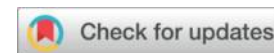




Article Title: Future Anxiety among University Students: A Comparative Study of Scientific and Humanities Disciplines: A Field Study at the University of Relizane



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Abstract:

This study examined future anxiety among university students. It also investigated differences in future anxiety by gender and academic discipline. The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

- The participants are expected to exhibit future anxiety.
- There are no statistically significant differences in future anxiety among university students according to gender or academic discipline.

To test these hypotheses, the study was conducted with 159 male and female students. They were selected purposively after screening an initial group of 195 students. The participants represented different levels of study, including bachelor's and first- and second-year master's programs. They also represented scientific and humanities disciplines: psychology, law, materials science, and technology. Data were collected during the 2025 academic year. The Future Anxiety Scale developed by Al-Khalidi was used.

The study adopted a descriptive-comparative approach. Several statistical procedures were applied using SPSS 24.

The study yielded the following results:

The participants reported a high level of future anxiety.

There were no statistically significant differences in future anxiety among university students according to gender or academic discipline.

Keywords: future anxiety - university students.

Introduction:

Successful university education produces beneficial outcomes for students. It should also help them improve their future lives. Students are therefore central to the educational process. The main aim of university education is to support the development of an integrated personality. It should also enable students to contribute to their own growth. Yet rapid change in the modern era has created difficult conditions. People face social complexity, accelerated social change, family disintegration, and declining religious and moral values. They also face heavier demands, poverty, limited educational opportunities, and class or sectarian conflict. University students are part of this social and cultural setting. They are affected by events around them. Persistent psychological pressure may weaken their ability to cope. Academic, social, and psychological aspects of university life can all become sources of stress. Students therefore encounter many difficulties and crises. Some arise from the characteristics of their developmental stage. Others relate to examinations and competition for academic success.

University students represent an important resource for the future. They will assume responsibility for society. They also think extensively about the future because it contains many uncertainties. These uncertainties can generate anxiety. Research indicates that many students anticipate the future with fear. Such fear may arise when educational, material, and personal goals remain unmet (Al-Masri, 2011: 2). It can adversely affect the behavior used to pursue those goals. Nahed Saud (2005) reported high future anxiety among male and female university students. She described it as a visible phenomenon in a society marked by rapid change and uncertain outcomes. Economic, social, health, and environmental conditions

interact and affect individual behavior (Al-Mashikhi, 2009: 2). The phenomenon therefore concerns both the individual and society. Uncertainty about the future has become common, especially among university youth. Students may experience tension and insecurity. They may also develop negative expectations about academic success. These expectations can reduce perseverance and self-directed achievement. Academic and social obstacles can intensify stress and impair healthy self-realization. Students may then struggle to prepare for examinations. This difficulty may appear in several behaviors that provide an escape from pressure. Some students may adopt improper methods to reduce tension and anxiety. Academic cheating may be viewed as a route to success, psychological security, and parity with classmates.

Research Problem: The present study examined the level of future anxiety among university students through the following questions:

What is the level of future anxiety among university students?

Are there statistically significant differences in future anxiety among university students according to scientific and humanities disciplines?

Study Hypotheses:

- University students have a high level of future anxiety.
- There are no statistically significant differences in future anxiety among university students according to scientific and humanities disciplines.

Study Objectives:

To determine the level of future anxiety among the participants.

To determine whether future anxiety among university students differs according to gender or academic discipline.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study stems from the seriousness of the phenomenon under investigation. Future anxiety has increased markedly in university settings. Despite this increase, it has not received sufficient scholarly attention. It may pose a risk to society as a whole. University students therefore require

particular attention. They are central to social life and are expected to contribute to the future development of society.

Theoretical Framework:

First: Future Anxiety

1. Definition of Future Anxiety:

- ✓ Amal Al-Ahmad defines future anxiety as an unpleasant emotional state. It is partly hereditary, but it is largely learned. It is accompanied by apprehension, tension, conflict, and fear of the unknown and the future. These reactions lack an objective basis. Nevertheless, the person responds as if they indicate an imminent threat or a situation that is difficult to confront (Al-Ahmad, 2001: 114).
- ✓ Zainab Shuqair views future anxiety as a psychogenic disturbance. It results from unpleasant past experiences and distorted perceptions of reality and the self. The person recalls negative memories and experiences, exaggerates negative elements, and dismisses positive aspects of the self and reality. This process creates tension and insecurity. It may lead to self-destructive tendencies, pronounced helplessness, generalized expectations of failure, and anticipation of disaster. The person may consequently develop a pessimistic view of the future (Shuqair, 2005: 5).

2. Main Indicators of Future Anxiety:

It is an unpleasant emotional state that involves discomfort.

It is a reaction to unexpected events that may occur in the future.

Securing employment, income, a family, and children is highly important. These concerns can lead young men and women to think continuously about their future with fear and apprehension.

The unknown is both important and unclear. Many people live with a persistent fear of it.

Future anxiety is accompanied by a persistent expectation of harm or misfortune.

It is therefore an emotional state marked by uncertain expectations, distress, tension, and anxiety about the coming days. These reactions occur under changing life conditions whose outcomes cannot be predicted.

The preceding definitions indicate that future anxiety is a disturbed and unpleasant emotional state that occurs from time to time. It is characterized by tension, distress, fear, discomfort, and a loss of psychological security. These feelings concern issues that threaten a person's value or existence. They are accompanied by anticipation of a danger that may occur in the future.

3. Manifestations of Future Anxiety: Future anxiety has three main manifestations:

Cognitive manifestations: These involve anxiety about the thoughts and needs that occupy the individual. Such thoughts may fluctuate and produce a pessimistic view of life. The person may believe that death is near. The person may also fear losing control of physical or mental functions (Al-Dahri, 2005: 328).

Behavioral manifestations: These arise from within the individual and take different forms. They may include avoiding embarrassing situations and other situations that provoke anxiety (Abu Ubaid, 2013: 139).

Physical manifestations: These are evident in biological and physiological reactions. Examples include shortness of breath, dry throat, cold extremities, elevated blood pressure, fainting, muscular tension, and indigestion. Anxiety does not cause the individual to lose contact with reality. However, it can impair daily functioning and lead to irrational behavior. In severe cases, individuals spend much of their time trying unsuccessfully to overcome their fears (Othman, 1993: 328).

Second: The University Student

The circumstances of university students must be considered within the broader reality of higher education in Algeria. Approximately 420,000 students are enrolled in higher education. This is a substantial figure with several important implications for the state. Some implications may be serious when the national knowledge system becomes unstable. The educational, instructional, and training dimensions of this system have faced scientific and pedagogical crises for some time. These crises now require objective and effective solutions. Universities currently produce large numbers of graduates, often without clear benefit, because most graduates cannot find employment (Bouasha, 2000: 32). This

is a major reason why Algerian university students may be dissatisfied with both higher education in general and their chosen disciplines in particular. Scientific research has also not yet secured a strong place in Algerian society or within economic institutions. This situation explains why higher education has struggled to produce qualified and productive professionals who can help address society's crises.

Field Procedures:

The study procedures were organized as follows:

First: Pilot Study

Pilot Study Sample: The pilot study involved 50 male and female students from several departments. These departments were selected after confirming that academic cheating was widespread within them. The sample characteristics are presented below:

Table 01. Characteristics of the Pilot Study Sample by Gender

Sample	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	46%
Female	27	54%
Total	50	100%

Comment on the Table: The table shows that females represented a larger proportion of the sample than males. Females accounted for 54%, whereas males accounted for 46%. This difference may reflect the greater participation of women in higher education.

Table 02. Characteristics of the Pilot Study Sample by Academic Discipline

Academic discipline	Frequency	Percentage
Psychology	20	40%
Legal sciences	10	20%
Economics	10	20%
Technology	10	20%

Comment on the Table: Psychology students provided the largest share of responses to the questionnaires and scales, at 40%. Each of the remaining disciplines represented 20% of responses. This pattern may reflect differences in students' willingness to complete the distributed questionnaires.

Pilot Study Instruments:

Future Anxiety Scale:

A. Description of the Instrument: The Future Anxiety Scale developed by Al-Khalidi (2002) contains 44 items. They are distributed across five domains: psychological, economic, social, health, and family.

B. Administration and Scoring:

Each item was answered on a five-point Likert scale. The five response options were: describes me completely, describes me often, describes me moderately, describes me slightly, and does not describe me at all. Scores were assigned to the five options as follows:

Positive items (0-1-2-3-4)

Negative items (4-3-2-1-0)

C. Psychometric Properties of the Scale

A. Discriminant Validity:

Table 03. Differences between the Upper and Lower Groups on the Future Anxiety Scale

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Significance at the 95% level		
				t value	df	p value
Upper	13	119.58	12.85	9.62	24	0.001
Lower	13	97.83	6.27			

The table shows that the questionnaire demonstrated discriminant validity in favor of the upper group ($t = 9.62$).

B. Reliability

- **Cronbach's Alpha:** Reliability reflects the internal consistency of the test items. The statistical analysis conducted in SPSS produced the following results:

Table 04. Reliability Coefficient Estimated with Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
0.89	44

The table confirms that the test has an acceptable level of reliability.

