

**THE COUNSELING PROBLEMS OF THE TEENAGERS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION  
(FOLLOW-UP STUDY)**

**MAHER MAHMOUD OMAR (Ph.D.)**

College of Arts - Kuwait University

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The problem to be studied in this research is the counseling problems of the teenagers in the Middle East Region. The research questions to be addressed : Do they perceive that they have certain problems ? If yes, What are they ? If not, how can they discover them ?

A review of the literature showed that few studies similar to that proposed have been reported. It further revealed that very little has been published about the guidance needs of secondary school students in the State of Kuwait (Omar, 1983). The researcher stated a definition of counseling in his book entitled, **The School Counselor** in 1983, as a learning process that helps an individual to understand himself by recognizing personal, social, educational, and vocational needs in order to satisfy them, according to available resources in his environment throughout a humanistic relationship between him and a professional specialist in the frame of his society value system (Omar, 1984). Mansour (1981) wrote in his report on Mission Regarding Educational and Vocational Guidance at Secondary School in the State of Kuwait that guidance and counseling are being used interchangeably by the guidance workers in the State of Kuwait. Then, he stated that two words are not the same because guidance is a generic term which includes a number of services; one of these is counseling. Problems can be defined as the external expressions of the unmet needs of the individual (Helwy, 1965). Saleh in 1972 classified the Problems of the Egyptian teenagers in eight categories :

(1) school problems that are concerned with underachievement, study habits and relationships with the school personnel; (2) problems related to post-graduation from school; (3) personal problems related to self-concept; (4) problems related to communications with others; (5) home problems related to the interaction with the family members; (6) problems related to communication with the opposite sex; (7) problems related to physical and mental illness; and (8) problems related to the public customs and traditions.

Accordingly, any individual may have any of personal, social, educational, and vocational counseling problems, if not all of them. Personal problems are related to the intellectual, physical, mental, religious, and moral aspects. Social problems are related to the behavioral interaction between an individual and the others in his environment. Educational problems are related to the educational setting, including the curriculum and training possibilities. Vocational problems are related to the career opportunities including positions, jobs, and occupations.

On the other hand, teenagers are defined by the American Association for counseling and development (1988) as the students whose grades are between 7 to 12. According to psychologists, the normal secondary school students are defined as teenagers whose ages are usually between 14 and 18 years old. Shartzer and Stone (1981, 1966) define the period of adolescence in which the teenagers are engaged as a transition period between childhood and maturity that denotes the physical, psychological and social development that take place; and its time span in years is roughly from 12 to 20 years old. Then, they generalized the characteristics of the teenagers during their adolescence period as : (1) physiological characteristics dominant from puberty to maturity; (2) changes in both the primary and seco-

ndary sex characteristic results in shifts in attitude towards the proper masculine and feminine sex role, and (3) searching for emotional, social, and economic independence. Lambert and Others (1972) state that the teenage period is tied to an age span with the starting age varying from 10 to 13 and the concluding age varying from 19 to 21; but they believe that a more realistic and meaningful definition of the teenage period may be relied on behavioral terms rather than chronological age as its reason for being.

A definition that determines the countries of the Middle East region, which Larudee (1976) described, divided the region according to geographical bases into five areas, which have common culture, Arabic tongue, and Islamic religion. The five areas are : (1) Western North Africa, included Moraco, Algeria, and Tunisia; (2) Eastern North Africa, included Egypt, Sudan, and Libia; (3) The Western Fertile Crescent, included Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon; (4) The Estern Fertile Crescent, included Iraq, the State of Kuwait, Qater, Bahreen, Auman, and The State of United Emareets. The Arabian Peninsula included Saudi Arabia and two Yemens.

The State of Kuwait occupies the North-Western corner of the Arabian Gulf. It is selected to be the representative country of the Middle East Countries, for the purpose of this research, because there many individuals who belonged to these countries living, working, and raising their children for a long time in it. Tables 1, 2, 3, and show the different data about the population in the State of Kuwait, describing its people, as reported by the Annual Statistical Abstract of Kuwait, 1979.

**Table No. (1)**  
**GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT POPULATION**  
**IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT**

Indicator	N	%
Total Population	994.837	100.00
Kuwaiti Population	472.088	47.50
Non-Kuwaiti Population	522.749	52.50

Table No. (2)  
POPULATION BY SEX AND NATIONALITY

Nationality	N			%		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Kuwaiti	236.600	235.488	472.088	23.8	23.7	47.5
Non-Kuwaiti	307.168	215.581	522.749	30.9	21.6	52.5
Total	543.768	451.069	994.837	54.7	45.3	100.0

Table No. (3)  
POPULATION BY SEX AND RELIGION

I (*)	Muslems			Christians			Others		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
N	517.808	426.973	944.781	22.711	22.22	4.50	.33	.22	.55
%	52.04	42.91	94.95	2.28	2.007	44.718	3.249	2.089	5.338

(\*) I = Indicator

N = Number of Population

% = Percentages

Table No. (4)

## POPULATION BY SEX AND NATIONALITY IN CENSUS OF 1975

Arab Nationality	M	F	T	%
Kuwaitis	236,600	235,488	472,088	47,5
Jordan and Palestine	107,770	96,408	204,178	20,5
Iraq	26,499	18,571	45,070	4,5
Saudi Arabia	6,620	5,907	12,527	1,3
Lebanon	13,208	11,568	24,776	2,5
Syria	24,641	16,321	40,962	4,1
Egypt	35,795	24,739	60,534	6,1
Tunis	73	54	127	*
Algeria	42	27	69	*
Libya	20	26	46	*
Morocco	38	21	59	*

Arab: Nationality	M	F	T	%
Sudan	1,119	434	1,553	0,2
P.D.R. Yemen	10,311	2,021	12,332	1,2
Arab Yemen R.	3,755	1,076	4,831	0,5
Bahrain	569	790	1,359	0,1
Qatar	62	50	112	*
Arab Gulf Emirates	1,382	1,203	2,585	0,3
Muscat Oman	5,117	2,196	7,313	0,7
Other Arab	404	350	754	0,1
-Non-Kuwaiti Arabs	237,425	181,762	419,187	42,1
Total Arab Nationality	474,025	417,250	891,275	89,6



Non-Arab Nationality	M	F	T	%
Iran	33,359	7,483	40,842	4,1
Turkey	52	66	118	*
India	16,779	15,326	32,105	3,2
Pakistan	14,996	8,020	23,016	2,3
Japan	260	101	361	*
Other African	317	123	440	*
Other Asians	1,122	249	1,371	0,1
United Kingdom	1,293	1,130	2,423	0,2
West Europe	583	392	975	0,1
U.S.S.R.	25	29	54	*
East Europe	292	273	565	0,1

Non-Arab Nationality	M	F	T	%
North Europe	93	80	173	*
Other Europeans	41	49	90	*
U.S.A.	351	343	694	0,1
Canada	33	18	51	*
Latin America	38	31	69	*
Australia, New Zealand	25	22	47	*
Not Stated	84	84	168	*
<b>Total Non-Arab Nationality</b>	<b>69,743</b>	<b>33,819</b>	<b>103,562</b>	<b>10,4</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>543,768</b>	<b>451,069</b>	<b>994,837</b>	<b>100</b>

## **METHOD**

### **Population and Sample :**

The population studied was male and female teenagers in the State of Kuwait. The total number of the population according to census in 1982 was 105, 719 male and female teenage students, including 54,630 males and 51,089 females. They were surveyed according to a random sample represented by 575 teenage students, including 281 males and 294 females selected randomly from five female secondary schools respectively.

### **Instrument :**

The Problem Checklist (240 items), developed by the researcher and standardized in the State of Kuwait by examining its reliability and validity was published as a Guidance Slate under the title "Teenagers Problem Checklist" in 1986. It was chosen for this research because it could determine the problems of the teenagers in personal, social, educational, and vocational areas as well as in their subareas, included, personality traits; physical and mental health; morality and religion; marriage; home conditions; leisure and finance; value of education; school subjects; school graduation; work values; preparation for occupations; and labor force.

### **Procedures :**

A Permission of Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait for administrating the research in its schools, and selecting the sample among its students was obtained. The research was administered at the end of the academic year during the period from March to May, 1988. The instrument was administered in 60 minutes in each class, which included 10 minutes for explaining the administration of the

instrument by the researcher and 50 minutes for checking the items on the checklist by the subjects as a group. Confidentiality was promised and preserved by the researcher. Results of this research have been reported according to the computer analysis, utilizing descriptive and comparative statistics. Means and standard deviations of the responses have been calculated. Ranking the original areas their subareas in order, according to the responses have been tabulated.

## RESULTS

The relationship between the dependent variables of personal, social, educational, and vocational counseling problems as expressed by the twelve Problem Checklist subareas and the independent variable of sex are examined to explore the importance of the teenager's problems as perceived all of them. Accordingly, all problems of all teenagers in regard to their sex, male and female, are presented according to the twelve problem subareas as well as the four major areas, expressed by means, standard of deviation, rank orders, and significant differences, as shown in tables 5 and 6, respectively. The twelve subareas are : (1) personality traits; (2) physical and mental health; (3) morality and religion; (4) relationship with the opposite sex and marriage; (5) home conditions and family relationships; (6) leisure activities and finances; (7) value of education and study habits; (8) school subjects and activities; (9) post-secondary school situations; (10) work values; (11) preparation for occupation; and (12) labor force.

## DISCUSSION

Sex differences are widely known. Females are different from males physically, psychologically, and socially. Frieze (1978) wrote that basic differences between the sexes start at a young age and continue throughout the persons lives, and that these differences have a biological origin; others see differences resultings from socialization. Empirically, the results of this research show differences between the problems of male teenagers and the problems of female teenagers. The findings of this research are discussed in regard to a similar study done by the researcher himself in 1983 in order to show if there are any changes among the teenagers problems have happened.

Table No. (5)  
ALL TEENAGERS PROBLEMS BY SEX WITH PROBLEM SUB AREAS

Subareas	Male			Female			Significant
	M	SD	RO	M	SD	RO	
1	2,96	0,49	8	3,65	0,62	3	Yes <sup>c</sup>
2	3,02	0,51	7	3,31	0,56	6	Yes <sup>b</sup>
3	2,84	0,42	9	3,44	0,59	5	Yes <sup>c</sup>
4	2,79	0,39	10	3,71	0,63	2	Yes <sup>c</sup>
5	2,71	0,36	11	3,82	0,66	1	Yes <sup>c</sup>
6	2,69	0,34	12	2,31	0,31	12	No
7	3,45	0,59	4	3,22	0,52	7	Yes <sup>b</sup>

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Subareas	Male			Female			Significant
	M	SD	RO	M	SD	RO	
8	3,36	0,53	5	3,09	0,51	8	Yes <sup>b</sup>
9	3,12	0,52	6	3,52	0,60	4	Yes <sup>b</sup>
10	3,58	0,61	3	2,89	0,45	9	Yes <sup>c</sup>
11	3,63	0,62	2	2,78	0,43	10	Yes <sup>c</sup>
12	3,92	0,68	1	2,45	0,11	11	Yes <sup>c</sup>

