

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter is divided into five sections: first, the research questions are addressed; second, the research design is indicated; third, the data collection procedures are presented; fourth, development and description of the FFSS is discussed; fifth, the pilot study and translation of all of instruments are described; and sixth, data analysis is presented and followed by the summary of the chapter.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to document and identify predictors of KU students' attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and, more importantly, examine the role of family, friends, and societal support associated with this kind of help-seeking behavior. Of interest also, are factors that may serve as obstacles to those who may wish to avail themselves of the service. The following questions guided this inquiry:

1. Do KU students have positive or negative attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help?
2. Do KU students' attitudes differ from those found in similar studies?
3. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and other demographic variables (gender, age, SES, education, marital status, location of residency or geographical location)?
4. Does the family, friends, and societal support scale (FFSS) enhance prediction of the subscales and total scores on the ATSPPHS beyond that already obtained in previous studies using the other predictors?
5. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and family, friends, and societal support?

6. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and life stress events?
7. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and utilization of social support?
8. Are there any stigma differences between male students and female students associated with their attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help?

Research Design

A correlational research design was used in this study to examine the relationships between attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help as the dependent variable, and the following independent variables: (a) family, friends, and societal support/sanction associated with professional help-seeking behavior; (b) orientation toward utilization of social resources; (c) life stress events; and (d) other demographic variables included in the study.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data for this study, the researcher enlisted the aid of colleagues at KU where the researcher is employed. The researcher visited various departments at KU and asked faculty members to help in distributing the questionnaires to their students. A total of 31 colleagues volunteered to help collect the data in a total of 46 classes over which they had responsibility. The researcher met with each instructor of the 31 instructors and discussed the purpose of the study and provided instructions to be followed when distributing the questionnaires, see Appendix A (English) and Appendix G (Arabic) for more information about the general directions.

In 18 of these classes, the questionnaires were distributed and completed during the scheduled class period. In the remaining 28 classes, the instructors asked the students to complete the questionnaire at home and return the completed questionnaire in the next class

meeting. The response rate was nearly 100% in those classes when the questionnaire was filled out during the class period. However, the response rate was much lower, approximately 70% in classes when the questionnaire was to be completed at home. The result was that of the 800 questionnaires distributed, 673 questionnaires were returned (84.12%) of which 529 (78.6%) were completed sufficiently to include in the analysis.

Each student participant was given an informed consent form and a packet containing the five assessment tools. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires and sign the consent form agreeing to participate in the study. In courses where the students were asked to complete the questionnaire in class, students who decided not to participate either left the room or sat quietly without disturbing those who decided to participate. To avoid giving the questionnaires to the same students in different classes, announcements were made by the researcher and colleagues in each of the classes, stating that those whom have already received a survey packet do not need to complete another one. The participants were told that there are no correct or incorrect answers and they should consider what their opinions reflect. All items and instructions were presented in Arabic language.

Those questionnaires administered in the classroom took 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The researcher and colleagues were available to answer any questions; however, neither the researcher nor his colleagues discussed any psychological or mental health-related topics prior or during the questionnaires. Participation in this study was voluntary and the students were free stop participating at any point. Information in the study was strictly confidential and no names, codes, or any means to identify participants was used. Only the researcher has had access to the data.

Development and Description of the FFSS

Central to the study was the development of an instrument to assess family, friends, and societal support and sanction associated with seeking professional psychological help. To this end, the researcher developed a list of items designed to measure support and sanction from three perspectives: the family, friends, and society, the latter items assess perception about society in general rather than family or friends per se. The result was a 22-item instrument named the Family, Friends, and Societal Support Scale (FFSS). The 22 items are divided into three subscales: Subscale I—Family support or sanction for seeking professional psychological help (items 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, & 21); Subscale II—Societal support or sanction for seeking professional psychological help (items 2, 5, 7, 13, 16, & 20); and III—Friends support or sanction for seeking professional psychological help (items 12, 17, 19, & 22), each using 4-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree & 3 = strongly agree) response. Scores are computed for each subscale as well as a total score (minimum 0 & maximum 66). Copies of this instrument are presented in Appendix B [English] & in Appendix J [Arabic]. Psychometric properties of the FFSS are found in the results chapter.

Content Review and Translation of the Instruments

Following approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Kuwait University, the researcher conducted a pilot study before the actual distribution of the questionnaires to KU students. Approvals from IRB and Kuwait University are presented in Appendix N and O, respectively. Participants in this study were exposed to no apparent physical, psychological, social, financial, or legal risks.

