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An investigation of the attitudes,  
perceptions, knowledge, and  
understandings of school counselors  
in Saudi Arabia

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## ABSTRACT

**INTRODUCTION:** The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education established the 'General Directorate of Guidance and Counseling' in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia) in 1981. In 2003 approximately 4,000 school-based counsellors were working in schools in Saudi Arabia. Student counselling programmes in Saudi schools cover the areas of preventative, educational, vocational, and religious and moral counselling. Although school-based counselling is well established in Saudi Arabia there are very few studies researching school-based counselling in Saudi schools that have been identified in the literature. There is evidence to show that school-based counsellors face numerous problems in practice.

**RESEARCH QUESTION:** The main research question for the research study is '*What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of school counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?*'

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of the study were: (1) to investigate the personal views and opinions of school counsellors working in boys' secondary schools in the research city; (2) to investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of school counselling which school counsellors have; (3) to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that school counsellors bring to/have developed through their work; and (4) to investigate any cultural impacts and influences on school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

**METHODS:** Four qualitative research methods were employed for the research study. These were: (1) a qualitative review of the literature; (2) a qualitative autobiography; (3) keeping a qualitative research journal; and (4) qualitative semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with twenty-four (n=24) male school-based counsellors working in secondary boys' schools located in the research city. The interview transcripts were coded and qualitative Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was carried out in order to identify themes from the qualitative data.

**RESULTS:** The TCA drew out six themes from the data obtained that related to stakeholders (i.e. students, parents, teachers, head teachers) within the school environment. These were: (1) negative stakeholder behavioural attitudes towards school counsellors; (2) negative stakeholder perceptions towards school counsellors; (3) a general lack of knowledge of modern school counselling practices demonstrated by the school-based counsellors; (4) dissension between school-based counsellors and other stakeholders regarding their role; (5) cultural and religious influences on Western models of school counselling; and (6) a general lack of support within and beyond the school community.

**CONCLUSION:** A broad range of significant problems for school-based counsellors were identified in the study. These problems significantly limit the ability of school-based counsellors to deliver effective and useful school counselling services. There exists a clear and pressing need to address these problems and deficiencies in order for school-based counsellors to be able to carry out their role within the school environment.

**KEY WORDS:** Middle East; Saudi Arabia; School-based counselling; school-based counsellors; school counselling programmes; mental health; mental health counselling; Western models of school counselling.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **AN INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING**

Over 80% of students who receive school counselling have been reported to show, as a direct result of the counselling they received, substantial improvements with the majority of the students also revealing that the counselling they received improved their self-esteem and confidence and making them feel better in (Sherry, 1999; Rupani et al., 2012). Ryan (2007) and Jefferies et al. (2008) have also argued that the improvements in the achievements noted in adolescent students can be credited to a counselling intervention in three main areas, namely academic achievement, personal development achievement and social and life skills achievement. According to Kovacs (1997), when children, in particular young people at school do not receive adequate responses to managing stress, they can experience a variety of learning-related challenges which range from unsatisfactory academic performance to anxiety and conduct problems.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) commissioned a systemic scoping review on the research evidence on counselling children and young people in the United Kingdom (UK). The research methodology employed by the researchers used a structured, hierarchical, systematic approach to undertaking a search and review of the research literature. The inclusion criteria that were used defined a range of issues relevant to counselling in children and young people (CYP). They included behavioural problems and conduct disorders; emotional problems (e.g. anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress); medical illness; school-related issues; self-harm by CYP; and sexual abuse (Pattison and Harris, 2006).

Furthermore, the study incorporated four groups of counselling approaches: (1) cognitive-behavioural; (2) psychoanalytic; (3) humanistic; and (4) creative therapies (Pattison and Harris, 2006). The study explored research evidence for the effectiveness of counselling for CYP (Pattison and Harris, 2006). After an extensive search of the research evidence for school-based counselling, the results of the review found that counselling was "a positive, useful and effective intervention across the full range of issues presented by children and young people" (Pattison and Harris, 2006, p.235). The study also found there to be a greater body of evidence supporting the use of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which indicated it might be particularly effective for older children and adolescents (Pattison and Harris, 2006).

The literature has highlighted a broad range of contemporary concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of CYP in schools (Pybis *et al.*, 2012; Rupani *et al.*, 2012; Cooper,

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2013; BACP, 2015; Teens in Crisis, 2017). In light of such evidence, the use of school-based counselling in schools will be examined in order to identify how it can help reinforce the mental health and wellbeing of CYP in schools. Mcleod (2013, p.3) notes that:

A counsellor is someone who does his or her best to listen to you and work with you to find the best ways to understand and resolve your problem. Counsellors do not diagnose or label people, but instead do their best work within whatever framework of understanding makes sense for each client.

In many countries around the globe, the physical and mental health and welfare of children and young people in schools is perceived to be a matter of real importance. It matters a lot. Children and young people are our future and we need to take their needs and their educational experience seriously. In the United Kingdom (UK) the Department for Education (2015) has noted that although mental health issues are now common (e.g. up to 10% of 5 to 15 year old pupils experience them), young people do not always get the assistance that they need as quickly as they should. The Department for Education (2015) notes that this is an area of concern, as issues such as anxiety, depression, low mood, conduct and eating disorders can significantly impact not only their happiness, but also their future life chances.

Protecting children and identifying their needs has been an area that the government in the UK has committed itself to. In a UK government Green Paper entitled "Every Child Matters", the government set out a consultation on children and young people (CYP) and how to keep them safe whilst also providing them with opportunities. The Green Paper noted that truancy in schools was still a persistent problem, the educational achievement of children in care remained low, and there was still a high number of children who were the victims of crime (TSO, 2003). The government noted that:

Our aim is to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential by reducing levels of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour among children and young people (TSO, 2003, p.6).

The outcomes that the government wished to achieve for CYP including: (1) being healthy (i.e. enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle); (2) staying safe (i.e. protected from harm and neglect); (3) enjoying and achieving (i.e. developing skills for adulthood and getting the most out of life); (4) making a positive contribution (i.e. more involved with community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offensive behaviour); and (5) economic well-being (i.e. not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving full potential in life) (TSO, 2003).

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Consequently, the Department for Education (2015) believes that schools, together with health, community and voluntary services, can play a vital role in supporting good mental health, and also in preventing and identifying mental health issues in children and young people. They argue that schools should ensure that sufficient importance is given to pupils' wellbeing, and to supporting pupils with the problems they face (Department for Education, 2015). The Department for Education (2015, p.6) notes that schools "increasingly play a valuable role in early intervention and support for mental health issues, in particular through growing use of school based counsellors."

At the same time it should be noted that school-based counselling is not at present mandatory for schools, so there are a lot of expectations on schools to provide such services, but the government has not committed itself to providing school counsellors for all schools. This makes the position unclear in the UK and therefore one that is still in a state of development. In contrast, a report on developing school counselling services for children and young people in Wales commissioned by NFER Wales concluded that there was a significant need for counselling services for children and young people, owing to increased mental health issues (Phillips and Smith, 2011).

Some issues identified included family-related matters, bullying, behavioural issues, and emotional problems, depression, self-harm and suicide (Phillips and Smith, 2011). The report noted that these issues needed to be addressed early on, because they could otherwise lead to negative experiences in the class such as underperformance, reduced motivation to attend school, reduced attendance, and overall impeded academic attainment (Phillips and Smith, 2011). In Wales it has been noted that the development of counselling in schools has been underpinned by the Welsh government's commitment to implementing a rights-based approach to the planning and delivery of services for children and young people (Phillips and Smith, 2011).

Counselling in schools was a feature of Everybody's Business (2001), which set out the framework for improving child and adolescent mental health services in Wales (Phillips and Smith, 2011). In addition, it was the Strategy for School-Based Counselling in Wales (2008) that set out the access to formal counselling should CYP need it in Wales (Phillips and Smith, 2011). The principle objective of the Strategy was to make it easier and acceptable for CYP to ask for help when they are upset, worried, confused or afraid (Phillips and Smith, 2011).

Counselling is a form of mental health intervention that may be useful for children or young people if they would like to explore, understand and overcome issues that may be causing them difficulty in their lives (Department for Education, 2015). The Department for Education (2015, p.16) sets out the aims of counselling in schools:

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The aims of counselling are to assist the child or young person to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to their world, to create a greater awareness and utilisation of their personal resources, to build their resilience, and to support their ability to address problems and pursue personally meaningful goals.

This chapter establishes a warrant for this thesis and argues that school-based school counselling is important for schools around the world. Particular emphasis is given to clarifying why I decided to carry out this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research study into school counselling practices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia). The study will highlight that school counselling practices in certain schools in Saudi Arabia are currently ineffective and need to be significantly improved if schools are to fully benefit from counselling services.

This research study is concerned with school counselling, and therefore this introduction chapter will provide an overview of what school counselling is and how it has developed around the world. Any reference to school counselling in this research study refers to the counselling of children and young people in schools, and not to the counselling of students in colleges or universities. The chapter will also introduce the reader to the Saudi Arabian context, where the research was undertaken.

In the following section, a brief literature review will analyse school counselling practices in more depth and set out the theoretical framework for the research study, and the research question the study aims to answer. Finally, the chapter will provide my personal positioning in relation to this research study. Because this research study uses a qualitative research methodology, and because I have a long history of being a school counsellor, I think it is essential for me to provide detailed information about who I am, why I undertook this research study, and my personal position in relation to this research study (Berger, 2013).

Young children and adolescents often need support, and counselling students in schools can often be very helpful to students as regards their emotional, vocational, and academic development (Bor *et al.*, 2002; Dimmitt, Carey, and Hatch, 2007; Cooper, 2013; Harris, 2013; Squier, Nailor and Carey, 2014). In some countries there is a long history of counselling in schools and school counsellors are regarded as health professionals acting within the context of the school environment (Harris, 2013). School counselling was introduced in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, and is practiced widely in schools all across Saudi Arabia.



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However, it has sometimes been my personal experience that school counselling is often not taken seriously by teachers, head teachers, and parents in parts of Saudi Arabia, and school counsellors are not able to provide effective school counselling services to students (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). The aim of this research study was therefore to explore the experiences of other school counsellors in Saudi Arabia, in order to compare them to my own experiences, and to try to identify what constitutes school counselling practices in certain schools in Saudi Arabia.

I wanted to research and explore whether my experience was typical of other school counsellors working in school settings, and to understand how they experienced and made sense of their role as a counsellor in school. There have been comparatively few research studies carried out on school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia and this research study aimed to fill a gap in the existing literature. As will be seen, the literature demonstrates that the counselling of children and young people in schools can have significant positive benefits. The role of the student counsellor varies by country as outlined in the following paragraph.

#### **Duties of student counsellors in Saudi Arabia**

The schools do not have written projects, responsibilities and duties of the counsellors. There were no rooms for counselling in the schools. Very loose coordination was found among the teachers, principals and counselling projects. Several recommendations were also made. (Alemu, 2013). As pointed out by Alhossaini (2013), apart from being one of the most demanding careers when compared with other professions in education, the role of the school counsellor is also complex. It involves interaction with students from diverse cultural, economic and social backgrounds. In Saudi Arabia, the duties of the student counsellor include monitoring students as they enter the school to establish reasons for unexpected behaviour among students. Student counsellors take note of issues like signs of loneliness and late attendance to school to facilitate investigations.

During office hours, student counsellors attend to any other cases brought by students and teachers that require counselling. Other duties of student counsellors include planning for the year and participating in school events as they occur during the year. When there are no activities to attend, student counsellors usually sit in the office waiting to attend to student needs. In addition to interacting and monitoring students, student counsellors write reports on student unusual behaviour and contact pupils' parents to establish reasons for lateness and absence.

Unlike in the United Kingdom and Europe where student counsellors are fully trained and qualified for their roles, Student counsellors in Saudi Arabia may be trained in other

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Subject areas and still perform counselling duties. In the United Kingdom, student counsellors have a specified budget for their activities whereas in Saudi Arabia there is no specified financial budget allocated for student counselling. In addition, practising student counselling in Saudi Arabia does not require one to hold a licence while student counsellors have to undergo some assessments and get their licences renewed every year in Western countries.

However, much of the literature covering school counselling practices has been developed in Western countries and there are few research studies that have investigated school counselling in Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, where the Islamic religion is practiced in all schools. There are also different cultural influences in Saudi Arabia that I am interested in understanding and elucidating with reference to the school setting. I will now make explicit the research question I sought to answer by carrying out this research.

The main research question for this PhD research study is:

***'What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?'***

There are several reasons why this research study is relevant and will significantly further and advance knowledge and understanding of this field.

Firstly, there is very little published research that has been carried out on the practice of school counselling in Saudi Arabia, and the research that has is either very limited or dated. Most of the academic literature that exists has also been carried out in Western countries such as the UK and the US, or internationally (Harris, 2013). There was some preliminary investigation into peer counselling when it was first developing in Saudi Arabia over 15 years ago (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999). Another early research study investigated students' perceptions of academic counselling at a higher education establishment, namely King Saud University (Al-Mannie, 1989). Another leading research conducted research into counselling and guidance in Saudi Arabia (Saleh, 1987). However, that research study was carried out nearly 30 years ago.

Since then there have only been a few research articles that have covered this area:

- (a) Al-Ghamdi and Riddick (2011) investigated principals' perceptions of the role of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia;
- (b) Moosa and Abi Haidar (2013) researched and discussed the automation of counselling and career services using Information Technology (IT) in Saudi Arabian higher education institutes; and

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- (c) Al-Ghamdi (2015) investigated the counsellor's role in private girls' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia.

There have also been some unpublished research theses (i.e. Masters or PhD theses) relevant to the area, including:

- (a) the perceptions of the role of secondary school counsellors (Al-Ghamdi, 1999); and
- (b) the perceptions of the actual and ideal role of school counsellors (Al-Ghamdi, 2010).

These articles and theses show that there is increasing interest in researching school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, and this research study seeks to add to the development of the literature in this area. As can be seen, Al-Ghamdi is one of the few people that have researched this area, and the majority of the research has focused on female in schools in Saudi Arabia.

Secondly, this research would advance the general understanding of school counselling in Saudi Arabia by:

- (a) providing practical and critical insights into how male school counsellors work in Saudi Arabia;
- (b) providing detailed information and a critical analysis of male school counsellors meaning making in terms of their professional role and responsibilities in Saudi secondary schools; and
- (c) providing detailed information and critical analysis about what difficulties, obstacles, and problems male school counsellors in Saudi schools face.

The PhD thesis is organised into six chapters. I will now provide an overview of the remaining chapters before introducing the reader to the practice of school counselling in Saudi Arabia.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The second chapter will provide a review of the literature covering a number of key areas. These include providing the reader with key definitions, an overview of key debates in the field of school counselling around the world, school counselling in the Middle East, and school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia. It will also cover cultural influences and Saudi *Shari'ah* religious perspectives, as well as the ways in which gender may affect school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design**

The third chapter illuminates my personal positioning as a practitioner and researcher I also provide a background narrative relating to my personal historical experiences in school counselling, and an autobiography that highlights my experiences with students and other school counsellors. This has implications for my choice of research methodology, and in returning to the research question, I consider and explain my choice of research methods, and provide a detailed explanation of how the research instruments were developed, piloted, and the steps taken to ensure that the research met the rigorous standards required of a doctoral thesis at all stages. I will also provide a comprehensive analysis of ethical issues involved in the research study, and finally an overview of how the thematic content analysis was conducted using NVivo qualitative coding.

### **Chapter 4: Research Findings**

The fourth chapter will set out the research findings. This chapter will include a summary of the respondents' views on school counselling, and focus on the six themes that emerged from the interview data following a thematic content analysis of the interview transcripts. The themes include:

- (1) negative stakeholder behavioural attitudes towards school counsellors;
- (2) negative stakeholder perceptions towards school counsellors;
- (3) general lack of knowledge of modern school counselling practices;
- (4) dissension between school counsellors and other stakeholders regarding their role;
- (5) cultural and religious influences on Western models of school counselling; and
- (6) lack of support within and beyond the school community.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

The fifth chapter will set out my interpretation of the research findings and provide a critical discussion of the research findings with reference to key themes identified in the literature review in chapter two. It will also set out a number of recommendations for the future development of school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia based on the research findings.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

The sixth chapter will set out the conclusions of the research study. It will also identify some limitations and draw upon these limitations to recommend future research to investigate school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia in more depth.

### **DEFINING SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

School-based school counselling is a practice that is increasingly being used around the world (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2011; Harris, 2013; McLaughlin and Holliday, 2013). A recent study of school-based counselling services for children and young people in 90 countries uncovered many interesting findings (Harris, 2013). The study found that school-based counselling was mandatory in 32 American states, one Australian state, three German states, two UK countries and three Canadian provinces (Harris, 2013). The study estimated that school-based counselling was well established in 62 countries and was starting to develop in another seven countries across the globe.

Most of the countries researched offered counselling services to children and young people (ages 5-18), although counselling was also required at the kindergarten level in 24 states in the US (Harris, 2013). This showed that counselling services were often provided from a very early age in US schools. Although in practice counselling students can take many different forms, it essentially consists of providing psychological, emotional, behavioural, and support to students in schools in order to support their engagement in learning, and ultimately, their quality of life.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has defined school counselling in the UK as:

a professional activity delivered by qualified practitioners in schools. Counsellors offer troubled and/or distressed children and young people an opportunity to talk about their difficulties, within a relationship of agreed confidentiality (Cooper, 2013, p.3).

In practice school-based counselling has been broadly referred to as:

a range of activities, which includes listening and other support for children and young people by a qualified counsellor. In this strategy we make a clear distinction between formal counselling and using counselling skills: Formal Counselling is undertaken by a professional, appropriately qualified counsellor acting in his or her specialist role and in accordance with a recognised code of

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ethics that requires confidentiality, accountability, supervision and continuing professional development.

Counselling skills are used by many people who work with children and young people in a specific role such as teachers, school nurses, youth workers and social workers. These skills include listening in a non-judgmental way, being empathic and helping people to feel valued and understood. The role and responsibilities of the individual professional will determine the boundaries of their working practice (Welsh Government, 2008, p.8).

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) (2014, p.5) have described what they believe counselling to be:

Counselling may or may not direct a particular action, it may offer useful strategies for coping with difficulties they are experiencing, it may explore and offer support to children and young people during difficult experiences such as family breakdown, bereavement, relationship difficulties, anxiety, bullying, emotional and behavioural difficulties and helps to enable them to make their own choices and/or changes. Counselling sessions help children and young people explore various aspects of their life and feelings. Counselling provides an independent safe space for children and young people to talk freely and openly.

It should therefore be noted that definitions of school-based counselling may vary greatly, depending on the particular context of the school (e.g. primary school, secondary school), and the country in which it is practised. Some countries, for example Saudi Arabia, do not have a centralised institution that governs ethical principles for professional school counsellors. Furthermore, the term "appropriately qualified" may vary, not only from country to country, but from region to region. In Saudi Arabia school counsellors are required to have bachelor's degrees, but this does not necessarily have to relate to counselling. Therefore caution should be exercised when discussing the definition and role of the school counsellor, as this will depend on the context in which the school counsellor is discussed.

A research study carried out by Harris (2013) provided a number of insights into school-based counselling practices around the world. The first is that mandatory counselling in schools is positioned between two professions, namely education and counselling, and is said to be "delivered by experienced teachers with an additional postgraduate level qualification in guidance and counselling or student-based counselling" (Harris 2013, p.1). Her study identified that school counsellors practiced person-centred (also referred to as

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relational) counselling in schools in approximately one third of countries reviewed. However, she also identified that cultural and political factors were influential in defining the remit for counselling in schools. For example, vocational guidance was found to be the dominant mode of counselling in the Nordic region.

The Nordic region was identified as being unique in that all five countries had made school-based counselling mandatory (Harris 2013). In the Nordic region and also in South America, she identified that the sufficiency of the person-centered approach had been challenged in light of social and economic conditions, and that other approaches had been used in order to meet the perceived aims of counselling within an educational environment (Harris, 2013). In China and Singapore, where traditional methods of healing such as Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and breathing exercises are widely used, culturally informed counselling formed an important part of school-based counselling (Harris, 2013). For the Nordic countries where guidance and counselling services are driven by the notion of social inclusion, constructivist and activity-based approaches were adopted that were orientated towards educational and vocational guidance (Harris 2013).

Harris (2013) also noted that constructivist (e.g. narrative and personal construct) and activity-based approaches to school counselling were also being used to support children and young people (e.g. Eastern European countries). In practice the research evidence indicates that students in schools may face a number of social and personal problems which they may need help with, such as bullying; peer pressure; racism; sibling rivalry; social exclusion; academic underachievement; developmental problems; mental health problems; or even drugs and substance abuse (Baginsky, 2004; BACP, 2015; NSPCC, 2015/2016; McArthur *et al.*, 2016; Teens in Crisis, 2017).

It is helpful to provide an example of the counselling of students in practice in order to see how counselling can help students in schools. Patel, Aronson and Divan (2016) note that bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, with common forms of bullying being physical bullying (e.g. pushing, tripping, or hitting), emotional bullying (e.g. the use of peer pressure and manipulation to isolate and hurt a person's feelings), and verbal bullying (e.g. teasing, mocking, threatening, taunting, and deliberately spreading rumours and lies). They further note that "Young people who are bullied may experience a number of distressing reactions, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and unexplained physical complaints" (Patel *et al.*, 2015, p.312).

Other students often avoid getting involved in the situation or distance themselves from the individual being bullied, and so the victim's circle of friends shrinks (Patel *et al.*, 2015). The bullying therefore results in a vicious cycle, where the bullying gives rise to emotional distress, which affects the victim's school performance, and the victim sometimes turns to

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substance abuse as a coping strategy (Patel *et al.*, 2015). This issue is clearly a difficult one to deal with in practice, as a child who is being bullied may be too scared or embarrassed to tell the teachers or his or her parents.

There is evidence to show that bullying in schools can be addressed by using a whole school approach in order to change the culture for students (Foster *et al.*, 1990; Suckling *et al.*, 2002). If teachers and parents cooperate together they may be able to identify sufficient indications of bullying to allow them to investigate the issue further. The counselling of students who have been bullied can form part of an overall strategy to address bullying in schools. Patel *et al.* (2015) note that psycho-education and problem-solving counselling are key strategies for helping victims address bullying and its emotional consequences.

