



Optimism and Pessimism and Their Relationship to Academic Achievement In Football Among Students of The College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences

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Abstract

Study purpose. The present study aims to assess the levels of optimism and pessimism and their relationship with academic achievement among students of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Qadisiyah University. It further seeks to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in these relationships based on gender (male/female) and type of academic achievement (theoretical/practical).

Materials and methods. The study employed a descriptive research design using survey and correlational approaches. The research population consisted of 212 first-year students enrolled at the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Qadisiyah University, during the academic year under study. A sample representing 85% of the total population (180 students: 154 males and 26 females) was selected. Data were collected through validated psychological scales assessing optimism and pessimism, in addition to records of students' academic performance. Appropriate statistical techniques including measures of central tendency, correlation coefficients, and tests for gender and academic achievement differences were applied to analyze the data.

Results. The findings revealed a generally high level of optimism and pessimism among the participating students. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between optimism and pessimism, indicating that the two constructs coexist in a balanced psychological framework among the students. However, the analysis demonstrated no statistically significant differences in the correlation between optimism/pessimism and academic achievement when compared across gender (male/female) or academic domains (theoretical/practical).

Conclusions. The results suggest that students exhibit a balanced psychological disposition characterized by both optimism and pessimism. While these traits are positively correlated, they do not appear to significantly influence academic achievement, regardless of gender or academic track. The findings highlight the importance of fostering positive psychological attributes among students, though such factors alone may not directly predict academic success.

Keywords: Optimism, pessimism, academic achievement.

Introduction

This section should clearly state the core controversy the paper will explore, the analysis of current research findings and publications, the hypotheses, and the research objectives.

Physical education is one of the most important fields that plays an active role in educational development in its various dimensions. Physical education lessons hold a scientific position and importance no less than other curriculum subjects. Through it, many educational and cognitive, emotional, and skill-based objectives can be achieved through various activities, whether physical, skill-based, mental, or social. These activities contribute significantly to preparing and equipping students to serve their country with high efficiency. Physical education is important in the educational process and is considered a fundamental basis that helps students improve their motor, cognitive, and skill-based performance. Through it, students acquire a wealth of information, skills, and rules specific to each sport, especially team sports, the most important of which is football. Training students in the qualities associated with optimism frees them from dwelling on potential failures and empowers them to become energetic and enthusiastic about performing in any sporting event. Furthermore, their long-term future expectations, stemming from experiences of failure and anticipated success in social, academic, and athletic situations, are linked in one way or another to optimism and pessimism. Understanding university students' attitudes and perspectives toward their future, whether optimistic or pessimistic, is crucial for developing their role and fostering their creativity.

"University students are in a stage of youth where personality traits are clearly formed and contribute to performance and achievement, both individually and collectively. Therefore, it is necessary to plan for the lives and futures of university students, preserve their energies, and utilize them effectively" (Abbas, 2023).

Pessimism is a negative trait that should be mitigated due to its detrimental effects on both the individual and society. The student-athlete's personality should be free of this trait, and conditions should be created to limit its development. However, developing sports programs and activities that can curb the growth of pessimism requires, first and foremost, measuring the degree of this personality trait in students (W. G. Mohammed & Abdul-Wahhab, 2024). This measurement helps determine the appropriate type of programs and activities and their content, in addition to providing an accurate description of the phenomenon and facilitating comparisons.

Through guidance, counseling, and therapeutic programs aimed at addressing the students' emotional well-being and elevating them to a high level of optimism. This, in turn, positively impacts their academic performance and prepares a generation free from ignorance, fear, backwardness, and pessimism a generation strong in character, morals, and personality, and characterized by optimism and a positive outlook.

Materials and methods

Study participants

The researchers employed descriptive research methods, combining surveys and correlation analysis, which is appropriate for this type of study.

1. Study population: The study population included 212 first-year students from the Faculty of Sports Science at the University of Qardishia in the 2023/24 academic year, of whom 26 were female and 186 were male.
2. Research Samples:

Pilot Sample: Thirty-two students from the Department of Sports Science were randomly selected from areas outside the main study population as a pilot sample.

Study organization

Construction and Application Sample:

"The sample must be representative of the original population, and this sample must meet a key condition: the ability to generalize its results to the group from which it was taken(Al-Furaiji & Abdul-Wahhab, 2024)." The research sample comprised 85% of the research population of 212 students. Accordingly, the sample size was 180 students, with 154 male students (85%) and 26 female students (15%). It should be noted that the construction sample was adopted as the application sample.

3. Main Research Procedures: Research tools vary depending on the objectives and nature of the data to be obtained. This study aims to reveal the relationship between optimism and pessimism, and their connection with the academic performance of students in football at the Faculty of Physical Education and Exercise Science, University of Qadiscia, this necessitates the use of two instruments to measure the variables of optimism and pessimism, and achievement (theoretical and practical). The following are the procedures followed in preparing the two instruments:

- Achievement (Theoretical and Practical): The researcher adopted the grade record for the football course in the first semester final exam of the academic year (2023-2024) as a measure of achievement (theoretical and practical) for the students in the research sample.
- Optimism-Pessimism: The researcher developed an optimism-pessimism scale by following these procedures:
 - a. Purpose of developing the scale: To identify the level of optimism-pessimism Its relationship with the level of academic achievement (theoretical and practical) of students in the Faculty of Sports Science at the University of Qadiscia.
 - b. Preparing "the initial version of the optimism-pessimism scale After reviewing psychological scales in this field, researchers collected several items. After removing similar and ambiguous items, 38 items remained. These items were submitted to experts in educational psychology, sports psychology, and testing and measurement technology for evaluation. Upon receiving the questionnaires from the experts, researchers collected and processed the data. A chi-square test was used to identify valid items. The results confirmed the validity of all items [Table 1](#)."

[Table 1](#). shows the validity of the items on the optimism-pessimism scale

Paragraphs	Number of those who approved	Agreement percentage	Calculated chi-square value	tabulated chi-square value	Statistical significance
-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-2-1					
-16-15-14-13-12-11					
-24-22-20-19-18-17	11	100%	11		0.05
-32-31-30-28-26-25				3.84	Statistically significant
38-36-35-33					
-34-29-27-23-21-3	10	90.9	7.36		
	37				

"The critical chi-square (chi-square) value is 3.84 at a degree of freedom of $(n-1) = 2 - 1 = 1$ and a significance level of 0.05."

- c. Preparing the Optimism-Pessimism Scale Instructions: The scale instructions should be clearly defined before administering it to the research sample. These instructions and the conditions for conducting the test must be clear, simple, and objective to ensure adherence without any discrepancies that could affect the test results.
- d. Keys to Correcting the Optimism-Pessimism "Scale: Calculating the score for each individual in the research sample on the scale is an important step. Scores depend on the item structure type and the number of answer options. After experts approve the answer options", they were as follows: The instrument consists of (38) items, each item containing two verbal situations (A) and (B). One (A) indicates optimism and the other (B) indicates pessimism. The answer is corrected by giving two points for the alternative that measures optimism and one point for the situation that measures pessimism.

Pilot Study of the Optimism-Pessimism Scale:

The researcher conducted a pilot study on a sample of (32) students. The sample was randomly selected on 22/1/2024. It was found that all the scale and the answer options were clear and understandable to the research sample. The pilot study showed that the time to answer the scale items ranged between (15-25) minutes, with an average of (20) minutes, and that all items were clear and understandable to the research sample.

- e. Main Application of the Optimism-Pessimism Scale: "After the Optimism-Pessimism Scale, with its instructions and items, was ready for application, the researcher began administering the scale to a research sample of (180) male and female students from the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences - Al-Qadisiyah University. The research sample represented (85%) of the research population for the period from March 10, 2024, to April 1, 2024. After sorting the forms for the construct sample, it became clear that all forms were valid for answering. Therefore, the researcher retained all (180) forms, which were used in the statistical analysis of the items of the Optimism-Pessimism Scale, consisting of (38) items, to determine its discriminatory power, validity, and reliability."
- f. "Statistical Analysis of the Items of the Optimism-Pessimism Scale: Statistical analysis of the items is more important than logical analysis because it verifies the content of the item in measuring what it was designed to measure, relying on certain indicators such as its ability to discriminate between respondents. Its validity and difficulty coefficients ([K. S. Mohammed, 2024](#)). The statistical analysis sample consisted of (180) male and female students. The researcher followed these procedures after correcting the forms and entering their data."

1. The Two Extreme Groups Method (External Consistency):

"To calculate the discriminatory power of the items on the Optimism-Pessimism Scale, the scores were arranged in descending order from highest to lowest total score for the analysis sample of (180) male and female students. The two extreme groups were then identified, with (27%) of the highest scores and (27%) of the lowest scores. The number of individuals in each group was (48) male and female students. The t-test for two independent samples was applied to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the means of the two groups. The t-value was considered an indicator of the validity of the item by comparing it to the tabulated value of (1.98) at a degree of freedom of (95) and a significance level of (0.05). The results of the analysis showed that all items were discriminatory, as shown in [Table 2](#)."

Table 2. The values of the discriminant coefficient t-test for the optimism-pessimism scale are shown using the extreme group method.

S	T value	S	T value	S	T value	S	T value
1	3.52	11	4.77	21	5.54	31	3.18
2	3.61	12	3.77	22	5.54	32	8.80
3	4.09	13	2.64	23	3.05	33	3.83
4	3.40	14	4.13	24	4.68	34	2.49
5	2.53	15	3.40*	25	2.87	35	3.13
6	3.69	16	4.02	26	3.12	36	3.13
7	5.18	17	3.45	27	4.45	37	2.08
8	3.86	18	3.42	28	6.67	38	2.73
9	4.95	19	7.36	29	3.69		
10	6.13	20	4.08	30	3.41		

"The tabulated t-value at a significance level of (0.05) and degrees of freedom (n1 + n2) - 2 = (48.6 + 48.6) - 2 = 97.2 - 2 = 95.2 = 1.98"

2. Internal Consistency (Relationship between Item Score and Total Scale Score):

" This method relies primarily on ensuring that each item on the scale follows the same trajectory as the scale itself. A high correlation between each item and the total scale score indicates that the item belongs to the scale, thus resulting in a homogeneous scale (Awad, 1984: 104). Therefore, the researchers used the Pearson correlation coefficient to calculate the correlation between the scores of each item and the total score. The number of questionnaires analyzed was 180, the same as the questionnaires analyzed in the two methods. All item scores were statistically significant; at a significance level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 178, there were 38 items, as shown in [Table 3](#)."

Table 3. shows the relationship between the item score and the total score on the optimism-pessimism scale.

S	Degree of correlation	S	Degree of correlation	S	Degree of correlation	S	Degree of correlation
1	0.39	11	0.48	21	0.47	31	0.37
2	0.43	12	0.40	22	0.51	32	0.75
3	0.42	13	0.35	23	0.38	33	0.34
4	0.44	14	0.42	24	0.44	34	0.60
5	0.37	15	0.72	25	0.44	35	0.35
6	0.41	16	0.33	26	0.39	36	0.35
7	0.71	17	0.39	27	0.38	37	0.37
8	0.48	18	0.72	28	0.61	38	0.64
9	0.44	19	0.46	29	0.32		
10	0.62	20	0.51	30	0.32		

"The tabulated value of (r) at a significance level of (0.05) and degrees of freedom (n-2) = 180 - 2 = 178 = 0.14"

g. Calculating the total score for the Optimism-Pessimism Scale: The scale, in its final form, consists of (38) items. A two-point scale was used for rating each item, with two verbal responses (A) and (B). One response (A) indicates optimism, and the other (B) indicates pessimism, as shown in Appendix (1). The response is scored by awarding two

points for the response that measures optimism and one point for the response that measures pessimism. Based on this, the highest possible score from respondents is 76, and the lowest possible score is 38. The assumed mean score for this scale is 57.

- h. Standard (Psychometric) Properties of the Scale:
 1. Validity: The current scale possesses the following validity indicators:
 - Content Validity: This type of validity was achieved when the researcher defined optimism and pessimism and wrote a number of items that aligned with the definition, the research objective, and the sample. The scale was then presented to a group of experts and specialists in educational and sports psychology and testing. After statistically analyzing their opinions using chi-squared (χ^2), all items achieved an acceptable level of agreement.
 - Construct Validity: This type of validity was achieved by maintaining the scale's distinctive items through item analysis procedures (discriminatory power) using the two-group method and the correlation of items with the total scale score, as previously mentioned in [Tables 2](#) and [3](#). This validity demonstrated that all scale items have the ability to discriminate between students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences on the optimism-pessimism scale.
 2. Reliability: Reliability is a fundamental component of any " test and one of the most important characteristics for evaluating a good test. To determine the reliability of the optimism-pessimism scale, researchers used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess its internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to a sample of 180 students' responses. "Using this method, the scale achieved a reliability of 94.70, close to 95. This is a high level of reliability at a significant level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom of ($n-2 = 180 - 2 = 178$) = 0.14.

Statistical analysis

IBM Statistical Package (SPSS version 25) was used to process the data and extract the results.