Twenty volunteers participated in the pilot study. Of these 20 participants, a total of 18 individuals were administered the questionnaires in person by the researcher and two of the participants were given the questionnaires electronically. The majority of the participants were

from Kuwait (n = 12) and the remaining from two Arabian Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia (n = 4) and United Arab Emirates (n = 4). In addition to the 20 participants, five Arabic native-speaking colleagues and doctoral students in related fields of counseling, psychology, and sociology reviewed the questionnaires. These colleagues were asked to judge the accuracy of the translation and to provide any suggestions. Following their review of the instruments, feedback and comments were obtained from each participant. In general the participants indicated that they found the instruments to be of appropriate length, clear, and free from biased language. Two of the participants felt that there was some overlapping in items across scales, but the remaining 18 participants did not see any overlaps. Some of the participants also noted misspelling and typing errors that were corrected prior to assembly of the final version of the instrument.

Other Instruments included in the study

Four other assessment tools were incorporated in the questionnaire. Each is described briefly below:

Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS). Fischer and Turner's (1970) Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) consists of 29 items, with 11 items positively stated and 18 negatively stated. The 29 items of the ATSPPHS are grouped into the following four subscales: Factor I—Recognition of Personal Need for Professional Help; Factor II—Tolerance of Stigma Associated with Psychological Help; Factor III—Interpersonal Openness; and Factor IV—Confidence in Mental Health Professional. Responses are recorded using a 4-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 3 = strongly agree). Scores are computed for each subscale as well as a total score. High scores on the ATSPPHS represent positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help from professionals. The ATSPPHS has been used extensively by many researchers to assess attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and is intended only for research use and should not be used for

clinical purposes (Fischer & Farina, 1995). Several researchers have chosen to modify items on the ATSPPHS for their studies (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Flum, 1998) by replacing certain words (e.g., psychiatrist with psychologist and mentally ill with personal and emotional troubles). A translation of the 29 items of the original ATSPPHS into Arabic was made by the author with assistance from Arabic-speaking colleagues who reviewed the translation to ensure its accuracy prior to conducting the pilot study.

Reliability. The ATSPPHS was standardized by Fischer and Turner on a sample of college students varying in age, background, and institutional affiliations and was shown to possess valid psychometric properties (Fischer & Turner, 1970; Fischer & Farina, 1995). Fischer and Turner (1970) reported the following reliabilities for each factor: Factor I: Need ($r = 0.67$); Factor II: Stigma ($r = 0.70$); Factor III: Openness ($r = 0.62$); and Factor IV: Confidence ($r = 0.74$). Also, the authors reported that the test-retest reliabilities ranged from 0.73 to 0.89 over five groups, and internal reliability averaged 0.85 for two samples. The ATSPPHS was found reliable in distinguishing those who have positive attitudes from those who have negative attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and in distinguishing those who have received professional help from those who have not (Fischer & Farina, 1995; Fischer & Turner, 1970).

Validity. Fischer and Turner reported four factors from their student samples: Factor I—Recognition of Personal Need for Professional Help; Factor II—Tolerance of Stigma Associated with Psychiatric (Psychological) Help; Factor III—Interpersonal Openness; and Factor IV—Confidence in Mental Health Professional. The construct validity of the ATSPPHS was found in that the total ATSPPHS scores correlated positively and significantly ($r = 0.49$) with another help-seeking scale, the Help-Seeking Attitude Scale (Poltkin, 1983). Also, the construct validity of the ATSPPHS was supported by the finding that the ATSPPH-Shorten Scale (Fischer &

Farina, 1995) displayed significant point-biserial correlations between those who had sought help and those who had not, $r = 0.24$, $p = 0.03$ for women, $r = 0.49$, $p = 0.0001$ for men, and $r = 0.39$, $p < .0001$ overall (Komiya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000).

Orientation Toward Utilization of Social Resources Scale (OTUSRS). The OTUSRS (Vaux, Burda, & Stewart, 1986) is a 20-item scale designed to measure people's orientation to having a social network by assessing their feelings about the advisability or usefulness of seeking social help, their past history of having actually sought social help, and the extent to which they feel that others cannot be trusted. Vaux (1985) and Vaux et al. (1986) found three factors or subscales that emerged from the factor analysis of the items on the OTUSRS: (1) Independence/Advisability, which contains items indicating the advisability and usefulness or not of seeking help and expression of independence; (2) History, which contains items indicating a positive or negative history with social (informal) help-seeking; and (3) Mistrust, which contains items suggesting that others may not be trusted. In this scale, participants respond to each item using a 4-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree & 3 = strongly agree). For the purpose of this study, the total scores of OTUSRS were used to indicate utilization of social network orientation; the subscales were not specifically used to meet the purpose of the study. Unlike Vaux (1985) and Vaux et al. (1986), who used the negative scores to indicate negative utilization of social network orientation, scores were reversed for the negative to obtain a positive network orientation score before scoring. A higher score was indicative of a positive social-network orientation, and a lower score was indicative of a negative social-network orientation.

