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# **Defense Mechanisms Used by Students to Cope with Stress and Fear of Negative Evaluation**

The Case of First Year Students of English at Mohamed Khider University –  
Biskra

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
the Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics

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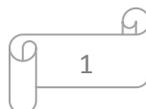
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# Dedication

This work is dedicated:

To my parents Souad and Abdel Moumen who did nothing but support me, and because of their encouragement, I am proud of the person I have become,

To my sisters,

To the most special people in my life, Guessouri Aichouche, Hafida, Hanane and Noura,

To my best friends, Mayssa, Sabrine and Zineb,

To Sarah Bouabbache, Amina Djabali, Yousra Sebiaa, Amira Doufani, Rachid Lamine Teta, Chergui Adel and Kamel Dakhia. If it was not for their constant encouragement and support, I do not think I was able to stay motivated. My deepest thanks go to each one of them.

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Last but not least, my deepest thanks go to all the first year students for their help and for taking their time to complete the questionnaire.

## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the issue on why do university students act in certain unacceptable ways and after relying on our research tools: questionnaire and students' interview, our study have analyzed the issue and tested hypotheses to reveal the undercover factors of the behavioral patterns of our participants (N=90). Our case study was first year students in the University of Mohamed Khider – Biskra. University students have always been victims to a massive input of stresses and negative evaluations that come from instructors or anyone else in their lives. They are always looked upon as perfectionists that overcame all the hardships in life and that could be one of the main reasons why they are misunderstood. Despite the fact that they have reached the age of maturity, they seem to lack the ability to act mature. What we are trying to say that we have all seen actual university students cheat, be rude to teachers or commit childish actions that would make them seem less of what they actually are. There are countless reasons why they behave like this, these are called defense mechanisms and they aim to reduce anxiety and stress that teacher, parents or peers, in fact as external factors, are the main causes why they get triggered easily.

**Key words:** University students, defense mechanisms, stress, coping, Negative Evaluation.

## List of Abbreviations

1. FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation
2. DM: Defense Mechanisms
3. FE: Formative Evaluation
4. SE: Summative Evaluation
5. IE: Illuminative Evaluation
6. NE: Negative Evaluation

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## General introduction

At some point, we all have seen some university students react in certain ways that made them sound as annoying or rude during lectures or when they receive their test result papers from their professors. But we have never really wondered ‘why’ they act out in such impolite manners. Whether we know it or not, what we think is inappropriate behavior coming out from a student is in fact a defense mechanism for them and the cause of stress can be the reason why their defense mechanisms act up, bearing in mind that they can be triggered easily and for the smallest reasons so, how can it not when they are under a lot of pressure?

University students have always been victims to a massive input of stresses and negative evaluations that come from educators or anyone else. So, the occurrence of psychological issues in students, and the trigger of their defense mechanisms may be associated with their fear of negative evaluations sourced from their teachers, counterparts and even by their parents. Not to forget, pressures by the world to succeed, homework, tests and assignments in complex subjects, social problems or worries about uncertain futures when their academic years fails miserably. In other words, these sources range from attempts to meet the academic expectations to financial problems, from adaptation to new environments to the problems experienced in establishing new friendships. (Dyson and Renk, 2006) However, their opinions on themselves in that situation differentiate from ours and that has added a new dimension to the problem, which makes it interesting to wonder about what pushes them to use strong emotions or even going as far as being rude to their teachers.

## **Statement of the problem**

This research aims to achieve making the inside and the outside of the university world acknowledge the problems that can carry consequences on the students' behaviors. These problems can cause for them an unsuccessful coping that can often result in anxiety, depression and a host of other mental health issues. We are also led to wonder which factors underlie certain (annoying or rude) behaviors expressed by our students in certain situations. Also, it will note why they express certain defense mechanisms and how they cloud reality to avoid suffering and stresses, at least for a while.

## **Significance of the study**

Algerian students acquire an education solely based on standardized exams, which causes them to develop a passive attitude for learning. In the view of university students have unique personality characteristics. They are often considered to be high achievers, perfectionists and more expected not to fail anymore after they have passed a-to-be considered difficult part of their academic life, Baccalaureate degree. Several studies have documented a very high incidence of anxiety, depression, stress, and sleeping difficulties among university students. On the other hand, Algerian university students tend to be more dependent on their parents for the longest time of their teenage and pre-adulthood years unlike their counterparts in the Western countries. Extensively, being a university student is inherently a very stressful, exposing a student to a large amount of academic and psychosocial stressors, especially first year university students, they cannot ready for adulthood and maturity if they were never introduced to it by their own parents. All their lives, they were supervised and conducted through life by mature adults and suddenly they found themselves in a new environment where they are not guided anymore.

In spite of the fact that they have reached an age that is supposed to be the age of maturity, physical and financial development, unfortunately, they lack independence in the exact same areas that consist of making decisions. In other words, the whole

situation just does not make sense to them as they are struggling to find an ego-identity balance between adolescence and adulthood.

### **Purpose of the study**

Since university students have a number of sources of stress and as scholars and researchers, we look for problems to fix. Therefore, the problem lies among the students that deal with failing classes and the stress, anxiety, strong fear of negative evaluations that comes along with it. However, these students have ways of adaptations that allow them to deal with the obstacles that face them during their academic year. Given this predicament, some educators fail to avow the widespread of chronic anxiety and stress and their effects on the academic performances of their students. Consequently, this study will analyze the issue and its details of the depth, and it will explain defense mechanisms to fill that gap and make it crystal clear; if there are any voids in understanding them. Also, the other objective of this study is to illustrate the relationship between first year university students' setbacks and their behavioral patterns and characteristics based on their defense mechanisms, and to determine whether an important correlation exists.

### **Main questions:**

- What is meant by defense mechanisms? Are they healthy or unhealthy to use?
- What are the defense mechanisms mostly used by learners and how do they use them to cope with the daily stress they face in life?
- How does the critical feedback and FNE effect on defense mechanism use for the learners?

### **Hypothesis**

- Depending on the Freudian theory to define defense mechanisms, they are a set of psychological approaches that humans tend to use to decrease tension.

- If learners are put under a large amount of stress, they will tend to use impulsive and immature defense mechanisms.
- If we put the critical feedback and negative evaluation face to face with students, they will most likely activate their defense mechanisms and give us attitude.

## **Methodology and Research Tools**

The intended method in this research is questionnaire, which is a set of questions that will be distributed to a sample in order to collect the data needed for this research. It was opted as the best method because questionnaires allow people to think about their responses and give the most accurate ones while answering the questions asked that it will provide an accurate and the most profound data. In addition, we will hold interviews with students and to ask them direct questions in order to prove our hypotheses after the data analysis.

## **Population**

The population of interest is first year students of Mohamed Khider University, Biskra. However, commonly a population contains too many individuals to study conveniently and the research is often restricted to a few samples drawn from it. So, the sample that will be chosen must cover up all the gaps in order to represent the entire population.

The sample should be representative by 70% to the entire population. Their ages differ from 15 years old to 33 years old. And of course, both genders are respected because the goal is assigning the sample to be as representative as possible. Additionally, the study takes place in the city of Biskra.

## **Structure of the research**

The number of the chapters that will be included in the research is three. Firstly, chapter one aims to achieve making the readers and contemporary students understand the meaning and definition of the defense mechanism and how they work in our daily life. However, chapter two targets to examine FNE, mental health, traits of anger and different waves of stress that hit their shore of sanity occasionally. On

the other hand, chapter three intends to analyze the data collected and test whether our hypotheses are accurate or not.

# Chapter one

## Defense Mechanisms

# **PART ONE**

## **CHAPTER ONE: DEFENSE MECHANISMS**

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## **1.1. Introduction**

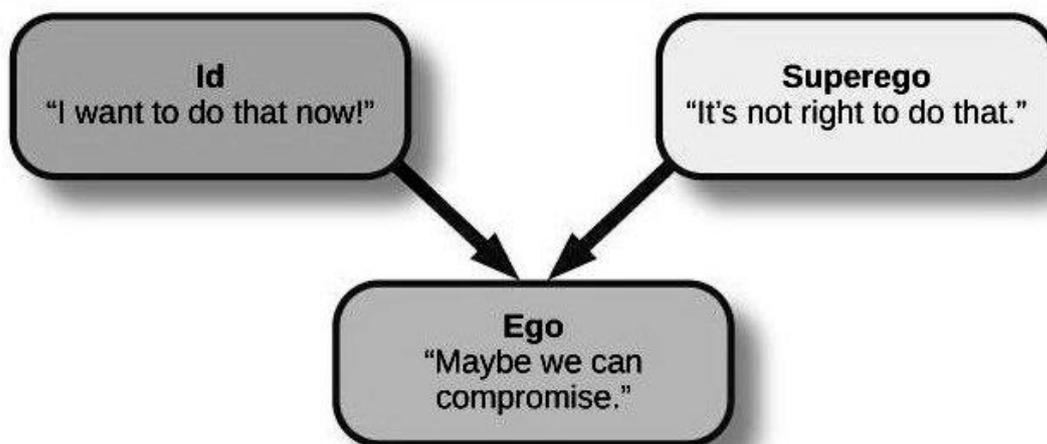
We often believe that only psychiatric patients, especially mentally ill people, use defense mechanisms because they are always looked upon as a way of taking back control or to avoid dealing with a traumatizing situation's occurrence. However, people fail to see that defense mechanisms are a part of our daily routines and by our, I mean, you and me and everyone else across the globe. Except that most of us do not realize that we use defense mechanisms or know what they are or how they function. Even if most of us are not having any ties with Psychology in a way or another, we have got to admit that there is something we have said or done that is engaged in some self-deception at least some of the time. Most of us do not realize how defense mechanisms have roots dived in the depth of our personalities and that is the interesting part. However, the question is—can we detect the form of deception that we have used at any given moment? We can because they are a part of our everyday life. If we really pay attention to the situation where we have felt like we were over-reacting or it entirely got the best of us but that after it has occurred. In view of the fact that defense mechanisms are unconscious processes so we cannot really control them. People fail to see that the defense mechanisms have profound impacts on the development of personalities which is why the ratio of people acknowledging them is very low. Nonetheless, it is interesting to point out that these mechanisms do function in lives of sane people like us or more specifically, university students.

## **1.2. Definition of terms**

### **1.2.1. Personality structure**

Usually when we talk about someone's personality, we are talking about what makes that person stand in the crowd and become different from other people, perhaps even unique. Sigmund Freud, the father of Psychology pointed out the structural models of

personality. Every individual have three parts: the id, superego and the ego. These three components work together to create a complete personality. The id is your instinctual component; the superego is the social component while the ego is your conscious decisions that are affected by both of the above. However, before we get to the point, we have to dive in a little in a psychology pool in order to make the upcoming definitions clear. Let us take a look at the explanation of the structural models of personality.



**Diagram 1.1:** Components of Personality Structures

### **1.2.1.1. The id:**

Have you ever seen a mother and her child in the grocery store and the child starts to act bratty and cries for his mother to buy him/her absolutely everything she/he sees? You probably have and you thought it was annoying. A child’s personality is all id and this makes us think of when a baby gets hungry, does she sit quietly and wait until someone remembers to feed her? No, because the id must be satisfied at all costs. It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. The id is the disorganized part of the personality structure that contains a human's basic, instinctual drives. In addition, id is the only component of personality that is present from birth. (Schacter,

2009) We call it a chaos, full of seething excitations. It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle. (Freud, 1933)

The id is the primitive, biological and instinctive component. It has been present since our birth and it consists all the impulsive parts of our psyche which responds immediately to the animalistic selfish drives. It is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our aggressive drives. The id is not affected or regulated by the world's reality or logic as it operates on the pleasure principle (Freud, 1920) which means that every urge should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences or how impossible it is to fulfil them. The id "knows no judgements of value: no good and evil, no morality." (Freud, 1981)

### **1.2.1.2. The superego:**

The personality of the newborn child is all id and only later it develops the ego and the superego. Consequently, the second structural component of the personality would be the superego. According to Freud, the superego is the social component of our personality that is represented by our conscience and is based on our ideal of perfection. Imagine you are in the grocery store as a child and you see candies on the drawers, so you try to take some but one of your parents tries to stop you and tell you that it is the wrong thing to do. Here for example, your parent's actions are similar to the superego because they told you what the right thing to do is. The superego is our idealistic view of what is right; it represents how we should treat other people and how we should behave as a member of society. When we obey the rules of morality and play by what is right and neglect what is wrong, we feel good about ourselves and we become proud of our accomplishments. It is also our conscience view of what is considered wrong. When we break one of the morality rules, the superego considers our behaviors to be bad and that would lead to feelings of guilt or remorse. It suppresses the unacceptable impulses of the id and looks after the ego to do well and strive for perfection.

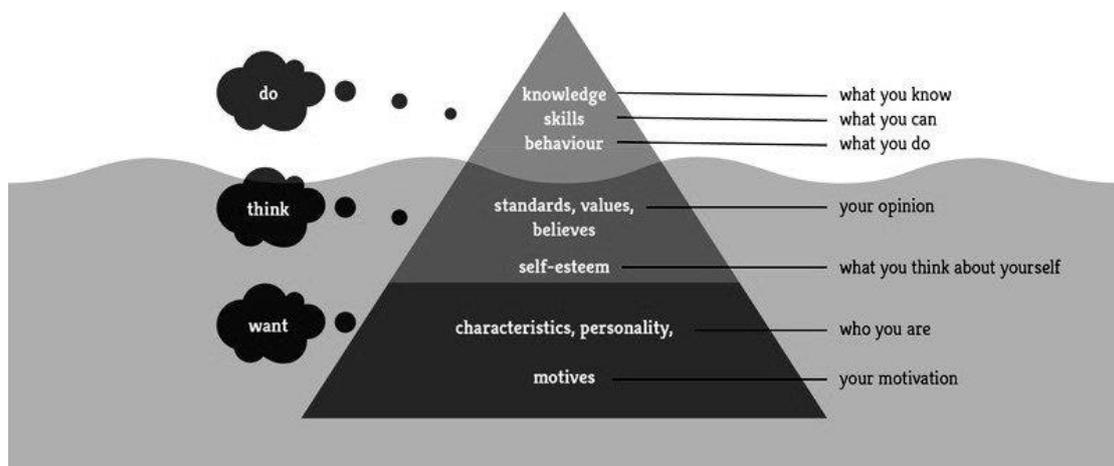
When a child grows up, she/he incorporates the values and morals of society which are adapted from her/his parents and other people around her/him. The superego starts developing at a very young age, from 3 or 5 years old. The superego tries to tame the id's immoral impulses and urges, especially those that are forbidden by society, such as aggression. In addition, the superego is overly cautious and it is the responsible side of guilt. When someone gives in to their id demands, later on the superego will punish us with making us feel guilty about the thing we have done. Guilt, embarrassment and shame often accompany anxiety. However, when someone does something that is ideal or does not go against morals or values, the superego will reward us by pushing us to feel proud of ourselves for committing to staying as 'good' people.

### **1.2.1.3. The ego:**

When anxiety becomes overwhelming, it is the ego's place to protect the person by employing defense mechanisms. (Freud, A. 1968) Last but not least, the last component of the personality is the ego. It is the balance between the good and the bad but according to the real world. The ego is "that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world." (Freud, 1961) *The id part of the personality is focused on being chaotic and making demands whereas the superego says no to the unreasonable demands of the id. Ideally, the ego is the decision making component because it develops in order to mediate between the both of them. It also functions to make balance between the unrealistic id and the external real world. It has no concept of right or wrong and it gets affected by the superego and the id because sometimes it is weak relative to the headstrong id. However, the ego tries to tame the id and make it meet the realistic ways of society.* Freud made the analogy of the id being a horse while the ego is the rider. The ego is "like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse." (Freud, 1923)

Despite the fact that the ego goes in several conflicts with the id by engaging in secondary process thinking, satisfaction is not abandoned. Nevertheless, if the ego gives in to the id and fails in its attempt to use the reality principles, anxiety is

experienced and that is when some primitive defense mechanisms are employed to help the individual cope with unpleasant emotions. It seems that if it was not for reality, we would be a lot more satisfied.



**Diagram 1.2:** An illustrated version of the personality structure components

We see that there are a number of different ways of coping with stress in a defensive manner and when there are conflicts between the components of the personality psyches; defense mechanisms kick in to protect the individual. Nonetheless, defense mechanisms work by distorting the id impulses into acceptable forms, or by unconscious or conscious blockage of these impulses. Doing this allows us to reduce anxiety that is caused by the unconscious thought or feeling (Freud, A. 1968). Let us take a take a look at the most common and less well known defense mechanisms that students may utilize, along with some examples of how the mind might use them.

### **1.2.2. Definition of Defense Mechanisms**

When psychologists talk about “defense mechanisms,” that leads most of us to think that they are techniques in which we behave or think in certain ways to better protect or “defend” ourselves. The idea is broader and deeper than that because most defense mechanisms have profound effects on whatever we do. It is interesting to point that they are unconscious, which means most of us do not realize we are using them in the moment. As pointed out by Coleman and colleagues (1987), defense mechanisms are “necessary to soften failure, to soothe tension and anxiety, to fix the emotional damage and to maintain our feelings of efficacy and valuableness.” When the level of stress is high, both productivity and the pleasure with life could decrease and problems in the relationships with the environment could occur (Morris, 2002). They are psychological strategies played by the unconscious mind to manipulate, deny or reframe reality in order to defend the person against feelings of anxiety and unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli. They enable the mind to reach compromise solutions for conflicts that seemed unable to be resolved. When we are threatened, we try to avoid the danger either by attacking or by escaping. Overcoming stress involves the behavior and thoughts of individuals to manage the results of stressful events (Folkman, 2010; Lundin, 1974; Saroson, 1972). However, the excessive use of these defenses can be a serious problem, which means that we can detect so many psychological disorders based on how much one uses these defenses, and that they can either be healthy or unhealthy depending on the circumstances and how much a person uses them. In other words, defense mechanisms may result in healthy or unhealthy consequences depending on the circumstances and frequency with which the mechanism is used because an excessive use may lead to maladaptive ways of coping- and it would result in consequences that the physical or mental health of the individual is affected. Psychologists have categorized defense mechanisms based upon how primitive they are. However, they are classified by the level of effectiveness: primitive, less primitive and mature defenses. Similar to a personality trait, defense mechanism appears as a fixation in adulthood; therefore, it is considered an important concept in understanding human behavior. For instance, during class presentations, we often see students acting differently from normal and that is them being anxious or making up excuses on why they do not want to get on board or it would even get to the point of them absenting that module. Sometimes, they would procrastinate their work or assignments and make up excuses saying that they were sick. When in fact, they were caught up in their fear of messing up or saying

something embarrassing during the presentation of their work. They would be too overwhelmed to realize what they are doing in that moment, which why they just want a way out of all this. Students do not understand what they are doing when they are pressured to do something they fear. As we have mentioned earlier, the whole concept of defense mechanism is unconscious and it can be used as a framework to elucidate personality characteristics, psychological functioning, temperament, stressful life events and mental/physical health, which is why all of the excuses and the lies that they made up would seem genuine to them because it is their only escape from the harsh reality.

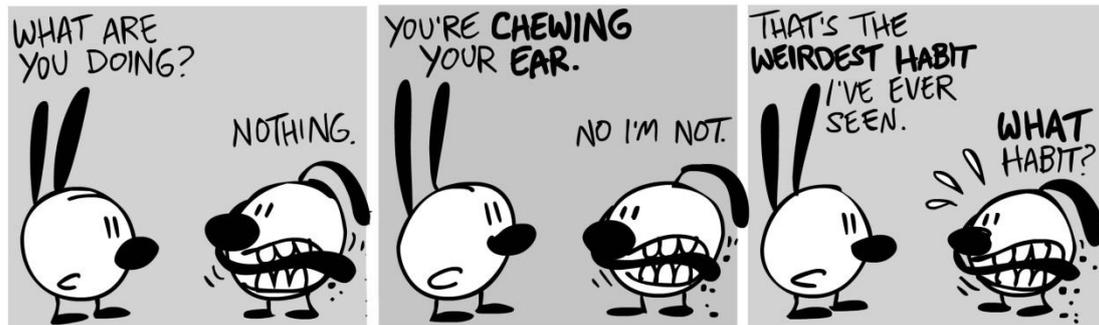
### **1.2.3. Types of Defense Mechanisms**

#### **1.2.3.1. Denial**

One of the most common and used defense mechanisms is denial because so many people use it in their everyday lives to avoid dealing with painful emotions or throbbing events that they would want to avoid. Or as according to Susan **Whitbourne, 2011**, “When you use denial, you simply refuse to accept the truth or reality of a fact or experience. [No, I’m just a social smoker,] is a good example; similarly people can apply this to any bad habit they wish to distance themselves from including excessive alcohol or substance use. "Just say no," in this case means that you protect your self-esteem by failing to acknowledge your own behavior.”

Denial is the refusal to accept reality and it involves blocking external events from awareness. It is the simplest defense to understand. It is simply the refusal to acknowledge what has, is, or will happen. (Richard, 2011) If a situation is too much to handle, you pretend like it does not exist owing to the fact that thinking about it may cause you to face a deeply distressing or a disturbing experience. Typically, your common reaction to it is, “It cannot be true.” So, you would rather not admit it merely to temporarily leap yourself from reality. For example, a student receiving a low mark from an exam attributes this low mark to an assessment-related mistake made by the teacher. Denial is a positive beneficial mechanism in some cases, while it is not in others. As an example, two sisters that lived in two different countries, one of them loses her life to a battle of cancer, her other sister refuses this reality and expects her

sister to be alive but still living outside the country is a typical example for denial. Consequently, the fact that the sister is using denial, she is refusing to face a threatening reality for the sake of her own mental health because she knows she cannot deal with the trauma. She completely deleted the situation of a loss that she failed to cope with. However, on the other hand, denial is not a useful defense mechanism to some people because it can lead to severe consequences.



**Diagram 1.3:** How denial is actually used

As an example, students who deny their need for studying and do absolutely everything to avoid opening their books will fail their exams at the end of the day. As another example, students that heavily smoke may refuse to admit to themselves that smoking is bad for their health. In the long run, denial can prevent you from incorporating unpleasant information about yourself and your life and have potentially destructive consequences. Nonetheless, it could be considered as a one of the dangerous defense mechanisms because, no one can disregard reality and get away with it for long.

### **1.2.3.2. Reaction formation**

Reaction formation is transforming internal unwanted or dangerous thoughts, feelings or impulses into the opposite of what is felt. Going to the opposite extreme, exaggeration; overcompensation for unacceptable impulses. Conscious feelings are the opposite of the unconscious ones. Love and hate would be the prime examples to explain what reaction formation really is. For example, a mother who was violent towards her child, for example, may react to her feelings of guilt for being an abusive mother by becoming extremely overprotective and caring frequently to convince both

herself and her child that she is a good mother and that she is very sorry for her behavior. The mother perceived her true feelings that are legally and morally unacceptable, and converted them in a much exaggerated performance to convince herself that her motives are sincere. However, reaction-formation takes place, it is usually assumed that the original, rejected impulse does not vanish, but persists, unconscious, in its original infantile form-. Charles Rycroft 1995.



**Diagram 1.4:** The comedy and tragedy masks

Reaction-formation term of developing reaction refers to the behavioral form of denial that people express by exaggerating their thoughts and emotions which are totally opposite to their own feelings. Exaggeration is a clue for this behavior.”- (Gokdag, 2015) as another example, a student dislikes his teacher and is very angry with her may instead be overly kind and generous toward his teacher. Here, exaggeration takes place but the student is incapable of expressing the negative emotions of anger and unhappiness with the teacher, and instead becomes overly kind to publicly demonstrate his lack of anger and happiness. According Calvin Hall, 1954, *“When love is experienced as a reaction formation against hate, we cannot say that love is substituted for hate, because the original aggressive feelings still exist underneath the affectionate exterior that merely masks the hate to hide it from awareness.”*

### 1.2.3.3. Acting out

Acting out is letting out feelings -that you're incapable of expressing- in actions to make yourself feel better. It is when someone deals with an emotional conflict or internal or external stressors by actions rather than reflections or feelings. (Terri L. Thompson, 2007). When a person acts out, she or he is releasing pressure and it often helps her or him get calmer or feel better and peaceful once again. For instance, when students get in an argument with a teacher, they cannot possibly become impolite and throw a temper tantrum of words at their teacher, so they would slam their bags on the table or leave the classroom.

Instead of saying, "I'm angry with you," the students act out differently from the feelings that they are incapable of expressing. However, defensive acting out is not synonymous with bad behavior because it requires evidence that the behavior is related to emotional conflicts. (Sadock, 2001) In other words, acting out is performing an extreme behavior in order to express thoughts or feelings that you cannot express the way you want to express, which this spots the lights on different forms of acting out. One of the most dangerous forms of acting out may also be self-injury or self-harm. You express in physical pain the feelings that you cannot stand to feel emotionally. When a student walks in class where his teacher and classmates are, and he accidentally trips over something. He may want to curse after falling but he can't because his ego perceived that behavior as a contradictory to the social etiquettes. The superego blocked the id's instinctual impulses from coming out. A person might act out by transforming an impulse into a rather calm behavior. When the id component of the human psyche signals the desire to act on an impulse, the ego and super ego will often counteract it if they feel that that behavior would be counterproductive.

#### **1.2.3.4. Dissociation**

Dissociation is another form of defense mechanisms that we will see. It means splitting off from reality or diving into thoughts and losing track of time and space or instead, when the person dissociates, they find themselves another way to represent themselves in order to live the moment. A person who dissociates often loses track of time or themselves and their usual thought processes and memories. This often happens to people who have a history of any kind of abuse and it leads them to believe that they have multiple selves or personalities, which bring us to think that dissociation, may be responsible for some symptoms of mental illnesses like hysteria or schizophrenia. People use dissociation as a defense mechanism to cope with uncomfortable or unwanted situations by removing themselves from them. This can cause them to enter a state of daydreaming, something most of the students do inside the classroom, they would stare into the space and allow their minds to wander off until someone nudges them and tell them to pay attention. For example, a student finds a module very boring; they may fantasize about other things that they find more interesting than focusing on the lesson. Day dreaming or fantasy formations are a part of dissociation because they are a way of relaxation for people who try to overcome conflicts via imagination.

Dissociation can be helpful sometimes as a way to stop an individual's life from interfering with another. For example, it happens when a student doesn't bring problems from home to the classroom. When life seems distressing, people often use fantasy as a way of escaping reality. "In this manner, a person who dissociates can "disconnect" from the real world for a time, and live in a different world that is not cluttered with thoughts, feelings or memories that are unbearable." (T. Manichander, 2015)

#### **1.2.3.5. Sublimation**

Sublimation refers to transformation of anxiety or stress into more acceptable forms. It is another type of displacement but it rather takes place when we manage to displace our emotions into something constructive rather than destructive. It is considered to be a more adaptive rather than a coping defense mechanism because it

transforms negative emotions into a positive energy to help the individual feel better. Many great musicians, athletes or painters were unhappy with their lives and used art to express themselves and Vincent Van Gogh is a primary example for sublimation. He was suicidal and unhappy but still used his negative energy to create the most beautiful paints in the whole world. Another example would be sports.



**Diagram 1.5: An illustration on how sublimation works**

When students are angry about grades or problems at home, they play football outside to release negative emotions out **instead** of bottling them in so it would not be destructive to them or anyone around them. In other words, instead of converting this negative energy into something that is socially unacceptable, the student may use sublimation to redirect this motivation into more acceptable, even productive results. George Vaillant, a psychoanalyst that followed Freud's path, identified sublimation as a mature, defense mechanism, which we can use to adapt to arising anxieties.

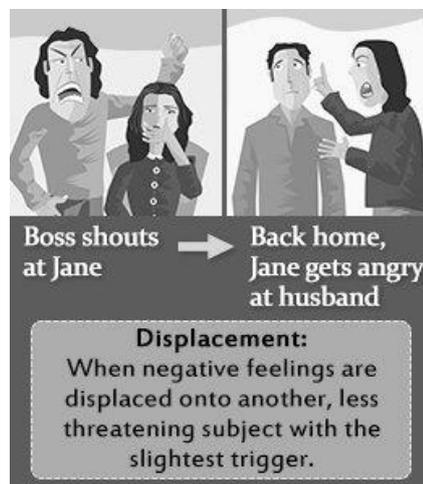
### **1.2.3.6. Displacement**

Displacement is shifting your instinctual impulse from the actual target onto a powerless substitute target. The substitute target can be a person or an object that can satisfy the anger of the aggressor. For example, when a father is frustrated by his boss or job, he suppresses his anger but later, he may go home and beat up a family member or engage in any type of violence that he cannot fulfill towards his boss.

As other examples,

- a. When a kid is bullied at school, he may beat up or bully his younger siblings to feel better about himself.
- b. A person who dislikes their teacher after being given low grades may feel that they would be punished if they express their hostility towards them. Therefore, they may unconsciously displace their antipathy onto their best friend, making excuses for treating them badly without justification.

Displacements are often quite satisfactory and workable mechanisms; if one cannot have steak, it is comforting to like hamburger equally well. As the March Hare observed, "I like what I have is the same as I have what I like." In another words, displacement occurs when a person represses affection, fear or impulses that they feel towards another person. However, displacement can cause serious complications in the substitute's life, especially if they are conscious with full recognition that she/he is a substitute for something else.



**Diagram 1.6:** An illustration on how Displacement works

When a person that wants to become a father very bad and he learns that it is impossible for him, he may then feel himself inefficient and that he lacks something. Consequently, he could either adopt a child or attach himself to a pet. However, in this case displacement can be considered as a good thing because it does not shift any

type of aggressive impulses towards anything. Just a simple getaway for someone to cope with what he cannot handle.

### **1.2.3.7. Idealization**

Idealization is the disregard of the negative qualities and glorification of the positive qualities in self or others. Sometimes it means being unrealistic and painting a rosy picture out of a gloomy fact, simply because the individual doesn't want to deal with emotional conflict or internal or external stressors, which is why she or he disregard the negative qualities and focuses only on the positive ones. It is the overestimation of the desirable qualities and the underestimation of the limitations of a desired object. Idealization is creating a perfect image of a person or a place or an object by focusing only on their positive traits and neglecting the negative ones, it is also speaking of the pros of something and ignoring the fact that it also has cons. For instance, when someone asks you about a holiday that you went to as a child, you most likely do not remember or mention the times you cried or felt sad but you will only focus on the 'happier times', so you only speak of them. As another example of idealization; a literature student major talks about the beauty of major whereas a STEM student talk about his/her major and how she/he will find a job in the future, ignoring the negative qualities that they face while studying.

### **1.2.3.8. Passive Aggression**

Passive aggression happens when someone deals with emotional conflict or internal or external stressors by indirectly expressing aggression toward others and things. The passive-aggressive behavior is characterized by a habitual pattern of passive resistance to expected work requirements. As Warner says: "The worst case of passive-aggressive behavior involves destructive attitudes such as negativity, sullenness, resentment, procrastination, 'forgetting' to do something, chronic lateness, and intentional inefficiency." Passive-aggressive behavior from students and teachers is damaging to classroom unity and productivity. If this behavior is ignored it could result in decreased office efficiency and frustration among workers. (Harms, 2012)

### 1.2.3.9. Rationalization

Rationalization is the justification of one's impulsive behavior towards someone else by saying that the actual motive behind that behavior was a good intention. It is making excuses for an act or a decision that was produced by an unconscious impulse and the excuse may apparently be logical or not. The purpose of rationalization is not to intentionally make up some false story to fool the person you have hurt but instead, the person making excuses will unintentionally mislead himself/herself as well as the person being fooled. As Karen Horney defined it in one of his quotes, "rationalization may be defined as self-deception by reasoning."

As an example, if a student fails an exam, they may excuse themselves from blame by rationalizing that she/he was too busy to revise during the revision period or that she/he is hated by his/her teacher. We rationalize things often on a fully cognitive level when we feed ourselves excuses on why we behaved in a certain way in order to convince ourselves and the people around us that our intentions are good to make an event or an impulse less threatening. Making excuses for anything comes easily from people with sensitive egos, it is not their fault. However, it is safe to say that many of us are quite prepared to believe our lies.



**Diagram 1.7:** An illustrated image representing Rationalization

## 1.2.4. Mature Defense Mechanisms

As should be clear by now, not all defense mechanisms are healthy, because when people engage in primitive and immature defense mechanisms, they tend to engage in it unconsciously and impulsively while disregarding the consequences of their own acts, and by trying to help themselves in this manner, they frequently end up making their situation worse. However, any conscious efforts that an individual takes towards coping with stress or a threatening situation, it is considered a mature coping, for instance, as can any significant self-help effort you decide to engage in.

People *decide* and choose to cope using mature defense mechanisms; they don't just occur spontaneously. Using self-soothing exercises is mature coping, as is working a cognitive restructuring exercise if you choose it so as to better yourself, and it is a healthy thing for you to do, it is mature coping.

Reality is accepted even when it is not appreciated; people decide to cope with using mature defense mechanisms when a situation is not pleasing. Uncomfortable feelings and thoughts are deliberately transformed into less threatening forms rather than being pushed aside. The mature defense mechanisms are defined by a healthy and conscious relationship with reality and they come in many forms; these few examples:

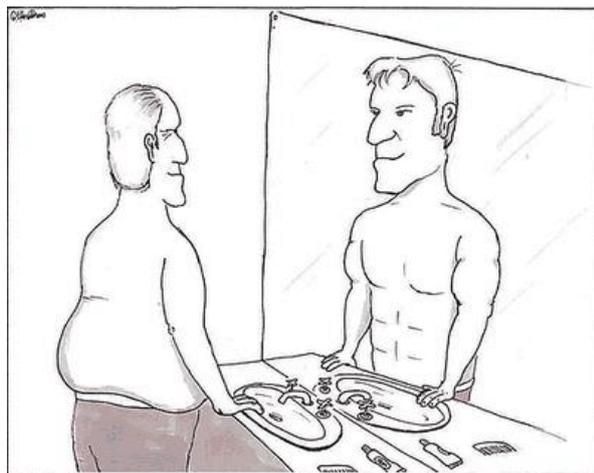
### 1.2.4.1. Acceptance



**Diagram 1.8:** Acceptance

The opposite of denial is acceptance and it is learning how to live with the circumstances of a storm. When a situation is too hard for an individual to handle, they come to a closure that they need to accept the aftermath in order to keep their sanity ongoing. It is also a technique that we use to live with a situation that has been causing them anxiety. In addition, it could mean coming out of their way to admit their wrongs and own up to their bad deeds. For instance, a student may acknowledge that she/he have behaved unreasonably towards their teacher or accept the new circumstances after an undesired situation has occurred.

#### 1.2.4.2. Self-Serving Bias



**Diagram 1.9:** Self-serving Bias in an illustration

Self-serving bias is mature defense mechanism that means we exaggerate the importance of our own achievements in order to protect our ego from criticism or similarly, a potential threat. For example, when you get criticized by your counterparts after a school performance, you would remind yourself that you have done absolutely great and nothing can phase you.

When similar situations happen, the defense is activated to protect ourselves from criticism and the complaints of others. For example, after passing an exam, some students over-estimate the significance of their own achievements and take credits for passing it without acknowledging the role played by the teacher in their success. The self-serving bias mechanism can be affective to maintain the stress and only focus on success but over-using it can be a sign of arrogance. Similarly, when faced with potential threat, we might deflect blame and apportion responsibility for failure to anybody but ourselves. As another example, there are some students that refuse to study for tests or exams simply because they think they are better off without taking a look at books or handouts.

#### **1.2.4.3. Avoidance**

When anxiety arises in a particular and you can't deal with it, the only solution sometimes, is to avoid that situation. Avoidance is dodging a stressful situation because dealing with it seems like too much of a work in that moment so the individual rather leaves it unsolved instead of confronting it. For example, a student might know that they are due to give a stressful presentation in the classroom; she/he would call in sick and skip that day to avoid presenting it. However, avoidance in situations that cause anxiety is only a short term option because you cannot avoid something forever. You may have to face it one way or another.

#### **1.2.4.4. Suppression**

Suppression is a defense mechanism that we are aware of using and it consists of pushing down memories, thoughts or emotions in order to focus on something else. In other words, suppression involves attempting not to think about a memory or stressful events in order not to add up more stress to the current stress and cause internal conflicts. As an example, a student in school finds that he thinks about his home problems in classes; he decides not to think about these problems until he goes back home so they do not interfere with his studies. Here, suppression was in full recognition and completely desirable since it allowed concentration on school and left

thinking about home problems until later. For instance, a student goes on vacation worried that she may be failing; she decides not to spoil her holiday by thinking of school. Unlike many other defense mechanisms, the suppression of thoughts and emotions is something which occurs consciously and we may be entirely aware that we are attempting to suppress anxieties.

## **1.1. Conclusion**

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological processes that help students cope with anxiety resulting from a stressful internal or external situation that they are facing. They do not only maintain mental stability in them; they also help them protect their ego in that exact moment. Students use different defense situations to cope with different situations.

# Chapter two

## Fear of Negative Evaluation and Stress

## **PART TWO**

### **CHAPTER TWO: FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AND STRESS**

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## **2.1. Introduction**

First year in university is the transitional period of major change and developments to students that can result in significant psychological stress for them. Moreover, the learning process that leads to changes in the students' psyche and according to Negiri, success in school depends on the ability of the learners to effectively carry out the academic activities that would help them to meet up with their specific academic goals and aspirations. Performance researches have been conducted within a range of theoretical frameworks, but these researches never actually analyzed the connection between academic performance and specific psychological defenses, including psychological defense mechanisms. Therefore the problem requires further investigation. Defense mechanisms become permanent methods of response through the human personality development and affect all aspects of life, including the studying activities. Especially if a combination of situations such as school, academic pressure, anxiety about the future and family/peer relationships play a role in creating angst for students, their failure to meet up with these academic requirements is a factor of defense mechanism. Therefore, we can assume that defense mechanisms certainly have an impact on the process of learning.

## **2.2. Literature Review**

A list of studies that ranged from the years of 2014 to 2015 has explained the impact of stress on defense mechanisms and their effects on children and adolescents. In 2014, according to the third annual international conference of early childhood care and education in Moscow, an article by the author Varvara Negrii illustrated the relationship between psychological defense and school students' academic performance. The investigated study talked about how the high academic performance

of schoolchildren is not only the key to success in school studies but it also plays an important role in the children's everyday life. It also mentioned that defense mechanisms are defined as a set of actions aimed at eliminating any changes threatening individual's mental stability in order to maintain a comfortable and permanent way of living, however, they can lead to maladjustment and disorganization, of course that depends on the internal structures or maturity. The conclusion that was conducted from that is correct. According to V. Negrii's study that was done on 97 students aged 15-18 from four secondary schools in Moscow summed up that primitive personality defense mechanisms are associated with low performance at school and mature defense mechanisms are associated with high academic performances. Therefore, as predicted, there is an identified connection between performance at school and defense mechanisms.

Similarly, a study that was done by Keun Huh and Myeong Hee Shin in 2015 spotted the light on defense mechanisms of Korean elementary students and their relationship with the stress from learning English. Casually, the study aimed to examine the relationship between the levels of stress included school children as a result of learning English and their resulting defense mechanisms from the whole matter. The subjects of the study were 106 fifth graders, both genders in South Korea and after the surveys were collected; the investigated study indicated that there was a strong relationship between the level of stress from learning English and defense mechanisms. Consequently, the findings implied that there was a need to consider their stress and help them control it in appropriate ways.

A 2015 research by Samira Salimynezhada aimed to study the relationship between general health and emotional intelligence with defense mechanisms where the sample size was 120 university students of different majors. The study conducted three solid hypothesizes, the first one confirmed that there is a correlation between general health and psychological defense mechanisms disruptive on students. The second hypothesis talked about the relationship between emotional intelligence and general defense mechanism, and showed that it doesn't exists; the result of the study corresponded with Behzadifard 2014. On the other hand, the third hypothesis's results showed that the assumption of the General health and mature defense mechanisms in patients with migraine headaches, there is a significant relationship between both. In the view of, previous researches like Bazyar Agha Yousef 2013; showed that general defense

mechanism is disrupted in people with migraine headaches and general health are related. Therefore, it would be helpful for peers, parents, and teachers to promote initiatives that address a student's perception of the initial source of stress.

### **2.3. Stress**

Some researchers defined stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change because when someone is under a large amount of stress, they can become tired, sick, and unable to concentrate or think clearly. In addition, they can even suffer mental breakdowns. For many, stress was their reaction to this in the form of chest pain, heartburn, headache or palpitations. Others used stress to refer to what they perceived as the end result of these repeated responses, such as an ulcer or heart attack. Schafer suggested that stress can be caused from "too much or too little arousal resulting in harm to mind and body." Because it can affect both the individual's body and mind. Some people used stress to refer to an overbearing unpleasant situation they were subjected to. Similarly, Patterson defined stress as, "the psychological response to stressors, particularly when there is a perceived imbalance between environmental demands (life changes) and the individual's capability to meet these demands." Also, a researcher advocated that stress is "a nonspecific response of the body to any demand that exceeds the person's ability to cope, as a person-environment relationship that threatens and as a mental state in response to strains or daily hassles." Consequently, many researchers were confused about the definitions of stress; however one physician concluded in the year of 1951 that the stress in addition to being itself was also the cause of itself, and the result of itself. In general, there is little agreement in the literature over, the definition of stress, and likewise, there is no consistency in how stress in students can be defined.

The relationship between defense mechanism and stress is that the effect of stress on someone can be different, according the defense mechanism that a person expresses in response to stress. A considerable number of studies have been conducted on defense

mechanism used by elementary students in South Korea. However, most such studies examined the relationship between the defense mechanism and the mental health or psychological wellbeing, and there is a lack of research on the defense mechanisms in response to stress from learning. Grohol empathized that, defense mechanisms are a one way of looking at how people distance themselves from a full awareness of unpleasant thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Stress induced fears and anxiety in people and it affects their performances at various levels. There are many sources of stresses among students:

- Family issues or problems with parents
- School-related problems or pressures
- Moving to a new community or changing schools
- Taking on too many activities or having too high expectations
- Family financial problems
- Chronic illness or severe problems in the family
- Their own thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (feeling depressed or lonely, getting into trouble because of their behavior)

### **2.3.1. Academic Stress and Teachers Role**

Regarding the effect of the teacher's role on the academic stress of the student, teachers play a strong and an essential role in the classroom and that does not mean that their duties stop only on education and on transmitting knowledge to students. No, because no education reform is likely to succeed without the spiritual active participation of teacher because they can create a low-stress learning environment in addition to help the students explore their identities and guide them. As well as regularly talking to them to identify the stress they are having because students are sensitive and get hurt easily, especially by their teachers' words. Some teachers pressurize their students into doing anything which they do not want to be doing but they must also understand diversity in learning styles, however, all of the styles should focus on the intellectual development and the stress management techniques of their students. Their ability to create effective learning environments that foster student achievement depends on the kind of relationship they build with their students. (Baker, 1997) The opportunities for frustration are in the hands of the

teacher to minimize, as Chandler emphasized, “A teacher has a vital role as a mediator who can filter the negative experiences of students and can buffer the impact of stress.”

Researches showed that students’ motivation and attitude toward school are closely linked their relationships with their teacher because tests have been shown to invite student participation and decision making, allow humor into their classroom make students into the courses that are being taught to them (Jennings, 1980). Students are likely to build stronger relations with teachers who are friendly and supportive. Therefore, teachers should be good at creating beneficial relations with their students and should try to detect and cure their stress by communicating effectively and orienting them with the stress management techniques.

### **2.3.2. Stress from learning and academic achievement**

The previous study compared the academic achievements of two groups; the first group was students in the low-stress and the second group was those in the high-stress group. The comparison revealed that there is a significant difference according to the level of stress. The students in the low-stress group gained higher scores in their English achievements than those in the high-stress group where the author part classified his study into three according to the answers given for the survey. The first part was the difference in the use of the defense mechanism according to the stress level, whereas the second part was the difference in English achievement according to stress levels in students and similarly, the third part was the difference in the use of defense mechanism by gender. The detailed results showed that students who have a high level of stress used the immature and self-restraining from stress defense mechanisms, which included fantasy and passive aggression towards their teachers and they seem to be overly frustrated with their own learning ability. On the contrary, the results showed that students with a low level of stress do not seem to use various

defense mechanisms to cope with the stress from learning. Therefore, the pattern for using defense mechanisms was a significant predictor in identifying the level of academic stress suffered by school students. Long story short, the findings of the investigated study indicate that elementary school students who suffered from a high level of stress while learning tended to use a wider variety of defense mechanisms than those who suffered from a low level of stress. Moreover, students who endured less stress while learning showed a higher achievement in their English exam than those in the group with high stress.

## **2.4. Evaluation**

Researchers conflicted on the several definitions of evaluation because it is a broad term that can be used in different fields. Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object according to Trochim (2006) and it is the most frequently given definition. Richards (2002) stated that evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information is necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institution involved. On the other hand, Dochy and Spiel (2001) stated that evaluation is a construct that has been studied since a long time and much have been written on it. While Ibid argues that evaluation emphasizes acquiring and assessing information rather than worth where he states that, "Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object". All these definition available however, an exact definition of "evaluation" is hard to set and the reason behind this may be because its meaning is overlooking all the aspects like, "summative vs. formative", "tests vs. assignments" etc. Also, this may be due to its enforcement in different and many fields such as politics, science, etc.

### **2.4.1. Educational Evaluation**

In education, evaluation defined as, the judgements about students' learning, the process of judging achievement, growth, product, or changes in these. (Echevaria, Vogt and Short, 2004: 148) Educational evaluation is also a professional activity that individual educators need to undertake because it is a responsibility.

### **2.4.2. Types of evaluations**

The types of evaluation in language teaching, there are four types of evaluation which are acknowledged by most of the researchers and they include: formative evaluation, summative evaluation, illuminative evaluation and negative evaluation. An FE sometimes referred to as internal evaluation is a method for judging the worth of a program while the program activities are formed in progress. This part of the evaluation focuses on the process and it permits the learners, and the instructors to monitor how well the instructional goals and objectives are being met. In addition, its main goal is to focus on deficiencies and difficulties so the learners learn properly and master the required knowledges. (Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand: 2014)

However, an SE is another broad category of evaluation types. As the name shows, it is a method of judging the worth of a program at the end of the program activities. (Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand: 2014) It is sometimes referred to as external evaluation. Scriven (1967) argued that, "All assessments can be summative but only some have the additional capability of serving formative functions." On the other hand an IE is mostly concerned with studying the ongoing process of education. In

general, the techniques used in this method are more subjective, and often involve personal value judgments of the results. (Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand: 2014) In such cases, the evaluator explores the perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the staff and students, using a variety of methods (Richards, 2001).

### **2.4.3. Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Fear of negative evaluation is the agitation of being viewed as nothing but a failure. When all you try is your best, or you may not try your best but the thumbs-down you get will cause deep conflicts in you. Watson and Friend (1969) defined FNE as a distress over negative evaluations by others and expectation that others would evaluate negatively because fear is a reaction to threatening situations and evaluation itself threatens the learner, we can conclude that negative evaluation itself creates fear, which is why it has been called Fear of Negative Evaluation. In education, Ross (1996) adjusted that evaluation should not only focus on the outcome and final results, but also on the process of learning. In the view of, NE can offend learners. Rubio (2007) stated that learners who have a very low self-esteem tend to underestimate themselves; therefore, even self-assessment can lead to negative evaluation. NE can offend the learner and push him to think that there is a sprinkle of subjectivity laying under the assessment given. As a result, they may develop fear from the evaluation learns face or any evaluative situations. This feeling is more likely to be reinforced when evaluators show a kind of subjectivity in their evaluations (Airasian, 2001)

Dodson pointed,

*“The fear of the panorama of a negative evaluation is probably inherent to being human. He specified it to criticism, ridicule, contempt, embarrassment, loss of acceptability, loss of respect, and rejection which are disagreeable experiences most individuals attempt to avoid.”*

Therefore, the use of different techniques to evaluate, other than tests and assignments, is needed because the aim of evaluation is to assess and follow the

progress, as Trochim (2006) previously stated that evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object. In other words, teachers or instructors should not evaluate their learners negatively; they should try to understand the problems of the learners through the mistakes that have been committed because doing otherwise may cause fear of negative evaluation in learners. Since negative evaluation creates fear in learners, and fear is related deeply to threatening situation, the learners' defense mechanisms can be triggered.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

The high level of stress that the students deal with on occasions, coupled with a strong fear of negative evaluations can be the main provocations of their psychological defenses, which can carry profound consequences on their academic life, combined with issues between them and their teachers. Therefore, awareness of the stressors for university students and of how frequently and which methods they use to cope with these stressors is important for students' success and their welfare.

# Chapter Three

## Data Analysis (Fieldwork)

## **PART THREE**

### **CHAPTER THREE: FIELD WORK AND DATA ANALYSIS**

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### **3.1. Introduction**

In the process of trying to test our hypotheses, we transacted this current practical work, as the previous theoretical chapters to make well-clear and to understand the major issues and its psychological factors/causes that our students are dealing with in their scholar learning process and what defense mechanisms they use on a daily basis.

### **3.2. Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.2.1 Aim of the Students' Questionnaire and Interview**

The questionnaire is aimed for First Year LMD students of Mohamed Khider University in Biskra(UMKB), of the academic year 2016/2017. Since the total number of students was 886, divided into 15 groups, it was nearly impossible to conduct a study on the total number of the students. Thus, we attempted to distribute the questionnaire on a sample of 150 participants (10 students of each class) however, it did not go as we expected. Nevertheless, the results we that we go indeed made it easier to explore the same issue that has been discussed in the theoretical parts of this research. On the other hand, the interview was about asking questioning a few questions to 10 more students.

#### **3.2.2. Structure and Description of the Data Collecting Tool:**

##### **Students' Questionnaire and Interview**

The total number of the copies of questionnaire made was exactly 150 copies. From the gross number, only 110 participants answered and 15 copies were omitted and neglected because they did not contain good reliable answers, in adding to other students refusing to answer and keeping the questionnaire completely blank, which led us to reckon 95 is the final number of the participants that have fully completed to answer the questions of the questionnaire.

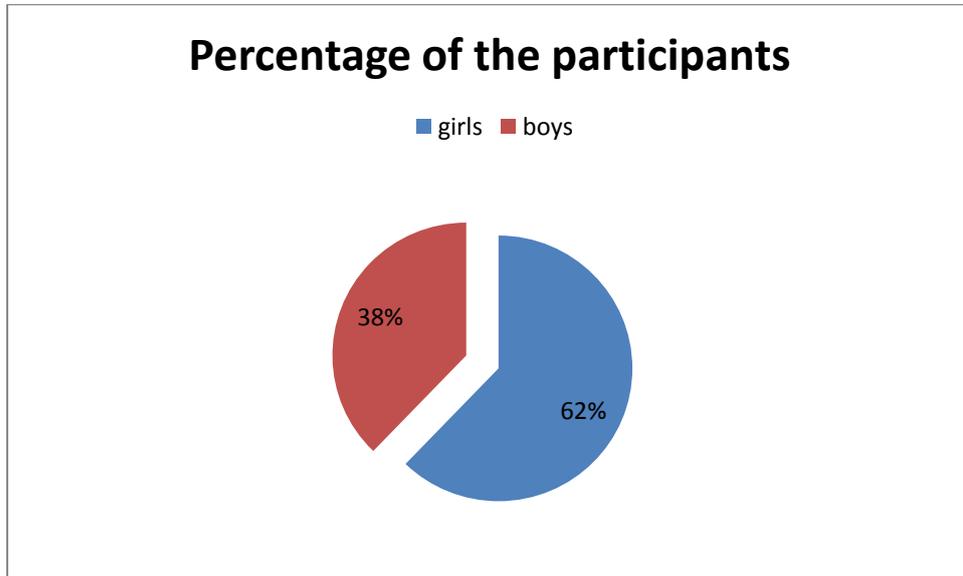
The questionnaire was formulated and divided into four (4) sections; each section had an effective role on investigating the prior issue. The first section focused mainly on the background profile of the participants, whereas it was about the gender and age. However, the second section was two (2) questions two/three answers for each, and the participants were supposed to choose the answer that they relate to the most. The two solid questions on this section focused on determining whether or not the participants use strong emotions to solve their problems. Nevertheless, the third section held accountable eight closed-ended questions (Yes or No) and it mainly focused on the psychological state and environmental factors affecting the students' mental health, however, some of the questions were used to know whether or not students use self-deception strategies. In the same section, there were two (2) open-ended questions that explored if there are any factors triggering the participants' defense mechanisms, or not. Last but not least, the fourth section it consisted of five (5) rating scale questions that mainly aimed to provide insights on the psychological case of the participants. Whereas the interview focused on the effects of FNE on defense mechanisms.

#### 4. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

##### Section one: Students' genders

Gender	Female	Male
Number	56	34
Percentage	62%	38%

**Table 3.1.:** The population participating in the questionnaire with respect to the gender



**Pie-chart 3.1.:** The population participating in the questionnaire with respect to the gender

Both table (1) and chart (1) illustrate that 62% of the participants are females and 38% are males, which leads us to think that the females' numbers in classes is higher than the males.

**Section two:**

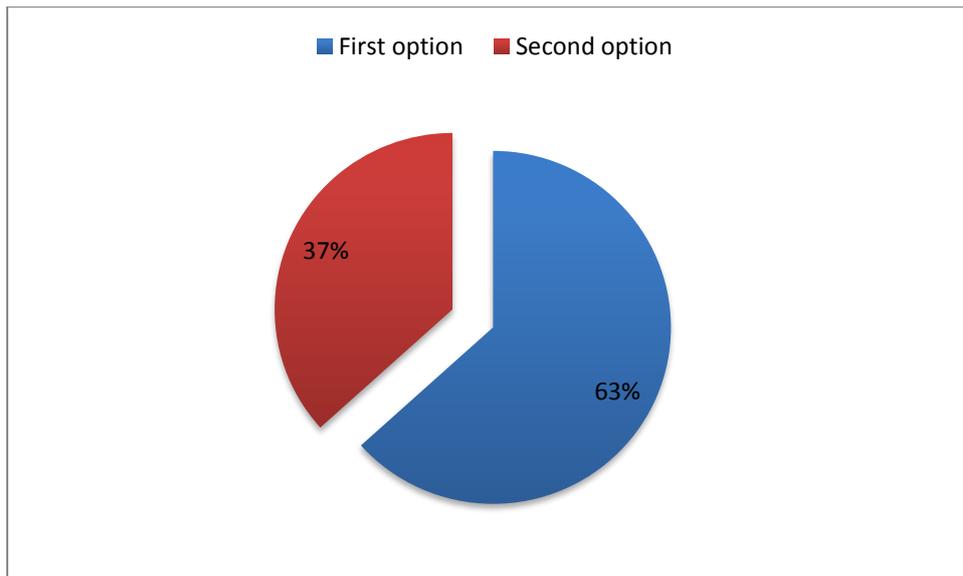
**Question 1:** When you fail a test or an exam that you did not really study for, do you:

First option: Blame your teacher for your grade outcome?

Second option: Promise yourself to do better and recompense?

	First option	Second option
Number of students	57	33
Percentage	63%	37%

**Table 3.2.:** Displaying whether or not participants use strong emotions



**Pie-chart 3.2.:** Displaying whether or not participants use strong emotions

The pie-chart and the table show that 57 (63%) students chose the first option that, and 33 (37%) students chose the second one. However, the question was a trick question to figure out the ratio of participants that unconsciously chose to allow their immature defense mechanisms to act up or, completely use their mature defense mechanisms instead. The students that selected the first option would usually use rationalization when a situation does not go well for them (i.e. blaming the outcome of their grades on their teachers) fast forward to our previous definition about rationalization, we rationalize things often on a fully cognitive level when we feed ourselves excuses on why we behaved in a certain way in order to convince ourselves and the people around us that our intentions are good to make an event or an impulse less threatening. On the other hand, the rest of the participants chose the second option which indicates that they use their mature defense mechanisms rather than the immature ones, which is acceptance. They have accepted the fact that they have failed and they are willing to recompense for that grade in the future.

**Question 2:** You argued with your teacher in class, do you:

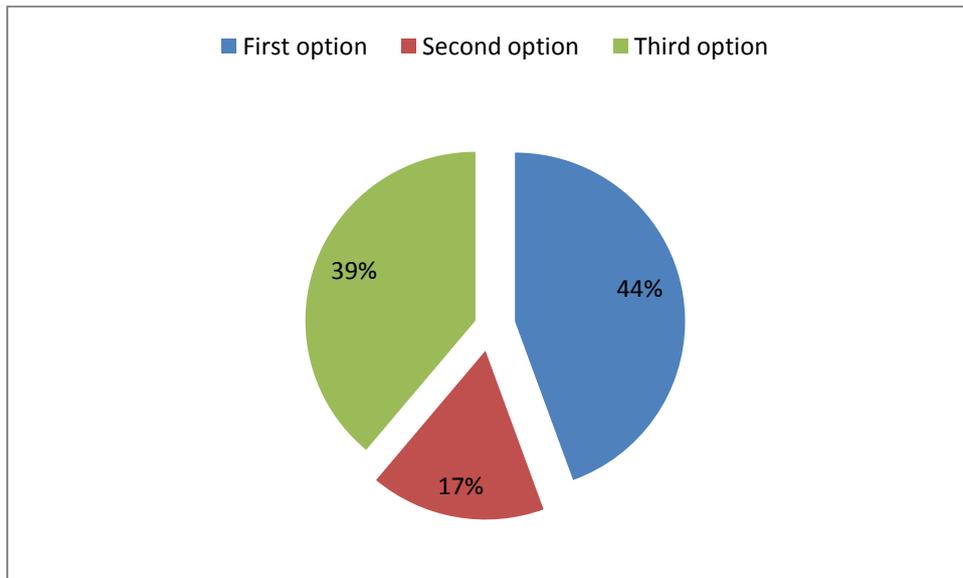
First option: Take responsibility for your actions and apologize?

Second option: Get upset and leave the classroom?

Third option: Stay calm and ignore the whole situation?

	First option	Second option	Third option
Number of students	40	15	35
Percentage	44%	17%	39%

**Table 3.3.:** Usage of defense mechanisms in serious situations



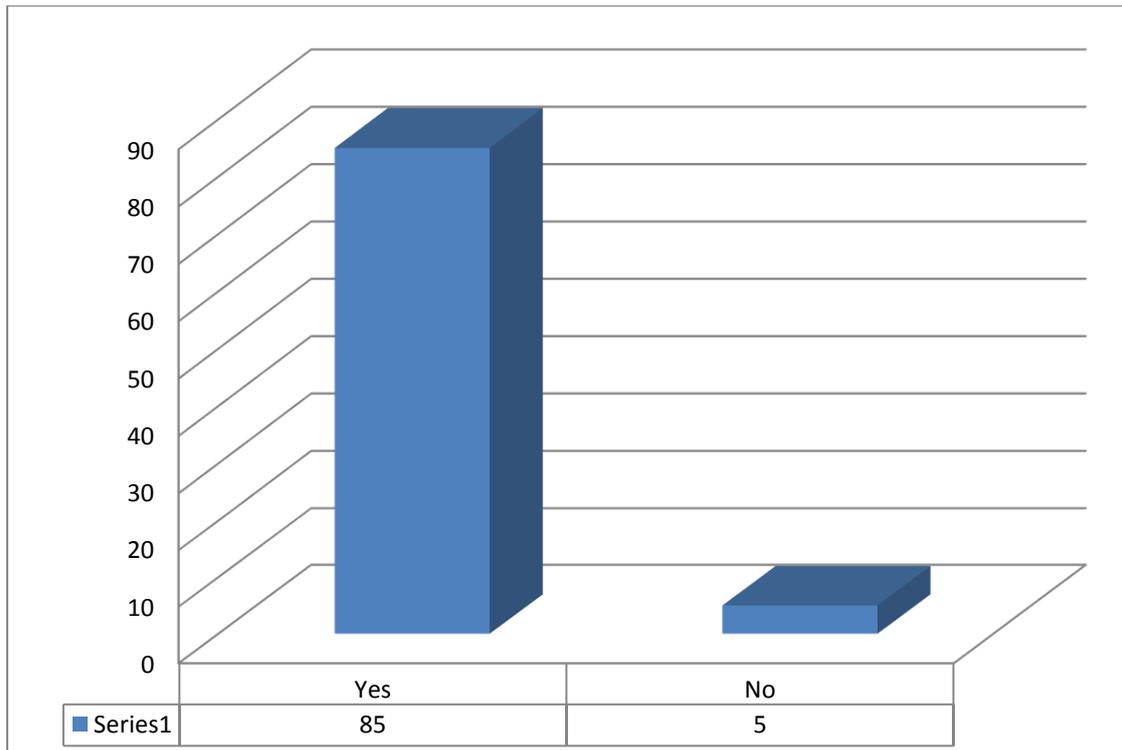
**Pie-chart 3.3.:** Usage of defense mechanisms in serious situations

The chart and the table above show us that the majority of the participants 44% have selected the first option, whereas the second and the third option were selected by 39% and 17%. Apparently, most of the students prefer using mature defense mechanisms in such cases and that is due to the respect they have for their teachers. However, the minority of the students would rather act on their impulses and allow them to take control. And on the other hands, the rest would rather remain neutral, ignoring the entire situation.

**Section three:**

**Question 3:** Have you ever argued with a teacher even though you know you are to blame?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

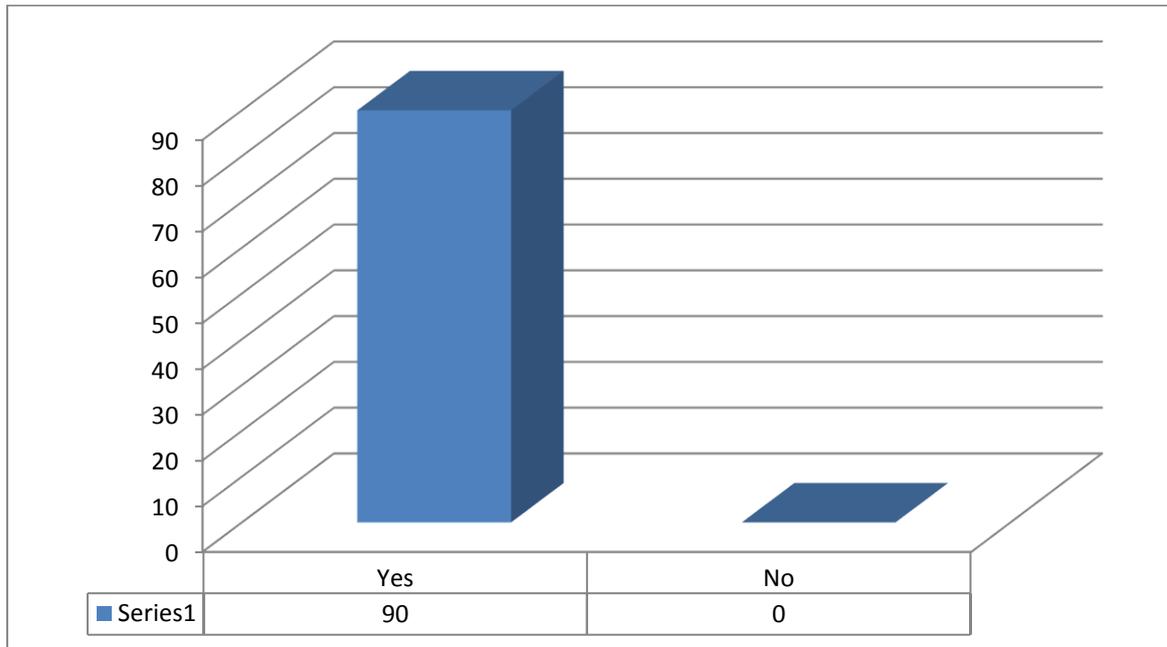


**Figure 3.1.:** Students taking responsibility for their actions

The figure represents the number of students that take the responsibility for their actions is 85 students, whereas 5 students said that they have never argued with their teachers before now. The answers to this question hide in the fact that there could be different reasons for the arguments and we do not know the outcome and how the students have reacted afterwards however, it is clear that they have used their immature defense mechanisms somehow as a way to advocate their wrong actions when they argued with their teacher even though they were the one to blame.

**Question 4:** Do your parents give you a hard time saying that you need put a little extra focus on school?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

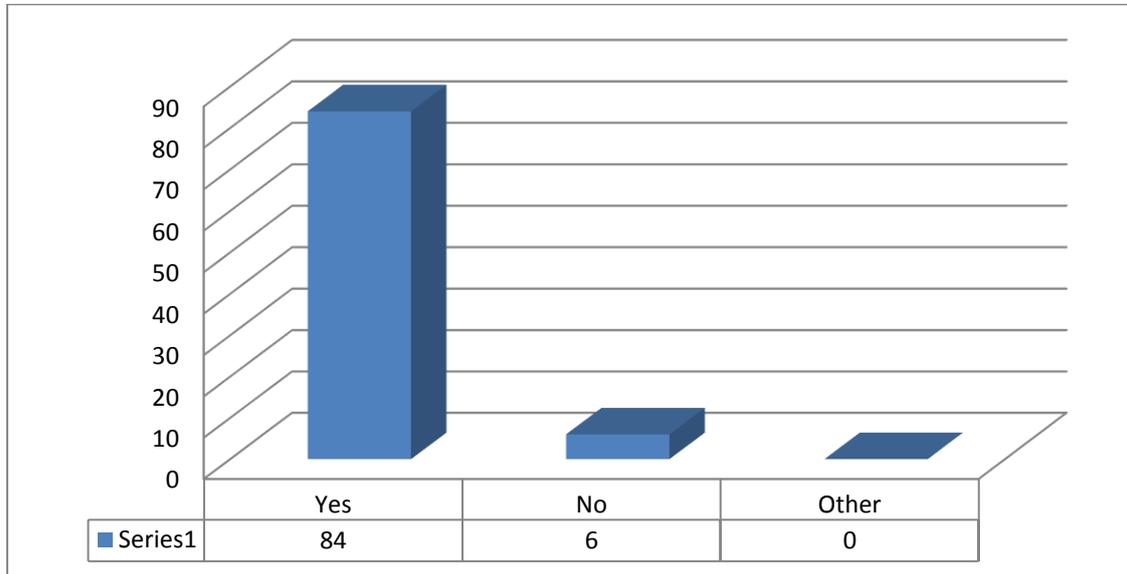


**Figure 3.2.:** Students pressured by their parents to study

The figure above clearly shows that all of the participants choose to answer (yes) to the fact that their parents give them a hard time to study instead of (no), which can be a good thing that they care about their grades and their future.

