Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 2 January 2011

Reviewer: Heather L McCauley

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for your interesting manuscript on a very important topic, intimate partner violence, or dating violence, among non-married men and women in Japan. I have thoughtfully reviewed your manuscript and provide the following recommendations.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) 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.

5) 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.
6) 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."

Minor Essential Revisions:

7) Intro: What is the prevalence of IPV in Japan? Are there studies documenting the prevalence of dating violence in Japan?

8) Methods: Please articulate a sample of your measures. How is 'harassment' measured?

Discretionary Revisions:

9) 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.

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

**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.