Author’s response to reviews

Title: Health and educational aspirations in adolescence: A longitudinal study in Finland

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Dobewall,

Your manuscript "Health and educational aspirations in adolescence: A longitudinal study in Finland" (PUBH-D-19-00302R1) has been assessed by our reviewers. Based on these reports, and my own assessment as Editor, I am pleased to inform you that it is potentially acceptable for publication in BMC Public Health, once you have carried out some essential revisions suggested below:

RESPONSE 1: Thank you. Please find our revisions below.

1. Please also state the role of the funding body in the design of the study, collection, analysis, interpretation of data, and in writing the manuscript, in the Funding section.
RESPONSE 2: On the title page we now state ”The funding bodies had no role in the design of the study, collection, analysis, interpretation of data, and writing the manuscript.”

2. We note that Sakari Karvonen; Leena Koivusilta; Mari-Pauliina Vainikainen are included on the title page, but they are missing from the Authors Contributions section. Please ensure that all authors are included in this section.

RESPONSE 3: The Author Contributions section states now: ”HD, PL, and AR conceived and designed the study. HD and AR performed data analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. HD, PL, SK, LK, M-PV, RH, and AR interpreted the data, commented on the manuscript, and contributed to all revision stages by substantively revising the manuscript. HD, PL, SK, LK, M-PV, RH, and AR read and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed both to be personally accountable for the author's own contributions and to ensure that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work, even ones in which the author was not personally involved, are appropriately investigated, resolved, and the resolution documented in the literature.” All coauthors agreed with this new formulation.

3. Please clarify whether permission from the school and/or local authorities was obtained to collect classroom data

RESPONSE 4: We addressed this point in RESPONSE 6.

4. Please clarify whether written parental consent was obtained from the parents in the municipalities that required consent, in both the Methods and Ethics approval and consent to participate section.

RESPONSE 5: Again, we addressed this point in RESPONSE 6.

5. Please clarify how consent was obtained for municipalities that did not require parental consent, and whether the participants were 16 years or older in these cases. Additionally, please provide more detail as to why local authorities waived the need for parental consent in some of the municipalities and not in others. Please be sure to include this in both the Methods and the Ethics approval and consent to participate section.

RESPONSE 6: The original statement of the Ethical Committee expressed the view that 13-year-olds are old enough to give their consent when the measures were what they were and the study was done as a part of their normal schoolwork. This is in line with the instructions of TENK / Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (https://www.tenk.fi/en). However, some municipalities had their own policies that were stricter than the view of the Ethical Committee. So, after receiving a positive statement we applied for research permit from each municipality separately and during that process we were informed about possible deviations from the general interpretations. After receiving the municipal-level research permit, we applied for the permit from each school, so in the end principals were those who decided about participation at the school level. Then, we informed the parents (or asked their written permission) and they had the
possibility to withdraw their children from the study. And then, at the moment of data collection, the students had the final decision.

In the respective sections it reads now…

Methods (page 8) “The study was conducted as part of the project “Redefining adolescent learning: A multilevel longitudinal cohort study of adolescent learning, health, and well-being in educational transitions in Finland” (Metlofin). It follows a large cohort of students from the Helsinki Metropolitan Region from the lower secondary education to the end of upper secondary education. The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of the National Institute of Health and Welfare. All comprehensive schools located in the 14 municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Region were invited to participate. Principals decided about participation at the school level. In 2011, the students were in the 7th grade when answering the survey for the first time (12-13 years old). A follow-up survey was fielded in 2014 when the students were in the 9th grade (15-16 years old). In line with the instructions of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK), the study was done as a part of participants’ normal schoolwork. Participation was voluntarily, and the students were instructed that they can decline to answer any question or withdraw from the survey at any time. Before fielding the surveys written parental consent was obtained in two municipalities that had policies that were stricter than the view of the Ethical Committee and the TENK instructions. In the other municipalities, information letters were sent to the parents of the student who had the possibility to withdraw their child from the study.”

Ethics approval and consent to participate

“ The study protocols were approved by the Ethical Committee of the National Institute of Health and Welfare. Principals decided about participation at the school level. In line with the instructions of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) (https://www.tenk.fi/en), the study was done as a part of participants' normal schoolwork. Participation was voluntarily, and the students were instructed that they can decline to answer any question or withdraw from the survey at any time. Before fielding the surveys written parental consent was obtained in two municipalities that had policies that were stricter than the view of the Ethical Committee and the TENK instructions. In the other municipalities, information letters were sent to the parents of the student who had the possibility to withdraw their child from the study.”

6. Please upload table S1 as a supplementary file.
RESPONSE 7: Done.

7. Please proofread and ensure that when you upload your revised submission that it is in the final form for publication. Please remove any tracked changes, colored text, or highlighting and include only a single clean copy of the manuscript. Should you wish to respond to these revision requests, please include the information in the designated input box only.

RESPONSE 8: We have used Grammarly to ensure that language and grammar are coherent. The document does not include any track changes or other highlighting.
Best wishes,

Janelle Coore on behalf of,

Maxine Dillon
BMC Public Health
https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/

Reviewer reports:
Dorothea Kesztyüs (Reviewer 1): Many thanks to the authors for the careful revision of the manuscript. I have no further comments.

RESPONSE 9: Once again, we want to thank the reviewer(s) and the editor for their interest in our work and their helpful comments. We are looking forward to seeing it published in BMC Publich Health.