Reviewer's report

Title: Comparing three short questionnaires to detect psychosocial problems among 3 to 4-year olds

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Reviewer: Lindsay S Schenkel

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“Comparing three short questionnaires to detect psychosocial problems among 3 to 4 year olds”

This is an interesting study that examines the psychometric properties of the SDQ, KIPPPI, and ASQ-SE, and the real-world usefulness of these measures at detecting psychosocial difficulties in young children. The paper is an important contribution as clarifies the utility of these measures in a Dutch sample. However, the importance of the overall study could be elaborate a bit more in the Introduction. In general, the paper is well-written and organized. There are a few minor grammatical errors that are noted below. The aims of the study are outlined; however, they could be clearer and more specific in the Introduction. Additionally, the authors could elaborate a bit in the introduction as to the importance of identifying adequate screening measures to assess psychosocial difficulties in children. The Results section is sound. Given that there are limited to no normative data for the measures used in the study, the methods for validation seems appropriate. Attention to a few issues would further strengthen the manuscript.

1.) Introduction: Page 4, there should be a citation after the first sentence (25% of children have behavior problems). Also, in the following sentence, specify (or make clearer) the percent of children with emotional difficulties who need treatment.

2.) Introduction: Page 5, the last part of the paragraph beginning “The psychometric properties of the ASQ:SE have been....” needs to be clarified. The authors indicate that no published studies exist that investigate the KIPPPI. However, in the following sentence, they make reference to “validity results.” This appears to be inconsistent and at the least confusing.

3.) Methods: The authors should be more clear as to the rationale behind the randomization of patients. The KIPPPI and SDQ were randomized but not the ASQ – why? Also, at the beginning of the paper, it is unclear why the ASQ is being included. A few more sentences to clarify would be beneficial.

4.) Results: It would be interesting to know the data on the question “Does the child have a psychosocial problem at this moment?” To assess for CHP ability to detect psychosocial difficulties, it would be interesting to include post-hoc analyses on this question – even if just briefly (as it notes in the method that
CHO “answered the following questions”…). The authors included being treated for psychosocial problems as a criterion variable (intuitively this would make sense, but the authors should make more explicit why they chose this particular variable).

5.) Discussion: Page 12, although the CBCL is a widely used measure with adequate psychometric properties, it is far from being a “gold standard” for psychosocial functioning. Of course, a more comprehensive assessment of psychosocial functioning would be superior. Although noted in the paper, it should be emphasized more and noted as a limitation.

In short, this is an interesting and well-written paper that extends past research and makes a significant contribution to the literature. With a few minor edits it is suitable for publication.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below