

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	What is Mental Health? Evidence Towards a New Definition from a Mixed Methods Multidisciplinary International Survey
AUTHORS	Manwell, Laurie; Barbic, Skye; Roberts, Karen; Durisko, Zachary; Lee, Cheolsoo; ware, Emma; McKenzie, Kwame

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Joseph Pierre UCLA
REVIEW RETURNED	11-Dec-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The question "what is mental health?" has garnered attention in recent years and has high relevance from a public health standpoint. In this paper, the authors set out to answer that question based on a survey rooted in different definitions of mental health in the existing literature. The results, somewhat predictably, are heterogeneous, leading the authors to propose their own broad definition in the conclusion of the paper.</p> <p>This paper represents a reasonable addition to discussions about mental health, but its significance may be somewhat limited for the following reasons.</p> <p>First, the methodology, specifically with regard to selecting survey respondents could be better described. How exactly did the authors select the 25 research "experts?" How were the respondents from SAMIT selected and weren't the authors concerned that those affiliated with SAMIT would have a somewhat homogenous view of the subject (inasmuch as SAMIT's focus is on social determinants of wellbeing)? Does the snowball technique used then risk reinforcing that homogeneity? As noted, the actual results indicate heterogeneous responses suggesting a diverse sample, but perhaps the responses would have been even more diverse with a different sampling method. Some additional discussion of these issues is warranted along with a more clear description of how initial respondents were selected.</p> <p>With regard to the results, it is unsurprising that the consensus was that there was no perfect definition of mental health. Healthcare definitions will always be subject to contextual utility -- that is, the optimal definition may vary based on why the question is being asked. Different researchers, clinicians, and public policy workers will set different thresholds to define health, just as is done with definitions of illness. In the final paragraph, the authors themselves suggest that it may not be possible to arrive at a common consensus definition. If that is so, and I think it is, then the paper loses some significance.</p>
-------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p>Perhaps the lesson of the study is not to inform the proposal of a more broad, multifaceted, consensus definition, but to acknowledge that no one definition will suffice and that indeed, definitions -- especially of social constructs like health -- will always be imperfect depending on the question being asked.</p> <p>I would note that the authors do not reference the paper by George Valliant on this subject published in 2012 (World Psychiatry). It would be useful to cite/discuss that paper and explain how the present study extends the issues already published therein.</p>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

REVIEWER	<p>Andrew Sarkin, PhD University of California, San Diego, USA</p> <p>No competing interests</p>
REVIEW RETURNED	22-Dec-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is an extremely well written article describing the results of a survey on the definition of mental health that was distributed to subject matter experts and people with lived experience. The study was well designed, the results presented clearly, and discussed in meaningful ways.</p> <p>There was a lack of discussion of limitations. One limitation that the authors should mention might be sample size, in that the opinions expressed seem so diverse that I am not sure that saturation was reached as far as response variety. It is easy for the reader to be concerned about the representativeness of such a diverse sample of convenience, and snowballing is a good way to get more participants but it indicates less diversity of opinion. The reader also doesn't know if the original 56 were colleagues of the authors or members of a specific professional organization and already lacked diversity, some will want to know more about the diversity of the final sample. The fact that over half were from Canada would make it a bit less relevant to the rest of the world that they chose the Canada government definition because it is something they have seen a lot, and familiarity breeds liking, and this possible limitation should be mentioned also.</p> <p>A few little things would be abstract it says 29% vs. 30% in the table. One of the figure captions has an error in the spelling of positionality-29% in abstract vs 30% in table. You might want to insert a comma after mental when saying "physical, mental and social health" so that people realize that mental and social are not being combined.</p>
-------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Joseph Pierre

Institution and Country UCLA

1. The Reviewer requested clarification of how the 25 research "experts" were selected. Please see point #2 in response to the Editor's comments above.
2. The Reviewer asked if the authors were concerned that those affiliated with SAMI would have a somewhat homogenous view of the subject (inasmuch as SAMI's focus is on social determinants of wellbeing). The reviewer makes a legitimate point about the influence of institutional bias on research which is being applied to diverse populations. In fact, SAMI training program at CAMH is actually designed to recruit researchers with very diverse backgrounds, who generally do not have expertise in the social determinants of health, so that they can integrate their expertise into the existing network, thus broadening the scope of SAMI's research worldwide (previously noted on page 5, lines 105-107). One of the strengths of the program is its diverse international base of researchers and their multidisciplinary and multicultural collaborators. To emphasize this, we have listed the diverse areas of expertise of the seven authors to demonstrate the heterogeneity of SAMI, which also extends to our affiliated network. (Please see page 6, lines 123-128)
3. The Reviewer asked if the snowball technique used then risked reinforcing that homogeneity. Again, this is a legitimate point that we believe is addressed by the very diverse and heterogeneous makeup of our SAMI program and network. More importantly, many of the names of other experts that were sent to us did not include their contact information, indicating that the respondents were suggesting people outside of their professional and personal networks. We independently verified the names and contact information for suggested participants with and without contact information sent to us. We have addressed this in the Discussion section under Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study (please see pages 14-15, lines 304-330). Please also refer to response # 2 above.
4. The Reviewer noted that our results indicated heterogeneous responses suggesting a diverse sample and that this diversity would have potentially been greater with a different sampling method. The Reviewer requested additional discussion of these issues, some discussion of Valliant's (2012) paper, and a clearer description of how initial respondents were selected. We have addressed this in the response to the Editor above and in the Discussion section (please see pages 13-14, lines 291-303 and pages 14-15, lines 304-330) and References (page 26, #26).

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Andrew Sarkin, PhD

Institution and Country University of California, San Diego, USA

1. The Reviewer noted a lack of discussion of limitations, particularly the sample size, the diversity of the opinions expressed, and saturation for response variety, and requested that these issues be addressed. We have done this in the Strengths and Weaknesses box after the abstract (please see page 3, line 50) and in the Discussion section under Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study (please see pages 14-15, lines 304-330)
2. The Reviewer kindly pointed out several minor editing errors (e.g., 29% vs. 30% in the abstract versus table; spelling of positionality, and inserting a comma after mental when saying "physical, mental and social health"). We have fixed these and other editing errors throughout the paper.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our manuscripts. My co-authors and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Joseph Pierre UCLA
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Jan-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	The newly revised paper is now suitable for publication.
-------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------

REVIEWER	Andrew Sarkin, PhD University of California, San Diego
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Jan-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>I do feel that the authors addressed the concerns presented in the previous review well in this improved manuscript, and have addressed the limitations better.</p> <p>One little thing - On page 7, line 155 the results says that 29% of experts felt that no description was satisfactory, which is contrary to the table and abstract (30%).</p>
-------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Joseph Pierre

Institution and Country UCLA

“The newly revised paper is now suitable for publication.”

Author Response: Thank you for all of your comments and suggestions.

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Andrew Sarkin, PhD

Institution and Country University of California, San Diego, USA

“I do feel that the authors addressed the concerns presented in the previous review well in this improved manuscript, and have addressed the limitations better. One little thing - On page 7, line 155 the results says that 29% of experts felt that no description was satisfactory, which is contrary to the table and abstract (30%).”

Author Response: Thank you for all of your comments and suggestions, especially catching this error which we have now corrected in the newly resubmitted manuscript (e.g., it should be 30% in the abstract, results and table).