أثر المتغيرات الديمغرافيه على مناهج قائمة حل المشكلات لدى عينة من الأزواج الكويتيين الذين يسعون لطلب الطلاق: دراسة ميدانية في الخدمة الاجتماعية الإكلينيكية

هند المعصب

ملخص: لسنوات عديدة كان هناك تركيز على دراسة عملية حل المشكلات في مجال الخدمة الاجتماعية الإكلينيكية. لذلك تناولت الدراسة الحالية العلاقة بين ثلاثة مناهج من قائمة حل المشكلات والمتغيرات التالية: الجنسية، والدخل، والوظيفة لدى عينة من 313 من الأزواج في مركز الاستشارات الأسرية في وزارة العدل بالكويت. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، قامت الباحثة بدراسة ما إذا كان المبحوثون يعتبرون أنفسهم فعالين في أنشطة حل المشكلات. كذلك قارنت هذه الدراسة بين المبحوثين الذين يستخدمون إستراتيجيات فعالة أو غير فعالة في حل المشكلات وبين كل من العمر ومكان الإقامة. أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين (السيطرة الذاتية والدخل، الجنسية) – (الثقة في حل المشكلات والدخل والمهنة) و (نمط الإحجام – الإقدام والوظيفة). كذلك وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين السيطرة الذاتية والعمر، وبين الثقة في حل المشكلات ومكان الإقامة. وأخيراً أظهرت النتائج أن المبحوثين في هذه الدراسة ينظرون لقدراتهم في حل المشكلات على أنها غير فاعلة.

المصطلحات الأساسية: حل المشكلات، الخدمة الاجتماعية الإكلينيكية.

The Effect of Demographic Variables on Problem-Solving Inventory Approaches among a Sample of Kuwaiti Couples Seeking Divorce: An Empirical Study in Clinical Social Work

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Abstract: The problem-solving process has been the focus of examination for many years in clinical social work. This study examined the relationship between the three approaches of a problem-solving inventory and the following variables: nationality, income, and occupation. In addition, the study investigated whether or not the participants perceive themselves as effective in problem-solving activities among a sample of 313 couples from the Family Consultations Center in the Ministry of Justice in Kuwait. In addition, the study investigated whether or not the participants perceive themselves as effective in problem-solving activities. This study compared participants who used either effective- or ineffective problem-solving strategies and the participants' age and erea of residence. The results showed: 1) a significant relationship between (personal control and income, nationality) - (problem-solving confidence and income, occupation) and (approach-avoidance style and occupation); 2) a significant relationship between personal control and age and between problem-solving confidence and area of residence. The results also illustrated that the participant of this study perceived their problem-solving abilities as ineffective.

Key words: Problem-Solving, Clinical Social Work.

Introduction

The problem-solving process has been the focus of examination for many years in clinical social work. In the last 60 years, the field of social work advanced research in the problem-solving process (Heinonen &

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Spearman, 2010). However, a review of the social work literature exposed that only a few studies have developed problem-solving techniques that clinicians can use to help clients with different problems.

Problem-solving as a term has been defined in clinical literature in different ways based on the purpose of the study. Some authors have defined problem-solving as a cognitive activity and others defined it as a search for a solution. For example, Heinonen and Spearman (2010) defined problem-solving as "identifying a client's problems, understanding them, and then engaging with the client in a process to solve the identified problems" (p. 6). In addition, Jonassen (2000) defined problem solving as a main cognitive action that is used in everyday situations. Maydeu-Olivares and D'Zurilla (1996) defined problem-solving differently than Heinonen and Spearman (2010) and Jonassen (2000). They did not view it as a problem that needs to be identified, nor as an action that has to be varied out. According to Maydeu-Olivares and D'Zurilla (1996), problem-solving is "the rational search for a solution through the application of specific problem-solving skills and techniques that are designed to increase the probability of finding the 'best' solution or coping response for a particular problematic situation" (p. 116).

