Author’s response to reviews

Title: "The Importance of Awareness, Support and Inner Strength to Balance Everyday Life" - A qualitative study about women's experiences of a workplace health promotion program in Human service organizations in Sweden.

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Response to the reviewers

We thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments. We have responded to each comment in italics to facilitate recognition. The changes in the manuscript are marked with yellow.

Reviewer Comments

Reviewer 1

In the introduction, the authors attribute the increase in absenteeism observed in Europe to the mental illnesses of women. I believe other factors should be mentioned, primarily the aging of the workforce [Poscia A, et al. Workplace Health Promotion for Older Workers: a Systematic Literature Review. BMC Health Serv Res. 2016 Sep 5;16 Suppl 5:329. doi: 10.1186/s12913-016-1518-z.]. Furthermore, women's absences are not only related to mental health, but also to social factors and the gender gap. Problems encountered by Swedish women who report higher levels of job strain due to less decision authority compared to men, are similar to those observed in Italian radiologists [Magnavita N. Is there a gender gap in Italian radiology? A cross-sectional study. Eur J Radiol. 2013; 82 (9): e502-e507 doi:pii: S0720-048X(13)00202-7. 10.1016/j.ejrad.2013.04.007 http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ejrad.2013.04.007].

Thank you for the interesting references. We agree that there are many other factors that can affect women’s absence than mental illness. Reviewer 2 suggestions for improvement of the paper was to shorten the introduction and reduce the references, as a compromise we chose not
to mention all the factors but to add the gender gap and reference “Magnavita N. Is there a gender gap in Italian radiology…”

There seems to be a problem with the definition of WLB. The authors observe that "Work-life balance has been defined in various ways, for instance, as a feeling of satisfaction due to a successful balance between work and private life”. The authors should say that the lack of a definition accepted by all makes it difficult to compare studies on the subject. A subjective definition such as that proposed by the authors has an obvious limitation. A workaholic worker could in fact consider himself fully satisfied by work and family life, even if this is marginal or practically non-existent.

We agree and we have changed in the paragraph after recommendations.

The study involved a small fraction of workers (55/1300, less than 5%) of a municipality. Later, only a small part of those who participated were interviewed. The authors must recognize that this is a strong limitation of their work. The interviews also bring with them a strong share of the interviewer's subjectivity.

We have made changes in the text under the heading Context to clarify that it was employees in the Social Administration (n = 524) and the Department of Domestic services (n = 107) in the municipality that participated in the study, and not all employees of the municipality.

We have also made changes in the text under the heading Methods to clarify that all participant [n=55] in the BELE-program were included in the focus group interviews. The purpose of the individual interviews [n=8] was to confirm the summary of the data collected from the focus group interviews and contribute to a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon.

In order to ensure that the findings of the study is the experiences and ideas of the informants and not the researchers we have considered the methodological aspects of credibility, dependability and transferability for trustworthiness throughout the study. We have rewritten the text under Methodological issues to clarify the trustworthiness of the results of the study.

Reviewer 2

The authors are addressing a critical problem of personal well being that has the potential to lead to an increase in burnout.

While the manuscript presents a program called BELE that has the potential to improve female workers' personal well being, the excessive length of the manuscript impacts negatively on its
presentation of the benefits of the BELE program. The introduction and discussion should be shortened. Too many papers are cited; more references are included than the number of patients that were studied. Removing some of the references will result in a shortening of the discussion.

We agree and have shortened both introduction and discussion by making the text more stringent. We have also removed references from 60 to 47. Since recommendations from Reviewer 1 was to clarify some sections and add references, we have tried to find a middle way to meet the suggestions from both for improvement of the paper.

All authors have seen and approved the revised paper.

Yours sincerely

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