Reliability of a shortened version of the Zagazig Depression Scale and prevalence of depression in an Egyptian university student sample

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Abstract:

Background: There is some evidence that university students are at higher risk of depression; but rates have been found to vary widely across different countries, and there have been few surveys in representative samples. This study was carried out to assess the reliability of the Arabic-language Zagazig Depression Scale (ZDS) in a sample of Egyptian university students and to use the ZDS to assess the prevalence of depression. Methods: The study was a cross-sectional survey of a representative sample of 988 undergraduate students from Assiut University, Egypt (response rate, 82.3%). Prevalence of depressive symptoms was assessed using the ZDS, a self-report Arabic-language version of the Hamilton Rating Scale, modeled on the Carroll Rating Scale for Depression. Results: Participants had a mean ZDS score of 17.8 (±9.0) out of a possible maximum score of 46. Using the recommended cutoffs for the ZDS, 37.6% of the students were found to have at least moderate depression, with 71% exceeding the cutoff for mild depression. The internal consistency of the ZDS was excellent (Cronbach α = 0.904), as was the split-half correlation coefficient. Conclusion: This survey revealed a worryingly high rate of depressive symptoms in a representative sample of Egyptian university students. The ZDS is a reliable and acceptable tool for assessing mental health in a university population. Crown Copyright © 2011 Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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