Reviewer's report

Title: Minor psychiatric disorders among Brazilian ragpickers: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Martha Traverso-Yépez

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Article: Minor psychiatric disorders among Brazilian ragpickers: a cross-sectional study.

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
True, there are not many studies on work and health among workforce in the informal sector, and more specifically, among ragpickers. So this cross-sectional research aiming to study the association of minor psychiatric disorders among ragpickers and compare to non-ragpickers from the same poor neighborhoods is relevant. However, it would be encouraging to see a more profound analysis about the socio-structural background of an extreme stratified society and high income inequalities, as the Brazilian. As a fact, it would be good to remember that global and national socio-political-economic trends favoring neo-liberalism had led to increased income inequality, poverty and unequal access to jobs and other health-relevant resources (a brief reference to these structural aspects is limited to a small paragraph at the very end of the article). So this lack of access to productive occupations and remunerated work contributes to expanding the informal labor market.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
Yes, the research methods are described step by step and easy to follow up.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
Yes, however, there is one point I would like to highlight. It seems odd in our Brazilian context, to think about middle class people living in the slum areas portrayed as ragpickers neighborhoods [“21.9% in the intermediate categories B or C”, which are equivalent to upper middle class (B) and say, middle-middle class (C)]. Moreover, the occupations of domestic workers, day labourers, retail and construction workers are more likely to be in Level D or maximum C. Therefore, it would be good to see a more critical positioning about the social class identification procedure. ABIPEME sorting has undergone strong criticism and several revisions due to be dealing with indicators or variables considered inadequate for discriminating social class differences in Brazil. There is a good article of Fauze Najib Mattar (1996) available in the Internet (http://fauze.com.br/artigo07.htm) “Porque os métodos de classificação socioeconômicos utilizados no Brasil não funcionam”, discussing this point.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
I think so, although in the Discussion item, pag. 13, part of the first paragraph “A household survey by trained interviewers provided insights into many aspects of these workers lives…” might be better at the Methods item. The same with the third paragraph “In the present study, we employed the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20)...”

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes, although, following the line of thinking in item 2, I consider that the last paragraph in pag. 14 should be revised. If you are comparing ragpickers with non-ragpickers in the same neighborhoods, it is impossible to think about people from the economic level A.
6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes, it does.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, but some revision is required, especially at the reference pages, in which some digital errors
were detected, including extra numbers and the Journal at Reference 35, totally misspelled.

All the observations posed are allowed for discretionary revision, with the exception of number 3
and 7 which needs a minor essential revision.

We ask all peer reviewers to declare their competing interests in relation to the paper they are
reviewing:

I do work in this interface between Social Psychology and Health and my interest on the subject
comes from my past experience studying the psychosocial conditions among informal labor force (I
do believe that despite the high rates of precarious work and unemployment in Third World
countries, the theoretical development about the psychosocial effects on the people involved is
rather small). I do have a research experience with ragpickers at the dump site in Guayaquil,
Ecuador, my native homeland, long time ago. When I arrived to Brazil to work as Visiting Professor
(and a year later, after the qualification process, as Associate Professor) at the Universidade
Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, my first research work was at a fisher’s village, 40 Kms, north of
Natal. Our action-research focused on a group of soap and detergent female producers, using local
seaweed as raw material. They had a precarious manufacturing infrastructure, but also different
problems related with the production and commercialisation process. The idea was to study how the
lack of productive occupations and the precarious working conditions affect the life and health of this
population.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.