Reviewer’s report

Title: Intimate partner sexual violence and risk for femicide, suicidality and substance use among women in antenatal care and general out-patients in Thailand

Version: 0 Date: 07 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Sheila Sprague

Reviewer’s report:

This study aimed to assess the prevalence and correlates of sexual assault victimization by an intimate partner among adult women attending outpatient and antenatal clinics who screen positive for intimate partner violence (IPV) within the past 12 months. This study focuses on an important women's right issue.

Overall:

* The authors use sexual assault and sexual violence interchangeably. Using one term consistently would add clarity.

* The authors should explicitly state at the beginning of the manuscript that the study is investigating sexual assault by intimate partners specifically, as opposed to sexual assault by anyone.

* There are a number of typos and grammatical errors throughout the manuscript.

* The 12 month prevalence seems very low. Previous studies of 12 month prevalence rates of IPV in women attending health care services have reported much higher prevalence rates ranging from 12% to 26% (e.g. references 1-3 below). Additionally, reference 4 below which comes from the data collected as part of the WHO multicentre study cited by the authors indicates that the 12 month prevalence of the Thai sample is 21.3% and 22.9% for the two Thai samples. The authors should cite some of these articles in their discussion and provide more detailed exploration about why their reported prevalence is so much lower. The authors should address the possibility of selection bias in their results interpretation and explore potential reasons why many women may not have disclosed? Without this discussion the results may make readers think that IPV is a problem experienced by very few women in Thailand.

Background:

* Paragraph 1: In the sentence that reads "According to the World Health Organization (WHO) multi-countrHUy study on women's health and domestic violence against women in Thailand [2], 23% of ever-partnered women in Bangkok and 34% in Nakhonsawan reported physical violence by their intimate partner at some time in their life, and 30% in Bangkok and 29% in Nakhonsawan reported that they had experienced sexual violence
by an intimate partner", the authors should clarify if the 30% and 29% of women who report experiencing sexual violence by an intimate partner is all women, or 30 and 29% of women who reported experiencing some form of IPV.

* Paragraph 1: In the sentence that reads "Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy was 4% of women who had ever been pregnant in both Bangkok and Nakhonsawan" there appears to be a typo. Should it read "Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy was reported by 4% of women who had ever been pregnant in both Bangkok and Nakhonsawan"?

* Paragraph 1: In the sentence that reads "Other local surveys found of 475 pregnant Thai women, 13.1% report ever been abused, whereas 4.8% reported physical abuse during pregnancy and 4.8% sexual violence in the past 12 months…" there is tense inconsistency. "13.1% report" should be "13.1% reported".

* Paragraph 2: The authors state that 40-68% of women have experienced both physical and sexual violence. Is that lifetime exposure?

* Has any previous research been done looking at the 12 month prevalence rate of IPV in Thai women? Is so this should be referenced and if not this should be stated as justification for the need for this study.

* Include rationale for conducting this study within a health care setting specifically. E.g. is there a reason to expect higher prevalence in this setting, or is identifying the prevalence important for identifying a need for IPV screening and assistance programs in these settings?

Methods:

* The following sentence is not clearly written: "The health care provider would inform the woman who has screened positive on the Abuse Screen for intimate partner (i.e., spouse/common-law, ex-spouse/ex-common-law, boyfriend/girlfriend, or ex-boyfried/ex-girlfriend) physical or sexual abuse occurring within the preceding 12 months about the study and referred to a female research assistant." Also appear to me missing words (e.g. Abuse Screen should be Abuse Assessment Screen and "intimate partner" should be "intimate partner violence" and "boyfriend" is misspelled in one instance.

* Remove the words "be" and "have" for conciseness from the following sentence: "Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants who met the following inclusion criteria: (1) be female, (2) be 18 years of age and older, (3) have experienced IPV in the past 12 months, and willingness to give informed consent." Also provision of informed consent should be its own inclusion criteria.
Were there any exclusion criteria? If so they should be listed and if not this should be stated.

The authors state: "Following an informed consent procedure, the interviewer verbally administered a questionnaire in Thai language in a private room without the partner or other individuals being present." Were these all questionnaires included in the measures section? If so "a questionnaire" should read "questionnaires" in the above sentence. If not, please provide details about the questionnaire (e.g. questionnaire name, number of questions, validity, reliability and citation if an pre-existing questionnaire was used, or details about what the questionnaire included if the questionnaire was developed for this study).

For the SVAWS and Danger Assessment Scale, the authors should clarify whether these questionnaires are assessing the severity of violence and danger that women experience specifically from intimate partner violence (as opposed to violence from other sources).

Data Analysis

* The authors should specify the specific parametric and non-parametric tests that were used.

* P-values should be included along with ORs and CIs

Results

* An acronym (IPV) is used for intimate partner violence for the first time in the results section. This should be used consistently throughout the paper or not at all.

* The sample characteristics from Table 1 in the results text should mention the characteristics that are significantly different between the sexually assaulted and non-sexually assaulted group.

* The language used to describe the Danger assessment items in the results text and Table 3 are different. The authors should use consistent language for clarity. The text of the results section and Table 3 should include ORs, Cis, and p-values.

* ORs, CIs, and p-values should also be included for the bivariate and logistic regression analyses in both the text and Table 4.

Discussion

* Are there other studies in Thailand that screened a small sample of women for intimate partner violence? If so these should be mentioned in the background section.
* The authors note that the prevalence of IPV identified in their study is much lower than other studies and suggest this may be due to Thai family values, however, some of the other studies cited with higher rates were conducted in Thai population. Could this difference be due to different reference periods (e.g. lifetime prevalence versus 12 month prevalence). It may be more useful to compare to other 12 month prevalence studies in Thailand.

* Also, it is unclear whether the authors are suggesting that Thai culture may be more accepting of the abuse which explains its occurrence, or the lower than expected rate of IPV disclosure among women.

* The authors should include a discussion of the implications of their findings (e.g. how can this research be used? What does it add to the existing literature? What are the authors recommendations for future research?)

References:


Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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