Reviewer's report

Title: Alexithymia and emotional regulation: A cluster analytical approach

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Reviewer: Giovanni Abbate-Daga

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The manuscript “alexithymia and emotional regulation: a cluster analytical approach” assesses 1788 college students using the TAS20. The aim of the study is to investigate subtypes of alexithymia and their correlation with coping with emotive factors.

Although the study is well described and the a priori hypotheses are clearly stated this paper shows some limitations.

Major compulsory revisions:

1) There isn’t general consensus in literature that TAS20 is an appropriate instrument to assess alexithymia for young adolescents. Even if the sample is composed by students who aren’t all teenagers, this point should be critically discussed and highlighted as a limit. It could be useful to analyse if the cluster distribution is age-related.

2) Again it is not clearly demonstrated that the TAS20 is independent of sex, socioeconomic status and years of education. Statistical analyses should be done again considering these aspects as confounding variables. In particular, gender is important because the sample is mainly composed of male subjects.

3) EHA cluster includes the 77.3% of the sample. The EHA cluster shows alterations mostly on EOT. Some studies and a review showed how the reliability of the EOT dimension is quite low (see Kooima et al. 2002). This limit has never been discussed in this study. Since the biggest cluster is investigated by this scarcely reliable dimension, the discussion should widely consider this issue. It is probable then that the cluster isn’t stable at all in time and/or it is an artefact due to the instruments that have been used by the authors. It should be necessary to reassess the students to evaluate validity. Without a longitudinal approach any speculation in the discussion should be shown just as an hypothesis to be confirmed.

Minor Revision:

1) The authors shouldn’t use in the abstract abbreviations that haven’t been previously explained in the text.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests