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## Studying the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure of some students in Iraqi universities (Field study)

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### Abstract

The study aimed to identify the causes of academic failure among university students from the point of view of Iraqi university students. The sample consisted of (319) male and female students. To achieve the objectives, the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach and the questionnaire as a tool for collecting data. She reached several results, the most important of which are: The most influential causes of academic failure are, in order: educational causes at a rate of (3.82) with a medium degree, then health and psychological causes at a rate of (3.55) with a medium degree, then social causes at a rate of (3.36) with a medium degree. It showed the existence of differences in the viewpoints of sample members attributed to gender differences, as the difference was in favor of males, and there is a difference in viewpoints among sample members attributed to the health status in favor of healthy people. **Keywords:** Low educational level, failure, university student, Iraqi universities.

**Keywords:** Failure, university student, Iraqi universities, field study, academic level

### Introduction

The university is one of the most important institutions that society relies on and depends on to develop and spread its culture and achieve its future aspirations, through educating students and providing them with various skills. The importance of the university in building youth is increasing, as through it, young people achieve their selves by possessing knowledge and science, contributing to achieving themselves, and developing their abilities to the maximum extent possible despite pressures <sup>[1]</sup>.

At this stage, the university student lives an age stage characterized by mental openness, intellectual freedom, and the formation of his personal and professional identity, and coincides with the emergence of many negative feelings such as conflicts, frustrations, fears, and anxiety related to achieving his psychological, professional, emotional, and sexual needs. He may develop some difficulties in adaptation and compatibility at the beginning of his enrollment in university, which negatively affects his academic progress, psychological and social compatibility, and this leads to the presence of one or more academic, social, or psychological problems among these students <sup>[2]</sup>.

Educational problems receive great and increasing attention from educational systems. And political, at both the local and international levels, alike, and the reason for this is the high level of awareness of the role of education and its impact on the future of peoples and individuals, and awareness has gradually become entrenched in education, which reflects an intellectual trend. It tends to consider education as an investment process in human capital <sup>[3]</sup>. The phenomenon of low academic level and failure is one of the most common phenomena in all environments and societies and affects society educationally and economically. However, the causes of this phenomenon vary from one person to another, and from one environment to another, and from here came the current study to show the causes of low academic level and failure among university students from the point of view of Iraqi university students.

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**Study Problem**

The decline in the academic level and failure is a major problem that must be solved. It is a multi-dimensional problem, sometimes a psychological and educational problem, and sometimes a social problem that psychologists are primarily concerned with, then teachers, social workers and parents. The issue of students failing, warning them or expelling them from the university is a waste of resources in university education, so studies and research must address mitigating this phenomenon and developing appropriate programs to avoid its occurrence<sup>[4]</sup>.

Therefore, it was necessary to uncover the reasons that may lead to students failing, through academic guidance meetings for struggling students at the university. Accordingly, the research problem can be defined in the following question:

**What are the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure among university students from the point of view of Iraqi university students?****The following questions emerge from the main question:**

1. What are the most important reasons affecting the decline in the academic level and failure among university students (educational, health, psychological and social) from the point of view of the students of the University of Iraq?
2. Is there a difference in the point of view of the sample members regarding the most important reasons affecting the decline in the academic level and failure among university students due to gender differences?
3. Is there a difference in the point of view of the sample members regarding the most important reasons affecting the decline in the academic level and failure among students due to differences in health status?

**Study Objectives****The study aimed to:**

1. Identify the most important reasons affecting the decline in the academic level and failure among university students (educational, health, psychological and social)?
2. Provide some suggestions and recommendations that may lead to solving the problem of the decline in the academic level and failure and raising university students to a better level.

**Importance of the study**

The importance of the research is as follows:

1. Addressing one of the important topics, which is the decline in the academic level and failure, which is a clear phenomenon in all universities, so it was necessary to stand on this phenomenon and know its causes.
2. This study is important; to make them aware of the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure and its impact on the student's academic future.
3. The results of the study may benefit those in charge of university affairs; to enable them to address any problems that arise, to raise the level of performance in the university.

**Theoretical Framework**

The phenomenon of academic failure is one of the most common and widespread phenomena in educational institutions of all kinds. Researchers have differed on the nature of the reasons related to this phenomenon, which are as follows:

**First-Subjective reasons**

These are those that go back to the individual himself, with his mental abilities and temperamental traits in addition to the

learner's readiness and the degrees of maturity of these readiness, including:

Intelligence, which is one of the most important mental factors affecting achievement, due to the existence of a strong correlation between them. Students with high intelligence often obtain high grades and tend to continue studying for a longer period, while some students with low intelligence tend to neglect classroom work and be absent from university<sup>[5]</sup>.

Achievement motivation is an internal state that moves the individual towards a certain behavior that encourages him to do it. The more the student's inclination towards the subject matter increases, his achievement in it increases, and the less his inclination towards it, his achievement in it decreases<sup>[6]</sup>.

Anxiety is an important topic in the field of psychology in general and mental health in particular, and is due to three elements: feeling helpless, feeling hostile, and feeling isolated. These factors arise from the following reasons: lack of emotional warmth in the family, feeling deprived, and the types of bad treatment he receives, such as control and disrespect, and the complexities and contradictions in the environment, and the types of deprivation and frustration it includes<sup>[7]</sup>.

The concept and self-esteem are considered among the factors influencing achievement: appreciation gives the student confidence in his work and diligence, and helps to succeed and pass the academic stage without difficulty, and the concept of self here leads to improving the student's behavior in addition to his academic performance<sup>[8]</sup>.

**Secondly, health and physical reasons**

Physical health has an impact on sound thinking, and weak structure and deteriorating health prevent his ability to pay attention, focus and follow up, so that the student becomes more susceptible to fatigue and exposure to various diseases that in turn disrupt his studies. Hearing, visual, mental, or motor disabilities are associated with frequent absences, and thus the inability to concentrate and perform the required tasks in a comfortable manner<sup>[9]</sup>.

**Third-Social and family reasons**

Family stability and solidarity are considered factors that contribute to the level of student achievement. The family represents the first basic unit responsible for raising and preparing the student, including educational preparation and academic achievement. The stability of the family, its social status, and its economic status have an impact on the academic achievement of children. Studies have shown that the fewer family problems, the higher the student's achievement, and that the phenomenon of academic delay is strongly linked to the nature of the family environment<sup>[10]</sup>.

The cultural level of the family, meaning the educational level of the parents, is due to its great impact on the student's achievement in terms of helping him review his lessons and monitor his various activities, and thus he receives sufficient care for his studies<sup>[11]</sup>.

**Fourth-Educational reasons represented by the overall circumstances that the student lives in, inside the university, including:**

**The professor:** He has a fundamental and direct role in the level of students and their achievement, either negatively or positively, through his ability to diversify teaching methods and the extent to which he takes into account individual differences between students, his general mood, personality type, and the extent of his ability to generalize achievement

tests, in a good and objective manner, and not to be lenient in distributing marks, in a way that is not commensurate with what the students deserve [12].

**The university social atmosphere:** Positive interaction between members of the university community contributes to raising their level of academic achievement, but if relations between members of the university community are disturbed, and incorrect methods spread, the student becomes unable to adapt to this community, which negatively affects his academic achievement [13]. The curricula are considered one of the indicators that researchers and experts rely on to measure the extent of the student's success and the educational system; Building educational curricula on scientific and methodological foundations, taking into account the characteristics of professors and teachers and their mental comprehension abilities, taking into account their psychological and social needs, and seeking to keep pace with the cultural, social, and economic changes surrounding the university, is sufficient to achieve suitable conditions for success [14].

**Method and Procedures**

**Study Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive analytical method to collect information from the study sample of female students at Hail University for the academic year 2024-2025, then analyze and interpret this information to reach results that clarify the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure among students at Iraqi universities.

**Study population and Sample**

The study community included all students at Iraqi universities, and the sample consisted of (400) male and female students from the original community. The questionnaire was distributed and the response was from 319 male and female students at a rate of 79.5%. The following tables show a description of the study sample according to its independent variables, which are: Gender and Health status.

**Table 1:** Distribution of study sample individuals according to gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	184	57.5%
Female	135	42.5%

The previous table indicates that the study sample is divided according to the gender variable into 57.5% males and 42.5% females. This indicates that the number of males in the study sample is the largest, followed by females.

**Table 2:** Distribution of study sample individuals according to health status

Health Status	Frequency	Percentage
Medically fit	188	58.8%
Medically unfit	131	41.2%

The previous table shows that the number of physically fit sample members was 188, representing 58.8%, while the lowest number in the sample was for those who were not physically fit, representing 41.2%.

**The researcher adopted the following five-point scale:**

1. I agree to a very large extent (5) degrees), and it represents the availability of the criterion to a very high degree, if the average estimates of the sample members are between (4.2-5).
2. I agree to a large extent (4) degrees), and it represents the availability of the criterion to a high degree, if the average estimates of the sample members are between (3.4-4.2).
3. To a medium extent (3) degrees). It represents the availability of the criterion to a medium degree, if the average estimates of the sample members are between (2.6-3.4).
4. To a small extent (2) degrees, and it represents the availability of the criterion to a low degree, if the average estimates of the sample members are between (1.8-2.6).
5. To a very small extent (1) degree). It represents the availability of the criterion to a very low degree, if the average estimates of the sample members are between (1-1.8).

**Statistical treatments**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used: calculation of questionnaire stability, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and use of (t-test) tests.

**Results and discussion**

First question: What are the most influential reasons for the decline in academic level and failure on university students, educational, health, psychological and social, from the point of view of students at the University of Iraq?

To answer this question, the researcher used arithmetic averages and standard deviations for each axes and questionnaire phrases, and Tables 3 and 4 illustrate this.

**Table 3:** Ranking of the causes according to their three axes, arranged in descending order

Axis	Mean	Standard deviation	Sum
Educational reasons	3.82	1.205	319
Health and psychological reasons	3.55	1.013	319
Social reasons	3.36	1.036	319

From Table 3, it is clear that the educational reasons obtained the highest arithmetic mean (3.82), which indicates that the educational reasons, from the students' point of view, are the most influential reasons for academic failure, while the health and psychological reasons came in second place with an arithmetic mean (3.55), followed by the social reasons with an arithmetic mean (3.36).

**Table 4:** Means and standard deviations for all questionnaire items

A. Educational reasons axis			
No.	Phrase	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Students' lack of response to the professor in the lecture	4.11	0.935
2	Weak guidance and counselling process in the college	4.11	1.127
3	Lack of diversity in teaching methods	4.09	1.01
4	Large number of required assignments	4.07	1.035
5	Students' absence from lectures	4.06	0.973
6	Not taking into account individual differences	3.97	1.212

7	Weak atmosphere of scientific competition among students	3.86	1.012
8	Length of the study courses	3.72	1.154
9	Difficulty of exams	3.72	1.33
10	Focusing only on the passing grade	3.67	1.133
11	Student's lack of interest in the major she joined	2.56	1.528
<b>B. Social causes axis</b>			
12	Weak family cohesion	4.06	1.037
13	Increased number of family members	3.76	1.226
14	Low level of family culture	3.68	1.128
15	Absence of role models and ideals within the family	3.63	1.315
16	Poor parental care for their children	3.61	1.385
17	Early marriage	3.61	1.303
18	Multiple responsibilities within the family	3.52	1.253
19	Late schooling	3.42	1.191
20	Poor choice of good friends	3.32	1.436
21	Violence within the family	3.20	1.449
22	Polygamy	3.17	1.537
<b>C. Health and psychological reasons</b>			
23	Weak physical structure	3.81	1.352
24	Weak senses such as hearing and sight	3.57	1.49
25	Confusion and shyness in front of others	3.52	1.425
26	Lack of adaptation with colleagues	3.52	1.204
27	Lack of desire for the subject matter	3.38	1.428
28	Lack of self-confidence	3.22	1.533
29	Fear and anxiety about the exam	3.22	1.425
30	Lack of motivation and desire to study	3.21	1.389
31	Neglecting the required duties	3.21	1.631
32	Feeling pain and deteriorating health	3.14	1.675
33	Lack of attention and distraction during the lecture	3.13	1.55

Table 4 shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations for all questionnaire phrases in the three-way dialogue: educational reasons, social reasons, health reasons and psychological reasons, arranged according to arithmetic means from highest to lowest.

We note that the phrase "students' lack of response to the professor in the lecture" came in first place: for obtaining the highest arithmetic mean (4.11), and the phrase "weakness of the guidance and counseling process in the college" shared the same degree with it, followed by the phrase "lack of diversity in teaching methods" with an average of (4.09), and this was within the axis of educational reasons.

The result can be interpreted as the fact that most of the reasons for academic failure are due to the student himself, his weak ability to concentrate, weak memory, and his lack of connection with the teacher as a result of bad relationships between them.

As for the social reasons, the phrase "family disintegration as a result of divorce" came in first place, with an arithmetic mean (4.06), followed by the phrase "increasing the number of family members" in second place with an arithmetic mean (3.76), and in last place came the phrase "polygamy" with an arithmetic mean (3.17). The result shows that the family has a

major role in the academic failure of their children, and their lack of interest in them academically, and family disintegration often leads to the loss of children.

As for the psychological and health reasons, the phrase "weak physical structure" came in first place, with an arithmetic mean (3.81), followed in second place by the phrase "weak senses such as hearing and sight" with an arithmetic mean (3.57), and in last place came the phrase "inattention and distraction during the lecture" with an arithmetic mean (3.13). We notice from what the result reached that the health and psychological reasons lead to each other, and cause the student's frequent absence and failure to perform the required tasks in a comfortable manner.

The second question: Are there differences in the point of view of the sample members about the most influential reasons for academic failure among university students, which are attributed to gender?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated to estimate the reasons for academic failure among university students according to the gender variable, and the (t) test was used to verify the significance of the differences between the means, the results of which appear in Table 5.

**Table 5:** T-test for the significance of the differences between the arithmetic means and standard deviation of the responses of the sample members' estimates of the reasons for the low educational level and failure according to the gender variable

Questionnaire Axis	Gender	Sum	Mean	St. dv	F	Sig
Educational Reasons	Female	183	3.19	1.253	318	0.020
	Male	136	3.49	1.253		
Health and Psychological Reasons	Female	183	3.42	1.108	318	0.400
	Male	136	3.65	1.184		
Social Reasons	Female	183	3.68	1.125	318	0.723
	Male	136	3.92	1.261		

We note from Table 5 that there is a difference in the viewpoints of the sample members regarding the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure, the most

influential of which is attributed to the gender variable, because the value of the moral significance for the educational factors is equal to (0.020). It is less than the level



of (0.05), which means that the specialization has an impact on the educational factors, and this difference was in favor of males with an arithmetic mean of (3.49), which is greater than the mean of females, which is equal to (3.19). The researcher explains this result by the fact that males are the largest percentage of students who fail academically, then females. We also note that there is no difference in the viewpoint of the sample members attributed to the gender variable regarding the social, health and psychological reasons, since the level of moral significance for them is equal to (0.400) and (0.723) respectively, which is greater than 0.05, which indicates that

the specialization variable has no moral effect on these factors.

**Third question:** Is there a difference in the viewpoint of the sample members regarding the most influential reasons for failure among university students attributed to the difference in health status?. To answer this question, arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated to estimate the reasons for the decline in the academic level and failure of university students, according to the social status variable. The (T) test was also used to verify the significance of the differences between the means. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6:** T-test for the significance of the differences between the arithmetic means and standard deviation of the responses of the sample members' estimates of the reasons for the low educational level and failure according to the health status variable

Questionnaire Axis	Health status	Sum	Mean	St. dv	F	Sig
Educational Reasons	Medically fit	188	3.51	1.215	318	0.000
	Medically unfit	131	3.13	1.089		
Health and Psychological Reasons	Medically fit	188	3.67	1.148	318	0.005
	Medically unfit	131	3.36	1.133		
Social Reasons	Medically fit	188	3.92	1.301	318	0.322
	Medically unfit	131	3.66	1.0149		

We note from Table 6 that there is a difference in viewpoints among the sample members attributed to the health status, because the moral values of the educational reasons and the health and psychological reasons are equal to (.000) and (.005) respectively, which is less than the moral value (0.05). This difference was in favor of the healthy with the largest arithmetic mean (3.51) and (3.67) respectively, and the researcher explains this result; that physical health affects sound thinking, while weak structure and deteriorating health prevent his ability to pay attention, focus and follow up, so that the student becomes more susceptible to fatigue and exposure to various diseases that in turn disrupt his studies.

**Recommendations**

The study revealed a positive relationship between social and educational reasons among Iraqi university students. Accordingly, the study recommends the following:

1. The need to raise awareness among families about the importance of education, urge them to continue their education, and encourage their children to do so.
2. The university should hold meetings and seminars, and invite mothers to attend them, as they play a major and effective role in raising awareness about the importance of continuing education.
3. Find innovative mechanisms to communicate with parents to follow up on their children's academic performance.
4. Improve methods of reinforcement and rewards for high achievement, whether from the university or the family, and honor parents.
5. The need to focus on activities, whether in-class or out-of-class, to highlight students' abilities, increase their self-confidence, and support their academic level for the better.
6. Positive interaction among members of the university community by strengthening the relationship between faculty members, students, and administration, and holding periodic meetings with them to learn about their problems and solve them at the appropriate time.
7. Holding training courses for faculty members on how to take into account individual differences among students,

whether using modern teaching methods or using various evaluation methods.

The university plays a pivotal role in shaping students' future by equipping them with essential skills and knowledge. However, academic decline and failure among students are pressing issues that need addressing. This study identified key factors contributing to these problems, including educational, psychological, social, and health-related causes. To mitigate these issues, the study recommends increased parental involvement, enhanced academic support, and improved teaching methods. Additionally, fostering a positive university environment and addressing individual student needs can promote better academic performance and reduce failure rates among students.

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