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# **Kuwait University students' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Seeking Counseling:**

## **Variation According to Gender, Age and Educational Level**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate knowledge about and attitudes towards seeking counseling among Kuwait University students in relation to some demographic variables, namely gender, age and the level of education; it also outlined the role of students' counseling knowledge and attitudes towards counseling in seeking counseling behavior. Furthermore, the study aimed to describe the relationship between knowledge of counseling and attitudes towards counseling in relation to gender, age and level of education. The study used scales of counseling knowledge and attitudes prepared specifically for the present research by the researcher. The instruments were developed and tested according to the attitudes' scale construction procedures and test development procedures. The validity and reliability of the research instruments were established and tested prior to the data collection. The instruments were applied to a sample consisting of 301 Kuwait university students, male and female, from different educational levels and ages. In order to answer the questions of this study, the data were entered into a computer system and SPSS16.0 software was employed for analysis, where the means, standard deviations, percentages, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent samples t-Test, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD Test, and standardized multiple regressions were calculated. The results of the study indicate that there is no significant positive correlation between the knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling held by Kuwait University students. Nevertheless, participants do have positive attitudes towards counseling, but have little knowledge of counseling issues. Additionally, there are no significant statistical differences in attitudes towards counseling issues in relation to gender and there is no significant statistical difference in knowledge of counseling issues in relation to age. On the other hand, there are statistically significant

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differences related to educational levels in favour of postgraduates. Finally, Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling is not predictable based on their attitude towards counseling, age, gender or level of education.

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#### **Introduction**

Counseling in the Middle East is quite new, especially in Kuwait. It was only in 1958 that the first official psychiatric hospital, with only five psychiatrists, opened in Kuwait (Alssaraf, 1995). In 1978, counselors were temporarily appointed in Kuwait public schools. In 1983, the first counseling unit was established to meet the psychological and academic needs of Kuwait University students (Soliman, 1993).

Studying at university can be a very exciting experience, where opportunities for personal development, academically and socially are offered. However, students may meet personal problems for which they need additional help and support beyond that offered by family, friends or tutors. Kuwait University offers all students a free, confidential counseling service, staffed by professional and experienced counselors from the staff of the educational psychology department. Students may experience a variety of psychological and personal problems that affect their academic or social life. These problems can be long-standing or resulting from a temporary crisis such as depression, bereavement and loss, sexual and cultural identity issues, anxiety, stress, life changes, illness, university relationship issues, suicidal feelings and eating disorders. According to Al-Darmaki (2003), through the university counseling student unit, students can get help to cope with these problems and understand their abilities to achieve a successful academic life with balanced psychological health and increased self-esteem.

Sometimes the difficulties may be unclear for the students and speaking with a counselor may help to clarify them. Despite the modest presence of professionals, counseling services have been

underutilized in Kuwait University (Soliman, 1991), with statistics indicating that only 0.62% of the enrolled students in the academic year 2008-2009, have sought counseling help from the University Counseling (Kuwait University Counseling Unit, 2009).

This study aimed to investigate the knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling of Kuwait university students on and to compare the results according to age, gender and students' level of education.

This paper is organized as follows. First, the introduction will include a short statement about the purpose of the enquiry and the importance of research. Second, there will be a review of the related literature and studies on the knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling among university students in order to explain what is already known about the area of the study. Third, the research questions will be outlined and the constructs that need to be measured to achieve the study aims are listed. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology employed in the current study, the research design, the research instrument, a list of the hypotheses and the independent and dependent variables, a short statement regarding the community of the study and the sample used, a discussion of the reliability and validity of the research instrument, and outlines of the limitations of the study, the procedures for data collection and statistical processing. Finally, the results, conclusions and recommendations derived from the present study will be presented and discussed.

### **Aims of the study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling of Kuwait University students through their seeking counseling behavior in relation to their gender, age and educational level.

### **Importance of the study**

The importance of the existing research arises from the significance of counseling in most Middle East countries, as developing countries. In the state of Kuwait, within the last 30 years, rapid social and economic changes have taken place. It seems that values, attitudes, and roles of individuals have been affected due to the internal changes in social and economic areas and other external changes. In fact, such shifts may lead to the experiencing of psychological problems, especially for people with less tolerance of change. Attitudes towards counseling may prevent some individuals from seeking help despite the

availability of such services.

Kuwait University students have been found to experience psychological issues such as distress, depression, and anxiety. However, based on preliminary observations by myself as researcher, when working as a Masters counseling student in Kuwait University and University of north Texas, there and as a staff member in the counseling unit there, only a small number of university students who were in need of counseling actually sought help from the service, and, of those who did seek help, some expressed initial reluctance to do so.

One explanation put forward for the students' reluctance to seek counseling may be their attitudes toward seeking counseling help; this, in turn, may be attributed to a lack of knowledge of counseling and to a lack of understanding of the value of counseling (Al-Samadi, 1997). Most Kuwaitis believe that counseling mainly represents western ideology. An individual's adoption of positive beliefs towards seeking counseling behaviors is a joint outcome of a complicated network consisting of belief values; religious beliefs, and the important effect of the mass media. It appears that any ideology inconsistent with Islamic and Kuwaiti traditions and issues related to social stigma will often result in resistance, with the result that Kuwaiti people are less accepting of new ideologies that may clash with their values, beliefs, and customs (Al-Thakeb, 1985). Ghubash and Eapen (2009) reported that some cultural beliefs affect peoples' understanding of mental health problems in the Arabian Gulf. Mukalel & Jacobs (2005), El-Islam (2006) found that some cultural and religious beliefs profoundly affect peoples' understanding and the way that they deal with their mental health problems and seeking help in Islamic countries. It was also found that misunderstanding mental health issues; in turn, seeking counseling help to be interrelated with the socio-cultural, religious context, so that, many people may prefer religious and traditional healing over counselling in dealing with mental health problems, because they believe that mental health problems are test or punishment from Allah ( Alradaan, 2012).

In addition, the Kuwaiti family, friends, and society have a considerable impact on decision-making. In fact, the family-oriented nature of Kuwaiti society stresses the role and functioning of each of its members. The family including parents, siblings, relatives, friends, peers, and neighbors as a large community, are considered as the most significant sources of financial, psychological and emotional

support. Furthermore, disclosing any personal issues or family matters outside the family setting conflicts with Kuwaiti family values (Al-Rowaie, 2001).

In light of the above, it is not surprising that the people of Kuwait might be more reluctant to seek counseling services. This study aims to provide a new perspective and evidence on how attitudes affect the seeking of counseling services among Kuwait University students. Additionally, it is hoped that this study will significantly benefit counselors and students in making them aware of the issues related to the observed large gap between the provision and take-up of the services provided. Thereby, negative attitudes hinder the development steps in counseling services, while positive attitudes facilitate the ways in which help can be provided and promote better mental health and consequently better academic achievement among students.

### **Previous studies**

A review of the literature related to seeking counseling draws attention to various factors which have a significant impact on students' attitudes, including social stigma, gender, age, previous counseling experience, and the level of education. Gender differences has been found as the most important variable that associated significantly with attitudes toward seeking counseling help by a number of studies (e.g., Al-Samadi, 1994; Fischer and Farina, 1995; Komiya et al., 2000), where women have more positive seeking counseling help attitudes than men have.

For example, Flum (1998) and Kessler have examined the gender differences in help-seeking. The increased rate of help-seeking behavior among women found in their study was explained by the greater ability of women to verbalize emotional distress in terms of conscious problems. The findings showed that men were less receptive to counseling than women and more concerned about their family reaction. Similarly, Cook's (1984) findings reported that female college students had greater interest in counseling than males did.

These previous findings support the conclusion of Leyla's study (2009), which was carried out to investigate attitudes toward seeking counseling help among 360 Turkish college students in Gazi University in Ankara. Her study focused on identifying factors encouraging and discouraging students to seek counseling. The results of the study found that females have more favorable attitudes

towards seeking professional help than males and gender differences could be a significant predictable factor in attitudes towards seeking counseling.

