

## How EFL Learners in Jordan Perceive University Education

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***Abstract:** This study investigated the perceptions of university education among junior students of English at three public universities in Jordan. The data was collected by asking the sample students (N=105) to directly answer the question: "why do you think people want to attend university?" The students provided answers in the form of free short essays (one page of three paragraphs) during writing courses taught during the academic year 2012-2013. The essays were skimmed and scanned manually and analyzed thematically using a qualitative content-analysis functional approach. A corpus of (525) statements realizing functions of higher education in the essays were identified and categorized in terms of themes using key words analysis. The results showed that these students viewed university education in terms of both intrinsic as well as instrumental motivation. However, the majority of motivating factors were seen in intrinsic motivation. The major reasons identified for attending university were personal development followed by job factors and socio-cultural interaction.*

***Key words:** EFL; Jordan; motivation; higher education; perceptions; university; students; undergraduate*

### 1. Introduction

Researchers at University of Rochester (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013) examined the reasons for attending college and the impact that motivation can have on academic outcomes. It was found that students are more likely to earn higher grades and get a degree if enrolling was motivated by intrinsic needs for autonomy and competence. According to Kennett, Reed and Lam, (2011), factors behind going to college included variables such as: "self-improvement; prove to self; contribute/give back to society; for the challenge; major goal/dream; respect; self-satisfaction/ fulfillment; higher education has intrinsic value; keep busy; like learning". On the other hand, external reasons included the following factors: "to prove to others; career/money; family expectations/reasons; friends going; to meet people; societal expectations; persuasion from teachers/others; break cycle; student services; location". This seems to be a useful framework for classifying college students' perceptions of university learning.

Studies such as Abraham & Jacobs (1990), Freeman (1999) and Sevier (1992) suggest that students may be "persuaded to enroll in a particular college because their parents or other family members attended the same school. They may even be encouraged to attend a particular institution because the family wants the student to achieve at a higher level than they did." This phenomenon can also be observed in Jordan where the family plays an essential part in any decision relating to college learning and choosing a major. Co<sup>^</sup>te´ and Levine (1997) distinguished five types of goals that motivate students to attend college. These are: Obtaining a good job, success, and financial rewards (career); Developing oneself personally or intellectually (personal); Helping others or improving the world (humanitarian); Meeting the expectations of others (expectation driven); Avoiding other less desirable options (default). In addition, they pointed out that reasons based on career goals or personal development in the first year of college positively predicted self-management and self motivation skills two years later, and attending college for lack of other alternatives (i.e., by default) negatively predicted self-motivation. Furthermore, personal and humanitarian reasons for college were positive predictors of grade point average three years later, and default motivation was a negative predictor of grades. Attending a university that has an excellent reputation for a specific academic program such as engineering or business will assist them in achieving their goal (Canale et al., 1996; Sevier, 1992). Students also see academic reputation as leading to more job opportunities for them (Freeman, 1999).

In a very recent study, Kennett, Reed, and Stuart (2013) examined the question how the reasons students attend university explain academic resourcefulness. A sample of (481) undergraduate students completed scales assessing general and academic resourcefulness, academic self-efficacy, explanatory style, university adaptation, and reasons for attending university. Students were also asked questions concerning retention, and expected and past grade performance. The results showed that students attending university for more internal reasons and less so to please others and to delay responsibilities uniquely contributed to higher levels of academic resourcefulness.

At the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel 2013) found that student motivation for attending college is related to educational success. Their study tracked the connection between student motivation for attending college and also the academic outcomes of (2,500) university students attending two different organizations; the two-year community college and a four-year liberal arts college; in the northeast. Students completed a web-based survey, which included supplying information about their skills, their GPAs as well as intentions to persist, and scales evaluating the three parts of intrinsic motivation. The team confirmed that college students who attend college to satisfy needs regarding autonomy and proficiency, two core aspects of intrinsic motivation, tended to have higher grades as well as intentions to persist.

