



## t-test Using STATA Software

Maher D. Fuad Fuad<sup>1</sup>, Munn Sann Lye<sup>1</sup>, Normala Ibrahim<sup>2</sup>, Phang Cheng Kar<sup>2</sup>, Siti Irma Ismail<sup>2</sup>, Balsam Mahdi Nasir Al-Zurfi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Community Health, Faculty of Health and life sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Health and life sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Community Medicine Unit, Management and Science University/International Medical School, Malaysia.

### ARTICLE INFO

Received : 02/11/2014

Accepted : 04/03/2015

Published : 10/06/2015

### KEYWORD

t-test  
STATA

### ABSTRACT

Students-t test is the most popular statistical test. The test compares two mean values to judge if they are different or not. For small data it is possible to conduct it using manual calculation – however that is not the case. Researchers would need to use statistical software and packages to conduct their analysis. This guide will help the junior researchers to conduct independent- and paired-t test using STATA software.

© Medical Education Department, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. All rights reserved.

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:** Prof. Dato Dr. Munn Sann Lye, Department of Community Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 43400 Malaysia

Email: lyems9@yahoo.com

## Introduction

Students-t test is the most popular of all statistical tests. The test compares two mean (average) values to judge if they are different or not. The Students-t test is the most sensitive test for interval data, but it also requires the most stringent assumptions. The variables/data are assumed to be normally distributed. If there is any reason to doubt this assumption, use another, distribution-free, test (e.g., Wilcoxon Test).

This article is going to discuss the independent as well as paired t test analysis using STATA software.

## Method

Step by step guide for the analysis of t test using STATA software. The data set used is from a research conducted by the authors to determine

the effect of mindfulness relaxation methods on medical students stress, anxiety and depression. The research study design was randomized controlled trials were the students divided to intervention group and control group.

The researchers had two objectives:

1. To determine the mean anxiety score difference between intervention and control group after the intervention program.
2. To determine the mean anxiety score difference between pre and post intervention among the intervention group.

In any statistical test , in order to solve a research problem, we will have to follow the following steps[1]:

1. State the hypothesis
2. State 2 tails or one tail.

3. State  $\alpha$  level.
4. Select the appropriate statistical test.
5. State the assumptions.
6. Check the assumptions.
7. Perform STATA using appropriate test.
8. Interpretation and conclusion.
9. Presentation of result.

The details of the steps are as follow:

### 1. *State the hypothesis*

For the first objective:

$H_0$ : there is no mean score difference between the two groups after intervention.

$H_A$ : there is mean score difference between the two groups after intervention.

And in symbols

$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$

$H_A: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

For the second objective:

$H_0$ : there is no mean score difference between pre & post intervention.

$H_A$ : there is mean score difference between pre & post intervention.

And in symbols

$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$

$H_A: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

### 2. *State 2 tails or one tail.*

*Two tails test.* Because any of the two groups can be larger or smaller than the other. i.e. There was no statement on which of the groups is supposed to be larger in the objectives of the researchers.

### 3. *State $\alpha$ level.*

$\alpha$  will be set to be 0.05. This value is determined by the researcher before the research even started.

### 4. *Select the appropriate statistical test.*

For the first objective: Because we are comparing 2 groups (this is the independent variable which is categorical) and stress, anxiety, and depression scores are numerical (this is the dependent variable)

So we have to use independent t test

For the second objective: Because we are comparing pre and post (this is the independent variable which is paired observation) and stress, anxiety, and depression scores are numerical (this is the dependent variable)

So we have to use paired t test

### 5. *State the assumptions.*

For independent t test the assumptions are:

- a. Numerical data for test variables (stress, anxiety and depression scores).
- b. Random samples.
- c. The observations are independent.
- d. Test variable (scores) are normally distributed in each group.
- e. Equal variances between both groups.

For paired t test the assumptions are:

- a. Numerical data for test variables (stress, anxiety and depression scores).
- b. Random samples.
- c. The observations are dependent or paired.
- d. Observations difference (scores) are normally distributed.

The next steps will be discussed separately for each objective (i.e. each statistical test will be discussed separately)

### **Independent t test using STATA**

For the first objective (to compare the mean score between intervention and control group after the intervention)

**6. Check the assumptions.**

- a. Scores are continuous numerical variables.
- b. Samples are randomly selected (this is predetermined in the study design when the researcher decides to conduct the study).
- c. The observations are independent because we have two groups and the data are not measured twice or related in any way.
- d. Normality assumption for the test variable

This can be checked via:

- 1. If the data is  $> 30$ , based on central limit theorem we can assume that the data is normal and proceed with t test.
- 2. However, if it is  $< 30$ , we need to check the normality status via histogram and the normal curve as follow:

