Reviewer's report

Title: Long Term Care in 29 European countries: evidence from an ecological study.

Version: 1 Date: 30 April 2011

Reviewer: Sven Lueke

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Methods: A short explanation of the choice of cut-off-point (>=60% of total variance) is missing, though there are several other options, e.g. Kaiser Criterion, Horn's Parallel Analysis etc.). Depending on cut-off-point, you could have gained e.g. 3 PCs. The manuscript could improve a lot, when taking into account this aspect. At least a critical discussion of the cut-off-point would be necessary.

2) Conclusions, 2nd paragraph: This paragraph slightly overvalues the results. The findings of the study are first of all explorative and descriptive: two factors for describing patterns of LTC were identified (explaining 60% of total variance), that show mainly 4 patterns of LTC, and allow comparisons between the 29 European countries. This is the first very important step. In order to gain meaningful policy-making evidence and to overcome several limitations of the study, additional subsequent research (in non-ecological design) would prove beneficial.

Minor Essential Revisions

2) Title: The explorative design of the study aims to identify different patterns of LTC in Europe. This should be expressed by the title of the manuscript, e.g. ‘Patterns of Long Term Care in 29 European countries: evidence from an ecological study.’

4) Discussion, 10th paragraph: The last sentence ‘Finally, the number of variables […]’ is a limitation, not a strength of the study results.

Minor issues not for publication

5) Background, 6th paragraph: Can patterns of LTC can be identified across Europe?

6) Discussion, 2nd paragraph: Western European countries mainly fulfil elderly needs[…].

7) References, Reference 17: When giving non-English references, an English translation would be useful for the reader.

8) References, Reference 19: Berlin DIW seems to be a co-author, but it is the institution of Erika Schulz.
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.