**Question 5:** Are your parents relying on you to lift them up in the future?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

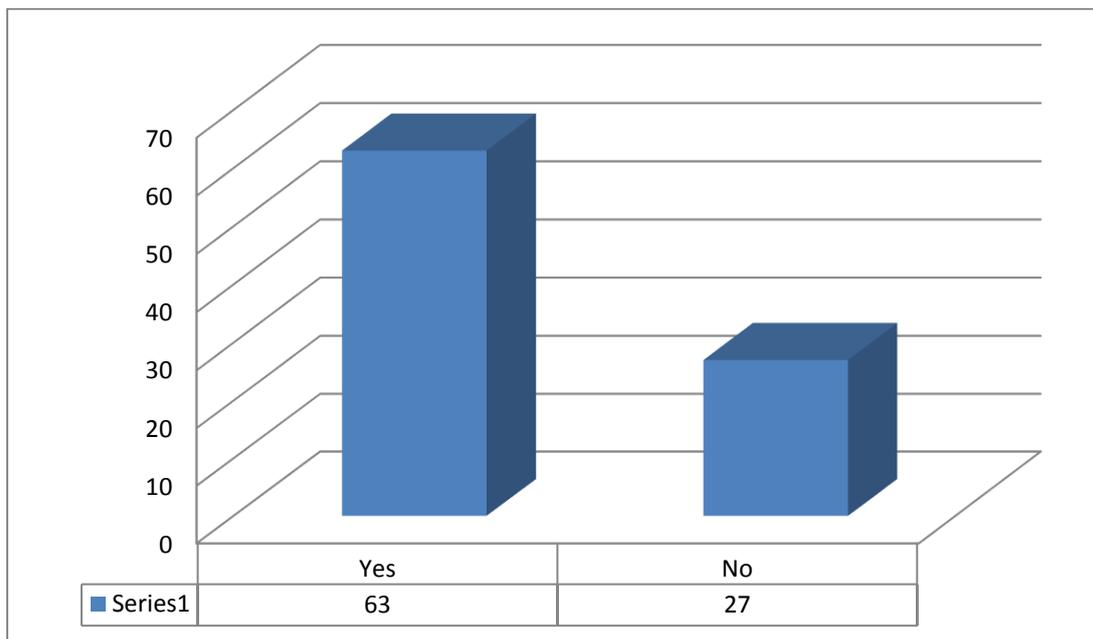


**Figure 3.3.:** Student pressured by one of the future factors

The figure above displays that most of the participants have chosen to answer (yes) and the total was 84 students instead of (no) 6 students. Although, it is a good thing, it can also be one of the major factors of pressure cause. Having such burden on the students' shoulders can be stressing and it may affect their advance in learning and it can also motivate them, which depends on the different types of personalities in students.

**Question 6:** Have you ever been shamed for bad marks?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

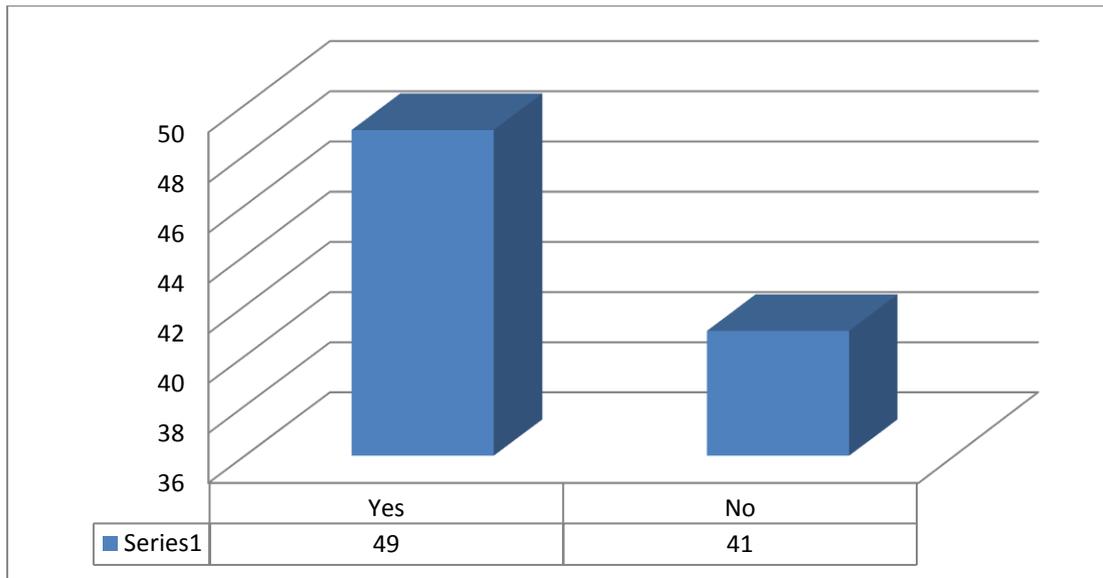


**Figure 3.4.:** Students shamed for their bad marks

The graph indicates that 63 of the total number of the participants were shamed for their bad marks and the rest (27) were not. Situations like this only lead to one thing: fear of negative evaluation and as we previously viewed that FNE is one of the factors that can trigger defense mechanisms to act up.

**Question 7:** Have you ever been called a failure? Or any sort of an equivalent? If yes, by who?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.



**Figure 3.5.:** Psychological issue cause

The figure illustrates that the majority; 49 students of the total number of students answered that they were called failures. Most of them answered that it was one of either their father or mother calling them that, teachers or most likely, their peers.

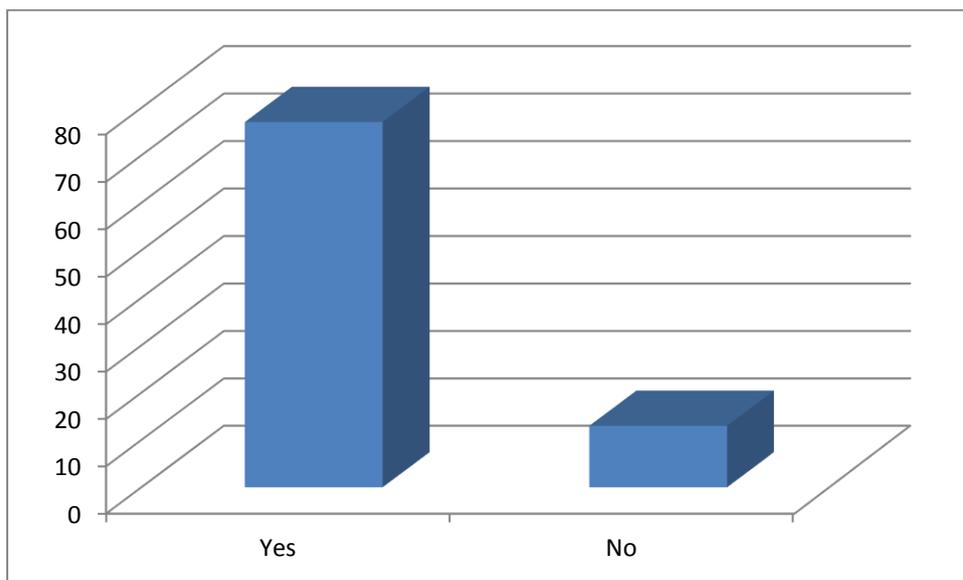
Teachers	Parents	Counterparts	Other
19	13	9	8

**Table 3.4.:** Number of students that were shamed

As the table above shows, 19 students have said that they were shamed by their teachers, 13 students said that their parents took a part in this, whereas also, 9 students said that they were shamed by their peers. This, in fact, could be one of the leading reasons to social anxiety, stress and not to forget, fear of negative evaluation. When a student gets humiliated, their self-esteem would drop and as a result, they may develop fear from the evaluation they face or any evaluative situations in the future.

**Question 8:** Are you able to keep a problem out of your mind until you have time to deal with it?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.



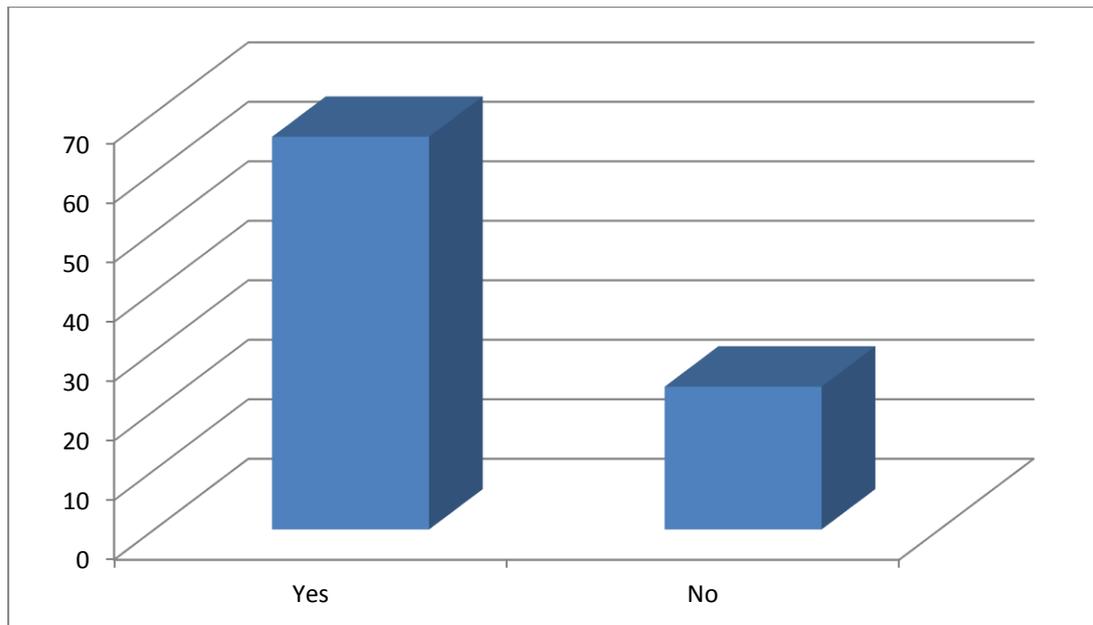
**Figure 3.6:** Suppression

As the graph shows, 77 participants answered yes on being able to keep problems and issues out of their thinking until they have time to deal with it. However, the rest of the participants: 13 students have answered no to previous statement. Suppression is one of the most used defense mechanism by students because most of the students are used to delaying dealing with an issue until further notice. It is a mature defense mechanism because they are aware and completely conscious to the idea, it consists of pushing down thoughts and emotion in order to focus on something else.

Consequently, most of the students usually do not do their assignment on time because it would conflict with their fun times and they would not want that, so they keep it until later to deal with.

**Question 9:** If you have an aggressive thought, do you feel the need to do something to compensate for it? If yes, what kind of something?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

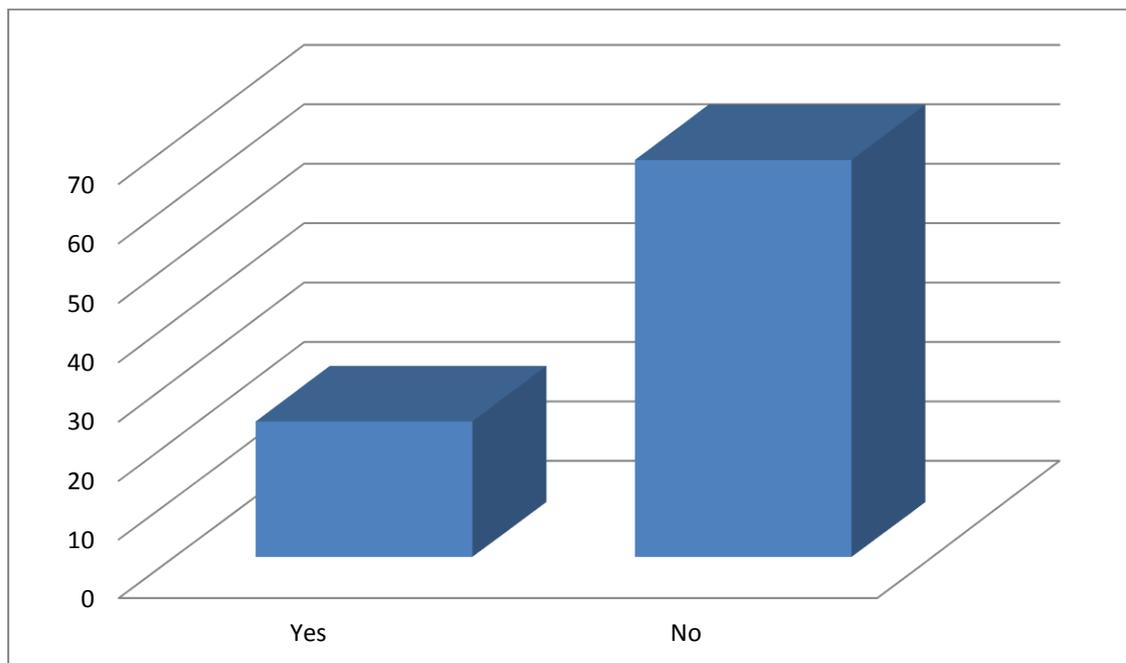


**Figure 3.7:** Using Sublimation

66 of the participants selected yes on having ways to transform their aggressive thoughts into better, useful things. This mature mechanism is called sublimation and it consists of turning solid and hard feelings into more wet, smooth ones that can benefit them or others around them. Sigmund Freud believed that sublimation was a sign of maturity and civilization, allowing people to function normally in culturally acceptable ways. On the other hand, 24 of the participants selected no to using sublimation, and it is probably because they do not know how to control their impulses yet so they rely on their strong emotions to devour the situations.

**Question 10:** If your teacher bugged you, would you act impulsively towards him/her?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.



**Figure 3.8:** Showing impulsiveness

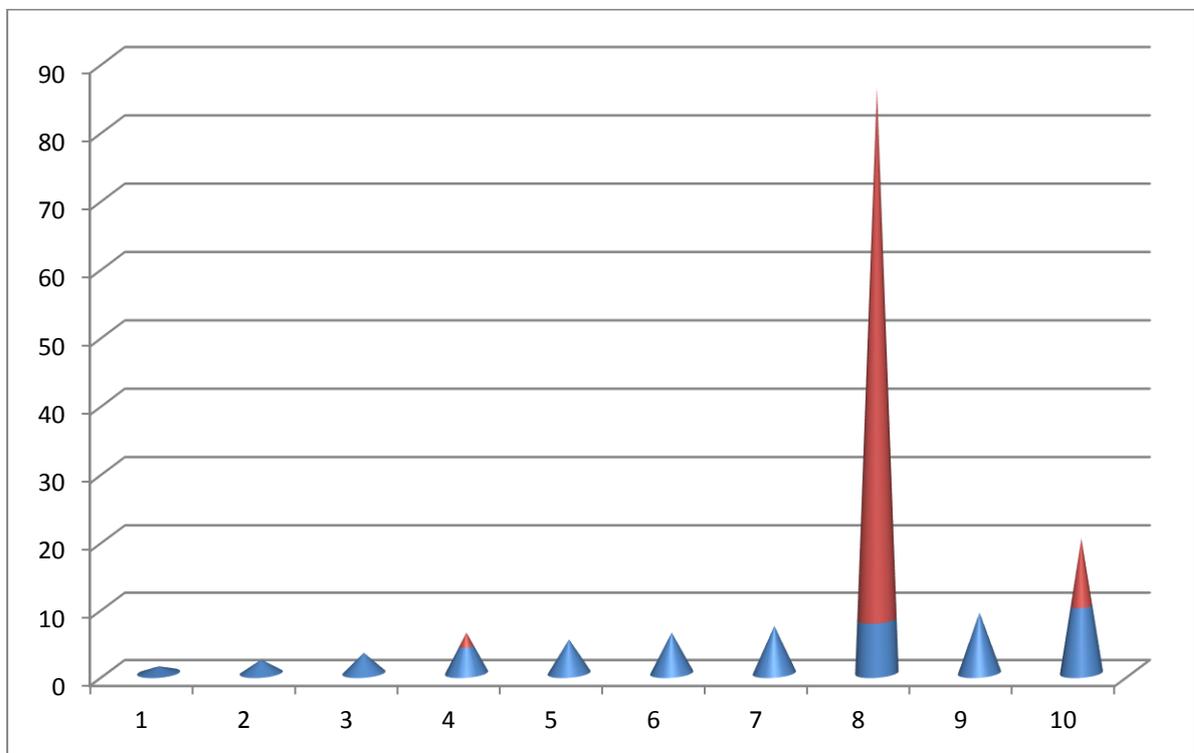
The current graph clearly shows that twenty three (23) students have chosen to answer (yes) when it comes to showing impulsive actions to their teachers, which clearly proves that some students are still unable to control their impetuosity towards their teachers. In other words, their ego occasionally still submits to their id desires. However, the rest of the participants in the same, specifically, sixty seven (67) of them have chosen to answer (no) to showing impulsiveness to their teachers if they ever bugged them.

**Section four:**

**Question 11:** If I failed an exam, I wouldn't care about the outcome as long as most of the class has failed too.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0	0	0	2	0	0	0	78	0	10

**Table 3.5:** Table showing the number of students rating from 1 to 10



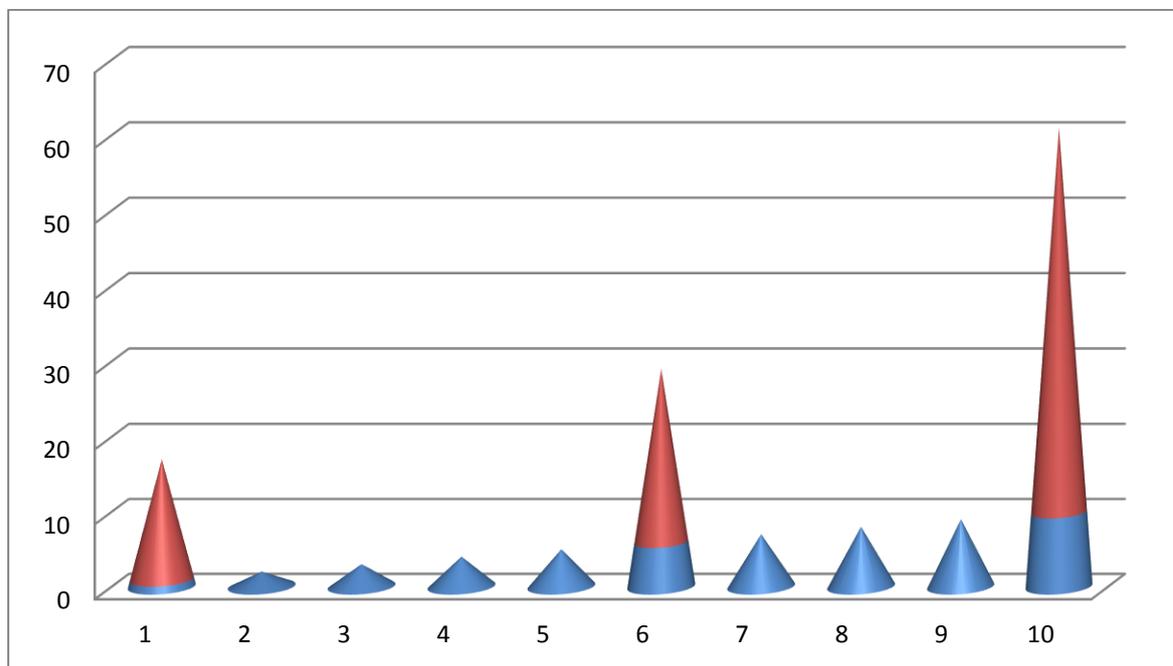
**Figure 3.9.:** Submission to the id desires

As seen in the graph the majority of the participants have rated 8 on the rating scale when it comes to not caring about the outcome of an exam as long as the rest of the class have failed it also. This kind of behavior is a defense mechanism associated with the id more than the usual because normally, one does not submit to the id needs and desires, however, the superego does not seem to have any effects to balance between maturity and immaturity, therefore, the id gets what it wants this time.

**Question 12:** I often find myself being very nice to people who by all rights I should be angry at.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	51

**Table 3.6:** Table showing the number of students rating the usage of reaction formation from 1 to 10



**Figure 3.10:** Table showing the number of students rating the usage of reaction formation from 1 to 10

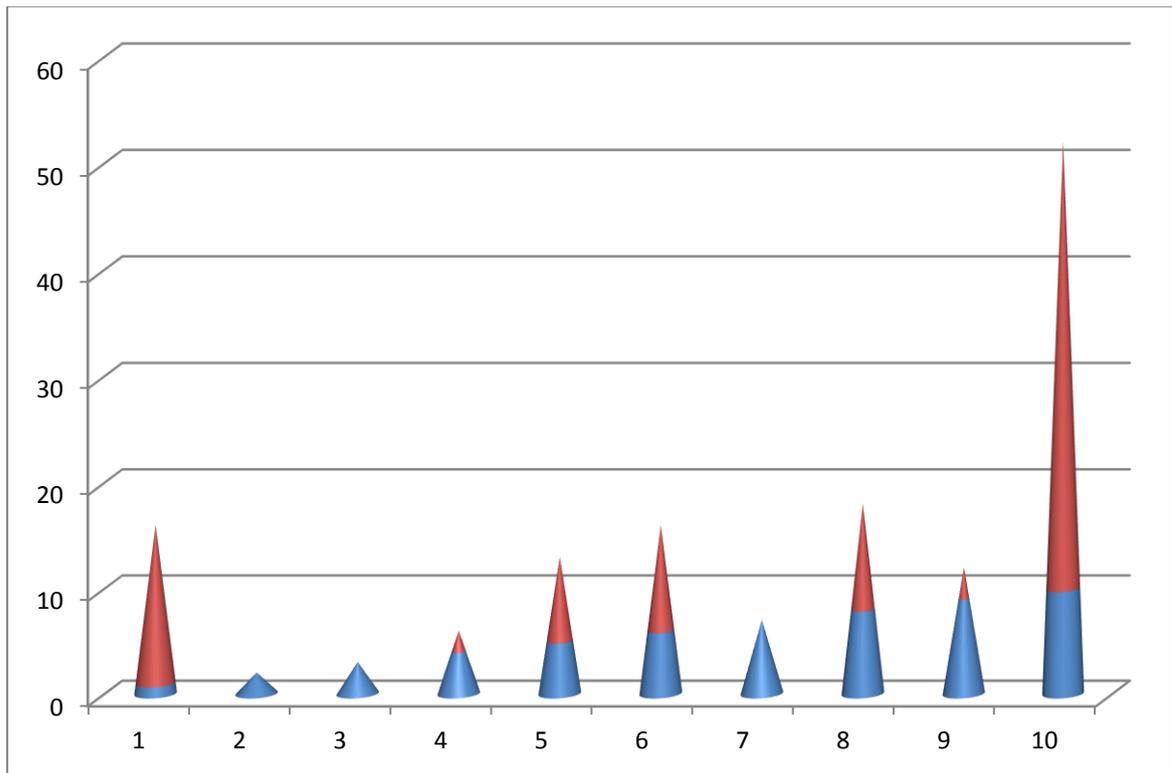
As displayed in the graph and the table above, the majority, 51 out of the total of students have rated 10 on the scale from 1 to 10 to using reaction formation as a defense mechanism to situations that require showing strong emotions. Reaction formation is acting the opposite way that the unconscious instructs a person to behave, "often exaggerated and obsessive". Therefore, when a teacher or anyone is being mean to them, the student wants to act upon their feelings but they cannot let it out as an impulse but instead, they become nice towards them. The minority of the students

said that they do not use reaction formation and we assumed that they would rather deal with the situation in a more of allowing the id to have its way.

**Question 13:** Often, I find that I don't feel anything when the situation would seem to warrant strong emotions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15	0	0	2	8	10	0	10	3	42

**Table 3.7.:** Table showing the number of students rating the usage of denial from 1 to 10



**Figure 3.11.:** Table showing the number of students rating the usage of denial from 1 to 10

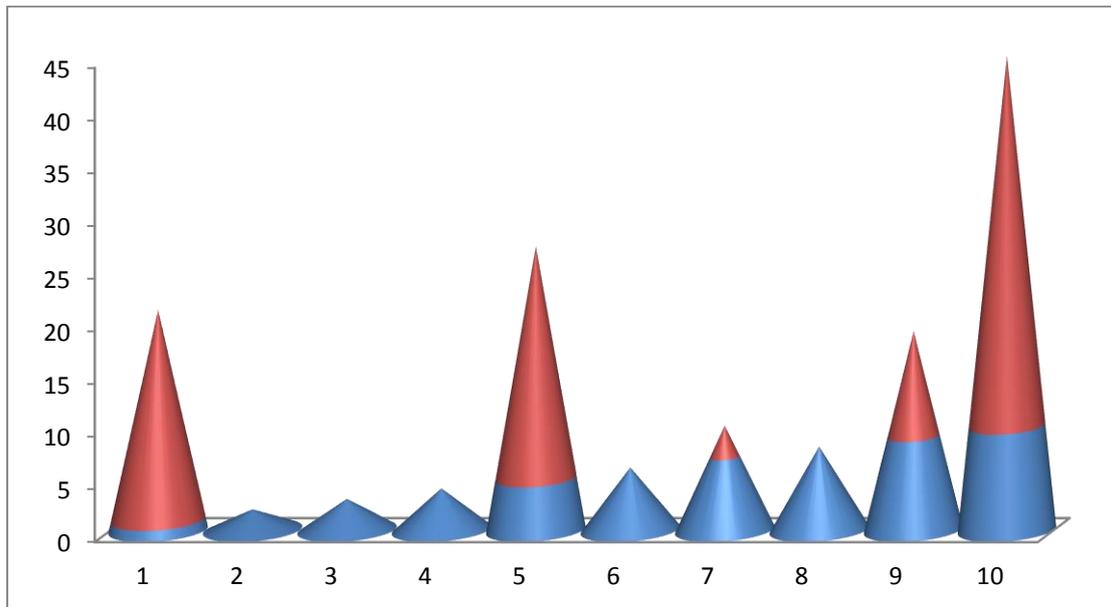
The table and the figure above illustrate that the majority: 42 students related to number 10 on using denial as a defense mechanism to cope with situations that

necessitates strong emotions to cope with, however, the students that answered yes to using this immature defense mechanism tend to refuse to deal with reality. Whereas, 15 students said that they tend to face their problems.

**Question 13:** I get more satisfaction from my fantasies than from my real life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20	0	0	0	22	0	3	0	10	35

**Table 3.8.:** Table showing the number of students rating the usage of dissociation from 1 to 10



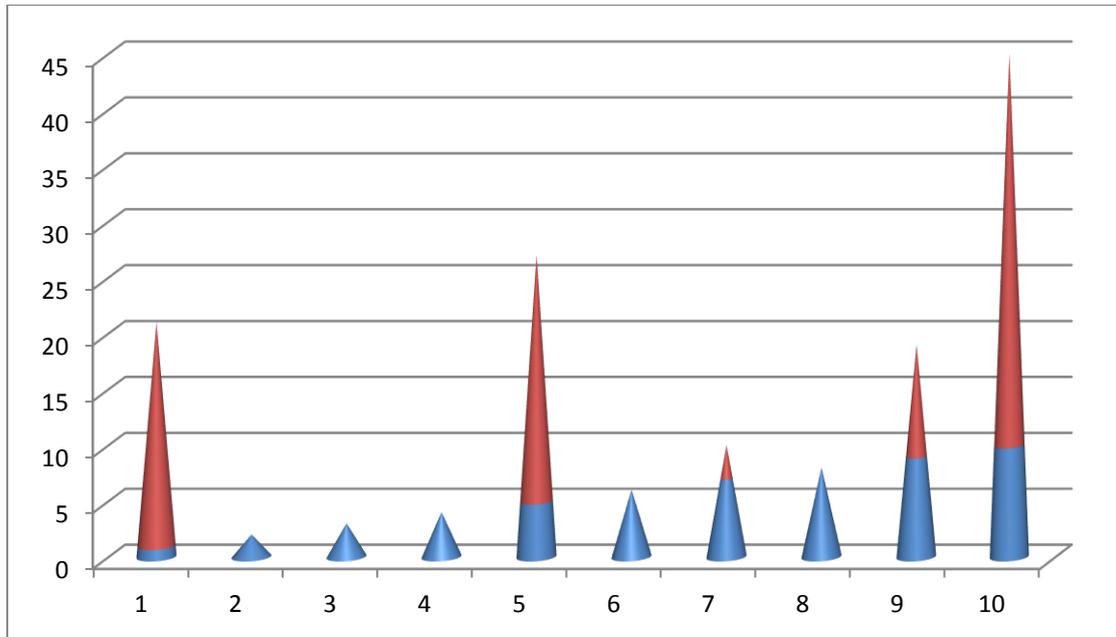
**Figure 3.12:** Utilization of dissociation among students

The figure and the table above once again show that the majority of the students related to number 10 when it comes to using the defense mechanism: dissociation. Dissociation consists of detaching themselves from reality and getting satisfaction from fantasies they daydream during the day. However, 22 students seemed to be neutral and on the other hand, 20 students chose the least number of the scale: 1. which means that they are more realistic and fantasy does not seem to be satisfying to them.

**Question 14:** I don't care about education or failure. I've special talents that allow me to go through life with no problems.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20	0	0	0	22	0	3	0	10	35

**Table 3.9.:** Utilization of self-serving bias among students

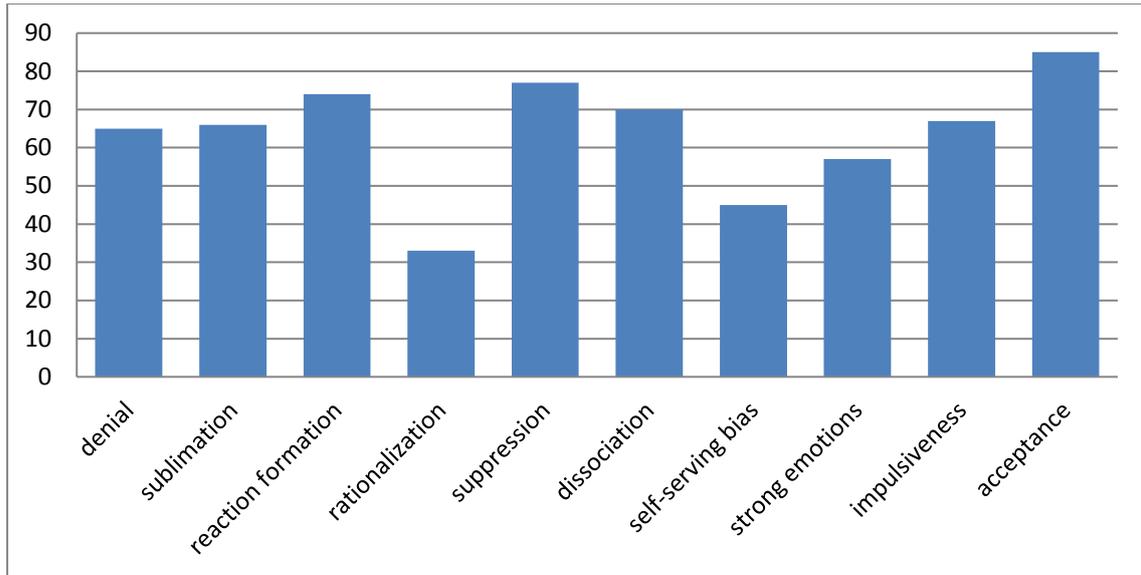


**Figure 3.13:** Utilization of self-serving bias among students

The table and the chart above represent that the majority of students use the self-serving bias mechanism. When we think of “self-serving” we usually think that someone is always looking at the bright side of something bad, however, the self-serving bias it consists of praising themselves and neglecting the favor of others in their success.

#### 4.1. Interpretation of the Data

After collecting the data and analyzing it, from the factors causing psychological issues to the students to the way they react to it, we have detected a list of defense mechanisms that students usually use to cope with the stress that they face on a daily basis. The figure and the table below illustrate the interpretation of data in a more conclusive matter.



**Figure 3.14:** Defense mechanisms used by students

List of defense mechanisms	Number of students using it	Percentage	Frequency of the usage
Denial	65	10%	Frequently
Sublimation	66	10%	Often
Reaction Formation	74	12%	Usually
Rationalization	33	5%	Seldom
Suppression	77	12%	Usually
Dissociation	70	11%	Often
Self-serving Bias	45	7%	Rarely
Strong Emotions	57	9%	Sometimes
Impusiveness	67	11%	Often
Acceptance	85	13%	Usually

**Table 3.10:** Defense mechanisms used by students by the frequency

## **5. Analysis of the Students' interview**

### **1. You try your best to impress your teachers after you failed their modules.**

The majority of students answered that they do feel the need to try to impress their teachers after they have failed their modules and justified their answers with being afraid of how their image will seem to their teachers after failing. Likely, three of the interviewees indicated that it is necessary to use this defense mechanism because they are afraid after failing a certain module, their teacher will look at them differently and not believe that they are ambitious students.

### **2. "I feel nervous and worried when I have to read loudly in the classroom" Do you relate to this statement?**

Most of the interviewees said that they relate to the statement because it was always hard for them to read loudly in the classroom and they feel under pressure whenever they do, mostly because they are afraid of committing oral errors. They have also mentioned that they would rather commit written errors than oral ones because the evaluation of their peers and teachers will be quick and they are afraid if it comes out as negative.

### **3. How do you feel when you make mistakes in the classroom?**

Some of the interviewees answered this with, "I would be afraid of being judged by my classmates and I do not want my teacher to think I am not a good student." Whereas the rest answered with, "Everyone makes mistakes." Spotting the light on the first statement, we can actually see that most of the students do feel like inferiors when it comes to committing mistakes in the classroom because they tend to wish to be perfectionist when it comes to English and making an error would make them feel incapable of fulfilling their wish.

### **4. If your peers laugh at you when you make an error, how would you exactly feel, and react?**

The majority of the interviewees said that they would feel uncomfortable and worried because it would hit their self-esteem and make them seem as incapable of doing something right and that would discourage them and stop them from trying again. As for reacting, they said that they would either get aggressive or tell them to keep quiet. We assume that depends on the personality of the individual.

### **5. How do your teachers correct your mistakes?**

According to our interviewees, the answer to this question depends on each teacher. Some of their teachers correct their mistakes harshly and some their teachers do it smoothly and brush it off. One of the interviewees said something that could describe the answers in a better way. *“For me, the main problem is the way my teachers’ correct my mistakes. I’m supposed to have difficulties and I’m supposed to make mistakes in order to learn. However, some teachers’ evaluations can be extremely harsh that would be the cause to my setbacks. Teachers do not understand that we our main problem is “understanding” and it is not a shame to make mistakes. They could do better when evaluating.”*

### **6. How do you react when your teachers correct your mistakes harshly?**

Two of the interviewees answered that they would be angry because it is humiliating when they do it in a harsh way. *“I would raise my voice back to them. This one time, Mr. B. told me to leave the classroom because I am stupid and I slammed the table and left, never attended his classes again.”* As one of the interviewees stated, their fear of negative evaluation may result in utilizing strong emotions when they feel threatened.

## **5.1. Discussion**

After the process of analyzing the students’ questionnaire and the students’ interview, we can say that the results obtained from the students almost support our hypothesis: when we put the negative evaluation face to face with our students, they will most likely react allow their defense mechanisms to take over the situation. The high levels of pressure and stress can demean the psychological state of the individuals and it clearly showed in the answers of the students that they get affected really badly by anything that threatens them.

## **6. Conclusion**

This chapter was concerned with the description and the analysis of the students' questionnaire as well as students' interview. It consisted investigating the effects of negative evaluation on using defense mechanisms as well as investigating the effects of stress and pressure on first year university students and how they can lead to feeling threatened as quickly as applying their defense mechanisms to cope with the situation.

## General Conclusion

The present study, with its detailed descriptions, investigated the threatening factors on the students' psychological states; including the responses to these menaces expressed by the students. After analyzing all the data, we found that students of Mohamed Khider get affected by almost everything around them, like every other human being, however, it is indeed quite crucial to recognize the fact that students are put under a large amount of stress and we should not invalidate the way they feel about threatening situations and how they react towards them. Instead of getting angry over how they acted, we should, us instructors and future instructors, try to understand the matter behind the problem. Most of the students have said that their teachers are the reason behind their stress and NE, given that evaluation is one the practices in the classroom but if it turns negative, it will influence the students' learner and their academic achievement, moreover, their psychological states. In the views of their fear of negative evaluation and stress can have damaging effects on the learners' personality as well, hence, their defense mechanisms will be triggered.

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# Appendices

# Appendix 01: Questionnaire

## 1. Please provide your age & gender in the spaces below:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Tick the box where the option is more accurate to you:

- When you fail a test or an exam that you didn't really study for, do you:
  - Blame your teacher for your grade outcome?
  - Promise yourself to do better and recompense?
  
- You argued with your teacher in class, do you:
  - Take responsibility for your actions and apologise?
  - Get upset and leave the classroom?
  - Stay calm and ignore the whole situation?

## 3. Choose yes or no as answer to the questions below.

**Please provide an explanation when necessary:**

- Have you ever argued with a teacher even though you know you're to blame?
  - Yes
  - No
- Do your parents give you a hard time saying that you need put a little extra focus on school?
  - Yes
  - No
- Are your parents relying on you to lift them up in the future?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you ever been shamed for bad marks?
  - Yes
  - No
- Have you ever been called a failure? Or any sort of an equivalent? If yes, by who?
  - Yes
  - No
  - \_\_\_\_\_

- Are you able to keep a problem out of your mind until you have time to deal with it?
  - Yes                       No
- If you have an aggressive thought, do you feel the need to do something to compensate for it? If yes, what kind of something?
  - Yes                       No
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- If your teacher bugged you, would you act impulsively towards him/her?
  - Yes                       No

**4. On a scale of 1 to 10, tick [ / ] the number you relate to the most:**

- If I failed an exam, I wouldn't care about the outcome as long as most of the class has failed too.  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
- I often find myself being very nice to people who by all rights I should be angry at.  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
- Often, I find that I don't feel anything when the situation would seem to warrant strong emotions.  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
- I get more satisfaction from my fantasies than from my real life.  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
- I don't care about education or failure. I've special talents that allow me to go through life with no problems.  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

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## **Appendix 02: Students' interview**

### **Investigating FNE as a main factor to get defense mechanisms triggered.**

2. You try your best to impress your teachers after you failed their modules.
7. "I feel nervous and worried when I have to read loudly in the classroom" Do you relate to this statement?
8. How do you feel when you make mistakes in the classroom?
9. If your peers laugh at you when you make an error, how would you exactly feel, and react?
- 10.
11. When your teacher corrects your mistakes in the classroom, how would you feel?
12. Do you think it is necessary to correct mistakes?
13. How do you like your teachers to correct you?

## ملخص

غالبًا ما يكون طلاب الجامعة دائمًا ضحايا الضغوط والتقييمات السلبية التي تأتي من الاستاذة أو أي شخص آخر في حياتهم. جميعنا قد رى طلاب الجامعة يغشون أو يكونوا وقحين للمعلمين أو يرتكبون أعمال صيانية حتى. هناك عدد لا يحصى من الأسباب التي تجعلهم يتصرفون على هذا الشكل، حيث وهذه الأسباب تسمى آليات الدفاع وتهدف إلى الحد من القلق والإجهاد الذي يخلف من التعامل مع الاساتذة وأولياء الأمور أو الزملاء. لذا تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على سبب تصرف طلاب الجامعة بطرق معينة غير مقبولة وبعد الاعتماد على أداة البحث: الاستبيان ومقابلات تجرى مع الطلاب، حللت دراستنا المسألة واختبرت الفرضيات للكشف عن العوامل السرية التي كانت سببا في تغيير أنماط السلوك للمشاركين لدينا.

طلاب السنة الأولى في جامعة محمد خيضر – بسكرة. (N = 90)