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Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at identifying Optimism Levels as one of the dimensions of mental health among Primary School Physical Education Teachers, The sample consisted of 60 Physical Education and Sports Teachers across schools in the Tissemsilt province. The study utilized Descriptive Method. This research employed Abdel-Khalek's (1995) Optimism Scale, which comprises 15 items to measure Optimism Levels. Mean values and percentages were computed for measurement. The study results revealed that Optimism Levels among the study sample were High. Therefore, the validity of the first hypothesis that Optimism Levels are High confirmed. This could be the result of some strategies adopted by Algerian Governments to take care of the above-mentioned group.

Keywords: Optimism Levels; Physical Education Teachers; Primary School

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Introduction

Recently, the term Optimism Levels, as one of the dimensions of mental health, has occupied a focal position in various Psychological Theories. Many studies, namely Rateb(2004), Alawi(2009), Aziz(2008), Al-Ansari (1995) and Abdel-Khalek (1995), have shown that lack of optimism has a role in the decline of performance mechanisms and motivation, which affects the psychological state of students and increases their anxiety about the future. Their internal anxiety, pessimistic vision and negative life-related expectations lead to low degrees of optimism, which makes them lack self-confidence, optimism and joy of studying, especially when they meet their specialization colleagues who graduated one batch after the other to face the specter of unemployment.

Improvement of human beings' life and achievement of their desired goals must be fostered by a better future through degrees holders' employment. It is certain that optimism and pessimism affect individual behavior in several respects. The human being has sometimes a tendency to expect good things to happen and hope for a better and brighter tomorrow. At other times, both evil expectation and bad aspiration for a dark tomorrow affect the psychological state of the human being and increase their anxiety regarding the present and the future. Therefore, Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers has attracted our research interest and we decided to examine it through Abdel-Khalek's (1995) Optimism Scale. This instrument comprises 15 items to measure Optimism Levels. Statistically speaking, they were measured via Mean values and percentages.

On this basis, the Research Question of our study could be formulated as follows:

1.1. Research Question:

What are Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers?

1.2. Sub-Questions:

- (a) Do Primary School Physical Education Teachers exhibit moderate Optimism Levels?
- (b) Do Primary School Physical Education Teachers exhibit High Optimism Levels?

1.3. Hypotheses:



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

- (a) Levels of Optimism among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are High.
- (b) Levels of Optimism among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are moderate.

1.4. Study Significance:

High lighting Optimism moderate among Primary School Physical Education Teachers from a psychological point of view and identifying their levels.

1.5. Research Objectives:

Determining Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers:

- (a) Finding out if Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are moderate.
- (b) Finding out if the Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are High.

1.6. Defining Concepts and Terms:

(a) Optimism:

Abdel-Khalek and Al-Ansari (1995: 2) define Itas a willingness that lies within the individual, based on general expectations of positive and new things to happen.

In the current study, Its Procedural Definition could be ‘The score obtained by the respondent on Abdel-Khalek’s(1996) Optimism Scale, which consists of 15 items’.

(b) Primary School Physical Education Teachers:

Physical education teachers for the primary level in the province of tissemst graduated from Institutes of Physical and Sports Activities Sciences and Technologies. They hold bachelor's degrees, with some having master's degrees, and others are in the process of pursuing a master's degree. The sample consisted of 60 teachers, randomly selected from schools across the municipalities and districts of tissemst province. This group was appointed for the first time in the education sector in Algeria, with the rank of primary school physical education teacher, following the decisions of the President of the Republic in May 2023. The selection process was carried out through digital means under the supervision of the Ministry of National

Education on a contractual basis. They underwent training and were appointed in September 2023."

2) Optimism (term) :

The term Optimism is used in the field of Psychology synonymously with other terms such as motivation, activation and arousal for both the mind and the body. They are the methods or procedures used by the psychologist or athlete himself to increase psychological energy to the optimal degree that suits performance (Rateb, 2000). Therefore, its use in the field of Sports Training and Training of athletes' psychological skills causes a kind of ambiguity. At the time when the term optimism is easier to understand and to determine. As a result, in the field of psychological training, exercising the mind and activating it independently of the body is required. We cannot overlook the integrated view in terms of influence and activation between the mind and the body.

Optimism viewed as a psychological state more than a kind of activity or vitality and intensity of the functions of the mind, which is the basis of motivation. Optimism can take positive or negative forms, depending on the nature of reactions of the energy source. Excitement, happiness and optimism are sources of positive energy, while anxiety and anger are sources of negative energy. As is the case for most psychological features, optimism characterizes the optimist by psychological comfort, which is the basis for motivation, activation and arousal to reach Optimal Psychological Energy. It is considered the ultimate step immobilizing people in a class in general and athletes and students in particular.

2.1 Optimism as a Source of Psychological Energy:

Optimism and Pessimism (anticipating positive or negative outcomes) can be traced back in history, according to ancient Arabic dictionaries like *Lisan Al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur, *Taj Al-Lughah*, and *Sihah Al-Arabiya* by Al-Jawhari, as well as *Al-Qamoos Al-Muhit* by Al-Fayrouzabadi, among others. The term Optimism was even found in the sayings of Prophet Mohammed, May Allah's Prayers be Upon him. These words have been a part of everyday language for a long time, appearing in various forms, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. However, it is worth noting that psychological studies on Optimism and Pessimism are relatively recent, with their origins dating back to no more than the last three decades of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, only a handful of isolated studies were published. In the subsequent two decades, research in the field of optimism and pessimism has seen a continuous and significant increase. This growth in research



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

is evident at the global level. However, as far as our knowledge goes, in the Arab world, interest in the study of optimism and pessimism only began in 1995.

In the field of psychology, Optimism is often used interchangeably with terms like motivation, activation and arousal for both mental and physical aspects. These terms describe methods or processes employed by psychologists and athletes to enhance psychological energy to an optimal level of performance (Rateb, 2004).

It should be noted that while these terms are related, 'Optimism' is more comprehensible and straightforward in the context of psychological training, which primarily focuses on mental exercises and activation, rather than the mind-body relationship (Aziz, 2008). Optimism is perceived as more than just a form of activity; it is also the intensity of mental functions, serving as a foundation for motivation. As mentioned above, Optimism can manifest in both positive and negative forms, depending on the source of emotional energy. Indeed, on the one hand, excitement, happiness, and optimism serve as sources of positive energy. On the other hand, anxiety and anger serve as sources of negative energy (Alawi, 2009).

Like many psychological traits, Optimism is characterized by psychological comfort. This comfort serves as the foundation for motivation and stimulation, leading to Optimal Psychological Energy, the achievement of which is a critical aspect of motivation, which is essential for individuals, including athletes and students, in various contexts, (Abdel-Khalek & Al-Ansari, 1995). Therefore, our study comprises a sample of 160 Students about to graduate who are currently enrolled in STAPS at the following universities: Tissemsilt, Chlef, Mostaganem, These students represent a significant subset of the overall study population.

2.2 Optimism of Physical Education teachers:

Optimism encourages Physical Education teachers to approach the learning process with enthusiasm and positivity, especially after years of patiently enduring the specter of unemployment. The turning point came with a decisive decision by Mr. Abdelmajid Tebboune, the President of the Algerian Republic, to create, for the first time in Algeria, positions for primary school physical education teachers. This groundbreaking decision addressed a long-standing issue and opened new opportunities for educators in the field.

The Ministry of Education, under the direct supervision of the Minister of Education, took swift action to implement this initiative. In September 2023, over 12,000 teaching positions for physical education specialists were filled

through contractual agreements. This development marked a significant milestone and provided a sense of relief and optimism for teachers who had long awaited such opportunities.

This newfound optimism among Physical Education teachers plays a crucial role in fostering resilience. It motivates them to view any challenges they face as opportunities for learning and personal development. The optimism becomes a driving force that transforms obstacles into stepping stones for growth.