Not only is a strong zero-tolerance anti-bullying policy essential for a secure school environment, but supportive interventions in the school are essential to protect bullied youth (Patel *et al.*, 2015). A school-based counsellor may seek to protect individuals from any subsequent bullying, to mitigate the risk of self-harm, and to provide problem-based counselling to help the youth identify different sorts of bullying and avoidance tactics (Patel *et al.*, 2015).

### **CONTEMPORARY COUNSELLING PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS**

Although school-based counselling can help children and young people deal with a range of personal, academic, and emotional issues or problems they may face, the extent to which school counsellors are effective at their jobs and help and support children, may in practice depend on many different factors, including the social and cultural context of school counselling; the resources, financial and social support given to school counsellors; and the qualifications and experience they have. According to McLeod (2013, p.3), counselling is an activity that developed during the twentieth century in the UK and reflects the pressures and values of modern-day life. Counselling is therefore something that has been developed for quite a while now, but it is still undergoing change, and it may also be developing in different ways and at different speeds in various countries.

In practice this framework of understanding may also differ according to the particular context and history which a counsellor is working in. For instance, counselling at work may be different to counselling undertaken in schools. Also, counselling in schools in the UK has developed over a longer time frame, and is still in a state of development. There are different perspectives on the history of school counselling in the UK that can be identified. These are important to note because they show that even in a developed country such as the UK, where school-based counselling is more widely practiced, it is still not mandatory



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and there are still questions that remain unanswered in terms of the government's commitment to the widespread development of school-based counselling services. This history of development can therefore be used when critically examining the historical development of school-based counselling services in Saudi Arabia.

Bor, Ebner-Landy, Gill, and Brace (2002, p.1) observe that the school is actually a much more recent setting for the provision of psychological treatment of young people in the UK. They note that up until about ten years ago, most mental health problems in students were referred to specialists outside the school setting, and that there are a number of reasons for this change in attitudes towards school counselling (Bor *et al.*, 2002, p.1). In practice these have been shown to include:

- increasing challenges for school children, such as competitiveness; family crises; homophobia; racism; scholastic underachievement; social exclusion (Pybis *et al.*, 2012; Rupani *et al.*, 2012; Cooper, 2013; BACP, 2015; Teens in Crisis, 2017;
- a growing shortage of specialist educational psychologists (Cooper, 2013);
- an increasing awareness of the role that schools play in identifying, managing, and preventing health problems in students (Bor *et al.*, 2002; Cooper, 2013);
- recognition that early identification of psychological problems can help to prevent major and more permanent behavioural problems in children (Bor *et al.*, 2002; Cooper, 2013);
- a growing understanding that counselling in schools contributes to important educational student outcomes (Carey and Harrington, 2010a; Carey and Harrington, 2010b);
- recognition that counselling as a profession is now better managed and regulated; and
- an educational climate where schools are considered a primary context for nurturing and supporting development (personal, moral, social) in children (Bor *et al.*, 2002, pp.1-2).

However, this is not to say that this is what counselling in schools has achieved at all times. Indeed, the history of counselling in schools has been somewhat more complex and challenging. McLaughlin (1999) provides a compelling insight into the development of school counselling practices in schools in the UK. McLaughlin (1999) notes that in the 1980s there was as an increasing emphasis placed on counselling skills based on the works of practitioners such as Egan (1986). This focused on person-centered, behavioural, and

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cognitive approaches and applied them within the context of school counselling (McLaughlin, 1999).

However, McLaughlin (1999) also notes that there were a range of reforms in the 1990s that significantly impacted counselling in schools. This included areas such as the National Curriculum, Circular 5/94 on sex education (DFE, 1994), and the Education Reform Act of 1988 (McLaughlin, 1999). McLaughlin (1999) argues that these reforms meant that pastoral care and guidance and counselling did not feature as priorities for the government, but instead priority was given to managing pupil behaviour, especially in light of the increasing number of pupils being excluded from schools. McLaughlin (1999) notes that in the year 1990-1991 the number of students permanently excluded from school was 2,910, but in 1995/1996 the number was 13,581 (Castle and Parsons, 1997).

McLaughlin (1999) argued that the fragmented approach to school reform in the 1990s led to a regression to previous views of counselling. These were views that counselling was for specialists who should be based outside of school, and that difficulties and difficult children should be dealt with through specialist provision (McLaughlin, 1999). However, McLaughlin (1999) believed that research on effective schools (Rudduck *et al.*, 1996) and on the effects of schooling on young people (Rutter, 1991) demonstrated that the social effects of schooling were important.

McLaughlin (1999) believed that the polarisation of the academic and the personal and the social was short-sighted, because counselling is an important part of a school's response (McLaughlin, 1999). Since that period in time counselling in the UK has been further developed and has increased in prevalence within schools in England (Baginsky, 2004; Fox and Butler, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Phillips and Smith, 2011; Cooper, 2013; BACP, 2015; Daniunaite, Cooper and Foster, 2015; Department for Education 2016).

The Department for Education (2016) has stated that counselling within secondary schools has been shown to bring about significant reductions in psychological distress, and also to help young people to move towards their personal goals. It also observes that school staff and young people have evaluated school-based counselling services positively, as an effective way of bringing about improvements in mental health and wellbeing (Department for Education, 2016).

Counselling within schools can be seen as something that has developed because of a broad range of mental health, behavioural, and psychosocial concerns and issues that students continue to face in schools in the UK. These include new issues which have arisen mainly because of social changes and associated behaviours, for example gang violence and stabbings of children in inner city schools in London (NSPCC, 2013; MOPAC & NHS

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England, 2016). However, it also includes more "traditional" problems such as student attendance and behavioural problems, emotional and development problems, and problems with new relationships.

However, current socio-cultural trends in society (e.g. single parent families, families on income support, full time working parents) have also sometimes made it difficult for parents or legal guardians to provide the full range of personal emotional and social support that young children and adolescents need. Consequently, there has been a rise in the numbers of counsellors within the school setting in order to provide additional social and emotional support to students that may need it. In practice counselling in schools can assist parents in helping their children by showing students where they can receive specialised help, and by providing consultations with parents (Hitchner and Tiff-Hitchner, 1996).

School counselling can also assist teachers by helping them to understand their students and by helping them to respond to them in suitable and appropriate ways according to their abilities, and any behavioural or mental health challenges they are experiencing (King, 1999). This increased use of school-based counsellors (school counsellors) in schools has resulted in benefits such as reductions in psychological distress (Department for Education, 2016). Earlier research studies have demonstrated that a range of psychotherapeutic modalities (e.g. behavioural, psychodynamic, humanistic) are effective and beneficial for clients (Smith, Glass, and Miller, 1980). Although these studies relate to the counselling of adults, talk-based theories may also be suitable for use within the school environment.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) notes that counselling is a prevalent form of psychological therapy for young people (around 70,000-90,000 sought counselling) (BACP, 2013a). Indeed, counselling as a form of psychotherapy within schools has been shown to be effective in practice as it:

- helps to improve the overall attendance, attainment, and behaviour of students (Pybis, Hill, Cooper, and Cromarty, 2012; BACP, 2013b);
- can be used to work with victims of bullying (McElearney, Adamson, Shevlin, and Bunting, 2013);
- positively impacts students' learning and study habits (Rupani, Haughey, and Cooper, 2012);
- reduces different types of psychological distress in young people (McArthur, Cooper, and Berdondini, 2012).

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The historical development of school-based counselling in the UK has shown that school-based counselling is prevalent in schools in England. It has been seen that it can help to provide effective support for CYP who are experiencing emotional health difficulties, and yet the BACP (2015) notes that despite this access to school-based counselling services in England for many remains problematic. Indeed, the Department for Education (2016) adds that although school-based counselling has gained much support, and increased in prevalence, there are areas that still remain to be developed. This includes increasing the extent to which practice is evidence-based, greater use of outcome monitoring; ensuring services are equipped to meet the needs of vulnerable CYP; increasing CYP's involvement with the development of services; and better integration with other mental health and wellbeing support services (Department for Education, 2016).

The analysis of school-based counselling in the UK provides a reference framework from which we can carefully draw upon when discussing school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia. By better understanding the concerns, issues, and developments regarding school-based counselling practices in the UK, we know what potentially to be on the lookout for when discussing school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia. This is not to say that any analysis of school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia will automatically transfer Western school-based counselling frameworks. Any analysis undertaken will instead cautiously draw upon these frameworks in order to formulate a better understanding of the state of development in Saudi Arabia. In order to comprehensively understand school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia, it is necessary to understand the contextual and social background of Saudi Arabia, as it is highly influential in terms of culture and traditions.

### **OUTLINING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF SAUDI ARABIA**

Saudi Arabia is an Arab country based in Western Asia which constitutes the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula. It has a land mass of approximately 2,150,000 km<sup>2</sup> which makes it the fifth largest state in Asia and the second largest country in the Arab world. In terms of its geography most of its terrain consists of barren landforms and arid desert. Saudi Arabia formerly consisted of four regions:

- (1) Hejaz;
- (2) Najd;
- (3) Eastern Arabia (Al-Ahsa); and
- (4) Southern Arabia ('Asir).

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These were united into a single state by the House of Saud, and the modern day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1932 by Ibn Saud. The Al Saud dynasty holds a monopoly of political power, and the country is an absolute monarchy with the country possessing no legally binding written constitution. In modern times however, Saudi Arabia has been divided into 13 regions, with each region divided into 'governates' or sub-regions, and the regional capital (**APPENDIX 1**). These sub-regions often have localised customs, traditions, and culture, and so schools within one particular region may be similar to other schools in that region, but those schools may in turn be different to schools in other major regions such as Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia's population has been estimated at 30,886,545 (2015), its Gross Domestic Product was approximately 73.892 Trillion in 2015, and life expectancy at birth (total years) was 71.005 in 2012 (World Bank, 2016). Two of Saudi Arabia's greatest attributes are that it is the birthplace of Islam (home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina), and that it holds vast natural oil reserves (approximately a quarter of the world's proven reserves under its deserts). The discovery of large reserves of oil in Saudi Arabia led to it rapidly developing its economy in the 1970s. This included rapid industrialization and urbanisation. Saudi Arabia is heavily dependent on foreign labour (expatriates) and on petroleum exports. Owing to the foreseen depletion of its oil reserves over the next thirty to forty years, Saudi Arabia is aggressively seeking to diversify its economy over the long-term.

The Government of Saudi Arabia is guided by the principles of Saudi Arabia:

**The reform mission, upon which the Saudi state was founded, represents the main core of the government. This mission is based on the realization of Islamic rules, implementation of Islamic law (Shari'a), and enjoining good and forbidding evil, as well as to reform the Islamic creed and purify it from heterodoxies. Therefore, it adopts its doctrine from the true Islamic principles that were prevailing at the very beginning of Islam.**

**We, Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, the king of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, consistent with the public interest, and in view with the development of the state in different fields, in addition to our enthusiasm to achieve our prospected objectives, we ordered the following:**

**First: Issue the basic law of governance according to the context herein below.**

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**Second: Act in accordance with all the systems, orders, and resolutions that are currently adopted, until they are amended pursuant to the basic system of governance.**

**Third: The basic law of governance shall be published in the official Gazette and shall be enforceable as of the date of its publication.**

This shows that Islamic law will influence not only teaching in schools, but also the school environment. The Basic Law of Governance sets out the laws for governing Saudi Arabia (**APPENDIX 2**). According to the Basic Law, the King must abide by Sharia (Islamic) law and the Quran. Sharia Law is the body of Islamic law which governs public and private aspects of the lives of Muslims throughout Saudi Arabia. It is the law of the land. It is based on the Qur'an (revealed by God to Muhammad (The Prophet of Islam) by the angel Gabriel), the Sunnah (the actions and words of Muhammad, hadith (statement, action, or approval attributed to Muhammad) and qiyās (legal reasoning).

Therefore, religion is part of the national culture of Saudi Arabia and this in turn is reflected in teachings in schools in Saudi Arabia, as well as school rules. There are a number of Articles that govern the family and education in Saudi Arabia which are tied together by Sharia, and which make the school culture in Saudi Arabia unique.

**Article 9** states:

**The family is the nucleus of Saudi society. Its members shall be raised and adhere to the Islamic creed which calls for obedience to god, his messenger and those of the nation who are charged with authority; for the respect and enforcement of law and order; and for love of the motherland and taking pride in its glorious history.**

**Article 10** states:

**The state shall put great attention to strengthen the bonds which hold the family together and to preserve its Arab and Islamic values. Likewise, it is keen on taking good care of all family members and creating proper conditions to help them in developing their skills and abilities.**

**Article 13** states:

**The goal of education is to instill the Islamic faith in the brains of the young generation and to impart them with knowledge and skills so that**

**they become useful members in building their society, who love their homeland and be proud of its history.**

These laws show that in principal the Government of Saudi Arabia is committed to building the Islamic faith in schools in Saudi Arabia. In principle schools in Saudi Arabia should therefore seek to ensure that they provide students with a strong and comprehensive education that meets all their needs. In order to better understand the future development of schools in Saudi Arabia, it is also helpful to have an overview of Saudi Arabia's 'Vision for 2030', which sets out its future goals to develop the country.

### **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision (2030)**

In 2016 the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia endorsed (during its session under the chairmanship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud) the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. This is a strategic goal to develop the nation by 2030 (Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, 2017). Core to this development are three pillars upon which the vision is based.

**Pillar 1** states:

**The first pillar of our vision is our status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds. We recognize that Allah the Almighty has bestowed on our lands a gift more precious than oil. Our Kingdom is the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, the most sacred sites on earth, and the direction of the Kaaba (Qibla) to which more than a billion Muslims turn at prayer.**

**Pillar 2** states:

**The second pillar of our vision is our determination to become a global investment powerhouse. Our nation holds strong investment capabilities, which we will harness to stimulate our economy and diversify our revenues.**

**Pillar 3** states:

**The third pillar is transforming our unique strategic location into a global hub connecting three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa. Our geographic position between key global waterways, makes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia an epicenter of trade and the gateway to the world.**

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Saudi Arabia is therefore seeking to strengthen its economy and to strengthen the Saudi educational system by 2030. It seeks to make Saudi schools globally competitive and to provide Saudi children and young people with a strong and comprehensive educational experience. In order to provide some context of school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, the next section will briefly set out the theoretical framework of the research study for the reader.

Al-Ghamdi (2015) undertook a research study to investigate the counsellor's role in private girls' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Although the present research study relates to boys' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, the study helps to highlight the approach that female Saudi school counsellors have applied in Saudi schools. This can in turn be used to guide practice in boys' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. The research study used a questionnaire which identified different dimensions relating to the actual and ideal roles of the female school counsellors. These are listed in **APPENDIX 3** as they are very helpful in identifying the type of work undertaken by the school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

For example, school counsellors should seek to address the developmental needs of students, and to engage in continuous personal and professional development (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). This means school counsellors should be regularly liaising with students in order to understand who they are, what classes they are taking, and how they are finding schoolwork in general. Al-Ghamdi (2015) notes that not only should school counsellors monitor the achievement level of students, but they should also work with students in order to try to prevent psychological and behavioural problems. This includes using inventories to assess students' needs and problems, as well as conducting research related to students' needs and problems.

School counsellors should actively assist students with problems of academic achievement, whilst also assisting teachers to recognise individual differences between students (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). This means that school counsellors need to actively forge strong working relationships with teachers in order to work together to help students. Counsellors should be able to assist students in making appropriate decisions, consulting with principals regarding the needs or concerns of students, and establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with school staff (Al-Ghamdi, 2015).

School counsellors should plan activities to achieve the objectives of the guidance and counselling programme and should also seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). School counsellors should also keep parents, principals and teachers informed about the guidance and counselling programme (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). As can be seen, in practice school counsellors have a very broad range



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of roles and responsibilities that they must take on if they are to provide effective counselling practices to students in schools.

In light of these proven practices in schools in developed countries across the world, the development of a strong and robust school counselling framework for a developing country like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia holds many attractions. Teenagers are at the most critical stage in their lives where they are in need of direction both in their personal and academic lives. They need qualified and skilled people to guide them in their behaviour and the direction they are going and also to help them discover their abilities. In practice it is therefore necessary to determine if the role of the school counsellor is effective and that counsellors are given the financial, social, and educational support they need, and are not impeded by problems which may unfairly affect the overall quality of school counselling services provided to students. School counselling in Saudi Arabia has been defined by the Saudi Ministry of Education as:

the reactive process set up between a counsellor and a student through which the counsellor gives help to the student to understand himself and recognise his capabilities and potentialities and to give him an enlightened approach to his problem and how to encounter him. He also helps him to enhance his responsive behaviour and to prove self-conformity with the community. (The Ministry of Education, 1995)

There would therefore seem to be some similarities in the underlying objectives of school counselling in the UK, and school counselling in some developing countries in the Middle East. But in practice there are also specific differences in Saudi culture compared to Western school counselling cultures, and there may also be financial and social barriers which may affect students in developing countries like Saudi Arabia. For example in Saudi Arabia there is religious oversight within schools undertaken by the Saudi Ministry of Education. Counselling in Saudi Arabia is also carried out according to official guidelines, which identify four main areas for counselling in schools. These include:

- (1) religious and moral counselling;
- (2) educational counselling;
- (3) vocational counselling; and
- (4) preventive counselling (The Ministry of Education, 1995).

Islamic (*Shari'ah*) law also requires separate male and female schooling (Al Rawaf and Simmons, 1991). Specific problems have been noted previously in relation to school

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counselling in Saudi Arabia, including a lack of clearly defined roles, a lack of administrative support, and a lack of professional identity and status (Al-Ghamdi, 1999). Furthermore, ambiguity and role conflict have been identified as potentially problematic, depending on the specific perceptions and understandings of school principals regarding the role of the school counsellor in the student setting (Al-Ghamdi and Riddick, 2011).

It has been seen that in the UK, school-based counselling is something that has developed over time, and is still in a state of development. Although the government has set out the need to care for CYP, there has still not been a national commitment to develop school-based counselling across all schools in the UK. At the same time, it has been noted that mental health and physical problems such as reduced attendance, anxiety, depression, bullying, and eating disorders are still present in schools throughout the UK. Consequently, school-based counselling is a way of effectively tackling these issues within schools and supporting CYP.

The development of school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia is not a new concept. The Basic Law of Governance in Saudi Arabia seeks to ensure that CYP are provided with an educational experience that provides them with the knowledge and skills that they need in order to become useful members in building the society in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government in its Vision 2030 seeks to make Saudi schools globally competitive and to provide CYP with a strong educational experience. Nevertheless, although Saudi schools have school counsellors their effectiveness in practice has been called into question. This research study will seek to identify the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and understandings of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia in order to identify the modern day reality of their working lives.

This chapter has provided an introduction to school counselling and a background to its historical development in the UK. It has also set out the research question for this research study and why the research study is relevant and will advance knowledge and understanding of school counselling. The chapter has set out an overview of contemporary counselling practice in schools as well as a review of the social context of Saudi Arabia, and school counselling in Saudi Arabia. The next chapter will provide a review of the most relevant literature covering school counselling around the world and in Saudi Arabia.

The points listed below provides, in summary, the justification of why this study is important.

- Studies relating to this discipline were undertaken at a time when there was still confusion over the role of student counsellors.

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- The counselling profession has since continued to grow and has experienced transformation, but there have been no corresponding studies exploring if the transformation has resulted in changes in the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of student counsellors in Saudi Arabia secondary schools.
- The more up to date research on the perceptions and attitudes of student counsellors in Saudi Arabia secondary schools has focused on student counsellors within female students' settings.

## **CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

The 'literature review' is the part of a thesis where there is extensive reference to related theory and research in the chosen field of study (Ridley, 2012). It is also the part where connections are made between source texts and personal positioning, and where the theories and previous research which have influenced the choice of research topic and methodology are set out (Ridley 2012). Here, the purpose of the literature review is to set out key debates and issues relating to the field of school counselling, as well as identifying gaps in the current knowledge base which this research study seeks to address.

Jessen *et al.* (2011, p.10) note that the literature review allows the researcher to show awareness of what is already known, as well as showing that the researcher can interpret and point out gaps and contradictions in existing knowledge. The current literature review will therefore aim to survey the academic literature relating to school counselling, and to school counselling in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia). It will do this with the aim of highlighting key findings, and relevant and meaningful articles or studies in this area. It will seek to potentially indicate where future research in this area may be developed. The literature review also refers to the individual's creative process, which provides the researcher with an opportunity "to engage in a written dialogue with researchers in your area while at the same time showing that you have engaged with, understood and responded to the relevant body of knowledge underpinning your research" (Ridley 2012, p.3).

The literature review will set out the research question and the research strategy and will define the meaning of school counselling. Thereafter, the literature review will review school counselling in practice, what it is and how it has developed in the United Kingdom (UK). Following on from this the literature review will set out school counselling practices in the Middle East and in Saudi Arabia. It will touch upon health, cultural, and other issues that might potentially affect students in Saudi schools. It will also review Saudi *Shari'ah* religious and masculine and feminine perspectives, and the potential impact of Saudi Bedouin culture. The final part of the literature review will discuss the nature of school counselling services in Saudi Arabia, as well as emerging problems with Saudi school counselling practices.

The main research question for this research and which frames the literature review is:

*What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of school counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?*

## CHAPTER 2 Literature Review

In order to help to support the research question the literature review needs to investigate how developed the literature on school counselling in Saudi Arabia is, and in particular whether there is any existing literature specifically covering this area. Before moving on to discuss school children and behavioural problems, the ethics of reviewing literature and the search strategies employed in the literature review will be briefly touched upon.

### THE ETHICS OF REVIEWING LITERATURE

According to Duffy (2017), writing involves ethical decisions because when we are writing we are essentially proposing a relationship with the reader, and in doing so, questions are raised about the morality of the writer. For example, writing involves ethical decision-making because we may be asking ourselves questions such as 'Should I use this inflammatory metaphor?', 'Shall I include this questionable source found on the internet?', or 'How do I address this provocative counterargument?' (Duffy, 2017). There are a number of areas that involves ethical decision making when undertaking a literature review. The first relates to the type of review undertaken.

When a researcher is undertaking a systematic review there is greater transparency in the overall process, the researcher documents the route through the literature for the reader to see. The reader can logically follow all the steps the researcher has gone through, and can also seek to replicate such steps to see if in fact what the researcher has found is an accurate representation of the actual search method used. This is not always the case in a traditional literature review, where the researcher has greater choice over the types of literature used. There exists the possibility that the researcher has, whether intentionally or unintentionally, relied on literature that supports a particular perspective but which may not be entirely accurate (Thomas *et al.*, 2015).

