Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 2 Date: 15 December 2012

Reviewer: Mariano Salazar

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for inviting me to review this paper. I think the manuscript addresses an important topic; however, before I can suggest publication major changes need to be done to it.

Major changes

Abstract

Please clarify what do you mean by help seeking as women who experienced IPV can seek help from many sources (formal and informal). I was wondering if when you talk about professional help seeking you mean looking for help from formal services such as police, shelters and so on.

Please clarify what type of IPV are you talking about emotional, physical, sexual, economical, any of the above? In addition it is important to specify what study design are you using in this manuscript. Is it case-referent study, a cross-sectional study?

In the result section you mention that “women in both groups reported high levels of psychological distress compared to the general population”. According to your aims you compared abused women who seek help with those who do not seek help.. so I was wondering if why are comparing with the general population. Also it is not possible to assess OR’s statistical significance if 95% CI is not shown. Please do so and clarify if you are talking about crude or adjusted results.

Also, clarify what does this paper add in relationship to what is already known of the field.

Introduction

Please use concepts consistently. Battered women and women experiencing IPV are similar concepts but they are not the same. Battered usually refers to a woman experiencing a repeated pattern of abuse associated with controlling behavior by their partner.

Important to add what influences women’s decisions to look for help. Also, it is important to expand the meaning of help seeking making clear that women can obtain help from formal and informal sources.

In general the background must be expanded. There are several other studies addressing this issue and should be at least mentioned in the introduction.

The justification needs to be improved. Many studies have been conducted
exploring this issue before and some have done what you have done. So my questions are , what is this study adding to the current level of knowledge on this issue? Why is it important and how this results can be used to improve abused women`s lives?

Methods

Please add what is the design of this study.

Participants: It is not clear who they are. Are they women exposed to abused at any point in their lives? In the last relationship ? in the last year? Women exposed to any form of IPV or just physical , sexual, etc?.

Participants selection : It is not clear., please improve it. Also, they way that the participants were selected might include a selection bias . Can you discuss how your sampling method is influenced by the fact that you are reaching women through internet and through newspaper adds ? What could happen if a woman does not have access to internet or does not read the paper?

As mentioned before it is very important to clarify what do you mean by help seeking and what type of actions are we talking about .

On page six, first paragraph there is a word in Swedish, please translate that to English.

Measures: It is important to improve the way IPV is described. As it is know it seems to describe actions only portraying physical IPV . What happened to actions describing psychological and sexual IPV?

On page seven, some paragraphs are starting with reference numbers. Please change that.

Analysis

It is not clear and sometime it can be contradictory. For example, In one part you mention that ethnicity was excluded from the analysis and in other you say that it is included.

On page nine, you mention that “lineality was checked for among all continues variables by grouping them into categories”. Do you mean multy-colineality? . If so, the technique that you used is new to me I would like to see a reference here. There are other ways to check for multicolinealaty in a model (tolerance and VIF) , IK was wondering why any of these methods were not used?

Results

Not clear. It is not shown if the differences described are statically significant. In addition, OR must be described with the 95% CI and it must be stated if there figures are crude or adjusted finding , otherwise is impossible to assess the validity of the findings described here. In the text, references to corresponding tables are missing.

Discussion and conclusions

Must be revised when the methodological issues presented before are addressed.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I do not have any competing interest