Reviewer’s report

Title: Support groups for Dementia caregivers - Predictors for utilisation and expected quality from a family caregiver’s point of view: A questionnaire survey

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Reviewer: Brent Mausbach

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Major Compulsor Revisions

1) The authors write that support groups have been proven in meta-analytic studies to improve subjective well-being in caregivers. While technically true, this statement fails to reveal that support groups are notoriously poor at more objective outcomes such as burden and depression (as indicated by these same meta-analyses). Indeed, other forms of treatment have much broader effects than simply subjective well-being, and depression and burden are likely far more relevant than subjective well-being in terms of public health costs, etc (e.g., loss of work, financial burden, and disability). Since the authors make it a point that their study is to find ways to influence low support group utilization, the bigger question is, “Why would communities want to prioritize support group utilization over more effective interventions that have broader treatment effects (e.g., depression, burden, well-being, etc)?”

2) On the above note, the authors should balance their literature review to indicate that while support groups do have an impact on subjective well-being, they do not have an impact on other more objective well-being measures.

3) The author’s indication that there is very little research on Support Group utilization is an interesting one, mainly because these are so commonly offered by community agencies. It is therefore odd that such a common service offering has so little information about it. Perhaps the reason there is such little research on predictors of support-group utilization is that scientists are more interested in increasing utilization of more effective treatment modalities, as mentioned above. Perhaps the authors could make a stronger case for why increased support-group utilization would be preferable over efforts to increase utilization of other resources and interventions, other than just highlighting the subjective well-being aspect.

4) The sample size is excellent and is a strength of the manuscript, although so many non-significant effects with such a large sample size is revealing. The authors reported eliminating several variables due to multicolinearity that could be more revealing. Since the authors had no a priori hypotheses this appears to be an entirely exploratory study, so why not at least explore those variables that were eliminated from the analyses?

5) The analysis predicting support group utilization appears to consist almost entirely of demographic predictors (e.g., age, gender, place of residence,
education, etc). While important, it would seem that individuals faced with different caregiving challenges might be more likely to use support groups. For example, do the authors have any information on caregivers’ level of depressive symptoms? Stress (other than hours of care)? Distress? It seems likely that caregivers would report greater “need” for support groups when these indicators became more elevated, and including these variables would make a more interesting analysis.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'