



The Effect of Stigma on Attitudes towards Seeking Help from Social Workers^{*}

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Abstract

The Goal of the Study: In the field of social work, social workers understand that it is \very difficult for individuals to ask for help from therapists. Therefore, it is important to study the variables associated with seeking professional help.

Study Methods: A total of 478 undergraduate students from Kuwait University participated voluntarily in the study.

Study Results: The findings for this study showed that the participants have a slightly high degree of public stigma, low self -stigma, and positive attitude toward seeking professional help. In addition, the findings of the study reveal that there are significant relations between gender, taking social work classes, thinking about receiving counseling, and having social problems and participants' attitude towards seeking professional help. Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that there were significant relations between gender, and thinking about receiving counseling, and self-stigma.

Study Conclusion: The findings of the current study have implications for the field of social work in Kuwait that would help to improve the knowledge in this area.

Keywords: Seeking Help, Social work, Social worker, Stigma.

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Introduction

To seek help from a social worker is a difficult decision that some people would never make which results in continuation of their stressful and undesired situations. Although there is a noticeable increase in numbers of practices and agencies offering counseling in all areas of mental and social issues, the hesitation to use these services is a serious problem (Vogel, Wester & Larson, 2007).

Help seeking is often considered as a weakness in one's abilities to solve his/her own problems or issues (Zartaloudi and Madianos, 2010). Discussing this topic with colleagues and with social work students, authors realized that a major issue practitioners and trainers face during their practice was that clients did not want to admit their inability to help themselves. Admitting that they are incapable of solving their own issues would mean that they are inferior to others, which could be very offending and resulting in low self-esteem (Heath, Vogel & Al-Darmaki, 2016).

It is difficult enough to ask a stranger for help, let alone trusting that stranger with your own private matters. It is understandable that in some cultures, such as in Arab countries, people are raised to keep their family matters private and avoid involving others in family issues. It is also prevalent in some cultures that one should make his/her own decisions and take responsibility of his/her own choices. If help is needed, relatives or very close friends could support when necessary. Therefore, it would be very difficult for someone to first admit to a stranger that he/she is incapable of solving a problem and then ask for this stranger's help.

Stigma is the main factor affecting the help seeking process (Vogel, Wade & Hackler, 2007; Zartaloudi and Madianos, 2010; Henderson, Evans-Lacko & Thornicroft, 2013; Knaak, Mantler & Szeto, 2017). Stigma is usually associated with the negative image of mental illness. It is often thought that only "crazy" people see therapists, therefore if someone is seeing a counselor he/she must be mentally ill. This impression has been existing for a long time regardless of social workers' efforts to change it. Conferences and

symposiums have always discussed this issue and promoted for a more positive view of counseling. Research papers and presentations also discussed the reasons for avoiding seeking help in different cultures. Nevertheless, it is an international impression that is strongly present in almost every society as literature will deliberate below.

Statement of the Problem

Many studies have been done on the idea of seeking professional help among different samples in Kuwait; however, none of them studied the effect of self and public stigma on seeking help among undergraduate students. There is a need to study these types of stigma and understand its effect on the help-seeking attitude by the social workers who work with students. In addition, there is a need to study the demographic variables associated with seeking help attitude and with self and public stigma. The field of social work in Kuwait is a new field and this type of study will help improve the knowledge about stigma and seeking help from professionals.

Significance of the Study

Until recently, little research was done on help-seeking attitudes in Kuwait in particular. Social work is a growing field in Kuwait, and counseling service is available in public/governmental and private sectors. However, the authors of this study understand from their experience that those services are underutilized.

This study presents the factors associated with attitudes towards seeking professional help. This is the first empirical study in Kuwait that investigates the relation between self- and public stigma, attitudes toward seeking professional help, and other factors such as socio-demographic variables that might be contributing to the limited use of counseling services. More importantly, this study focuses on the largest population of Kuwaiti society-the youth. Young people are the future of any country; they should be mentally well and prepared to deal with stressful situations to live a healthy life. Therefore, this study used a sample of college students from different majors and cultural back-

grounds that would represent the youth of Kuwait and help us understand the factors affecting their help-seeking behavior.

