Reviewer’s report

Title: Violence against primary school children with disabilities in Uganda: A cross-sectional study

Version: 2
Date: 4 July 2014

Reviewer: mariane sentenac

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This publication addresses an important area of research and makes a unique contribution to the topic of physical, emotional, and sexual violence among school aged-children with and without disabilities in Luwero District Uganda. Furthermore, it helps identify and describe the most common perpetrators that bestow violence in Ugandan youth. This manuscript has clear objectives, is methodologically sound, its results are well described, is well written, and may extend previous research. However, some issues could be clarified to improve the manuscript. There is no major compulsory revisions.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) In the introduction, authors stated that previous studies did not collect information on the perpetrators of violence (line 55). Given that this is a central issue in this paper, more details should be provided concerning gap in the literature in this section.

2) In the introduction, it is mentioned that ‘selected factors associated with increased risk of violence’ (line 81) are explored; however, the authors do not provide any background information or premise for exploring these factors. These ‘selected factors’ should be described in detail and a rationale in examining these factors should be provided in the background section.

3) The study’s objectives are clear; however, it would be beneficial to have 1or 2 stated hypotheses about what the authors were expecting to find.

4) In the methods (line 100), it is stated that student participation was 77% and that 19% were absent. What about the remaining 4%? Student refusal and parental refusal should be added. This point should be clarified.

Discretionary Revisions

1) In the methods, concerning the instruments (line 123), different forms of violence have been assessed through numerous items in each domain. Finally, the coding chosen is binary (yes/no). These forms of variables lead to a lack of information. It would have been interesting to assess the level or frequency of violence. Has this point has it been considered by the authors?

2) In the methods, regarding the instruments (line 119), it should be clearly stated that the measure of disability is caught through the measure of functional limitations. Line 134: information is provided on the SDQ; however it would be beneficial to include additional information on the measures of the others factors.
3) In the analysis section (line 147), regarding missing data, a more detailed description should be given to guarantee the representativeness of the sample.

4) In the discussion (line 254), “Interestingly, for girls,….”. Please delete ‘Interestingly’, there is no need to tell readers what is ‘interesting’. Moreover authors should discuss this results in more depth.

5) In the discussion (line 256), the term ‘risk factor’ should be used with caution given the cross-sectional nature of the study, especially regarding the symptoms of mental disorders. The cross-sectional design of the study does not allow the authors to draw conclusions about causal relations between variables. This point should be mentioned as a limitation.

6) One finding was that working outside the home was a risk factor of violence experience in both disabled and non-disabled children. Why were employers not considered as potential perpetrators of violence?

7) Line 308: The term ‘bullying’ is mentioned for the first time in the discussion and is associated to emotional violence. Bullying involves an unequal distribution of strength between an aggressor and victim, and the victim endures repeated acts of harmful psychological or aggression but repeated over time (see definition provided by Dan Olweus, 1999). Bullying can take different forms: cyberbullying, verbal bullying, physical bullying or relational bullying. This definition should be kept in mind by the authors when they discuss bullying behaviours in their manuscript.

8) Lines 318 to 322: Authors report the lack of efficacy of interventions designed to address school-based violence in low income countries, while interventions designed to reduce bullying seems more successful. More elements should be provided by authors to feed into the discussion.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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