Reviewer's report

Title: Mental health (GHQ12; CES-D) and value attributed to work among inmates of a semi-open prison and the long-term unemployed in Luxembourg

Version: 1 Date: 21 December 2007

Reviewer: Jeremy Miles

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To authors:

1. (Abstract) It seems unlikely that the mental health of the two groups was identical.
2. The abstract implies a causal relationship when it says "the greater the value prisoners put on work, the better their GHQ12 score", however, the results do not demonstrate such a relationship, and so this should be rephrased.
3. The authors state that self esteem was associated with psychological well being â## most clinicians would suggest that self esteem was part of psychological well being.
4. The conclusions of the study do not follow directly from the study.
5. The authors state that no computer knowledge was required, however, some computer knowledge was required â## presumably to use a mouse or keyboard.
6. Is there any information available about the translations of the tests that were used? The authors state that (for example) the self-esteem questionnaire was validated by Rosenberg, but that was the English version.
7. Rather than carrying out two multiple regressions, I would carry out a moderated regression, with prisoners, LTU men, LTU women as a categorical variable, and compare slope parameters amongst the three groups.
8. When groups are compared, the difference, the confidence intervals of the difference, and the exact p-values should be given.
9. When correlations are being described, the correlation (or the regression) should be given. The authors state that two effects were in opposite directions, but don't say what the size of the effects
were. The effects should be tested for a statistically significant difference.

10. It appears that English is not the first language of the authors, the manuscript should be proof read by a native speaker.

11. The authors should consider the extent to which their comparisons are meaningful, given the disparate nature of the populations.

12. It is very dangerous to compare R2 across different groups. R2 is a function of the relationships, and of the variances. It may be that the relationships are the same, but the variances differ.

13. The sample size is small, a power analysis should be carried out to assist in the interpretation of the results.

14. As I've already said in the abstract, the discussion goes a long way beyond the results, for example: "The more empowerment is increased, the less the depression", the authors do not know this, to determine this, they should carry out a randomized controlled trial, with an intervention that changes empowerment. "Positive attitudes towards prisoners among those helping them are important to the effectiveness of various correctional rehabilitation programs and to successful reintegration" this may be true, but the study tells us nothing about it. "The education level of persons with less schooling, who have not reached the end of secondary school, whether prisoners or unemployed, has a negative impact on their mental equilibrium", maybe, but maybe having less mental equilibrium leads to leaving school sooner.