## STUDY OF THE RISK FACTORS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING AMONG A SAMPLE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN EGYPT

#### **Thesis**

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#### $\mathbf{BY}$

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the soul of my father for his inspiring guidance. And continuous help of my mother, my husband and all my family who supported and encouraged me a lot and to my beloved son Kareem.

#### **ABSTRACT**

#### Aim of the Work:

The aim of this study was to determine the risk factors for psychological suffering in a sample of Egyptian university students with special emphasis on different characteristics of the current status of university education.

#### **Subjects and Methods:**

Hundred of the new students who were presenting to the psychiatric outpatient clinic of Cairo University Student Hospital. They were subjected to standardized measure of present state examination, life events stressors scale, coping process scale and semi-structured interview stressing on specific risks of different characteristics of the current status of university education.

#### **Results:**

The measured risk factors were family stressors and personal stressors which were accompanied with low level of wishful thinking, active coping and turning to religion.

#### **Keywords:**

Psychological suffering, Risk factors, College students.

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### List of Abbreviations

AAMC Association of American medical colleges

AMAC American medical association council on scientific

affairs

APA American psychiatric association

B.P.S Brief psychotic symptoms

CRI Coping responses inventory

CRI-Y Coping responses inventory-youth form

D.S.M.IV Diagnostic statistical manual of mental disorders the

4th edition)

Fig Figure

G.A.D Generalized anxiety disorder

G.H.Q General Health questionnaire

LISRES-Y The life stressors and social resources inventory-

youth from

M.D.D Major depressive disorder

O.C.D Obsessive compulsive disorder

P.S.E. Present state examination

S.P.S Shared psychotic symptoms

SPSS Statistical package of social science

WHO World health organization

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# INTRODUCTION & AIM OF THE WORK

#### INTRODUCTION

During the transition from the high school environment, students often experience personal and emotional problems, global psychological distress, somatic distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression (Gerdes and Mallinckrodt, 1994). Life transitions, such as moving away from home to college, create valuable opportunities for growth and change while also potentially heightening self-doubt and disappointment, and even encouraging self-defeating habits (Compas et al., 1986; Feinere et al., 1983; Schloss-berg, 1981; Weiss, 1990). These researchers indicated that a critical transition for many late adolescents is the move from one's childhood home to college.

Giddan (1988) has argued that the first year of college is the most difficult period of adjustment a student faces. Social or relational challenges are often primary for new college students (Kaufman et al., 1993), even though new college students' individual and academic pressures have been at the focus of college transition research.

Although the stresses of college life affect all students, only a relatively small number take advantage of counseling services. In an attempt to explain why some students seek professional counseling services and others do not, some investigators maintained that certain critical differences exist between that minority of college students who seek counseling and the majority who do not. For example, counselees have been found to have greater overall levels

of anxiety about themselves than those students who seek counseling (Coller and Megent, 1995).

During this major life change, most students add miles between themselves and people they have relied on for 18 years, break up with their significant others and promise to email the best friends they were used to seeing after school each day (Moss and Gordon, 1973; Schuff et al., 1994).

College, most often the best years of a student's life, at its first bloom carries with it high anxiety about changing location, routine and study habits; separation from friends; the learning environment; managing finances; and much more (Ensel and Nan 1991; Thoits and Peggy, 1995).

Tertiary education has always been regarded as highly stressful. Even though only the academically-minded of the population in society is eligible for tertiary education, this stressful environment can exert a negative effect on the psychological and physical well being of the undergraduates. This will eventually result in poor academic performance and possibly a large number of psychological casualties (**Supe**, **1998**).

A study in Singapore reported 57% of medical students had mental disorders based on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) compared to 47.3% of law students (**Ko et al., 1999**). Although more than half of all patients with mental disorders are initially seen in the general medical system, their symptoms are frequently not diagnosed and thus, they are not likely to receive proper treatment.

Studies on mental disorders among medical students have found that these disorders are under diagnosed and under treated. Failure to detect these disorders will unfortunately lead to increase psychological morbidity with unwanted effects throughout their careers and lives (**Firth-Cozens, 1987**). Early detection shortens the duration of an episode of emotional disorder and results in far less social impairment in the long term .Therefore, mental disorders must be eradicated or minimized at an early stage for a better quality of life among medical students.

#### **HYPOTHESIS**

- Not all university students presenting to psychiatric outpatient clinic are suffering from psychiatric disorder. Some of them may be stressed or burned out because of the presence of risk environmental factors.
- The type of university education may impose special stress on university students.

#### AIM OF THE WORK

#### This work will determine:

 The risk factors for psychological suffering in a sample of Egyptian university students with special emphasis on the different characteristics of the current status of university education.