**Author’s response to reviews**

**Title:** Mental distress and associated factors among Aksum University students, Ethiopia: A cross-sectional study

**Authors:**

Tadis Tesfahunegn (taddis2007@gmail.com)

Etsay Gebremariam (etshm.2014@gmail.com)

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**Author’s response to reviews:**

A point-by-point response to comments

Comment 1: - In your response to the reviewers you state that Dachew et al. has now been cited as reference 16. However, the reference in the bibliography pertains to Berihun et al. Please ensure that you check all references and citations rigorously and ensure the Dachew article is properly cited. Please also include additional text in the manuscript which acknowledges the differences and similarities, similarly to your response to the reviewer, between your study and those of Melese et al. 2016 and Dachew et al. 2015.

Answer 1: References are corrected. Dachew article is properly cited (see page-14). Additional text are included in the manuscript which acknowledges the differences and similarities (page-3, paragraph -2, line-6-9) and page-3, paragraph -3, line-15-18). In Ethiopia there are only two studies conducted among under graduate medical students [17,18] which are not enough. The medical students are not similar with the whole university students. In addition to this, a study was also recommended including students in different disciplines among university students in Ethiopia [16,23].

Comment 2: We note that you have justified the cut-off of 0.8 on SRQ-20 to detect mental distress with reference to previous literature. However, the citations pertaining to Hanlon et al., Scholte et al., and Chipimo and Fylkesnes, have not been included in the manuscript. Please include additional text in the manuscript which recapitulates your response to the reviewer on this question, and which cites the above studies.

Answer -2: Citations pertaining to Hanlon et al., Scholte et al., and Chipimo and Fylkesnes, have been included in the manuscript with additional text related to sensitivity and specificity validation figure on mental distress in developing countries including Ethiopia (In the methods part, (page-5,paragraph -1, line-10-11).

Comment 3: Please remove the keywords from the abstract of the online submission form.
Answer 3: keywords removed.

Comment 4: Please indicate in the title page that the superscript asterisk pertains to the corresponding author, and name this author explicitly.

Answer 4: Corrected.

Comment 5: Please include a Declarations heading following the list of abbreviations, and reformat the order of the subsections so as to be consistent with BMC Psychiatry guidelines (https://bmcpsychiatry.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript/research-article).

Answer 5: Accepted and declaration section included

Comment 6: Please ensure that tables are free of shading and formatted according to BMC Psychiatry guidelines (https://bmcpsychiatry.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript#preparing+tables).

Answer 6: Corrected (see page 18-20)

Comment 7: Please provide the ethical approval number obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the College of Health Sciences of Axum University, and detail the procedure (i.e. verbal/written) for obtaining informed consent from the participants. Please append this information to the ‘Ethics approval and consent to participate’ section of the Declarations.

Answer 7: The number of the ethical approval obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the College of Health Sciences of Axum University was Ref.no Aku/UN/201/08, and date 07/07/2008. The ethical approval and the informed written consent procedure were detailed in the manuscript.

Comment 8: Unfortunately, there are some minor language issues throughout the manuscript.

Answer 8: grammatical, punctuation errors are corrected in the mother document. See attached the mother document.

Comment 9: Please rename Reference to References.

Answer 9: Corrected (page-14)
Comment 10: Please remove the attachments from the manuscript, including the metal distress data, as this contains potential patient identifiable material.

Answer 10: Removed.

Answer 10: We have noted that manuscript contains substantial textual overlap with previous publications.

Answer 10: Corrected. See the attached mother document.