

Irrational Beliefs among Sciences and Human Sciences Students at Isra University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at examining the percentage of irrational beliefs among students at Isra University. The sample included 600 students (300 social sciences and 300 sciences students) enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018. This quantitative study adopted the irrational scale of beliefs, which was Arabized and codified for the Jordanian environment by Rihani(1985). The findings of the study showed that there was an increase in the level of irrational ideas between the sample of the study in favor of social sciences students.

Keywords: Irrational ideas ; sciences faculties ; social sciences faculties.

Introduction

Irrational beliefs are important for psychologists since they help to understand people's emotional reactions when they come across stressful situations in their lives (David &Szentagotai, 2006). Irrational beliefs are illogical cognitive evaluations, and they are illogical, rigid, and false, causing emotional disturbance and distress (Ellis, 1962). TEBT gave a general view for irrational beliefs that we impose interpretations over the knowledge we gain, and idiosyncratic interpretations of the world in which people strongly believe lead to psychological disturbance (Ellis & Dryden, 1988).

The concept of irrational beliefs has raised controversy among psychologists, especially that it has a long-life impact on the person. Even though its roots date back to the views of philosophers in the ancient Greek civilization, it has a very short history as a scientific concept. Albert Ellis established the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in the 1950s according to a cognitive model, and it asserts that irrational beliefs are the main factor that stands behind emotional disturbances such as anxiety, anger, and stress (Yildiz, Baytemir, &Demirtas, 2018; Chan, & Sun, 2020). According to Ellis, and Dryden (1987), the psychological disorders generated by our beliefs is not generated by the experiences and incidents experienced by people; however, it results from the beliefs held by people about these incidents that make themirrational(Bernard & Cronan,1999). As a result, irrational ideasmake people disturbed, and worried, and make them ineffective and unhappy people. If they can overcome these irrational ideas, they will not be affected by emotional disorders, or at least such beliefs will disappear with time.

Corsini refers to the role of irrational beliefs in personality disorders in his model, known as ABC, as the letter A refers to "Activating event", B refers to "Beliefs", and C refers to the "Consequences" of emotions (Weiner, & Craighead, 2010). So, the interpretation of events is the main cause of personality disorders rather than the situation itself (Cramer, &Kupshik, 1993).Irrational beliefs are generalizations derived from assumptions that are not empirically proven and appear in absolute language using the words of need, must, and urgent phrases and destructive beliefs representing absolute thinking (Abrams, &Ellis, 1994).

Ellis's theory is based on several philosophical assumptions about humans and the nature of an individual's disorders. Patterson (1980) pointed out that Ellis's theory is based on a set of assumptions, including that irrationality might be associated with the individual since childhood. Also, irrational belief is self-destructive thoughts that need to

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be attacked so that the individual becomes logical and rational (Patterson, 1980).

An early study by Goldfried and Sobocinski (1975) revealed that there is a relationship between irrational beliefs and disruptive examination anxiety in first-year female university students more than male students and more than junior students. Rebha (2014) investigated the relationship between irrational thoughts and Future anxiety, and the findings of the study showed that there is a positive statistically significant relationship between irrational thoughts and future anxiety among the students of psychology and educational sciences. Also, Abdalqader (2007) examined the irrational thoughts among Palestinian university students. The findings of the study showed that males have more irrational thoughts than females, and junior students have irrational thoughts more than graduates, and middle income has a negative influence on irrational beliefs than the low- and high-income students.

Past studies show that many university students have different levels of irrational beliefs that lead to several emotional disorders such as depression, stress, and anxiety (Bridges, & Harnish, 2010; Dilorenzo, David, & Montgomery, 2011; Al-Heeti, Hamid, & Alghorani, 2012; Chan, & Sun, 2020; Chrysidis, Turner, & Wood, 2020). Also, past studies showed that irrational beliefs are a major cause of behavioral and emotional disorders, and people suffering from irrational beliefs usually tend to have higher levels of depression, stress, and anxiety. Such findings are the motive to carry out this study among university students in Jordan, especially than irrational beliefs might also affect the students' learning process and academic achievement (Heimisson, & Dedrick, 2020; Falah Mehnehj, Yamini, & Mahdian, 2020).