Shersher (2011) defined problem-solving as a model that assists clients in making an effective decision when they are dealing with their problems. Amer (2010) illustrated that the problem-solving model is based on a set of ideas, such as the following: individuals are able to change; problems are a result of not fulfilling one's basic needs, external pressures, and internal tensions; and the problem can be treated. Emteer (2008) demonstrated that the problem-solving model does not promise to come up with the absolute right answers for a situation, but it does promise to raise the probability of being able to find appropriate solutions.

Theoretical Perspective and Literature Review

The problem-solving inventory model (Heppner & Petersen, 1982)

Heppner and Petersen (1982) developed a model of problem-solving inventory (PSI), which helps social workers to measure the clients' perception of their abilities to solve a problem. The PSI is a self-report measure to assess an individual's awareness of his or her abilities to react to daily problems (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007). Individuals who recognize themselves as successful in solving problems score lower in the PSI, which

means they have confidence and self-control in engaging with and approaching problematic activities (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007; Sahin et al., 1993;. Heppner & Hillerbrand, 1991). However, individuals who consider themselves as being unsuccessful in solving problem score higher in the PSI, which means they have low confidence and self-control, and they avoid engaging in problem-solving activities (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007; Heppner & Hillerbrand, 1991; Sahin et al., 1993).

The problem-solving inventory measures three dimensions. **The first** dimension is "problem-solving confidence," which evaluates the confidence of an individual when he or she participates in several problem-solving activities. **The second** dimension is the "approach-avoidance style" which gauges to what degree an individual participates in or avoids diverse problem-solving activities. **The third** approach is personal control, which demonstrates an individual's ability to control his or her emotions and behavior while solving a problem (Heppner & Lee, 2002; Heppner & Petersen, 1982; Wei, Heppner & Mallinckrodt, 2003).

The field of clinical social work applied the problem-solving model to problem-solving therapy to work with clients who have different social problems. Malouff et al. (2007) indicated that problem-solving therapy focused on using the problem-solving orientation in a client's life and applying problem-solving skills. In general, the effectiveness of the problem-solving process depends on three factors: problem-solving orientation, problem-solving skills, and behavioral style of problem-solving (Siu & Shek, 2005).

Nezu (2004) explained that one's problem-solving orientation included evaluating the problem as a challenge, believing that every problem has a solution and that the process of problem-solving requires time and effort. D'Zurilla and Nezu (2010) indicated that one's problem-solving orientation implies "the operation of a set of relatively stable cognitive-emotional schemas that reflect a person's general awareness and appraisals of problems in living, as well as his or her own problem-solving ability" (p. 200). The factor that could affect the problem-solving orientation is a set of (negative or positive) emotions that are linked with problems that individuals are facing and how they try to solve the problem (Siu & Shek, 2005).

In addition, D'Zurilla and Nezu (1990) developed a model that

includes four major skills for problem-solving abilities that improve the outcomes of the problem-solving therapy. The first skill is the ability to define a problem, the second skill is the ability to find alternative solutions, the third skill is the ability to make a decision, and the last skill is the ability to evaluate the outcomes of the solution. The problem solving skills are important to establish a useful solution for a problem that clients are facing (Siu & Shek, 2005).

The behavioral style of problem-solving is related to the action clients take - whether the clients would move toward solving the problem or avoid it, whether the clients would rush to solve the problem or would be careful and move slowly (Siu & Shek, 2005). Doss et al (2005) studied 134 married couples who are seeking couples therapy. These couples were randomly assigned to two couples therapy styles, TBCT and IBCT, both of which use communication and problem-solving training. While the former focuses on the *behavioral exchange* of the spouses, the latter focuses on their *emotional acceptance of each other's behavior*. The researchers found that TBCT helped couples to change the frequency of their behavior and IBCT helped couples to accept each other's behavior.

Some studies examined the relationship problem-solving and other variables, such as social support, marital satisfaction, age, gender, and marital distress (Blanchard-Fields, Jahnke, & Camp, 1995; Sabourin et al., 1990; Blanchard-Fields, Stein, & Watson, 2004; D'Zurilla et al., 1998; Sullivan et al., 2010).

Sullivan et al. (2010) examine the relationships between problem-solving and social support behaviors among newlywed couples and its effect on marital satisfaction. They found that lower positive support behaviors could predict a high level of negative emotion during problem-solving conversations. In addition, the findings of Sullivan et al.'s (2010) study support the idea that problem-solving is a predictor of the future path of a couple's marriage. According to Sullivan et al. (2010), the level of satisfaction for couples can be predicted based on the spouses' problem-solving behaviors.

Sabourin et al. (1990) studied the relationship between problem-solving self-appraisal, coping efforts, and marital distress among 75 couples. The findings of their study demonstrated that distressed couples showed less confidence in solving a problem, tended to avoid taking

action toward problem-solving, and used weak strategies to control their behavior than did non-distressed couples.

Almotagely (2010) examined the effectiveness of the problem-solving model on reducing the social and emotional problems for the wives of AIDS patients in Egypt. The results of her study showed that the problem-solving model has reduced the social and emotional problems that these wives are facing. In addition, Shrsher (2011) found that the problem-solving model is effective in reducing family conflict and strengthening family relationships for depressed clients in Egypt. Furthermore, Alja'farawe (2012) examined the effect of the problem-solving model as an intervention to reduce the life pressures among high school students in Egypt. The results of her study showed that the problem-solving model as an intervention helps to reduce the social and family pressures among high-school students. Rasi et al. (2013) applied the problem-solving model to Iranian women who participated in their study; they found some improvement in these women's lives, such as succeeding in finding a job and improving their family relationships.

Regarding the relationship between age differences and problem-solving, many studies found that older people were more successful in solving problems than young people (Blanchard-Fields, Chen, & Norris, 1997; Blanchard-Fields, Jahnke, & Camp, 1995; Blanchard-Fields, Stein, & Watson, 2004). Blanchard-Fields et al. (2007) studied the age differences in the effectiveness of problem solving among 106 people. They found that younger adults were less effective than older adults when solving everyday problems.

D'Zurilla et al. (1998) conducted a study on the differences between age and gender on social problem-solving skills. They found that men had a higher score on the positive problem-solving orientation scale and women scored higher on the negative problem-solving orientation scale. Men viewed a problem as a challenge, had high problem-solving confidence, and they expected positive outcomes. However, women had low problem-solving confidence, and viewed a problem as a threat. In addition, D'Zurilla et al., (1998) found that a significant relationship between age and the problem solving abilities. The ability to solve a problem increases from young adulthood through middle age and decreases in older (60-80) age (D'Zurilla et al., 1998).

The Significance of the Study

To the best of the author's knowledge, no empirical study to date has examined clients' perceptions of their own problem-solving abilities

in Kuwait. This study is the first to examine this issue in Kuwait. Therefore, it is important to explore a new technique to help social workers in Kuwait improve their interventions with clients. The current study will assist social workers in the field of clinical social work in Kuwait to measure a client's awareness of his or her ability to solve a problem that may affect his or her life based on cognitive, affective, and behavioral items. In addition, this study will help social workers identify clients who have ineffective problem-solving skills and those who have effective problem-solving skills.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not the participants perceive themselves as effective or ineffective in problem-solving activities. In addition, it will investigate whether there are any differences among the three approaches of problem-solving inventory (problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, personal control) and the nationality of the participants, monthly income of the participants, and their occupation. The other purpose of this study is to compare the participants who used either effective or ineffective problem solving strategies based on their age group and their area of residence.

Research Questions

- Do the participants of this study perceive themselves as effective or ineffective in problem-solving activities?
- Are there significant differences among the three approaches of the problem-solving inventory (problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, personal control) and the demographic variables (nationality of the participants, monthly income of the participants, and their occupation)?
- Are there significant differences between the participants who used either effective or ineffective problem-solving strategies based on their age group and their area of residence?