Similar findings of the impact of gender differences in seeking counseling were also found by Komiya and Eells (2001), who examined the relationship between demographic variables and attitudes towards seeking counseling among 120 international students in the United States. Gender differences were significantly related to help-seeking attitudes. The study showed that females have greater openness to emotions and open attitudes toward seeking counseling. In a study by Solberg et al. (1994), gender differences were found to be a significant predictable factor in help-seeking behavior, with women seeking help more frequently than men. In another university sample, help seeking behavior had a positive correlation with factors such as gender, level of education, social support, and age (Cramer, 2000; Solberg et al., 1994). Alternatively, it was also documented that gender differences have no direct relationship to counseling help attitudes. A study by Hye and Tidwell (2005) with 157 Korean Americans students found no significant gender differences with respect to their attitudes in procuring professional counseling.

Moreover, demographic variables, such as age and level of education, have been found to have a positive correlation with seeking counseling help behavior among college students in various studies. A study by Leaf et al., (1987) investigated the effect of relationships between age and education on attitudes towards counseling services in New Haven and found that women indicated significantly higher receptivity to counseling services than men. The study showed that women were less likely than men to be concerned about their families getting upset when they seek counseling. In addition, the study revealed that the age groups in the middle range were more likely to be highly responsive to counseling services than young adults (ages 18 to 24).

Regarding the factor of the level of education, Hye and Tidwell (2005) study revealed significant differences between respondents regarding their levels of education, where higher level of education indicated more positive attitudes towards securing counseling assistance. In Fischer and Cohen (1972) and Fischer and Farina (1995) study, it has been found that more educated individuals are more likely to show



positive help-seeking attitudes compared to those lower educated individuals.

In the Arab culture, there is a paucity of documented studies investigated attitudes toward seeking counseling help. A literature review had drawn the attention to few studies conducted on college students from Arab countries. Al-Samadi (1994) in Jordan found that female college students have shown more positive attitudes toward seeking counseling when compared to males. A kuwaiti study by Al-Rowaie (2001) has looked at the influence of intrinsic factors on students' attitudes towards counseling help. The study aimed to investigate 529 Kuwait University students' attitudes towards seeking counseling. The results indicated that Kuwait University students have less positive attitudes towards seeking counseling than groups studied by other researchers in other studies. The results also found females have more favorable attitudes towards seeking counseling than males. A study by Al-Darmaki (2003) has drawn attention to the importance of intrinsic factors affecting United Arab Emirates University students' attitudes towards seeking counseling. She conducted her study on 301 students to investigate the students' attitudes towards counseling in relation to some demographic variables. Her findings show that female participants have more favorable attitudes toward seeking professional help than males.

### **Research questions**

1. Are there any significant statistical differences in the average Kuwait University student's performance on the scale of knowledge of counseling that can be attributed to the student's age?
2. Are there any significant statistical differences in the average Kuwait University student's performance on the scale of attitudes towards counseling that can be attributed to the student's gender?
3. Are there any significant statistical differences in the average Kuwait University student's performance on the scale of attitudes towards seeking counseling that can be attributed to the student's level of education?
4. What is the relationship between Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling and their attitudes towards seeking counselling?

5. Can the knowledge of counseling issues be predicted by attitude, gender, age, and level of education?

### **Constructs**

The two constructs to be measured in this investigation are:

1. Knowledge of the issues of counselling among Kuwait University students.
2. Attitude towards the issues of seeking counselling among Kuwait University students.

### **Definition of terms**

For the objectives of this study, the researcher used the following definitions:

- **Knowledge of counseling** is procedurally defined in this study as Kuwaiti university students' ability to correctly answer 15 closed, multiple choice questions based upon the issue of counseling and seeking counseling help. A high score indicates high levels of knowledge of seeking counseling help and a low score low levels of knowledge.
- **Attitudes towards seeking counseling** is procedurally defined in this study as Kuwait University students' responses to 15 statements regarding the issues of seeking counseling help, whether such a response is positive or passive. A participant's attitude towards seeking counseling help is identified in the course of the current study through answers related to the measuring scales prepared for this study. A high score indicates high levels of attitude of seeking counseling help and a low score low levels of attitude.
- **Counseling** is procedurally defined in this study as the process in which a trained counselor helps a person function more effectively and improve his or her life by addressing problems in a preventive and developmental way.

