Reviewer’s report

Title: Productive activities, mental health and quality of life in disability: Exploring the role enhancement and the role strain hypotheses

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Reviewer: Katja Kokko

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BMC Psychology

Reviewer's comments on the manuscript titled "Productive activities, mental functioning and well-being in disability: Exploring the role enhancement and the role strain hypotheses"

The main of the present study is to analyze the links of engagement in productive activities (i.e., paid work, volunteering, education, housework) to mental functioning and well-being among a representative sample of 1,157 Swiss women and men with a severe spinal cord injury (SCI). Both load and diversity of productive activities were considered. Their associations with mental functioning and well-being, after controlling for several covariates, will be examined using Tobit regressions. The results will be interpreted in light of two competing hypotheses of Role Theory, namely, role strain and role enhancement.

The abstract, introduction, and methods are generally well written and the main aim of the study is to a some extent innovative, particularly its focus on the individuals with a disability, which is shown to reduce engagement in productive activities. Here, it will be tested whether an engagement is related to either a high or low level of mental functioning and well-being.

However, there are a couple of issues, which currently limit the potentiality of the manuscript. First, well-being is assessed in the present study using a scale for the quality of life (WHOQoL-BREF). I would consequently use the term "quality of life" when referring to it. Quality of life is a broader concept than mental well-being, including satisfaction with one's life circumstances. On the other hand, mental well-being can be characterized by one's feelings of happiness as well as positive and (low) negative affectivity, dimensions related to personal growth and resolution of social tasks and encounters (e.g., Keyes, 2005). The change of well-being to quality of life have implications for the introduction where the main concepts are defined.

Second, it would be useful to give a reader further information about the particular characteristics of the SCI individuals in relation to productive activities. Third, it can be argued that there are gender differences in engagement in productive activities and their links to mental functioning and quality of life. But only one reference (26), from 1995, is given to justify the gender issue. There may be more and more recent studies on this topic. Please update the references. Fourth, age will be considered as a covariate. However, I am wondering if it might alternatively be studied as a moderating factor, that is, to see whether the association between engagement in productive activities and mental functioning and quality of life is dependent on
the age of the SCI individual. Finally, in the context of the sample description, the reader is referred to previous publications for further information. I would recommend that more detailed information about, for instance, the attrition and representativeness of the sample was given in this manuscript too.

Reference:


Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

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Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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