Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding the supports needed for policy implementation: a comparative analysis of the placement of intermediaries across three mental health systems

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Reviewer: Lana Meiqari

Reviewer's report:

The article is using a novel concept from the public policy and looking at it in the context of health policy and mental health systems in particular. However, it is hard to read with several objectives mentioned across the article. The manuscript needs major revision and further clarification of its rationale, methods and results to make it easier to read, understand and make conclusions.

Title

- Needs to be more specific in terms of what the paper is about, methods used and where. A suggestion would be something like: "Understanding structural supports for policy implementation: a comparative analysis of the placement of intermediaries across three mental health systems"

Introduction

- The problem and research gap need to be more explicit. One suggestion would be to present your definition of the concept of intermediaries and the added value of studying it at the top of the introduction/background as described in the literature of public policy. Then, clarify your rationale of using it in the context of health systems and mental health services in particular, in addition to your specific interest in understanding why there is variation in terms of the placement of intermediaries in mental health systems.

- You mention "structural supports" in your title, however, this is not introduced anywhere in your introduction or the rest of the manuscript. Can you mention what does it mean and how it is related to intermediaries?

- In health policy and system research, there is a mention to the role of community mobilizers/community-based organizations in addition to patients' coalitions/organizations.
They also have a role as mediators between patients, providers and policy makers. It would be good to explain where they fit within the intermediaries role, if any.

Objective

- Your main objective/research question is mentioned in Line 148. However, in other parts of the article you have some objective-like statements. It is not clear - at least based on a first read - if these statements are things that you would like to clarify in your research, results from your research, or are hypothesis derived from analyzing literature to find the research gap? If results, then they are not needed in the background. If hypothesis, then they need to be explicitly mentioned as part of the research rationale. Here are some examples:

Line 68: As part of a broader program of research, we are interested in understanding the role of policy-oriented intermediaries in mental health systems who support the implementation of EIPPs at scale.

Line 96: We examine each of these explanations in turn below and argue that there are too many similarities in the articulated values and policy directions in these jurisdictions to explain the variation in the placement of intermediaries in their mental health systems. We suggest that these factors may be necessary for intermediaries to arise, but not sufficient to explain the variation in their placement in mental health systems.

Turning to why values were ruled out, we first explored whether there were differences in the types of values at play in mental health in New Zealand, Ontario and Scotland (selection of which is explained in detail in the methods section).

Lines 152-157: Through this analysis, we argue that the placement of intermediaries supporting policy implementation in these three mental health systems can be explained primarily using an institutional framework. More specifically our analysis indicates that the placement of these intermediaries can be explained through an understanding of the policy legacies leading to the current public/private mix of mental health service delivery, and the differing administrative capacities of mental health systems.

Methods

- A boarder statement on the type of analysis is needed as an introduction to the Methods section between lines 162 and 163.

- My understanding is that you have conducted the analysis at two phases. In the current description, there is a mix of results and methods across both sections and even the
introduction. One suggestion would be to clarify (as part of the broad statement) that your research has been conducted in two phases: 1) qualitative interviews and 2) literature and policy review. Then describe the methods (data collection and analysis procedures) for each of the two phases individually. This would shuffle around the different sections within Methods.

- First subheading under Methods could be Qualitative Interviews:

  Start with its objective from Line 164 (also from Lines 194-202) looked for the presence of intermediaries in the mental health systems of eight high-income countries. … etc.

  Data collection for the qualitative interviews which includes: Sampling (who?); Data collection tools and procedures (interview guides, interview procedures); and data management and analysis (data handling and analysis).

- Second subheading under Methods could be Literature and Policy Review

  Start with "Selection of settings", then Data sources and finally, Data analysis

Results

- Besides description of intermediaries, I would suggest to add a separate sub-section after that on "description of the placement of intermediaries in the health system"

- Line 284: You mention the use of an institutional framework which is only mentioned in Line 154. This needs more clarification. What is this framework? How did you use it? Was it part of your conceptual background? Then it should be discussed in the introduction. Was it part of your data collection and/or analysis process? Then you can add the framework to your methods where appropriate.

  Right now, you only mention the use of institutional theory (Line 241). This is vague and need clarification. What theory, and how was the theory or framework used in analyzing the data and identifying the two factors in your results?"

- It would be interesting to add a third table where you compare the cases against the two factors that you identified as main results. This would help in taking some details regarding the cases out of the results to present them in an easier to read way. Also to focus your results on the similarities/differences instead of describing individual cases.

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:

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