Reviewer's report

Title: Agreement between parents and adolescents on emotional and behavioral problems and its associated factors among Chinese school adolescents: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Leslie Rescorla

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript addresses the important topic of parent-adolescent agreement in a large representative sample of Chinese adolescents recruited through schools. The measures used are appropriate for the questions addressed and the overall design of the study is sound. However, the manuscript does not have an up-to-date review of relevant literature and the analyses could be more comprehensive. Specific suggestions for improvement are detailed below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors should summarize findings from the Rescorla et al. (2013) report of CBCL-YSR cross-informant agreement in 25 societies, including China (N =27,861). Although Rescorla et al. did not present most results separately by society, some findings are. For example, Table 4 indicates that the mean CBCL-YSR r across 17 problem scales in China was .45, placing it 17th out of 25 societies when ranked from smallest to largest mean cross-informant r. Table 4 also shows that Chinese parents and adolescents, on average, had strong agreement on mean item ratings (.82), as did the other 24 societies. In short, this comprehensive study is very relevant to the current manuscript and the authors should contextualize their work with respect to these international findings.

2. The Rescorla et al. (2013) literature review includes a short summary of cross informant agreement findings from the Wang, Zhang and Leung (2005) (rs = .35-.60) study, which the authors did not include in their literature review. The Wang et al data were used in the Rescorla et al (2013) multicultural analyses, but more detailed findings based on those data were presented in Chinese by Wang et al. in 2005. Clearly, these findings are also very relevant to the current manuscript and should be summarized in the literature review.

3. The authors state that they used the 1991 version of the CBCL and YSR, even though their data were collected in 2010 and the 2001 versions of these instruments were available in Chinese at that time. The authors should explain the reason they did not use the most current version of the checklists. They also should state what translation they used, whether a back-translation was done and approved by the U.S. authors of the instrument, and whether they obtained a license to duplicate and distribute >2000 CBCLs and YSRs, as copying the forms without such a license is a violation of copyright.

Discretionary Revisions
4. On p. 10, the authors state that they tested informant and gender differences using t-tests on CBCL-YSR discrepancies. I think it would be better to use a 2 x 2 ANOVA with informant as a within-subjects factor. This would allow examination of possible informant x gender interactions and facilitate reporting of effect sizes, which are not currently included in the manuscript. Inspection of Table 2 suggests these ESs would be very small (e.g., ds of about .10-.15). It might also be good to include age as a variable in such an ANOVA, as gender or informant effects might vary as a function of age (e.g., for younger vs. older adolescents).

5. The results on p. 11 could be described in somewhat more detail, particularly the interesting findings related to the family variables.

6. On p. 12, the authors describe a correlation of .60 as “moderate.” According to Cohen’s (1988) benchmarks, correlations > .50 are considered large. In the field of cross-information agreement an r of .60 is quite high. I therefore suggest the authors restate this conclusion.

7. On p. 13, the authors state on lines11-12 that there were gender differences in discrepancies but results presented on p. 10 and in Table 2 not make these evident. Table 2 is confusing, but were it presented in the context of ANOVA results, the reader would have a clearer idea of what was found.

8. On p. 13 the authors use the term “more discrepancies” several times, but I think they must be referring to “larger discrepancies.” This locution and many other problematic English language usage issues should be addressed at a later stage in the revision process.

9. The last sentence of the manuscript (p. 15) is very confusing. I am not sure what point the authors are trying to make.

Overall, this study has the potential to be a good addition to the literature on parent-adolescent agreement when it is better situated in the context of the relevant literature and some revisions of the analyses are carried out.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I receive royalties from sale of the US versions of the instruments used in this study.