Reviewer's report

Title: Organization Specific Predictors of Job Satisfaction: Findings From a Canadian Multi-Site Quality of Work Life Cross-Sectional Survey

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Reviewer: Dr AS Ostry

Level of interest: not specified

Advice on publication: Other (see below)

General Comments:
This paper, as currently organized and written needs improvement in order to be published. The paper is well written has major problems. The paper lacks a coherent conceptual framework and reporting on literature review, a rationale for the development of their Quality of Work Life (QWL) questionnaire, clear hypotheses, and clearly described statistical methods.

1. Lack of a conceptual framework:
It is not clear what the authors' conceptual model is. In part, this is due to the vague definition the authors use for QWL as "referring to the strengths and weaknesses in the total work environment". The authors then seem go on to describe this total work environment from the behaviour and reward system for staff and other organizational characteristics. This definition appears to focus on organizational-level factors as the most important in producing quality of work life.

The problem is one of "leakage" between the vague definition of QWL and job satisfaction. For example, the authors note that "the QWL factors identified in these meta-analyses include: reduced work stress, organizational commitment and belonging, positive communication, autonomy, employee recognition, predictability of work activities, fairness, clear locus of control, organizational decisions, education, professionalism, low role conflict, job performance feedback, opportunities for advancement, and fair pay levels."

Are these the independent variables which really define QWL? Is there an even larger list of these aspects of work life that make up this definition of QWL? Without a precise definition it is hard to know what QWL is. As well, this diffuse definition contains complex elements of work life, that are themselves poorly defined.

For example, locus of control, is probably a personality characteristic rather than an aspect of work life.
Some of these independent variables are task-level, some are organizational level. What does professionalism mean?

The implicit model in this study appears to be that reduced QWL leads to reduced job satisfaction which leads to outcomes such as increased staff turnover.

2. Literature review:
The authors state "after reviewing the literature on QWL" etc. but provide the reader with no sense of this literature. How big is the literature? What is the scope and depth of the literature? Only 19 papers are cited in the references. It gives me no sense of the authors literature framework. There is a huge literature on work stress, the contribution of fairness, equity, organizational factors, task-level factors etc on job satisfaction that the authors have ignored.

3. Hypotheses:
"We hypothesized that the predictors of job satisfaction would vary depending on the organization." This is, like the definition of QWL, too vague a hypothesis.

This hypothesis is sharpened up on page 10 when the authors say that "prior to analysis, study researchers reached a consensus on which survey questions to include as potential predictors of job satisfaction". The hypothesis seems to be (page 10) that eight predictors within the QWL envelope (supervisor social support, co-worker social support, teamwork, communication, role clarity, decision latitude, organizational/staff relations, patient / resident care) which the authors a priori have decided are the most important predictors, are important for job satisfaction.

4. QWL Questionnaire:
Why no union representatives on the QWL Task force used to develop the questionnaire? Are the 6 facilities in the study unionized? How large a group of staff was the questionnaire piloted?

Its not clear what the 32 individual questions are? (page 12).

5. Statistical Methods:
Logistic modeling is unclear. Its' not clear from the description of analysis what the adjusting variables are. These methods need to be more clearly explained.

Finally, it is interesting that in the discussion the authors note that their survey was conducted at a time of major restructuring and that Site 1 and 2 were particularly vulnerable in this regard. Why are there no variables looking at the threat of unemployment or experience of unemployment in relation to job satisfaction? Why were there no variables looking at the HSRC process and its aftermath? This is a huge process underway across these facilities, which must have had major implications for QWL and yet the authors don't appear to have studied this process and its impact????

In conclusion, this paper is poorly conceptualized, has a limited literature review, and poorly explained statistical methods. I recommend not to publish this paper as is but perhaps after extensive re-writing and re-review.
Competing interests:

None declared.