Reliability. In addition to designing the OTUSRS and putting it through factor analysis, Vaux et al. (1986) assessed its reliability and validity by conducting studies with five samples, including four samples of college students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds

(Caucasian [n = 142, 66% female], African American [n = 75, 55% female], Foreign, Middle-Eastern & Asian [n = 80, 60% female]) and one sample of community adults (Caucasian [n = 37, 73% female]). The reliability of the OTUSRS was assessed in terms of the homogeneity of the scale and in terms of its stability over time. The internal consistency reliability estimates by coefficient alphas ranged from 0.60 to 0.80, mean alpha = 0.74 (Vaux et al., 1986). The stability of the scale was assessed in two out of three test alphas 0.85, 0.87, and 0.18, over one-, two-, and three-week intervals (Vaux, 1988).

Validity. The OTUSRS was found to have good criterion-related validity with regard to personality criteria and social support (Vaux et al., 1986). The positive scores on OTUSRS were related consistently and significantly to the availability of specific supportive behaviors, whereas negative scores were consistently associated with lower availability of socially supportive behaviors.

Life Stress Events: Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). The Life Stress Events (LSE) questionnaire was assessed using measures constructed from 18 items adapted from the Holmes and Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Appendix E [English] & L [Arabic]). Holmes and Rahe (1967) defined life stress events experienced primarily during the previous 6 months. For the purpose of this study, certain modifications were made on the original scale of the SRRS, as some of the items seem inappropriate for college students, especially for KU students. On the original LSE, the authors list 43 stressful life events, such as retirement from work and mortgage foreclosure. Of the 43 items, 18 were selected and included in this study. Excluded are those life events such mortgage or loan over \$10,000, detention in jail, changing to different line of work, etc, which are not likely to be experienced by students at KU.

Reliability. Reliability coefficients for the SRE ranged from 0.78 to 0.83 for short test-retest intervals (range from 2 weeks to 5 months). As expected, considerably lower coefficients (e.g., $r = 0.34$) are presented for longer administration intervals (2 years).

Validity. Some validity data are presented through retrospective and prospective studies focusing on the predictability of health change occurring after life change. In one study involving medical students, 86% with high life change scores, 48% with moderate life change scores, and 33% with low life change scores experienced major health changes (Homes & Rahe, 1967). The Holmes and Rahe's Social Readjustment Rating Scale correlated 0.49 with the Anton and Reed's (1994) External Stressors Scale (ESS).

Demographic Data Sheet (DDS). Preliminary demographic information such as gender, age, nationality, marital status, college and major, GPA, residence location, family profile, and previous counseling experience are included in Appendix F for English and Appendix M for Arabic.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 9.01 for Windows (1998). Statistical procedures included descriptive statistics, t-test, nonparametric tests, reliability coefficients, Pearson correlation coefficients, and regression analysis. The results of this study are presented in chapter 4. Internal consistency reliabilities for each of the scales used in this study were computed. All of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable, attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help scale (ATSPPHS), were computed and are reported in chapter 4.

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted using total scores on the ATSPPHS as the dependent variable. Selected demographic variables (e.g., gender, marital status, major, previous counseling experience, residence location) were entered in the first block using forward

regression procedures since some of these variables lack theoretical support in predicting ATSPPHS. The Orientation Toward Utilization of Support Resources Scale (OTUSRS) was entered in the second block followed by the variable of Life Stress Events (LSE), which was entered in the third block. The fourth block included family, friends, and societal supports/sanctions (FFSS) into the model.

Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology of this study. A correlational research design was used to measure the attitudes among students at KU toward seeking psychological help. Thirty-one instructors volunteered their classes to participate in the study. The participants were selected from various colleges within the university. The participants completed five different assessment tools, which were transcribed in Arabic language. Eight hundred total questionnaires were distributed. Of these 800 questionnaires, 673 participants returned the questionnaires. Only 529 questionnaires were complete and used in the analysis. The results from the assessment tools, demographics, OTUSR, LSE, and FFSS were analyzed using SPSS.