Reviewer’s report

Title: Concepts of social epidemiology in health services research

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Reviewer: Martin Lindstrom

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Manuscript: “Concepts of social epidemiology in health services research”

This manuscript discusses how theoretical considerations behind factors such as social inequalities, social relationships, social capital and work stress may enrich health services by specifying research questions, clarifying methodological issues, understanding how social factors are related to health care, and by developing and implementing interventions. The presentation and discussion are generally sound and clear. References seem relevant. Some amendments are recommended, and they are given below.

There is no need for professional English language examination of this manuscript.

Title
The title should also specify the nature of this manuscript

Abstract
No suggested improvements.

Background
It may be added that the four theoretical and conceptual areas presented and discussed by the author are also inter-related because they interact with each other or represent different steps in the same causal pathways leading to health outcomes or health services outcomes.

Discussion
It should be clarified that “Social inequality” is often considered as the underlying social conditions determining health and health services outcomes, and that social factors such as social relationships, social capital and psychosocial work stress are often regarded as intermediate social factors in the pathways between social inequality and health outcomes as well as health services outcomes.

It should be made clearer than now that parts of the “Social relationships” area are very close to the “Social capital” area. This becomes even more obvious as the author correctly presents Bourdieu as opposed to Putnam and Coleman as major representatives of the social capital literature. Bourdieu’s definition of social capital to an important extent includes aspects of rather close social support, which on the other hand Putnam and Coleman exclude from the social
capital concept.

Also, authors such as Bourdieu would exclude trust from the social capital concept, while Putnam and Coleman include it. It should thus be stated clearer that Bourdieu as opposed to Putnam and Coleman may contribute with partly different analytical frameworks for our understanding of health services and research problems within this particular research area.

Relevance for health services research

The public’s and the patients’ trust in the health care system and health care services should be mentioned and also emphasized. As the manuscript stand now, there is only focus on trust within the health care system and within the health care services. Different aspects of outside trust in the health care system, i.e vertical trust as an aspect of social capital, is also highly important.

Summary

The complex nature of the interrelationships between the four concepts may be stressed more in the summary.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.