**Reviewer's report**

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

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 27 Feb 2019

**Reviewer:** Rebecca Erschens

**Reviewer's report:**

I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to review this exciting and well written qualitative study. I hope I can help the authors with my feedback. The study examines stressors, resources and improvements related to the education of medical students using a qualitative design. In focus groups, students of a German university were interviewed. With the authors' proposal to achieve thematic saturation, they emphasized the students' frequent criticism of organizational structures. In addition, they discussed the strengths, limitations and possible conclusions of the studies.

I would recommend to the authors a renewed native-language revision and to focus here in particular on common "medical educational expressions". Overall, as a reader I would ask myself what is the intrinsic strength of researching the parameters attached here in qualitative design. Perhaps the authors could go into more detail here. I would like to read whether the authors have found a difference in the perception of the investigated factors between German and international medical students. German and international literature shows that especially international medical students show different stress rates, stressors and academic performance than German medical students.

In the following I would like to go into the individual passages within the manuscript with some more suggestions.
Introduction

Altogether the introduction is well written, I recognize a "red line" and through the style (slowly going into detail from a broader perspective with finally following own research questions) the reader may follow generally well. In some parts I would have wished for more German and international relevant quantitative literature about, mental health, study situation, stressors and resilience coefficients.

Maybe as a possible optional you can refer to the study (Erschens, R., Herrmann-Werner, A., Keifenheim, K. E., Loda, T., Bugaj, T. J., Nikendei, C., ... & Junne, F., 2018. Differential determination of perceived stress in medical students and high-school graduates due to private and training-related stressors. PloS one, 13(1), e0191831.) as a German study on the association of stress with specific stressors in medical education.

On the other hand, there are already German quantitative studies on the association of mental distress and coping strategies, e.g. Erschens, R., Loda, T., Herrmann-Werner, A., Keifenheim, K. E., Stuber, F., Nikendei, C., ... & Junne, F., 2018. Behaviour-based functional and dysfunctional strategies of medical students to cope with burnout. Medical education online, 23(1), 1535738.

I would suggest to the authors at the end of the part of the introduction to describe the aims and issues or hypotheses of the study even more explicitly, perhaps also by means of paragraphs (I-III), etc.

Methods and Results

Methods and Results are very precise and well described and the reader can follow every step. It would be great if I could have a schematic diagram in which the category system and the considerations of clustering and perhaps also a potential model could emerge.

Discussion, Implications and conclusion

Perhaps it would be possible for the authors, by enumerating the research questions on the basis of paragraphs, then within the discussion to take a position again on each question in the sense of a synthesis.

the authors could decide even more about how to better separate the Implications and Conclusion part in terms of content. I would like to read more about the implications that can be deduced from the results of the current study at the behavioral-level and at the organizational-level. I would also like to read about the efforts or programs that may already exist at the respective university or at other German or international universities.
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.

I am able to assess the statistics

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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