
**Career Future Anxiety Among University Students
Approaching Graduation**
**A Field Study on a Sample of Students at Khemis Miliana
University**

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the level of career future anxiety among university students approaching graduation. A descriptive research design was adopted. The Career Future Anxiety Scale, developed by Mohammed Ben Younis (2017), was administered to a stratified random sample consisting of 120 male and female students. The findings revealed a high level of career future anxiety among students nearing graduation. Moreover, no statistically significant differences were found in career future anxiety according to gender. These results underscore the importance of understanding the factors contributing to career-related anxiety in order to enhance support mechanisms that facilitate students' transition from university to the professional workforce.

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Anxiety; future; career; student; university.

1. Introduction

University students today face significant concerns about their future, particularly as they approach graduation and transition from academic life to professional careers. This period of transition brings both opportunities and challenges, as students strive to establish themselves socially and professionally. The uncertainty surrounding their career prospects, combined with rapid economic and labor market changes, often leads to what is known as future anxiety—an emotional state characterized by tension, fear, and apprehension regarding upcoming life events (Al-Mashayekhi, 2009).

Future anxiety is particularly pronounced in relation to career expectations. Graduating students often experience stress about securing suitable employment, meeting professional demands, and achieving the ambitions they have cultivated throughout their academic journey (Al-Mahamid & Al-Safasifa, 2007).

While moderate concern can motivate planning and goal-setting, excessive anxiety disrupts balance, diminishes hope, and may hinder students' capacity to make realistic decisions about their professional paths.

Work carries substantial significance for students, not only as a source of financial independence and social status but

also as a means of achieving self-fulfillment and psychological stability. The shift from public sector employment to privatization, coupled with rising competition in the labor market, exacerbates concerns about employability and career success. Consequently, understanding the level of career-related anxiety among university students nearing graduation is crucial, as it can influence their motivation, decision-making, and overall well-being.

Empirical studies across the Arab world support these observations. Research in Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia (Hattaraf, 2020; Al-Fayyadi, 2017; Alwan, 2016; Al-Momani & Naeem, 2013; Al-Safasifa, 2017; Habib, 2014) consistently demonstrates that university students experience high levels of future anxiety, particularly concerning their professional lives. These findings highlight the necessity of investigating career-related concerns in graduating students to better understand the factors influencing their anxiety and to inform interventions aimed at supporting their transition into the workforce.

In this study, we aim to address the following inquiries:

- What is the extent of future anxiety among graduating university students?
- Are there any significant gender-based differences in the level of career-related concerns among graduating university students?

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

Hypotheses:

Based on the aforementioned inquiries, we can propose the following hypotheses:

- Graduating university students experience a high level of future anxiety regarding their careers.
- There are statistically significant disparities in the level of career-related concerns among graduating university students based on gender (males/females).

The objectives of the study:

The objectives of the current study were as follows:

- To assess the level of future career future anxiety among university students who are about to graduate.
- To examine the gender differences (males/females) in the level of future career future anxiety.

The importance of the study:

The importance of the present study arises from the significance of its subject matter. Anxiety has become an increasingly influential factor in individuals' lives as a result of the growing pressures characterizing the contemporary era, often described as an era of stress. Within this context, career future anxiety among university students represents a particularly important issue, as it exerts a direct and multifaceted impact on their personal, academic, and psychological lives.

Examining and interpreting the level of career future anxiety among university students provides a scientific basis for designing guidance and training programs aimed at reducing such anxiety. These programs can contribute to enhancing students' psychological adjustment, promoting mental balance, and supporting their overall psychological well-being.

2. Theoretical Background

Future anxiety is the worry and concern individuals experience regarding uncertainties and potential negative outcomes in their future (Abu-Hammor & Al-Safasfeh, 2023).

The term *career future anxiety* refers to a state of unease, tension, and a sense of apprehension and fear about an uncertain professional future, including the possibility of finding suitable employment opportunities after graduating from university (Al-Mahamid & Al-Safasfa, 2007).

Thinking about an unknown future can have a significant impact on an individual's overall well-being, including mental, physical, psychological, and behavioral health. Anxiety surrounding one's professional future may lead to social isolation, excessive pessimism, and a lack of trust, which may even manifest as skepticism and mockery toward others' motivations. It can also create a perception that society is filled with untrustworthy individuals (Al-Hamdani, 2011).

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

Career future anxiety refers to a negative emotional, cognitive, and physiological state experienced by students, characterized by worry, stress, and uncertainty regarding their future employability, career decisions, and the transition from university to professional work. It often manifests as fear of not finding suitable employment, concern about meeting job market demands, and apprehension about fulfilling professional and social responsibilities (Atikah, Kurniawati, & Rifameutia, 2023; Abu-Hammor & Al-Safasfeh, 2023).