Based on the above discussion, the researcher sees that the anxiety resulted from irrational thoughts appears due to the inadaptability of the person to the surrounding environment. That is, the irrational thoughts might not be the cause of psychological disturbances; however, they make the individual unable to adapt to the environment. Hence, the disputes and fighting among students of some colleges have deep roots with irrational thoughts that lead to the students' inadaptability to the study environment at the university.

The significance of the study stems from the fact that irrational thoughts are the corner stone in the life of students so that they will be able to adapt to the surrounding environment. Also, irrational thought are a main source of anxiety and inadaptability to the life, which significantly influence the learning and career of students. The researcher, during lecturing at the university, noticed that there are many disputes among social sciences students more than those happening among students of sciences departments. Hence, the researcher attempted to investigate this issue through highlighting the role of irrational thoughts on his behaviors. Therefore, this study aims to investigate irrational beliefs through the following questions:

- a. What is the level of irrational beliefs prevalent among Isra university students?
- b. What is the level of irrational thoughts among students of human colleges?
- c. What is the level of irrational thoughts among students of science colleges?
- d. Are there statistically significant differences in the average degrees of irrational thoughts attributed to the student's specialization?

1. Methodology

1.1. Research design and sample

This study adopted the quantitative Descriptive research design. This design is suitable for the study because it helps to collect data from a large number of participants (Creswell, 2017). The researcher referred to the university colleges and took permission to carry out the study at the university, and then the participants were selected randomly from among male and female students. The sample of the study compromised 600 students (300 human sciences students and 300 sciences students), with an average age of 20.9 years. Table 1 shows the background information of the study participants.

Table 1. Participants' background information

Faculty	Number	Gender	Marital Status	Age
Colleges of human sciences studies	300 students	150 males	16 married	18-23
		150 females	134 singles	
Colleges of sciences studies	300 students	150 males	6 married	18-23
		150 females	144 singles	

1.2. Research instrument

The instrument of the study is the rational and irrational beliefs scale translated by al-Rihani (1985), and it was used to measure irrational beliefs. This scale consists of 52 items expressing 13 irrational beliefs. The scale consists of 13 sub-beliefs, and each one is expressed in four items, where half of them is positive and the others are negative. The response to items is either "Yes" or "No", where the answer "Yes" indicates acceptance of the item and the answer "No" indicates rejection of the item. Moreover, the answer that indicates the respondent's acceptance of irrational beliefs is given two scores while one score is given to the answer that indicates rejection of irrational beliefs. Thus, the minimum score range is 4, which refers to a high degree of rational belief, while the maximum score range is 8, which indicates a high degree of irrational belief.

The total score of scale ranges from 52 as the lowest score that indicates the rejection of all irrational beliefs represented by the items or a high degree of rational belief; whereas, the 104 score indicates the highest degree of acceptance of irrational beliefs represented by the items or a high degree of irrational belief. The first section of the scale included personal and scale information, and students could answer all items within 20 minutes.

1.3. Validity and reliability

The researcher validated the scale based on the validity of the content, where the scale was presented to psychologists, and 90% of them agreed on the validity of the scale to measure irrational beliefs. Also, the researcher has calculated the reliability coefficient of the 13 sub-dimensions, and the results of the dimensions' reliability ranged from 0.45 as the lowest score to 0.83 as the highest score. In terms of the correlation of the scale items with the final value of the scale as an indicator for the construct validity. The calculation of the correlation coefficients between the score of each item and the total score of the scale, these values ranged between 0.38 and 0.68 and all of them were statistically significant, which indicates that the construct validity were good to carry out this study. Also, the researcher calculated the internal consistency by using the Cronbach's Alpha, and value was 0.943 indicating that the scale has a very good internal consistency.

1.4. Study Limitations

The study is limited to the following determinants:

- This study is limited to one scale, which is the irrational thoughts scale, translated by al-Rihani (1985).
- This is limited to students of Isra University, which is a private university that mostly enroll students belonging to the middle- and low-income families in Jordan.
- The study is limited to the male and female participants who agreed to participate in the study.

2. Results

2.1. Level of irrational beliefs prevalent among Al-Isra University students

To answer the first question, which is: What is the level of irrational thoughts prevalent among Al-Isra University students? The averages are calculated for each item in Table (3), and the following criterion has been adopted in determining levels as shown in Table (2) below.

Table 2. Standard used in determining levels

Extent	level
8-7	high
6.9-6	Average
5.9-5	Low

The results of the averages are shown in Table (3) below.

Table 3. Level of irrational beliefs in the sample

No	Items	average	Level
1	The calamity is that it does not happen what the person wishes or does not happen the opposite of what he wishes	7.63	High
2	Punishment and cruel blame must be directed to people who act wrong	7.51	High
3	His position is more important to men than to women	7.49	High
4	One has to be serious and formal with others in order to have a decent place among them	7.44	High
5	Past events influence the construction of current behavior and their impact cannot be ignored	7.17	High
6	The individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset to annoy them	7.07	High
7	A person must be loved by all the people around him	6.82	Medium
8	There is always a strong person who should be counted on	6.52	Medium
9	The individual must feel that he is of high value and high efficiency and carry out his work in a perfect manner	6.49	Medium
10	There is always a single, correct solution to the problem that must be reached	6.15	Medium
11	The causes of unhappiness are external and cannot be controlled by the individual	6.12	Medium
12	One must always expect dangerous or frightening situations to occur and occupy themselves with the constant willingness to confront them	6.04	Medium
13	It is easier and better to avoid duties and responsibilities than to confront them	5.98	Low

Table (3) shows that there are six irrational items in the high level of spread among the study sample from university students; six items at the intermediate level; and one item at the low level, This means that the prevalence of irrational thoughts among students ranged between high and medium, and the item "calamity is that what the person desires does not happen or that the opposite of what he wishes" is the most prevalent, while the item "it is easier and better to avoid duties and responsibilities rather than face them" is the least prevalent.

2.2. Level of irrational thoughts among students of human colleges

To answer the second question, which is: What is the level of irrational beliefs among students of human colleges? The mean and standard deviations were calculated and the results are shown in Table (4) below.

Table 4. Statistical averages and standard deviations for students of human sciences

No.	Items	SMA	SD	Level
1	The individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset to annoy them	7.93	1.00	High
2	Punishment and cruel blame must be directed to people who act wrong	7.80	1.10	High
3	His position is more important to men than to women	7.76	1.22	High
4	One has to be serious and formal with others in order to have a decent place among them	7.63	1.20	High
5	Past events influence the construction of current behavior and their impact cannot be ignored	7.60	1.20	High

No.	Items	SMA	SD	Level
6	The individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset to annoy them	7.56	1.20	High
7	A person must be loved by all the people around him	7.54	1.32	High
8	There is always a strong person who should be counted on	7.23	1.20	High
9	The individual must feel that he is of high value and high efficiency and carry out his work in a perfect manner	6.23	1.30	Medium
10	There is always a single, correct solution to the problem that must be reached	6.12	1.40	Medium
11	The causes of unhappiness are external and cannot be controlled by the individual	5.96	1.30	Low
12	One must always expect dangerous or frightening situations to occur and occupy themselves with the constant willingness to confront them	5.21	1.20	Low
13	It is easier and better to avoid duties and responsibilities than to confront them	5.12	1.30	Low

Table (4) shows that there are eight irrational beliefs in the high level of prevalence among the study sample of university students in the human majors; two items at the intermediate level; and three items at the low level, which means that the spread of irrational beliefs among students of human specializations exceeded half. The item "the individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset to annoy them" is the most prevalent, while the item "an individual should always expect dangerous or frightening situations to occur and occupy himself with a constant readiness to confront them" is the least prevalent item.

2.3. Level of irrational thoughts among students of science colleges

To answer the third question, which is: What is the level of irrational thoughts among students of scientific colleges? The mean and standard deviations were calculated and the results are shown in Table (5) below.

