Author's response to reviews

Title: Validation of the Arabic version of the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We would like to thank you and the reviewers for the valuable comments that helped us improve our manuscript. We also thank you for giving us the opportunity to revise and resubmit it. We think that this is an important addition to the literature because having a validated scale will allow people in the Arab region as well as Arab populations in the world to accurately assess the magnitude of stress and evaluate interventions aimed at reducing it. Below you find a point by point reply to the reviewers’ comments.

Best regards,
Ziyad Mahfoud

Reviewer: Andy Smith
Reviewer’s report:
This paper reports a study of stress and pregnancy using the Arabic version of the PSS-10. The title should be changed to reflect this.

We added to the title “pregnant and postpartum women” to reflect the populations of interest.

Generally the study is well-conducted and reported. It would be better to list the actual questions in each factor rather than referring to numbers (pg10).

Thank you! We added a table [table 3 now] (which was also recommended by reviewer 2) that contains the questions in each factor
Reviewer: david roe
Reviewer's report: 
In this paper the authors presented their evaluation of the validity of the Arabic translation of the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) in pregnant and postpartum women. Following are a number of comments:

1. Page 3 first paragraph: references are needed.

This is now our second paragraph and references were added

2. Page 3 second paragraph: in the first paragraph the authors write about stress in general, while in the second paragraph they turn the focus to measuring stress in pregnancy. A presentation of stress in pregnancy is needed before discussing measures of perceived stress during pregnancy. Moreover, the sentence "Concerns about economic insecurity, breastfeeding, and bonding with the infant can contribute to the stress often experienced during this period" should be elaborated upon within the context of measuring perceived stress during pregnancy. The authors should consider revising the entire paragraph.

This paragraph was revised and put as paragraph one. Also references were added

3. Page 3 paragraph 3: In the first sentence, while mentioning the "few validated tools"- references are needed to support the claim. Added references In this regards, when presenting the PSS-10, a ref is also needed. It seems that this paragraph should come after the current fourth paragraph on page 3.

References were added and the order of paragraphs was reversed.

4. Page 4 paragraph 2: this paragraph should not stand by its own. It is too short and does not hold for new idea. Did the authors meant to write "mainly"? And by mistake they wrote "namely"?

“namely” was replaced with specifically and the whole paragraph imbedded with another paragraph

5. Page 4 paragraph 3: References are needed in order to support the claim regarding the translation into different languages and the validation issue.

References were added
6. Page 5 first paragraphs- the last sentence ("However, some of these studies reported a good level of reliability with internal consistency of the PSS-10 scale ranging from 0.71 to 0.8") is repetitive as the same info has been already presented in the previous paragraph.

We would like to keep it as it addresses reliability only in studies that surveyed pregnant and postpartum women.

7. Page 5 participants' description: The authors should further explain in the introduction the meaning of the different pregnancy trimesters since they mention it in this paragraph, while not explaining it before.

We added definitions within the text

Also, the description of the sample composition and the dropout rates should be separately discussed. Currently, the discussion of these issues is mixed and thus confusing. Were the students pregnant? Were they mothers? Or did they serve as a control group? This point needs clarification. Moreover, if 2 students refuse to participate, how was the response rate 100%??.

We edited the paragraph as to make it less confusing

The mentioning of the "retest" in this paragraph is unclear and I couldn’t understand where, logically, it stem from. The whole participants' paragraph should be rewritten and edited. A lot of info is missing and it is not presented in a well organized manner. Also, the procedure part should be presented in a more clear manner, so the reader will be able to understand what the authors did.

We re-edited the whole section. Thank you for point this out

8. Page 7, administration paragraph: Was the study approved by an ethical review committee?

Yes the study was approved by the Institutional review Board at the American University of Beirut. We added this to the this section

9. Usually, SES is measured by presenting participants the average income per person/family in the country and asking him/her to indicate its location on the income scale (below average, more than average etc). Asking women whether their income is sufficient or not is not an accepted form for measuring SES, and thus can't serve or presented by the authors as a SES measure.

We understand the reviewer’s point of view, however questions on income are sensitive to a lot of people and can result in high rates of inaccuracy and missing
data. Moreover, this question; used in other studies, correlates well with other indicators of SES.

10. The method part requires extensive editing. A well detailed description of the research groups is needed, as well as an organization of the method part according to the accepted form of manuscript method part: participation, instrument and procedure. In the instrument part the description of all the scales should be presented, along with an explanation of how and why the 7 negative life events were chosen, known reliability and the reliability the authors have found in the current study should be reported.

Extensive editing was done. We followed the guidance of the reviewer comment above. The event score is only done to capture any added stress that the participant might have experienced so that we can control for it in the analysis.

11. Page 7 second paragraph- please explain what you meant by writing: "A sub sample of the participants was chosen at random and asked to consent to a retest after one week".

It is legitimate in validation study to do a test retest on only a subsample of the study sample. We have decided a priori to take a subsample 20 from each group for test retest purpose.

12. Page 8, reliability paragraph: why 41 (15.3%) of the sample participated at time 2 assessment?? An explanation is needed. Also, the authors should explain this high dropout rate in time 2.

There is no drop out but we had refusals especially from the pregnant women to consent to revisit the clinic for a retest after one week. We mentioned that in the manuscript.

13. Pages 8 and 9, data analysis: a reference to the appropriate tables is missing in the text.

Reference to tables were added

14. Page 10, factor analysis: The authors should add a table of the items content for each factor.

A table was added with items and factor loadings

15. Page 12, Discussion: the test re-test should not be presented in an explicit way as it is presented now, since this test was done only on 15% of the sample.

This was explained earlier in previous replies. See answer to 11 and 12 above
16. Page 13 second paragraph- were the students recruited from a college or a university? Please be consistent with the wording and terms throughout the manuscript.

All Students were recruited from a University. We changed all “college” to “university”.

Finally we uploaded the Arabic version of PSS10 that we used for this study.