Results

This section presents the results of the current research and interprets them in light of the research objectives. This required the construction of the Optimism-Pessimism Scale using the procedures followed in constructing psychological scales, which were discussed in the third section. For academic achievement (theoretical and practical), the researcher used the grade record for the football course in the first semester final exam of the academic year. (2021-2022) A measure of academic achievement (theoretical and practical) for the research sample of students of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences - Al-Qadisiyah University.

Identifying the Level of Optimism-Pessimism among Students of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences:

To achieve this objective, the researcher measured the level of optimism-pessimism among the sample. After statistically processing the data for the sample of (180) male and female students, their average score on the scale was (73.610) with a standard deviation of (14.023). This average was higher than the hypothetical mean of the scale, which was (57). To determine the statistical significance of the differences between the mean and the hypothetical mean, the researcher used a one-sample t-test, as shown in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. shows the results of the t-test for the significance of the difference between the mean and the hypothetical mean of the optimism-pessimism scale.

variable	sample	Mean	SD	hypothetical mean	T value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Optimism - Pessimism	180	73.610	14.023	57	17.2	1.97	0.05

"**Table 4**" shows that the calculated t-value is (17.2), which is greater than the critical value of (1.97), at a significance level of (0.05) and degrees of freedom of (179). This indicates statistically significant differences between the two means, not differences resulting from chance."

Investigating the Significance of Differences in Optimism-Pessimism Levels Among Students of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences According to the Variables of Gender and Academic Achievement (Practical-Theoretical):

A. Gender:

The results of analyzing students' responses on the optimism/pessimism scale showed that the average score for males on the scale was (73.38) with a standard deviation of (6.23), while the average score for females was (72.90) with a standard deviation of (6.84). To determine the significance of the difference in students' scores on the optimism/pessimism scale according to the gender variable, an independent samples t-test was used. The results are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Results of the t-test for the significance of the difference in students' average scores on the optimism/pessimism scale according to the gender variable

Gender	Number	Mean	SD	T value		Level of significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Males	154	73.38	6.23			
Females	26	72.90	6.84	0.795	1.97	Not significant at 0.05

"The critical t-value at $180^{\circ} - 2^{\circ}$ of freedom = 178 and at a significance level of 0.05 is 1.97."

"**Table 5** shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of males and females on the optimism/pessimism scale. The calculated t-value was 0.795, which is less than the critical t-value of 1.97 at 178° of freedom and a significance level of 0.05."

B- Academic Achievement (Practical-Theoretical):

Table 6. shows the means, standard deviations, calculated and critical t-values, and significance levels for the theoretical and practical achievement of male and female students.

Sample	Theoretical achievement		academic achievement		Calculated value of (t)	Level of significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Male students	56.32	9.31	65.24	10.29	3.21	Moral support for practical

Female students	67.48	8.79	58.24	7.73	3.94	achievement Moral support for theoretical achievement
"The value of (t) of the grandfather at a degree of freedom of 180-2=178 and under a significance level of (0.05) equals (1.97)"						

Table 6 lists the mean, standard deviation, t-value, and significance level (theoretical and practical performance) for the students in relation to the variables under study. The mean of theoretical performance was 56.32, and the standard deviation was 9.31. The mean of practical performance was 65.24, and the standard deviation was 10.29. The t-value was 3.21, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at a significant level of 0.05 and 178 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the difference is statistically significant and has a positive impact on practical performance.

We found that the average theoretical score for female students was 67.48, with a standard deviation of 8.79; the average practical score was 58.24, with a standard deviation of 7.73. The calculated t-value was 3.94, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at a significance level of 0.05 and 178 degrees of freedom. This indicates that theoretical scores were superior to practical scores, and the difference was statistically significant.

To achieve this, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient to calculate the correlation between the scores on the optimism-pessimism scale of the total sample (180 male and female students from the Faculty of Sports Science at the University of Cadisia) and their football academic performance (theory and practice). The correlation coefficient was 0.55. To determine the significance of this correlation coefficient, we converted it to the corresponding t-value using the Pearson correlation coefficient t-test **Table 7**."

Table 7. shows the t-test value for the significance of Pearson's correlation coefficient between optimism-pessimism and academic achievement.

Number	Calculated correlation coefficient value	T value		Level of significance
		Calculated	Tabulated	
180	0.55	13.77	1.97	Sig. at 0.05

Table 7 shows a statistically significant correlation between optimism/pessimism and theoretical and practical academic achievement at a significance level of (0.05) and degrees of freedom of (178). The calculated t-value for the correlation coefficient was (13.77), which is greater than the tabulated t-value of (1.97).

