Reviewer's report

Title: Life course risk and resilience factors for behavioural and emotional problems in middle childhood

Version: 1 Date: 5 December 2013

Reviewer: Rachel Han

Reviewer's report:

Overall, this is a nicely written manuscript with findings that may potentially provide important information regarding several risk and resilience factors that are associated with child internalizing and externalizing problems in middle- and upper-middle-class Canadian families. However, I also think there are two questions involved in the manuscript that could limit its potential contribution to the literature.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The way that internalizing and externalizing scores were analyzed needs more justification. The authors only examined children who scored either high or low for each dimension, leaving children who scored in the middle range on internalizing and externalizing symptoms uninvestigated. Given the demographic characteristics of the current sample (i.e., children from middle- and upper-middle-class families whose mothers received routine prenatal care voluntarily and agreed to participate in several follow-ups), leaving children who scored in the middle range unexamined would decrease the power of this investigation and limit its implication. A more acceptable way of identifying risk and resilience factors might be analyzing internalizing and externalizing problems as continuous variables (as they are) and investigating potential resilience or risk factors (e.g., self-esteem, social competence) as moderators. In this way, less information would be missed. Similarly, many continuous study variables were arbitrarily dichotomized in this study, which again may lead the authors to lose important information regarding the moderating effects and associated mechanisms of risk and resilience factors.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Many proposed risk and resilience variables examined in the Results section were not discussed or reviewed at all in the Introduction section (e.g., parenting morale, adequate good quality time, etc.). It may give the readers an impression that the authors only randomly assessed whatever information available in the questionnaires and their testing of hypotheses was not being theoretically driven. Please consider add some discussion of examined variables in the Introduction section and explain the rationale why examining these variables as risk or resilience factors.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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