Reviewer’s report

Title: EXPERIENCES OF AN INTERNET-BASED SUPPORT AND COACHING MODEL FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH ADHD AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Version: 1 Date: 30 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Will Canu

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your manuscript stemming from your internet-based coaching intervention with ASD and ADHD individuals. I agree with you that little published work exists regarding the qualitative experiences of adolescents and young adults in this population, particularly with regards to intervention. I therefore think that your work is quite interesting, and would be to others in our niche, too, even though it does not necessarily directly inform treatment development for more widespread, "traditional" forms of intervention (e.g., face-to-face CBT). Novel, adjunctive therapies that increase clients' life satisfaction and adjustment are important to identify, test, and refine, too!

There are salient strengths to your manuscript, including the rationale for the coaching intervention established in the introduction, your efficient description of methods and results (the latter is hard in qualitative studies), and a discussion that generally stays "within bounds" in terms of interpreting your data and noting limitations. I have some suggestions to improve the quality of the manuscript, as follows, which I believe will help you to have as much impact with this as possible.

INTRODUCTION

- p. 4- I think that it is important to clearly signal that while psychostimulants are regarded as effective for adult ADHD that the extent of clinical trials with emerging adults-- your population-- is actually quite scant. See Weyandt et al. (2014).

- p. 6- you state that "most quantitative research so far has focused on younger populations" (lines 127-8); first, I think you mean to say "qualitative" here. Second, there is one qualitative study of ADHD college student adjustment that I know of that would seem quite important for you to review, as one of the themes that emerges therein has to do with treatment. This study would not only flesh out your introduction and help you to posit a priori expectations but also anchor aspects of your discussion better. See Lefler, Sacchetti, & Del Carlo (2016).

METHOD

- There are some aspects of your sample description that I find deficient. You only describe your participants by age and by exclusion criteria in Method section. While you
provide Table 1 which gives good individual client detail, I think that it would benefit the reader to at least provide % of males, mean (SD) age, and also information about ethnicity in the Method. I would also recommend describing the sample more fully in terms of symptomatic presentation (table with ADHD sx counts, same for ASD, # domains of impairment); this would better establish how well "confirmed" these diagnoses were and knowing how severely affected your sample was helps with possible transfer to other treatment settings/populations.

- A little over 50% of your intervention participants ended up completing these qualitative interviews; did you examine whether those participating in this study were systematically different than those who refused? It would be important to know if this was or was not the case.

- Regarding exclusion from your pilot, how was it determined that major depression was "an obstacle?" Further, what sort of "criminal activities" were exclusions? Do you mean conduct disorder/antisocial PD behaviors? Surely you do not mean things like misuse of substances (common, but illegal) or other minor violations? Perhaps you could be a little more detailed/clear here.

- Please report the mean (SD) time elapsed from end of treatment to follow-up qualitative interview.

- In data analysis (line 216) you state that "the larger context of the text is to be considered" in qualitative analysis. I am not very familiar with qualitative techniques, but this statement seems so vague as to be unclear. Could you please provide more detail or explanation here to clarify?

- In the cross-examination by the second author of the first-author's coding process, was there any reliability check, or any data regarding agreement? Any differences? If so, how were these resolved?

RESULTS

- This is just my opinion, and minor, but I find the subtheme "postulating necessary prerequisites" to be cumbersome, as a name. I played around with it a bit and came up with a possible alternative of "reassurance regarding treatment design." You might play around with that or other ideas.

DISCUSSION

- p. 21 you indicated that "participants appreciated and experienced a need for this kind of support after recently undergoing a neuropsychiatric evaluation." I think I missed reference to this specific qualitative response in the results; make reference to it there more clearly.
- in limitations I think you should more pointedly indicate the significance of the latency for some participants from intervention to follow-up interview. Depending on your mean latency, it could very well be that there is some "rosy retrospection" going on here.

- p. 25, line 601 - "quantitate" should be "quantitative."

- in limitations explicitly state that the small size and comorbidity of your sample does NOT lend well to distinguishing issues or responses that distinguish the ADHD/ASD groups and their experience. That you looked for this qualitatively (and your decision metric for whether something was "overwhelmingly" one dx or another is unclear) in this sample does not convincingly suggest that there are no differences.

- in conclusions, you state that this study promotes "a person-centered approach" with ASD and ADHD clients. Nowhere else in the manuscript is person-centered therapy mentioned, and as such this seems a stretch. I would recommend deleting this.

OVERALL

- my markup includes many small writing errors, mainly related to punctuation (particularly use of semicolons and also omitting commas and parentheses, as with "e.g." and "i.e." notes). A very careful re-editing is indicated to deal with this. I recommend that multiple co-authors accomplish this to have multiple eyes on the text, as that might prevent reading over these minor errors.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.