Reviewer's report

Title: High School Suicide in South Africa: Teachers' knowledge, views and training needs

Version: 2 Date: 2 December 2014

Reviewer: Susan De Luca

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Major Compulsory Revisions:
1) I am concerned at some of the terminology used. For example, in the field of suicidology, we do not use the phrase "committed suicide". Please correct to "died by suicide". This will also help the reader understand when you're using suicide as a general term or you're actually meaning death. When you are not referring to a suicidal death, please use "suicidal behavior" throughout.

2) It appears that the authors are really seeing teachers as gatekeepers but we know from RCT's (see Wyman's RCT study on QPR) that using teachers as gatekeepers does not increase students' disclosure for suicidal concerns. While there are still gatekeeper programs on the BPR, leading experts (see LoMurray and Wyman) agree that peer mentoring/leader models are more effective as students and adolescents in general do not seek out adults (especially teachers) when they are dealing with distress. So there needs to be more of an argument why understanding teachers' knowledge/awareness of suicidal behaviors is related to decreasing suicidal risk.

3) I’m not familiar with South Africa’s school system, but for many school districts around the world school social workers/counselors/psychologists are available to teachers and students. I’m wondering why this hasn't been included in the literature to either show the lack of services available to SA schools or how these resources are available but not effective in SA schools.

4) The discussion, while it needs to summarize the results, is just that. I would like to read why the authors recommendations are based on this study. What are the study's strengths and limitations? What are the messages that they would like teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers and clinicians to take from their study.

Discretionary Revisions:
5) Line 123 needs a cite for the first sentence

6) In the discussion section the authors write about their attitudes/bias regarding suicide but I didn't know if that was specifically asked. (the interview guide was not attached). To me, knowledge is important on warning signs, but if a person has a bias towards suicide this might stop them from reaching out to a student. Were questions regarding attitudes/past personal behaviors and experiences with suicide, willingness to offer help asked? If so, please indicate. If not, state why.
7) Were incentives provided to participants?

8) The discussion section is the first time drug use was discussed. As drug use and mental health conditions are highly associated with suicidal behaviors, your comment in the discussion section will be strengthened by adding this to your lit review.

9) To further strengthen your argument for the need of a study like this, are there suicide prevention programs already in place in some SA schools? If so, are they effective? If not, why? If there are no suicide programs in SA schools, why?

10) "Life Orientation" is referenced but I'm not quite sure what this is (since it is capitalized I'm assuming it's a program?). Please clarify.

11) Line 410 is quite a leap. There are "no" services available for individuals dealing with suicide in SA? That's quite hard to believe. If this is the case, this is a great argument for the study, but needs to be introduced earlier in the paper and in more depth. Again, why are there no services?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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: no