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Exploring students' and examiners' perceptions of the **sequential OSCE:** a **qualitative study**

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Background

- Sequential testing is a modern assessment approach that offers robustness with affordability.

- Some medical schools adopt sequential testing for OSCE as the CPSA (clinical and professional skills assessment) element of the UK Medical Licensing Examination (UKMLA).

- There is a noticeable lack of an in-depth qualitative analysis of stakeholders' acceptability and perceptions of sequential testing.

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Research Question

(RQ1) What factors influence candidates' self-efficacy in a sequential OSCE?

(RQ2) How do self-efficacy beliefs influence candidates' engagement and performance in a sequential OSCE?

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Context

1st sequence

Cutoff: Two SEM above borderline regression score
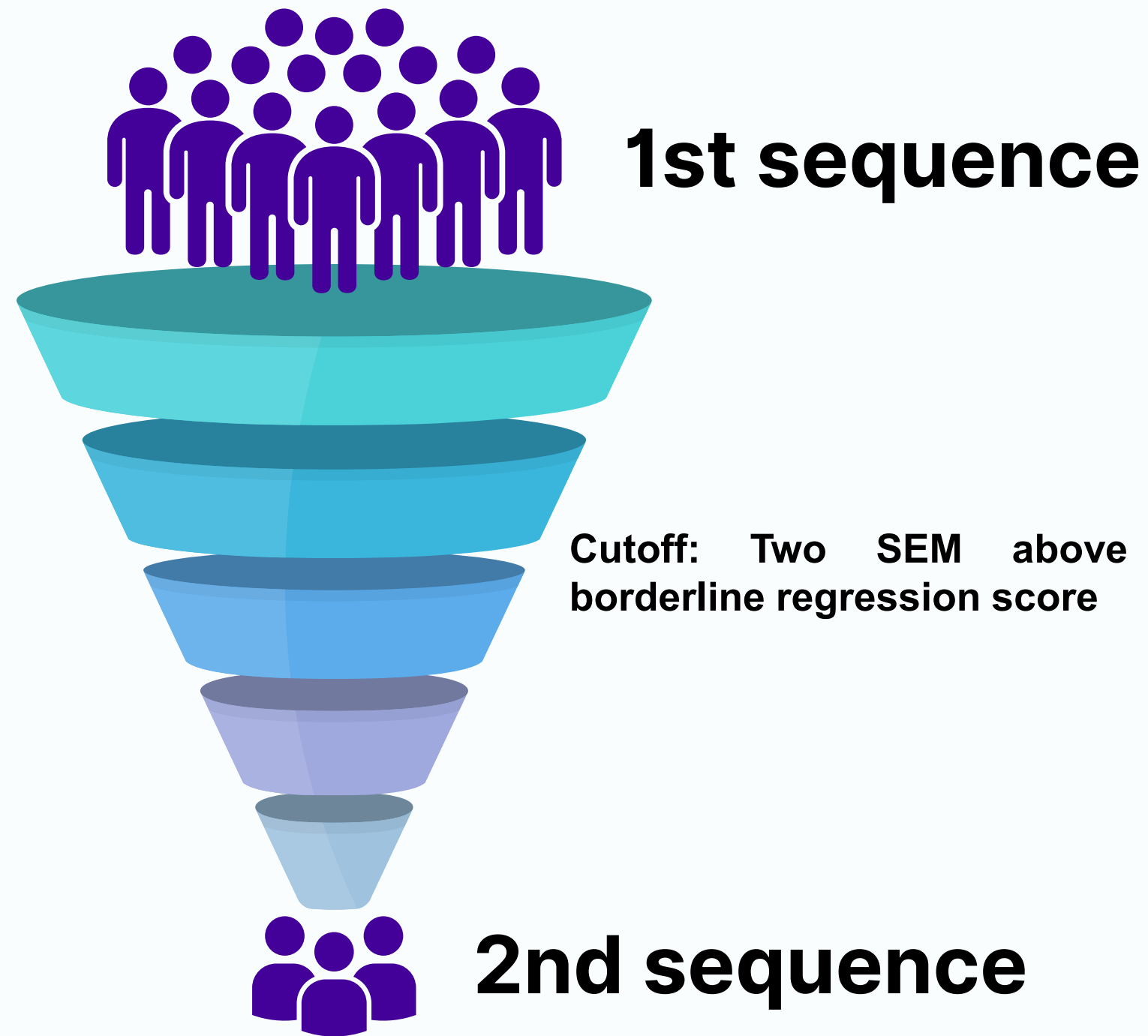
2nd sequence

Two large-scale (n=636) sequential OSCEs annually, one for third year and one in final year medical students.

All students sit 12 stations in the 1st sequence, students who do not pass the cutoff sit a further 12 stations

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Methodology

We conducted semi-structured interviews with sequential OSCE candidates (n=22)

- interpretivist paradigm

- theory-informing inductive data analysis study design

- framework analysis

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Theoretical lens: Self-efficacy theory

- People who credit their success to effort and ability (internal) feel more confident in future challenges (high self-efficacy).
- People who blame external factors or lack of ability (external/internal) feel less confident (low self-efficacy)
- Attribution shapes self-efficacy by influencing how people interpret past experiences and translate them into beliefs about future capabilities.

Research Question

(RQ1) What factors influence candidates' self-efficacy in a sequential OSCE?

(RQ2) How do self-efficacy beliefs influence candidates' engagement and performance in a sequential OSCE?

What's new compared to existing literature

- First study to provide an in-depth exploration of candidates' perceptions of sequential testing.

- Delves deeper into the psychological and motivational aspects.

- External factors such as the imperfect construct of sequential testing are significant determinants of candidates' performance.

- Complete understanding of the phenomenon requires the consideration of the reciprocal interaction and tension between external sociological factors and candidates' personal efficacy-activated processes.

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Recommendations for educators

Interventions to promote efficient sequencing

- Improve communication and information-giving
- Create a supportive learning environment for candidates navigating the whole sequence
- Optimising the exam environment
- Provide rich feedback and reduce outcome uncertainty
- Instill stress-coping strategies among candidates

Future research should focus on investigating the effectiveness of various strategies to improve students' self-efficacy in sequential testing.

Any questions?

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