Author's response to reviews

Title: Psychological Quality of Life and its association with Academic Employability Skills among newly-registered Students from three European Faculties

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Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: Submission of revised manuscript  MS: 1835779403463112

Dear Editor,

We would like to submit for review a revised version of the above manuscript. Our responses to the reviewers are attached.

Psychological Quality of Life and its association in Academic Employability Skills among newly-registered students from three European Faculties
Michèle Baumann PhD, Ion Ionescu PhD, Nearkasen Chau PhD,

This manuscript has been seen and approved by all authors who have been personally and actively involved in substantive work leading to the article and hold themselves jointly and individually responsible for its content. The manuscript is not simultaneously under consideration for publication in another journal and the material has not been published elsewhere. All relevant ethical safeguards have been met in relation to subjects’ protection. We have no conflict of interest to declare.

Looking forward to hearing from the Editorial Board,
On behalf of the authors,
Sincerely yours,

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Luxembourg, March 28, 2011

BMC Psychiatry
Angelina Ilievska MSc
on behalf of Prof Gerhard Andersson
Responses to Reviewers 1 & 2

Title: Psychological Quality of Life and its association with academic employability skills among newly-registered students from three European faculties

Version: 1 Date: 8 March 2011
Reviewer: Björn Paxling

Reviewer 1
I have previously reviewed the manuscript then titled: "Psychological Quality of Life among newly-registered students from three European faculties: out of balance with academic employability skills?", and have now been asked to review a revision of said manuscript, now titled” Psychological Quality of Life and its association with academic employability skills among newly-registered students from three European faculties”. I have thoroughly read the revised manuscript, as well as the authors replies to my and the other peer reviewers comments.

My general impression is that the authors have invested a significant amount of time and work into rewriting the MS, both the introduction and the discussion have been extensively rewritten which has really improved the quality of the MS! I find that the authors have taken time to read all my and the other reviewers comments with great care and have implemented suggestions as well as come up with own solutions to problematic parts of the previous paper, and in my impression the resulting MS is drastically better than the previous one! I have a couple of suggestions for revisions of the revised manuscript that I hope might help improve it further. None of my comments are major compulsory revisions, and I do recommend that the paper will be published after a minor revision.

Thank you very much for your encouragement and valuable suggestions.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. In the Abstract, results section, I believe a word or two is missing at the end of this sentence: ”Students in F2 (Belgium) had the worst QoL-psychological.”

We have reorganised the first sentence: QoL-psychological, QoL-social relationships and QoL-environment scores were highest in F1 (Luxembourg), and the QoL-psychological score in F2 (Belgium) was the lowest.

2. Methodology/Ethics, page 4, forth row: and extra [ is inserted right before the quote, please delete this.

Yes we deleted it.

3. Methodology/Data collection/c), page 5 row 1-2: The importance of going to university was assessed on a four-point scale from: ”very important” to” an important step” according to the text, which puzzles me. Is ”not important step” supposed to be the least important choice of answer for this question? When I look at Table 1, results from the question about: ”Importance of going to university” is divided into three categories: Very important, Important and Not important, which adds to my confusion.

These categories are now mentioned in the text and tables 1 & 3: very important”; “important”; “of little importance” and “not important”. “of little importance is grouped with “not important” in the Tables.
4. Results/page 6, second paragraph: The numbers reported in this paragraph are also reported in Table 2, but the numbers differ between the text and the table. I suppose the reason for this is that the results were recalculated to be adjusted for sex and age in order to find a significance (which is perfectly alright), but the numbers in the text ought to be the same as in the table, or at least it should be clearly stated the reason for this not being the case.

We have corrected the mistakes in the text.

5. Discussion/Page 8, third paragraph: I believe there are several cases of confusion about the correct reference in this paragraph. In the reference list, ref [47] concerns the WHOQOL-BREF and the relationship between electronic and paper/pencil-version, but in the text reference [46] is instead used to prove this point. Please recheck that the references are correct.

We corrected this mistake.

6. Table 1: I am unsure if the p-value column adds anything to this table on socio-demographics, could it perhaps be omitted?

Your comment is pertinent, but when characteristics of F1, F2, and F3 are given, it is useful to know whether the differences were significant or not.

7. Table 3: In the upper section of this table, the relationships between QoL-psychological and socio-demographic characteristics are presented by Mean and SE. I don’t quite understand how these Means show the relationship (as is clearly shown in the lower part of the Table with correlation coefficients instead). What does Means stand for in this context, and why wasn’t correlation coefficients used throughout the entire table?