Overall, these definitions illustrate a progression from a general understanding of future anxiety to a specific, multidimensional understanding of career future anxiety. The literature consistently emphasizes that career future anxiety is a critical concern for university students, as it not only affects their psychological and behavioral health but also has broader societal implications. Therefore, synthesizing these insights, a working definition of career future anxiety should reflect its emotional, cognitive, physiological, and social dimensions, highlighting both personal and professional stakes.

Procedural definition. Career future anxiety refers to the unease, tension, and anticipation individuals feel about their future professional prospects, particularly regarding employment opportunities after completing their university education.

In this context, it is measured by the overall score obtained by university students in response to the items of the *Career Future Anxiety Scale* developed by Younis Ben Hussein (2017), which was used in the present study

3. Field Study Procedures:

3.1. Study Method:

The study utilized a descriptive approach, chosen for its suitability to the study's objectives.

3.2. Study Population and Sample:

The study population consisted of all third-year students enrolled in the Department of Social Sciences at Djilali Bounaama University in Khemis Miliana during the 2022–2023 academic year. These students specialized in Education Sciences: Guidance and Counseling, Sociology, and Philosophy.

The table below provides a breakdown:

Table 1. Distribution of Study Community Members

	Females	Males	Total
Guidance and Counseling	192	16	208
Sociology	166	66	232
Philosophy	33	4	37
Total	391	86	477

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

In the field of Educational Sciences, specifically Guidance and Counseling, students make up 43.60% of the study community. Sociology majors, on the other hand, account for 48.63% of the study community. Philosophy students represent a smaller proportion, at 7.75% of the study community. With regard to gender distribution, males constitute 18.02% of the study community, while females account for 81.97%.

To conduct the study effectively, a stratified random sample of 120 male and female students was selected from various specializations within the Department of Social Sciences. The sample was carefully chosen to reflect the proportional representation of each major within the total study community, as well as the gender distribution. The table below illustrates the distribution of the sample according to the variables of major and gender.

Table 2. Distribution of Study sample Members

	Females	Males	Total
Guidance and Counseling	48	4	52
Sociology	42	17	59
Philosophy	8	1	9
Total	98	22	120

The main study sample consisted of 120 male and female

students, representing approximately 25.15% of the total study population. The sample included 22 male students and 98 female students. In terms of specialization, 52 students were enrolled in Guidance and Counseling, 59 students in Sociology, and 9 students in Philosophy

3.3.The study tools and their psychometric characteristics:

The Future career anxiety Scale developed by Younis Ben Hussein (2017) was used, consisting of 35 items in the form of declarative statements.

The psychometric characteristics of the scale in the current study:

For the psychometric properties of the scale, a sample of 30 male and female students from the mentioned specialties was selected.

The validity:

We compared the mean scores of the survey sample individuals, representing 27% of the highest scores and 27% of the lowest scores on the scale, to test the scale's ability to discriminate between different levels of future professional anxiety among the sample individuals. The results were as follows:

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

Table 3. Differences between the mean scores of the two groups of the survey sample individuals on the Future Career future anxiety Scale.

	Lower Group		Uppern Group		t-value	Significance Level
	N=8		N=8			
	\bar{x}	Q	\bar{x}	Q		
future professional anxiety	85.50	3.66	124	7.21	-13.47	0.01

The data presented in Table 3 clearly show that the *t* values are statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level. This indicates that the measurement tool has the ability to effectively discriminate between the two groups being compared, which constitutes a strong indicator of its reliability.

The reliability: The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the Future Career future anxiety Scale was found to be 0.78, which suggests a high level of internal consistency.

3.4. Statistical Methods:

In order to obtain the results, various statistical methods were employed, including calculating the mean, standard deviation, conducting one-sample t-test, and independent samples t-tests. These analyses were performed using the SPSS

software, version 25, a widely used statistical package for social sciences.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The first hypothesis is presented, analyzed, and discussed as follows: University students demonstrate a high level of concern about their prospective careers.

The mean and standard deviation of the sample scores of university students in career future anxiety were calculated in order to evaluate the hypothesis. A one-sample *t*-test was employed to determine the significance of the difference between the observed mean and the expected mean. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 4. the difference between the hypothetical average and the mean of the sample individuals' scores in career future anxiety.

Mean	standard deviation	hypothetical mean	t-value for a one sample	Sig	degrees of freedom
108.35	10.55	105	1.42	0.00	119

The table clearly shows that the *t* value for the one-sample

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

test is statistically estimated at 1.42, at a significance level of 0.01. Moreover, the mean score of the sample participants in terms of career future anxiety is 108.35, which is higher than the estimated population mean of 105. This indicates that university students exhibit a significantly high level of concern regarding their future careers. Therefore, it can be concluded with confidence that the first hypothesis is supported.

This result makes a lot of sense, and it can be explained by the students' anxiety about their future, due to their fear of the unknown and the challenges they may face amid the social circumstances in which they are living.

