Reviewer’s report

Title: Gender-based differences in the high-risk sexual behaviours of young people in Melilla (Spain): a transversal study

Version: 2
Date: 1 April 2014

Reviewer: Aine Aventin

Reviewer’s report:

This was an interesting article and I enjoyed reading it. However, I think that the authors need to address a number of issues before it would be suitable for publication.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It is not clear what research gap the study fills. In the background and discussion sections the authors highlight other research with similar aims/findings. I would suggest that at the end of the ‘background’ section the authors clearly indicate what gap the research aimed to fill (i.e. clearly define the research question) and in the ‘discussion’ section clearly indicate what the study adds to the literature.

2. I am concerned about use of the term ‘verify’ in objective 1. This word suggests that the study will ‘prove’ something yet it is a correlational study so can only present associations between variables. The word/phrase should be changed to better highlight what the study can achieve.

3. The discussion and conclusion sections need further work. At present the discussion summarises the results and highlights similar findings from previous studies. This needs to be balanced with an interpretation of the findings (including examination of why some of the findings differ from previous research) and a clear discussion of their implications. The authors should also indicate directions for further research.

4. The limitations of the study need to make clear that this was a cross-sectional correlational study i.e. caution should be applied when interpreting the results as they represent correlations/associations between variables and do not infer causality. Do the authors also need to note here that they did not achieve their estimated required sample size?

5. I also wondered about the use of the term ‘young people’ in the title when the sample consists of individuals aged 15-29. Having read the title I assumed the study was about adolescents. Consider changing this term or adding ‘young people aged 15-29’

6. The authors do not report the distribution of the sample in relation to age e.g. how many where in the younger/older age groups. Neither do they indicate whether they did any analysis by age. I would expect that there are differences in findings among 15 year-olds and 29 year olds and would like to see an indication
of differences (or if reported elsewhere a summary of this and indication of publication elsewhere).

- Minor Essential Revisions

7. Throughout document: should the word ‘systematic’ in the term ‘systematic condom use’ be replaced with ‘consistent’? If not, please define systematic.

8. Consider changing the term ‘transversal’ in the title and elsewhere to ‘cross-sectional’. I think it might be more commonly understood but perhaps just my own preference.

9. The authors mix use the terms ‘subject/subjects’ and ‘participant/participants’ throughout the document. Apologies if I’m being pedantic but I prefer the term participant as it suggests doing research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ the individuals taking part.

10. The term STD (sexually transmitted diseases) should be replaced with STI (sexually transmitted infections) throughout the document.

11. Background/para 3/line 1: ‘In regards to protection’- protection against what? STIs, pregnancy, both?

12. Methods/para 2: I’m not sure that all the demographic detail on the population of Melilla is needed. The authors do not refer to it as part of their analysis.

13. Methods/para 3: Why did the authors choose the 15-29 age range? How was the sample distributed according to this relatively broad range? Also, it would be interesting to know if the participants were students/employed etc.

14. Methods/para 3/line 7: ‘All participants were aged 15-29 years of age and had previously agreed to answer 80% of the questions in the survey’. This seems strange. Why only 80%?

15. Methods: Provide information on the parametric properties of the scale (reliability and validity). Also, what where the response categories (e.g. agree, strongly agree etc)? Where they the same for all items?


17. The Results section begins ‘Regarding high-risk sexual practice’ and then talks about experience of penetrative sex among participants. Do the authors consider sexual intercourse to be ‘high-risk’ behaviour (even for 29 year olds?) Please clarify.

18. Throughout the results the authors use the term ‘determining’ (fairly determining, highly determining etc). This needs to be defined as it is not always clear what it means (e.g. determining of motives/behaviour) or what the range of possible ‘determining’ responses are.

(Minor issues not for publication)

19. Abstract/Methods: add ‘four’ to ‘different centres’

20. Abstract/Methods: define ‘minor’ under 18?

21. Abstract/Methods: consider substituting term ‘psychological questionnaire’ to
‘psychometric text’ or ‘standardised measure’ and provide the name of the scale.

22. Abstract/Results/Line beginning ‘alcohol consumption’: sentence should begin ‘Differences associated with…’

23. Abstract/Results/Line beginning ‘alcohol consumption’: sentence should begin ‘Differences associated with…’

24. Abstract/Results/Line beginning ‘Nevertheless, the factors, my partner..’ should begin ‘Gender-based differences for ‘my partner’ sentence should begin ‘Differences associated with…’

25. Background/Line 1: Should ‘live their sexuality’ be ‘express their sexuality’?

26. Background/para 2/line 7: Should ‘Other factors with a close relation to’ be ‘Other factors which influenced’

27. Background/para 3/line 1: ‘In regards to’ should be ‘with regards to’ – this is repeated throughout the document

28. Background/para 3/line 2: Consider replacing ‘This indicates’ with ‘This suggests’

29. Background/para 3/line 3: Consider replacing ‘mainly’ with ‘in particular’

30. Background/para 3/line 5: ‘This reflects an overvaluation’ – overvaluation by whom?

31. Background/para 4/line 1: reasons for not using condoms by whom?

32. Background/para 4/line 3: Consider replacing ‘been the cause’ with ‘has contributed to’

33. Background/para 4/line 6: Consider replacing ‘discover and analyse’ with ‘examine’

34. Methods/para 4/last line; Change ‘two of the questionnaires’ to ‘two questionnaires’

35. Methods/ethics/line 4; Change ‘process’ to ‘processes’

36. Methods/ethics/line 5: ‘was voluntary and that the information they provide would be kept…’

37. Results/para 1/line 6: For consistency insert percentages after ‘men’ and ‘women’

38. Results/para 2/First line: Remove the first word ‘However’.

39. Results/para 3/line 2: Clarify what ‘opportunity’ means

40. Results/para 7: Line beginning ‘In the case of the variable…’ The sentence needs reworking. It is confusing at present. I’m not sure what ‘partner demand of a condom means’. i.e. whether or not a partner demands a condom is slightly/fairly determining of whether or not they would use protection – confusing!

41. Results/para 8: Line beginning ‘For 50% of women…’ Not comparing like with like here (not determining/highly determining) and it is confusing.

42. Results/para 9/second last line: ‘to be highly determining or not determining’
– confusing. Please re-word.
43. Discussion/para4/line 3: Consider replacing ‘important’ with ‘strong’ or just leave as ‘correlation’
44. Discussion/para4/line 5: Change ‘the perspective’ to ‘the prospect’
45. Discussion/para4/line 7: Change ‘It should be asked’ to ‘Further research might examine’
46. Discussion/para5/second last line: the term ‘resolve complex situations related to actual condom use’ needs clarification – what kind of complex situations?

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare I have no competing interests