Author’s response to reviews

Title: Perceptions and intervention preferences of Moroccan adolescents, parents, and teachers regarding risks and protective factors for risky sexual behaviors leading to sexually transmitted infections in adolescents: Qualitative findings

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your reply and comments.

Comments and responses:

Reviewer #1:

Comment 1: Page 7, Lines 146-15: Please provide further elaboration on the sampling process and include the Braun and Clarke, 2013 reference in the manuscript. Please include whether the authors considered the study as a 'small/medium/large' project with "x" number of focus groups and "x" number of participants per category culminating to a grand total of "x" participants (per category and overall). It will be helpful if Table 1 (see attached Tables 1 with suggestions for reformatting) also includes the total number of participants for each group (Students, Teachers, Parents)

Response: Thank you for this comment it was very helpful. We have added in the method section further elaboration of sampling process and we included the Braun and Clarke, 2013 reference, the paragraph was edited as follow:
“Our sampling process was guided by the guidelines concerning the project sample size for thematic analysis recommended by Braun & Clarke, 2013, which categorize suggestions by the type of data collection and the size of the project (‘small’, ‘medium’, or ‘large’). In this study, which is a part from a large project, 3–6 focus groups (4–8 participants in each group) are recommended for each category of participants leading to a total number of 12-48 participants per category.”

Comment 2: Page 7, Lines 156-157: Please provide additional information regarding "Sampling continued .... sources of data". Sampling reflects number of focus groups per category - as these varied per category, will be helpful if the authors include relevant text to describe the author's underlying rationale

Response: thanks for this comment. Additional information was added in the method section as you recommended, as follow: “Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, which is defined as the moment during data collection and analysis where the same themes are recurring, and little or no change is given by additional data during two consecutive focus groups for each category of participants.”

We must note that the number of focus group required for saturation is a matter of discussion, although a recent study found that saturation may be achieved within three to six focus groups as 90% of all themes are discoverable, and three focus groups were also enough to identify all of the most prevalent themes within the data set (Guest.et al. 2016).

Comment 3: Page 8, Lines 166-168. The sentence "Data were then collection .... among participants" is confusing. Please revise; else suggest delete.

Response: This sentence was deleted as you recommended. The change made are colored in red.

Comment 4: Tables: The tables provide excellent information. However, suggest that for clarity purposes tables 1 - 3 will benefit from formatting revisions suggested below:

Table 1: Please see attached document (Tables 1-3)

Table 2: Please insert formatting (such as single or double lines) that enables easier reading of the focus group guideline questions across the three focus group categories (adolescents, parents, teachers).

Table 3: Please see attached document (Tables 1-3)
Response: thank you for your helpful suggestions. The tables were revised and formatted as you recommended.

Comment 5: The manuscript will benefit from copy-editing. There are several places in the text that the sentence is not clear, or is grammatically incorrect.

Response: Thank you for your comment. In response to your comment, we have had this article edited by an experienced scholarly writer and are confident about the grammar. We have proofread the manuscript again, but because the reviewer gave no examples, we are unclear about what changes are requested. I simply request the reviewer for some suggestions to improve if possible.

Reviewer #2:

Comment 9: KII - The answer provided is not adequate and scientific - there seems to be a lot of assumption here. on FGDs This is partly convincing but not entirely. However conservative the context could be there bound to be extreme variations in level of understanding and experience

Response: thank you for your helpful comments.

We agree with you that it would have been useful for this study to include interviews with key informants to gather information from experts, but in our case we faced two main obstacles, the first is that in KII we need to meet many people to produce results that can be generalized, which is difficult in our context because of the scarcity and lack of accessibility to associations and experts concerned with sexual health of adolescents, the second obstacle is the time required to select and get commitment that can be substantial for the timeline of our study.

First, we respected the conservatives’ norms in Morocco by conducting a single sex FGDs. For Teachers FGDs, the selection of participants was based on their disciplines, from included school’s teachers of disciplines concerning with health risk behaviors (i.e. Life and earth Science, familial instruction, Islamic education, Arabic language, physical education) were randomly invited to participate in the FGDs. The homogeneity was not our aim in the selection of parents and teachers FGDs rather to collect different point of views of different range of age among parents and teachers.

Comment 10: Selection of participants- This is explained. However, it is not yet clear if majority of adolescents in high school are 16 years and below. what about those past 16 yeas?
Response: we agree with you, it could be that adolescents with 17 years and above have more experience and information about topic. However, during project elaboration, this point took a lot of discussion but different members of team agreed on the idea that 14-16 years represent the appropriate range of age gather valuable information about our research question.

Comment 16: This is now clear in the response section, however in the actual document, a lot of the above information have left out

Response: thank you for this helpful comment. We have added elaborate description of the six phases of thematic analysis in the manuscript as you requested, the change made are colored in red.

Comment 26: This is explained, however not satisfactory. I believe KIIIs can be administered in any context provided the interviewer creates a rapport and has skills to do the same.

Response: we agree with you that KIIIs can be administered in any context and can enrich the study because they can gather rich information from experts, but as noted above, in our case we are confronted with two main obstacles: the first one, to conduct the KIIIs we must meet many people to produce results that can be generalized, which is difficult in our context because of the scarcity and accessibility of associations and experts concerned with the sexual health of adolescents. The second difficulty is the time required to select and get commitment that can be substantial for the timeline of our study.

Comment 28: Conclusions well explained and though not explicit on risk factors. The protective factors are explicit

Response: thank you for this comment. We edited this sentence to make it explicit on risk factors, the change made are colored in red.

Comment 30: The recommendations need to begin with 'based on the study findings and conclusions…'

Response: this sentence was added to the recommendations as you requested.