Second: Main Study

Study Method: The nature of a research topic determines the method that best serves its objectives. The present study sought to examine future anxiety among university students by measuring its level. A descriptive method was therefore appropriate. This method extends beyond collecting and classifying data. It also includes interpretation. Descriptive research becomes meaningful when data are organized, analyzed, and used to draw conclusions relevant to the research problem. The method comprises integrated procedures for describing a phenomenon or topic. It relies on collecting, classifying, processing, and thoroughly analyzing facts and data. These procedures support conclusions and generalizations about the phenomenon under study. On this basis, the study adopted a descriptive-comparative method.

Study Sample and Its Characteristics:

The main study involved 159 male and female students who showed a positive indication of future anxiety during screening. The remaining study measures were administered to these students. Their main characteristics are presented below:

A. Sample Characteristics by Gender:

Table 05. Sample Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	81	50.94%
Female	78	49.36%
Total	159	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher from SPSS output.

Comment on the Table: Most participants were male. Men represented 50.94% of the sample, whereas women represented 49.36%.

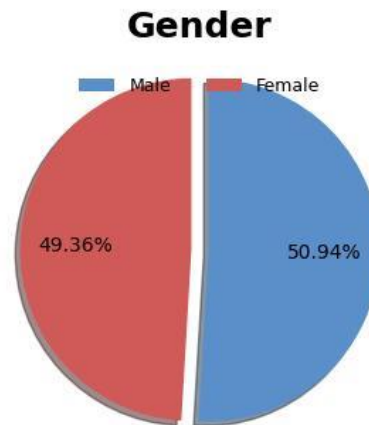


Figure 01. Pie Chart of Sample Characteristics by Gender

Source: Prepared by the researcher from Excel output.

B. Sample Characteristics by Academic Discipline:

Table 06. Sample Characteristics by Academic Discipline

Academic discipline	Frequency	Percentage
Psychology	38	23.89%
Law	42	26.41%
Economics	34	21.87%
Technology	45	28.30%
Total	159	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher from SPSS output.

Comment on the Table:

The proportions were similar across academic disciplines. Technology students formed the largest group, at 28.30%. They were followed by law students at 26.41%, psychology students at 23.89%, and economics students at 21.87%.

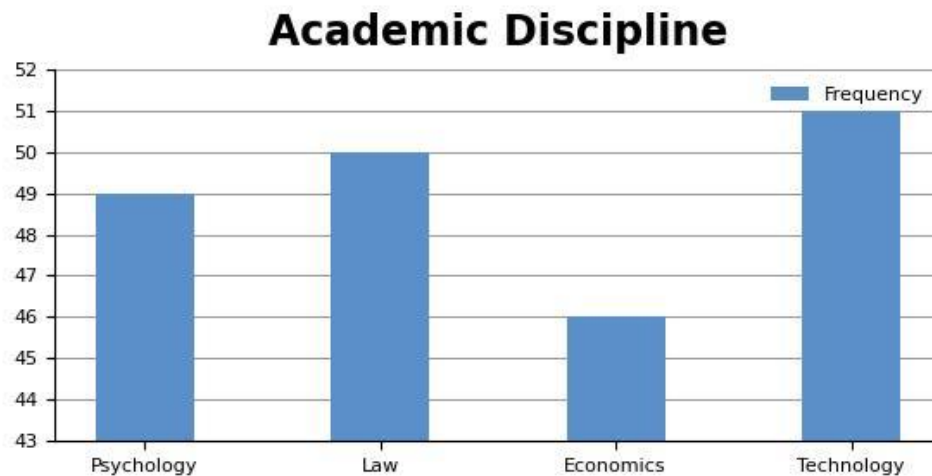


Figure 02. Bar Chart of Sample Characteristics by Academic Discipline

Source: Prepared by the researcher from Excel output.

Study Delimitations: The present study was delimited as follows:

Population Delimitation: The study included students at the University of Relizane. They represented all years of bachelor's and master's study. The disciplines were legal sciences, economics, psychology, and technology.

Geographical Delimitation: The study was conducted at Ahmed Zabana University in Relizane Province.

Statistical Procedures Used in the Study:

Several statistical procedures were used to estimate the psychometric properties of the instruments and test the hypotheses. Analyses were conducted with SPSS, version 20. The procedures were as follows:

1. Frequencies and percentages
2. Arithmetic means and standard deviations
3. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient
4. Cronbach's alpha coefficient

5. Independent-samples t test

Presentation and Discussion of the Hypothesis Results:

Presentation and Discussion of the First Hypothesis: The level of future anxiety is expected to be high among the participants.

A. Results of the First Hypothesis:

Table 07. One-Sample t-Test Results for the Difference between the Observed and Theoretical Means of Future Anxiety

Variable	N	Mean (x)	Standard deviation (s)	t value	df	Theoretical mean	Significance level (alpha)	p value	Result
Future anxiety	159	109.3	18.88	52.11	158	88	0.05	0.00	Sig.

Source: Prepared by the researcher from SPSS output.

