Reviewer’s report

Title: The effects of health worker motivation and job satisfaction on turnover intention in Ghana: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Prisca AC Zwanikken

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   In itself the question is reasonably defined. However in the abstract at the beginning performance is mentioned, to be improved by motivation and job satisfaction. In the objective nor in the results performance doesn’t come back anymore, nor in the conclusion.
   The question is new for the 3 districts in Ghana, in other countries motivation, job satisfaction and retention has been studied before as described by the authors themselves.

   In the introduction it is stated that retention builds up competencies, optimises team relations etc. However retention in itself doesn’t improve that, a motivated retained health worker will. Retention is not the same as motivation.

   Page 5 “set of psychological..” – it seems a word is missing, psychological what?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   There are some questions in terms of the description.
   - The instrument was translated from French. Was it backtranslated to check for consistencies? Did all the health workers in those 3 districts speak sufficient English to understand and answer the questionnaire? It seemed that the questionnaires were validated in different countries, not in Ghana itself.
   - The authors state that job satisfaction is a motivational outcome. They also set out to measure both concepts separately. However these concepts, as they themselves state, are related, and also sometimes a bit overlapping (i.e. work environment/ management and organizational commitment). It is not clarified how they see the overlap between the 2 concepts and their constructs. Ie the authors write:” For the “job satisfaction” construct we used the overall job satisfaction score instead of the original questions of the motivation instrument” – the reason for this is not clarified, and both concepts now seem to become blurred: using 2 different instruments but not what was left out/ nor clarifying the choices.
   - It is not clear whether the pretest led to any changes in the instruments.
- Who interviewed the health workers? Are those the writers of the article, or were there research assistants involved and were they trained? How was consistency ensured amongst interviewers?
- It is not clear why the admin and support workforce were not included – are there no problems in retention and performance amongst these cadres?
- N=28 due to retirement were left out: is this retirement because of age or because of other reasons? In some countries retirement is also a way of expressing the intention to leave for greener pastures, this is not clear from the description and might cause a bias.
- If the first author is from Basel, why was there no ethical clearance asked in the based institute?
- How the factors “career development” and “supervision” were established or inferred is not described.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Can you please still check with a statistician.

The characteristics of the interviewed population is described, but not related to the overall population, to check for representativeness.

On page 13 it is stated “the district” was significantly associated. What is meant by “the district” – place of work, seems like it, see page 17, but would be better to clarify?

On page 15 it is stated that all adjusted odds rations were lower than 1. However some of them were not statistically significant, and reaching higher than 1, the statement therefor needs to be read with caution.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

In general yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

In the discussion in-service training and supervision are stated as important to reduce turnover intention, however in table 2 and 5 the mean and adjusted odds ratio they were not found to be statistically significant. So the discussion of these results and the literature needs to be clarified.

The findings in the adjusted odds ratio are a bit strange given the factor analysis that supervision is a factor?

In the discussion it is stated that the District managers lack management capacity – however only the perception of health workers have been surveyed, and these perceptions were not triangulated, therefor that statement cannot be made.

In the conclusion it is stated that listening to health workers and team building is important, however those aspects have not been studied. Again the comments
on in-service training and supervision need to be more carefully worded.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   As for the title yes. However see 1: performance mentioned in the introduction of the abstract but nothing is being said about it in the findings, nor the conclusion.