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Future Anxiety and Assertiveness among a Sample of Adolescent Female Students in the State of Kuwait

By

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Abstract

The current study aimed to identify the nature of the relationship between assertive behavior and anxiety about the future among a sample of teenage female students in the State of Kuwait, and used the descriptive, comparative, and correlational approach. The study sample consisted of (400) teenage female students in grades 14-16 in basic education in the State of Kuwait, and a measure of future anxiety was applied to them. And affirmation The results indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between the components of future anxiety and the dimensions of assertiveness. It also showed that there were significant differences in the average scores of future anxiety between Kuwaiti women and non-Kuwaiti women, as the average scores of non-Kuwaiti women were higher in anxiety related to life problems. While the differences trended in the direction of Kuwaiti women in health anxiety, death anxiety, mental anxiety, and the total score of the scale, on the other hand, no differences were observed between the two samples in despair in the future, and fear and anxiety of failure in the future. It was also noted that there were statistically significant differences between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women in the total degree of assertiveness and its dimensions. The differences in defending personal rights trended in the direction of Kuwaiti women, while the significant differences in positive interaction with others, rejection of illogical demands, and the total score of the assertiveness scale trended in the direction of non-Kuwaiti women. The results also confirmed the ability of the components of assertiveness in the sample to predict future anxiety.

Keywords: Assertiveness,, Future Anxiety, Adolescence.

مستخلص البحث:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على طبيعة العلاقة بين السلوك التوكيدي والقلق المستقبلي لدى عينة من الطالبات المراهقات في دولة الكويت، واعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي والمقارن والارتباطي. تألفت عينة الدراسة من (٤٠٠) طالبة مراهقة تتراوح أعمارهن بين ١٤ و ١٦ عامًا في مراحل التعليم الأساسي في دولة الكويت، وتم تطبيق مقياس القلق المستقبلي عليهن. وأظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة سلبية دالة إحصائيًا بين مكونات القلق المستقبلي وأبعاد السلوك التوكيدي. كما أظهرت النتائج وجود فروق دالة إحصائيًا في متوسط درجات القلق المستقبلي بين الكويتيات وغير الكويتيات، حيث كانت متوسطات درجات غير الكويتيات أعلى في القلق المتعلق بمشكلات الحياة. بينما اتجهت الفروق لصالح الكويتيات في القلق الصحي، وقلق الموت، والقلق النفسي، والدرجة الكلية للمقياس. من جهة أخرى، لم تُلاحظ فروق بين المجموعتين في الشعور باليأس تجاه المستقبل والخوف والقلق من الفشل في المستقبل. كما أشارت النتائج إلى وجود فروق دالة إحصائيًا بين الكويتيات وغير الكويتيات في الدرجة الكلية للسلوك التوكيدي وأبعاده. حيث اتجهت الفروق في الدفاع عن الحقوق الشخصية لصالح الكويتيات، بينما اتجهت الفروق الدالة في التفاعل الإيجابي مع الآخرين، ورفض المطالب غير المنطقية، والدرجة الكلية لمقياس السلوك التوكيدي لصالح غير الكويتيات. وأكدت النتائج كذلك قدرة مكونات السلوك التوكيدي لدى العينة على التنبؤ بالقلق المستقبلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السلوك التوكيدي، قلق المستقبل، المراهقة.

Introduction

Adolescence is a highly turbulent and cyclical phase of life characterised by fluctuating moods, marked by persistent concern for the future and apprehension about failing to meet aspirations and expectations. This phase is a pivotal transitional period, crucial in the academic and career trajectory of the female student. This stage is significant because female students are nearing the conclusion of one phase and the commencement of another academic phase, which presents a distinct perspective on the future (Al-Khattaf, 2021).

Future anxiety is an expression of psychological pressures in adolescents, stemming from their contemplation and imagination since childhood. The future is influenced by various circumstances, primarily social, health-related, psychological, and economic factors, alongside the student's educational attainment, achievements, and self-awareness regarding their abilities, potential, and inclinations (Hamoud, Abou Helal & Alfarissya, 2022), which leads to students' anxiety about their future. This anxiety is inherent; yet, it can become genuinely perilous when the sensation of fear and impending threat escalates, particularly in an environment that frustrates and fails to fulfil their aspirations (Marzouq, 2022, p. 110).

Conversely, assertive behaviour is a significant subject in various aspects of life. This topic has garnered significant interest among researchers in psychology, particularly in the study of personality, and serves as a crucial method for managing situations involving anxiety, aggression, depression, and frustration (Mahmoud, 2006, p. 398). Assertive behaviour signifies the expression of emotions in a rational manner aligned with the contextual circumstances, provided that anxiety is absent, as anxiety responses inhibit assertive behaviour. Consequently,

it can be asserted that there exists an inverse relationship between assertive behaviour and anxiety (Abbas, 2015, p. 450).

Low assertive behaviour may result in a heightened incidence of diseases and psychological disorders due to the individual's acquiescence to others' attempts to impose their views, his inability to confront exs in personal interactions and apprehension in facing others are prevalent indicators of insufficient assertiveness (ElBarazi, Mohamed, Mabrok, Adel, Abouelkheir, Ayman, et al., 2024). Salmi (2018) recognised that adolescents exhibit elevated levels of future anxiety and instability in assertive behaviour, a consequence of a society replete with variables and influenced by economic, social, environmental, health, and other dynamic factors, whose outcomes remain uncertain and whose interactions directly impact individual behaviours. Maashi's (2012) study revealed a significant degree of future concern among students at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the significance of this study, which examines the phenomenon of future worry and assertiveness among adolescent female students in the State of Kuwait, became evident.

