

# **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-EFFICIENCY AND DEPRESSION AMONG EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES STUDENTS AT AL-ALBAYT UNIVERSITY**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to find out the relationship between self-efficiency and depression among educational sciences students at Al-albait University, in the light of two variables: academic level and sex. The study was conducted on a sample of 193 students. Data was collected using general self-efficiency scale and Beck depression checklist. ANOVA and correlation coefficient were used to find out the relationship between study variables. Results showed a high level of self-efficiency among subjects, as well as a negative relationship between self-efficiency and depression. However, results also showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the respondent's responses due to their academic level or sex.

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**Keywords:** Self-Efficiency, Depression, University Students

## **Introduction**

The University stage is one of the most important developmental stages in the lives of individuals due to its characteristics, demands, and needs. Therefore, since it has been in use lately, university students are required to move into the adult world with the accompanied requirements and problems to adapt with. Students should also adapt to this transition from the secondary stage into the university stage with their own new requirements and responsibilities. However, this stage needs to be adapted to by students more than any other stages.

Depression is the most related variable to adaptation, and has received a great deal of scientists and researchers interest. It is also one of the most psychological disorders among people in general and among

university students in particular. Thus, the percentage of students suffering from depression ranges between 17 – 23%, and there are 45% of students receiving counseling services who are suffering from depression (Hamdi and Dawood, 2000; 44). However, 3-5 of the world countries inhabitants are affected by this disorder (Haddad and Azzeitawi, 2002).

Depression has been indicated to have a wide range of affect disorders, represented by a group of very complex clinical symptoms (Freeman, Pretzel, Fleming and Simon, 1990). Furthermore, depression is a self-affective experience characterized by sadness, pessimism, carelessness, loss of interest, feelings of failure, dissatisfaction, self-harming thoughts, hesitation, indecisiveness, expansion, loss of appetite, feelings of guilt, slow response, and inability to exert any effort (Coles, 1982). Therefore, depression can be explained through the cognitive triad represented by a negative view of one's self, the world, and the future. In addition, depression negatively affects individual's motivation, affections, ideas, and physiological responses (Khawaja & Duncanson, 2008).

Depression have several definitions, but the most important definition was provided in the diagnostic and statistical manual DSM-IV. Therefore, it refers to "Depressed moods such as loss of interest or enjoyment in activities, noticeable increase in weight, anxiety, excessive sleep, slowness or rashness, tiredness or loss of energy, low self-esteem, guilt, low ability to think, hesitation, continuous thoughts of death, and suicidal thoughts or homicide attempts" (American Psychiatrist Association, 1994).

Given the importance of the topic, it receives the interest of researches and scientists trying to study the relationship between depression and some individual factors such as self-efficiency, anxiety, self-esteem etc. However, this is in an attempt to investigate the mechanism through which these factors affect depressive symptoms.

Expectancy value theories might be among the most important theories which attempts to explain depression. These theories are based on the premise that individuals should conduct in certain behaviors believing that they will achieve what they want. Also, it states that individuals becomes depressed and are involved in a conflict with others when they hold erroneous beliefs about their behaviors, and the behaviors of others. For instance, when they are over or under-valued, some individuals often experience the feelings of inability in achieving their goals and objectives (Maddux, Stanley and Manning, 1987).

Individual perception of his self-efficiency depends on a certain level of achievement, and his ability to control events. Thus, self-efficiency has an effect on the nature of the job or the goal which the individual wants to achieve, the amount of effort he exerts, and the extent of his consistency in facing obstacles he encounters, and his style of thinking and so on (Bandura

et al., 1987). Bandura (1986) is one of the most outstanding scientists who talks about self-efficacy, when he introduced his theory in this regard. He stated that inactive and persistent behavior depends on individual judgments and expectations regarding his behavioral skills, and its sufficiency to deal with environmental and surrounding conditions successfully. This also includes factors that play a crucial role in psychological adaptation and disorder, as well as in specifying the extent of the success of each treatment of affective and behavioral problems (Maddux, 1995). In addition, this theory suggested the existence of three cognitive components which constitutes psychological problems. Therefore, any change or modification in these components is considered as one of the important treatment methods. These components are:

1. Self-efficiency Expectation: This means individual conventions of his personal abilities in behaving in a manner in order to achieve certain results.
2. Results Expectation: Individual conventions which is related to the probability that a behavior will lead to specific results.
3. Results Value: Self value assigned by an individual to specific results (Maddux, Stanley and Manning, 1987).

