Reviewer’s report

Title: Performance management methods and practices among Nurses in Primary Health Care Settings: A systematic scoping review protocol

Version: 0 Date: 05 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Genevieve Rouleau

Reviewer's report:

The focus of this systematic scoping review protocol is to examine the evidence about the performance management practices and its consequences amongst nurses in Primary Health Care (PHCs) settings. While I found the focus interesting, I felt that the paper in its current form is not suitable for publication unless it is extensively edited. In my opinion, the paper needs an important linguistic revision to facilitate the reading. The concepts of interest (e.g. performance management and development, performance appraisals) need to be defined. There are some weaknesses in the methodology that have to be addressed. By reading the paper, this is not clear if the authors make the difference between, for instance, quality assessment, and assessing transparency and methodological quality. Overall, conceptual clarity has to be added to increase the readability of this article. I have provided you with some references and suggestions that I hope will inspire you in making the paper ready for further attempts of publication.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

1) Abstract

a. Background

- Information in the abstract would benefit from additional clarity

- Lines 8-9: "Despite the important benefits of effective managing performance and development of nurses"

What are these benefits?

What does that mean "development of nurses"?

These need to be operationalized if possible

- Line 16: "...investigates its contribution"
To what are you referring by "its"? (performance management and appraisal systems?)

b. Methods

- Lines 42-45: "Articles (do you mean "title and abstracts ?) retrieved from the databases will be screened and duplicates will be removed. This will be followed by two independent reviewers screening eligible abstracts and text articles in parallel, full.
I don't understand the logic of this sentence, specifically the order of the "steps". First, title and abstracts have to be screened and duplicates have to be removed (the "first screening"). Secondly, the full texts of included title and abstracts from the "first screening" are retrieved.

- Lines 46-47: Abstract and full article screening will be guided by eligibility criteria. I don't think this sentence is necessary. The quality of the included studies will be determined by Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT 2011 Version). -- Remove the word "version"

c. Discussion
The discussion will benefit for clarification. For example: "... to expose knowledge gaps and inform future research". Which knowledge gaps? About what?

d. Keywords
Are some of these keywords free text? Do they come from thesaurus of database? What does "development" mean? Consider operationalizing (see previous comment 1.a)

2) Paper

a. Background
Please check all the references in the paper. The order seems to be wrong. See line 3. The sentence ends with the reference number 6.

Are there only 2 references to support the first paragraph? I counted only 3 references in all of the background, which is too few to support an entire formulation of a research question that justifies your systematic scoping review.

Lines 8-10: I think it would be relevant to bring some statistics about the number of people requiring daily healthcare.

The concepts of interest would benefit for clear definition (e.g. performance management and development, appraisal methods). (idem 1a.)

Lines 21-28:
"In light of organisational change, there needs to be workforce preparedness for chronic care, and at the centre of this change is the provision of patient-centred care." -- This sentence needs to be reworded. They are many relevant ideas that need to be well structured/conceptualized to enhance clarity.

"As a result of these changes, there is a need for performance management and appraisal methods and practices to encourage the reconfigured healthcare system [4]." I'm not totally convinced by your arguments. Why it's so important to focus on performance management? Further clarity in the background might answer this question.
Could you make explicit links as to why nurses in primary health care settings are targeted in your protocol, as well as the links between these healthcare providers pertaining to their role in managing chronic diseases and the importance of mapping evidence on performance management? Until now, these associations are not completely clear with my reading of the background. The link between the issues of chronic conditions and re-organization of healthcare system is clearer.

This was the first time you mentioned a group of words, named them entirely, and then put the acronym in bracket. Afterwards, you can only use the acronym. This rule is not consistent throughout the text. Please standardize the form. This should start in the abstract and/or background as soon it is relevant.

For example, see lines 34-35: human resource management (HRM). Line 46, the acronym HRM is used, without its meaning. See also p. 5 line 9. Page 5, lines 27-37 - replace primary healthcare settings by its acronym.

It would be interesting to have a sub-heading in the background that emphasizes the importance of your work - e.g. "Why it is important to do this systematic scoping review?"