### **Methodology of the study**

The study adopts the scientific paradigm and quantitative methodology. It uses the descriptive survey method, where the participants answer questions through the utilization of descriptive statistical methods to describe the students' performance in the counseling knowledge test and their attitudes towards the same subject. Responses to the descriptive questions will be analysed by

using descriptive statistics, the mean, standard deviation and frequency counts. The relationships between the variables of the study will be tested by using the Pearson moment correlation and the differences between the variables will be tested using the independent t-test.

### **Research instrument**

The data of the study were collected by means of two measurement instruments, which were specially designed based on a study of the educational literature related to this field. The first instrument was a 15 item attitude scale, aimed to measure participants' attitudes towards counseling. The attitude scale includes positive and negative statements. A Likert 5-level scale was used in this attitude scale. Each statement had five responses: strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, and strongly disagree. The grades of positive statements are calculated as per the following arrangement: five – four – three – two – one, whereas the grades of the negative statements were arranged in the reverse way. The Likert scale was used since it usually gives a very accurate measurement of the participants' opinions and attitudes (Bryman, 2008)

The second instrument was a 15 item knowledge test, aimed to measure participants' knowledge of the counseling. A high score indicates high levels of knowledge of counseling and a low score low levels of knowledge.

### **Background data**

The following respondent background data were collected:

1. Gender: Respondents tick a male or female tick box, information collected for descriptive purposes.
2. Age: Respondents select from the following categories: 18-22 years , 23-27 years, 28-32 years, 33-37, and over 37
3. Level of education: Respondents select from the following categories: undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate.

### **Questionnaire development**

1. **Literature searches:** Design of the instruments of the study was based on previous studies reported in educational journals. The attitudes scale was developed by the researcher. Items which do not fit with Kuwaiti culture were removed. In addition, the researcher used her experience as a counsellor and her mental health education PhD degree to design the

knowledge test.

- 2. Exploratory interviews:** These were conducted individually through seeking out and meeting the researchers' counseling colleagues and expert professors in the educational psychology department in Kuwait University.
- 3. Questions construction:** Based upon the prior phases, key themes for both the knowledge and attitudes instruments were established, and questions and statements produced by drawing upon these themes.

### **Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: Younger KU students have more knowledge of counseling than older KU students.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in knowledge of counseling between KU students between age groups.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference between male and female attitudes towards counseling.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between male and female attitudes towards counseling.

H<sub>3</sub>: KU students who have higher level of education have more positive attitudes towards counseling than students who have a lower level of education.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between KU students' level of education and their attitudes towards counseling.

H<sub>4</sub>: KU students' knowledge of counseling will correlate significantly with their attitudes towards counseling.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant correlation between the knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling of KU students.

H<sub>5</sub>: KU students' knowledge of counseling will be predictable based upon their attitudes towards counseling, gender and age, and level of education.

H<sub>05</sub>: KU students' knowledge of counseling will not be significantly predictable based upon their attitudes towards counseling, gender, age, and level of education.

### **. Variables of the study**

**Table (1): Variables of the Study**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>
H1	Age	Knowledge of counseling
H2	Gender	Attitudes towards counseling
H3	Level of education	Attitude towards counseling
H4		Knowledge of counseling Attitudes towards counseling
H5	Attitudes towards counseling Gender. Level of education. Age.	Knowledge of counseling

### **Community of the study**

The community of this study consisted of all the Kuwaiti students (15,232) who enrolled in Kuwait University during the year 2013.

### **Sample of the study**

The main group of this small scale study was composed of Kuwait University students who enrolled in the university in 2012. Due to the fact that a process of random sampling was not possible, a convenience sample of 301 enrolled students was drawn in order to conduct the study. The participants were 161 males and 140 females, of different ages and levels of education (undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate) but, as Kuwaitis, sharing a common ethnic background. All the participants completed the attitudes scale and the knowledge scale.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study was conducted in Kuwait University in Kuwait and is limited to the students enrolled during the year 2012.

