Reviewer’s report

Title: Working conditions and Work-Family Conflict in German hospital doctors: psychosocial and organisational predictors and consequences

Version: 2 Date: 31 January 2008

Reviewer: Jess K Alberts

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   No; the authors need to provide a clearer explanation of how their study addresses the problem of physician attrition.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   No; as described below, the authors need to provide additional detail regarding their method and how it answers the general question they have posed.

3. Are the data sound?
   Yes; although the authors need to provide additional explanation/elaboration of their findings, the data themselves are sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   No. As discussed below, the article is underwritten and needs more elaboration. It also needs to conform better to the standards for reporting research findings.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   In general, yes, though they do need to be developed in greater detail.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   In general yes; though a bit more clarity would help.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   In general, this is the weakest aspect of the study. The authors need to provide a stronger review of the literature and rationale statement.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes.
9. Is the writing acceptable?

10. No. The article requires significant editing and rewriting.

General Comments:

This paper has potential for publication; the fundamental study appears to be sound. However, the article needs substantial revision before it is ready for print. It suffers from two primary shortcomings: its is underwritten; that is, overall each section needs considerable development and elaboration; and the entire paper requires significant technical editing.

Here are some examples of material from the various section that I believe need to be developed further:

Literature Review
In the literature review, the authors refer to existing research briefly and somewhat tangentially. The findings from these studies need to be explicitly discussed and connected to the current study. For example, on page 2, last full sentence, the authors state that Discussion and contradictory findings remain for the assertion that women are predestined for higher WFC than men due to their higher involvement in family chores. The authors do not reference specific findings nor articulate what the differing findings are, nor do they explain that due to these contradictory findings, their studies addresses the issue of sex difference in order to bring greater clarity to the issue. Similar problems arise on page 3 at the bottom of the page where the authors summarize findings of the 2004 German ministry study. Overall, the rationale for the study needs to be more developed and more and stronger arguments made for its necessity. Also, more of the relevant literature needs to be discussed and connected to the current study.

Method
The method section requires additional development as well. More detailed explanation regarding how the pre-test was conducted is needed, and operational definitions need to be offered for family and work-life conflict. On page seven, the authors also need to explain their claim that the demand-control-support model is a convincing model predicting physician stress. What is this model and in what way has it been established as a convincing model (and what does this mean)? They authors also need to provide the reliability statistics and any validity checks for the various measures that they use. On page 8, the authors need to provide additional explanation regarding how their interviews and pilot tests were conducted.

Results
In the results section, the authors explanation of their findings could be more specific. For example, the authors combine the responses rather and completely that time exposure makes if difficult (for respondents) to fulfill their duties. I don't see the reason for combining these two sets of
responses, nor is it clear what is meant by “time exposure.” Do the authors mean “time commitment”? In addition, on page 10, the authors write that “Further relations were found for the appreciation of one’s work by superiors;” the meaning of this statement is not clear. What is mean by further relations? Do the authors mean associations? Correlations? This absolutely needs to be clarified. In addition, on page 11 the authors indicate that no correlations were found for “expected sexual contact from colleagues or superiors;” I don’t know why this variable was included nor how it is connected to issues of work-life. Some explanation of the inclusion of this variable is needed. Again, overall, this section needs more development and specificity.

Discussion

The discussion section also needs additional elaboration. On page 13, for example, it would be useful for the authors to explain how their findings are relevant to the larger public, not just physicians. In addition, the authors needs to provide more detail regarding how their sample was similar to “the population of German physicians;” and what they mean when they say that the participants in their study “gained higher values on some of the scales.” This latter claim is quite vague and imprecise.

On page 13 at the bottom of the page, the authors present findings that more appropriately belong in the results section than the discussion section. Overall, the discussion section needs additional detail, explanation, and elaboration. Finally, the authors need to provide a clear statement of what the findings mean and what their implications mean.

In sum, although this article has a contribution to make, the authors (and editor) need to do considerable work to prepare it for publication.