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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Relationship between Psychological Stress and Future Anxiety among University Students: A Field Study on a Sample of Students at the University Of El Oued

Atika Gherghout[1], Naoui Bettaher[2], Hynd Ghedhaifi[3], Ahmed Djelloul[4], Abdelmalek Haba[5]

[1,2,3,4]University of El Oued, Algeria

[1,2]Measurement and Psychological Studies Laboratory, University of Blida 02, Algeria

[3,4]Social Development and Community Service Laboratory, University of El Oued, Algeria

[5]University of Medea, Algeria

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***Corresponding Author:**

atika-gherghout@univ-eloued.dz

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore the nature of the relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students. The general research question was formulated as follows: "Is there a significant relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students?" The study sample included 7,403 male and female students, and the following scales were applied: the Psychological Stress Scale by Dr. Nabil Kamel and Professor Ibrahim Al-Hajjar (2005), and the Future Anxiety Scale by Ghaleb Al-Mashikhi (2009). The descriptive method was followed, and data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study reached the following conclusions :

- There is a positive correlation between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.
- There are no statistically significant differences in psychological stress attributable to gender.
- There are statistically significant differences in future anxiety attributable to gender, favoring males.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological stress is a common phenomenon in human life, manifesting in various everyday situations, making it essential to understand its causes and how to manage it to mitigate its intensity (Munira Saleh, 2017). In the contemporary world, psychological stress is one of the most serious challenges threatening human life, health, and energy, especially with the complexity of life and the increasing burdens and developments in familial, educational, and cultural domains (Nawal Mohammed Yahya, 2019). These rapid changes and the growing advancement in life goals contribute to the escalation of psychological stress that pursues individuals as they strive to achieve harmony with themselves and their environment.

Amid rapid transformations and modern societies, psychological stress has become an integral part of people's lives, especially in urban areas (Ali and Ismail, 2012). People live in a constantly changing world full of challenges and anxiety about the future, affecting their ability to adapt and increasing psychological tension. This anxiety can lead to severe psychological and physical responses, disrupting life balance and causing disturbances in various aspects of life, making it essential to seek effective means to cope with this stress.

1- The Problem:

In today's world, individuals live in a constantly changing environment influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political factors. Life has become more complex, shifting from simple to intricate, making it harder for individuals to achieve their goals, and those goals no longer bring peace or psychological security. University students, in particular, face numerous challenges such as academic, emotional, and professional adaptation. These challenges, along with economic and familial problems, often lead to feelings of stress, discomfort, and anxiety. (Badr, 1993, p. 8).

This leads to what is known as psychological stress, one of the most dangerous problems facing modern humans. It threatens their energy, health, and life, being a common human phenomenon that arises in various situations requiring individuals to adjust or readjust to their environment. Like most human phenomena, such as anxiety, conflict, and aggression, stress is part of the human experience.

Life stress has become a tangible phenomenon in all societies, but its intensity varies due to several factors, the most significant of which include the nature of societies, their level of development, and the resulting strong interaction and interdependence between institutions and individuals. The scarcity of resources, the intense competition for them, and the rapid pace of change in these societies also play a role, so much so that many have labeled the modern era as the "Age of Stress." Consequently, psychological stress has become a hallmark of this era and a natural aspect of human life that cannot be avoided. Our contemporary lives are characterized by complexity and rapidly successive changes.

This leads individuals at any stage of life to feel helpless and unable to comprehend these changes, which in turn increases their feelings of frustration, stress, anxiety, and psychological pressure. The latter was first defined by researchers Lazarus and Folkman in 1944 as a specific relationship between the individual and the environment, which the individual perceives as taxing and overwhelming, or as exceeding their resources to cope with, thus posing a threat to their health. Stress does not reside within the individual or the event itself, but in the interaction between the individual and their environment. Stress responses occur as a result of an imbalance between internal and external demands and the individual’s resources to meet these demands.

Beck defines psychological stress as a response made by an organism to a situation that pressures the individual’s self-esteem, or to a problem without a solution that disrupts balance, or to a situation that triggers thoughts of helplessness, despair, and depression. (Rabie, 2019, pp. 11, 12, 18).

It appears that university students constantly think about the future; an individual's anxiety about the future can obscure their clear vision of their capabilities and undermine their abilities. This, in turn, hinders the setting of realistic goals aligned with their aspirations to achieve future objectives that bring them happiness. (Al-Husseini, 2011, p. 27)

This leads to the central question of our current study:

Research Question:

Is there a significant relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students?

2- Hypotheses of the Study:

Based on the research question, the study's hypotheses are as follows:

- There is a positive correlation between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.
- There are statistically significant differences in psychological stress attributed to gender.
- There are statistically significant differences in future anxiety attributed to gender, with males experiencing higher levels.

3- Reasons for Choosing the Study Topic:

The choice of this topic was based on several criteria and considerations, including:

- The researchers' personal interest, which motivated them to select this subject.
- The researchers' review of relevant literature, which highlighted the importance of the study variables and their impact on the lives of university students.
- The significance of the study sample, which consists of university students who are considered essential for the development of a cohesive society.

4- Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the levels of psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.
- To determine the differences among students in terms of psychological stress and future anxiety based on the study variables.
- To explore the nature of the relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.

5- Importance of the Study:

- The importance of this study lies in its focus on a highly significant and sensitive topic—future anxiety, which is one of the most pressing psychological issues faced by university students.
- The study seeks to understand the relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.
- It aims to identify the outcomes of psychological stress and future anxiety, and to provide suggestions for overcoming the problem of future anxiety.
- The study also seeks to uncover the reasons that lead students to feel anxious about the future.

6- Operational Definitions of the Study:

- **Psychological Stress:**

Defined by Al-Hajjar and Dukhan (2005) as the set of situations, events, or thoughts that lead to feelings of tension, typically arising from an individual's perception that the demands placed on them exceed their capabilities and resources.
(Al-Hajjar and Dukhan, 2005, p. 376)

- **Future Anxiety:**

Future anxiety is defined by Al-Mashikhi (2009, p. 12) as "a feeling of discomfort and negative thinking about the future, characterized by a negative outlook on life, an inability to cope with stress and life events, low self-esteem, a loss of a sense of security, and a lack of self-confidence." (Salem Ali Al-Kuraidis, 2015, p. 237)

7- Previous Studies:

7.1 Salwa's Study (1998):

Salwa Abdel Baki conducted a study focusing on sources of anxiety and stress among students at Helwan University. The study sample consisted of 592 students from various colleges and majors. The researcher used an anxiety scale she developed. The results showed that feelings of inferiority and lack of self-confidence were characteristic of both past and present anxiety. The study also found that the loss of a love object was common across past, present, and future concerns. Future anxiety was distinguished by qualitative factors such as hopelessness, bad luck, and pessimism. No gender differences were found in anxiety levels, but students in scientific fields were more anxious than those in other majors. An analysis of responses to an open-ended question revealed that future-related problems, such as finding a job, pessimism about the future, and expectations of bad luck, were of primary concern.

7.2 Flynn's Study (2000):

Flynn examined the relationship between trauma, life stressors, and future orientation in a sample of 81 university students. Various tools were used to measure future perception, optimism and pessimism, control ability, and behavioral problems, along with a demographic data list. The results indicated that trauma and stress had no significant impact on the level of future orientation among the study sample.

7.3 Nabil Koukaly's Study (2002):

Nabil Koukaly conducted a study titled "A Public Opinion Survey on Certain Conditions in the Palestinian Territories." The study aimed to understand psychological stress in the Palestinian territories. The sample consisted of 1,085 males and females from Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The study included a pessimism scale, and the results indicated that 67% of the sample expressed anxiety about the future and had negative expectations about economic conditions, with 58% being pessimistic about the future.

7.4 Sana Saud's Study (2003):

Sana Saud's study focused on the relationship between future anxiety, irrational thoughts, and psychological stress among a sample of adolescents. The sample included 599 students, with 299 males and 300 females, from the first and second years of general secondary education in both literary and scientific branches, as well as from Al-Azhar and technical (industrial and commercial) schools in the Western province (Tangier city). The students ranged in age from 14 to 16 years. The researcher applied an anxiety and irrational thoughts scale she developed, along with a stress scale developed by Zainab Shaqir. The study results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between future anxiety and both irrational thoughts and psychological stress. There were differences in levels of future anxiety, irrational thoughts, and psychological stress between adolescent males and females, with females being more affected. The study also found that future anxiety, irrational thoughts, and psychological stress were influenced by the type of education. Additionally, the interaction between gender and education had an impact on future anxiety and irrational thoughts but did not affect psychological stress. Irrational thoughts and psychological stress were influenced by the level of future anxiety (low, medium, high).

7.5 Ibrahim Badr's Study (2003):

Ibrahim Badr conducted a study examining the relationship between youth's lack of future orientation (loss of hope in the future) and their experience of certain disorders (depression, alienation, and psychological stress). The study sample consisted of 1,058 students aged 20-22 years. The study utilized various tools, and the results revealed that 80.25% of the sample suffered from a

lack of future orientation. The study also found a significant positive relationship between the lack of future orientation and psychological stress among both genders, with a non-significant difference in psychological stress levels favoring males.

7.6 Minakshi Tiku's Study:

Minakshi Tiku conducted a study on 42 families from Kashmir who were displaced due to political and ideological reasons. These families experienced stress and persecution that threatened their sense of belonging and status. The researcher used several scales, including anxiety and depression scales. The results indicated that the participants exhibited symptoms of psychological distress, including future anxiety and depression.

FIELD STUDY:

1- Study Methodology:

No study is complete without relying on a methodology or approach that uncovers the truth using a set of tools. Given the nature of this study, which aims to understand the relationship between its variables (psychological stress and future anxiety), we have chosen the descriptive method. This approach allows us to describe the phenomenon in question.

2- Study Population:

The study population consists of all male and female students of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Martyr Hamma Lakhdar University in El Oued. The total number of students is 7,403, with 2,221 male students and 5,182 female students. The following table (Table 1) shows the distribution of the study population by gender:

Table 1: Distribution of the Study Population by Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	2,221	30%
Females	5,182	70%
Total	7,403	100%

It is clear from Table 1 that the study population consists of 7,403 students from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, with males comprising 30% and females 70% of the total.

3- Pilot Study:

The pilot study allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research framework and gather the necessary information to develop appropriate tools for measuring the study's variables. Additionally, the pilot study helps the researcher verify the feasibility of studying the selected variables and aids in formulating hypotheses. It is also crucial for understanding the study population and for fine-tuning the selection of the sample.

Therefore, conducting a pilot study is essential to ensure the reliability of tests, samples, and the selection methods used, thus helping the researcher avoid errors in the main study.

3.1- Limits of the Pilot Study:

1. **Spatial Limits:** The pilot study was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Martyr Hamma Lakhdar University, El Oued.
2. **Temporal Limits:** The study tools were applied from February 2, 2023, to March 31, 2023.

3.2- Validity of Study Tools:

1. Psychological Stress Scale:

1.1- Description of the Scale:

The scale was developed by Dr. Nabil Kamel Dukhan and Professor Bashir Ibrahim Al-Hajjar (2005) from the Islamic University of Palestine. It consists of 60 items. The scale was adapted to the Algerian environment by researcher Sbih Hanan in 2020 at Mohamed Boudiaf University in M'sila, using a sample of university students. The total score of the scale ranges from 60 to 180 points. There are three response options for each item: Always (03), Sometimes (02), and Never (01).

1.2- Psychometric Properties of the Scale:

- **Reliability of the Scale:**

The reliability coefficients of the test were calculated using the split-half method with the Guttman formula and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha formula. The following are the results:

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients Using Internal Consistency and Guttman Methods

Cronbach's α	Guttman
0.65	0.71

The previous table shows that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.65, and the split-half reliability using the Guttman formula is 0.71. From this, we can say that the scale demonstrates acceptable levels of reliability.

Scale Validity:

The validity of the scale was calculated using the Internal Consistency method. Correlations were calculated between the scale items and the dimension scores, as well as between the items themselves, and between the dimensions and the overall scale score using Pearson's correlation coefficient. This procedure was used to indicate the internal consistency validity of the scale. Although internal correlations are used as an indication of internal consistency, they can also be used as an indication of construct validity, since the theoretical basis of the study is the unidimensionality of the measurement subject.

Table 3: illustrates the value and significance of the correlation between each item's score and the total score of the scale.

Item Number	Item-Dimension Correlation	Significance Level	Item Number	Item-Dimension Correlation	Significance Level	Item Number	Item-Dimension Correlation	Significance Level
1	0.83	0.01	17	0.66	0.01	33		0.01
2	0.84	0.01	18	0.67	0.01	34	0.73	0.01
3	0.80	0.01	19	0.68	0.01	35	0.69	0.01
4	0.91	0.01	20	0.82	0.01	36	0.68	0.01
5	0.92	0.01	21	0.75	0.01	37	0.79	0.01
6	0.80	0.01	22	0.58	0.01	38	0.77	0.01
7	0.53	0.01	23	0.53	0.01	39	0.65	0.01
8	0.74	0.01	24	0.79	0.01	40	0.41	0.01
9	0.60	0.01	25	0.78	0.01	41	0.62	0.01
10	0.65	0.01	26	0.80	0.01	42	0.41	0.01
11	0.47	0.01	27	0.78	0.01	43	0.69	0.01
12	0.86	0.01	28	0.78	0.01	44	0.68	0.01
13	0.75	0.01	29	0.79	0.01	45	0.79	0.01

14	0.87	0.01	30	0.85	0.01	46	0.77	0.01
15	0.66	0.01	31	0.72	0.01	47	0.49	0.01
16	0.69	0.01	32	0.67	0.01	48	0.38	0.01

It is evident from Table 3 that the values of the scale items' scores in relation to the total score are statistically significant, ranging between 0.38 and 0.92, with most of these values being significant at the 0.01 level.

2- Future Anxiety Scale:

2.1- Scale Description

The Future Anxiety Scale was developed by Ghalib Al-Mshaikhi (2009). The initial version of the scale consisted of 49 items distributed across five dimensions. The final version of the scale includes 43 items categorized into five different dimensions of future anxiety among university students.

Table 4: presents the dimensions of the Future Anxiety Scale.

No.	Dimension	Item Numbers	Number of Items
1	Negative Thinking Towards the Future	1-6-11-16-21-26-31-36	8
2	Negative Outlook on Life	2-7-12-17-22-27-32-37-41	9
3	Anxiety from Pressuring Life Events	3-8-13-18-23-28-33-38-42	9
4	Psychological Aspects of Future Anxiety	4-9-14-19-24-29-34-39	8
5	Physical Aspects of Future Anxiety	5-10-15-20-25-30-35-40-43	9
	Total Score		43

which was adapted to the Algerian context by researcher Ahlam Yahya (2019) from Mohamed Boudiaf University in M'sila, on a sample of university students.

Questionnaire Scoring:
The total score of the scale ranges from 43 to 129. Three response options are provided for each item on the scale: "Applies" (3), "Sometimes" (2), and "Does not apply" (1).

2.2- Psychometric Properties of the Scale:

Scale Reliability:

The reliability coefficients were calculated using the split-half method with Guttman's formula and internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha. The results are presented below:

Table 5: Reliability Coefficients Using Internal Consistency and Guttman Methods.

Cronbach's α	Guttman
0.61	0.73

It is evident from the previous table that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.61, and the split-half reliability using the Guttman formula is 0.73. From this, we can conclude that the scale demonstrates acceptable levels of reliability.

Scale Validity:

The validity of the scale was calculated using the Internal Consistency method.

Table 6: shows the value and significance of the correlation between each item's score and the score of the dimension to which it belongs.

Dimension	Item No.	Item-Dimension Correlation	Significance Level	Dimension	Item No.	Item-Dimension Correlation	Significance Level
Negative Thinking Towards Future	1	0.54	0.05	Anxiety from Pressuring Life Events	3	0.53	0.05
	6	0.49	0.05		8	0.45	0.05
	11	0.62	0.01		13	0.61	0.01
	16	0.71	0.01		18	0.48	0.05
	21	0.52	0.05		23	0.41	0.05
	26	0.60	0.01		28	0.49	0.05
	31	0.69	0.01		33	0.71	0.01
	36	0.50	0.05		38	0.52	0.05
Negative Outlook on Life	2	0.49	0.05		42	0.60	0.01
	7	0.55	0.05	Psychological Aspects of Future Anxiety	4	0.60	0.01
	12	0.50	0.05		9	0.69	0.05
	17	0.62	0.01		14	0.50	0.05
	22	0.48	0.05		19	0.49	0.05
	27	0.49	0.05		24	0.55	0.05
	32	0.56	0.05		29	0.50	0.01
	37	0.60	0.01		34	0.62	0.05
	41	0.60	0.01		39	0.48	0.05

Dimension	**Item No.**	**Item-Dimension Correlation**	**Significance Level**
Physical Aspects of Future Anxiety	39	0.56	0.05
	5	0.60	0.01
	10	0.60	0.01
	15	0.53	0.05
	20	0.45	0.05
	25	0.61	0.01
	30	0.48	0.05
	35	0.41	0.05

It is evident from Table 6 that the correlation values between the items of the dimensions forming the scale and the total score of the dimension to which they belong are statistically significant, ranging from 0.41 to 0.71. Most of these values are significant at the 0.01 level, while others are significant at the 0.05 level.

