Reviewer's report

Title: Mental health of indigenous school children in northern Chile

Version: 2 Date: 14 August 2013

Reviewer: Fernanda Serpeloni

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Overall the paper deals with an important topic and shows interesting results regarding the mental health of indigenous children in Chile. The study compares the mental health, anxiety and depression, between Aymara and non-Aymara school aged children in Northern Chile. The level of involvement with Aymara culture was also investigated. The manuscript lacks some crucial information including methods descriptions and results tables. Therefore I recommend you a further elaboration of the following points:

Discretionary Revisions

1. It would be interesting to have a more elaborated background section on the impact of migration on indigenous families in general (e.g. on mental health, integration to the community, etc) and more specific about the situation of the Aymara children (e.g. living conditions and unemployment rate).

2. “Approximately 10% of children and adolescents suffer from anxiety, ranging from 5.6% to 21%, depending on the criteria used and the type of anxiety disorder studied”. Information about the population is missing. I would suggest, for example, including “worldwide”, if this is the case.

3. “The study of anxiety and depression – which, according to some authors, should be considered in a broader psychopathological category”. It is not clear what would be considered a broader psychopathological category.

4. “Research among these population groups reveals that psychosocial factors (racism, family disconnectedness, community dysfunction, and social disadvantage)…” In this affirmation it is not clear of which groups you are referring to.

5. “The loss of land, culture, and identity; covert and overt racism; marginalization; and powerlessness have been highlighted by indigenous peoples as fundamental causes of poor health. Obviously, each situation differs, depending on a number of contexts.” I would recommend citing some of the different contexts.

Minor Essential Revisions

6. “Given the high rates of continuity in adolescence and in the long term in adulthood, the existence of psychological disorders in childhood has been a subject of research in recent years and is the main cause of disability in this age group.” This is an important affirmation. I suggest making it clearer. Information on the age groups, and types of psychological disorders and disabilities is
missing.
7. I would recommend to specify more the migration background of the Aymara population. Were they forced to leave their places during the dictator? Do they have the choice of staying at the Andes? This is an interesting factor when considering the exposure to traumatic events of the individual that migrated and now is also facing, as you mentioned, “stress due to an individual’s acclimatization to the culture, which tends to increase levels of anxiety or depression”. Is this the case of Aymara population? Findings show that traumatic events also might contribute to the development of depression. Don’t you think that this would be interesting to approach in the discussion?

Major compulsory Revisions
8. The paper needs good language and grammar revision. There are some parts that are confusing due to the English.
9. It is not clear how the sampling was done. A better explanation in the methods section should be included. E.g. How were the private and public schools chosen? Is the sample a representative population of the indigenous in the city of Arica?
10. Stress in children (Sic): in the methods you specify that this instrument is designed for children between 9 and 12 years old and is also adapted to Chile. However you used this instrument with adolescents from 13 to 15 years old. Is this instrument validated for this age?
11. “Inventory of the level of involvement in the Aymara Culture”. I would recommend giving more information about this instrument in the methods section. Is this scale validated or in the process of being validated? Was it based in another scale?
12. “Once approval was received, parents were invited to participate voluntarily in the study…” I was confused about this sentence. Were the parents of participants also interviewed or they were invited to give the consent for their child to take part in the study?
13. In the results you only considered the information on ethnicity provided by parents. Why did you ignore the information provided by the children?
14. The information of the subscales in Table 1 is missing from the methods section.
15. A table with the results of the subscales of the “Inventory of the level of involvement in the Aymara Culture” is missing.
16. Procedure: A better description of the data collection should be given. How were the questionnaires applied? By self-assessment or through interviews? Was it a group session or individual? What was the background of the interviewers?
17. Migration: It is not clear if the children migrated themselves from the high Andean plateau or if their ancestors did (e.g. parents and grandparents. Does the migration background have an impact on the level of involvement with the culture?
18. “Table 2 shows a significant difference in the subscale for hopelessness, in which Aymara children with a low level of involvement scored more points.” I would suggest to discuss this result in the Discussion section.

19. The use of graphs is suggested for the results section. If parametric tests are to be used tests for normality or graphical use of boxplots is recommended.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.