Reviewer's report

**Title:** The Buffering Effect of Relationship Satisfaction on Emotional Distress in Couples

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 10 October 2011

**Reviewer:** Joseph M Trombello

**Reviewer's report:**

I sincerely appreciate the authors' careful attention to all of my points in the previous review. The covering letter and revised manuscript addressed many of these concerns. I have only a few minor residual suggestions.

**Minor essential revisions**

- On page 4, the following sentence: "Poor mental health in men and women, in particular depression, is a major health problem that not only affects individuals, but also may have severe negative effects on their families" should be revised to "Poor mental health - in particular depression - among men and women is a major health problem that not only affects individuals, but also may have severe negative effects on their families" in order to improve grammar.

- On page 7, the following sentence demonstrates poor grammar: "Besides of the strong main effects of relationship satisfaction on mental health that has previously been demonstrated [17-21], a good relationship may also have an additional protective effect under otherwise stressful conditions" (i.e. the "of" is not necessary).

- On page 9, the authors write that "The women, but not the men, are also followed up at later times." "Are" should be changed to "were," and the authors may also want to briefly mention the frequency and duration of the follow-up intervals.

- There is a typo in the following sentence on page 21, as "if" should be changed to "of": "The literature shows a decline in marital satisfaction after pregnancy [63, 64], which is what to expect if the time when expecting a child is among the happiest periods in many couples' lives."

- The above sentence seems to also miss the point that pregnancy can be a significant stressor that affects marital satisfaction (i.e. it's more than just a regression to the mean phenomenon.)

**Discretionary revisions**

- On Page 5, the authors write: "To date, most research on relationship dissatisfaction and psychological distress has been based on small samples that
are not necessarily representative of the population of married or cohabiting individuals." This might be a good place for them to discuss the strengths/aims or the need for their current study.

- On page 6, the following sentence: "However, most of the research, particularly when it comes to pregnant couples, is based on small samples with limited power to obtain precise estimates and to investigate interaction effects" could be expanded, as it provides another opportunity for the authors to discuss how their work might add to the literature.

- Again, on page 7, the authors state that "To our knowledge, no previous large-scale study has investigated the direct effect of one spouse’s relationship satisfaction on the other’s emotional distress." Here, the authors might mention that this is a key aim of the current work.

- It is a bit cumbersome to read at the bottom of all of the tables what results are significant versus non-significant. The authors may consider replacing this text with p-values or asterisks as is more common to denote significant effects. On the other hand, I understand if the authors specifically used the text at the bottom of tables to avoid this confusion (i.e. I see pros and cons either way).

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests below.