Reviewer’s report

Title: Is Anybody Doing It? An experimental study of the effect of normative messages on intention to do physical activity

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Reviewer: Amudha Poobalan

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Is anybody doing it?? An experimental study of the effect of normative messages on intention to do physical activity

General comments:
This study addresses an important age group who are at a crucial transition point. This age group is known to have lower levels of physical activity and are notoriously hard to reach. Although studies have shown a poor correlation between the intentions and actual behaviour, this study has attempted to address this in this crucial age group within the TPB frame work. However there are several issues that needs to be clarified before publication

Major compulsory revisions

1. Methods:
• The authors need to justify the sample size and how this was calculated
• Authors say that the sample was randomised and stratified. The on-line recruitment process and how they were randomised needs to be explained clearly
• In the methods section, using intentions as a proxy for PA and not measuring the PA behaviour needs a bit more of a justification. There are several studies that report the gap between intentions and actual behaviour, hence that justification is quite crucial

2. Results and related tables:
• In the demographics table (Table 1), added information on the numbers in each of the control and interventions groups will be more useful
• In the results section, a bit more information on the univariate analysis results should be presented before going on to the results of ANOVA
• The authors should comment on the poor fit of the ANOVA (Adj R2 of 0.012) and revisit this in the discussion section again
• More information on the direction of effect is needed.
• Results on differences between treatment 1 and 2 should be presented to make the results complete
3. Discussion:
• The discussion is weak. Although they achieved the sample size, authors should provide an insight into the possible causes of the large drop-outs specially relating to gender differences (women) and Croatians
• Authors should discuss the poor fit of the ANOVA and its implication on the interpretation of the results. Bit more in the results about the univariate analysis might add to this aspect
• More discussion is needed on the differences between Bulgaria and Croatia. Authors should discuss the other possible factors that could be influencing the differences?? Given that the dropout rate is more from Croatia and the PA intention is lower, the authors need to discuss this in a bit more detail
• Given the unexpected results, the authors should discuss the interactions/inter relations between this crucial age group and how this age group might perceive the construct of ‘descriptive’ norm.

Minor Essential revisions
1. Typo and Grammar errors:
• Page 4, last sentence in 3rd paragraph about hypothesis: in (b) should this be saying ‘subjects exposed to negative messages… would indicate’
• Page 5, last para: expand ICT
• Figure 1 is inserted in page 7, but figure 2 and 3 is not cited in the text at all, although it refers to the same message
• In page 10, last line in first paragraph: Should it say Figure 4??
• Again page 10: [Figure 2 about here]. Should this say figure 4?

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

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