Problem of the Study

Farag indicates that anxiety correlates with diminished assertiveness, suggesting that enhanced assertive capability may result in reduced anxiety levels. Welby addresses anxiety in its broad sense (Farag, 1998, p. 158), although there exists another variant of anxiety linked to an individual's perception of the future and apprehension of the unknown, termed future anxiety. Hambrick, Turk, Heimberg, Schneier, & Liebowitz (2003, p. 515) reports that the prevalence of general anxiety varies between 7% and 12% of the population. Additionally, a study by Chang, Ji, Li, Pan & Su. (2021) reveals that the prevalence of anxiety

among college and university students in Europe, America, Asia, and the Pacific is 31%. Conversely, Oliveira Carvalho, Hülzdünker, & Carson. (2022) suggest that the prevalence of anxiety may exceed this figure, potentially reaching 55%. The research conducted by Al-Otaibi, Al-Harthi, & Jaber (2023) established that the concern regarding the future among a sample of Umm Al-Qura University students was 62.33%.

Numerous prior studies demonstrate that affirmation training is an effective treatment technique for addressing future anxiety, as evidenced by the research conducted by ElBarazi et al., 2024. Certain educators concur that adolescents exhibit symptoms indicative of future anxiety, including diminished self-confidence, reluctance to engage in dialogue and discussion, withdrawal from such interactions, and an inability to envision the future. Consequently, it is imperative for families, educational institutions, and society at large to attend to these issues and offer support to help them navigate the challenges and barriers they encounter, as well as to identify the sources of anxiety related to their future perspectives. (Al-Khattaf, 2021).

The current study seeks to answer the following main question: Is there a correlation between future anxiety and assertiveness among a sample of teenage female students in the State of Kuwait? Several sub-questions arise from this main question:

Are there statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the Future Anxiety Scale attributed to nationality?

Are there statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the Affirmation Scale attributed to nationality?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study resides in the dimensions it explores, as assertive behaviour is a crucial idea in an individual's life. This social ability differentiates an individual, enhances self-esteem, and fosters a favourable perception of oneself and others. Al-Shennawi & Shalabi's study (2010) demonstrated a favourable association between assertive behaviour and an individual's self-esteem. Assertive behaviour constitutes a dimension of personality that enables an individual to act in alignment with personal interests and needs, while also facilitating the defence of rights without anxiety. Its impact is evident in the individual's ability to confront psychological pressures and mitigate their effects (Al-Qarni, 2020, p. 23).

Future anxiety is a topical and pertinent subject, as individuals often experience fear regarding many potential challenges they may encounter in the future. All forms of anxiety we experience possess a somewhat brief and constrained temporal dimension, impacting us for limited durations (Liu et al., 2021).

This study is significant as it illuminates a serious psychological disorder that may impact adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, who previous research indicates are among the most susceptible to anxiety disorders (Ganji, Khani et al., 2022). The study problem was derived from the significance and relevance of the topic, as evidenced by a review of the literature and prior research concerning anxiety about the future and assertiveness among adolescent female students in the State of Kuwait.

The Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the main objective, which is to identify the correlation between future anxiety and assertiveness in a sample of teenage female students in the State of Kuwait. Several sub-objectives emerge from this main objective:

Detecting statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the future anxiety scale attributed to nationality.

Detecting statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the assertiveness scale attributed to nationality.

Detecting the contribution of assertiveness among students in predicting future anxiety among the study sample.

Study Concepts

Future Anxiety:

Matarneh & Altrawneh defined it as "a form of anxiety, with roots in the past and orientations towards the future, represented in a set of cognitive structures such as pessimism and the individual's difficulty in realizing the achievement of his general life goals" (Matarneh & Altrawneh, 2014, p. 181).

Abdel Aziz also defined it as "a state of discomfort and tension, in which the individual's thinking is negative towards the future, and signs of anxiety about the coming fate appear on him" (Abdel Aziz, 2021, p. 328).

Operational definition of future anxiety: It is a form of anxiety stemming from adverse past experiences, characterised by a distorted perception of reality and self, an exaggeration of negative aspects, a denial of positive elements, feelings of insecurity, and a pervasive state of pessimism. It is quantified by the score attained by the student on the future anxiety scale.

Assertiveness Behavior: It was defined by:

It is defined as "the individual's ability to bear responsibility, claim personal rights, and express thoughts and feelings honestly and frankly in a way that takes into account the rights and feelings of others and social values" (Al-Zamely, 2011, p. 10). Assertiveness is defined as a collection of verbal and non-verbal behavioural skills that enable students to express their feelings, whether negative or positive, honestly and without pretence while fostering positive social interactions aligned with societal values, customs, and traditions. The measurement is based on the level attained by the student when responding to the assertive behaviour scale.

Study Limitations

The study deals with future anxiety and assertiveness to a sample of (400) teenage female students, (200) Kuwaitis and the same number of non-Kuwaitis in the schools of the Ministry of Education in the Capital Governorate and Mubarak Al-Kabeer in the State of Kuwait, in the period from 1/3/2024AD to 8/4/2024 AD.

Theoretical framework and previous studies:

First: Future Anxiety:

Future anxiety typically manifests in students due to inadequate academic preparedness (Kunzler et al., 2020), insufficient academic adaptation, a deficit in professional competencies, diminished motivation

and self-efficacy, pessimism, and an inability to comprehend negative emotions regarding a profession, thereby hindering their ability to channel these feelings constructively to attain their objectives (Hamoud et al., 2022, p. 129).

Symptoms of future anxiety:

Future anxiety has four main symptoms, which are:

Physical symptoms: Once a person thinks about the future, he feels tired, stressed, headache, sweating, rapid heartbeat, and has rapid breathing.

Psychological symptoms: The most important of these symptoms are tension, feeling uncomfortable, rapid nervous excitement, and negative thoughts towards oneself, and all of these symptoms are represented by not going to school, fear of the exam and the desire to postpone it.

Mental symptoms: They appear in two aspects:

Memory: Where concentration decreases as soon as anxiety and tension occur and the individual cannot remember information.

Thinking: Anxiety generally affects thinking, as the individual does not control his thoughts, in terms of accelerating or stagnant thinking, and anxiety about the professional future usually results from irrational thinking about the future and fear of what will happen in it.

Cognitive symptoms: Because the individual is unable to think, he is usually led by others, emotion prevails over logic, and he has extremism in judging things (Oweida, 2015, p. 25).

Individuals exhibiting elevated future anxiety possess numerous characteristics, including alienation, apathy, insecurity, frustration, deprivation, hopelessness regarding the future, fear of the unknown, dissatisfaction with themselves and their lives, diminished self-confidence, pessimism about forthcoming events, feelings of inferiority, a diminished focus on the present or a tendency to escape to the past, withdrawal from constructive endeavours, introversion, manifestations of doubt and sadness, low ambition, and low self-esteem, alongside a propensity for coercive and compulsive influence over others, as well as rigidity in thought and adherence to established beliefs. The study "Al-Khattaf" (2021) sought to ascertain the degree of future concern among a sample of high school pupils in Buraidah, Saudi Arabia. The findings indicated that female students have a significant level of future anxiety, which correlates with several symptoms such as fear, pessimism, and a diminished sense of security.

The effects of future anxiety

Future worry directly influences an individual's outlook on the future and anticipated occurrences, thus engendering fear and dread due to distorted perceptions of prospective happenings. All of these factors exert their influence on the individual, and their impacts are seen in the following:

Doubt in the competence of the personality, and loss of moral cohesion.

Pessimism and lack of confidence in the individual's ability to achieve himself.

Rigidity of opinion, lack of change and development in life.

Helplessness and dependence with irrational ideas.

Submission to the routine of life, and failure to think of creative alternatives.

Loss of moral cohesion, which leads the individual to mental and physical collapse (Dabbagh & Al-Zahraa, 2020, p. 24).

In light of the aforementioned consequences, some research has demonstrated that future worry is associated with certain traits that adversely impact the individual. Al-Mashyakh's study (2009) revealed that students at Taif University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exhibiting elevated future fear possess diminished self-efficacy and ambition levels. The study by Greaves-Lord et al., (2010) established the potential to forecast future anxiety in Dutch teenagers by identifying diminished psychological flexibility and self-reliance. It also determined that there are gender disparities in future fear among females. This conclusion is consistent with Karmiyan's study (2008).

Theories Explaining Future Anxiety:

Many theoretical frameworks have researched the topic of future anxiety, and among these explanations are:

Psychoanalytic theory: posits that early childhood experiences significantly influence personality development, with the ego serving to preserve the integrity of the self. Anxiety is a legitimate concern driven by the need for survival and self-preservation. Nonetheless, it may evolve into neurotic anxiety if the psychological construct is jeopardised, prompting the ego to intervene defensively. This defence manifests as repression, targeting ideas, while the psychological energy necessitates release. This release materialises as feelings of anxiety, stemming from the id's impulses—both the ego and the superego have sought to suppress—emerging within the realm of consciousness. Freud

concentrated on the concept of foreseeing future peril, which he described as a nebulous, unintelligible, and unwarranted worry, deeming it a source of neurotic anxiety (Omura, Maguire, Levett-Jones, & Stone, 2016).

Horney posited that an individual's anxiety regarding the future is merely a reaction to threats against fundamental aspects of the personality, with the environment and culture significantly exacerbating anxiety, particularly when they are fraught with complexities and contradictions that induce feelings of helplessness and inferiority. Conversely, Adler associated an individual's anxiety about the future with the life goals they establish. The more realistic the goals are, as opposed to being imaginative, the lesser the anxiety regarding the future, and vice versa. According to Young, anxiety is a response triggered when an individual's mind is infiltrated by irrational influences and fancies originating from the collective unconscious, which archives prior events (Marzouq, 2022, p. 113; Dabbagh & Al-Zahraa, 2020, p. 19; Muhammad, 2013, p. 354).

Behavioural theory: Advocates of this theory perceive all forms of worry as learnt behaviours acquired from one's surrounding environment. This phenomenon is recognised by behaviourists as classical conditioning, wherein a novel stimulus is linked to a pre-existing stimulus (the original stimulus) (Almigbali & Alkhawaja, 2021, p. 254), resulting in a conditioned response (anxiety). Typically, the stimuli do not elicit worry and panic; rather, anxiety reflects the individual's preparedness and prior experiences. Woolpy asserted that the person's worry is merely a classically conditioned reaction governed by the principles of learning (Dabbagh & Al-Zahraa, 2020, p. 20).

Humanistic Theory: This theory pertains to anxiety for the future, characterised as a concern of forthcoming occurrences that jeopardise one's professional existence. This results in the individual's fundamental needs remaining unmet (Marzouq, 2022, p. 115). Maslow identified the essential needs for an individual to adapt to both their environment and themselves, which include: biological or physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Obstruction of any of these needs results in an imbalance among the subsequent needs in the hierarchy, leading to concerns regarding the future, whether professional, academic, or economic (Oweida, 2015, p. 35).

Cognitive Theory: posits that anxiety arises from the intricate interplay among knowledge, emotion, and behaviour, which are inseparable. It asserts that both physical and psychological threats elicit anxiety, stemming from disorganised or distorted perceptions of reality. Within this framework, anxiety about the future manifests as a state of preoccupation, discomfort, and fear, predominantly characterised by cognitive elements rather than emotional ones. Cognitive mechanisms serve as the primary source of future-related anxiety, with the nature of thoughts forming a foundational premise for such anxiety. Consequently, knowledge precedes anxiety, and this cognitive representation is often accompanied by negative emotional states. Al-Fiqi (2013, p. 26).

Freud's explanation of future fear pertains to expectancy, indicating that individuals tend to generalise concern in analogous situations by anticipating the dangers that elicit their anxiety. In relation to humanistic theory, the future concern is associated with the goals that an individual establishes in life. The more pragmatic his aims are, devoid of fancies and illusions, the more he may alleviate anxiety regarding his future, and conversely. He also emphasised the significance of expectations that

influence his future motivation and affect behaviour. According to cognitive theory, future fear arises from the onset of conflicts, challenges, and crises in teenagers. This anxiety manifests during adolescence, a time characterised by recurrent crises, where the individual's incapacity to effectively address these challenges engenders apprehension for future difficulties.

Second: Assertiveness Behavior:

Psychologists have held varying perspectives on the adoption of assertive behaviour. American psychologist Salter (1949) was the first to scientifically elucidate this concept and its beneficial implications, describing it as a general personality trait, akin to introversion or extroversion, that some students possess, enabling them to exhibit assertiveness in diverse situations. The student may exhibit negativity and struggle to assert himself in many social contexts due to the absence of certain attributes in others. (Khalaf, 2012, p. 67)

Wolpe formulated his assertive theory, defining assertive behaviour as an individual's capacity to convey emotions in diverse contexts and among commonplace individuals (Abu Hammad, 2014, p. 133).

Types of assertive behavior and its classifications:

Lazarus characterised assertive behaviour in an individual through four responses: the capacity to refuse, fulfil necessary actions, articulate both good and negative emotions, and initiate or conclude conversations at will.

Al-Zuwawi & Bin Zayd (2020, p. 297) classified assertive behavior into: (1) Verbal assertive behavior: which is represented by acknowledging the validity of something, gratitude, directing appropriate criticism in some situations, and requesting an explanation for situations

in the event of a lack of understanding. (2) Non-verbal assertive behavior: which includes the internal aspect represented by (stomach cramps, high or low blood pressure, and increase and decrease in heart rate) and the external aspect represented by: (facial expressions, eye contact, and head nods).

Characteristics of assertive behavior:

The most important characteristics of assertive behavior collected by (Abu Hammad, 2014, p. 134) are:

Quality: This behavior includes a number of quality skills that share a number of elements, including: (the ability to express positive and negative feelings, defending private rights, taking the initiative in social communication, and rejecting what is unacceptable).

Defending private rights, and expressing thoughts and feelings explicitly without violating the rights of others.

Relative effectiveness: That is, it is not always effective, as sometimes assertive behavior brings trouble to the individual, as the extent of effectiveness depends on the criterion used to determine effectiveness.

Situational: That is, it is affected by the situations that the individual goes through and the characteristics of these situations, from individuals and the environment.

Learnable: Because it is an acquired behavior, learnable.

It includes verbal and non-verbal elements: Verbal includes expressing one's feelings and opinions in speech, while non-verbal includes moving the index finger in a warning position.

A prior study addressing assertiveness and its attributes is the research conducted by (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012), which sought to ascertain teachers' perceptions of their student's needs, the impact of fostering positive behaviour, and the methods employed by educators to cultivate assertive behaviour within the school environment. The study sample comprised 69 randomly selected male and female teachers. The study yielded several findings, the most significant of which is the efficacy of techniques that promote assertive behaviour among students in fostering positive behaviour.

The research conducted by Abbas (2015) sought to examine assertive behaviour in middle school female students and its correlation with social adaption in the school environment. A sample of 100 female middle school pupils was utilised. The study's results demonstrated a positive correlation between assertive behaviour and social and school adaptation behaviours within the research sample, indicating that an increase in assertive behaviour corresponds with enhanced school social adaptation (Abbas, 2015, p. 446). The study by Al-Zuwawi & Bin Zayd (2020, p. 288) intended to determine the signs of assertive behaviour among secondary school students in Misurata, Libya. The study sample comprised 260 male and female students, selected randomly using a stratified technique. The study's results indicated statistically significant differences in self-expression towards males between genders, with no differences observed in other aspects of assertive behaviour. Additionally, differences between sexes were noted based on specialisation (scientific and literary).

Theories explaining assertive behavior

Wolpe's Theory (Wolpe, 1979): Wolpe initially posited that assertive behaviour equated to aggressive behaviour; however, subsequent research in this domain led to a paradigm shift, redefining assertive behaviour as the capacity to appropriately articulate emotions towards others, excluding anxiety, as well as the individual's ability to assert themselves and their rights—a skill cultivated through training. It is not a stable characteristic of the individual, as he may exhibit assertiveness at certain times and non-assertiveness at others (Al-Qarni, 2020, p. 22). Wolpe posited in his thesis that human behaviour is marked by constant change, primarily influenced by two significant factors: development and learning. Consequently, when an individual articulates their feelings, this articulation manifests as socially acceptable behavioural representations. Wolpe asserted that assertive behaviour only reflects an individual's positive and negative emotions while defending rights in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of others (Wolpe, 1979, p. 565).

Lazarus's theory (Lazarus, 1966): Lazarus asserted that assertiveness is a learnt behaviour that can be cultivated, allowing individuals to articulate their thoughts and defend their rights when unfairly infringed upon. The individual's assertiveness fluctuates based on life circumstances (Ali & Al-Rubaie, 2018, p. 285). At times, it can be assertive, conveying positive actions and emotions such as acceptance, approval, interest, love, and admiration; while at other times, it may be negative, reflecting emotions that signify fear, anger, non-acceptance, and doubt (Hagi & Marakeshi, 2021, p. 20). Lazors delineated four components of assertiveness: the capacity to express both positive and negative emotions, the ability to oppose and reject, the capability to

request favours or undertake specific actions, and the proficiency to initiate, terminate, or sustain a conversation (Al-Qarni, 2020, p. 29).

