Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and determinants of intimate partner violence towards female students of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Version: 1 Date: 28 May 2013

Reviewer: Katie Edwards

Reviewer's report:

I have now completed my review of “Prevalence and determinants of intimate partner violence towards female students of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.” This paper reports the findings from a well-designed and important study. Given the dearth of research on IPV in Nigeria, this paper fills an important gap in the literature. However, there are several concerns I have with the paper and have divided them into major compulsory revisions, minor essential revisions, and discretionary revisions.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Throughout the paper the authors state that behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use are determinants or predictors of IPV. Given the data are cross-sectional, however, the authors do not know this. Moreover, there is research demonstrating that these behaviors can be outcomes of IPV (likely they both increase risk and are exacerbated by IPV). The authors need to temper their language and reframe this throughout as it is not accurate to describe these things as determinants/causes/predictors of IPV.

2. The authors state that data were collected in an interview format and then later in the paper, the authors state a survey/questionnaire was used. This is confusing and needs to be clarified. If it was indeed a face-to-face interview stating the data were anonymous is incorrect.

3. Much more details about the measures that were used to assess all constructs of interests are needed including validity and reliability data, names of measures, sample questions, etc.

4. I read the paper twice and never saw the actual rates of IPV—this is critical and should be included.

5. The presentation of the odds ratios is confusing. First, for the categorical variables with more than two levels, what was the reference group? Also, when there are two levels of a variable (e.g., alcohol use, yes or no) there should only be one odds ratio but the authors have listed two—this is confusing and I think incorrect.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. There were several, minor grammatical and typographical errors throughout the paper (e.g., In the abstract “descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis
was done” should be “analyses were done” yes?).

2. In the abstract and results sections, the authors need to include the comparison groups (e.g., “Students who smoked cigarettes (OR= 2.46; 95% CI: 1.58-3.83); consumed alcohol (OR= 2.36; 95% CI: 1.82- 3.06); and with history of interparental violence (OR= 2.40; 95% CI: 1.88- 3.07) were more likely to experience violence” --- the authors need to add “than students who did not engage in these behaviors” or something like that. This needs to be corrected throughout the results section.

3. In the abstract, when discussing academic performance please put an “e.g.,” in parentheses after adverse effects and give an example. This is quite vague.

4. There are no rates of IPV in Nigeria provided in the Introduction, but they are mentioned in the Discussion. I think there should be more focus on research in Nigeria on IPV in the Introduction to really set the stage for the current study. Also, the authors should state explicitly what their study adds that is not already known in the literature. Moreover, the final sentence of the introduction “Thus, this study adds…” seems to come out of nowhere. I think a final paragraph that includes a summary sentence of what is known about IPV in Nigeria, another sentence about what is not known or less studied, and then a sentence with the broad goals of the study. Following this, the authors need to include more specific aims, given that the authors measured a number of factors related to disclosure. Also, did the authors not have hypotheses? Finally, I think some type of underlying theory or conceptual model would be helpful. The authors examined a number of variables (but not others, like attitudes towards IPV) and the rationale for the inclusion of some variables and not others is unclear and should be discussed in the Introduction. This is why I think some type of underlying theory would be important.

5. Why was the study only on female students when men and also be both victims and perpetrators of IPV?

6. Why were peers not listed as an option for informal support disclosure? In U.S. studies with adolescents and young adults, friends are the most common source to whom victims disclose to. Perhaps it is different in Nigeria?

7. The authors should include a paragraph that includes limitations and future research.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Readability could be improved by the use of transitions between paragraphs in the introduction and discussion sections.

2. It would be helpful if the authors could use less vague terminology and quantify things when necessary (e.g., “women rarely disclose IPV”… could you state the percentage of those who disclose?

3. The statement that “it is likely that students who were resident off campus may have had different experiences” could use some further explication—what do the authors mean by this? Is their research to support this?
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.