Author’s response to reviews

Title: Psychometric Assessment of the Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index (PSSI)

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Author’s response to reviews:

We are pleased to be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript. We greatly appreciate the suggestions of both of our reviewers. In what follows, we provide our responses to the reviewers’ comments.

Reviewer #1:

Comment: Abstract: Identify post-secondary participants, location and sample size in which data were obtained from to develop the instrument.

Response: Thank you for this suggestion - these changes have now been made to the abstract.

Comment: Method: Resolve disparity in line 85-86: In your abstract tool for data collection were survey, FGD and individual interview 5. Line 86: "Result detailed elsewhere" specify if it is part of this study for clarity.

Response: This disparity has now been resolved. We have removed the reference to online surveys (generically) and focus groups in the abstract, as this pertains to a previous study where we were undertaking item pool development for the instrument. We have now clarified that this is previous work, and not part of the present study (this has been fixed in both the abstract and methods sections).
Comment: Line 88-89: identify the range of stressors: does high value correlate to higher level of stress? Say a little about the analysis.

Response: We have updated the language in this section to make it more clear that higher severity/frequency ratings are representative of more stress.

Comment: Line 106-107: Were all your participants around you to complete preliminary version of PSSI on your desktop computer? Your readers need to understand why they have to be around your desktop and if they are students, how did you manage Hawthorne effect?

Response: Thank you for this very interesting question! Yes, all participants were in the same room as me while they completed the preliminary PSSI during the cognitive testing phase. The interviewer is required to be present in order to pick up on micro-communications that might otherwise be missed, were the interviewer behind a screen or otherwise not physically present. I am not overly concerned about the Hawthorne effect for two reasons: 1) participants weren’t being asked to complete the PSSI for their information to be recorded (in fact, none of the survey data was actually submitted during this phase), but rather to identify any ambiguities, spelling errors, or other issues with the wording and layout of the tool; and 2) participants were very forthcoming with their opinions and ideas regarding the PSSI throughout the process, which does not demonstrate them feeling as though they should adjust their performance based on my presence.

We have added the following sentence to the manuscript in this section for our readers’ understanding: “Note that the interviewer must be physically present during cognitive interviews in order to pick up on non-verbal communications, including body language and facial expressions.”

Comment: How many focus group sessions was conducted for this study and how did you analyse the findings from FDG?

Response: We apologize for the confusion on this point. The focus groups were conducted during the item pool development phase of this project, which is detailed in another paper. In this study, we did not conduct any focus groups. This has now been resolved, as above.
Comment: Line 226: How many participants? "Response rate 11%?"

Response: A total of n = 535 students returned a pre-test survey, while the initial invitation was e-mailed to 2000 students, representing a response rate of approximately 11%.

Reviewer #2:


Response: Reference has been added.

Comment: In methodology part, its better at least one paragraph explain about main point such, sample size, sampling method, place.

Response: We thank the reviewer for this recommendation. However, given the nature of this study (several different samples used for each component of this multi-dimensional research project), we believe it is most appropriate to identify sample sizes, methods, and other details (e.g., who the participants were, where they were sampled from, etc.) in each section, as the manuscript is currently laid out. Using one paragraph to address all four samples and their natures would disrupt the current flow of the paper. We have, however, added sample sizes and additional information to the abstract, upon the request of another reviewer.

Comment: In page 6, Please nominate pilot test was conducted among how many students, how choose it.

Response: Though we go into great detail in the results section regarding the number of students who participated in the pilot test (both in the pre-test and post-test, as well as the response rate represented by this level of participation), we have added here a generic “over 500 students” comment to this section for clarity. We have also added that students were randomly sampled.