Author's response to reviews

Title: Perceptions on the Importance of Gerontological Education by Teachers and Students of Undergraduate Health Sciences: An Exploratory Study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Chick:

I send you the corrected manuscript entitled “Perceptions on the Importance of Gerontological Education by Teachers and Students of Undergraduate Health Sciences: An Exploratory Study” and reply point-by point to comments of the reviewers, for review and possible publication in BMC-Medical Education.

Sincerely

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Perceptions on the Importance of Gerontological Education by Teachers and Students of Undergraduate Health Sciences: An Exploratory Study

Authors: Victor Manuel Mendoza-Nunez, Maria de la Luz Martinez-Maldonado and Elsa Correa-Munoz

REVIEWER 1 (Paul Stolee)

1. Comment:

“My major concerns with this paper are the limited information presented on their methods, and the limited analysis of the data they collected:”

1. Reply:

It was included the information related to the methods and analysis.

2. Comment:

“Little data are presented on the sample (age, gender, background, etc.) – these would be relevant covariates to consider in the analysis, and the authors point to the need for future research on the influence of these factors. It seems that this study would have been a readily available opportunity to do that kind of exploration, but the authors either did not collect the relevant data (suggesting a poorly developed conceptual framework) or did not analyze it. The authors mention that they asked about previous education in geriatrics and gerontology – this may have been relevant in analyzing the results, but does not seem to have been considered.”

2. Reply:

This information was included.

3. Comment:

“How was the questionnaire administered? Was it pre-tested? What information is available on its reliability and validity? When was it administered? How were these data analyzed?”

3. Reply:

This information was included
4. Comment:
“Conducting an “in-depth interview” with all participants suggests a huge amount of qualitative data were collected. Very little of it is presented here, and one wonders what was done with it all. Was an interview guide used? Structured, semi-structured, open? How long were the interviews? Were the interviews taped and transcribed? What approach was used in their analysis? None of this information is presented, but is necessary to understand and interpret the findings.”

4. Reply:
This information was included.

5. Comment:
“Many of the terms used are not defined – for example, what are “theoretical”, “methodological”, and “motivational” problems associated with teaching gerontology? I do not know what the authors mean by these terms, and this makes me wonder if the questionnaire respondents understood what they were being asked.”

5. Reply:
The terms were defined.

6. Comment.
“The term “transversal study” is a new one on me – I have taken it to mean a study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods allowing linkages between the two sets of data (i.e., qualitative and quantitative responses for the same subjects). Is that correct? In any case, the authors need to make clear how their data were analyzed to take advantage of both types of data – in this draft, the links between the two are not clear.”

6. Reply:
It was included the information requested. Also the term “transversal study” was corrected.

7. Comment:
“The authors may wish to consider two recent articles by Diachun et al. published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society (March and April, 2006) that address similar issues. The first of these papers suggests a role for gender in medical student interest in geriatrics (females more interested), the second
questions the benefits of experiential approaches to education (relevant to the reported desire of students for more direct experiences with older persons).”

7. Reply:

The articles were considered in the manuscript.

8. Comment:

The relevance of Blackburn’s “seven levels of change” is not made clear in the discussion, and seems out of place.

8. Reply:

This information was eliminated.

REVIEWER 2 (Laura Diachun)

1. Comment:

“Although the authors have had the manuscript translated into English, a significant number of spelling and grammatical errors still exist. I also question whether at times, the translation has altered the meaning/interpretation of the results. See #2”

1. Reply:

The manuscript was corrected.

2. Comment:

“The conclusions don't seem to relate to teh study question posed. "The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perception of students and teachers toward current education programs in gerontology" yet the conclusion states "teachers and undergraduate students of sciences of the health (in English: Health Sciences)have a negative perception of ageing linked to potential ageism". This does not directly flow from the results nor does it address the study question. While the two may be linked, this linkage is indirect ie if one has a negative view of ageing they may feel curriculum on aging is not important...but based on the results presented, I am not sure how the authors have come to the conclusion that students and teachers have a negative perception of ageing.”

2. Reply:

The conclusions were corrected.
3. Comment:

“Although the question posed by the study has merit, the content of the paper does not suggest how the authors attempted to answer this question. The study was to evaluate “perceptions of current educational programs” yet participants were asked about their own personal education, the main problems with teaching in this area and their perspective on future educational priorities.”

