Reviewer's report

Title: Feminisation of the health workforce and wage conditions of health professions: an exploratory analysis

Version: 0 Date: 21 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Neeru Gupta

Reviewer's report:

This article presents an exploratory analysis of associations between increased participation of women in the health workforce and gender wage gaps in 25 countries at different levels of economic development. The premise of the research is highly promising, timely, and policy-relevant. But I offer certain suggestions before the paper can be considered as ready for publication.

The (over-reaching) title needs to be rephrased to reconcile with the actual contents of the paper. This is neither a "global" nor "impact" study. It covers 25 countries, and presents descriptive trends. No causality can be inferred that warrants the use of the word "impact" here.

Similarly, the first sentence of the paper's first paragraph, "The global health workforce is feminizing," needs to be rephrased to reconcile with the actual contents of the paragraph. None of the supporting background evidence discusses trends over time in sex ratios, rather current characteristics related to women's dominant numbers in the health workforce.

The article attempts to bring "feminism" into the discussion, but fails to make the most basic distinction between the constructs of "sex" (biological) and "gender" (socio-cultural). The theoretical/conceptual background needs considerable reinforcing.

The analysis seems to group all health workers together, and does not account for "horizontal" versus "vertical" wage gaps (i.e., within versus across occupations). Is the trend over time attributed to women entering higher paying occupations at a lower rate than men, or to more women entering lower paying occupations, or to lower wages across all occupations? These would lead to very different gender-sensitive HRH planning and policy concerns. Given that the researchers appear to have access to case-level data, I am not certain why they elected not to perform some basic statistical controls.

While the researchers grouped countries by income level, it is obvious some countries within these groups are over-represented compared to their national populations (notably, Ukraine, Belarus, Netherlands) while others are under-represented (e.g., India, Paraguay, United States).
The researchers acknowledge limitations to their data source, and mention weighting the data by age and "gender" (sex), but it is not clear whether they also weighted by national population or labour force size.

The authors should consider minimizing the use of acronyms, especially two- and three-word terms that can just as easily be spelled out and would make the text much more reader-friendly.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.
I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.