Author’s response to reviews

Title: Growing up HIV-positive in Uganda: "psychological immunodeficiency?" A qualitative study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to revise our manuscript "Growing up HIV-positive in Uganda: "psychological immunodeficiency?" A qualitative study" (PSYO-D-17-00005R1). The comments from the reviewer were very constructive and we have revised the manuscript accordingly. Below we describe the comments and the changes made:

Reviewer :
Jeffrey Grierson (Reviewer 1): The study reports on a qualitative component of a study of mental health among children and adolescents living with HIV in Uganda.

The paper present a thoughtful and interesting consideration of the social and relational aspects of attachment, support and mental wellbeing issues for 21 young people recruited through a clinical setting.

One concern I have is about the depth of the interviews. The authors report that interviews were between 12 and 31 minutes, but these included "household composition, economy, family activities, responsibilities and friends" followed by the presentation of a vignette to which the participant responded. It seems unlikely that such short interviews could have provided particularly rich text and it would be informative for the authors to address this issue.
Revision:

We understand this comment fully and had exactly the same reflections initially, when we got the transcripts. The entire group then read the interviews thoroughly and discussed the content, both with each other, and with the large international research group from the entire CHAKA project. By going in depth into the texts, we quickly discovered a surprising richness despite the interviews’ length. On these grounds, we decided to proceed with the interviews. In the revised version of the article, we addressed this shortly in a new paragraph under the methods section:

Methodological considerations

The interviews were relatively short and lasted between 31 minutes and 13 seconds and 12 minutes and 5 seconds. The average was about 19 minutes. Despite the short length of the interviews, the participants managed to express surprisingly “rich texts” with personal descriptions. Seemingly, the concrete but open questions on how and whom they lived with, their daily struggles and pleasures provided a comfortable basis for telling their own story of their care environment.

Reviewer:

There is some indication that narratives were informed by caregiving rhetoric (e.g. reference to self-stigma p11- line 53) which may inform the way participants talk about their needs and experiences. This should be acknowledged in the discussion.

Revision:

In the revised version, we have started the discussion section with a repetition of the purpose of the study in order to clarify and acknowledge why this approach was chosen and deemed appropriate.

The purpose of the study was to investigate both the protective and the risk factors in HIV-infected adolescents care environment in order to understand what might contribute to negative outcomes and what might provide a protective buffer against harmful life events. In accordance with the focus of the study on the care environment, the interviews mainly focused on the adolescents’ experience of being part of a family and community context. This approach has the advantage on getting valuable information on contextual aspects that seem important for their psychological development.
Reviewer:

There are a couple of minor typographical/ language errors that should be corrected- for example, on p3, lines 55 and 56 orphan's should be orphans, on page 7 line 49 'station' is unclear as is 'detected' on line 53.

Revision:

Orphan’s are changed to orphans.

Station is changed to “home”.

Detected is changed to “noticed”.

The rest of the manuscript is proof read once more.