### **Reliability and validity**

#### **Reliability**

In order to strengthen the validity of the study results, it is important to establish the reliability of the study instrument. Reliability refers to the

consistency to which the instrument is able to measure the constructs it purports to measure. According to Fink (2005), a reliable data collection method is '*one that is relatively free from measurement error*'. As a result of the limited time-scale, it was not possible to commence test-retest or parallel forms of tests of reliability. Therefore, Cronbach Alpha is commonly used to test the internal consistency of the test instrument (Bryman, 2008). The result of Cronbach Alpha for the attitudes scale is .960 and the result of Cronbach Alpha for the knowledge test is (.848). These coefficients were considered suitable for the purposes of this study (for more information see Appendix 1).

### **Validity**

The researcher attempted to strengthen the internal validity of the study by trying to design well knowledge test and attitude scale. Furthermore, the researcher presented the 30 item instrument, in its initial form, to her colleagues in the counseling department in Kuwait University, who specialized in counseling and their opinions were requested on every statement with regard to the following: clarity of meaning, suitability for the purpose, and the possibility of modification, deletion or addition of necessary items. As a result, a few items were modified and some were replaced by others in order to be more suitable for Kuwaiti society and culture. By interviewing experts and seeking their opinions both face and content validity were achieved. Since the study was conducted with only 301 university students in Kuwait, external validity is limited. Thus, the sample may not fully represent all the Kuwait University student population. Additionally, generalization of the results derived from this study will be limited to the Kuwait population or any other culture similar in which the study takes place.

### **Procedure of the study**

1. The knowledge test and attitude scale were prepared.
2. Pilot testing and face validity of the instruments were established.
3. Permission was obtained from Kuwait University to conduct the study.
4. Informed consents were attached to each questionnaire copy; the purpose of these was to ensure that participants understood the aim and processes of the research, what kind of participation was required from them, how the data would be

used, how and to whom it would be reported, if there was any risk or possible detriment during the research process, and if they wished to participate. According to Silverman (2006, p.324): "*Informed consent and respondent validation are ways to ethically ensure participant understand*" (see Appendix1).

5. Another ethical issue relates to possible harm: the researcher arranged to conduct her research in a safe environment in order to reduce the stress or discomfort of the participants.
6. Ethical issues also include confidentiality and anonymity of the participants: these were achieved in this study by not identifying participants by name.
7. Regarding BERA's Revised Ethical Guidelines numbers 10 and 11, which stress the need for "Voluntary Informed Consent", the researcher made sure that only those participants who were happy to participate were included.
8. The sample of 301 participants was identified with the aim of the study and given the knowledge test and attitude scale.
9. The questionnaire forms were collected and the data obtained were entered in the computer system for analysis, and the necessary statistical processing carried out.
- 10.

### **Statistical processing**

SPSS software was employed to analyze the results of the two instruments, with descriptive statistics used to determine the frequency counts, mean, percentages, and standard deviation of the variables. Independent samples T-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine the differences between age, gender and level of education. Pearson moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between knowledge and attitude while standardized multiple regressions were calculated to predict knowledge of counseling help.

### **Results**

**Question 1: Are there any significant statistical differences in the average of Kuwait University students' performance on the test of knowledge counseling that can be attributed to the students' age?**

In order to answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the participants' knowledge marks were calculated. The mean was

equal to 8.73 and the standard deviation was 2.90 (see Table 1). In addition, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (see Table 2).

Table (2): Mean and standard deviation of knowledge

Knowledge			
Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
18-22	8.18	207	3.341
23-27	8.67	31	3.983
28-32	9.17	27	2.787
33-37	9.00	19	1.000
over 37	9.50	17	1.291
Total	8.73	301	2.900

Table (3): One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) results revealing the impact of age on students' knowledge.

	ANOVA				
	Knowledge				
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.064	4	1.766	.186	.943
Within Groups	236.803	296	9.472		
Total	243.867	300			

It is evident from the results in Table 2 that ANOVA failed to reveal a statistically reliable difference in students' knowledge between the age groups, i.e.  $p > \alpha$  ( $F = (4.25) = (.186)$   $p = 0.943$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis,  $H_{01}$  (There is no significant difference in knowledge of counseling between Kuwait University students between age groups) is accepted for the sample.

**Question 2: Are there any significant statistical differences in the average of Kuwait University students' performance on the scale of attitudes towards seeking counseling that can be attributed to the students' gender?**

In order to answer this question, the means and standard deviations



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of the participants' marks were calculated. The mean for males was 50.36, the standard deviation was 13.247 and standard error mean equalled 3.540. In contrast, the mean for females was 58.75, the standard deviation was 9.896 and standard error mean equalled 2.474. In addition, independent samples t-Test was conducted (see Table 4). The t-Test did not reveal a statistically reliable difference in attitudes towards counseling between the genders, i.e.  $p > \alpha$  ( $t = 1.982$ ,  $p = .057$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis,  $H_{02}$  (There is no significant difference between male and female attitudes towards counseling) is accepted for the sample.

#### Group Statistics

Table (4): Attitudes towards counseling help by gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitudes Male	140	50.36	13.247	3.540
Female	161	58.75	9.896	2.474

Table (5): One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).  
Results revealing the impact of level of education on students' attitudes.

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Attitudes	Equal variances assumed	1.987	.170	-1.982	300	.057	-8.393	4.235	-17.069	.283
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.943	23.865	.064	-8.393	4.319	-17.310	.524

**Question 3: Are there any significant statistical differences in the average Kuwait University students' performance on the scale of attitudes towards counseling that can be attributed to the students' level of education?**

In order to answer this question, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Table (5) shows the relevant results.

**ANOVA**

	Attitudes				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	155.729	2	77.865	.510	.606
Within Groups	4120.438	298	152.609		
Total	4276.167	300			

It is evident from Table 5 that ANOVA did not reveal a statistically reliable difference between the students' levels of education, i.e.  $p < \alpha$  ( $F=2, 27 = .510$ ,  $p=0.606$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_{03}$  (There is no significant difference between Kuwait University students' level of education and their attitudes towards counseling) is rejected for the sample. To find out which education level is different, Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD Test were applied. The test indicated that the mean score for the postgraduate group ( $m=5.938$ ,  $SD=5.914$ ) was significantly different from the undergraduate and graduate groups.

**Multiple Comparisons**

**Table (6): One way attitudes by level of education**

Tukey HSD		Attitudes				
(I) L. education	(J) L. education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Undergraduate	Graduate	-2.188	5.349	.912	-15.45	11.08
	Postgraduate	-5.938	5.914	.581	-20.60	8.73
Graduate	Undergraduate	2.188	5.349	.912	-11.08	15.45
	Postgraduate	-3.750	6.672	.841	-20.29	12.79
Postgraduate	Undergraduate	5.938	5.914	.581	-8.73	20.60
	Graduate	3.750	6.672	.841	-12.79	20.29

Dependent variable: Attitudes/ POSTHOC= TUKEY BTUKEY ALPHA (0.05).

**Question 4: What is the relationship between Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling and their attitudes towards seeking counseling?**

In order to answer this question, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient test was conducted. Table 10 shows the relevant results. The table below presents the correlation matrix between knowledge and attitude; the results show that there is no significant relationship between the two variables ( $r=-.015$ ,  $N=301$ ,  $p=.939$ ). The correlation coefficient is not very small, neither not very strong, which indicates a moderate relationship. This would mean that knowledge of counseling is not associated with attitudes towards the counseling. Therefore, the null hypothesis,  $H_{04}$  (There is no significant correlation between the knowledge of and attitudes towards counseling help of Kuwait University students) is accepted for the sample.

**Correlations**

Table (7): *Pearson's correlation coefficient test.*

		Knowledge	attitudes
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.639
	N	301	301
Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	-.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.639	
	N	301	301

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Question 5: Can the knowledge of counseling issues be predicted by the attitude, gender, age, and level of education?**

In terms of the fifth hypothesis, the prediction of Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling help based upon their attitudes towards counseling, age, gender and level of education, the researcher applied Standardized Multiple Regression analysis. See Tables 8, 9 and 10

**ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

**Table (8): a. Predictors: (Constant), attitudes, level of education, gender, age**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	71.487	4	17.872	1.142	.360 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	391.213	296	15.649		
Total	462.700	300			

b. Dependent Variable: knowledge

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

**Table (9): b. Dependent Variable: knowledge**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6.875	3.736		1.840	.078
Age	.148	.846	.053	.174	.863
Level of education	1.711	1.500	.344	1.141	.265
Gender	-.508	1.569	-.065	-.324	.749
Attitudes	-.022	.067	-.067	-.330	.744

