Author's response to reviews

Title: Knowledge, experience, and potential risks of dating violence among Japanese university students: a cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Revision note

Knowledge, experience, and potential risks of dating violence among Japanese university students: a cross-sectional study

The authors thank the reviewers for their comments. We have revised the manuscript in accordance with the reviewers’ comments as indicated below.

Responses to Reviewers

1. Reviewer’s comment
   You smartly mention that you intended to measure physical, sexual, emotional IPV, etc, in your measures. I appreciate your attention to the various forms of IPV. HOWEVER, you go on to create a summary score, and an "ever experience harassment" variable as if these items can be included together. There is a VERY big difference between an item like "I have asked my boyfriend/girlfriend what is more important between me and another/others," and "I have had sexual relations with my boyfriend/girlfriend against their wishes." Any summary variable you create is very misleading. It should also be noted that p-values presented in Table 1 are unadjusted and I would caution making firm interpretations based on gender with what little you have to work with. Please break down into physical IPV, verbal IPV, sexual IPV, etc.

Response

The Results section and tables have been revised, and we have excluded scores regarding experience of perpetration and being a victim of violence and knowledge score. Table 1 shows the study participants’ demographic characteristics and experiences of having a boy/girlfriend, and presents detailed demographic characteristics of the study participants. Especially, the distribution of faculties to which the participants belonged has been added in the Results section (P9, L2-6). The results of perpetration, being a victim, and IPV knowledge are shown descriptively in the Results section (P9, L10-14, P10, L4-8, P10, L8-14) and the new Tables 2, 3, and 6 in the revised manuscript. In addition, the previous Table 5 and 6 were excluded, because the scores and means are not used in the revised manuscript. The order of description of results regarding knowledge of IPV and help-seeking behavior have been modified. Therefore, the new Table 5 shows the results of logistic regression analysis to assess factors associated with help-seeking behavior among
study participants who had experienced any type of harassment, and two sentences were added in the Results section (P13, L3-7). The new Table 6 shows knowledge of IPV.

2. Reviewer’s comment
   Please make your results much more clear. When are you using linear regression? When are you using logistic regression? Where are the "ending relationship" items in your tables? Your manuscript would be stronger if you focus on your analyses on only a handful of the variables you collected.

Response
   In addition to modifications mentioned in the response to the reviewer’s comment 1, the Methods section has been revised to mention the types of analysis that were applied in the present study (P8, L3-5). The new Table 4 was added to show details of the types of harassment that were clear physical and sexual harassment, help-seeking, experience of attending lecture/seminar regarding DV and/or dating violence, and termination of relationships after harassment. Two sentences were added in the Results section (P11, L17-P12, L3).

3. Reviewer’s comment
   While you cannot revise your measures at this point, I do think one major flaw is your choice of items for violence perpetration, violence victimization and IPV knowledge. For example, an important knowledge question addressed forced condom nonuse, yet you did not measure this in the perpetration and victimization questions. There is too strong a focus on digital abuse given the literature you cite is much more about sexual/reproductive health.

Response
   The objectives of the present study were to describe the situation of perpetration, being a victim of, and knowledge regarding IPV among freshman university students in Japan, and their consultation and help-seeking behavior when experiencing IPV. The previous Tables 2, 3, and 4 have been renumbered as Tables 2, 3, and 6, respectively, in the revised manuscript to describe perpetration, being a victim, and knowledge of IPV, and the Results section has been amended to focus on the study objectives. In addition, the Discussion section (P17, L14-18) and references have been revised to discuss the objectives and results of the present study.
4. Reviewer’s comment
Your Cronbach’s alpha for IPV knowledge is not strong. You might address the lack of reliability in your limitations, especially as you still go on to use the mean score from the instrument in your analysis.

Response
We have omitted the score and mean of IPV knowledge in the revised manuscript.

5. Reviewer’s comment
I would suggest caution citing "reciprocal IPV" literature. The studies often conflate physical and sexual violence and ignore that women are more likely to be injured by a partner compared to men. (Please see recent commentaries by Dr. Elizabeth Reed for clarification on this debate). You could strengthen your case by being careful with the measures you combine.

Response
Six sentences regarding gender differences have been added in the Discussion section of the revised manuscript citing additional literature about reciprocal IPV (P16, L2-17, P18, L9-10).

6. Reviewer’s comment
Your lit review in the discussion section could be moved to the introduction. Scientific studies of the relationship between IPV and sexual/reproductive health are more compelling than conjecture that IPV, STI and abortion are the result of the "deterioration of human relationships."

Response
The manuscript has been revised and some sentences regarding STI and abortion in the Introduction section have been omitted in the revised manuscript.

7. Reviewer’s comment
Intro: What is the prevalence of IPV in Japan? Are there studies documenting the prevalence of dating violence in Japan?

Response
Three sentences have been added to describe the prevalence of IPV in Japan (P3, L15-P4, L4). There has been no suitable survey regarding dating violence in Japan, and one sentence was added to explain this point in the Introduction section of the revised manuscript (P4, L12-13).

8. Reviewer’s comment
   Methods: Please articulate a sample of your measures. How is 'harassment' measured?

Response
   One sentence has been added to describe the procedure used in the study in the Methods section (P7, L8-11).

9. Reviewer’s comment
   Intro: The introduction needs some reorganization. You mention domestic violence, IPV and dating violence in the first sentence. It would be less confusing to those that are not familiar with IPV research to just use IPV. Also, please wrap up your discussion of the WHO multi-country study before you mention the country-specific laws.

Response
   We have removed the description of domestic violence, and the discussion of the WHO multi-country study has been concluded before mentioning the Japanese Domestic Violence Prevention Act in the revised manuscript in the Introduction section.