Method

This is a descriptive study. A social survey approach was selected to address the research questions. The sample of this study was recruited on a voluntary basis from the Family Consultation Center in the Ministry of Justice in Kuwait. The author of this study selected the Consultation Center to examine the research questions among its clients.

Participants

The sample of this study drew from the clients who come to the Family Consultation Center in the Ministry of Justice in Kuwait. The aim of the Consultation Center is to work with couples who want to get a divorce. The Center tries to help them find urgent alternatives and solutions for their marital problems (Family Consultation Center, 2015). The study sample was restricted to individuals who were:

- Age 18 or older at the time of the survey;
- Couples who were seeking divorce; and
- Couples who actually went to the Family Consultation Center.

This study used a non-probability, convenience-sampling method to recruit the participants. A total of 313 couples participated voluntarily in this research. Their ages ranged from 19 to 61 years old (mean = 33.22, SD = 8.22). Females comprised 54.6%, and males comprised 45.4% of the sample. The majority of the sample was Kuwaitis (76.7%), followed by non-Kuwaitis (19.2%). In terms of their places of residence, 30.4% of the sample reported that they lived in Farwaniya, 10.9% lived in Al-Ahmadi, 19.2% in the Al-Asima, 16.9% in Hawalli, 8.9% in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and 12.5% lived in the Al-Jahra. In terms of their monthly income, 70% were in the middle-income range, 24% had high income, and 5.1% had low income. With regard to having a work life, 74.1% of the participants were employed, 3.8% participants did not work outside the home, 10.5% of the participants was students, 4.2% of the participants reported they were retired, and 3,5% were businessmen. In terms of educational level, 32.6% of the sample had high school education or less, 59.7% of the sample had a bachelor's degree, 7% had a master's degree or higher.

The Instrument

The participants in this study completed a questionnaire that included two parts. The first part asked about relevant demographic information, such as Age, Level of Education, Governorate, Nationality, and Gender. The second part included the Problem Solving Inventory Scale (PSI) developed by Heppner and Petersen (1982). The PSI is an instrument used widely to measure how clients generally react to their daily life problems. It is a 35-item self-report scale with statements that describe one's problem-solving ability. Responses made on a 6-point Likert scale were used, ranging from strongly agree, moderately agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. The PSI has three subscales. The first subscale represents

problem-solving confidence (11 items), the second represents approach-avoidance style (16 items), and the third represents personal control (5 items); in addition, there are three filler items that do not get a score (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007). When the participants scored higher on the total PSI score, that suggested ineffective problem-solving; and when they scored lower, it suggested effective problem-solving (Wei et al., 2003). Heppner and Petersen (1982) found the PSI valid and reliable with 0.09 alpha for the total measure; the subscale alphas ranged from 0.72 to 0.85.

Content Validity

The PSI was translated to Arabic by an Arabic specialist. Another English specialist translated the Arabic version of the questionnaire back to English to make sure that the translation was accurate. The researcher conducted a field test of the Arabic version of the questionnaire utilizing a panel of judges consisting of three professors from the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Kuwait University who were familiar with the study. This panel evaluated a draft of the questionnaire and members gave their opinions. The panel suggested some changes for the scale's items to make them more understandable for the respondents. The author of this study made the corrections that were required by the panel. The members approved all of the changes that were made for the PSI scale and found all items were accurate; they did not require any more changes.

Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine whether the instrument had adequate internal consistency. In the current study, the overall alpha for the problem-solving inventory scale (PSI) was $\alpha = 0.87$. The internal consistency reliability of these subscales was found to be as follows: problem-solving confidence ($\alpha = 0.73$), approach-avoidance style ($\alpha = 0.74$), personal control ($\alpha = 0.62$).

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions in this study, several statistical tests were used, such as correlations, t-test and ANOVA. In addition, descriptive analyses were used to describe the sample of this study and calculate the means, standard deviation, and the percentages.

Results

Correlations

The correlations among the three dimensions of the PSI (problem-

solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, personal control) were used to test the relationships between them. The results show that there is a positive correlation between problem-solving confidence and approach-avoidance style (r = 0.568) and between problem-solving confidence and personal control (r = 0.518). In addition, there is a positive correlation between approach-avoidance style and personal control (r = 0.502) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Correlation among Variables.

