

Concerns on Methods While Altering Intervals in the Questionnaire – Results That Are Statistically Fixed: Commenting on Perceived Stress and its Correlates among Medical Trainees in Oman – A Single-Institution Study

The study conducted in Oman by Al Shamli et al. [1] attempts to correlate perceived stress among medical students with other factors. It is appreciable that the authors have brought about using the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10), as the main questionnaire for perceived stress.

My main concern with regards to the study is that the authors have considered a range from 0 to 40, where < 20 is a “No” and >20 is a “Yes” to PSS-10. But the originally validated PSS-10 by Cohen et al. (www.das.nh.gov/wellness/docs/percieved%20stress%20scale) states that while using the PSS-10 questionnaire, there are three ranges of results that can be acquired, which are “scores ranging from 0 to 13 would be considered low stress;” “scores ranging from 14 to 26 would be considered moderate stress;” and “scores ranging from 27 to 40 would be considered high perceived stress.”

But in the PSS-10 validation used by the researchers, they have not delineated this classification appropriately and have altered the values to above and below 20. According to Cohen et al., scores of 19 and 21 will both be considered moderate stress, but according to the research by Al Shamli et al. [1], a score of 19 will be a “No” result for PSS-10 and a score of 21 will be a “Yes” result for PSS-10. This unfortunate ambiguity results in questionable data production as some individuals who may be classified as a “moderately stressed” individual by the PSS-10, may have been incorrectly identified by this altered PSS-10 classification used by the researchers.

In conclusion, using an appropriately delineated classification and separation of intervals of questionnaire results, one may obtain results with higher accuracy. Without the previous validation of the accuracy of the new test scores, usage of these scoring ranges is highly questionable. It is suggested to the authors, that instead of classification of the PSS-10 as a “yes” and a “no” outcome, it would be more appropriate to follow the intervals approved by Cohen et al., which has been statistically identified.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Reference

1. Al Shamli S, Al Omrani S, Al-Mahrouqi T, et al.: Perceived stress and its correlates among medical trainees in Oman: a single-institution study. *Taiwan J Psychiatry* 2021; 35: 188-96.

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