

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Using community influencer groups to address COVID-19 misinformation and vaccine hesitancy in Uganda: a protocol for a prospective quasi-experimental study.
AUTHORS	Ssanyu, Jacquelyn; Kiguba, Ronald; Olum, Ronald; Kiguli, Juliet; Kitutu, Freddy

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Lockyer, Bridget Bradford Institute for Health Research
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Nov-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thanks for the opportunity to review this protocol on what I think will be an interesting and significant study.</p> <p>The first issue I identified is that BMJ Open asks that the dates of the study should be included in the manuscript, which I could not find. As a result, I'm not sure if this study has begun or not, and whether any changes could now be made to the methods.</p> <p>My main concern is not justifying why there is no plan for any post intervention qualitative work. This decision means you might not fully understand the complexities of how the intervention was received, what worked and what didn't and how it could be improved. I think this is a limitation of the research which needs to be justified and acknowledged within the limitations.</p> <p>There was also some other areas of clarification 'healthy men and women' on page 9, does this mean that they do not have Covid-19/in quarantine or that they are healthy in other aspects? I think this is a limitation of the research which needs to be justified and addressed.</p> <p>There also needs to be clarification on your 'purposive sampling', in what ways will this be purposive, what criteria will be used? These issues means that the methods are not described sufficiently to allow the study to be repeated.</p> <p>It would be useful to provide topic guides for the interviews and focus groups and the survey questions so that this study could be adapted and repeated elsewhere.</p> <p>Overall, if these issues were addressed and/or justified I think this protocol is suitable to be published.</p>
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REVIEWER	Liu, Taoran Jinan University, Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, School of Medicine
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Nov-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	This is an interesting research direction and the authors performed a thorough study protocol with adequate introduction, methodology
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	<p>and discussion. However, several revisions should be made to improve the quality of this paper.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The objectives of the study protocol should be placed below or in the introduction section, not in the method section. 2. It is better for authors to present an example question of COVID-19 misinformation and hesitancy towards a potential COVID-19 vaccine. 3. Discussion needs to be more practical, for example, the methods to reduce the misinformation phenomenon and more realities of vaccine hesitancy should be presented.
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Dr. Bridget Lockyer, Bradford Institute for Health Research

Comments to the Author:

Thanks for the opportunity to review this protocol on what I think will be an interesting and significant study.

The first issue I identified is that BMJ Open asks that the dates of the study should be included in the manuscript, which I could not find. As a result, I'm not sure if this study has begun or not, and whether any changes could now be made to the methods.

Response

Thank you for this comment. The planned start and end dates of the study have been included in the revised manuscript. The study has not yet ended and so changes recommended by the reviewers that have the potential to improve the quality of evidence generated out of study can be made.

Comment:

My main concern is not justifying why there is no plan for any post intervention qualitative work. This decision means you might not fully understand the complexities of how the intervention was received, what worked and what didn't and how it could be improved. I think this is a limitation of the research which needs to be justified and acknowledged within the limitations.

Response:

The authors are grateful for this comment. Post intervention qualitative work will be conducted as suggested by the reviewer to examine how the complexities of how the intervention was received, what worked and what didn't and how it could be improved. This has been clarified in the revised manuscript.

Comment:

There was also some other areas of clarification 'healthy men and women' on page 9, does this mean that they do not have Covid-19/in quarantine or that they are healthy in other aspects? I think this is a limitation of the research which needs to be justified and addressed.

Response:

The authors are grateful for this observation. A clarification has been made in the revised manuscript. "Using village leaders, men and women without signs and symptoms of COVID19 or a positive COVID19 test nor in quarantine aged 18 to 65 years in the study villages will be identified and invited to participate in the study. The participants will be representative of the community members of the study villages"

Comment:

There also needs to be clarification on your 'purposive sampling', in what ways will this be purposive, what criteria will be used? These issues means that the methods are not described sufficiently to allow the study to be repeated.

Response:

Thank you for this observation. The authors have provide more information about the “purposive sampling” in the revised manuscript.

Comment

It would be useful to provide topic guides for the interviews and focus groups and the survey questions so that this study could be adapted and repeated elsewhere.

Response:

Thank you for this guidance. The authors have provided the topic guides for the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews as supplementary material for the readers' review.

Comment:

Overall, if these issues were addressed and/or justified I think this protocol is suitable to be published.

Response:

The authors are very grateful for this favorable observation.

Reviewer: 2

Dr. Taoran Liu, Jinan University

Comments to the Author:

This is an interesting research direction and the authors performed a thorough study protocol with adequate introduction, methodology and discussion. However, several revisions should be made to improve the quality of this paper.

Comment:

The objectives of the study protocol should be placed below or in the introduction section, not in the method section.

Response:

Thank you for this observation. The research objectives have been placed below the introduction section as recommended by the reviewer. in the revised version.

Comment:

It is better for authors to present an example question of COVID-19 misinformation and hesitancy towards a potential COVID-19 vaccine.

Response:

The authors are grateful for this observation. The detailed structured tool used in the quantitative household survey has been provided as supplementary material for the readers' review.

Questionnaire items on misinformation were broadly categorized into general misinformation, conspiracy beliefs and religious misinformation beliefs. Items on vaccine hesitancy focused in childhood and adult vaccines.

Comment

Discussion needs to be more practical, for example, the methods to reduce the misinformation phenomenon and more realities of vaccine hesitancy should be presented.

Response:

Thank you very much for this comment. The discussion has been revised with more practical suggestions that will be considered in line with the findings from baseline to address misinformation.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Lockyer, Bridget Bradford Institute for Health Research
REVIEW RETURNED	10-Mar-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thank you for making the revisions suggested, which I am mostly happy with.</p> <p>My main issue is still the post-intervention qualitative work. The abstract does not explicitly say that qualitative interviews post intervention will take place, and within the main text it is still vague.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p>'Qualitative interviews including focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with some of the social influencers and the beneficiaries of the intervention will be conducted. The interviews will examine the complexities of how the intervention was received, what worked and what did not and how it could be improved'</p> <p>How many are you planning to do, and when will this take place? 6 months afterwards in line with the survey?</p> <p>Please make sure that the plan for the post intervention qualitative work is mentioned in the abstract, the participant flow chart, and discussed in slightly more detail in the section quoted above.</p> <p>My only other suggestions for corrections is within the interview/focus group topic guides. I think the question 'Why is it important to vaccinate ourselves and our children?' is a bit too leading and should be changed to 'Do you think it is important to vaccinate ourselves and our children? Why/why not?'</p> <p>I also think you could add a question at the end that asks if there's anything else they would like to discuss, so that participants have the opportunity to discuss the topic outside of these specific questions.</p>
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REVIEWER	Liu, Taoran Jinan University, Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, School of Medicine
REVIEW RETURNED	31-Mar-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The authors have addressed all the questions and comment that I raised in the previous review round. The study is interesting, and I think it is suitable for publication.</p> <p>There is only one small problem :</p> <p>(1) In the abstract, the full name of "COVID-19" should be "Coronavirus Disease 2019" instead of "Coronavirus Disease 19".</p>
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 2

Dr. Taoran Liu, Jinan University

Comments to the Author:

The authors have addressed all the questions and comment that I raised in the previous review round. The study is interesting, and I think it is suitable for publication.

There is only one small problem: In the abstract, the full name of "COVID-19" should be "Coronavirus Disease 2019" instead of "Coronavirus Disease 19".

Response

We are grateful to the reviewer for this complement. The suggested change from 19 to 2019 has been made in the abstract of the resubmitted manuscript for your consideration.