Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Harmful Traditional Practice Exposing Young Girls to Experience Virgin Pregnancy (Shilshalo): A Qualitative Study in Argoba Community, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia

Authors:

Yohannes Belete (beletemersha6@gmail.com)
Negesse Atlaw (negekebe@yahoo.com)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear reviewers,

We duly acknowledge your efforts to give us very interesting and constructive comments on our research manuscript. We have meticulously read all your comments and we have addressed almost all comments that you gave for us. The major revisions we made and the reflections we gave for your questions and comments are stated as follows;

Reviewer reports:

Kahsu Gebrekirstos (Reviewer 1): Comments

Title:

I think making is not appropriate term. It shows confirmation. Better to change it with other words like "exposing"

Response: We agreed on your comment. The word ‘making’ has been changed as you suggested.

Abstract:

Avoid abbreviations from Abstract

Include objective of the study at the end this paragraph

Response: We have made corrections as per your comment. At the background section of the abstract, the last three lines reveals about the objective of the study.
Plain English summary

Why this section is not important to present it separately? May be you can summarize and include it under background. because you have to follow the author guideline of this journal.

Response: We agreed on your comment without any reservation and, therefore, this section has been deleted from the whole manuscript document.

Background:

Page 5, Line number 18-26: this part should come to the end of this section.

Page 5, Line number 52: Understanding is not action word. change it

Page 5, Line number 54: No Need to include specific objectives. General objective is enough.

Response: According to your comment, we have made revision on the background section of the manuscript.

Methods

The methods section need major revision.

You need to introduce the study area at the beginning of methodology.

Follow the submission guideline of the journal.

How do you select the study participants? especially the boys and girls

What was your inclusion criteria

The title is very interesting but the methods section needs revision.

Line number 20: This design need more clarification, what type of case study, explain the case.

Data gathering Instruments: This section need major revision, you need to write about data collection tool, then data collection.

Include: Who collect the data?

Page 6, Line number 28: What type of interview? in depth interview is used in qualitative study designs
Page 6, Line number 30: Data collection tool or method? revise it, Mention the type of tool used for interview

Page 6, Line number 38-40: Include source of this tool

Include the number of FDGs in addition to the number of participants, clearly indicate who were the data collectors? mainly for the females.

Trustworthiness of the study: Better to make it, data quality control.

Response: The whole comments you raised on the methodology section of the manuscript have been revised except one comment (See the methodology section of the revised manuscript. The corrections are highlighted in blue color). You suggested that ‘Trustworthiness of the study’ should be changed with ‘Data quality control’. However, as per our knowledge the word ‘data quality control’ is more suitable for quantitative study, not for qualitative study.

Results:

I have a couple of questions related to this practice.

1. Have you tried to assess the practice of open sexual intercourse as consequence of this practice?

Response: We found out that your question is quite interesting. During the data collection process, we tried our best to find a girl who experienced such case but unfortunately we did not get a single case. The community of course perceived those virgin pregnant girls as if they committed open sexual intercourse. But the actors responded that they were not doing open sexual intercourse and they practice ‘Shilshalo’ in a very safe way since it brings societal punishment on them.

2. What if the teenagers fall in real love? if ever happened

Response: On page 12 on the last paragraph, there is a statement that says: ‘In the Argoba culture, there was different expectation for a boy and a girl to engage in marriage life. The boy should be self-reliance for basic needs. Whereas a girl was expected to marry whom her families prefer’. This statement implies that whatsoever teenagers fall in real love, they are unlikely to engage in marriage life.

3. Include the outcome of virgin pregnancy
Response: One page 9, the whole story stated as ‘Psycho-Social consequence’ has dealt about the outcome of virgin pregnancy.

Page 9, line 38: You did not mention nurses as data sources but included here? why?

Response: We have mentioned them as health professionals in the data collections instruments section of the original manuscript (The last line in the first paragraph, page 4). We have also stated them in the revised manuscript in page 8 at the second paragraph)

Page 12, line 15, 16 (subtopic Reasons to practice): This should be before the consequences of the practice

Response: Although we do respect your comment, we found out that the existing skeleton of the result section of the manuscript is appealing for reader. Once the reader knows the practice and consequence of ‘Shilshalo’ and then they will be getting informed about the reason for the practice of ‘Shilshalo’.

