Reviewer’s report

Title: Alcohol and policy interventions to reduce intimate partner violence: a review

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Reviewer: Catherine Kothari

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The authors address an important question: whether interventions to reduce alcohol use also reduce IPV. Given the amount of research tying alcohol use and IPV, a review that focuses upon alcohol-related interventions is warranted. Structuring the review from an ecological standpoint, examining interventions at the community and individual level, is a unique and valuable stance from which to assess policy and programming.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors differentiate between studies examining (1) alcohol interventions and IPV and (2) the mediating role of alcohol consumption in the relationship of alcohol interventions and IPV outcomes. There is no justification provided for separating these, nor is there a clear definition of how they are causally or conceptually distinct. The operating assumption in any alcohol intervention outcome (including IPV) is that the impact of the program is dependent upon the degree to which it changes alcohol consumption, which is why the distinction above is confusing.

2. Separate design criteria are used for #1 and #2 above….Why? Justification needed.

3. The multi-level approach, grounded in ecological framework, is a real strength of this paper; but the application of this approach could be improved. First, the distinction between population studies and community-level studies is unclear and either needs to be differentiated better or merged together. In contrast, the merging of the individual studies with the couple studies needs to be justified, otherwise based upon figure 1, the expectation is that they will be separate categories.

4. Authors describe using a critical narrative approach. How they implemented this approach, though, is not well described in the methods section nor is it clear from the organization of the methods section.

a. Even with the flowcharts, it was difficult to track the sequence of stage 1 search/stage 2 searches, which studies were included/excluded, which met criterion #1/met criterion #2, etc.


5. Too much of the discussion section reads like a rephrasing of the results. More
synthesis with existing literature on alcohol/addiction/substance use and violence/aggression/behavior changes would greatly improve this paper.

6. Finally, given the stated dearth of alcohol-intervention-IPV studies, it is premature to draw conclusions about targeting certain types of interventions to certain demographic groups (lines 310-314).

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The population/community studies are ecological studies, and thus limited in their ability to control for confounding factors at the individual level. And, in the current review, none of the studies in these categories appear to include individual confounders. It is misleading, then, to claim that designs were excluded “where it was not possible to conclude that the outcome was the result of the intervention/policy….” when these studies, in fact, did not account for individual-level confounders.

2. The review question specifies the outcome of interest as “(alcohol-related) intimate partner violence,” but alcohol-related IPV is not distinguished from non-alcohol-related IPV either conceptually or operationally. Either define it and stay true to it, or drop it.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Please define the term “grey literature” in the methods section.
2. If it is kept, the paragraph on page 13, lines 310-314 belong in the discussion session not the results section as they are conclusion statements.
3. The sentence on page 15, lines 357-360 refer to data that should be present in the results section but is not; either add it to the results or remove it from 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