Reviewer’s report

Title: Explaining gender differences in non-fatal suicidal behaviour among adolescents: a population-based study

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Reviewer: Paul PP Plener

Reviewer’s report:

This paper dwells on gender differences in suicidal behaviour (suicidal ideation and suicide attempts) presenting data from a representative German school sample of adolescents in the ninth grade. Strenghts of this paper include the large sample size (n=5512), the high participation rate (89.1%) and the use of validated psychometric instruments. It can be discussed in how far this paper, that draws back on a data pool already presented in previous works of this group (Brunner et al., 2007), delivers new data. However, after double-checking previous publications the amount of new analysis and discussion in this paper (the YSR-gender-suicidality-data) justifies a separate publication. The statistical approach is sound, the language is adequate. I´d suggest to accept the paper for publication after discretionary revisions.

Discretionary revisions:

Abstract:
No need for changes

Background:

This section opens up the field of gender differences in suicide with regards to psychopathology. The section could be improved by including a discussion about childhood adversities and suicidality (e.g. Bruffaerts et al., 2010) as e.g. childhood sexual abuse is reported to be more prevalent in girls as well, which could also explain gender differences. The paper could be further improved by discussing neurobiological gender differences in emotion processing that may account for differences in psychopathology (e.g. Schneider et al., 2011).

Methods:

Please provide information if there was an “opt-out” procedure for parents who wouldn´t want their children to participate.

Results:

No objections

Discussion:

The authors state that “Boys usually tend to act out their personal problems and
therefore more likely show aggressive (externalizing) behaviours while girls more often show auto-aggressive (internalizing) symptomatology.” It is not clear whether this statement refers to scientific evidence (then references should be given) or whether this is the author’s suggestion (in which case I would change the wording to pronounce the fact, that this is to be understood as hypothesis). I would suggest to further discuss the impact of traumatic events as possible “missing link” between gender, psychopathology and suicidality.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests