

Anxiety in secondary school students in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, 2018–2019

Sir,

I read with interest the study by Al Salman *et al.* on anxiety and depression in secondary school students and their relation to the use of electronic devices, in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, 2018–2019, in the January–April issue of 2020.^[1] The authors used two self-rated instruments, Beck Depression Inventory and Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), to assess depression and anxiety, respectively. The authors found that participants who used electronic devices at bedtime were 1.524 times more likely to have anxiety, while spending >2 h on the devices at bedtime was significantly associated with depression.^[1]

In the study, the authors reported that all the students (100%) had anxiety of some severity as measured on the GAD-7, and an equal percentage had mild and moderate anxiety (34.3% and 34.6%, respectively): 21.5% had moderate-to-severe anxiety and 9.6% of the students had severe anxiety. The GAD-7 is a 7-item self-report questionnaire, a validated instrument developed to diagnose GAD, with good sensitivity and specificity as a screen for panic, social anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder.^[2] The GAD-7 score is calculated by assigning scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, to the response categories of “not at all,” “several days,” “more than half the days,” and “nearly every day,” respectively, and then adding the scores of the seven questions together. GAD-7 scores range from 0 to 21, with scores of ≥ 5 , ≥ 10 , and ≥ 15 representing mild, moderate, and severe anxiety symptom levels, respectively, but when used as a screening tool, further evaluation is recommended when the score is 10 or greater.^[2] In the study, the authors grouped students into four categories of anxiety according to the GAD-7 score (scoring 0–5: mild, 6–10: moderate, 11–15: moderately severe, and 15–21: severe), which is incorrect and so has to be reconsidered in the interpretation of the study results.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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