Reviewer’s report

Title: Absenteeism amongst health workers - developing a typology to support empiric work in low-income countries and characterizing reported causes.

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Reviewer: Mohsin Sidat

Reviewer’s report:

The article submitted is interesting and relatively well written. However, there are minor essential revisions required in my opinion and they are listed below:

Key words: suggest to remove the word “presenteeism”;

Abstract: - requires review of the punctuation; still related to abstract, would suggest substitution of word “absence” by absenteeism” in the last phrase “…to true contextual differences or inconsistent definitions of absence absenteeism.” Otherwise, abstract very well written, congratulations to authors;

Background: requires review of the segment “…while the burden of disease is high leading [1].” What is meant by high leading? Or the authors intended to simply say that burden of disease is high?

Methods: I would suggest to authors to remove “Search Strategy” subtitle as the is only one subtitle which could easily fit under methods section as a whole;

Results: this section is overall very well written; no further comments;

Discussion: requires review of the sentence “It is clear that there are no universally used definitions of absenteeism. Definitions used in research often depend on the context, what data is available and the factors postulated to be most problematic as causes.” I think that it is expectable that no universal definition exists and thus would suggest the authors to state the sentence differently such as “This study confirms that there are varied definitions of absenteeism which depends on the context and availability of data to assess causal factors.” (just simple suggestion, but its acceptability is at authors discretion); in the same paragraph, the use of the word “blurring” seems inappropriate to me and would suggest revisiting alternative to it; I would also suggest to revise the following segment “We thus propose that future empiric work should consider employing definitions linked to a more standard and comprehensive typology that promotes cross comparability. Our review suggests that a typology based on three key characteristics (Table 1) might be useful and consider absenteeism as: planned / unplanned, sanctioned / unsanctioned and voluntary / involuntary. Further empiric work might then help refine or revise such a framework.” I think that contextual and other factors would determine the definitions most appropriate for future studies and thus instead of suggesting employment of definitions linked to standard typologies promoting cross comparability I think the authors could have suggested for future studies should take into account the three key characteristics they systematized from the review
they did and this is perhaps achievable. Thus, I would suggest the authors to review this lastly identified/commented segment of the paragraph;

The segment of text, “Cadres higher in the hierarchy have been reported to have lower rates of absence [44, 53]. They have also been reported to have higher presenteeism than other cadres [44].” require caution as their absenteeism might have not be well documented (as mentioned by authors “or poorer collection of information [38, 69]”). Thus, I would suggest the authors to revisit this sentence and present it in more clear way without allowing ambiguous or inaccurate interpretations (perhaps revisiting the whole paragraph where the segment appears would allow better presentation of the facts and factors related to higher cadres’ absenteeism).

Conclusions: no comments;
References: no comments;

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.