Author’s response to reviews

Title: Youth paying for sex: what are the associated factors? Findings from a cross-sectional study in Cambodia

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Author’s response to reviews:

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Lianne Urada, PhD
Associate Editor: Global Health
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Dear Dr. Urada,

Thank you very much for your kind consideration on our manuscript.
Please find a revised manuscript entitled “Youth paying for sex: what are the associated factors? Findings from a cross-sectional study in Cambodia.”

We have revised the paper based on very constructive comments from the reviewers. We would be very grateful if you could accept this paper for publication in BMC Public Health as a ‘Research article.’

Two attached files include a ‘Cover letter with a list of responses to reviewers’ and a 'Revised Manuscript’ with revised contents highlighted in blue.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Response to Reviewers

Reviewer 1:
Abstract
Use past tense throughout and modify grammar issues (have to had, etc)
RESPONSE: We have copy edited this document again. Thank you.

Define adjustment
RESPONSE: We have added the words “After controlling for potential confounding” in the place of the term adjustment.

Introduction
Define indirect and direct FSWs
RESPONSE: We have added definitions to the first mention of the terms in the introduction on page 4 line 91-94.

Was sex work legal in Cambodia? Until when? On the street, just brothels?
RESPONSE: We added language to clarify the legal status of prostitution and third party procurement on page 4 line 108-110.

How does the prevalence in Cambodia compare to other surrounding countries?
RESPONSE: The prevalence of paying for sex in other countries is defined on page 3 line 57-59.

In place of saying 'today' specify a year so the statement is timeless
RESPONSE: We have made this change.

You might need some additional references to back-up your statement about HIV being concentrated in those groups
RESPONSE: We have cited the most recent national report from the Ministry of Health.
Are men included in that law, men selling sex?
RESPONSE: Yes, we have added clarifying language to page 4 line 110.

How does the law prohibiting selling sex make the environment easier to buy sex?
RESPONSE: Yes, we have added clarifying language to page 5 line 115-116.

Flip your ordering of the paragraphs, from more general, to more specific. You have lots of global data that can be first in the intro
RESPONSE: We have moved the Cambodia specific sections from the front to page 5-6.

This intro is quite long, is it all necessary?
RESPONSE: We have made an attempt to shorten the introduction by taking out the section on sweetheart relationships since this is not directly relevant to the study.

Remove the word 'prostitute'
RESPONSE: We have omitted this word.

Methods

Why was supervision done by the PI and team for mapping?
RESPONSE: We have omitted this as it not a necessary detail

How were the times chosen?
RESPONSE: We have added clarifying language to page 6 line 173.

Interviewer administered or participant?
RESPONSE: We have made it clear that these were interviewer administered on page 7 line 183.
What was the training?

RESPONSE: We have added clarifying language to page 7 line 185-187.

How many questions in the survey

RESPONSE: We have added clarifying language to page 7 line 184-185.

What happened when you had an inconsistency by data enterers in EpiData?

RESPONSE: Supervisors would go to the source document and check the data. We did not add this detail to the manuscript.

Did you include just variables that you collected which were significant in your preliminary model?

RESPONSE: Yes, we added clarifying language to page 8 line 211-212.

Not sure why you went to lit review here

RESPONSE: Our initial model was informed by the literature in terms of what we would expect to be significant regardless of significance at bivariate level. We have added this language to page 8 line 211-212.

What is 'highest p-value greater than 0.05'?

RESPONSE: We removed this phrase to avoid confusion.

Was Touro granted exempt IRB approval? If so just mention that

RESPONSE: Yes, we added this information on page 8 line 221.

Results
Make sure stats in text match tables. In table 2, you have 0.08 and 0.07 in text. Apart from this, no need to replicate all the data. You can say something like slightly younger and give the p-value in text without the values and SD which people can see in the table.

RESPONSE: We have customarily included all results in both text and tables as we are under the impression that they should both stand alone.

Maybe title table 2 sexual behavior vs risky. Since having a girlfriend might not be risky.

RESPONSE: We agree and have changes the title.

You can probably combine table 3 with table 2, it just shows 1 column and you can show the other one as well for 'didnt pay for sex'

RESPONSE: Does the editor have any preference in terms of table size? Happy to combine if you can fit a longer table.

I usually dont see 'theoretical' before logistic regression, so decide if you need that word. Do you mean univariate?

RESPONSE: We have omitted this work to avoid confusion.

Discussion

Paragraph 2, were those in the same area and what was their sample size?

RESPONSE: We have added some additional language to answer this question in the paper on page 17 line 335-338.

In the first few paragraphs, try additional comparisons of what you found with neighboring countries, versus the 2 studies 6,9 which have been done in Cambodia

RESPONSE: There are no comparable studies that we are aware of from neighboring countries. In addition, Cambodia has a very specific historical and cultural context making it less applicable to compare to neighbors.
Maybe another limitation is you did not collect data from men seeking sex from other men? Maybe that's something that has high stigma in that setting and you can educate the reader.

RESPONSE: We have added some language to address this comment on page 20 line 419-421.

What are the drawbacks of making sex work illegal vs controlling it in a way with HIV testing/condom use etc to empower FSWs?

RESPONSE: We have added some commentary in the conclusion on page 21 line 435-437.

Reviewer 2:

Critique: Youth paying for sex: what are the associated factors? Findings from a 1 cross-sectional study in Cambodia

What is meant by the word "compromising" in your sentence "Most recent Central Intelligence 65 Agency estimates show Cambodia has the estimated youngest population in Southeast Asia with 66 19.1% of the population compromising young people between 15 and 24 years of age [5].

RESPONSE: This should be “comprising.” We have made this change.

This study is well-conceptualized and addresses an important behavior, namely, high-risk males paying for sex. The background of the study provides sufficient justification for research directed towards this high-risk population.

RESPONSE: Thank you.

What was the background of your interviewers and did they have previous experience in interviewing this study sample?

RESPONSE: These were peer data collectors. We have added some language to clarify. Please see lines 185-187.
What was your inclusion criteria for participation in this study?

RESPONSE: Participants had to be Male aged 10-24 years, Present in the selected hotspot and had to agree to participate in the survey. We have added this language to the manuscript on page 7 line 179-180.

Did you employ a power analysis to assess the resultant number of study participants required to detect small differences in your study hypotheses?

RESPONSE: We have added some clarifying language about sample size calculations on page 6, line 158-160.

How many individuals were interviewed in order to reach your number of 405 participants? How many of these individuals were invited to enroll into your study but refused? I note that you address this in line 339 but it is not clear with regard to the issue of sample selection bias.

RESPONSE: We experienced a 12% refusal rate.

How did you measure consistent condom use? Did you use a scale in which you have several items that all are highly related in measuring this very difficult construct? Did you use a measure that can rule out any potential social-desirability bias? This is a major issue when sensitive questions are asked and participants often try to please the interviewer with the response they think they should give.

RESPONSE: We are aware of these potential pitfalls of this type of research. We used validated questions from sexual behavior surveys that are used national and internationally. For each type of partner, we asked the question three different ways:

In the past three months, how often did you use a condom with a woman that you paid to have sex with?

0. No sex/no sex with paid sex workers
1. Always
2. Frequently
3. Sometimes
4. Never

During the last time that you paid to have sex with a woman how many condoms did you use?
1. One condom
2. Two condoms at the same time
3. More than two

Did you propose using a condom the last time you paid to have sex with a woman?
1. Yes
2. No