Reviewer's report

Title: Should I stay or should I go? Team climate and propensity to leave among hospital employees

Version: 1 Date: 3 January 2007

Reviewer: patricia W stone

Reviewer's report:

General
Thanks for the opportunity to review this interesting and potentially important manuscript. This manuscript has much strength including the use of a fairly large sample size and longitudinal data. I have a few concerns/comments, which are outlined below.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Theoretical Framework: It would be very helpful to provide an overview of the theoretical rationale for this analysis. Specifically, organizational climate is often defined as the shared perceptions of organizational members about the work environment. It is typically measured by aggregating individual scores to the unit level after demonstrating evidence of perceptual agreement. Some researchers have used a "consensus" approach in which the mean is used to represent a group level attribute but only when data are available from the majority of group members (estimates in the organizational literature range from 60 to 75% at a minimum). In this study, an individual’s perception of a team climate is the independent variable. Discussion on how an individual’s versus the team’s perceptions of the climate is theoretically similar or different would be beneficial.

More explanation and justification of using a variable that examines what some one would “rather do if their livelihood were sufficient” is needed. This is a very different variable than used in most healthcare services turnover research. Most frequently, intention to leave (or stay) is used as the proxy for turnover. See the following for good reviews of the literature

Measures: In the “survey measures” section it is unclear what West’s four factors are? Additionally, with the 14 items of the TCI it seems that this is a one dimensional measure so it is not clear how the “four” factors are relevant. The discussion of the factors related to team climate may be better suited in the background and/or theoretical underpinnings section. In the methods, it would be best to stick to what was measured. For the TCI, the discussion of how the variables were developed should be organized in the survey measure section, not statistical analysis. More discussion on the reliability, validity and perhaps cronbach alpha (for internal consistency) of the actual variables would be helpful. For example, for the summed score that was developed, has this ever been done before? Is the cronbach alpha sufficient (at least)?

Regarding the propensity to leave, it was not clear to me exactly what was calculated. For example “I would give up working completely” means leave? Additionally, the references using this variable are 25-30 years old.
There needs to be more discussion of the covariates (theoretical rationale for including as stated above) and reliability and validity of the measures. For example, it is not clear why the minor psychiatric morbidity variable was included. Are people with psychiatric morbidity more likely to have a propensity to leave? Is this a reliable and/or valid instrument to measure this?

Statistical Analysis: It is not clear why the analyses were stratified by sex. This comment may be more related to theoretical underpinnings and a priori notions? A correlation was done (results presented in strengths and weakness section) but never mentioned in statistical analysis. Furthermore, this correlation does not substantiate the stratification.

Results: I believe table 2 and 3 would be more informative if there was an additional column for leavers and percentages of leavers and non-leavers were given for each TCI quartile. This would allow readers to easily
look at the various groups and understand the differences and similarities in the data.

Discussion: There needs to be a section labeled “discussion”. The discussion is present, but not labeled. Furthermore, the discussion should probably be more thoughtful and expanded. While many studies are cited, this is done in passing without careful analysis of how these results compare. More discussion of the dose response finding is needed. Is this the first research to find such?

In the discussion, it is mentioned that women were over-represented; however, there is no discussion (or analysis for that matter) on how the demographics of the respondents are similar or different than the demographics of the occupations studied. Most likely, women are very much overrepresented in these populations. It would really help to know how the sample compares to the population of interest.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The manuscript needs to be edited for grammar.
For example sentences should not start with numerals, the terminology “the answer was cast…” sounds like a vote, it would more usual to say “responses were provided on a 4-point scale…”;
GHQ-caseness is an unusual term;
dichotomized good or rater good, average, rather poor or poor does not make sense. This may be a trichotomized scale?
two surveys achieved is an anthromorphisim.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The list of 14 items is probably better suited in a table than bulleted in text.

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

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 have no competing interests