Author’s response to reviews

Title: Prevalence and determinants of mental distress among University students in Ethiopia: a systematic review protocol

Authors:

Berihun Dachew (berihunassefa21@gmail.com)
Berhanu Bifftu (berhanuboru@gmail.com)
Bewket Tiruneh (jeryfiker21@gmail.com)
Degefaye Anlay (degefaye@gmail.com)
Meseret Wassie (meseretadu@gmail.com)
Kim Betts (k.betts@uq.edu.au)

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Dear Judy Wright,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to address the reviewer’s concerns. We appreciate the reviewer’s constructive comments and suggestions. We have carefully revised our manuscript based on the reviewer comments. We believe we have addressed all concerns in the revised manuscript. Below, we have provided a point-by-point response to the reviewer comments.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Berihun Assefa Dachew
Reviewer reports:

Thank you for re-submitting your manuscript with changes following comments from peer-reviewers. The revision is a much improved manuscript - well done. There are some typographical queries (minor) but also a more significant comment on providing a full description of how you plan to identify and synthesise factors affecting mental distress (major).

The page numbers relate to the clean version of the manuscript:

1. p3 line 58 should this be 'supervisors' instead of 'supervisor'

Authors’ response: Thank you, this has been corrected.

2. p 3 line 67 reword as 'mental distress prevalence among university students' and remove the comma after 'Ethiopia'

Authors’ response: Corrected.

3. p5 line 100 typo for Questionnaire

Authors’ response: Corrected.

4. p5 line 101. If you are excluding non-English language studies you should provide a reason as it is recommended to not limit inclusion based on language. You reason may be because you do not have resources (to pay or find volunteers) to translate the data you'd like to extract from the paper? Or are non-English papers irrelevant?

Authors’ response: We understand that non-English studies are equally important but do not have resources to pay or find volunteers to translate the data. We have now included the reasons for excluding non-English language studies (see page 5, line 105-106).
5. p5 line 111. typo. form should be 'from'
Authors’ response: Corrected.

6. p5 'Data extraction and management' section. The review states it will identify factors affecting mental distress and I assume this could include (but not be limited to) the factors you mention in the background section e.g. finance, lack of social support, adult supervisors... However it's not clear how you are collecting data for this as these type of data are not mentioned as items in your data extraction form.

Authors’ response: Yes: this could include (but not be limited to) the factors that we have mentioned in the background section of this protocol. Risk or protective factors examined in each study were extracted together with their respective odds ratio (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI). This has now been included in the data extraction section of protocol (see page 5, line 115-116).

7. p5 line 117 replace 'in to' with 'into'
Authors’ response: Corrected.

8. p6 line 124 add a space between prevalence and (proportion)
Authors’ response: Corrected.

9. p6 line 131. Sincere apologies but please change 'Cochrane's Q' back to 'Cochran's Q' test. This was a mistake in the last round of editing comments - the correct name is Cochran's Q test https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cochran%27s_Q_test
Authors’ response: Corrected.

10. p6 line 134. add a space in between Stata 14 and Metaprop
Authors’ response: Corrected.
11. p6 Data Synthesis section. Related to comment 6, how will you synthesis the data you find on factors affecting mental distress? The data synthesis only seems to the cover the quantitative analysis of prevalence data.

Authors’ response: Thank you. We acknowledge that the data extraction and statistical analyses for factors affecting mental distress are overlooked in the previous version of the protocol. This has been described now (see page 6, line 126-127).

“The pooled prevalence (proportion) of mental distress and the pooled odds ratios (OR) of identified factors associated with mental distress with 95% confidence interval (95% CI) will be calculated using random-effects [29] and quality-effects models [30]”.