Predictors of National Security Awareness Among University Students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study aimed to identify variables contributing to the prediction of national security awareness among university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Methods: The sample comprised 395 male and female students from Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, with a mean age of 19.85 years and a standard deviation of 1.11. The research utilized scales of national security awareness, psychological security, critical thinking, quality of life, national belonging, and intellectual extremism. Structural Equation Modeling (Path Analysis) was employed to analyze the data.

Results: The study revealed that national security awareness can be statistically predicted based on the examined variables, namely critical thinking, quality of life, and national belonging, across all participants. National belonging emerged as the most influential variable in predicting national security awareness, followed by critical thinking and quality of life. Additionally, there were no differences in the contributing variables according to gender and academic qualifications.

Conclusion: The findings were discussed and interpreted, highlighting the importance of national belonging, critical thinking, and quality of life in predicting national security awareness among university students. The study concluded with suggestions and recommendations for enhancing national security awareness through targeted interventions focusing on these key variables.

Keywords: Predictive Variables, National Security Awareness, Psychological Security, Critical Thinking, Quality of Life, National Belonging, Intellectual Extremism, University Students at Saudi Arabia.

Predictores de Consciência de Segurança Nacional Entre Estudantes Universitários no Reino da Arábia Saudita

RESUMO

Objetivos: Este estudo teve como objetivo identificar variáveis que contribuem para a previsão da consciência de segurança nacional entre estudantes universitários do Reino da Arábia Saudita.

Métodos: A amostra foi composta por 395 estudantes do sexo masculino e feminino da Universidade Islâmica Imam Mohammad bin Saud, com idade média de 19,85 anos e desvio padrão de 1,11. A pesquisa utilizou escalas de consciência de segurança nacional, segurança psicológica, pensamento crítico, qualidade de vida, pertencimento nacional e extremismo intelectual. Modelagem de Equações Estruturais (Análise de Caminho) foi empregada para analisar os dados.

Resultados: O estudo revelou que a consciência da segurança nacional pode ser prevista estatisticamente com base nas variáveis examinadas, nomeadamente pensamento crítico, qualidade de vida e pertença nacional, em todos os participantes. A pertença nacional emergiu como a variável mais influente na previsão da consciência de segurança nacional, seguida pelo pensamento crítico e pela qualidade de vida. Adicionalmente, não houve diferenças nas variáveis contribuintes de acordo com o gênero e as habilitações acadêmicas.

Conclusão: Os resultados foram discutidos e interpretados, destacando a importância do pertencimento nacional, do pensamento crítico e da qualidade de vida na previsão da consciência de segurança nacional entre estudantes.

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universitários. O estudo concluiu com sugestões e recomendações para aumentar a sensibilização para a segurança nacional através de intervenções específicas centradas nestas variáveis-chave.

**Palavras-chave:** Variáveis Preditivas, Consciência de Segurança Nacional, Segurança Psicológica, Pensamento Crítico, Qualidade de Vida, Pertencimento Nacional, Extremismo Intelectual, Estudantes Universitários na Arábia Saudita.

**PREDICTORES DE LA CONCIENCIA EN SEGURIDAD NACIONAL ENTRE LOS ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS DEL REINO DE ARABIA SAUDITA**

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivos:** Este estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar variables que contribuyen a la predicción de la conciencia de seguridad nacional entre los estudiantes universitarios en el Reino de Arabia Saudita.

**Métodos:** La muestra estuvo compuesta por 395 estudiantes, hombres y mujeres, de la Universidad Islámica Imam Muhammad bin Saud, con una edad media de 19,85 años y una desviación estándar de 1,11. La investigación utilizó escalas de conciencia de seguridad nacional, seguridad psicológica, pensamiento crítico, calidad de vida, pertenencia nacional y extremismismo intelectual. Se empleó el modelado de ecuaciones estructurales (análisis de ruta) para analizar los datos.

**Resultados:** El estudio reveló que la conciencia de seguridad nacional se puede predecir estadísticamente en función de las variables examinadas, a saber, pensamiento crítico, calidad de vida y pertenencia nacional, en todos los participantes. La pertenencia nacional surgió como la variable más influyente en la predicción de la conciencia de seguridad nacional, seguida del pensamiento crítico y la calidad de vida. Además, no hubo diferencias en las variables contribuyentes según género y titulación académica.

**Conclusión:** Los hallazgos fueron discutidos e interpretados, destacando la importancia de la pertenencia nacional, el pensamiento crítico y la calidad de vida en la predicción de la conciencia de seguridad nacional entre los estudiantes universitarios. El estudio concluyó con sugerencias y recomendaciones para mejorar la conciencia sobre la seguridad nacional a través de intervenciones específicas centradas en estas variables clave.

**Palabras clave:** Variables predictivas, conciencia de seguridad nacional, seguridad psicológica, pensamiento crítico, calidad de vida, pertenencia nacional, extremismismo intelectual, estudiantes universitarios en Arabia Saudita.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Security is a basic concept in both individual and communal contexts, serving as a fundamental pillar for the functioning of nations. It involves a shared national obligation, demanding the proliferation of awareness across societal entities, particularly educational institutions, to safeguard against deviance and criminality while promoting stability (Talafha, 2008). Moreover, educational establishments, as key societal entities, assume a crucial role in cultivating civic values and fostering security consciousness among forthcoming generations through tailored educational settings and structured programs (Al-Hawshan, 2004).
National security is closely related to many affective aspects, e.g., critical thinking, national belonging, and quality of life. Recent research underscores a positive correlation between critical thinking and awareness of national security (Al-Qarni et al., 2018). Critical thinking, widely endorsed by educators and psychologists, is believed instrumental in equipping individuals with indispensable cognitive abilities, facilitating the rectification of flawed reasoning, rational analysis, prudent judgment-making, and the conceptualization of innovative solutions for societal advancement (Jirwan, 2007).

Belongingness, or national belonging, emerges as a fundamental human requisite, shaping individuals' societal standing and fostering a sense of communal responsibility (Rafie, 1990). Scholars have elucidated the positive association between a sense of security and various facets of individual well-being, encompassing mental and physical health, social connectivity, life competencies, and self-actualization (Nimilat & Suhail, 2019).

Furthermore, the quality of life amplifies family belonging, derived from allegiance to the homeland, signifying that meeting the need for societal affiliation positively influences the reinforcement of national belonging (Al-Elan, 2020). Thus, quality of life constitutes a holistic construct encapsulating multifaceted dimensions of human existence, intertwined with material and psychological contentment and self-realization, thereby fostering individual excellence across diverse domains (Al-Najjar & Al-Talaa, 2015).

Despite the paramount importance of these factors, recent research indicates a flow in the threat posed by terrorist activities and extremist ideologies, endangering the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for its pivotal status within the Islamic world and as the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Consequently, there is an urgent imperative to disseminate awareness regarding national security concepts among all strata of society, with particular emphasis on university students, to safeguard the Kingdom's safety and stability. In line with this aim, the present study seeks to discover the critical variables contributing to national security awareness among students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2 NATIONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

National security awareness is a fundamental concept crucial for the stability of nations and the protection of their citizens. However, its interpretation varies depending on the context. While some nations perceive national security as primarily safeguarding borders and defending sovereignty, others adopt a broader perspective encompassing political, economic, social stability, human rights, and social justice. In certain contexts, national security extends to...
encompassing sustainable development, citizen welfare, providing employment opportunities, and access to good education. The researcher operationally defines awareness of national security as “the university student's perception of their role in preserving personal and societal security, understanding the prevailing security circumstances, and the foundational principles necessary for maintaining the nation's cohesion and stability across various domains, thus enabling it to fulfill its responsibilities towards citizens and the international community”.

Awareness of national security manifests in two levels: *automatic preventive awareness* and *perceived preventive awareness*. The former represents the lowest level of awareness, exhibited instinctively by individuals and students, and often linked more to intuition than conscious perception. In contrast, the latter is acquired through education, guidance, and social upbringing. This level of awareness enables individuals to comprehend the characteristics of their environment and effectively address security threats, with educational institutions playing a pivotal role in nurturing such awareness among students (Boukraa, 2003).

Previous studies exploring the connection between national belonging and awareness highlight four key dimensions of awareness: love for the homeland, defense of the homeland, nation-building, and homeland preservation (e.g., Assafah, 2003; Al-Alawi, 2005). The significance of national awareness lies in its decline potentially leading to fluctuating thoughts among citizens and contradictions with reality, resulting in their detachment from society and susceptibility to adversarial ideologies hindering progress and development (Jouhar, 1995). Moreover, national awareness serves as a catalyst for positive civic engagement, enabling individuals to navigate evolving circumstances and confront challenges, thereby fostering the prosperity of their nation and society (Ali & Faisal, 2000).

**3 CONCEPTS RELATED TO NATIONAL SECURITY AWARENESS**

Awareness of national security plays a crucial role in fostering individuals' sense of belonging to their community, thereby enhancing their self-confidence and trust in themselves and their society, which, in turn, influences their psychological well-being (Smith, 2004). It also positively impacts their mental health (Jones, 2012) which is facilitated by various societal factors including family dynamics, educational practices, and community engagement (Al-Hajjaj, 2014; Karsoua, 2006; Radwan, 2002). Al-Nafar and Ibrahim (2020) define psychological security as "the individual's perception of belonging and recognition within the community, along with feelings of reassurance, acceptance, and warmth, without a sense of threat or danger".
Furthermore, a close relationship exists between awareness of national security and national belonging. Individuals who possess awareness of national security acknowledge the significance of their homeland and their role in safeguarding it against both external and internal threats. Those with a strong national belonging take pride in their country's achievements and actively contribute to its defense across various domains (Al-Khatib, 2019; Al-Suwaidi, 2020), thus promoting psychological resilience and societal stability (As’ad, 2007; Khudair, 2000). National belonging, as defined by the researcher, encompasses "an individual's affection for and attachment to their homeland, their willingness to make sacrifices for it, their adherence to its values and traditions, respect for its laws and institutions, preservation of its resources, and integration into its societal issues and events".

Studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between awareness of national security and critical thinking. Individuals with a heightened awareness of national security demonstrate superior analytical and evaluative abilities, enabling them to better comprehend security threats and make well-informed decisions regarding their mitigation (Al-Qarni et al., 2018). Critical thinking, as a cognitive skill, stimulates mental faculties and enhances individual efficacy across diverse contexts (Cottrell, 2017; Atiya, 2009). Critical thinking can be conceptualized as "the capacity to analyze and assess information, pose significant questions, and articulate problems clearly, gather and evaluate relevant information, employ abstract reasoning, engage in explicit reasoning, and communicate effectively with others" (Hamdah, 2018, p. 153).

Moreover, numerous studies have underscored a robust association between awareness of national security and quality of life. Individuals with heightened awareness of national security typically enjoy superior physical and mental well-being, greater life satisfaction, and a propensity to engage in social and civic activities, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life (Jones, 2012; Brown, 2015). Quality of life, defined as "an individual's subjective sense of competence and ability to cope with challenges" (Al-Aswad, 2017, p. 90), reflects the holistic well-being of individuals within a societal context.

Furthermore, ideological extremism poses a significant threat to individual and societal security, manifesting in various forms of violence, attacks on innocent individuals, and societal instability (Satouhi, 2022). Al-Sayyed (2023, p. 467) characterizes ideological extremism as "the adoption of ideas that surpass the bounds of moderation and are intertwined with numerous societal issues, coupled with a rejection of alternative viewpoints and resorting to confrontation through various means."
4 THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study is prompted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's significant role as the spiritual center of the Islamic world, owing to its possession of Islamic holy sites. This status necessitates a heightened focus on preserving national security. Therefore, the current study aimed to explore factors contributing to national security awareness among various segments of the Saudi society, with a prominent emphasis on university students. Moreover, this study responds to the recommendations of many conferences for exploring national security awareness. For example, the Arab Convention for Combating Terrorism, held in Riyadh on 16-18/2/1420 AH, emphasized the importance of citizen awareness of national security as a shared responsibility between individuals and security agencies (Naif University for Security Sciences, 1426 AH). This study also fills a research gap as there is a scarcity in the research repertoire that addresses the relative contribution and predictive value of national security awareness among university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

5 METHOD

To test the research hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive correlational research method to explore the extent of contribution of the study variables, namely psychological security, critical thinking, quality of life, national belonging, and ideological extremism, to the level of national security awareness among the study participants.

5.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the pilot study were 130 male and female students from Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, with an average age of 19.60 years and a standard deviation of 0.81. Meanwhile, the main research participants were 395 male and female students from the same university, with an average age of 19.85 years and a standard deviation of 1.11.
5.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

5.2.1 Scale of National Security Awareness

Based on a review of previous studies by Tablan (2004), Al-Yahyawi (2007), Al-Otaibi and Al-Zaki (2008), Khan et al. (2011), Al-Harbi (2017), Al-Qarni et al. (2018), Nofal et al. (2018), Osman (2019), and Al-Nahal (2020), the researcher has developed a scale to measure the national security awareness among students at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. The initial form of the scale comprised 24 items, with five options (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never) for each item, with respondents receiving scores of 5-4-3-2-1 for each statement in the scale.

The content validity of the scale was assessed by a group of psychologists, with their agreement rates ranging from 85.71% to 100%, leading to some adjustments in certain statements. An exploratory factor analysis of the scale revealed its saturation on a general factor with an eigenvalue of 7.301 and variance of 30.42%. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the scale's items was calculated, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency. The correlation coefficients between the items and the total score ranged from 0.701 to 0.376. Additionally, the scale exhibited high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.812.

5.2.2 Scale of Psychological Security

The study adopted the Psychological Security Scale developed by Hussein (2016), consisting of 33 self-report items. Participants respond to these items using a three-point scale (always, sometimes, rarely), with corresponding scores of 3-2-1. The psychometric properties of the scale were verified by calculating the internal consistency of its items. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with correlation coefficients between the items and the total score ranging from 0.711 to 0.350. Additionally, the scale revealed high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.725.

5.2.3 Scale of Critical Thinking

The study has also adopted the Critical Thinking Scale developed by Jabr (2018), comprising 45 self-report items distributed across four dimensions: lower-order cognitive skills, middle-order cognitive skills, higher-order cognitive skills, and emotional skills. Participants
responded to these items using a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), with corresponding scores of 5-4-3-2-1 for all items except for items 12, 32, 39, and 44, which are reverse-scores. The psychometric properties of the scale were verified by calculating the internal consistency of its items. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of its respective dimension ranging from 0.658 to 0.289. Correlation coefficients between the dimensions and the total score of the scale ranged from 0.761 to 0.633. Additionally, correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of the scale ranged from 0.728 to 0.300. Moreover, the scale showed high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four dimensions and the total score being 0.710, 0.778, 0.811, 0.799, and 0.899 respectively.

5.2.4 Scale of Quality of Life

The study adopted the Quality-of-Life Scale developed by Al-Anzi and Al-Muhaddawi (2022), which comprises 36 self-report items distributed across five dimensions: Education and employment opportunities, Community services and infrastructure, Health and sports, Heritage, culture, and arts, Entertainment, leisure, and tourism. Participants responded to these items using a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), with corresponding scores of 5-4-3-2-1 for all items. The psychometric properties of the scale were verified by calculating the internal consistency of its items. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of its respective dimension ranging from 0.725 to 0.399. Correlation coefficients between the dimensions and the total score of the scale ranged from 0.733 to 0.625. Additionally, correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of the scale ranged from 0.715 to 0.400. Moreover, the scale revealed high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four dimensions and the total score being 0.766, 0.790, 0.720, 0.800, 0.789, and 0.910 respectively.

5.2.5 Scale of National Belonging

The researcher, drawing upon studies by Arab (2018), Mahboub (2018), Al-Qarni (2019), Abdel-Rahim (2020), and Khalifa (2022), developed a scale to measure national belonging among students of Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University. The initial version of the scale consisted of 20 items, with five response options (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never) assigned scores of 5-4-3-2-1, respectively. However, for items 3, 15, and 20, the key was
reversed to 1-2-3-4-5. The validity of the scale was assessed through experts in psychology, with agreement percentages ranging from 85.71% to 100%. Some modifications were made to the wording of certain items based on their feedback. Additionally, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, resulting in the scale saturating on a general factor with an eigenvalue of 7.916 and a variance of 39.580%. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the scale items was calculated, revealing high level. The correlation coefficients between each item and the total score ranged from 0.745 to 0.390, demonstrating a high level of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.911, indicating high reliability.

5.2.6 Scale of Intellectual Extremism

The researcher adopted the *Intellectual Extremism Scale* developed by Al-Kharsha (2020). The scale consisted of 39 self-report items in four dimensions: political, social, religious, and ideological extremism. The scale used a five-point Likert scale for responses (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always), with scores assigned in ascending order (5-4-3-2-1) for all items, except for items 4, 13, 15, 18, 19, 23, and 24, the scoring was reversed to 1-2-3-4-5. The psychometric properties of the scale were assessed revealing high internal consistency. The correlation coefficients between each item and the total score for the dimension it belongs to ranged from 0.699 to 0.357. Moreover, the correlation coefficients between the dimensions and the total scale score of the scale ranged from 0.740 to 0.674, while those between each item and the total scale score ranged from 0.701 to 0.399. Additionally, the scale demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four dimensions and the total score being 0.745, 0.687, 0.750, 0.790, and 0.805, respectively.

5.3 THE STATISTICAL METHODS

To verify the research hypotheses, the researcher used path analysis and regression analysis to uncover the variables that can predict the national security awareness, reveal the most significantly contributing variables to national security awareness, and assess similarities between males/females and scientific/theoretical specialization within the path analysis model.
6 RESULTS

6.1 RESULTS OF THE FIRST HYPOTHESIS

The first hypothesis stated that "national security awareness cannot be statistically predicted by the studied variables (psychological security, critical thinking, quality of life, national belonging, ideological extremism) among the study participants." To test this hypothesis, path analysis was conducted. Figure (1) below illustrates the extracted path analysis model depicting the relationships among the research variables.

Figure 1
Path analysis model of the impact of independent variables on national security awareness

All fit indices for the proposed path analysis model fell within an acceptable range, with the values of $\chi^2$ (1.250), RMR (0.000), GFI (1.000), AGFI (0.989), NFI (0.998), RFI (1.000), IFI (1.000), TLI (0.995), CFI (1.000), and RMSEA (0.036). Table (1) below illustrates the direct effects of the independent variables on the national security awareness as included in the path analysis model:
Table 1

Direct Effects of Independent Variables on the National Security Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Effect Direction</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Critical Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td>To</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Security</td>
<td>National Security Awareness</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>10.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>3.998</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0.870</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>8.743</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Belonging</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Significance level at 0.001
Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

The results presented above indicate that all unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients are statistically significant at 0.001 level, except for the direct effects of Psychological Security and Ideological Extremism. These coefficients were statistically non-significant for both unstandardized and standardized values. This suggests the effectiveness of three variables, namely critical thinking, quality of life, and national belonging, among the studied variables, in predicting national security awareness. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative one is accepted, indicating that "National Security Awareness can be statistically predicted based on critical thinking, quality of life, national belonging among the study participants.

6.2 RESULTS OF THE SECOND HYPOTHESIS

The second hypothesis of the study states that “None of the studied variables can significantly predict national security awareness among the study participants”. The following table shows the relative contribution of the studied variables to predicting national security awareness.
Table 2

*The relative contribution of the studied variables to predicting national security awareness.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Predictive Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>Model r²</th>
<th>Relative Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Security</td>
<td>National Belonging</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.633</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

The table above illustrates the contributions of the studied variables (National Belonging, Critical Thinking, and Quality of Life) in sequence to National Security Awareness. It shows the relative contribution percentage of each independent variable in National Security Awareness, which were respectively (National Belonging 33.6%, Critical Thinking 24.3%, Quality of Life 5.3%). These values indicate the relative contribution of each variable in explaining the variance of the total score of National Security Awareness among the study participants. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative one is accepted, indicating that "National Belonging contributes more significantly to predicting National Security Awareness among study participants”.

6.3 RESULTS OF THE THIRD HYPOTHESIS

The third hypothesis stated that there is a difference within the path analysis model explaining the direct correlations and impacts between the independent variables and the national security awareness between males and females. To test this hypothesis, the researcher computed the direct effects, standardized regression coefficients, standard error, and critical values equating to the "r" value and its significance for both males and females. Figures (2) and (3) below show the derived path analysis model.
Figure 2
Path analysis model for the impact of independent variables the national security awareness among male participants

![Path analysis model for male participants]

Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

Figure 3
Path analysis model for the impact of independent variables the national security awareness among female participants

![Path analysis model for female participants]

Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

Table (3) below also shows the direct paths and standard regression coefficients between the variables of the path analysis model for male and female participants.
Table 3

The direct effects of the independent variables on the awareness of national security between males and females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and direction of influence</th>
<th>Standardized regression coefficients</th>
<th>Critical value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>from</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological security</td>
<td>National security awareness</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual extremism</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Significance level at 0.001
Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

Table (3) indicates that all standardized regression coefficients, critical values, and their statistical significance are largely similar between the male and female participants. However, the direct effect of the "Quality of Life" variable on "National Security Awareness" was statistically significant for males but not for females. These findings reveal the effectiveness of three variables, namely critical thinking, quality of life, and national belonging, in predicting national security awareness for male participants. However, only two variables: i.e., critical thinking and national belonging, were effective in predicting national security awareness for females. Moreover, the similarity between males and females in terms of the relative contribution of each predictor variable to national security awareness was calculated and presented in Table (4) below.

Table 4

The relative contribution of the studied variables to predicting national security awareness among male and female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Predictive Variables</th>
<th>Pearson's r</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>Model r²</th>
<th>Relative Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings indicate a diverse relative contribution of each independent variable to national security awareness. Among males, the order of relative contributions is as follows: National Identity 22.1%, Critical Thinking 15.5%, Quality of Life 4.6%. Conversely, for females, it is National Identity 25.3%, Critical Thinking 19.3%. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting a disparity in the path analysis model elucidating the direct correlations and impacts between independent variables and national security awareness among males and females.

6.4 RESULTS OF THE FOURTH HYPOTHESIS

The fourth hypothesis states that "There is a difference within the path analysis model that illustrates the direct relationships and effects between the independent and the national security awareness between the scientific and theoretical specializations". To test this hypothesis, the researcher calculated the direct effects, standardized regression coefficients, standard error, and critical value equivalent to "t" and its significance for both scientific and theoretical specializations, depicted in Figures (4) and (5) below.
Figure 4
Path Analysis Model for the impact of the dependent variables on the national security awareness among participants of scientific specialization

Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

Figure 5
Path Analysis Model for the impact of the dependent variables on the national security awareness among participants of theoretical specialization

Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

The direct paths and standardized regression coefficients between variables in the path analysis model among the scientific and theoretical specialization are shown in the table below.
Table 5

The direct impacts of the dependent variables on the national security awareness among participants of scientific and theoretical specialization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and direction of influence</th>
<th>Standardized regression coefficients</th>
<th>Critical value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>from Psychological security to National security awareness</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<td>0.386</td>
<td>7.704</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>3.408</td>
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<tr>
<td>National belonging</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>5.107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual extremism</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.325</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

***Significance level at 0.001
Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)

Table 5 demonstrates that, overall, standard regression coefficients and critical values show similarity in statistical significance between participants of scientific and theoretical specialization. However, the impact of psychological security on national security awareness differs significantly between the two groups, being significant for theoretical specialization and not for scientific specialization. This highlights the predictive efficacy of four variables in national security awareness for theoretical specialization: psychological security, critical thinking, quality of life, and national belonging. Conversely, for scientific specialization, only critical thinking, quality of life, and national belonging were effective predictors. Moreover, the relative contribution of predictor variables to national security awareness was compared between the two specializations, as detailed in Table 6.
Table 6 outlines the proportional contributions of each independent variable to national security awareness. In the scientific specialization, the order of contribution percentages is as follows: Critical Thinking 34.7%, National Belonging 23.8%, Quality of Life 19.5%. Conversely, in the theoretical specialization, it is Critical Thinking 34.7%, National Belonging 23.8%, Quality of Life 8.1%, Psychological Security 6%. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating "a lack of similarity in the path analysis model explaining the direct relationships and impacts between the independent variables and the national security awareness between participants of scientific and theoretical specializations".

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Predictive Variables</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>Model r²</th>
<th>Relative Contribution</th>
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<td>Theoretical</td>
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<td>Quality of Life</td>
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<td>National Security Awareness</td>
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Source: Prepared by Authors (2024)
7 DISCUSSION

7.1 CONTRIBUTION CRITICAL THINKING, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND NATIONAL BELONGING TO NATIONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

The results of the study revealed that national belonging encourages social cohesion and civic engagement, thereby raising awareness of national security issues. Moreover, critical thinking aids in grasping political and social dynamics more profoundly, enhancing awareness of potential threats to national security. Quality of life significantly influences national security awareness, likely because individuals in secure and stable environments are more inclined to engage with national issues. These findings align with previous studies by Al-Qarni et al. (2018), Al-Zubaidi et al. (2021), and Al-Elan (2020), emphasizing the correlation between national security awareness and critical thinking, national belonging, and quality of life.

7.2 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES IN VARIABLES CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

The results also indicate similarities between males and females regarding the impact of national belonging and critical thinking on national security awareness. This may stem from shared social, economic, and educational experiences within Saudi Arabia, fostering a strong sense of national identity among all individuals. Additionally, educational institutions aim to instill critical thinking skills in both genders. Thus, both males and females contribute similarly to national security awareness through national belonging and critical thinking. Furthermore, while quality of life contributes to national security awareness in males, it does not in females, possibly due to males benefiting more from the Kingdom's services, leading to a higher perceived quality of life.

7.3 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL SPECIALIZATIONS IN VARIABLES CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

Both scientific and theoretical specializations demonstrate similar contributions of critical thinking, national belonging, and quality of life to national security awareness. This similarity arises from shared educational experiences and social contexts within Saudi Arabia, fostering a strong national identity among both specializations. Moreover, both groups
recognize the diverse services provided by the Kingdom. Thus, both specializations contribute similarly to national security awareness through critical thinking, national belonging, and quality of life. Additionally, psychological security contributes to national security awareness in the theoretical specialization but not in the scientific specialization, likely due to the focus of theoretical study on psychology and social relationships, fostering a sense of psychological well-being and community acceptance, which reflects on national security awareness.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results, the following recommendations are suggested:

• Offering training programs to enhance national security awareness among university students.

• Promoting the development of self-assessment tools to identify individuals' strengths and weaknesses.

• Developing incentive programs to foster national affiliation.

• Incorporating national security topics into educational curricula at all levels, from elementary to university.

• Organizing regular seminars, workshops, and discussions on national security issues in universities and local communities.

• Strengthening efforts to encourage social integration and civic participation across diverse ages and cultural groups.

1. Suggestions for Further Research

The research suggests several potential areas for future investigation:

• Investigating the national security awareness among both Saudi and foreign students in Saudi universities, considering cultural differences.

• Exploring the developmental trajectory of national security awareness across different age groups.

• Evaluating the impact of a critical thinking-based program on university students' national security awareness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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