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EXISTENTIAL ALIENATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE LEVEL OF OPTIMISM AMONG.

Abstract

The research aimed to identify the level of existential alienation and optimism among Private university students and the relationship between the scores of the research sample on the existential alienation scale and their scores on the optimism scale. It also aimed at revealing the significance of the differences among the scores of the research sample on the optimism scale between students with high existential alienation and students with low existential alienation and measuring the significance of the differences among the research sample individuals on the existential alienation scale and the optimism scale according to the two research variables: (the academic year, and the economic level of the family). The researcher used the descriptive analytical approach. The research sample consisted of (301) male and female students from Lebanese French University. The optimism scale prepared by Abdul Khaleq was applied. The results showed: 1. According to the existential alienation measure, the level of existential alienation among the research sample was high, and the level of optimism among the research sample was medium. 2. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between the scores on the existential self-alienation scale and the optimism scale of the people in the study sample. 3. Existential isolation among college students can be used to figure out how optimistic they are. 4. There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the research sample's



answers on the scale of existential alienation based on the school year, which favoured students in their first year, and based on the family's economic level, which selected students from poor families.⁵ There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the research sample's responses on the optimism scale based on the academic year in favour of students in their fourth academic year and based on the family's economic level in favour of students whose family's economic level was good.

Keywords: existential alienation, optimism, the private world, the community world, the individual's relationship with himself.

Introduction:

Ideas of alienation have been widespread in recent years, and many societies in the early stages of history experienced these concepts. The concept of old alienation differs from modern alienation. It has now become more complex and broader. The current circumstances through which the country is going, such as violent acts, unrest, and social and economic instability, led the society with its various groups to live a bitter reality due to the catastrophe, crises and lack of a sense of security. "These circumstances may affect the students' view of themselves, their present and future which may be reflected in their existential presence represented by human awareness, their responsibility to build themselves, their communication with others of their society, the development of the world in which they live, and to be distinguished in everything" (Fiest & Fiest, 2009, p 353). Dean (1961) sees existential alienation as conditions that involve the independent relationship between the individual and his environment. Situational factors explain why students are excluded in one situation, such as university, but not in another (Calabrese & Seldin, 1986, p 121) & (Abdulkaeim, 2022, p 3).

To be alienated is the feeling of non-belongingness or isolation from family, friends, or university (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p 432). In the academic context, alienation is often associated with the student's negative behaviours, such as self-isolation, failure, absence, and dropout (Mau, 1992, 733). This point of view is consistent with that of Adler (1939), who indicated that failure to study often stems from a feeling unrelated to the teacher, other students, or the university community as a whole, but rather from a low level of optimism (calabrese & Seldin, 1986, p 122).

Optimism is one of the essential topics in psychology as it has recently received a lot of attention from psychologists due to its association with the characteristics of the mental and physical health of the individual. Recently, societies have witnessed many changes affecting the individual's optimism level in various aspects of life, cultural, intellectual, social, and economic. The most affected groups of society by



these cultural and social changes and transformations are the university youth groups, by their social status in that they are considered as a group living in a transitional stage that seeks to change their social status for the best through acquiring education and knowledge. (Al-Ansari and Kazem, 2008, 110).

Also, optimism is considered one of the most prominent personality traits affecting human behaviour and expectations regarding the present and the future, whether positive (optimistic) or damaging (pessimistic). A positive mood activates creativity and problem-solving and helps students classify and organize information. Consequently, it affects their achievement and academic excellence (Al-Musawi and Al-Ankoushi, 2011, 163)& (Hasan and Abdulkarim, 2022 p 91).

So, we find that optimism is essential for human survival, through which one can predict the future and ideas about social and economic development. In addition, it helps individuals understand their specific goals and ways to overcome daily difficulties.

Many previous studies, such as the study of (Abdul-Khaleq, 2000), indicate that optimism reduces the risk of exposure to health problems and a faster recovery after important events such as death or illness. Also, optimists are less anxious, more able to bear adversity, more confident and able to make decisions, and more creative, showing a highly positive relationship between an optimistic outlook and happiness. Optimism is positively related to controlling stress, confronting it, solving problems successfully, self-control, self-esteem and compatibility, and physical and psychological health (Muhaisen, 2012, p. 54). Abdel-Khaleq and Al-Ansari (1995) also define optimism as a lotoward the future that makes the individual expect the best, wait for the best to happen, aspire to success, and exclude anything else. They assume that optimism is a trait and not a state. Despite the trait's orientation towards the future, it affects the individual's current behaviour and is linked to the positive aspects of the behaviour. It can have a good effect on the psychological and physical health of the individual (Al-Ansari & Kazem, 2008, p. 113) & (Hasan and Abdulkarim, 2022 p 4111).

Since optimism is essential among university youth, as it affects their vision of the future, their planning for it, and consequently their ability to face what they encounter in their lives, the research seeks to identify these two concepts and study the degree of the relationship between them.

Literature Review

Ali (2005), Iraq: entitled: "Optimism - Pessimism and their Relationship with Gender, Grade, Specialization, and Academic Achievement among Baghdad



University Students." The study aimed to identify the degree of optimism - pessimism among Baghdad University students according to the following variables: gender, specialization, and the academic year). The study sample consisted of (480) male and female university students. The researcher used the optimism-pessimism scale of Al-Hakak (2001). One of the most important results of the study was that Baghdad University students were characterized by a high level of optimism in their university life. The students of the University of Baghdad, of both sexes, from the scientific and human specializations, and the four years, had the same level of optimism. That is, there were no statistically significant differences according to the variables of gender, specialization, and academic year. There were statistically significant differences according to gender, academic year, and achievement, meaning that the specialization variable had an effective contribution rate in optimism and pessimism in favour of the scientific specialization.

Al-Houdali's study (2010), Palestine: entitled: "Alienation and its Relationship with Optimism and Pessimism among Al-Quds University Students." This study aimed at determining the degree of alienation, optimism and pessimism among Al-Quds University students, explaining the meaning of alienation, and identifying its relationship to optimism and pessimism.

Muheisen's study (2012), Palestine: "Optimism and Pessimism among Al-Aqsa University Students in Gaza in the Light of Some Variables." The study aimed to identify the prevalence of optimism and pessimism among students of Al-Aqsa University in Gaza, and their relationship to religiosity, the degree of differences in optimism and pessimism according to gender, specialization, place of residence, marital status, organizational belongingness, and whether optimism and pessimism represented one factor or two independent factors.

The study of Bani Mustafa and Makalada (2014), Jordan: "Moral judgment and its relationship to the level of optimism and pessimism among Yarmouk University students." The study aimed to identify the level of moral judgment, optimism, and pessimism among Yarmouk University students and identify the relationship between moral judgment, optimism, and pessimism and the statistically significant differences at the levels of moral judgment, optimism, and discouragement.

Hatem (2014), Iraq: entitled: (Academic Alienation and its Relationship to Optimism and Academic Pessimism for Female Students of the Boarding Departments of the Faculty of Physical Education). The study aimed to reveal the correlation between academic alienation and academic optimism and pessimism and the differences between the average scores of undergraduate students on the optimism-pessimism scale and the academic alienation scale.



Tan (2011), entitled: The Relationship of dispositional optimism and Perception of academic stress in high-ability Students. The study aimed to understand the relationship between optimism and other psychological variables such as self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, hope, academic resilience, and school satisfaction.

Afanasyev & Sharaj Study (2016), entitled: Alienation of Personality in Higher Education. The problem of existential personality alienation in the learning process is expected at all levels of education. In this respect, identifying its causes and ways to overcome them is increasingly important. The study provides a complex vision of depersonalization in higher education in modern Russian society regarding philosophical, social, psychological, and educational settings. Öksüz¹, Öztürk (2017) study, entitled: (Relationship between Levels of Student Alienation and Hemsehrilik Attitudes of University Students: A Study on Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University Students. This study aimed to reveal the relationships between students' levels of alienation and hemispheric attitudes.

Research Methodology

The research used the descriptive analytical approach. The research population consisted of all the students enrolled in the following academic specializations of Lebanese French University: (College of Administration and Economics, College of Education and Languages, College of Law and International Relations, College of Engineering and Computer Science) for the academic year (2021-2022 AD). Their number was (2857) male and female students, according to the statistics issued by the Registration Department at Lebanese French University.

The initial population and the rate of the research sample are clarified in the following tables:

Table (1): The original population of the research sample and the percentage of the model drawn

	The academic specialization	The original community	Draw rate%	The selected sample
1	Faculty of Administration and Economics	1163	10.66%	124
2	Faculty of Education and Languages	693	10.38%	72
3	Faculty of Law and International Relations	724	10.22%	74
4	Faculty of Engineering and Computer Sciences	277	11.19%	31



The total sum	2857	10.53%	301
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Table (2): The distribution of the research sample according to the economic level variable

The variable	The group	Number of students	Percentage
I am running the economic level a few minutes late; my previous meeting is over.	Weak (1,000,000 dinars or less)	138	45.8 %
	Medium (from 1,100,000 to 2,000,000 dinars)	96	31.9%
	Good (2,100,000 and over)	67	22.3%
	Total sum	301	100%

Research instruments:

