Reviewer’s report

Title: Experienced Stressors and Coping strategies among Nursing Students

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Reviewer: Leana Uys

Reviewer’s report:

General
1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The purpose of the study is clear, but the study would benefit if the authors clearly formulate the research questions, e.g.:
   • What is the different between students of different years with regard to stressors and coping mechanisms?
   • What are the greatest stressors in different years?
   • What are the coping mechanisms used by students I indifferent years?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
The method of obtaining the “informed consent” from students is not clear. It is not clear to what extent students had a choice not to complete the questionnaires, by whom it was presented to them, and how the completed forms were returned. All these aspects is important in terms of the extent of freedom students had to refrain from being part of the study.
Along a similar vein, we are not told what the populations of nursing students were, in order to evaluate how representative the 300+ sample was.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
The results are not described well. Firstly, the tables are duplicated, not correctly titled (table titles are always at the top of the table, not the bottom) and no key is given to the * and colours used in the tables. Secondly, there is no reference to the tables in the narrative and much of the narrative, especially with regard to the coping mechanisms, are just a repeat of what is in the tables. Thirdly, it is not clear what the data analysis consisted of: what was compared with what and why was this done? Specifying the research questions and answering these explicitly in the results section will help the reader understand what the researchers did.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
See above

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion does not add much to the article. It consists mostly of a repeat of the results, referring to a few literature sources in comparison, but without drawing any conclusions based on the comparison. Much more can be done here to identify the implications of the results for educators, for further research and for students. It needs to be pointed out that the researchers did not use any theoretical framework for coping, although they seem to favour certain coping mechanisms above others (in the conclusion). Perhaps if they have a conceptual framework, it would be easier to interpret the results.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Careful editing is essential. A few examples:
Some sentences are not very clear, e.g. p4 “responsible for their own needs for the first time” des not sound right.
The punctuation around the reference brackets is often incorrect, especially on page 4 e.g. a full-stop before the bracket and after, instead of just after.
The capitals are not always correctly used, e.g. (shields) (page 4); “than other Students” (page 5); Iran Medical sciences University (page 7).
I think the references are not in the correct format. I could not find the reference of Srivastava (1991) in the reference list. If it is the same as Beck and Srivastava, the reference in the article should be corrected. In any case, the Beck and Srivastava reference is incomplete.
Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Clarifying research questions.
Writing results more clearly, describing the exact nature of statistical analysis (what was compared with what and why?).
Improve discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Thorough editing.
Clarifying tables.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Refer to a theoretical framework for coping.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.