Reviewer's report

Title: Stressors and resources related to academic studies and improvements suggested by medical students: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 19 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Thomas Kötter

Reviewer's report:

I commend the authors for conducting a qualitative study exploring stressors and resources related to medical education from the students' point of view. The authors have managed to conduct eight focus groups with close to 70 participants and distilled the results into actionable points for both practice and research. I also appreciate that the authors discuss their results, as well as strengths and limitations of their work, thoroughly in the context of the existing literature.

A few points to consider to strengthen the manuscript:

1. I am not a native speaker myself, but I recognize that this manuscript needs a thorough language revision.

2. The keywords should be taken from the MeSH database.

3. In order to enhance the transparency of the methodology, I would recommend to provide the interview guideline, the category system, as well as the completed COREQ checklist to the readers.

4. Why didn't you collect and report sociodemographic data of all participants? This should be explained.

5. The authors state, that most identified stressors involved organizational structures. These may be suboptimal and this is in line with earlier results. But the significant imbalance between external factors named as stressors and suggestions for improvement by the participants and internal stressors / personal characteristics is considerable. Could this be in part socially-desirable answering and / or reduction of cognitive dissonance among the participants? This should be discussed by the authors.

6. There are numbers missing (page 15, lines 21 and 22).

7. Please check all references carefully regarding compliance to the journals' requirements.
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.

Unable to assess

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

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.