

# The Evaluation of Perceived Stress, Social Support and Emotional Eating in Bezmialem Faculty of Medicine Students: A Cross-Sectional Study

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## INTRODUCTION

Adequate and balanced nutrition is one of the prerequisites for being healthy. Nutrition refers to the intake and utilization of the essential nutrients necessary for growth, development, and maintaining health and productivity. Eating disorders are disturbances in eating behavior that can lead to medical, psychological, and social problems, negatively impacting the quality of life.

Emotional eating behavior is a response involving overeating that occurs when an individual struggles to express and perceive their emotions. Especially in situations where coping with various negative factors such as sadness, disappointment, anger, daily stressors, shattered courage, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and stress becomes challenging, the tendency towards emotional eating behavior may increase. In a study on the relationship between negative emotions and excessive food consumption, it is mentioned that sad moods have a greater impact on food consumption than happiness. The relationship between emotional states and appetite is reported to cause an increase or decrease in appetite by 30% to 48%. It has been stated that stress not only directly affects health beyond psychological processes but also brings about changes in health behaviors such as food choice and intake. Many studies have reported that stress influences emotional eating behavior. Social support, typically from family and friends, provides both physical and psychological aid, addressing fundamental social needs and positively impacting overall well-being.

Medical students undergo a challenging educational process with intense theoretical classes and practical applications. Therefore, they may particularly face high levels of stress, especially during their practical experiences. Considering that stressors are thought to increase emotional eating, it can be said that medical students constitute one of the risk groups related to emotional eating.

## METHODS

Our cross-sectional study was applied to Bezmialem Vakif University Faculty of Medicine students. Data were collected through the Demographic form, Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Perceived Stress Scale, Social Support Scale and Emotional Eating Scale. The resulting data was analyzed with Ibm SPSS Statistics 22.0.

## RESULTS

Among the students participating in the study (n=70), 35.7% were male, while 64.3% were female (Fig.2). According to the BMI (Body Mass Index) scores of the participants: %68.5 were in the normal weight range, %21.6 were overweight, %8.5 were obese, and %1.4 were underweight (Fig.1).

The mean scores of anxiety, social support and emotional eating for all students were found to be at **moderate level**, the scores for depression at mild level and the scores for perceived stress were found to be at **severe level**.

A **positive** significant correlation was observed between Perceived Stress and Emotional Eating Scales ( $r:0.246$ ;  $p:<0.05$ ). Additionally, there was a **positive** significant correlation between Beck Anxiety and Depression Inventories and the Emotional Eating Scale ( $r:0.504$ ;  $p<0.05$ ,  $r: 0.432$ ;  $p<0.05$ , respectively). Furthermore, a **negative** significant correlation was found between the Social Support Scale and the Emotional Eating Scale ( $r:-0.272$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). (Fig.4).