Kfoury et al. (2013) analyzed women's motivation to become dentists in Brazil. They discussed the reasons that lead women to choose dentistry as a profession in Brazil and the impact of feminization on the current and future profile of the profession. The authors' review of the

relevant literature published between 2000 and 2011, primarily in Brazil, suggests that whereas men have tended to choose dentistry as a good business opportunity, women have tended to base their decision on relations with other people and the flexibility of practicing the profession. The conclusion suggests that characteristics often associated with women can affect the dental profession in Brazil by introducing greater concern with the promotion of health and other people's well-being in contrast to traditional dentistry based on curative procedures.

Students' reasons for choosing dentistry as a profession have not been well documented, especially in developing countries. Therefore, Banabilh (2013) investigated career decisions of undergraduate dental students at the University of Science and Technology, Yemen. A total of (300) out of (500) responses were recorded for this study, a response rate of (60) percent. An questionnaire was administered to dental students at UST, and a chi-square test was used for statistical analysis of the data. The results showed that students chose dentistry as a career for the following reasons: economic (easy to find jobs, 44.7 percent); vocational (I like to treat people to improve their health, 39.0 percent); personal (my family dentist's encouragement, 37.3 percent); and professional (I can work in many fields, 33.0 percent). When group and item scores were compared between genders, statistically significant differences were only found for vocational reasons ( $p < 0.05$ ). In conclusion, the reasons Yemeni dental students chose dentistry as a profession were primarily economic, then vocational.

Mariño et al. (2012) reported on career decisions of Australian oral health profession students. This study collected and analyzed recent information regarding the socio-demographic profile and career decisions of (829) Australian oral health profession students and the reasons for their career choice. Data were collected during the 2009–10 academic year via a web-based survey. Most of the students said they had selected their course in high school (66.8 percent) and were most influenced in their career choice by self-motivation (85.3 percent) and caring for and helping other people (86.6 percent). The majority of the respondents reported wishing to work in a city (51.5 percent), practicing general dentistry (31.8 percent) in either the public or private sector (40.2 percent each).

According to Kennett, Reed and Lam, (2011), several decades of research have been spent, for example, linking students' goal orientations with their learning behavior and grades (e.g., Cury, Elliot, Da Fonseca, & Moller, 2006; Deci & Ryan; 2000; Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Murayma & Elliot, 2009; Phan, 2009). Reporting their own research, Kennett, Reed and Lam, (2011) have found that individual students have both internal and external reasons for attending university and the pattern of reasons do have an impact on success. They asked undergraduate students to list all of their reasons for attending university and to indicate those most important. Overall, students reported more than five and most listed both internal and external reasons. Highly endorsed internal reasons included self-improvement, achieving life goals, whereas highly endorsed external reasons pertained to career and family.

Upper-year students listed more reasons for attending and tended to list reasons pertaining to self-improvement/satisfaction and societal contributions. Many first year students attended to prove to others they could earn a degree.

On the assumption that students' orientation to higher education may affect their academic decisions, expectations, and performance, Xu (2011) examined students' perceptions of university education comparing China with USA. The results revealed insights of the culture and systems' impact on students' perceptions of higher education. Citing the research, Xu mentions that there are two generalized types of educational orientation among students: a learning-oriented type and a grade-oriented type (Alexitch & Page, 1996; Katchadurian & Boli, 1985). The former focus primarily on values such as harmony, personal growth, the process of learning and intellectual competence, and this type of student espouses intrinsic values. The grade-oriented student primarily focuses on concerns such as grades, status, competition, and recognition, and they are more interested in extrinsic values (Alexith, 1994; Rich, 1990, Stark, Bentley & Lowther, 1991). Xu also provides further evidence from the literature where researchers have reportedly found that "learning-oriented students reported the highest grades, and also showed the greatest degree of satisfaction with their university experience (Alexith, 1994)".

It can be assumed that a reliable identification of motivational factors would usefully inform pedagogical interventions. According to a study by Savage, Birch and Noussi (2011) "students who are more intrinsically motivated may benefit from less prescriptive assignments which offer more freedom to choose from "formative" assessment topics in which they have a greater personal interest. Those who are more extrinsically motivated, where the final "summative" grade is thought of as the most important, may be less influenced by pedagogical styles". Savage, Birch and Noussi (2011) investigated the motivation of engineering students in higher education. They examined motivational factors affecting higher education students in the Faculty of Technology at the University of Portsmouth. (422) students completed the questionnaire. Of the (24) students invited to attend the interviews, (11) attended. The study came with different results. The questionnaire responses indicated that students operate both intrinsically and extrinsically. The semi-structured interviews, however, found little evidence of the former, with most students indicating that they operate extrinsically. Savage, Birch and Noussi (2011) also reviewed previous research (Rebolledo-Medez et al., 2006; Turner and Patrick, 2004) and emphasized the importance of increasing a student's intrinsic motivation as they study at university. They also cited other studies which found a positive correlation between actively developing a motivating environment and student performance, Rebolledo-Medez et al., 2006; Turner and Patrick, 2004; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

Yi-Yin, (2011) aimed to understand older adults' motivation to learn in higher education. The methodology of this study was a qualitative study with an in-depth interview for collecting the data. The researcher interviewed three adults over (60) years old who are studying in a university campus with a semi-structured, open-response interview guide. The study found older adults learners in higher education are motivated by a desire for knowledge, a desire for stimulation, a

desire for self-fulfillment, a desire for 'generativity', and learning as a transition. This study also found that older adult learners in higher education face some barriers that influence their leaning such demographic barriers e.g., as memory decline, lack of time; attitude barriers, specifically ageism by older adults themselves or by others. There were also structural barriers such as required course load and inflexible course schedules.

From a methodological point of view, Kennett D. Reed, M. and D. Lam (2011) stressed the importance of directly asking students their reasons for attending higher education. They asked undergraduate students to list all of their reasons for attending university and to indicate those most important. Participants were (69) first year and (63) upper year undergraduate students attending a multicultural/urban university in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Most of the sample was comprised of females (87%), with ages ranging from 17 to 48 years and on average being 20.86 years. Overall, students reported more than five and most listed both internal and external reasons. Internal reasons included self-improvement, achieving life goals, whereas external reasons pertained to career and family. Upper-year students listed more reasons for attending and tended to list reasons pertaining to self improvement/ satisfaction and societal contributions. Many first year students attended to prove to others they could earn a degree. They argued that complexity of reasons the students listed may help to explain outcomes such as GPA, retention and satisfaction.

Relationships between academic motivation and personality among college students were examined by Clark and Schroth (2010). They involved (451) first-year college students in the study. Multiple regressions compared three types of intrinsic motivation, three types of extrinsic motivation and five personality factors. The results indicated that those who were intrinsically motivated to attend college tended to be extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, and open to new experiences. Those who were extrinsically motivated tended to be extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, and neurotic. Those who lacked motivation tended to be disagreeable and careless. These results suggest that students with different personality characteristics have different reasons for pursuing college degrees and different academic priorities.

Pisarik (2009) reported on motivational orientation and burnout among undergraduate college students. This study examined the relationships among motivational orientations based on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) and burnout among undergraduate college students. A sample of (191) university students was administered the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002). The results showed that intrinsic motivation to attend college was associated with lower levels of burnout, while 'amotivation and external regulation' were associated with higher levels of burnout.

Coy-Ogan (2009) analyzed perceived factors influencing the pursuit of higher education among first-generation college students. They examined the perceived differences among salient

factors influencing the pursuit of higher education between first-year, first-generation college students and students from college-educated families. These factors included family influence, secondary school support, peer influence, preparation for college, awareness and access to financial aid, and relative functionalism. T-test was used to analyze data derived from The Factors Influencing the Pursuit of Higher Education (FIPHE) Questionnaire (Harris, 2009). The survey instrument was administered to (348) first-year college students. No significant differences were found between the perceptions of first-year, first-generation students when compared to first-year students from college-educated families except for the factors of family influence and preparation for college. First-year, first-generation college students perceived family influence and preparation for college to be less powerful factors affecting their pursuit of higher education than students from college educated families.