4- Main Study:

4.1- Study Boundaries: This main study is limited by specific human, temporal, and spatial boundaries, which indicate the scope within which its results can be generalized as follows:

1. **Spatial Boundaries:** Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Martyr Hamma Lakhdar in El Oued Province.

2. **Human Boundaries:** The study sample includes 120 students from the undergraduate (Bachelor's) and graduate (Master's) levels at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences.

3. **Temporal Boundaries:** The study tools were applied during the period from November 2022 to May 2023.

4.2- Main Study Sample: Our choice of the study sample aimed at saving time and effort. There are many types of samples, and we chose the stratified random sample because it is the most suitable for our study. This method involves selecting a sample that represents the subgroups within the study population in the same proportions as in the population. It can also be used to select equal samples from each subgroup if the research aims to compare them.

After visiting the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, we applied the stratified random sampling method to select the sample representing the research population. As a result, we obtained a study sample consisting of 120 students from the faculty, selected through the stratified random method. The following table (Table 7) shows the distribution of the study sample by gender:

Table 7: Distribution of Study Sample by Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	36	30%
Females	84	70%
Total	120	100%

Based on Table 7, the study sample consists of 120 students. It is evident that the percentage of females is higher than the percentage of males selected for the study, with 84 females making up 70% of the sample, while 36 males represent 30%.

5- Statistical Techniques Used in the Study:

The importance of statistics as a tool lies in its ability to enable researchers to arrive at accurate scientific results, in contrast to other various methods and techniques, such as personal observation, which may not lead to results that align with scientific facts. Based on this, the data from the study sample were entered into a computer using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, known for its use in handling the study variables and performing statistical analyses to answer the research questions.

The statistical techniques used to examine the distribution characteristics of the study sample scores include:

- Spearman-Brown Formula
- Cronbach's Alpha Formula
- T-test for Differences
- Guttman Formula
- Pearson Correlation Formula

Presentation and Discussion of Study Results

1- Presentation and Discussion of the First Hypothesis:

To address the first hypothesis of the study, which states that there is a positive correlation between psychological stress and future anxiety among the study sample, we applied Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 8: Value and Significance of the Relationship between Future Anxiety and Psychological Stress among University Students.

Indicators	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
Psychological Stress	0.74	0.01
Future Anxiety		

Table 8 shows that the correlation coefficient is 0.74, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This allows us to accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between psychological stress and future anxiety among the study sample. This correlation means that any change in the first variable is followed by a change in the second variable. In this case, an increase in psychological stress among students leads to an increase in their future anxiety.

Our study is consistent with the findings of Sana Saud (2003), which concluded that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between future anxiety and both irrational thoughts and psychological stress. It also aligns with Ibrahim Badr's 2003 study, which showed a significant positive correlation between a lack of future orientation and psychological stress in both genders.

However, there are studies that differ from our findings, such as Flynn's study (2000), which suggested that trauma and psychological stress do not affect the level of future orientation in the study sample.

The discrepancy between our study and Flynn's (2000) study could be attributed to the time gap between them 23 years which could have significantly altered human nature, either for better or worse. University students face a range of challenges, including reduced energy levels, muscle tension, changes in sleep and eating habits, difficulty completing research tasks due to their abundance, and obtaining necessary references for some courses. They also struggle with the financial burden of university expenses. All these factors contribute to discomfort, anxiety, and preoccupation with what the future holds.

In addition, university students often feel that obstacles prevent them from achieving their goals, leading to emotional exhaustion, expressed as feelings of frustration, helplessness, depression, and anger. They may also experience mental exhaustion, such as dissatisfaction, feelings of inadequacy, inefficiency, and inferiority, all of which make them anxious and fearful of the future, including an inability to make critical decisions, fear of failure in academics or social relationships, or boredom. Based on the above, we can conclude that as psychological stress increases, so does future anxiety, and conversely, as psychological stress decreases, future anxiety decreases as well.

2- Presentation and Discussion of the Results of the Second Hypothesis:

To address the second hypothesis of the study, which states that "There are statistically significant differences in psychological stress among the study sample attributed to the gender variable," we calculated the mean and standard deviation for both groups and then applied the T-test.

