Reviewer's report

Title: The match between motivation and performance management of health sector workers in Mali

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Reviewer: Gustavo Nigenda

Reviewer's report:

General

The complexity of the issue merits a broader explanation of the theoretical grounds on which the approach to the problem is based. In general, there are two ways to move forward. The first is trying to use a simple frame of concepts (motivations) based on managerial sciences in order to understand specific behaviour of individuals (as it is the case of the paper). The second is to move through a political science approach where individuals respond to motivations that are located beyond the boundaries of their labour environment. This is a political type of approach where issues such as interests and power play a major role in the explanation of phenomenon.

The first type of approach has the advantage that it can identify specific behaviours that can be related to a variety of managerial options to be implemented in order to change or encourage them. This is appealing because information can be translated very easily into policy recommendations. Its main shortcoming is that it can oversimplify the phenomenon and produce a recommendations that in practice will not be helpful.

The second type of approach is a more elaborated one but it can go in depth to find the reasons behind motivations (or lack of) that can be directly linked to the job situation or to a broader context. In this type of research, conflict normally appears as a major issue to be considered. Recommendations may not be easy to identify and less to implement because they are not normally identified as concrete conducts but more to chains of events that surpass the capacity of managers to keep control on them.

One can choose one of the other but the important thing in a paper is to clearly explain why authors decide to go for one and not for the other because the implications of the study will be different.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The methodological approach of the paper is appropriate as said before but it needs to be accurately explained in terms of who participated in in-depth interviews and group discussions. According to the third paragraph in page 3, managers are included, but they do not appear on the list mentioned on page 4.

This detail is important as triangulation of sources is key to interpret highly subjective information as the one derived from qualitative approaches. For example when authors talk about key aspects related to motivation / de-motivation it is important to know whether managers think the same or they have a different view.

Regarding the quantification of motivating / de-motivating aspects, how do we know that these averages do not reflect a socially shared subjective view? Again, triangulating information can
provide a certain sense of validity to the information but we need to know if information was obtained from other “social actors” such as managers.

The paper provides data on private providers but there is no mention on the text about them. They could also be an important source of contrasting.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

In the present paper the conceptual ground is taken from Herzberg who defines two different areas of motivation. It would be good if in the discussion authors can go back to Herzberg propositions in order to test how close or how far are their results from those elements proposed by Herzberg.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**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.