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Psychological stress and its relationship to the psycho-social adjustment

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Abstract

The importance of the current study lies in finding the relationship between stress and social adjustment among university students by using Mulla Taher's method for measuring psychological stress and Mahmoud's method for measuring psycho-social adjustment. As a result, if the student fails to perform self-adjustment, this will cause psychological imbalance and increase the psychological stress, thus affecting his/her behavior and leads him/her to isolation from society. In conclusion, through the process of socialization performed by the family and the community, the individual acquires values, moral beliefs and different habits and attitudes.

Keywords: Psychological, Stress, Social, Adjustment, Students.

Estrés psicológico y su relación con el ajuste psicosocial

Resumen

La importancia del estudio actual radica en encontrar la relación entre el estrés y el ajuste social entre los estudiantes universitarios utilizando el método de Mulla Taher para medir el estrés psicológico y el método de Mahmoud para medir el ajuste psicosocial. Como resultado, si el estudiante no se adapta, esto provocará un desequilibrio psicológico y aumentará el estrés psicológico, lo que afectará su comportamiento y lo llevará a aislarse de la sociedad. En conclusión, a través del proceso de socialización realizado por la familia y la comunidad, el individuo adquiere valores, creencias morales y diferentes hábitos y actitudes.

Palabras clave: psicología, estrés, social, ajuste, estudiantes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological Stress is one of the issues that gained academics' attention because of their psychological, social, economic, political and cultural effects. This attention has increased especially during the 20th century due to wars and complexity of contemporary life (OTHMAN, 1987). Psychological stress is a necessary condition faced by Individuals regardless of their lifestyle. The continually changing life conditions involve stressful requirements towards adaptation to changing circumstances.

As social beings, people may have some genetic issues and grow up within a specific natural environment and social context. Thus, they have to balance their life in accordance with what is so-called in psychology adaptation. The internal factors, namely, those factors or conditions found inside a human, and the external factors, i.e., environmental, social and natural factors, are considerably governing humans' ability to achieve adaptation and then psychological health. However, a human may not be able in every moment of life to keep equilibrium and make an adaptation. Hence, experiencing psychological stress leads to psychological injuries. The more complicated psychological life has effects on human life, their performance levels and psychological stability. Particularly, traumatic events experienced by the individual lead to some responses that are far from correct social behavior (RADHWAN, 2007).

The psycho-social adjustment is vital in dealing with situations experienced by the individual in his/her everyday life, strengthening their confidence and endurance of difficulties, enhancing self-reliance and commitment to the duties required. Through observing many situations experienced by people, especially students, these students are characterized by having a weak psycho-social adjustment in the face of difficult situations they encounter in their lives.

Accordingly, the study is attempting to highlight the most significant psychological stress and its relationship to psycho-social adjustment. The necessity of studying such an issue among university students is important because students' suffering from psychological stress could lead to many problems and psychological conflicts, inappropriate adaptation to study and impede and obstruct their study course. In fact, this highlights the problem of this study that students' increased psychological stress leads eventually to non-comfort and psychological discouragement, which in turn affects their study course and ability to study and complete their duties correctly.

Since their existence on earth, humans have undergone personal, social and psychological crises and troubles as an inevitable issue in much often. Existing studies found that certain psychological and physical disorders are sometimes associated with severe crises faced by a human. Also, there is a relationship between these various life crises and psychological diseases and disorders. In fact, some studies attributed public health and psychological injuries to such crises faced by human throughout his/her life stages. Each stage has

different requirements, and some steps require human to change and reconsider their lifestyle (RADHWAN, 2007).

Some researchers have found that the psychological stress suffered by students during their study course may be due to the environmental pressures including increasing numbers of students in the classroom, high or low temperature, poor lighting and ventilation as well as poor housing. On the other hand, it could be due to psycho-social stress represented by poor family relations, disruption of some communications channels as well as a social weakness within the family and the conflict of generations. Also, students' psychological stress can be a result of personal pressures characterized by guilt, anxiety about the future and exceed expectations with respect to self and others (ASSAFASFAH, 2005).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A pioneer in the field of stress, life is the process of harmonization with the circumstances surrounding human. Among the development patterns occurring in each individual's life course from birth to death are the daily stresses and tensions. ALHILO (1989) opines that when adversity intensifies, the individual becomes tense and anxious and then activates his/her physical and psychological defenses to encounter nerve attitudes and to bring back his/her psychological equilibrium (JIRJIS, 2002). Unfortunately, some people fail to develop a strategy to encounter possible stress. For example,

those people who are escaping from stress to the worst condition, such as instead of taking appropriate reactions to face stress they become heavy smokers and addicted to sedative or are eating greedily (MARTIN, 2000).