Expectation related to self-efficiency is part of self-concept. Thus, if an individual convention in his efficiency is high, this will contribute in forming positive self concept and vice versa. Low self-efficiency is an important aspect of depression, while depression according to self-efficacy theory is a result of high assess (Hamdi and Dawood, 2000: 46). Particularly, when individuals believe the existence of very desired results that can be achieved through behaving in certain ways (high assessment of results), while believing at the same time that they are unable (compared with others) to behave appropriately (low self-efficacy assessment), these conventions will lead to poor self-initiative, persistence, low self-value, and finally a feeling of depression (Maddux, Stanley and Manning, 1987).

Self-efficiency in line with Beck Cognitive Theory on the importance of self-efficiency perception and low self-value shows that individual perception of his inability to control results is the basis of the cognitive problem of the depressed person. It also appears that low self-efficiency expectancy is more important than low expectancy of results among depressed individuals based on their inability to control and direct. However, Beck (1980) emphasized that depressed individuals view themselves as incompetent and inefficient due to under estimation of their abilities, and believing that the world is full of obstacles. As a result, they automatically have negative ideas (thought) which sometimes leads to disruptions in cognitive processes, and biases in attention and in the explanation of events (Hamdi and Dawood, 2000, pp 46 -47).

Consequently, several studies have been carried out on self-efficiency and variables such as anxiety, tension, persistence, and successes. However, there were only few studies conducted that addresses self-efficiency and depression. Similarly, there are many studies on the relationship between depression and some variables such as problem in solving self-esteem, parental practices, and so on. Therefore, this study came as an attempt to show the relationship between self-efficiency and depression by providing educational literature on this topic.

### **Empirical Studies Reviews**

Mahalik and Hivlighan (1988) study aimed at finding out the effect of training on self-efficiency i.e. the effect of therapeutic program based on self-help. However, this study was conducted on a sample of 52 university students suffering from moderate depression. Furthermore, they were subjected to a therapeutic self-help program. Results showed that their high expectations on their self-efficiency led to a decreased depression state among them.

Kelly (1993) conducted a study which aims to identify the perception of occupational related self-efficiency. Thus, this study was conducted on a sample of 286 male and female students from nine to the eleventh grade. Results showed that sex has a very poor effect on occupational self-efficiency, while achievement had the greatest role in predicting self-efficiency than sex. However, sex shows no variance in the interest of specific accusations.

Hamdi and Dawood (2000) conducted a study which is aimed at identifying the perceived self-efficiency relationship with sex, depression, and stress degree. The study was conducted on a sample of 414 educational sciences faculty students of the University of Jordan. Results showed statistically significant differences between males and female mean scores on self- efficiency scale. Thus, boys out performed girls, while less depressed students are more self-efficient. Finally, the results of the study showed that less stressed students were more self-efficient.

Al-Nabhan, Zghoul and Al-Hindawi (2000) conducted a study that aims to find out the existence of anxiety and depression phenomena among a sample of Mu'tah University students as well as the relationship between them. The study was conducted on a sample of 926 university male and female students. Results showed that respondent's scores on anxiety and depression checklist reflect a medium degree of anxiety and depression. In addition, it shows the variation of depression intercity according to academic level and the interaction of this variable with the subject's sex. Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences in the depression intensity due to the respondent's sex and academic Majors. Furthermore, results also

showed a strong correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.59$ ) between subjects anxiety and depression.

Radwan (2001) conducted a study which aims to identify the relationship between depression and pessimism. The study was conducted on a sample of 1134 male and female students at Damascus University, and 522 students from secondary schools in Damascus. Results showed positive relationship between depression and pessimism, and that depression incidence among study sample ranged from 5.2 – 5.7%. However, its incidence among universities was greater than that among secondary schools students. Also, its incidence among university male students was greater than that among females. In addition, there were no differences between the male and female schools students.

Gamers, Hu and Garacia (2002) conducted a study on the effect of academic self- efficiency among fresh student in an academic performance and congruence. Thus, the study was conducted on a sample of 256 fresh students. Results showed a strong and direct correlation between self- efficiency, as well as a strong relationship between academic self- efficiency and academic performance and congruence.

Al-Yahfofi (2003) conducted a study which aims to find out the relationship between depression and some socio-demographic variable. The study was carried out on a sample of 610 male and female students at Lances universities. Results showed no statistically significant differences in depression between male and female students. The result also shows that poor class students were more depressed than those from middle and high classes.

Bostana et al. (2005) conducted a study which aimed at specifying the rate of depressive symptoms incidence among university students. The study was conducted on a sample of 504 Turkish students. Results showed that the rate of depressed students was 62.5%, and that the rate of depressive symptoms incidence was 32.1% among older students. Also, the result of the study showed the rate of depressive symptoms to be 34.7% among lower socioeconomic class students. However, among graduates, it was 31.2%, and 29.9% among low achievers.

Alansari (2006) conducted a study aiming at investigating sex differences in depression among 8,538 randomly chosen university students from 17 Muslim countries. Thus, results showed statistically significant differences in depression due to sex variables in 9 of these countries. In countries like Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria, Oman, Qatar, Morocco, and Kuwait, females have higher depression level than males. However, depression level among males is greater than that among females in Saudi Arabia. Thus, there are no differences in depression due to sex. This was

found in Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Jordan, and Sudan.

Loose, Ratelle, Guay, Senecal and Harvey (2006) conducted a study with the aim of understanding and finding out the correlations among adolescent's self-efficiency beliefs, their academic congruence, and some other variables. The study was conducted on a sample of 411 late adolescence students. Results showed that 50% of the adolescents have high tendency of stable beliefs, while 20% of them faced an increase in self-efficiency beliefs. Meanwhile, 30% of them experience a decrease in their self-efficiency beliefs. Results also showed that female enrolled in practical technology program out performed male students in the self-efficiency program.

Smith (2007) study aimed to identify the effect of total self-efficiency. Furthermore, the study was conducted on a sample of 203 students using both self-efficiency and adaptation scales. Results showed that students with high self-efficiency were better in emotional and behavioral adaptation than others.

Bayram & Bilgel (2008) conducted a study in Turkey which aimed to find out the incidence of depression. The study was conducted on a sample of 1617 male and female students. Results revealed that 8.10% of the studied sample suffered from severe depression, and that depression has no relationship with the subject's age between males and females. Results showed that students have more depression level than those studying basic, scientific engineering, and medical sciences. Meanwhile, results showed that students who are satisfied with their education were less depressed than those who were not satisfied. Also, depression among first and second study year students were higher than those in the third, fourth, and fifth study years. Additionally, results showed that poorer students were more depressed, and that village residing students were more depressed than cities residents.

Khawaja & Duncanson (2008) conducted a study which aimed at identifying the effect of demographic variables in depression among students. The study was conducted on a sample of 287 Australian male and female students. Results showed that depression among girls was higher than that among boys. Likewise, depression among Law College students was higher than that among other college students. Finally, results showed that depression among students satisfied with their financial status was lower than students that were dissatisfied with their financial status.

Finally, Bayati, Mahammad and Mohammed (2009) conducted a study which aimed at specifying the incidence of depression among students at Arak University, Iran. The study was conducted on a sample of 304 students. Results showed that 52.3% of students suffered from more than

average depression. Also, females were more depressed than males. Meanwhile, the results of this study showed that the desired specialization was one of the most important factors that lead to depression. Furthermore, the non existence of statistically significant differences in depression incidence between medicine and other college students also results in depression.

After this review, it was clear that these studies attempts to discover depression incidence rate and its relationship with several social demographic variables. However, some variables receive no sufficient interest as self-efficiency that might have some relation with depression. Nevertheless, this is considered as a departure points for conducting more research studies on variables that does not receive enough interest.

### **Problem Statement and Study Questions**

Self-efficiency is one of the concepts related to human achievement in various fields. Thus, it contributes to initiation among individuals, as well as in generating motivation to exert efforts in certain task till it is accomplished. Therefore, individual perception of his self- efficiency will affect his psychological wellbeing. Therefore, this study came as an attempt to investigate the relationship between self-efficiency and depression among educational sciences faculty students at the university. The study also sought to explore differences between boys and girls in self-efficiency. Depression is among the most psychological discords spread among individuals, especially among university students. Also, there might be a relationship between anxiety and self-efficiency. Thus, this requires explaining this relation if there is one. We can determine this relationship in the following research question: "What is the relationship between self-efficiency and depression among education sciences students in light of their sex and study year and their interaction? Specifically, the study sought to answer the following study questions:

1. What is the level of self-efficiency among educational sciences faculty students at Al-albays University?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship at  $\alpha=0.05$  level, between self-efficiency and depression among educational sciences faculty students at Al-albays University?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  level due to sex and study year variables or their interaction?

### **Importance of the Study**

Self-efficiency in work motivation and achievement, and its importance in individuals particularly in university students, leads to increased persistence and intuition because university study and life should

be enjoyed by students through self-positive expectancy and assessment. This makes it possible to be able to adapt and persist in this study, and to be able to adapt to new university environment. Therefore, he should feel high self-efficiency that motivates and qualify him to positively interact with others. At the same time, self-positive self-efficiency helps to protect and immunizes individuals against psychological disorders including depression which can largely spread among university student around the world. Thus, this result to the significance of this study which attempts to identify self-efficiency level and its relation with depression that accompanies the current and fast changing life.

### **Study Objectives**

This study aims to find out self-efficiency level among educational sciences faculty students and its relationship with depression.

### **Study Limitations**

Consequently, the generalization of this study results will be confined in the light of the following limitations:

1. The study sample consisted of educational sciences faculty students at the second and fourth university study years during 2012/2013 academic year at Al-albait University.
2. Scales and measures were applied to measure self-efficiency and depression.

### **Operational Definitions**

– Self-efficiency: Individual's expectations of his ability to behave in a manner that leads to satisfying results in specific situation (Jabber, 1986). This is measured by subjects score in responding to the study instrument prepared for this purpose.

– Depression: Depressed mood such as loss of interest or enjoyment in activities, loss or gain of weight in a noticeable way, sleeping or anxiety, pushy or slowness, severe tiredness or energy loss, feelings of low self-esteem or guilt, low ability to think and hesitations, repetitive thought about death, and suicidal thoughts or attempts (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Hence, this is measured by the subjects score on Beck Depression Checklist.

– Academic Level: The study year of the university students were those in second year and fourth year.

## Methodology and Procedures

### Methodology

The study employed descriptive analytical approach and field study. Therefore, data were collected through administering both measures on the sample that was adopted.

### Study Population

Population consisted of all second and fourth year university students at the educational sciences faculty of Al-albays University during their first semester 2012/2013 session. This totals 604 students.

### Study Sample

The study sample consisted of 193 male and female students majoring class teacher and child education at the educational sciences faculty of Al-alBays University from second and fourth university study years during the 2012/ 2013 academic year. Thus, these represent about 31% of the study population. Sample members were randomly drawn, where 8 classes out of 22 were chosen. In addition, 25 male and female students from each section from second and fourth university years were also chosen. Thus, this is as shown in Table (1).

