

# **Eating Disorder Outpatients in Lebanon: a Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study**

**Beleza Abdalla, Hanine Mattar, Lea Rossek, Nadine Zeeni, and HibaSafieddine.**

Lebanese American University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

[Beleza.abdallah@gmail.com](mailto:Beleza.abdallah@gmail.com), [hanine.mattar@gmail.com](mailto:hanine.mattar@gmail.com), [lea.rossek@gmail.com](mailto:lea.rossek@gmail.com),  
[Nadine.zeeni@lau.edu.lb](mailto:Nadine.zeeni@lau.edu.lb)

Research in the field of eating disorders (ED) remains limited in the Middle East. Although it was declared by several studies that there is an increase in some of the risk factors associated with ED in Lebanese students, no study has previously been conducted on Lebanese patients who were clinically diagnosed with ED. The aim of the present study was to profile ED patients seeking help at outpatient clinics across Lebanon. This was accomplished by health care practitioners who were asked to fill one questionnaire per ED patient. Collected information included demographics, medical history, anthropometrics, therapy characteristics and its outcome. Bulimia nervosa was the most prevalent ED (44.6%) followed by anorexia nervosa (30.1%) and binge eating (24.3%). The emerging socio-demographic profile of the Lebanese ED patient was that of a single female young adult of middle to high socio-economic status with severe ED symptoms (amenorrhea and/or multiple purging behaviors) often accompanied by depression (73.4 %). In addition, distorted body image was a major characteristics of ED patients ,with the AN group having the highest prevalence (96.7%). Regarding the outcome of the therapy, it was not different between disorders, however it was positively correlated with the number of consultations ( $r=0.441$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). The current study emphasizes the compelling need for a public health approach to ED awareness and could help in developing remedial and preventive educational programs targeting youth in Lebanon and the Middle East. Moreover, there is a clear need for specialized multidisciplinary clinics dedicated to ED therapy in the region.