Author’s response to reviews

Title: Incidence Rates of Sickness Absence Related to Mental Disorders: A Systematic Literature Review

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Once again, we would like to thank the reviewers for taking the time to closely read our paper. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions have greatly contributed to the quality of the manuscript.

Responses to Reviewers’ Comments (Reviewers’ comments in bold)

Reviewer 2: Dr. Sandra Helena van Oostrom

1. **I would shorten the conclusion paragraph in the abstract.**

   The conclusion paragraph was edited to read:

   **Conclusions:** The results of this systematic review suggest that this is an emerging area of inquiry that needs to continue to grow. Priority areas for growth include cross jurisdictional collaboration and development of a typology characterizing the benefit generosity and work integration policies of sickness absence schemes. Finally, the literature should be updated to reflect benefit scheme changes over time.

2. **The meaning of the sentence in the introduction is unclear to me: “These classifications focus on similarities that would lead to similar outcome.”**

   The sentence was edited to read:

   These classifications focus on developing an inventory of types of public policies (e.g., work integration schemes) that would affect that outcome of interest (e.g., employment rates) [20].

3. **First paragraph of discussion: numbers are given for ‘workers’ and ‘persons’. I advise to be consistent in use of terminology here.**

   Thank you for pointing that out. The change has been made throughout.

Reviewer 3: Dr. Marianna Virtanen

4. **The study of Mittendorfer-Rutz et al. (PlosOne 2012) was excluded. However, in Table 1, the incidence rate of sickness absence due to mental disorder is reported…**

   Thank you for pointing this out. We respectfully disagree with the inclusion of the Mittendorfer-Rutz et al. paper. The reason is that the denominator that is used to calculate the incidence rate is not exclusive comprised of an employed population. As described in
the paper, the authors use a working aged (16-64 year olds) population who are not on receiving type of disability, pension or sickness benefit. On further reflection, we also removed the Wynne-Jones et al. paper that was originally included in our review. It also used a denominator that consisted of a “working aged” population rather than a working population.

5. Please correct the following (p.10): “There was variability in the number of absence days needed to qualify for sickness absence benefits. The number of days ranged from 3 to 90 days. “There was variability in the number of absence days needed to qualify for sickness absence benefits. In addition, the Finnish study [24] examined the incidence of >90 days absence due to limited availability of data.” This is very important because in Finland people qualify for compensation after 9 days, not after 90 days.

Thank you for this information. We revised the text to read:

There was variability in the number of absence days needed to qualify for sickness absence benefits. The number of qualifying days used for the studies ranged from 3 days to 90 days. It should be noted, that while the days required to qualify for benefits in Finland is 9 days, due to limited availability of the data, the Finnish study [24] examined the incidence of >90 days absence.