Author’s response to reviews

Title: National guidance and district level practices in the supervision of community health workers in South Africa: a qualitative study

Authors:

Tumelo Assegaai (mampetumelo@yahoo.com)
Helen Schneider (hschneider@uwc.ac.za)

Version: 1 Date: 24 Jan 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer reports:

Reviewer #1: Comments: HRHE-D-18-00190

A detailed study to identify gaps between policy and guidance materials and working and relationship conditions at working level in the CHW context. Methods applied could be replicated in similar contexts to identify gaps in other systems and enhance performance.

Some small typing errors need to be remedied prior to publication:

Page 2, line 34: replace "definition" with "definitions"
Page 3, line 33: add "level" after "national"
Page 11, line 21: after "(40)" add a full stop.
Page 13, line 3: replace "dedicate" with "dedicated"

In addition, please check and correct the punctuation throughout the reference section, for example, reference 35 "…. Health.; 2010." Semicolon after the full stop? Corrected
Reviewer #2: This is an interesting article, focusing on the importance of the role of supportive supervision in the health system, and the translation of policies and guidelines into practice, in particular at the provincial and district levels. It also highlights the importance of community health workers in the primary health care.

Overall, the article is well written, clear and concise.

Minor comments follow regarding specific sections of the article. Revisions indicated in yellow shading in the document and also next to the comments below.

Background

1. The objective written in the last paragraph of the Background should state that the study included two districts from one province in South Africa, as stated in the abstract.

   λ. Page 4, line 4-7: added “The study was based in two districts of the North West Province…”

2. It is not clear in the Background (nor in the methods section) if the policies and guidelines reviewed are national documents or if these are developed/adapted at the province or district levels.

   λ. Page 3, line 33: “National”

   λ. Page 3, line 36: “the national

   λ. Page 4, line 11: “To describe the policy on WBOT supervision, all NDoH guidelines, policy and training documents related to the WBOTs and available in the public domain since the inception of the WBOT programme were sourced”

Methods

3. In the abstract is mentioned that the North West Province was selected because this was an early adopter of the WBOT strategy. This should also be mentioned in the methods section. It could also be interesting to include the dates when the WBOT strategy implementation started at the different provinces and, specifically, within the selected districts.

   λ. Page 1, line 13-14: added “in the North West Province, an early adopter of the WBOT strategy”;

   λ. Page 2, line 16: deleted “an early adopter of the WBOT strategy”
Page 4, line 3-4: added “The study was based in two districts of the North West Province, and an early adopter of the programme”

4. It is not clear to me if the document analysis was based on a predefined extraction grid (based on a framework, for example; although it is mentioned some literature in the background section - ref. 27 and 29 it is not clear that this is followed in the analysis) or if the themes and sub-themes emerged from the analysis. Clarifying this would support the reader in understanding the findings.

Page 5, lines 2-5: “The text was organised along the three domains of supportive supervision (management, development, support) that emerged from the literature. Within each of the three domains, themes and sub-themes, and the specific elements were inductively coded based on the material in the documents.”

5. Also, it is unclear if the document review (data extraction and analysis) was conducted by more than one researcher, as a measure to limit bias and increase accuracy. If so, I suggest adding this information in the methods section.

Page 5, lines 8-9: “Both authors agreed on the framework for the analysis and read the documents. The first author (TA) did the coding, which was then discussed and validated with the second author (HS).”

Discussion

6. Some questions that could be interesting to explore in the discussion: Do the authors expect this to be the case of other provinces, i.e., the same findings across South Africa? If policies and guidelines are developed or adjusted at the provincial and district level, could major differences be expected in the supervision process?

Page 12, lines 33-40: “The national frameworks reviewed substantively shaped how the North West Province approached the supervision of WBOTs and the findings in this province are likely to be mirrored in other provinces. Although provinces are required to develop implementations plans where adaptations may be introduced within the broad framework, in practice, at the time of this research the national policy documents were being implemented without much provincial and local adaptations. Nonetheless, the day to day experiences of supervision largely depend on the nature of local leadership and context from districts to facilities, and in turn, this is likely to result in variations across provinces and districts.”
References

7. The citations and reference list require review for consistency and accuracy.

Corrected

Author

Minor corrections were made as highlighted in yellow as with corrections listed above by the reviewers