Reviewer’s report

Title: Developing content for national population health surveys: an example using a newly developed sedentary behaviour module

Version: 1 Date: 25 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Stefaan Demarest

Reviewer's report:

The authors have taken (most of) of the remarks of the reviewers into consideration while revising the manuscript. Yet, the fundamental question "what is the added value of the manuscript?" remains at least partly unanswered. According to the authors, this added value lays in "outlining the development process of a new survey module addressing an emerging area (sedentary behavior) for use in a national survey" (response to the reviewer 1 on the previous version of the manuscript). The content as such new module (sedentary behavior) is -in this perspective- less important that the process of its development. At the same time (response to reviewer 2 on the previous version of the manuscript), the authors state that "the objective of this paper is to both describe the development process of modules for surveys (using the sedentary behavior module as an example), as well as the details of content of the module"

Compared to the previous version of the manuscript, the main orientation of the manuscript has shifted (slightly) towards the development process, at least this is put forward by the authors: the aim of the manuscript is "to provide an approach for the development of future survey content" (abstract). "The results of this paper describe this process and present a framework for content development" (abstract). "that may serve as a model for future population survey content development" (abstract).

Yet, although the process applied in the development of the new module on sedentary behavior module by PHAC and Statistics Canada is described into detail, the "framework of content development" that could be used in other surveys for other domains is not that clear: "thinking about the module in the preplanning phase of the survey; building in flexibility and ranked priorities into the module; and, basing the development and process on the best science and international best practices" (page 15, line 19) are quite general elements to take into consideration when developing modules/questionnaires. Also the content of figure 1/table 1 refer to general processes/recommendations. The link with work done by PHAC and SC is not at all clear to me. It might be that PHAC and SC developed the content of the sedentary module according the processes/recommendations as presented in figure 1/table 1 - and that's quite OK - but that is just an example/an illustration of how the presented processes/recommendations were applied, not 'providing' a(-n) (new) approach.
This paper could be suited for publication in APH if the authors would elaborate their (new?)
approach of/development process of modules - with the sedentary behavior module as example.
For the moment, it still looks (as this was also the case for the previous version, although
announced otherwise) the emphasis lays on the particular 'history' of the development of the
sedentary module by PHAC/SC. A stepwise description of the process - first in general terms and
then applied to the development of the sedentary module - in the discussion/conclusion section
would broaden the scope and would make the findings/process useful for other modules/other
surveys/other contexts.

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