Discussion

Page 15 15, line 33: studied???

Page 16, line 17-26: Why do you compare early marriage and FGM with Shilshalo?

Response: It is quite difficult for us to compare the result of this study with similar study done in the previous time as our study is a new study. However, we believe that ‘Shilshalo’ as HTP would have shared some commonalities with other HTPs including early marriage and FGM. This is the justification for why we compared early marriage and FGM with ‘Shilshalo’.

Conclusion:

The first two lines of the conclusion are not related to your findings. The conclusion should be based on your findings. Focus on answering your objectives.

Response: We have accepted this comment; and the conclusion section has been revised as you suggested.
Muche Achenef Asmamaw (Reviewer 2): Dear Authors,

The manuscript is interesting, and focused on the hidden but high burden of HTPs specifically "Shilshalo" in Argoba Community, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. Though, it is a well written manuscript, I have some observations and comments below,

1. What types of software you have used to analyzed the qualitative data in this study?

Response: As we all know, one of the hard part of qualitative analysis is finding a mechanical system to help to manage interview data. Many researchers do it by hand with transcript printed on the paper and they marked up in pen and colored markers. There are also computer programs such as NViVO, MAX QDA or Atlas Ti designed for qualitative analysis. However, these computer programs could not do sophisticated analysis unlike those computers programs used for quantitative analysis (SPPS and AMOS). Therefore, we did not use any software rather we analyzed it by using hand in a way that explained above.

2. In result section," The only members of the community who openly opposed the practice", Is the school community, health professionals etc.., accepted the practices? Most HTPs accepted by religion Example HTP. But 'Shilshalo' practice is not accepted. So that, what will be the real justification and what was the exact association of religion and HTPs!!!
Response: We thought that teachers, health professionals and other professionals working in different organization would not support the practice as they are educated people; but we agreed on your comment because when we say the only member of the community who openly oppose the practice were religious leader, it will give the readers of the manuscript a meaning that the educated people working in different organization were also supported the practice just like what you understood. So that, we have made revision on the statement to make it clearer (See the revised manuscript in page 13).

3. Is polygamy accepted in Argoba Community? The Shilshalo' practice of one girl with more than one boys leads polygamy is highly practices. Again, most of Argoba community is Islamic religion followers. So that the region opposition and Shilshalo' practice has controversy.

Response: We found out that some of the comments stated in ‘Comment 2’ and the whole comment given in ‘Comment 3’ are similar in terms of theme. Both comments are focusing on the association between religion and ‘Shilshalo’ as most of HTPS have direct connection with religion. Our response for these comments is that religion has a strong association with HTPs especially with polygamy. The Islamic religious thought encourages men to marry up to 5 women. In this case, religion has a direct connection with HTPs. However, the other canon of Islamic religion is that any sexual practice before marriage is forbidden. Since ‘Shilshalo’ is practiced before marriage, it will not get religious support rather it has been openly opposed by Islamic religious leaders whatsoever it is practiced one girl with more than boys. Given this fact, we can understand that religion is not always support all forms of HTPs rather it depends on the nature of the HTPs.

4. Any clear differences between Shilshalo' practice with masturbation practice?

Response: Masturbation is a sexual stimulation of one’s own genitals for sexual arousal or other sexual pleasure but ‘Shilshalo’ is a kind of sexual stimulation done between partners.

5. In conclusion section, add sentences to conclude how 'Shilshalo' is practiced, problems girls face due to the practice of 'Shilshalo' and reasons for practicing 'Shilshalo'.in Argoba Community in line with your finding. Then after, paragraph to express your recommendation.

Response: We agreed on your comment. The conclusion section has been rewritten and amended as you suggested.
6. Other minor comments are found in the manuscript.

Response: Almost all comments that you forwarded in the manuscript document (Title, author, Background, Methodology and Result sections) have been addressed as you suggested.

Thank you in advance for your valuable comments!

The Authors