Reviewer's report

Title: Predicting violent infractions in a Swiss state penitentiary: a replication study of the PCL-R in a population of sex and violent offenders

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Reviewer: Marc Graf

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1. Yes, although the underlying hypothesis could be defined more stringent (I assume the authors hypothesize that the PCL-R has some predictive value regarding violence in institutions, verbal aggression better than physical. Yes. According to the above mentioned, one could define with which method and statistical analysis and which level of significance the hypothesis is verified or falsified.

2. Basically yes. I doubt whether the PCL values are normally distributed (not mentioned) and therefore the mean is the correct measure to be used (abstract results). On page 13 (results) the sum inmates with possession of illegal drugs (n=15), verbally aggression (n=29) and physical aggression (n=31) (total 85) does not correspond to the mentioned 94 inmates with any disciplinary infraction.

3. Yes. I know the main investigators as very reliable and experienced in this field and the manuscript shows no sign of inconsistent data.

4. Yes.

5. The conclusions are well balanced except in the abstract: “Possible explanations are discussed” is too general and says nothing at all. In the discussion I miss the mentioning of the general scientific consensus, that the construct of psychopathy is only one variable or dimension to explain aggression in such a sample and that for prognostic reasons the PCL-R should rather be used as a check-list then calculating the sum-score. Finally it would be very important to assess diagnoses (personality disorders, substance use disorders, schizophrenic disorders and organic disorders as the most important ones regarding aggression) to describe the sample. Differentiated percentiles are published regarding prison inmate or forensic hospital samples and our own group published such percentiles and the predictive value of the PCL-SV in a Swiss sample in the “International Handbook on Psychopathic Disorders and the Law” (Ed. Felthous and Sass, Wiley & Sons, 2007). On page 5 “background” the authors mention the 2-factor model, meanwhile also 3- and 4-factor models are published. On the same page the authors forgot to cite the publication of Dietiker et al. 2007 (Risk assessment of sex offenders in a German-speaking sample : Applicability of PCL-SV, HCR-20+3, and SVR-20) when they refer to studies about the predictive validity of the PCL in German-speaking countries.

6. Yes.

7. Yes.
8. Yes, with limitations mentioned under 5.
9. Yes.

All in all I suggest this manuscript to be published with discretionary revisions. The article of this research group is of high relevance regarding prediction of aggressive behavior in general and therefore adds to the still marginal database, especially in Swiss conditions, as prior publications suggest that Anglo-Saxon results should not be devolved uncritically.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No