Author’s response to reviews

Title: Gender differences in a resource-demand model in the general population

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We would like to express our gratitude to the reviewer and editor for the careful review of our manuscript and for providing us with comments and suggestions. In the following responses we address each point made by the reviewer with an indication of where it has led to a modification in the manuscript.

Reviewer: Anthony Montgomery

Comments to the authors:

R1/1: Overall, the authors claim to be examining a resource-demand model. However, they never make reference to the job demand resources (J-DR) model of Demerouti et al. They either need to reference and integrate the model, or at least explain how their approach differs from the model. It will be a little confusing for readers, who will (naturally) think that are examining the well known J-DR model.

Response: We thank the reviewer for these suggestions. We explained in greater detail on page 6: “In a previous study on the associations of resources, chronic activated distress, and exhaustion in general, Kocalevent et al. (2013) could demonstrate the influence of chronic stress on exhaustion diminishes when the direct influence of resources on exhaustion is taken into account [2]. The analyses focused on structural equation modelling and hypotheses were derived from a resource-demand of health [26]. This resource-demand model records chronic stress as subjective perceived stress. Stress factors and subjective perceived stress should be unspecific and at the same time interpretable to a variety of real-life situations (e.g., “you feel under pressure from deadlines”), and (c) the perceived stress should be recorded independently of the stage in the coping process at which the subject might currently be, other than resources-demands models focusing only on employees [27].”

R1/2: The introduction does not make a strong case for gender differences in chronic stress. Indeed, the evidence presented seems to suggest the opposite, that we don’t have considerable evidence of gender effects. Moreover, they didn’t
find any significant differences themselves

Response: The introduction should give an overview of the existing empirical evidence for gender differences in stress. The reported results did not clarify about possible gender differences of stress in a resources-demands-model about gender-related aspects of self-efficacy, optimism, chronic stress, and exhaustion. That was the aim of the underlying study.

R1/3 On page 6, the authors state; “There is a need to clarify the pathways of gender and stress.” It would helpful if the introduction did a better job in developing hypotheses concerning potential gender differences. Otherwise, the research feels like a bit of fishing trip (i.e., we will look for gender differences, and explain them if we find any).

Response: We thank the reviewer for this comment. We changed the sentences accordingly (page 6): “(…) However, the mechanisms underlying gender-related stress processes in a resources-demands model remain to be explicated.”

R1/4: The authors should present statistics on response rates by gender. A potential confounder in their research is that women with high levels of stress are more likely to reply to such a survey.

Response: We agree and considered the suggestions of the reviewer in order to clarify the results (page 10): “The gender ratio is balanced (female, n=1346, 52.7%; male, n=1206, 47.2%)”.

R1/5: In terms of their method, it was a household interview. Where any of the men and women in their sample living in the same house?

Response: The respondents were not living in the same house.

R1/6: On page 13, the authors state; “Moreover, most stress studies have not incorporated resource change as central mechanism in their overall models.” It’s not clear what the authors mean by resource change, but again the work on the J-DR model has incorporated resources as a central variable in explaining burnout.

Response: We thank the reviewer for this suggestion and changed in the text where appropriate (on page 13): “Moreover, most stress studies have not incorporated the influence of resources on health outcomes. (…) Another resources-demands model focusing on employees also derived evidence for resources within stress processing on health outcomes [27].

R1/7: On page 14, the authors state; “Further results from our sample suggest that chronic work stress seems to rise and fall over the lifetime in a consistent way for both genders.” The authors should be careful here, as this sentence makes it sound as though their research was longitudinal.
Response: We would like to apologize for this vagueness. We changed the sentence into (page 14): “Further results from our cross-sectional sample suggest that chronic work stress seems to rise and fall over the lifetime in a consistent way for both genders.”.

R1/8: The manuscript doesn’t include a limitations section, which is a little odd.

Response: We agree with the reviewer and added on page 15: “A potential limitation of this general population study is that it is a cross-sectional study which would does not allow for interpretations of causality or possible mediator effects.”