Reviewer’s report

Title: Entering an Emotional Minefield: Professionals’ Experiences with Facilitators to Address Abuse in Child Interviews.

Version: 0 Date: 23 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

No - there are major issues

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Maybe - with major revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: What is your overall impression of the study? This study sought to generate understanding of how professionals working with children seek to ask private questions about child maltreatment. It comes at a time when research increasingly finds exposure to early childhood adversities are relatively common. In the U.S. research has also discovered that nearly one third of all children are at risk of having an abuse or neglect allegation by age 18. For black children, the risk increases to 50%. All of this means that it is critical to screen children for exposure to early childhood adversities early and often. Though this study asks an important question there are numerous ways to strengthen the manuscript so that it reaches its goals. The findings have important implications, but more information is needed about the research method, sample recruitment, context, sample demographics, and the analysis.

What have the authors done well? The authors make a strong case for the research question. The background section is short and to the point. Similarly, the discussion section lays out some valuable implications for the field that ring true from my practice and research experience.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Revisions should focus on the 'Methods' section. First, define the method that is used and connect clearly to the goal of the study. Second, describe the analysis that is aligned with the method clearly and how the authors implemented it. Third, consider adding information about the service context in Helsinki for the reader, the interview guide that was used in the study, and tell the reader more about this sample. Fourth, make the findings come alive by integrating more context. Fifth, connect the theoretical application to the front, middle and back ends of the paper. To me the implications are the most interesting so I would place these up front and center on them in the discussion. Sixth, there is a section on the authors, which is helpful but this sections
does not share each author's philosophy or perspectives going into the study. I mention only because the authors make reflection such a big part, but all this could be connected more clearly.

Interpretive description is a new method and the authors could do a better job of defining this type of analysis for the reader and connecting it to the goals of the study. What is written is wordy and the points the authors try to make are not entirely clear to me. For instance, the meaning of Heidegger's phenomenology and Gadamer's dialectical hermeneutics are difficult to understand without definitions and clear connections to goals of the study. Second, I would have benefited from knowing why social workers from CPS and clinical psychologists from mental health agencies were selected for this study. Part of the problem is there is no information about the context in which these services are provided. In the Ethics section I learned the study was conducted in Helsinki, but really the Norwegian context of child protection should be made clearer in the methods section. In the U.S., for instance, it is the job of CPS investigators to ask questions about abuse and neglect allegations. The problem is that what is uncovered by CPS is typically a partial view of maltreatment experiences and some of this information conflicts with what children self-report. Some information about why it is important to ask these members questions would go a long way to clarifying the study purpose. Otherwise, I am left a little confused. Third, I could not follow the data analysis section. This section would benefit from being clear about how many authors read and coded the transcripts, how codes were identified and how discrepancies were addressed, how codes turned into patterns or themes within and across interviews, and how rigorously it was accomplished. The last sentence in the 'Data Analysis' section highlights my confusion. I want to know how the analysis was deepened (and what they authors mean by this). I also want to know more about the thematic structure? Did they code by interview questions or identify codes through reading text and constant comparisons. Including the interview protocol would be useful here as would providing the sample demographics. The 'Results' section falls somewhat flat in my opinion. There are ways to make the results section come more alive. For instance, could the authors provide some information about the participants and their work in ways that put some context around the themes that are identified? I just do not get a strong sense of who these people are. Finally, for whatever reason I found myself not entirely connecting to the Deci and Ryan application. This theoretical explanation comes out of nowhere, which could be the problem. Is the goal of the research method to build a theory? Perhaps this could be connected more clearly to the method and the analysis? I am unsure, but I wanted to know more about it's purpose.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

None

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.
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.

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:

Acceptable

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No