**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Assessing social recovery of vulnerable youth in global mental health settings: A pilot study of clinical research tools in Malaysia.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 08 Feb 2019

**Reviewer:** Laurie Heatherington

**Reviewer's report:**

This manuscript describes the results of a qualitative study testing the feasibility and acceptability (participants' responses to) of a set of measures relevant to the assessment of serious mental health problems in young adults in Malaysia. The introductory material reveals that the authors are experienced in assessing and treating young adults with psychosis in the UK, and seeking to test this core set of measures of social recovery/psychosocial functioning for their potential useful in the Malaysian context.

There is much to recommend about this work in general. The manuscript documents the dearth of mental health treatment is Malaysia as well as the need to start at the beginning, and in a culturally sensitive way, to first test the usefulness and feasibility of a means of identifying those at risk. The sample included participants from several ethnic groups in this multi-ethnic society Clearly, it is a first step in an important, ongoing collaboration to develop mental health treatment services in an area of great need.

The measures were presumably translated (although we need more information about that - were they also backtranslated?) and presented in a semi-structured interview. More information is needed about the interviewers and the interview settings. Most participants completed most measures although there was some attrition, and participants made useful comments about improving the measure or the administration. Time to completion ranged from 53 minutes to just over two hours, quite a range. With only nine participants, it is hard to have a reliable sense of how long the battery will typically take. A larger sample would significantly improve the strength of the evidence on this dimension, and in general. If adjustments to the measure and the administration of it (e.g., breaking it into sections) were to be made on the basis of this pilot data, then testing it on a larger sample would provide stronger evidence. The other major concern is the sampling. It is not exactly clear how this set of nine young people, none of whom were showing signs of incipient mental illness were identified and recruited. Also, then, by definition, this does not test the feasibility of the battery in a population for whom the measure is eventually intended. It seems that the authors learned a lot from this initial testing that will be helpful moving forward to develop the assessments in Malaysia, and they are encouraged to continue to develop their important research program.
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?  
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.

No

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests  
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal