Reviewer’s report

Title: Population levels of wellbeing and the association with social capital

Version: 2 Date: 07 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Richard Rowe

Reviewer's report:

This paper proposes to measure levels of well-being in South Australia and test whether these are predicted by a range of demographic, health social and economic indicators.

Strengths of the study include a large sample that is likely to be representative of the target population and appropriate treatment of the survey design variables.

I have a number of concerns about the ms:

1. The paper is designed to identify predictors of wellbeing, but the introduction does not provide a full review of well-being predictors from other studies. The well-being construct, or at least the measure that is used here, has a lot of overlap with the construct of anxiety and depression. Therefore this review should include predictions of levels of internalising disorder in general as well as studies that specifically measure wellbeing. A focus on neighbourhood characteristics that predict these disorders would seem relevant to the study of social capital set up here.

2. There is a conceptual overlap between the wellbeing and social capital measures. As noted in (1) the well-being measure contains an overlap with depression. The item tapping control in the social capital measure is also likely to pick up variance related to depression, as this seems closely related to depressogenic attributional style. This point may be solved by removing the control item from the social capital measure. The authors do need provide a defence for their approach to measuring social capital in this ms.
Specific comments

P1 Line 66. Independent components should not be connected. I think dissociable would be a better term than independent here.

P1 Line 72. Please explain the evidence underlying this relationships in more detail. As written, it is assumed that well-being causes good health etc. But was is the evidence to support this causal relationship Does the literature convincingly show that the causal arrow goes in this direction, rather than mental health etc causing well being. Or might it be that shared factors cause both well being and strong health? Or might well-being and strong mental health be two measures of the same construct?

p4 line 93. I don't understand what the authors mean by "providing additional explanatory outcomes." In my understanding, outcomes are there to be explained, they cannot explain anything themselves, without becoming predictors.

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.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

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
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Acceptable

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