Stress level depends on the equilibrium between stress needs and requirements, and between skills and coexistence with stress. Stress often occurs when there is a lack of equality between these two factors and when coexistence skills exceed the balanced needs to a great extent. This theory is based on the relationship between four aspects of the individual and attitudes as described in figure 1 (JIRJIS, 2002).

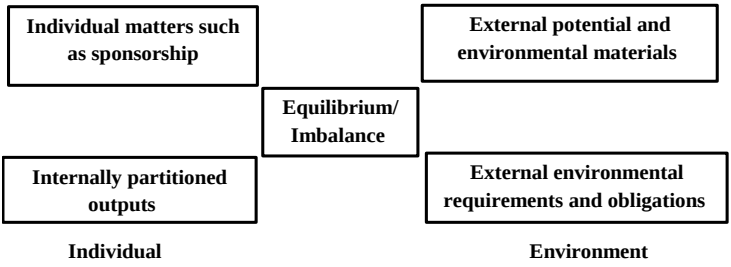

Figure 1: the basic components of the global model of stress

ALHILO (1989) discovered that animals respond similarly to different kinds of stress including extreme cold, conflicts, diseases of pride and surgery.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aimed at examining the relationship between psychological stress and methods of dealing with it through neural characteristics including anxiety, depression, hysteria, phobias, physical diseases. The study sample included (498) students from the Technical Institute of Kirkuk. Psychological stress among students was measured using questionnaire which included (56) items distributed to five fields including: economy, psychology, family, education and emotion. The researcher has also used two scales; one of them measured methods of dealing with stress and the second measured neural characteristics (Crown indicator). The study found that students suffer from psychological stress and there is a relationship between the independent variable (stress) and dependent variable. In addition, it explained methods of dealing with the characteristics, which were significant to each other (JIRJIS, 2002).

This study aimed at defining the role of social support in the positive treatment of stressful life events and reducing the negative effects resulting from stress. The study sample included (100) university students. Half of the students were assessed with their families; while the other half were assessed on the campus. The study concluded that there are significant differences between the two groups in relation to positive dealing with stressful life events. The differences were in favor of students living with their families. However, the differences related to the negative handling were for students living on campus (MAHMOUD, 2006).

This study aimed at defining how to deal with psychological stress among female students living in dormitories and those living with their families according to variables of housing and tertiary. The study sample included (200) university students. The study employed the scale of dealing with stress proposed by (ALHILO, 1989). The results showed that there are significant differences in relation to how to deal with psychological stress. Accordingly, students living with their families tended more to use behavioral method; while avoidance method was clearly used by students living dormitories.

There are significant differences related to how to handle stress among junior students and senior students using the cognitive method as compared to behavioral and avoidance methods. Hence, senior students tended to use the cognitive method. Also, there are statistically significant differences in how to handle stress among junior students and senior students (living with their families). Senior students tended to use the cognitive method as compared to behavioral and avoidance methods (JIRJIS, 2002).

This study aimed at measuring the level of innovative thinking and psycho-social adjustment for third-grade students in Al Mutamayizeen schools depending on the gender variable. The research sample consisted of two steps: first, selecting four Al Mutamayizeen schools and then measuring the same number in relation to regular schools. Second, assessing the randomly selected sample of schools in comparison to regular schools. Then, the sample included (492) students. The research instrument was to test the ability to innovative

thinking and measure psycho-social adjustment. The researcher found that the mean of total respondents who selected the ability to innovative thinking was (11.169) with a standard deviation of (94.27); and scores ranged between (94) as a minimum score and (248) as a maximum score (ALASERY, 2003).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the procedures followed by the researcher in conducting this study, including method, study sample, research instrument, research reliability and validity and statistical methods used in analyzing the results. In order to achieve research objectives, the researcher followed the descriptive method whereby the phenomenon under study is described and analyzed as well as to determine the relationship between the components of this phenomenon and its relevant perspectives, its processes and effects (ALNASHIA, 1999).

