The Level of Optimism Among Divorced Women

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Abstract:

This study investigated the level of optimism among divorced women and examined whether it varied according to age, educational level, number of children, and employment status. The sample consisted of 50 divorced women residing in Algiers.

Using the descriptive method .Data were collected through a personal information questionnaire prepared by the researcher and the *Optimism Scale for Divorced Women* developed by Ensaf Abdelkader Ibrahim Amro and Amina Ahmed Al-Sharif (2018).

Statistical analyses indicated significant differences in optimism based on age, with higher scores among women aged 20–30 years. Significant differences also emerged by educational level, favoring university graduates; by number of children, favoring women without children; and by employment status, favoring employed women. Overall, the participants demonstrated a moderate level of optimism, highlighting the influence of sociodemographic factors on the psychological well-being of divorced women.

Keywords: divorced women, optimism,

الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة الى الكشف عن مستوى التفاؤل لدى النساء المطلقات ، ومعرفة ما اذا يختلف باختلاف كل من السن و المستوى التعليمي وعدد الابناء والحالة المهنية . تكونت عينة الدراسة من 50 مطلقة مقيمة في ولاية الجزائر.

تم الاعتماد على المنهج الوصفي وجمعت البيانات باستخدام استبيان المعلومات الشخصية من اعداد الباحثة، ومقياس التفاؤل لدى النساء المطلقات من اعداد انصاف عبد القادر عمرو وامينة احمد الشريف (2018)

اظهرت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في مستوى التفاؤل تبعا لمتغير السن لصالح المطلقات اللواتي تتراوح اعمارهن بين 20 و30 سنة .كما وجدت ان هناك فروق دالة احصائيا تبعا لمتغير المستوى التعليمي لصالح الجامعيات ،وتبعا لعدد الابناء لصالح غير المنجبات وتبعا للحالة المهنية لصالح العاملات ،اظهرت المشاركات مستوى متوسط من التفاؤل مما يبرز تاثير العومل السوسيوديموغرافية في الصحة النفسية للنساء المطلقات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النساء المطلقات ،التفاؤل.

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1. Introduction and Research Problem

Optimism is a central topic in psychology in general and in positive psychology in particular. It has received considerable attention from psychologists and researchers due to its strong association with both psychological and physical well-being. Optimism shapes individual behavior and social relationships, as it fosters positive expectations for the future, enhances resilience against despair and failure, and supports personal success.

As a positive psychological construct, optimism helps mitigate the effects of stress by strengthening an individual's coping skills, promoting a constructive perspective on life, and facilitating effective problem-solving in personal and familial contexts. Individuals with higher levels of optimism tend to possess more adaptive strategies for managing stress and life challenges (Abu Al-Diyar, 2010, p. 61).

Mustafa Hijazi (2012) defines optimism as a state characterized by confidence in achieving goals and the ability to face obstacles, challenges, and even adversities (Hijazi, 2012, p. 115). Similarly, the World Health Organization (2004) conceptualizes optimism as a voluntary psychological process that generates satisfaction and self-confidence while distancing the individual from feelings of despair and helplessness. Optimistic individuals interpret crises in a manageable way, which fosters a sense of security and well-being, and enhances both psychological and physical immunity (Qneita, 2016, p. 10).

Maslow emphasizes that optimistic personalities are those that achieve self-actualization, reaching the highest level of talent and personal growth—a focal point of positive psychology research (Dayf & Boutaghan, p. 32). Likewise, Seligman notes that while optimists and pessimists face the same setbacks, optimists recover more effectively. They demonstrate resilience, vitality, higher work performance, better health, and often greater longevity (Dayf & Boutaghan, p. 32).

The significance of optimism and positive thinking lies in their profound influence on psychological well-being. A positive mental attitude can replace undesirable emotions that hinder personal growth and is closely linked to success across various life domains. Positive thinking—essentially the practice of optimism—enables individuals to focus on the good in every situation and has lasting effects on daily functioning and future life outcomes (Saeed Al-Ruqeeb, 2008, p. 7).

Prior research has consistently highlighted the benefits of optimism. Studies by Abdel-Khaleq (2000), Charyton et al. (2009), Kelloniemi et al. (2005), and Heinonen et al. (2005) demonstrated that optimism reduces the risk of health problems, accelerates recovery from critical life events such as illness or bereavement, and is associated with lower anxiety, greater resilience, improved decision-making, and enhanced creativity. Optimism also correlates positively with happiness, stress management, problem-solving, self-control, self-esteem, psychological and physical health, and healthy lifestyle habits. In contrast, pessimism is linked to anxiety, depression, hopelessness, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, neuroticism, hostility, social withdrawal, low academic achievement, and unhealthy behaviors (Muheisen, 2012, p. 54).

Divorce has become an increasingly important social concern due to the rising rates in recent years. In Algeria, data from the Ministry of Justice show that divorce cases increased from 57,000 in 2015 to 63,000 in 2016, reaching 68,000 in 2017 (Sputnik News, 2018). Tounsi (2000) describes divorce as the final stage in a chain of family conflicts and disintegration. While it may sometimes be a necessary solution to escape marital tension and

burdens, it inevitably causes harm to family members. Recovery and adaptation can take a long time, and numerous studies have documented the negative psychological effects of divorce on women, including anxiety and depression (Amro & Al-Sharif, 2018, p. 2).

Empirical studies have addressed optimism in divorced women. For example, Amro and Al-Sharif (2018) examined optimism among 200 divorced women in Hebron, Palestine. The study found that overall optimism was moderate, with significant differences by age (favoring women over 30), employment (favoring employed women), and education (favoring university graduates). Similarly, Qneita (2016) assessed optimism, pessimism, and life satisfaction among 296 divorced women in Gaza. Her results indicated above-average optimism, with significant differences by age (favoring women aged 30 or below), residence (favoring Rafah), educational attainment (favoring university graduates), employment (favoring employed women), and number of children (favoring women without children).

Drawing on these findings and the reviewed literature, the present study seeks to determine the level of optimism among divorced women in Algeria and to explore potential differences across age, educational level, number of children, and employment status.

1.2-Research Questions

2. 1 What is the level of optimism among divorced women?

2. 2 Are there statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women according to age, educational level, number of children, and employment status?

1.3-Hypotheses

-The level of optimism among divorced women is moderate.

-There are statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women according to age, educational level, number of children, and employment status.

1.4-Study Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

-To identify the level of optimism among divorced women.

-To examine the influence of personal variables on the level of optimism among divorced women (age, educational level, number of children, and employment status).

1.5-Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the following points:

5. 1It addresses an important social group—divorced women—especially in light of the significant increase in divorce rates in Algeria.
5. 2It focuses on optimism, which is considered a key variable in the field of positive psychology.

1.6-Spatial and Temporal Limits

The study was conducted on a sample of 50 divorced women residing in Algiers during July 2025.

2. Definition of Terms

A. Optimism

Conceptual Definition:

-Badr Al-Ansari (1998) defined optimism as a hopeful outlook toward the future that leads an individual to expect the best and anticipate positive events while excluding negative possibilities (Al-Ansari, 1998, p. 15).

-Abdel-Khaleq (1998) described optimism as a hopeful perspective toward the future, where an individual expects the best, anticipates good events, aspires for success, and disregards negative possibilities (Abdel-Khaleq, 1998, p. 45).

-Dember & Brooks (1989) defined optimism as a concept reflecting a positive outlook on life, encompassing the perception and evaluation of both the present and the future (Dember & Brooks, 1989, p. 102).

- Optimism is a psychological tendency that reflects an individual's expectation of positive events in the future, and their adoption of a positive outlook on life, the present and the future, with little focus on negative outcomes.

Operational Definition:

Optimism is defined operationally as the total score obtained by a divorced woman on the *Optimism Scale for Divorced Women* developed by Ensaf Abdelkader Ibrahim Amro and Amina Ahmed Al-Sharif (2018).

B. Divorce

-Al-Harasis (1996) defined divorce as the breakdown of the family structure, resulting in the failure of one or both parties to fulfill their obligations toward the children. It is a means used by one or both spouses to escape unavoidable marital tensions (Amro & Al-Sharif, 2018, p. 5).

-Al-Olayan (2005) defined divorce as the dissolution of the marital bond between spouses using specific verbal expressions, whether explicit or implicit (Al-Olayan, 2005, p. 22).

-According to Khuwaiter (2010), a divorced woman is any woman who has been separated from her husband during his lifetime through his act of divorce (Amro & Al-Sharif, 2018, p. 5).

-Divorce is the dissolution of the marital bond between spouses during the husband's lifetime, resulting in the breakdown of the family structure, the impossibility of continuing married life, and the inability of one or both parties to fulfill family obligations.

A divorced woman is any woman who has separated from her husband during his lifetime through a legal divorce, resulting in changes in her social and familial status, along with accompanying psychological and social effects.

2- Method and Tools:

2.1-Research Methodology

Since the study focuses on the level of optimism among divorced women, the **descriptive method** was adopted, as it aligns with the research objective and aims to describe the characteristics of a particular situation and its observable factors. Descriptive studies are considered easier to interpret and comprehend (Abdel Fattah Dweidar, 2007, p. 76).

2.2-Data Collection Tools

-Personal Information Questionnaire:

This form collects personal data about the divorced women, including age, educational level, number of children, and employment status.

-Optimism Scale for Divorced Women (Amro & Al-Sharif, 2018): This scale consists of **15 items**, each rated on a **3-point Likert scale**:

Always (3 points)

Sometimes (2 points)

Never (1 point)

Scale Scoring

15–25 points: Low optimism
26–35 points: Moderate optimism
36–45 points: High optimism

Psychometric Properties of the Scale

In the Original Study:

A. **Validity:**
   a. *Face validity* was confirmed by presenting the initial version of the scale to seven experts in psychological counseling and mental health to ensure clarity and appropriateness of the items.
   b. *Construct validity* was examined using the correlation matrix between items and the total score, confirming high validity.

B. **Reliability:**
   Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was **0.91**, indicating very high reliability.

In the Current Study:

A. **Validity:**
   Internal consistency was calculated using item-total correlations, which ranged between **0.70 and 0.93** at the **0.01 significance level**, confirming good validity.

B. **Reliability:**
Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was **0.82**, indicating a high level of reliability.

2.3-Statistical Methods

-Arithmetic means and standard deviations

-Pearson correlation coefficient

-T-test

-One-way ANOVA

-Scheffé test for post-hoc analysis of ANOVA results

2.4-Study Sample

The study used a **purposive sampling method**, which is a non-probability sampling technique. The sample consisted of **50 divorced women**, selected from **Algiers**, on whom the study was applied.

Characteristics of the Study Sample

The study sample consisted of 50 divorced women. The main characteristics of this sample are presented in terms of age, educational level, number of children, employment status, and the results related to their level of optimism.

a) Age Variable

Table (1) presents the distribution of the study sample according to the age variable

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20_29	28	56%
30_39	14	28%
40_49	8	16%
Total	50	100%

The participants in the study sample were categorized into **three age groups** as follows:

Group 1: 20–29 years

Group 2: 30–39 years

Group 3: 40–49 years

According to Table (1), the number of divorced women aged 20–29 years was 28, representing 56% of the total sample. The 30–39 years age group included 14 participants (28%), while the 40–49 years age group was the smallest, with 8 participants (16%).

This distribution indicates that the largest proportion of the study sample consists of younger divorced women aged 20–29 years, while the number of participants decreases gradually with age.

b) Educational Level Variable

Table (2): presents the distribution of the study sample according to educational level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	2	4
Primary	5	10
Intermediate	6	12
Secondary	26	52
University	11	22
Total	50	%100

The participants were classified according to five educational levels: **no formal education, primary, intermediate, secondary, and university**. As shown in Table 2, **2 divorced women (4%)** had no formal education, **5 (10%)** had a primary level, **6 (12%)** had an intermediate level, **26 (52%)** had a secondary level, and finally **11 (22%)** were university graduates.

C. Number of Children Variable

Table (3): Distribution of the Study Sample According to the Number of Children

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No children	9	18
Two or fewer	22	44
Three or more	19	38
Total	50	100%

The participants in the study sample were classified according to the number of children into three categories: childless, two children or fewer, and three children or more. As shown in Table (3), 9 divorced women (18%) had no children, 22 (44%) had two children or fewer, and 19 (38%) had three or more children.

D. Employment Status Variable

Table (4): Distribution of the Study Sample According to Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	17	34
Unemployed	33	66
Total	50	100%

The participants in the study sample were categorized according to their employment status as either employed or unemployed.
As indicated in Table (4), 17 divorced women (34%) were employed, while 33 (66%) were unemployed.

E. Optimism Score Variable

The mean optimism score for the study sample was **29.84**, with a standard deviation of **4.727**.
Accordingly, the level of optimism among divorced women in the study sample is considered moderate.

3- Results and Discussion

-First Hypothesis: The level of optimism among divorced women is moderate.
The mean score of optimism among the study sample was **29.84**, with a standard deviation of **4.727**, indicating that the level of optimism among divorced women is **moderate**. Accordingly, the first hypothesis stating that the level of optimism among divorced women is moderate **was confirmed**. This finding is **consistent** with the results of **Amro & Al-Sharif (2018)**, but **contradicts** the findings of **Quneita (2016)**, which indicated that the level of optimism among divorced women was **above average**.

-Second Hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women **attributable to the variables of age, educational level, number of children, and employment status**.

There are statistically significant differences in optimism scores according to the **age variable**.

-Optimism and Age

Table (5): presents the mean scores of optimism according to age.

Age (Years)	Frequency	Mean Optimism Score
20_29	28	35.1
30_39	14	28.95
40_49	8	29.25

As shown in **Table 5**, the mean optimism score among the study sample was **35.10** for the age group **20–29**, **28.95** for the age group **30–39**, and **29.25** for the age group **40–49**.

Table (6): presents the differences in optimism scores by age.

Optimism Score	F-value	Sig. (p-value)
Age	4.666	0.004

As indicated in Table 6, the F-value was 4.666 at a significance level of 0.004, suggesting statistically significant differences in optimism scores by age.
Using Scheffé's post hoc test, the difference was in favor of the 20–29 age group at the 0.05 significance level.

Accordingly, there are significant differences in optimism levels by age, favoring younger divorced women (20–29 years old).

According to Table 6, the F-value was 4.666 at a significance level of 0.004. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in optimism scores based on the age variable. Using the Scheffé post hoc test, it was found that the difference in optimism scores according to age favored the age group of 20–29 years at the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, there are statistically significant differences in optimism scores according to age, in favor of the 20–29 age group.

The hypothesis stating that there are statistically significant differences in optimism scores according to the age variable, in favor of the 20–29 age group, was confirmed. This result is consistent with the findings of the study by Ensaf Amro and Amina Al-Sharif (2018) and the study by Suhad Qanita (2016).

This result can be interpreted by noting that younger divorced women often possess a greater ability to adapt to life changes compared to older age groups. At this stage of life, the future remains open to them, and divorce may be perceived as an opportunity to reorganize priorities, such as continuing education or entering the labor market. Additionally, younger divorcees are more likely to receive stronger social support from family and friends, who may view divorce at this age as a step toward liberation from an unsuccessful relationship rather than a social stigma. Furthermore, the evolving societal perception of divorce tends to be more accepting for younger women, which reduces social pressures and allows them to express their emotions in a healthy manner, thereby maintaining a higher level of optimism.

-**The second sub-hypothesis** states that there are statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women according to the educational level variable.

-Optimism and Educational Level

Table (7) presents the mean level of optimism according to the educational level.

Educational Level	Frequency	Mean Optimism Score
No formal education	2	26.28
Primary	5	31.05
Intermediate	6	30.52
Secondary	26	28.15
University	11	33.2

As shown in Table (7), the mean optimism scores among the study sample varied by educational level: 26.28 for women with no formal education, 31.05 for those with primary education, 30.52 for intermediate level, 28.15 for secondary level, and 33.20 for university-level participants.

Table (8) presents the differences in optimism scores by educational level.

Optimism Score	F-value	Sig. (p-value)
Educational Level	10.948	0.000

According to Table (8), there are statistically significant differences in optimism scores according to the educational level variable, with an F-value of 10.948 at the 0.01 significance

level. Using the Scheffé post hoc test, the differences were found to favor women with a **university-level education**.

Accordingly, the second sub-hypothesis is confirmed: there are statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women based on educational level, favoring university-educated participants. This finding is consistent with the results of **Qanita (2016)** and **Amro & Al-Sharif (2018)**.

This finding indicates that the **educational level variable** is a statistically significant factor influencing optimism, with **university-educated women** exhibiting the highest levels of optimism. This result can be interpreted in light of several interrelated factors.

First, higher education provides broader cognitive and life skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to make rational decisions. These skills enhance an individual's sense of self-efficacy and control over life circumstances, which in turn reduces feelings of helplessness and fosters greater optimism toward the future.

Second, higher educational attainment is often associated with better professional and social opportunities. University-educated divorced women are more likely to have wider social networks, more stable employment opportunities, and greater financial independence. All these elements directly contribute to building a positive and optimistic outlook on life.

Finally, the university environment itself can provide a cognitive and cultural context that encourages positive thinking and personal growth, equipping individuals with more effective coping mechanisms to face life challenges, including divorce, thereby maintaining a higher level of optimism.

The Third Sub-Hypothesis:

There are statistically significant differences in optimism levels among divorced women **based on the number of children**.

Optimism and the Number of Children

Table (9) presents the mean scores of optimism according to the number of children

Number of Children	Frequency	Optimism Score
No children	9	32.49
Two or fewer	22	29.12
Three or more	19	27.91

As shown in **Table 9**, the mean optimism scores varied according to the number of children: **32.49** for divorced women without children, **29.12** for those with two children or fewer, and **27.91** for those with three or more children.

Table (10) shows the differences in optimism levels according to the number of children

Optimism Score	F-value	Sig. (p-value)
Number of children	4.961	0.011

The results in **Table 10** reveal that the **F-value** was **4.961**, which is statistically significant at the **0.05 level**. Post-hoc **Scheffé tests** indicated that the difference in optimism was **in favor of divorced women without children**.

Accordingly, the third sub-hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that there are statistically significant differences in optimism based on the number of children.

This finding can be attributed to the material and psychological burdens associated with motherhood after divorce, which often impose additional pressures on divorced mothers and affect their ability to maintain optimism about their personal future. In contrast, a divorced woman without children can dedicate most of her energy and resources to rebuilding her life**,** from pursuing professional or academic advancement to reestablishing her social life, whereas a divorced mother faces a dual challenge. Alongside the emotional pain resulting from the divorce experience, she bears the full or primary responsibility for childcare, which goes far beyond the financial dimension alone.

From a financial perspective**,** a divorced mother may find herself in a difficult economic situation, having to provide housing, education, healthcare, and daily needs for her children on her own. This financial strain can limit her opportunities for economic stability and lead to ongoing anxiety about the future. From **a** psychological and emotional perspective, she carries a heavy emotional burden: she is not only responsible for her own mental well-being but also for offering emotional support and psychological stability to her children, who may themselves be struggling with the consequences of parental separation. This dual role requires significant psychological resilience and often leaves little time for self-care or recovery, resulting in feelings of fatigue and helplessness**,** which are incompatible with optimism.

Moreover, the presence of children may reduce a divorced woman's opportunities to re-enter romantic or marital relationships, either due to social pressures or the difficulty of finding a partner willing to assume her family responsibilities. Collectively, these factors negatively influence her expectations for the future, making her outlook more cautious and realistic**,** which explains the lower levels of optimism compared to her counterparts without children.

The Fourth Sub-Hypothesis:
There are statistically significant differences in the level of optimism among divorced women according to the occupational status variable.

Optimism Scores and Occupational Status

Table (11): Mean Optimism Scores According to Occupational Status

Employment Status	**Mean Score**	**Standard Deviation**
Employed	33,18	3,245
Unemployed	28,12	4,470

As shown in Table 11, the mean optimism score for employed divorced women was **33.18,** whereas the mean score for unemployed divorced women was **28.12.**

Table (12): Differences in Optimism Scores According to Occupational Status

Optimism Score	F-value	Sig. (p-value)
Employment Status	-2.028	0.01144

Table 12 indicates the existence of statistically significant differences in optimism levels according to occupational status, with a t-value of -2.028 at the 0.05 significance level. Post-hoc analysis confirmed that these differences were **in favor of employed divorced women**. Hence, the fourth sub-hypothesis was supported.

These results suggest that employment positively influences optimism among divorced women. Engaging in work provides financial independence and a greater sense of control over one's life. It also facilitates social integration and access to diverse support networks**,** which reduces the sense of isolation that may follow divorce. Furthermore, employment enhances self-esteem and personal achievement, helping women rebuild a positive self-image after the divorce experience. This outcome aligns with prior psychological and social studies, which emphasized that participation in the workforce contributes to improved mental health, mitigates feelings of despair, and fosters positive life attitudes. Consequently, employed divorced women exhibit higher optimism levels compared to their unemployed counterparts. These findings are consistent with the studies of **Quneita (2016)** and **Amr & Al-Sharif (2018).**

4- Conclusion

A Based on the presentation and discussion of the results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

-The **first hypothesis** stating that the level of optimism among divorced women is moderate has been confirmed.

-The **second hypothesis** has also been verified, indicating that there are statistically **significant differences** in optimism levels according to **age, educational level, number of children, and occupational status** among divorced women.

B General Conclusion:

The results of the study revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in optimism levels among divorced women attributable to a set of demographic variables, namely **age, educational level, number of children, and occupational status**. Differences by age were in favor of divorced women aged 20–30 years, which can be explained by their greater psychological and social adaptability, as well as wider opportunities to rebuild their personal and professional lives after divorce, compared to older women who may feel that their social opportunities are relatively limited.

Similarly, differences by educational level favored university-educated women, as higher education equips them with cognitive and life skills that enhance their ability to cope with stress and plan realistically for the future with confidence, thus boosting their sense of optimism. Differences by number of children favored divorced women without children, as the absence of family responsibilities reduces psychological and social pressures and provides greater flexibility in managing life after divorce.

Finally, differences by occupational status favored employed divorced women, which aligns with previous studies indicating that engagement in work provides a sense of financial independence, enhances self-efficacy and personal achievement, and expands opportunities for social integration, thereby raising optimism levels.

Overall, these findings emphasize the crucial role of demographic factors in shaping the psychological well-being of divorced women. Younger, more educated women, those without children, and those actively engaged in the labor market tend to experience higher levels of optimism. This underscores the importance of psychological and social empowerment for divorced women by providing educational and employment opportunities alongside appropriate psychological support

Study Recommendations:

a. Encourage divorced women to cultivate optimism through positive thinking and participation in self-development and psychological support programs.
b. Enhance social support for divorced women through family, friends, and the community to alleviate feelings of loneliness and increase psychological well-being.
c. Develop counseling programs, centers, and community initiatives to help divorced women adapt psychologically and socially after divorce.
d. Conduct future studies comparing optimism among divorced and non-divorced women, and explore influencing factors such as , income, and social support.

Suggested Future Research Topics:

a. The Psychological Impact of Divorce on Women's Self-Esteem: A Comparative Study Between Divorced and Married Women.
b. The Role of Social and Family Support in Enhancing Optimism Among Divorced Women.
c. The Relationship Between Optimism and General Mental Health Among Divorced Women: A Field Study on a Sample of Divorced Women.
d. Psychological Coping Strategies After Divorce and Their Impact on Women's Optimism.
e. Optimism and Quality of Life Among Divorced Women.
f. The Impact of Religious and Spiritual Practices on the Level of Optimism Among Divorced Women.
g. Predicting the Future Mental Health of Divorced Women Based on Their Level of Optimism.

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