Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing Predictors of Intention to Prescribe Sick Leave Among Primary Care Physicians Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Version: 0 Date: 25 May 2017

Reviewer: Bengt Arnetz

Reviewer's report:

This study addresses the potential use of the theory of planned behavior in predicting whether primary care providers will prescribe sick leave or not.

This is an important topic, since sick leave is a major disruption to a person's life, is costly, and also could be the ground for conflicts between the provider and the patient. Little is known about the provider's mindset and motivation when prescribing sick leave in comparison to the many studies focusing on patients.

Specific Comments.

Abstract: Background, delete reference to methods, "questionnaires were developed..........tested". Rather, provide rationale why the theory of planned behavior, TBP, was used. Or, specify what is not known in the literature re what is not known in the realm of provider decision making in terms of sick leave.

Method should state how many providers received the invitation to be part of the study, not just actual n that accepted. It is unclear how model was tested. Structural Equation Modeling? Due to limited n, I assume that was not the case.

Results: Cronbach's alpha are not provided for Subjective norm towards sick leave. It was actually very low and did not support creating a scale using these items. The lack of a strong alpha questions the validity of the proposed model.

Discussions

Adequate. But, support of the model as presented is lacking based on results presented

body of Text

Background: OK.
Methods:

If possible, state the total n of providers invited to respond to the survey.

Pilot questionnaire: was comments from the 30 providers offered in writing only, or did you interview them as well?

Reliability and validity, p 8. It is unclear whether the authors first ran a factor analysis to determine whether items loaded unto one factor or more.

Multiple regression, p 9. Please specify what modeling was used. Stepwise or all factors included at start. Were items, scales, standardized in the analysis?

Cronbach's alpha of 0.6 is too low. Should be set at 0.7 or higher.

Results:

See comments re actual n of invited providers.

Cronbach's alpha for Subjective Norms (see prior comments) is too low to allow to create a scale. Details Table 1.

Temporal stability. Please provide statistics, such as intra-rater stability or correlation, not just a p value.

Figure 1. It is stated it is a PATH diagram. But, the methods section suggests it is based on multiple regression analyses. Please clarify. Furthermore, Subjective norms and Perceived Behavioral Control both have low Cronbach's alpha and thus should not be fitted into a model as two separate scales.

Discussion

The overall discussion is good. However, revise discussion about model, since a couple of scales should not be used based on low Cronbach's alpha. Also, discuss lack of hard data on outcomes, that is, whether a physician actually provided sick leave or not. That could be the subject for a future study.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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