Table 5. Averages and standard deviations for students of science colleges

No	Items	SMA	SD	Level
1	The calamity is that it does not happen what the person wishes or does not happen the opposite of what he wishes	7.71	1.60	High
2	His position is more important to men than to women	7.38	1.33	High
3	One has to be serious and formal with others in order to have a decent place among them	7.25	1.30	High
4	Punishment and cruel blame must be directed to people who act wrong	7.25	1.50	High
5	The individual must feel that he is of high value and high efficiency and carry out his work in a perfect manner	7.10	1.36	High
6	The individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset to annoy them	7.02	1.30	High
7	The causes of external misery, which the individual cannot control	7.02	1.12	High
8	An individual must always expect dangerous or fearful situations to occur and occupy himself with a constant willingness to confront them	6.95	1.23	Medium
9	The individual must be sensitive to the problems of others and be upset with their annoyance	6.21	1.36	Medium
10	A person must be loved by all the people around him	6.08	1.20	medium
11	There is always a single, correct solution to the problem that must be reached	6.07	1.25	medium
12	It is easier and better to avoid duties and responsibilities than to confront them	5.83	1.20	Low
13	There is always a strong person who should be counted on	5.24	1.20	Low

Table (5) shows that there are seven irrational beliefs in the high level among the study sample of university

students in the scientific colleges; four items at the intermediate level; and two items at the low level, which means that students of science colleges have common irrational beliefs that range from high to moderate. Also, the item of "calamity is that what the person desires does not happen or that the opposite of what he wishes" is the most prevalent while the item "there is always a strong person must rely upon" is the least common item.

2.4. Differences in the average degrees of irrational between science colleges and human sciences colleges

To answer the fourth question, which is: Are there statistically significant differences in the average degrees of irrational thoughts attributed to the student's specialization? the independent sample t-test is used as shown in Table (6) below.

Table 6. Test results for differences in irrational thoughts, according to the specialty variable

No	Item	Science colleges		Human colleges		T-value	Sig.
		Std. Dev.	Average	Std. Dev.	Average		
1	A person must be loved by all the people around him	1.20	6.08	1.20	7.56	10.72	**0.00
2	The individual must feel that he is of high value and high efficiency and carry out his work in a perfect manner	1.30	7.02	1.30	5.96	7.09-	**0.00
3	Punishment and cruel blame must be directed to people who act wrong	1.50	7.25	1.22	7.76	3.26	**0.00
4	The calamity is that what the person desires does not happen or that the opposite of what he wishes is done	1.60	7.71	1.32	7.54	1.01-	0.24
5	The causes of unhappiness are external and cannot be controlled by the individual	1.12	7.02	1.20	5.21	13.57-	**0.00
6	An individual must always expect dangerous or frightening situations to occur and occupy himself with a constant willingness to confront them	1.23	6.95	1.30	5.12	12.58-	**0.00
7	It is easier and better to avoid duties and responsibilities than to confront them	1.20	5.83	1.40	6.12	1.94	0.06
8	There is always a strong person to rely on	1.20	5.24	1.10	7.80	19.36	**0.00
9	Past events affect the construction of current behavior and their impact cannot be ignored	1.36	7.10	1.20	7.23	0.88	0.27
10	The individual must be sensitive to other people's problems and get upset with their discomfort	1.36	6.21	1.00	7.93	12.67	**0.00
11	There is always a correct and only solution to the problem that must be reached	1.25	6.07	1.30	6.23	1.09	0.22
12	An individual must be serious and formal with others in order to obtain a decent place among them	1.30	7.25	1.20	7.63	2.64	**0.01
13	The position of the man is more important than the woman	1.33	7.38	1.20	7.60	1.51	0.13

** Statistically significant at the level of 0.01

Table (6) shows that the value of items (1, 3, 8, 10, 12) are statistically significant, and the differences were in favor of human colleges, meaning that they possessed these irrational beliefs higher than students of science colleges. Also, there are statistically significant differences for the items (2, 5, 6) at the level of 0.01 in favor of science colleges, meaning that they possessed these ideas to a greater degree than students of human colleges, while there are no statistical differences in the rest of the irrational beliefs.

Discussion

Results of this study indicated that there are irrational beliefs among Isra university students. The results can also be interpreted in light of the age stage that university students go through in terms of expanding the network of social relations, mixing and the desire to adhere to some ideas, and the difficulty of dialogue with others by accepting their ideas. In addition, the academic, economic, family, and other pressures contribute to adhering to and strengthening some beliefs. Several studies have confirmed the prevalence of irrational thoughts among university students (Al-Zahrani, 2010). Also, this result is in line with past studies that irrational beliefs are common among university students (Al-Rihani, 1987; Chan, & Sun, 2020; Onuigbo, Onyishi, & Eseadi, 2020; Heimisson, & Dedrick, 2020).