Therefore traditional reviews are open to academic scrutiny, and rely on the researcher to conduct the review in an ethical manner which seeks to be unbiased (Polonski, 2014). Wager and Wiffen (2011) have argued that the literature can often form the basis for policy decisions and it is therefore important for those who contribute to it to take responsibility for ensuring that it is accurate and unbiased. They provide examples of what would be unethical when contributing to the literature. This includes repeatedly publishing positive findings whilst suppressing negative findings (Wager and Wiffen, 2011). They also note that because systemic reviews require citations of the work carried out by others, the distinction between plagiarism and legitimate citation may become blurred (Wager and Wiffen, 2011).

It is therefore highly important for an ethical researcher to try to ensure that this does not occur. They also note that transparency is key, and so it is important to state any reasons

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### **Literature Review**

why the author may not be considered neutral or impartial, e.g. personal, political, or academic competing interests (Wager and Wiffen, 2011). The Research Ethics Guidebook (n.d.) sets out a number of additional ethical points to take into account when conducting literature reviews and systematic reviews. The first is that it is ethical practice to identify how research will best build upon any work that might have already been done (The Research Ethics Guidebook, n.d.). The literature review might be used to develop arguments about work that needs to be carried out and provide a justification for this (The Research Ethics Guidebook, n.d.).

Another important point to note is that a reviewer of literature might not always be able to identify procedures such as informed consent that were used to ensure ethical practice in a research study (The Research Ethics Guidebook, n.d.; Pemberton, 1999; Vergnes *et al.*, 2010). In such a case if the researcher uses such an article there is the risk that the reviewer of literature may be unwittingly promoting unethical research. Therefore, it is important for researchers to ask themselves key questions when conducting literature reviews. This includes questioning how a reviewer of literature will treat research studies accurately and fairly, and questioning if the research studies being reviewed raise any ethical questions that the reviewer of literature may need to address (The Research Ethics Guidebook, n.d.; Pemberton, 1999; Vergnes *et al.*, 2010).

### **LOCATING LITERATURE: THE SEARCH STRATEGIES**

The research strategy for this literature review consisted of undertaking a number of online searches using key words in search engines and online databases. The primary research strategy was steered by the research question and aimed to identify all research relating to school counselling in Saudi Arabia. A secondary research strategy was to identify all supporting literature, including literature covering school counselling in the UK, in the United States (US), and internationally. The practical research steps taken for the primary and secondary research strategies are listed below.

It should be noted that the literature contains references to student counselling, school counselling, and school-based counselling. It is often the case that the particular context of the term will reflect what type of counselling is being referred to. For example, in the US student counselling may refer to the counselling of students in both secondary education and higher education establishments. However, in the UK school counselling may refer only to the counselling of children and adolescents in secondary schools, but not counselling of students in higher education establishments such as universities. Consequently, within the context of this research study school counselling refers to the

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counselling of children and adolescents in secondary schools, and not to counselling of students in higher education institutions and universities.

Boolean logic can be used to define search strings in order to search electronic catalogues, databases, and the internet. For this literature review I used different Boolean search terms ('AND', 'OR') and applied a number of different key word combinations. In order to ensure a comprehensive coverage of the literature both student counselling and school counselling were incorporated within the search. The key words and combinations used are:

- Counselling.
- International counselling.
- Saudi Arabia AND school counselling.
- Saudi Arabia.
- School counselling AND bullying.
- School counselling AND culture.
- School counselling AND death.
- School counselling AND divorce.
- School counselling AND feminist AND perspectives.
- School counselling AND Islam.
- School counselling AND Islamic law.
- School counselling AND peer pressure.
- School counselling AND practices.
- School counselling AND religion.
- School counselling AND self-harming.
- School counselling AND Shariah.
- School counselling AND suicide.
- School counselling and the Middle East.
- School counselling.
- School-based counselling.
- Student counselling AND bullying.
- Student counselling AND culture.
- Student counselling AND death.
- Student counselling AND divorce.
- Student counselling AND feminist AND perspectives.
- Student counselling AND Islam.
- Student counselling AND Islamic law.
- Student counselling AND peer pressure.
- Student counselling AND practices.

- Student counselling AND religion.
- Student counselling AND self-harming.
- Student counselling AND Shariah.
- Student counselling AND suicide.
- Student counselling AND the Middle East.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia AND school counselling.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- The United Kingdom AND school counselling.
- The United Kingdom.
- The United States.
- UK.
- US.

I aimed to first carry out these searches on major educational electronic databases, then to move on to carry out these searches on electronic databases that were relevant to counselling and school counselling. After that, I moved on to carry out these searches on online search engines and across news and media online websites.

### **Online Educational Electronic Databases**

- Emerald Insight ([www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)).
- Ingenta Connect ([www.ingentaconnect.com](http://www.ingentaconnect.com)).
- JSTOR ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)).
- Sage Journals (<http://journals.sagepub.com/>).
- Science Direct ([www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)).
- Science Open ([www.scienceopen.com](http://www.scienceopen.com)).
- Taylor & Francis Online ([www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com)).

### **Journals Relating to Counselling and School counselling**

- International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling.
- University & College Counselling Journal.
- Journal of College Counselling.
- BACP Therapy Today.
- British Journal of Guidance & Counselling.
- International Journal of Psychology and Counselling.
- Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools.
- Journal of School Counselling.
- Counselling and Psychotherapy Research.
- BACP Children and Young People Journal.



- British Journal of Educational Psychology.
- British Journal of Developmental Psychology.

### **Search Engines and News and Media Websites**

- Aljazeera.
- Amazon.
- BBC News.
- Comment Middle East.
- Google Scholar.
- Google.
- Middle East Health.
- The Guardian.

There were a large number of articles relating to school counselling practices practiced in Western countries such as the UK and the US. The abstracts of these articles were studied in order to ensure that they were directly relevant to the current study. Any that were not relevant to the study were not used. There were few articles relating to school counselling practices practiced in Islamic countries and the Middle East. Therefore all articles that related to these areas were used.

### **SCHOOL CHILDREN AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS**

There are a number of issues nowadays which schoolchildren may not have had to deal with ten to twenty years ago, e.g. issues relating to gangs or drugs. At the same time, there are also issues which schoolchildren may have to deal with now that have now become more acceptable to talk about these issues, e.g. issues relating to alcohol and sex. In practice, some children in schools have to deal with issues relating to bullying, peer pressure, a pressure to 'fit in' to peer or social groups, or to be liked or popular (BCAP, 2013b). Children in schools also face emotional troubles, behavioural problems, or they have problems at home such as divorcing parents or a death in the family (BCAP, 2013b).

The problems faced by children in schools in the UK will be reviewed here in order to provide an illustrative example of the problems faced by schools in Western developed countries. The British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) has stated that mental health problems can obstruct goals for children and young people, and can also "disrupt learning, underpin truancy, increase rates of school exclusion, and lead to the abuse of alcohol and drugs" (BACP 2013c). The BACP states that mental health problems can also lead to wider problems for the community, such as crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as teenage pregnancy (BACP 2013c).

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The UK's Department for Education (2015) has identified some of the more common emotional and behavioural problems faced by children. These include: (1) emotional disorders (e.g. phobias, anxiety, depression); (2) conduct disorders (e.g. stealing, defiance, fire-setting, aggression, anti-social behaviour); (3) hyperkinetic disorders (e.g. disturbance of activity and attention); (4) developmental disorders (e.g. delay in acquiring certain skills such as speech); (5) attachment disorders (e.g. children markedly distressed or socially impaired because of abnormal attachment to parents); and (6) other mental health problems (e.g. eating disorders, habit disorders, post-traumatic stress syndromes, somatic disorders, psychotic disorders) (Department for Education, 2015).

In recent times self-harming behaviour has risen because of a range of issues (BACP, 2013b). Children have to face difficulties with personal relationships, dating or even sexual worries (Earle, 2013). Issues which may affect children include family structure, parental mental ill-health, parents who abuse drugs or alcohol, domestic violence, parenting styles, physical punishment, and child mistreatment (Earle, 2013). Therefore identifying these issues and also helping children to successfully deal with them is very big challenge.

For example, according to recent research undertaken by the children's charity 'NCH' based in the UK, 1 in 17 adolescents may be self-harming; 1 in 30 girls (aged 13-15 years) have either self-harmed or committed suicide; suicide by young men has increased by 75% in the last ten years; and more than 400 children every day receive counselling by the children's charity 'Childline' (BACP, 2013b; Bywaters and Rolfe, 2002). Added to this, it was noted by respondents that both parents and schools were not well prepared in terms of the help they could offer, and schoolchildren were experiencing a number of different mental health disorders, that sometimes went unnoticed by school staff (BACP, 2013b; Bywaters and Rolfe, 2002).

Indeed, in an Association of Teachers and Lecturers' (ATL) survey of 844 education staff, 56% of staff said there were more children with emotional, behavioural and mental health problems than there were five years ago, and 62% said there were more than there were two years ago (ATL, 2013). It was noted that between students the most common behaviour was verbal aggression (77%), followed by physical aggression (57%), bullying (41%), and also breaking or ruining other students' belongings (23%) (ATL, 2013). It was identified that nearly 90% of support staff, lecturers, teachers, college leaders, and school heads had dealt with a challenging or disruptive student during the school year (ATL, 2013).

It was identified that staff believed lack of boundaries at home was the main reason for bad behaviour (79%), followed by behavioural problems (69%), emotional problems (68%), attention seeking behaviour (64%), lack of positive role models at home (61%),

and also family breakdowns (61%) (ATL, 2013). Another difficulty highlighted by the survey was that a third of staff (35%) noted that they did not receive any training in how to deal with challenging, disruptive or violent students (ATL, 2013). The challenge of dealing with behavioural and mental health problems in schools in the UK still exists, and therefore effective ways of successfully dealing with such problems are key to overcoming such challenges.

### **DEFINING THE FIELD: WHAT IS SCHOOL COUNSELLING?**

When people speak of psychologists or psychiatrists, they usually know that these types of professionals deal with people's mental, behavioural or emotional problems. Clinical psychologists usually provide different types of mental health care, whilst psychiatrists seek to assess and address both the mental and physical aspects of their patients' psychological problems. But when we talk about school counsellors, it is much more difficult to place an exact definition of the type of work that they undertake. For example, Mcleod (2013, p.3) states that counselling is an activity that emerged during the twentieth century, and reflects the pressures and values that affect people in modern life. A counsellor is therefore:

...someone who does his or her best to listen to you and work with you to find the best ways to understand and resolve your problem. Counsellors do not diagnose or label people, but instead do their best to work within whatever framework of understanding makes most sense for each client (Mcleod, 2013, p.3).

The BACP provides a more detailed definition:

Counselling and psychotherapy are umbrella terms that cover a range of talking therapies. They are delivered by trained practitioners who work with people over a short or long term to help them bring about effective change or enhance their wellbeing (BACP, 2013a).

If counselling involves training practitioners and the use of talking therapies, then it would seem that school counselling would be the application of this type of counselling within the context of schools. Perhaps one of the difficulties with more precisely understanding what a school counsellor does, and the exact role of the school counsellor, is that it is only a relatively recent development. Bor *et al.* (2002, p.1) remark that the school setting is a more recent context for providing the psychological treatment of young children, because until ten years ago, most schoolchildren with mental problems were referred to specialists

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outside the school setting. But modern life for both primary and secondary schoolchildren has become highly challenging.

It is first necessary to critically investigate the development of school counselling within the UK, and also internationally, in order to better compare against the development of school counselling in Saudi Arabia. School counselling has become well developed in countries such as the UK and the US, as well as internationally. Bor *et al.* (2002, p.3) observe that in recent years in the UK, school counselling has begun to take on a more prominent role in schools. They say that because teachers are under huge pressures to keep records about pupils because of the National Curriculum criteria, school counsellors can help teachers by taking on additional roles to emotionally and psychologically support pupils (Bor *et al.*, 2002, p.3).

School counselling can be an effective 'intervention strategy' for young people, because it can help students to improve family relationships; cope with bereavement better; manage their anger more; and helps with other issues such as bullying and eating disorders (BACP 2013c). In fact counselling can help children to cope with behavioural and emotional difficulties, and can help them to stop being excluded from school and can help them to obtain educational qualifications (BACP 2013c). Evidence from research studies have shown that targeted school-based interventions have led to improvements in wellbeing and mental health, thereby improving pupil attainment and also reducing levels of school exclusion (Banerjee *et al.*, 2014).

An evaluation of school-based counselling in Wales showed that counselling was associated with significant reductions in psychological distress, and 85% of respondents felt more positive about attending school after counselling, as well as feeling they could cope better (Welsh Government, 2008). The Department for Education (2016) considers school-based counselling to be one of the most prevalent forms of psychological therapy for young people in the UK. The Department for Education (2016, p.22) provides an illustrative description:

School counselling services tend to take the form of qualified counsellors having specific one-to-one sessions with pupils, and often counsellors will undertake targeted group work with pupils. Counselling in secondary schools is frequently delivered as a talking therapy, drawing on creative approaches where helpful and necessary.

## **IS SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN PRACTICE EFFECTIVE?**

School-based counselling is well developed and practiced widely around the world. It has been identified that school-based counselling was mandatory in 39 countries (including countries in the Caribbean, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East) (Harris, 2013, p1). School counselling has also been shown to be effective in practice (Baginsky, 2004; Harris, 2013). The BACP (2015, p.1) has stated that:

Counselling in schools has been shown to be a highly effective support for tens of thousands of troubled children and young people who are experiencing emotional health difficulties.

In practice it is now accessed by 70,000 to 90,000 young people in the UK every year (McArthur et al., 2012; BACP 2013c). The UK's Department for Education (2016) concludes that evidence has shown that school staff, children and young people that have evaluated school counselling are positive about it. They see it as an effective way of bringing about improvements in mental health and well-being, and also in helping children and young people to engage with studying and learning (Department for Education, 2016). The Department for Education (2016) considers that counselling within secondary schools has been shown to bring about significant reductions in psychological distress, and to help young people move towards their personal goals.

According to Cooper (2013, p.4), approximately 61-85% of secondary schools in England provide young people with access to counselling services. These counselling services are normally provided on a one-to-one, rather than group basis (Cooper, 2013, p.5). Also, it was noted that research surveys have suggested that most school-based counsellors in the UK are predominantly female (85%); white (90%); and have an average age of between 40 and 49 years old (Cooper, 2013, p.5). They also have a master's level qualification or above (70%); are members of a professional training body (85%); and have often had some training in therapeutic work with children and young people (80%) (Cooper, 2013, p.5). Dryden *et al.* (2000) note that counselling in the UK has been developed a lot because of a number of different and relevant factors. These include:

- (a) increased visibility;
- (b) more widely available training courses and increased professionalism;
- (c) lifelong counselling supervision;
- (d) accreditation/registration as a counsellor;

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- (e) the development of codes of ethics or practice, as well as guidelines for practice;
- (f) a greater emphasis on counselling research and evaluation (Dryden *et al.*, 2000, pp.471-478).

Other research into school counselling in the UK found that a number of different types of counselling modes of provision were being used. These included modes such as, counselling as part of a multi-agency team; school-based healthcare staff; teaching staff; in-house peer support; centralised provision of counselling by local authorities; single counselling practitioner model (Pattison *et al.*, 2007). They also developed a number of school counselling good practice guidelines which make a number of recommendations for the provision of counselling services, such as:

- (a) having professionally qualified counsellors with previous experience of working with young people;
- (b) delivering accessible counselling;
- (c) being monitored and evaluated;
- (d) responding flexibly to local needs of diversity; and
- (e) employing counsellors who are members of a professional body and have personal qualities which make them suitable as counsellors (e.g. approachable, good listening skills, can encourage trust) (Pattison *et al.*, 2007).

However, the BACP (2015) argues that whilst the Welsh Government's national school-based counselling service has demonstrated that it has been an overall success, access to school-based counselling services in England is still problematic. It is noted that programmes in Wales and Northern Ireland are supported by national school-based counselling programmes, funded by their governments (BACP, 2015). But England lags behind, and this means that young people in England may not be able to access much needed therapeutic support in their schools (BACP, 2015). It argues that "there has been little movement towards a policy of universal provision for school counselling, and coverage in England remains patchy" (BACP, 2015, p.2).

All these developments and factors show that school counselling in the UK is practiced widely and is well-established. Data from a nationally representative survey of teachers highlighted that 62% of schools offered counselling services to their pupils (70% of secondary schools) (Harland *et al.*, 2015). The Department for Education (2016) observes that the evidence shows that counselling in schools is increasingly viewed as a profession, and that there has been a significant move away from school staff doing counselling

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training as an add-on to their role. However, overall the evidence would suggest that its usage in schools in England is patchy and not consistent, as some schools employ people who are qualified and dedicated to providing school counselling services, while other school counsellors are not qualified and are learning on the job.

US and international research would seem to show that modes of delivery of school counselling can differ, depending on which country they are based in. For example, Cooper (2013, p.5) noted that the work of school counsellors in the US "Is more orientated towards educational and vocational guidance; with one-to-one, on-going therapy often only a small part of a counsellor's workload". Cooper (2013, p.9) also argues that internationally, school-based counselling interventions have been found to significantly reduce psychological distress in children and young people. But this evidence has been said to come mainly from behavioural studies or interventions in the US which are normally group-based, so this is not directly relevant to the effectiveness of UK school-based counselling (Cooper, 2013, p.9).

Therefore, although there is evidence to support the notion that school-based counselling is effective, much will depend on the particular context of the counselling and the types of intervention strategies that are being used by schools. In addition, when discussing school counselling it should always be remembered that school-based counselling will take many forms and may be practiced by different types of individual, both qualified and unqualified. Therefore discussions of school-based counselling should always be informed by the particular context within which it is being discussed. It is also important to take into account the fact that research involving different school counselling modes of delivery may not be appropriate for other countries. For example, Hassard and Costar (1977) showed that the literature in Canada supports the view that secondary school principals are significant determiners of the counsellor role. The work of Harris (2013) also demonstrated that school counselling approaches differed across the world.

In the US many states practice the 'practical' mode of delivery of school counselling, meaning that school counselling had broader aims (including academic and other wide personal factors), and sometimes involves counsellors with no formal teaching qualifications (Harris, 2013, p.1). On the other hand in the UK school counsellors normally have a teaching qualification as well as a postgraduate level qualification in guidance and counselling, or school-based counselling (Harris, 2013, p.1). The Department for Education (2016) observes that school counselling services tend to take the form of qualified counsellors, i.e. a professional practitioner who has typically completed a two year part-time or one year full-time diploma.

**CULTURAL INTERSECTIONS: SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Abi-Hashem (2014) has stated that the Middle East region is a vast region which stretches from the East Mediterranean basin (including countries such as Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Egypt) to inland countries (including Iraq and Jordan). It also includes countries located within the Arabic peninsula such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries such as Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. Abi-Hashem (2014) comments that most Middle Eastern societies are characterised by: (1) a strong family bond; (2) a strong sense of community and social identity; (3) a strong rootedness in the land and a long generational heritage; and (4) a strong sense of hospitality, which includes an openness to the East and the West (whether unregulated or with cautious and restricted openness).

Therefore, although the Middle East region covers a broad range of countries, there are certain characteristics that can be identified at a social level that show commonalities in the lifestyles of the people in these countries. In addition to this, there are different attitudes or schools of thought that may exist in each country, as regards the effectiveness, or stage of development of school counselling practices. For example, Khamsa (2015, p.383) remarks:

For these Arab nations, existing research on school counselling indicates differing attitudes towards school counselling across these countries. Generally speaking, research concerning attitudes towards school counsellors in Arab countries is rather modest, but general research on the topic mainly indicates a positive general attitude, whereby school counselling is viewed as influential and necessary.

Although not based on rigorous empirical evidence, and more on past experience, Moracco (1978) noted that counselling was beginning to play a major role in the modernisation process that was taking place in the Middle East region. He noted "This process will undoubtedly cause a certain degree of personal disruption. The disruptive forces of modernization seem a natural part of the process" (Moracco, 1978, p.199). he believed that the counselling enterprise in developing countries had to provide support services to the people, and had to provide and equip individuals to live in a new and modernised society (Moracco, 1978). Whilst a wide range of benefits of counselling in schools have been touched upon previously, policy elements and political justification have not been addressed.



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So for example, although Moracco (1978) argues that the counselling enterprise must provide support services to people, this raises the point about whether or not it is the government's obligation to provide counselling in schools in countries that are only newly developing. Given limited funding in such countries, there is a policy argument to be made that it should be more important to first put in place the basic framework for schooling and the educational curriculum, before moving on to more advanced support services. However, Moracco (1978) argued that it was the job of Ministries of Education to provide proper guidance and counselling services to students in order to help ease the shock of modernisation. The difficulty with this belief however, is that it is not at all helpful in terms of argument. Without any idea of what the 'shock of modernisation' is, and what its actual effects on students are, then the argument remains weak. Morocco (1978, p.199) finally believed that:

Before counselling can make an impact in the Middle East it must develop an indigenous philosophy of counselling. Recognizing that the Middle Easterner is a product of an authoritarian society, for instance, approaches to counselling which depend on counselling initiative, such as a strict nondirective approach, may not be appropriate. The philosophy must take cognizance of a deeply rooted history of tradition on the one hand and a strong desire to modernize on the other.

This final belief would seem to be justified if we recognize that culture and society play a strong role in Middle Eastern countries, and they make each country in the Middle East different. So for example, Saudi Arabia is a clearly authoritarian society and therefore what Morocco is saying would seem to be logical. Strict non-directive therapies are founded on the belief that the counsellor should guide the client to explore internal beliefs and emotions (Clutterbuck, 2008; Cunningham, 2008; McCarthy, 2014). However, Morocco (1978) argues that if a Middle Easterner has been shaped by an authoritarian society, then the strict non-directive approach may not be appropriate for clients because this will be difficult or alien for them to implement. Therefore the degree of authoritarianism and collectivist culture in countries in the Middle East may impact the extent to which certain types of counselling are accepted.

