:** Stephen Edward McMillin

1. **Support the claim that mentors are the significant adult for Israeli youth in boarding schools.** Mentors are more than dormitory counselors. They service a special function including emotional support and guidance, one-to-one and group meetings. Additional detail was provided to support this contention. See page 8, lines 10-13. Moreover, we have added more defining information on mentors. Page 18, lines 15-21.

2. **Positive perception of mentors.** You are right that many students did not have a positive perception of mentors. Of course, that is not surprising as
mentors provide academic performance and discipline, issues that do not add to their popularity. See pages listed above.

3. **Sedentary Issue – Lack of Follow-up on Physical Activities.** The lack of follow-up on physical activity was acknowledged by the mentors. See page 19, lines 19-22. They also acknowledged that this was an area for which they did very little intervention. See page 21, lines 12-17. To be clear that health behaviors and physical activities were relegated to a lower priority, we have added further clarification in the discussion. See page 23, line 14.

4. **Mentor Responsibilities**—provide earlier in paper. See #1 in this section

5. **Analytic Plan.** Transcription by author #1 was documented. See page 14, line 9. Themes were discussed among authors and validated by boarding school staff. See page 14, lines 11-12.

6. **Thicker qualitative description.** Please see page 8, lines 8-13.

7. **Mentor Definition.** As noted in the response to Reviewer #1, item #3, mentors have a variety of functions including providing emotional and instrumental support depending on the context. Mentors do model self-regulation, however with this population, more emphasis was placed on the need for providing problem-solving assistance and crisis containment.

8. **School Performance.** In the questionnaire, school performance is measured by self-perception. See page 11, lines 10-13. For more details, see Reviewer #1, item #3

9. **Repetition - Methods.** We rearranged headings so it is clear that we are describing first the quantitative data analyses and then the qualitative data analyses. The repeated quantitative information was deleted. See page 11, lines 22 and page 13, line 14.

10. **Mixed –Methods.** In this paper, we feel the qualitative findings clarify and illuminate the quantitative findings, and thus, provide a more complete picture of this rarely studied situation.

11. **Language editing and corrections.** We have checked and corrected the listed typos and language editing.

Sincerely,

Maayan Agmon, Cheryl Zlotnick, & Anat Finkelstein