Reviewer's report

Title: Elderly care in activities of daily living in rural Vietnam: Need and its socioeconomic determinants

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Reviewer: Masamine Jimba

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Comments

This is potentially a high quality paper with a large sample size in which the authors try to assess the daily needs and their socioeconomic determinants among older people in a rural setting in Vietnam. The elderly population is increasing in Vietnam and other developing countries, but little has been studied, which makes this paper very valuable. However, it can be much more improved. The specific comments are shown below.

Abstract

P2L8 In the results, it is better show the data of main results, though it depends on the journal policy. In the same way, it might be better to describe the results in the past tense, but it also depends on the journal policy.

P2L8 In page 7 of the main text, the authors clearly stated that the majority of respondents have 'no need' based on the results shown in Table 2. This point seems to be one of major findings, but it is not listed as a main result in the abstract and in the discussion of the main text, either.

P2L9 In the methods, please show your study design in the methods.

P2L13 FilaBavi repeat census and Filabavi DSS are the same?

P3L1 Conclusion is redundant. I wonder which evidence in the results of the abstract is linked with the second sentence of the conclusions ('the development of a social network…'). Home-based care should be given through the social network? Who does what, more specifically?

Main text

P1L7 Who are the most vulnerable groups?

P1L9 Please define ‘older people.’

P1L18 Please define ‘the elderly.’

P2L13 …in health facilities when older people…: a phrase is missing?

P3L5 What do you mean by 'two-thirds of the population (263,763?) are farmers (39% of men, 57 % of women)…'? Two-thirds means about 66%. The combination of 39% of total men and 57% of total women do not seem to make 66% of total population.
Regarding ADL measurement, nothing is written about its reliability and validity, including the translation and back-translation. Are all the questions (that were developed perhaps in the western country) relevant for Vietnam?

According to the results, several participants were illiterate. It is not clear how the 'Intellectual ADL-questions (such as writing and reading skills) were asked to participants? Similarly, did all the study participants had radio or television? If not, how they (participants) answered these questions. The authors should provide the detail description.

Regarding the measurement of chronic diseases, is it common to get the diagnosis of chronic diseases in Vietnam (or how many of the elderly people are regularly checking their health for the diagnosis of such problems)? If it is common, how these questions were asked? For example, is it possible that the participants know what is COPD? Please specifically describe your measurement.

The ADL score of 0 is defined as “none” and “some help.” Since you focused on the participants who need help and their status of receiving support, it may be easier to convince readers the significance of needed help, if “some help” would be categorized separately from “none,” or is categorized together with “complete dependence” variable as 1.

The presence of the acute or chronic diseases (if any) will influence the need of the daily care. If possible, I would suggest the authors to adjust this variable in the multivariate model.

As is already mentioned for my comments on the abstract, the majority of respondents expressed ‘no need’ for support based on the results shown in Table 2. Although this point seems to be one of major findings, it is completely overlooked in the discussion of the main text. Under this context, other major findings should be discussed.

The text stated “a significant group does not receive any or enough help.” In P9L2, however, you mentioned that, “need of help in one or more specific ADLs for almost one-third of rural older people”, and “over one-third of those who need help do not receive enough support.” These statements seem to be a little exaggerated, as only 3 out of 14 specific types of ADL did not satisfy the needs of one-third of people in need of help. These statements are also contrasted from the sentence under P9L4 from the bottom; “Among those who express the need for support, most require some help, and the majority receive enough support. Only a few receive no support”.

Although you stated that ‘the ADL supports received among those in need are presented in Table 3’, clearer description in the methods or results would help readers to understand that the sample size is different between Table 2 and Table 3 and that the sample sizes of specific ADL types vary from around 90 to 600 affecting the range of CI.
P8L3 What did you try to indicate by (Table4) in this sentence?

P10 L5 Please show evidence about ‘increasing migration of the young labour force’ and ‘transition from extended households to nuclear households.’

P12L12 Please show evidence that ‘people in mountainous areas have a poorer general health status.’

P14L2 What do you mean by ‘the vulnerable’? Why ’80 years or older’ and the illiterate are the most vulnerable? Compared with who, and by what reason, they are the most vulnerable? For example, were they more vulnerable than those who might be younger and literate but live alone and have serious diseases without social support?

P15L3 What do you mean by ‘social network’? Any direct data are available about the need for ‘social network’ in this paper? In this social network, who does what to whom?

Tables: For each table, the size of population should be clearly stated. In particular, it is necessary for Table 2 and Table 4.

TableA1. Of total, 54.8 % are married but only 30.5% live with spouse. What does it mean? 24.3% of the total are married but separated? In the same table, the percentage of ‘separated, divorced, or single’ is only 2.4%. I cannot understand how I should interpret this? In the results, the support from spouse is very low. I wonder which denominator did you use to show this result.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.