Reviewer’s report

Title: Prevalence and Associated Factors of Alexithymia among Adult Prisoners in China: a Cross-sectional Study

Version: 0 Date: 12 Apr 2017

Reviewer: S Kilian

Reviewer's report:

I would like to congratulate the authors on an interesting and important paper. Your study highlights the impact of prison on prisoners mental health.

Firstly, one aspect that I would suggest you address in more detail in your background section and in your discussion is how childhood trauma types might influence emotion/affect regulation, since emotion regulation is at the core of alexithymia. Increasingly research studies are suggesting that trauma types (abuse versus neglect) may have a differential impact on emotion-regulation and I think this is an important issue to mention in your paper, since you only found two types of trauma to be significant predictors in your regression model. This suggests to me that the other trauma types might be less important in terms of emotion-regulation.

Furthermore, I would also suggest that if you have information on the psychiatric history of your sample it would be best to report on this in your paper. In other words, do you know how many study participants have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (for example in the past 6 months). If you don't have access to this information then I would suggest that you mention this as a study limitation. The reason being that results indicating that longer term prisoners have higher rates of alexithymia in my opinion may be confounded by the fact that these participants have psychiatric illnesses and that the illness may in fact be one of the factors driving a higher incidence of alexithymia.

Lastly, were you able to control for adult trauma. In general prison can be a very violent environment and this has made me wonder whether the higher incidence in alexithymia might not also be due to trauma other than that experienced during childhood (i.e. trauma experienced after the age of 18 years while in prison). If you were unable to measure adult trauma I would suggest that you mention this as a study limitation.

All in all well done on a good paper.
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.

Yes

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?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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