Reviewer's report

Title: Traumatic episodes experienced during the genocide period in Rwanda influence life circumstances in young men and women 17 years later.

Version: 2 Date: 30 October 2013

Reviewer: Hannah Kuper

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes the reporting of traumatic episodes among young people in Rwanda over three time periods: lifetime, during the genocide and in the last three years. The authors showed worryingly high levels of experience of traumatic episodes. These data are important, and they could be appreciated even more with some improvements in the description of the methods and display of data.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Sampling: The authors need to improve the reporting of the sampling of the population.
- Methods: page 6: the description of the power calculation is unclear as it seems to be mixing the sample size estimation for a survey and for a case-control study.
- Methods: page 6. Was the selection of villages by probability proportionate to size (whereby large villages were more likely to be selected) or at random? If at random, then the sample selected will be biased towards small villages and therefore not representative of the population. This would need to be discussed as a limitation.
- Methods: page 6. A description is needed as to how the households were selected for inclusion as this is currently not clear.
- Methods: page 6. The description of selection of individuals for inclusion is not at all clear and needs to be improved. Furthermore, it would be useful to specify eligibility criteria (e.g. permanent resident? Lived in Rwanda all lives?).

Language: The subject matter is very sensitive and upsetting and it is unsurprising that the authors use emotive language. However, this is not entirely appropriate for a scientific publication and I suggest that the authors make efforts to report just facts, rather than judgment. For instance the sentence “... even their children were not spared” (introduction, paragraph 2) could be rephrased as “and children were also victims”. Or the sentence “The annual national commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda is another factor that awakens the trauma caused and also hatred among some people” (discussion, page 15, paragraph 3) could be taken out. I suggest that the authors read through the paper again and tone down some of the phrasing.
• Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract:
- Specify in the methods when the study was conducted
- Include some figures (e.g. numbers, %, p-values) in the results.
- The conclusion that the traumatic episodes may be as an aftermath of the genocide is too speculative and should be taken out.

Introduction:
- Paragraph 3 – it would be useful to give the sample size for the population
- Paragraph 4 – Some would argue that the Gacaca hearings and the Genocide memorial period may help people by talking through issues and rather than being upsetting and traumatic.
- Page 5 – the top four paragraphs are long and not entirely relevant to the paper’s subject and should be reduced.

Methods:
- Page 7: specify that the interviewers were all clinical psychologists as this is currently not clear.
- Page 9: specify that the asset score was created by adding up the number of assets owned.

Results:
- Page 10: please specify the response rate.

Tables and Figures
- I do not believe that the figures make a useful contribution and these could be taken out.
- Table 1: The total column is not needed. P values should be written as <0.001 rather than 0.000. I am not sure that it is relevant/necessary to include partner information in this table.
- Table 2: Again, I do not believe that the total column is needed. It would be sufficient to present asset summary score, rather than including individual items.
- Table 3: I do not believe that this table is needed as the pertinent information is included in table 4.
- Table 4: Please include the p-values comparing men and women at the three different time periods.
- Table 5: The OR in this table should be age-adjusted rather than crude. Please express comparisons in terms of “more likely” rather than “higher risk” as the measure is odds ratio not risk ratio. The statement on the majority attended school does not relate to the OR given for that sentence.

Discussion:
- Page 15, paragraph 1. This paragraph is not needed and obscures the main findings which relates to experience of trauma.

- Page 17, paragraph 4, final sentence. This sentence (“this points at feelings of insecurity...”) is too speculative and should be taken out.

- The conclusion needs to be a bit “snappier” and in keeping with the findings.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests