Reviewer's report

**Title:** Controlling behavior, power relations within intimate relationships and intimate partner physical and sexual violence against women.

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**Reviewer:** Farah Ahmad

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Manuscript title: Controlling behavior, power relations within intimate relationships and intimate partner physical and sexual violence against women

I read this paper with great interest. The paper is relevant to the audience of BMC Public health. However, some revisions are needed as described below. Also, careful editing is needed for structure of sentence and grammar.

A. MINOR COMMENTS

**ABSTRACT**

1- The ‘background’ section should specify that Nigerian context.

2- In the ‘method’ section, the author immediately start with the analysis. It is important to first describe the cross-sectional survey they used examined by secondary analysis and the types of variables examined.

**INTRODUCTION**

3- Para 1: in the last sentence, the author states that “being controlled by an intimate partner and the use of emotional threats are highly injurious behaviors that warrant as much focus as other forms of violence”. Please elaborate on this point using evidence from existing literature.

4. Para 2: It is not clear whether the author is referring to “sex” or “gender” in the sentence starting as “A key element when examining...”

B. MAJOR COMMENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

1- Para 1: The author states that “..most of the existing studies have been carried out in North America, the United Kingdom, and Asia”. There is some important work on ‘controlling behavior’ conducted in the Middle East by MM Haj-Yahia with Jordanian and Palestinian populations.

2. Para 5: The hypothesis should be rephrased because the analysis is based on a cross-sectional survey and the use of word “subsequently” implies that it would be longitudinal.

**METHODS**

3. Under “measures”, the authors should cite original sources of the scales used.
Many of the needed references seem missing.

RESULTS

4. The prevalence of physical violence is 15% in the studied sample, consistent with existing studies. My question is about appropriateness of using “logistic regression” and reporting odd ratios for such a high prevalence. The odds ratios may be misleading because they overstate relative risks. (See Altman DG, Deeks JJ, Sackett DL). Odds ratios should be avoided when events are common. (letter). BMJ. 1998;317: 1318, and Sackett D, Deeks J, Altman D. Down with odds ratios! Evidence-Based Med 1996;1(6):164-166.) It would be better to give estimates of either relative risk.

DISCUSSION

5- Some parts of the discussion are confusing. For example, (para 2 of this section) the author states that “Controlling behavior by husband/partner and physical and sexual IPV against women was one the strongest risk factors for both physical and sexual IPV,...”. What do the author mean by saying that physical and sexual IPV...was the strongest factor for physical and sexual IPV? Which one is independent variable and which one is dependent variable? They seem same to me.

6- In the conclusion section, the author states that “This study indicated that controlling behavior by husband/partner is a strong risk factor for physical and sexual violence.” I am not that sure about it because the data set is cross-sectional in nature. Also there is debate about it in the literature. Some argue that “controlling behavior” is a precursor of “physical/sexual violence”. Others argue that the two co-exist and are only different forms of partner violence. This should be discussed.

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, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'.