Literature Review

The reasons why people do not seek professional help when they experience a social or an interpersonal problem were discussed in many studies. Vogel et al (2007) and Corrigan (2004) stated that stigma and its association with mental illness is the most common reason for not seeking help. Corrigan (2004) distinguished between the terms “public stigma” and “self-stigma”. However, he confirmed that both similarly affect the attitude of people towards seeking help and continuing to receive help. He defined public stigma as “what a naive public does to the stigmatized group when they endorse the prejudice about that group” (p. 616), while he described self-stigma as “what members of a stigmatized group may do to themselves if they internalize the public stigma” (p. 616).

Zartaloudi and Madianos (2010) found that perceived stigma is a major barrier for seeking help. They stated that “people who are in need of help often fail to use helping resources because it represents an open admission of inadequacy” (p. 81). It is the fear of what others might think of a person who is receiving counseling that hinders the process of seeking help. Knaak et al (2017) and Henderson et al (2013) discussed “labeling” as a main factor in decreasing the help seeking behavior. Henderson et al (2013) mentioned that among the reasons that prevent people from seeking help from mental illness institutions are the prejudice and the expectations of discrimination against people who have mental illness. While in their study about healthcare and stigma, Knaak et al (2017) suggested that stigmatization can be experienced by an individual concurrently on different levels “intrapersonal (eg, self-stigma), interpersonal (eg, relations with others), and structural (e.g. discriminatory and/or exclusionary policies, laws, and systems)” (p. 111).

Obviously, society and cultural factors are very influential when it comes to people’s attitudes towards help seeking. It was found that if the social network, family and friends for example, was encouraging

and supportive to the individual, seeking professional help would be much easier (Zartaloudi & Madianos, 2010; Vogel et al, 2007; Gulliver, Griffiths & Christensen, 2010). People tend to first ask family members or close friends for help when facing a stressful situation before thinking of seeing a therapist. People are likely to decide to seek professional help when someone they trust in their social network recommends so (Vogel et al, 2007; Gulliver et al, 2010). A study on Turkish adolescents (Cakar, 2015) showed that when support is available from friends and teachers, there would be less need for counseling. It is believed that “there may be a relation in that an adequate level of support received from social support sources can contribute with regard to adolescents’ adaptation and development, and therefore, it indicates that adolescents need less professional psychological support as a result” (p. 7).

Other demographic factors such as gender have been discussed in several studies. Gender was found to be one of the main predictors of help seeking behavior (Komiya, Good & Sherrod, 2000; Mackenzie, Good & Sherrod, 2006; Vogel et al; 2007; Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein & Zivin 2009; Yu, Liu, Hu, Liu, Yang, Zhou & Xiao, 2015; and Cakar, 2015). It was found that females are more likely to seek professional help than males when experiencing stressful situations (Oliver, Pearson, Coe & Gunnell 2005; Komiya et al, 2000; Mackenzie et al, 2006; Vogel et al; 2007; Yu et al, 2015; and Cakar, 2015). Authors of current study agree with Hammer, Vogel & Heimerdinger-Edwards (2013) in that males are less likely to seek help because of the perception of masculinity, especially in patriarchal societies such as Kuwait, which is similar to UAE (Al-darmaki, 2003) and Oman (Al-Bahrani, 2014). However, Picco et al (2016) found no significant differences between genders in their attitude towards seeking professional help.

Another factor affects the attitude towards seeking help from therapists which is a previous experience in therapy. Studies found significant relation between positive attitude towards seeking help and prior treatment experience (Gulliver et al, 2010; Masuda, Andersons &

Edmonds, 2012). Moreover, people who received counseling before have lower mental health stigma (Masuda et al, 2012).

Education is another well-documented predictive factor for help seeking attitudes. Studies showed that higher education is associated with higher intentions to seek help for mental health problems (Gulliver et al, 2010; Rusch et al, 2014; Yu et al, 2015, Picco et al, 2016). In their study about men's seeking help attitudes, Hammer et al. (2013) found out that men with higher education (post graduate) had more favorable attitudes towards seeking counseling since they had lower levels of stigma than men with lower level of education.

Literature about help seeking attitudes in the Middle East is very limited. Few studies were conducted in the United Arab Emirates about college students' attitudes toward seeking counseling (Al-Darmaki, 2014; Heath et al, 2016). It was found that stigma had significant association with negative attitude towards seeking help from a professional therapist. Heath et al. (2016) found that what was known as "loss of face" is a main factor of not using counseling services in the United Arab Emirates. They also found gender differences in attitudes towards counseling in favor of females where women also showed less help seeking stigma than men.

An interesting study by Bener and Ghuloum (2010) conducted in Qatar showed that men reported more positive attitude towards seeking professional help than women. They stated that men showed better attitudes towards many aspects of mental illness than women. Findings of that study revealed a great degree of willingness to visit a therapist of counseling among study subjects, regardless of gender. However, women showed higher preference to seek help from a traditional healer than men when they face emotional problems.

Al-Bahrani (2014) studied the help seeking attitude among college students in Oman. She, strikingly, found out that students had positive attitudes towards seeking professional help. Results showed that students had confidence towards counseling and towards counselors as well. Her study indicated that students had tolerance to stigma attached to seeking professional help, which she explained as a result of

participants having some awareness or exposure to the concept of help seeking. No gender differences were found in terms of attitudes towards seeking help.

Al-Kandari (2017) conducted a study about the attitudes of Kuwaiti high school students towards seeking help from school social workers. The study showed that, in general, high school students had neutral attitudes towards seeking help while 10th grade students only had negative attitude. Students in the study revealed that they prefer to ask someone from their social network for help with financial and family problems, while seeking help from the social worker for academic and personal problems.

Purpose of the Study

This study assessed Kuwait University students' attitude towards seeking professional help and toward self- and public stigma of seeking professional help. Furthermore, the study explored whether variables such as gender, existing social problems, considering consultation, and taking social work classes are associated with students' attitude toward seeking professional help in general and toward self and public stigma of seeking professional help

Research Questions:

- 1 - Do Kuwait University students who participated in this study have positive attitudes toward seeking professional help?
- 2 - Do Kuwait University students who participated in this study have self-stigma associated with seeking professional help?
- 3 - Do Kuwait University students who participated in this study have public stigma associated with seeking professional help?
- 4 - Are there significant relations between gender and attitudes toward seeking professional help, self-stigma, and public stigma among a sample of undergraduate students in Kuwait University?
- 5 - Are there significant relations between taking social work classes and attitudes toward seeking professional help, self-stigma, and public stigma among a sample of undergraduate students in Kuwait University?
- 6 - Are there significant relation between thinking about receiving consulting from social workers and attitudes toward seeking professional help, self-stigma, and public stigma among a sample of undergraduate students in Kuwait University?

- 7 - Are there significant relations between having social problems and attitudes toward seeking professional help, self-stigma, and public stigma among a sample of undergraduate students in Kuwait University?

Methodology

In order to address the research questions of the current study, a quantitative cross-section survey method was selected to address the research questions.

Instrument of the Study

The distributed questionnaire consisted of four parts that started with demographic information, such as marital status, age, the district where they live, and gender. The second part of the questionnaire included the “attitudes toward seeking professional help” scale (ATSPPH-S) developed by Fischer and Farina (1995) containing 10 items that measured participants’ attitudes toward seeking professional help. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the findings, with a higher score indicating more positive attitudes toward seeking professional help. The ATSPPH-S was valid and reliable ($\alpha = 0.80$).

