Reviewer's report

Title: Safety Culture in the Maternity Units: a census survey using the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire

Version: 1 Date: 13 May 2011

Reviewer: Dimitrios Siassakos

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Abstract-Results: SD is high indicating non-normal distribution, please present work experience as median-range (or IQR).
2. The flow of the argument is problematic in the introduction. Several themes are mentioned, like bullying, team training, managerial and organisational issues, but their relationship is not described. Perhaps the authors could refer to organisational theories. Alternatively they could just frame their argument better, and support the argument with evidence by citing papers that link adverse obstetric outcomes or their reduction to safety and teamwork, teamwork and safety to team training, etc. Where there is no evidence, or the evidence is of poor quality (eg association between attitudes and team performance, between attitudes and har patient outcomes), they should discuss it (in the Discussion).

As a general comment, I prefer a punchy introduction (maximum 1 page), where there is a clear argument for why there is need for this research, while the rest of the argument is moved to the Discussion/Comment.

2. Methods - as a general comment, the authors could consult and adhere to the STROBE guidelines.
3. Methods - I would like to see more detail about the sample size calculation: Was it retrospective or prospective, what was the power, and what was the difference assessed? For this cross-sectional study it does not make sense to have a sample size calculation unless there is a predetermined hypothesis of difference between sub-groups, which should have been explicit in the introduction as a concept, clear as an objective in both abstract and end of the intro, and detailed as a hypothesis in the methods. If the calculation was retrospective, please just delete it.
4. Methods - the completion rate belongs to the Results. "Incomplete" should be explained in detail, and the demographic characteristics of those incomplete, esp work experience, compared to those complete (descriptive comparison will suffice)
5. Methods - the collaboration scale is already part of the Sexton questionnaire, your description is inaccurate and makes it sound as if you had to add it on
6. Methods - I am really pleased you followed a distinct process to validate the Greek translation. But there is no need to explain content validity in too much
detail, anyone reading a questionnaire study should know what it means (unless the Editors feel it is necessary, in which case one sentence is enough).

7. Methods & Results - the authors mention only t-test and chi-square, then present correlations and r in the results, and ANOVA in the Tables. Table 3 does not detail for which comparisons ANOVA was used and in which the t-test. The linguistic problems have also made it difficult to understand which results are from univariate and which from multivariate analyses, but I would strongly advise the authors to stick to the latter (ANOVA or regression)!

8. Results - the term "unit choosing" is inappropriate and creates confusion

9. Results - how many midwives were excluded for not speaking Greek? How can they practise in Cyprus if they do not?

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Abstract - Background: Is it only the last decade?
2. Abstract - Results: rate "higher" not "more" "less" not "fewer" experience. "Fearless" is inappropriately used. Generally there is need for linguistic revision and editing.
3. Please spell my name correctly in the Discussion!!!

Discretionary Revisions
1. The authors could consider asking for help from someone with English as first language, or professional editing services.

Overall, the data have potential, particularly if presented within a strong conceptual framework, but the paper needs linguistic editing, better framing of its argument, and probably a statistical revision first.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

There are no financial competing interests. I have published in the same area and with the same instrument (safety attitudes questionnaire).