Reviewer's report

Title: Sexual behavior and drug consumption among young adults in a Latin American shantytown

Version: 1 Date: 18 July 2008

Reviewer: Catherine S Todd

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- Major Compulsory Revisions

None.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. Methods section, paragraph one, last sentence: is AB PRISMA the Peruvian NGO? If not, please provide the name of the Peruvian NGO. If so, please clarify the sentence.

2. Methods section, paragraph two, third sentence: It seems AB PRISMA is the local NGO. After correcting the statement identified in the immediately preceding comment, please remove the description of AB PRISMA as a local NGO as this should be stated at its first mention.

3. Methods section, paragraph 3: The authors state that the questionnaire was delivered in two portions: one interviewer-administered and one section on sexual behavior that was self-administered. However, the limitations section of the Discussion does not mention this division when discussing self-reported behaviors, and this seems important. Admissions of alcohol and illicit drug use may be just as sensitive, but because they were elicited by an interviewer, may have been more likely to be under-reported. Further, the authors make no mention of whether lack of or low literacy may have impacted reporting of sexual behaviors as this section was completed by the participant. Could this have been a contributing factor to the 7 respondents removed from the study due to incomplete questionnaire?

4. Methods section, paragraph 8, last sentence: The authors state that STI symptoms were queried. It should be specified whether individual symptoms were assessed (e.g. penile discharge, external sores on genitals, etc), as asking this population whether they had STI symptoms could result in misunderstanding the question. This becomes clear in the Results but should be made clear in the Methods section also.

5. Results, paragraph 1: Provide percentages for unemployment for the comparison between male and female participants.
6. Results, paragraph 5: Please insert the percentages or mean numbers to provide perspective on reported figures of “men had four times as many lifetime partners as women.” 80 vs. 20 is far different than 8 vs. 2.

7. Results, paragraph 7: The authors mention that the analysis was adjusted for sociodemographic variables; however, only odds ratios are reported. These should be denoted as Adjusted Odds Ratios.

8. Results, paragraph 10: Same issue regarding reporting adjusted odds ratios.

9. Discussion, paragraph 5: “Sexual workers” should be changed to “sex workers”.

10. The “Author Contributions” section is written in a different voice than the rest of the manuscript. Please change statements like “main responsible for the data collection was JAGB” to “JAGB was responsible for data collection” and other awkward phrases in this section.

11. In Table 3, though the text explains the differences between the two models, it would be wise to define Model 2 as the analysis adjusted for HED in the title of with an asterisk by the term the first time it is used.

12. General comment: “High risk sexual behaviors” is not defined and readers assumptions of the meaning may vary. Please define what you are referring to in your manuscript.

- Discretionary Revisions

1. Results, paragraphs 8: The authors mention few women reported either illicit drug use or multiple casual partners in the last year. Please provide numbers to define “few”.

**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.