Reviewer's report

Title: "What counts": Health workers’ preferences for public or church-run health facilities in Tanzania

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Reviewer: Anna-Karin Hurtig

Reviewer's report:

This is a very well written paper which, through a qualitative study, addresses the health workers’ perceptions and experiences of the differences between working conditions in the public health sector and church-run facilities in Tanzania. The aim of the paper is well defined. The different sections of the paper are well laid out and thoughtfully written.

Below follow some suggestions to how the manuscript could be further improved

Title: The title could better reflect the findings, maybe by using a short illustrative quote. “What counts” does not appeal to me but it is a matter of taste…

Abstract: The result section relates the good pension with the government sector but other factors are not related to the public sector or the church facilities. This could be done to better summarize the findings. Now this section appears rather like a list of different aspects which have been given importance by the respondents but does not responde directly to the aim of addressing experiences of differences in working conditions between the two sectors.

Background: It is stated that “…only 35% of the health workers positions are filled by qualified health workers”. Does any information exist on how the division is between the public sector and church run facilities when it comes to positions filled?

Methods: The analysis of the data is well explained. Still it would be good to have a reference to the thematic approach of analysis adopted.

Result: The discussion start with a nice division of the results into two axis based on values “health workers’ rights in their employment” vs “health worker’s relationships to the patients they serve”. This can be seen as part of the analysis and the two axis representing two overarching themes. The authors could chose to make this more explicit by introducing these overarching themes in the result section rather than in the discussion section. This would require some resorting of the result.

Discussion: 1. On the first page, 2nd paragraph in the background section the concept of “motivation” is discussed in terms of “health workers’ motivation to perform their work well”. The authors never come back to this in the discussion and what consequences the findings might have for performance and quality of services. It might be out of the scope of the paper to do so, as it is concerned
more with the distribution of health workers rather than the quality of services provided. It would however be important to discuss what this study manages to capture and what it does not in relation to motivation and performance.

2. Ref. 44 is referred to at p. 18 as “Songstad” should be “Songstad et al”.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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.