Reviewer's report

Title: Reasons for non-participation in a parental program concerning underage drinking: a mixed-method study

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Reviewer: Michael Ichiyama

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MS: Reasons for non-participation in a parental program concerning underage drinking: A mixed-method study

This study examined an important issue regarding the development of effective parent-based interventions targeting underage alcohol consumption. The authors utilized the Health Belief Model (HBM) as the framework for guiding an analysis examining factors related to parental non-participation in a school-based program designed to prevent underage drinking among Swedish youth in grades 7-9. The study had numerous methodological strengths, including longitudinal data collection, mixed-method design (assessing both quantitative and qualitative data), use of confirmatory factor analysis to assess internal validity of measures, and evaluation of subject attrition. Lower education level, program-related factors such as perceived need for the intervention, and practical issues like time demands predicted non-participation. Findings may contribute to parent-based intervention planning.

Major Revisions

1) Page 4, 1st paragraph. The “Background” section needs more information. I would suggest a brief review of parent-based alcohol prevention programs (at least provide some examples from other studies). I would also include something about peer influences. There has been debate in the literature about the relative impact of parents vs. peers on adolescent behavior generally. Some mention of this seems warranted.

2) First paragraph, page 11. Does any data exist on how many of the 13 “Strong and Clear” activities the participants and partial non-participants actually completed? I believe these groups were based whether they met inclusion criteria and the subjective assessment of whether they considered themselves “participants”. However, it would be interesting to know how many activities were actually attended among these groups. From my read of the manuscript it could well be the case that some who were partial non-participants actually completed more activities than some parents who considered themselves participants (please correct if this is an incorrect assumption). If this data does not exist at least provide some mention of this issue.

3) Page 23, last sentence. Recruitment and retention are important issues in parent-based interventions in light of the non-participation issue. The authors should describe the potential use of systematic follow-up contacts with parents to
increase recruitment/participation rates. Phone contact after 1 week, then 2 weeks, etc. These are commonly used to increase recruitment rates in survey research (see text by Dillman). Also, the authors could discuss the use and/or viability of incentives to increase participation.

4) Conclusions, page 25. Too short. Authors should sum up but also provide more of a discussion of future directions and how specifically the study findings can contribute to the design of future parental intervention projects.

Minor Revisions

1) Page 4, 1st paragraph. The authors state that parental participation in previous studies has been “generally low”. Could you provide some percentages or other statistics from these studies to give the reader some idea of what “generally low” is?

2) The last sentence in the 1st paragraph on page 5 beginning “The literature gives support . . .“ needs to be rewritten. It is hard to follow.

3) In the second paragraph on page 6, “self-administrated” should be “self-administered”.

4) Page 20, 2nd paragraph. “. . . high as well as low” reads better as “. . . low as well as high”

5) Page 22, last sentence. Sentence starting with “Parents who did not think . . .” is confusing and should be rewritten.

6) Page 16, 2nd paragraph. Discussion of differences between schools are mentioned as a possible explanatory factor regarding the results. I think you should speculate on what sort of differences you are referring to.

7) Page 20, 3rd paragraph. Authors mention that school with highest participation rate was used as the reference for the logistic regression. This was not made clear in the Method/Analysis section and should be. In the same paragraph you note that “contextual factors” may account for some of the findings. You should provide examples of such contextual factors for the reader.

Discretionary Revisions

1) Here is a structural suggestion that would begin on page 4, 2nd paragraph, that might make the manuscript easier for the reader to follow. At the beginning of the second paragraph I would insert a heading something like “Factors influencing participation in parental support programs”. There also needs to be a transition sentence at the end of the second paragraph to lead into the following subsections. You then go into these factors, “Socio-demographic factors”, “Psychological and behavioral factors”, etc. These should become subheadings. Then at the bottom of page 6, the subheading “Towards a theory-driven analysis . . . “ should become a heading.

2) At the bottom of page 7 to the top of page 8. This paragraph moves abruptly from the theoretical to the analytical. I know they are linked but in the middle of the paragraph you describe how socio-demographic factors are “entered first”. I think the reader would benefit if you briefly delineated the regression model
strategy before describing the analytic procedure even if clearly linked to the theory. I think the sentence beginning with “Therefore, sociodemographic . . . “ should be a separate paragraph.

3) The literature on parental monitoring and parental relationship quality should also be noted in the Intro especially since they come out in the content analysis (see page 17).

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, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.