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ABSTRACT

Depression Among Medical Students When Compared to Other Students at West Bank Universities.

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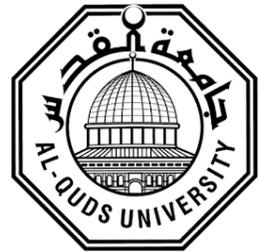
Published in December 2020

Background: Depression has been an inconspicuous yet crucial concern in our society, particularly among medical students, who are the future health care providers. Therefore, our research investigated the following question: “**What influence do socio-demographic and academic factors have on depression levels among medical students compared to other students, at West Bank Universities?**”

Objectives: This research aimed to assess the previous influence, identify and compare the prevalence of depression among medical and non-medical students. More importantly, to investigate whether medical students have the propensity for depression, or it is just a false perception of depression symptoms?

Methods: A quantitative, cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of **714 medical and non-medical students (comparative group)**, from Al-Quds and Al-Najah Universities. Data was collected using a questionnaire that includes: the investigation of research questions and related factors, and the computations of depression using Beck Depression Inventory. The data were analyzed using SPSS (VER:20).

Results: About one-third of our sample’s medical students suffered from some form of depression; in particular, moderate depression appeared to be relatively high (18.7% and 25.5%



in medical and control, respectively). At all depression levels, there appeared to be a significant difference, with a lower prevalence of depression in medical students compared to the control group, except that medical students suffered from a higher rate of mild mood disturbances (25.1%) than non-medical students (14.6%). Furthermore, there was a significant relationship ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between higher prevalence of depression and female gender, lower GPA, low economic status, and lack of psychological support. Other variables, such as accommodation and year of study, showed insignificant relationships with depression.

Conclusion: Based on these results, we conclude that the prevalence of depression appears to be high regardless of university or specialty, reflecting the high depression rates in Palestinian society. Higher prevalence of depression among non-medical students can be attributed to medical students' adaptation to stress from high school, as both universities accept high scores. The researchers recommend medical students to practice their hobbies and participate in **extracurricular activities** as both factors showed a significant decrease in depression.

Finally, the perception of higher depression among medical students seems to be false, according to our results.

Key words: Depression in Palestine, medical students, University students, Al-Najah University, Al-Quds University, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), extracurricular activities.