Reviewer’s report

Title: Sex work stigma and non-disclosure to health care providers: data from a large RDS study among FSW in Brazil

Version: 0 Date: 02 Jul 2018

Reviewer: K Biello

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes an analysis of survey data collected among FSW in 12 Brazilian cities to examine the associations between sex work stigma and health care utilization. While the topic is important and has public health importance, there are a number of methodological concerns that dampen my enthusiasm.

Overall:

1) Needs thorough editing. Many incomplete sentences throughout the manuscript, including the abstract.

2) Multivariate is inaccurate description - should be multivariable.

3) The paper is unfocused - too many independent and dependent covariates, some of which are likely highly correlated.

Title:

Use of the word "effect" suggests causality, which this paper can not determine.

Background:

The main goal of the paper is to examine the association between stigma/discrimination and adverse health outcomes and health care utilization. The prior work on this is briefly glossed over (with another incomplete sentence) on page 4.
Methods:

1) how did you choose the sociodemographic indicators? Very few were included and it seems that some key variables might be missing (e.g., race).

2) Presentation of the measures is imprecise (e.g., "percentage of FSW who received condoms for free"). If these were modeled at the individual level, then they are not percentages.

3) The organization of the measures is confusing and at this point in the manuscript, it still isn't clear what the independent and dependent variables are. Given that there are many, these should be more clearly labeled.

4) Page 7: should tell the reader the difference between types of health care services and why those differences might matter.

5) What is the role of the "indirect indicators" of sex work stigmatization? Are these additional outcomes? It's really unclear. Also, they are likely highly correlated with the health outcomes (e.g., HIV test, Pap smear) but definition.

6) In the stats analysis section, it appears that only "not always disclosing FSW status to a health care staff is the primary independent variable. Is this correct? If so, this needs to be made clear previously

Results:

1) Confidence intervals should be included, not just p-values

2) Again, this is very hard to follow since the distinct aims have not been clearly outlined previously. Too many independent and dependent variables without a clear rationale for all of them distinctly.

Discussion:

1) A lot of redundancy within discussion and between intro and discussion.

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

Yes

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.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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