Reviewer’s report

Title: Cross-Sectional Survey to Develop a Scale of Community Commitment for Preventing Social Isolation in Older People

Version: 1 Date: 6 August 2012

Reviewer: Hal Kendig

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The paper aims to develop and validate a new Community Commitment Scale in Japan for action by volunteers to prevent social isolation in older people. It builds on a US-based Brief Sense of Community Scale and aims to conceptualise and then measures volunteers’ and community residents’ psychological sense of belonging and socialising in the community. It is surprising that the article does not explicitly aim to conceptualise and assess the Japanese cultural context of commitment and how it may or may not differ from those in Western countries.

2. The article does not conceptually develop how these belonging and socialising concepts and measures may actually lead to volunteering efforts nor their efficacy.

3. The 24 item pool for the scale was generated from literature and previous studies and then reviewed by ‘knowledgeable experts’ for face validity. The scale does not appear to have been informed by any qualitative understand of the core concepts based on the views and experiences of volunteers or residents themselves. There does not appear to have been any interpretive de-briefing with the local volunteers who completed the pilot questionnaires.

   It is not clear why the larger, subsequent survey included only relatively older people: even if they do make up the majority of volunteers surely younger adults who who volunteer cross-generationally are important too?

4. Nor are we told of variation of responses within different kinds of volunteers, residents, or neighbourhoods within the Yokohama areas surveyed.

5. In the discussion of measures (reduced to 12 items after the pilot), we are told the scale was translated into English for subsequent face validity examination by a US expert but we are not told of the concurrence (or not) nor anything about interpretation of cultural differences. In sum, the test of adequacy of the scale is limited mainly to internal consistency, and correlation across the US and Japanese versions - with the main findings being the factor analyses yielding the socialising and belonging domains.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The data is sound in a technical sense though questions remain concerning
substantive validity.

2. The discussion accurately reports the internal consistency and (in a limited way) the concurrent validity and the broad US and Japanese consistency. The use of terms CC and CCS and SOC without explanation will be confusing for most readers. Could more interpretation be given on variation in findings across volunteers, residents, neighbourhoods etc? And what might explain the variation. The main concerns are for the substantive validity of the measures: how do we know that they are ‘grounded’ in volunteers own views? Does the scale really in a practical sense enable us to do better in volunteer efforts to combat social isolation? Some predictive value is helpfully reported: that more community commitment is associated with more confidence in helping elderly neighbours avoid social isolation.

3. The writing is straight forward but would benefit from a thorough edit for fluency and readability.

Further notes
1. The manuscript does adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

2. The limitations of the work are clearly stated apart from the concerns above for substantive validity and cultural appropriateness.

3. The authors have clearly acknowledge the work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished.

4. The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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