Author’s response to reviews

Title: Comprehensive analysis of HIV/AIDS policymaking process in Iran

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Author’s response to reviews:

With many thanks to the reviewers for their great comments, all revisions in the manuscript are colored in RED.

Reviewer reports:

Reviewer #1: This issue and the aim of the work being described in this manuscript is important, particularly in a context of a global policy and programme activity to control of HIV. The manuscript is well prepared, and the methodology employed is sound, as such the manuscript deserves publication.

The quality of the English used in the manuscript is unsatisfactory. The paper still needs a careful revision and a thorough proofreading by an English native speaker since some typos and grammar mistakes are disseminated throughout the text, together with some phrases that should be rephrased for clarity, since they are difficult to interpret.

Revisions:

The whole manuscript was language edited.

Abstract:
Background: Please revise this section. This section can improvement, if write about important of HIV in health systems.

Revisions:
Abstract; background; line 1-2.

Results: Please describe the participants' demographic characteristics. Also, please describe results according finding of this study. This section is unclear.

Revisions:
Abstract; results; line 1-6.

Main body of manuscript:

Introduction: Please, in the introduction, try to provide a background based on the extant scholarly literature (comparing and discussing similar studies carried out in other countries).

Revisions:
Introduction; paragraph 2; the whole paragraph.

Results: Some sentences in result should be shortened and refined, because they are very long to follow.

Revisions:
Results; the whole section was revised.

Discussion: However, in my opinion, the discussion lacks a deepened comment on these findings. This could be achieved, for instance, comparing the findings about HIV policymaking with other suitable studies. Please revise this section accordingly.

Revisions:
Discussion; the whole section was revised and the discussion was improved.
Reviewer #2:

Title: Comprehensive analysis of HIV/AIDS policymaking process in Iran: a theory-based and multimethod study with retrospective design

This paper aims to address the HIV/AIDS policy making process in Iran covering the period 1986 to 2016. The study is based on a review of 48 policy documents and 39 KIIs. The paper covers an interesting topic and presents some interesting ideas on the HIV policy making process in Iran. However it needs to address the following comments if it is to be accepted for publication.

1. This study is based on an analysis of KIIs and policy documents. However, the authors have not presented any quotes in the paper. Suggest the authors include appropriate quotes to support and enhance the analysis and study results.

Revisions:

Results; the whole section was revised. Quotes were added where possible and in Table 1. Due to word limitations, one or two quotes were presented for each sub-theme or subsection.

2. The authors need to build a rationale for this study. Right now it is not clear why an exploration of the HIV/AIDS policymaking process in Iran covering three decades is needed.

Revisions:

Introduction; lines 60-73.

3. What are the objectives of this paper? These would need to be clearly stated.

Revisions:

Introduction; lines 74-82.

4. How is this study different from the earlier study by the same authors titled "HIV/AIDS policy agenda setting in Iran"(2015) in terms of study objectives? Do both draw from the same data sources?
Yes, they do. Both studies draw from a same project, which was a PhD thesis project. In the published paper, we only aimed to present our findings on how and why AIDS control was initiated among policy-makers’ agenda setting in Iran. As you know, in the present study, however, we presented our findings on very different objectives which are presented in lines 74-82.

5. Further information on the study methodology is needed (see below for comments).

All following comments were revised and addressed within the methods section.

6. The study findings have been divided into contextual factors, content, actors and evidence. However, there is no clear picture of how these factors reflect a larger narrative that can provide insight into the policy making process in Iran. An exploration of how these factors intersect to shape the policy making process would be helpful.

Revisions:

Results; lines 187-189. And Figure XX.

7. The subtitle 'A theory based and multimethod study with retrospective design' is not necessary.

Revisions:

Title was revised.

Specific comments

Introduction:

1. The authors could include data on the HIV epidemic in Iran, e.g., HIV prevalence, new infections, trends, prevalence among key populations, AIDS related deaths.

Revisions:

Background; Paragraph 1; lines 6-11.
2. Details are required on how the authors define 'policy making process' in this study.

Revisions:
Background; Paragraph 4; lines 3-7.

3. A clear discussion of the theoretical framework and how it guided the study would strengthen the paper.

Revisions:
Methods; Study framework; Paragraph 1; lines 8-12.

Methods

1. Please review and address the repetition in this section.

The section was revised to address the repetitions.

2. The authors could provide the following details: The study site, the time period when data collection and analysis were done. Please also add references where appropriate

Revisions:
Methods; Study setting; Paragraph 1; lines 1-2.

3. You have indicated that the interview guide was based on a literature review. Could you provide a reference?

Revisions:
Methods; Data collection; Paragraph 2; line 5.

Data collection:

1. KII: The data collection technique is not clearly explained. The authors should clarify how key informants were identified for the study, how they were approached and the criteria for selection of respondents.

Revisions:
Methods; Data collection; key informants; the whole subsection.

Also, why did the study include PLHIV and how were they recruited?
2. How were interviewers selected and trained?

Revisions:
Methods; Data collection; key informants; paragraph 2; lines 1-2.

3. Policy documents: Please add details on how policy documents were identified, selected and reviewed.

Revisions:
Methods; Data collection; policy documents; the whole subsection.

Data analysis:

1. Please describe how the data were coded and the key themes that guided the analysis of the HIV policy making process. Who analyzed the KIIIs and the documents? How many people coded the data? Details of training provided to the team.

Revisions:
Methods; Data analysis; the second paragraph.

2. How did the theoretical framework inform your data analysis?

Revisions:
Methods; Data analysis; the second paragraph; lines 5-7.

3. How did you know when saturation was reached?

Revisions:
Methods; Data collection; key informants; paragraph 2; lines 8-9.

4. Were respondents compensated for participating in the study? How did you ensure the confidentiality of PLHIV?

Revisions:
5. The section on Quality of Research needs to be reviewed for content and presentation.

Revisions:

Methods; quality of research; the whole section.

Results:

1. This section needs to be reviewed and tightened. Findings need to be supported with appropriate quotes.

Revisions:

Results; appropriate quotes were included in the section to support the findings.

The section was also reviewed for consistency.

2. The two sections Contextual Factors and Policy Context in Iran only contain tables. Please add a discussion and quotes to support the tables. Also it is not clear whether the findings in the table on Policy Context are from the literature or from this study?

Revisions:

Results; HIV/AIDS policy context in Iran; paragraph 1.

Results; Table 2. Due to word number limitations, appropriate quotes were included in Table 2.

3. Figures 1-3 and the text need to be aligned.

Figures and tables were aligned to the text.

4. The study includes interviews with 3 PLHAs. What were the findings from these interviews? Were they in consonance with those of policy makers? It would be interesting to highlight findings from PLHA interviews.

Revisions:
Results; HIV/AIDS policy context in Iran; paragraph 2. And Table 2 (for quotations).

Discussion; paragraph 3; lines 10-14.

Discussion

Suggest a review of the discussion section as a whole in light of the overall critique of the paper, and the paper's rationale.

Revisions:

Discussion; the whole section was revised for inconsistencies and word formatting.

Some of the material presented in this section, e.g. details of HIV policies in Iran, could be presented in the findings section.

Revisions:

Discussion; the whole section was revised. The details of HIV policies were removed: paragraph 1.

