Reviewer's report

Title: Resilience to trauma in the two largest cities of Brazil: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2013

Reviewer: Anu Asnaani

Reviewer's report:

This article examines predisposing factors and possible mechanisms related to resilience to traumatic events in a cross-sectional sample of two Brazilian cities. The study utilizes a good sample size of participants with a range of ages, assesses several key psychological disorders, and revealed that male gender and absence of parental mental disease was associated with positive adaptation. As expected, the authors also found an inverse relationship between amount of childhood violence experienced and level of resilience.

This article represents an important topic for readers of BMC Psychiatry and for the resilience and trauma fields in general. The study has several notable strengths, including a large sample size, along with use of a representative community sample, and a relatively broad inclusion of possible factors for the main analyses.

However, it is unfortunate that this manuscript has a number of issues that require revision. Of note, it was actually quite difficult to assess the scientific merit and soundness of this study because of the number of grammatical structural/format issues with the paper, which greatly detracted from the authors’ main points.

This study certainly represents an area that is important in the fields of trauma and resilience, but I do not feel it is suitable for publication in BMC Psychiatry in its current form. The authors are advised to significantly revise the manuscript as outlined below, to better highlight the study’s main findings, and to let reviewers more adequately critique the scientific soundness of this article.

Major compulsory revisions (in order of appearance in manuscript):

1. Abstract: Overall, this was a good summary. However, authors need to re-check that they maintain consistency in their tense use (e.g. using past tense for most of the Methods description, except the last line which is in present tense). Also, the conclusions seem a bit of a stretch, and not specific enough to what the findings immediately mean (as opposed to far-in-the-future or removed implications). This should be modified to more adequately represent the major implications of the findings.

2. Introduction: This was one of the most problematic sections of the manuscript. Specifically, the review of the literature on resilience and its relationship to
trauma was very scant, and did not represent an adequate review of the literature. The authors might consider taking some of the information from the discussion (which was certainly more thorough but included information that was more fitting in the introduction) and adding it to this section instead. The introduction does not have to be overly long, but it does need to set up readers well for the hypotheses made in the empirical portion of the study, and that was lacking in the current draft. Also, there were several particularly small paragraphs that either did not transition well from previous points or presented information at too superficial a level to be meaningful (e.g. paragraphs 5 and 6) – these should be re-written or expanded on.

3. Methods: No significant issues with this section; adequately describes measures used and refers to another paper for other methodological details.

4. Results: This is the other section requiring significant editing and additions. The results are not presented in the full level of detail needed – even if tables are presented, authors must mention statistical tests to back up conclusive statements made. From simple details about the percentage of each ethnic group described to F tests with associated p values for all statements made regarding risk/resilient factors for positive/negative adaptation to trauma, this section must be added to significantly. It is not enough to simply confidence intervals and p values in Table 3. Also, I’m confused about why the authors chose to report the chi square statistic in the second table without any follow up analyses, particularly for categories with three or more choices (e.g. ethnicity, age group, etc)

5. Discussion: This section is more thorough and complete, which was appreciated. However, even this section would highly benefit from significant reorganization so that readers can follow the important points made by the authors more easily. In addition, authors should consider using more transitional statements at the beginning of paragraphs to form a more logical flow of arguments. In addition, authors should be careful not to present new data here (e.g. page 10, line 5); all data must be presented in the results, and discussion should be restricted to interpretation of empirical findings only, to be consistent with conventions for presenting scientific work.

Other major comments:

1. As mentioned previously, there are a substantial number of grammatical/vocabulary issues throughout the manuscript, too many to mention individually here. The authors would benefit from a thorough review to ensure these errors are corrected; they significantly distract readers from the scientific merit of the article. In particular, check for odd word choices (e.g. “lifelong” added incorrectly on line 5 of the introduction, “fuel thriving” on page 3, line 7), correct/consistent tenses, and appropriate negative word matches (e.g. “neither” and “nor” should be “either” and “or” on page 9, line 11).

2. Quotes should only be used sparingly, and are used too much in this paper. In addition, if quoting a specific line, the page number where this quotation appears in the cited paper must be cited in parentheses immediately following the
3. Similarly, unpublished data should only be used sparingly, if at all, because it brings the validity of findings presented into question since unpublished data cannot be evaluated for scientific soundness.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.