Table (1): Sample distribution by sex and study year

Sex Academic level	Male	Female	Total
Second	43	67	110
Fourth	32	51	83
Total	75	118	193

### Study Instruments

Researchers utilized two study instruments:

#### 1. General Self- efficiency Questionnaire

General self- efficiency expectation questionnaire developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1986) in its Arabic version was translated by Radwan (1997) into Arabic. However, this questionnaire was administered to university students at various faculties, where its validity was established through internal consistency coefficient. Also, its alpha values were greater than 0.80. Total scale alpha was 0.85, while the reliability established through test-retest method was 0.71.

In the current study, researcher makes use of the scale content validity by presenting it to seven psychological experts at the university. Furthermore, their opinions were positive in that the scale was valid, clear, and suitable for the university students. For calculating the scale validity, it was administered on a sample of 45 students from the educational science faculty, where test-retest coefficient was 0.76.

The scale consists of 10 items where the examinee is required to respond according to a scale starting by “no”, “Seldom”, “almost”, “always.” Thus, the scores range from 10 – 40, which indicates a high degree between 5-10 minutes for administration.

## 2. Beck Depression Checklist

Arabic version of beck depression checklist (Hamdi, Abu Hijleh and Abu Taleb, 1988), consists of 21 items measuring depression. Thus, responding to these scales goes according to four points 0- 3, where 1 means no symptoms at all, and 3 means high depression symptoms. Consequently, respondent’s scores range between 0 and 63. Where 0- 9 score is the natural range (non-depressed), 10-16 is the minimum depression limit, 17-29 is the moderate depression, and finally 30- 63 is severe depression.

### **Scale Validity**

Discrimination validity of beck checklist was found by Hamdi et al. (1988). Thus, this was found through its administration on two groups of university students classified as depressed and non-depressed through clinical interviews.

### **Scale Reliability**

Hamdi et al. (1988) find out the reliability coefficient of beck checklist by test - retest method by administering the list on a sample of 80 students at Jordan University. Also, it was re-administered once again after one week, where reliability coefficient was 0.88. Meanwhile, they calculated the internal consistency of the list by administering it on a sample of 635 university students where Cronbach alpha was 0.87. However, in the current study, the reliability coefficient of test-retest method on a sample of 50 university students was 0.86.

### **Statistical Treatments**

After scoring students responses, they were entered into the computer memory. Furthermore, SPSS package was applied to them. Then, the means and the standard deviations of the degree to which independent variables affected depression variable were computed. In addition, computing correlation coefficient was also computed. Also, 2 way ANOVA was performed according to the study variables.

### **Results and Discussion**

First Research Question: What is the level of self efficiency among educational sciences students at Al-albait University? Means and standard deviations were calculated, and are shown in Table (2) below.

Table (2): Means, standards deviation, and self-efficiency scores according to sample's sex and academic level

Variable	Variable category level	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score	N
Sex	Males	27.96	4.38	5	34	75
	Females	26.65	5.16	17	38	118
	Total	27.16	4.90	5	38	193
Academic level	2nd year	27.47	4.88	17	38	110
	4th year	26.75	4.93	5	37	83
	Total	27.16	4.90	5	38	193

Table (2) shows that the self-efficiency mean score for educational sciences students is 27.16. However, it is above the assumed mean (25); so students have high self-efficiency compared with the assumed one. This can be explained by the fact that educational sciences students due to academic experiences are subjected to their study of educational materials. This basic theme constitutes the student's personality and ability. In trying to develop these abilities and skills, we can explain large part of self-efficiency at high levels among educational sciences students. Azzayat (2011: 11z) pointed out that self-efficiency concept develops through active dominant experiences that are significant to the individual's life. This efficiency refers to the person's belief about his self-abilities and what they include to mental cognitive and affective aspects to process situations/problems on academic objectives. In the concept of self-efficiency, educational sciences faculty students possess cognitive and affective aspects through their study. This occur especially when they are dealing with problem solving methods and thinking types, educational objectives, and ways of achieving them, as well as various educational cognitions and their practical application. Thus, this positively affects their self-efficiency rating and make it appears at a high level.

