Reviewer's report

Title: A Haven of Green space: Learning from a pilot pre-post evaluation of a school-based social and therapeutic horticulture intervention with children

Version: 2 Date: 24 Mar 2018

Reviewer: Isadora de Oliveira

Reviewer's report:

Clearly gathering of data was achieved and this study is of interest to the readership. The most important feedback with respect to revisions is the need to be cautious with conclusions drawn. Interventions and limitations are well described, but the number of participants is not too extensive for reporting any change in outcome over time for comparison concerning the intervention. Therefore, it is not possible to infer from the current data set whether categorizing patient presentations has meaningful impact on outcomes.

Unfortunately several aspects of the study compromise the usefulness of the work. The first issue is that the background could be condensed into a more elucidative way to explain the "Haven Green space pilot intervention".

Also, the lack of demonstration of reliability for the interventions used - there should have been a sub-study or subgroup of the population that was used for reliability. Evaluation methods are in development and there should be evidence of consistency in reliably classifying the patients. Qualitative and quantitative methods are well described, but the evaluation design should be reconsidered.

As a result this paper was an admirable attempt to provide information from mental wellbeing of the children pre- and post-intervention, and assess the value of the evaluation methods, but critical elements of examiner reliability, small sample size and lack of specific age-appropriate classification criteria are all problematic.

Specific Feedback:

Background

Page 3 Line 44: remove the additional "s"
Although defined as: "a pilot study with a small sample size unable to assess statistical significance, this exploratory analysis is intended to capture associations in trends only.", power analyses concerning sample size should be conducted.

Page 15 Lines 48-59 (Conclusion): Although this conclusion would be appropriate for promoting the need for horticulture activities, it cannot be supported for scientific reporting. Please consider revising the conclusions to be much more similar to the previous paragraph, where it is proposed that a school-based intervention to improve wellbeing, using psychotherapeutic and STH techniques could lead to better outcomes, but further study is warranted to determine this.

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

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.
Unable to assess

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.
I recommend additional statistical review

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
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