Aguiar, et al. (2009) studied factors involved in the choice of dentistry as an occupation by Pernambuco dental students in Brazil. A total of 1,024 students were surveyed. All participants were enrolled in dentistry courses in the state of Pernambuco in 2008. The results demonstrated that the choice of occupation was made primarily for economic reasons (73.5 percent), followed by vocational reasons (68.3 percent), professional reasons (67.8 percent), and personal reasons (56.6 percent).

Phinney et al. (2006) (cited in Kennett, Reed and Lam, (2011) discussed the paucity of research on why young people attend university. In a research report, Phinney, Dennis, and Osorio (2006) reported on a study on reasons to attend college among ethnically diverse college students. A survey of (713) ethnically diverse university freshmen (463 Latino, 167 Asian American, 54 African American, 29 European American) assessed reasons for attending college in relation to ethnic identity, family interdependence, and college adjustment. Results revealed three reasons for attending college not reported in previous research. These were: "to help one's family, to prove one's self-worth, and because of encouragement".

Green and Hill (2003) investigated whether male and female college students reported different reasons for attending college. They revisited the study of Schab (1974) who found that women frequently reported non-academic reasons for attending college. They hypothesized that women today place a greater emphasis on the career preparation aspect of college than they did in 1974, and that women emphasize academic and professional preparation more than men do. Participants rated reasons for attending a university on a 7-point scale. Supporting the hypothesis, results indicated that female participants attend college for professional / academic preparation rather than non-professional reasons (e.g., to make friends). The results also revealed that women place a greater emphasis than do men on the importance of professional/academic reasons for attending college.

Scarbecz and Ross (2002) researched gender differences in first-year dental students' motivation to attend dental school. During the academic year 2000-01, they conducted a survey

of first-year dental students at a sample of publicly funded U.S. dental schools. The data showed that male dental students rate self-employment and business-related motives as more important, while female dental students rate people-oriented motives more highly. Factor analysis revealed four distinct clusters of motives for pursuing a dental career: a financial motive, a business-oriented motive, a people-oriented or caring motive, and a flexibility motive. Women scored significantly higher than men on the caring factor, whereas the reverse was true on the business factor. Male and female students rated financial and flexibility motives equally.

Hayden (2000) studied factors that influence the college choice process among African American students. One of the factors that may influence success rates is the college selection process. The four arenas explored in the study included academic factors, social factors, personal factors, and financial factors. The target sample included (360) freshmen. Results revealed that students are motivated by their aspirations to become an authority in their field, to own their own business, and to be financially stable when they enter the workforce. The study also showed that the academic reputation of an institution can also be very important. Having reviewed relevant previous research on the subject of this study, it can be clearly seen that very few studies have been conducted in Jordan on the topic of students' perceptions about university education. It is also evident that with reference to the teaching and learning of English language majors, almost nothing has been done.

## 2. Method

Inspired by previous studies and particularly that of Kennett D. Reed, M. and D. Lam (2011), the data for this study was collected by asking students to directly answer the research question: *Why do you think people want to attend university?* The students were asked to write short essays (maximum of three paragraphs) in answer to the previous question. This was done as part of an in-class activity in the writing courses taught by the researcher and fellow colleagues during the academic year 2012-2013 at three public universities in Jordan selected from the north, center, and south of the country. An equal number of essays were taken from each university; i.e. (105) students/essays from each university. Students were allowed to use dictionaries during the task. The time allowed was a maximum of fifty minutes. The question of the study was explained to the students. Students were told that they will not be evaluated for their ideas or perceptions but only their language quality will be assessed for feedback as this was not considered an exam. The essays were scanned manually by the researcher scanned with the purpose of identifying the sentences or statements or phrases that indicated reasons or perceptions for going to university or college in general. The participants were listed in order after giving them serial codes.

Color coding was used for different themes in categorizing the perceptions. Key words identifying the concepts were also highlighted. Frequencies and percentages were also calculated for each theme so that the themes can be ranked in terms of importance. Illustrative quotations are taken verbatim. The sample of the study (n=105) were all first and second year level students

who were enrolled in undergraduate English programs in three major public universities in Jordan. The perceptions of older students were not taken in this study because the students who were taking the writing course were mainly junior students. The majority of the participants in this study were females (n=85). The EFL programs in public Jordanian universities tend to be composed of mainly women students. The ages of the students range from 19-21 years. All of the students hold Jordanian nationality and the vast majority come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, i.e. middle class families.

The unit of analysis was chosen to be the number of statements carrying university functions and their frequency in each essay. This is because each student was expected to mention a multiple of reasons or functions of university education. These reasons were written in paragraph format but they were listed after identifying them in sentences as written by students in the order or sequence in the original format. More than one statement were mentioned by each individual student; therefore the total number of sentences / phrases reflecting the function of stating purpose of university education were taken as the corpus, that is, (525) where the average is (5) for each student. Students' statements are quoted verbatim (including language errors) to illustrate specific points.

### **3. Research problem**

Kennett, Reed, and Lam (2011) stressed the importance of directly asking students their reasons for attending higher education. Few studies have directly asked undergraduate students their reasons for coming to institutions for higher learning and, instead, have been developed based on theoretical rationale. Relatively little attention has been paid to why students decide to go to college. Reasons for attending college are important because they may influence academic engagement and outcomes. Other than the work by Co<sup>^</sup>te´ and Levine (1997), there is relatively little research on reasons for attending college or on the factors that predict such reasons. The psychology of Arab and particularly Jordanian EFL learners in terms of their concepts has never been examined by researchers. Although university education in Jordan is now highly on demand, the available literature, and particularly within the Jordanian educational context does not show why EFL undergraduate students seek university education. Much literature talks about problems of language learning among undergraduate students with reference to specific skills or contexts.

### **4. Study question**

This research aims at answering the following question: How do Jordanian EFL students perceive purposes of university education?

## 5. Hypotheses of the study

The study postulated the following two hypotheses:

1. Jordanian EFL students perceive university education in terms of extrinsic instrumental job-related motivation.
2. Jordanian EFL students have positive attitudes towards university education in general.

## 6. Results

All students wrote in length about why they thought people go to universities. They expressed their conceptions through the short essays. Having scanned the essay, it was found that each student has mentioned at least five different reasons for university education. In all, there were (525) statements carrying the function of university education. It was possible to categorize the statements used by the students in their free writing essays on university education into four evident themes: These are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Distribution of statements indicating purposes of university education in ranking order

percentage	frequency	Theme
58.85 %	309	1. self-education
18.85 %	99	2. triviality (default)
12.57 %	66	3. career-related
09.71 %	51	4. socializing
100 %	525	Total

The key words or phrases indicating each theme or university function are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Themes of university education and key lexical exponents

Lexical Exponents	Theme
Information, knowledge, dream, learn, culture, life, satisfaction, self-improve, good, personality, educational, success; free	1. self-education

just a stage of life; forced; parents' pressure; nothing to do, pass time; imitate others in family or friends; show off;	2. triviality (default)
job; work; pay; earn; money; salary; career; living; difficult circumstances; benefits; unemployment;	3. career-related
Socializing; fun; meet people; make friends; waste time; appearances; communicate with others in campus;	4. socializing

### 6.1. Results in relation to Theme 1: Self- education

The majority of the statements given in the essays were perceiving higher education as an educational endeavor. Almost two thirds of the statements (58.85%; n=309) were focusing on educational and learning concepts. The reasons provided in this category were purely academic. This shows a clearly intrinsic motivation shared by the students. Coming to university is seen in terms of self learning and personal venture aimed at personal satisfaction. It is interesting to observe here that the purpose of attending university was seen and expressed in the form of metaphors like the word "dream". Receiving "good" education is viewed as a dream of life among these young Jordanian EFL learners. This reflects a social attitude to higher education in Jordan as many families strive to provide decent levels of education to their sons and daughters in order to face challenging life realities. The university is viewed as a source of self realization for many students. It gives them "*experience and lessons in life*" as one participant wrote. Frequent words used in this category of statements included nouns and verbs indicating knowledge, educations, learning and experience. The students are clearly aware of life challenges and therefore they used concepts realized by phrases such as: "*learning how to deal with people and society; learning how to solve your problems; learning how to be a successful person in the future; education is very important in our life*".

It can be said here that learning for learning or pure learning was emphasized by the students. They see learning in relation to knowing more and in terms of acquiring life skills such as: "to know about society, people and environment." There is a clear sense of social and environmental awareness among the students. They see university education as a means to understand society and the wide environment outside the campus. The students' essays revealed clear appreciation to the general value of learning and education gained from higher education. Their statements stressed the significance of self-development. This can be clearly seen in phrases like:

- "*love to improve themselves*";

- *"complete their learning";*
- *"live satisfied";*
- *"change our wrong thoughts";*
- *"stand out in a crowd";*
- *"build up our personalities";*
- *"gain knowledge";*
- *"expand their information";*
- *"receive a good education"*

It is also interesting to note that the participants showed awareness of personal life skills that may be gained by university education. Among such skills are: *"Learning how to deal with people and society";* and *"Learning how to solve your problems"*. Here, students clearly expect university education to equip them with social skills or interpersonal skills and problem solving skills which are quite necessary for success in any future career. The following quotations provide evidence for this finding:

- *"We can't talk to well educated people unless we're at a good level of education"*
- *"Learning how to be a successful person in the future"*
- *"Universities are a place to build up our personalities"*
- *"So that they can deal with their problem in a good way"*
- *"Knowledge and education are the first main weapon people hold to prove they are successful in their community."*
- *"To improve their skills"*

Within this frame of mind, students expressed their perceptions of higher education in terms of personal freedom and self realization. The essays were full of phrases and statements like this:

- *"To get free life"*
- *"They have a good life"*
- *"Love to prove themselves"*
- *"And how to stand out in a crowd"*
- *"In my point of view, the people attend University to learn and make theirselves"*
- *"Prepare their life to new style"*
- *"We need education to stand up on our feet"*
- *"Education is very important in our life especially for women"*

In Jordan, it is a fact of life that every family, even the poorest, wants their sons and daughters to "complete their education". This is widely appreciated as a way for better income and more opportunities for social recognition. Among women students, this could be seen as more important than getting married. However, future research must verify this observation. It is also worth mentioning that the students in this category equated "studying" with "learning". Coming to higher education to study a particular subject is viewed as a way of learning skills for the future. It is common to hear testimonies by Jordanian parents who win financial prizes (lotteries) declaring that they intend to use the money to support the higher education of their children.

Moreover, going to university and getting a degree is a way for many Jordanians to get accepted by others in the society. It is a means to enhance social recognition. Consider the following quotation by this student: *"Some people get into the university just to be accepted as educational people in the soucity."* The modern Jordanian society has been steadily valuing education as a priority. According to one student, *"Jordanian believed that learning is a very important thing"*. Another student wrote: *"It's also part of our culture because we are in some part good in learning."*

Other quotes include statements like this:

- *"To complete your education that you worked hard for 12 years ( you won't stop after that hard work)"*
- *"Education is very important for us"*
- *"It's our right to learn, and transform thoughts, ideas, facts, attitude and a way of good life between people"*
- *"Universities are the highest level of education"*

It may be interesting here to note the statement expressing education in terms of "right" rather than a "privilege". However, some other students said it was a duty. "Also, going to the university is a duty thing that we should do it". Also interesting to observe students equating university education with the idea of "being good". Becoming a "good" citizen is interestingly widely found in educational missions and policies in curriculum documents. It is the ultimate goal of education. Consider the following statements which clearly show an intrinsic attitude to learning at university level.

:

- "I think the people who they are going at University is good people"
  - "To be successful in everything"
  - "To be perfect person"
  - "And to be cultured in everything"
  - "With wisdom and confidence, everything became easier"
  - "It is important to go to university and get a high education"
- Perceptions of University Education
- "People want their sons be the best in the life"
  - "It makes its students more intelligent"

## 6.2. Results in relation to Theme 2: Triviality

It is interesting that the second major category of the students statements expressed in their free essays were neither academic nor pragmatic concepts. Just around one fifth of the statements (18.85 %; n=99) were expressing ideas that show no clear purpose. This category involved key

words such as: *"just a stage of life; forced; parents pressure; nothing to do; unemployment; pass time; imitate others in family or friends"*. It may be worrying too to find such a big portion of the students not really knowing why they are there or what university education can do to them. Statements in this category carried vague semantic loads. The following are illustrating examples:

- *"to specialize in different topics"*
- *"forced to attend university"*
- *"Get a certificate"*
- *"Some people are forced to get into the university"*
- *"After they finish studying at school, they go to university"*
- *"People attend universities once they finished high school"*
- *"So they take them in the university after they passed the tawjihi"*
- *"Just because of the degree"*
- *"They want to be called (A University graduated) not else"*

It can be noticed here that the EFL learners perceive higher education also in terms of other non-academic concepts. Coming to university because "you have to" or because they are "forced to" are certainly not worthwhile goals. Some students see coming to university as defacto, that is, once finishing secondary school, the natural follow-up step is joining college. Therefore, university education becomes in this case as a goal in itself rather than a means to improve life. "Getting the degree" or "to be called a university graduate" is seen as a goal. This shows that many students in campus may just find themselves there not knowing what they are supposed to do. They may see university education as a stage to pass or waste time until something happens to them later on. Perhaps such students did not receive any career guidance before they come to university. One could also hypothesize here that it is these students who are "getting lost" in campus that are causing troubles and violent actions from time to time.

### 6.3. Results in relation to Theme 3: Career-related

In this category the students reported reasons that reflected purposes of a pragmatic nature indicating factors of extrinsic instrumental motivation. The third category indicating goals of university education were classified as pragmatic. Just above one tenth of the statements were expressing ideas of a pragmatic nature (n=66; 12.57%). Key words showing this function of university education were: job; work; pay; earn; money; salary; career; living; difficult circumstances; benefits. The percentage of expressions showing pragmatic goals is clearly not much. However, we can safely assume that going to university for so called "benefits" is still a major interest among students of EFL in Jordan. This can be added to other intrinsic goals mentioned in Theme One above. In this category of perceptions, higher education is basically seen as a means to an end, i.e. material objectives related largely to money and job values.

University education is the way to get a degree which will enable many Jordanian graduates to compete for a "good" job both inside and outside the country. It is no secret that the Jordanian

economy is not at its best nowadays. People feel the pinch of unemployment and poverty loom large. It may be even more difficult for Jordanian women to compete for the shrinking job market. Getting a job and a reasonable salary is naturally a big reason to go to higher education. For women students, it can be more important because equality with men is seen usually in terms of job opportunities for both sexes. The following statements may be listed as illustrative examples of this theme:

- *"To build their future and career by their own success and effort"*
- *"Because they are interested to get a good job which is depends on the quality of their education"*
- *"And get a job for living"*
- *"And earn lots of money"*
- *"We need to face life difficulty in every way possible"*
- *"Education at Universities cause a lot of money, yes"*
- *"Most people bealived that they cant find a good job without sertificat"*
- *"people are living under difficult circumstances"*

#### **6.4. Results in relation to Theme: Socializing**

The last and least significant category in the eyes of EFL students is the university function of socializing. It received only less than a tenth of the total statements (n=51, 09.71%) The key words indicating this goal were: *"fun; meet people; make friends; waste time; appearances; show off, and communicate with others in campus"*. In addition to the above mentioned goals, university education is viewed as fun. The campus offers a wide range of activities and facilities that provide the feeling of having fun while studying. For women students, this is important. In a society that is rather reserved and conservative in culture, it can be understood why students find an outlet in campus where liberal and free attitudes are maintained. The best way for women to escape from the kitchen is to be in campus. Many expressions were like his: *"To get free life; have fun; and waste time"*. Students can gain value added benefits by staying in campus. It is an ideal method for making new friends and meeting old ones. Reflecting this function of higher education are statements like this:

- *"It helps us learn how to get along with people"*
- *"It is a place to meet new people"*
- *"Make new friends"*
- *"Meeting people"*
- *"And make new relationships"*
- *"Until to discuss with other people"*
- *"For fun"*
- *"They say : our sons will see a lot of people and learn from them"*
- *"And to communicate with other people"*

- *"To enter this new world"*

## 7. Discussion

The results of this study showed that the vast majority of the statements indicating university goals were positive whether intrinsic, career-related or socializing, or even passing time. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study, i.e. "Jordanian EFL students have positive attitudes towards university education in general." is confirmed. EFL students at Jordanian public universities do clearly appreciate learning and see it as a central or pivotal player in their life. The findings indicate that it is possible to classify students' interests in university education in terms of four possible categories. These were ranked in order according to the frequency of statements occurring in the students' essays. The top category could be named: self-education. The reasons provided in this category were purely academic. This shows a clearly intrinsic motivation shared by the students. Coming to university is seen in terms of self-learning and personal venture aimed at personal satisfaction. It can be concluded here that the majority of Jordanian EFL students recognize the value of higher education as a personal investment. This shows a high level of awareness of learning as a means of improving one's chances in life. It can be safely said here that most students of EFL involved in this study showed intrinsic motivation for learning at university level. This will guarantee more personal commitment to study and may well indicate better academic achievement.

The second biggest, though not high but still relatively big, category of statements (18.85 %; n=99) indicating interest in university education, was studying for no obvious reasons. This category can be described as "triviality" because no obvious or meaningful reasons were mentioned. It can be said that almost one fifth of statements were on trivial purposes. Coming to university may be a reason for its own sake. There is a clear lack of awareness or commitment to university learning perceived by EFL students. This is a serious finding although it may not be that alarming. It is clear that a bunch of students are seen in campus doing just nothing or spending time waiting for a degree. There is therefore an obvious need for career orientation to avoid the possibility of having many students who are feeling lost.

Only (12.57%) of the statements were on career related goals. This disproves the first hypothesis of the study: "Jordanian EFL students perceive university education in terms of extrinsic instrumental job-related motivation." This can be explained by referring to the fact that the majority of EFL students in Jordanian universities are females. They possibly view university education first as a source of learning for life skills, but getting a job may come at a later stage or a second priority. Although many women go to universities in Jordan, it seems that only a few find suitable jobs particularly in teaching English. Jordanian women do not easily enter business or companies that require long hours of working or coming home late. The teaching profession is already suffering from unemployment. The least weighted category was found to be socializing in campus. This received less than ten percent of the statements mentioned in the essays. It can be

concluded here that the university is still seen as a place for meeting people and making friends. However, this is not the major concern for coming to university. Many students want to finish earlier and go home. Many don't like to be late for home. Many women students don't like to take late afternoon or evening courses. This is because of the conservative nature of the Jordanian Arab largely Muslim society.

## 8. Conclusion and recommendations

As the results have shown, the majority of responses were in favor of intrinsic motivation. This can be utilized by Departments of English and linguistics in Jordan. The students do want to learn and improve their life opportunities. Therefore, their study plans should be geared towards fulfilling these desires for pure learning. More research is clearly needed to verify the findings of this study. We still need to know how English programs at university level meet students' expectations. Indeed, there is so much that has to be clarified as to the sociology and psychology of Jordanian EFL learners. After all, their life in campus would mean a little if educational content does not meet the learners' own goals.

## 9. Limitations of the study

No attempt was made to study the differences between the women and men students because the numbers were not equal. Women students were the majority. Also, no comparisons were made between the students according to their place of study; i.e.; university. The main concern was to see how they all viewed university education.

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