Reviewer’s report

Title: Perceptions of perioperative nursing competence: A cross-country comparison

Version: 2 Date: 20 Feb 2018

Reviewer: Panagiota Copanitsanou

Reviewer's report:

Overall, this is a well-written manuscript, about an original topic.

I have a few suggestions for the authors, which I think should be addressed in their text:

--Are there any data about whether "Nurses' perceptions of their competence … may affect role and teamwork performance, job satisfaction, recruitment and retention"?

--The phrase "Describing where differences occur across countries is important: Although nurses perform similar roles, there is variation in how the tasks within these roles are operationalised [10] and notwithstanding the government and statutory regulations that determine nurses' scope of practice [1]" is a little long and difficult to understand—perhaps it could be split in 2 sentences?

--Please explain more about "An initial combined sample of 1,557 cases was reduced to a final sample of 768". Although this is cleared in Table 1, it should also be made clear within the text.

--In the results, the sentence "A 4 (country) x 3 (years of experience in OR) x 2 (education level) factorial ANOVA was used to examine the influence of the independent variables on the total reported perceived perioperative competence (PPC) of respondents" is a repetition from the methods section.

--The authors say that "There were also significant main effects for Country F(3,706)= 6.5, p<.001 (ηp 2 =.03), and years of experience in the OR F(2,706)= 58.5, p<.001 (ηp2 =.14). However, these were qualified by a significant interaction between these variables F(6,706)=2.5, p=.022 (ηp2 =.02)" - could they describe what they mean? E.g. did the nurses in one country tended to have more years of experience in comparison to another country?
The authors mention several times in the text that this is a secondary analysis of the data. The first time they mention this, I believe they should also mention (very briefly) the aim of the analysis of the primary data. Perhaps they should also explain more about the reason they chose to perform secondary analysis (perhaps many readers of the journal do not know what this means). Furthermore, are there any particular limitations connected to secondary analysis for example?

In the discussion, the authors say that "competency-based management approaches that accurately assess a nurse's performance, skills and abilities have the potential to increase nurses' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses". Are such approaches performed in any of the 4 participating countries?

In the conclusion, the sentence "Ours is the first study to describe cross-country comparisons relative to…" is too strong a sentence. Perhaps the authors could consider changing this into "To our knowledge, this is the first study to describe cross-country comparisons relative to…”.

In Table 1 please make sure all the percentages are added into 100.0%.

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

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