Reviewer's report

Title: Interest in dietary pattern, individual-level social capital, and psychological distress: A cross-sectional study in a rural Japanese community

Version: 2 Date: 9 February 2013

Reviewer: Wesley Dean

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Major Compulsory Revisions
The paper is much improved. I consider it nearly there, but you need to make a stronger case for why you are linking elements of social capital such as affection/love for one's community and a sense of reciprocity with depression and dietary patterns. My suggestion is for you to suggest somewhere fairly close to the front of the paper that you propose a conceptual model to explain the relationship between social capital, depression, and dietary pattern. Construct a figure which allows you to indicate the likely causal linkages (mechanisms and directions) between these distinct constructs. Depression, for example, limits one's interest in maintaining a healthy diet. Strong emotional attachment towards one's community and strong feelings of reciprocity are likely to improve one's feelings of depression, and vice versa. Social capital both improves access to FV entailing greater dietary diversity, and provides normative guidance to eat a better diet, but not having the resources to eat a healthy diet may also destroy social capital. A further characteristic of the model is that it is multilevel. The depression measures speak to the individual, and the social capital measures speak to how that individual functions within a broader community. I really do think a figure would help you lay out these relationships. Some of these pathways are present in the conclusion, but not in the introduction.

Minor Essential Revisions
1) Page 5, change "We also had a hypothesis that..." to "We hypothesized that..."
2) Page 6, change "We conducted a survey in municipality..." to "We conducted a survey in a municipality..."
3) Page 8, change "based on the Putnam's..." to "based on Putnam's..."
4) Page 10, change "suggesting that the lower the social capital, the..." to "suggesting that the lower the level of perceived reciprocity, the..."
5) In a number of places you use the expression "items of social capital." This would read better if you changed it to "social capital items" or "two social capital items."
6) On page 12, you write that "It seemed that the association between interest in dietary pattern and psychological distress was more greatly attenuated by the inclusion of the social capital variables, as compared with the association between social capital and psychological distress by the inclusion of interest in
dietary pattern." I have difficulty following this sentence. Please clarify, and preferably break it up into more than one sentence.

7) Page 14, change "We consider the public health meanings of an association between interest in dietary pattern and psychological distress as follows: The improvement of dietary patterns would also be a favorable strategy for promoting the mental health of community residents where mental health issues such as suicide prevention are regarded as important parts of the health promotion agenda in the community." to "We consider the public health significance of an association between interest in dietary pattern and psychological distress to be as follows: The improvement of dietary patterns would be a favorable strategy for promoting the mental health of community residents where mental health issues such as suicide prevention are regarded as important parts of the health promotion agenda."

8) Page 15, change "sense of belonging to community..." to "sense of community belonging..." You may want to look for other instances of this phrasing throughout the paper.

9) Page 15, change "They concluded that individual..." to "They concluded that a low level of individual..."

10) Page 15, change "There seem to be three possible explanations of why social capital was associated with interest in dietary pattern: facilitated access to information on healthy eating, normative pressure to adopt healthy eating behavior from neighbors’ social support, and reciprocal nonmarket exchanges of food that are characteristics of rural communities. First, people living in a community with a higher level of social capital such as reciprocity could attain higher levels of health literacy by facilitated flows of health information on dietary habits through community health activities." to "There seem to be three possible explanations for the association of social capital with interest in dietary pattern: facilitated access to information on healthy eating, normative pressure to adopt healthy eating behaviors from neighbors’ social support, and reciprocal non-market exchanges of food that are characteristics of rural communities. First, people living in communities with greater levels of reciprocity could attain higher levels of health literacy by facilitated flows of health information on dietary habits through Community health activities."

11) Page 15-16. I do not understand the inclusion of the claim about social capital and technology literacy. Make this clearer, or preferably find a food or depression related example.

12) Page 16. Linking dietary interest to social capital through neighbors' social support is plausible for two reasons: social support/reciprocity increases access to fruits and vegetables (an instrumental dimension to social capital/reciprocity) and it increases social contact, hence greater normative pressure to eat a normalized diet. It would make sense for this section to find its way, in one form or another, to the conceptual model in your introduction.
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:

I declare that I have no competing interests.