**Reviewer’s report**

**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

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 22 Nov 2018

**Reviewer:** Charles Opiyo

**Reviewer's report:**

Abstract

Background

The presentation under this is clear. However, there is no single study quoted or reference to inform the claims made on background. It would be useful to have looked at both drivers and barriers.

Methods

The methodology well highlights the approach taken. The analysis is equally well presented even though it is not clear how the datasets were analysed after categorization by thematic areas.

While it could be recommended that FGDs would suffice for adolescents its not clear how the FGDs were administered to teachers.

Results

The results are well presented in the abstract.

The title of the manuscript

The title is a bit confusing, it talks about risks and protective factors of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. There are no known protective factors of STIs and especially when in this case it refers to adolescents as the primary subject. Use 'for' instead of 'of'.

The authors names are well presented including their contact details.
Abstract - Main body

Background

Well-articulated. No previous study referenced to as part of the background

It would be more reasonable to use the word 'promote' as opposed to 'facilitate' unless there is explanation of key concepts

Introduction

Well presented with various studies that help build a case for the study in relation to facilitators and drivers.

The ecological model applied needs to be adequately explained and justification for its application be highlighted.

The justification in the knowledge gap is not well explained bearing into account that most of the previous studies quoted brought out the common aspects/universally known drivers for STIs.

Methodology

The methodology on the use of FGDs is clear. However, the statement needs to begin explaining the method used and study design before talking about triangulation. As it is, the three categories of FGDs infer triangulation as opposed the specific methodology.

It would have also been useful if there were Key Informant Interviews especially for the teachers as opposed to FGDs. Teachers are not homogenous group and in some instances the parents.

Study participants

It is not clear what informed settling on 14-16 years old? Adolescence begin from 10-19 years and to be precise, adolescents is 10-14 years and teens from 15-19 years while youth generally is 10-24 years. Kindly elaborate on this

Clarify what one means by advantaged and disadvantaged schools. Including socio-economic levels in view of the study

There is need to explain the characteristics that were considered among the parents and teachers to ensure homogeneity in the groups before conducting FGDs
Issues of consent not mentioned- the participants needed to sign a consent besides being informed about the confidentiality of the data/process

Data collection instruments

It is clear on the administration of FGDs. However, the number of participants per FGD not mentioned. There is also a need to restate the number of FGDs conducted

Ethical consideration

This is clearly presented, however there is no copy of the ethical approval letter/certificate as part of the annex

Data Analysis

The data analysis process is clear and how this was done. It would be useful to highlight the six phases of analysis mentioned

The linkage between ecological model and data collection and analysis is inadequate. How did you consider the various aspects of ecological model (individual, relational, community and societal) at the administration of FGDs and analysis thereof? At the same time ensure congruity between research methodology and research question or objectives? Were there any callback/follow up to get more information on what was not clear or incomplete?

Results

The number of FGDs conducted and characteristics of the participants needed to come in the earlier paragraphs above. It is not clear why the parents and teachers of ages 30-60 were grouped together- these are not homogenous.

The results are clearly highlighted especially on other routes such as use of needles, blood transfusion and drug injection; however, it is stated that campaigns on HIV transmission has been massive including transmission routes yet STIs seem to be a major challenge. Is HIV not an STI? And are other STIs not spread sexually as HIV?

Overall there is linkage between the ecological model and the study objectives.
While under risk factors there are voices highlighted verbatim, the same cannot be seen for protective factors. The participants and their voices need to be adequately represented in the study.

Discussion

Talk about the study without referring to you "our study" not necessary

While referring to other studies it is useful to give highlights especially on specific jurisdictions and what was found out in such studies. This will ensure seamless connection between the current study and the reference study.

The discussion is well presented

There is need to provide adequate interpretation of the results with less of reporting what has been captured in the results.

A lot of issues related to society such as religion are discussed under community unlike in the case of results where they were highlighted

The studies or references brought out in the discussion need to be highlighted in terms of what they talk about and whether the current study concur or contradicts such references.

A lot of new view points have come up which should be able to fill the knowledge gap identified in the introduction or background.

Limitations

The limitations are well presented

Other glaring limitations would be on the choice of only one type of qualitative method- FGDs. The study would have been richer had it included KIIs.

The justification for limitation is equally clear. It is advisable that for each limitation the researcher should be able to explain how they were managed, or controls put in place.

Other groups such as religious leaders were not interviewed yet there were perceptions on the role of religion in shaping up adolescent behaviour?

Conclusions
The conclusions are too broad instead of being succinct and made along the study objectives. In this case the focus was on risk factors and the other on protective factors. The entire conclusion should be reworked along the two areas.

Most of the statements look like recommendations and these should be separate from the conclusion.

In summary the conclusion should be drawn from research objectives which must also be linked to analysis and interpretation of the data.

Acknowledgement

There is no acknowledgement of parents as participants and neither teachers as participants

It is assumed that the method adopted is congruent to the journal guidelines

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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