In fact the correlation coefficient can be used between two quantitative variables. The factors in the upper section of the Table are qualitative; for example for sex, we have to compare the mean values. A foot-note has been added to the Table.

Discretionary Revisions

8. Background, page 3, first paragraph, second sentence: Please elaborate what the abbreviation OECD is short for.

We indicate the full name of this abbreviation.

9. Background, page 3, second paragraph, first sentence: This sentence sounds grammatically strange both in the beginning and at the end, I have italicized the parts I think needs reformulation: ”People at university are exposed [...] adulthood and issues to do with being a student.”

Yes, the sentence has been rewritten.

10. Methodology/Data collected/b), page 5, 6th row: The German and Romanian versions of AES was translated and back-translated by experts, but there needs a short elaboration regarding which kinds of experts these were (language-experts, experts in employability, or something else?)

We have added to this passage: ...a team comprising a language-expert specialising in public health and a professor specialising in employability in social work.

11. Discussion/page 7, second paragraph, last sentence: It is here stated that results may be influenced by «difficult global economic circumstances, particularly for the Romanians”, and I’d like to see one or several references here. When this paper is read many years in the future, it may not be so clear that the world was under difficult economic circumstances, and readers that want to read more about this should have a reference to follow. This is particularly important when a
specific country is pointed out as being more affected than others, as is the case with Romania in this sentence. We have added this reference: [27] European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. How are you? Quality of Live in Europe. Focus issue June 8, 2010. [www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/focusform.htm]

12. Discussion/Page 7, third paragraph, third sentence to last: "It was observed that social sciences graduates who had worked for at least two years attained higher levels." Please elaborate briefly which kind of higher levels the social sciences graduates attained (risk of misinterpretation if not more clearly defined). We corrected: It was observed that social sciences graduates who had worked for at least two years attained higher AES.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Reviewer 2
Title: Psychological Quality of Life and its association with academic employability skills among newly-registered students from three European faculties
Version: 1 Date: 18 March 2011
Reviewer: Tomas Jungert

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Most limitations of the work are clearly stated, but when the authors state that the results cannot be generalized, this is a limitation that it is important that this be discussed more.
We have reformulated the first sentence of the limitations paragraph: First, the survey was conducted among newly-registered volunteers and examined only one social sciences faculty per country; therefore, the results could not be generalized.

Minor Essential Revisions
2. p. 3, last line of second paragraph, what is “the most promising” that should be implemented? Something is missing there.
The sentence is modified and becomes: «Ultimately, interventions should be designed and evaluated, and then the most promising interventions should be implemented on a large scale."

3. P. 5, paragraph 4, the scale of "other factors" is quite strange. I wonder if it should really be a four-point scale from “very important” to “an important step”. We have completed this sentence and modified the tables 1 and 3: - The importance of going to university was assessed on a four-point scale from “very important”, to “important”, “of little importance” and “not important”.

4. In the results, the fourth paragraph on page 6, the authors should delete the report of the non-significant result: “The faculty-AES interaction was near significant…..”
Yes we have deleted this sentence: The faculty-AES interaction was near significance (p=0.061), which means that there was a trend in the relation between AES and QoL-psychological according to the faculty.

**Discretionary Revisions**

5. In abstracts, we don’t normally use abbreviations. Furthermore, it should be stated what Whoqol stands for in the main document – as it is now, this explanation is only given in the abstract.
We have added this information in the abstract: World Health Organisation Quality of Life short-form.

6. The second paragraph of the Discussion could be removed since it is only a repetition of the results.
This paragraph is to situate the samples. Your pertinent comment prompted us to rewrite the paragraph in the discussion section. It becomes:
"First, it should be noted that the students’ age differed between the three faculties (youngest in Belgium and oldest in Luxembourg), and that students entered university one year younger in Belgium than in Luxembourg and Romania. The over-representation of women in social sciences is well known [35, 44]. Luxembourg has established a policy of Life Long Learning for the whole population, in particular since the opening of the university in 2003."

7. Finally, the writing is acceptable, but the command of language could be improved and it may be useful to consider getting help from someone who could review the English. A few examples are on p. 7, paragraph 3, it should say oriented, not orientated and on p. 7, last paragraph, it should say poorly and not poor.
The manuscript was checked by a professional translator who has English as native language.

8. I think that the authors have improved their manuscript a lot. It is an interesting and relevant research area that they explore. In general, the question posed by the authors is well defined, the methods appropriate and the data seems to be sound. Now, more conclusions are drawn from the results of the current study, which I also think is an improvement.
Thank you for your encouragement.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field
**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published
Yes, this is done.
**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.