3. Reply:

This was considered in the manuscript.

4. Comment:

“The methods section is weak and lacks detail. It would be helpful to have more details about the participants: gender, age, discipline, extent of training, level of study. The abstract indicates that participants also had an "introductory workshop". This is not mentioned or explained in the text of the manuscript. More detail regarding the content and validity of the survey tools as well as content and structure of the interview is needed.”

4. Reply:

The methods section was corrected. Also it was eliminated the information about workshop, because it is irrelevant for the study.

5. Comment:

“The authors find that students place more value on gerontological education and yet the paper seems to emphasize that the main issue is student attitude and lack of student knowledge. Is it not the reverse? Are the instructors the real barrier to optimizing education? This warrants emphasis in the discussion section.”

5. Reply:

This was considered in the discussion.

6. Comment:

“The first quote in the results section is somewhat contradictory and doesn't fully support the authors' assertion.”

6. Reply:

This was corrected.
7. Comment:

“Method of statistical analysis is not adequately described in the text.”

7. Reply:

This information was included.

8. Comment:

“Teacher's priorities in the teaching of gerontology: It is not clear if the results in this section were predetermined or in fact, determined as a consequence of qualitative data analysis (which seems to be what the authors suggest). Quotes like "some teachers don't have enough knowledge on this topic" suggest that the categories of teaching priorities were pre-determined rather than identified by thematic analysis of participant responses. The quotes put forward warrant further scrutiny to ensure that they are in fact in the correct category.”

8. Reply:

This was described in the methods section.

9. Comment:

“Table 1 lacks detail and warrants clarification in the text. What is a theoretical or methodological problem associated with current teaching practices? Please give examples. Are the participants rating these categories with respect to themselves? or the other participants (teachers rating students, students rating teachers)?”

9. Reply:

This was considered in the manuscript.

10. Comment:

“The major focus of the discussion (Blackburn 2005) seems a bit erroneous to the paper or at minimum is not tied in tightly enough.”

10. Reply:

This information was eliminated.

11. Comment:

Review the conclusions for relevance.

11. Reply:

The conclusions were corrected.
12. Comment:

“The meaning of the term methodological knowledge is not clear to me (under problems that affect teaching). Please define and give an example.”

12. Reply:

The terms were defined in the manuscript.

13. Comment:

“Sciences of the Health of typically know as Health Sciences.”

13. Reply:

This was corrected.

14. Comment:

“I believe that Transversal study may be more commonly known as a cross sectional study.”

14. Reply:

This was corrected.

REVIEWER 3 (Hollis Day)

1. Comment:

“I would like to see a Table 1 that comments on the demographics of the participants in the project. It would be helpful if you mentioned if this data had been gathered in the course of the survey as information of this type can be useful to those who would like to see if the study applies to their own population.”

1. Reply:

This information was included in the manuscript.

2. Comment:

“There is not enough detail about the study to replicate it. You don't indicate how the survey was done: mail, email, group meeting. What was the response rate? For the interview: who did the interviewing? Were the responses audiotaped or videotaped? Who coded the responses and how was consensus reached when there was disagreement?”
2. Reply:

This information was described in the manuscript.

3. Comment:

“The area of “theoretical concepts” is still unclear after several reviews. You talk about theoretical concerns as being a major area of concern but in neither the table nor the body of the paper is it clear what this term means. In general, for Table 1, each of the terms needs to be better defined in the body of the paper so that anyone who reads the paper will be clear about the authors' intents for these categories.”

3. Reply:

The terms were defined.

4. Comment:

“Translating a paper into another language is really challenging work. However, the lower quality of the translation of this paper is very distracting to the reader and takes away from the content. Sentences are long and complicated and there are so many grammar errors that it is very distracting. I would have another translator or fluent English-speaker look at this more carefully.”

4. Reply:

The manuscript was corrected.

5. Comment:

“By the term transversal, do you mean cross-sectional study?”

5. Reply:

This was corrected.

6. Comment:

“I would consider using more quotes, particularly from students. This makes your narrative much richer, more descriptive and can illustrate your points more effectively. In Table 4 it would be helpful to identify who said the quotes (teacher or student) and at what level for example the student is.”

6. Reply:

The table 4 was corrected.