

National Belonging and Its Relationship with Psychological Security Among University Students

FENK AMJAD HASAN¹

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Personality Psychology, Research Center, Salahaddin University / Erbil, Iraq.
Email: fenk.hasan1@su.edu.krd, Orcid: 0009-0000-4965-1419

* Corresponding Author: FENK AMJAD HASAN, fenk.hasan1@su.edu.krd

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aimed to identify the levels of the two variables—psychological security and national belonging—among university students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. **Method:** The descriptive method was adopted as it was suitable for the objectives of the study. **Sample:** The study was applied to a sample of (389) male and female students selected through the convenient sampling method from two universities—one public and one private—in the city of Erbil. **Instruments:** Two scales were used: Al-Qarni's (2018) Scale, consisting of (16) items, to measure national belonging. A Psychological Security Scale consisting of (25) items, prepared according to Maslow's Theory of Needs (1972). **Results:** The findings showed that the participants experienced high levels of psychological security and national belonging. The results also showed a positive relationship between national affiliation and psychological safety, meaning that as a person's level of psychological safety increases, so does the level of national affiliation. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences in the two variables by gender, while significant differences emerged depending on the type of university (public or private). **Recommendations and Suggestions:** The study recommended promoting national awareness of the need to meet and develop these needs among Kurdish individuals by focusing on values established by family, school and other social institutions. The role of visual media and social media platforms was also emphasized in this. Furthermore, the study suggested further research on the variables of national belonging in relation to other psychological variables.

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1. Introduction

The term "belonging" has recently gained widespread attention across various sections of society. This interest stems from the insistent need of societies, and Kurdish society in particular—both as individuals and groups, and as an authority—for a social behavior that embodies the quality

of national belonging. Undoubtedly, when studying the evolutionary history of advanced human societies, we observe high levels of belonging among their members.

Generally, the term "belonging" refers to a person's feeling of affiliation with a specific group or category. Belonging begins as a need and a feeling, then evolves into a principle, a value, and a behavior that prepares the individual and equips them with comprehensive goals that transcend the boundaries of intellectual selfishness and self-centeredness. As for belonging to the homeland, it refers to a positive feeling and the formation of a positive relationship that connects us to our homeland, despite all the negatives we encounter in our daily lives. This state and feeling of belonging to the homeland and forming positive relationships with it is also significant. The homeland is the second womb that carries us after the mother's womb. Hence, in this research we try to identify the components of this trait and the negative and positive factors affecting its formation. As an example, the feeling of psychological loneliness was chosen as a variable affecting the formation of the trait, and this is what the current study tries to answer.

Importance of the Research:

Patriotism is an essential human trait and an issue that has garnered global attention, particularly in recent years. This is due to society's need for this social characteristic to be present, ingrained, and prominent among its members in general, and its youth in particular, in order to propel the nation towards progress and development.

National identity is entrenched in the psychological and intellectual development of the individual from birth. The homeland, initially, is the mother, father, and siblings; the land where we play; the history we learn in schools; and the customs and traditions we are raised with.

It is well known that the most dangerous thing that societies face is the loss of their individuals' effectiveness and activity, and the spread of ideas of laziness and lethargy and the justification of negative behaviors that control the course of their lives, which leads to the death of every idea that tries to break out of this intellectual and social stagnation in its infancy, and they are seized by the foolish imitation of other societal experiences. In these circumstances, society loses the ability to stimulate internal energies and the latent life within it. This was demonstrated in Hassan's 2009 study, which was conducted on groups of Kurdish society, where one of the most prominent results of the study was a decrease in the level of the researcher's trait or pattern (which included research into everything new and moving away from the ordinary and familiar) in the Kurdish personality pattern in the society studied at that time (Hassan, 2009, P. 2-5). Here, society turns into a marginal entity in

everything, and from here the need for memories and historical glories emerges to unravel the knots of the present that prevent creative interaction with the issues of the era.

Belonging is one of the basic psychological and social needs of humans, as Maslow explained in his famous hierarchy of needs, as shown in Figure.(1)

The importance of this need is highlighted during youth, a stage in which the features of human personality are formed and future directions are determined. It is one of the fundamental psychological needs without which the psyche cannot be balanced, nor can a person find happiness. Just as a person psychologically needs security, love, appreciation, and success, they also need belonging because it fulfills these needs. Belonging stems from interaction with one's homeland, land, identity, values, and beliefs, and is also manifested in interaction and cooperation with fellow citizens through mutual giving and receiving. A person, who is aware of himself/herself and others, has a genuine sense of belonging, and his/her relationship with his/her homeland is positive and effective. This can only be achieved through the serious commitment of every citizen to fulfill their role, bear their responsibility, and strive with all their capabilities to serve and elevate their country. Hence, the importance of researching the level of belonging and its relationship to an important variable: psychological security.

Regarding the second variable (psychological security), Its importance lies in the fact that it is one of the pillars of mental health and psychological and social adjustment. Psychological security is an important factor in a person's sense of security and inner stability, which in turn affects their behavior and relationships with others. It also helps to deal with the psychological pressures of life and to cope and adapt to stressful situations without feeling anxious or threatened. The importance of psychological safety is particularly evident in educational and business environments, where there is a direct link between it and motivation for achievement, better performance and a deeper sense of belonging to the institution and society. This was demonstrated in Al-Sawaf's 2018 study, which found a link between psychological safety and achievement motivation (Al-Sawaf, 2018, p. 114). Furthermore, UNICEF (2024) emphasizes the importance of psychological safety as a fundamental component of human development. In order to achieve this security, children's needs for security, emotional support and care must be met which promotes their mental and physical development. The organization also highlighted the need for governments and local communities to invest in psychosocial support programs for children, especially during critical developmental periods such as childhood and adolescence (Shamila, 2025, p. 41).

Research Problem:

Despite the central role of national affiliation in ensuring social stability and cohesion, observable indicators in Kurdish society suggest a gradual decline in some of its manifestations among university youth. This decline may be due to political fragmentation, economic inequalities and perceived social injustice. At the same time, psychological safety represents one of the most basic human needs and plays an important role in shaping personal identity and social behaviour. However, empirical studies examining the relationship between psychological safety and national belonging among Kurdish university students are limited. This difference highlights the need to examine how psychological safety contributes to strengthening or weakening national belonging within this important demographic group.

Kurdish society is a complex society consisting of many social classes, sects and religions, a complex interplay of historical, political and social factors. This complexity gives rise to deep divisions among its members due to religious, political and ethnic differences, and creates challenges for individuals to develop a sense of belonging to their homeland.

National affiliation is a fundamental and important factor for the stability and development of society; Therefore, it is extremely important to address this issue. In our current society, there are many factors that contribute to weakening national belonging. These include individuals who feel marginalized and unrepresented, as well as corruption and poor governance. High levels of corruption and lack of social justice lead to a loss of trust in state institutions.

Furthermore, ongoing conflicts and wars can weaken national belonging because of the suffering, and economic differences between different sectors of society also contribute to weakening it. One of the most important factors is the existence of several Kurdish political parties with different agendas, which have fragmented national loyalties, making party or regional affiliation stronger than national identity.

On the other hand, the study highlights the overall importance of meeting basic human needs, primarily the need for psychological safety. It undoubtedly affects a person's mental state from childhood through adolescence and young adulthood. It is important to understand how psychological safety affects health and how it can be improved to improve quality of life. This study attempts to identify the level of psychological safety and the relationship between psychological safety and national belonging.

The weakness of national belonging can be a problem on many levels. Patriotism fosters a sense of responsibility towards country, nation and society and encourages participation in development and protection. Its weakness leads to the prioritization of individual interests over the common good and opens up to negative external influences.

Based on the researcher's observations and experiences, this human need, and subsequently personal characteristics and social behavior, indicates a decline in the level of belonging among members of society, as evidenced by their behavior towards society and the environment. As a hypothesis, we seek to investigate the causes of this decline and its relationship to other psychological variables, such as psychological security.

Research Objectives:

1. To measure the level of national belonging among university students.
2. To measure the level of psychological security among university students.
3. To examine the statistical relationship between national belonging and psychological security.
4. To identify differences in national belonging and psychological security according to gender and type of university (public vs. private).

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant positive relationship between national belonging and psychological security among university students.
2. There are statistically significant differences in national belonging according to the type of university.
3. There are no statistically significant differences in psychological security according to gender.
4. Psychological security significantly predicts the level of national belonging among university students.

Research scope:

Students of Salahaddin University-Erbil (governmental university) and Cihan University (non-governmental university) for the academic year 2024-2025.

Defining the terms:

The concept of belonging in language: The meaning of the word (نما nama) in the language means elevation, and among the meanings of belonging is affiliation and belonging to it: he/she affiliated

himself/herself to it, and it is said: So-and-so belonged to so-and-so if he/she was elevated to it in lineage, and every elevation is belonging, and the word (Belongingness) in English lexicons indicates the meaning of belonging, and it originally goes back to the word (Belong) which means the verb to belong, or to be closely related and enjoy the basic social relationships that allow integration into the group (Al-Abd Al-Qadir, 2018, P. 1561).

First: Belonging

Maslow's Definition (1954):

In his book in 1954, **Motivation and Personality**, Maslow defined belonging as the third need in his hierarchy of needs, alongside the need for love and belonging, which falls under the category of social needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, belonging includes the desire to establish emotional and affectionate relationships with others, especially with important groups in an individual's life.

An individual can fulfill this need by forming friendly relationships with those around him/her at work and by making new friends. A work environment that fails to satisfy these needs leads to a disruption in the psychological balance of employees, resulting in workplace problems that lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and job turnover (Muwaffaq, 2020, P. 207-211).

Nasser's definition:(1993)

Loyalty to one's homeland is embodied in sacrifice for the people and the land, a sacrifice stemming from a feeling of love for that homeland and its people (Nasser, 1993, P. 23).

Ali's definition:(1998)

Belonging is the citizen's inner feeling that they are part of that homeland, so that love, attachment, and loyalty to it are deeply rooted in his/her heart. They embrace its values, embody its customs, appreciate its institutions, abide by its laws, preserve its resources and wealth, engage with its events and problems, and are prepared to develop and advance it (Al-Qarni, 2018, P. 80).

Khudhur's definition:(2000)

Belonging is a kind of unity between the individual and the group, with the availability of a sense of security, satisfaction, pride, and honor in it. This is an attitude that the individual feels through his/her

integration into a group and his unity with it, and that he/she has become an accepted part of it, and has his/her distinguished status and secure position in it (Khudhur, Latifa Ibrahim, 2000, P. 14).

Abu Al-Nasr's 2022 definition:

Belonging is the positive attitude through which an individual feels pride and honor towards something important to him/her, and their behavioral commitment to a set of personal values and standards such as rights and duties, as well as his/her commitment to a set of general values and standards such as respecting the law, preserving public property, and social interaction with others (social relations) (Abu Al-Nasr, 2022, P. 4).

Nationalism: The 1996 Arabic Encyclopedia defines nationalism as: an individual's love and loyalty to his/her homeland, which includes belonging to the land, people, customs, and traditions, pride in history, and dedication to serving the nation (Al-Qarni, 2018, P. 80). **National belonging:** This is an individual's feeling of positive affinity towards his/her family, community, and homeland, and his/her sense of being an integral part of it. This leads to his/her adherence to the prevailing values and laws of their country, pride in their social, religious, and cultural identity, and readiness to defend and sacrifice for it against any potential threat (Nader & Hussein, 2018, P. 356).

Theoretical definition of national belonging: It is an individual's need to belong to a specific group and participate in its rights and duties. Its characteristics include preserving the language and feeling responsible towards it, maintaining public property, and protecting and preserving the environment. In return, individuals receive their rights to social justice, equal opportunities, and benefit from national resources.

Operational definition of national belonging: This is the overall score obtained by the sample individuals on a national belonging scale.

Second: Psychological Security

Maslow's Definition (1972):

An individual's feeling of acceptance, belonging, and familiarity, a scarcity of feelings of threat, danger, and anxiety, and a perception that humanity is friendly and good. They feel trusting towards

others, are tolerant and empathetic, optimistic, happy, emotionally stable, inclined towards extroversion, self-accepting, responsive to reality, and relatively free from neurotic disorders (Maslow, 1972, P. 36).

Abu Amra's Definition (2012):

It is a psychological state of feeling comfortable, calm, reassured, and accepted by one's family and society, as well as feeling protected from exposure to social, economic, and psychological dangers (Abu Amra, 2012, P. 166).

Mustaf's Definition (2018):

Security needs: These are the needs for peace, reassurance, protection, and freedom from fear and anxiety (Mustaf, 2018, P. 178).

The theoretical definition of psychological security: It is the feeling of reassurance and the absence of fear and threat from the past, present, and future. It is among the basic psychological needs for mental health.

The operational definition of psychological security: It is the overall score an individual obtains on a psychological security scale.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Belonging is a pivotal concept that defines the nature of the relationship between the individual and the group in every time and place. It explains the individual's need to belong to others, and the need of others for the individual's growth and continuity. The individual develops his/her abilities through belonging to a group, starting with the family and play groups, then other small groups, larger groups, and finally the wider society. These groups of belonging are the primary groups to which the individual belongs, and they shape the foundations of their personality, which bears the characteristics of the group, such as family, society, nationality, and homeland.

The positive effects of belonging and the gains that genuine belonging brings to the individual include: intellectually, recognizing the homeland's favor and being loyal to it; increasing individuals' motivation to learn and perform in service to the homeland and maintain its security through words and deeds; and fostering dialogue and discussion while rejecting violence. Genuine belonging is achieved through dialogue, calm discussion, and objective presentation, which resolves disputes and leads to respect and sacrifice. Violence, on the other hand, neither establishes rights nor solves problems. Twins distinguishes between two types of belonging: organic belonging and cognitive

belonging. Organic belonging is to the family or clan, and it is an involuntary, intimate, emotional belonging that is represented by emotional participation, and the individual is attached to it in good times and bad. As for cognitive belonging, it represents a pattern of voluntary submission, such as the individual's belonging to a political party or a cultural group (Muftin, 2010, P. 54).

Hijazi (2005) argues that individuals constantly strive for belonging and connection with others to alleviate the tensions they experience when isolated from the group. This is one of the ways individuals feel a sense of unity and acceptance within the community. Therefore, belonging provides individuals with psychological satisfaction, a feeling of security, tranquility, and self-esteem. Society satisfies an individual's sense of security through their sense of belonging, and individuals strive to maintain their social connections. In the absence of belonging, individuals experience alienation, instability, financial anxiety, and a lack of a stable identity (Hijazi, 2005, P. 122).

The term "national belonging" is commonly used at the local, regional, and international levels. Given the diversity of cultures and social differences among peoples, indicators and evidence of national belonging vary depending on the cultural environments from which the criteria for national belonging emerge. Despite this diversity, there is a minimum set of standards that are often shared across most cultures and societies. The term belonging is a socio-psychological term that has been addressed by many early scholars. It is a fundamental component of the individual's psychological needs according to Maslow's classification of needs. Abraham Maslow presented a model that classifies human needs according to a hierarchical system that begins with physiological needs at the base of the pyramid and includes psychological needs in its upper part, including the need for belonging, the need for security and reassurance, the need for love and belonging, the need for appreciation and respect, and the need for self-actualization (Al-Qarni, 2018, P. 74-75). Figure 1 illustrates Maslow's pyramid of needs.

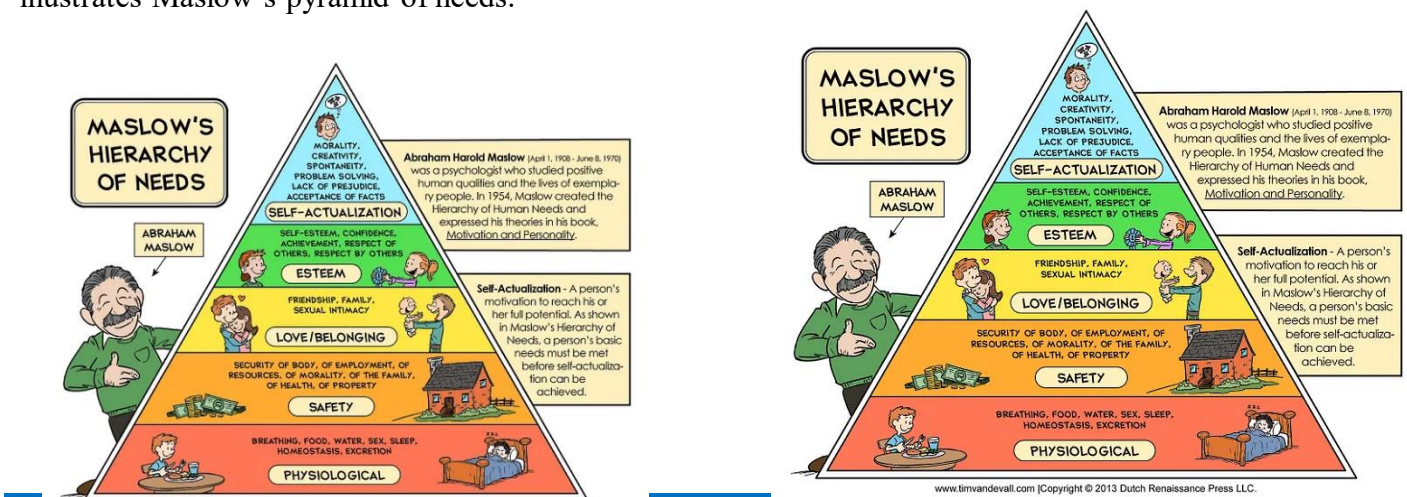


Figure (1) illustrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs

<https://share.google/yd53Xwj00SEP6Ryyu>

Belonging is considered one of the psychosocial needs that includes love and all forms of belonging. Individuals feel the need to join a group and experience love and intimacy, such as belonging to family, community, and country.

Belonging is a fundamental need for social and psychological well-being. This is what we strongly observe in our Kurdish society, where there is dependency and reliance on others in their joys and sorrows, in their strength and weakness. This reflects the cohesion and family unity stemming from the prevailing customs, traditions, and religious values that influence the formation of personal characteristics and, consequently, social behavior. The groups of belonging are the primary groups to which the individual belongs, and through which the characteristics and components of his/her personality are formed. The first human personality to which the individual belongs, and which plays a vital role in the subsequent life of the human being, is the personality of the mother with all the characteristics and qualities she carries. This is in addition to the characteristics and traits transmitted to the human being through the genes (of the mother and father). After birth, the human being begins to acquire the characteristics and patterns of his/her personality from them. It is known, according to psychological theories, that the human personality is formed simultaneously between heredity and environment, with varying degrees and patterns for each. More precisely, the physiological human needs that the human being is born with, which are common between humans and lower animals, and the human needs acquired according to the environment in which the individuals lives, are the basis for the formation of his/her personality.

Belonging to the family is the foundation and starting point for building a sense of belonging, especially to the mother, who is considered the primary source for fulfilling this need in the child. The feeling of belonging to the mother is the first building block for the other types of belonging that the individual experiences later in life.

Many theorists have focused on the concept of the feeling of affiliation, such as Murray and Fromm, among others. Fromm identified five basic needs for the individual: the need for belonging, transcendence, origins, a guiding framework, and identity. Alderfer's theory is a modified version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, encompassing three basic needs: existence and availability needs, belonging needs, and growth needs. The first category, existence needs, are Maslow defined as

biological needs and the need for safety. The second category, belonging needs, includes the individual's desire and interest in having close relationships and connections with others in their community. This category corresponds to what Maslow considered needs for love and esteem. The third category focuses on growth needs, related to the desire for self-development, which Maslow defined as the need for self-actualization (Al-Qarni, 2018, P. 79).

Psychoanalytic theory:

Freud, the founder of psychoanalytic theory, offered an explanation of belonging based on the following three assumptions:

- 1- Belonging behavior depends on early parental relationship patterns, especially with the mother.
- 2- Early feeding methods influence personality development, including the need for belonging.
- 3- Belonging behavior is a type of oral development resulting from prolonged breastfeeding (Al-Harithi & Abdel-Fadil, 2019, P. 7).

According to this theory, the mother's physical and emotional presence in a child's life is a crucial factor in the formation and shaping of the child's overall personality. This includes the traits that develop as a result of the satisfaction or lack thereof of basic physiological and psychosocial needs. Furthermore, the methods and approaches of the parents, particularly the mother, in fulfilling these needs play a role in the formation of the child's personality. Furthermore, the presence or absence of a mother in a child's life (or the presence of a foster mother) also plays a role in developing a sense of belonging. Belonging grows through a feeling of acceptance and unconditional love. A mother teaches a child to belong first to the family, then to the school, community, and nation. This is done in various ways, including telling stories related to the homeland, nationality, customs, and family roots, thus instilling in the child a sense of identity and belonging. A person is like a tree, composed of roots, branches, leaves, and fruit. The mother is the root that provides us with psychological, emotional, and spiritual nourishment. If she is strong and resilient, the individual grows, flourishes, and bears fruit.

Maslow's theory:

Abraham Maslow confirmed in his hierarchy of drives that the individual's need for esteem and self-actualization represents the highest of human needs, and it came at the top of the pyramid and will not

be achieved except after the individual achieves his/her basic needs represented in (physiological and psychological security) which occupied the base of the pyramid and Maslow called them the lower needs, then the need for love and belonging comes in the middle of the pyramid (same previous source, P. 9).

Theories of Psychological Security:

First: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Maslow places psychological security second only to physiological needs in his hierarchy of basic needs. He asserts that humans generally need a sense of security and stability before they can achieve growth in higher-order aspects of their personality, such as self-esteem, self-actualization, and a sense of belonging.

Second: Attachment Theory:

This theory posits that a child's relationship with his/her caregivers (such as parents) is the foundation of his/her sense of psychological security. A secure attachment relationship contributes to the child's psychological and social development.

Third: Psychoanalytic Theory:

Freud (1977) believed that psychological security is linked to basic needs in childhood, such as love and affection, and that any disruption in these needs leads to anxiety and personality disturbances later in life. Freud also believed that psychological security is formed in the early years through the satisfaction of psychological and physical needs.

Fourth: Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (Trust vs. Distrust):

Children rely on their caregivers to build trust. Erikson emphasizes that psychological security is achieved in the early stages of life, which depend on trust and stable, loving care that helps establish a sense of security in the child (Shamila, 2025, P 42-46).

The feeling of psychological security that is, the child's sense of comfort, reassurance, and protection is largely fostered by the mother from a very young age. This is achieved through affection, tenderness, emotional stability, positive interaction, support, encouragement, and the absence of threats and excessive punishment. A mother's embrace serves as a psychological refuge for the child; her words, tone of voice, and smile instill inner peace, which is the foundation of psychological security and the basis for a sense of belonging.

Previous Studies:

First: Marginson's 2012 Study:

This study, titled "The Level of Psychological Security Among University Students," aimed to identify differences in psychological security among university students based on gender, nationality, and field of study. The study sample consisted of 237 male and female students from various countries studying at Australian universities. The Psychological Security Scale was used, along with statistical methods including the independent samples t-test and percentages using the SPSS statistical package. The results showed no differences in psychological security based on gender or nationality, while differences were found favoring students in applied colleges (Marginson, 2012, P. 70).

Second: Asaliya and Abu Sakhila's 2016 Study:

This study was titled "Extremism and its Relationship to Weak Belonging Among University Students in the Gaza Governorates." This study aimed to identify the prevalence of both extremism and weak sense of belonging among university students in the Gaza Strip, as well as to identify differences between extremism and weak sense of belonging according to the variables of gender, academic level, place of residence, and political affiliation. The study was conducted on a stratified random sample of 180 male and female students from Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. Using the Extremism Scale and the Weakness of Belonging Scale, the study concluded that university students exhibited a moderate level of extremism (social extremism, followed by familial extremism, and finally political and religious extremism). The results also indicated that the sample exhibited weak sense of belonging, with familial belonging ranking first, followed by weak political belonging, then national belonging, and finally social belonging. A significant relationship was found between high levels of extremism and weak sense of belonging (Asaliya & Abu Sakhila, 2016, P. 1).

Abu Al-Maati & Ahmed, 2018 study:

This study entitled: "Level of National Belonging and Life Satisfaction Among University Students (A Cross-Cultural and Comparative Study)"

This study aimed to identify the level of national belonging and life satisfaction among university students, the differences between these two variables according to nationality and gender, the relationship between them, and the extent to which national belonging predicts life satisfaction. The study was conducted on a sample of 666 male and female university students in Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia (Al-Sarhan, M. F. (2025)). The results showed differences in national belonging and life satisfaction according to nationality across all dimensions, favoring the Saudi sample. No differences

were found in national belonging according to gender, while differences in life satisfaction were found, favoring males. The level of national belonging among the three samples ranged from average to above average, and life satisfaction was above average in all three groups. The study found a relationship between national belonging and life satisfaction, and that national belonging predicts life satisfaction with a percentage ranging from 5% to 33%, depending on nationality. Based on these findings, a set of recommendations and suggestions was presented (Abu Al-Maati & Ahmed, 2018, p. 1).

Nmeilat and Suhail's 2019 study:

This study, titled "Psychological Security and its Relationship to National Belonging among Students of Al-Quds Open University," aimed to identify the relationship between psychological security and national belonging among students at Al-Quds Open University. It also aimed to identify differences in psychological security and national belonging according to variables such as gender, academic specialization, and place of residence (Abouyounes, M. W. (2025). The descriptive-analytical method was used, and data were collected using two instruments: a psychological security measure and a social belonging measure. The sample consisted of 360 male and female students. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between psychological security and national belonging. The results also showed no statistically significant differences according to the variables of gender, place of residence, and academic specialization (Nmeilat and Suhail, 2019, p. 1).

Al-Zahrani's 2022 study:

This study, titled "Perceived National Belonging and its Relationship to Psychological Security among a Sample of University Students in Jeddah." This study aimed to identify the level of both perceived national belonging and psychological security among a sample of university students in Jeddah, as well as to explore the relationship between them. The study sample consisted of 300 students (150 males and 150 females) aged between 20 and 26 years. The Perceived National Belonging Scale and the Psychological Security Scale were used. The results showed an average level of both perceived national belonging and psychological security, and a significant correlation between perceived national belonging and psychological security. No significant differences were found between the scores of male and female students on the two scales. Among the study's recommendations are achieving psychological security in society and developing the role of the family in instilling belonging, loyalty, and citizenship (Al-Zahrani, 2022, p. 1).

Secondly: Ibrahim and Mustafa's 2023 study, titled "The Level of National and Ethnic Belonging among Kurdish Youth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and its Relationship to Some Variables: Youth

in the Aqrah District." As an example, this study aimed to measure the level of national and ethnic belonging among Kurdish youth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The sample consisted of 350 young people, and a scale developed by the researchers was used to measure the level of national belonging. The study concluded that the sample possessed a very high level of national and ethnic belonging, and that all economic, social, and cultural characteristics of the sample did not affect the level of national belonging. However, there were statistically significant differences in the level of national belonging according to family income. The high percentage of ethnic belonging compared to national belonging reflects the absence of an independent entity and a unified, liberated homeland for the Kurdish people. One of the study's recommendations is to encourage researchers to conduct studies on the problems, desires, and inclinations of Kurdish youth in the age of technology and globalization (Ibrahim and Mustafa, 2023, p. 1883).

Al-Khalif's 2024 study:

Entitled "The Role of Educational Institutions in Promoting National Belonging Values: A Social Work Perspective," the study aimed to identify the role of educational institutions in promoting national belonging values from a social work perspective. It employed a descriptive-analytical approach and included a sample of 103 female students from Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. The study concluded that educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting social values such as social solidarity, cooperation, tolerance, respect for diversity, and social responsibility. It also highlighted the negative impact of media content that casts doubt on national identity on the sample's sense of belonging. The results confirmed the feasibility of implementing a proposed framework for the role of social workers in promoting national belonging values through collaboration with school staff, thereby strengthening belonging values among students (Al-Khalif, 2024, p. 1).

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive-analytical study that relies on collecting data related to the research variables and then interpreting it to draw conclusions. The descriptive social survey method with a sample was employed (a systematic attempt to obtain information and data from the research population and the sample drawn from it using scales designed for this purpose).

First: Research Population

The current research population includes students of Salahaddin University-Erbil, a public university, with a student body of 25,081, and students of Cihan University, a private university, with a student body of 6,100 for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Second: Research Sample

The study sample consisted of 389 male and female students selected using simple random sampling to more accurately represent the original population. The selection criteria were considered in relation to the nature and objectives of the research, as the sample represents university students who are expected to be affected by the study variables related to psychological security and national belonging. Participation from Cihan University, a private university, was voluntary. Salahaddin University-Erbil, a public university, comprised participants from all colleges and departments. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 30 years, with males making up 31% and females 68%. The majority of participants were in the 21-23 age group, representing 43%. Regarding the type of university, 86% of the participants were from public universities, while 13.6% were from non-public universities. Table (1) shows the distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Members

Variable	Alternatives	Repetitions	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	122	%31.40
	Female	267	%68.60
Age	18-20	162	%41.60
	21-23	170	%43.70
	24-26	34	%8.70
	27-29	12	%3.10
	30+	11	%2.80
University type	Government	336	%86.40
	Non-Government	53	%13.60
College type	Scientific	292	%75.10
	Humanities	97	%24.90
Family economic status	Very bad	5	%1.30
	Bad	24	%6.20
	Average	223	%57
	Good	117	%30
	Very good	20	%5

Have you previously participated in any national or volunteer ?activities	Yes	83	%21.30
	No	306	%78.70

Third: Research Tools

National Affiliation Scale:

To achieve the research objectives of measuring the level of national affiliation among the sample members, the researcher used the scale developed by Al-Qarni (2018). The researcher selected (16) items, and face validity was established by presenting it to experts in the field. Discriminant validity was also established for the scale items (Table 2).

Psychological Security Scale

The researcher reviewed several theoretical frameworks, literature, and studies related to the research topic. She adopted Maslow's 1972 definition of psychological security and relied on his theory, which formed the basis for developing the scale items. The initial version of the scale consisted of 25 items, each with five alternatives (always applies, often applies, sometimes applies, rarely applies, never applies). These alternatives were assigned weights of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Validity and reliability were established through face validity, and discriminant validity was also used for the scale items (Table 2). Reliability was further assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Fourth: Statistical Methods Used: The SPSS (v29) statistical package was used.

Scale Validity:

The validity of both scales was established by presenting them to a group of experts in the field. The percentage of agreement with the items reached 95% after incorporating the suggested modifications*. The discriminant validity coefficient for the items was also calculated for the two axes of psychological security and national belonging, as shown in Table 2.

Table No. 2

The scale was accurate

Discriminatory truth of the first axis

Lower and upper groups	arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Test value t	The statistical value of the test
Lower Groups %27	3.329	0.328	- 40.122	<.001

Discriminatory validity of the second axis

Lower and upper groups	arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Test value t	The statistical value of the test
Lower Groups %27	2.716	0.311	- 34.018	<.001
upper Groups %27	4.067	0.263		

Discriminatory truth of the two axes

Lower and upper groups	arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Test value t	The statistical value of the test
Lower Groups %27	3.099	0.23	- 33.446	<.001

The t-test results indicate statistically significant discriminant validity, as the significance value is less than 0.05 for the Psychological Security Scale. This means the items are discriminant in measuring what they are designed to measure, and the scale is valid. Similarly, the t-value for the National Affiliation Scale is less than 0.001, indicating that each dimension differs from the other in measuring its respective variable.

Scale Reliability:

The reliability of the Psychological Security and National Affiliation Scales was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as shown in Table 3.

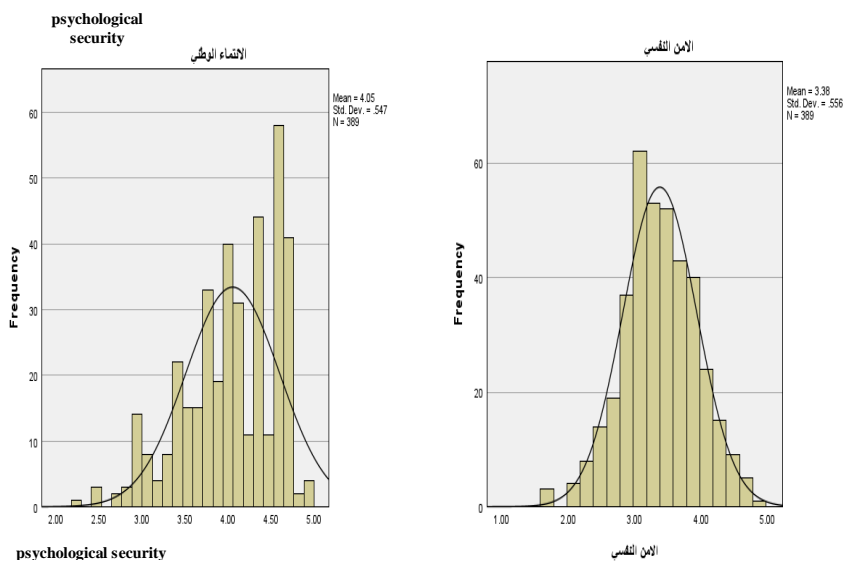
Table No. 3

Themes	Number of phrases	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Axis 1 (Psychological Security)	25	0.913
Axis 2 (National Belonging)	17	0.836
Total	42	0.879

The table shows that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the most commonly used indicator for measuring internal consistency, indicates the degree to which the items on the scale are related to each other and measure the same dimension (the same axis). The reliability coefficient for the psychological security scale was 0.91, and for the national belonging scale, it was 0.84. The overall reliability coefficient for both scales was approximately 0.88, indicating a high degree of reliability for the instrument.

Final application of the scale: The final application of both scales was conducted electronically. Links to the scales were sent to student groups at Salahaddin University-Erbil (a public university) and Cihan University (a private university). With the assistance of the teaching staff and the academic departments, the data was distributed as shown in Table 1. Data were collected online using the Kobotoolbox platform, a United Nations-affiliated platform. After data collection, the required data were transferred and processed using SPSS version 29. Normal distribution of the research data and its representation of the study population:

Table No. (4) and the two graphs show that the value of the arithmetic mean, median and mode of the two scales is very close to each other, and the value of skewness and kurtosis is between $\pm(-2)$, and this indicates that the data represents the normal distribution of the research and the researcher can use the two tests for the statistical treatment of the data.



National belonging **f** levels of national belonging and psychological security

National belonging

Chapter Four

Presenting and Discussing Results

Interpreting the Results of Objective One

Identifying the level of both the psychological security and national belonging variables.

As shown in Table.(4)

Table No(4) .

The scale	The sample	arithmetic mean	Average	patter n	standa rd deviat ion	tor sio n	sta nda rd err or	sca tte r
Psychologic al security	389	3.38	3.36	3.52	0.556	0.066	0.0282	0.0217
National belonging	389	4.05	4.12	4.76	0.547	0.627	0.0277	-0.158

The results, as shown in Table No. (4), indicate that the arithmetic mean of the psychological security variable on the sample of (389) individuals was (3.38) compared to the hypothetical mean (3) and with a standard deviation of (0.556), which indicates that the members of the research sample enjoy a high degree of psychological security. This can be explained according to the largely stable social and political conditions in the Kurdistan Region, where urban development is taking place and there are diverse and multiple recreational, security and safety facilities in the cities of Kurdistan. Social media, which is a window to what is happening in the world and in different societies, in addition to the intellectual progress witnessed by segments of society in terms of social and educational development, similar to societies advanced in terms of education, where modern educational methods have made the child the focus of the educational process. This is what we witness in the majority of schools and even families, and this is due to media openness and the overwhelming desire to imitate other societies that are economically and socially advanced. There is no doubt that imitation is one of the important methods of learning, and in a study conducted by the researcher in 2009 on the Kurdish personality, it became clear that the method of imitation is very prominent among segments of Kurdish society (Hassan, 2009, pp. 3-5). The skewness value (0.066)

and kurtosis value (0.0217), which are close to zero, indicate that the distribution is characterized by moderation and closeness to the normal distribution, and this reflects consistency and harmony in the responses of the sample members. Regarding the second variable, national affiliation, the results showed a relatively high level, with a mean of 4.05 compared to the hypothetical mean of 3 and a standard deviation of 0.547. This reflects the sample's high degree of national affiliation. The kurtosis and skewness indices indicate a slight deviation from the left-hand normal distribution, suggesting that the majority of the sample scored highly in this dimension. Comparing the two variables, the mean for national affiliation (4.07) is higher than the mean for psychological security (3.38). This indicates that the sample possesses a high level of national affiliation that surpasses their sense of psychological security. This can be attributed to the strong sense of national unity among members of Kurdish society, a legacy passed down through generations due to continuous oppression and persecution by surrounding powers. Furthermore, as a large nation scattered across various countries worldwide, we lack a unified state under the banner of our beloved Kurdistan.

To explain the response to the question posed to the sample group within the biographical questions (Have you participated in any national or volunteer activities?), the results indicate that the majority of the sample did not participate in volunteer work. According to the researcher, this is due to several reasons, including the fact that public universities generally lack such activities, which does not provide young people with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and volunteer spirit

Interpretation of the results of the second objective: Identifying the relationship between the two variables: The results, as shown in Table (5), indicate...

**means that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*means that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table No. 5

The relationship between variables		psychological security	National belonging
psychological security	Pearson's coefficient	1	.291**
	Semantic significance	-	<.001
National belonging	Pearson's coefficient	.291**	1
	Semantic significance	<.001	-

There is a direct correlation between psychological security and national belonging. These results are consistent with the findings of Al-Zahrani's 2022 study, where an increase in one is linked to an increase in the other. The Pearson correlation coefficient (1) is significant and statistically significant, meaning that the higher the level of psychological security and the greater a person's sense of safety and tranquility, the higher their level of national belonging. This is a logical result if interpreted according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where both variables represent psychological needs that a person seeks to satisfy in order to feel psychological comfort, achieve mental health, and reach the level of self-actualization at the top of the pyramid. One of the advantages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is that a person does not move up the ladder in their psychological needs without satisfying the previous need. The need for security precedes the need for belonging. Therefore, a high level or satisfaction of the security need is followed by satisfaction and a rise in the level of belonging, which confirms that the result is not just a coincidence and that it reflects a real relationship between the two variables. However, there are other important factors that affect national belonging, which we can address in other studies.

This finding can be interpreted in light of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which posits that the satisfaction of security needs precedes higher-order social needs such as belonging. When students experience psychological security, emotional stability and freedom from threats, they are more able to make positive connections with their social and national environments. This result is in line with previous studies such as Al-Zahrani (2022) and Namilat and Suhail (2019) who confirmed that people with higher psychological security show stronger levels of national belonging. Therefore, psychological safety is a fundamental pillar for developing loyalty, identity and social integration.

Many studies have shown the connection and connection between psychological safety and various social and cognitive aspects of an individual. For example, Shamila's 2025 study showed that the absence of psychological safety negatively affects many aspects of a child's and later adult's life, affecting emotional, cognitive, social and physical development, including of course sense of belonging and national identity. The study called for the cooperation of all social institutions to meet this vital psychological need (Shamila, 2025, p. 40). Interpreting the results of the third objective: to identify differences between sample members in the variables psychological safety and national identity according to gender and type of university, as shown in table (6).

Table No. (6) shows the significance of the differences between the variables.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	value of t	The statistical value of the test	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VI F
3	Psychological security	0.991	0.03	0.83	32.651	0	0.113	8.821
	University type	0.432	0.094	0.098	4.615	0	0.162	6.170
	Age	0.147	0.037	0.073	4.021	0	0.221	4.531

Table No. 7

Sig.	F	Mean Square	Df	Sum of Squares	Model
<.001 ^f	4422.374	2107.104	3	6321.313	Regression
		0.476	386	183.915	Residual
			389	6505.228d	Total

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the psychological security variable has a clear impact on the dependent variable, making it the most influential variable compared to university type and age. The beta coefficient was 0.830 for university type and 0.098 for age, with a smaller and limited effect (0.073). This indicates that a higher level of psychological security significantly increases the level of national belonging. The t-value was 32.651, which is significant at the 0.000 level.

Similarly, the B-value was 0.991, which is positive and significant. Therefore, the differences among the sample members according to the research variables showed that those with high psychological security achieved higher scores on the national belonging variable. This result is consistent with psychological literature, which confirms that a sense of psychological security is the foundation for building identity, loyalty, attachment, and belonging to a group (Maslo, 2000). In other words, students with high levels of psychological security have a greater ability to integrate and feel a sense of belonging. By belonging to their universities and communities.

The F-value (4422.374) indicates statistical significance at the 0.001 level, as shown in the table. This suggests that psychological security has a strong and significant impact on the dependent variable, national affiliation. The variance can be explained by individuals with higher levels of

psychological security, followed by differences based on university type, and then slight differences favoring older individuals. Regarding the age variable, it was found to contribute only to a limited extent in explaining the variance, with differences favoring older individuals; that is, the older a person is, the stronger their sense of national affiliation. The influence of age on affiliation is dynamic and changes with the stages of life. In childhood, affiliation is to family and school, then in adolescence to peers and friends. As a person grows older, their affiliation shifts towards the nation and nationality, with the nature of affiliation changing from a need for support to a need for mutual support, self-esteem, and social recognition. In general, these results are consistent with theoretical hypotheses indicating that affiliation is the product of the interaction of several psychological, social, and demographic factors. Age.

Based on the answer choices in the scales used in the research, the researcher resorted to using a more precise statistical method to achieve the third objective, which was the Chi-Square test. The results, as shown in Table (8), indicated statistically significant differences between private and public universities in the variable of national affiliation, favoring public universities. This means that young people in private universities registered a lower percentage of national affiliation than young people in public universities. This can be attributed to several economic and social factors. For example, students may view private education as an alternative option they resort to when they are not accepted into public universities, which creates a feeling of injustice and a sense of being less fortunate for not obtaining a public university place. This may be reflected in their sense of belonging. On the other hand, we note that public universities enjoy a symbolic and national status because they are linked to the local government, while private universities are considered closer to private investment projects. Also, the costs of studying in public universities are lower compared to private universities, where the costs are exorbitant, in addition to the rules and regulations being governed to a certain extent by the vision of the university owner. It is subjective, not objective.

As for the psychological security variable, there are no statistically significant differences between governmental and non-governmental universities.

Table No. 8

#	Answer s	University type				Total
		Governmental		Non-governmental		
		Repetition s	Percentag (%) e	Repetition s	Percentag (%) e	

psychological security	Strongly Disagree	3	0.90%	0	0.00%	3	0.77%
	Disagree	22	6.50%	4	7.50%	26	6.68%
	Neutral	149	44.30%	22	41.50%	171	43.96%
	Agree	138	41.10%	21	39.60%	159	40.87%
	Strongly Agree	24	7.10%	6	11.30%	30	7.71%
	Total	336	100%	53	100%	389	100%
	Person Chi-Square –Independence test chi-square						
Value		DF		The statistical value of the test			
1.685 ^a		4		0.793			
National belonging	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
	Disagree	2	0.60%	2	3.80%	4	1.00%
	Neutral	44	13.10%	4	7.50%	48	12.30%
	Agree	148	44.00%	18	34.00%	166	42.70%
	Strongly Agree	142	42.30%	29	54.70%	171	44.00%
	Total	336	100%	53	100%	389	100%
	Person Chi-Square –Independence test chi-square						
Value		DF		The statistical value of the test			
8.346a		3		0.039			

Table No. 9

#	Answers	Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		Repetitions	Percentage (%)	Repetitions	Percentage (%)		
psychological security	Strongly Disagree	1	0.80%	2	0.70%	3	0.77%
	Disagree	6	4.90%	20	7.50%	26	6.68%
	Neutral	49	40.20%	122	45.70%	171	43.96%
	Agree	55	45.10%	104	39.00%	159	40.87%
	Strongly Agree	11	9.00%	19	7.10%	30	7.71%
	Total	122	100%	267	100%	389	100%
Person Chi-Square –Independence test chi-square							
Value		DF		The statistical value of the test			

					test		
	2.579 ^a		4		0.631		
National belonging	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
	Disagree	3	2.50%	1	0.40%	4	1.00%
	Neutral	17	13.90%	31	11.60%	48	12.30%
	Agree	46	37.70%	120	44.90%	166	42.70%
	Strongly Agree	56	45.90%	115	43.10%	171	44.00%
	Total	122	100%	267	100%	389	100%
Person Chi-Square –Independence test chi-square							
Value		DF		The statistical value of the test			
5.086 ^a		3		0.166			

The results in Table 9 show that the chi-squared value was 2.58, with a significance level of 0.63. Since this value is greater than the critical value of 0.05, there are no statistically significant differences between males and

females in the psychological security variable. These results are consistent with those of Margenson (2012), Namilat and Suhail (2019), and Demiral (2020), which also found no statistically significant differences between males and females (Demiral, 2020, p. 461).

This can be explained by the researcher's observation of the intellectual, ideological, and social value changes that Kurdish society, like other societies, is undergoing, which are favoring women. This can be attributed to the recent technological advancements that have swept through societies, making it easier to recognize changes occurring worldwide, especially in advanced societies, in both material and human development. In these advancements, there is no difference between the roles of both genders. Consequently, less developed societies have begun to emulate the intellectual patterns of these advanced societies, hoping to catch up materially. This can also be attributed to the increased awareness in societies in recent years. The results for the second variable were (5.08), with a significance level of (0.166), which is greater than (0.05). This indicates no differences between the sexes in the level of national belonging. This is a natural result, as women currently work alongside men in all areas of practical life, participating in the political and economic processes and all fields of work in society, thus creating a balanced environment for both genders to work and contribute. On the other hand, according to the results, there are gender differences in participation in volunteer work, with 39% for males and 13% for females. This means that males participate more in volunteer

work than females, perhaps due to the nature of society, where males tend to be more visible and present in various fields than females. This is encouraged by society, as remnants of old ideas still exist, such as parents' concern for protecting their daughters by not allowing them to be in different places and at different times. The results also showed that there are no differences between students of public and private universities in terms of psychological security. As for the variable of national belonging, the chi-square results showed differences between public and private universities, favoring public universities, meaning that the level of national belonging among students of public universities is higher than its level in private universities.

Recommendations and proposals

Recommendations

1. Universities should establish psychological support and counseling units aimed at enhancing students' sense of safety, emotional stability, and self-worth.
2. Educational institutions are encouraged to integrate national and civic activities within academic programs to promote active engagement and collective identity.
3. Media institutions should design content that reinforces national values and psychological well-being among youth.
4. Governmental bodies should ensure social justice, equal opportunities, and freedom of expression, as these factors are essential for strengthening psychological security and national belonging.

Suggestions

1. Conduct further studies on national identity and its relationship to other psychological and social variables, such as democratic and authoritarian parenting styles, and its relationship to the use of violence of all kinds in dealing with children and youth.
2. Conduct a study on the factors influencing the fulfillment of the need for psychological security.

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