Reviewer's report

Title: Perceived risk for HIV transmission among Police Officers: a qualitative study of potential volunteers for a phase I/II HIV vaccine trial in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Reviewer: Shelley Lees

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Perceived risk for HIV transmission among Police Officer: a qualitative study of potential volunteers for a phase I/II HIV vaccine trial in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

This paper looks at the perceived risk of HIV transmission amongst Police Officers. It presents findings on sexual behaviour risk and risk related to working as a police officer. The findings of sexual behaviour risk are very similar to those found in a wide range of literature on HIV risk in sub-Saharan Africa and therefore do not tell us anything new. What is interesting is, however, the risk that police officers identify (both sexual and work related) that are influenced by the rules and practices of the organisation they work in intersected with the society they live in. I think that this paper would be better if it focused the findings and recommendations on this aspect.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Background
   This needs improving in terms of scientific language. For example “It is not surprising therefore that the mission of an organisation like the IAVI …. has the support of many”. This is a subjective statement.
   You state that police officers engage in multiple sexual relationships and low condom use. Is this higher or lower than other populations?
   You state that the study had two questions. What are these? What question is this study answering?

2. Methods
   It is not clear what you mean that POs can make independent informed decisions. What adult populations cannot make these?
   It is unclear how many people attended the education workshop and how many recruited for the FGDs. Is the number [9] after the first sentence under Study design and sampling a reference or a number?
   In the data collection you say you asked “can you tell me your views about the problem of HIV and AIDS…” Isn’t that a leading question using Problem?
   What do you mean by cultural norms? Norms of the institution, ethnic group, Dar es Salaam?
   How were the participants approached? At the meeting?
Do you mean private place at the police station, not secured?

The data analysis section is very unclear. Can you outline HOW you actually did the interpretive analysis. The findings are presented with two themes personal sexual practices and compromising risk-taking behaviour, however the analysis for the sub themes for these is unclear.

3. Findings

Some of the language seems to come from a direct translation of Swahili which does not make sense in English. For example, the first sentence “The participants asserted that sexual behaviour should not be used to segregate members of the police force from the general population”. That seems to be from a quote and not an analysis situating the sexual behaviour of the police in the context of wider society.

You use words such as asserted, discourse. I think reported and narrative are better.

Most of the findings are presented as introductory text to a quote and not as an analysis. There is some repetition about sexual behaviour in both themes. I think further analysis could be conducted to understand how personal sexual behaviour is affected or constrained by institutional rules and practices. What is their own and the institutions responsibility to their sexual risk?

Overall, this could be a very interesting paper if it presented some new perspectives on sexual risk and did not make the same recommendation for increasing condom use, which has been made over and over again to no avail. A better recommendation would be to look at improving working life so that POs are less likely to engage in risky sex and minimising risky practices at work

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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