Reviewer’s report

Title: The effects of martial arts participation on mental and psychosocial health outcomes: A randomised controlled trial of a secondary school-based mental health promotion program

Version: 1 Date: 06 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Karina Lovell

Reviewer’s report:

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Overall this is well written protocol but there are a number of major issues which is due to a lack of detail.

The title of the paper is to evaluate the training effects of martial arts participation on mental health outcomes: A randomised controlled trial of a secondary school-based mental health promotion program however the intervention consists of martial arts and psycho education and therefore the title should accurately reflect this.

A major difficulty with the protocol is the absence of an inclusion and exclusion criteria- I have read the paper a number of time and am unsure who they are targeting - the protocol states that they are aims to develop valid and reliable data regarding the efficacy of a martial arts based therapeutic intervention as an alternative to psychological therapy. It is unclear if the intervention is targeting i.e. young people with pre-existing or current mental health problems or whether it is targeting young people with no known mental health problems. Due to this it becomes difficult to assess the protocol (i.e. primary and secondary outcome measures). This latter point also relates to rationale as the premise of the study is based on the rationale that the intervention is an inexpensive alternative to psychological therapy but if they don't have a mental health difficult then the premise of this rationale is flawed. Further even if the authors intend to offer this to young people with a mental health problem then I did not understand why it would be deemed an inexpensive alternative to a group psychological intervention as time and resource is comparable.

The rationale for the choice of the primary outcome should be justified.

There is no mention of PPI in the protocol and its exclusion should be justified.

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?
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Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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