Reviewer’s report

Title: Student motivation to learn: Is self-belief the key to transition and first year performance in an undergraduate health professions program?

Version: 0 Date: 11 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Rashmi Kusurkar

Reviewer's report:

Overall comments:
Overall this is an interesting paper. I was a bit surprised with the choice of using the motivation-engagement wheel, especially when there are several theories of motivation which could have been used for the set-up of the study. The sample size is too small for the conclusion drawn from the study. The introduction, research questions and discussion need to be re-written. Please see my specific comments below. A statement about ethical approval for the study is missing.
I wish the authors luck with the paper.

Abstract:
Representative of the work conducted.

Introduction:
The introduction does not include the theoretical framework of the MES-UC. This is an absolute necessity for understanding the rest of the paper. The structure of the introduction is strange. In the middle of the introduction there is a section called "Background", which is not really the background of the study. Aims and research questions don't have to be reported in a separate section. The introduction does not lead to the first research question. I think only the second research question should be included in this manuscript. The third research question is really looking at the recommendations that come out of this study. It is not a research question.

Methods
I did not find the exact period of data collection for the data included in this particular study. I found the sample size really low. ES and IS are not very well-chosen short forms. I suggest to write the whole variables in the entire manuscript.

Results
There is no theoretical background for some of the results found. Why should ES be correlated with disengagement? There is a high probability that this is a chance finding.

Discussion
The discussion needs complete re-writing. The authors have not considered all limitations of their study. This section needs to be more expansive. The framework used by the authors to study motivation and engagement is not a theory of motivation. It is a hybrid model which has been developed by Martin
AJ. The authors need to reflect on their choice of this model and the limitations of not choosing one of the well-known and well-formed motivation theories.

Conclusion
The conclusion is too strong for a study that includes only 55 students.

References
In order

Use of language
Acceptable.

Ethical Approval
Ethical approval has not been sought.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable
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