Existential Alienation Scale: The researcher followed the following steps in designing the research tool:

Table (3): The distribution of the items of the existential alienation scale

Scale dimensions	Paragraphs	Total Sum
The first dimension: (the private world)	1,4,7,10,13,16,19,22,25,28,31,34,37,40,43,46,49,52	18
The second dimension: (the world of society)	2,5,8,11,14,17,20,23,26,29,32,35,38,41,44,47,50,53	18
The third dimension: (the individual's relationship with himself)	3,6,9,12,15,18,21,24,27,30,33,36,39,42,45,48,51,54,55	19



	The total sum	55
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The validity of the existential alienation scale: The researcher calculated the fact of the internal construction of the existential alienation scale, and the results were according to the following: The truth of the statement: The correlation of the total sum with the sub-items was made, as shown in Table (4):

Table (4): The correlations between the total and the sub-items of the existential alienation scale

statement number	correlation coefficient	statement number	correlation coefficient	statement number	correlation coefficient
Q1	0.645**	Q20	0.749**	Q39	0.690**
Q2	0.571**	Q21	0.712**	Q40	0.657**
Q3	0.798**	Q22	0.782**	Q41	0.700**
Q4	0.690**	Q23	0.771**	Q42	0.696**
Q5	0.727**	Q24	0.695**	Q43	0.738**
Q6	0.699**	Q25	0.624**	Q44	0.724**
Q7	0.832**	Q26	0.670**	Q45	0.715**
Q8	0.860**	Q27	0.482**	Q46	0.725**
Q9	0.802**	Q28	0.415**	Q47	0.651**
Q10	0.725**	Q29	0.447**	Q48	0.668**
Q11	0.734**	Q30	0.427**	Q49	0.686**
Q12	0.686**	Q31	0.582**	Q50	0.547**
Q13	0.566**	Q32	0.581**	Q51	0.396**
Q14	0.609**	Q33	0.725**	Q52	0.327**
Q15	0.470**	Q34	0.717**	Q53	0.516**
Q16	0.726**	Q35	0.758**	Q54	0.481**
Q17	0.609**	Q36	0.707**	Q55	0.466**
Q18	0.805**	Q37	0.785**		
Q19	0.711**	Q38	0.828**		

Table (4) shows that the correlation of the total with the sub-items ranged between (0.327 and (0.860), which is an acceptable correlation indicating that the scale has a reasonable degree of internal consistency. The validity of the internal construction: The researcher conducted the correlation of the total sum with the sub-dimensions of the scale of existential alienation as shown in Table (5):



Table (5): Correlation coefficients (Pearson) between the total and sub-dimensions in the existential alienation scale

Scale dimensions	Pearson correlation coefficient	Significance level
The first dimension: (the private world)	0.873**	0.000
The second dimension: (the world of society)	0.829**	0.000
The third dimension: (the individual's relationship with himself)	0.864**	0.000

Table (5) shows that the correlation of the total with the sub-dimensions is statistically significant, and the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient ranged between (0.829 and 0.873), which indicates that the scale of existential alienation is homogeneous in measuring the purpose for which it is developed, and is characterized by internal validity.

The discriminative validity of the scale of existential alienation:

To verify the validity of the existential alienation scale, discriminative validity was conducted as the researcher applied the scale to a pilot sample of (24) students who were not included in the basic research sample to ensure the validity of the existential alienation scale. The results were treated statistically using a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney test) to indicate the differences between the upper and lower quartiles, and the results were as shown in Table (6):

Table (6): Mann-Whitney test for the differences between the upper category and the lower category of the existential alienation scale

The discriminatory validity		N	Total ranks	Rank average	Z	Man Whitney	Significance level	Decision
The first dimension: (the private world)	1.00	8	96	8	3.30	77.000	0.000	Significant at (0.01)
	4.00	8	254	22				
	total	16						



The second dimension: (the world of society)	1.00	8	9	94	4.10	83.000	0.000	Significant at (0.01)
	4.00	8	94	9				
	total	16	250	24				
The third dimension: (the individual's relationship with himself)	1.00	8	98	8	3.60	80.000	0.000	Significant at (0.01)
	4.00	8	256	26				
	total	16						
Total score	84.000	4.29	10	96	4.29	84.000	0.000	Significant at (0.01)
			2	2				
			8	52				

The reliability of the existential alienation scale: Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated between the individuals' responses using half split, Pearson's according to the repetition after reapplication of the scale on the same sample after ten days, and Cronbach alpha. The results are indicated in Table (7):

Table (7): Results of reliability of the existential alienation by repetition, Spearman-Brown, and Alpha Cronbach

The scale dimensions	Reliability by repetition	Spearman-Brown	Alpha Cronbach
The first dimension: (the private world)	0.820	0.735	0.672
The second dimension: (the world of society)	0.847	0.796	0.681



The third dimension: (the individual's relationship with himself)	0.855	0.780	0.651
The total sum	0.851	0.768	0.729

Table (7) indicates that the value of reliability by repetition for the scale of existential alienation was in the total score (0.851), while the value of reliability by using half split was (0.768), and the importance of reliability according to Alpha Cronbach was (0.729). So, it can be seen that all the values of the reliability coefficients were high, indicating the scale's reliability, thus allowing the research to be conducted.