Gestalt theory: A significant idea in Gestalt theory pertinent to assertiveness is the notion of aggression and defence. Perls thinks that aggression is not an instinct or energy, but rather a biological function. It is a mechanism employed by living organisms to interact with their surroundings to fulfil their needs and to overcome obstacles that impede this fulfilment. Consequently, the purpose of aggression is not annihilation or subversion, but rather the surmounting of opposition, with the opposing entity operating as effectively as possible (ElBarazi et al., 2024). Assertive training aligns with certain objectives of Gestalt therapy, including the acquisition of individual rights without encroaching upon the rights of others, articulating opinions without denigrating those of others, assuming responsibility for one's actions, whether beneficial or detrimental and confronting situations that necessitate individual engagement rather than avoidance. (Liu et al., 2019)

The correlation between affirmation and prospective anxiety

The study conducted by Al-Harbi and Al-Qasim (2013) sought to elucidate the correlation between future anxiety and self-assertion, as well as the potential to forecast future anxiety levels based on self-assertion. Additionally, it aimed to assess the impact of self-assertion, along with specialisation in its scientific and literary domains and academic performance, on future anxiety levels among a sample of 306 secondary school students from six schools in Medina. The findings revealed that secondary school pupils exhibit average levels of both future fear and self-assertion. The results demonstrated a statistically significant negative association between future anxiety and self-assertion, suggesting the potential to forecast future anxiety based on self-assertion

levels. It also suggested a statistically significant effect of self-assertion and specialisation on future anxiety levels, whereas no statistically significant relationship was found between achievement and future anxiety levels.

The study conducted by Al-Otaibi, Al-Harthi, and Jaber (2023) established that the anxiety level regarding the future among a sample of Umm Al-Qura University students was 62.33%, while the self-efficacy level was 69.87%. Furthermore, a statistically significant inverse relationship was identified between the dimensions of future anxiety and self-efficacy. The statistically substantial correlation between future anxiety and academic specialisation was notable, although the correlation between future anxiety and academic level was statistically insignificant. Al-Abbasi's study (2023) sought to elucidate the correlation between assertive behaviour and career anxiety in exceptional middle school pupils, as well as the degree to which career worry serves as a predictor of assertive behaviour in this demographic. The findings revealed that exceptional middle school pupils exhibit assertive behaviour and experience career anxiety, with a statistically significant correlation between the two factors. The study indicated no differences in the connection between the two variables based on gender (male and female) and aimed to determine the degree to which career worry predicts assertive behaviour among exceptional middle school pupils. A correlation between career anxiety and assertive behaviour was also identified.

The study conducted by ElBarazi et al., (2024) sought to determine the impact of training on self-assertion in alleviating anxiety, tension, and depression among university students. The study sample comprised fifty university students. The findings indicated that training in self-assertion diminishes anxiety, despair, and stress.

Study Hypotheses

There is a correlation between future anxiety and assertiveness in a sample of teenage female students in the State of Kuwait.

There are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the future anxiety scale attributed to nationality.

There are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the assertiveness scale attributed to nationality.

Assertiveness among students contributes to predicting future anxiety in the study sample.

Study Methodology and Procedures

First: Study Methodology

A particular methodology must be employed to examine the correlational links among the research variables and to characterise and analyse the phenomenon under investigation. The examination of each phenomenon relies on the existing reality and necessitates an accurate and comprehensive description, which entails quantitative assessment—providing numerical values that denote its magnitude or correlation with other phenomena—or qualitative characterisation, which involves detailing its attributes (Melhem, 2000, p. 32). Consequently, the present study employed the descriptive correlational method, as it is the most suitable approach for this research.

Second: Study Community

It encompasses all elements of the phenomenon relevant to the investigation. The community comprises all persons possessing data relevant to the issue under investigation. A comprehensive collection of individuals, objects, or categories that the researcher intends to examine (Daoud and Abdul Rahman, 1990, p. 66). The present study population comprises female students in grades nine to eleven attending schools in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate and the capital for the academic year 2023-2024.

Third: Study Sample

The sample comprised 400 female students from grades nine to eleven in Kuwaiti schools located in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate and the capital. A simple random approach was employed to choose 200 Kuwaiti female students and an equal number of non-Kuwaiti pupils, all aged between 14 and 16 years.

Fourth: Sample Selection Conditions

These controls and procedural conditions were as follows:

Excluding cases suffering from psychological problems, numbering (5 cases of students) who suffer from psychological problems such as anxiety, stress and depression.

Excluding cases who did not respond to the tests (20 cases who did not want to answer the tests).

After excluding all the previous cases, the study sample in its final form consisted of (400) female students from the State of Kuwait.

Fifth: Study Tools

In order to achieve the objectives of the current research, it was necessary to have scales that measure the variables studied in the research sample. After reviewing a number of scales that addressed the research variables, the following scales were adopted:

Measures of homogeneity and equivalency of the sample:

To assess homogeneity among the sample members, the graduated matrices test developed by Raven (1983) was utilised. This test comprises 60 matrices categorised into five groups, with each group containing 12 matrices arranged in order of difficulty, ranging from observational accuracy to public relations perception, which pertains to abstract cognitive dimensions. The matrix comprises a substantial shape from which a segment has been removed, and the examinee is required to identify the missing segment from among six or eight presented shapes. It is appropriate for those aged 6 to 60 years. Fatiha Abdel Raouf (2004) translated and standardised it in Kuwait, yielding good levels of stability and validity.

Methods for validating the study hypotheses:

The assertiveness behaviour scale: The scale developed by Hasnain (2021) was utilised to assess assertive behaviour, comprising 47 items with both positive and negative orientations, categorised into three domains: defending personal rights, positive interaction with others, and rejecting unreasonable demands. The response options were threefold: always, sometimes, and rarely.

Assessing the psychometric efficacy of the assertive behaviour scale, which encompassed the following stages:

Scale Stability:

Stability was assessed through two methods. The first involved re-application after a two-week interval on a sample of 40 female students, yielding a stability coefficient between 0.62 and 0.846. The second method employed the half-division technique, calculating the correlation coefficient between the two halves of the individual and paired scale, resulting in a stability coefficient ranging from 0.72 to 0.88. The subsequent table presents the stability coefficients.

