Reviewer's report

Title: Relationship between Family Interaction Types and Depression among Sixth Graders in Taiwan

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Reviewer: Katherine Shelton

Reviewer's report:

General
This manuscript presents findings relating to the association between aspects of family interaction and depressive symptoms in a sample of children and their parents living in Taiwan. The work is of potential interest to those working in the area of family functioning and children's psychological health.

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

Abstract:
The background should be re-written. The statements are too vague and over-reach the scope of the article. Two simple statements that make the case that family functioning is associated with children's depressive symptoms would suffice.

Methods: How old are the children? Why should the reader be concerned about the proportion of the sample that lives in Taipei or Hsinchu?

The results section doesn't adequately capture what was found. The frequencies for each item on the depression scale should not be described. Instead, focus on the types of interaction identified and how these relate to depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: Again, the statements made overreach the findings. This study doesn't really tell us how best to prevent child and adolescent depression.

Background:
The authors provide an overview of several different perspectives on family functioning. What is not clear to the reader is which perspective or framework is favoured by the authors. The conclusion that while previous research has conceptualised family interaction into types, family life is more complex than can be captured by such an approach rather undermines the case for the analyses that follow. Thus, while the introduction is interesting, it really isn't clear what the authors hypothesised regarding their approach to characterising family interaction or which interaction styles would be associated with depressive symptoms.

In re-organising the introductory material, it might be helpful to first describe the theory that guides the present study and then present evidence that different types of interaction are linked to symptoms of depression in young people.

Methods:
Participants: What proportion of the sample is from Taipei city vs. Hsinchu County?
How old are the participating students? How many students were sampled (not just those with complete questionnaires)? Do the authors have any other information about these families that would help the reader get a sense of the data e.g. level of parental education, socioeconomic status, parent occupation, marital status etc? Do the authors regard the sample as representative of Taiwanese families?

Measures: Some subscales have sample items, some don't. I wonder if it might help the reader to have a table or appendix in which the complete measure is presented.
Data management and statistical analyses: Rather than frequencies and percentages, it would be more helpful to the reader to know if these measures are normally distributed or not (particularly depressive symptoms). It's not at all clear why ANOVA and regression techniques are to be used. Given the aims of the study, only the ANOVA results appear relevant here.

Results
It is very hard for the reader to interpret the description of depressive symptoms. It would be more interesting to know if there were sex differences in levels of depressive symptoms and the association between symptoms and age.

What is the pattern of associations between the derived subscales? This should be included as a separate table.
There was insufficient information about the cluster analyses and how the results should be interpreted.

The last section, which is really the crux of the paper, appears rather rushed. No rationale was presented in the introduction for conducting analyses separately by gender and location and no differences are found. If there was no a priori reason to expect differences, than the analyses and presentation of results could be simplified. The regression analyses are not clear. Why was this done and what was the independent variable? The ANOVA already tests for differences in symptom levels as a function of interaction style.

Discussion
The text needs sharpening here. Avoid expressing the findings in the context of the 'development of depression'. These results relate to symptom levels assessed at the same time as family interaction so the language of 'development' and prevention needs revision.
The section that describes Taiwanese parents applies to all parents, irrespective of nationality! (pg. 14). There also needs to be consistency in reference to the sample as not all readers will be familiar with the cultural context. It would be clearer to refer to the sample as Taiwanese rather than switch between 'Taiwanese parents' and 'Chinese parents'.
The discussion introduces a lot of new material without reference back to perspectives described in the introduction. There needs to be a more streamlined presentation of the literature that orients the paper. The section on sex differences and geographical belongs in the introduction and will require revision based on the age group under study here (i.e. children vs. adolescents). Again, why was location (County sampled) of interest here? What was hypothesised? The results testing differences between groups in depression level were not presented and there is no discussion of why such a difference might exist.

Study limitations
This seemed rather vague and there are other limitations that should be acknowledged (e.g. single informant across all measures).

Conclusions
A rather strong final statement that should be revised in line with the study findings.

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

Title: Suggest replacing Depression with depressive symptoms as no diagnostic criteria is used.

There are some other minor essential revisions that should be made. Some of these relate to sentence structure and spelling (e.g. ‘researches’ appears throughout the document).

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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