Reviewer’s report

Title: Awareness of professional rules among Iranian nurses: a cross-sectional study

Version: 0 Date: 07 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Theodore Cosco

Reviewer's report:

The authors have developed and administered a survey that captures information on nurses' knowledge on issues surrounding the legal aspects of nursing practice. This is a meritorious study in its examination of an important topic: being aware of the relevant laws that govern nursing is an integral component of effective practice. Whilst the motivations are sound and the subject matter is relevant, the manuscript falters in its articulation, and choice, of the methods used. Firstly, it is unclear as to how the survey was developed and tested before administration in the study. Notably, it is unclear as to what exactly is captured in the questionnaire the authors have developed. Given that the crux of the study is the legal knowledge of nurses, it is important to know what components of legal knowledge are being examined in this study. Consequently, it is hard to know what is being measured and how relevant this is to the field and to nurses themselves: what is a realistic expectation for legal knowledge? Further the details surrounding the randomness of participant selection and recruiting of the expert panel are unclear.

In the analyses, the authors ran t-tests and ANOVAs, but it is unclear as to whether the authors used their categorical, i.e. "good" to "weak", scale as the outcome or they used the raw data. Either way, given the sample size and the size of the categories listed, it seems unlikely that these would be normally distributed, suggesting that these parametric tests may be unsuitable in this instance. Adjusting for confounders, e.g education, in the analyses may also provide some greater insights into what, if anything, is driving the relationships.

I would suggest some detailed proofreading of the manuscript for grammar and punctuation as there are errors throughout. Further, there are some major formatting inconsistencies in the tables and text, e.g. reporting of decimal places.

MAJOR

How were participants randomly selected? The procedure is not described in full. Which wards were these participants selected from?

Where were the questions from the questionnaire drawn from? Is there a precedent for the use of these questions? I would suggest appending the manuscript with a list of the questions to provide the reader with a better idea of what exactly has been covered. Besides a cursory description it is
not known what level of depth of knowledge about legal procedures etc. an individual would be expected to know.

Who were the "experts" used to determine the construct validity of the instrument? How were they recruited into the study and what qualified them to assess the construct validity?

How were the thresholds for the cutoffs established? If this is a newly developed scale how did you determine what would be considered "good" vs. "weak"?

How were participants recruited and how were the surveys administered?

MINOR

Results

The first sentence lists the "mean and standard deviation" as "6.4±31.1", which I believe is a reversal of the numbers. This should be amended.

The total number of participants is not mentioned.

In Table 2 the mean and SD statistics for the Head Nurse are "30.11 ± 21.96", which must be a typo.

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

No

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

No

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

No

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 am able to assess the statistics
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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