Author’s response to reviews

Title: Examining the mental health outcomes of peer-led school-based interventions on young people aged between 4 and 18 years old: A systematic review protocol

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Version: 1 Date: 12 Apr 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewers’ comments:

Reviewer #1:

Comment #1

‘Consider searching Google Scholar, relevant conference abstracts, and also combining the results from MEDLINE (e.g. in Ovid) and PubMed (restricting to records to find references that not yet indexed in MEDLINE) into one database labelled MEDLINE.’

Response #1

Thank you very much for these suggestions. I have now taken out ‘PubMed’ and replaced with ‘MEDLINE’ and these results will be combined. I have also clarified where I will be sourcing grey literature, including several that you mentioned in your comments.

Editor’s comments:

Comment #1

‘Line 45-47 should be deleted.’

Response #1

These lines have now been deleted.

Comment #2
‘To increase the readability of the paper, I suggest to the authors to reduce the length of the Background section.’

Response #2

The background section has now been reduced by 12 lines and the syntax has been amended to flow in a more engaging manner. The authors felt that the remaining information included within the background section is pertinent to the justification of this review. All background information on governmental documents has now been grouped together and a more relevant meta-analysis is now described in place of a dissertation that was previously cited.

Comment #3

‘It seems like authors will include randomized controlled trials and non-randomized comparative studies. If this is the case, please replace observational studies by “and non-randomized comparative studies” throughout the text. Or specify the design of observational studies ie case control? Cohort studies?’

Response #3

We intend to include both RCTs and also those studies that do not apply an intervention, i.e. observational studies. If the term ‘non-randomized comparative studies’ would be preferable, then we will amend the protocol accordingly. At present, the manuscript contains the term ‘observational studies’ but has specified case control and cohort studies.

Comment #4

‘Data extraction. It would be better to perform an independent study selection based on title and abstract and then for full texts to minimize/avoid selection bias.’

Response #4

This has now been amended to reflect that each reviewer will independently screen titles and abstracts and then full texts. It has been made clear in the manuscript that this is in order to reduce the risk of selection bias.

Comment #5

‘Risk of bias. Why not consider using the Cochrane Robin I tool for non-randomized comparative studies instead of Newcastle Ottawa Scale?’

Response #5
Thank you very much for this suggestion. This is an option that we did consider during the development of our protocol, however Cochrane themselves warn that the use of the ROBINS-I tool ‘requires author teams to have sufficient knowledge and experience to apply the tool’. Neither author has experience of using this scale and so, following Cochrane’s advice, the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale has been selected as an effective, yet more skills-appropriate alternative to suit both reviewers equally and therefore maximise the accuracy of any assessments. However, if necessary then both authors will gain the required experience in order to use the ROBINS-I tool.