Reviewer’s report

Title: Job satisfaction of public and private primary care physicians in Malaysia: analysis of findings from QUALICO-PC

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Reviewer: Ayako Honda

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the paper titled "Job satisfaction of public and private primary care physicians in Malaysia: analysis of findings from QUALICO-PC".

The paper is well written and nicely structured.

The main issue with the paper is the link between the measurement of job satisfaction and public health issues in Malaysia - the paper could be improved by providing a stronger case for examining job satisfaction in Malaysia, discussing how the study results contribute to the improvement of the work environment for health workers, and discussing the public health issues addressed by the study results. Also, it would be good to highlight how the study is addressing knowledge gaps in the literature. (The paper provides some background on the study, highlighting low health worker density as a public health problem in Malaysia, however I think stronger justification for looking at health worker job satisfaction is required in the background section and the paper needs more concrete arguments on the policy implications of the study in the discussion section.)

In addition, if the study aims to contribute to the methodology for measuring health worker job satisfaction, the methods section should include more detail on the adaptation of the internationally-developed questionnaire in the setting of Malaysia and there should be a paragraph discussing the advantages and limitations of the questionnaire. The paper currently includes a paragraph discussing the limitations of the study but it is somewhat general and a more concrete argument on the use of the questionnaire in Malaysia would be of benefit so that future use of the same/similar questionnaire in other settings could be improved.

Following are a number of specific comments on the paper:

Introduction:

The introduction states that the low density of primary care providers is a public health problem in Malaysia, and the subsequent section discusses workforce attrition due to job dissatisfaction. Is the high attrition rate the main reason for the lack of primary care providers in Malaysia? What causes the job dissatisfaction? It would be good to provide some undying causes of the low density of primary care providers, drawing on existing studies, and linking the argument to the study of health worker job satisfaction.
Also, the introduction states that variation exists in how job satisfaction in doctors is measured and provides some factors contributing to the variation. It would be good if the background section could expand on the methodological developments that have occurred and challenges in measuring job satisfaction, and the discussion section included how this study contributes to the advancement of the methodology.

One of the study objectives is to compare job satisfaction for medical doctors in public and private primary care clinics. It would be good to clarify which sector the study focuses on and how the comparison of public and private can produce policy implications.

Methods:

As mentioned above, it would be helpful to include an explanation of how the standard international data collection instruments were adapted to the study setting. If the study team undertook pilot testing of the questionnaire, a brief explanation of the process involved in the pilot testing would be of benefit.

A brief explanation on the basis for selecting the independent variables should be included - are there any existing studies that can be referenced to show factors influencing doctor job satisfaction in the study setting?

Discussion:

The section states that job satisfaction in Malaysia is higher than that in European countries despite the fact that the workload in Malaysia is greater. It would be interesting to see possible reasons for the findings, drawing on the existing literature.

As mentioned above, the argument on the comparison of public and private would be clearer if the authors could articulate the policy relevance of the comparison.

As also mentioned above, it would be of benefit to provide a paragraph discussing the data collection instruments, considering both the advantages and limitations of the instruments, and providing suggestions for use of the same/similar questionnaires to measure health worker job satisfaction in other settings.

I hope the above helps you to improve the paper. Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything that requires clarification.

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