

The Relative Contribution of Psychological Immunity to the Predictiing of Psychological Well-Being Among University Students : A Field Study at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'Sila Algeria

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Abstract

The present study aimed to reveal the correlation between psychological immunity and psychological well-being, to identify their respective levels, and to determine the relative contribution of psychological immunity in predicting psychological well-being among a sample of university students. A descriptive analytical approach was utilized on a sample of 40 male and female students at Mohammed Boudiaf University in M'Sila during the 2023/2024 academic year. The study applied the Psychological Immunity Scale by Hussein Muslim Mahmoud Ahmed (2020) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale by Shend, Salouma, and Wahiba (2013) after verifying their validity and reliability. Data were analyzed using SPSS v.26. The results revealed a high level of both psychological immunity and psychological well-being among the sample, alongside a statistically significant positive correlation at the (0.01) level between the two variables. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a statistically significant relative contribution of psychological immunity (38%) in predicting psychological well-being among university students.

Keywords: Psychological Immunity; Psychological Well-Being; University Student.

Introduction

In light of the technological, economic, and social developments the world is witnessing, this progress has been accompanied by numerous pressures and obstacles. When negative aspects dominate reality, individuals may experience anxiety. Al-Khawaja (2010, p. 11) referred to this era as 'the age of anxiety and tension,' noting that mental health is one of the most compelling human sciences. Researchers' focus has expanded beyond modern psychological disorders to encompass the concept of mental health and its manifestations, aiming to achieve it for individuals and protect them from psychological disturbances. Study and work lacking stability, continuity, and satisfaction are primary causes of anxiety, particularly for students nearing graduation. Fears arise from the potential loss of livelihood and exposure to unemployment, leading to severe psychological pressure and creating fertile ground for anxiety. From this standpoint, research in positive psychology has gained prominence. Scientists and researchers have begun addressing positive topics that were previously less discussed, such as happiness, hope,

optimism, psychological quality of life, trust, and adjustment, marking a qualitative shift in research focus.

Consequently, 'psychological immunity' has become a fundamental goal. Positive psychology attempts to direct people's lives toward happiness, love, and social justice through self-immunity, rather than focusing solely on psychological stress and illness. This is linked to self-acceptance, which results from the integrated development of personality in all its aspects. This is especially relevant during the university stage, characterized by rapid personality changes that may lead to disorders if adequate psychological and educational care is not provided to achieve psychosocial adjustment for students, who bear the responsibility of leading society in the future. Therefore, it is essential to care for this demographic by extending a helping hand to develop their capabilities and creative energies to prevent them from encountering obstacles.

The term 'Psychological Immunity' is one of the most recent concepts in positive psychology and mental health in general. It represents the psychological system parallel to the biological immune system that protects the body from organic diseases. The psychological immune system refers to the self-immunity that protects the individual from falling into psychological disorders through subsystems and strategies that make the individual strong, cohesive, and capable of facing difficulties and negative thoughts, ultimately achieving a high degree of mental health and quality of life (Abdul Aziz, 2019, p. 418).

Theorization in the field of psychological immunity emerged from scientific studies on the mind-body relationship. Psychologist Robert Ader at the University of Rochester discovered that the immune system has the ability to learn. This discovery was a surprise at the time, as the prevailing view was that only the brain and nervous system could change their behavior based on experiences. Ader's discovery encouraged numerous studies that concluded there are many communication pathways between the central nervous system and the immune system, represented by various biological pathways proving that the mind, emotions, and body are not separate entities but work synergistically together (Goleman, 2004, pp. 226-227).

While psychological immunity is a relatively modern scientific term in positive psychology, psychological well-being also takes precedence as a dynamic concept encompassing various psychological, subjective, and social components. It serves as a general umbrella covering dimensions of mental and positive health and is related to how individuals perceive various aspects of their psychological lives. For instance, to what extent does an individual feel capable of controlling their personal life, that their personal life has value and meaning, and that they possess positive social relationships with others? (Smith et al., 1999, pp. 280-282).

This prompted the current study to investigate the topic of psychological immunity and its contribution to predicting psychological well-being, given their importance as rich topics concerned with mental health in general, both theoretically and practically, especially among university students.

Problem Statement

The university is an academic, professional, social, and cultural institution that must transcend its traditional role of presenting scientific knowledge and information. It must open its doors to contribute

broadly and rapidly to cultural, social, and scientific development in its environment, participating actively and effectively in societal activities.

