



PEER-REVIEW REPORT

Name of journal: World Journal of Psychiatry

Manuscript NO: 45877

Title: Medical student depression and its correlates across three international medical schools

Reviewer’s code: 02445267

Reviewer’s country: Italy

Science editor: Ying Dou

Reviewer accepted review: 2019-01-31 10:13

Reviewer performed review: 2019-01-31 10:24

Review time: 1 Hour

SCIENTIFIC QUALITY	LANGUAGE QUALITY	CONCLUSION	PEER-REVIEWER STATEMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accept	Peer-Review:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language	(High priority)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good	polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	<input type="checkbox"/> Onymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of	(General priority)	Peer-reviewer’s expertise on the
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade E: Do not	language polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision	topic of the manuscript:
publish	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Rejection	<input type="checkbox"/> Major revision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced
		<input type="checkbox"/> Rejection	<input type="checkbox"/> General
			<input type="checkbox"/> No expertise
			Conflicts-of-Interest:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS

Thanks to the Authors for this well-designed research.

INITIAL REVIEW OF THE MANUSCRIPT



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PEER-REVIEW REPORT

Name of journal: World Journal of Psychiatry

Manuscript NO: 45877

Title: Medical student depression and its correlates across three international medical schools

Reviewer's code: 00784262

Reviewer's country: Canada

Science editor: Ying Dou

Reviewer accepted review: 2019-01-31 13:56

Reviewer performed review: 2019-01-31 14:44

Review time: 1 Hour

SCIENTIFIC QUALITY	LANGUAGE QUALITY	CONCLUSION	PEER-REVIEWER STATEMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	Peer-Review:
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language	(High priority)	<input type="checkbox"/> Anonymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good	polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onymous
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of	(General priority)	Peer-reviewer's expertise on the
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade E: Do not	language polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision	topic of the manuscript:
publish	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Rejection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major revision	<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced
		<input type="checkbox"/> Rejection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General
			<input type="checkbox"/> No expertise
			Conflicts-of-Interest:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
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SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS

The Yale response rate disqualifies this school. Yale has also had recent well publicized suicides on campus so that its mental health services have been ramped up. It is an elite school that is probably not comparable to the other selected schools Chinese cultural



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factors make mental illness symptoms very difficult to admit, even anonymously. A way to get around this is to ask for physical symptoms (sleep, appetite, fatigue) or to ask students how many of their fellow students they perceive as being depressed. Many Middle East countries have high rates of consanguineous marriages which may predispose to depression. The depression rates in the local regions are needed for comparison.

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PEER-REVIEW REPORT

Name of journal: World Journal of Psychiatry

Manuscript NO: 45877

Title: Medical student depression and its correlates across three international medical schools

Reviewer's code: 02989927

Reviewer's country: Brazil

Science editor: Ying Dou

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Reviewer performed review: 2019-02-01 02:49

Review time: 1 Hour

SCIENTIFIC QUALITY	LANGUAGE QUALITY	CONCLUSION	PEER-REVIEWER STATEMENTS
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<input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language	(High priority)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good	polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	<input type="checkbox"/> Onymous
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of	(General priority)	Peer-reviewer's expertise on the
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			<input type="checkbox"/> No expertise
			Conflicts-of-Interest:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS

45877 Medical Student Depression and Burnout across Three International Medical Schools, by Gold et al., 2019. The study investigates the level of depression and burnout among medical students in three culturally diverse countries. A total of 473 participants



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were recruited by convenience. When compared with the US students, participants from the Middle Eastern country and China predicted higher levels of depression. However, emotional exhaustion was highly relevant among US students. Information bias might be accounted for the between-country difference of depression. Authors claim local strategies to prevent and treat the mental health of medical students. The starting point of the study - the mental health of medical students from different cultural backgrounds - is interesting. However, the state-of-art method in cross-cultural psychiatry recommends establishing a measurement invariance to make the comparison meaningful. This is to say, the authors have not analyzed the measurement equivalence of their tools. Confirmatory factor analysis is the gold standard method for assuring the universalist assumption of mental distress. Therefore, the reported prevalence and ANCOVA analyses might remain fundamentally invalid. Overall, the manuscript is well organized, but considerable editing is necessary to improve its argumentative flow (mainly the Discussion). The sample size is modest. I think that more refined analyses might improve the scientific soundness of this investigation.

