

General

# The Association of Emotional Blackmail and Adjustment to College Life Among Warned Female Students at Al-Balqa University Students

Raed A. Al-kreimeen<sup>1 a</sup>, Nedal Ahmad Alghafary<sup>2 b</sup>, Fadi Soud Samawi<sup>1 c</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Sciences, Al-Salt College for Social Science/ Al-Balqa Applied University, <sup>2</sup> Teaching Curricula in Physical Education, Al-Salt College for Social Science/ Al-Balqa Applied University

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The present study aimed to identify the association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students at Al-Balqaa Applied University. It was a descriptive correlational study that included recruiting all warned female students at Al-Balqaa Applied University (BAU) (n=357) during the beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020. The study adopted the emotional abuse scale developed by Neil Jacobson and John Gottman. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items and the college adjustment test (CAT) developed by Pennebaker (2013). The test comprised 19 items. The collected data were analyzed statistically using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) (v. 26 IBM Corporation). The study's findings showed that warned female students had a high level of emotional blackmail ( $2.90 \pm 0.799$ ). In addition, the results indicated that there is a low level of college adjustment among the warned female students ( $3.62 \pm 0.736$ ). Finally, the study showed a strong and significant inverse correlation between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students at Al-Balqa Applied University. Therefore, the study recommended increasing the students' awareness and knowledge about coping strategies to overcome the effects of emotional blackmail and increase their college adjustment.

## INTRODUCTION

A person lives amid a society governed by a social and civilized nature. Still, his tendencies and attitudes take different forms and patterns of behavior in dealing with them, and material benefits or personal interests in this deal are often overwhelming. He realizes these benefits to the interests of these two groups. This is what is called emotional blackmail.

Usually, this behavior that a person adopts to achieve his personal goals at the expense of and emotional manipulation of the other party is a type of psychological violence. It is often more harmful than physical and verbal violence because it clearly impacts the other party's conscience (the victim). Because of the psychological negligence that the victim is exposed to, he begins to feel that he himself is worthless and that he deserves nothing, and this is known in the psychology of low self-esteem, which affects the characteristics of the victim's personality, psychological

disturbances, and affliction with affection If he is subjected to emotional blackmail.

Emotional blackmail is a subtle form of manipulation that may shape some of our closest relationships.<sup>1</sup> Just like any blackmail, emotional blackmail centers around a basic threat; if you don't do this for me, bad things will happen.<sup>2</sup>

The subject of blackmail has received great attention in the world, and this concern represented the call for awareness of its dangers, the need to confront it, and the undertaking of special projects in the community to protect it and raise awareness of its effects, the seminars held around it, and the media programs that referred to it.<sup>3</sup> An urgent need to study the reality of extortion in society and to what degree it exists in a way that threatens the psychological, social, and religious security of the individual and society. This necessitated the need for a study that gives indications of the reality of extortion. The current study's problem is identifying the extent of emotional blackmail related to compatibility in university life among warned female students at Al-Balqa Applied University.

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a Email: raedalk@bau.edu.jo

b Email: nghafary@bau.edu.jo

c Email: fadi.samawi@bau.edu.jo

Emotional blackmail is a situation or speech that someone takes to cause you a sense of shame or error or make you responsible for what you do not bear.<sup>4</sup> Emotional blackmail is used to achieve emotional and psychological control over others and to make the other feel that he is in debt or guilty of the right of the person who blackmails him, which is a very despicable method of dealing with others.<sup>5</sup>

Emotional blackmail is a type of exploitation practiced by a person who influences another person within a system of relationships. From the angle and based on the threat to deprive or prevent the use of various means of punishment or to exploit the need for one of the parties to keep something by the other party.<sup>6</sup>

Emotional blackmail can be more devastating than physical abuse. While wounds and bruises may leave scars, they will heal eventually.<sup>7</sup> However, emotional trauma can leave lifelong invisible scars that may affect the brain chemistry and change the individual.<sup>8</sup> Emotional abuse can affect the development of the brain and the capacity to process emotions. Emotional blackmail happens when someone tries to control you by using emotions as a weapon instead of physical violence.<sup>9</sup> The blackmailer acts in a dominating way and tries to scare and isolate the victim to control. It can be done through abusive words and statements, threats, and body language regularly or whenever the abuser feels.<sup>10</sup>

Going off to college is a life-changing experience. It is also a big challenge; some of the demands they are ready to confront, others just blindsides them.<sup>11</sup> College life can be among the most rewarding and challenging periods in a young person's life. Increasingly, students need mental health care and support for their well-being.<sup>12</sup> According to the American College Health Association report released in 2017, 39% of students reported feeling so depressed that they were having trouble functioning, 61% reported that they experienced overwhelming anxiety in the last 12 months. In addition, the center for collegiate mental health reported that the number of students using counseling centers increased by approximately 30% on average from 2009 to 2015.<sup>11</sup>

Like other groups of society, college students may be exposed to emotional blackmail by their colleagues or by other people outside the university campus.<sup>13</sup> So, we find those who intentionally or unintentionally practice this method that leads to harm to the other, who may become a victim of deviations.<sup>14</sup> Because of anxiety and lack of internal reassurance, decisions being taken within the cognitive bias diverges from successful decision-making, which increases the size of the problem.<sup>15</sup>

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL PARTIES

Emotional blackmail requires two parties; it is a bilateral process and not individual performance. There is the blackmailer who is the one who threatens and bargains, and there is the other party (the victim), which is the person who is under blackmail through threat and bargaining from the blackmailer. Each side of the emotional blackmail process has its psychology and silence, which is part of his personality.<sup>16</sup>

**The blackmailer's psychology:** On the surface, the blackmailer looks like others, and they are usually highly effective in many aspects of their lives, but in many aspects, the internal world of the blackmailer appears different.<sup>17</sup>

Emotional blackmailers act out of fear of deprivation. This deprivation is not apparent unless his sense of stability and deprivation are subjected to violent vibration. Hence, the blackmailer feels fear as a sign of instability, just as simple frustration is seen as a potential disaster. He believes that if he does not get what he wants, even by force, then the world around him will collapse. Therefore the blackmailer blackmails the other party for the following reasons: fear of loss, fear of losing control, and fear of rejection.<sup>18</sup>

**The psychology of the other party under blackmail:** The submissive personality (under blackmail) is, in fact, subject to power, cannot make decisions, is hypersensitive, vulnerable, hesitant, and insecure in itself, all because it has not exercised the will, and has not had the opportunity for self-growth or the opportunity to exercise power. In the right context, they do not have the moral strength that enables them to resist and withstand life situations. They are no longer in the correct way to perform their future role, they will feel distressed, apprehensive, and suspicious of others, and they cannot enjoy life or see the positive aspects in it.<sup>19</sup>

Among the features that make the other party vulnerable to blackmail are: an excessive need to satisfy others, an intense fear of anger, a need for reassurance at any cost, a tendency to assume more responsibilities than it should be about the lives of others, a high level of self-doubt, and when these traits control in a person and enter into war with his intelligence, confidence, certainty and thought, he is the one who prepares himself to be a victim of great manipulation.

## THEORIES EXPLAINING EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL

1. Social exchange theory: This theory was proposed by Peter Blau (1959). The social exchange theory is considered one of the first theories that explained emotional blackmail. Thibout & Kelley (1959), of the founders of this theory, revealed that the relations between individuals in the community are based on the social exchange that depends on the quantitative and qualitative balance in the rights and duties, and it is natural that will affect the shape and continuity of the relationships.<sup>15</sup>

Homans (1961) confirmed what Thibout & Kelley (1959) revealed, which is that the continuous communication between groups and individuals leads to the formation of love, sympathy, and cooperation; this consequently increases the size of interaction between community groups.<sup>12</sup>

2. Emotional blackmail model (Forward, 1979): Susan Forward (1979) proposed the emotional blackmail hypothesis through her work as a volunteer in the neurological diseases institute at California state university in Los Angeles. Forward revealed in her book (Emotional blackmail) that many successful and skilled people in different fields feel hesitant and helpless in front of those practicing emotional blackmailing. Forward reported that the blackmailer tries to

hide their acts and take care that the victim does not notice that. Forward pointed to the FOG state that the victim experience due to fear, obligation, and guilt. As the blackmailer works – in his relationship with the victim – to stir those factors to ensure that the victim will fear losing the relationship, show obligation to it, and feel guilty if not doing what is required and asked by the blackmailer.<sup>17</sup>

By presenting the two theories, we find a difference in viewpoints, as the concept of force is the only means used by a blackmailer to trap the victim, according to Peter Blau (1964). When there is a need for another person, he will pay for it in a form that does not take acceptance and approval but rather obeys his/her desires. Therefore, those subject to force based on affection do not necessarily feel their poor position and lack of identity.

While Forward goes with her model in a way or broadly from Blau, as she indicated, emotional blackmail might occur during the social relationship, directly or indirectly, such as using force by the blackmailer in Blau. However, as Forward sees that the blackmailers are intelligent and self-sufficient persons, to fulfill their needs and not feel the blackmailer (the victim), it may be the weak that extorts the emotionally strong one.

Emotional blackmail occurs through systemic steps, best described as follows:

- **Demand:** When the blackmailer asks the victim (either directly or indirectly) to do something for him/her.
- **Resistance:** When the victim shows refusal and worries about this request
- **Stress:** When the victim is narrowed down, the blackmailer describes the victim as a selfish person.
- **Threat:** when the blackmailer finds continuous resistance from the victim, the blackmailer might start threatening the victim
- **Bowing:** When the victim does not want to lose the relationship, tries to convince themselves that it was a mistake to resist, starts to bow and submit.
- **Duplication:** when the previously mentioned steps are repeated

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

Up to the researcher's knowledge, there is a significant lack of studies investigating the association of emotional blackmail and college life adjustment among the youth category. However, several studies explored emotional blackmail and adjustment to college life as separated variables. For example, Karnani & Zelman<sup>1</sup> measured the emotional blackmail among couples from different ethnicities in Hong Kong. The sample of the study consisted of 199 expatriates committed to couple relations. A structured emotional blackmail scale consisted of 25 items was used in this study. The study's findings showed that FOG (Fear, Obligation, and guilt) status explained 47.8% of the emotional blackmail among the studied subjects.

In a study carried out by Al-Khatib, Awamleh, & Samawi,<sup>20</sup> the purpose of the study was to assess the level of college life adjustment among undergraduate students at Albalqa Applied University. The study adopted the de-

scriptive cross-sectional research approach by recruiting a sample of 334 undergraduate students. The study results showed a moderate degree of adjustment to college life among undergraduate students in Albalqa Applied University. In addition, the results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the responses to the college life adjustment scale neither referred to the college, gender, academic level, nor the interaction between these variables.

Moreover, Bushong<sup>21</sup> investigated the association between gender, emotional blackmail and mental health problems among college students. A sample of 101 undergraduate students was recruited in this study. The depressive disorders, apprehension, self-confidence and emotional abuse aspects were assessed using a self-filled questionnaire. The findings revealed that there was no variation in the mental health problems assessed in this study as a result of emotional blackmail referred to gender differences.

In a study that was carried out by Liu,<sup>17</sup> the purpose of the study was to investigate the association between blackmail and employees well-being. A sample of 299 employees filled a questionnaire to examine their perceptions of emotional blackmail. The findings showed that explored employees had negative perceptions about the association between emotional blackmail and well-being.

Lee & Park<sup>22</sup> carried out a cross-sectional study that investigated the impact of grit and stress on the adjustment to college life among nursing undergraduates. The sample of the study was 145 nursing students. The study results showed that grit was positively correlated to the adjustment to college life among nursing students. However, the results showed that there was a negative correlation between stress and adjustment to college life. Therefore, the study recommended improving the students' awareness about the effective coping strategies to manage stress and improve grit level among them.

Jeong<sup>23</sup> carried out a descriptive cross-sectional study that sought to determine the effect of resilience and social support on the adaptation to college life among junior and senior students. The study sample consisted of 166 undergraduates from two higher education institutions. The study results indicated that both resilience and social support significantly had a positive impact on the level of the students' adjustment to college life. Therefore, the study recommended developing educational programs to increase students' awareness of emotional support and resilience and their significant role in improving students' adjustment to college life.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lee<sup>24</sup> carried out a cross-sectional study that aimed to explore the impact of YouTube addiction and loneliness on adjustment to college life during distance education. The participants of the study were 95 undergraduate students in Korea. The study results showed that their loneliness and YouTube addiction negatively affected the adjustment to college life, and based on the regression analysis, they were found to be significant predictors of adjustment to college life.

In another study carried out by Klem,<sup>25</sup> the purpose was to investigate the impact of aggression on college adjustment among undergraduate students. The study sample consisted of 135 undergraduate college students. Both stu-

dent adaptation to college questionnaire and indirect aggression scale was used in this study. The findings of the study indicated that indirect aggression was not associated with students' adjustment to college. However, the study reported that indirect aggression was significantly associated with students' emotional adjustment but not overall college adjustment.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

Analyzing the reality of university education for students, and determining the types of obstacles that may hinder the university student's career, regardless of their quality (academic, psychological, economic, social, ethical, etc.). It also helps to provide and suggest means and methods that can help the university student face what He may encounter difficulties, which may affect his potential and performance in his roles. Hence, the current study aims to find out the relationship between emotional blackmail and compatibility in university life among the warned students at Al-Balqa Applied University.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of emotional blackmail among warned female students at Al-Balqaa Applied University, Jordan?
2. To how extent is warned female students at Albalqaa Applied University in Jordan are adjusted to their college?
3. Is there any significant association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students at Abalqaa Applied University, Jordan?

## RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

In light of the increasing interest in university students' mental health, due to its significant impact on achieving their psychosocial adjustment, this study reveals the association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among students. Furthermore, this study derives its importance from the importance of the study sample represented by female students who obtained academic warnings, which indicates in advance the existence of weakness in academic achievement.

Up to the researcher's knowledge, there is a significant lack of studies investigating the association between emotional blackmail and other psychological variables within the educational institution's contexts. This study is considered one of the few studies in the Middle East region that investigated emotional blackmail and its association with the extent of female students' college adjustment. Therefore, it provides a useful theoretical framework that may form the nucleus of future studies that include more variables and a larger study sample and various academic institutions.

The current study results will positively contribute to designing and laying the foundations for awareness programs to increase students' awareness of strategies for dealing with emotional blackmail and how to achieve a higher level of adjustment to university life.

## RESEARCH DEFINITIONS

**Warned students:** The researcher defines the warned students as those students having one or more academic warnings due to lack of acceptable academic performance or misconduct during the academic process.

**Emotional Blackmail:** A form of psychological manipulation - during which a system of threats and various types of punishment inflicted by a person on another close to them occurs in an attempt to control their behavior.<sup>14</sup> The researcher defines emotional blackmail operationally as the total score obtained by the warned female students at Al-Balqa Applied University on the emotional blackmail scale adopted in the present study.

**Adjustment to college:** The researcher defines adjustment to college in this study as a state of internal equilibrium that occurs for college students so that they are satisfied with themselves and accept it, with relative freedom from tension and conflict that is associated with negative feelings about the self, the state of internal balance can be accompanied by a positive deal with reality and the environment. It is defined as the total score obtained by the warned female students at Al-Balqa Applied University on the college adjustment scale adopted in the present study.

## METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study was correlational. It examined the association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned undergraduate females at Al- Balqa Applied University, Jordan.

### PARTICIPANTS

The study sample consists of all (357) female warned students at Al-Balqa Applied University, according to the statistics of the Deanship of Student Affairs and the Admission and Registration Unit at the university, as shown in [Table \(1\)](#).

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

To achieve the study objectives, the researchers adopted the following instruments:

1. Emotional abuse questionnaire developed by Neil Jacobson and John Gottman. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items. Each item is scored based on a 4-point Likert scale (Never=1, Rarely=2, Occasionally = 3, and Very often=4). If a participant gets a score between 73 and 94, she is considered emotionally abused. Obtaining a score higher than 95 indicates severe emotional abuse of the participant. The internal consistency is .92. The EAQ has been widely used

**Table 1. Distribution of Study Population**

Variable	Number of Students	N	Percentage%
Gender	Females	357	100%
Type of Faculty	Scientific	183	51.3%
	Humanities	174	48.7%
Total		357	100%

in previous research, indicating its external validity (Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000). The EAQ focuses on a wide range of different patterns of emotional abuse and has strong psychometric values. Higher scores indicated higher levels of experiencing emotional abuse.

- The college adjustment test (CAT) was developed by Pennebaker (2013). The test comprised of 19 items covering three domains: positive affect (items 9, 10, 12, 13, 18, 19), negative affect (items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17), and homesickness domain (items 1, 2, 3, 15, 16 and (8-item 11). As indicated by the test's author: "Based on two samples of 287 and 260 entering college students, the internal consistency of the scale is acceptable, Cronbach alpha = .79. Two-month test-retest with 196 introductory college students was good,  $r = .65$ ."

To ensure the adopted scale's reliability in the Jordanian context, both scales were administered to a pilot sample consisting of 20 warned students excluded from the original study sample. The reliability coefficient for the emotional abuse questionnaire was 0.783, whereas the college adjustment test's reliability coefficient was 0.81.

#### STATISTICAL PROCESSING

The collected data were organized, coded, and exported to the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) (v.26, IBM Corporation). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study participants' characteristics and their responses to the adopted scales. In addition, the Pearson Correlation factor was used to assess the association between emotional blackmail and the adjustment to college life among the study participants. Finally, the results of the study were presented as texts, tables and discussed later.

#### RESULTS

The results presented in [Table \(2\)](#) indicate the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants. The results indicated that 40.3% ( $n=144$ ) of the study participants were less than 20 years old, whereas 32.2% ( $n=115$ ) and 27.5% ( $n=98$ ) were more than 22 years and 20 to 22 years old, respectively. In addition, single females were the most participating students as they constituted 80.4% ( $n=287$ ). Married and divorced females constituted 17.1% and 2.5%, respectively. Finally, the results related to the participating females' academic year indicated that first-year students were the highest (33.9%,  $n=121$ ); on the other hand, second, third, and fourth-year students were constituting 29.7%, 18.8%, and 17.6%, respectively.

The results are shown in [table \(3\)](#), represent the means and standard deviations of the warned students' responses to the emotional abuse scale items. The results showed that warned female students experienced a high level of emotional blackmail as the total score was (78.33) with a mean score of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.799. The students reported that they are exposed to be caught at consistencies to show that they were lying; their partners tried to convince people that they were crazy and told other people that they were crazy. The mean scores of the scale items ranged between 3.45 and 2.19. all items were shown to be moderate to high at the emotional blackmail scale used in this study.

The results shown in [table \(4\)](#) represent mean scores and standard deviations for the warned students' responses to the college adjustment test items. The results showed that the participating warned students had a low college adjustment level ( $3.62 \pm .736$ ). The students reported that they felt anxious or nervous during the last seven days ( $4.91 \pm .791$ ), liked the social life ( $4.44 \pm .743$ ), felt depressed ( $4.21 \pm .891$ ). In addition, the students reported that they felt angry ( $4.18 \pm .607$ ) they worried about the impression they made on others ( $4.16 \pm .841$ ). The warned female students' overall adjustment score was 77.95, which indicated maladjustment to college life.

Pearson's correlation factor was calculated to investigate the correlation between emotional blackmail and adjustment to college among warned female students. As shown in [table \(5\)](#), there was a significant inverse association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment ( $r = -0.641$ ,  $P = 0.03$ )

#### DISCUSSION

Emotional blackmail is when someone uses our empathy and care for them against us. They can threaten to hurt themselves or someone else if the other partner does not do what they want. So, they are using the fact that we care for them and their well-being to manipulate others into doing something for them or giving them something they want. They can even threaten publicly revealing personal information or secrets about their partners or withholding love and affection until they get what they want.

The present study sought to identify the association of emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students at Al-Balqa Applied University. Therefore, a sample of 357 warned female students from different academic majors and levels were recruited in the present study.

The results of the study showed that there is a high level of emotional blackmail among the warned female students. The high level of emotional blackmail among recruited fe-

**Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants**

Variable	F(%)
<b>Age</b>	
Less than 20 years	144 (40.3%)
20 – 22 years	98 (27.5%)
More than 22 years	115 (32.2%)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	61 (17.1%)
Single	287 (80.4%)
Divorced	9 (2.5%)
<b>Year of Program</b>	
First	121 (33.9%)
Second	106 (29.7%)
Third	67 (18.8%)
Fourth or more	63 (17.6%)

**Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the participant's responses to the emotional abuse scale items**

My partner, parents... etc.	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Tries to catch me at inconsistencies to show that I am lying	3.45	.591	1
Tries to convince other people that I am crazy	3.25	.767	2
Tells other people that there is something wrong with me	3.25	.780	2
Says things that hurt me out of spite	3.21	.840	3
Has told me I am sexually unattractive	3.19	.902	4
It tells me I am sexually inadequate	3.13	.784	6
Insults my religious background and beliefs	3.11	.997	7
Insults my ethnic background	2.19	.835	23
Insults my family	3.10	.805	8
Talks me into doing things that make me feel bad afterward	2.85	.768	13
It tells me no one else would ever want me	2.84	.922	14
Humiliates me in front of others	3.07	.963	9
It makes me do degrading things	2.73	1.017	17
Questions my sanity	2.57	.961	20
Tells other people personal information or secret about me	2.76	.935	16
Verbally attacks my personality	2.69	.973	18
Has insulted me by telling me that I am incompetent (stupid).	3.11	.795	7
Ridicules me	2.44	.627	21
It forces me to do things against my will	3.05	.821	10
Questions whether my love is true	2.36	.751	22
It compares me unfavorably to other partners	2.88	.633	12
Intentionally does things to scare me	3.15	.597	5
Threatens me physically during arguments	2.66	.804	19
Warns me that if I keep doing something, violence will follow	2.81	.721	15
Our arguments often escalate out of control	2.36	.621	22
I'm worried most when my partner is quiet	3.21	.667	3
He drives recklessly or too fast when he is angry	2.91	.703	11
<b>Total score (78.33)</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>.799</b>	

male students might refer to the social and academic pressure exerted on the participating students. The study sample represented by female students having academic issues they have to overcome. Therefore, they might be emotionally disturbed and simply affected by other surrounding psychological effects. In addition, the high level of emotional blackmail might be referred to an emotional rela-

tionship in the university campus that might be affected by the academic performance of the warned students and vice versa.

Furthermore, the study results showed a low level of college adjustment among the warned female students. The decline in the adjustment to college life might be attributed to the students' low academic performance. Lack of adjust-

**Table 4. Means and standard deviations for the participant's responses to the College Adjustment Test (CAT)**

Within the LAST WEEK, to what degree have you.	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
You missed your friends from high school	3.36	.687	12
You missed your home	3.32	.509	13
You missed your parents and other family members	3.07	.745	15
You worried about how you will perform academically at college	2.99	.561	16
You worried about love or intimate relationships with others	4.01	.615	7
You worried about the way you look	3.61	.743	11
You worried about the impression you make on others	4.16	.841	5
You worried about being in college in general	2.85	.826	17
You liked your classes	3.16	.904	14
You liked your roommate(s)	4.06	.561	6
You liked being away from your parents	3.87	.637	9
You liked your social life	4.44	.743	2
You liked college in general	3.75	.953	10
You felt angry	4.18	.607	4
You felt lonely	2.82	.755	18
You felt anxious or nervous	4.91	.791	1
You felt depressed	4.21	.891	3
You felt optimistic about your future at college	2.21	1.007	19
You felt good about yourself	3.95	.614	8
Total score (77.95)	3.62	.736	Low

**Table 5. Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r^2$ ) between the emotional blackmail and the college adjustment among warned female students at Albalqaa university**

Variable	College adjustment	
	$r^2$	P
Emotional adjustment	-0.641	0.03*

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

ment to college might significantly affect the student's engagement in academic activities and tasks.

The present study results indicated a significant inverse association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students. Thus, mood disturbance and emotional disturbance caused by the emotional blackmail might significantly affect the students' engagement, attitudes, and perceptions of college life and academic performance.

A psychotherapist, Susan Forward popularized emotional blackmail; she uses the term FOG to explain how manipulative people can use Fear, Obligation, and Guilt to get the partner to do what they want. FOG can be dangerous sometimes, and that's exactly what fear, obligation, and guilt can do. When an individual is scared, his/, her brain uses stress response, fight, flight, freeze to help them assess and act accordingly. When this response is triggered, the amygdala sounds the alarm, which causes the prefrontal cortex to go offline. Therefore the individual is more reactive, impulsive, and can be really bad at making decisions. Therefore, when an individual is in that state, he/she can be, ore malleable or easily manipulated.

The obligation also plays a big role. Relationships are not built on what is owed to an individual. Instead, the individual's relationships, especially females, should be based on mutual love and care. No healthy relationship can exist when the obligation is used to manipulate.

Finally, there is guilt. We have all had someone guilt us into doing something. It could be through obligation; whatever an individual can do to get another feels bad for him/her, like poking him/her, feel like he/she owe him/her for all they have done.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, the present study showed a significant inverse correlation between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among warned female students at Al-Balqaa Applied University, Jordan. Fear, obligation, and guilt were huge motivators that raised emotional blackmail among the studied females. Consequently, their adjustment to college was negatively affected due to emotional disturbances resulting from the emotional blackmail.

## IMPLICATIONS

**In terms of practice:** The findings of the current study might be beneficial for the warned female students, both males, and females, in different educational settings, as they might improve the awareness and practices of those students when exposed to emotional blackmail acts. In addition, these findings highlight the association between emotional blackmail and college life adjustment, which will enable the students to adopt specific acts and strategies to overcome any possible effects.

**In terms of education:** This study's results might draw the attention of the curriculum designers and developers to include the concepts of emotional blackmail and college adjustment in the university curricula, especially elective courses related to psychology.

**In terms of policy:** The results of the current study might draw the attention of the educational institutions' administrative authorities to issue and set a policy regarding the practice of any emotional blackmail acts among students, in addition, to issue strict rules, regulations, and punishment for any harmful acts related to emotionally blackmail and might disrupt the adjustment to college life among the students.

**In terms of research:** The current study explores the association between emotional blackmail and college adjustment among university students. The findings and the theoretical framework of this study might direct future research studies about the possible investigations of different variables related to emotional blackmail, factors influencing emotional blackmailing, adjustment to college life, and coping strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends holding educational and awareness campaigns aiming to increase the female students' knowledge and awareness about emotional blackmail and the coping strategies they might adopt to reduce their emotional disturbance. In addition, students should be encouraged to engage in more social and academic activities on the university campus, consequently improving their adjustment level, either to college or socially.

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