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## **Psychological Security of the Elderly after the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Wilayas of El Oued and BordjBouArreridj– Algeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the current study was to assess the level of psychological security among the elderly after the Corona pandemic. In addition, it aimed to investigate the significance of differences in psychological security levels among the elderly attributed to gender and age variables (60-70 years / 71-80 years). The study was conducted on a non-random sample of 153 elderly people from the provinces of BordjBouArreridj and El Oued in Algeria, selected using the snowball sampling method. The study adopted a descriptive approach and used ZainabShaqir's (2005) Psychological Security Scale (Emotional Reassurance), which consisted of 54 items. After statistical analysis of the field study data, the following findings were obtained:

- The level of psychological security of the elderly in BordjBouArreridj and El Oued after the Corona pandemic was moderate.
- There were statistically significant gender differences in the level of psychological security among the elderly, in favour of women.
- There were no statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among the study sample attributed to age variables (60-70 years old / 71-80 years old).

These results were interpreted on the basis of the theoretical background, explanatory theories and previous studies on the topic. The study concludes with a series of recommendations and suggestions.

**Keywords:** Psychological safety, older people, corona pandemic.

### **1- INTRODUCTION**

The world population is experiencing a steady and significant increase in the number of older people. The number of people aged 60 and over has risen from 200 million in 1950 to 760 million in 2010, and is expected to exceed one billion by the end of the current decade (2010). By 2050, a fifth of the world's population is expected to be over 60. The elderly population is thus the fastest growing age group and has become a global phenomenon (United Nations, 2010, p.4).

Although we live in an era characterised by scientific progress and the search for means to ensure human freedom and prosperity, our era is also marked by significant changes in human life. These changes have not been entirely positive, as they have had numerous negative consequences for humanity, especially in developing countries, which have been hit by sudden and unexpected waves of change that have exceeded all expectations. This has led to various psychological problems, the most common of which are anxiety, stress, psychological depression, rebellion, and internal and external conflicts. These problems can lead to a lack of psychological security among individuals (Naïsah, 2012, p.115).

Discoveries and inventions are also internal sources of social and cultural change. Although they often go hand in hand, there are differences between them. Discovery involves the realisation of certain elements that already exist in nature but have not been recognised by anyone before (Sabaa, 2019, p.31). However, what we are realising is that the world is interconnected through various discoveries and means of communication, despite the dispersion of family members within the household.

Change is a universal reality that should not escape anyone's awareness. Every living being undergoes change, whether it is progress and growth or decline and collapse. Man, as a venerable being, experiences this change at various stages of his life, from the softness of his nails to his death. However, the appearance of signs of frailty in the elderly makes them dependent on those around them, similar to young children who need constant care to communicate with other family members and the outside world. This allows them to interact and affirm their importance despite their age.

According to FaysalHijazi and Abu Ghali (2010, p.111), citing Abu Hattab (1995), old age is considered a stage of physical weakness and frailty. It is a state in which the decline in physical and mental functioning is evident

and its effects on cognitive processes can be measured. A person does not enter old age at the age of sixty or sixty-five. Ageing is a gradual process in which changes occur slowly. One of the most characteristic features of this phase of growth is generally the reversal of human development. With the onset of old age, deterioration begins at a slow pace and gradually accelerates until it reaches its maximum in the later stages of life. This is determined by the health, psychological, economic and social environment in which the elderly person lives, which provides them with all the means of comfort and psychological peace.

## **2- Problem Statement**

Throughout their different stages of life, individuals grow up in the embrace of others, whether individuals or groups, as infants, children, adolescents, and elders, etc. What distinguishes their stages of growth is their sense of security and tranquillity as they live, experience happiness, learn and share experiences with others. However, when they encounter disturbances in their relationships, behavioural problems and psychological disorders may arise, leading to chronic and serious illnesses.

Many psychologists have focused on studying the motives behind human behaviour, including the motive for safety. One of the most famous psychologists in this regard is Abraham Maslow, who categorised human motives into five, forming a hierarchical pyramid. The base of this pyramid is physiological needs, followed by the need for safety, then the need for love, the need for self-esteem and finally the need for self-actualisation. Erich Fromm also emphasised that the need for safety is the primary social and psychological motive that drives and directs human behaviour towards its goal (Al-Khudairi, 2003, p.3).

Based on this perspective, individuals constantly seek to maintain their psychological balance, stability and feelings of happiness and satisfaction by building strong and positive relationships that ensure their appreciation, respect and trust, away from violent and frightening practices that threaten their sense of psychological security. The sense of psychological security encompasses several feelings based on similar connotations. It includes the absence of pathological anxiety and fear, the dissipation of threats and risks, and a sense of tranquillity and emotional and material stability, along with a reasonable level of acceptance and tolerance in relation to psychological and human environmental factors (Iqra, 2005, p.132). Old age is considered to be one of the stages of life that heralds the approach of death. It is generally accompanied by disturbances at the physiological and psychological levels, manifesting as lethargy, helplessness, isolation, sadness and a sense of emptiness. After a life of activity, productivity and enjoyment in the earlier stages, the diminishing vitality and activity of life can cause feelings of sadness and despair in older people, especially when they perceive the changes that occur over time in various aspects and areas. One of the most significant changes they experience is a feeling of incapacity and a destabilisation of their sense of security and psychological well-being. Their enjoyment of life and sharing it with family members, with whom they used to share jokes, experiences and memories, may diminish. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by older adults, particularly in terms of memory loss among survivors.

Increasing social phenomena from one generation to the next, such as independence and the preference for smaller families, contribute to the feeling of isolation among older adults. Algerian society has been affected by various cultural and social changes, particularly in relation to the concept of the extended family, where individuals now seek stability, balance and individual interests in their marital and family life. This has led to the neglect of the interests of the extended family and the loss of some concepts of social solidarity and cohesion. As a result, there have been changes within Algerian families, particularly in the relationship between individuals and their elderly relatives. There is a noticeable shift in the status and real position that the elderly held in the past, resulting in concepts of disunity and disintegration within the family when the elderly lose their ability to independently manage family affairs and adapt to modernity (Seba, 2019, p.16). It is evident that the status of older parents within the family has been undermined, as they may feel a lack of acceptance, neglect and disregard for their needs, which can lead to a loss of psychological security.

This field study aims to assess the level of psychological security of older adults in Algeria from their perspective. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of psychological security among older adults in the post-COVID-19 period in the regions of BoudjBouArreridj and El Oued?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among older adults according to gender (male, female)?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among the sample according to age groups (60-70 years, 71-80 years)?

## **1-2 Hypotheses**

Given the nature of the topic (psychological security among older adults in Algeria post-COVID-19), the characteristics of the study sample consisting of older adults, and in order to answer the previous questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- The level of psychological security among older adults in BoudjBouArreridj and El Oued post-COVID-19 is

moderate.

- There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among older adults according to gender.
- There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among the study sample attributed to age groups (60-70 years, 71-80 years).

### **1-3 Significance of the study**

The importance of this study lies in its focus on the living conditions of older adults within families, regardless of their gender, whether they are widowed or have a surviving partner. The study also sheds light on the different aspects of the lives of the elderly, whether they are sick or healthy, whether they live in a desert region (El Oued province) or in a northern region (BoudjBouArreridj province).

The importance of the current study lies in examining the psychological security of older adults in the post-COVID-19 era, given the pressures, health problems and increasing threats they face, especially due to the frailty of their physical condition.

The study aims to promote the restoration of values of compassion within family members, as parents care for their children and meet their needs. In turn, part of the attention and care should be devoted to the elderly, including their health care, psychological well-being, and social support, with an emphasis on institutional care for the elderly.

### **1-4 Aims of the study**

The objectives of this study were:

- To answer the research questions and provide evidence for the validity of the hypotheses.
- To understand the current level of psychological security among older adults in BoudjBouArreridj and El Oued provinces in the post-COVID-19 period.
- To identify any differences in the level of psychological security among older adults based on gender and age groups in the older stage of life.

### **1-5 Define the key concepts of the study**

#### **1-5-1 Psychological security**

There are several definitions of psychological security. Among these definitions, Maslow defines it as "the individual's feeling of being loved and accepted by others as if he were one of them, perceiving his environment as friendly, and feeling a lack of danger, threat, and anxiety". In the current study, it is measured using Maslow's Psychological Security Scale (Gharbi, 2015, p. 160). Abd al-Majeed (2004) defines it as "the absence of fear and the feeling of reassurance, love, acceptance, stability, belonging, the sense of protection, care, support, and assistance in facing situations, with the ability to cope with surprises and meet needs" (Abd al-Majeed, 2004, p. 241).

In the context of older adults, psychological security refers to their sense of calm, stability, and psychological comfort with themselves and their environment, without feelings of fear, anxiety, disturbance, or threat. It also includes their ability to meet needs and cope with situations.

#### **00- Procedural identification of psychological safety**

It refers to the total score obtained by the older adult on ZeinabShaqeer's (2005) Psychological Security Scale used in this study. Shaqeer explains that psychological security refers to a person's perception of others' interest in them and their understanding, which allows them to experience a high degree of warmth and affection. This leads to a state of calm, acceptance, and stability that ensures emotional stability, self-acceptance, self-respect, and the expectation of security in life. It also includes the ability to achieve future desires free from the risk of mental disorders or conflicts that threaten their security and stability in life.

#### **1-5-2 Concept of Older Adults**

An older adult is defined as an individual who has reached the age of 60 or older and is experiencing a number of physical, psychological, social, and economic changes that make them dependent on the care and assistance of others (Ghanam, 2019, p. 306). The term "older adult" refers to someone who has reached an advanced age, has experienced a decline in physical and cognitive abilities, and often shows signs of aging such as gray hair. As age increases, terms such as "elder" or "senior" may be used, and the United Nations Population Division has defined older adults as individuals who are 65 years of age or older, rather than the previous definition of 65 years of age (Mehrieh, 2022, p. 1114). Older adults may be referred to as elders or seniors, but the focus is on their needs from their immediate environment, including family, and from society as a whole, because everyone needs to live in a secure environment where they feel protected and belong to a group, whether it's the family or the larger community. They should feel secure within themselves, have confidence in their present and future, and be able to cope with stress. This enables them to develop a balanced personality characterized by healthy

behaviors and psychological traits that serve as an immune system to face problems and overcome difficulties, allowing them to effectively fulfill their role and succeed in life (Houari&Bouchlaghem, 2020, p. 250)

### **1-5-3 ageing**

Researchers have not agreed on a comprehensive definition of ageing, mainly because it is not a fixed phenomenon that occurs in the later stages of the life of an individual or a living organism. Rather, it is a dynamic state influenced by the individual's physiology, psychology, social, economic and cultural environment, and the individual's acceptance of and behaviour in response to these factors (Qanawi, 1987, p. 03). However, in this study, the researcher used chronological age as a criterion to determine the age of ageing, and therefore an older adult is someone who has exceeded the age of sixty (60)".

Feeling cared for, useful, and secure plays a crucial role in the lives of older adults, as it helps them maintain their zest for life. Many older adults do not find the aging process difficult because they receive care, respect, and appreciation from those around them. However, others may experience psychological distress and low self-esteem, which can negatively affect their mental and emotional well-being due to a lack of social and emotional support (Sani, 2015, p. 18). Therefore, positive psychology research seeks to explore indicators of the aging process and emphasizes the importance of relationships and social environments in mental health, quality of life, and psychological well-being, including death anxiety.

### **1-5-4 COVID-19 Pandemic**

The term "coronavirus" is derived from the Latin word "corona," meaning crown or halo. The name refers to the distinctive appearance of the virus when viewed under an electron microscope, as it has surface projections that resemble a crown or the sun's corona. In Arabic, the term "virus corona" is the most commonly used name compared to other languages where it is called crown virus, halo virus, or corona virus, among others.

It is also known as a "novel coronavirus of a new strain first identified in a cluster of pneumonia cases in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China". It is also recognized as a "new virus, symbolized by the acronym COVID-19 due to its human respiratory disease, which can spread from person to person and was identified through epidemiologic investigation in Wuhan, China". The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic when the number of cases increased significantly worldwide. The Director-General of the World Health Organization stated, "We are deeply concerned both by the alarming spread and severity of the disease and by the alarming level of inaction. That is why we have made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic. He added that this is not just a public health crisis; it is a crisis that affects all sectors of society, and therefore every sector and every individual must be involved in the fight (Mahdidi, 2022, p. 194).

## **2- Methodology and Tools**

### **2-1 Study Areas**

The field study was conducted in the following areas:

#### **\*Geographical area**

The study was conducted in the provinces of BordjBouArreridj and Ouargla.

#### **\*Timeframe**

The study was conducted from March 1, 2023 to April 1, 2023.

#### **\*Human population**

The study was conducted on a sample of elderly people from the provinces of BordjBouArreridj and Ouargla.

### **2-2 Study methodology**

The methodology refers to the approach and techniques used by researchers to organize, analyze and present their ideas, as well as to reach reasonable and credible conclusions and findings. In this study, a descriptive methodology was adopted because it is the most appropriate to assess the level of psychological well-being of the elderly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2-3 Study population and sample**

#### **2-3-1 Study population**

The study population includes all individuals who represent the phenomenon under study. In our study, the population consisted of all elderly people in the provinces of BordjBouArreridj and Ouargla.

#### **2-3-2 Study sample**

A non-random purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of 153 elderly individuals using the snowball sampling technique during the year 2022-2023. This sampling method was chosen based on the nature of the topic and the human population under study, as we believed it would serve the research objectives.

Due to the nature of the topic, the study focused on elderly people aged 60 and above in the provinces of BordjBouArreridj and Ouargla. The distribution of the study sample is as follows:

The characteristics of the primary sample are represented according to the gender variable, as shown in Table 01



**Table 1: Sample Distribution by Gender Variable.**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	98	64.1%
Female	55	35.9%
Total	153	100%

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

According to Table 01, the study sample consisted of (98) males (64.1%) and (55) females (35.9%).

- Characteristics of the study sample by geographical area

**Table 2: Sample Distribution by Geographic Region.**

Geographic Region	Number	Percentage
Al wadi	95	62.1%
Bordj bou Arreridj	58	37.9%
Total	153	100%

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher

According to Table 02, the study sample consisted of (95) elderly individuals from the Ouargla region, accounting for 62.1%, and (58) elderly individuals from the BordjBouArreridj region, accounting for 37.9%.

- Characteristics of the Study Sample by AgeTable 03: Characteristics of the Study Sample by Age:

**Table 3: Sample Distribution by Age Variable**

Age Group	Number	Percentage
60-70 years	130	85%
71-80 years	23	15%
Total	153	100%

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

According to Table 03, the study sample consisted of (130) older people aged 60-69 years, representing 85%, and (23) older people aged 70-80 years, representing 15%.

- Characteristics of the study sample by chronic disease statusTable 04: Characteristics of the study sample by chronic disease status:

**Table 4: Sample Distribution by Chronic Disease Variable.**

ChronicDisease	Number	Percentage
Yes	92	60.1%
No	61	39.9%

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

According to Table 04, the study sample consisted of (92) older people with chronic diseases (60.1%) and (61) older people without chronic diseases (39.9%).

- Characteristics of the study sample by marital statusTable 05 Characteristics of the study sample by marital status:

**Table 5: Sample Distribution by Marital Status Variable.**

Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Partner Alive	100	65.4%
Partner Deceased	53	34.6%
Total	153	100%

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

According to Table 05, the study sample consisted of (100) older people with a living partner, 65.4%, and (53) older people with a deceased partner, 34.6%.

## 2-4 the data collection tool

In terms of the data collection tool, the study used ZainabShaqeer's (2005) scale, which consists of 54 statements measuring psychological security (serenity, emotional well-being). The statements are paired with

four response options: Strongly agree, agree, sometimes disagree and strongly disagree. These choices are weighted as follows: 3-2-1-0 for positive statements and 0-1-2-3 for negative statements. Thus, the total score on the scale ranges from 0 to 162, and the levels of psychological safety are determined according to the following table:

**Table 6: Levels of Psychological Security According to the Scale**

Expression Numbers	Correction Direction	Emotional Security Level	
1 to 9	3-2-1-0	Very High Psychological Security	(131-162)
		High Psychological Security	(97_131)
20-54	0-1-2-3	Moderate (Average) Psychological Security	(63_96)
		Simple Psychological Security	(31_62)
		Low Psychological Security	(0_30)
		Total Score (Psychological Security)	0-162

The source :( the Psychological Security Scale by ZainabShaqeer (2005).

**-The psychometric properties of the data collection instrument in the current study**

**-The calculation of internal consistency reliability**

The bi-serial correlation coefficients were calculated for each dimension of the Psychological Security Scale with the total score, as shown in the following table:

**Table 7: Relationship of each dimension of the Psychological Security Scale with the total score**

Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	SignificanceLevel (p-value)	Significance
Psychological Security Related to Individual Formation and Future Vision	0.969	0.01	Significant
Psychological Security Related to General Life and Work of the Individual	0.956	0.01	Significant
Psychological Security Related to the Mood State of the Individual	0.952	0.01	Significant
Psychological Security Related to Social Relationships and Social Interaction of the Individual	0.932	0.01	Significant
Total Score	1	—	—

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

The table shows that all dimensions are significantly related to the total score of the scale. The correlation coefficients are 0.969, 0.956, 0.952 and 0.932 respectively. These values indicate a strong positive relationship between the different dimensions of the scale and the total score of psychological security. The statistical significance level was set at 0.01, confirming the construct validity of the Psychological Security Scale and its applicability to the current study.

To assess discriminant validity (concurrent validity), 27% of the lowest scores and an equal proportion of the highest scores on the scale were selected from a sample of 30 older people. The means and standard deviations of the lowest and highest scores were calculated. A t-test was performed to test the significance of the differences in scores, with the following results:

**Table 8: Significance of Differences Between Study Sample Individuals on the Lowest and Highest Scores of the Psychological Security Scale**

	Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	SignificanceLevel (p-value)	Significance
Total Score	Upper Group	8	72.8750	21.86607	-7.867	0.01	Significant
	Lower Group	8	134.0000	2.20389			

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

Interpretation of Table 7

From Table 7 we can see that the value (t) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with a value of (-7.867). Therefore, we can conclude that the Psychological Security Scale has the ability to discriminate in measuring the intended construct.

#### Calculation of the reliability of the Psychological Security Scale

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

#### Calculation of scale stability

Scale stability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

**Table 9: Coefficient of Stability for the Psychological Security Scale Using Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Coefficient of Stability (Cronbach's Alpha)		Number of Items
the Psychological Security Scale	0.959	54

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

From the table we can see that the coefficient of stability of the scale is exceptionally high at (0.959). This means that the scale has a very high degree of stability.

#### -Reliability using the split-half method

**Table 10: Stability of the Psychological Security Scale Using Split-Half Method**

Coefficient of Correlation Between Halves	0.714
Total Stability Coefficient (Spearman-Brown)	0.833

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

The correlation coefficient between the two halves of the scale was calculated to be 0.714. Using the Spearman-Brown correction equation, the estimated overall stability coefficient was found to be 0.833. This indicates that the scale is highly stable.

In order to estimate the sample's responses to the Psychological Security Scale, the scale was adjusted by assigning a score of 3 to the highest rating of the scale items and a score of 0 to the lowest rating. The difference between these scores represents the range of the category divided by the desired number of categories. In this case the calculation would be  $(3-0)/3=1$ . Based on this, the following scores were assigned to help interpret the results:

**Table 11: Ternary Scale for Assessing Agreement with Psychological Security Scale Statements**

Response Estimation for Statements	Average Ranges Between
Low	[0-1[
Moderate	[1-2[
High	[2-3]



From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

**000- The methods used in the study, using the SPSS22 statistical package, were as follows**

Methods used in the study, using the SPSS22 statistical package, include descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations), Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to assess normality of distribution, Pearson correlation coefficient to calculate internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha as a measure of scale stability, independent samples t-test for discriminative validity, and the Mann-Whitney U test as an alternative to the independent samples t-test to assess differences.

**3- Results**

**-Verification of the normality of the distribution of the study data**

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing using various appropriate statistical methods, it is essential to verify the assumption of normal distribution for the variable under investigation in the current study, represented by "Psychological Security in the Elderly". The following table illustrates this:

**Table 12: Checking Normal Distribution for Psychological Security Variable**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk Statistics			Decision
	Significance Level	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Statistics	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	
Psychological Security	0.083	153	0.012	0.961	153	0.000	Significant

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

From the data presented in the table above, and based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, all the values for the variable under study (psychological security in the elderly) are significant at the alpha level ( $0.05=\alpha$ ). This leads us to conclude that the variable data do not follow a normal distribution. Consequently, all the statistical methods used to address the various hypotheses and questions in the current study are non-parametric methods.

**00- Presentation, analysis and discussion of the results of the hypotheses**

**1- Presentation and Analysis of the Discussion of the First Hypothesis**

The first hypothesis stated that the level of psychological security is low among a sample of elderly people in Al-Wadi and BordjBouArreridj.

After processing the responses of the sample individuals and relying on the mean scores and standard deviations for each dimension of the Psychological Security Scale, as well as the total score, and considering the ranking of each dimension in the scale (High - Moderate - Low), as previously explained, the following results were obtained

**Table 13: Illustrates the means and standard deviations of the sample individuals' responses for each dimension of the Psychological Security Scale and the total score.**

Dimension Number	Dimension Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
01	Psychological security related to individual formation and future vision	1.8072	0.63736	1	Moderate [2.1]
02	Psychological security related to general and practical aspects of life	1.6496	0.40757	4	Moderate [2.1]
03	Psychological security related to the individual's mood	1.6984	1.13368	2	Moderate [2.1]
04	Psychological security related	1.7843	0.64184	3	Moderate [2.1]

	to social relationships and social interaction				
Total score	-	1.7641	0.54761	-	Moderate [2.1]

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

Table 12 shows that the mean scores for the dimensions ranged from (1.649 - 1.807), with the lowest response value being (0) and the highest being (3). The dimension 'Psychological security related to individual formation and future vision' ranked first with a mean of (1.807) and a standard deviation of (0.637). Meanwhile, the dimension 'Psychological security related to general life and individual process' ranked last (04) with a mean score of (1.649) and a standard deviation of (1.133). The total scale had a mean of (1.764) and a standard deviation of (0.547). This falls within the moderate range ([2.1]), indicating an average level of psychological security among the elderly in Al-Wadi and BordjBouArreridj.

## 2 - Presentation and interpretation of the results in the light of the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis stated that there would be statistically significant differences in the level of safety among the study sample due to the gender variable (male, female). To verify this hypothesis, the Mann-Whitney U test, an alternative to the independent samples t-test, was used. After statistical analysis, the results are presented in the following table

**Table 14: Mann-Whitney U test for significance of differences in psychological security based on gender variable.**

Psychological Security	Sample Size	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	SignificanceLevel	Decision
Male	98	70.71	6930.00	2079.000	6930.000	-2.343	0.05	Significant
Female	55	88.20	4851.00					
Total	153							

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

From the above table, it can be seen that the individuals in the study sample, totalling (153), were distributed on the Psychological Security scale according to the gender variable, with (98) males, representing (70.71) as the mean rank, and (55) females, representing (88.20) as the mean rank. Looking at the value of the Mann-Whitney U test, which is (-2.343), we can see that it is statistically significant at the (0.05) level. Therefore, it can be said that there are statistically significant differences in the level of safety among the sample due to the gender variable (male/female). The confidence level for this result is 95%, with a 5% probability of error, and the comparison of the means favours the women.

## 3- Presentation and interpretation of the results in the light of the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis stated that there would be statistically significant differences in the level of safety among the sample due to the age variable (60-70 years / 71-80 years). The Mann-Whitney U test, an alternative to the independent samples t-test, was used to test this hypothesis. After statistical analysis, the results are presented in the table below

**Table 15: Mann-Whitney U test for significance of differences in psychological security based on age variable.**

Psychological Security	Sample Size	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	SignificanceLevel	Decision
60-70 years	130	78.49	10203.50	1301.500	1577.500	-0.988	0.323	Not Significant
71-80 years	23	68.59	1577.50					
Total	153							

From the SPSS outputs prepared by the researcher.

From the above table, it can be seen that the study sample, consisting of a total of 153 individuals, was distributed as follows on the basis of the gender variable in the Psychological Security scale: 130 older people aged between 60 and 70, with an average rank of 78.49, and 23 older people aged between 71 and 80, with an average rank of 68.59. Considering the value of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was 0.988-, it is clear that it is

not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of psychological safety among the sample due to the age variable (60-70 years, 71-80 years). The confidence level for this result is 95% with a 5% probability of a type I error.

## **4- DISCUSSION**

### **4-1 Discussion of the results of hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 stated that the level of psychological security of the elderly in Béjaïa and Ouargla after the COVID-19 pandemic is moderate. Based on the results presented in Table 11, it is clear that the sampled people have a moderate level of psychological security. This finding is consistent with the results of several studies, including those conducted by Houari and Bouchlaghem (2020) and El Khedary and Ashour (2003). These studies also found that university students had a moderate level of psychological security. However, these results contradict the findings of the studies conducted by Al-Tahrawi (2007), Khouitar (2010), Naeessa (2012) and Al-Ghamdi (2015), which showed that the sampled individuals exhibit a high level of psychological security.

The findings indicate that the majority of the sample individuals in the study have a moderate level of psychological security in terms of their relationships with their families, their involvement in social life with their families, their inner peace within the family, and their satisfaction with themselves and others in general. ZainabShaqeer (2020) explains that "psychological security refers to an individual's perception of the care and understanding of others, which allows them to feel a significant amount of warmth and affection. This puts them in a state of calm, acceptance and stability, which ensures emotional stability, self-acceptance, self-respect, and thus anticipates the occurrence of security in life, with the possibility of achieving their desires in the future, away from the risk of developing psychological disorders or conflicts and any threat that jeopardises their security and stability in life" (Houari&Bouchlaghem, 2020, p. 248). Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

### **4-2 Discussion of the results of hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 stated that there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among the study sample attributed to the gender variable (male, female), with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The comparison of the means favours women, which can be explained by the fact that elderly women in Algerian households are surrounded by the love and care of their children and grandchildren. They have a special value within the family according to customs and traditions. They are not responsible for household chores or for the material needs of the family. However, they offer advice and guidance to both younger and older family members. In addition, they rarely leave the house on a daily basis, as dictated by custom and tradition. They also benefit from social and health protection to reduce the risk of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, as they have limited interaction with others compared to older men.

These findings differ from a study conducted by Jabr (1996), cited by Khouitar (2010), which aimed to examine the relationship between psychological security and variables such as gender, age, marital status and educational level. The study included a sample of 342 men and women from different educational and social backgrounds, including 252 married individuals and 95 unmarried individuals. The researcher used Maslow's test of psychological security and found no statistically significant differences in levels of psychological security between men and women, with an increased sense of security associated with advancing age. The findings also differ from the studies conducted by Houari and Bouchlaghem (2020) and AbdouAsmaa (2017), who found no differences in the level of psychological security based on gender.

According to Rabi Mazid (2019), physical strength decreases during the stage of old age, despite significant advances and awareness in healthcare. Older people need health services because of physical weakness and age-related diseases. They perceive care as having no value without love and attention, which is emphasised by various studies and field research on the psychological concept. Abd Al-Majeed (2004) stated that psychological security is characterised by the absence of fear, feelings of reassurance, love, acceptance, stability, belonging, protection, care, support and assistance in coping with situations, as well as the ability to cope with surprises and meet needs. The majority of older women experience these aspects, supporting hypothesis 2.

### **4-3 Discussion of the results of hypothesis 3**

Hypothesis 3 stated that there would be no statistically significant differences in the level of safety among the study sample attributed to the age variable (60-70 years, 71-80 years) at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The results of the field study suggest that older people in both age groups are experiencing the developmental stage of old age and its physical manifestations. In addition, they face challenges such as a decline in physical strength and productivity, especially after retirement. They may feel a lack of purpose in life and face various problems that affect their health and economic well-being. This supports the understanding that 'old age is a stage of fundamental growth accompanied by various physiological, social and psychological changes that may affect the lives of older people and their overall well-being' (Al-Shal, 2012, p. 1478).

In addition, a study by Rook (1987), cited by Khouitar (2010, pp. 90-91), examined the relationship between

social interactions, feelings of loneliness and satisfaction with social relationships among older women. The aim of the study was to examine the depth of social interactions and their impact on feelings of loneliness and satisfaction with social relationships in a sample of women aged 60 to 89 years. Participants completed measures of loneliness, social satisfaction and reciprocal social interactions. The study found that disruptions in social interactions were associated with increased feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction with social relationships. It also showed that social exchange varied according to the type of social support, including support from friends, emotional support and instrumental support.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the older participants in the study have a moderate level of psychological security in both age groups (60-70 years and 71-80 years). This can be attributed to the relatively stable relationships within Algerian families, where there are inherited mechanisms for caring for parents in old age. In addition, children help to support and visit their elderly parents from time to time. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported by the results of the study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Undoubtedly, this research aims to assess the level of psychological well-being of the elderly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which is of great importance in the lives of individuals, especially in society as a whole. This importance is rooted in the family, which serves as the cornerstone in the formation of individuals' personalities and forms the core of society. The failure of individuals (children) to fulfil their role towards their parents and to fulfil their natural obligations has a negative impact on the psychological well-being of the elderly in particular, as well as on the family and society as a social institution with a fundamental role in protecting the individual. Psychological well-being results from interaction with the environment through experiences and situations that individuals encounter. It is a fundamental need that individuals strive to achieve at every stage of their lives, as it means freedom from anxiety and fear, acceptance of oneself and others, and the attainment of a sufficient level of psychological harmony and adaptation, especially at critical stages such as old age. As the days and years pass, the need for protection and belonging to a group, be it family or society, becomes vital as an immune system that the elderly use to face the fear of facing death alone. This is why we recommend the following:

- Establish family counselling centres in all neighbourhoods, offering free services to educate people about the importance of having older members in the family.
- Establish comprehensive care centres for the elderly who have no carers, as well as rehabilitation centres to provide support.
- Organise regular training courses and educational seminars for families, conducted by specialists, to educate them on how to deal with the elderly.
- To highlight the elderly population by organising regular training courses for professionals in family sociology and psychology.
- Establishing special centres and clubs for social, recreational and sports activities for the elderly.
- Emphasise the need to benefit from the experience of older people and to invest it in sustainable development in various fields, while promoting intergenerational communication.
- Develop a long-term Arab strategy to address the needs of older people and facilitate their mobility between countries.
- Promote Islamic culture and human awareness among family members and society.
- Support voluntary associations that provide care and services to the elderly and activate community-based initiatives in this field.

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