Reviewer’s report

Title: Involvement and structure: A qualitative study of organizational change and health among women in the public sector in Sweden

Version: 1 Date: 7 December 2010

Reviewer: Marianne Upmark

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Involvement and structure:
A qualitative study of organizational change and health among women in the public sector in Sweden

The study focus on an issue of great societal interest. An advantage is it’s unusual design. The methods used seems adequate to get a deeper understanding of work-related sickness absence than epidemiological studies usually can give.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Title: According to the content of the article “health” would be replaced by “sickness absence” (see below).

Introduction: This section uses the concepts “health” and “sickness absence” interchangeably. The latter is a health related outcome depending on many other agents except health. One of the most important is the legal criterias for getting sick pay from the social insurance (see for example the great fall of the Swedish sickness absence rates the last years as well as the corresponding rise in the late 90´s – it is difficult to claim that the health of the Swedish population has undergone the same rapid fluctuations). If the authors refers to sickness absence or high sickness absence as an outcome the same term ought to be used in the title as well as in other parts of the text.

In the same section, paragraph four and five organizational changes are discussed. I suggest the authors to have more references on health consequences of these changes. The consequences on effectiveness are too sweepingly described. In my opinion the introduction would be more stringent if these sentences were omitted. If they are included they have to be developed with further references.

2. Material and Method

Material:
The independent variable is sometimes referred to as expansion and sometimes as organization change. In the title as well as in the paper organizational change is presented as a risk for the employee’s health. Under the above heading is
stated: “..Since large expansions and future sickness absence was strongest among female public sector employees, we chose to study that subgroup”. This statement raises the question whether consequences of expansions or organizational change are studied. These terms are not interchangeable. Great expansions doesn’t necessarily involve organizational change. If the authors consider expansion per se to be a kind of organizational change, I think this must be declared. Especially in the public sector there might be great expansions in for example home care for elderly or in nurseries implying many new units and employees, but probably few perceivable changes for a single unit providing these services. Or are the informant selected because of experiences of both expansion and organizational change? The paragraph with the heading “Informants” gives too scarce information on how the informants are selected.

The purpose of the paper would be easier to grasp for an outside reader if the authors in the beginning of this chapter defined and discussed the outcomes of the study. Not until page ten you get informed that the outcome is long-term sickness absence 1997-1999. This outcome, as well as the opposite low sickness absence, have to be exactly defined since there are many different definitions of these concepts in the scientific literature. If they are not, the differences concerning sickness absence between the four groups are impossible to value. It should also be stated how the information on sickness absence is collected (self-reported or by registers).

"Minor issues not for publication"Under the heading Interviews I suggest that the four first sentences in paragraph two is placed first directly under the heading.

3. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

Under the heading Qualitative Comparative Analysis, in the same paragraph, the description of the QCA is quite well described.

"Minor issues not for publication" However, in the third paragraph, I suggest that the second sentence starts with the words “In general” a one (1)…..(indicating that there are some different way of interpreting the use of the figures 1 and 0 which is described in the following sentences).

"Minor issues not for publication"Fig 2. is proposed to be deleated, it does not help the reader.

"Minor issues not for publication"The last two lines on page 9 should be omitted (they are repeated in the first sentence under the heading Results where they have a better location).

4. Results

"Minor issues not for publication"In the second paragraph, the reference, is suggested to be remarked with a figure and included in the reference list alternatively to be referred to in a foot-note.
"Minor issues not for publication" The same paragraph, third – fifth line referring to Table 2: I’m afraid I do not understand the following “….we were left with one solution for the outcome ‘high sickness absence.’ and four alternative solutions for ‘low sickness absence’. As far as I understand there are three themes for high sickness absence, or am I wrong? Is your intention that solution is the same as theme? If so, I would prefer the same concept to be used.

"Minor issues not for publication" fifth paragraph, first line: Table 1 is called Box 1 in the box where the content is presented.

"Minor issues not for publication" Numerals are sometimes presented in letters, and sometimes in figures. One thumb rule is to use numerals for numbers between 1 and 10, and letters for numerals above 10.

"Minor issues not for publication" third paragraph, fifth line: “evidence” is proposed to be displaced by “indications” to avoid misinterpretation of the concept evidence.

I would prefer to have the Result section shortened by 20-30%. In this way, I think the text might be more coherent. One option to shorten the text could be to separate the references from the section and let them illuminate the results of the interviews in the beginning of the Discussion section.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

I find both these sections to be quite good and overall written in a good way (regarding content as well as language).

The limitations of the work are clearly stated.

6. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes, by large.

7. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Title: According to the content of the article “health” would be replaced by “sickness absence” (see remarks in the Introduction section).

"Minor issues not for publication" To avoid a title that is too similar to the reference to Westerlund et al., 2004 a, I would suggest to have a title in form of a question like: Why is expansion increasing the risk of long-term sickness absence?

8. Is the writing acceptable?

Overall the paper seems not to be as carefully written as is necessary to be acceptable for publication in it’s present version.
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests'