

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form ([see an example](#)) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

ARTICLE DETAILS

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| TITLE (PROVISIONAL) | Pilot study on the prevalence of perceived abuse and mistreatment during clinical internship: a cross-sectional study among first year residents in Oman |
| AUTHORS | Al-Adawi, Samir; Al-Shafee, Mohammed; Al-Kaabi, Yousuf; Al-Farsi, Yousuf; White, Gillian; Al-Maniri, Abdullah; Al-Sinawi, Hamed |

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | Kal Winston Assistant Professor, Ross University School of Medicine Dominica |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 01-Oct-2012 |

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| THE STUDY | The term 'explore experiences' is mentioned in the research question. From the tables, it appears participants simply responded to very few pre-defined categories. Individuals typically interpret these types of statements differently. Nowhere is it explained what these categories consist of. It would have been really good to have included some interviews or focus groups so that the participants' interpretations really could be explored. The lack of qualitative data in a phenomenological study of perceived experience should be cited as a major limitation. Use of SPSS for statistics is mentioned, but the tables only include simple counts and percentages. I think this is fine, but the methods section should be clearer about this. There are very minor errors of English, mostly of prepositions and pronouns, sprinkled throughout. |
| RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS | Again, I feel some qualitative data is needed to fully understand this. The terms 'verbal abuse', 'physical abuse or threats', 'academic abuse' and 'sexual harassment' all appear to be undefined. |
| GENERAL COMMENTS | If you choose not to include any qualitative data from interviews or focus groups, then you should state this as a major limitation of a study which is designed to explore participants experiences. |

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| REVIEWER | David Power MB MPH Program Director, Medical Student Education Department of Family Medicine and Community Health University of Minnesota Medical School USA |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 11-Oct-2012 |

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| THE STUDY | I consider this an important pilot study, especially if this truly is the first report of abuse amongst interns in Oman. That being said, while in many parts of the paper the English is very readable there are |
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| | other parts of the paper - the abstract - where the English is not at a level yet for publication. For example the phrase 'across the border' is used when I believe the intent is to communicate 'across the board', There are other similar examples so I think the language does need to be re-worked before publication. |
| RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS | <p>Again, I consider this a pilot study. There are more sophisticated measures than those used by Sheehan (ref#20) in 1990. I am personally involved with several publications by Dyrbye et al where validated measures are consistently used and referenced. Nonetheless, as a pilot study, the results of this survey are alarming and need to be presented in the literature.</p> <p>The discussion is much too lengthy and includes too much conjecture. In my opinion, the main conclusion is that there is a serious problem that needs further investigation and attention.</p> |
| GENERAL COMMENTS | <p>I believe this is important, sentinel pilot research that should be published. I've mentioned some concerns above that need to be addressed. I am fascinated that some interns reported physical abuse or threats of physical abuse. Given that this is a rare observation in the Western literature, I would love more information on this - did anyone actually experience physical abuse such as slapping or pushing? Clearly unacceptable and grounds for legal action in many countries.</p> <p>I recommend re-working this paper to present it as a pilot study suggesting the need to explore this issue further. I do believe that a more comprehensive survey should be planned by the authors, including surveying about mental health attributes - such as depression and burnout - of the respondents. The discussion will need to be limited because these are preliminary findings - so this should be much shorter.</p> <p>I do believe this needs to be published - and wonder indeed if the authors risk any negative consequences by proceeding to publication. I applaud them indeed for casting light on these staggering figures for abuse in this arab country.</p> |

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

| Reviewer | Reviewer' comments | Authors' response |
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| Kal Winston | The term 'explore experiences' is mentioned in the research question. From the tables, it appears participants simply responded to very few pre-defined categories. Individuals typically interpret these types of statements differently. Nowhere is it explained what these categories consist of. | The statement 'explore experiences' has been revised. Also, now it is mentioned in the text that the study employed quantitative approach via The Likert-type questionnaire |
| | It would have been really good to have included some interviews or focus groups so that the participants' interpretations really could be explored. The lack of qualitative data in a phenomenological study of perceived experience should be cited as a | We thank Prof Winston for raising this important omission. This issue has now being recapitulated as one of major limitation of this study. |

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| | major limitation. If you choose not to include any qualitative data from interviews or focus groups, then you should state this as a major limitation of a study which is designed to explore participants experiences. | |
| | Use of SPSS for statistics is mentioned, but the tables only include simple counts and percentages. I think this is fine, but the methods section should be clearer about this. | The text has been revised. |
| | There are very minor errors of English, mostly of prepositions and pronouns, sprinkled throughout. | Attempt was made by a native speaker to polish the English expression and grammar. |
| | The terms 'verbal abuse', 'physical abuse or threats', 'academic abuse' and 'sexual harassment' all appear to be undefined. | We are grateful to Prof. Winston for raising this issue. These terms have now been operationalized in the text, plus Table 1. Please see description under the title Assessment Measures |
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| David Power MB MPH | I consider this an important pilot study, especially if this truly is the first report of abuse amongst interns in Oman. That being said, while in many parts of the paper the English is very readable there are other parts of the paper - the abstract - where the English is not at a level yet for publication. For example the phrase 'across the border' is used when I believe the intent is to communicate 'across the board', There are other similar examples so I think the language does need to be re-worked before publication. | The suggested changes have been taken onboard. Also, as alluded above, attempts were made to improve the English expression and grammar. |
| | Again, I consider this a pilot study. I recommend re-working this paper to present it as a pilot study suggesting the need to explore this issue further. There are more sophisticated measures than those used by Sheehan (ref#20) in 1990. I am personally involved with several publications by Dyrbye et al where validated measures are consistently used and referenced. Nonetheless, as a pilot study, the results of this survey are alarming and need to be presented in the literature. I do believe that a more comprehensive survey should be | We are grateful of the Prof Power's suggestion that this paper should be considered as pilot. On this ground, the title has been duly changed as "Pilot study on the prevalence of abuse and mistreatment during clinical internship: a cross-sectional study among first year residents in Oman". We will also consider conducting another study with more robust methodological sophistication. The idea to also to explore possible sequel mental health of maltreatment |

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| | planned by the authors, including surveying about mental health attributes - such as depression and burnout - of the respondents. | in future studies have been noted with deep appreciation. |
| | The discussion is much too lengthy and includes too much conjecture. In my opinion, the main conclusion is that there is a serious problem that needs further investigation and attention. The discussion will need to be limited because these are preliminary findings - so this should be much shorter. | We thank the esteemed Professor for this recommendation. We fully agree with his suggestion and therefore the text has been drastically reduced. |
| | I believe this is important, sentinel pilot research that should be published. I've mentioned some concerns above that need to be addressed. I am fascinated that some interns reported physical abuse or threats of physical abuse. Given that this is a rare observation in the Western literature, I would love more information on this - did anyone actually experience physical abuse such as slapping or pushing? Clearly unacceptable and grounds for legal action in many countries. | This issue has been made more explicit in the text. |
| | I do believe this needs to be published - and wonder indeed if the authors risk any negative consequences by proceeding to publication. I applaud them indeed for casting light on these staggering figures for abuse in this Arab country. | We thank Prof Power for this enthusiasm and encouragement. |
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VERSION 2 – REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | David Power MB MPH Program Director, Medical Student Education Department of Family Medicine and Community Health University of Minnesota Medical School USA |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 30-Oct-2012 |

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| THE STUDY | <p>This is definitely improved over previous draft. I like that this is framed more as a pilot study and would recommend that language continue through the discussion.</p> <p>Some of the English still needs slight tweaking - I recommend a non-medical editor review it for grammar.</p> <p>On re-read, I am concerned about how participants were enrolled in</p> |
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| | <p>the study - especially since, for a survey, this is a very high response rate. The reader needs to be clear that participants knew participation was voluntary - if this was so, I would recommend stating that. I would remove the sentence 'return of a completed survey was interpreted as a sign of informed consent'. Instead, the cover letter with the survey should have clearly indicated to the participant that this was a research study and that participation was entirely voluntary. If this was the case, I would state this more clearly. I would also remove the comment in discussion about the 11 who did not respond - since a 100% response rate is completely unrealistic - this is a very high response rate as it is - but, again, we need reassurance that participants voluntarily responded and knew it was a research study.</p> <p>I would suggest that this reference was a more impactful study than the one quoted for Dyrbye et al (I acknowledge I was also a co-author on this one): Dyrbye LN, Massie FS Jr, Eacker A, Harper W, Power DV, Durning S, Thomas MR, Moutier C, Satele D, Sloan JA, Shanafelt TD. 'Relationship between Burnout and Professional Conduct and Attitudes among US Medical Students'. Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), 2010, 304(11):1173-80.</p> |
| RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS | In the discussion I would focus more on the fact that female students did not experience more abuse than males - I think this is very surprising. One of the results not shared was the gender of the perpetrator - is that information known? I assume most consultants are male. If there is any data on this, I would share it in the gender section. Since a more senior male attending abusing a junior female intern seems such a stereotypical picture, I would address this topic more. |
| REPORTING & ETHICS | I believe the informed consent process as outlined in first textbox needs to be re-written. I hope authors did make it clear to respondents about their voluntary participation in a research study - and expect this was so given that it was reviewed by an IRB. |
| GENERAL COMMENTS | I fully support this being published as a preliminary pilot survey which is unique from Oman. |

VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

| REVIEWER | REVIEWERS' COMMENTS | AUTHORS' RESPONSES |
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| David Power | | |
| | <p>This is definitely improved over previous draft. I like that this is framed more as a pilot study and would recommend that language continue through the discussion.</p> <p>Some of the English still needs slight tweaking - I recommend a non-medical editor review it for grammar.</p> | <p>Another attempt was made to improve the language</p> |

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| | <p>On re-read, I am concerned about how participants were enrolled in the study - especially since, for a survey, this is a very high response rate. The reader needs to be clear that participants knew participation was voluntary - if this was so, I would recommend stating that. I would remove the sentence 'return of a completed survey was interpreted as a sign of informed consent'. Instead, the cover letter with the survey should have clearly indicated to the participant that this was a research study and that participation was entirely voluntary. If this was the case, I would state this more clearly. I would also remove the comment in discussion about the 11 who did not respond - since a 100% response rate is completely unrealistic - this is a very high response rate as it is - but, again, we need reassurance that participants voluntarily response and knew it was a research study.</p> <p>I believe the informed consent process as outlined in first textbox needs to be re-written. I hope authors did make it clear to respondents about their voluntary participation in a research study - and expect this was so given that it was reviewed by an IRB.</p> | <p>We thank the esteemed reviewer for raising this important issue. The text has been revised in order to take onboard on this issue.</p> |
| | <p>I would suggest that this reference was a more impactful study than the one quoted for Dyrbye et al (I acknowledge I was also a co-author on this one):</p> <p>Dyrbye LN, Massie FS Jr, Eacker A, Harper W, Power DV, Durning S, Thomas MR, Moutier C, Satele D, Sloan JA, Shanafelt TD. 'Relationship between Burnout and Professional Conduct and Attitudes among US Medical Students'. Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), 2010, 304(11):1173-80.</p> | <p>Done as suggested.</p> |
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| | <p>In the discussion I would focus more on the fact that female students did not experience more abuse than males - I think this is very surprising. One of the results not shared was the gender of the perpetrator - is that information known? I assume most consultants are male. If there is any data on this, I would share it in the gender section. Since a more senior male attending abusing a junior female intern seems such a stereotypical picture, I would address this topic more.</p> | <p>Additional paragraph has been added to touch base on this important issue. Again, we are grateful to our esteemed reviewers for brining this issue.</p> |

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| | I fully support this being published as a preliminary pilot survey which is unique from Oman. | Thank you |
| | Would you be willing to share your data? Cast your vote in our http://80911.poll daddy.com/s/would-you-be-willing-to-share-your-data-in-an-open-repository > Online Poll | Yes and we casted my vote |