Reviewer's report

Title: Help-seeking behaviour in Sami and non-Sami adolescents in North Norway: A population based survey

Version: 1 Date: 29 May 2009

Reviewer: Carolyn E. Stephens

Reviewer's report:

Review of the manuscript, “Help-seeking behavior in Sami and non-Sami adolescents in North Norway: A population based survey”.

Specific questions for review:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well-defined? No. Language and organization of content interfere with comprehension throughout the manuscript. Three topics are introduced in the abstract (a) ethno-cultural factors, (b) demographic variables, and (c) self-reported emotional and behavioral problems. These appear to be matched with the research questions on pages 6 and 7. The phrases introduced in the abstract should be used repeatedly in the manuscript to give the reader points of reference, especially in defining the research questions on pages 6 and 7. Although in different words and in a different order, the "aims" of the study on page 3 are described on pages 6 and 7 as research questions. Cut the entire "aims" paragraph on page 3.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? 3. Are the data sound? 4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data depositions? Details of design should be reviewed by an expert in group design research. The order of table presentation should follow the order of presentation of the research questions. Table 1 would become Table 2.

4. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? No. The discussion refers to data and connects the authors' conclusions to them but it needs reorganization for clarity. The conclusions section is a clearly stated summary of findings.

6. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes. They reference other relevant studies.

7. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? No. The title and abstract were confusing to someone without prior knowledge about North Norway health care or the Sami population. More specific use of language would help. For example, add further descriptive terms such as “help-seeking behavior for health services” (line 1) instead of "help seeking behavior" or for greater clarity, change the phrase to “health service use”. The abstract refers to “use” more (6 times) than “help-seeking” (2 times).
8. Is the writing acceptable? No. Some editing is needed for both clarity of
statements and organization.

Discretionary revisions

1. Authors should keep in mind that many readers will not be familiar with the
Sami people or health care delivery in North Norway. Clarify these when they are
first introduced in the body of the manuscript to prevent a reader from trying to
“piece together” background information as the manuscript unfolds.

2. Change language to make a clearer distinction between health services (in
general) and health services (school). Check manuscript to clearly delineate
differences when referring to each.

3. Use more heading levels to clarify content.

4. Repetitive phrases can make writing dull, but in this multi-part study, using
repetitive specific language can clarify meaning, such as referring to
“psychological/emotional help-seeking” or “general health care help-seeking”
before using a shorter reference with the same meaning. See page 4, paragraph
3, line 1 “In general, ethnic differences in service use pattern…. “ Change to
“health care service” and then use the more general term “service” in line 3.

5. Mark parallel items using parentheses and letters (a), (b), and (c) or numbers
to clarify relationships among elements.

6. Use order of presentation and content for research questions presented on
pages 6 and 7 as the organization framework for presenting content throughout
sections of the manuscript.

7. Group answers to research questions together to enable the reader to
comprehend relationships between questions and answers. Research Question 2
appears to be answered in part on pages 14 (bottom) and 15 (top) with additional
information (gender and SES) provided on page 16.

8. Pages 14 through 16 are confusing. They appear to be answering research
questions 1-3, but they are organized by some other information, perhaps lines 3
and 4 of the abstract. Does the subheading “Cultural factors and help seeking”
refer to Research Question 1? On page 15, the paragraph beginning with “Youth
with a subjective Sami self-identification were more…. “ may refer to Research
Question 2. On page 15, “Sami youth with conduct problems had a lower….” may
refer to Research Question 3? If these paragraphs describe results for the 3
questions, they should be presented in parallel form having subheadings for all 3
or no subheadings for any of them. Subheading ”Demographic factors and
behavioural/emotional problems seems to continue answering questions related
to Research Question 1.

9. Omit paragraph 2 on page 16 “Another possible reason is that there…”, cite
correct references for statements, or integrate information into other sections of
the manuscript. This information seems ‘stuck on’ at the end of the section.

10. Include specific statements that place the current findings in the context of
the larger body of research cited that includes other minority populations.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. Check style manual for comma use in series and after independent clauses.
2. Use active rather than intransitive forms of verbs when possible.
3. First use of an abbreviation should be preceded by words of explanation such as “general practitioner physicians (GP)”.
4. Correct run-on sentences (see page 3, paragraph 1, “As cultural specific health services…..” And in paragraph 3 after citation “[1]. In North Norway…..”).
5. Reference a table (Table 1) when it is first introduced in a paragraph.
6. Use the past tense of the verb to describe completed studies.
7. Check use of past and present tense of verbs for consistency ( “The Sami youth were divided into three subgroups. The “parentage only” group consist of the Sami youth who report Sami parentage, but no subjective Sami self-identification and they do not have Sami language competence.” Replace with, “The “parentage only” group consisted of the …who reported Sami parentage, … and, they did not…”).
8. Correct plural / singular use for noun and pronoun referents (incorrect, “As cultural specific health services to indigenous population only to a limited extend are available.”)
9. Check adverb usage (correct, “As culturally specific health services…..” Or “As cultural-specific health…..”)
10. Correct typos (change “extend” to “extent”).
11. Correct awkward sentence construction (replace “The experience of growing up as a young Sami today varies a lot depending on the ethnic community they are part of” with “The experiences of growing up as young Sami today vary depending on their ethnic communities.”)

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.