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**Master Thesis Defense**

Entitled

*CHAOTICALLY-DISENGAGED FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN MUSLIM  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY AND SELF-  
COMPASSION*

by

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Abstract

Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health issues among university students. Growing evidence suggests an association between impaired family functioning and increased depressive symptoms. However, there is a gap in the literature with regards to the factors that mediate this relationship. Psychological flexibility and self-compassion are two factors that have been previously linked to both family functioning and depressive symptoms. The present study aims to investigate the mediation role of psychological flexibility and self-compassion on the association between chaotically-disengaged family functioning and depressive symptoms in Muslim university students. Whilst previous studies have been conducted in this topic area in the United States, the results of the present study apply uniquely to the Middle East context. A cross-sectional research design was employed, whereby Muslim university students completed a set of questionnaires measuring chaotically-disengaged family functioning, depressive symptoms, psychological flexibility and self-compassion. Mediation analyses revealed that chaotically-disengaged family functioning was significantly and positively associated with depressive symptoms. Both psychological flexibility and self-compassion emerged as significant mediators in the model. As expected, higher levels of chaotic-disengagement were associated with lower levels of self-compassion, and in turn, lower levels of self-compassion were associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. On the contrary, chaotic-disengagement was associated with higher psychological flexibility, which in turn, was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. The results suggest that strategies focusing on increasing self-compassion may be effective in reducing the negative effect of living in a chaotically-disengaged family environment on depressive symptoms in Muslim university students. In terms of psychological flexibility, results should be interpreted with caution, and the limitations of the methodological design must be taken into account.

**Keywords:** chaotically-disengaged family functioning, depressive symptoms, psychological flexibility, self-compassion, Muslim, university students

