Author’s response to reviews

Title: 'Just because she's young, it doesn't mean she has to die': exploring the contributing factors to high maternal mortality in adolescents in Eastern Freetown; a qualitative study.

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Author’s response to reviews:

Point by point response to editor’s comments

Thank you for your helpful comments. I will address your direct comments in the first part of the paper, and then point out where I have made further changes ‘in the spirit of’ your initial comments.

Line numbers refer to the copy you commented on.

Comment on conclusion, lines 35 to 40

I tried various rearrangements of this paragraph before leaving it with minor changes only – the structure represented here, of looking at vulnerability to pregnancy, followed by vulnerability to maternal death once pregnant is the pattern I have used throughout the whole paper, and I think it is a logical progression. However, I have made more of a distinction between the two groups. I reduced the number of ‘cares’. I have been clearer about the pilot intervention.

Background, lines 64 to 73

I have clarified about the ‘it’ and the ‘improved’, and have brought up the sentence about the % of pregnancies and deaths in teenagers, and introduced the national strategy.

Footnote about the strategy

I made this clearer by adding ‘the six pillars are’
Line 71 comment
I’m afraid this comment wasn’t visible, but I have simplified this sentence.

Line 73 ‘under 5’s’
I changed this accordingly

Line 78
I have moved this paragraph around to make the point about EVD and how it relates to teenage pregnancy flow better.

Line 87
I changed ‘this research’ to ‘the current study’

Line 92
Partnered to partnered with.

Line 92
Confusion about the survey. Generally, I think that this whole paragraph clearly explains that this is not referring to the SLDHS, but to a small local survey carried out in 2015. However I have made some small changes to this paragraph to make it even clearer.

Line 108
I wasn’t sure either, and initially changed the text to 5 focus groups, but have consulted with social science colleagues and it is felt that a group of 2 is still a group, and not an interview. So I have left it as 6 focus groups. The reader is not misled as I have said only 2 people attended.

Line 113
This teenage mother was unable to attend the focus group but wanted to talk to me anyway, so I felt it was valid to include her interview as such. I have made this justification in the text.

Line 119

Please see previous comments about the local household survey I am referring to. See line 87 for first reference to this survey.

Lines 126, 127

I have substituted ‘professional’ for elite, and have better explained how they were recruited.

Line 181-184

I have removed the brackets

184 – results table

My conversations with the blood bank technicians were opportunistic, as I was giving blood. However since I have not quoted them, I have taken them out as a source, since you accurately point out that I have not mentioned them within my methods section.

Line 187-189

I am unable to read your whole comment on this as the text box does not expand. However, I thought carefully about how these two vulnerabilities co-exist for teenagers in Freetown, and see it as appropriate to analyse them as themes in the same section.

Line 190

In accordance with your general comments about providing an overview to orientate the reader, I have added a paragraph between the main and subheading to give more context.

Line 206
Have added ‘in this situation’ to ‘many girls’, but have been clear that girls living with their own parents can also be subject to the same pressures.

Line 216

Here, and throughout the results section, I have moved the content which discusses the literature down to the discussion section, and added content which gives context.

Line 230

I have made suggested changes regarding the water situation, and given more context as to the problem girls face.

Line 239

I have removed this quote

Line 241

I have rephrased the sentence about coercion and rape

Line 263

I have added a concluding sentence in this and other sections of the results section

Line 265

I have changed the subtitle heading as I realized the old heading was not comprehensive enough.

Paragraph underneath ‘sex to pay for school fees etc’ heading

I have added a new paragraph to give more context, and have moved other content down to the discussion
Line 284
I actually love this quote – it’s my favorite, and I think it shows how teachers (both male and female), by demanding extra charges, put girls at risk of transactional sex with older men, outside of school. I have added ‘male and female teachers’ to make the reader see it for what it is – not a demand for sex, but a demand for money. This is also partly why I adjusted the subsection heading. I have added a concluding paragraph to this section.

Line 298 – Sex for grades
I have reshuffled, adding some context, taking out some reference to literature.

Line 343
I have made this clearer

Line 355
I have softened this statement

Line 372
I have removed this quote

Line 375-387
I have moved this into the discussion

Line 389
I have made some changes to the paragraph under the criminal justice system heading

Line 439
I have added a concluding sentence at the end of the section on the criminal justice system
I have taken out this section, and have slightly adjusted the remaining content to provide enough context for the reader, while leaving in key references.

I have removed a quote about ‘being found out’ for captain band

End of contraception section
I have added a concluding sentence

I have added a paragraph setting the scene

I have shortened the quote

I have taken out a quote

I have added a concluding paragraph to the section

I have rearranged this section slightly to follow your guidance
Line 596-601
I have taken out some content to move to discussion

Line 629-633
I have taken out some content to move to discussion

Line 639-641
I have taken out a quote

Line 668-670
I have taken out a quote

Line 685-689
I have substituted a quote for an informative sentence

Line 690-701
I have moved this section to the discussion

Line 701-704
I have made changes to the concluding sentence for this section

Line 706
Changes to introductory sentence
I have moved this section to the discussion

I have made some changes to provide clarity

I have made changes to this paragraph to take out the context in the literature, and replace with the situational context

Discussion

My changes to the discussion are not easily itemised, but are a result of bringing down some of the content from the Results section, then making changes to sentence structure in order not to repeat references to the literature.