Studies investigating school counselling in Kuwait have found that although teachers were satisfied with school counselling services, few schools had them, even though most teachers believed counselling to be essential to the quality of the schooling provided to students (Saleh, 1987; Sarraf, 1993). Many Kuwaiti people have historically preferred to seek traditional healers in relation to psychological problems, rather than turning to professional counselling services (Khansa, 2015). Again, this study highlights the issue of

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deeply ingrained cultural attitudes which may affect the way in which school counselling is perceived by people in Middle Eastern countries.

Therefore, it would seem to be the case that a direct transfer of a Western school-based counselling model into schools in the Middle East may not be the correct way to develop school-based counselling services. Strict non-directive therapies which reflect person-centred approaches may be the norm in Western countries. However, this approach may backfire in an authoritarian country such as Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, as noted by Khansa (2015), the local culture may significantly influence how school-based counselling services are viewed. In nomadic and tribal rural towns and villages in Saudi Arabia, the person-centred approach to school-based counselling may in theory be potentially alien to some Saudi people who have never attended schools themselves. Day (1983, p.144) has adopted this position too:

Given the highly individualistic quality inherent in counselling services, it makes good sense that sociological factors that influence the individual would effect the quality of the counselling relationship that develops within different cultural groups.

Hanan Al Fardan, a Masters in Education student at the British University in Dubai, conducted a study on school counselling in Dubai on behalf of the Dubai School of Government (Shahbandari, 2012). It was found that only some private schools in Dubai had full-time counsellors, whilst in a majority of schools teachers or other staff members doubled as counsellors (Shahbandari, 2012). Shahbandari (2012) reported that the unavailability of professional counsellors was one reason for a lack of counselling in schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Hanan Al Fardan stated:

Role of counsellors in schools is key. It was found that the students aren't provided with as much information about options available as they would like. It is specially important for counsellors to make students aware that all the academic choices are not linked to career choices because the job markets keep changing (Shahbandari, 2012).

The study highlights relevant issues at both a national and a local level. From a national perspective if school-based counselling services are to be developed cohesively in the Middle East, then governments have to be prepared to commit sufficient time and resources to developing such services. This includes ensuring that there are sufficient counselling qualifications offered by higher education establishments and universities in order to provide sufficient professional counsellors. This will take time. For example, Soliman (1994) stated that only five out of 23 Arab countries provided either a diploma in

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counselling or a Master of Art in counselling at that time. Only some universities offered degree programmes in counselling at that time, i.e. universities of Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Riyadh, Ain Shams (Wehrly, 1995).

At a local level if schools do not implement cohesive school-counselling programmes and policies then students will remain confused, not only about the role of the school counsellor, but also about the importance of the school counsellor within the school setting. Shahbandari (2012) demonstrates that the school counsellor has responsibilities to the students and must take those responsibilities seriously.

It has been seen that historically only some schools in the UAE had professional counsellors. However, it has also been identified that not only are school counsellors needed in schools in the UAE, but students' views of counsellors has been seen to be positive. For example, Smith (2011) undertook a study of mental wellness in female post-secondary school students based in the UAE. Smith (2011) sampled 123 female undergraduates using Golberg and Hillier's (1979) 28-item scaled version of the General Health Questionnaire. It was found that there was an extremely high prevalence of mental illness (51%) among the students that were surveyed (Smith, 2011). It was also found that students held favourable views towards counselling even though they had never actually sought such services.

From a conceptual perspective, Low (2009) identified and assessed four domains pertaining to school counselling in the Middle East region. These domains were identified as: (1) internal challenges (e.g. issues relating to clientele groups, the willingness of students to seek counselling, and teachers' attitudes towards counselling); (2) external challenges (e.g. socio-economic changes outside the school including globalisation, societal familial trends); (3) systems challenges (e.g. guidance programmes, school practice guidelines, referral procedures, resource planning); and (4) personal challenges (e.g. training, supervision, attitudes towards school systems).

This conceptual framework is extremely helpful for school counsellors in the Middle East. It provides a way to ensure school counsellors are providing high quality school-based counselling services. School counsellors can use these domains to map out challenges they face within the school environment. This will help them to investigate each challenge within each domain in order to see if each challenge has been effectively addressed. By using these domains to provide a practical guide to approaching school counselling school counsellors can, over time, provide more effective school counselling services.

In addition to this, by developing this type of mapping of challenges, the resulting map can be used to discuss challenges and issues identified with other teachers and head

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teachers. By working to address each challenge one by one, the school counsellor can develop school counselling services that are effective and are regularly used by students in schools in the Middle East. If for example, the map identifies that there is a lack of available training, but that all other challenges have been addressed, it may help convince head teachers of the need to provide adequate training.

A study undertaken by Day (1983) assessed the attitudes that individuals in the Middle East took from both governmental and individual levels. Day (1983) undertook two studies, the first study was based on a survey questionnaire relating to the status and the projection for counselling services in the future for ten countries in the Middle East. This study found that within all ten countries in the Middle East counselling was present and it was projected that counselling would increase in all ten countries. The study was based on the administration of a four question questionnaire to appropriate government officials in ten Middle East countries. The data used is therefore not entirely robust as it is possible that the government officials in each of these countries may have simply wanted to ensure that to the outside world the country was developing counselling services in the same way as other governments in the Middle East.

The second study was based on a self-report questionnaire provided to forty Middle Eastern college students who had undergone an initial experience in counselling (Day, 1983). It was found that approximately 80% of students were satisfied with counselling services and another 80% stated that they would actually recommend such services to friends if they required such services. Although the study is helpful it cannot be taken to be representative of the views of students in the Middle East. Even if the study used equally representative numbers (i.e. four students per country), the small sample size demonstrates that the findings cannot be generalised to the general public in each Middle Eastern country. As the study was carried out when counselling services were only just being developed, the counselling services offered to students took the form of personal and guidance counselling. Indeed, Soliman (1987) observed that counselling services in the Arab world were only a recent development, and were not widely present.

Brinson and Al-amri (2006) argue that counselling services in the UAE were predominantly focused within elementary and secondary schools. They noted that the idea of a private practitioner relating to mental health counselling did not really exist. Brinson and Al-amri (2006) therefore devised and tested a new survey which was completed by 141 undergraduate students. The questionnaire asked the students about their perceptions of the importance of counselling throughout society in the UAE, and also about the role of the school counsellor in society (Brinson and Al-amri, 2006). Brinson and Al-amri (2006) found that in general, students held favourable views towards the role of the counsellor.

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It should be noted however, that the majority of those individual students that were questioned were female.

Khansa (2015) observes that school counselling in Lebanon is still considered to be a relatively new profession, and it has not been formally included in the education process. Because of this, school counselling retains more flexibility in terms of its potential development, but also at the same time retaining more ambiguity because of this (Khansa, 2015). Khansa (2015) therefore undertook a study to investigate the perceptions of teachers towards school counsellors in Lebanon. The study used semi-structured interviews with 100 teachers taken from thirteen private schools located in Lebanon (Khansa, 2015). The interviews were analysed using descriptive qualitative grounded theory in order to identify how teachers viewed school counsellors and why they held such views (Khansa, 2015).

It was found that many of the teachers knew the role of the school counsellor, even if they did not have a counsellor in their school, or even if they did not have a licensed school counsellor (Khansa, 2015). This included the job of the counsellor based on what the counsellor does in the school (Khansa, 2015). The robustness of the findings can be called into question however. Khansa (2015, p.385) states "Since teachers did not have enough workshops to know the exact job of the counsellor, they were general and unspecific." This shows that it might have been the case that the teachers had a basic understanding, but not detailed understanding of the role of the counsellor. Although the study did not explain the difference between a licensed school counsellor or a counsellor, it is likely the case that the licensed school counsellor would be regulated by a national regulatory authority.

Khansa (2015) found that teachers who had the longest teaching experience demonstrated different negative perceptions of school counsellors. Khansa (2015) believed that this might be owing to these teachers drawing upon a time when school counselling was not present in schools and such services were looked down upon or misunderstood. Other teachers had also stated that they believed the counsellors to lack sufficient training, since the counsellors were believed to be fresh graduates with a general counselling degree or a psychology degree (Khansa, 2015). The previous experience of a school counsellor may therefore affect the degree to which others within the school setting accept a school counsellor and are willing to work effectively with a school counsellor.

The study also found that none of the teachers were satisfied with the counselling services that were available in Lebanon. Khansa (2015, p.385) noted:

Most teachers interviewed are aware of the fact that a student's academic achievement might be blocked if he/she is facing any kind of non-academic

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problem, however, not all of them would refer to the counselor but instead deal with it on their own. That could be the case due to our culture and religion that makes the family come first.

Al-Sheerawi (2005) undertook a study which sought to identify sources of stress, coping strategies, and counselling needs for university students in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The study used a mixed methods approach with two hundred university students (female, n=80, male, n=120) completing a constructed and standardised stress questionnaire (Al-Sheerawi, 2005). The study sought to identify the main sources of stress that affect level of stress, coping strategies and counselling needs, and whether gender and locality affected these areas at all (Al-Sheerawi, 2005). It also sought to investigate whether there existed any type of relationship between sources of stress and coping strategies (Al-Sheerawi, 2005).

The study found that students viewed time management as the most frequent source of stress, followed by religious, ethical, academic, and family domains (Al-Sheerawi, 2005). The study found that the most used coping strategies were accepting responsibility, followed by positive reappraisal, problem solving, escape avoidance, and distancing strategies (Al-Sheerawi, 2005). Al-Sheerawi (2005) also found that locality had a significant effect on counselling needs, so that non-home students experienced a greater need for counselling than home-students. Al-Sheerawi (2005, p.1) states:

The results from this study suggest that university students do experience a significant level of stressful life events. Therefore, it is important that counsellors and teachers address the impact of stressful life events on a university student's well being. Conducting ongoing assessments of the level of stress experienced by university students might help counsellors or teachers intervene earlier and hence target better services to the population of students. Also, considering the unique sources for minority students, counsellors or teachers more appropriately should target unique interventions to meet their needs.

Although the present research study relates to school counsellors in Saudi schools, it is very important to note that any other research into counselling services in the Middle East including higher education establishments, universities, and other institutions, may be helpful in building up what Morocco (1978) labelled an "indigenous philosophy of counselling" in the Middle East. Given the distinct lack of research on counselling services provided in the Middle East, and in particular Saudi Arabia, it is argued that a narrow focus on only school-based counselling studies may inadvertently miss research studies that may help to provide insights that may guide school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia. For

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example the domains identified by Al-Sheerawi (2005) (religious, ethical, academic, family), may also be relevant for children in schools in Saudi Arabia. The coping strategies for avoiding stress identified might also be applied in practice in Saudi schools (Al-Sheerawi, 2005).

### **FOCUSING DOWN: SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN SAUDI ARABIA**

In contrast to school counselling which has become well-established in the UK and in other developed countries such as the US, it can be argued that school counselling in Saudi Arabia is relatively undeveloped. This is a similar theme that has been identified in other Middle Eastern countries. There are many possible reasons why this may be the case. For example, it may be a lack of incentives, or a lack of school support or investment, or it may even be because of cultural reasons. It is helpful if we begin with the general premise that counselling for adults has been proven to work. For example, the massive research project carried out by Smith *et al.* (1980), concluded that "all psychotherapies – verbal or behavioural, psychodynamic, person-centred or systemic, - were beneficial to clients, and were consistently effective" (Lines 2011, p.5).

Nevertheless, it cannot be presumed that simply because the counselling of adults works in practice that the counselling of children and adolescents in schools will also work. There may be a range of moderating factors that influence whether counselling in schools is effective or not. However, as the previous review of the literature has shown, school counselling efforts have also been successful in the UK and internationally (Pybis *et al.*, 2012; Rupani *et al.*, 2012; Cooper, 2013; BACP, 2015). The literature has demonstrated that counselling in schools can provide a real benefit to children and adolescents, as it provides a way to help them address a range of feelings. The problems that children and adolescents face in Saudi Arabia may be different, but they are still nevertheless problems.

If school-based counselling has been demonstrated to provide positive results in schools all around the world, it is worthwhile investigating if it has the potential to benefit schools in Saudi Arabia. In order to do so a number of questions must be asked and answered. This includes questions such as "To what extent has school counselling in Saudi Arabia being developed?", "To what extent school counselling culturally appropriate within Saudi schools?", and "What barriers and challenges currently exist to developing school counselling more effectively in schools in Saudi Arabia?"

It is important to ask and answer such questions because it cannot be taken for granted that because school counselling works in schools in other countries it will work in Saudi Arabia. This is because Saudi society is normally conservative with tribal and familial influences. Therefore in theory it may be the case that students and their parents and

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family do not want school counsellors who are not family, or closely related, to listen to what they may consider private and confidential issues. Indeed it was even recently identify in the news that private schools were banned from hiring expatriate school counsellors because of issues regarding the confidentiality of Saudi families (Saudi Gazette, 2014b). In reality then it is highly likely that Western style school counselling practices may have to be specifically modified, changed, or adapted to the Saudi school setting, to better reflect cultural, religious, social, and local moderating factors.

It would seem to be the case that cultural barriers exist, and Saudi culture may be different in that it does not facilitate openness of students, or school counselling may not be seen as sufficiently 'mainstream' yet (i.e. teachers and head teachers do not believe it will make much impact on students) (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c; Al-Ghamdi, 2015). Alternatively, it may be that it is not receiving enough administrative, social and other support by teachers, head teachers, and the school in general. Equally, it may be that it is not accepted in the same way that general teaching is accepted by schools. Saudi people may view academic training as a positive and necessary experience for young people, whereas social-emotional or psychological developmental approaches to well-being may be seen as unnecessary, excessive, or even disproportionate responses to 'children's problems'.

Al-Ghamdi (2015) has argued that career school counsellors in Saudi Arabia have to deal with a number of obstacles in their daily work. One problem is that there is no comprehensible illustration of the role of career counselling in Saudi schools for administrators, students, teachers, parents and counsellors (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). Al-Ghamdi (2015) adds that, even though the Saudi Ministry of Education has established a school counselling service, it does not fulfil its purpose in satisfying the needs of the vast majority of students. Al-Ghamdi (2015) undertook a study of the problems faced in career counselling in private girls' schools in Saudi Arabia.

It used two focus group discussions with a group of 15 participants, together with a survey using a self-reporting questionnaire that was distributed to 55 female counsellors from private schools in Jeddah (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). The study found that the counselling process was not effective because of a number of factors. These included non-provision of training, lack of interpretation of psychological tests administered, and bad handling of legal issues (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). The study also found that school counsellors faced a number of ethnic and cultural issues, including a lack of support from parents, and parental pressures and family values impeding career counselling because of gender discrimination by families in choice of employment and career (Al-Ghamdi, 2015).



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Al-Ghamdi (2015) also found that students did not trust counsellors as they were considered to be outsiders or strangers, and so did not want to disclose their personal or academic problems to them (Al-Ghamdi, 2015). Al-Ghamdi (2015, p.6115) observed that "The school counsellors also reported that some students had previous experiences of fear or betrayal or distrust in a school setting due to administration, School head or teachers that makes them reluctant to share their goals and expectations."

Some of these issues can be seen in research carried out on school counselling in Saudi Arabia. Abu-Rasain and Williams (1999) carried out a longitudinal study (1 year) of peer counselling in a boys' secondary school in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was to provide individual support to students, as well as improving the social environment and reducing pupil loneliness. The research used interviews, questionnaires, school records, psychological tests, and focus groups (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999). It was found that there were significant positive changes in 'guidance' and 'reliable alliance', and also that the number of problems presented to the school counsellor were reduced (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999).

However, it was also found that "Whilst teaching staff were unsupportive of the programme, clients valued the service and peer counsellors themselves profited through increased self-esteem" (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999, p.493). This research provides some support to the argument that school counsellors in Saudi Arabia can provide a valuable service to students and can impact them positively. Although it is accepted that this study was only based on peer counselling, nevertheless, another question that arises from this research is why the teaching staff were unsupportive of the programme?

In answering this question, it may be useful to take a look at the research carried out by Al-Ghamdi and Riddick (2011). They aimed to study the different perceptions of school head teachers (principals), regarding the 'actual' role and 'ideal' role for school counsellors in Saudi intermediate girls' schools. The research used a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews to gather data on principals' perceptions. It was found that many differences existed in what principals thought the role of the school counsellor should be, and that this "suggests a potential for ambiguity and role conflict" (Al-Ghamdi and Riddick, 2011, p.347). In light of problems faced by school counsellors being accepted in schools, Al-Ghamdi and Riddick (2011) therefore recommended that in order to improve the overall quality of counselling services in Saudi schools, there should be an increased awareness of all school stakeholders regarding the availability of counselling services.

It may also be that 'Western-style' counselling research or methods may not automatically transfer to Saudi schools. For example, Saleh (1987) argued that the theories, models, research findings and techniques of natural sciences could easily be transmitted from

industrialized countries to developing non-western countries. But those of behavioural sciences were more controversial, especially for the Arab world, whose culture was very different to the West, meaning that there were cultural implications for counselling in the Arab World. (Saleh, 1983, p.71).

## **HEALTH AND OTHER ISSUES POTENTIALLY AFFECTING STUDENTS IN SAUDI SCHOOLS**

A review of the literature has demonstrated that there are a number of health trends that can be identified that are relevant to students in Saudi schools. These health trends include general problems with health issues, high levels of anxiety and depression, high levels of overweight and obesity, and high levels of diabetes in Saudi schools. These health and other issues will be identified and discussed in more depth, with a view to demonstrating a clear need for the counselling of certain students in schools in Saudi Arabia.

### **General health and other problems in Saudi school**

There are a number of health problems and other problems that can be identified to exist in schools in Saudi. For instance, Alqahtani (2015) carried out a study of 315 teachers in 50 schools based in the Khamis Mushate region. Alqahtani (2015) found that 72.7% of teachers in those schools had witnessed epileptic fits, but what was more worrying was that 64.7% of those teachers had not actually been able to provide first aid to those students. Aloola *et al.* (2015) investigated whether schools in Saudi Arabia needed a school-based asthma educational programme. It used a sample of 1,139 teachers and 82 managers located across 89 primary schools operating in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Aloola *et al.*, 2015). The study found that there was a significant lack of school policies and first-aid policies relating to the treatment of asthma in these schools. Many of the participants noted that there was a clear need for asthma education in Saudi schools as a majority of the managers and teachers in these schools had insufficient knowledge of asthma treatment and care (Aloola *et al.*, 2015).

AlMakadmaa (2015) carried out a study of 1,688 students to investigate school risk behaviours in high schools located in Riyadh. The study found that high proportions of student skilled classes at school (20%, 3 hours or more; 37% between 1-3 hours; 5% at least one hour). AlMakadmaa (2015) also found that a large percentage (37%) of students had taken part in theft, fights, or damaging school property. AlMakadmaa (2015) noted that there was a clear need to put in place new strategies or mechanisms to promote positive student behaviour. AlBuhairan (2015) carried out a large study of 12,575 adolescents located across thirteen regions in Saudi Arabia. There were a number of risk behaviours that were identified, including violence, dietary and sedentary behaviours,

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bullying, and tobacco use (AlBuhairan, 2015). The study found that 14.3% of the adolescents had signs that indicated depression, 28% of them had a chronic health condition, and 30% of them were overweight or obese.

Gawwad (2008) undertook a study that investigated the knowledge, attitudes, and management practices of teachers with regards to diabetes in Saudi schools. The study was carried out on 177 teachers located in girls and boys primary and intermediate schools located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Gawwad (2008) found that the attitudes of teachers towards diabetes education and management was negative. The former Chairman of the Saudi Society of Gynecology and Maternity in Saudi Arabia, Professor Hasan Jamal, believes there are a number of health issues prevalent in Saudi Arabia. He noted that conditions such as breast cancer, blood pressure problems, obesity, diabetes, and other diseases were present in Saudi Arabia "at staggering and astronomical levels" (Saudi Gazette, 2014a). Professor Jamal noted that there was a clear lack of health education programmes in Saudi Arabia as well as problems in existing health awareness programmes (Saudi Gazette, 2014a).

### **Anxiety and depression in Saudi school students**

There are a number of articles in the literature that have been identified that show moderate to high levels of anxiety and depression in Saudi schools. For example, Ahmed and Alrowaily (2015) undertook a research study to investigate the levels of anxiety and depression present in 331 secondary school students (15-18 years) located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They found that 28.4% of those students suffered from depression and 25.7% of those students suffered from anxiety. These are significantly high levels of anxiety and depression found among a large sample of students. Koenig *et al.* (2014) undertook another research study of individuals (1-20 years) that were attending child psychiatry clinics located in Saudi Arabia.

Koenig *et al.* (2014) found that there was an overall high prevalence of depression and anxiety, this included conditions such as attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, mood disorder, and anxiety disorder. There were many symptoms identified as well, including high levels of hyperactivity, poor school performance, anxiety, impulsivity, and concentration and attention problems (Koenig *et al.*, 2014). These are precisely the types of problems and conditions that teachers in Saudi schools should be looking out for in order to pass these concerns on to school counsellors. The school counsellors would then be ideally placed to discuss these issues with students with a view to identifying the underlying problems or disorders and the origins of these problems and disorders.

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Al-Gelban (2007) undertook a research study to investigate the prevalence of depression, stress, and anxiety in a sample of 1,723 students (male) in schools located in the city of Abha, Saudi Arabia. Al-Gelban (2007) found that 59.4% of these students suffered from one of these disorders, 40.7% suffered from at least two disorders, and 22.6% suffered from all three disorders. Al-Gelban *et al.* (2009) undertook a study into levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in 545 female students that were based in Abha. Al-Gelban *et al.* (2009) found that 73.4% of these students demonstrated signs of at least one disorder, and 50.1% of them demonstrated signs of at least two disorders.

Ghazwani *et al.* (2016) carried out a study of 454 secondary school boys (15-20 years) in Abha. The study showed high levels of social anxiety disorder (SAD) in those schools. The prevalence of more severe SAD was 11.4%, the prevalence of severe SAD was 36%, and the prevalence of SAD was 11.7%. Overall, these are very high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in male and female Students in Saudi Arabia. Clearly these students would seem to be facing significant problems that are leading to these high levels of stress, anxiety, and even depression.

Raheel (2015) undertook a study of 1,028 adolescent girls (15-19 years) located in secondary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Raheel (2015) found that approximately 30% of these girls were depressed. Raheel (2015) noted that teachers could be helped to identify signs of depression. Asal and Abdel-Fattah (2007) carried out a research study to investigate the prevalence and risk factors for 490 (males, N=306, females, N=184) high school students located in Taif, Saudi Arabia. They found that 3.7% of these students showed signs of very severe depression, 7.3% of them showed signs of severe depression, and 22.4% showed signs of moderate depression (Asal and Abdel-Fattah, 2007). Asal and Abdel-Fatth (2007) believed that it was important to try to put some kind of framework in place for early recognition and intervention.

### **Overweight and obesity in Saudi schools**

Overweight and obesity is generally defined as abnormal or excessive accumulation of fat that may impair health (WHO, 2015). The body mass index (BMI) is a weight-for-height index which is typically used to classify overweight and obesity. The BMI is measured by dividing somebody's weight in kilograms by their height in meters (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) (WHO, 2015). An individual who has a BMI that is 25 or greater than 25 is overweight (WHO, 2015). An individual who has a BMI that is 30, or greater than 30 is obese (WHO, 2015). In 2014 more than 1.9 billion people aged 18 or over were overweight, with 600 million of these people being obese (WHO, 2015).

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Overweight and obesity are known to be linked to more deaths around the world as compared to underweight, and most of the world's population live in countries where overweight and obesity kill more people than underweight (WHO, 2015). El-Hazmi and Warsy (1997) undertook a study of 14,660 adult Saudi males and females in Saudi Arabia. It was found that 27.98% out of a sample of 1033 males present in the Western Region were overweight, and 16.55% of these were obese (El-Hazmi and Warsy, 1997). Out of a sample of 1358 females, 24.15% of those were found to be overweight, and 21.8% of these were found to be obese (El-Hazmi and Warsy, 1997).

Al-Nuaim (1996) showed that out of 9,061 school children (6-18 years) the prevalence of overweight (11.7%) and obesity (15.8%) were strikingly high. Another study using Saudi reference data showed that out of 19,317 children and adolescents the prevalence of overweight (21.3%), obesity (9.3%), and severe obesity (2.0%) were all significantly high (El-Mouzan *et al.*, 2010). El-Mouzan *et. al* (2010) believed that it was imperative that action be taken to try to prevent a rise in the significant number of overweight and obese children and adolescents in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Hazaa (2012) carried out a longitudinal study (10 years) of 2,906 school children (14-19 years) in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Al-Hazaa (2012) found that young children and adolescents had less active lifestyles, with less physical activity levels and with increasingly sedentary lifestyles owing to sedentary activities such as watching television or video. Al-Hazaa (2012) believed that it was absolutely crucial that the Saudi Government should make obesity a national priority in order to promote more healthy and active lifestyles for children and adolescents in Saudi schools.

### **Diabetes in Saudi schools**

Holt (2004) has estimated that the number of people in the world that have diabetes is around 20 million. Approximately 86,000 children are estimated to develop type one diabetes mellitus every year (IDF, 2015). Saudi Arabia has the third largest incidence of diabetes globally (31.4 per 100,000) (Diabetes UK, 2014), and the prevalence of type one diabetes mellitus is estimated to be around 109.5 per 100,000 children and adolescents (Alherbish *et al.*, 2008). Al-Khader (2001) is of the opinion that the prevalence of diabetes in Saudi Arabia is set to rapidly rise to become one of the highest in the world in the next few years. The high prevalence of diabetes has been estimated to reach 40-50% levels by 2020 (Al-Khader, 2001).

These levels are highly significant because the literature has demonstrated that hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia can significantly affect the performance of children in assessment situations within the context of the school (Desrocher, 2004). Meo *et al.*

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(2013) carried out a study to investigate the impact of type one diabetes mellitus on academic performance. The study investigated 72 students (36 non-diabetic, 36 diabetic) from schools (N=8) based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Meo *et al.*, 2013). Meo *et al.* (2013) found that students with type one diabetes mellitus demonstrated a significantly lower overall academic performance compared with their non-diabetic peers.

Al-Mutairi (2015) carried out a study of beliefs relating to the prevention of diabetes mellitus on 426 non-diabetic students based in secondary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Al-Mutairi (2015) found that a very high number of students did not know how severe the type two diabetes mellitus was and the risk factors associated with it. Abahussain (2005) carried out a study to identify the knowledge levels of 91 female diabetic school teachers located in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Abahussain (2005) found that they showed low levels of understanding of hypoglycemia symptoms, there was a low level of knowledge in general about diabetes mellitus, and their understanding of diabetes was inadequate.

### **CULTURAL ISSUES POTENTIALLY AFFECTING SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN SAUDI SCHOOLS**

There are a number of cultural issues that may need to be taken into account when considering counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia. Firstly, in Saudi Arabia, society in general operates in a closed type of community, or in very family-like communities (Champion, 2005). They tend to rely on familial ties or only move in close or family circles. The researcher Hofstede believed this to represent a high 'Power-Distance' culture (Hofstede 1983; 1984). It is noted that Dr Geert Hofstede conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on how values in the workplace are influenced by culture, using and analysing data collected from over 100,000 individuals from forty countries (1967-1973) (Cyborlink, 2014). Indeed Bhagat and McQuaid (1982) believed it to be one of the most significant cross-cultural studies of work-related values.

Using the data Hofstede formulated a model which identified 'dimensions' which differentiated cultures, namely 'Power-Distance', 'Individualism', 'Masculinity', and 'Uncertainty Avoidance' (Cyborlink, 2014). Jones (2007, p.4) explains that Power-Distance is the degree to which unequal distribution of power and wealth is tolerated by a culture; Individualism is a measure of whether people prefer to work by themselves or in groups; Masculinity has to do with the extent to which masculine traits (e.g. authority, assertiveness, performance) are preferred by a culture over feminine traits (e.g. personal relationships, welfare); and Uncertainty Avoidance is "the extent to which people are threatened by a lack of structure or by uncertain events".

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Applying the Hofstede model in Saudi Arabia means that a high Power-Distance culture means that people in Saudi society accept the existing unequal distribution of power, and accept the rights and views of those in power or who have authority. School counselling in schools may therefore be viewed within this Saudi social hierarchy. Indeed previous research has shown that negative perceptions of school counselling by principals (i.e. school head teachers) can have a negative effect overall on other peoples' views of school counselling within the school setting in Saudi Arabia (Al-Ghamdi and Riddick, 2011).

Saudis may also show low levels of intercultural sensitivity, so according to the 'Bennett Scale' (the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity), some might be classified as being in the 'Denial of Difference' stage of development (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2004). This means that Saudis might view their own culture as being the "only" culture, and might be uninterested or unsympathetic to other cultures or influences. Identifying the stage of intercultural sensitivity development in Saudi schools (e.g. *denial* → *defence* → *minimisation* → *acceptance* → *adaptation* → *integration*) might therefore help to bring increased acceptance, adaptation, and eventually integration of 'Western' school counselling practices (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2004).

For Saudi Muslims, there would also not seem to be a separation between religion and normal life, religion is normal life. Therefore in theory Western school counselling practices that conflict with Shari'ah religious beliefs or teachings will not be generally accepted or tolerated by Saudi society. This may put Saudi school counsellors in an incredibly difficult position – do they counsel students on what is right according to morality or what is right according to Shari'ah principles? What should Islamic Saudi school counsellors say about Christian or Buddhist beliefs? What should they say to students who do not want to believe in the Islamic religion? What should they say about sex outside of marriage? What should they say about homosexual rights? What should they say about marriage outside of Bedouin tribal circles? The academic literature that provides any insight into these difficulties or problems faced by Saudi counsellors is either extremely limited or does not exist.

### **SAUDI SHARI'AH RELIGION AND MASCULINE AND FEMININE PERSPECTIVES**

Saudi Arabia is also governed by *Shari'ah* or Muslim law, which is based on long-established religious principles. In schools this means that girls and boys must attend separate schools and be taught separately. These religious aspects of *Shari'ah* law also mean that Saudi Arabia has a society that also reflects a dominant masculine culture (Haddad *et al.*, 1997; Buys and Macuiba, 2012). It may therefore be the case that for

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example, girls in Saudi schools do not feel 'right' or comfortable talking to school counsellors, or describing their personal feelings to strangers.

This may also reflect a passive, submissive or deferential culture for Saudi girls (Hamdan, 2005; Mondal, 2005; Mogul, 2012). On the other hand, this may also be true for boys because they feel they must uphold the masculinity of the family, and therefore do not want to be sharing personal problems with strangers as it may make them look weak. Indeed in Saudi Arabia there is also a very dominant male culture, which means that in many parts of society males still control females.

For example, females have to be escorted wherever they go, so as can be imagined this creates problems for females too. Máirtín Mac an Ghail previously argued that in boys schools in the UK there was growing professional concern in education about boys schooling underachievement, and that this was framed in terms of a 'crisis masculinity' (Mac an Ghail, 1996). Haywood and Mac and Ghail (2003, p.68) also argued that school cultures were developing from different types of masculinities in the UK, and that:

Generationally specific class fractions are responding to emerging politicized schooling agendas in differentiated ways. Students from a social justice inspired middle-class background reject traditional academic routes; they hold middle-class values but operate with anti-schooling responses.

But these types of developments are very different to Saudi schooling. It can actually be argued that instead of a crisis in masculinity, there exists a crisis in femininity in Saudi schools, as there is not only female educational underachievement, but culturally, it may even be expected (Sallam and Hunter, 2013). Saudi tribalism is still strong and influential, and is ruled by a male and patriarchal culture (Reuters, 2012). Not only this, but in contrast to differentiation of boys in the UK and "class fractions", boys schooling in Saudi Arabia promotes conformity and conservatism. It could even be argued that it is boys that are favoured and girls that are marginalised in Saudi Arabia (Asia News, 2013; Sallam and Hunter, 2013). Therefore there is potentially a need for an increasingly feminist perspective as opposed to a masculine perspective in Saudi schooling. For example, many Saudis expect girls to assume traditional Saudi roles, and for instance, in Bedouin tribes Bedouin women are only allowed to marry inside their group, and inheritances are only passed down to males (Bethany World Prayer Center, 1997).

Maisel and Shoup (2009, p.63) have argued that Bedouin culture continues to have an impact on the formation of national identity, and that "Moral values, traditions, and customs of the Bedouin are now increasingly promoted and largely accepted in the entire society of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia." Harper *et al.* (2007, p.13) note that "At the core of



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Arab culture are the nomadic Bedouin tribes that, for thousands of years, herded camels, sheep, and goats on the desert fringes of the Arab world." They also observe that although Saudi Arabia is home to the most honoured Bedouins, the camel herders, there are different cultural influences now because oil has brought wealth to Saudis but Saudis still "remain very conservative and cling tightly to their Bedouin culture and religious values" (Harper *et al.*, 2007, p.14).

Podikunju-Hussain (2006, p.103) has also argued that "Muslims who identify with Islamic values need to know that counselors are open and understanding of their perspective and will not try to change it". It is also noted that these types of Muslims may consider all concerns to be potentially religious issues, so they may be less likely to get counselling services in the first place because they would prefer a religious or Islamic viewpoint (Podikunju-Hussain, 2006, p.105). The religious culture may also affect how students relate to school counsellors in Saudi Arabia, since some schools may have foreign or Western school counsellors.

For example, Podikunju-Hussain (2006, p.105) believes that "Muslim clients may see the non-Muslim counselor as representing the views of a biased society", i.e. Western society is biased against the religious and cultural practices of Islam. Sumari and Jalal (2008, p.31) point out that some Muslims may be suspicious towards anything that originated in the West, and Western countries are often labelled as evil or as trying to undermine Muslim cultural traditions. This may mean that some Saudi students see school counselling as being Western-based and may therefore automatically reject it because of cultural traditions. Indeed Hays (1999, pp.336-337) has argued that:

The effective and ethical practice of counselling demands that coun-selors of diverse cultural identities think critically about their own perspectives and work continually to overcome their own biases.

There are therefore potentially many issues which may make providing effective counselling services more difficult for school counsellors in Saudi Arabia. Hays (1999, p.334) therefore sets out a number of cultural factors which school counsellors should take into account when providing counselling services, including: age; disability; religion; ethnicity; social status; sexual orientation; indigenous heritage; national origin; and gender.

### **THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF SAUDI *BEDOUIN* CULTURE**

Farsoun (2013, pp.59-60) has also argued that this contrast is still evident in Saudi social and political cultures, as although Saudi Arabia has introduced the most sophisticated

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technologies, Saudi social structures are still primarily Bedouin in character and there is an overwhelmingly Bedouin Saudi political culture. In the Saudi Bedouin culture, families still do not like their girls going to University or to work, and they prefer them to stay at home, get married and have children. It is still a very traditional culture in many places. In fact, even after finishing secondary school many Saudi families still believe that female students should stay at home, so it causes many problems for females in terms of how they feel.

They often feel that life is unfair or they feel oppressed, and this may cause emotional problems for them at school, or affect how they cope with schoolwork. Other problems arise because of the cultural power-tribe tradition in Saudi Arabia. If you do not come from a 'high quality' tribe in Saudi Society then you will have many problems and you may not be happy in your life. Big families mean power and authority in Saudi Arabia, but those who do not have tribes or connections are weak, and this may strongly affect children at school. Families from high quality tribes will not give their daughter to date or get married to weak families, so some older children may face problems. It is still difficult as many Saudi tribes prefer to keep marriage inside the family, from the same tribe, and so many females feel sad, depressed, or oppressed.

### **SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICES IN SAUDI ARABIA**

Despite these difficulties, many schools in Saudi Arabia now have a range of school counselling services available for students (Harris, 2013; Guardian Jobs, 2014; Uniagents, 2014). Indeed Saudi Arabia started to develop a national counselling and guidance program many years ago (Saleh, 1987). A practical example is the Jeddah Knowledge International School which states that students can arrange meetings with either an 'academic counsellor' or a 'social counsellor' (JKIS, 2013). In terms of the academic counsellor, it is noted that students are encouraged to talk with school counselors and teachers (or the Head of School) in order to learn more about the curriculum and course offerings. In terms of the social counselor, it is noted that students can make an appointment with the social counsellor directly, and also that this counsellor can assist students "with a wide range of personal concerns including such areas as social, family, emotional or academic needs" (JKIS, 2013). There are also school counsellor positions advertised online in Saudi Arabia. For example, one position advertised for a private sector employer in Dammam, was seeking a male, mid-career school counsellor (BAYT, 2013). The position required only High School or Diploma qualifications as well as a reasonable level of English, and paid Saudi Arabian Riyals (SAR) 45,000 per year, as well as SAR 28,000 (housing allowance), SAR 4,000 (transport allowance), and medical/social insurance (total SAR 77,000 (approximately £12,737)) (BAYT, 2013).

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The duties and responsibilities listed included things such as:

- (a) providing one-on-one or group school counselling and advisory sessions (including advice relating to training, disciplinary, attendance, or personal issues);
- (b) supporting students, instructors, Seniors and Training Managers to resolve their complaints/grievances which are raised by other students or faculty;
- (c) maintaining up-to-date school counselling and support records;
- (d) counselling and advising students about attendance and punctuality issues;
- (e) counselling and advising 'at risk' students about academic, technical training or class performance issues;
- (f) supporting students with 'exceptional' medical or personal issues;
- (g) assisting and supporting students with all matters relating to sponsoring companies, accommodation, travel documents, orientation, extra-curricular activities, and student recruitment activities (BAYT, 2013).

Although this type of job specification shows in some detail what school counsellors will be doing, it also shows potential difficulties with the position. For example, a salary of £12,737 is quite low and is very unlikely to attract degree qualified applicants. Also, all that is required in terms of qualifications is High School or Diploma qualifications, and not any specific counselling qualifications or training. Also, the job specification does not list any cultural duties or responsibilities. This means that it is very likely that the position will need "on-the-job training", and so school counsellors will have to obtain experience through their job, as well as learning about religious or cultural Islamic influences. This may be difficult for a young school counsellor to quickly learn about. For example, Thompson (2012, p.313) states that during the month of Ramadan in the Muslim calendar, self-discipline and purification are a religious requirement, so school counsellors need to be aware of this as fasting may be wrongly interpreted as child neglect by school personnel.

### **IDENTIFYING EMERGING PROBLEMS WITH SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GAP IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE**

As was noted in the introductory chapter, there has been very little published research that has been undertaken in school counselling in Saudi Arabia. There is either very dated research (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999; Saleh, 1987), or the research has been undertaken as part of a postgraduate thesis (e.g. Al-Ghamdi, 1999; Al-Ghamdi, 2010; Al-

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Ghamdi and Riddick, 2011). Identifying the gap in the existing literature is therefore easy because there is virtually no research that exists on school counselling in Saudi Arabia.

Drawing on my 16 years of professional experience in school counselling in Saudi schools, there are many problems that exist in practice but which have not been covered anywhere in the existing literature and therefore cannot be academically referenced. However, the evidence that I provide here is based on my experience undertaking research into school counselling practices in schools in Saudi Arabia for my masters degree undertaken at Nottingham University. As it is from my own subjective experiences, I will note here that the reader should decide themselves about its trustworthiness. During the course of 16 years of employment in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, I have seen first-hand that school counsellors become bored with their work, or feel negative about their work because they feel that teachers do not support or respect them (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c).

Because of the education system in Saudi Arabia, other school counsellors may not actually have any special knowledge or training about school counselling, or they may lack a minimum level of suitable qualifications (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). For instance many school counsellors in Saudi schools hold degrees in areas such as art, sports, or geography, so although they are educated individuals, they are not properly educated or qualified in providing counselling services. There are other problems that may exist in practice as well. For example there is a general lack of financial support from the Saudi Ministry of Education, which means that school counsellors cannot be properly trained on the job (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c).

Some secondary schools in Saudi Arabia may not provide sufficient support for school counsellors, as some school counsellors do not have any administrative support and may feel overburdened with their workloads. There are also further difficulties in practice, for example schools do not provide special rooms or other facilities so students can be counselled in practice (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). Saudi school teachers' attitudes are also often unhelpful or uncooperative, as they believe that it is the duty of school counsellors to solve all behavioural issues with students. This means that there is often an uncooperative atmosphere with other school teachers, and they do not want to get involved (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c).

School counsellors also encounter difficulties when communicating with students' parents. Parents are also often uncooperative because of cultural reasons, for example because parents are reluctant to discuss their child's problems with any person who is not a close family member (i.e. close ties, tribes, and familial bonds in Saudi Arabia). Other problems include counsellors being given extra work to do beyond their role; insufficient training or

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unqualified counsellors; an insufficient number of counsellors; and a lack of guidance or details of the school counsellor job specification (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). Some of the counsellors are unaware of their own role leading to them being poorly prepared for their task. So overall, it would seem to be the case that there are difficulties with communication; teacher and head teacher support; government support; cooperation from parents; and perhaps a lack of greater appreciation or understanding of the importance of the role that school counsellors play in students' lives.

School counselling is an area which has developed significantly over the past ten to twenty years, and is practised widely in many countries across the world. In the US, it has broader aims and is perhaps focused on providing vocational support for children and young people in schools. In the UK it has become a separate profession, and school counsellors in schools are normally highly qualified and experienced. It has been seen that although school counsellors have become more widespread in Saudi Arabia, a large number of problems and difficulties still exist in practice. There is only a limited amount of academic literature covering school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, and this also means that there is a limited knowledge of school counselling practices. This is an unfortunate situation because school counselling could significantly benefit children and young people in Saudi schools. Saudi Arabia is a developing country which is still undergoing cultural and social development.

In addition to religious Islamic separation of males and females in the Saudi school system, there may often be cultural conflicts between older, conservative, and more traditional Saudi values, and modern 'imported' Western beliefs about democracy, or a modern technologically-focused society. Children and young people may not only face more traditional social challenges such as bullying and peer pressure, but they may face personal religious and moral challenges as well at an early age. It has been seen that there is also a significantly high prevalence of overweight and obesity, diabetes, and anxiety and depression in Saudi adolescents of school age. The literature would tend to suggest that staff and teachers are inadequately prepared to deal with health issues such as diabetes, overweight, obesity, anxiety, depression, and epilepsy in schools in Saudi Arabia.

In addition to these issues, there are other difficulties that Saudi students may face. In theory counselling in Saudi schools could help to support students but in practice school counselling in Saudi schools has faced a number of challenges. For example, schools do not have separate counselling departments or dedicated budgets; counsellors are often not suitably qualified; school counsellors often experience problems regarding cooperation and status; there is a lack of financial support, as well as a lack of parental and school

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support in some cases. Identifying and examining the current problems that school counsellors face in Saudi schools can therefore be said to be a current challenge for Saudi schools as well as the Saudi government. Consequently, future research into this area might be able to provide greater insight into developing the professionalism of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ORIENTATION, DESIGN AND ANALYSIS**

### **CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the theoretical approach to research design that was used in this research study, as well as discussing research methods and the practical research methodology that was implemented in this research study. The chapter will therefore set out the approach to the PhD research study, the orientation to knowledge, and the overall design of the research project. It will set out my chosen research paradigm, the philosophical perspective adopted, and the choice of methodology and research methods. It will also set out the research question, the aims and research objectives. In terms of research methodology, it will describe how the relevant research data was collected and analysed, why the semi-structured interview method was chosen, how the interview guide was created, and sampling methods used. It will also address issues relating to research ethics, and the practical implementation of content analysis, thematic content analysis, and coding of interview transcripts.

### **SELECTING THE RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The main research question for my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research study involved researching about and understanding the *subjective* attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and understandings of individual school counsellors. This involved carrying out research which targeted, identified, and explored what their individual feelings, beliefs, knowledge, achievements, experiences, and opinions were. These are all aspects of their subjective personal experience that cannot be empirically observed, identified and tested scientifically. Johnson and Christensen (2011, p.380) note that "Positivism is the idea that only what we can empirically observe is important and that science is the only true source of knowledge." By 'empirically observe' we mean what can be physically identified through scientific testing or observation. So in practice the positivist research philosophy means that only observable phenomena are important for the purposes of research, and that other aspects of human experiencing, such as feelings and thoughts are not important for research because they cannot be proved using scientific methods.

Rubin and Rubin (2011) observe that researchers that use quantitative tools and techniques that focus on counting and measuring are positivists, whereas researchers who prefer qualitative tools of description, questioning, and observation are called naturalists. This is because positivists seek to identify a single universal truth or rule, whereas naturalist or interpretivist researchers accept that the truth is always changing or views

on it may differ, and so they only aim to explain what they see (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The positivist research philosophy which is concerned with scientific testing or observation, is therefore not well-suited to supporting the research study, whereas a post-positivist or interpretivist research philosophy would accept a more realistic view of the importance of these types of subjective personal experiences and beliefs.