The third part of the questionnaire included the “self-stigma of seeking help (SSOSH)” scale developed by Vogel, Wade, and Haake (2006). The SSOSH scale contained 10 items that “assess concerns about the loss in self-esteem a person would feel if they decided to seek help from a psychologist or other mental health professional” (Vogel et al., 2006, p. 326). Items in the SSOSH scale were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The SSOSH scale was valid and reliable; the internal and consistency reliability ranged from 0.86 to 0.90 (Vogel et al., 2006).

The fourth part of the questionnaire included the stigma scale for receiving psychological help (SSRPH) developed by Komiya, Good, and Sherrod (2000). The SSRPH contained five items that used a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The SSRPH was “designed to assess individuals’ perceptions of how stigmatizing it is to receive psychological treatment” (Komiya et al., 2000, p. 139). The higher score in the SSRPH indicated a higher level of

public stigma (Pinto, Hickman, & Thomas, 2015). The SSRPH was reliable ($\alpha = 0.80$) (Logsdon, Usui, Pinto-Foltz & Rakestraw, 2009).

The language of the three scales (ATSPPH-S, SSOSH, and SSRPH) that were used in the current study was English. All three scales were translated into Arabic then back translated into English by specialists. In addition, a panel of judges consisting of four professors from the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Kuwait University who are familiar with the study evaluated the scales, and a field test of the Arabic version was conducted.

Internal Consistency

Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha (α). The reliability alpha scores of the three scales were found to be as follows: ATSPPH-S, $\alpha = 0.56$; SSOSH, $\alpha = 0.84$; and SSRPH, $\alpha = 0.57$. All measurements were satisfactory.

Sample and Data Collection

A total of 478 undergraduate students from Kuwait University participated voluntarily in the study. This study used a convenience-sampling method to recruit the participants. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 46 years old (mean = 22.01, SD = 3.88). Females comprised 72.4% of the sample and males 27.6%; 16.7% of the sample were married, 80.5% single, 2.3% divorced, and 0.2% separated. The majority of the sample were Kuwaiti (90.4%), and the rest were non-Kuwaiti (9.6%).

In terms of their father's educational level, 24.1% had attended high school, 27.2% had a high school diploma, 10.7% had a diploma after high school, 32% had a bachelor's degree, and only 5.9% had either a master's degree or a doctorate. In terms of their mother's educational level, 27.8% had attended high school, 25.7% had a high school diploma, 15.1% had a diploma after high school, 28% had a bachelor's degree, and only 3.3% had either a master's degree or a doctorate.

Regarding the college they attended, 13.6% of the participants were from the College of Education, 12.1% from the College of Engineering, 15.5% from the College of Arts, 1.7% from the College of

Law, 0.4% from the College of Islamic Studies, 19.5% from the College of Social Science, 18.4% from the College of Science, 1.3% from the College of Allied Health Science, 14% from the College of Business Administration, 2.3% from the College of Life Sciences, 0.4% from the College of Architecture, and 0.4% from the College of Computing Sciences and Engineering.

In terms of their places of residence, 20.3% of the sample reported that they live in Farwaniya, 15.7% in Al Asimah, 9.6% in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 11.5% in Hawalli, 20.9% in Al Ahmadi, and 21.3% in Al Jahra.

Regarding the participants' academic year, 14.2% of the participants are in their first academic year, 29.7% in their second, 26.4% in their third, 19.7% in their fourth, and 9.8% in their fifth or higher. Among the participants, 29.5% have thought of consulting a social worker for their social or psychological problems, while 70.5% have not; 49.6% have taken classes in the social work department, while 50.4% have not; 64.2% have taken classes in the psychology department, while 35.8% have not; 14.0% have suffered from psychological problems, while 85.1% have not; and 26.8% have social problems, while 73.2% do not.

Data Analysis

This study used the IBM SPSS statistics package v.23. Descriptive analyses were used to describe the sample of this study based on the means, standard deviation, and percentages. T-test was conducted to illustrate the differences among variables.

