Reviewer's report

Title: Applying the Workload Indicators of Staffing Need (WISN) Method in Namibia: Challenges and Implications for Human Resources for Health Policy

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Reviewer: Thomas Hall

Reviewer's report:

No MAJOR or MINOR essential revisions are proposed. Overall, the paper is excellent, well-written, important, and well documented.

Discretionary revisions. While acknowledging space limitations, information / comments I would have like to have available include:

Approximate FTE personnel costs of applying WISN, perhaps as a % of the relevant workforce, and degree to which this time requirement might be expected to decrease with repeated applications. In sum, some sense of the cost of WISN application since to be valuable it must be repeated periodically.

Recommended frequency of WISN updates

A brief comment as to how / whether the application of WISN has any bearing on the private sector. I don't recall the article indicating the relative size/importance of the private sector

The WISN description comments on "available working time (p. 28)" and "allowance factors." These adjustments are very relevant but I don't have assurance that they fully take into account time taken in refresher training, staff meetings, supervision, record keeping, coffee breaks, travel time, etc. If only the formal leave, sick leave, etc., is accounted for, the true "available time" may be an overestimate.

I would have welcomed a bit more on the challenges of policy implementation, especially dealing with the difficulties of taking staff away from one facility to send them to another, and dealing with unions, but perhaps this is a separate paper.

Lastly, I wish the numbers / %s in Table 2 could be rounded off. Using decimals implies an accuracy that doesn't exist. The computer can give as many decimals as one likes but most of these numbers / %s could be rounded off to the nearest 5 or even 10 (which I'm NOT recommending), and we'd still have the info we need. In Table 5 the WISN ratio could be rounded to the nearest decimal rather than to two decimal points.

Again, I recognize space limitations and even without any changes, the article is excellent and should be published.
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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 declare that I have no competing interests