According to Patton (1990) a 'research paradigm' is a world view or general perspective, the way the real world is viewed and interpreted. So the research paradigm is an interpretative framework which helps the researcher to study and understand the world, and is guided by a set of beliefs (Guba, 1990). Kumar (2014) explains that there are two main research paradigms, namely *quantitative* and *qualitative*, that form the basis of research methodology in the social sciences. He also notes that the *mixed methods* research paradigm has emerged recently as a way of approaching social enquiry, but that it has not yet developed its own body of investigative methods and procedures.

Kumar explains that the crucial question that divides these two research paradigms "is whether the methodology of the physical sciences can be applied to the study of social phenomena." The quantitative or scientific research paradigm is based in the physical sciences whereas the qualitative research paradigm is not (Kumar, 2014). The research question together with the research aim and objectives, means that the research will not be looking to use a scientific approach to proving pre-existing research hypotheses. Instead, the research will seek to interpret the facts that are uncovered by the researcher. This type of research enquiry will therefore adopt an interpretive (and not scientific) research paradigm, based on qualitative enquiry.

## **PART A: ORIENTATION TO KNOWLEDGE**

### **Researcher Positioning**

Davies and Harré (1999, p.37) define 'positioning' as the "discursive practice whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines". According to Curtis, Murphy and Shields (2014), the positioning a researcher occupies in relation to the research setting, participants and data analysis and presentation, is one of the most important considerations when undertaking social research. They explain that this is because the positioning a researcher adopts may impact and influence the whole research study (Curtis, Murphy and Shields, 2014).

They contrast an 'expert' researcher who is capable of removing himself from the study and providing the research with an objective standpoint, with a subjective researcher (Curtis, Murphy and Shields, 2014). They explain that for a subjective researcher, "the researcher is bound up in the research itself and incapable of presenting anything other



than a partial and subjective account" (Curtis, Murphy and Shields, 2014, p.178).

In practice this subjective viewpoint may affect the way the researcher carries out the research, what methods he uses, and how he interprets the data that is collected. Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (1997, pp.228-229) note that in reality researchers and those being researched "cannot suddenly switch off their personal predilections and purposes and stop being human in the name of 'objective' research". What they are saying is that if a researcher labels research as objective, this can always be questioned because the researcher and the participants are not robots, they will always have feelings, beliefs, opinions and emotions.

These are always difficult to control or to 'turn off' when carrying out a research study. But Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (1997, pp.228-229) also point out that there is a problem when research is called subjective, because there is a danger that the researcher will substitute his or her own views and interpretations of what is happening "for those accounts and evaluations held and acted upon by those (insiders) who are making it happen". Therefore, although research may be labelled subjective the researcher can still aim to view the research from an objective perspective. For example, the researcher can seek to apply the same research procedures to any research participants that are interviewed. The researcher can keep a research journal which will help the researcher to practice reflexivity through the research study. The researcher can also regularly ask for comments and feedback on any work that has been undertaken from colleagues and supervisors, in order to ensure that the views of the researcher do not become too subjective in nature.

By clarifying the positioning of the researcher, the researcher can also identify potential bias in the research, and can clarify the approach that the researcher will or has taken in relation to the research study and the research participants. Khawaja and LercheMørck (2009) have argued that researcher positioning can affect research in theoretical and practical ways. In terms of theory, they say that researcher positioning may involve questions about which theory to use to ask research questions (Khawaja and LercheMørck, 2009):

Within a poststructuralist and social constructionist framework examining researcher positioning means to focus on the relations between the researcher and the informants. It means looking at how social categories such as gender, ethnicity, and religion intersect and affect this relationship (Khawaja and LercheMørck 2009, p.29).

This may mean that social categories such as gender, ethnicity and religion may affect the

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research relationship with the research participants. A Christian researcher may potentially view Muslim research participants differently in a research study on religious views. A female researcher may potentially view male prison inmate participants differently in a research study on prison inmate views on females. What they seem to be saying is that it is important to examine researcher positioning to see if social categories may affect research study relationships in theory. In terms of practical research they say that:

...researcher positioning points to issues of collaboration between the researcher and the co-researchers: the term co-researcher is very central in this regard and it denotes the informants as active participants in the research process. The informants/interviewees become co-researchers when they engage in the common research goal (Khawaja and LercheMørck 2009, p.30).

I feel that is similar to the way that I interacted with the research participants. I had informed the research participants of the aims of the research, but I had also informed them that I wanted to hear their personal views and not what they thought I might want to hear. It was important for me to ensure that the research participants viewed me as a researcher and not in any other role.

#### **TRACING MY JOURNEY: A PERSONAL NARRATIVE**

In light of the ethics of personal writing, I will now take a step back and aim to present to the reader in an objective way my professional journey, in order that the reader can have a better understanding of my researcher positioning. Berman (2001) notes that all types of writing may be risky, and although risky writing tends to be personal writing, not all personal writing is risky. There are risks involved with personal writing, such as regretting personal disclosures because of later criticism, or individuals being retraumatized because of the process of writing (Berman, 2001). Berman (2001, p.22) remarks that "Self-disclosure and shame thus exist in a reciprocal relationship: the more one self-discloses, the greater the threat of shame." Duffy (2017) adds that writing involves ethical decisions because every time we write, we propose a relationship with others, our readers. By proposing such relationships writers raise ethical questions relating to the disclosure of our opinions and beliefs (Duffy, 2017).

The ethics of personal writing addresses a very broad range of ethical issues which researchers need to be aware of in practice. Not only in relation to potential issues relating to criticism, but also to reader trust issues, and both potential positive and negative behavioural outcomes from the writing (Pemberton, 1999; Eakin, 2004). It is important to note that researchers need to take care when disclosing their story, because it has the potential to impact not only themselves, but also others involved within the writing. By

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understanding potential ethical issues that may be involved in personal writing, researchers can identify and understand how their writing may have the potential to impact others, and can then take care when disclosing their story in order to ensure that they acknowledge ethical issues concerning their disclosures (Pemberton, 1999; Eakin, 2004).

After my time at University, I decided to apply to become a teacher. In the Saudi government education system at that time, individuals applied for a general teacher position, and were assigned to a role related to their qualifications. I did one year of primary school teaching and then, because I had graduated in psychology, I was given the position of school counsellor. I remember that I was determined to try hard in this role because it was my first job. I therefore dedicated myself to the position at a Primary School where I spent two years. After that I moved to an Intermediate or Middle School and spent another 4 years as school counsellor there.

I think this was a challenging time for me because I did not have any qualifications in school counselling and I knew little of the practical methods and techniques used for counselling. Although I felt ready for the role at the beginning it also felt like a burden because it was something I had never done before and I did not want to get it wrong. At that time I saw counselling as an opportunity to help others and to develop myself and so I dedicated myself to the role.

After, I moved to a different secondary school in City X. I was loyal to this school because it gave me the opportunity to do something which gave me great joy. Although I had no formal training in school counselling, my motivation came from my life experience and helping others, and trying my best to learn all I could about helping and counselling students. After this I spent around another 8 years as school counsellor at the City X Secondary School. I believe this is where I learnt how to be an effective school counsellor, and how to really help students. I enjoyed the job because I saw students who were similar to the troubled young person I had once been or young people with special needs. Overall I found that persistence and a caring attitude were the best way to win the trust of the students. In a school like City X Secondary School, if your actions are regularly seen by others then people saw what kind of a person I was and how I sought to help students. I think this was helpful in terms of allowing me to develop relationships with students that allowed me to communicate more clearly with them.

I even went out of my way to help poor students who had no clothes or food, I made arrangements for them to have free lunches in the student canteen, which I paid for out of my own pocket. According to my own cherished values, this is what it means to be human, to help those who need help, just as we needed help at one time. My time at City

X Secondary School was happy and interesting because I was able to develop strong relationships with students, and I felt that I was able to give something back by helping those that I saw might have problems. I spent another two years supervising school counsellors in the City X Education Department.

Then another two years later, I was appointed as the Director of School counsellors Programme for the City X Education Department. Me, a poor boy who was born into Bedouin life, a Director of School counsellors! (Alotaibi, 2014c)

I decided to improve my qualifications and moved to the United Kingdom (UK) to study English in 2008. I saw that Saudi Arabia was opening up to foreigners and that it was important to learn English. I spent 2008 studying English at the School of Education in Nottingham and then I studied for a Masters Degree in Counselling Studies at the same University. I graduated with merit and continue to be very proud of my achievement. After that I moved home to continue my position as Director of the School counsellors Programme for the City X Education Department.

### **Professional Influences on Positioning**

Many people measure success by how much money they have, or how many cars or houses they own. But for me, I measure success by the number of people I have been able to help in my life. My name is Turki Al Otaibi. I was previously the Director of the School counselling Programme at the Education Department in 'City X', a small provincial city geographically located in central Saudi Arabia in the Najd region. I was responsible for the appointment and supervision of all school counsellors in City X. I was the line manager for eight male supervisors and fifty male school counsellors in the City X region.

For me, school counselling is not a job, it is my life, it is my passion. It touches my heart and I hope to bring some of that joy to the students that I have helped and worked with (Alotaibi, 2014c).

In order to understand my passion for school counselling, I think it is necessary to look at my humble beginnings. I was born into poverty, on 24 September 1969 in 'Ta'if', a city in the Mecca Province of Saudi Arabia. I was born into a small house with a small family made up of me, my two older sisters, and my mother and father.

For the first two years of my life I was told that the relationship between my father and my mother was not good, and that there were constant problems between them. Unfortunately things only got worse. When I was two years old my father fell ill and died, something that has affected me ever since. At that time in Saudi Arabia it was traditional,

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if the father died and there were no older male children in the family (for example aged between 15-20 years old), for the family to look to the grandparents for help. This was because at that time women were not allowed to work outside the home. But even if my mother had had the chance to find a job, she did not know how to read or write and had no qualifications, so it would have been nearly impossible for her to find work.

My mother's father lived in a small village which was located around 200 km from the capital city of Riyadh. My mother's mother was from a Bedouin tribe and she raised sheep and camels. My mother was forced to sell our small house and take us to live with my grandmother in a small house made of mud, with no electricity or gas. We lived a transitory life, most of the time we lived in the small house, and sometimes we went out with my grandmother whilst she tended to the sheep and camels. We only had a small amount of money and my mother tried to make the best of it by growing vegetables for our food. The only father figure I had in my life was my father's brother, 'Aday', who is now dead. At that time he came once a year to visit us and to give us money. I can remember this was a sad and lonely time for me.

When I was 6 years old my mother tried to send me to a school that was based very far away. The only way I could get to the school was by car, but as our family did not have enough money to pay for transport I often missed school. Even when I was at school I had problems fitting in. All the other children at school had clothes, money and food, and I had none. I spent 2 years at this school and when I look back it was an intolerable period of my early life. My mother tried to improve our life by re-marrying but this raised many problems.

When my mother married we moved to City X. But this split our family up because in Saudi Arabia there are strict, traditional rules regarding the separation of males and females. My father's brother came and took my two sisters away because it was culturally forbidden at the time for females to be living with another man. I was therefore left in City X alone with my mother and lived there until I was around 8 or 9 years old. I remember that life improved for me for a little while as I went to a school that was located close by.

I was still poor and believed I could not trust anyone at that time. I thought that everyone hated me as I did not have a father and was poor. I think this partially reflects Saudi culture, and partially my own beliefs which may have been somewhat exaggerated as a child. But it is noted that Saudi culture is a very masculine and patriarchal culture, where fathers play a dominant role in family and social life. Therefore, lack of a father may be seen by conservative others as a lack of power in the tribe and in Saudi society. I tried to make friends with other children who were like me, who had no mother or father, or who

had lost their parents. I made friends with the 'loners' of this world and I think this is a habit that has stuck with me throughout my life, as I always have sympathy for people who are suffering in some way, or who are strays, or underdogs.

Later on I attended middle school and then later still secondary school. One particular event is memorable. I remember that I developed a habit of falling down in the street for no reason. My mother thought I had a physical problem with my body, and so she took me to the doctor. But the doctor said that the problem was not physical, that it was to do with my mind – it was 'psychological'. He explained that he thought it was to do with me being constantly put under psychological and emotional pressure. I think this had a profound impact on my life because I realised at that moment that there were other problems that people might have, beyond for example, illness or disease. In fact, I think this may have influenced me taking human and psychology subjects in my secondary school. I didn't like sports or other subjects that needed a lot of personal interest and physical commitment.

It was these other subjects to do with the mind and personality that touched my heart. My great breakthrough in life came when my father's brother made a small amount of money in his business, and gave me the money for my education. Although it was only about £4,000 at that time, it changed my life and allowed me to go to University, something I would never have dreamt possible. I bought a small car and drove to Al-Qassim University to apply for a place on their psychology degree. This was my big chance and I was so happy when the University accepted me, especially because I got free accommodation and a monthly stipend of about £120.00. I decided that having been given this great opportunity, I was not going to waste it, and I spent all 4 years at the University working hard and doing my best to achieve. I think this time was important because it made me self-reliant and independent for the first time in my life.

With students increasingly facing challenges that were not frequently encountered in the last few decades, and growing in environments where problems have become an ever-present subject of life, counselling has always been as important as any other profession. Studying a PhD in student counselling presented opportunities for me to understand the challenges encountered by student counsellors as they perform their daily duties with a view to improving student counsellors satisfaction and the overall service delivery to those receiving counselling services. My previous experiences highlighted in the few paragraphs above have helped me realise that one of the key contributors to job satisfaction is having the knowledge that I am undertaking a worthwhile cause. My personal motivation for undertaking this research was mainly drawn from the knowledge that my research would offer recommendation for the improvement of the way in which student counsellors

support students. By undertaking this research, I envisioned myself significantly contributing to the way in which student counsellors make a substantial difference on the lives of students on a daily basis through their counselling services. In addition to providing me with professional skills and knowledge, my motivation for undertaking this research was also drawn from the opportunities the research offered me to gain some ideas and skills I could use in real and personal life beyond the professional pursuit of my career.

### **Connecting Narrative and Personal Positioning**

Throughout this research study I have adopted a subjective researcher positioning in relation to both the role of school counselling in Saudi schools, and to the research study participants, the school counsellors. By writing my autobiography I was able to see that I may be viewed as particularly biased towards school counselling. It would therefore be very difficult for me to adopt an objective stance in relation to this research when I have been doing school counselling all my adult life. Consequently, I would say that it was sometimes difficult to see if I was being overly critical of school counselling practices that I had seen previously, or if I was being objectively fair towards these school counselling practices. I therefore tried to be constantly aware of how I approached the research study and the research participants.

My autobiography showed me that although my personal history had clearly shaped my early positionality as a researcher, I had to ensure that I approached the research study with a more objective lens in order to ensure that the research study process was fair and transparent. By this I mean that although I said that I had adopted a subjective positioning throughout the research study, I remained alert to the risk that I might introduce personal bias into the research process by influencing the answers of the school counsellor research participants in one way or another. The risk that I was aware of was that past organisational hierarchy and the dynamics of power within relationships meant that it was possible that previous roles that I had in schools in City X might have potentially influenced the way I was perceived or treated by the research participants. This was something that I wanted to make sure did not influence the interviews or the research process.

Although I had positive and favourable attitudes, perceptions, experiences and knowledge about school counselling, I had to make sure that during the semi-structured interviews I did not cross over the line from a neutral interviewer to a biased interviewer. From one viewpoint my subjective beliefs about school counselling may be criticised because people may see my views about school counselling as unrealistic. This may be true, but I think school counselling is more than just a job, just like being a nurse or a doctor is about more than money – it is about helping people and perhaps even saving lives. One of the difficulties about Saudi culture in relation to school counselling is that change is difficult,

change takes time. Schools, students and parents may not see the full benefits that school counselling has to offer. Even other school counsellors may not yet see the real benefits. In addition, students are separated, and coordinating school counselling initiatives may be difficult in practice.

I feel that my relationship with school counselling was significantly changed and influenced by my master's research study on school counselling that I carried out at the University of Nottingham. Throughout my time carrying out my master's research study I was exposed to a great deal of literature on school counselling practices in the UK, the US, and from around the world. This influenced me and my approach to school counselling as I had identified that school counselling in the UK and the US was viewed as a profession in its own right, with a range of counselling qualifications and services offered. I saw that school counselling was a profession that required continual training, both formal and ongoing on-the-job training. I also saw that there were a range of different approaches and techniques that were utilised by counsellors in schools in order to help different students in many different ways.

I believe that my personal narrative has highlighted that my personal viewpoint has been significantly influenced by my migration and by cultural approaches to education and school counselling in the UK. It has demonstrated to me how school counselling can be, how its quality can be improved, and what it can really offer students if carried out properly. A big cultural difference between the UK and Saudi Arabia is the emphasis on the extended family in Saudi Arabia. School counselling in the UK often functions as an alternative to extended family, but this does not seem to be the case in Saudi Arabia yet. There remain significant cultural challenges to the acceptance of school counselling in schools. I therefore believe that feeling passionate about school counselling is perhaps the only way to bring about real change, because if I do not help to bring about change, who will? My exploration of my researcher positioning has therefore highlighted that the epistemological position I have adopted has been driven by the need to ensure an objectivist approach towards understanding the nature of knowledge.

### **Developing my Relationship with School counselling**

After my time at University, I decided to apply to become a teacher. In the Saudi government education system at that time, individuals applied for a general teacher position, and were assigned to a role related to their qualifications. I did one year of primary school teaching and then, because I had graduated in psychology, I was given the position of school counsellor. I remember that I was determined to try hard in this role because it was my first job. I therefore dedicated myself to the position at a Primary



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **Research Orientation, Design and Analysis**

School where I spent two years. After that I moved to an Intermediate or Middle School and spent another 4 years as school counsellor there.

I think this was a challenging time for me because I did not have any qualifications in school counselling and I knew little of the practical methods and techniques used for counselling. Although I felt ready for the role at the beginning it also felt like a burden because it was something I had never done before and I did not want to get it wrong. At that time I saw counselling as an opportunity to help others and to develop myself and so I dedicated myself to the role.

After, I moved to a different secondary school in City X. I was loyal to this school because it gave me the opportunity to do something which gave me great joy. Although I had no formal training in school counselling, my motivation came from my life experience and helping others, and trying my best to learn all I could about helping and counselling students. After this I spent around another 8 years as school counsellor at the City X Secondary School. I believe this is where I learnt how to be an effective school counsellor, and how to really help students. I enjoyed the job because I saw students who were similar to the troubled young person I had once been or young people with special needs. Overall I found that persistence and a caring attitude were the best way to win the trust of the students. In a school like City X Secondary School, if your actions are regularly seen by others then people saw what kind of a person I was and how I sought to help students. I think this was helpful in terms of allowing me to develop relationships with students that allowed me to communicate more clearly with them.

I even went out of my way to help poor students who had no clothes or food, I made arrangements for them to have free lunches in the student canteen, which I paid for out of my own pocket. According to my own cherished values, this is what it means to be human, to help those who need help, just as we needed help at one time. My time at City X Secondary School was happy and interesting because I was able to develop strong relationships with students, and I felt that I was able to give something back by helping those that I saw might have problems. I spent another two years supervising school counsellors in the City X Education Department.

Then another two years later, I was appointed as the Director of School counsellors Programme for the City X Education Department. Me, a poor boy who was born into Bedouin life, a Director of School counsellors! (Alotaibi, 2014c)

I decided to improve my qualifications and moved to the United Kingdom (UK) to study English in 2008. I saw that Saudi Arabia was opening up to foreigners and that it was

important to learn English. I spent 2008 studying English at the School of Education in Nottingham and then I studied for a Masters Degree in Counselling Studies at the same University. I graduated with merit and continue to be very proud of my achievement. After that I moved home to continue my position as Director of the School counsellors Programme for the City X Education Department.

### **The Role of Epistemological Positioning in Research**

According to Langellier (1989), the 'personal narrative' as a communication and performance tool can take many forms, including as a story-text, as storytelling performance, as conversational interaction, as a social process, and as a political praxis. Others such as Russell and Bohan (1999) and Ahern (1999), have strongly argued that researchers should not be separated from the research process, as they are the co-creators of research knowledge. Russell and Kelly (2002) put forward another belief that in post-modern research the subjectivity of the researcher is actually both assumed and appreciated.

Bukvova (2010) explained from a personal perspective what she sees as the role of 'epistemological positioning' in research. She explains that the epistemological position is a way of describing the way she as researcher sees the world, and the way she believes knowledge is created and shared (Bukvova, 2010). By describing her epistemological position, she thinks that not only helped her to realise her own views on her research topic, but also impacted how she interpreted her research (Bukvova 2010). Savin-Baden and Major (2013, pp.58-59) provide an explanation of what views of knowledge and views of reality are about. They state that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with views of knowledge and how it may be known, e.g. theories of knowing and the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, pp.59).

Alternatively ontology is concerned with a branch of metaphysics (i.e. questions about the nature of reality), which means that it covers different views of whether reality is a social construction or something that is external to social actors (Savin-Baden and Major 2013, p.58). This mean that researchers that are carrying out qualitative research, often either implicitly or expressly assume specific research positions when conducting their research, and these guide them in their research process. For Berger (2013, p.2), locating researcher positioning means a:

...turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that

it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions [sic] being asked, data being collected and its interpretation.

Berger (2013, p.1) argued that overall reflexivity in qualitative research was affected by whether the researcher is part of the researched, and shares the participants' experience. In practice this meant taking account of the researcher's personal characteristics, for example gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, beliefs, biases, preferences and emotional responses to the participant (Berger 2013, p.1). In contrast Dowling and Brown (2009, p.143) believe that "it is no more necessary to resolve your epistemology or ontology in your empirical research than it is to incorporate a declaration of your religious affiliation, though some would consider one or more of these essential."

I think this statement is not completely accurate. In some circumstances putting forward an epistemological positioning in research is very necessary, particularly when the researcher is located within the research itself. For instance, Etherington (2004, p.26) noted that some areas of research are best served by using more traditional methodologies and methods, where quantitative facts can prove useful, e.g. surveys can provide important information about statistical incidences of phenomena.