Variables		X_1	X_2	X_3
X_1	Problem-Solving Confidence	1.00		
X_2	Approach-Avoidance Style	0.568**	1.00	
X_3	Personal Control	0.518**	0.502**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The main objective of this study was to investigate whether or not the participants perceive themselves as effective or ineffective in problem-solving activities. A descriptive analysis was conducted to answer this research question. The participants of this study have high score on problem-solving confidence (M = 34.53; SD = 9.04), approach-avoidance style (M = 50.15; SD =11.22), Personal Control (M = 13.53; SD = 3.99) and the Total PSI (M = 111.07; SD =22.85). As a result, we concluded that the participants in this study perceived themselves as ineffective in problem-solving skills (See Table 2).

Table 2: PSI Means and Standard Deviations

Sub-Scales	*M*	*SD*
Problem-Solving Confidence	34.53	9.04
Approach-Avoidance Style	50.15	11.22
Personal Control	13.53	3.99
Total PSI	111.07	22.85

T-test

T-test analysis was used to illustrate the differences between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti participants in the three approaches of the PSI (problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, personal control). The analysis indicated that there were no differences between the

two groups of participants in the problem-solving confidence and approach-avoidance style at $p < 0.05$.

However, the result of the t-test showed that there are differences in personal control between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti participants. The former had a mean of 13.29 and the latter, a mean of 14.66 ($p = 0.05$) (See Table 3).

Table 3: T-test between Nationality and Problem-Solving Confidence, Approach-Avoidance Style, Personal Control

Scales	Kuwaiti		Non- Kuwaiti			
	df‘	t	*M*	SD	M	SD
Problem-solving confidence	34.32	8.67	36.53	9.96	298	.08
Approach-avoidance style	49.82	10.56	51.73	12.93	298	.23
Personal control	13.29	3.93	14.66	4.01	298	.01**

***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05, (2-tailed)

ANOVA

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test differences between three approaches of the PSI (problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, personal control) and the participants' monthly income, where the participants' income was divided into three parts: low income, middle income, high income. The results show that there were significant differences at $p < 0.05$ between the participants' monthly income and their problem-solving confidence. The participants who had high income scored significantly higher on problem-solving confidence; they were followed by the participants who had middle-income and those who had low income. In addition, there was a significant difference between the participants' monthly income and personal control at $p < 0.05$. The participants who had high income scored significantly higher on personal control, followed by the participants who had middle income, and those who had low income. Moreover, there were no significant differences between the approach-avoidance style with regard to the participants' monthly income at $p < 0.05$ (See Table 4).

Table 4: One-way ANOVA between Participants' Income and Problem-Solving Confidence, Approach-Avoidance Style, & Personal Control

	Low Income		Middle Income		High Income			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	df	F
Problem-solving confidence	27.93	9.83	34.21	9.03	36.69	8.18	309	6.76***
Approach-avoidance style	46.62	12.63	50.38	11.06	50.46	11.54	309	0.85
Personal control	11.06	4.89	13.49	3.92	14.08	3.89	309	3.62*

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

The occupation variable refers to the type of work that participants do. This variable has five categories: employed, not working, student, retired, and businessman. The results of one-way ANOVA showed significant differences at $p < 0.05$ in the relationship between Occupation and problem-solving confidence. Participants who were employed scored significantly higher on the problem-solving confidence than did the other participants with different occupations. Moreover, there were significant differences at $p < 0.05$ in the relationship between Occupation and the approach-avoidance style. Participants who are unemployed scored significantly higher on the approach-avoidance style than did the other participants with different occupations.

However, there were no significant differences at $p < 0.05$ in the relationship between Occupation and personal control (See Table 5).

