

Publication

Exploring the role of social capital, self-efficacy and social contagion in shaping lifestyle and mental health among students representing the future healthcare workforce in Palestine: social cohort study protocol

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INTRODUCTION: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and depression form an unhealthy mix. The project focuses on potentially effective psychosocial factors shaping health-related habits and mental health. The study is conducted among health domain students. Understanding what shapes their health will determine their quality of care. The study is implemented at An-Najah National University in Palestine. This zone of continuous conflict psychological stress is high and mental health problems are stigmatised. **METHODS AND ANALYSIS:** Students who are enrolled in second and third year will be invited to fill in a baseline and two follow-up online questionnaires. The questionnaires will assess: health behaviours and outcomes (health-related habits, obesity and mental health), main predictors (social capital, social network, self-efficacy), confounders (general and sociodemographic characteristics) and effect modifiers (sense of coherence (SOC) and family SOC). Friendships within participating students will be identified by allowing students to name their friends from a pull-down menu of all students. Descriptive statistics and scores will describe participant's characteristics. The relationship between health behaviour, outcomes and main predictors will be examined by regression and structural equation models. Clustering of health behaviours and outcomes will be assessed by permutation tests. Their spread within the network of friends will be investigated by longitudinal generalised estimating equations. **DISCUSSION:** The study will identify the prevalence of NCD-related health habits and mental health aspects in the future healthcare workforce in Palestine. It will be the first study to address the role of psychosocial factors for the targeted students. It has the potential to identify targets for promoting physical and mental health among these future professionals. **ETHICS AND DISSEMINATION:** Ethical approval was obtained from Ethikkommission Nordwest- und Zentralschweiz (EKNZ) in Switzerland and the Institutional Review Board Committee (IRBC) in Palestine. Participation in the study is voluntary and requires informed consent. The data management methodology ensures the confidentiality of the data. The outcomes of the study will be published as scientific papers. In addition, it will be presented in stakeholder conferences and to students at An-Najah National University.

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