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Psychological stress and its relationship to emotional maturity among students of the college of physical education and sports sciences

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Abstract

This study introduces and highlights the importance of assessing psychological stress among university students and its relationship with emotional maturity, which is regarded as one of the main foundations of mental health. Based on the researcher's observations of third-year students, difficulties were noted in identifying the correlation between these two variables, which defined the purpose of the research. The theoretical section explains the concepts of psychological stress and emotional maturity and discusses their significance in the sports field. The study adopted the descriptive survey method, applied to a genuine research population consisting of third-year students at the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. Two instruments were used: a psychological stress scale (33 items) and an emotional maturity scale (25 items). Both tools were validated by experts before application. Findings indicated that the students demonstrated an average level of both psychological stress and emotional maturity. The research recommends encouraging students to attend lectures regularly, engage in daily reading, and avoid postponing academic work until examination periods in order to reduce anxiety and fear.

Keywords: Psychological, stress and emotional maturity

Introduction

Psychological stress is a key factor influencing an individual's ability to adapt to the pressures and challenges of everyday life. It reflects the capacity to persist in the face of obstacles and respond to difficult situations positively and effectively. Students in the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences face multiple sources of stress, ranging from academic requirements to rigorous physical activities and competitive sports, all of which may affect their psychological and emotional functioning.

Meanwhile, emotional maturity represents an essential component of mental health. It is characterized by the ability to regulate emotions in a manner appropriate to diverse situations, thereby promoting healthy social interactions and enhancing academic and athletic performance ^[1]. Despite the recognized importance of both concepts, few studies have examined the relationship between psychological stress and emotional maturity among students in physical education colleges ^[2].

Accordingly, this research aims to explore that relationship among third-year students at the University of Babylon, in order to understand how psychological stress influences emotional maturity and how this interaction affects students' capacity to adapt to daily academic and physical challenges. Practical recommendations are also proposed to help strengthen students' psychological and emotional well-being and improve their performance in both academic and athletic domains.

Research Problem

The ability to cope with psychological stress and achieve emotional balance plays a critical role in the academic and athletic performance of students in the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. Psychological stress reflects the individual's ability to endure pressures and sustain performance under challenging circumstances, while emotional maturity relates to the student's capacity to regulate emotions and maintain composure across various contexts.

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Given the increasing academic and physical demands placed upon students, it is necessary to investigate the connection between these two constructs. This study therefore seeks to measure both variables, with expert validation, and to determine the degree and nature of their relationship.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the level of psychological stress among third-year students in the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Babylon (academic year 2025-2050).
2. To assess the level of emotional maturity among the same group of students.
3. To examine the relationship between psychological stress and emotional maturity, and to determine the extent to which each influences the other.

Methodology

The research employed the descriptive survey method as the most suitable approach for addressing the exploratory nature of the problem.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised all third-year students in the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Babylon. The sample represented the entire population, consisting of 50 male and female students.

Research Tools

To ensure systematic evaluation, the following tools were employed: ^[3]

- Relevant scientific references and resources.
- Data entry form.

- Open-ended questionnaire.
- Two validated scales:

Emotional Maturity Scale

25 items, revised and finalized following expert review.

- **Psychological Stress Scale:** 33 items, standardized within the Iraqi context and approved by specialists.

Field Procedures

Both scales were submitted to experts to confirm clarity and relevance of the items. After minor revisions, the final versions were adopted. A pilot study was conducted on October 10, 2050, with 50 third-year students to confirm item comprehensibility and avoid potential difficulties before the main application ^[4].

Scoring Procedures

- **Emotional Maturity Scale:** 25 items with three response options (often, sometimes, rarely). Positive and negative items were weighted to ensure higher scores reflected greater maturity.
- **Psychological Stress Scale:** 33 items with four response options (applies greatly, moderately, weakly, does not apply). Items were scored so that higher values indicated greater psychological stress, with reversed scoring applied where necessary.

Results and discussions

Presentation and Discussion of Results

4.1 Psychological Stress among the Research Sample

To assess the reality of psychological stress among the students, the mean and the hypothetical mean were calculated, as presented in Table (1).

Table 1: Mean and Hypothetical Mean of Psychological Stress

Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Degrees of Freedom	T Calculated	T Tabular
Males/Females	50	80.77	57.42	80	22	2.89	2.056

As shown in Table (1), the mean (80.77) is very close to the hypothetical mean (80). This indicates that the research sample demonstrated a moderate level of psychological endurance. This result may be attributed to the routine and monotony of daily lectures, which lacked variety and excitement. Moreover, insufficient repetition of practical sessions by students negatively influenced exam

performance,⁵ thereby contributing to the observed level of psychological stress ^[6].

Emotional Maturity among the Research Sample

To evaluate the students' emotional maturity, the mean and hypothetical mean were also calculated, as summarized in Table (2).

Table 2: Mean and Hypothetical Mean of Emotional Maturity

Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Degrees of Freedom	T Calculated	T Tabular
Males/Females	50	70.98	22.40	76	25	2.97	2.056

Table (2) reveals that the mean (70.98) is close to the hypothetical mean (76), with a degree of freedom of 25 and a significance level of 0.05. These findings suggest that the sample demonstrated a moderate level of emotional maturity ^[7]. This outcome is explained by the limited engagement of students in lecture participation and their insufficient involvement in developing practical performance skills. Consequently, weaknesses in exam performance contributed to reduced emotional maturity ^[8].

Conclusions

1. The students demonstrated an average level of both emotional maturity and psychological stress.

2. A direct relationship was found between psychological stress and emotional maturity, confirming the interdependence of the two variables.

Recommendations

1. Apply the Emotional Maturity and Psychological Stress Scales as valid instruments for measuring these traits among students in other academic levels and disciplines.
2. Encourage students to attend lectures consistently, adopt daily study habits, and avoid accumulating material before examinations in order to minimize anxiety and fear.

3. Motivate students to participate in extracurricular activities such as tournaments, workshops, and specialized courses to foster emotional and psychological resilience.
4. Expand research efforts to assess other psychological traits that may influence both the theoretical and practical performance of students.

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