Results

Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Help

The mean of the SSRPH scores was 11.26 (2.25 per item mean), which is considered a little higher than the midpoint of 2 on the 1 to 4 range scores. These results indicated that the undergraduate students who participated in this study have a slightly high degree of public stigma. The mean of the SSOSH scores was 36.85 (3.68 per item mean), which is considered higher than the midpoint of 3 on the 1 to 5 range scores. The result indicated that the undergraduate students who participated in this study have low self-stigma of seeking help. The mean of the ATSPPH-S

scores was 30.91 (3.09 per item mean), which is considered higher than the midpoint of 2 on the 1 to 4 range scores. These results indicated that the undergraduate students who participated in this study are more positive toward seeking professional help (see Table 1).

Table (1)
Coefficient α , Mean Score, and Standard Deviation for the Scales ($N = 478$)

Scale (Number of Items)	Coefficient α	Mean Score	SD	Per-Item Mean
SSRPH (5)	0.57	11.26	2.48	2.25
SSOSH (10)	0.87	36.85	6.72	3.68
ATSPPH-S (10)	0.56	30.91	4.36	3.09

Gender

A t-test was conducted to find the differences between gender and the scores on the three scales (SSRPH, SSOSH, ATSPPH-S). The results showed that there were significant differences between gender and SSOSH ($t = -5.36$, $p = 0.00$), with a mean of 34.23 for male students and 37.86 for female students. In addition, there were significant differences between gender and ATSPPH-S ($t = -4.50$, $p = 0.00$), with a mean of 29.42 for male students and a mean of 31.46 for female students. However, the analysis indicated the mean of SSRPH did not differ significantly at $p < 0.05$ (see Table 2).

Table (2)
T-test between Gender & SSRPH - SSOSH - ATSPPH-S.

Gender	Male Students		Female Students		df*	T
	M	SD	M	SD		
SSRPH	11.48	2.68	11.18	2.40	470	1.14
SSOSH	34.23	6.13	37.86	6.68	462	-5.36***
ATSPPH-S	29.42	4.41	31.46	4.22	450	-4.50***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, (2-tailed).

Social Work Classes

A t-test was conducted to find the differences between the “social work classes” variable that was defined as “Did participants of the study ever take social work classes?” and the scores in the three scales (SSRPH, SSOSH, ATSPPH-S). The results showed that there were significant differences between students who took social work classes and those who did not take any in the ATSPPH-S ($t = 2.24, p = 0.02$), with a mean of 31.37 for the participants who took social work classes and 30.46 for the participants who did not. However, the analysis indicated the means of SSRPH and SSOSH did not differ significantly at $p < 0.05$ (see Table 3).

Table (3)
T-test between Social Work Classes & SSRPH - SSOSH - ATSPPH-S.

Did participants of the study ever take social work classes?						
	Yes		No			
	M	SD	M	SD	df*	T
SSRPH	11.05	2.38	11.48	2.57	470	-1.86
SSOSH	37.29	6.26	36.42	7.14	462	1.38
ATSPPH-S	31.37	4.36	30.46	4.22	450	2.24*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, (2-tailed).

Consulting

A t-test was conducted to find the differences between the “consulting” variable that was defined as “Have you ever thought about consulting a social worker about your problems?” and the scores in the three scales (SSRPH, SSOSH, ATSPPH-S). The results showed that there were significant differences between students who thought about consulting a professional and those who did not on the SSOSH ($t = 4.33, p = 0.00$), with a mean of 38.89 for the participants who thought about consulting a social worker about their problems and a mean of 35.99 for the participants who did not. In addition, there were

significant differences between students who thought about consulting a professional and those who did not on the ATSPPH-S ($t = 4.79, p = 0.00$), with a mean of 32.38 for the participants who thought about consulting a social worker about their problems and a mean of 30.28 for the participants who did not. However, the analysis indicated the mean of SSRPH did not differ significantly at $p < 0.05$ (see Table 4).