Lines 41-47

I invite you to revise and nuance the scope of the statement. I don't believe that mapping the evidence on performance will improve HRM and HR outcomes. Perhaps the findings can target some relevant indicators and practices that will need to be addressed to better meet the patients' outcomes/quality of care, or to foster performance management. The sentence that follows this one - "enhance our understanding" - is more suitable and adapted to the type of review you will conduct. Again, the findings can give (for instance) researchers and target populations some avenues that are evidence-based to foster performance management in PHC settings.

(The findings of the scoping cannot lead to find the most effective approaches in performance management because this is not aim of a scoping review.)

b. Methodology

Is the term "performance appraisals" used interchangeably with "performance management?" (line 7)

Lines 26-30: "The review will also include a quality assessment as encouraged by Levac et al, 2010 to improve transparency in the process of reviewing literature [9]. To also assess the methodological quality of included studies"

o Please ensure you use a consistent formatting style (e.g. APA, MLA). Your citation here does not fit in either of these. Please revise and ensure all citations are standardized.

o Please clarify these two sentences and be certain that each term is used properly. There are many concepts here: "quality assessment", "transparency", "methodological quality".

o Furthermore, this sentence "to also assess the methodological quality…" needs to be reworded.

o For your information, there is a brand new paper that has just been published on reporting a scoping review. You may use this guide to report your work: http://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2700389/prisma-extension-scoping-reviews-prisma-scr-checklist-explanation

o When I consulted the paper wrote by Levac (2010), it seems that it's more about recommendations for
enhancing scoping study methodology than for assessing the quality of this type of review. The MMAT is used to assess methodological quality of mixed method studies. Including the research question is a bit redundant with the detailed objectives in the background. Perhaps you could cite the objective in a more general way in the background and present the research questions as is in the methodology section?

This sub-heading is missing (Stage 1. Identifying the research question is missing).

There are redundant information in this section "Eligibility of research question". Is box 1 mandatory? (The content is very similar to those in table 1). In the Context, what do that means by "within the global context"?

Table 1
o I invite you to remove unnecessary information "for studies to be included/excluded"… in both columns.

Table 2
o The search strategy doesn't match the one presented in page 7. Some terms related to nurses are missing.

Stage 2 (p. 7)

o I invite you to consult resources and references to support this phase. For example, you can consult Cochrane, even if you don't conduct a Cochrane review. This resource contains useful information: http://handbook-5-1.cochrane.org/

o For example, to get a more comprehensive search strategy, you could, as suggested by Cochrane (2011): "Use Both free-text and subject headings should be used (for example Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and EMTREE)."

o You could also ask a health librarian at your research or clinical center to build and/or to validate your search strategy.

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o Regarding the screening of titles, abstracts and full texts, I share my experience with you. Feel free to agree or not with this ways of doing the screening. I followed these steps as inspired by Cochrane.

   o Stage 1

1) A health librarian, student or someone else performed the search strategy.

2) All the titles and abstracts were exported into a bibliographic tool.

3) Duplicates were removed.
4) Titles and abstracts were independently screened (or not) for eligibility (first screening). (Some folders are created in Endnote, e.g "included", uncertain, excluded)

5) Discussion between the reviewers took place after the first screening (as you mentioned)

6) Searching for full texts.
Here, I don't understand why the senior librarian is involved at this stage of your project (to assist in retrieving and finding papers), and not earlier in the identification of relevant studies (in validating your search strategies and in performing them for each database).

Stage 2: Charting the data

♣ How will you extract the data? Two reviewers? Only one? Consider research on MMAT to justify choice of number of data extractors.

Stage 3:

♣ Do you have any references to support the thematic analysis in systematic scoping review?

♣ See an example in other type of systematic review: Thomas J, Harden A. Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. BMC Med Res Methodol 2008;8:45.
MMAT is a good tool to appraise the quality of mixed method studies. However, this tool is not applicable to assess the quality of the grey literature. You should use tools that are tailored to each type of study/paper. For example, see this reference: McArthur A, Klugarova J, Yan H, Florescu S. Innovations in the systematic review of text and opinion. Int J Evid Based Healthc. 2015;13(3):188-195. You need to explain how you will proceed with the quality assessment of grey literature.

c. Discussion

P. 12, lines 49-50

♣ I suggest removing the sentence or nuancing it "It is anticipated that the findings of this scoping review will contribute to better management of healthcare human resources."

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

An article of importance in its field that should be highlighted to relevant networks

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

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
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Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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Were you mentored through this peer review?

No