Table 5: One-way ANOVA between Occupation and Problem-Solving Confidence, Approach-Avoidance Style, & Personal Control

Scales	Student		Employed		Unemployed		Retired		Businessman			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	df	F
Problem- solving confidence	34.0	6.17	35.1	8.98	33.58	7.31	28.00	11.55	31.50	8.52	301	2.46*
Approach - avoidance style	51.69	10.71	50.34	10.92	54.41	5.85	41.30	12.44	47.16	10.60	301	3.05*
Personal control	13.45	4.19	13.48	4.00	13.91	3.62	12.75	4.24	14.25	2.89	301	2.47

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

Cross Tabulation and Chi Square

A cross tabulation and Chi Square were conducted to compare the participants who used either effective or ineffective problem solving strategies and participants' age group. The results showed that there was no statistically significant association between problem-solving confidence and the approach-avoidance style and the participants' age at $p < 0.05$. However, there was a significant association between personal control and age, χ^2 (3, N = 287) = 10.72, p = 0.01. The participants were divided into four age categories: 29 years old or less, 30 to 39 years old, 40 to 49 years old, and 50 years old and older. The results showed that the age group of 29 years old or less tended to have low personal control in problem-solving. Furthermore, the age group of 30 to 39 years old tended to have high personal control (See Table 6).

Table 6: Cross tabulation between Age and Personal Control

Personal Control	Age					
	29 or less	**30 to 39**	**40 to 49**	**50 & above**	χ^2	**df**
Low	59 (20.6%)	43 (15%)	17 (5.9%)	4 (1.4%)	10.72**	3
High	48 (16.7%)	79 (27.5%)	28 (9.8%)	9 (3.1%)		

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

In addition, cross tabulation and Chi Square were conducted to compare the participants who used either effective or ineffective problem solving strategies and participants' area of residence. The results showed that there was no statistically significant association between personal control and approach-avoidance style and area of residence at $p < 0.05$. However, there was a significant association between problem-solving confidence and area of residence, ¡^{2} (2, N = 309) = 4.40, p = 0.03. The area of residence was divided into two categories: urban and suburban. The results showed that participants living in urban areas tended to have low problem-solving confidence, and those living in suburban areas tended to have the high problem-solving confidence (See Table 7).

Table 7: Cross Tabulation between Area of Residence and Problem-Solving Confidence

Problem-Solving Confidence	Area of Residence			
	Urban	Suburban	χ^2	df
Low	79 (25.6%)	74 (23.9%)	4.40*	1
High	62 (20.1%)	94 (30.4%)		

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

Discussion

According to the latest report from the Central Statistical Bureau in Kuwait, the divorce rate in Kuwait is increasing. In 2004, the total number of divorce cases was 4,899; in the following 10 years, the number increased to 7,327 (Central Statistical Bureau in Kuwait, 2014). This increase in the divorce rate in Kuwaiti society calls for researching the causes and seeking the best intervention techniques in assisting couples with marital problems that could lead to divorce. The current study assumes that clients who decide to get a divorce may not possess effective problem-solving strategies. Therefore, the author selected to test the problem-solving inventory on those individuals who decided to get a divorce and already went to the Ministry of Justice in Kuwait to get divorced.

The results of this study show that the participants had a high score on problem solving confidence which means that they had less confidence in several problem-solving activities and they viewed the problem as a threat. In addition, they scored high in the approach-avoidance style which means that the participants avoided the problem solving activities and they did not want to be part of the solution. Furthermore, the participants also scored high on personal control which means that they had low self control and low ability to control their emotions and behavior during problem solving. Finally, the participants of this study scored high on the total score of the problem-solving inventory scale, which means that they perceived themselves as ineffective in problem-solving inventory.

These results would help clinical social workers who work in the Family Consultations Center in the Ministry of Justice in Kuwait to identify an appropriate therapy that includes problem- solving training for clients who scored high on the PSI scale. This might help the clients to recognize effective problem solving skills, which might change their opinion and understand that divorce is not the only solution to their problems and that they might consider other options. The couples therapy that includes problem-solving training has good results in changing the target's behavior and acceptance of the behavior of the spouse (Doss et al., 2005)

The findings of this study identify some of the correlates of the PSI variables. They show that there is a positive correlation, that is, a positive relationship among the three variables: problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, and personal control. For instance, when problem-solving confidence increases, approach-avoidance style increases and personal control tend to increase as well.