Table 9: Value and Significance of Differences in Psychological Stress Among University Students Attributed to the Gender Variable.

Indicators	Variables	Males (N = 36)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Females (N = 84)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	T-Value	Significance Level
Psychological Stress		3600%	192.62	28.67	84	185.05	23.24	1.33	Not Significant

The results shown in Table 9 indicate that the T-value is 1.33, which is not statistically significant. Therefore, we can conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in psychological stress among the study sample attributed to the gender variable.

This finding is consistent with the results of Samira Shand Mohamed Al-Anwar (2006) and Chlorouinats (2006), which found no statistically significant differences in the level of problems according to gender variables. It also aligns with Shabaan's (1995) study, which found no significant differences between the means of both genders in the use of older and integrative methods.

Consequently, we conclude that there is no difference in the level of psychological stress based on the gender variable. This can be explained by the fact that psychological stress, as a general phenomenon, can be experienced by everyone, regardless of whether the individual is male or female. Both males and females are exposed to the same stressors, especially since they study in the same environment with the same characteristics and features. They are all going through the same academic phase university studies with the same professors, studying the same curricula, and facing the same academic obligations, such as homework and exams.

Students experience stress within the family, at work, and among friends, meaning these stressors do not discriminate between males and females.

3- Presentation and Discussion of the Results of the Third Hypothesis:

To address the third hypothesis of the study, which states that "There are statistically significant differences in future anxiety among the study sample attributed to the gender variable," we calculated the mean and standard deviation for both groups and then applied the T-test.

Table 10: Value and Significance of Differences in Future Anxiety Among University Students Attributed to the Gender Variable.

Indicators	Males (N)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Females (N)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	T-Value	Significance Level
Future Anxiety	36	112.35	11.61	84	94.06	13.43	2.54	0.01

The results shown in Table 10 indicate that the T-value is 2.54, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences in future anxiety among the study sample attributed to the gender variable. Upon examining the mean scores of both groups, we find that the mean score for future anxiety is higher among males than females, indicating that the differences favor males.

Our study differs from that of Hassan (1999), which found no statistically significant differences in future anxiety based on gender, and from the study by Al-Mawla (2007), which found a statistically significant relationship between willpower and future anxiety, favoring females. This was also the finding of Al-Sabawi's (2008) study. The differences could be attributed to the context in which the study was conducted, the time period, and the sample population.

For university students, continuous thinking about the future is a source of anxiety, with males experiencing this more than females. Among the reasons for this are the young male's inability to achieve his goals and ambitions, and a lower ability to cope with more complex problems in life, which leads to future anxiety. Male university students tend to view life and future problems realistically, where the abundance of life's problems causes them to focus on the more complex issues. This is supported by Antoine Rahme's (2002) study on students' attitudes toward their future, which found that they focus on their studies and work, but not on long-term goals. The difference may also be due to the greater opportunities available to males compared to females, such as fulfilling psychological needs, and the fact that females are more often held accountable for failure than males. Moreover, males are generally more ambitious and persistent than females. The expected behavioral patterns for males allow for more tolerance of mistakes in their roles, unlike females, who often do not receive the same forgiveness when they make mistakes, leading them to develop more pessimistic and negative thoughts about the future compared to males. (Roumissa, 2014, p. 98).

STUDY SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study contributes to the exploration of the relationship between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students. It addresses a timely and relevant topic, given the current emphasis on personal characteristics and emotions. The growing interest of researchers in studying human behavior and thoughts, both positive and negative, is reflected in various research efforts aimed at understanding human motives, as well as identifying emotional characteristics and traits, and developing positive skills and attributes.

This motivated us to examine aspects of this topic among university students, with our study sample drawn from students at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the University of Martyr Hamma Lakhdar in El Oued.

The key findings of the study are as follows:

- There is a positive correlation between psychological stress and future anxiety among university students.
- There are no statistically significant differences in psychological stress attributable to the gender variable.
- There are statistically significant differences in future anxiety attributable to the gender variable, with males experiencing higher levels of anxiety than females.

In light of these findings, we propose the following recommendations:

- Develop educational programs to raise awareness about the main sources of psychological stress that students may face, the risks associated with them, and strategies to cope with and mitigate their effects.
- Implement regular programs and continuous evaluation of psychological stress levels among students to monitor and manage stress.
- Establish a counseling program aimed at alleviating future anxiety among university students.
- Conduct further studies that examine the variables explored in this study among students at other educational levels.

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