



Future Career Anxiety and Its Relationship with Marital Distress Among the Al-Hussein Bin Talal University Students

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Abstract

Background: Youth is a very important stage of human life that an individual establishes for the personal and professional future. This stage contains many developmental tasks that must be optimized to avoid falling into serious problems or disrupting one's life.

Objectives: This descriptive correlational study was done to identify future career anxiety and its relationship with marital distress among university students.

Methods: A sample of 487 male and female students at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Jordan answered the two used instruments to measure marital distress and future career anxiety.

Results: The results indicated a high level of Future career anxiety and a moderate level of marital distress. Also, there was a positive relationship between both of these factors. There were no significant differences in marital distress between students regarding gender, faculty, year of study, birth order, and income level. However, there were significant differences in future career anxiety due to the year of study in favor of the fourth year, also in the income in favor of the low income. On the other hand, there were no significant differences in Future Career Anxiety due to gender, faculty, and birth order.

Conclusions: The present study demonstrated a relationship between future career anxiety and Marital distress.

Keywords: Career Future Anxiety, Marital Distress, University Students

1. Background

University students face many challenges that may affect their lives; thus, there is a need to receive counseling services at social, professional, and family levels, by which they can successfully pass this stage and become productive individuals at the professional and family levels.

Many factors affect university students' adjustment and success (1). Anxiety is one of the problems of the students affecting their future careers (2-6). The prevalence of generalized anxiety is about 3.6% worldwide (7). Undergraduates report experiencing a degree of career anxiety that is defined as a state of tension affecting the individual who is seeking to choose a future career, which may be a temporary or continuous state (4, 8, 9).

Another challenge for university students is the decision to choose a future life partner, which affects individual life, and can become a source of anxiety that may threaten the individual's mental health (10). Marital dis-

stress is defined as a state of tension when choosing a life partner and marriage, which may result from unpleasant experiences that lead to stress and anxiety (10-12).

In this study, we investigated these two variables that are related to the developmental stages associated with the early adulthood of the study sample, namely the choice of a future career and the choice of a life partner. They have a reciprocal influence; the choice of the right job offers an opportunity for the individual to provide a suitable spouse and married life (13) and avoidance of the probability of getting divorced (14) for reasons such as unemployment or lack of income (15). The divorce rate among youth has increased significantly in recent years in Jordan. The number of divorces in Jordan was 64990 between 2014 and 2018, and there are about 4333 cases of divorce a year (16). Thus, the fear of divorce and choosing the right partner has become an obsession that threatens the youth. Therefore, students hope to find a career that will enable them to be able to form a healthy family after graduation. Choosing

the appropriate profession and selecting the right partner are essential for individuals' mental health (10, 11).

Many studies tried to discuss anxiety in several aspects. Piarik et al. (17) explored career anxiety through a qualitative investigation of undergraduate college students who were in various stages. Their findings provided a contextual and developmental perspective on career-related anxiety that can guide counselors in the implementation of interventions for reducing anxiety associated with career selection and development (17).

Aljundi and Dasouqi (18) investigated the level of marital distress and self-esteem among university students. The sample was composed of 180 students from three Universities. The results showed a higher level of marital distress in females, city residents, and those with low income, while specialization had no effect (18).

Hammad (19) examined the relationship between future anxiety and specialization. The sample consisted of 380 students of Najran University. The results showed a higher level of future anxiety in Humanity caused by specialization and the female gender (19).

Al-Shraifin et al. (20) investigated the relationship between future career anxiety and career counseling services among 957 high school students in Jordan. The results revealed a high level of future career anxiety in subjects and the moderate effectiveness of career counseling services perceived by the students (20).

Miller and Rottinghaus (3) examined the role of meaning in life concerning anxiety and career indecision in a sample of 229 university students. The meaning in life did not mediate the relationship between anxiety and career indecision (3).

Al-Muzayn (21) examined the problems associated with marriage and the future academic life among 230 students of the Islamic University in Gaza. This study indicated that the high level of marriage and academic life problems in females (21).

Most of the studies have addressed the concern of future anxiety, career anxiety, or marital distress separately, or in association with other variables in different populations, while we tried to find the relationship between future career anxiety and marital distress among university students.

2. Objectives

This study was done to examine the relationship between career anxiety and marital distress among university students with a BA degree at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Ma'an in Jordan, in the first semester of 2018 - 2019.

3. Methods

The current descriptive correlational study was done on the students (5,000) students in the colleges of Science and Humanities of the University of Al-Hussein Bin Talal in Jordan in 2018 - 2019. A random stratified sampling was done, and 10% of the study population, including 500 female and male students were selected. The two scales of the study were distributed to them during their presence in their lectures. After taking the approval of the University's presidency, students were given an idea about the scales and also the goals of the study, and the confidentiality and accuracy of the information were emphasized. Then, they were given sufficient time for answering the scales directly distributed by the first researcher who worked in the university. After examining the responses, the questionnaires of 13 students were ruled out because they were not fully answered, and finally, 487 questionnaires belonging to 225 students from the college of humanities and 275 students from Science college were evaluated. The characteristics of the subjects are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Al Husain Bin Talal University Students Sample of the Study

Variable	No. (%)
Gender	
Males	214 (43.94)
Females	273 (56.06)
College	
Science	263 (54.00)
Humanities	224 (46.00)
Academic year	
First-year	126 (25.87)
Second-year	190 (39.01)
Third-year	93 (19.10)
Fourth or more	78 (16.02)
Birth order	
First	118 (24.23)
Middle	272 (55.85)
Last	97 (19.92)
Family income	
High	51 (10.47)
Medium	366 (75.15)
Low	70 (14.37)
Total	487 (100)

3.1. Future Career Anxiety Scale

Bakkar's Future Career Anxiety scale (22) consisted of 27 items divided into 3 dimensions: Having access to a career (items 1 - 12), the importance of the career (items 13 - 19), and family and social stability (items 20 - 27). The scale was administered to a sample of 50 students to ensure construct validity. The correlation coefficient ranged between 0.45 and 0.54, which indicates a good validity of the scale. Also, Cronbach's alpha for reliability was computed, which ranged from .80 to .83. The scale was scored as follows: Always (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), never (1) for positive items, and the negative items are scored inversely. The highest possible score for a student is 108, and the lowest score is 27.

3.2. The Marital Distress Scale

The scale was prepared by Aljundi and Dasouqi in 2017 (18). For the present study, the political dimension was excluded. Therefore, the items of the scale became 34 instead of 46, with three dimensions of social (1 - 13), economic (14 - 23), and psychological (24 - 34). The scale is scored as follows: strongly disagree (5), disagree (4), neutral (3), agree (2), and strongly agree (1). To ensure validity, the scale was applied to a sample of 50 students of the population, and the values ranged from 0.42 to 0.58. Cronbach's alpha also varied from 0.82 - 0.85. The total score of the scale ranges from 34 to 170.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (version 21) Mean and standard deviations, Pearson correlation, and ANOVA were used in this study.

4. Results

The results showed that the overall level of future career anxiety among Al-Hussein Bin Talal University students was at a high level, with an average of 3.171, and a standard deviation of 0.48. Concern about access to the career ranked first in terms of relative importance with an average of 3.312 and was at a high level. The second dimension was the advantages and importance of the job with an average of 3.298 and was found at a high level. Finally, the concern about family and social stability (third dimension) was found with an average of 2.904 and was at a moderate level.

Also, the results showed that the overall level of marital distress was at a moderate level, with an average of 3.298, the economic dimension was in the first order with an average of 3.787 and being at a high level, followed by the psychological dimension (3.113) and at a moderate level, and finally, the social dimension with an average of 3.078 was at a moderate level. The mean and standard deviation of the

future career anxiety and marital distress among Students University are provided in Table 2.

