Reviewer’s report

Title: Trends in childhood and adolescent internalizing symptoms: results from Swedish population based twin cohorts

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Reviewer: David Chinn

Reviewer's report:

This is a generally well written and interesting paper with some important implications. Some editing, especially of language, is required. There are some limitations, expanded upon below, which need further description in the text prior to publication.

Page 3 - the method could be clarified a little - this study involved gathering samples of both 9 and 15 year olds, each gathered from successive birth cohorts from 1998-2008 (for 9 year olds) and 1994-2001 (for 15 year olds).

Page 4 - lines 2-3. Should read "some form of mental health problem."

Page 4 - lines 10-12. Need to re-word. Rather than "internalising symptoms being associated with a range of symptoms," surely the negative effects cited are not "symptoms" but instead difficulties that may be related to the aforementioned internalising symptoms.

Page 4 - lines 53-54. Clarify the text - this study presumably demonstrated an increase in girls but not boys demonstrating these psychosomatic health problems.

Page 5 - line 1. Reword - it would read better if it said "it is unclear if this reflects an increase in specific psychiatric symptoms or an increased propensity to seek mental health services.

Page 6 - line 14. The SCARED seemed a good instrument to use.

Pages 6-7. There appeared to be far greater depth to the investigation of anxious/depressive problems at age 9 (with two instruments being used that look into this specifically) than at age 15 - when the only measurement that was done was a 5 item sub scale into emotional symptoms. This there any reason for this significant discrepancy? This could be expanded upon in limitations.

Page 8 - lines 43-44. Clarify text - this may be rewritten as "statistically significant for the total sample, and for both girls and boys respectively when their results were analysed separately." Or something similar.

Page 9 - line 58-59 should be "percentages" given the reference to multiple groups. Similar on the next page in the same sentence this should read "cut-offs." When reporting these results on
pages 9 and 10, it should be emphasised at this stage that the only data collected related to parent reports. Parent reports internalising difficulties differ significantly from children's own self-ratings (often under estimating the distress that children feel), which may have given very different results if there were collected. The same point could be made on page 10, lines 21-22. Extending this, when discussing the different findings for 15 year olds between self and parent ratings, the inferior ability of parents to rate internalising symptoms compared to self ratings could again be noted. The point is well made on page 12 line 43-45, but could also be noted earlier in the paper too for ease of interpretation.

Page 10 - line 51-52. Maybe don't use "robust finding" when referring to previous research that these findings appear to contradict in terms of the specificity of only girls experiencing increasing internalising symptoms at age 15.

Page 11 - line 53-54 doesn't read well and could be reworded.

Page 12- line 2-3. This is a troubling finding in light of possible future psychiatric problems. These findings may increase the risk that a given youth will develop psychiatric problems, but it is by no means certain that they definitely will.

Page 14 line 1. There may be clinical implications too. It is not realistic for clinicians to repeatedly assess boys and girls for internalising problems, but the results of this study should prompt clinicians to have a higher index of suspicion for the presence of internalising symptoms in children and young people, in both boys and girls.

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?
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