Reviewer's report

Title: New Partnerships among Single Older Adults: A Q Methodology Study

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Reviewer: Tom Dening

Reviewer's report:

It is a paper on an interesting topic, though I am not sure it is ideally suited to BMC Geriatrics. It may be more appropriate for a journal with more of a social sciences focus.

I admit to being confused by the statistics. Factor analysis has been performed on the participants' responses to a series of Q statements. I would have thought that this shows an underlying structure for the responses. However, the authors seem to treat the results as though the analysis has grouped the participants. I am puzzled that factor analysis would do this - it seems to me that another method would be required to cluster the participants. It may be that I am simply mistaken but I do find this confusing.

The data are obtained from a sample of older people in Taiwan, recruited from a fairly limited range of community organisations, elderly apartment complexes and elderly care centres. We do not know even if this sample is typical of Taiwan, let alone anywhere else. There are no discussions of any limitations of the methods used, of which the biggest is surely whether these findings can be generalised to other communities. Another distinct possibility is that responses may have been affected by a desirability/respectability bias on behalf of the participants.

The five factors cover just 53% of the variance, so this doesn't feel like a very strong explanation of the findings. Some of the factor titles, especially for Factor 1, appear weak, and it is difficult to tell what is the construct that is being described by the factor.

Finally, it is difficult to see what the implications are for practitioners. I am not sure that being aware of these factors will affect how health professionals interact with older people, including about how they seek new relationships.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I recommend additional statistical review

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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