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PEER-REVIEW REPORT

Name of journal: World Journal of Psychiatry

Manuscript NO: 45877

Title: Medical student depression and its correlates across three international medical schools

Reviewer's code: 02445242

Reviewer's country: India

Science editor: Ying Dou

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SCIENTIFIC QUALITY	LANGUAGE QUALITY	CONCLUSION	PEER-REVIEWER STATEMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	Peer-Review:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language	(High priority)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good	polishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept	<input type="checkbox"/> Onymous
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of	(General priority)	Peer-reviewer's expertise on the
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		<input type="checkbox"/> Rejection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General
			<input type="checkbox"/> No expertise
			Conflicts-of-Interest:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS

Comments for the authors This was an interesting study of depression and burnout from three medical schools in the US, China and the Middle-East. The study was well designed, the manuscript well written and easy to read, and the findings novel enough



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to perhaps make a significant contribution to literature in this area. However, it appeared to me that to improve upon the messages that one can derive from this study certain clarifications and elaborations are required. Firstly, this was primarily a study of depression among medical students. Burnout or emotional exhaustion was one of the many factors that influenced depression (Table 4). Thus the title "depression and burnout" was a bit misleading because it was actually a study of depression, burnout, exercise, stress and unmet mental health needs. Therefore something like "Depression among medical students and its correlates across three medical schools" might have been more appropriate. The aims/objectives of the study might have to be restated keeping the above considerations in mind. The abstract and core tip will also need to be modified to emphasize that it was primarily a study of depression with an exploration of factors influencing it, including burnout, exercise, stress and unmet mental health needs. Alternatively, if the authors still wish to include burnout as one of the primary variables examined apart from depression, they need to include a regression analysis where emotional exhaustion is the dependent variable. Secondly, though the authors have stressed that their study was intended to be a cross-cultural comparison, very few 'cultural' variables were actually examined. Rather the environment at the three medical schools (roughly equivalent to 'work-culture'), stress, exercise, access to health-care etc. turned out to be the pertinent influences on depression. The authors have hypothesized that personality variables (perfectionism, imposter syndrome) and social factors ("societal prestige and pressure from family and friends") could account for the differences observed, but there is very little to suggest that these would be significantly different between the US school (representing Western cultural values) and the Chinese and Middle-Eastern schools (representing non-Western cultural values). To complicate matters further, their findings are somewhat mixed and do not support the Western-non-Western divide. While the rates of depression are significantly higher in



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the Chinese and Middle-Eastern school schools compared to the US one, they are more conflicting regarding the results of emotional exhaustion across the three schools (Tables 2 and 3). The rather strange finding that high/low rates of depression in the Middle-Eastern and US schools did not go hand in hand with rates of burnout will have to be better explained. In this regard certain statements like "With simple analyses without controlling for any variables, the school in the Middle Eastern country had the most severe presentation of both burnout and depression" in the Discussion were a bit confusing because I could not find any data to support this, while the statement "In our study, however, students in the Middle East were not the most emotionally exhausted after adjusting for the influence of depression." was clearly evident from the results. The other puzzling finding was that 'stress' was associated with lower rates of depression. The authors have stated that convenience sampling, differences in "stress" and unmet mental health needs could account for some of the discrepancies in their findings. While they have acknowledged that the assessment of "stress" by a single question was somewhat "inadequate, it appears from table 1 that unmet needs were also assessed by a single question. This has to be accepted as a limitation. The authors go on to discuss several Chinese and Iranian studies to highlight the findings on depression and burnout among medical students in these countries. I think the Chinese studies should be cited in the Introduction itself to complement the findings from the US and Middle-East. Moreover, if there is any Chinese study on burnout this should be quoted. One interesting finding to my mind was the very high response rates in the Chinese and the Middle-Eastern school and much lower rate in the US school despite the incentive offered. This could be suggestive of a "cultural" difference, i.e. conformity and respect for authority, between the US and the two non-Western schools. Further, the request for anonymity from the Middle-Eastern school suggests that there is difficulty in acknowledging the reality of depression and burnout among students by the authorities



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of this school, which could be another difference in the work cultures of these different schools accounting for the discrepant findings of this study. It is therefore encouraging to know that the "Middle Eastern site has recently launched a voluntary faculty mentorship program." It would be helpful if the authors could include a few lines on these trends. Finally, to better understand the relative contribution of different variables to depression, table 4 should include the R square values for each of the variables that were significantly associated with depression in the regression analysis.

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