Ultimately, the optimism among these educators contributes to enhancing the overall learning experience for students. As they dedicate themselves to guiding and nurturing young minds in primary schools, these teachers strive to maximize the positive impact of their time, ensuring that students benefit to the fullest extent.

2.3 Traits of Optimism:

Aspinwalet al. (2001) identified three behaviors and beliefs of optimistic individuals, noting that they handle negative information more effectively than pessimists, process information flexibly, and excel in problem-solving compared to pessimists.

2.4 Relationship between Self-Confidence and Optimism:

In a study conducted by Nasserbay, Boumelah and Alwan (2018), the relationship between Self-confidence and Optimism among graduating students at the STAPS Institute at the University of Bouirawas explored. The descriptive approach was used, and measures of optimism and self-confidence were applied. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between Self-confidence and Optimism Levels.

2.5 Optimism Level:

Qadumi(2015) aimed at identifying Optimism level among players in Collective Sports teams in Palestinian universities. Their study also aimed at identifying differences in Optimism based on variables such as Sport type, academic level and playing experience. Their study surveyed 246 participants and applied Abdul Khaleq's(1996) Optimism Scale. Their study found that Overall Optimism Level among participants was high.

2.6 Optimism Level and Health Behavior in Athletes:

Mariusz (2012) states that individuals with an optimistic outlook exhibit resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks, and optimistic athletes are more motivated by their hope for success rather than a fear of defeat. This study aimed to investigate whether optimism also influences positive health



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

behaviors among athletes. The research involved 147 women and 385 men engaged in athletic training, while a control group of 262 women and 435 men with no competitive athletic history was examined. Optimism was measured using the "O-P" Attitude Questionnaire, and health behavior was assessed using the Juczynski Health Behavior Inventory, which evaluated aspects like nutrition habits, preventive measures, positive attitudes, and healthy practices. Results indicated that pessimism levels among athletes were moderate, and female athletes displayed lower pessimism compared to female non-athletes, with a similar trend observed in males. Gender did not significantly affect optimism levels in either group. Among women, optimism correlated with positive health practices, including sleep, recreation, and physical activity. Additionally, as pessimism increased, positive attitudes decreased in female controls, female athletes, and male controls. In conclusion, athletes demonstrated higher levels of optimism compared to non-athletes, with optimism correlating with positive health behaviors, particularly among female athletes.

2.7 Relationships between Optimism, Stress and Perception

Boland (1995) study examined coping strategies and adaptation in women aged 60 and above. The hypothesis posited that optimism among older women would correlate with reduced perceived stress levels, a greater tendency to view stressors as challenges rather than threats or losses, employ more adaptive coping mechanisms, exhibit fewer distress symptoms, and experience higher life satisfaction. A prospective correlational design was employed, involving two interviews, with a minimum three-month interval, with 113 women. Their discussion focused on the necessity of clarifying Optimism construct, considering whether It should be conceptualized as bipolar or two-dimensional. In the latter case, optimism and pessimism would be related yet distinct constructs. Additionally, they claimed that relationships between these constructs and neuroticism and extraversion require further elucidation. The results prompt inquiry into whether optimism and pessimism could be subsumed under one or more of the "Big Five" personality factors, including neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

2.8 Optimism Efficacy as a Psychological Phenomenon:

According Rotondo et al.(2010), numerous studies have investigated the efficacy of optimism as a psychological phenomenon, resulting in various theoretical formulations of the same concept, which have been conceptualized as disposition, attributional style, and cognitive bias or shared illusion. This overview

aims at exploring the concept of "optimism" and its relationship with mental health, physical health, coping, quality of life, purpose, health lifestyle, and risk perception. Expectations, both positive and negative, concerning the future are pivotal for comprehending vulnerability to mental disorders, particularly mood and anxiety disorders, as well as physical illness. A noteworthy positive correlation is observed between Optimism and coping strategies centered on social support and a focus on the positive aspects of stressful situations. Through the utilization of specific coping strategies, optimism indirectly impacts the quality of life. There is compelling evidence that optimistic individuals exhibit a higher quality of life when compared to those with low levels of optimism or even pessimists. Optimism can significantly influence mental and physical well-being by promoting a healthy lifestyle, adaptive behaviors, and cognitive responses characterized by increased flexibility, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and more efficient processing of negative information.

2.9 Optimism Protocol

Regourd-Laizeau, Martin-Krumm and Tarquinio (2012) claim that Optimism can be approached from several perspectives. It can be viewed directly, as in the proposal by Carver and Scheier (1982), with the concept of Dispositional Optimism. It can also be approached indirectly, as in the work of Abramson et al. (1978), with the concept of an Optimistic Explanatory Style. Regardless of the chosen approach, Optimism is primarily associated with beneficial effects, across various contexts such as health, the workplace, school, and even Sports performance. Consequently, the development of techniques to enhance Optimism has become crucial in different domains. Their article aims at briefly introducing some of these techniques and provide a more detailed discussion of the contribution of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) to the development of an Optimistic Explanatory Style in the field of Sports.

2.10 Optimistic Personality

Mariusz (2012) characterized an optimistic personality as someone who approaches problems flexibly, maintains emotional balance, engages with others affectionately and confidently, refrains from dwelling on negative memories, and focuses on a positive side of the future. Additionally, an optimistic personality demonstrates strong determination in challenging situations, actively participates in community service, appreciates circumstances adequately, and approaches life with hope and joy



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

2.11 Relationships between Optimism and Pessimism

Abdel-Khalek and Al-Ansari (1995) had several objectives. They aimed at investigating the relationships between optimism and pessimism, as assessed by their Arabic questionnaire, and various psychological disorder indicators, including depression, despair, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Their study also involved conducting a factor analysis of these variables. Two separate samples of Kuwait University students, comprising both males and females ($N_1 = 277$, $N_2 = 111$), were used in the study. Significant correlations were identified between their study variables. Notably, there was a negative correlation between optimism and pessimism, despair, depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, respectively. Additionally, scales' correlation for the last four variables was found to be significant, suggesting convergent validity of optimism and pessimism scales.

When reviewing the Literature on Optimism, the following observations were made: (1) Previous studies primarily focused on Optimism included a wide range of related factors such as pessimism, anxiety, stress, motivation and achievement. These studies also involved participants from various age groups and different sports. (2) Descriptive approaches were commonly used in most of the studies, for instance Nasserbay, Boumelah and Alwan (2018) and Qadoumi (2015). This choice aligns with the current study, which also adopted a descriptive approach, taking into account the nature of research. The researchers have drawn upon the above-mentioned studies to determine the research problem, methodological approach, sample size, measurement tool, statistical methods, and how to present and interpret results.

3. Methodological Procedures for the Study:

The study population, research sample and research instrument are described below:

3.1. Study Population:

The study encompasses Primary School Physical Education Teachers Tissemsilt

3.2. Research Sample:

The present study distinguishes itself by assessing Optimism Levels in a random sample of 60 Primary School Physical Education Teachers.

3.3. Study Tool:

The study employs Abdel-Khalek's (1996) Optimism Scale, which consists of 15 items.

3.4. Optimism Scale:

This scale assesses individual optimism using a response scale containing five options: Very high (5), High (4), Medium (3), Low (2), and Very Low (1). It has been standardized and validated on a sample of university students, demonstrating good reliability with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.91. For the current study, reliability coefficient reached 0.90, indicating good reliability.

4. Analysis of Results:

For the research question related to Optimism Levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers, the results were analyzed using arithmetic averages and percentages. Standard Deviation was also computed. The results' analysis followed a scale similar to the one used by Qadoumi (2015), where:

Over 80% indicated a Very High degree of optimism.

70-79.9% indicated High Optimism.

60-69.9% indicated Moderate Optimism.

50-59.9% indicated Low Optimism.

Less than 50% indicated Very Low Optimism.