RO = Rank Orders    df = 573

\* M = Mean    SD = Standard of Deviation

<sup>a</sup> P = .05

<sup>b</sup> P = .01

<sup>c</sup> P = .001

Table No. (6)  
ALL TEENAGERS PROBLEMS BY SEX WITHEN MAJOR AREAS

Areas of Couns. Prob.	Male			Female			Significant
	M	SD	RO	M	SD	RO	
Vocational	3,71	0,63	1	2,71	0,42	4	Yes <sup>c</sup>
Education	3,31	0,56	2	3,26	0,54	3	No
Social	2,73	0,42	4	3,29	0,56	2	Yes <sup>c</sup>
Personal	2,94	0,49	3	3,47	0,61	1	Yes <sup>c</sup>

\* M = Mean

SD = Standard of Deviation

RO = Rank Orders

df = 573

<sup>a</sup> P = ,001

<sup>b</sup>

P = ,01

<sup>c</sup>

P = ,05



Subarea 6, leisure activities and finances, ranked twelfth by both male and female teenagers. The frequency and seriousness of the problems grouped within that subarea were about the same level for both males and females. It seems that problems related to that subarea were less trouble for both of them because it ranked at the end of Rank Orders.

According to the findings of the similar study which was done by the researcher in 1983, subarea 6 ranked tenth and eleventh by males and females, respectively. It seems that problems related to that subarea become less trouble for the teenagers than before in 1983 because of emphasizing the school activities and the wide spread of summer clubs for both boys and girls in 1988 more than in 1983.

Subareas 12, the labor force; 11, preparation for occupation; 10, work values; value of education; and 8, school subjects ranked first, second, third, fourth, fifth by males and eleventh, tenth, ninth, seventh, and eighth by females, respectively. It seems that problems related to those subareas bothered the male teenagers more than the females because they ranked higher for males.

Subareas 5, home conditions; 4, relationship with the opposite sex; 1, personality trait; 9, post-secondary school; 3, morality and religion; and 2, physical and mental health rank first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth by female teenagers and eleventh, tenth, eighth, sixth, ninth, and seventh by males, respectively. It seems that problems related to those subareas bothered the female teenagers more than the males because they ranked higher for females.

By comparison with the previous study done in 1983, the most five serious problems that bothered boys were related to sub-

areas 9, post secondary school; 8, school subjects; 11, preparation for occupation; 7, value of education; and 4, relationship with the opposite sex that ranked first, second, third, fourth and fifth, respectively. The most five serious problems that bothered girls were related to subareas 9, post-secondary school; 4, relationship with the opposite sex; 11, preparation for occupation; 5, home conditions; and 8, school subjects that ranked first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, respectively.

Accordingly, it seems that the old five serious problems which were found in the last study done in 1983 bothering the boys more than the rest of the others, are replaced now by new five serious problems found in the recent research. Undoubtly, the attitudes, interests, and concerns of male teenagers are changed now because of the political and socioeconomical situations in the Middle East Region. Most of them are worried because they want jobs before graduation from the secondary schools, and a large number of them drop out of school seeking jobs, as a request of their identity and achievement of their independency. Unfortunately, the labor market is closed and cannot accept any new worker, especially those who are not graduates, nor prepared for jobs and occupations.

The female teenagers are bothered now by new serious problems replaced the previous ones found in the last study in 1983 because of the increase of the conflicts between the old traditions of marriage in the Middle East Region and the urgent needs for satisfying their sexuality by marriage. Parents ask for difficult requirements for fulfilling the marriages of their daughters, in return there is a shortage of males who are interested in marriage because of socioeconomic situations. Thus, their personal problems are created as well as their social problems.

Accordingly, the four major areas of personal, social, educational, and vocational Counseling problems ranked third, fourth, second, and first for male teenagers, and first, second, third, and fourth for the females, respectively. It seems that male teenagers are worried too much by the others, and the females are worried too much by problems related to personal area more than the others.

By the comparison with the study done in 1983, both males and females were bothered by the problems related to personal, social, educational, and vocational areas that ranked fourth, third, first, and second, respectively. It seemed that all of them were bothered by the same degree of frequency and seriousness of the problems, previously.

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