Dear Editor and respected authors,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the manuscript entitled “The prevalence of lower back pain and its association with ergonomic risk levels associated with manual handling of patients among nurses in public tertiary hospitals in Botswana.”

Here are my comments and areas of improvement:

Lines 17-19: The magnitude of ergonomic risks associated with these healthcare activities have not been adequately investigated.

I think the topic is overwhelmingly investigated worldwide, but the authors should consider adding context to this statement. For example, they could add “in Botswana” to the end of this sentence.

Line 22: The MAPO is not clear. I suggest writing the full name of this scale.

Line 29: “these did not show …”, what does the word “these” refer to? Please clarify.

Line 29: “This could be partly …”, what does the word “this” refer to? Please clarify.

Since the abstract is a stand-alone piece, I suggest clarifying what does the MAPO index mean. It is not clear why you were so interested in this index.

Line 43: “with GBD 2020 suggesting …” what does GBD refer to?!

Please avoid using acronyms that have no clear meaning. You should explain any acronym at its first appearance in the text to avoid confusion.

Line 56: “has been reported in Asian, England, India, and European nurses.” This sentence is grammatical incorrect and requires a reference at the end.

Line 103: Sampling and sample size estimation, this section requires a revision. The sampling approach is not clear. The sample size calculation needs to be detailed. Which software was used? What are the other parameters?

Line 115: write the full name of the NMQ.

Line 178: “only 256 nurses successfully completed the questionnaire”

Based on your sample size calculations, you did not achieve the minimum required sample size 367 cited in line 113.

Line 179-180: “When participants were asked if they had LBP, 76.6% reported that they had LBP”

This statement is vague. What was the exact question to draw this conclusion? Did you ask participants if they were experiencing LBP at the time of questionnaire completion? Over the last week? The last month? The last year?! Please clarify.

Line 180: “Majority of the study participants were females (70.7%)”

I am just curios since the majority of the studied sample were females, how did you control for conditions such as pregnancy, menstrual cycle, that are known to trigger LBP?

Line 230 Discission

Overall, the discussion is well-written although short. However, I do notice that several numbers have been cited in the discussion. Usually, the discussion section should be more of a “discussion” than a “results”. Make sure that you only cite numbers that are highly relevant to the discussion.

Another major limitation of the discussion is the lack of connection between LBP among nurses with other healthcare professions. For example, physiotherapists do similar tasks to nurses and I think comparing your results with the previous study included physiotherapists would add a context and value to your paper.

I suggest adding the following references to your discussion and write a small paragraph on the comparison between LBP reported in your study and other healthcare professionals:

1) Khairy WA, Bekhet AH, Sayed B, Elmetwally SE, Elsayed AM, Jahan AM. Prevalence, Profile, and Response to Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders among Egyptian Physiotherapists. Open Access Maced J Med Sci. 2019 May 17;7(10):1692-1699.

2) Mierzejewski M, Kumar S. Prevalence of low back pain among physical therapists in Edmonton, Canada. Disabil Rehabil. 1997 Aug;19(8):309-17.

All the best,