

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** A descriptive study of youth risk behavior among urban and rural secondary school students in El Salvador

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 26 January 2006

**Reviewer:** Minoru TAKAKURA

### Reviewer's report:

#### General

This study is a descriptive epidemiology of health risk behavior among secondary school students in central El Salvador. There are many studies published on the prevalence of health risk behavior among youth and this question is not new. Sampling design and procedures are appropriate and well described.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. There is a need for authors to provide further explanations of public health problems in El Salvador, regarding burdens of disease, major causes of death among adolescents, and any differences in health problems between Salvadorans and other Latin Americans.
2. In this study, youth risk behavior measurements based on the US CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) are comprised of five behavioral domains. The original YRBS questions include six domains of health risk behaviors. Therefore, it is necessary to give reasons why these five domains have been targeted in this survey. In addition, there is a necessity for detailed information regarding questions (e.g. reference periods, methods of dichotomizing response categories) to be given in the text.
3. The prevalence of risk behaviors by school type and subjective economic status are not shown in the text or tables. As this is a descriptive study of risk behaviors among Salvadoran adolescents, it is necessary to describe any prevalence of risk behaviors and give all results of bivariate analyses.
4. Similarly, confidence intervals should be added for estimation of the prevalence of each risk behavior in the Results section or Tables.
5. Further explanation about the school system in El Salvador is required.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

6. Information concerning the handling of missing data is needed.
7. The following possible confounders have not been taken into account in this study: ethnicity, religion, and academic performance. The authors need to mention this possible limitation.
8. I could not retrieve Mitchell's relrisk ado program application for Stata from <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/ado/analysis/> (reference 9). The authors should indicate the correct URL. In addition, according to McNutt et al. (Am J Epidemiol 2003;157:940-943), the corrected prevalence ratio proposed by Zheng and Yu is controversial. The authors should address this point.
9. Do not use vertical lines in Tables.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

10. The authors mention that "...calculating prevalence ratios and 95% confidence intervals using SPSS software" (page 8). What kind of programs or commands of SPSS were used?

11. I would suggest deleting Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the study sample are described in the text.

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests