Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 17 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Caroline Joyce

Reviewer's report:

I think this is a really worthwhile paper which is very timely and important. I congratulate the authors for undertaking such important research to ensure we understand the risk to psychological wellbeing of clinicians to enable them to give the best care to a vulnerable population.

Overall, I feel the manuscript is not well organised. My feedback on the paper is as follows:

Formatting

The page numbering skips from page 9 to page 40.

Introduction

The introduction had too much background information to set the 'scene' and not enough literature to support the aims of the study. The introduction does not very clearly present the theory supporting the aims of this study. I would like to see the imbalance between background information and the theory to support this study addressed.

On page 3, line 20 the word "field" is used, it is not clear what field you are referring, could this be clearer?

Methods section

In the study design starting from line 14 - 20 the studies aims are included. These should be included at the end of the introduction.

Under the heading 'The Refugee Reception Center Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg-Kirchheim' the content in this section could be summarised. There is a lot of information in this
section which is not need to how you conducted the study. For example, line 14 - 17 this does
not provide the reader with any relevant information about the study's methods.

Was the 9-item questionnaire developed for this study piloted at all?

For each of the standardised scales used in this paper the internal reliability or consistency is not
reported for any of the subscales. There is also no power calculations for the sample size.

Results

Sample description

Line 4 - total of 89 medical students, n=62. It would be good to know the reasons for non-
participation.

In table 2 it is not clear what is meant by 'current treatment' - had this treatment been ongoing or
since working in the service centre. I think this should be made clearer.

How do you know the psychological results were due to attachment. There is no pre/post data
and no questions were asked about mental health before working in the centre. Therefore I am
unsure how you can make this assumption. Would prior mental health issues have been captured
in the qualitative data?

Discussion

Your discussion makes some statements that I do not feel that you can back up with your results.

Your limitation does not address the fact that you asked no mental health questions before
entering the Refugee Centre. It is possible that some students may have a pre-existing mental
health issue that would have impacted your results. I think a limitation you also need to address
is the psychological assessments were only given at one time point. If you are examining the
impact on psychological health of working in a refugee centre these measures should have been
given before and after working in the centre.

On page 25, starting line 5 - I feel this sentence contradicts what you are stating in the previous
paragraph (p 24 lines 17-20). Also on page 25, line 12-16 - this sentence needs to be clarified,
what first year students are you comparing these results to, is this compared to the study you are
citing? How do you know they are significantly different? This is confusing how and if this was
done, as this does not appear in your result section.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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

Yes

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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