Reviewer’s report

Title: Subjective caregiver burden: validity of the 10-item short version of the Burden Scale for Family Caregivers BSFC-s

Version: 2 Date: 14 December 2013

Reviewer: Vivian W. Q. Lou

Reviewer’s report:

This study aimed to validate a 10-item short version of the Burden Scale for Family Caregivers (BSFC) by using a community sample in Germany. Findings supported that BSFC is an economical measure with satisfactory reliability and validity. With strong practical implications for developing an economical measure for caregiving burden, improvement can be made on following concerns.

Background

Since the main purpose of the study is to validate BSFC, it would be desirable if the underlying conceptual model for family caregiving burden can be critically reviewed and discussed. In particular, the advantage of composing a summing score to interpreting “total” subjective burden needs to be further elaborated.

Method

- MMSE was used to measure cognitive impairment but not a diagnostic tool for dementia. On page 8, the authors wrote “Patients were included if they had physician-diagnosed mild or moderate primary dementia …”; On page 13, the authors wrote “Caregiver burden will be positively correlated with the severity of the dementia syndrome assessed by the MMSE”. It is suggested that the authors clarify this point.

- The original sample contained 390 cases; while the active sample contained 357 cases. It would be desirable if the authors could clarify who were the drop outs and their characteristics.

- How did the NOSGER be conducted? Via CATI? If this is the case, would it be possible for any observation bias by family caregivers?

Results

- To confirm a one-factor structure of BSFC, confirmatory factor analysis is suggested on top of exploratory factor analysis.

- To test H2 (on page 13), the authors wrote (on page 16) “The BSFC-s score correlated higher with the NOSGER subscale for disturbing behavior….”. However, a difference between correlation coefficients does not mean statistical difference; a test on difference between correlation coefficients is suggested.

Discussion

- On page 19, the authors argued that “…, with only half as many items, the
BSFC-s is able to measure total caregiver burden as validly as the ZBI”. In order to argue this point, it is suggest that regression models on institutionalization by ZBI and BSFC-s can be computed independently for a comparison.

- Since only 32 cases were institutionalized at a follow-up time of 2.5 years, possible limitations of this small size of sample deserve discussion.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests