

optimism and pessimism among university students
(A study on a sample of students at Sidi Bel Abbes University)

التفاؤل والتشاؤم لدى الطلبة الجامعيين

(دراسة على عينة من الطلبة بجامعة سيدي بلعباس)

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Abstract :

The current study aimed to identify the level of optimism and pessimism among students at Djilali Liabes University in Sidi Bel Abbes. The study was conducted on a sample of (70) students, and a tool was used to collect data, which was the Arab Optimism and Pessimism Inventory prepared by Abdel Khaleq (1996). The descriptive approach was followed to verify the validity of the hypotheses, and the following results were reached:

The level of optimism among students is high.

The level of pessimism among students is low.

There are no statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism due to the educational level variable.

Keywords: optimism, pessimism.

ملخص:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على مستوى التفاؤل والتشاؤم لدى الطلبة بجامعة جيلالي ليابس بسيدي بلعباس، تم إجراء الدراسة على عينة قدرها (70) طالبا، وتم استخدام أداة لجمع البيانات التي تمثلت في القائمة العربية للتفاؤل والتشاؤم من إعداد عبد الخالق (1996)، وتم إتباع المنهج الوصفي للتأكد من صحة الفرضيات، وقد تم التوصل إلى النتائج التالية:

مستوى التفاؤل لدى الطلبة مرتفع.

مستوى التشاؤم لدى الطلبة منخفض.

لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في التفاؤل و التشاؤم تعزى لمتغير المستوى الدراسي.

كلمات مفتاحية: التفاؤل، التشاؤم

Introduction:

Students face some difficulties and issues that may lead them to feel pessimistic and reflect negatively on their academic adjustment. The individual needs optimism to deal with the constant pressures of life, and a positive outlook on life despite its heaviness, as it does not proceed at the same pace and requires the individual to adapt to his reality.

Optimism and pessimism are two of the most important traits that characterize human beings, which mainly revolve around a special vision of the future, as optimism contributes to thinking about what is positive in an individual's life, and the World Health Organization (2004) defined optimism as a voluntary psychological process that generates thoughts and feelings of satisfaction, endurance and self-confidence (Gharghout and Masoudi, 2022, p. 284), which is the opposite of pessimism, which characterizes only the negative aspects of events, which drains one's energy and makes him feel weak and lacking in his activity.

Seligman also emphasizes in his theory of optimism on the "interpretive style" that grows and develops in childhood, where each individual acquires a certain habit of thinking about causes and a special vision characteristic of him based on this interpretive style, and that the basis of optimism is the way in which the individual thinks and looks at the causes (Bekal and Maarouf, 2021, p. 255).

Optimism in the student's life is an important factor in achieving psychological compatibility and normal adaptation among university students. It is a continuous dynamic process that contributes to achieving a balance between the student and his environment, and this balance includes satisfying his needs within the requirements of the environment. Whether the compatibility is sound or unsound is determined by the extent of the success of the methods that the student follows to reach a state of relative balance with his environment. On the contrary, an incompatible person is a person who has lost the ability to balance between his personal needs on the one hand and between those needs and the requirements of the surrounding social reality on the other hand.

The school of psychoanalysis has theorized that a compliant individual can satisfy the ego's impulses in accordance with the expectations of the superego, while behaviorists believe that a compliant person can satisfy the ego's impulses in accordance with the expectations of the superego. While behaviorists believe that a compliant person is one who has developed positive behavioral habits in response to various environmental stimuli. The humanistic school also emphasizes that a compliant person is able to satisfy their needs and self-actualization (Samadi and Al-Baqawi, 2016).

From the above, it is clear that the issue of optimism and pessimism is an important factor in the individual's sense of psychological compatibility, as

meeting the individual's needs makes him feel optimistic and his ability to achieve his goals and thus feel happy and content, while not having enough objective possibilities of optimism and failing to satisfy his needs, he feels pessimistic and thus cannot achieve his goals, which makes him feel frustrated.

It is clear from the above that both optimism and pessimism have a significant impact on the lives of university students who suffer from many changes as well as multiple psychological pressures in their family, social, academic and economic lifestyles.

This prompted us to study this topic, which is the level of optimism and pessimism among university students at Sidi Bel Abbès University

The study questions were as follows:

- What is the level of optimism among university students?
- What is the level of pessimism among university students?
- Are there statistically significant differences between optimism and pessimism attributable to the two variables of study level.

1. Theoretical framework:

1.1. Optimism and pessimism:

1.1.1. Definition of optimism:

Tiger (1979) defines optimism as an attitude and action that helps individuals overcome the shocks and adversities they may face in their social life (Ahmed, 2013).

Badr Al-Ansari (1998) defined it as a positive psychological state that makes the individual expect the good.

1.1.2. Terminology related to optimism:

A. Happiness: Happiness is a state of joy, bliss, and fulfillment that arises from the satisfaction of motives but rises to the level of psychological satisfaction and thus contributes to self-actualization (Boutelji, 2019).

B - hope : Erikson (1964) referred to hope as a human force that the individual acquires through early experiences and socialization that lead them to believe that the world is a trustworthy place (Abu Al-Diyar, 2012).

C. Extraversion : It is a set of traits that frame the individual's tendency to socialize and thus the tendency to integrate towards society (Rua Bahia and Tamouz, 2019).

D-Definition of pessimism :

Khalil defines it as a person's expectation that negative events will occur instead of positive events (Zaidi and Ben Tayeb, 2021).

Al-Ansari (1998) defines it as a negative expectation of future events, and the expectation of evil and lack of success.

1.1.3. Terminology related to pessimism:

A. Anxiety: It is a psychological state characterized by fear, apprehension, and anticipation of dangers and disasters, although there is no reason for this anxiety (Abdul Sattar, 2002).

B- Depression : It is a mental illness characterized by the presence of psychological manifestations and physical symptoms, represented by mood swings and a feeling of sadness and despair (Al-Sherbini, 2001).

C- Frustration : It is a psychological condition that occurs when a person tries his best but does not succeed, and the result is a feeling of dissatisfaction (Khalid Hussein, 2008).

1.1.4 .Types of optimism and pessimism:

Unrealistic optimism: It is defined by Taylor and Brown (1988) as a person's ability to feel optimistic about events without logical justifications that lead to this feeling, which sometimes causes unexpected events to occur (Abu-Assad, 2015).

Unrealistic pessimism: Unrealistic pessimism is any individual who faces a serious matter and becomes a victim of an accident, an incurable disease, etc. (Al-Ansari, 1998).

Comparative optimism: It is an internal tendency that makes an individual think and expect positive things to happen to him more than others, and negative things to happen to others more than him (Al-Ansari, 1998).

Defensive pessimism : It is the bad expectation of future events, even though individuals recognize that they have performed well in similar situations in the past, and thus they always take the position of a defender of pessimism (Al-Ansari, 1998)

Effective optimism: Moore emphasizes that optimism is an essential part of an individual's emotional life in order to live an active and effective life and stay away from pessimism.

Functional optimism: It is the individual's exaggeration of giving importance to his own abilities and capabilities in the face of dangers, through the convictions he sets for himself about the situation and his ability to face it (Sarrah, 2019).

1.1.5 .Theories explaining optimism and pessimism:

1.1.5.1. Psychoanalytic theory:

Freud believes that the general rule of life is optimism, and that pessimism does not form in the life of an individual unless he has formed a psychological complex, and the individual is considered optimistic if nothing happens in his life that makes the emergence of psychological complexes possible, and if the opposite happens, the person becomes pessimistic (Shaheen, 2021).

Freud considers the origin of optimism and pessimism from the oral stage, and stated that there are oral personality traits and patterns associated with this stage as a result of the stabilization process at this stage, which is due to pampering and over- satisfaction or frustration and aggression.

1.1.5.2. behavioral theory:

This theory argues that through imitation and mimicry, optimism and pessimism can spread from one place to another. This transfer is explained by the similarity of signs of optimism and pessimism found in different times and places (Rua Bahia & Tamouz, 2019).

2. Methodology and sample of the study:

2.1. Methodology of the study:

The methodology is the basic tool that the researcher uses to solve the research issue, and the methods differ according to the research issue, and the general and specific objectives that the research aims to achieve.

Since our goal of this study is to find out the level of optimism and pessimism among university students, we rely on the descriptive method because of its suitability for the nature of the research procedures, which is concerned with describing and analyzing the phenomenon by expressing it and relies on analyzing the data and results obtained in testing the hypotheses in a scientific manner.

2.2. Study sample:

The sample is considered to be a part of a specific community that represents in its characteristics that community in order to save time, effort and money, as the main

sample of the study consisted of 70 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Sidi Bel Abbes, selected randomly.

3.The study tool:

The Arab List of Optimism and Pessimism by Abdelkhalek (1996)

The Arab List of Optimism and Pessimism contains two subscales, the first after optimism (15 items) and the second after pessimism (15 items), and is answered according to the pentagonal distribution (no, a little, medium, many, very much). The scale was constructed by the author to measure the traits of optimism and pessimism in adults. The optimism scale is scored separately from the pessimism scale and each is given an independent total score by summing the examinee's choices on each statement, as shown in the following table:

Table (1) shows the *response scores for the optimism and pessimism scales*

Alternatives	No	A little	Average	a lot	Very much

Degree	1	2	3	4	5
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Note: The minimum score for each dimension =15, while the maximum score for each dimension =75

4.Study results and discussion:

4.1.Results and discussion of the first question: What is the level of optimism among university students?

Table (2) represents the level of optimism among university students.

Dimension	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Hypothetical mean	(t)	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Optimism	56.40	9.38	45	6.65	69	0.00

The arithmetic mean of (56.40) is greater than the hypothetical mean of (45). The value of the standard deviation ranged from (9.38). The calculated t-score was estimated at (6.65) at the significance level (0.00), thus the level of optimism among the sample of students is high.

This is what was found in the study of Zagawa Ahmed et al. (2020). Titled optimism and pessimism and its relationship with mental health among university students, the percentage of optimism among students amounted to (57.37%), while the percentage of pessimism among the sample was (42.63%), and this result shows that the students of the study sample enjoy an average level of optimism in general.

Similarly, the study of Al-Musawi, Abdulaziz Haider, and Al-Ankoushi Halim Sakheel. (2011) entitled optimism and pessimism among the students of Al-Qadisiyah University to the distribution of the trait of optimism and pessimism among the students of Al-Qadisiyah University closer to moderation, as it was found that the majority of the sample members fall on the middle of the optimism-pessimism continuum when they categorized the university students into optimists and pessimists, it was found that optimists are more numerous than pessimists.

Optimism is a mood trait that mediates the relationship between external events and an individual's interpretation of them, as it includes cognitive, emotional, and motivational components, as people who have a level of optimism tend to use better methods, be more successful, and have better physical health. Much psychology research has also indicated that optimism reduces the risk of health issues and leads to a faster recovery after traumatic events such as death or illness, and that optimists are less anxious, more able to withstand adversity, more confident, able to make decisions, and more creative.

This is due to the strength of the students' personality, their maturity, and their sense of responsibility towards themselves and those around them, which instills in them optimism, a sense of interest and self-esteem, and a strong self-confidence that helps them to achieve success in their future scientific and professional career and strengthens them in overcoming hardships and facing challenges with determination and a strong spirit.

The results can also be explained by the fact that the study sample enjoys such a high level of optimism due to the correct and sound family upbringing in which security, tranquility and care prevail, all these elements refine their personality and make them optimistic.

4. 2. Results and discussion of the second question: What is the level of pessimism among university students?

Table No. (3) shows the *level of pessimism among university students*

Dimension	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Hypothesized mean	(t)	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Pessimism	29.60	11.05	45	-7.63	69	0.00

From the table related to the level of pessimism among university students, we note that the arithmetic mean was estimated at (29.60), which is lower than the hypothesized mean of (45) and the value of the standard deviation ranged at (11.05), while the calculated t value amounted to (7.63-) at the level of significance (0.00), and therefore the level of pessimism among students is low.

Our study conflicted with the study of Zaidi Maria and Ben-Tayeb Fatima Zahra (2022) entitled optimism and pessimism and their relationship with psychological adjustment among female students residing at Messila University, which found that the dominant pattern among a sample of female students is pessimism to a high degree.

Our study agreed with the study of Al-Fleet Ghadeer Salem Abed and Al-Shamimri Huda Saleh (2023) entitled optimism and pessimism and their

relationship with psychological compatibility among cancer patients in Jeddah, which showed that the sample members have a low level of pessimism.

Behavioral theory believes that the construction of an individual's personality consists of expectations, goals and ambitions, and some individuals may succeed in performing some tasks while others fail, and thus have negative expectations towards these tasks and are often dominated by pessimism, so individuals differ in their expectations of success or failure towards future events.

The reason for this result that states a low percentage of pessimism for students can be attributed to the changes that we are witnessing at the present time, which made there is a state of optimism and hope among students that things will be improved and will witness many reforms in all fields (educational, economic, social...) and all these reasons made students approach life with a positive attitude.

4.3. Results and discussion of the third question:

Are there statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism depending on the educational level variable?

Table No. (4) shows the *results of the t-test to calculate the significance of the differences in optimism and pessimism among university students according to the educational level variable*

Dimension	Specialization	Number	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	(T)	Degree of Freedom	Significance level
Optimism	Bachelor's degree	28	56.110	9.54	-0.63	68	0.53
	Master	2	60.50	7.77			
Pessimism	Bachelor's degree	28	29.85	11.39	0.47	68	0.64
	Master	2	26.00	2.82			

By presenting the results of the hypothesis that states "There are no statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism depending on the variable of educational level", it was found after statistical processing through Table 4 that the value of (t) calculated for the optimism dimension (063.-) at the level of

significance (0.53), while the pessimism dimension was estimated (t) calculated (0.47-) at the level of significance (0.64), which are statistically insignificant values, which means that there are no statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism among students depending on the educational level variable, thus we conclude that the third partial hypothesis, which states that "there are statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism among students depending on the educational level variable", is realized.

This is the result of the study of Mona Ismail Abdel-Moneim Al-Muhtasib. (2008) entitled optimism and pessimism and their relationship with stressful life events and coping methods among students of Al-Quds University to "There are no statistically significant differences in the averages of the degrees of optimism and pessimism among students of Al-Quds University attributed to the academic level variable".

The study of Zagawa Ahmed et al. (2020) entitled optimism and pessimism and its relationship with mental health among university students, found that there are no statistically significant differences in the trait of optimism and pessimism attributed to the variable of gender and academic specialization.

Similarly, the study of Al-Kridis, Reem Salem, and Al-Amri Nadia Mohammed. (2015). Optimism and pessimism in a sample of female students of Princess Noura bint Abdul Rahman University in light of some variables to the absence of statistically significant differences in pessimism scores attributed to the difference in both academic level, monthly income, while there are statistically significant differences in optimism scores by different academic level in favor of the sample members whose family income from (20000 SAR and more) and different academic level in favor of the eighth level and different grades in favor of female students with an excellent grade.

It can be said that students at all levels, whether bachelor's or master's, are characterized by a similar degree of optimism, which means that the variable of educational level did not affect the level of optimism and pessimism among them, as both have educational and professional opportunities, as well as scientific and technological progress that contributed significantly to the cultural change of Arab societies, especially since society has become dealing with either party as an independent entity with freedom to practice various activities, as they were given equal opportunities to express opinions and trends and have the right to all professional journals.

This can be explained by the fact that students at both levels live in the same conditions and their cognitive experiences are similar, and both seek to achieve success, achieve compatibility, highlight their abilities, and embark on a bright life filled with love and optimism.

Conclusion:

Optimism and pessimism are important topics in psychology because of their impact on the behavior and psychological state of individuals. Students who tend

towards optimism are usually more resilient and able to adapt to the daily challenges and pressures in university life, and optimism can promote a sense of positivity and self-satisfaction, which contributes to building healthy social relationships and academic success and thus achieving psychological compatibility, while pessimism can lead to anxiety and depression, which negatively affects academic performance and social relationships, and pessimistic students may find it difficult to adapt to challenges, and may feel frustrated and isolated and thus poor compatibility.

We found the following results:

- Students' level of optimism is high.
- Students' level of pessimism is low.
- There are no statistically significant differences in optimism and pessimism due to the study level variable.

Recommendations:

- Increase attention to university students, and provide all kinds of support to alleviate the pressures they may be exposed to that may affect their psychological well-being.
- Developing the level of psychological services and providing psychological clinics and psychologists to help students achieve the highest level of psychological compatibility.
- Paying attention to psychological and emotional issues at different stages of study among university students
- Intensifying efforts between the state's hospital institutions and universities to provide health and psychological care, and treat cases that need immediate treatment without delay.
- Paying attention to preventive awareness programs for students derived from the Islamic religious culture.

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