Reviewer’s report

Title: Attentional Avoidance in Peer Victimized Individuals with and without Psychiatric Disorders

Version: 3 Date: 02 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Andrea Pozza

Reviewer’s report:

I believe that the statistical analysis is described clearly and well-established. However, I highlight some important points which the authors should address to make clearer the methods and to improve the consistency between methods and objectives.

Methods

- Page 12 row 25. I suggest to remove the exclusion criterion (b) related to "evidence of current psychosis" for the clinical group, as it is not consistent with the group characteristics: 4 participants had schizophrenia paranoid subtype or schizoaffective disorder (see Table 1).

- Page 17 row 5-10. Please, provide a statistical test value supporting the following sentence: "Error rates did not differ between the two samples. Out of 240 trials, participants indicated between 0 and 17 wrong colors (clinical sample: M = 5.65, SD = 4.17; control sample: M = 6.29, SD = 4.26)."

- Page 18 row 32-9. Please, add a statistical test value justifying the following statement: "Error rates did not differ between the two samples. Out of 480 trials, participants indicated between 0 and 38 wrong locations (clinical sample: M = 10.52, SD = 10.12; control sample: M = 8.13, SD = 5.71)."

- Page 19 row 24-9. I suggest to explain more thoroughly the rationale why "To be included in the high peer victimization group, participants had to score higher than the median (FBS total > 11; n = 28) on the FBS [89]". Why was this score chosen?

- The Eta squared index (η2) was used as a measure of effect size but the criteria to interpret it are not mentioned in the Methods. In the Discussion section page 24 row 26-8, the authors state: "effect sizes of the significant effects were medium". I suggest to mention the criteria to interpret its value in the Data reduction and Statistical Analyses paragraph. For example, see Olejnik and Algina (2003).

Results
Page 20 row 7. Please avoid sentences like "Table 1 presents participants' means [...]" and replace all of them with "Participants' means are presented in Table n" throughout the manuscript.

Page 20 row 17-33. The authors have conducted a series of repeated-measure ANCOVAs testing main or interaction effects of several predictors. However, some of these interaction effects have not been justified sufficiently in the Objectives section (e.g., Valence x Group x Peer victimization interaction effect is not mentioned). Please, provide a rationale in the Objectives section for all the effects analysed by the ANCOVAs or remove those which are not mentioned in the Objectives or those not based on the literature.

It should be noted the small sample size of the study; the analysis appears under-powered here. It seems that they did not conduct an a-priori power calculation to determine the requested sample size. In addition, the analysis appears weak because the control group was not matched on age against the clinical group (ie, the two groups were significantly different on age); so the effect of age had to be controlled for by the analysis. This should be highlighted as a limitation.

It seems that childhood maltreatment and trait anxiety have been tested as covariates, then removed from the analysis, but they do not seem to be mentioned in the Objectives. Please, clarify.

In addition, as the authors tested many effects, I suggest to provide a summary of all the ANCOVAs effects in a Table. The Beta coefficients of each tested effect are not given and they should be provided in the Table to make the reader more familiar with the effect direction.

Conclusion

I suggest the authors to mention that the sample size was small for the type of analysis

Page 27, row 50-5. Please remove or revise the following sentence: "With respect to the results of the present study, it may be suggested that peer victimization in and of itself is associated with a risk for developing biases in emotion processing", as statistical analysis/research design do not allow to draw this conclusion about the risk developing biases.

Table 1

Please, report the p-value when it is not significant instead of "n.s."

Please, add the statistic test value for each comparison (e.g., independent Student t test)
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.

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?
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