The results showed a positive relationship between future career anxiety and its three dimensions with marital distress. Pearson correlation for the relationship between future career anxiety and marital distress among University students are provided in Table 3.

To determine the differences in the level of future career anxiety among university students according to gender, faculty, year of study, birth order, and family income, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The differences in the overall career anxiety level among university students according to gender, faculty, year of study, birth order, income are presented in Table 4.

The results showed no differences regarding gender, faculty, and birth order.

The results indicated significant differences according to the year of study. To determine the differences, the Scheffe test was used for the post-comparisons, which indicated differences in the students' future career anxiety level according to the student's academic year. The average score of the students in the first year was 3.090, and it was 3.055 for second-year, 3.168 for third-year, and 3.473 for the fourth-year students.

There were significant differences regarding family income. To determine the differences, the Scheffe test was used for the post-comparisons and showed that there were differences in the students' career anxiety level according to family income, where the average score of students from the low-income category was 3.280, for those with moderate income was 3.102, and for cases with high income was 3.007, which confirmed that the differences in favor of students with low income.

The results of the ANOVA showed the differences in the level of marital distress among university students in terms of gender, faculty, year of study, birth order, and family income. However, we found no significant differences in the level of concern about marital distress among university students according to these variables. The F-value was calculated and was not significant at the level of 0.05. This indicates that the level of marital distress among the students was equal despite the different variables mentioned. The results of the ANOVA to test differences in the level of marital distress among university students in terms of gender, college, year of study, birth order, and family income are provided in Table 5.

5. Discussion

The results showed that the level of future career anxiety was at a high level. This result can be attributed to the fact that students studying at universities suffer from high

Table 2. mean and Standard Deviation of the Future Career Anxiety and Marital Distress Among University Students

Variable	Dimension	Average	Standard Deviation	Order	Level
Future career anxiety					
Dimension number: 1	Ability to access a career	3.312	0.54	1	High
Dimension number: 2	Advantages and importance of profession	3.298	0.62	2	High
Dimension number: 3	Family and social stability	2.904	0.59	3	Moderate
Dimension number: -	The general level of students' future career anxiety	3.171	0.48	-	High
Marital future anxiety					
Dimension number: 1	Social	3.078	0.68	3	Moderate
Dimension number: 2	Economic	3.787	0.82	1	High
Dimension number: 3	Psychological	3.113	0.73	2	Moderate
Dimension number: -	The general level of students' marital distress	3.326	0.74	-	Moderate

Table 3. Pearson Correlation for the Relationship Between Future Career Anxiety and Marital Distress Among University Students

Variable	Dimensions of the Marital Distress Scale			
	Social	Economic	Psychological	The Scale as a Whole
Career future anxiety scale				
Ability to access a career	0.309 ^b	0.278 ^b	0.416 ^a	0.315 ^b
Advantages and importance of the profession	0.208 ^a	0.261 ^b	0.304 ^a	0.248 ^b
Family and social stability	0.360 ^b	0.339 ^b	0.292 ^a	0.219 ^a
The scale as a whole	0.419 ^b	0.305 ^b	0.277 ^a	0.402 ^b

^aSignificant at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.^bSignificant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$.**Table 4.** The Differences in the Overall Career Anxiety Level Among University Students According to Gender, Faculty, Year of Study, Birth Order, and Income

Variable	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Squares' Average	F-Value	Statistical Significance
Gender	0.019	1	0.019	0.212	0.97
Faculty	0.012	1	0.012	0.132	0.89
Year of study	1.288	3	0.429	4.718 ^a	0.02
Birth order	0.013	2	0.006	0.071	0.95
Income	0.945	2	0.473	5.192 ^a	0.01
Error	43.177	477	0.091	-	-
Total	45.481	486			

^aSignificant at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

career anxiety because of their need to practice a profession as soon as possible, especially in circumstances where there are fewer job opportunities for new graduates. Also, it can be due to the nature of life and geographical location where the students living in the south have few job opportunities, and they have to wait for years to get a governmental job. Some of these students may also suffer from financial problems as a result of the study, which can affect their future job; thus, they need to work to pay back the money

they spent. The family and social stability dimension was found at a moderate level; this indicates that the family supports their children and helps them overcome the absence of a job, and especially, those living in the south have strong family ties.