Table (4)
T-test between Consulting & SSRPH - SSOSH - ATSPPH-S.

Have you ever thought about consulting a social worker about your problems?						
	Yes		No			
	M	SD	M	SD	df	T
SSRPH	11.16	2.54	11.31	2.46	470	-0.58
SSOSH	38.89	6.59	35.99	6.60	462	4.33***
ATSPPH-S	32.38	4.28	30.28	4.25	450	4.78***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, (2-tailed).

Social Problems

A t-test was conducted to find the differences between the “social problems” variable that was defined as “Do you have social problems?” and the scores in the three scales (SSRPH, SSOSH, ATSPPH-S). The results showed that there were significant differences between students who have social problems and those who do not on the ATSPPH-S ($t = 2.91, p = 0.04$), with a mean of 31.88 for the participants who have social problems and a mean of 30.55 for the participants who have none. However, the analysis indicated the means of SSRPH and SSOSH did not differ significantly at $p < 0.05$ (see Table 5).

Table (5)
T-test between Social Problems Classes & SSRPH - SSOSH - ATSPPH-S.

Do you have social problems?						
	Yes		No			
	M	SD	M	SD	df*	T
SSRPH	11.54	2.78	11.16	2.36	470	1.47
SSOSH	37.78	7.31	36.52	6.48	462	1.78
ATSPPH-S	31.88	3.97	30.55	4.45	450	2.91*

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, (2-tailed).

Discussion

This study focused on students' attitude toward seeking professional help and the stigma (self-stigma and public stigma) associated with their attitude. The findings of this study suggest that most of the students who participated in this study are more positive toward seeking professional help, have a higher degree of public stigma, and have less self-stigma of seeking help. These results showed that the undergraduate students who participated in this study have a better view of seeking help from professionals such as social workers, psychologists, or psychiatrists. In addition, the participants are less concerned about losing their self-esteem if they want to seek professional help regarding their problems. However, they showed a high level of public stigma, which refers to others' negative opinions of an individual (Vogel, Wade, & Hackler, 2007). According to Corrigan (1998, 2004), a person's decision to seek professional help is influenced by two kinds of stigma: self-stigma (decrease in someone's self-esteem) and public stigma (a person is socially undesirable).

The other findings of this study showed that the participants' attitude to seek professional help is associated with gender, where male students are more positive than female students. In addition, the participants' self-stigma is associated with gender, where male students have less self-stigma than female students. However, public stigma is not associated with gender. This result does not support the results

from other studies such as Al-Samadi (1994) and Komiya et al. (2000), where they found that undergraduate female students in Jordan are more positive toward seeking professional help than male students. On the other hand, this result supports the findings from Bener and Ghuloum (2010) study in Qatar which showed that men reported more positive attitude towards seeking professional help than women. The results of the current study could be due to the Kuwaiti culture, a part of the Muslim and Arab culture, where women could be stigmatized if they seek mental health services (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). This stigma could affect females' marital prospects and could raise the possibility of separation or divorce (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Al-Krenawi et al., 1997).

The findings show that attitudes toward seeking professional help are associated with social work classes. Furthermore, the participants who have taken social work classes have positive attitudes toward seeking professional help than the participants who have not. Similarly, Al-Darmaki (2003) found that "participants with more education and social sciences majors exhibited favorable attitudes toward professional help-seeking" (p. 506). Classes in social work that the College of Social Sciences in Kuwait University offers could include information that would help improve students' attitudes toward seeking professional help.

In addition, self-stigma is associated with thoughts about consulting a social worker. The results show that the participants who thought about consulting a social worker about their problems have less self-stigma than those who did not. Furthermore, attitudes toward seeking professional help are associated with thoughts about consulting a social worker. The results show that the participants who thought about consulting a social worker about their problems have positive attitudes toward seeking professional help than those who did not. Thinking about consulting is a new variable that was not studied in literature before, and based on the results of the current study, this variable could have an impact on the process of seeking help.

