

Review of: "How Competent are Health Professionals in Delivering Nutrition Education? A Cross-Sectional Study in Ebonyi State, Nigeria"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

TITLE: How Competent are Health Professionals in Delivering Nutrition Education? A Cross-Sectional Study in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Authors examined the knowledge, perception, and practice of nutrition education among health workers, mainly in two health facilities (a tertiary facility and a secondary facility) in a state in Nigeria. The relevance of the study to medical practice is not in doubt. The operational term (competency) was well defined and makes the title succinct. The introduction, methodology, and results sections were generally well-written and substantially clear.

However, I have a few concerns authors may need to check out and address.

INTRODUCTION

Comment/Query: Would authors state the gaps in the existing literature that stimulated their interest in this study?

- *Objectives and research questions*
 - Comment/Query: Would authors list the specific objectives for the study?
 - Comment/Query: Would authors raise a few critical research questions?

METHODOLOGY

- *Sample size calculation*
 - Comment/Query: Is there any explanation as to why other health workers (besides nurses) were not considered in this calculation? If previous data for other health workers could not be found, authors should state so.
- *Sampling*
 - Comment/Query: It would seem that authors intended to survey respondents spread across three tiers of health facilities: tertiary, secondary, and primary. This is fine! Yet authors randomly selected the tiers from pools that may have contained multiple tiers. One would then wonder what the probabilities are of selecting the only tertiary, a secondary, and a primary facility from the selected pools of LGAs. Authors may want to clarify the selection process

or give more details.

- *Questionnaire*
 - Comment/Query: Would authors state in clear terms how the instrument was administered to the participants? Was it online- or paper-based, and was it self-administered? If it was paper-based, what was the total number distributed? And how many non-responders were there?
- *Scoring system*
 - Authors' note: For each variable, a correct response was given a score of one.....
 - Comment/Query: Authors may want to reference this scoring method.

RESULTS

- Comment/Query: The data was skewed toward respondents from AEFUTHA; 69% work in the single tier that accounted for <0.01% of facilities in the state. Was there a bias for the single tertiary facility in the state?
- *Table 1*
 - Comment/Query: Would authors clarify what they mean by post-graduate level and Diploma? Diploma can also be a postgraduate certification!
- *Table 5*
 - Comment/Query: Would authors provide a little more detail here?

DISCUSSION

- Comment/Query: The first paragraph is another background to the study. Would authors place this appropriately?
- Comment/Query: Would authors specify the cadre of staff surveyed in the Tanzanian study?
- Comment/Query: When comparing their findings with previous studies, authors should be clearer with what study they refer to.
- Authors' note: Although some respondents practice nutrition education, the majority of them do not use the Nigerian food-based dietary guidelines for nutritional education of patients.
 - Comment/Query: The relevance of this statement is doubtful.
- Authors' note: physiotherapists were 17 times more likely to demonstrate competency in nutrition education compared to dietitians.
 - Comment/Query: Would authors discuss the possible reason(s) for this paradox?
- Authors' note: The current finding in our study supports an improvement in their competencies in nutrition education with further training.

- Comment/Query: There was no intervention in this study! Authors may want to clarify this statement.
- *Limitations of the Study*
 - Comment/Query: Would authors state the strength(s) of their study?

ABSTRACT

Comment/Query: The conclusion section appears too wordy.

OTHER CONCERNS:

Methodology

- Rather than “federal, general, and PHCs”, authors may want to categorize health facilities into tertiary, secondary, and primary.
- Some numbers don’t seem to add up: 370 public health facilities do not equate to 1 federal hospital + 40 general hospitals + 144 PHCs. Authors may want to clarify.
- Would authors confirm the existence of “Ebonyi North LGA”?
- What tier of health facility does Mater Misericordiae Hospital belong to?
- In the *Sample size* subsection, the statement of attrition is better mentioned last.
-three senatorial *districts*, rather thanthree senatorial *zones*.
- In the *Data Management* subsection, rather than explaining the use of certain statistics, authors should relate the use to their own study?

Results

- Authors should avoid duplicating figures (in the tables) in the result prose.
- Authors’ note: Although a minor proportion of health professionals, 25.3%, had a positive assessment of their skills in nutrition education, a higher proportion, 74.7%, lacked nutrition education skills.
 - Comment/Query: The thought here is not clear enough.

GOOD LUCK!