Observers of the educational movement in this era identify main axes for educational goals classified into three major domains representing the most crucial aspects of human personality development: the cognitive domain, the affective/emotional domain, and the psychomotor domain. Any deficiency in addressing these aspects will lead to an incomplete or unbalanced personality (Al-Shamani, 2014, p. 248).

Hence, educational institutions, particularly universities, must direct their attention to building students' personalities in a balanced and integrated manner, enabling them to adapt to their society and contribute to its comprehensive development. This is crucial given the problems students may face during the university stage, which can leave them in a state of anxiety and tension.

Based on their findings regarding youth anxiety about the future and related disorders affecting their personalities, Tozevski et al. (2010) recommended the necessity of establishing centers in universities dedicated to achieving students' personal well-being and success. These centers would assist them in solving psychological problems, providing counseling and psychoeducation, and helping them define and achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals (Al-Shamani, 2014, p. 252).

Hardly any society is devoid of life's pressures and difficulties; they constitute part of the lives of its members due to their universality. It has become difficult to bypass and ignore these pressures, leading individuals either to surrender to them, confront and mitigate them, or attempt to live and adapt to them. An individual's personality characteristics and psychological state play a major role in the type of response to these pressures. Individuals face numerous stressful situations involving undesirable experiences and events that may harbor sources of tension, risk factors, and threats in all life domains (Fayed, 1998, p. 155).

Therefore, a new trend by Martin Seligman emerged, known as positive psychology, which views humans differently: health is the baseline, not illness, and individuals can adapt and harmonize with society by focusing on positive or bright aspects of their lives, fostering hope, cooperation, and happiness (Okasha & Selim, 2011, pp. 1-4).

Through this trend, many researchers focused on studying positive experiences, personality traits, and positive habits that help individuals cope with stressful events in their daily lives. Among these positive factors investigated to understand the psychosocial variables underlying individuals' maintenance of their physical and mental health is the concept of 'psychological immunity' (Hassan et al., 2006, p. 116).

As Abdel Wahab (2002, p. 317) argues, if an individual or society loses its psychological immune system, it becomes a fertile environment for psychological and social diseases, extremism, and terrorism. Consequently, a university student's psychological immunity indicates their level of mental health, enabling them to endure pressures and their negative effects resulting from contemporary challenges, conflicts, and negative emotions, while fostering a positive orientation toward life (Abdel Latif, 2010, p. 182).

In this context, Youssef (2021) demonstrated the contribution of a positive life orientation and coping styles in predicting psychological immunity among Ain Shams University youth. Ibrahim (2022) indicated that psychological immunity plays a mediating role in how academic flourishing components affect university quality of life. Voitekane (2004) found a positive correlation between goal-directedness, quality of life, and psychological immunity among students.

Enhancing 'psychological well-being' is an objective of any personal, social, and emotional development, and a goal societies seek for their members in their pursuit of human advancement. An individual's enjoyment of a good psychological life enables them to perform life and occupational tasks efficiently. The capacity to accomplish tasks and cope with pressures requires a degree of emotional stability, psychological calmness, and focus (Ahmed & Qarni, 2017, p. 331).

The current study seeks to investigate the predictability of psychological well-being through the contribution of psychological immunity and the nature of the relationship between them among university students by answering the following questions:

1. What is the level of psychological immunity among a sample of university students?
2. What is the level of psychological well-being among a sample of university students?
3. Is there a correlation between psychological immunity (and its dimensions) and psychological well-being (and its dimensions) among a sample of university students?
4. What is the relative contribution of psychological immunity in predicting psychological well-being among a sample of university students?

Study Objectives

1. Identifying the level of psychological immunity among a sample of university students.
2. Identifying the level of psychological well-being among a sample of university students.
3. Exploring the nature of the correlation between psychological immunity and psychological well-being among a sample of university students.
4. Verifying the possibility of predicting psychological well-being in light of the relative contribution of psychological immunity among a sample of university students.

Study Hypotheses

1. The level of psychological immunity is high among the sample of university students.
2. The level of psychological well-being is high among the sample of university students.
3. There is a statistically significant correlation between psychological immunity and psychological well-being among the sample of university students.
4. Psychological immunity significantly contributes to predicting psychological well-being among the sample of university students.

Significance of the Study

5.1. Theoretical Significance: Its theoretical importance lies in addressing relatively modern variables belonging to the field of positive psychology, which aims to improve the quality of life, eliminate life pressures, and foster positivity, especially among university students. It also explores the relationship between the study variables, their levels among students, and predictability.

5.2. Practical Significance: The current study adds to previous literature by addressing psychological immunity and psychological well-being. It can serve as a starting point for further positive studies focusing on university students, helping them immunize themselves through positive thinking, self-efficacy, goal orientation, problem-solving, spiritual orientation, body image orientation, and the search for strengths. This enables them to have a purpose in life, accept themselves, attain autonomy, and form positive relationships with others as a result of personal growth and environmental mastery.

Operational Definitions

1. Psychological Immunity: A hypothetical concept referring to a person's ability to face crises, endure hardships and misfortunes, and resist resulting thoughts and feelings of anger, resentment, hostility, despair, helplessness, defeatism, and pessimism. Psychological immunity provides the body with 'Super Immunity' that activates biological immune systems, making the study of psychological immunity necessary for developing both mental and physical health (Morsi, 2000, p. 96). Operationally: It is the score the university student obtains by responding to the scale prepared by Hussein Muslim Mahmoud Ahmed (2020) and its six dimensions: self-efficacy, strengths, spiritual orientation, positive problem-solving orientation, goal orientation, and body image orientation.

2. Psychological Well-Being: Defined by Shend, Salouma, and Wahiba (2013) as an indicator reflecting positive psychological functioning. It goes beyond mere mental health, determining the individual's relationship with themselves in terms of acceptance, uniqueness, and awareness, achieving autonomy despite having good, secure, and respectful relationships with others. It involves striving to achieve adopted life goals by exploiting environmental opportunities and overcoming obstacles, leading to progress, continuity, and personal growth (Abu Deraz, 2019, p. 8). Operationally: It is measured by the total score obtained by the sample of Mohammed Boudiaf University students on the scale utilized in the current study, prepared by Shend, Salouma, and Wahiba (2013).

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

First: Psychological Immunity

Al-Sherif (2015) defines it as: 'a hypothetical, interactive, and variable affective system that shares with the biological immune system the maintenance of the individual's stability and balance by protecting the affective state from the threat of negative feelings resulting from extreme events. It provides a high degree of stability in facing life fluctuations through cognitive abilities of adaptive unconsciousness derived from conscious inputs, which help cope with pressures, resist them, and support mental health' (Al-Sherif, 2015, p. 25).

Wilson (2002, p. 40) mentions factors affecting the psychological immune system that may weaken its efficiency, including weak predictive thinking, low mindfulness, negative self-view, and inability to adapt to the context. Barbanell (2009) added psychological burnout, crises, continuous traumatic experiences, and the collapse of defense mechanisms. Conversely, Abelson et al. (2004) argue that for the psychological immune system to function efficiently, it must operate unconsciously and without the individual's intervention, provided the individual possesses several elements, including self-motivating

opinions, supportive cognitive biases, unrealistic optimism about the future, improved perception of harsh realities, and positive imagination.

Symptoms of losing psychological immunity include weak self-control, weak resistance to failure, and yielding to it. It also involves weak emotional maturity, intellectual rigidity, resistance to change, isolation, weak interaction with others, a lack of joy and pleasure in life, and a tendency toward sadness and pessimism (Abdel Wahab, 2002, p. 320).

Method and Tools

1. Study Methodology: The study followed a descriptive analytical approach due to its suitability for the topic's nature and objectives in identifying the relative contribution of psychological immunity as a predictor of psychological well-being among university students.

2. Study Sample: The study sample consisted of 70 male and female students randomly selected and distributed across academic levels (third-year bachelor's, first-year master's, second-year master's, and clinical doctorate) during the 2023/2024 academic year at Mohammed Boudiaf University in M'Sila. The sample was divided into an exploratory sample of 30 students to verify the validity and reliability of the study tools, and a main sample of 40 students.

3. Study Tools

3.1. Psychological Immunity Scale: Prepared by Hussein Muslim Mahmoud Ahmed (2020), consisting of 39 items distributed across six dimensions.

No.	Dimensions	Items
1	Self-efficacy	01 to 13
2	Strengths	14 to 20
3	Spiritual orientation	21 to 26
4	Positive problem-solving orientation	27 to 31
5	Goal orientation	32 to 35
6	Body image orientation	36 to 39

3.2. Psychological Well-Being Scale: Prepared by Shend et al. (2013), reflecting components of positive functioning as defined by Ryff, consisting of 69 items distributed across six dimensions.

