Author’s response to reviews

Title: Motives, Experiences and Psychological Strain in Medical Students Engaged in Refugee Care in a Reception Center - A Mixed-Methods Approach

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Reviewer 2,

Thank you very much for reviewing our manuscript. We found your comments and suggestions were very useful in further improving the manuscript.

Comments:

1) Point 3 - page 3, line 19-20 - Thank you for making the relevant changes to this section by adding a sentence to explain what you were referring to when using the word field. In the sentence you added it is not clear what "latter" is referring to, could you please clarify?
Thank you for this very important advice. We have replaced the word “latter” with “global health teaching”, to clarify the sentence (see page 3, line 20-21):

“The 2010 worldwide survey on global health education in medical undergraduate curricula emphasized the gradual development of global health teaching (Rowson et al., 2012).

2) Point 14 - page 26 (lines 13-17) - Thank you for clarifying this point. Could I suggest you reword the end of the sentence? May I suggest the following wording after "fearful attachment...." "compared to a sample of first year medical students in study conducted by Bugaj et al., (2016)."

Thank you for this important comment. We have followed your suggestion and have changed wording of the corresponding sentence (see page 27, lines 13-17):

“The participants showed significantly lower values for depression (PHQ-9) and anxiety (GAD-7), a significantly higher score for mental well-being (SF-12), a significantly lower rate of dismissing attachment style, but simultaneously a significantly higher rate of fearful attachment compared to a sample of first-year medical students in a study conducted by Bugaj et al. (Bugaj et al., 2016).

3) Point 15 - I am a little confused by your response to this point. I think you need to clarify the results in table 5 are being compared with the results of a previous study - Bugaj et al., 2016. Although this study is referenced under the table and on page 21, the relevance of comparing your data with the data from this study is not clearly stated anywhere in this manuscript until the result section. I would assume that Bugaj paper supports and provides context to your study? If so the relevance and importance of this study should be cited in the introduction to support the aims of your study. I would also expect you to make some reference in the method section that you are comparing your results with Bugaj study and note the relevant analysis you undertook to provide data for table 5. As the manuscript stands I feel there is no justification presented as to why this paper suddenly appears in the results and no justification has been presented why this has been done.

Could you please revise by including the relevance of the Bugaj study in your introduction section and how this paper supports the aims of your study. It would also be helpful to your readers in the method section to state how the results from Bugaj will be included in your analysis and what statistical test will be used.

Thank you for this very helpful comment. We agree that we need to elaborate on the relevance of the Bugaj study to justify why we compared our results with the results of the Bugaj study. Therefore, we have now included a new paragraph in the introduction section describing this study in more detail (see page 5, lines 13-24):
“In a previous study conducted in 2016, Bugaj et al. investigated psychological stress and possible protective factors in a sample of n= 293 first-year medical students. It was shown that students with a secure attachment style experienced significantly less stress than students with insecure attachment styles (Bugaj et al., 2016). In addition, a positive “Model of the Self”, as part of the dimensional analysis of adult attachment, was also identified as stress-protective in medical students (Bugaj et al., 2016). The above mentioned study by Bugaj et al. examined the general experience of stress in medical students. However, it can be assumed that additional context-specific stressors come in to effect during the voluntary assignment of medical students in a refugee reception center. In order to better understand the experiences, learning achievements and stressors of this specific working context, we conducted a prospective study using a mixed-methods approach.”

According to your suggestion, we further included a paragraph in the methods section explaining how we compared our results to the Bugaj study results (see page 15, lines 18-24):

“Since the above mentioned study by Bugaj et al. (2016) examined the general stress load of medical students, we used the results as a “baseline”-measurement. By comparing the psychometric results of the present study with the results of the study conducted by Bugaj et al., we aimed to estimate the extent of context-specific stressors in a reception center for refugees on the psychological burden of medical students. The group comparisons were carried out using Student's t-test for independent samples.”