Author’s response to reviews

Title: Relationships between burnout, turnover intention, job satisfaction, job demands and job resources for mental health personnel in an Australian mental health service

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor and Reviewers

We thank you for taking the time to review and make very helpful comments on this manuscript. We have made the recommended revisions to the manuscript and we believe the current version of the manuscript is substantially improved and we thank you for your assistance in this process.

Below is a detailed overview of the changes that have been made in response to each of your comments and suggestions.

For your convenience, we have included a clean copy of the revised manuscript (presented first) as well as a copy showing the changes that have been made (presented second).

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this revised version of the manuscript.

REVIEWER 1

Lauren Luther (Reviewer 1): The authors aim to explore the relationships between burnout, turnover intention, job satisfaction, job demands, etc among mental health personnel in Australia. Comments aimed at improving the manuscript are below.
COMMENT:

More rationale for why the authors are exploring these relationships in mental health personnel in Australia is needed. Why might the relationships be different in this population or why would it be helpful to explore these relationships in a different sample? Indeed, as the authors state, many of these relationships have been previously in numerous other mental health professional samples.

RESPONSE:

We believe that differences in how services are organised and delivered will have an impact on burnout, turnover intention and job satisfaction. Therefore we believe that it is necessary to conduct research in the Australian context rather than rely on evidence from other countries. We have added a comment to this effect in the introduction of the revised manuscript. Additionally, we have further highlighted the additional factors included in this research project that add to the literature in this area.

COMMENT:

The job demands resource paragraph was a bit hard to follow. This model could be better described.

RESPONSE:

The description of the JD-R has been revised in the new version of the manuscript.

COMMENT:

The response rate seems rather low and is a limitation. Might those who were the most burned out be the ones that did not respond?
RESPONSE:

We have added further commentary about this limitation in the limitations section of the revised manuscript. We have also explicitly highlighted that one of the consequences of the low response rate may have been that staff who were most burnt out may not have responded.

COMMENT:

Despite the low response rate, it seems like more advanced statistics could be used to help to understand the relationships in the sample (i.e., predictors or turnover or burnout?) or examining which specific job demands and job resources might be most predictive of burnout or turnover could make the paper have a stronger contribution.

RESPONSE:

Thank you for this suggestion. We have added stepwise linear regression models to the analysis. This, coupled with the other analyses has allowed for a more detailed exploration and identification of factors that appear most influential in terms of associations with burnout, turnover intention and job satisfaction.

COMMENT:

More description about the job demands and job resources scale could be helpful since it is a new scale.

RESPONSE:

We have added a more detailed description of the Job demands and job resources scale to the manuscript and we have also provided a detailed document outlining the scale to be added as a supplementary resource.
COMMENT:

In the results, you often describe that this correlation was stronger than another. This should be empirically tested with Fisher's r to z transformation. Further, the correlations could be discussed in more detail (i.e., which individual job demands and which individual job resources were correlated or were not with burnout and turnover and satisfaction).

RESPONSE:

In this revision, we have removed many of the places where we were commenting on certain correlations being “stronger” than others. Part of this was related to the inclusion of the regression analyses which enabled a more comprehensive discussion of the most important job demands and job resources. In the few places where we have commented on one correlation being stronger than another, we have provided the Fisher Z result.

COMMENT:

Limitation is that all measures are based on self-report.

RESPONSE:

We have included a comment about this in the limitations section of the revised manuscript.

COMMENT:

The discussion seems more like a repeat of the results section in parts. More integration with prior work is needed, and it would be helpful to take out the hypotheses sections and reword them into the paragraph. More work is needed to help the reader understand the utility and implications of these correlations and whether the magnitude is similar to prior work. Further, more discussion about why it is helpful to know that similar correlations exist in an Australian sample is needed. Finally, more integration with findings and the JD-R model are needed.
RESPONSE:

Thank you for this comment. We have restructured and re-written the discussion to address these concerns. In the revised manuscript, the discussion is no longer structured within the headings of the research hypotheses / questions and provides a more holistic analysis and discussion of the results. The addition of the regression analyses into the manuscript has also meant that the discussion can be more focused on those results that are most important and how these might be addressed. We have aligned the discussion to focus more specifically on these results in the context of the JD-R model.

REVIEWER 2

Jack Chen, MBBS PhD MBA(Exec) (Reviewer 2): The authors have conducted the largest study in the Australian mental health context with two aims: 1. To explore the relationships (through bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients) between burnout, turnover intention and job satisfaction; 2: To examine the differences in burnout, turnover intention, job satisfaction, job demands or job resources between different mental health professional groups and settings (through t-test and one-way ANOVA). I have a few questions on the design and analysis of the study as follows:

COMMENT:

1. The choice of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OBI) as the measures of Burnout. This inventory was only scarcely used in the mental health setting compared to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as shown In the most recently published systematic review by O'Connor et al. 2018;( Burnout in mental health professionals: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence and determinants European Psychiatry; 53: 74-89). The MBI inventory provided subdomains of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment . Could authors provided some discussion on why the OBI was chosen instead of MBI? Are there any substantial chance that the results related to burnout could be altered should the MBI be used?

RESPONSE:

The OLBI was selected primarily due to its alignment with the JD-R model that was influential in the design of this study. Additionally, we have provided more detail in the current manuscript in terms of some of the additional advantages of the OLBI in comparison to the MBI.
COMMENT:

2. The Pearson coefficients used in testing the research questions 1 assume simple linear correlation between constructs which may not be true. The low correlation coefficient showed in the results may be due to the fact that the analyses method used failed to take into account the nonlinear relationship between two items. More importantly, correlation is not causation and the interpretations should be exercised with great caution. Another important limitation of the method used in research question 1 is that it failed to take into account other potential confounders. Other approaches such as a structure equation modelling approach would be more theoretical and technically sound and the limitations of using simple correlation coefficients should be acknowledged in the discussion.

RESPONSE:

Thank you for this comment. We have included detail of the initial explorations undertaken to confirm the linear (or absent) relationship between each set of variables. Our explorations revealed no significant non-linear relationships amongst any of the variables investigated. In the new regression analyses (included in response to your comments as well as comments from Reviewer 1), we have included a range of potential confounders to address the concerns you have raised above. Additionally, the use of regression analyses has allowed for somewhat more definitive conclusions to be drawn (although the limitation of cross-sectional comparisons being unable to identify causation remains and this has been highlighted in the limitations section).

COMMENT:

3. For the research questions 2, the using the simple t-test and ANOVA approaches are severely limited. A multiple linear regression approach may be a much better alternative as it will incorporate professional group, management role, working setting as well as other important confounding factors such as age, gender, years of working experience in mental health setting to adjust for the important covariates. These adjustment could potentially change the findings and discussions of the paper.

RESPONSE:

While we have retained the analyses related to research question 2, we have added research question 3. In the regression analyses included in research question 3, these various potentially
con founding variables have been included to strengthen the conclusions / interpretations that can be drawn from the results.

COMMENT:

In summary, despite that the authors have collected some important data in the Australian mental health setting, there were serious limitation in the study design and analyses which may limit the importance of its findings.

RESPONSE:

We hope that the revisions made to the analysis and reporting address some of the concerns that you have raised. We believe that the comments you have made and the comments from the first reviewer have substantially improved this version of the manuscript.