When students enter university, they carry with them high hopes for their university degree, which they expect will guarantee them a respectable job, financial stability, independence, and a promising future. However, as their graduation approaches, they are confronted with the harsh reality of increasing unemployment rates among university graduates from various academic disciplines, including those with advanced degrees, such as Master's and Ph.D.

Many of them struggle to find employment or end up working in fields unrelated to their studies. This reality is further emphasized by the frequent protests shown on television screens, where university graduates demand more job opportunities.

The results of our study are consistent with a series of studies conducted in Algeria and several Arab countries, which have revealed that university students often experience anxiety

about their future careers; however, the severity of this anxiety varies.

For instance, a study conducted by Al-Safasfa (2017) found that graduate students at Mutah University (Jordan) experience a high level of future anxiety. Similarly, research by Al-Momani and Naeem (2013), Habib (2014) at the University of Basra (Iraq), Alwan (2016) at King Khalid University, and Abu Al-Eish (2017) at Hail University reached comparable conclusions.

On the other hand, Al-Shuail's study (2018) identified a moderate level of career future anxiety among students at Al-Baha University (Saudi Arabia), whereas Al-Mashaqba's research (2015) revealed a low level of future anxiety among students in the Northern Borders region (Saudi Arabia).

4.2. Presentation, analysis, discussion, and interpretation of the second hypothesis: Statistically significant differences were found in students' levels of career future anxiety according to gender (male vs. female).

To confirm the hypothesis and to determine the significance of the difference between the average scores of males and females in career future anxiety, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted. The results are presented in the following table:

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

Table 5. Significance of the Difference between Average Scores of Males and Females in professional Future Anxiety.

	Males		Females		t-value	Sig
	N=22		N=98			
	\bar{x}	Q	\bar{x}	Q		
future professional anxiety	108.45	11.15	108.26	10.06	0.08	0.93

By analyzing the table, it can be observed that the calculated t value for the two independent samples is 0.08, which is not statistically significant. This leads to the conclusion that there are no significant differences in the level of career future anxiety between males and females.

In other words, there is no statistically significant variation in the level of career future anxiety among students based on their gender. Therefore, the second hypothesis is not supported.

In today's open era, there is no statistically significant difference between males and females. Gender differences in education, employment, and the ability to hold various positions have largely disappeared. Women have made significant strides in all fields, including physically demanding jobs, many of which are now facilitated by machinery.

Contemporary times require women to actively participate alongside men in shouldering the burdens of life and the increasing expenses associated with modern living and ongoing development. This participation is essential to meet their needs and provide for their families.

The transition from extended families to nuclear families has also encouraged women to enter the workforce, as it has altered lifestyle dynamics. Algerian society, with its democratic culture, embraces women as active members, recognizing their contribution to societal development. Women have demonstrated their capabilities and undertaken projects that men sometimes find challenging, particularly those requiring patience and time.

According to a study conducted by Soufi Rania (2017) on the satisfaction with academic guidance and its impact on career future anxiety among psychology students, it was found that there were no significant differences in the level of career future anxiety based on gender.

The study attributed this to social and economic changes, as well as societal perceptions that have encouraged women to pursue careers alongside men. These findings are consistent with a study by Tajani Ben Taher (2010) on the sources of pressure and future anxiety among students at the University of Aghouat.

The results revealed that gender (male, female) did not play a significant role in future anxiety, which was explained by

Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

women's desire to establish themselves in different areas of life while balancing their roles as professionals and homemakers.

Work is necessary to achieve economic security and to make individuals feel productive and effective in society, rather than a burden on others. All these material and moral aspects render male and female students equal in terms of job opportunities.

Therefore, the concern associated with obtaining a profession in the future does not differ between males and females. Female students, upon reaching this stage of university education, also desire and aspire to obtain a profession that is compatible with their studies, interests, and inclinations, just like male students.

This result contradicts the findings of a study conducted by Ahmed Jabr (2012) on the major personality factors and their relationship to future anxiety among Palestinian university students in the Gaza Strip, which found statistically significant differences in future anxiety in favor of females.

The findings of the current study diverge from those of Al-Hashimi (2001), whose research on career-related anxiety and the level of career orientation based on gender and specialization revealed that males experience higher levels of future anxiety compared to females.

5. CONCLUSION

The future career is the foremost concern for university students, particularly those in their final years. After years of study, they prepare to enter the workforce. Constantly pondering their future profession can become a distressing preoccupation for university students, as they worry about what the future holds and the possibility of unemployment after graduation. Our study revealed a significant level of career future anxiety among graduating university students, which remains consistent regardless of the student's gender.

In light of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the issue:

- Offer psychological and social support to graduating students through counseling programs. Such programs can help alleviate their future worries, especially under the current circumstances. Universities can employ counselors or psychologists to provide guidance and support.
- Utilize media and the internet to promote awareness about mental health and strategies to cope with different forms of anxiety, particularly among university students. Hosting programs with experts in psychological counseling and religious guidance can be an effective way to disseminate information and provide guidance.

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Career Future Anxiety Among University Students Approaching Graduation

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