The results of this study illustrated that there were no differences between non-Kuwaiti and Kuwaiti participants on the confidence and avoiding problems activities. However, the non-Kuwaiti participants displayed less personal control than did Kuwaiti participants. Non-Kuwaiti couples showed less control over their feelings and behavior during problem solving than did Kuwaitis. Individuals who move to another country with their families might lose their social support and may experience stressful life events, which may contribute to this finding. In contrast, citizens of the country who are surrounded by their social support might receive help through their marital problems.

In addition, the results showed that participants who are employed had less confidence in problem solving than did the other participants with different occupations. This could be explained that individuals who are employed have other priorities to focus on, such as work and their future that takes their attention away from their marriage. Furthermore, participants who are unemployed had the least confidence in problem solving. Unemployed individuals usually suffered from many problems such as financial problems, poor health, and shame (Rantakeisu et al., 1999) which may have caused them to avoid facing their problems or finding a solution that might help them.

The results of this study demonstrate that participates who receive high monthly income had less confidence in problem solving activities; they viewed the problem as a threat and had less control over their emotions than the participants who receive middle-income or low income. This may be because participants who receive high monthly income have financial resources so learning problem-solving skills is not their only option, in contrast to clients who receive a low income and who have to adopt problem-solving strategies. According to Orthner et al. (2004), there is a relationship between problem-solving and positive outcomes for low-income families.

Another finding of this study showed that participants from urban areas tend to have low problem-solving confidence. In contrast, participants from suburban areas tend to have high problem-solving confidence. This means that participants from urban areas have more effective problems-solving strategies than do those from suburban areas. This could be related to patriarchal culture, which is stronger in suburban areas. In this patriarchal culture men have the full authority to decide for their families and women have less participation in problem-solving that may affect the problem-solving confidence skills among these couples.

Another finding of this study is the comparison between the participants who used either effective or ineffective problem-solving strategies and the participants' age. Moreover, the age group of 29 years old or younger tends to have low personal control in contrast to the age group of 30 to 39 years old that tends to have high personal control. The results of the current study confirm the findings of D'Zurilla et al. (1998). In addition, D'Zurilla et al. (1998) explained that the older group scored low on positive problem orientation and solving a problem rationally.

Implications for Clinical Social Work

The field of clinical social work would benefit from the findings of this study by having more knowledge on the effect of the problem-solving inventory on clients' perspective on solving problems. Clinical social workers who work with couples can coach these clients on how to improve their problem-solving strategies. In addition, clinical social workers should study the cases and identify which cases have ineffective problem-solving strategies before using any intervention.

The current study is the first study in Kuwait that examined the problems-solving inventory scale which will help the clinical social work field in Kuwait to understand the main approaches that may play a role in working with clients who fail in problems-solving in their marriage. These approaches are problem-solving confidence, approach-avoidance style, and personal control. Understanding the importance of these three approaches on working with clients would help to improve the social work field in Kuwait.

Future Research and Recommendations

There are many areas that need to be examined in future research. One of these areas is the relationship between marital satisfaction and the problem-solving inventory among Kuwaiti couples. Another area for future research is to investigate the relationship between social support and the problem-solving inventory among Kuwaiti families. Future studies can investigate the impact of the problem-solving inventory on individuals' quality of life. Another study examined the effect of training couples to learn and use problem-solving skills in their decision to get a divorce.

Based on the findings of the currents study. Some recommendations can be made First, there is a need to design a problem-solving training program for couples to assist them with their marital problems. In addition, there is a need to organize workshops to train social workers in Kuwait with interventions based on problem-solving therapy. Furthermore, there is a need for social workers to use the problem-solving inventory scale with clients who have daily social problems, which will help them address whether or not their clients have effective problem-solving strategies.

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