The general common irrational beliefs among students of human sciences and sciences colleges might be explained by the change of beliefs among students due to the study at the university. This is confirmed by the study of Adnan et al. (1993) that studying affects the adjustment and mental health in terms of rational ideas among students.

Besides, the results indicated that students of science colleges have ideas that maintain their motivation to achievement and work while the students of humanities colleges are more vulnerable to have irrational beliefs which is in line with Ibrahim (1990). This can be noticed in the responses of the students to the first item "the person should be loved by all the people around him" which shows that the way of thinking of the students of human sciences differs in attitudes, goals, learning when compared with students of science colleges students. Accordingly, the way of life of the individual along with his goals determine his beliefs. Also, the results of the fifth item presented that the scientific college students distinguished from social science students, "the causes of external unhappiness cannot be controlled by the individual." Therefore, science college students overcame their frustrations, stress, and resisted the obstacles that might lead them to failure. However, social sciences students are less resistant to stress and frustration, which makes them tend to have irrational beliefs.

The results of the third, fourth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth items indicate that there is no difference between the human sciences students and the students of sciences colleges students. These results indicate that the prevalence is the irrational thoughts among students in large and medium proportions and that there are differences in the level of irrational ideas due to specialization in most ideas, and this is consistent with the results of the study of (Al-Rihani, 1987) that irrational ideas spread in Jordanian society with rates reaching more than 40 %. When a person is irrational, we must reduce his/her feelings of inferiority by making it clear that s/he just underestimates himself. Rational people know that their feelings of incompetence stem from irrational ideas because people cannot be competent in everything they do (Hassan, & El Gamaly, 2003). The idea of having a high motivation for study, diligence, and scientific advancement suggests that this motive biologically-based (Alaeddin, 1999). Also, the difference between human sciences students and sciences students might be explained by the fact that the courses of sciences colleges are more difficult than the courses in human sciences colleges. Therefore, the major has a clear effect on the way of thinking and irrational ideas among students.

Abrams and Ellis (1994) confirm that man is born with a will to behave in both rational and irrational ways. Also, the individuals are biologically composed to think in a twisted way on many occasions or to defeat themselves, to exaggerate everything, to be excited, and to act very strangely for the most trivial reasons. Also, humans genetically ready for emotional and psychological disorders; however, the individual comes across difficult situations and he needs to realize himself to achieve his goals (Sheikh, 1990).

Conclusion, Implications and Directions for Future Studies

The current study investigated the irrational beliefs among students of human sciences and students of sciences. The findings showed that university students' irrational beliefs commonly range between high and medium. In general, the comparison between human sciences students and sciences students showed that social sciences students tend to have irrational beliefs higher than students of sciences colleges.

The study concluded with some implications. First, it is important to add educational or philosophical courses to the students of social sciences to limit the spread of irrational thoughts. Second, university students need health support

from their universities. Therefore, universities need to establish a health care center for psychological support to help students overcome such feelings. Third, university lecturers must play a key role in this regard, and this can be achieved by providing psychological support training to university lecturers. This is to qualify them to understand the psychology of students to support students to overcome irrational beliefs.

Due to the limitations of this study just like any other study, future studies can further replicate the study and focus on age differences among students. Besides, future studies can also investigate the differences among students according to the major in the human sciences colleges. Such studies might complement this study to have a complete picture for the spread of irrational thoughts among university students.

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الكليات العلمية والإنسانية في جامعة الإسراء

فراس الحبيس *

ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى فحص نسبة المعتقدات اللاعقلانية لدى طلاب جامعة الإسراء. ضمت العينة 600 طالب وطالبة 300 (من كليات العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية و 300 طالب من الكليات العلمية) في الفصل الدراسي الثاني من العام الدراسي 2017/2018. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة الكمية على مقياس الأفكار اللاعقلاني الذي عرّبه وتقننه للبيئة الأردنية الريحاني (1985). وحصل الباحث الصدق والثبات جيدين للمقياس. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هناك زيادة في مستوى الأفكار اللاعقلانية بين أفراد عينة الدراسة لصالح طلاب كليات العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية.

الكلمات الدالة: الأفكار الغير عقلانية، الكليات العلمية، الكليات الإنسانية.

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