Second Research Question: Is there any statistically significant relationship at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level, between self-efficiency and depression among educational sciences faculty students at Al-albait University?

Pearson correlation coefficient was found, and it was - 0.240 with a statistical significance at  $\alpha = 0.001$ . Therefore, this means the existence of a negative and significant correlation between self-efficiency and depression. In addition, this indicates that the greater self-efficiency is accompanied with less depression.

This is a logical finding and is consistent with the explanation of depression through expectancy value theories that are based on a premise that individuals conduct behaviors believing that they will make them achieve what they want. Also, it states that individuals becomes depressed when they hold wrong expectations about their behaviors and feel that they

can do nothing that make things depend on their objectives (Maddux, Stanley and Manning, 1987). Therefore, low self-efficiency is an important aspect of depression. Depression, according to Bandura self-efficiency theory is a result of high results expectation with low self-efficiency expectation (Hamdi and Dawood, 2000). These finding are in line with Mahalik and Kivlighan (1988) study who found that student's high expectations about their self- efficiency resulted in a decreased depression state. Smith (2007) found that students with high self-efficiency were better than others in emotional adjustment. Finally, this finding is consistent with Hamdi and Dawood (2000) study, who suggested that less depressed students are more self-efficient. This finding also emphasizes the importance of developing self-efficiency among persons and students in particular as a factor that helps in limiting depression among our students. Consequently, it also helps in the general adjustment process.

Third Research Question: Are there any statistically significant differences at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level in self-efficiency due to subject's sex and academic level or interaction?

2-way ANOVA was employed in answering this question. The results of this analysis according to subject's sex and study year are displayed in Table (3) below.

Table (3): 2- way ANOVA results for self-efficiency according to subjects sex and academic level

Source	Sum- square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Sex	73.00	1	73.00	3.060	0.082
Academic level	26.223	1	26.223	1.099	0.296
Sex x academic level	1.830	1	1.830	0.077	0.782
Error	4509.367	189	23.859		

Table (3) shows no statistically significant differences between university's students mean scores on self-efficiency due to their sex or their academic level. However, there are no significant interaction between student's sex and academic level on self- efficiency. Thus, this means that student's sex and academic level have no effect in determining his self-efficiency, suggesting that self-efficiency was not related to student's sex. This finding is consistent with Kelly (1993) results which show very low effect of sex on occupational self-efficiency. Nevertheless, his study is in contrast with Loose, Ratelle, Guay, Senecal and Harrey (2006) study which found that girls enrolled in scientific technology program outperformed boys who are self-efficient. On the other hand, Hamdi and Dawood (2000) study found that boys have more self-efficiency than girls. Thus, this contrast can be explained by the time difference for conducting the study, society development, changing view towards girls in a positive way, societal and

international interest in women especially in education and employment fields, and criminalizing the inferior view toward women. However, women can get everything they wanted and receive more support than men, and this might lead to increased feeling of their ability and their self-efficiency.

As for the study year, the study revealed no statistically significant differences due to this variable which can be explained by arguing that second study year students might have certain type of exaggeration in estimating their self-efficiency. Considering the fact that they are still at the beginning of their university study, life experiences, and in fronting difficulties, they might have real feelings that they possess enough abilities which makes them raise their self-efficiency estimation. On the other hand, fourth year students possess more experiences. This can be observed in their experiences with life difficulties, and their expectation regarding the labor market. Subsequently, their pessimism and ambiguity towards getting a suitable job, gives their self-efficiency a suitable estimation. Thus, their estimation is not high compared with low academic level students.

### **Recommendation**

In light of the above findings, we hereby recommend the following:

1. Benefiting from these findings to notify university faculty members for more interest in developing and upgrading their student's self-efficiency. Given that it is an addition for its self-importance, it would contribute directly or indirectly to student's psychological adaptation.
2. Conducting similar studies on self-efficiency relationship with other psychological disorder variables.
3. Conducting similar studies on similar samples in other Arabic universities to confirm the current findings, reject them, or modify them especially with the multiple changes taking place in our Arabic societies.

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