Reviewer's report

Title: Development and validation of a tool to assess the physical and social environment associated with physical activity among adults in Sri Lanka.

Version: 3  Date: 10 February 2014

Reviewer: Ruwan R Ferdinando

Reviewer's report:

Overall I was impressed with the detail and the rigour evident in the article. It is nicely written. I think this article addresses an important issue and is worth publishing. The methods are well defined and appropriate for the research question. The amount of data presented is sufficient and fitting. I am impressed with the analysis and the statistics used. However, I have a few questions and comments.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore): None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Background, Para 4: “Abbreviated Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale (ANEWS))” needs to be corrected as “Abbreviated Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale (ANEWS)”.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The study is titled “Development and validation of a tool to assess the physical and social environment associated with physical activity among adults in Sri Lanka”. However, this study has been conducted in the district of Colombo in the Western Province of Sri Lanka which encompasses the economic capital of Sri Lanka. The physical and social environment associated with physical activity among adults in Sri Lanka is not represented by this study setting. Furthermore, being the district with the highest population density, it may have characteristics only specific to it and not to other districts in Sri Lanka. It has been shown that in Sri Lanka, there are rural-urban differences in physical activity. Due to the difficulty in generalizing the findings to Sri Lanka, the title seems to be misleading. It may need change.

2. Traditionally, populations in South and South-East Asia have been rural-based agrarian workers and occupational physical activity levels have been high. (Refer http://sajprevcardiology.com/vol7/vol7_4/physicalactivity.htm). Currently there is a discussion of the divide between Occupational and Non-occupational Physical Activity. Does this instrument possess the property of assessing PA in these different subgroups? Or it is only recommended for the general population.
I wonder how justifiable to state “This will enable identification of various physical and social environmental factors affecting PA in Sri Lanka, which will help in the development of more tailored intervention strategies for promoting higher PA levels in Sri Lanka”, as mentioned in the abstract.

3. I wonder whether there is a difference in the factor structure between males and females due to the nature of the different physical and social environmental factors associated with physical activity in these two categories. Would this instrument become valid and reliable in assessing the physical and social environment associated with physical activity when studied among females alone? These questions may be relevant to be addressed in improving the generalisability of the instrument. In a South Asian context the items such as infrastructure for walking, aesthetics and facilities for cycling, vehicular traffic safety, access and connectivity, recreational facilities for PA, safety, social cohesion and social acceptance may not be very relevant in the determination of above for the majority of females who are housewives.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.