Author’s response to reviews

Title: Smoke-free-school-hours at vocational education and training schools in Denmark: Attitudes among managers and teaching staff – a national cross-sectional study

Authors:
Clara Heinze (clara.heinze@regionh.dk)
Anneke Hjort (anneke.vang.hjort@regionh.dk)
Peter Elsborg (peter.elsborg@regionh.dk)
Helle Maindal (htm@ph.au.dk)
Charlotte Klinker (charlotte.demant.klinker@regionh.dk)

Version: 1 Date: 28 May 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Petri Böckerman,

First, we are very grateful for the useful comments from the reviewers, which we believe have helped us to improve our paper. We have prepared and submitted a detailed response to the reviewer comments. For each comment we have responded to the reviewer(s)' comments and revised the manuscript accordingly with track changes.

We hope you once more will consider our paper for publication.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely, Clara Heinze

Response to the reviewer comments

Reviewer 1 (Hatim Mohammed Almahdi, MFD RCSI, MSc, PhD):

Abstract:
Background: redundant, make it brief, definitions and aim and objectives.
• Response: We have deleted a sentence to make it more brief (Abstract, page 2, line 3-4)

Method: please write brief about the study population, area and sampling procedures, no need for details of statistical analysis.

• Thank you for this comment. We have rewritten the method in the abstract section (Abstract, page 2, line 11-17)

Result: Rewrite to reflect the important figures only

• We have adjusted the results section in the abstract section to comply with this comment (Abstract, page 2, line 17-23).

Conclusions:

Background

Line 3, page 3, What do you mean by external cause.

• Response: We deleted the word external as it had no meaning in this context (background, page 3, line 9)

Lines 14-19, page 3, the sentence is a conclusion of the following lines, suggest to move it to the end of the paragraph.

• We agree and have complied with this suggestion (Background, page 4, line 10-13)

Lines 14-44, page 3, is ONE paragraph, Please break it paragraphs so it can easily be captured.

• We have rewritten this paragraph to make it more concise (Background, page 3, line 13-23 + page 4, line 1-13).

Please explain the age of the students in VET.

• The age of VET students is explained it in the Study design and setting section (Study design and setting, page 7, line 7-11).

Line 12, page 4, add years to 18.

• We have added years (Background, page 4, line 21).

Line 12, 31, page 5, add reference to the statement.

• We have added a reference (Background, page 5, line 21).
Line 37, 39, 42, page 5, rove the numbering and write it letters.

- We removed the numbering and wrote it with letters instead (Background, page 6, line 7-12).

Method

Use subtitles to make it reader friendly.

study design and area, study population, sampling procedures including calculations, data collection and statistical analysis in addition to ethical issues.

- Thank you. With this comment we reconsidered the subtitles already used and changed them to; Study design and setting, Data collection, The questionnaire, Variables and Statistical analysis. Further, we included a sentence about why a sample size calculation wasn’t made for this study (Data collection, page 8, line 6)

Line 153, page 8, please verify how do validate the questionnaire and what are the results of the pilot study and is there any amendments and that are they.

- In section 2.3 (The questionnaire) we describe how the questionnaire was developed, we have now added that minor adjustments were made because of the pilot, and that the questions were based on Danish and international questionnaires and literature.

Result

No reference to any table or figure in 3.1 insection.

The reporting needs major revisions.

- Thank you for this comment. We have made revisions in this section, so the items and findings in the tables are not repeated in the text and as such the majority of table references has been deleted. We deleted following sections; (Results, page 12, line 11-14 + page 12, line 17-18 + page 13, line 12-16 + page 13, line 22-24 + page 14, line 1-5).

Discussion

Please rewrite the limitations in a concise paragraph, some of the information may be suitable for the section of variables (lines 331-337). In limitation section concentrate on the weakness in the study design, sample size, randomization and representativeness of the sample, in addition, to reliability and validity of the questions.
• We have rewritten the limitation section according to the above recommendation and changed the order of the paragraphs to comply with this comment.

Rewrite the conclusion section just explain what really did you find.

• This is a valid point. Actually, the headline is misleading as this section contains Conclusion and implications. We have made changes to the section and as we believe that implications are essential to report in this case, we have changed the headline to Conclusion and implications.

References

Please revise all the references to be in the format.

• The reference style has been changed to Vancouver (brackets).

Reviewer 2 (Gholamreza Heydari):

All sections are too long. Background and finding must be limited. Much items in finding are repeated in the tables.