The total variance in knowledge explained by the model as a whole was 39.93%; R square was ( $R^2=.393$ ). The analysis of variance revealed that the model did not significantly fit the data overall  $p>\alpha$  ( $F= 1.141$ ,  $p=0.078$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ); age ( $\text{beta}=.053$ ,  $t= .174$ ,  $p=.863$ ), gender ( $\text{beta}= -.65$ ,  $t=-.324$ ,  $p=.749$ ), level of education ( $\text{beta}=.344$ ,  $t=1.141$ ,  $p=.265$ ), attitude ( $\text{beta}=-.067$ ,  $t=-.330$ ,  $p=.744$ ). Beta values are very small. The Standardized Multiple Regression analysis revealed that gender, age and attitudes are not significant predictors of Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling. Therefore, the null hypothesis,  $H_{05}$  (Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling will not be significantly predictable based upon their attitudes towards counseling, gender, age, and level of education) is accepted for the sample.

**Model Summary**

Table (10): a. Predictors: (Constant), attitudes, level of education, gender, age

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.393 <sup>a</sup>	.155	.019	3.956

**Discussion**

This small scale study concludes that there is no significant correlation between the Kuwait University knowledge and attitudes towards counseling. The findings of this study revealed that most Kuwait University students have positive attitudes towards the counseling issues. However, the students' positive attitudes are not reflected in their behavior towards seeking counseling from the university counseling unit (Kuwait University Counseling Unit, 2009). One explanation put forward for the students' negative behavior towards seeking counseling may be their beliefs, which derive from family, culture, society, social stigma and media, that counseling largely represents western ideology and that it clashes with their values, customs and, possibly, with their religious beliefs. Thereby, the impact of social stigma might be a crucial factor which could affect counseling seeking behavior among individuals. Stigma has been identified as a key factor may prevent some individuals from seeking professional help despite the availability of such services avoiding counseling (Leaf et al., 1987; Sayed et al., 1998). A review by Angermeyer and Dietrich (2006) showed that the misconceptions about mental health issues still occurred among public. Understanding the phenomena of stigma, developing and testing models that explain why it occurs, and evaluating strategies might help to diminish its effects (Chicago Consortium for Stigma Research, 2001, p. 1). With continued research and education the stigma of mental illness can be overcome. Thus, stigma needs to be investigated in further research as a significant variable could affect seeking counseling help. Students' negative attitudes toward interpersonal openness can be explained within the Arab cultural context. Self-disclosure to outsiders is considered unacceptable behavior in this culture. People are encouraged to share personal and emotional issues and discuss problems within their families only. In counseling, self-disclosure is expected in order to get

psychological help. Individuals who have negative attitudes toward interpersonal openness may become reluctant to self-disclose to professional help providers or may decide not to seek help for psychological issues (Al-Darmaki, 2003). Therefore, counselors need to address clients' fear of self-disclosure and counseling outreach programs should focus on educating people about counseling expectations and goals. Perhaps, the cause for these results in this study is that most of Kuwaiti attitudes are constituted on religious values not on knowledge. Therefore, the religious aspect is the inner motive for protecting and making, regardless of the variation in knowledge, age, education level and gender. In addition to religion, the roles of the Kuwaiti family, friends, and society have a huge impact on one's decision making. The family including parents, siblings, relatives, friends, peers and relatives as a larger community, are considered as the most significant sources of financial, psychological and emotional support (Al-Thakeb, 1985). On the other hand, the present research revealed a lack of knowledge on the part of the students about counseling, which, may be due to the inadequate information provided in schools, universities, and colleges. This lack of knowledge might advocate that the university counseling unit should arrange activities in order to raise students' awareness of counseling issues. In fact, this lack of knowledge amongst university students about counseling addresses a missing element in the Kuwait educational system, namely; mental health education. Thereby, education is a tool which should be employed to reduce the stigmatization of counseling help and this could be initiated by introducing mental health education in all schools, in order to raise students' awareness of the value of seeking counseling.

With regard to gender and its impact on counseling help attitudes, this study confirms that there is no significant difference between males and females. This conclusion contradicts the results obtained in studies by Al-Darmaki (2003); Leyla (2009); Al-Rowaie (2001) and Leaf et al., (1987), in which they maintain that gender differences were significantly related to help-seeking attitudes. On the other hand, this result is in line with the results of Hye and Tidwell's (2005) study, in which no significant gender differences with respect to the students' attitudes in seeking counseling were found.

Furthermore, this study revealed that there are statistically significant differences related to educational levels in favour of postgraduates, which suggests that, the higher the level of education of the students,

the more positive their attitudes towards counseling. It appears that this result is in line with those achieved in the studies by Hye and Tidwell (2005). Additionally, the study revealed that Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling is not predictable based upon their attitude towards counseling help, age, gender, and level of education.

### **Recommendations and Further Research**

In view of the conclusions extracted from the study, the researcher recommends that further research in the seeking counseling area needs to be conducted. Thus, this study suggests the following:

- 1- the role of the counseling unit in the university should be increased and made more active through workshops in order to raise students' awareness about counseling;
- 2- a more in-depth study within the educational field of applying mental health education in primary, middle, and high schools should be conducted, in order to raise students' knowledge and awareness of the value of counseling in relation to understanding mental health issues;
- 3- the attitudes of those who have sought counseling help compared with those who have not had contact with counseling help providers should be examined;
- 4- the role of the mass media in developing negative attitudes towards seeking counseling help amongst students should be explored;
- 5- The impact of stigma of mental illness, cultural issues and family role on students' attitudes towards seeking counseling help behavior should be explored.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of knowledge and attitudes of Kuwait University students towards counseling in their seeking counseling behavior related to their gender, age and educational level. The study reported that positive attitudes towards counseling help were held by the students, although they have a lack of knowledge about counseling issues. In addition, the study found that there is no significant correlation between knowledge and attitudes towards counseling held by Kuwait University students. Furthermore, it is also concluded that there is no significant statistical difference related to gender attitudes towards counseling issues and there is no significant statistical difference in knowledge of counseling issues between age groups. However, the study findings revealed that

there are statistically significant differences related to educational levels in favour of postgraduates. Hence, Kuwait University students' knowledge of counseling is not predictable based upon their gender, age, level of education and their attitude towards counseling.

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## معرفة طلبة جامعة الكويت واتجاهاتهم نحو طلب المساعدة الإرشادية في ضوء

### متغير الجنس والعمر والمستوى الأكاديمي

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### الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى التعرف على طبيعة اتجاهات طلاب وطالبات جامعة الكويت نحو الارشاد النفسي ومدى معرفتهم بأهمية ودور الارشاد النفسي في حياة الفرد والعلاقة بين هذه المعرفة والاتجاهات نحو الارشاد وتأثير ذلك على اتجاه الطلبة نحو طلب المساعدة الارشادية النفسية. كما هدفت الدراسة لمعرفة مدى مساهمة بعض العوامل الديمغرافية كالجنس والعمر والمستوى الأكاديمي بمعرفة الطلبة بالإرشاد النفسي واتجاهاتهم نحوه. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف صممت أداة لقياس الاتجاهات النفسية (١٥ بند) نحو الارشاد واستبانة لقياس معرفة الطلبة بالإرشاد النفسي (١٥ بند) بواسطة الباحثين وتم اختبارها ثم تطبيقها. أشارت نتائج التحليل الاحصائي للأداتين اللتان طبقنا على عينة عشوائية عشوائية تكونت من ٣٠١ طالبا وطالبة الى:

١. عدم وجود ارتباط دال احصائياً بين معرفة طلبة وطالبات جامعة الكويت بالإرشاد النفسي واتجاهاتهم نحوه.
٢. عدم وجود ارتباط دال احصائياً بين معرفة طلبة وطالبات جامعة الكويت بالإرشاد النفسي ومتغير العمر بالنسبة للطلبة.
٣. عدم وجود ارتباط دال احصائياً بين اتجاهات طلبة وطالبات جامعة الكويت نحو الإرشاد النفسي ومتغير الجنس بالنسبة للطلبة.
٤. يوجد ارتباط دال احصائياً بين اتجاهات طلبة وطالبات جامعة الكويت نحو الإرشاد النفسي والمستوى الأكاديمي للطلبة.