Reviewer’s report

Title: Staff motivation and welfare in Adventist health facilities in Malawi: a qualitative study

Version: 6 Date: 15 August 2013

Reviewer: Tarja Suominen

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Thank you for having the possibility to read this interesting article and of an important topic. However, the manuscript in its present form is not ready for publication.

The authors would benefit if writing down clearly the purpose of the study and the research questions they want to answer. If the purpose is to find out the motivating factors, please answer in your text what they are. Now you start the results by presenting: staff being treated unfairly and the institution on the way to lose its purpose. These are not in balance with your objectives. So, please write down the purpose and research questions and structure your results firstly based on the research questions.

Background

The background is not strong enough. I just wonder based on which kind the literature search the references have been found. Also the manuscript lacks methodological references.

Methods

Please add which background questions were asked and whether your interview a theme interview or which it was. Which kind of data you received, may be you could write how much different statements you received for the analysis. Which kind of analysis was made? Was it made just by one of the researchers? Was the person who interviewed the staff at the same time the upper level boss of them, if that was so, you should critique this and discuss what it may impact on the results you received.

No need to offer so much information of the institutions because of anonymity issues, just that 4 institutions, one private, serving which kind of population and how big, the amount of staff between etc. No information needed based on each institution. The data has put together and you are not analyzing based on different institutions, so offer to the readers information as a group of those selected institutions. You should write what kind of impact it had that one of the researcher was working as director for all institutions. How staff was informed that there was a free choice to participate or not, which kind of information they received before they were asked to participate by the heads of the institutions? Which kind of criteria the researcher gave to the heads of the institutions, whom to select? Do you know whether there were persons who denied participate?
In your table you can present by numbers the facilities, not need by names, because of the anonymity issues.

You write “the participants were selected based on their role, experience and years of service in the institution”. This is not telling to a new reader what this means. Did you as researcher ask to select one under the age of 30, one over 50, at least two women from each institutions, or what do you mean, sorry to say but you are not offering information enough to understand how the participants were selected.

Your write “Thereafter a preliminary report of findings to the management team was given”. What do you mean by this? Was it so that each institution got some information what their own staff was telling and if so, did the participants know this before they offered they consent to participate in this study? Was the staff informed that the management team of they own institution is getting to know they answers and was it so that the heads also knew e.g. the persons (like 6) who from their own institution participated in the study.

Ethical consideration
What means here that all information given would be treated with strict confidentiality? At the same time I am not sure in which form the management team got to know the findings.

Results
The results is now impossible to evaluate, because the objective mentioned is to explore the motivating factors, but here we are not able to see in written form which they are based on the data collected.

If your research question was like what impacted work motivation (is the concept work motivation or motivation you are investigating) you may write: Based on the results there were xxx factors impacting to work motivation: staff being treated unfairly and ……..

Then you start to open what means this “staff being treated…”
Staff being treated unfairly meant poor and sometimes dangerous working conditions, poor housing facilities, dissatisfaction with allowances and contracts….

Soon you notice that something is not fitting nicely, if the name of the category is staff being treated unfairly. The subcategories/subtitles should be created in the way that they present “staff being treated unfairly”. Subtitle “Dissatisfaction with allowance and contracts” is not subcategory of staff being treated unfairly. Easy way to evaluate the subtitles is to write down the sentence and evaluating if all the subtitles in their present form tell about staff being treated unfairly (there is action in this title).

Why you are offering sometimes information whether some staff person of support member said something. I assume you analyzed the data so that you put all data together and your research question (not presented) was not to investigate what staff is reporting and what support members are reporting.
Please, think the anonymity issues once more, you write “one of the support member of staff narrated… he lost one of his relative…” May be some can recognize from this who that was and I think it is not needed to put here it was a support member, because you have not been systematic in analysis from which group the respondents was.

Some quantitative expressions exist, not relevant in the qualitative analysis, like “almost all participants”.

I am sure there are some interesting results and worthwhile to present but the results are not clear here, clear purpose of the study, research questions and more information of the data and the data analysis needed before commenting more the results.

Discussion
Discussion of the results is missing. I waited to see some discussion in relation to other findings in this field investigated. I also expected some critique of ethical issue and also some critique of methods and analysis used, and also discussion of limitations.

References
The reference list is quite limited, method references missing, also some minor technical errors exits.

Tables
Tables and figures many times helps the readers to understand the qualitative analysis made, but there are no tables or figures in this manuscript.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

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