Reviewer's report

Title: Are single mothers' higher smoking rates mediated by dysfunctional coping styles?

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Reviewer: Anna Pease

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and well-written paper reporting on the results of a cross-sectional survey looking at smoking in single and partnered mothers and their associated coping styles. The paper adds to the body of evidence that single mothers are more likely to smoke and brings to light some interesting associations between their smoking habits and coping strategies. There are some discretionary revisions that may make this paper more readable and clarify more accurately the study that has taken place:

1. It is clearly acknowledged in the limitations of the study that firm conclusions about the causal relationship between smoking and coping cannot be drawn as the study is cross-sectional. However, an assumption that single mothers ways of coping predict smoking behaviour was necessary to complete the analysis. It may be beneficial then to change some of the language in the abstract of the paper to reflect this limitation, for example, instead of the "causal links" they could write "associations between". Again, I would change "Moreover, single motherhood turned out to moderate the..." to "Our results indicate that single motherhood may moderate the..."

2. Background: I would reword the sentence "By contrast, Avison et al. could not find any evidence that..." to "In contrast, Avison et al. found that single mothers did not react differently to stressors, and were not more vulnerable to them."

3. Methods: From the section that begins "The percentage of single mothers who smoked" to the end, should be included in the "Smoking prevalence" section rather than in the Sample section.

4. Smoking prevalence: Reword "If the women answered "smoking daily", it was asked" to "If the women answered "smoking daily", they were asked"

5. Question the conclusion in the discussion that a higher score on substance consumption meant a mother was more likely to smoke - it could also be that smoking leads to higher scores on that scale since it includes smoking as a coping mechanism. This was not a surprising finding and I am curious as to why the authors found it so interesting.

Overall the paper is interesting and if published will likely lead to some debate about how best to support single mothers who smoke to become smokefree while acknowledging that they may need extra support to deal with the stress
they experience.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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