

## **Contradictory Self-Discrepancy in Light of Certain Variables Among a Sample of Students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla**

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### **Abstract:**

This study aimed to identify the level of self-discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla, and to determine the significance of differences in self-discrepancy based on gender and academic specialization among the 461 students in the study. A descriptive-comparative approach was used to achieve these objectives. The Self-discrepancy Scale developed by Hossam Mahmoud Zaki Ali (2023) was used to collect data. The study found that the level of self-discrepancy was high among the sample in the scale as a whole and in the dimensions of the ought and ideal self, while the level of the actual self was low. No statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy were found based on gender in the scale as a whole or in the dimensions of the actual and ideal self. Differences were found in the ought self, favoring females. No statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy were found based on academic specialization in the scale as a whole or in its dimensions.

**Keywords:** Self-Discrepancy; Real self; Ideal self; Ought self; Self-Discrepancy Theory.

### **1. Introduction:**

The self is the distinctive characteristic that differentiates human beings from other creatures. It encompasses the characteristics that distinguish an individual from others and constitutes an important aspect of personality, serving as a fundamental reference for understanding it and a central component in its formation. The development of the self begins during the earliest stages of an individual's development. The features of this development become more evident during youth, when young people tend to establish and build their self-confidence, define the characteristics of their personality, and affirm their sense of self. This is particularly evident among university students, who experience a more pressing motivation than in previous developmental stages: the desire to affirm themselves and construct an integrated self-image encompassing their cognitive and social abilities as well as their future aspirations.

At this stage, university students reconstruct their academic, social, and professional selves under the influence of academic pressures and obligations, in addition to social comparisons and family expectations that may not correspond with their aspirations and capabilities, thereby creating conflict among these different selves. Such conflict may result from the evaluations and beliefs that students develop "through the events and situations they experience. These evaluations may be positive, enhancing their self-concept and increasing their psychological and social adjustment, or they may be negative, undermining their self-image and reducing

their self-confidence and self-esteem. This may occur when the self-concept does not correspond with the individual's hopes, ambitions, and aspirations, that is, when contradictions exist between their beliefs about themselves and what they desire and wish for" (Amin et al., 2023). These discrepancies may expose students to the risk of developing mental health disorders.

Within this framework, Higgins (1987) believes that "individuals' problems and psychological disorders result from their inability to consciously understand situations and events, accurately assess their actual and personal capabilities and future aspirations, and understand what society expects of them" (Al-Ferhat et al., 2019). The concept of discrepancies between individuals' perceptions of their actual attributes and their judgments about the attributes they would prefer to possess, as well as the idea that individuals may hold conflicting or incompatible beliefs and experience discomfort as a result, has a long history in psychology and social psychology. Numerous theories have proposed a relationship between feelings of discomfort and specific types of discrepancies in beliefs (Higgins, 1987; TABRIZI, 1993). On this basis, Higgins (1987) proposed a systematic model aimed at distinguishing between different emotions and different discrepancies and linking various types of emotional vulnerabilities to different types of self-discrepancies (Yıldırım & Gençöz, 2020), within the framework of his **Self-Discrepancy Theory**.

Higgins and Nakkawita (2021) state that Self-Discrepancy Theory "assumes that the self influences both the intensity and quality of an individual's emotional experience. It also explains that both the relative magnitude of self-discrepancies and their accessibility predict the types of emotional discomfort that an individual tends to experience. Thus, the theory integrates and extends the relationship between conflicting or inconsistent self-concepts and emotional experience." Higgins (1999) also indicated that there are potential factors that may influence the relationship between self-discrepancies and emotional states, stating that the magnitude, accessibility, importance, and relevance of self-discrepancies can operate as influential factors. Studies examining factors affecting self-discrepancy have found that practical reasoning and verbal abstract reasoning (Stevens et al., 2014), neuroticism (Wasylikiw et al., 2010), private self-consciousness (Fromson, 2006), and goal strength (Stevens et al., 2015) moderate the relationship between self-discrepancies and negative emotions (Yıldırım & Gençöz, 2020).

According to Self-Discrepancy Theory, self-discrepancies constitute representations of self-states. Accordingly, Higgins (1987) assumes that self-discrepancies arise from relationships among different representations of self-states, known as "cognitive representations of the self." The latter refer to how individuals evaluate or perceive the attributes that constitute their selves, which are often described in the theory as "self-concepts." These concepts are based on the semantic model of self-perception, and there are two fundamental cognitive dimensions underlying the representations of different self-states. The first dimension involves the domains of the self (actual self, ought self, and ideal self), whereas the second dimension involves the standpoints on the self (self and other). Based on these domains and standpoints, different types of discrepancies have been described (Dubey & Zia, 2025; Amin et al., 2023).

With regard to the domains of the self, the theory assumes that individuals maintain three basic types of self-representations that influence emotional and motivational behavior (Kenny & Robinson, 2026). Accordingly, the self is divided into three dimensions: the actual (real) self, the ought self, and the ideal self. The “actual self” is defined as the way individuals perceive their own attributes, or as the representation of the attributes that someone (either oneself or another person) believes or perceives that one actually possesses. The “ideal self” is defined as how individuals perceive the ideal version of themselves, or as the representation of the attributes that someone (oneself or another person) wishes or believes that one would ideally possess, such as representations of hopes, aspirations, or wishes. Finally, the “ought self” describes an individual’s responsibility or obligation to embody a particular version of themselves, or the representation of the attributes that someone (oneself or another person) believes one should possess, such as duties, obligations, and responsibilities (Al-Dhahabi & Al-Sulaimani, 2015; Amin et al., 2023; TABRIZI, 1993; Yıldırım & Gençöz, 2020; Higgins & Nakkawita, 2021; Ožanić & Kamenov, 2024; Dubey & Zia, 2025; Kenny & Robinson, 2026). As for the two standpoints on the self (self and other), these involve distinguishing between representations of self-states by considering the standpoint of the person concerned. A standpoint is defined as a perspective from which a person can be judged and reflects a set of attitudes or values. In this regard, Higgins (1987) describes two basic standpoints on the self: (a) the “self” standpoint/one’s own personal standpoint, defined as the self-guides that individuals hold for themselves, such as their hopes and aspirations or their duties and obligations in life; and (b) the “other” standpoint/the standpoint of a significant other, defined as the self-guides that others hold for the individual, whether the “other” is a specific significant person or a generalized other, such as a mother, father, brother/sister, husband/wife, or close friend. Individuals may possess representations of their self-states in relation to several significant others. This results in four self-concepts serving as self-guides: ideal/self, ought/self, ideal/other, and ought/other (Higgins, 1987; Higgins & Nakkawita, 2021). As a result of these different selves, individuals have a range of possibilities in their attempts to achieve correspondence between their self-concepts and self-guides.

According to Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins et al., 1986; Higgins, 1987), individuals are motivated to match their self-concepts with their self-guides; that is, they are motivated to work toward a state in which the actual self-corresponds with the ideal self and/or the ought self. Accordingly, the theory proposes that discrepancies or mismatches produce feelings of discomfort and emphasizes that each type of discrepancy leads to a specific negative psychological state and a specific emotional/motivational problem (TABRIZI, 1993). Thus, discrepancies between goals, obligations, and duties lead to emotional responses that may result in individuals experiencing various psychological disorders.

In the same context, Higgins (1987) described different types of discrepancies associated with negative psychological consequences, one of which is the discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self. In self-identity disturbance, feelings are associated with the individual’s own standpoint because self-identity disturbance occurs between the individual’s desires, wishes, hopes, and so forth. This self-discrepancy leads to the absence of positive outcomes, resulting in dissatisfaction and disappointment (Dubey & Zia, 2025). Moreover, the discrepancy

between the actual self and the ideal self produces dejection-related emotions such as sadness, dissatisfaction, and depression, whereas the discrepancy between the actual self and the ought self produces anxiety- and tension-related emotions such as fear and nervousness (Hassan & Hussein, 2022; Al-Ferhat et al., 2019; Yıldırım & Gençöz, 2020; Ožanić & Kamenov, 2024). In this regard, numerous studies conducted on non-clinical populations have sought to demonstrate an association between self-discrepancies and their psychological consequences and have found a clear relationship between ideal–actual self-discrepancy and depression (Ožanić & Kamenov, 2024). Other studies have also sought evidence supporting the proposed relationships between different types of self-discrepancies and specific emotions. A considerable number of studies have been conducted to support these propositions. Researchers found that participants with high levels of depression exhibited a greater discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self than between the actual self and the ought self, whereas participants with high levels of anxiety exhibited a greater discrepancy between the actual self and the ought self than between the actual self and the ideal self (Higgins et al., 1986; Strauman, 1989). Support for this theory has also been found among participants experiencing clinical depression or anxiety, as demonstrated in studies by Johns and Peters (2012) and Scott and O'Hara (1993). In contrast, other researchers have found that all types of discrepancies are associated with depression, anxiety, and negative emotions in general (Yıldırım & Gençöz, 2020).

Some Arab studies have also attempted to investigate self-perception discrepancies among university students in light of certain variables, including the studies of Al-Asimi (2012), Al-Shammari (2016), Al-Dhahabi and Al-Sulaimani (2016), Ahmed Hassan and Mohammed Hussein (2022), Rania Kamal Amin et al. (2023), and Adhra Hindi (2024).

In conclusion, Self-Discrepancy Theory is one of the theories that has attempted to explain the relationship between the self and its emotional responses. Accordingly, it seeks to identify the factors that moderate this relationship in order to reduce the gap between cognitive representations of the self and self-guides, thereby preventing the occurrence of psychological disorders. From this perspective, the research problem is defined through the study of self-perception discrepancy among university students, considering that they are among those who most need to understand how patterns of discrepancies vary between their cognitive self-representations and their self-guides in order to safeguard their mental health. Therefore, the present study seeks to identify certain variables that may influence self-discrepancies among university students by addressing the following questions:

## **2. Research Questions:**

1. What is the level of self-perception discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla?
2. Are there differences in self-perception discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the gender variable?
3. Are there differences in self-perception discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the academic specialization variable?

### **3. Research Hypotheses:**

1. The level of self-perception discrepancy is expected to be high among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.
2. There are statistically significant differences in self-perception discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the gender variable.
3. There are statistically significant differences in self-perception discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the academic specialization variable.

### **4. Research Objectives:**

The present study seeks to:

- Identify the level of self-perception discrepancy among the members of the study sample.
- Identify differences in self-perception discrepancy among the members of the study sample according to the variables of gender and academic specialization.

### **5. Significance of the Study:**

The significance of the present study can be summarized as follows:

#### **Theoretical Significance:**

The theoretical significance of the present study is evident in the sample it addresses, namely university students, who represent an important segment of society. University students are considered particularly relevant when discussing the self because, at this stage, they face numerous challenges in achieving the selves they aspire to become, while simultaneously responding to the demands of the university and social environments surrounding them and coping with what they actually experience. In addition, the study contributes to the theoretical enrichment of a relatively new concept in the field of mental health, namely self-perception discrepancy. As indicated by Self-Discrepancy Theory, the discrepancies experienced by students among their different selves (actual, ought, and ideal) may contribute to the development of psychological and emotional disorders (anxiety, depression, stress, etc.).

#### **Practical Significance:**

The findings of the study may contribute to the development of counseling programs aimed at reducing the level of self-perception discrepancy and the resulting loss of balance or consistency among the different selves among university students and other groups. The findings may also be useful in developing preventive programs designed to reduce the occurrence of psychological disorders and the negative effects associated with self-perception discrepancy by narrowing the gap among the different selves (actual, ought, and ideal).

## **6. Operational Definition of the Study Variables:**

### **Self-Discrepancy:**

Higgins (1987) defines self-discrepancy as the lack of consistency between an individual's beliefs about their current attributes, all the attributes they wish to possess, and the attributes they believe they ought to possess.

Operationally, it is defined as the score obtained by the university student through their responses to the Self-Discrepancy Scale developed by Hossam Mahmoud Zaki Ali (2023) during the 2025/2026 academic year. The scale consists of the following dimensions:

#### **6.1. The Actual Self:**

The attributes that a person believes they actually possess.

#### **6.2. The Ideal Self:**

The attributes that a person wishes to possess (hopes and wishes).

#### **6.3. The Ought Self:**

The attributes that a person believes they ought to possess (obligations, duties, and responsibilities).

## **7. Study Delimitations:**

### **7.1 Human Delimitations:**

The human delimitations of the present study consist of a sample of students from Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla, totaling (461) male and female students.

### **7.2 Spatial Delimitations:**

The spatial delimitations of the present study include several faculties at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla, representing scientific and literary specializations.

### **7.3 Temporal Delimitations:**

The temporal delimitations of the present study correspond to the 2025/2026 academic year.

## **Method and Instruments:**

### **1. Method Adopted in the Study:**

The present study adopted the descriptive-comparative method to investigate self-discrepancy in light of certain variables among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

### **2. Study Sample:**

The study sample consisted of (461) male and female students, including (88) males and (373) females, from Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla during the 2025/2026 academic year. They were selected using stratified random sampling from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Letters and Languages, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Matter Sciences, and the Faculty of Medicine.

### **3. Study Instrument:**

Since the study seeks to investigate self-discrepancy among a sample of university students, it adopted the Self-Discrepancy Scale developed by Hossam Mahmoud Zaki Ali (2023).

#### **3.1. Description of the Self-Discrepancy Scale:**

The present study used the Self-Discrepancy Scale developed by Hossam Mahmoud Zaki Ali (2023). The scale consists of 24 items formulated in a self-report format and comprises

three dimensions: the Actual Self, the Ought Self, and the Ideal Self. Responses are provided using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), corresponding respectively to the response alternatives (1-2-3-4-5) for positively worded items, while the scoring is reversed for negatively worded items.

The minimum score that a respondent can obtain is 24, while the maximum score is 120, and the hypothetical mean of the scale is 72. The items are distributed across the dimensions as follows:

**Table (01): Distribution of the Self-Discrepancy Scale Items Across Its Dimensions**

| No.                          | Dimensions  | Positive Items               | Negative Items   | Number of Items |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 01                           | Actual Self | 23 - 16 - 15 - 13 - 6 - 3    | 19 - 18          | 8               |
| 02                           | Ought Self  | 22 - 11 - 7 - 1              | 23 - 20 - 14 - 4 | 8               |
| 03                           | Ideal Self  | 17 - 12 - 10 - 9 - 8 - 5 - 2 | 21               | 8               |
| <b>Total Number of Items</b> |             |                              |                  | <b>24</b>       |

### 3.2. Some Psychometric Properties of the Self-Discrepancy Scale:

In order to verify the suitability of the scale for application in the main study, some psychometric properties of the instrument were calculated, as follows:

#### 3.2.1. Validity:

##### a. Internal Consistency Validity

The correlation coefficients between the dimensions of the Self-Discrepancy Scale and their respective items were calculated. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (02): Correlation Coefficients for the Internal Consistency Validity of the Self-Discrepancy Items with Their Respective Dimensions**

| Actual Self Dimension |                         | Ought Self Dimension |                         | Ideal Self Dimension |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Item                  | Correlation Coefficient | Item                 | Correlation Coefficient | Item                 | Correlation Coefficient |
| 03                    | **.262                  | 01                   | 653.**                  | 02                   | 561.**                  |
| 06                    | **.609                  | 04                   | 679.**                  | 05                   | 668.**                  |
| 13                    | 626.**                  | 07                   | 466.**                  | 08                   | 543.**                  |
| 15                    | 614.**                  | 11                   | 799.**                  | 09                   | 521.**                  |

|           |        |           |        |           |        |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| <b>16</b> | 501.** | <b>14</b> | 658.** | <b>10</b> | 386.** |
| <b>18</b> | 454.** | <b>20</b> | 789.** | <b>12</b> | 600.** |
| <b>19</b> | 430.** | <b>22</b> | 387.** | <b>17</b> | 478.** |
| <b>24</b> | 593.** | <b>23</b> | 670.** | <b>21</b> | 430.** |

**\*\* Significant at 0.01 / \* Significant at 0.05**

From Table (02), we observe that the correlation coefficients between the items of the Self-Discrepancy Scale and the dimensions to which they belong were statistically significant at the (0.01) significance level, with values ranging between (.262\*\* and .789\*\*).

**b. Extreme-Group Comparison Validity:**

Extreme-group comparison validity was calculated by ranking the scores of the sample members in descending order and selecting (27%) from both the upper and lower ends of the distribution of the sample, which consisted of 60 participants. The difference between the two groups was calculated using the independent-samples t-test. The results are presented in the following table:

**Table (03): Results of the Extreme-Group Comparison Validity Analysis for the Self-Discrepancy Scale**

| Statistical Indicators<br><br>Scale | Upper Group (N = 16) |                    | Lower Group (N = 16) |                    | t-value | p-value | Statistical Decision |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|----------------------|
|                                     | Arithmetic Mean      | Standard Deviation | Arithmetic Mean      | Standard Deviation |         |         |                      |
| <b>Total</b>                        | 96.94                | 4.37               | 74.06                | 10.58              | 7.99    | 0.000   | Significant at 0.01  |

It is evident from Table (03) that the arithmetic mean of the upper group on the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (96.94), with a standard deviation of (2.564.37), while the arithmetic mean of the lower group was (74.06), with a standard deviation of (10.58). The t-value for the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (7.99), which was statistically significant at the (0.01) significance level. This indicates that there were statistically significant differences between the upper and lower groups. Accordingly, the Self-Discrepancy Scale demonstrates adequate discriminative ability to measure what it was designed to measure.

**3.2.2. Reliability:**

**a. Split-Half Reliability:**

In order to verify the reliability of the scale, the split-half reliability method was used, whereby the scale was divided into two halves. The first half consisted of the odd-numbered items, while the second half consisted of the even-numbered items. The

correlation between the scores of these two halves was calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The Guttman formula was used to correct the reliability coefficient of the scale. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (04): Correlation Coefficient Values Between the Two Halves of the Self-Discrepancy Scale Before and After Correction**

| Statistical Indicators<br>Variables | Sample | Correlation Coefficient (r) |                  |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|------------------|
|                                     |        | Before Correction           | After Correction |
| Odd-Numbered Items                  | 60     | 0.72                        | 0.83             |
| Even-Numbered Items                 |        |                             |                  |

From Table (04), it can be observed that the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was estimated at (0.72), while the corrected correlation coefficient (r), using the Guttman formula, reached (0.83). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Self-Discrepancy Scale has an acceptable level of reliability.

**b. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability:**

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for the Self-Discrepancy Scale. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (05): Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Self-Discrepancy Scale**

| Dimension   | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Total Scale | 24              | 0.82                         |

It can be seen from Table (05) that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (0.82), indicating that the scale has an acceptable level of reliability.

**Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Results**

**Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the First Hypothesis Result:**

The first hypothesis states that: The level of self-discrepancy is expected to be high among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

To verify the hypothesis, the significance of the difference between the hypothetical mean of the Self-Discrepancy Scale and the arithmetic mean of the study sample was calculated using the one-sample t-test. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (06): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the Self-Discrepancy Scale (Actual Self, Ought Self, and Ideal Self)**

| <b>Statistical Indicators</b><br><b>Variables</b> | <b>Number of Items</b> | <b>Hypothetical Mean</b> | <b>Arithmetic Mean</b> | <b>Standard Deviation</b> | <b>t-test</b> | <b>Significance Level</b> | <b>Rank</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Actual Self</b>                                | 08                     | 24                       | 23.16                  | 3.83                      | 4.73          | 0.00                      | 3           |
| <b>Ought Self</b>                                 | 08                     | 24                       | 33.84                  | 3.31                      | 63.90         | 0.00                      | 1           |
| <b>Ideal Self</b>                                 | 08                     | 24                       | 29.85                  | 3.99                      | 31.48         | 0.00                      | 2           |
| <b>Self-Discrepancy</b>                           | 24                     | 72                       | 86.85                  | 7.98                      | 39.97         | 0.00                      | /           |

From Table (06), it can be observed that the Ought Self dimension was the predominant dimension among the study sample, with an arithmetic mean of (33.84) and a standard deviation of (3.31), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of the Ought Self dimension, which was (24). The Ideal Self ranked second, with an arithmetic mean of (29.85) and a standard deviation of (3.99), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of the Ideal Self dimension, which was (24). The Actual Self ranked last, with an arithmetic mean of (23.16) and a standard deviation of (3.83), which is lower than the hypothetical mean of the Actual Self dimension, which was (24). It can also be observed that the arithmetic mean of the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (86.85), with a standard deviation of (7.98), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (72). This indicates that the level of self-discrepancy is high among the study sample; therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed.

This result can be explained by the fact that the study sample experiences discrepancies between self-representations and the two standpoints on the self (self and other), that is, an increased gap between the different self-concepts and states of mismatch among them (Actual Self, Ought Self, and Ideal Self). At this stage, university students experience a critical period during which their self-system is being formed. However, this process is confronted with numerous demands and conflicts. The Ought Self imposes social, academic, and family expectations upon students, such as expected academic success and excellence, thereby reflecting their sense of duty, obligation, and responsibility. As for the Ideal Self, students find themselves in conflict with the attributes and characteristics they seek to possess, which reflect their ambitions, aspirations, and personal and professional desires, such as graduating, achieving academic excellence, and obtaining their dream job. Their Actual Self, however, is determined by the capabilities and actual characteristics they believe they truly possess. Consequently, the gap between these different self-concepts may become more pronounced in the presence of cognitive failures, academic results, and academic and social comparisons.

The result of this hypothesis is consistent with the study of Al-Ferhat et al. (2019), which revealed a high level of self-discrepancy among its sample, as well as the study of Ahmed Hassan and Mohammed Hussein (2022), whose results showed that the level of self-discrepancy was high among the study sample, with the Ought Self ranking first, the Actual Self second, and the Ideal Self third. However, the result of the present study differs from that of Ammar Al-Shammari (2016), who found that the Ideal Self ranked first, the Ought Self second, and the Actual Self third. Meanwhile, the study of Adhra Hindi (2024) found that the level of self-discrepancy among the study sample was moderate, with the Actual Self ranking first, the Ought Self second, and the Ideal Self third.

### **Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Second Hypothesis Result:**

The second hypothesis states that: There are statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the gender variable.

To verify the hypothesis, the independent-samples t-test was used to compare the scores of male and female students on the Self-Discrepancy Scale. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (07): Results of the Independent-Samples t-Test for the Self-Discrepancy Scale (Actual Self, Ought Self, and Ideal Self) According to Gender**

| Statistical Indicators<br>Gender |         | Sample | Degrees of Freedom | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation | t-test | Significance Level | Statistical Decision |
|----------------------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Self-Discrepancy                 | Males   | 88     | 459                | 85.92           | 9.40               | 1.219  | 0.223              | Not Significant      |
|                                  | Females | 373    |                    | 87.07           | 7.60               |        |                    |                      |
| Actual Self                      | Males   | 88     |                    | 23.23           | 3.78               | 0.193  | 0.847              | Not Significant      |
|                                  | Females | 373    |                    | 23.14           | 3.85               |        |                    |                      |
| Ought Self                       | Males   | 88     |                    | 33.05           | 3.83               | 2.532  | 0.012              | Significant          |
|                                  | Females | 373    |                    | 43.03           | 3.15               |        |                    |                      |
| Ideal Self                       | Males   | 88     |                    | 29.65           | 4.49               | 0.535  | 0.627              | Not Significant      |
|                                  | Females | 373    |                    | 29.90           | 3.87               |        |                    |                      |

It can be seen from Table (07) that the study sample consisted of (461) male and female students, including (88) male students, whose mean score on the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (85.92), with a standard deviation of (9.40), and (373) female students, whose mean

score on the Self-Discrepancy Scale was (87.07), with a standard deviation of (7.60). The *t*-value was (1.219), with a probability value of Sig. = 0.223, which is greater than the significance level of (0.05), indicating that the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no differences between males and females in self-discrepancy on the scale as a whole and its dimensions, except for the Ought Self dimension, where differences were found in favor of females. This means that gender did not have a substantial effect on self-discrepancy among the study sample, except for the Ought Self dimension.

The absence of differences according to gender—and where differences were found, they were not substantial, except for the Ought Self dimension in favor of females—can be explained by the fact that gender does not influence the emergence of a state of mismatch among cognitive self-representations. This suggests that other factors may contribute to the emergence of gaps among university students' self-concepts. Students of both genders are motivated to achieve correspondence between their self-concepts and their self-guides; that is, they are motivated to work toward a state in which the Actual Self corresponds with the Ideal Self, or the Actual Self corresponds with the Ought Self. Each type of discrepancy may lead them to experience feelings of anxiety, frustration, or sadness, and perhaps depressive symptoms, as reactions to their inability to express their aspirations and their future and academic concerns. Moreover, nowadays there are no substantial differences between males and females in terms of study and work. Accordingly, self-standards and self-evaluations tend to be similar, as social expectations and obligations (Ought Self), as well as desires, aspirations, and hopes (Ideal Self), are formed in a relatively equivalent manner for both genders. At this stage, both males and females strive toward the desired goal of self-actualization and future success.

As for the difference in the Ought Self in favor of females, this may be attributed to socialization patterns that differentiate females from males. Consequently, female students may experience a discrepancy between the Ought Self and the Ideal Self, that is, between fulfilling their personal desires and aspirations and meeting obligations, duties, responsibilities, and family burdens. This may be particularly evident when a woman assumes not only the role of a student but also that of a mother, which may generate feelings of disappointment or may manifest in the form of self-punishment for failing to fulfill duties and obligations, thereby causing distress and anxiety.

The result of the present study is consistent with the findings of Rania Amin et al. (2023), who found no differences according to gender in the Ideal Self dimension, while differences were found in the Actual Self dimension in favor of females. However, the present findings differ from those of Riyadh Al-Asimi (2012), who found substantial differences between male and female scores across all dimensions of self-discrepancy, indicating that females exhibited greater discrepancy in the Actual and Ideal Selves, whereas males exhibited greater discrepancy in the Ought Self. The findings also differ from those of Jamal Al-Dhahabi and Ammar Al-Sulaimani (2016), who found gender differences in self-discrepancy in favor of males; Ammar Al-Shammari (2016), who reported differences in self-discrepancy (Actual/Ought/Ideal) according to gender in favor of males; Ahmed Hassan

and Mohammed Hussein (2022), who found differences between males and females in self-discrepancy in favor of females; and Adhra Hindi (2024), whose study revealed differences between male and female students on the Self-Discrepancy Scale in favor of males.

### **Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Third Hypothesis Result:**

The third hypothesis states that: There are statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla attributable to the academic specialization variable (scientific–literary).

To verify the hypothesis, the significance of the differences between the scientific specialization group and the literary specialization group on the Self-Discrepancy Scale was calculated using the independent-samples t-test. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

**Table (08): Results of the Independent-Samples t-Test for the Self-Discrepancy Scale (Actual Self, Ought Self, and Ideal Self) According to Academic Specialization**

| Statistical Indicators<br>Academic Specialization |            | Sample | Degrees of Freedom | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation | t-test | Significance Level | Statistical Decision |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Self-Discrepancy                                  | Scientific | 175    | 459                | 86.79           | 8.64               | 0.134  | 0.893              | Not Significant      |
|                                                   | Literary   | 286    |                    | 86.89           | 7.56               |        |                    |                      |
| Actual Self                                       | Scientific | 175    |                    | 23.30           | 4.05               | 0.643  | 0.521              | Not Significant      |
|                                                   | Literary   | 286    |                    | 23.07           | 3.70               |        |                    |                      |
| Ought Self                                        | Scientific | 175    |                    | 33.73           | 3.62               | 0.570  | 0.569              | Not Significant      |
|                                                   | Literary   | 286    |                    | 33.91           | 3.11               |        |                    |                      |
| Ideal Self                                        | Scientific | 175    |                    | 29.75           | 4.11               | 0.413  | 0.680              | Not Significant      |
|                                                   | Literary   | 286    |                    | 29.91           | 3.93               |        |                    |                      |

It is evident from Table (08) that the number of students in scientific specializations was (175), with a mean score of (86.79) on the Self-Discrepancy Scale and a standard deviation of (8.64), while the number of students in literary specializations was (286), with a mean score of (86.89) and a standard deviation of (7.56). The t-test value was (0.134), with a probability value of Sig. = 0.893, which is greater than the significance level of (0.05), indicating that the difference is not statistically significant. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there are no differences between students in scientific and literary specializations in

terms of self-discrepancy. In other words, academic specialization has no effect on self-discrepancy among the members of the study sample.

The absence of differences according to academic specialization can be explained by the fact that specialization does not influence the occurrence of different self-discrepancies. Therefore, other factors may influence students' perceptions of themselves, such as goal strength, coping strategies for dealing with stress, psychological resilience, and others. Regardless of the student's specialization (scientific/literary), it is fundamentally associated with their academic and professional future. Accordingly, all students, whether in scientific or literary specializations, are relatively similar in setting their academic and future goals. Furthermore, ongoing social change and technological development no longer place primary emphasis on the type of specialization; rather, they provide equal opportunities to individuals who possess the abilities and capabilities required to keep pace with ongoing changes. This can also be attributed to the developmental stage through which students are passing, during which they seek to achieve self-actualization and independence and to develop their personalities. Within the university context, students are exposed to similar situations and events and, consequently, face similar pressures and challenges. As demonstrated by the theory, self-discrepancy is associated with cognitive evaluations rather than with factors such as academic specialization, academic level, or gender.

The result of this hypothesis is consistent with the findings of Al-Ferhat et al. (2019), whose results indicated that there were no differences in self-discrepancy and its dimensions according to academic specialization. However, the present finding differs from that of Riyadh Al-Asimi (2012) and the study of Jamal Al-Dhahabi and Ammar Al-Sulaimani (2016), which found a statistically significant difference in self-discrepancy according to academic specialization in favor of literary (humanities) specializations. It also differs from the study of Ammar Al-Shammari (2016), which revealed statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy (Actual/Ought/Ideal) according to academic specialization in favor of humanities specializations, and from the study of Rania Amin et al. (2023), which found statistically significant differences according to academic specialization in the Actual Self and Ideal Self dimensions.

### **General Conclusion:**

Based on the findings of the present study, which aimed to investigate the level of self-discrepancy among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla, it is evident that university students experience a gap and discrepancy among their different selves (Actual/Ought/Ideal). This discrepancy may affect the development of their personalities and perceptions, as well as their psychological and social adjustment. Moreover, this discrepancy is not influenced by students' gender or academic specialization, as demonstrated by the findings obtained.

The results of the present study revealed that the level of self-discrepancy is high among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla; there are no statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy according to the gender variable among the members of the study sample; and there are no statistically significant differences in self-discrepancy according

to the academic specialization variable among the members of the study sample. Accordingly, the present study proposes the following:

**Study Suggestions:**

- Conduct further studies on the concept of self-discrepancy among university students and other groups, such as adolescents, particularly in light of the lack of studies addressing this topic within the Algerian context.
- Investigate the concept of self-discrepancy in relation to other variables, such as depression, anxiety, social anxiety, and personality disorders.
- Encourage the conduct of quasi-experimental studies examining the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce the gap among self-discrepancies among university students and other groups, such as mindfulness-based programs, as well as programs aimed at reducing the effects of these discrepancies on their mental health.

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