Reviewer's report

Title: Violence witnessing, perpetrating and victimization in Medellin, Colombia. A random population survey

Version: 1 Date: 23 February 2011

Reviewer: Andres Villaveces

Reviewer's report:

• Major Compulsory Revisions

Background section:

1. First phrase of your second paragraph: Please provide a reference for this statement.

2. You state there are 120 WHO member States. There are actually 193. Did you mean States that reported data on violence?

3. The last phrase of this paragraph talks about data from the past yet it refers to the year 2020. What is the correct meaning of this statement?

Methods section:

1. The authors mention the themes or topics for which they had questions but do not explain enough how these concepts were defined. Respondents as well as readers could have different interpretations of the meaning of threats, extortion or engaging in violent behaviours. Can the authors further explain how they operationalized these concepts in their survey? How did they ensure respondents understood the concepts they were asking? I understand they used a validated questionnaire previously used in the PAHO ACTIVA project yet for the reader it is still not clear what the meaning of the different acts of violence they asked about entail.

Terms such as extortion for example have a very specific legal definition and hence I suggest the authors further explain the use of each and every one of these terms.

Tables: In several tables the authors added captions at the end that state either association Chi2 or trend Chi2 or association Chi2 with Yates correction. The selection and combination of simple Chi2 tests and Chi2 tests for trend is confusing when shown in this manner. Furthermore there is no mention of these tests and their corresponding p-values in the methods section. Can the authors please provide the reader with more concrete information and rationale used for combining these tests in the tables?

• Minor Essential Revisions
1. This might seem picky (sorry), but I would like to understand better the use of the term “aggressors” and “aggressive” selected by the authors throughout the manuscript. I would suggest they replace the term for “perpetrator” or “perpetrated”. While I understand and agree with the use of the term aggression in several sections of the manuscript, it seems to me that perpetrator fits better in other. For example in the results section (paragraph 4 after the insert of table 2), the authors state that “Participants without a partner were significantly more aggressive in so much as verbal violence, …) In light of the fact that the authors did not have any measure of aggressive behaviours but rather a report about it, I submit that it might be more accurate for them to report that “Participants without a partner were significantly more likely to perpetrate verbal violence, etc…” The latter expression states a fact while the former is more of a qualifier for which they have no measure.

Minor issues not for publication:
1. I found throughout the manuscript a few spelling mistakes that I recommend the authors correct. In addition the authors repeat several times that the reported data were not evenly distributed within the participating population. Perhaps it would suffice to mention this only once in the text.

2. In the tables please replace IC95% for 95% Confidence Intervals.

• Discretionary Revisions

The authors might want to include a table with the meaning of the variables they used or perhaps they can include this in the methods section. The explanation is necessary. The format is for them to choose.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.