The descriptive method corresponds to the nature of the current study as it depends on data collection and analysis and relating its different implications to find results that contribute to the understanding of reality and its perception. As listed in Table 1, the current research includes students selected from Technical Institute, Kirkuk. The total number is (850) students from all departments.

Table 1: The research community 1

Community	Departments	Number	Total
Technical Institute, Kirkuk	Accounting	104	850
	Electron	331	
	Electricity	317	
	Warehouse Management	98	

After collecting information on the community represented by students in Technical Institute, Kirkuk, the basic research sample was chosen randomly by (12%) representing (100) students in different departments of Technical Institute/Kirkuk.

Table 2: The research community 2

Sample	Number	Percentage
Students in Technical Institute, Kirkuk	100	12%

The researcher used the questionnaire as a research instrument as it is appropriate to the current research nature. The questionnaire is one of the instruments used to collect information and data from sources. The characteristics of questionnaire include cost-effective, more practical, limited time and data can be collected from a large population ALASERY (2003) as well as the possibility of quantitative expression of the information contained in the answers.

Table 3: The percentage of experts' views on the validity of psychological stress measurement items

Items no.	Number of agreed experts	Number of disagreed experts	Percentage
1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38	10	------	100%
3, 7, 17, 21, 33	9	1	90%
4	8	2	80%

Table 4: The percentage of experts' views on the validity of psycho-social adjustment items

Items no.	Number of agreed experts	Number of disagreed experts	Percentage
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68	10	------	100%
14, 18, 25, 30, 31, 35, 36	0	1	90%

Reliability refers to consistency in measurement results or accuracy of individuals' performance and stability in results over time. Reliability test gives the same results if applied to the same group of individuals. Reliability of measurements of psychological stress and

psycho-social adjustment was tested using the test-retest method. ALASERY (2003) confirms that extracting reliability coefficient using this way requires reapplying the scale twice within two different periods on the same group of individuals.

The researcher has implemented the scale for the first time on a sample consisting of (30) students randomly selected from Technical Institute/Kirkuk on 20/8/2018. A week later, on 4/3/2018, after distributing the first questionnaire, the scale was reapplied on the same group. After processing the data statistically using an appropriate statistical method that is Pearson correlation, it is found that the reliability coefficient was (0.95) for psychological stress measurement (see Table 5) and (0.93) for a psycho-social adjustment (see Table 6).

Table 5: The reliability of psychological stress measurement

Factor	First test	Second test	Pearson correlation
Number	30	30	30
Mean	80.83	81.33	0.95
Standard deviation	8.026	7.471	

Table 6: The reliability of psycho-social adjustment measurement

Factor	First test	Second test	Pearson correlation
Number	30	30	30
Mean	94.70	94.60	0.93
Standard deviation	11.710	11.312	

After verifying the validity and reliability of measurements in their final forms starting from 29/3/2018, the measurement was applied to students at Technical Institute /Kirkuk. The researcher, therefore, adopted the completed forms, which were (100) questionnaire forms. Then, forms of the two measurements were corrected by giving alternatives for estimates contained in the instrument (very stressful, stressful, no stress) with respect to psychological stress and also alternatives for a social and psychological adjustment (applicable to, sometimes applicable to, not applicable). Note that all items of psychological stress measurement were negative except for item (15).

For example, the respondent's answer in the positive items takes (1-3) scores; while the negative items in relation to psycho-social adjustment items take (1) scores. The scores of negative items ranged between (1-3) including: 2-4-6-9-12-15-17-19-21-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-31-32-36-37-40-41-53-54-55-56-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65. The scales of positive items ranged between (3-1) including: 1-3-5-8-10-11-13-14-16-17-20-22-30-33-34-35-38-39-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-57-66-67-68. Thus, the highest score in the psychological stress measurement was (114), and the lowest one was (3). Whereas the highest score in psycho-social adjustment measurement was (204) and the lowest one was (68). The researcher employed (SPSS) software to achieve the objectives and explain the results obtained from measurements.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results found in this study according to predetermined objectives, and then presents conclusions and suggestions, as follows: The researcher found that the arithmetic mean (77.45) with a standard deviation of (8.733), and compared to the mean that was (70), using T-test for one sample. The findings showed that there is a statistically significant difference for arithmetic mean. Hence, the calculated T-value was (88.684), which was greater than the tabulated T-value that was (1.98) at a significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (99) (as listed in Table 7).

Table 7: T-test for one sample on the difference between the arithmetic mean and mean for psychological stress measurement.

Number of participants	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Degree of freedom	T-value		Significance level
100	77.45	8.733	70	99	88.684	1.98	0.05

According to Table 7, students at Technical Institute suffer from psychological stress. The researcher believes that is one of the disadvantages of contemporary technological development experienced in the world now. This is due to that student at this stage of their lives are facing some difficulties while trying to adjust to the curriculum and their relationship with teachers, not to mention the problems of study and examination system which increase the mental

disorders among students. If the student fails to perform self-adjustment, this will cause psychological imbalance and increase the psychological stress, thus affecting his/her behavior and leads him/her to isolation from society.

In such a case, not only the institute must pay attention to the scientific aspect, but also it should care about helping students to develop their ability to make positive responses to various educational, psychological and social aspects. Consequently, students will feel security and reassurance and acquire proper attitudes and good educational and moral standards. It is found that the arithmetic mean (94.58) with a standard deviation of (10.832) and compared to the mean that was (70), using T-test for one sample. The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference for the mean. The calculated T-value was (87.314), which was greater than the tabulated T-value that was (1.98) at a significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (99) (outlined in Table 8).

Table 8: T-test for one sample on the difference between the arithmetic mean and mean for psycho-social adjustment measurement.

Number of participants	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Degree of freedom	T-value		Significance level
100	94.58	10.832	80	99	87.314	1.98	0.05

As listed in Table 8, students have a good level of psycho-social adjustment. The high level of psycho-social adjustment can be attributed to the availability of some factors that are expected to help students to positive psycho-social adjustment. This refers to the quality of services provided by the institute, such as the creation of an appropriate place for study including classrooms furnished with proper seats and library equipped with references and books and supplies required for reading. Also, this can be explained by the relative stability in the city, representing a kind of moral support that motivates students' abilities to cope with the difficulties that may affect their psycho-social adjustment.

The results indicated that the arithmetic mean (75.32) for psychological stress and (95.32) for psycho-social adjustment with a standard deviation of (8.363) for psychological stress and (10.269) for psycho-social adjustment, and compared to the mean that was (70) for psychological stress and (80) for psycho-social adjustment, using T-test for two samples. The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference in favor of females. Hence, the calculated T-value was (2.503) for psychological stress and (0.681) for psycho-social adjustment. The results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females because the calculated T-value was smaller than the tabulated T-value that was (1.98) at a significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (98) (see Table 9).

Table 9: The significance of statistical differences for psychological stress and social adjustment depending on gender variable (male and female).

Measurement	Sample	Number	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	T-value		Significance level
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Psychological stress	male	50	75.32	8.363	2.503	1.98	0.05
	female	50	79.58	8.655	-	-	0.05
psycho-social adjustment	male	50	95.32	10.269	0.681	1.98	0.05
	female	50	93.84	11.424	0.681	1.98	0.05

The results in Table 9 are consistent with the reality because social relations, increasing external stress and changes occurring in the daily lifestyle affect female students more than male students.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, females would have certain emotions because they are more vulnerable to change effects than males in terms of building relationships with others which helps them to express what they are thinking about. This is due to that the social environment in which we live now is encouraging, and male students are allowed to do things rather than female students. This effect varies depending on differences in relation to customs, traditions and culture prevailing in the community where the students live. Through the process of socialization performed by the family and the community, the

individual acquires values, moral beliefs and different habits and attitudes. Previous studies found that females in our society are affected by the process of socialization more than males; as a result, there will occur some internal conflicts that generate tension, anxiety and frustration.

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