Reviewer’s report

Title: Bullying and sexual abuse and their association with harmful behaviours, antidepressant use and health-related quality of life in adulthood: A population-based study in South Australia

Version: 1 Date: 02 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Michael Dunne

Reviewer’s report:

The author(s) have responded fairly well to the main comments of both reviewers. I have some further criticisms, but none relate to major methodological or analytical flaws.

The key problem I have - as a seasoned reviewer of many hundreds of articles for public health and social science journals - is that I cannot see evidence that the statement on Author Contributions on p20 is actually true. There are many grammatical imperfections and lapses in the clarity of expression and argument throughout this paper. Most appear to emanate from the writing style of a single author who may have English as a second language. I do not make that assertion on the basis of family name, but do so on the basis that I have supervised the writing of many students with ESL backgrounds. There are SEVEN co-authors here, but it is quite obvious that they did not all work to refine this manuscript. Those co-authors who may, at best, have given this paper a perfunctory light read to tick off ahead of submission should either a) do the serious work expected of them as co-authors, or b) remove themselves from co-authorship. If the problem rests with the first author (i.e. submitting without seeking or waiting for co-author input) then this is a valuable lesson not to do so.

I reviewed this manuscript on paper and made many marginal notes. Often, I use such notes when I give extensive detailed feedback to authors to improve their paper. However, the obvious lack of attention to this manuscript by co-authors makes me disinclined to do their work for them.

If any authors think I am being too harsh, look at the final paragraph of the Abstract (pages 3-4) and the second paragraph on page 6 that contains two long and convoluted sentences. Read the first paragraph of the Discussion (p14), which has a long third sentence that is convoluted and therefore confusing. See the lack of clarity in the first paragraphs on both page 17 and page 18. These are among the most difficult parts of the text, but the whole paper needs careful editorial revision.

Additional comments:

While the authors revise this paper, they should reconsider whether the first paragraph on p17 is necessary. The data here are insufficient to offer any insight into the impact of "neurological/psychological modulation" - the associations they attempt to draw together appear to be tenuous and do not elucidate underlying mechanisms.
At the start of the Methods section on p7, after the description of sampling and before the sub-section on measurement of bullying and abuse, the authors should add a paragraph that outlines the scope and content of the omnibus survey interview. This is crucial, given the change in the paper to emphasise the feasibility of inclusion of brief sensitive questions on sexual abuse and bullying within general health and social surveys. What other measures were included in the interview? How long did the interviews take on average, and what was the time range? Also, on p10, the first sentence of the Data Analysis sub-section should be deleted, as it is too basic for a journal article.

I encourage the lead author to work with the team to resolve these issues and re-submit. I have checked the tables and am confident that this paper has the potential to make a sound contribution to the literature.

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.

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English  
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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 organization 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