Table (1): Reliability coefficients for the assertive behavior scale (n=30)

Stability Tests	Re-application	Half division
Defending personal rights	0.86	0.88
Positive interaction with others	0.71	0.81
Reject unreasonable demands	0.63	0.72
Total score on the scale	0.75	0.72

Validity of the Scale:

The criterion validity was assessed by computing the correlation coefficient between the survey sample's scores on the assertive behaviour scale utilised in this study and their scores on the assertive behaviour scale developed by Kazim (2018). The criteria validity for the scale dimensions ranged from 0.54 to 0.61.

Future Anxiety Scale developed by Shuqair in 2005: The scale seeks to ascertain the individual's personal perspective on the future, utilising a graduated continuum from strongly disagree (no) to disagree sometimes (a little), to a moderate degree, generally (a lot), and always

(totally). Five degrees are assigned to these paragraphs, rated 4-3-2-1-0 when the orientation of the items towards future worry is negative and rated 0-1-2-3-4 when the orientation is positive. A high score on the scale signifies elevated future anxiety in the individual. The scale comprises 28 paragraphs allocated over five axes as detailed below:

Anxiety related to life problems, including vocabulary numbers 17-4-20-21-22-24.

Health anxiety and death anxiety, including vocabulary numbers 10-18-19-25-26.

Mental anxiety, including vocabulary numbers 3-6-11-13-14-23-28.

Despair in the future, including vocabulary numbers 7-8-9-12-16.

Fear and anxiety about failure in the future, including vocabulary numbers 1-2-5-15-27.

Thus, the total score of the scale ranges between (0-112) and the levels are determined according to the following:

Very high future anxiety from (91-112), high future anxiety from (60-90), medium future anxiety from (67-45), simple future anxiety from (22-44) 28, and low future anxiety from (0-25).

Calculating the psychometric efficiency of the Future Anxiety Scale, this stage included the following:

Scale Stability:

Scale stability was assessed through two methods. The first involved re-application, with an interval of approximately two weeks between the initial and subsequent assessments, conducted on a sample of 40 female students. The stability coefficient varied from 0.78 to 0.91. The second method utilised the half-division technique, measuring the

correlation coefficient between the two halves of the individual and paired scale, resulting in a stability coefficient ranging from 0.74 to 0.89. The subsequent table presents the stability coefficients.

Table (2): Reliability coefficients for the future anxiety scale (n=30)

Stability Tests	Re-application	Half division
Anxiety about life problems	0.91	0.88
Health anxiety and death anxiety	0.78	0.77
Mental anxiety	0.80	0.89
Despair in the future	0.85	0.82
Fear and anxiety of failure	0.81	0.79
Total score on the scale	0.79	0.74

Validity of the Scale:

The criterion validity was assessed by computing the correlation coefficient between the survey sample's scores on the assertive behaviour scale utilised in this study and their scores on the future anxiety scale developed by "Farghali" (2019). The criteria validity for the scale dimensions ranged from 0.54 to 0.61.

Study Implementation Procedures:

To validate the hypotheses, several procedures were executed, including the preparation of measurement instruments, and the stabilisation and adjustment of certain variables, followed by a survey study conducted on a sample mirroring the original study's specifications to ascertain its applicability. The primary study was subsequently executed.

The application procedures for the basic sample went through several successive stages, which were:

Approval was obtained for the field application from the Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait for the application.

The sample was selected in a simple random way.

The basic sample of 400 female students was determined, some variables were adjusted and fixed, and the degree of equivalence between the case and comparison groups was identified, as the Progressive Matrices Scale was applied, in order to determine the intelligence level of the sample and create equivalence between them, then the basic sample was selected, to which the Future Anxiety and Affirmation Scale was applied, and it is noted that the application procedures took a month.

Statistical methods used in data analysis:

To verify the validity of the study hypotheses, some statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) known as the (S.P.S.S). The following statistical methods and techniques were used:

Mean, standard deviation.

Pearson's straight-line correlation coefficient.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

"T. test" to identify the significance of differences between groups

Stepwise regression coefficient.

Study results and discussion:

Hypothesis 1: "There is a correlation between future anxiety and assertiveness in a sample of teenage female students in the State of Kuwait".

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used, and the results of this hypothesis were as follows:

Table (3): Correlation coefficients between future anxiety and assertiveness.

Components of future anxiety	Affirmative Components			
	Defending personal rights	Positive interaction with others	Reject unreasonable demands	Total score
Anxiety about life problems	**0.730-	**0.504-	**0.385-	**0.545-
Health anxiety and death anxiety	**0.421-	**0.465-	**0.432-	**0.441-
Mental anxiety	**0.544-	**0.520-	*0.321-	**0.360-
Despair in the future	**0.482-	**0.671-	**0.560-	**0.331-
Fear and anxiety of future failure	**0.343-	0.219-	**0.352-	**0.370-
Total score on the scale	**0.471-	**0.450-	**0.481-	**0.510-

* Significant at 0.05 level

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table (3) shows that there is a significant negative relationship between the components of future anxiety and the dimensions of assertiveness at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

This outcome aligns with the findings of the study by Al-Harbi and Al-Qasim (2013), which demonstrated a statistically significant negative association between future fear and self-affirmation. This outcome aligns with Farag's (1998) argument that anxiety correlates with diminished assertiveness. It is anticipated that an increase in the individual's assertion will result in a decrease in anxiety levels. In this context, the findings of this hypothesis align with the research conducted by ElBarazi et al. (2024), which established a significant correlation between self-affirmation training and anxiety reduction. The outcome of this hypothesis can be elucidated from a cognitive and human perspective, indicating that future anxiety primarily stems from an individual's negative beliefs, unreasonable expectations, and an exaggerated perception of potential scenarios. As a result, this produces an increase in bad behaviours. Furthermore, these adverse thoughts may arise from the individual's apprehension regarding his existence, continuity, and self-affirmation, as well as from his perception of impending events as a threat to his quest for self-realization and existence.

Therefore, the most effective approach to comprehending future anxiety is to accurately interpret the underlying causes, which aids in mitigating future anxiety and maintaining it within its natural confines. This can be achieved through techniques that modify negative thoughts, enabling the individual to adopt a more positive and realistic perspective, while recognising their capabilities and potential to confront the pressures and daily challenges they encounter.

Future anxiety manifests in individuals through negative and irrational thoughts regarding their future, diminished self-assertion, and avoidant behaviour, leading to a tendency to evade confrontation and challenges, which adversely affect their personal, social, and professional lives. Furthermore, assertive behaviour exhibits an inverse correlation with nervousness and shyness (ElShrafy, 2013).

Hypothesis 2: "There are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the Future Anxiety Scale attributed to nationality".

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a "t" test was calculated to identify the significance of the differences between the average scores of the two samples, and the results are shown in the following table:

Table (4): Significance of differences between the average scores of female students (Kuwaiti/non-Kuwaiti) on the future anxiety scale.

Subscales of Future Anxiety	Kuwaiti women (n=200)		Non-Kuwaiti (n=200)		T-Value
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Anxiety about life problems	13..03	2.95	21.27	2.55	10.70**
Health anxiety and death anxiety	16..29	3.47	10.25	1.99	4.51**
Mental anxiety	27.23	4.38	18.03	7.76	12.23**
Despair in the future	17.20	2.71	16.89	2.99	0.531
Fear and anxiety of future failure	12.52	2.63	13.23	2.10	0.910
Total score on the scale	69.87	5.89	76.32	4.39	3.98**

** Significant at (0.01) level

* Significant at (0.05) level

The aforementioned results suggest that the second hypothesis is largely substantiated, as significant disparities were observed in the average future anxiety scores between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women. Non-Kuwaiti women exhibited higher average scores concerning anxiety related to life problems, with a t-value of 10.70, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Conversely, the differences favoured Kuwaiti women in health anxiety, death anxiety, mental anxiety, and the overall scale score, with t-values of 4.51, 12.23, and 3.98 all of which are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. No differences were identified between the two samples for future despair, fear, and anxiety of failure.

The elevated anxiety experienced by non-Kuwaiti girls regarding life challenges can be elucidated by their potentially pessimistic worldview, which influences their cognition and hampers their capacity to address life's difficulties. It also impacts their focus and instils uncertainty over certain personal competencies. This is typical considering the difficulties that students endure in life. Their pessimistic perspective on the future is often linked to intrusive thoughts that may be erroneous beliefs, such as the conviction that new opportunities are unattainable and that adverse circumstances cannot be relinquished or evaded, potentially resulting in diminished performance levels. This outcome aligns with the research conducted by Al-Sabaawi (2008) and Ahmed (2001).

The non-Kuwaiti female student exhibits a limited capacity to withstand challenging situations and adversities due to her living conditions and the prevailing economic hardships, which heighten her anxiety about the future and its varied dimensions. Shalhoub, 2016 The

elevated levels of health anxiety, death anxiety, mental anxiety, and the overall scale score among Kuwaiti women can be elucidated by the correlation of their personality traits with their independence, lifestyle, decision-making capabilities, and organisational control.

Moreover, the elevated expectations that parents hold for their daughters often instigate considerable fear and confusion, prompting the female student to worry excessively about her future, thereby exacerbating her anxiety regarding it. The characteristics of the study sample present a dilemma for the female student, instigating anxiety and trepidation regarding her academic and professional prospects. Consequently, various internal conflicts arise as she grapples with divergent ideas and aspirations, influenced by her potential, cognitive capabilities, and psychological preparedness, ultimately rendering her susceptible to the adverse effects of future anxiety.

The elevated overall score on the future anxiety scale within the Kuwaiti sample is ascribed to various factors, including the swift advancement and progress of the contemporary era, which engenders apprehension about the future among female students and their inability to adapt to modern developments; this exacerbates their mental stress and intensifies feelings of tension and fear regarding future changes. Accelerated social transformations engender feelings of distrust and apprehension over the future in individuals, as well as an inability to adapt to social and technological advancements. This may be attributed to the familial upbringing of the study sample, as certain families tend to emphasise their daughters' futures negatively, fostering excessive concern that subsequently leads to future anxiety in the female students.

The lack of differences between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women concerning despair about the future and anxiety regarding potential failure may stem from the shared physiological, psychological, and emotional characteristics experienced by both groups. The adolescent phase is inherently anxiety-inducing for parents, the adolescents themselves, and educational institutions due to the psychological, social, emotional, and affective transformations that occur. These transformations are universal among all students and can result in heightened tension for female students, fostering apprehension about their academic, professional, and social futures, thereby increasing anxiety levels irrespective of their specialisations or nationalities.

Hypothesis 3: "There are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample on the assertiveness scale attributed to nationality".

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a "t" test was calculated to identify the significance of the differences between the average scores of the two samples, and the results are shown in the following table:

Table (5): Significance of differences between the average scores of female students (Kuwaiti/non-Kuwaiti) on the assertiveness scale.

Assertiveness subscales	Kuwaiti women (n=200)		Non-Kuwaiti (n=200)		T-Value
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Defending personal rights	28.82	6.29	18.72	8.06	13.95**
Positive interaction with others	25.41	7.84	38.68	7.70	17.07**
Reject unreasonable demands	18.22	5.50	40.55	4.06	46.02**
Total score	74.48	9.21	85.59	11.21	4.30**

** Significant at (0.01) level

Table (5) indicates that the third hypothesis was confirmed, revealing statistically significant differences between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women in overall assertiveness and its dimensions. Specifically, the differences in defending personal rights favoured Kuwaiti women, whereas significant differences in positive interaction with others, rejection of illogical demands, and the overall assertiveness scale favoured non-Kuwaiti women.

Concerning the orientation of disparities in pleasant interactions with others, the rejection of irrational demands, and the overall level of assertiveness towards non-Kuwaiti women. This outcome aligns with reality, as typical, compatible behaviour is exemplified by an individual living their life and comprehending the significance of that existence through an awareness of their potential and abilities while being free to pursue their desires in a manner congruent with their capabilities (Al-Shanawi and Shalabi, 2010). Assertion encompasses effective communication, which extends beyond the mere selection of appropriate words; it involves tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expressions, body language, and gestures, all of which contribute to the intended message. The absence of these elements may result in distorted communication (Bishop, 2010).

