Reviewer's report

Title: Risk-based approach to school entry examinations in Germany – a validation study

Version: 0 Date: 13 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Monika Daseking

Reviewer's report:

Many thanks for the opportunity to review this publication. The authors have worked on an interesting question. I would like to thank the authors for their previous work. However, in my opinion there are still some serious problems in the revised manuscript, which I would like to address below.

In general, there are still linguistic limitations. Many formulations and phrases appear in their structure very "German". I would like to recommend that the manuscript should be revised again by a native speaker. In addition, it would be useful to critically question specific formulations once again. As an example I would like to mention the following passage (page 8, line 1): "...reduces the number of children undergoing clinical examinations...". In my opinion young Children do not actively undergo a clinical examination, they are rather passively presented for an examination or they were examined. Another example (p.5, line 11): …and took the existence of already diagnosed developmental delays as a surrogate… it would certainly be stylistically better here to use an alternative verb (took ? set?).

Please remove the use of "our", "us", and "we" and incorporate more formal language.

Data:

Formally, the statistical symbol "n" should always be used when naming sample sizes, especially on page 5, from line 19. Misunderstandings can quickly arise between year and sample size.

When the variables are mentioned (p. 6) and their content clarified, there is no explanation as to why three or more siblings or growing up with a single mother represent a risk factor for child development (p. 7, line 3). Please provide scientific evidence to support this.

The operationalization of the variable migration background also appears suboptimal. To go solely by nationality or country of birth does not provide sufficient information. In my opinion, the mother tongue with which the children grow up would be the better predictor or, as a risk factor, more meaningful. This would also include those children who live in Germany in the third generation, but who do not grow up with the German language as their mother tongue. As...
has recently been discussed again, language competence is an important prerequisite for educational success and school development.

"Heretofore" is a rarely used term, is there an alternative for that?

How does the description "severe developmental disorders" come about? (p. 5, line 24) The previous sentences only mentions known preexisting developmental disorders. Please provide description about classification of "severe developmental disorders"; what types of impairment or disorder are summarized here?

Results:

Demographic characteristics are usually not part of the results. When demographics are presented as a result, additional analyzes should be performed to compare the samples for distribution of characteristics, i.e. chi-square. (Additionally, it would be useful to calculate OR!)

Based on significance tests it can then also be discussed that there are (significantly) more boys in the group of children with developmental disorders, for example.

In order to increase the significance of the manuscript, it would also be possible to perform the calculations for the years mentioned separately and then compare them statistically.

Discussion:

I would ask the authors to formulate the consequences that can be drawn from the results more clearly once again. Only the reference to a stepwise approach remains too vague here. Could you provide a flowchart or an illustration that outlines the stepwise procedure? How should a school enrollment examination be structured? All children in screening, children at risk with differentiated examination? Only examine children at risk at all? Who's gonna examine the children without risk factors? Only a medical assistant? What if problems not are seen in this situation? Is it indeed the right way cutting resources for most children? Wouldn't it be better to provide/offer more resources overall if SEE's role in health reporting were to be taken seriously to gather epidemiological data? You have already mentioned this point, but the question remains in which direction the SEE should develop.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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