• The background section has been rewritten and now appears more concise as we have deleted some points (Background, page 3, line 17-20 + page 4, line 1-10). We have also revised the result section, so findings from the tables are not repeated in the text. We deleted the following sections; (Results, page 12, line 11-14 + page 12, line 17-18 + page 13, line 12-16 + page 13, line 22-24 + page 14, line 1-5).

Reviewer 3 (Shane P A Allwright, BA Mod., MSPH, PhD):

This is a well written paper using survey data collected for other purposes to attempt to gain insights into support for implementation of SFSH polices in VET's.

However, I have concerns about the question used to assess attitudes towards SFSH in order to answer objectives one and two ("1) assess attitudes towards implementing SFSH among managers and staff at Danish VET schools, 2) examine what is associated with managers' and staffs' attitudes towards implementing SFSH"). This question reads:

"Where do you think the school should be in two years in relation to SFSH?"

The respondent is offered four possible responses to this key question:
1) the school has implemented SFSH, 2) the school is in the process of implementing SFSH, 3) the school is not about to implement SFSH, and 4) do not know. These responses were then "recoded to reflect 1) favourable, 2) somewhat favourable, 3) not favourable or 4) indecisive attitudes towards SFSH."

These four response options, rather than assessing the respondent's attitude, assess the actual situation with respect to SFSH in the respondent's school. Unless this is a translation issue, I see this as a flaw that undermines the analyses relating to the first two objectives of the paper. (Assessing attitudes would surely require the responses to be phrased differently e.g. 1) the school should implement SFSH, 2) the school should not implement SFSH, 3) do not know do /no opinion.)

• We see your point here. We realize that we have not been carefully enough in the translation process. In Danish the question is clearly a question assessing attitude, as the piloting also confirmed. Based on your comment we suggest to change the translation of the question to; “In your opinion, where do you think the school ought to be in two years in relation to SFSH?” (Variables, page 9, line 20-21 + Limitations, page 17, line 10-11).

Each school was characterised as "in favour" or "less in favour of SFSH" according to the principal manager's 'attitude' towards SFSH. "The principal manager's attitude was used because it is a management decision as to whether a Danish VET school will implement SFSH." (P9 line 166) Again, these responses reflect the actual school situation rather than attitude per se, but given that the decision to implement SFSH is dictated by the principal manager, in this case the situation may in fact reflect the manager's attitude. The analyses that address objective 3) "explore the differences in health promotion environments among VET schools based on management's attitudes towards SFSH" may therefore be valid.

• Thank you for this reflection. And please see previous comment about translation of the Danish item. It is indeed the managers attitude that is measured and not a prediction of the future. We agree that given the manager’s position and decisive role in the matter, their attitude may in fact reflect the actual situation at the school.

Minor comments

It would be clearer to refer throughout to ‘teaching staff’ rather than ‘staff’.

• Thanks, we agree and have changed staff to ‘teaching staff” throughout the paper.

Abstract Conclusion

"Conclusion: If management had a favourable attitude towards implementing SFSH, the school tended to have a higher focus on promoting a healthy work environment. Thus, implementing other health promotion activities and policies might be an important first step to establish readiness to implement SFSH." As the health promotion activities and policies pre-dated the survey and the question on SFSH, the first sentence might be better to rephrased as "existing
health promotion facilities and activities were associated with a favourable attitude towards implementing SFSH”. Healthy work environment is surely the explanatory variable.

- Good point and we recognize we have not been clear enough on the explanatory variable. We changed the first sentence in the abstract conclusion to: “Existing health promotion facilities and activities at the schools were associated with a favorable attitude among the management towards implementing SFSH” (abstract, page 2, line 23-24 + page 3, line 1-2) and in the conclusion (Conclusion and implications, page 18, line 17-20).

Methods

Asking the principal manager to select other managers and teaching staff seems fraught with opportunities for bias as mentioned by the authors in the Limitations section. However, the sampling procedures and questionnaire appear to have been designed for another purpose so the authors presumably had no say in how the participants were selected.

- Thank you for raising this point. However, this was done in order to avoid a loss of power as a result of a small sample size. This was a risk because the schools are very protective of their teaching staffs time, the gateway to the teaching staff had to be the manager. We were aware of that this may introduce bias, and hence we specifically asked the manager to choose teaching staff in different positions and with different opinions. Looking at other data, that was also collected as part of this study, reveals that the teaching staff on other issues are not as positive as the management, suggesting a diversity in teaching staff opinions. But we do acknowledge this is a limitation, and is addressed in the limitation section (Limitations, page 18, line 1-7).

Editing

There are very few typos. Some minor edits required e.g. "staffs' attitudes".

- This has been corrected