Also, the results showed that the overall level of marital distress was at a moderate level, which can be due to a decline in marriage rates among young people because of the high costs of marriage, as well as the difficulty of

Table 5. Analysis of Variance to Test Differences in the Level of Marital Distress Among University Students According to Gender, College, Year of Study, Birth Order, and Family Income

Variable	Mean Square	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	Squares' Average	F-Value	Statistical Significance
Gender	0.391	1	0.391	1.105	0.29
Faculty	0.184	1	0.184	0.520	0.47
Academic year	2.643	3	0.881	2.489	0.06
Birth order	0.747	2	0.374	1.055	0.35
Family income	0.255	2	0.128	0.360	0.70
Error	169.086	477	0.354		-
Total	172.848	486			

obtaining a job that enables them to provide the requirements of marriage, such as housing, transportation, and health insurance. In addition, the high divorce rates, especially among newlyweds, results in fears about the future of marriage.

Another result was a positive relationship between career and marriage distress; this means that the high future career anxiety of university students increases marital distress. Their concern about the possibility of getting a job makes them avoid thinking about marriage, and they are concerned about their inability to meet the basics of marriage.

Also, the results showed that there were no significant differences in terms of gender, faculty, and birth order. The opportunity to work is not gender-related, which means that both males and females experience concerns about the future career. Besides, the limited employment opportunities available to students are not related to the type of college. Saturated occupations may exist within natural-science or humanitarian disciplines. It should be noted that many young people work after graduation in occupations that do not match their specialties. Concerning the order in the family, this can be attributed to the fact that the student, regardless of the order in the family, wants to practice a profession after graduation and may suffer in this regard whether he is the first or the last in his family. The results of this study were inconsistent with those reported by Hammad (19), who found a high level of future anxiety in students with humanitarian disciplines, and gender differences in favor of males. Our results are compatible with the results of Al-Shraifin, et al. (20) who indicated a high level of future career anxiety among students.

There were statistically significant differences in career anxiety between students regarding the year of study, and Scheffe test results confirmed that the differences in favor of fourth-year students. This result is logical because the fourth-year students are about to graduate and finish their

university life and hope to join the category of workers and producers in the community.

Also, there were differences in the students' career anxiety level according to family income, Scheffe test results confirmed that the differences were in favor of students with low income. This finding is logical because students from low-income families are more likely to practice a profession than others. This raises the concern about their future job, and also, these students may use bank loans for the study that should be paid after graduation.

We found no significant differences in the level of concern about marital distress among university students according to different variables. The reason is that students were studying in the same university, living in a similar geographical environment. Also, they had the same customs and were similar regarding social and economic levels. Males and females are also seeking marriage, and the college, in which they are studying does not affect their concern about marital distress. The results are consistent with the results of Al-Muzayen (21), which revealed no differences in marital distress due to specialization and level of study. However, our results were not consistent with those of Aljundi and Dasouqi (18). Muzayen (21) indicated differences in the marriage distress in favor of females and low-income earners.

5.1. Conclusions

The decision to choose a future life partner is one of the problems that affect an adult's life. After graduation, the student seeks to find a career to enable him to form a successful family. The results indicated a high level of future career anxiety and a moderate level of marital distress among university students. There was a positive relationship between career and marital distress. We recommend conducting further studies on career and marital distress, assessing other variables and in other universities. The officials and decision-makers in universities should introduce specialties required by the labor market.

Footnotes

Authors' Contribution: Study concept and design: MA and HE. Analysis and interpretation of data: SM and WY. Drafting of the manuscript: WA. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: SM, WS, and SMA. Statistical analysis: SM, WY, and MA.

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