Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring the context of care in an Australian acute care hospital: a nurse survey

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2010

Reviewer: Heather K Spence Laschinger

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Minor Essential Revisions:

Background:
1. The paper introduces the PARIHS framework, however the addition of a diagram of this model may help with comprehension for readers with no previous knowledge of this framework. Seeing the model may help novice readers follow the remaining logic and concepts of the paper.
2. The Estabrooks et al. finding introduced on page 2, paragraph 2 about individual level variables and the fact that they explain more variance than either unit level or organizational level factors does not seem to coincide with the present findings. It would be good to see this mentioned in the discussion.
3. Page 2, paragraph 3, line 3, you have a typo, it should say “micro” not “mirco”

Measuring Context:
4. Please expand the description of the ACT in this section. Introduce and briefly explain the dimensions. Clarify what is meant by the term “organizational slack”. What does it mean to have organizational time slack or space slack? This should be clearer to the reader. What are some examples of structural and electronic processes or information sharing activities, please provide some context for these dimensions.
5. Please provide the psychometrics that are available for the ACT.

Method:
6. Is there justification for assuming that context in control and implementation wards was similar prior to implementation? If so, please provide.

Data Analysis:
7. Please provide a more detailed description of how the frequency questions were dichotomised to a 0 or 1, this is not clear.
8. Please define what you mean by “current position”, does this mean their length of time as an RN, the length of time they have held a specific position such as unit leader, or length of time they were an RN at that organization, there are too many possible interpretations of this term.

Context of Care:
9. 3 of the 4 dimensions that did not show significant variation look to have been scored by dichotomizing the frequency variables. Is this possibly due to some measurement error in this process? Without a clearer understanding of what was done it is difficult to put this in context, but seems like something to consider.

10. Paragraph 4, Line 2 reads: A total of 276 themes to the open-ended question were apparent from these responses... Table 3 lists 7 themes rather than 276. The remainder of the sentence is awkward and requires rewording to make its meaning more evident.

Canonical correlation analysis:

11. Paragraph 4, Line 9 reads: Considering the experience variables ‘months on current unit’ exhibited slightly greater influence over the variable composite and the canonical function. The first instance of variable does not appear as though it should be plural. Additionally this sentence appears to be a fragment, does not feel like a complete thought.

12. Paragraph 5. Please reword the third sentence of this paragraph, it is awkward to read and the point could be made much clearer. Additionally, the conclusion is made that experience is negatively correlated with information sharing processes, yet in function 2 months on current unit was positively correlated with information sharing processes. Please explain the conclusion in lieu of this finding.

Variation in context between and within wards:

13. The second paragraph of this section states that, “Secondly, a number of dimensions of context, chiefly ‘Information sharing’ dimensions and ‘Structural and electronic resources’ varied more within a ward than between wards. Mostly, these dimensions are calculated using sums of items dichotomised as 0 and 1; while it is possible that these dimensions are inherently more variable in a population of nurses, or the items used to measure the dimensions are less precise, another interpretation is that these dimensions of context are more related to factors operating at the hospital level.” Again, this conclusion is difficult to interpret without a more detailed understanding of the dimensions of this tool and how it was scored.

14. Paragraph 3, Line 7 reads: However, despite the lack of expected impact of the intervention on the contextual factors, it was felt important to measure context. This line is awkward to read, please re-phrase.

Conclusions:

15. The final conclusion seems to be reaching a bit beyond the data in the present study, I would suggest expressing the implications of the results in a more cautious way.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.