Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring the reliability and acceptability of cognitive tests for Indigenous Australians: A Pilot Study

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Reviewer: Alden Gross

Reviewer's report:

This is a review of "Exploring the reliability and acceptability of cognitive tests for Indigenous Australians: A Pilot Study" submitted to BMC Psychology. Authors sought to demonstrate reliability and acceptability of select cognitive tests in an Australian aboriginal sample. Authors concluded all four tests are reliable and well-accepted.

The paper has no falsifiable hypotheses (the abstract's Conclusion states that all 4 tests tested "showed the highest reliability"), nor does it seek to perform analyses or evaluations of validity using available tests. It is unclear how the sample was selected; it sounds as if this is a convenience sample of hospital patients who happen to have taken certain tests and later provided consent. The tests have nothing to do with WKS, yet the convenience sample includes patients with this condition. It is unclear how the particular decrements in WKS are being picked up by the test battery. Reads have no way of knowing whether the sample represents most aboriginals.

Section-specific comments are below.

Introduction. Authors claim several times throughout the Introduction and manuscript that mainstream cognitive tests are based on Western concepts. This is false and makes it sound like authors are oddly scapegoating an entire region of the world; mental status testing has deeper roots in ancient China than anywhere in the Western hemisphere or Europe.

The second paragraph is a non-sequitur about retest effects. Authors never evaluate retest effects in their sample; all they report is a test-retest reliability.

Authors state that indigenous people are the only ones who are able to determine relevance and acceptability of cognitive tests. This is preposterously false. Authors ought to learn about tests of differential item functioning in cognitive testing. See Thissen, D., Steinberg, L., Gerrard, M. (1986). Beyond group differences: The concept of bias. Psychological Bulletin, 99, 118-128.

Methods. Why were pregnant participants excluded? Why did authors select these particular tests? How many raters were used to score the subjective elements of tests like story recall, and how were discrepancies handled?
Results. Authors must make clear how the qualitative research in their convenience sample differs from a typical English-speaking sample. There appears to be little to differentiate aboriginals from English speakers. Everybody feels somewhat like a failure for performing poorly on tests, for example. It is unsubstantiated hearsay (and demonstrably false) that "older people would struggle using the computer..." This is agism and should have no place in scientific research; I could quote a participant saying the sky is purple and that does not prove anything about the hue of the sky. And what relevance does, "My husband was a white fella and I understand English" have in any teachable or generalizable context?

Overall, the vignettes may be safely excluded from the manuscript, leaving just test-retest coefficients. There is not enough for a publishable manuscript here. A qualitative research journal may be a more appropriate venue.

Discussion. There is nothing here but speculative text based on authors' opinions. It cannot contain rational evaluations of research because nothing substantive appears to have been done in the paper.

**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.

No

**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?**  
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I am able to assess the statistics

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