Author’s response to reviews

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

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Dear Paul Shekelle, MD

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. Changes are highlighted in yellow in the tracked version of the manuscript. Below, we have provided a point-by-point response to the reviewer comments.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,
Reviewer reports:

I have myself done a number of reviews dealing with the mental health instruments you anticipate using, such as the BDI, and some issues that repeatedly crop up are the following: some studies will report the proportions of subjects exceeding a certain threshold (such as the proportion of subjects with a BDI greater than 20), whereas other studies will report the numeric values for the instrument (such as a mean BDI of 26 with a standard deviation of 5, or whatever it is). How do you plan to synthesize across studies reporting dichotomous and continuous outcomes, and how do plan to synthesize across studies that use different thresholds, for example a BDI of 20 or a BDI of 29; and how do you plan to synthesize across studies that use different instruments, such as the BDI and HAM-D?

Authors’ response: Thank you. As the objective of this systematic review is to provide the pooled prevalence of mental distress among university students in Ethiopia, only studies reported the prevalence of mental distress or provided sufficient information to calculate prevalence will be included. This has been mentioned in the inclusion and exclusion criteria section of the protocol (page 4-5, line 96-102). Sub group analyses will also be performed to explore the sources of heterogeneity attributed to variation in thresholds, differences in the assessment methods used to measure mental distress, and other factors such gender, sample size, year of publication, study quality, and year of study (page 6, line 137-139).