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Eating disorders and body image concerns among medical students in Syria: a study on prevalence and risk factors

Submission date
20/06/2025

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
20/06/2025

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
20/06/2025

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, or binge-eating are serious mental health conditions that affect how people eat and feel about their bodies. Medical students face high stress and pressure, which may put them at risk for these problems. However, no studies have looked at eating disorders among medical students in Syria. This study aimed to:
1. Measure how common eating disorders and body image concerns are among medical students at Aleppo University.
2. Compare risks between male and female students.
3. Check if body mass index (BMI) is linked to these issues.

Who can participate?
Medical students (any year) aged 18 years or older at Aleppo University

What does the study involve?
Participants filled out a 15–20 minute anonymous survey online, answering questions about:
1. Their eating habits
2. How they feel about their body shape
3. Basic details like age, gender, weight, and height (to calculate BMI)
No treatments or follow-ups were required - it was a one-time survey.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Benefits: Helps universities understand students' mental health needs and design better support programs.
Risks: Some questions might feel personal, but participation was voluntary, and answers were kept private.

Where is the study run from?
Aleppo University (Syria)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
February 2024 to March 2024

Who is funding the study?
Investigator initiated and funded

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Study information

Scientific Title
Prevalence of eating disorders and body shape concerns among medical students at Aleppo University, Syria: a cross-sectional study assessing gender differences and BMI associations

Acronym
EDMS-SYR

Study objectives
1. To determine the prevalence of disordered eating attitudes (using EAT-26) and body shape concerns (using BSQ-34) among medical students at Aleppo University, Syria.
2. To assess gender differences in eating disorder risk and body dissatisfaction.
3. To examine the relationship between BMI categories and disordered eating behaviors/body image concerns.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 02/02/2024, Local Research Ethics Committee of Aleppo University-CME (Aleppo, Aleppo, -, Syria; -; cmoffice@alepuniv.edu.sy), ref: 7

Primary study design
Observational

Study design
Single-center cross-sectional observational study

Study type(s)
Screening

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Eating disorders (EDs) and body image concerns

Interventions
Participants are medical students at Aleppo University who voluntarily complete an anonymous online survey. The survey includes three sections:
1. Demographics (age, gender, BMI, academic year, income, smoking/exercise habits)
2. Eating disorder screening (26-item EAT-26 questionnaire)
3. Body image assessment (34-item BSQ-34 questionnaire)

Duration:
Participation: single session (~15–20 minutes).
Observation period: survey open for 2 months (February–March 2024)
Follow-up: none (cross-sectional design)

Process:
Enrollment: Students access the survey via email/Telegram links.
Participation: After providing electronic consent, they complete the survey in one sitting (mandatory responses to prevent missing data).
Completion: Responses are anonymized and stored securely; participants may withdraw before submission.

No interventions, clinical visits, or further contact occur.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Prevalence of high-risk eating disorders: the proportion of participants scoring ≥20 on the Eating Attitudes Test-26 (EAT-26) at a single assessment at survey completion (February–March 2024)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Severity of body shape dissatisfaction measured using the Body Shape Questionnaire-34 (BSQ-34) at a single assessment at survey completion
2. Gender differences in eating disorder risk: comparison of EAT-26 scores (≥20 vs <20) between males and females at a single assessment at survey completion
3. Association between BMI categories and disordered eating: EAT-26 scores across BMI groups (underweight, normal, overweight, obese) at a single assessment at survey completion
4. Demographic correlates (e.g., academic year, income): links between EAT-26/BSQ-34 scores

and demographics in a self-reported demographic survey at a single assessment at survey completion

Completion date
30/03/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Enrolled as an undergraduate medical student at Aleppo University, Syria, during the study period (February–March 2024)
2. Aged 18 years or older (no upper age limit, as the study targets all academic years)
3. Willing and able to provide electronic informed consent prior to survey participation
4. Access to an internet-connected device (to complete the online survey via Google Forms)
5. Proficiency in Arabic (the survey was administered in Arabic)

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
310

Key exclusion criteria
1. Non-medical students (e.g., students enrolled in other faculties or programs at Aleppo University)
2. Individuals unable to complete the survey independently due to cognitive or language barriers (e.g., non-Arabic speakers)
3. Duplicate submissions (prevented by requiring unique email addresses for survey access)

Date of first enrolment
05/02/2024

Date of final enrolment
30/03/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Syria

Study participating centre
Aleppo University
Faculty of Medicine
Aleppo University Campus
Aleppo
Syria
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Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Aleppo

ROR
https://ror.org/03mzvxz96

Funder(s)

Funder type
Other

Funder Name
Investigator initiated and funded

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
IPD will not be shared to protect participant privacy

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available