This outcome is also ascribed to the reality that non-Kuwaiti adolescents harbour more substantial aspirations and elevated ambitions, perpetually seeking avenues to harness their potential. Consequently, they exhibit persistent anxiety regarding their post-graduation prospects and the means to secure appropriate employment. The insufficiency and inability to fulfil their needs render non-Kuwaiti adolescents perceiving

their circumstances as precarious, awaiting potential resolutions that may ensure their reintegration. The divergence in the defence of personal rights among Kuwaitis is attributable to the attributes exhibited by Kuwaiti women at that age, characterised by enthusiasm, audacity, and autonomy. This period is marked by a propensity for self-affirmation, contemplation of life and future prospects, education, and marriage, alongside heightened anxiety regarding these aspects (Bani Younis, 2004, p. 123).

This outcome aligns with Yong's (2010) assertion that self-affirming individuals can articulate their emotions, advocate for their objectives, and cultivate satisfactory personal relationships; regarding knowledge and influence, these individuals can manage both positive and negative emotions effectively. Certain researchers have discovered that self-affirming persons possess intrinsic abilities to manage adversities. Such individuals can restore their self-affirmation following traumatic experiences.

Research indicates that individuals exhibiting high assertiveness can consistently alleviate their tensions and address conflicts through assertive strategies, such as protesting, requesting behavioural modifications, reprimanding, or notifying others of unacceptable actions. Conversely, individuals lacking self-assurance often suppress their reactions, emotions, and tensions until they accumulate, potentially resulting in physical violence, either consciously or unconsciously (Frag, 1998, p. 27).

Hypothesis 4: "The components of assertiveness contribute to predicting future anxiety in the study sample".

Table (6): Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis of the components of assertiveness among female students in predicting future anxiety

Predictors	B-factor	R2	F	Beta	T-Value	
Positive interaction with others	0.852	0.67	805.11**	0.819	28.37**	
Constant	56.15					
Defending personal rights	0.771	0.68	**417.08	0.741	19.89**	
Reject unreasonable demands	0.151			0.121		3.25**
Constant	63.36					
Positive interaction with others	0.732	0.69	282.92**	0.703	17.32**	
Defending personal rights	0.144			0.116		3.12**
Reject unreasonable demands	0.109			0.076		2.23*
Constant	66.88					

** Functional at 0.01level

* Functional at 0.05 level

The data from the preceding table yields the subsequent results and implications:

The preceding table clearly demonstrates a statistically significant impact of positive interactions with others on forecasting future anxiety within the study group, indicating this variable's predictive capacity about future anxiety.

Additionally, the defence of personal rights and the rejection of illogical demands collectively predict future anxiety, accounting for 68% of the total variance in future anxiety scores. This substantial variance indicates their predictive capacity regarding future anxiety performance within the sample.

Furthermore, the combined influence of positive interactions with others, the assertion of personal rights, and the rejection of illogical demands on predicting future anxiety are substantial, effective, and statistically significant. Collectively, these factors account for 69% of the total variance in future anxiety scores, demonstrating a considerable explanatory power of these three dimensions of assertiveness in forecasting future anxiety among the female students in the study sample.

The capacity of assertiveness components in the sample to forecast future anxiety is evidenced by findings from the studies conducted by Al-Harbi and Al-Qasim (2013) and Al-Abbasi (2023), which suggest that self-assertion can predict future anxiety. Consequently, future anxiety may stem from irrational thought processes, apprehension regarding anticipated adverse events, and feelings of confusion, distress, and ambiguity, coupled with a pessimistic outlook on life, which in turn may lead to a decrease in self-assertion (Abdel Mohsen, 2007, p. 120). This interpretation aligns with Beck's perspective, which posits that future anxiety stems from erroneous beliefs within the individual, leading to misinterpretations of reality, situations, events, and interactions. This misperception induces a state of fear and pervasive anxiety, resulting in a loss of control over emotions and rational thought (El-Nagar & Elhebshe, 2015).

Shalhoub (2016) recognises a marked escalation in anxiety regarding future events, correlating with the intensity of pressures and challenges confronting this demographic, alongside a decrease in assertiveness. Consequently, anxiety surpasses the capacity of youth to envision the future, which becomes overshadowed by negativity and trepidation. The repercussions of contemporary changes have permeated every facet of life that underpins the foundation upon which young individuals rely to construct their future, encompassing economic, social,

familial, educational, and occupational dimensions. Assertiveness aids in forecasting future anxiety symptoms, as a typical adolescent can articulate themselves in socially acceptable manners, particularly during the onset of adolescence. Research indicates that assertiveness training effectively enhances social coping skills and diminishes anxiety in the majority of adolescents. (A.Rezan & Mustafa, 2023)

The forecast of confirmatory identification of future anxiety levels may be elucidated by the traits of adolescence, which encompass adolescent girls' vigorous assertion of their rights, their efforts to acclimatise to pressures and anxiety, and their responsiveness to the needs of others while maintaining their own interests and principles (Bishop, 2010).

Recommendations:

Based on what was stated in the theoretical framework and the results of the studies, and what the results of this study resulted in, the following recommendations can be presented:

Preparing activities, trainings, lectures, seminars and workshops that help develop self-assertion and skills to reduce future anxiety among female students.

Working to instill psychological and social concepts through the teaching process, leads to developing self-assertion among female students.

Providing guidance and educational programs to develop self-assertion and provide them with the abilities and skills to deal with and understand their behaviors, tendencies and interests, and recommend and guide them.

Including curricula and social and societal topics through which female students discover the skills necessary for good social interaction, good treatment of others and behavior in different social situations.

Conducting a study to reduce future anxiety among other categories of students.

Focusing on the role of self-assertion in helping students face various problems.

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