Table 1 below provides a summary of results:

Table 1 Arithmetic Means and Percentages of Optimism Levels Scores among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
Very Low	9	15%	12	3.16
Low	8	13.33%		
Moderate	12	20%		
High	15	25%		
Very High	16	26.67%		
Total	60	100%		

The maximum Levels of response is (5) Levels.

It is clear from Table (1) that the optimism scores of Primary School Physical Education Teachers were high in all items, as the response percentages ranged between (70-79.9) % The optimism scores are high. Regarding the overall level of optimism, it was high, We have also documented that the percentage of respondents with a very low level of optimism was 15%, while those with a low level constituted 13.33%. The average level was reported at 20%, with high and very high levels standing at 25% and 26.67%, respectively. This analysis reveals



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

that overall optimism levels were generally high, above average, or nearing good, totaling 70% according to the assessed levels of optimism.

5. Findings and Discussion:

The first partial hypothesis: The levels of optimism among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are high.

By analyzing the results summarized in Table No. 01 and through the values obtained, we show that the students' levels of optimism are high.

In all of the above paragraphs. We arrive at the validity of the first hypothesis: The levels of optimism among Primary School Physical Education Teachers .

By analyzing the results of Summary Table No. 01 and through the values obtained, we found that Optimism levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are High. This reflects the students' positive outlook on professional life in particular and the future in general. This study also agreed with the study of Qadumi(2015), which aimed at identifying Optimism levels among players of Collective Sports teams, in addition to identifying differences in Optimism depending on the variables of the game, academic level and playing experience. To achieve this, the study was conducted on a sample of 246 players.

After Abdel-Khalek's (1996) Scale was applied to measure Optimism, the study percentages revealed that the overall level of Optimism among the members of the study sample was High. This is due to the strategies adopted by the Algerian State in achieving comprehensive growth in all sectors, especially in higher education sector. These include creating employment opportunities for young graduates of STAPS institutes through various programs, such as establishing start-ups, opening job positions for Physical Education teachers in primary schools, providing unemployment grant in addition to integrating 8,000 Magister and Doctorate holders into university as assistant professors. In light of these results, we arrive at the validity of the first hypothesis: Optimism levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are High.

The second partial hypothesis: Optimism levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are Moderate.

By analyzing the results of summary table No. 01 and through the values obtained, we found that Optimism levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are moderate in all items, and this is inconsistent with the second partial hypothesis: Optimism levels among Primary School Physical Education Teachers are average in all items of the scale.

All percentages amounted to more than 70%, which indicates inaccuracy and validity of the second hypothesis according to the results obtained, and that Optimism levels are High in all items of the scale according to the research.

The study concludes that university students exhibit high levels of optimism, which can be attributed to factors such as upbringing and family environment (Rateb, 2004). Various state initiatives to address unemployment and promote academic advancements have contributed to increased optimism among students. The study underscores the significance of the state's strategies in enhancing employment prospects for graduates, resulting in a positive outlook among students.

6. Recommendations:

- Increasing the duration of each physical education class by one hour is deemed insufficient, and it is recommended to extend it by at least one and a half hours per session.
- Providing the necessary sports equipment for conducting classes and sports activities in accordance with the approved program is crucial.
- Incorporating the process of constructing and equipping a sports field with artificial turf and lighting for each new school complex is highly recommended.
- Isolating the designated sports area from classrooms to preserve the tranquility during lessons is essential.
- Regularly training teachers, especially in the psychological aspects of child development, is crucial for effective physical education.
- Permanently integrating Physical Education teachers at the primary level into their positions, especially those appointed through digital means and have received training, is highly recommended.

Conclusion:

The study successfully validated its research hypotheses. It drew both general and specific conclusions in addition to providing valuable recommendations for future research in this area.

This summary provides a clear picture of our study's outcomes and suggestions for future actions based on our research findings. Our work emphasizes the importance of optimism among Primary School Physical Education Teachers.



Studying the Levels of Optimism Among Primary School Physical Education Teachers

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