No.	Dimensions	Items
1	Purpose in life	1,7,14,20,26,27,29,33,35,39,46,49
2	Self-acceptance	2,15,21,28,30,34,36,42,44,50
3	Autonomy	3,8,9,12,16,22,32,38,41,43,48,51

4	Positive relations with others	4,10,17,23,31,37,40,45,47,52,56,62
5	Personal growth	5,11,18,24,53,57,59,61,63,65,68
6	Environmental mastery	6,13,19,25,54,55,58,60,64,66,67,69

Psychometric Properties of the Current Study

Discriminant Validity (Extreme Groups) for Psychological Immunity Scale: Verified through discriminant validity of the total scale score by taking one-third of the total exploratory sample (30 students).

Variable	Indicator	N	Mean	SD	df	T-value	Sig.	F
Psychological Immunity	Lower	10	87.90	3.54	18	-9.51	.000	0.89
	Upper	10	103.00	3.55				

Reliability by Cronbach's Alpha for Psychological Immunity Scale: The reliability coefficient was (0.72) for the 39 items, indicating high reliability.

Discriminant Validity (Extreme Groups) for Psychological Well-Being Scale:

Variable	Indicator	N	Mean	SD	df	T-value	Sig.	F
Psychological Well-Being	Lower	10	239.30	14.82	18	-9.83	.000	1.60
	Upper	10	296.10	10.66				

Reliability by Cronbach's Alpha for Psychological Well-Being Scale: The reliability coefficient was (0.90) for the 69 items, indicating very high reliability.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: The level of psychological immunity is high among the sample of university students.

Sample (N)	Mean	SD	Hypothetical Mean	T-value	df	Sig.
40	94.95	7.09	78	84.66	39	.000

The table indicates that the mean of the study sample on the total scale was (94.95) with a standard deviation of (7.09), while the hypothetical mean was (78). Since the arithmetic mean is greater than the hypothetical mean, we conclude that the level of psychological immunity is high. This supports the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The level of psychological well-being is high among the sample of university students.

Sample (N)	Mean	SD	Hypothetical Mean	T-value	df	Sig.
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40	266.10	28.34	207	59.36	39	.000
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The arithmetic mean for the psychological well-being variable was (266.10) with a standard deviation of (28.34). Since it is higher than the hypothetical mean (207), we conclude that the level of psychological well-being is high, supporting the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant correlation between psychological immunity and psychological well-being among the sample of university students.

Dimensions	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance	Autonomy	Positive Relations	Personal Growth	Environmental Mastery	Total Well-Being
Self-Efficacy	0.41**	0.54**	0.43**	0.46**	0.50**	0.51**	0.59**
Strengths	0.35*	0.46**	0.41**	0.49**	0.55**	0.50**	0.57**
Spiritual Orientation	0.36*	0.18	0.18	0.41**	0.13	0.33*	0.33*
Problem-Solving	0.11	0.13	0.12	0.21	0.14	0.05	0.16
Goal Orientation	0.26	0.40**	0.38*	0.33*	0.39*	0.31*	0.43**
Body Image	0.15	0.07	0.31	0.07	0.14	0.04	0.16
Total Immunity	0.45**	0.50**	0.48**	0.54**	0.50**	0.49**	0.618**

There is a positive correlation between total psychological immunity and total psychological well-being ($r = 0.618$, $p < 0.01$), confirming the third hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Psychological immunity significantly contributes to predicting psychological well-being among the sample of university students.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Correlation (R)	Sig.
Psychological Well-Being (Dependent)	40	266.10	28.34	0.61**	0.01
Psychological Immunity (Predictor)	40	94.95	7.09		

Table of Variance (ANOVA):

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11960.994	1	11960.994	23.45	0.000
Residual	19380.606	38	510.016		
Total	31341.600	39			

Simple Linear Regression Model Summary:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.618	0.382	0.365	22.58

Regression Coefficients:

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	31.655	48.543		0.652	0.518
Psychological Immunity	2.469	0.510	0.618	4.843	0.000

The determination coefficient (R Square) is 0.382, meaning that 38% of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by the regression model (psychological immunity). The regression equation is: $Y = 31.655 + 2.469(X)$. This indicates that psychological immunity significantly contributes to predicting psychological well-being.

Recommendations and Proposed Research

1. Work on developing psychological immunity and psychological well-being among university students to face academic, life, and professional pressures.
2. Replicate this study on larger samples to obtain more generalized results.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of counseling programs in developing students' psychological immunity and well-being.

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