Reviewer’s report

Title: Modeling Predictors of Drug Risk among Male Street Laborers in Urban Vietnam

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Reviewer: Nathan Hansen

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Overall I like this paper and think it has potential to add to the literature on HIV prevention among injection drug users. I noted numerous minor issues in my read of the manuscript and overall it could benefit from a thorough edit. My comments by section follow:

Abstract:
1. Background: In the first sentence, “drug risk” might be better phrased as “drug use-related HIV risk” or just “drug use.” Also, it might be better to say the study tests “a modified version” rather than “the modified version” of the IMB model, as more than one modified version is possible. Finally, the last sentence, “risk drug use behavior” should match the phrase in the first sentence—so something like “drug use-related risk behavior” would be better.

2. Methods: There needs to be a better transition between methods and results. Methods should state that SEM was used to analyze data from interviews.

3. Results: There wasn’t really a hypothesis stated for results to be contrary to—I might remove the opening phrase and just start with “Overall measures of fit....” Again, last sentence; use “drug use-related risk behavior.” Some of the wording here could be improved.

4. Conclusion: I would omit the sentence: “The results provide interesting directions for future research and suggest ways to effectively design intervention strategies” and simply explain the directions for future research and ways to effectively design interventions.

5. Key Words: Unskilled laborer is a key word, but the abstract uses the term low-skilled laborer. Choose one and then be consistent.

Background:
1. First paragraph: “at risk drug using populations” would be better as “at-risk, drug-using populations.” Also should say “Injection drug users” rather than “injecting drug users.

2. Bottom of page 3: I am not sure that the “social influence of drug using peers, friends, or relatives” helps migrants stay away from drugs. I would expect that these influences would increase drug use. In fact, the intent of this entire paragraph is somewhat unclear. And in the last sentence of the paragraph, “a fairly great attention” needs to be rephrased. Finally is the association of drug
use behavior with this population what is of interest, or variables that are associated with drug use behavior within this population?

3. On page 4, in the background, generally past tense is the most appropriate; thus the paper should read “To identify an appropriate theory for the current study, a critical review of the literature was essential” rather than “is essential”.

4. The last sentence of the paragraph at the top of page 5 is unclear—what types of items should be added to which constructs?

5. On page 5: Again, use the term “injection drug use,” not “injecting drug use.”

6. Last paragraph on page 5: A modified version of the IMB model has not been described yet, so stating that “the purpose of this study was to examine if the modified IMB model is superior to the original” does not make sense. What modified model? Some points that put migrant laborers at increased risk have been noted, but not how the IMB model should be adapted or modified based on this information. There is a leap in logic here.

Methods:

1. In the sample size and participants description it reads “men were selected because of their greater frequency compared to females.” What does this mean—more male migrant laborers, more males using drugs, more males with HIV, more males in Vietnam?

2. There are some minor typos and errors in this section.

Findings:

1. On page 9, in describing education, it reads: “(mean class completed=8).” What does this mean? Is it years of education? Does “class” represent some other level of educational achievement?

2. In the Descriptives of Modified IMB Model Constructs it reads: “Mobility was low, alcohol consumption and depression levels were close to moderate…” etc. What are the low, moderate, medium, positive, and high levels referenced here made in comparison too? Is there a normative sample or a way to anchor the reported values?

3. Last sentence on page 9 should read “scales and subscales demonstrated construct validity.”

4. On page 10, the sentence starting with “There was a significant path from information and motivation to behavior skills…” is long and convoluted. It is missing a conjunction (and, or) somewhere, and may be improved by splitting it into two sentences.

5. For the last sentence describing the original model, the text should note that all fit criteria were met, not just the Chi-square.

6. No comma is needed after All in the second paragraph on page 10.

Discussion

1. The information in the last paragraph on page 12 and continued on page 13 describing the formation of the modified IMB model should be in the background
section to explain how this model was created.

2. Model fit of the modified model was not as good as for the original, but wasn’t that bad—it was also a more complicated model. I would guess that with some effort to get better measures and a stronger measurement model, a modified model would be fine (mobility and alcohol use don’t really seem to work with depression and social isolation). The question is whether the added constructs add significantly to prediction of behavior. The do seem to work against information and motivation. In fact, stress might actually operate more as a moderator. It might be beyond the goals of the current paper, but it does seem that more exploration of these variables is warranted.

3. Why was the description of the test for indirect effects in the Discussion and not in 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 I have no competing interests