

Peer Review Report

Review Report on Trust in institutions and the COVID-19 threat: a cross-sectional study on the public perception of official recommendations and of othering in Switzerland

Original Article, Int J Public Health

Reviewer: Jeremy Ward

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EVALUATION

Q 1 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

The paper presents a series of interesting results. The attention paid to othering strategies/avoidance of specific groups is of particular interest: it is both original to study this via survey and it is known to be a very important social dimension of epidemics.

Nevertheless, the paper lacks clarity. It presents a tremendous variety of results and the reader can get lost in them (at least I was). It seemed to me that the authors tried to answer too many questions or did not manage to articulate these results. As a consequence, it is unclear what the main findings are and how each analysis provides new elements to the literature. The discussion helps tease these various results out: there is a big section on othering. I also believe the results pertaining to othering/avoidance of other groups are the most interesting. I also believe that the other results presented (linking perception of the disease with trust in institutions for instance) can be presented in support to these findings. But in the present form, it is very difficult to assess the degree of interest one should give to each finding or whether the analyses are pertinent: why did the authors analyse the link between trust in institutions and othering? I believe the paper would gain greatly from focusing on one or two questions or hypotheses and by ordering the results section in a way that allows the reader to follow the demonstration, to connect the various results.

My second main comment relates to the choice of distinguishing between people aged over 65 and under 65. In the introduction and methods section, the authors present this distinction as very important for their study. But in the rest of the article, it seems to me little attention is given to the differences between the two. These differences are not much commented upon in the discussion. Either it is important and then it should be analysed thoroughly or it isn't and then it should be mentioned as a methodological limitation of their sampling procedure (which can be justified for other aspects of their work, no problem there).

Other comment: the authors speak of othering strategies to talk about avoiding specific subgroups. I wouldn't be against more justification of the connection between the two. It seems to me this theme is the core of the article but this is not discussed enough. For instance, the authors could evoke the issue of stigmatisation in the discussion.

Q 2 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

Difficult to identify except for the belief in the efficiency of othering strategies

Q 3 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Strength: good sample size, inclusion of a variety of items including trust in institutions and avoidance of some social groups

limitations: research objective unclear, therefore choice of explanatory variables seems a bit arbitrary

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

It is not concise nor attractive: it testifies to the fact that the results are not prioritized enough in the narration

Q 5 Are the keywords appropriate?

yes

Q 6 Is the English language of sufficient quality?

yes

Q 7 Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

Q 8 Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

yes

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 Originality



Q 10 Rigor



Q 11 Significance to the field



Q 12 Interest to a general audience



Q 13 Quality of the writing



Q 14 Overall scientific quality of the study



REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 Please take a decision based on your comments:

Major revisions.