Reviewer’s report

Title: Risk factors for mental disorders in women survivors of human trafficking: a historical cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 24 March 2013

Reviewer: Michael Gerhard Odenwald

Reviewer’s report:

1. This is an important study and a neglected population that deserves more attention and support. Nevertheless, the manuscript needs to be revised in order to make the best out of it. The other article reporting from this data set (Ostrovschi et al., 2011) needs to be cited and acknowledged. It needs to be shown what the differences between both articles are.

Abstract:

2. Please write out AOR the first time you use it.

3. Why is duration of trafficking independent risk factor? AOR is not significant.

Methods.

4. You describe the inclusion criteria. Among the mentioned inclusion criteria, one pops out and deserves more explanation: “and had received crisis-intervention care from this programme”.

5. Some statements need more explanations: “Following discussions with IOM we chose not to ask about the trafficking experience itself.“ How can you assess PTSD without the possibility to ask what they experienced during trafficking? Later on you say that data were collected on trafficking experiences duration; so you mean that no information was assessed in what way women were exploited? Even if so, can you explain to the reader what Moldavian women usually have experienced? Only from Table 1 the reader known that it’s mainly sexual exploitation.

6. For the modified version of the Conflict Tactic Scale, please report internal consistencies for the three scales from your sample as well as example items for the scales.

7. For the modified CANSAS-SF, please report the items you have added tot he original items. Please also report internal consistencies or other coefficients of reliability and if existing of validity. Please state more clearly that this does not refer to your data but to a different publication: „Correlations of inter-rater reliability by service users and test-retest reliability are very high (r=0.98, P<0.01 and r=0.71, P<0.001 respectively).[28]“

8. Please also report the internal consistency of the original and the modified social support questionnaire used in your study.
9. The assessment of baseline psychiatric disorders seems to be a weak point of the study. The baseline assessment was a clinical assessment. Do you have any information on the reliability of this assessment, e.g. inter-rater reliability? What is astonishing, from Ostrovschi et al., 2011, we know that at baseline 105/120 women received any diagnosis at baseline, some months later it’s much less. It is astonishing that chronic diagnoses seemed to be made at baseline, e.g. schizophrenia, and were not confirmed with the SCID some months later. This baseline assessment was done based on ICD-10, the SCID assessment based on DSM-IV. Does this explain the inconsistencies? Please invalidate my doubt that this was reliable. And it seems that you have just used anxiety or depression from the baseline assessment for the adjustment. Why?

10. Do you have any study that reports on the reliability or validity of the Romanian version of the SCID?

11. Can you report the average time between baseline and SCID-assessment? Is this a potential predictor variable for a SCID diagnosis?

Statistical analysis

12. Please use “statistical analysis” as heading

13. Table 1: How did you calculate Fisher’s exact test when there more than two x two categories?

14. It is not fully clear what you mean with “Variables were included in the model if they showed an association with mental disorder in bivariate analyses (p<0.1),“ after having said that you are using backward stepwise inclusion. Please state that these were the variables with which you started the back inclusion procedure.

15. What was the dependent variable of logistic regression models? Any SCID diagnosis or just mood and anxiety diagnoses? It is not fully clear how many different logistic regression models you calculated. Have you calculated one model for each predictor variable? Please report more carefully. How was adjustment of Odds Ratios made? I do not understand whether you have systematically controlled for some variables. Did you calculate binary logistic regression models with constant?

Results:

16. “Very little difference was observed in respect of age, country trafficked to, duration of trafficking, marital status, or pre-trafficking employment status.“ What do you mean with „little difference“? Do you have p-values?

17. Table 1: the N in the third column is not correct.

18. Social support score: The direction of the association is counter-intuitive: In Table 1, the participants who are burdened by mental disorders seemed to have received more social support? Why? In the regression model the direction is the opposite direction.

18. Some of your statements imply that you use only SCID anxiety and depression diagnosis as dependent variable in logistic regression? Please clarify.
Seems that you have assessed all disorders. Please justify if this is the case.

Discussion:
19. The problems stated above were not discussed. The discussion of limitations should include the identified problems. The recommendations should be made carefully, according to the findings and their limitations.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.