Author’s response to reviews

Title: Senior orienteering athletes as a model of healthy aging: a mixed-method approach

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Qiushi Feng,

We hereby submit a revised version of our manuscript "Senior orienteering athletes as a model of healthy aging: a mixed-methods approach" after having carefully considered the editors’ comments and suggestions.

Please see point-by-point response below. In the uploaded file of the manuscript changes and revisions are marked in yellow.

We hope that you now will find our manuscript suitable for publication in BMC Geriatrics, and are looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

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Point-by-point response to reviewers:

Editorial Comments:

1) In conclusion, you rightly emphasize that senior orienteering athletes are homogenous. This is an important point to justify a potential model for healthy aging. However, in the empirical part, you may want to add one or two sentences in the results to clearly support such a conclusion. The similarity of the two samples of OR and LO as mentioned is no good evidence here, and the health distribution of OR should be more appropriate to be used.

Reply: We have now adjusted this section and removed the part were we state that the populations of orienteering athletes are homogenous due to the observation of no statistical differences between the OR and LO groups. Instead we have added the following sentence, pg. 14 (line 281-284), section is marked in yellow.

The populations of senior orienteering athletes (OR and LO) were identified as homogeneous samples according to their similarities in health distribution (table 2). As outlined in the table none of the orienteers were smokers and the distribution of medications were found to be similar between the groups.
2) I would like to suggest moving the content related to Table 4 and 5 from the result session to the discussion session, and moving Table 4 and 5 to the appendix. Otherwise, the major point of the paper, health advantage of the senior orienteering athletes, is blurred.

Reply: We thank the editor for pointing this out, we have now moved the content related to table 4 and 5 to the discussion and the tables can now be found in the Appendix, as table 6 and 7 respectively. The added sections can be found on pg. 27 (line 628-630) and pg. 29 (line 680). As the discussion already contained a thorough description of the results related to table 5 (study participants scoring high on HADS), this section was deleted from the paper.

3) I also hope you could improve Table 2. In the first row, the labels Senior orienteering athletes and Orienteering athletes are very confusing and you need to change them. I would further suggest adding results of statistics tests for comparing sample characteristics, between LO and OR, and between OR and free-living elders. You may also want to discuss a bit about the later comparison in text.

Reply: We have now changed the labels of the table and the headings are now equal to those used in the text; O-Ringen orienteering athletes (OR) and Local orienteering athletes (LO). We have also included the results for the Mann-Whitney U-test, which was the statistical test used to compare the OR and LO populations, see table 2.

Minor editorial comments:

1) You need to mention about the position of tables in the text.

Reply: We have now moved former table 4 and 5 (now table 6 and 7) to the Appendix, pg. 36 (starting line: 836), to indicate where they belong in the paper. All other tables are numbered and cited in sequence in the end of the manuscript using Arabic numerals according to the author guidelines for BMC Geriatrics.

2) The paper by Algilani in 2014 needs to be specifically mentioned at the beginning of your qualitative results as it provides the guideline of coding.

Reply: In the beginning of the qualitative results section, we have now added that the concept of optimal functionality were developed by Algilani et al. The added words can be found on pg. 17, line: 379.

3) For Table 6 and 7, you need to use the main category names consistent to the text content, such as self-related factors, body-related factors, and external factors.

Reply: We thank the editor for pointing this out. This has now been changed; self-related
factors, body-related factors and external factors are now consistently used throughout the manuscript.

4) At line 298, I guess it should be ?quantitative?.

Reply: We thank the editor for observing this mistake, this has been changed and the sentence can now be found on pg. 27 (line: 628).

5) At line 349, you may add high before HADS score.

Reply: We thank the editor for pointing this out. The content related to former table 5 has now been moved, as previously requested to the discussion. When moving the content, we observed that the information regarding the nine orienteering athletes scoring high on HADS were already present in the discussion and therefore this sentence was deleted from the paper. However, it is clearly stated in the discussion pg. 29 (line: 681), that these nine participants scored high on HADS.

6) At line 380, the comma between affected and health should be removed.

Reply: We have now removed the comma. We thank the editor for reading the manuscript so carefully.

7) I hope you proofread the paper for another round to avoid any possible editorial errors.

Reply: All co-authors have carefully read through the manuscript once again. We have also asked our collaborator, who is native English speaking, to copyedit the paper once more.