Reviewer's report

Title: Risk factors by gender for violence victimization among Swedish youths: a cross-sectional study

Version: 2

Date: 1 April 2014

Reviewer: Katarina Swahnberg

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this paper. It is an interesting paper that adds important knowledge to the field especially pointing out that violence is not a single experiences among victimised young people. I would like to recommend this paper for publication after major revision. Now it is structured as any descriptive prevalence study on violence but due to the actual analytic content I would like to make some suggestions.

Major revision

Background:

Health risk behaviours, especially sexual risk behaviour and a history of sexual abuse is an established research field and there are both published reviews and metaanalyses that ought to be referred to. One example: Paolucci EO, Genuis ML, Violato C. A meta-analysis of the published research on the effects of child sexual abuse. J Psychol. 2001;135(1):17-36.

The strongest message in this paper, in my opinion, is about revictimisation or rather polyvictimisation and yet the concept revictimisation only appears in a very short paragraph in the discussion.

The study aim is important but the study design is not optimal for this kind of analyses still it is doable if the aim is theoretically supported. A theoretical section about revictimisation and polyvictimisation would not only support the direction of the associations found in this study, but also give a platform for an interesting discussion anchored in both theory and empery.

Title:

“Risk factor” indicates a study design that is able to establish causal relations and then it seems unfortunate to signal a different study design at the end.

The terminology is a general problem in the paper; “odds” “associations” “risk estimates” is used interchangeably.

Minor revision

Methods/settings:

It would be informative if you could explain the procedure a bit more e.g., who gave the information, who took the verbal informed consent etc?
Methods/instrument/abuse:
Reference 27 is an ordinary prevalence study not supporting the validity of abuse questions in NorAQ. There are two published validation studies, one in a male and one in a female sample, available that would suit this purpose better.

I suggest that the abuse questions are displayed in a separate appendix or table since they are crucial to understand and assess the whole paper. It would also be helpful if you clearly stated what the dependent variable is.

Methods/instrument/alcohol:
The reader has to be able to understand the text without looking up former publications. Even if it is fine to refer to previous work sufficient information should be given, e.g. 5 or 6 what? is the cut of for hazardous drinking.

More important is how the age variable was handled. It is not known to the reader now. Which makes it hard to understand what is meant e.g. in the result section page 10 line 17 “…declined with age…”

Statistical methods:
“samples” page 8 line three, could it be groups?

Ethics:
All staff was informed about this…. Maybe you could rewrite to avoid imprecise wording like “this”.

Discussion:
The discussion is less well written than the rest of the paper. There are more fragments e.g. page 12 line six “Immigrant status did not show any associations.” and something is lacking in the line before that.

The understanding of polyvictimisation and the view of violence not as separate acts but a state of violence, might help you develop your interesting thesis about violence as a continuum (page 13)

I do not understand why you bring up the gap of one or several years… page 13. Does it have any importance for interpreting your results?

Is “past 12 months” equal to “recent” violence exposure?

Page 15 line 5, “A systematic review…” did it show a greater risk to become a victim or a perpetrator? To my knowledge the association between violence and alcohol is very complex. On may also wonder how relevant a review of risk factors for IPV is in your setting.

I agree with the author’s conclusion and I do not think it should be changed in any way.

But, there is no consensus about screening for abuse or asking routine questions
about abuse in health care in Sweden today. Maybe you should refer to the debate in the discussion?

Good luck with your important work!

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests to declare