Reviewer's report

Title: Job satisfaction trends during nurses' early career

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Reviewer: Judith W Alexander

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This is an interesting manuscript exploring job satisfaction in nursing from a new perspective—that of job satisfaction early in the nursing career. Some suggestions to improve the manuscript are given below.

â€¢ MAJOR COMPULSORY CHANGES

o The theoretical background is good, but seems to be added on and not tied to the design of the study or interpretation of the results. Comments on how the theoretical material helps explain the results would enhance the presentation and improve probably of the use of the results in practice.

o For Americans, the educational system (having many diploma nurses), the level of nurses (D,E,F), and the positions that nurses take upon graduation (adult, child, mental health, and learning disability) are unfamiliar and need some explanation for clarity purposes. What other entry into practice programs exist in the UK, and what proportion of nurses use these other programs? New graduates in the US, take positions in Medical-Surgical, Pediatric, Intensive Care, and Emergency Department nursing, while few take them in Mental Health. Additionally, I am uncertain what Learning Disability Nursing is.

o The sampling technique seems to indicate a national sample of all new graduates in the UK, but that is unclear. The number of sites and clinical units included in the study is not addressed. Given the large sample size, I assume that many sites were included.

o The data analysis and presentation is complicated, but generally well presented. However, I feel that the presentation could be re-organize to add clarity. The information presented in the text needs to be more clearly aligned with the tables. Material presented on pages 15-16 (related to the demographics) is not given in a table and therefore difficult to follow. The sample was divided for analysis into one group with all responses (by calculations using missing data) and one group of those who completed all the surveys. Again it is unclear which table reflects which data set. The explanation of the figures is incomplete and the figures themselves seem to have more information than is discussed in the text.

o Some discussion is needed of why the response rate declined with each time of administration. Is this just a normal situation of non-response in a longitudinal study or is it because nurses were no longer employed in the position they held originally? If in fact there was turnover in the three year period among the nurses early in their career, this fact would have implications for the analysis of job satisfaction. On page 19, the statement is made the greater opportunities to
move between jobs in early career will diminish as time goes on and this may well impact on the longer-term job satisfaction of this particular cohort. WHY? 

As presented, the study is purely descriptive. The additional of discussion of some implications for nurse leaders on HOW to use this information to improve the job satisfaction of (and perhaps ultimately retain) nurses early in their careers would be helpful.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
- Reference needed to support content in first paragraph in the Background section
- On page 10, the first time MREC is mentioned, the acronym needs to be defined.
- Cronbach’s is misspelled on page 19

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
- None

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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 have not competing interests