We can draw a histogram using the following command

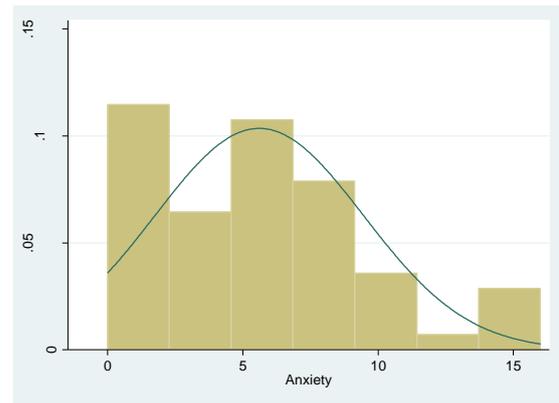
*Histogram dependent variable if independent variable==(code given for independent variable), normal*

So for the researchers' data (Theses for depression, anxiety and stress for intervention group respectively)

*histogram dass\_a\_p if group==0, normal*

(Theses for depression, anxiety and stress for control group respectively)

*histogram dass\_a\_p if group==1, normal*



(Anxiety control)

Although the sample size is relatively large and we can follow the central limit theorem and conduct the test.

However, for the purpose of complete analysis we may go for normality test using skewness-kurtosis test which will evaluate the null hypothesis that the sample at hand came from a normally-distributed population. The command is (sktest).

Use the command

*sktest dependent variable if independent variable==code given to independent variable*

For the researchers data as follows

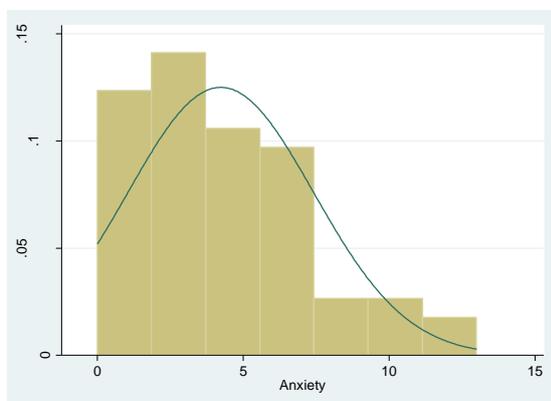
*sktest dass\_a\_p if group==0*

(For the intervention group)

*sktest dass\_a\_p if group==1*

(For the control group)

The results are shown in table 1.



(Anxiety Intervention)

Table 1: Skewness-kurtosis test which will evaluate the null hypothesis that the sample at hand came from a normally-distributed population.

```
. sktest dass_a_p if group==0

Skewness/Kurtosis tests for Normality

Variable | Obs Pr(Skewness) Pr(Kurtosis) adj chi2(2) Prob>chi2
-----|-----
dass_a_p | 61 0.0126 0.5455 6.15 0.0461

. sktest dass_a_p if group==1

Skewness/Kurtosis tests for Normality

Variable | Obs Pr(Skewness) Pr(Kurtosis) adj chi2(2) Prob>chi2
-----|-----
dass_a_p | 61 0.0141 0.5151 6.05 0.0486
```

Here, the probability of skewness is less than 0.05 in indicating a violation of normality. However we still can conduct t test (as mentioned earlier based on central limit theorem).

e. Equal variance assumption: to check the equality of variance we have to perform the robust tests for equality of variances test. We can use the command *robvar dependent variable, by (independent variable)*

For the researchers data

```
robvar dass_a_p, by ( group)
```

The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Robust tests for equality of variances test

group	Summary of Anxiety		Freq.
	Mean	Std. Dev.	
intervent	4.2295082	3.190577	61
control	5.6065574	3.8526125	61
Total	4.9180328	3.589678	122

```
W0 = 1.2705244 df(1, 120) Pr > F = 0.26191718
W50 = 1.1928007 df(1, 120) Pr > F = 0.2769532
W10 = 1.2307172 df(1, 120) Pr > F = 0.26948589
```

According to the results in the table equality of variance is assumed.

### 7. Perform STATA using appropriate test.

To perform the independent t test using STATA we need to use the following command:

```
.ttest dependent variable, by independent variable
```

For the researchers data

```
ttest dass_a_p,by ( group)
```

See table 3.

We only need to look for the mean difference, t value, degree of freedom (df), P value (Sig. (2-tailed) and 95% confidence interval

So,

Mean difference is -1.38

t value is -2.15

df is 120

P value is 0.034 and 95% C.I. is (-2.65, -0.11)

Table 3: independent t test using STATA

```
. ttest  dass_a_p,by  (group)

Two-sample t test with equal variances
```

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
interven	61	4.229508	.4085115	3.190577	3.412363	5.046653
control	61	5.606557	.4932765	3.852612	4.619858	6.593257
combined	122	4.918033	.3249942	3.589678	4.274621	5.561444
diff		-1.377049	.6404712		-2.645138	-.1089608

```

diff = mean(interven) - mean(control)          t = -2.1501
Ho: diff = 0                                degrees of freedom = 120

Ha: diff < 0                                Ha: diff != 0                                Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0168                          Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0336                          Pr(T > t) = 0.9832

```

So the result will be written as follow:

- Mean (SD) of intervention group = 4.23 (3.19)
- Mean (SD) of controls group = 5.61(3.85)
- t stats = -2.15, degree of freedom (df) = 120
- P value = 0.034
- Mean difference = -1.38 with 95% CI= (-2.65, -0.11)

**8. Interpretation and conclusion.**

To interpret as follows:

We reject the null hypothesis since P-value is significance (< 0.05) and 95% CI does not cross “0”.