There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the research sample's responses on the optimism scale according to the variable of the economic level of the family. The results are indicated in Table (8):

Table (8): Results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for the differences between the answers of the research sample on the optimism scale

The optimism scale	The source of variance	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	Degree of freedom	F-value	The probability value	Decision
The total score	Between groups	5847.947	2	2923.974	299	16.940	0.000	Significant at (0.01)
	Within groups	51435.588	298	172.603				
	Total	57283.535	300					

It is clear from Table (23), and after the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, that the calculated (F) value amounted to (16.940), which is significant at (0.01) in the answers of the research sample members on the optimism scale according to the variable of the economic level of the family. Thus, the current hypothesis is accepted. The Scheffe test for comparing differences between means shows all responses in the total score of the optimism scale were in favour of students whose family's economic level was (sound).

Table (9): Multiple comparisons between the averages of the responses on the optimism scale according to the economic level variable



optimism scale	Scheffe		Average Variances	The probability value	The lowest value	The highest value
	Group A	Group B				
The total Score	Weak	Average	1.396	0.727	-2.90	5.69
		Good	*-9.923	0.000	-14.74	-5.11
	Average	Good	*-11.319	0.000	-16.46	-6.17

This can be explained by the fact that many factors directly or indirectly affect a student's optimism level at the university level. Some of them are related to the nature of family and social relations, and others are related to the family's economic status.

Conclusion

The research results showed a statistically significant negative correlation between the scores of the research sample on the existential alienation scale and their scores on the optimism scale. This is because the student with existential alienation cannot carry out his academic and social roles and does not trust himself, his abilities, or others. Thus, he becomes helpless and unable to overcome the academic difficulties and problems he faces in university life. His ambition and optimism decrease, and he becomes more pessimistic and alienated from reality and society. The results also indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the total score and the sub-domains of the existential alienation scale between the mean scores of students' responses in the first academic year and the mean scores of students' responses in the fourth academic year in favour of students in the first academic year. In addition, there were statistically significant differences in the total score of the optimism scale between the mean scores of students' responses in the first academic year and the mean scores of students' responses in the fourth academic year in favour of the students in the fourth academic year because the students of the first academic year passed through difficult circumstances for many years, and through the experiences they experienced, they realized that the events became a part of this life which cannot be changed. This increased their level of existential alienation and their distance from reality. However, the students of the fourth academic year became more aware of the requirements of the university educational environment, more communicating with others, their self-awareness, and their awareness of the importance of their existence. The results also showed differences in the dimensions of the scale of existential alienation in favor of students whose family's economic level was (weak), while the results of the optimism scale were in favour of students whose family's financial status was (sound). The high economic level improves the quality of academic life for the university student and increases his existential presence. In addition, a family with a high economic level



seeks to provide services and direct assistance for its children to help them provide the necessities for a decent life as well as provide a job opportunity that ensures them an appropriate income and allows them to choose the academic specialization for their future as well as providing knowledge support for them. At this stage, children think more about their professional future and the occupations that suit them more than others.

In light of the research results, the research concluded with the following suggestions:

1) Working on educating family members about the importance of providing appropriate family support for children, raising their level of optimism, and avoiding future conflicts, whether at the level of the family, work, or daily social interaction.

2) Working on enhancing the existential presence of university students, as it contributes to getting rid of the individuals' feelings of despair, surrender, and pessimism and their resistance to the pressures of life. Thus, they are closer to optimistic and psychologically healthy students.

3) Conducting other research on different age groups, such as students in secondary education, to study the existential alienation variable and its relationship to the level of optimism.

4) Conduct seminars and workshops by the university administration to educate young people about their future by identifying their true potential and teach them to plan for the future on sound foundations so that the student does not fall prey to unrealistic professional ambitions.

5) Activating the role of teenage students in the local community by allowing them to participate in summer and community activities to strengthen their personalities, develop their optimism for the future, teach them appropriate behaviour in dealing with others, and enhance their existential presence.

6) Providing counselling programs for pessimistic students to enhance their optimism and increase their motivation for academic achievement.

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