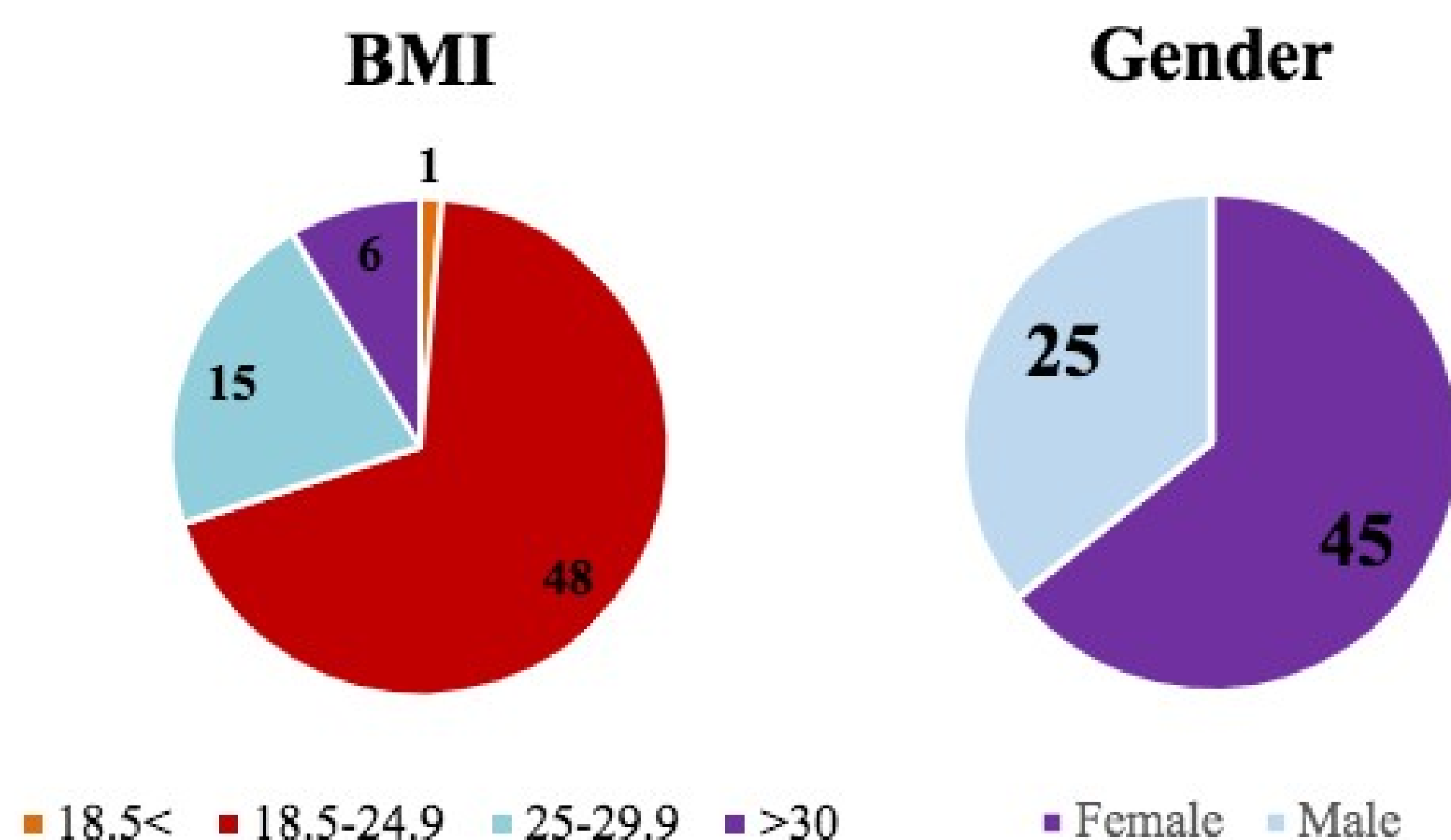


Figure.1

Figure.2

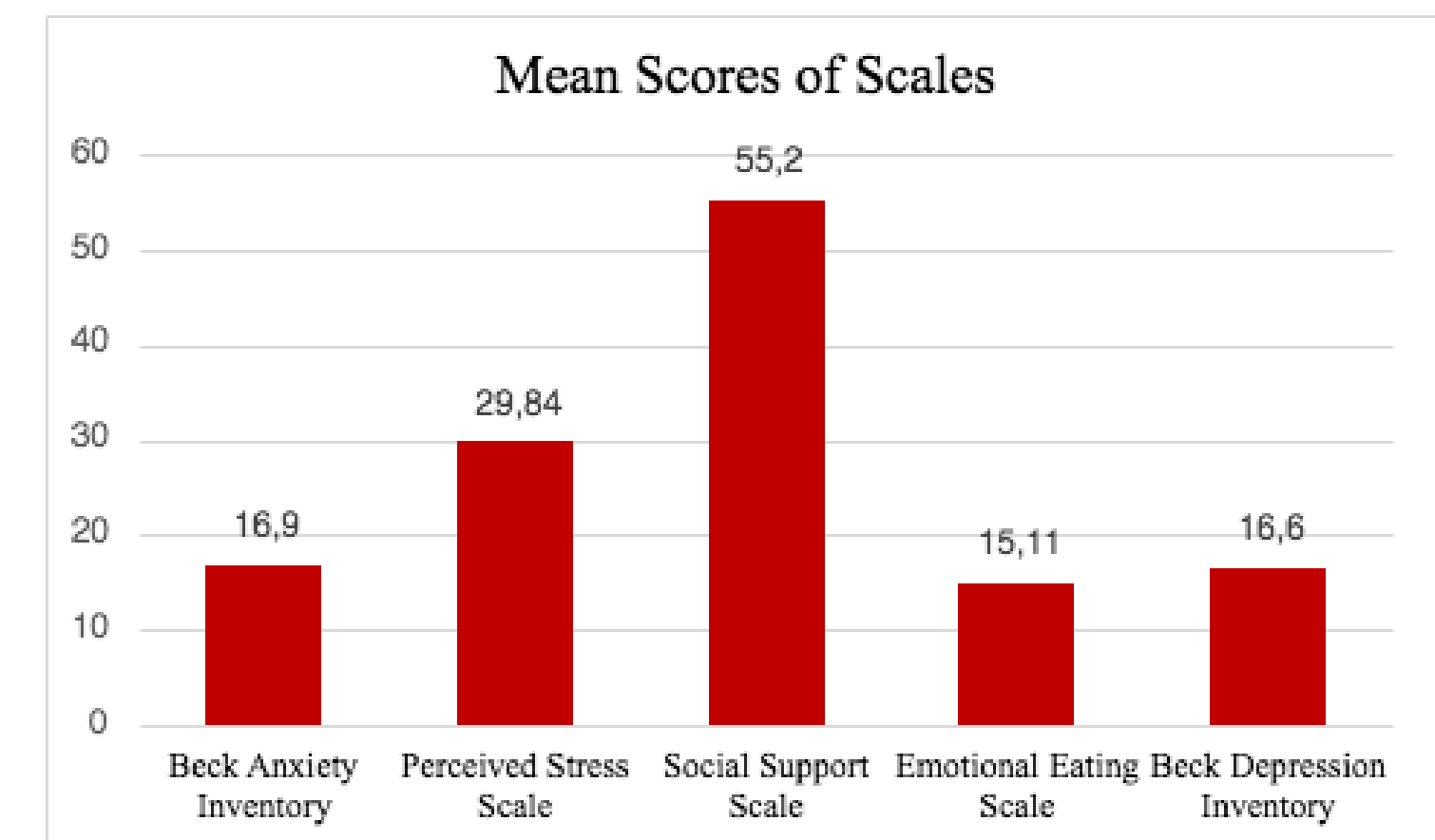


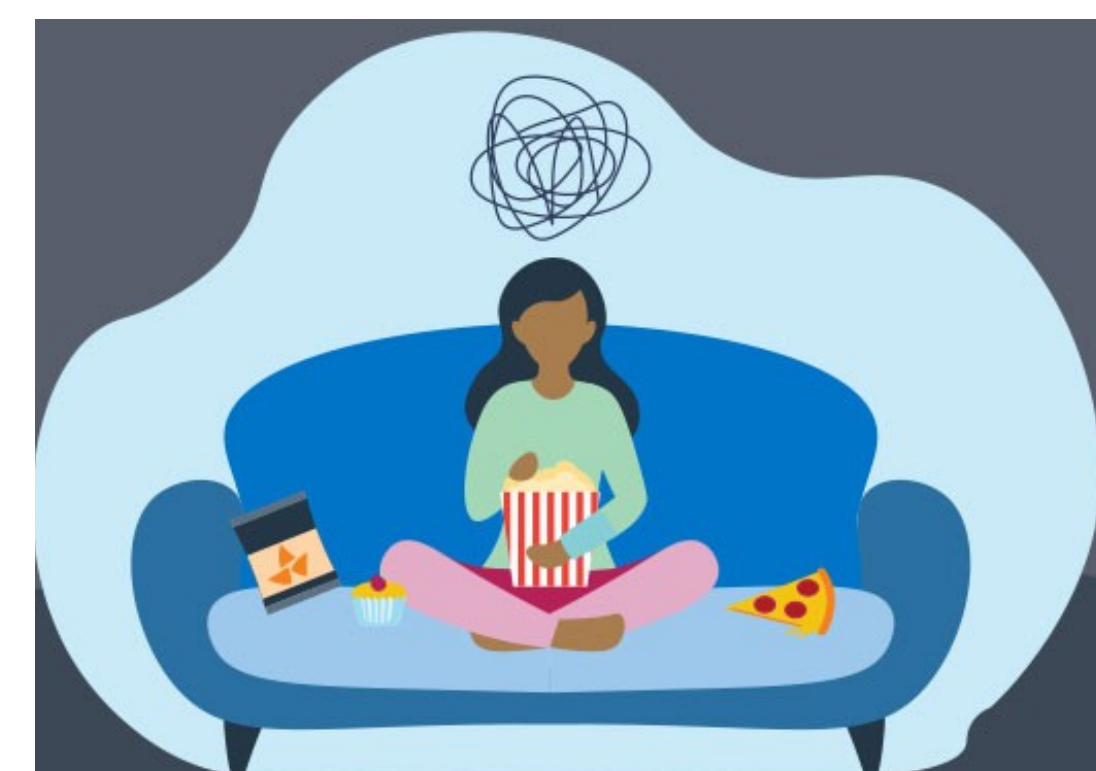
Figure. 3

	N:70	Beck Anxiety Inventory	Perceived Stress Scale	Social Support Scale	Emotional Eating Scale	Beck Depression Inventory
Beck Anxiety Inventory	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	0,496	-0,458	0,504	0,649
Perceived Stress Scale	Correlation Coefficient	0,496	1,000	-0,391	0,246	0,559
Social Support Scale	Correlation Coefficient	-0,458	-0,391	1,000	-0,272	-0,620
Emotional Eating Scale	Correlation Coefficient	0,504	0,246	-0,272	1,000	0,432
Beck Depression Inventory	Correlation Coefficient	0,649	0,559	-0,620	0,432	1,000

Figure. 4: Correlation Coefficient is between -1 and 1. If the number is closer to one, there is a positive correlation. If the number is closer to -1, there is a negative correlation between scales.

## CONCLUSION

The results obtained in the study indicate that stressful lifestyle can have a real impact on the development of emotional eating problems among medical students. Medical schools should closely monitor the mental well-being of students and encourage them to develop healthy lifestyles, optimize coping styles, and establish sources of social support.



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## KEY WORDS

Emotional eating, stress, social support, student, anxiety, depression