Reviewer's report

Title: Reading and writing difficulties in adolescence and risk of health related work exclusion: a cohort study

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Reviewer: Sigrun Olafsdottir

Reviewer's report:

This paper is interested in understanding how reading and writing difficulties impact work exclusion related to health later in life. The paper provides an interesting data analysis and provides some justification for why we should care about reading and writing difficulties. However, it suffers from some limitations.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors do not provide a strong theoretical background, which I understand is appropriate for a public health journal. However, they could make a stronger case for why it is important to focus on health related work exclusion, and especially what are the mechanisms that link reading and writing disabilities to work exclusion. It is also somewhat unclear what is of ultimate interest, and again, those are all related, but the paper focuses on medical conditions, yet the dependent variable is health related benefits. It would be beneficial to establish a stronger link between health outcomes, work exclusion and health benefits, particularly having a more systematic language of what is ultimately of interest, and then why it is of interest. The background could be more focused on what is the key point of the study, what is the link between reading and writing disabilities and health, what are the things that the authors will test, and why we should care about this topic.

2. The discussion is somewhat unsystematic and would benefit from some more integration of ideas. I am also skeptical of whether the findings from one region in Norway can really be generalized to most European countries, especially if they do not apply to young people living in large cities in Norway. The authors should also elaborate on why the homogeneity of their sample is a strength of the study.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It is somewhat unclear what the authors are interested in. The title mentions health related work exclusion, yet the abstract focuses on health related social insurance benefits. Those are obviously linked, yet it would be clearer to use the same language, or at least make the link. We are basically interested in health related social insurance benefits, as they indicate health related work exclusion.

2. The discussion on who was excluded from the sample (pg. 5) is somewhat unclear (starting with, A total of 101 out of 163 individuals). This would benefit from re-writing. It also seems like the authors are referring to multivariate
analysis, rather than multivariable analysis (first paragraph, page 7). The authors also measure family socioeconomic status with education, which is too limited of a variable to capture socioeconomic status.

Overall, the analysis appears solid, but the paper would benefit from a clearer argument, integration of different ideas, and somewhat stronger theoretical frame.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests