

Catastrophic Thinking Among Employees and Its Relationship to Social Adjustment in Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences

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Abstract

Objectives. This study aimed to identify the level of catastrophic thinking among employees in the Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan, determine the level of their social adjustment within the same work setting, and examine the relationship between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment among these employees.

Materials and Methods. This study involved employees working in the Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan. A total of **60 employees** were selected using **purposive sampling**. Data were collected from the selected participants and analyzed to describe the levels of catastrophic thinking and social adjustment, as well as to test the relationship between the two variables.

Results. The findings indicate that catastrophic thinking and social adjustment are important issues among employees. The work environment can involve continuous demands and pressure; when social adjustment is disrupted, work-related stress tends to increase. The results also suggest that employees' work experiences are closely connected to social pressures, highlighting the need to understand the social context surrounding the workplace.

Conclusions. This study concludes that identifying catastrophic thinking and social adjustment among employees is essential. Employees may face ongoing pressure in their work, and difficulties in social adjustment can contribute to broader work stress. Because work is strongly influenced by social pressures, attention to the social environment is necessary to support employees' well-being and performance.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Catastrophic Thinking, Management, Employees.

Introduction

Management has long been recognized as an established field of knowledge that has evolved from early civilizations to the modern era (Acar, 2023; Ashraf et al., 2021; Babayev et al., 2025). As social and organizational life becomes more complex, the need for better management practices also increases, encouraging researchers to develop new standards and criteria that help individuals and institutions work more effectively (Ahmady et al., 2016; Aktaş et al., 2011). In the workplace, one psychological factor that can interfere with performance is catastrophic thinking—a pattern of pessimistic, fear-based thoughts that

makes a person assume the worst outcomes from ordinary situations (Abarghoueinejad et al., 2021; Aiken, 1985; Didymus et al., 2021). For example, someone may believe that a minor physical discomfort will lead to serious illness, that driving slightly faster will certainly cause an accident, or that a plane crash is bound to happen (Abarghoueinejad et al., 2021; Abduh et al., 2024). This kind of thinking often creates excessive worry, reduces concentration, weakens discipline, and eventually affects productivity and the quality of work. If it is ignored, catastrophic thinking can become a hidden weakness that disrupts an otherwise stable work environment, which is why it is important to identify it early and help individuals shift toward more constructive ways of thinking. Another key factor in work life is social adjustment, which refers to a person's ability to adapt psychologically and interact well with the people and conditions around them. Social adjustment is a dynamic process; individuals continuously try to fit into their environment so they can work comfortably, build positive relationships, and maintain harmony within their group (Kokkinos et al., 2014). In an educational institution, good social adjustment supports a healthier climate, strengthens connections among staff, and helps them carry out tasks in a more balanced and consistent way. Based on this background, the present study addresses a problem often seen in workplaces: catastrophic thinking can limit task performance, and in many cases it is closely linked to difficulties in social adjustment (Adewale et al., 2024; Bf et al., 2020). Employees generally need to build and maintain social relationships at work, yet social pressures or relationship problems may increase stress and worsen negative thinking patterns (Miller et al., 2011; "Social, Cultural, and Other Diversity Issues in the Traumatic Stress Field," 2015). Therefore, this study aims to (1) identify the level of catastrophic thinking among employees in the Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan, (2) identify their level of social adjustment, and (3) examine the relationship between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment. The study is limited to employees of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan (human scope), conducted from October 6, 2025 to January 30, 2026 (time scope), and carried out within the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan (spatial scope).

Materials and Methods

Study Participants.

This study involved employees working in the Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan. The study population consisted of employees in these colleges, and 60 employees were selected using purposive sampling, meaning

participants were chosen intentionally to match the focus of the research. Employees were included if they were actively working during the data-collection period and agreed to participate (Sugiyono, 2017). Questionnaires that were incomplete were not included in the final dataset.

Study organization.

A descriptive design with a correlational approach was used because the study aimed to describe the variables and test their relationship rather than apply an intervention. Data were collected using two instruments. Catastrophic thinking was measured using the Catastrophic Thinking Scale, which includes 25 items across five dimensions (developed by Mustafa Hussein). Social adjustment was assessed using the Social Adjustment Scale, consisting of 44 statements across four dimensions (developed by Hala Makki). Both scales were administered to all participants between October 6, 2025, and January 30, 2026. In addition, the researcher conducted brief personal interviews with experienced specialists to support the research process and ensure that the chosen procedures and instruments were appropriate for the study context. After data collection, responses were checked for completeness, coded, and organized into tables before statistical processing.

Statistical analysis.

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the scores, including the mean and standard deviation for each scale. The relationship between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment was examined using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results were then interpreted based on the research objectives to explain the level of each variable and the strength and direction of their association.

Results

This section presents the descriptive statistics and the correlation results between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment among employees in the Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the University of Maysan. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for both variables, followed by the Pearson correlation test. The analysis shows a very strong positive correlation between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment ($r = 0.934$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the two variables moved in the same direction in this sample. The correlation was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ with degrees of freedom $(n - 2) = 58$, confirming that the relationship observed was unlikely to occur by chance.

Table 1. Arithmetic means, standard deviations, correlation coefficient values, and significance level for the catastrophic thinking and social adjustment scales

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R-value	Sig	Significance
Catastrophic thinking	100.21	6.452	0.934	0.000	moral
Social adaptation	112.27	6.323			

Significance < (0.05) and degrees of freedom (n-2) = 58.

Discussion

Discussion of Study Variables: Catastrophic Thinking and Social Adjustment

Based on Table (2), the relationship between catastrophic thinking and social adjustment is supported by the correlation value (r) and its significance level (sig), which indicates that the association found in this study is statistically meaningful. In this context, the moderate level of catastrophic thinking shown by employees can be seen as a realistic response to continuous job demands and ongoing workplace pressure. The way individuals interpret these pressures is also shaped by personal characteristics, so it is reasonable that catastrophic thinking does not appear in the same intensity for everyone. In daily life, negative or “worst-case” thoughts can happen to anyone, but some individuals go further by trying to justify those thoughts and treating them as true even when they are not. This idea aligns with Barakat’s view that certain people may reach frightening convictions and still attempt to prove them in one way or another, even when they are incorrect (Moran, 1996).

At the same time, social adjustment is not only about individual effort but also about the environment that surrounds the employee. A supportive and well-organized workplace can help employees settle, cooperate, and feel psychologically stable, and this process may be easier when a person already has good personal development and social experience. In other words, adjustment can happen faster when the environment provides the right conditions (Jurecka et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2014). More broadly, adaptation to the social environment is shaped through a long educational process in which family and educators help individuals learn to meet social expectations and integrate into the culture and social space of others (Aktaş et al., 2011; Cardella et al., 2021). These points help explain why catastrophic thinking and social adjustment appear closely related in the current study.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underline that identifying catastrophic thinking and social adjustment among employees is not optional, but a crucial step for understanding the real conditions of the workplace. Employees who work hard and continuously often face ongoing pressure, and when social adjustment is weak, that pressure can easily develop into serious

work-related stress. This also shows that employees' performance is not separated from social influences; instead, work life is strongly shaped by social pressures that exist inside and outside the work environment.

Based on these conclusions, the study recommends regular and periodic assessments of the employees' work environment to detect sources of pressure and patterns of catastrophic thinking that may emerge from the surrounding social context. It is also recommended to develop comparative models for evaluating work systems so the college can implement improvements that best fit its conditions. In addition, colleges should invest in programs that strengthen employees' skills in coping with social pressures and improving social adaptation, since workplace demands often come with unexpected burdens. Finally, future research is encouraged to explore related aspects of this issue, using broader samples and additional variables to provide a more complete explanation of the problem.

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