Reviewer’s report

Title: A protocol for a cluster-randomized controlled trial testing an empowerment intervention to prevent sexual assault in upper primary school adolescents in the informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya

Version: 0 Date: 21 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

N/A - no experiments or analyses

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Yes - current version is technically sound

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: This is a well-written and excellently designed protocol on sexual assault among young Kenyan learners. The authors lay out their argument and methodology clearly.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

I have only minor comments for consideration, though I believe the protocol would be publishable in its current form.

Intro

1. I wondered about adding citations to page 4, line 47 and then later saw a strong paragraph in Discussion about informal settlements. Could this paragraph be better upfront to make the case for the novelty and importance of this work?

2. page 5, line 1, should say "settlements are similar to the setting where we plan to conduct this trial."

3. I think the paragraph on page 5, lines 18-40 could actually be dropped. None of these trials are among adolescents. Would it be more valuable to rather highlight the literature from other settings (primarily UK and US) where school-based interventions worked with young learners around sexual assault?

4. On page 6, it would be good to highlight limitations of prior versions of the boys' intervention, to make the case for why "significantly revised boys' intervention" was needed.

5. Depending on journal, you might blind the first study design paragraph.

6. The process evaluation plans seem somewhat small to add value to the overall trial. Could consider enriching these with participant observation, in-depth interviews with facilitators, etc.
7. Please check consistency with regards to total schools count - is it 90 or 100? Rationale in sample size seems to point to 90.

8. Could selection bias of schools be a potential limitation?

9. Kindly check tense throughout - sometimes present tense is used and sometimes past. This will depend on the journal.

10. On page 9, line 52, what are the authors planning to test with the boys sample. And is such a small n per school going to get at that, at least in a preliminary way?

11. How long was the training of trainers?

12. Hard to remember the primary outcome, so please remind readers on page 13, line 35 and perhaps line 49.

13. Is the paragraph on page 14, lines 11-35 needed?

14. How will Kenyan co-investigators be involved in the data analysis of qualitative data? Seems important given the specific contextual considerations of informal settlements to involve local staff in this.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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