So we accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>A</sub>) which state that there is mean anxiety score difference between the two groups.

So the mean anxiety score of intervention group is smaller than that of controls by 1.38 score after the intervention program and it was statistically significant (P value 0.034, 95% CI= (-2.65, -0.11)).

**9. Presentation of result.**

The final table should be presented as in table 4.

Table 4: Presentation of independent t test results

Table X: Mean anxiety score difference between Intervention and Control

Variable	Mean score (SD) of intervention	Mean score (SD) of control	Mean difference	t (df)	p value*	95% C.I.
Test result	4.23 (3.19)	5.61(3.85)	-1.38	-2.15 (120)	0.034	(-2.65, -0.11)

\*independent t test, SD = standard deviation

**Paired-t test using STATA**

For the second objective (to determine the mean score difference for intervention group before and after the intervention)

**1. Check the assumptions.**

- a. Scores are continuous numerical variables.
- b. Samples are randomly selected (this is predetermined in the study design when

the researcher decides to conduct the study).

- c. The observations are dependent because we have one group and the data are measured twice.
- d. Normality assumption for the observation deference.

This can be checked via:

- a. Score is numerical.
- b. Random sample from the study design.
- c. The observations are dependent (each measurement is separately) and paired because we have a before and after design.
- d. Observation difference should be normally distributed.

Normality can be checked through the following steps:

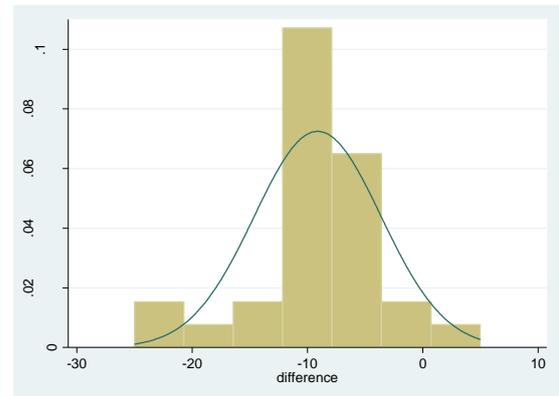
First we need to compute the difference as below:

```
.generate difference= d_ass_a_p- b_d_ass_a
```

the variable *difference* is generated now we can check the normality of this variable using histogram.

```
histogram difference, normal
```

The following graph will be generated and as shown the distribution is normal.



(Score difference)

## 2. Perform STATA using appropriate test.

To perform the paired t test using STATA we need to use the following command:

```
. t test first variable==second variable
```

For the researchers data

```
ttest d_ass_a_p== b_d_ass_a
```

See table 5.

Table 5: Paired t test using STATA

Paired t test						
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
d_ass_a_p	61	4.229508	.4085115	3.190577	3.412363	5.046653
b_d_ass_a	61	13.34426	.7147491	5.582369	11.91455	14.77397
diff	61	-9.114754	.7048227	5.504841	-10.52461	-7.704899

```

mean(diff) = mean(d_ass_a_p - b_d_ass_a)
Ho: mean(diff) = 0
Ha: mean(diff) < 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000

t = -12.9320
degrees of freedom = 60

Ha: mean(diff) != 0
Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000

Ha: mean(diff) > 0
Pr(T > t) = 1.0000

```

We only need to look for the mean difference, t value, degree of freedom (df), P value (Sig. (2-tailed) and 95% confidence interval

So, the result will be

Mean score (sd) before the intervention was 13.34 (5.58)

Mean score (sd) after the intervention was 4.23 (3.19)

Mean score difference (sd) was -9.11 (5.5) with 95% C.I. (-10.52, -7.70) and p value less than 0.001.

So the result will be written as follow:

### 3. Interpretation and conclusion.

To interpret as follows:

We reject the null hypothesis since *P*-value is significance (< 0.05) and 95% CI does not cross "0".

So we accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_A$ ) which state that there is mean anxiety score difference between before and after intervention.

So the mean anxiety score of after the intervention is smaller than that before by 9.11 scores and it was statistically significant (*P* value <0.001, 95% CI= (-10.52, -7.70)).

### 4. Presentation of result.

The final table should be presented as in table 6.

Table 6: Anxiety score after and before intervention among 61 students.

Variables	Pre-intervention score mean (SD)	Post- intervention score mean (SD)	Mean score difference (95% CI)	t-statistic (df)	p value
Anxiety score	13.34 (5.58)	4.23 (3.19)	-9.11 (-10.91, -7.70)	-12.93 (60)	<0.001

### Conclusion

The above guide will work as an easy step by step guide for a beginner to conduct the analysis using STATA software

### Reference

1. Daniel, W.W., *Biostatistics: a foundation for analysis in the health sciences*. New York, 1987.