Reviewer’s report

Title: Is involvement in school bullying associated with increased risk of murderous ideation and behaviours among adolescent students in China?

Version: 0 Date: 08 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Herbert Scheithauer

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the manuscript "Are adolescent students involvement in school bullying associated with increased risk of murderous ideation and behaviors?"

This is definitely an interesting manuscript - however, to my opinion, authors have to revise the manuscript:

What is the general explanation model for the association between bullying (perpetrator and victims) and murderous ideation and behaviors? Do authors expect that victims of bullying develop violent rage fantasies - to take revenge? This would not explain why also perpetrators have higher rates in murderous ideation etc. Thus, to my opinion, authors have to start with a more rigorous literature review and develop hypotheses - on the basis of theories, empirical results etc. - WHY (and in which direction) they expect to find relations between variables investigated

Authors for example found that 7.2% of their sample reported about attempts to murder another person - how can authors make sure that this is really true and not a reporting bias (e.g. students incriminating themselves) - I would expect that at least some of these attempts must have been notified? Maybe authors did not measure attempts etc. but violent fantasies only which served as emotion regulation strategy?

Due to the high prevalence of bullying and the low frequency of homicide in adolescence, bullying can NOT be a causal risk factor - especially not in prospective longitudinal studies (e.g. see Mulvey & Kaufmann, 2001). In retrospective case analyses e.g. of school shootings, scholars found: in nearly 90% of cases the future perpetrator experienced social conflict within the school environment. A minority of perpetrators (29.9%) were physically bullied, while 53.7% experienced peer rejection, verbal and otherwise. Romantic rejection was only found in 29.9% of cases. Conflicts with teachers (43.3%) proved a decisive factor. (see Sommer et al., 2014). Thus, although in cases of severe forms of homicidal violence some evidence exists that perpetrators reported negative social experiences in their lives, this kind of social experiences is very common, highly prevalent and thus can not be a causal risk factor or can be used to predict this kind of homicidal violence. Additionally, anti-bullying programs won't have an impact of these
kind of very, very rare cases of homicidal violence. (see authors' conclusion "Prevention towards school bullying might have an impact on reducing adolescent murder intention and behaviors").

Authors analyzed nested data (students nested in school classes) and thus have to control for bias due to clustering at the classroom-level - authors should check the ICCs.

Some minor issues:

Authors should add "in China" to the title

Additionally, one can expect cultural differences - thus, the situation/results in/for China may be different from results in other cultures/nations. Authors should discuss this issue.

The manuscript needs a language check

References


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.

No

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

No
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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