Another finding of the study is the association between attitudes toward seeking professional help and social problems. The results

show that the participants who have social problems are more positive toward seeking professional help than the participants who have none. Thus, individuals with social problems would try to solve them by seeking professional help, whereas individuals without social problems would not; therefore, they have less attitudes toward seeking professional help. This result contradicts with some of the studies discussed in the literature regarding seeking help from family and friends rather than from a professional such as studies by Cakar (2015) and Vogel et al (2007). In fact, this result is promising for the field of social work. This means that people in conservative culture like Kuwait are becoming more open to consulting a social worker, who have long been thought of as a stranger, and receiving help from a professional.

Implications for Social Work

The findings of the study revealed new information about variables that can have an impact on and associate with seeking professional help. These variables are gender, social work classes, consideration of consulting, and existing social problems. Social workers need to decrease those factors that could affect the process of seeking professional help, which can encourage clients to ask for help and continue the helping process.

In addition, social workers should consider factors such as stigma, which largely contributes in the process of seeking professional help, especially in a culture like the Kuwaiti culture where people could be stigmatized just for seeking help from social workers or psychologists. Social workers have to understand the effect of self-stigma and public stigma on seeking professional help. While practitioners must be educated on the associated factors so they can help their clients overcome them, social work educators need to educate their students about these factors and how to control them.

Recommendations for Future Research and for the Field

Conducting research about the influence of self-stigma and public stigma on the therapy among a sample of Kuwaiti clients is, with no doubt, very helpful to the field of social work. Another area for future research would be to study the factors that could decrease the self- and

public stigma on seeking professional help. In addition, a research on how culture could contribute to seeking professional help may be conducted.

Some recommendations can benefit the social work field based on the findings of the current study. First, workshops that can educate social workers about self- and public stigma and their effect on seeking professional help are needed. Second, social workers need to consider the variables that could affect clients' decision on seeking professional help, such as gender, social work classes, considering consulting, and social problems. Social workers also need to be trained in helping clients decrease self- and public stigma if they want to ask for professional help. Third, academic social workers who work in Kuwait University should attempt to offer introductory courses in social work as general education courses so that all students in the university would be able to take them; these classes could help improve the students' view about seeking professional help.

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أثر وصمة العار على التوجهات نحو طلب المساعدة من الاختصاصيين الاجتماعيين

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ملخص

هدف الدراسة: يدرك الاختصاصيون الاجتماعيون العاملون في مجال الخدمة الاجتماعية أنه من الصعب للغاية على الأفراد طلب المساعدة من المعالجين. لذلك كان من المهم دراسة المتغيرات التي قد ترتبط بتوجهات الأفراد نحو طلب المساعدة المهنية.

منهجية الدراسة: شارك ما مجموعه 478 طالباً جامعياً من جامعة الكويت طوعية في الدراسة.

نتائج الدراسة: أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن المشاركين في الدراسة لديهم درجة مرتفعة قليلاً من وصمة العار العامة، وانخفاض في وصمة العار الذاتية، واتجاه إيجابي نحو السعي للحصول على المساعدة المهنية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تكشف نتائج الدراسة أن هناك علاقات ناجحة بين كل من النوع الاجتماعي، وأخذ مقررات في الخدمة الاجتماعية، والتفكير في تلقي المساعدة المهنية، ووجود مشكلات اجتماعية مع متغير اتجاه المشاركين من طلب المساعدة المهنية. علاوة على ذلك، أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود علاقات ناجحة بين النوع والتفكير في تلقي المشورة ووصمة العار الذاتية.

الخاتمة: نتائج الدراسة الحالية لها تطبيقات كثيرة في مجال الخدمة الاجتماعية في الكويت والتي من شأنها أن تساعد على تحسين المعرفة في هذا المجال.

المصطلحات العلمية: طلب المساعدة، الخدمة الاجتماعية، الاختصاصي الاجتماعي، وصمة العار.

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