Reviewer’s report

Title: From social adversity to sympathy for violent radicalization: The role of depression, religiosity and social support

Version: 0 Date: 23 May 2019

Reviewer: Karin De Ridder

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors,

This article focuses on a college population - in this case a young population (majority is 16-21 years old) and mainly female, third or more generation immigrants and not religious. The text is balanced as it describes well several sides of this topic and emphasizes nicely what this study can cover (and what not). It is clear that this study covers the sympathy of violent radicalization (SVR), not the factors that might be mediators/moderators to actual violent radicalization. So, even though media focuses often on Islam/Muslims, this study will not be able to make any hard statements about any such relationship, as the study population only has 6% Muslims. The authors are also not formulating any of these statements as such, although any conclusion on "no mediation" of religion between social adversity and SVR should not be mixed up with the usual "media focus" on "Islam/Muslims" and "radicalization". The authors balance this well in their conclusions of the main text, in my opinion better than in the conclusion part of the abstract.

The weakest point in the study is probably the response rate, varying between 2 and 19% of the college populations (N=1894). If using the full data sample, it is even less (N=1190) although the characteristics between the full sample and the full data sample are similar. Can there be given a clarification why there still are missings for some variables in the full data sample (Table1)? How was it handled in the analyses?

As reviewer I am not familiar with all the used instruments, which all have references to earlier studies. Is it possible to provide the range (min-max) of the continuous instruments, to have a faster and better understanding of the means in table 2? Additionally for Table 2, is it possible in the table (or it's footnote) to indicate which instrument was used in the table (as discrimination and "radicalization" have 2 instruments). NB: "sympathy for violent radicalization" is more correct than "radicalization".

Can the authors specify somewhat more the multilevel model that was used (line 26 page 10) for presenting the results of line 30-46 page 13? It would be an added value (and easier to understand) for most readers to have a table with a traditional approach added to the manuscript. Does a traditional approach also support/suggest the presence of mediation, e.g. change in coefficient of the exposure when adding the mediator in the model based on non-predicted data?

Without prejudice to the above comment, the authors present a nice stepwise presentation of their statistical approach - from univariate analysis, DAG's to multilevel analyses and finally quantification of the mediation within a counterfactual framework. Something that is confusing are the moderation analyses: I assume that they were performed in the multilevel models? Maybe it would be easier for the
reader to first present the "basic models" (previous comment) and "moderators" to finalize it with the "mediators" (Monte Carlo approximations etc.)? Are all presented instruments/variables used to predict the mediator and outcomes in the counterfactual framework?

Final comment, the CI of proportion mediated can be below zero or exceed the 1 - theoretically that is impossible. Is this a modelling issue, e.g. bad choice of the models (linear, non-linear or semiparametric) or a mathematical issue? How were the models chosen?

Kind regards,

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