To identify the differences in the correlation between optimism-pessimism and academic achievement (theoretical and practical) among students of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, according to the variables of gender and academic achievement.

The results achieved for this objective were as follows:

a. Gender:

"To determine the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients for optimism-pessimism and academic achievement according to the gender variable (male-female), the researcher used the z-test to determine the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients, as shown in **Table 8**."

Table 8. shows the z-value of the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients for optimism-pessimism and academic achievement according to the gender variable (male-female).

Gender	Samples	Calculated correlation coefficient value	Fisher's standard value	Z-value		Level of significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Male	154	0.490	0.536	0.51	1.97	Non-Sig. at 0.05
Female	26	0.450	0.485			

b. Academic Achievement: To identify the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients of optimism-pessimism and academic achievement according to the achievement variable (theoretical - practical), the researcher used the z-test to determine the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients, as shown in [Table 8](#).

[Table 8](#). shows the Z-value of the significance of the differences between the correlation coefficients of optimism-pessimism and academic achievement according to the variables (theoretical - practical).

[Table 8](#) shows that the calculated Z-value (0.23) is smaller than the critical value of (1.97) at a significance level of (0.05), and is therefore not statistically significant. This indicates no difference between the correlation coefficients according to the academic achievement variable (theoretical-practical).

Discussion

[Table 4](#) indicates that students at the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Qadisiyah University possess a high level of optimism, exceeding the hypothetical average of the optimism scale. This result can be explained by the nature of university life, which represents a stage of professional and future preparation for students. At this stage, students strive for self-realization and plan for their professional futures, which fosters feelings of optimism. Furthermore, the university environment provides greater opportunities for social interaction and expanding one's network ([K. S. Mohammed, 2024](#)), contributing to the development of a positive attitude towards expecting the best, i.e., optimism. In addition, the nature of the physical education and sports sciences specialization, which requires physical activity and vitality, contributes to enhancing a positive psychological state and an optimistic outlook on oneself and the future. ([Abd El-kadder, n.d.](#))

[Table 6](#) indicates statistically significant differences between the average theoretical and practical academic achievement scores of male students. The calculated value (3.21) is higher than the tabulated value (1.97), indicating the superiority of practical achievement over theoretical achievement. This result can be explained by male students' inclination towards practical subjects that align with their physical abilities and athletic interests, as well as their prior experience in practical applications through participation in sports, particularly football. This is consistent with what Murri and Al-Hilah (2004) indicated: that learning is linked to the learner's individual abilities and skills; the more they participate in sports, the greater their experience and ability to acquire new skills. ([Abd El-kadder, n.d.](#))

As for the academic achievement results for female students, the calculated value (3.94) was higher than the tabulated value (1.97), indicating that theoretical achievement outweighs practical achievement for female students. This can be explained by the fact that female students tend to prefer theoretical lessons that rely on memorization and understanding, and they prefer

activities that require less physical exertion, due to physical, social, and cultural differences. Furthermore (Bogićević et al., 2023), social customs and traditions limit female participation in sports activities outside the academic setting, reducing their opportunities to gain practical experience and leading to their greater theoretical proficiency compared to practical skills (Rentz, 2011).

Table 7 indicates that higher levels of optimism among students are associated with higher levels of theoretical and practical academic achievement. Optimism acts as a motivator for academic performance and increases motivation to achieve (Burke et al., 2006). Optimists view challenges as opportunities for growth and demonstrate perseverance in achieving their academic goals, which positively impacts their performance in both theoretical and practical courses (Kurova et al., 2023).

Table 8 shows no statistically significant differences in the correlation coefficients between optimism/pessimism and academic achievement based on gender (male-female) and the type of achievement (theoretical-practical) (Aliberti et al., 2025). This is attributed to the fact that all students are exposed to the same educational conditions, whether in theoretical or practical subjects, in addition to their similar ages and their belonging to the same academic year (first year), which leads to a similar level of awareness and attitude towards studying (Fatma & Irawan, 2025). Furthermore, both males and females strive for self-affirmation and academic excellence, which reinforces a similar level of optimism among them (Aydin, 2019).

Conclusions

Students in the School of Sports Science generally exhibited higher levels of optimism/pessimism. Male students outperformed female students in the practical football exam, while female students outperformed male students in the theoretical football exam. A positive correlation existed between optimism/pessimism and academic performance (theory/practice). However, no statistically significant differences were found in the correlation between optimism/pessimism and academic performance among students in the School of Sports Science, regardless of gender (male/female) or academic performance (theory/practice).

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