Etherington (2004, p.26) also notes that, as a practitioner and researcher in human sciences, these traditional methodologies are less useful for exploring human experience and relationships. In contrast, Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p.53) note that qualitative researchers place a value on human experience, and mostly believe in being transparent regarding the researcher's role; they normally use inductive analytic processes, and they try to seek knowledge in uncontrolled and natural environments. Indeed Buckner (2005) noted that this increased transparency of the researcher's position, or awareness of the researcher's influence, was helpful in leading to important insights about the actual area being studied.

It is also noted that in order to guide their views and ultimately their work, qualitative researchers often take a particular stance that helps them to make the assumptions they adopt in their work more explicit, both for themselves and for potential readers (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.53). Within the context of researching the views, opinions, practices and beliefs of school counsellors and students being counselled in Saudi Arabia, it is proposed that qualitative approaches are best suited to exploring human experience, including participant's intra-relational and inter-relational experiences.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry typically begins with the researcher's autobiographically orientated narrative which is relevant to understanding the

research puzzle. It has also been noted that autoethnography has a lot to offer the researcher that is interested in using personal narrative to locate themselves within the research (du Preez, 2008). du Preez (2008) comments that self-reflective autoethnographic accounts of experience are deeply personal accounts, which normally reveal the researcher's lived experiences, as well as providing an exploration and development of the researcher's ideas. This means that a researcher's autobiographical narrative in the form of an autoethnographic account can provide the researcher's viewpoint regarding particular research.

This narrative can inform a potential reader about how the researcher has come to his or her research viewpoint, and it can also allow the potential reader to make value judgments about the research. Whilst the subjectivity of the researcher's approach may be assumed, the challenge for the researcher is to provide transparency of the researcher's views in order to allow the reader to form their own opinions. The researcher's autobiographical narrative will be presented here, in order to demonstrate the researcher's position and reflexivity, as well as in order to reveal cultural viewpoints relevant to the research (Chang, 2008). In order to increase transparency of the research approach the narrative will also present a critical reflection.

## **PART B: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Researcher's Choice of Research Methodology**

According to Audi (2010), epistemology, which is the theory of knowledge is all to do with what a person perceives, believes, and is justified in believing. In general, epistemology is therefore concerned with different sources of knowledge that can exist, such as 'perceptual', 'memorial', 'introspective', 'inductive' and 'testimony-based' beliefs (Audi, 2010). The choice of epistemological approach taken in regards to the research will therefore reflect the researcher's final research objective. For example, if the researcher wishes to adopt a scientific approach which can deliver objective and justifiable results through experimentation, empirical knowledge was a suitable epistemological source of knowledge.

However in the present research, in order to seek an answer to the research question, the researcher has specifically adopted an 'interpretative' rather than a scientific approach to the research methodology in order to interpret and understand school counsellors' behaviour, motives, and reasons, rather than seeking to predict and generalise its causes and effects (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Carson *et al.*, 2001).

Because of the unique and individual nature of school counselling practices and methods in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia), it may often be difficult to devise research

that can produce generalizable rules that can be applied throughout all schools in Saudi Arabia. For instance, research that investigates school counselling practices in boys' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia may produce conclusions that cannot be generalised to girls' secondary schools because of the separation of males and females in schools in Saudi Arabia.

Alternatively, research into school counselling practices in large schools in large cities such as Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, may produce conclusions that cannot be generalised to small schools in smaller and provincial towns in Saudi Arabia. Cultural traditions may also be different in the North and South of Saudi Arabia, or schooling practices may be different across the thirteen provinces in Saudi Arabia, each with a capital of its own. I have therefore tried to focus on gaining a richer and more in-depth understanding of a particular cultural context, and that is the context of school counselling practices in a provincial city in central Saudi Arabia, located in the Najd region.

I have aimed to justify my choice on the basis that the research did not seek to find 'the correct answer', but instead it sought to explore and investigate the subjective feelings and key experiences of the research participants. Creswell (2008) has argued that this type of research data is best explored using a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach. Creswell (2008, p.201) explains that qualitative research has a number of characteristics which make it particularly suited for this type of cultural narrative research, including that the research:

- (a) takes place in a natural setting;
- (b) relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection;
- (c) uses multiple methods of data collection;
- (d) is inductive;
- (e) is based on participants' meanings;
- (f) is emergent;
- (g) often involves the use of a theoretical lens;
- (h) is interpretative;
- (i) is holistic.

### **Research Question**

The main research question for this PhD research study is:

***'What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of school counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia towards the effectiveness of student counselling?'***

### **Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the research study was to investigate, identify and clarify how school counsellors working in a provincial city in Saudi Arabia (City X), feel and think about their work in schools. The research sought to gain a general understanding of school counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia, and also to provide practical and critical insights into how school counsellors work within the specific cultural context of Saudi Arabia. In practice the research aimed to investigate what school counsellors do in their work, how they approach and execute their counselling work with students, and what difficulties, problems, and obstacles they face when doing their job.

For example, the research sought to investigate whether school counsellors found counselling students interesting and exciting work, or to find out if they do not like their work and why. In general the research study sought to find out the good things and the bad things that may exist for school counselling in schools in the research city. Overall, the research study also aimed to find out whether school counsellors believed school counselling to be effective in schools based in City X.

I think this is a very important and relevant aim. Based on my past experience I have found that school counselling practices are very different in Saudi Arabia than elsewhere. The literature review showed that school counselling is practiced widely around the world. It also showed that in certain countries such as the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), school counselling practices are widespread and highly developed. School counselling is even mandatory in schools in the US. Yet, from my professional experience I have found that school counselling practices in Saudi schools are less developed than in other countries.

I have found that school counsellors are often not seen as important to schools by other teachers and parents, and there are sometimes negative perceptions of school counsellors. Their role in the school is often seen as inferior to the roles of other teachers and this has at times had a negative impact on the way school counsellors interact with other teachers and students. I have also found that school counsellors face other difficulties in practice. For example school counsellors may often lack financial and other resources. They may not even have an office in which they can work. There may just be one school counsellor in a school which has hundreds of students.

Some school counsellors lack appropriate qualifications and other school counsellors feel that they lack sufficient training in school counselling methods. Because of the Saudi culture, parents may often trust or have confidence in school counsellors and this may impact their reputation in Saudi schools. There are many other issues like this relating to school counselling which I have encountered in Saudi schools. Therefore the aim of this PhD research was to investigate these issues in greater depth, and to see to what extent my experience with school counselling was still true or not. The research study also aimed to provide richer insights into how school counsellors in Saudi schools view their school counselling work.

I think it is very important to understand these issues in order to identify whether Saudi schools are providing sufficient and/or effective school counselling to all their students.

Consequently the objectives of the research study were set as follows:

- (a) To investigate the personal views and opinions of school counsellors working in boys' secondary schools in the research city.
- (b) To investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of school counselling which school counsellors have.
- (c) To investigate the attitudes and perceptions that school counsellors bring to their practice of student counselling and subsequently develop through their work.
- (d) To investigate any cultural impacts and influences on school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

### **Researcher's Choice of Research Methods**

The chosen research methodology required me to carry out four different methods of research which were as listed below.

- (a) **A literature review.** This was chosen in order to survey the existing literature on school counselling practices in different countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia, and to identify any gaps in the literature that are directly relevant to this research study;
- (b) **An autobiography.** This was chosen in order to clarify my own unique insight and both personal and professional experiences of school counselling in Saudi Arabia,

as well as to articulate my personal positioning in relation to the research context and focus for the investigation.

- (c) **Keeping a research journal.** This was chosen in order to help me to organise and structure my research, my research timeline, and to help me to evaluate my progress and to see my overall journey through the PhD research process. The journal also helped me to record my immediate responses to interviewees, to their schools, and to reflect on the reading I did. Overall it was chosen in order to help me make connections between different aspects of the research process.
- (d) **Semi-structured interviews.** These were chosen in order to allow me to directly obtain rich data relating to the knowledge and understandings of school counsellors and their attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of school counselling in Saudi Arabia.

### **Literature Review**

In chapter 2 I carried out a critical literature review to identify key issues and debates that proved relevant and useful in interpreting the data obtained during the research study. The literature review made extensive reference to related academic theory and research, and allowed the research to identify gaps in the literature, and also to develop the literature in the field (Jessen *et al.*, 2011; Ridley, 2012). The literature review helped me to view the data obtained in a critical way. It also helped me to apply modern theories and findings in the literature concerning school counselling during the interpretation of the research data obtained. The literature review was also very influential in the development of my writing style and in helping me to prepare articles on school counselling in Saudi Arabia for conferences that I have attended.

The literature review was highly influential in developing the semi-structured interview questions, and enabled me to define what school counselling is in practice, as well as the range of different school counselling methods used around the world. For example, a study of global school counselling practices by Harris (2013) found that school counselling was mandatory in 39 countries (including countries in the Caribbean, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East). School counselling services in one third of 90 countries surveyed also showed that school counsellors practised relational or person-centred approaches to school counselling (Harris, 2013).

Harris (2013) also found that other approaches such as constructivist (e.g. narrative and personal construct), activity-based (e.g. cognitive-behavioural), and pluralistic approaches were being used. One of the key findings in the study carried out by Harris (2013), was that many states in the US practiced a more practical model of school counselling, often



with counsellors that had no formal teaching qualifications. This seemed to be the case in the Saudi Arabia as well. The study also helped me to see the extent to which school counselling had developed in other countries around the world, and I was able to compare the use of different approaches to school counselling.

The definitions of school counselling that I was able to find in the literature allowed me to develop a stronger picture of what school counselling is about, and what school counsellors should be aiming to achieve. This included potential 'best practices' for school counselling, such as accessible counselling; professionally qualified and experienced counsellors; monitoring and evaluation procedures; flexible responses; responding flexibility to local diversity needs; and having professional counsellors who demonstrate personal qualities which make them suitable for counselling, e.g. good listening skills, trustworthiness, approachability (Pattison *et al.*, 2007). But by comparing best practices with different approaches to school counselling in different countries, I was able to see that potential best practices for school counselling in Saudi Arabia might have to be adapted to take into account local Saudi culture and traditions.

The literature review was also helpful in allowing me to identify trends and statistics relating to school counselling practices in the UK, the US, and around the world. By seeing figures and statistics relating to the rate of adolescent self-harm, suicide, or alcohol and drug problems, it provided me with a way to compare practices in Saudi Arabia (Bener and Al-Ketebi, 1999; Al-Asmari *et al.*, 2004). I was able to analyse how student distress and related behaviours that contributed to counselling referrals in Western schools compared with behaviours occurring in Saudi schools, and to consider similarities and differences with Saudi students in terms of psychological and behavioural health problems, and the extent of those problems (Abou-Zeid *et al.*, 2009).

I was also able to examine to what extent the literature supported positive school counselling outcomes, in the ways school counselling helped students. For example, I was able to see the range of behaviours and mental health problems that could be positively tackled by school counselling practices (Al-Gelban, 2007). This included school counselling addressing issues such as school exclusion, how intervention strategies for young people, improved family relationships, helped students manage their anger, helped students with eating disorders, and also to cope with bereavement and loss.

### **Autobiography**

My research used a personal experience story which was guided by a number of key concepts throughout (**APPENDIX 4**). I believe that the development and writing of my autobiography in chapter 1 allowed me a unique opportunity to view my life story

objectively which I had never done before. By putting down my life experiences on paper, I was able to see just how much my personal life history had affected and influenced my choices relating to school counselling. I was able to see that my social and cultural background had significantly influenced the way I approached school counselling practices. I was deeply motivated to help others, and to help students in particular, in their journey in life and at a time in which they may have been particularly vulnerable. For me, school counselling has become a way of life and I do not view it as just another job that I must do. My autobiography therefore allowed me to appreciate how the quality and standards of school counselling that I had developed were founded on this commitment to helping others.

### **Keeping a Research Journal**

I kept a monthly research journal to record detailed comments about the choices that I made at each stage of the research process. I also used the research journal as an aide-memoire for the writing up phase of the research thesis. This was used to add to the data obtained from the participants and to increase the trustworthiness of the research approach. The research journal was intended to help me as a researcher to see how the research had developed, and also to be used to see how problems with the research were addressed and overcome. I think keeping the research journal was in some ways effective and useful for me, but in other ways it was not. It was useful for me because there had been so much research and work done that I had found it difficult to keep track of when I had done work on something and what stage of development it was at. Keeping the research journal helped me to keep track of my work, and it also helped me to see how slow or how fast I was progressing. By doing this I was able to plan out in advance the different stages of the research that I would do, to reflect my own time and abilities.

The research journal was also useful for me because I was able to use it as a source of knowledge. There were many different research concepts that I was not familiar with in the beginning stages of my research study, and during my meetings with my supervisors I was able to discuss these in greater depth. By keeping a research journal I was able to add to my personal knowledge and understanding of these research concepts. By keeping separate sections for specific research concepts such as 'informed consent', 'project information sheet', 'risk assessment', 'semi-structured interviews', I was able to have an easily accessible and updated guide to these concepts.

Another example is that I did not know what an autobiography was in the beginning. But by keeping a research journal I was able to keep notes on personal events and memories that I remembered and that might add to the final thesis chapter. When I carried out the literature review I was also able to write down notes about questions that I might ask in

the interviews. Ortlipp (2008) notes that keeping a research journal is a strategy that can help to facilitate reflexivity. Keeping a research journal for me was sometimes a problem because it took a lot of extra work to keep the journal, and it sometimes made my workload difficult to handle.

Sometimes I felt that I had to write down everything that I had done in the past month, and I was not sure what was relevant and what was not relevant. Ortlipp (2008) notes that keeping a research journal will help to create transparency in the research process, and provide an audit trail of changing methodologies. Janesick (1999, p.505) argues that:

For qualitative researchers, the act of journal writing may be incorporated into the research process to provide a data set of the researcher's reflections on the research act. Participants in qualitative studies may also use journals to refine ideas, beliefs, and their own responses to the research in progress.

In my research journal I tried to write down the things I had done in lists and then I had to narrow down those lists to see what I should put in the journal and what I should not put in the journal. So sometimes I felt that the research journal was not helpful because it made my work more complex. Borg (2001) notes the research journal is an excellent tool for promoting and understanding researcher development. When I look back on my writing in the journal, it has helped me to remember things more clearly because I have done so many different parts of the research at different times.

### **Engaging with Participants via Semi-structured Interviews**

Moser and Kalton (1971, p.271) define an interview as "a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent". In-depth interviews are a form of research method that is now widely established and can provide a researcher with rich research data (Mack *et al.*, 2005; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Santiago (2009) notes that the qualitative researcher can choose from three types of interview, these are:

- (1) unstructured;
- (2) semi-structured; and
- (3) structured.

The difference between them is that structured interviews usually have a set format, with pre-set closed-ended questions (Santiago, 2009). Structured interviews involve the researcher asking each participant the same set of questions and not discussing the questions or issues further (Corbetta, 2003; Santiago, 2009).

This type of interview is useful where the researcher wants to try to compare the answers of the research participants, and is a good research technique to use to seek out specific information (Santiago, 2009). However, a disadvantage to this technique is that it limits the interaction between the interviewer and the research participant. The researcher may not be able to follow up on initial enquiries by asking questions in a different direction, or by picking up on something new that arises in the interview. This type of interview may be less suitable for interviewing school counsellors because there may be new issues or views that arise, that I would not be able to follow up on.

The aim of the research study was to identify the views, opinions and perspectives of the school counsellor, and by using a limiting interview approach, this would negatively affect my ability to obtain deep and rich insights into areas which might have arisen during interview.

In contrast to structured interviews, unstructured interviews are interviews where the interviewer and respondent know that they will be speaking to each other in a formal interview, but there is no structured interview guide involved (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). The interviewer does have a clear plan about what the focus of the interview is, but the interviewer asks open-ended questions to allow the respondent to respond as he or she likes (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Because of the format of this type of interview, the interviewer has little or no control over the responses of the respondent, and therefore may be less useful in situations where the interviewer seeks specific information from the respondent (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) state that these types of interview "are an extremely useful method for developing an understanding of an as-of-yet not fully understood or appreciated culture, experience, or setting." They recommend that they should be used:

...when the researcher has developed enough of an understanding of a setting and his or her topic of interest to have a clear agenda for the discussion with the informant, but still remains open to having his or her understanding of the area of inquiry open to revision by respondents (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

As was mentioned previously, unstructured interviews provide little or no control over the responses of the respondents. This means that it may be difficult in practice to compare the responses of the school counsellors' views on particular areas, such as school counselling practices, or perceptions of school counsellors by others. Because there is no set format, or standard interview guide, the interview relies on the skill of the interviewer to ask questions that may address the issues that the research study is investigating. There is therefore a risk that the interview may not sufficiently identify or address the

issues that the researcher would like to investigate.

On the other hand Bernard (1998) argues that unlike unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews can provide the researcher with data from interviews that is reliable and comparable (Bernard, 1988). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to have an interview guide for each interview participant, but they also provide the researcher with flexibility to follow up with other questions if an interesting topic, point, or issue arises (Bernard, 1988).

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they could offer a number of particular advantages, including:

**(a) that the interviewee and interviewer know how to 'play their roles';**

A formal interview structure and process allowed each of the participants to understand what was required of them in advance, as they understood that they were there to be interviewed and would be asked questions on their knowledge and views. Each school counsellor was therefore able to think briefly in advance about what kinds of questions might be asked of them. It is likely that the interviewees saw their role in the interview as being one of opening up to the interviewer and replying either briefly or in-depth to questions asked.

**(b) the form of qualitative inquiry allows for the interpretation of particulars in great detail;**

In a quantitative survey, the aim of the survey questionnaire is generally to ask a specific question and to obtain a specific, or range, of responses. However, qualitative inquiry aims to provide richer and deeper insights into the views, beliefs, and opinions of those people who are questioned. Instead of just a simple answer to a specific question, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions, to see the emotional and facial responses of the interviewee, and to probe deeper into the views, beliefs, and opinions of the interviewees. This flexibility provides the researcher with a better tool for obtaining insights about a topic area or views and opinions which are discussed.

**(c) research projects are "made much more feasible" (for researchers who do not have much time or many resources available for many different interviews, transcription sessions or analyses);**

Quantitative research often uses quantitative survey questionnaires which may be filled in online or by telephone. These types of survey often depend on achieving a large number of responses in order to ensure that the sample is representative of

the target population. But this kind of method would be extremely difficult and expensive for me to carry out in practice in Saudi Arabia. Instead, by carrying out qualitative interviews with a smaller sample of research participants based in the research city, I was able to carry out my research by myself in a way that was not too expensive for me to carry out.

- (d) that interviews can offer extremely relevant and interesting insights and "it is possible to say interesting things about culture and society in general from analyzing just a few cases or instances" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008, p.141).**

The semi-structured interview format would also allow interviewers to use full questions (which forces the researcher to think carefully about question formulation), whilst also giving me the flexibility to follow up on questions which might lead to other interesting avenues of research enquiry (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.39). The aim of the research study was to find out the views of the research participants. But if I had a fully structured interview format they would only be answering the interview question and we might not have the opportunity to explore other interesting areas that might come up. On the other hand I also felt that I was not sufficiently professionally experienced in interviewing to carry out an unstructured interview without pre-written questions. I felt that semi-structured interviews therefore provided me with a good middle ground to ask questions and explore potentially interesting areas. The choice of question, the development of the interview guide, and the piloting of the semi-structured interview questions is set out below.

The research used 24 semi-structured interviews of school counsellors currently working in boys secondary schools in the research city. As explained in the literature review in chapter 3, in Saudi Arabia there is separation of boys and girls because of religious Islamic law requirements, and so I focused solely on boys' schools in Saudi Arabia. The single-sex system of schooling in Saudi Arabia also presents practical challenges for researchers who need to gain access to schools for research purposes. Gaining access to institutions of the opposite gender to the researcher is potentially very problematic, and this is another reason for focusing on boys' schools in this instance. The semi-structured interviews used a specially designed interview schedule questionnaire that was developed using feedback and recommendations from my research supervisors at the University of Nottingham.

## **Sampling**

Saudi Arabia is divided into 13 provinces (**Figure 1**). The research was conducted in City X which is a central provincial city based in the central Riyadh province of Saudi Arabia, and which has a more traditional culture than other major cities in Saudi Arabia.



**Figure 1: The Riyadh province in Saudi Arabia (JGHTI, 2014)**

There are approximately 25 secondary schools located within City X, each with a dedicated school counsellor. I invited all 25 school counsellors within each secondary school in City X to take part in the research study. This was done via a written invitation to participate, which included full details of the research study in a Project Information Sheet (**APPENDIX 5**). One school counsellor was away at the time of the semi-structured interviews, and so only 24 school counsellors participated in the study. The high response rate may have been because of my previous positioning in the field of school counselling in City X. The convenience sample for the study population was comprised of 24 school counsellors working in boys' secondary schools in City X. Those school counsellors that were willing to participate in the study formed the group of research participants. In all, I conducted 24 interviews with school counsellors.

## **Development of the Interview Schedule**

The questions for the semi-structured interviews were developed over a period of time. The accuracy and suitability of the questions were improved by incorporating feedback and recommendations from my PhD supervisors. I developed the interview schedule further by starting with the research question which was "What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of school counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?" I broke this down into key components that would identify or address four human

attributes contained in the question.

- (a) attitudes (**A**);
- (b) perceptions (**P**);
- (c) knowledge (**K**);
- (d) understandings (**U**).

The attitudes attribute was aimed at identifying attitudes of school counsellors in their work or the attitudes they adopted to others such as other teachers, parents, or headmasters. The perceptions attribute was aimed at identifying the perceptions of the school counsellors towards the effectiveness of their student counselling services and also the perceptions of others towards the value of school counsellors. It also included how school counsellors believed they were perceived by others. The knowledge attribute was aimed at identifying the current knowledge of school counsellors regarding school counselling practices.

It aimed to identify to what extent they were qualified in school counselling and had acquired knowledge of school counselling skills. The understandings attribute was aimed at identifying the understandings of school counsellors about the role of the school counsellor, and about the role of the school counsellor in the school. It also included the understandings of others such as teachers, parents or headmasters about the role of the school counsellor. I also used the objectives of the research to focus questions on four domains, these were:

- (a) views and opinions (**VO**);
- (b) knowledge and understanding (**KU**);
- (c) attitudes and perceptions (**AP**);
- (d) cultural impacts and influences (**CI**).

