Reviewer's report

Title: Measurement Properties of a Novel Survey to Assess Stages of Organizational Readiness for Evidence-Based Practice in Community-Level Prevention Programs

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Reviewer: Tiina Kortteisto

Reviewer's report:

Firstly, the topic of this article is an important and useful in the field of health service research, and particularly in the implementation context. A brief and valid instrument for measuring an organizational readiness for evidence-based research implementation and use in the healthcare context is a welcome tool. It is a great challenge to develop and test this kind of instrument!

In general, the introduction section is informative and coherent. The gap between the need to direct scarce public resources to the most effective community prevention programs based on evidence-based knowledge and the implementation and use of this evidence-based knowledge in local practices is obvious in the United States, and also all over the world. To disseminate and uptake the evidence-based knowledge is challenging! Important issues are awareness and adoption. The last one almost always necessitates changes to local practice, which means that health care professionals have to make changes their own working habits. That is a big issue! However, I recognized that the chosen perspective of this article is an organizational level, because of the variability in organizational readiness for integrating research evidence into practice. My first question: Is there any evidence behind this opinion/statement?

You have three specific aims in your article. I understood that the aims are to describe 1) the development of a brief and generalize able survey instrument to measure stages of organizational readiness for evidence-based decision making in public health settings, 2) the measurement properties of the novel instrument, and 3) the potential uses of the instrument. My second question: Did I understand the aims right way?

The method section describes well, what you have done and how. The recruitment of the study participants was described adequate. The response rate for the final analytic sample was 62% (n = 243). A test-retest reliability of the survey instrument was performed among a subset of respondents (n = 92). My third question: Who is a subset of respondents and what are their
characteristics? The participants and their background have been described in the table 1. There could be shown also this ‘second round’ group information.

The development of the survey instrument was based firstly on Steckler’s study group work (1992) and Roger’s theory, and secondly on Briss’s et al. (2004) lessons and Dreisinger’s study group qualitative study (which is not available). The maintenance and sustainability factors were based on Schell’s study group work (2011). In further development, a group of key stakeholders took part of a cognitive response testing. This is very interesting method and I think it is worth while to describe more precisely this process e.g. by using a flow chart. Particularly, because one study aim is to describe the development of generalize able instrument.

Survey items (n = 26) were grouped based on the four-stage readiness framework. These four stages; awareness, adoption, implementation, maintenance, and a contextual domain, organizational climate, were explained shortly in the last paragraph of the measures section. The items of four domains have described in the table 3 except the items of organizational climate, which can be seen only from the Appendix. I was wondering the community awareness items: are they really clear for respondents? Is obesity a central issue for all preventive programs?

The analysis has been described well and the choices have been rationalized. The tables 2-6 are informative, but only abbreviations of the model fit indices have been used. The results section contains measurement model development and performance of readiness scales sections. The results of models have interpreted and reported clearly. Only the interpretation of ICC values (test-retest reliability) is inadequate, because you did not give any background information to your assessment; good to moderate.

At first, in the discussion section, you concluded your main results well, but I recognized that you had had a hypothesis in the beginning; grant-funded and supported programs will achieve higher mean scores than others. This has not clear stated in the introduction section. Furthermore, I need some evidence behind this statement too. In addition, you mentioned at least two times ‘latter stages’. It is not necessarily clear for all readers what are these specific stages.

The discussion section, particularly your citation to the systematic review of Greenhalgh’s study group and Weiner’s studies indicates that you have reviewed your results in more general level than only measurement properties level. You mentioned that your work serves as a demonstration of the utility and validity of a brief instrument and may bolster efforts in other areas, and I agree that.

The conclusion section is quite long and you use also citations. It could be reasonable to move all issues with citation to the discussion section, and make a short conclusion with possible further development need.

Major revisions:

1. The starting point in the study, the statement of the variability in organizational
readiness for integrating research evidence into practice, needs some background evidence. Without cited evidence it is only a hypothesis or an opinion. How you define a concept ‘organizational readiness’? Is it a keyword?

2. The aims of the study should be reported clearly. If you had three study questions, you should also answer each of these questions in the report.

3. In the method section, there is a need to describe more carefully the different phases of the development (development process), because of theory-based perspective, e.g. by using a development flow chart. Also the test-retest procedure needs more information and reasoning, e.g. evidence behind good-moderate ICC values.

4. Your hypothesis and all starting points should be stated clearly in the introduction instead of only discuss them in the discussion section or concluded your results with some new citations. Is the conclusion section a right place for new citations?

5. In the abstract you mentioned mediators and moderators of readiness for EBP, but you did not report these clearly in the text or in the tables.


Minor revisions:
1. Three items of organizational climate should be reported clearly in the table or at least in the text. Also the specific analysis for this latent factor should be reported.

2. The abbreviations in the tables should be opened in a footnote.

3. ‘Latter stages’ is not enough; it has to be saying clearly what stages you inferred.

4. The pages should be numbered!

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interest.