Reviewer's report

Title: Battered women and help-seeking - a study of Swedish women subjected to partner violence

Version: 2 Date: 10 December 2012

Reviewer: Marie Gantz

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1) Page 6, please explain the statement beginning: "Due to misunderstandings and contradictory answers."

2) Page 8: Statistical analysis section states that two variables (last incidence of violence and ethnicity) were excluded from the models due to selection bias; however, if all women were included in the models, then it would have been better to include those covariates in the model to help control for the selection bias.

3) Page 12: If more help-seekers were in a relationship, how is it true that "Being/staying in the abusive relationship decreased the likelihood of seeking help?" Some clarification is needed. Also, please see the related comment about Table 1 below.

4) Page 12: The results controlling for ethnicity seem more important to report than those not controlling for ethnicity. Only by controlling for ethnicity are you able to compare the other predictors within comparable ethnic groups.

5) Page 13: Regarding the statement: "Differences in psychological distress might be due to the fact that many help-seekers had left their violent relationship more recently," had they left the relationships before or after seeking help?

6) In Table 1 and in the text of the paper, what is the distinction between "in a relationship" and "new relationship?" Are these mutually exclusive categories? Is the "new relationship" with the perpetrator or with someone else? Please also clarify why help-seeking women were more likely to be "in a relationship" category in Table 1, but in Table 3 the OR for help-seekers for "in a relationship" is <1.

Minor Essential Revisions
7) Bottom of page 2 (grammar): should be "compared to those who did not seek help."

8) Page 7: Where did the cut off of 44 for the psychosocial functioning score come from?

Discretionary Revisions
9) In the results section of the abstract, reporting ORs for non-help-seeking vs. help-seeking might make the direction of the differences clearer.
10) Page 4, under Participants, 204 are reported as non-help-seekers, however, 55 were found to have sought help. That could probably use clarification in this paragraph.

11) Page 6: There should be a comma after "from never to more than 20 times," for clarity.

12) Page 6: A full list of acts considered severe violence would be helpful.

13) Page 13: One explanation for "when different types of violence were compared separately the differences disappeared" is the fact that you have reduced numbers when you look at individual types of violence, thus you have less power to detect a significant difference.

14) Page 13: I would expect that this statement could be verified using your data: "One explanation could be that women in the help-seeking group might have been exposed to different types of violence to a larger extent compared to non help-seeking women"

**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, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interest.