Statistical Interpretation of the Table:

The arithmetic mean was 109.30, and the standard deviation was 18.88. The t value was 52.11 with 158 degrees of freedom. The theoretical mean was 88. The significance level was 0.05, and the reported p value was 0.00. The p value was below 0.05, which indicates statistical significance. The observed mean was also higher than the theoretical mean. These results indicate a high level of future anxiety among the participants.

B. Discussion of the First Hypothesis:

The results show that university students at different levels experience high future anxiety. This result agrees with earlier studies of university students. Those studies also reported high future anxiety. They include Ahmad Suriya (2014), Al-Momani and Naim (2013), Al-Qurashi (2012), Muhammad (2010), Al-Sabaawi (2006), Ahmad Ali Kanaan and Abdullah Al-Majdal (1998), and Jassim (1996). Based on the theoretical framework and previous research, the researcher attributes this high level to the complexity of contemporary social life. The present era is marked by rapid change and is often described as an age of anxiety and stress. University students struggle to reconcile many goals with the realities of

daily life. A gap therefore remains between their aspirations and their ability to achieve them. Young people who do not attend university may enter employment early and gain financial independence. By contrast, university students' prospects often depend on their chosen discipline, the duration of study, and the relevance of their training to available work. Employment opportunities may also be affected by favoritism and personal connections rather than professional skill or academic merit. University education has struggled to keep pace with current conditions and often produces unemployed graduates. Students may recognize from the beginning of their studies that their qualifications are not needed in the labor market. They may nevertheless feel compelled to continue in order to satisfy their families or society.

The broader ideals once associated with the university's mission to future generations, whom Bourdieu called "the heirs," have therefore weakened. A narrower meaning has taken their place. It reflects how students view their actual surroundings. Students once placed hope in their studies and chosen discipline. They expected knowledge to support a personal project, professional integration, and a desired social position. Many now feel deprived of this legitimate prospect. Learning consequently acquires hidden meanings. Students may express these meanings through indifference toward university services and activities. They experience pressure from both present realities and future uncertainty. University students are not isolated from difficult life circumstances and social conflict. They also undergo psychological, social, and physiological development. This development produces needs that require fulfillment, ambitions that require achievement, and a strong desire for independence and a distinct identity.

Presentation and Discussion of the Second Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences in future anxiety among university students according to gender or academic discipline.

A. Results of the Second Hypothesis:

Table 09. Independent-Samples t Test for the Difference between the Two Means

Gender	N	Mean (x)	Standard deviation (s)	t value	df	Significance level (alpha)	p value	Result
Male	81	103.34	10.25	1.92	194	0.05	0.69	Not significant
Female	78	100.47	10.50					

Source: Prepared by the researcher from SPSS output.

Statistical Interpretation of the Table:

The male group had a mean of 103.34 and a standard deviation of 10.25. The female group had a mean of 100.47 and a standard deviation of 10.50. The t value was 1.92 with 194 degrees of freedom. The reported p value was 0.69 at a significance level of 0.05. Because the p value exceeded 0.05, the result was not statistically significant. Future anxiety therefore did not differ significantly by gender.

Table 10. One-Way Analysis of Variance for Differences in Future Anxiety by Academic Discipline

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p value	Significance level	Result
Between groups	339.37	3	113.12	1.039	0.37	0.05	Not significant
Within groups	20895.78	156	108.38				
Total		159	Source: Prepared by the researcher from SPSS output.				

Statistical Interpretation of the Table:

The between-groups sum of squares was 339.37, and the within-groups sum of squares was 20,895.78. The degrees of freedom were 3 between groups and 156 within groups. The mean square was 113.12 between groups and 108.38 within groups. The reported p value was 0.37 at a significance level of 0.05. Because the p value exceeded 0.05, the result was not statistically significant. Future anxiety therefore did not differ significantly by academic discipline.

Discussion of the Hypothesis:

In this context, Kisker noted that university students face academic, psychological, and social pressures. These pressures create crises linked to their developmental stage. They also arise from examinations, competition for success, emotional problems, and the demands of university rules and regulations. Such demands can restrict students' movement and freedom. A major source of pressure is the attempt to affirm and realize the self in the future. Most students perceive that future as uncertain. Their goals become unclear because their professional prospects after graduation are also unclear. This uncertainty creates persistent future anxiety across disciplines and levels of study. Students face the same

challenge and the same wait for employment. Abu Zaid Nabila Amin (1992) similarly found no differences in university students' views of the future by socioeconomic status or by high versus low achievement. The study also found that university youth were anxious about their lives and futures. Their outlook was pessimistic because they could not achieve their goals. University students, who were once viewed as exemplary, may consequently experience psychological problems that appear in maladaptive behavior. Such behavior may include examination cheating. It may also include the use and distribution of drugs and hallucinogenic substances, even within the educational environment.

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