The first draft of interview questions is included to illustrate the basic format of the semi-structured interview questions at the start (**APPENDIX 6**). This draft consisted of 16 basic interview questions which covered a range of issues about school counselling practices and which focused on the key content areas identified above.



**Table 1: First draft of semi-structured interview questions**

	Questions	Human Attributes				Domains			
		A	P	K	U	VO	KU	AP	CI
1.	What do you actually do as a school counsellor – can you talk me through your typical school week?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Do you know how the head teacher perceives the school counsellor's role?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a school counsellor?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Do you perform any work that is not related to the school counsellors' role or job?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	What qualifications do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of school counsellor?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
6.	What specific training did you have to prepare you for the role of school counsellor?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
7.	What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of school counsellor?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
8.	Do you think if school counsellors could attend a specific school counsellor training course it would benefit your role or job?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the school counsellor's job?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Why do you think school counselling is necessary in Saudi schools?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12.	What more would you like to be able to do in your role? (What	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	Questions	Human Attributes				Domains			
		A	P	K	U	VO	KU	AP	CI
	stops you? What gets in the way?)								
<b>13.</b>	Who supports you in your role in school? (How do you experience their support? Is there enough support? What more support do you need?)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>14.</b>	If you could change one thing as a school counsellor in this school, what would it be?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>15.</b>	If you could change one thing for school counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>16.</b>	Do you think that a national school counselling association in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The human attributes focused on the personal beliefs, feelings and experiences of the school counsellor. On the other hand the domains were intended to reflect whether or not the question more broadly covered those four areas. For example, for Question 1 shown in **Figure 2**, the question potentially includes what the school counsellor perceives to be his typical week, it covers his knowledge of being a school counsellor and his understanding of his role as school counsellor.

However, because it is focusing on his practical duties, it would not tend to cover his attitude to the job. The question would not generally cover views and opinions of school counsellors because they are describing their own role, not what they believe to be general views and opinions, e.g. of teachers, parents, students.

Some of the questions included the words "do you", and reflected a Yes/No positivist type of response. However, I also included follow-up questions in the interview schedule in order to be able to allow me to follow up on initial enquiries. I also aimed to follow up on these types of questions if anything of significance or interest arose during the interview. I was aiming to use the interview schedule as a guide to the interview.

**Figure 2: Question 1 of the first draft of semi-structured interview questions**

	Questions	Human Attributes				Domains			
		A	P	K	U	VO	KU	AP	CI
1.	What do you actually do as a school counsellor – can you talk me through your typical school week?		☑	☑	☑		☑	☑	☑

The main aim when drafting these questions was to potentially cover as much content and as many of the characteristics and domains as possible. If the questions were too narrowly worded they would not address my research questions. These initial questions were then grouped together into three different categories which were:

- (a) the role of the school counsellor;
- (b) qualifications and training;
- (c) school counselling practices.

I believed that grouping the questions in this way would make it easier for the research participants to engage in more depth on each area during the interview process (**APPENDIX 7**). The interview schedule was then developed further by dividing it into three different parts.

**Part 1** provided an introduction to the interview with the aim of putting the interviewees at ease, as well as clarifying the researcher's new relationship with the research participants. This was intended to specifically let the participants know that I was not acting in any official capacity as a person in charge of student services, but instead solely as a PhD researcher. Although I had known many of the research participants previously, I made sure that all research participants were updated with what I was currently doing. I therefore provided the participants with some background about me as a researcher at the University of Nottingham, and I also explained the aim of the PhD research study and the research procedures.

Magnusson and Marecek (2015) note that in the first part of the interview guide, the goals are to establish the terms of the interview, to set a conversational tone, and to begin to build a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. They also suggest that including a few warm-up questions in the interview guide can help to build the relationship between the participant and the interviewer, and "may be especially helpful if the topic of

the interview is a difficult one or likely to be embarrassing or painful for the participant" (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015). I knew that the interview might cover some potentially difficult issues for the participants. I therefore aimed to use some-warm up questions combined with my own counselling experience, to build rapport with the participants and to help put them at ease from the start.

**Part 2** then establishes some parameters which acknowledge the ethical issues involved in the interview process given my previous role. I knew many of the research participants because of my previous role as their director, and so this meant that it was possible that they might still view me as a senior authority figure. If this was the case then they might be more likely to simply say what they believed I wanted them to say. Alternatively, if this was the case, it might mean that they would be less willing to talk freely and openly for fear that I would judge them, or that there would be negative consequences after the interview. I therefore wanted to explain as clearly as possible to the research participants were free to speak as freely and as openly as possible with me, with no fear of negative consequences.

Ethical issues in communication research are important but they can be ambiguous, and so must be directly addressed (Baxter and Babbie, 2003). Sanjari *et al.* (2014) acknowledge that there are many ethical challenges that may arise owing to the nature of qualitative studies, and in particular because of the researcher-participant relationship. They believe researchers may face dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishing honest and open interactions, and aiming to avoid misrepresentations (Sanjari *et al.*, 2014). The potential ethical dilemmas outlined above, in addition to these dilemmas, meant that in practice I believed it was essential for me to develop a communication strategy which reflected my role as an ethical researcher. A strategy that incorporated open and honest discussions, with full transparency about my role as a researcher, and what was expected from the research participants.

Part 2 also sets out a discussion of research ethical procedures (e.g. ethical protections and potential ethical problems that may arise) with the research participant. This was done in order to reassure the research participant about the absence of potentially negative consequences, for example the research participant facing criticism or disciplinary proceedings from the school. This was vital for the research and I aimed to emphasise that there would be no repercussions for the research participant from anything they said or did. Finally, Part 3 contained 14 semi-structured interview questions which were grouped into four different categories:

- (a) the role of the school counsellor (6 questions);

- (b) qualifications and training (2 questions);
- (c) school counselling practices (4 questions);
- (d) closing questions (2 questions) (**APPENDIX 8**).

The interview schedule was subsequently re-worded and improved through further feedback and review stages I carried out with my research supervisors. The final Pilot Interview Schedule was used for a single pilot testing of the interview questions (**APPENDIX 9**).

### **Interview and Translation Strategies**

Filep (2009) notes that language can be an important element of identity, so certain aspects such as ethnicity, religion and gender can be constructed in the process of using language. According to Filep (2009) this means that language is not a neutral medium, but it can define difference, commonality, exclusion and inclusion. Filep (2009) therefore argues that interview and translation strategies must aim to incorporate considerations relating to what type of translation strategy should be used (i.e. literal, non-literal); problems with non-equivalent words; and meanings and messages reflecting a specific cultural context. Consequently, Temple and Young (2004) argue that qualitative research that involves a translation process raises issues of representation that should be of concern to all researchers.

For instance, Aranguri *et al.* (2006) believe that within the context of interpretation, it is not simply words that are being translated, but perhaps meaning, intent, and local language sayings. Berman and Tyyskä (2011) note that interpreters may change meanings by omissions, revision, or reduction of content. In practice they identified a number of issues relating to the translation process which raised "serious questions about ambiguities and ownership of translated language content; assumption and community familiarity and cultural similarity between researchers, translators and participants" (Berman and Tyyskä, 2011, p.178).

In practice Filep (2009) proposes that translating strategies can sometimes adopt methods that increase the overall quality of the translation process. These include:

- (1) back translation (i.e. independent translation and comparison with two versions of the translation);
- (2) consultation (i.e. discussing use and meaning of problematic words and phrases with bilingual specialists or professionals);
- (3) collaboration (i.e. collaborating with other researchers who understand the

languages used);

- (4) Pre-testing or pilot testing (i.e. pilot testing the research instrument in the local language and culture to test for the respondent's interpretation of an item's meaning).

Because of the potential for different types of errors, ambiguities, and problems in the translation process, Edwards (1998) argued that interpreters need to have a clear understanding of the role (i.e. they require training), in order for them to fully understand the research topic and objectives. Squires (2008) argues that a failure to address language barriers and the methodological challenges they present can threaten the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of cross-language qualitative research.

Squires (2008) notes that the literature shows that experienced cross-language researchers recommend pilot testing the translated research questions (Esposito, 2001; Adamson and Donovan, 2002; Temple 2002; Hole 2007). Squires (2008) also notes that authors that carried out pilot testing of the interview questions prior to implementing the main study enhance the credibility of their findings in cross-language studies. In light of the surrounding issues regarding translation, this research study carried out a pilot testing of the semi-structured research questions in Arabic prior to implementation in the main study. It also used consultation with another bilingual professional.

### **Pilot Interview**

The Pilot Interview Schedule was translated from English into Arabic, and the Pilot interview was carried out in November 2014 with a professional colleague of mine who spoke Arabic. The Pilot Interview was helpful in showing ways in which the interview questions could be improved (Kim, 2011). I generally found that there were not too many gaps in the conversation and that the interview flowed quite smoothly. I was therefore happy with the way I had carried out the interview. However, I had to bear in mind that I conducted the pilot interview with someone I knew and was accustomed to talking with. I think this prior relationship allowed us to talk freely and with ease.

Since I had carried out interviews as part of my Master's degree at the University of Nottingham, doing the semi-structured interviews was not a new skill that I had to learn. Also, I am well accustomed to talking with many different types of people in Saudi Arabia due to my professional experience as a school counsellor. I was able to use my experience in counselling and the techniques that I have learned, during the interviews, in order to put the participants at ease, and to develop a relationship with them. I believe I have developed good interpersonal skills when talking with people who speak Arabic. Therefore I think all these things helped me to feel confident in my interview skills.

In general the interviewee seemed to understand most of the questions and did not have too much difficulty answering them. However there were a few minor problems or points to note which I thought might make the interview questions better. At the end of the Pilot Interview I went through the interview questions on paper with the interviewee and we made notes and comments about the interview questions. A summary of the joint notes and comments made is set out in italics below. These comments were incorporated into the final Interview Schedule by making minor amendments to the order of the questions (**APPENDIX 10**).

- **Personal Questions:** *I think perhaps the interview should start by asking personal questions about the participant's age and years of experience in counselling and the number of years of experience in education in general, i.e. demographic questions. These types of questions are normally used in interviews for quantitative analysis. But I think in this interview it may help to make the person being interviewed more comfortable, because they can answer the questions easily.*
- **Question No. 14:** *I feel that this question may be better towards the end before the final closing questions, for example, to be question No. 21.*
- **Question No. 18:** *In the interview it felt like this question duplicated two other questions (No. 3(b) and No. 10).*
- **Advance Copy:** *I think that we could send the Interview Questions to the participant in advance, so they can prepare themselves. But one of the problems with this was that the responses that the participant may give may be prepared and not "natural", e.g. the participant may not give completely honest answers.*
- **Advance Information:** *I think that we should give some information about the following to the participants in advance, because some of them may not understand what they mean: (a) a national school counselling association; a national school counselling qualification; (b) online e-training for school counsellors in English and Arabic; (c) online school counselling chat groups.*

### **Interview and Research Data Procedures**

Each school used in the research study has one school counsellor and each interview took place when the school counsellor was made available, with the school providing a room at the school for the interview to take place. The language used for each interview was Arabic. Each interview was recorded and then the data was collected into 24 digital files, stored on the researcher's password protected computer, and then transcribed into English in Microsoft Word (Arabic version). The 24 raw translated Microsoft Word transcripts were

then re-formatted into a structured transcript format in Microsoft Word (English Version). The structure is shown below and was used in order to be able to reference each question and answer quickly and on an individual basis.

- 1. TA** I want to start with you[AA] .....And we would like to thank you for joining us...

I want to know your age, work in counselling, and your qualification?

### **Research Procedures and Ethical Considerations**

Modern day research ethics is a socially constructed and situated field which typically reflects the current political and cultural factors of a country (Silverman, 2011). For example, cultural practices in Japan may impact research ethics because many people in Japan are Buddhist, and Buddhist beliefs may affect how people are treated. In the same way cultural practices in Saudi Arabia may be significantly influenced by the Islamic religious beliefs of Muslims in Saudi Arabia. These may then affect principles of research ethics in practice. For example, ethical principles relating to the equal treatment of participants may not be possible in certain situations in Saudi Arabia because of the general Islamic separation of men and women. It is therefore important to realise that when undertaking any field of research (e.g. medicine, education, politics, sociology, health sciences), that ethical principles are also taken into consideration, in order to ensure the health and well-being of any participants, or to avoid cultural or religious offence or embarrassment.

In practice research ethics may affect the research methodology or research methods adopted, depending on the nature of the research study. For example, applying research ethical principles to a research study may mean ensuring that participants are not overtly or covertly tricked or coerced in any way, that they are not put at risk (Creswell, 2013), and that the beliefs, views and self-respect of participants are upheld through 'informed consent' (Hammbersley, 1999). Informed consent upholds ethics in research because it concerns the notion of the rights of participants to know what is being researched, what is expected of them, and their right to withdraw from the research. Another important point about ethical research relates to all research data obtained from the participants being dealt with in a confidential way in order to protect and uphold the privacy of individuals (Mertens, 1998).

The research methodology included a number of practical steps that were taken in order to uphold ethical research principles, and to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all the research participants. The steps taken were as follows.



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **Research Orientation, Design and Analysis**

- (a) I read and understood the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (Version 4, March 2013) (The Research Ethics Code), and aimed to incorporate it into the research methodology where appropriate;
- (b) I wrote and finalised an 'Informed Consent Form' for signature by all research participants prior to carrying out the research study. The Informed Consent Form was drafted in English and was then translated into Arabic (**APPENDIX 11**).
- (c) I wrote and finalised a 'Project Information Sheet' which informed all the research participants in detail about the nature of the research study. The Project Information Sheet was drafted in English and was then translated into Arabic.
- (d) I submitted an application to the University of Nottingham Research Ethics Committee for research ethics approval. This procedure included submitting supporting documents as well as carrying out revisions to the final research ethics application (**APPENDIX 12**);
- (e) I obtained research approval to carry out the research study in Saudi Arabia from the Saudi Ministry of Education;
- (f) I obtained research approval and consent from the Saudi secondary schools located in City X;
- (g) I carried out a project risk assessment agreed between myself and my research supervisors;
- (h) I provided all the research participants with the opportunity to ask questions regarding any part of the research study;
- (i) I ensured that the names of the research participants would not be disclosed or published, and that all references to the research participant in the research was anonymised.
- (j) I ensured that all recordings, written transcripts, and supporting interview documentation was kept securely locked, and that only I had access to the research data and research information;

- (k) I ensured that all the research participants were provided with a written transcript of the recorded interview upon request;
- (l) I read and followed guidelines and recommendations in the 'Ethical guidelines for researching counselling and psychotherapy' published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) relevant to the research study; and
- (m) I read and followed guidelines and recommendations in the 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) relevant to the research study.

I believed that all these steps taken together throughout the research process would help to create and ensure conditions of honesty, safety, and confidence in the research process for all the research participants.

### **Research Risk Assessment**

Bond (2004) states that all researchers researching counselling and psychotherapy are expected to have given careful consideration to risks arising from the research, in terms of people that might potentially be affected and the integrity of the work. Bond (2004, p.5) states that "Reasonable steps should be taken to control and eliminate all adverse risks to participants". This should include the researcher consulting with someone who is competent to identify both any potential risks to the research participants and whether these have been adequately taken into account in the research design (Bond 2004). In this research study I set out an agreed research risk assessment with my research supervisors.

This risk assessment identified potential risks to me as a researcher personally (e.g. negative views, opinions, or other repercussions by research participants, teachers, headmasters, and schools), and to the research participants (e.g. negative views, opinions, or other repercussions by teachers, headmasters, and schools), and these risks were subsequently addressed throughout the research ethics approval process carried out by the University of Nottingham (Bond 2004). Bond (2004, p.6) also states that "Some studies may be relatively unproblematic in the way that data is collected or analysed but may raise significant ethical issues over how the research is published or disseminated." This was taken into account in the research design by ensuring that all references to the research participants were anonymised through the use of research participant codes.

### **Potential Risks to the Researcher**

No potential physical, emotional, or professional risks were identified except those

connected with issues of self-disclosure relating to the researcher's positioning account set out in chapter 2 and section 0 above. Although my positioning account has been incorporated into the final thesis, I will only disclose those personal details that I feel completely comfortable with disclosing in the final published thesis.

### **Potential Risks to the Research Participants**

- **Lone working risks.** I set up a lone working policy. This covered me notifying the principal of the school and/or a school supervisor of the date, time, and location of the interview, and the potential length of the interview. This was done in order to ensure that the school knew where the school counsellor and the researcher were located when the researcher was visiting the school (e.g. in case of fire or other emergency).
  
- **Potential confidentiality risks.** I tried to ensure that all interviews took place within a location where the interview would not be disturbed or overheard. I spoke with the principal of the school and/or school supervisors about these requirements. In all my interviews I was provided with a location that was suitably quiet and where we would not be disturbed. Although I had no control over the school environment, for example if there was fire in the school, I tried to minimise the risks to any breach of privacy as much as possible. I requested the use of a locked room in schools where it was available.
  
- **Potential emotional risks.** Bond (2004) states that vulnerability in research can arise in different ways, and good practice in research includes taking adequate account of the vulnerabilities of participants in research design and implementation. It also includes ensuring that the wellbeing of participants experiencing or who may experience vulnerability is respected, and that they are not caused any avoidable distress (Bond, 2004). Bond (2004, p.8) recommends that "Care should be taken to minimise and, when possible, to alleviate any distress caused to research participants." There are no official or government counselling offices based in Saudi Arabia, nor are there any private offices or independent counselling associations in Saudi Arabia.

BERA (2011, p.7) states "Researchers must recognize that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process and must take all necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion and to put them at their ease." I therefore contacted each school in advance and jointly agree with each school as to what support service might be made available for each school counsellor, for instance in the event that interview participants become emotionally distressed. I discussed with each school that I would make myself available to the school counsellor if he wished to talk (BERA, 2011).

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **Research Orientation, Design and Analysis**

Or alternatively I asked each school if the head teacher might be able to make arrangements with another school for another school counsellor to be made available to the interviewee if needed (BERA, 2011). Prior to starting every interview, I took some time with each interviewee to talk about how they were and to catch up with the interviewees in general (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015). I previously had professional relationships with many of the school counsellors that I interviewed, and I think this helped with putting them at ease prior to the interview. I also think it was very helpful for me in terms of regaining their trust, because they knew me personally from before and also the work I had done in Saudi schools.

While my previous experience with student counsellors as part of their leadership team was beneficial in gaining their trust and obtaining opportunities to interview participants and obtain their views on their attitudes towards student counselling functions, their perceptions towards their role and the challenges they encounter, the position of authority held previously had the potential to limit the openness of participants in giving truthful and accurate information they could view as unwelcome to the researcher who had previously worked in a senior leadership position. To overcome the risk of compromised data and untruthful responses from participants, I had to highlight how my daily experiences working as a student counsellors had inspired me to undertake this study with the view of improving the welfare of student counsellors. Drawing from the experiences of how we had worked as a team with the participants and built trust over the years, I presented the research to the participants as an opportunity for them to truthfully express their concerns and facilitate the changes they desired to see in their work. In addition to assuring participants that all data will be anonymised, participants were assured of obtaining the desired change without fear of victimisation. In addition, I also assured all respondents that the study would not result in them suffering any harm whether physical, emotional or psychological.

BERA (2011, p.7) states that researchers "must desist immediately from any actions, ensuing from the research process, that cause emotional or other harm." Because I had been a school counsellor for a long time previously, and because I was interviewing people who were school counsellors, I feel that there may have been a lower risk of interviewees feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed. In many of the interviews I felt as if we both had faith in each other's abilities. But I made sure that at the start of each interview I talked to each interviewee prior to the interview, and told them that they did not have to answer any questions if they did not want to (BERA, 2011). I also told them that if they felt uncomfortable answering any question we could move on to the next question, and that if at any time they became emotional, or wanted to take a break or stop the interview we would do that (BERA, 2011).

## **Informed Consent**

BERA (2011, p.5) defines voluntary informed consent to be "the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway." It believes that researchers are required to take all steps that are necessary to ensure that all the participants understand the research process, including why their participation is required, how it will be used and to whom it will be reported (BERA 2011). Bond (2004, p.6) states that "It is normally good practice to give participants a written statement of the research aims, procedures and information about any potential risks." In order to uphold principles of voluntary informed consent, all research participants were provided with a 'Project Information Sheet' which explained in detail the nature of the research study. All research participants were also provided with an 'Informed Consent Form' which explained what they were consenting to, and which also allowed the research participants to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so.

BERA (2011) also states that educational research that is undertaken by UK researchers outside of the UK must adhere to the same ethical standards as research in the UK. BERA provides guidance as to how to apply this in practice:

Appropriate consent should be sought from local authorities in cultures that adopt a collective approach to consent (e.g. community or religious leaders or local government officials) but cultural sensitivity should not extend to excluding individuals from making their own informed decision to take part in the research. Additional regulations and cultural sensitivities of the host jurisdiction must also be observed, for example if participants wish to be accompanied in data collection activities such as interviews (BERA 2011, pp.5-6).

## **Responsibilities to the Research Participants**

BERA (2011) states that it considers that educational researchers should act with an ethic of respect for people that are involved in the research they are carrying out. This includes ensuring full openness and disclosure in the research process, ensuring that participants understand their right to withdraw and any potential detriment arising from the research, and that the research respect the privacy of the participants. The guideline of openness and disclosure requires that the research secures the voluntary informed consent of the participants which was obtained in practice (BERA, 2011). BERA (2011, p.6) states that "Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right."

The Project Information Sheet which was provided to the researcher participants stated that the research participants could withdraw from the research study at any time and for any reason. BERA (2011, p.7) recommends that "Researchers must make known to the participants... any predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research." The research study aimed to eliminate or minimise detriment from participating in the research by ensuring the anonymity of the research participants and by providing counselling support to research participants in the event of emotional distress during the research study. BERA (2011) notes that the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is the norm and that researchers must recognise participants' entitlement to privacy and provide them with rights of confidentiality and anonymity. These are directly addressed below.

### **Participant Confidentiality and Anonymity**

I aimed to ensure participant confidentiality by using identification code numbers to correspond to research data in any research paperwork and computer files. Since there were 24 research participants, each participant was provided with a simple number code, i.e., "SC01, SC02, SC03, SC04, SC05, SC06, etc." This ensured that any references to any comments made by interviewees, whether positive or negative, would be anonymous, and the participant would not be identified in any way. This was done in order to protect the rights of the participant, and so that their participation in the research study would not put them at risk in any way (BERA, 2011).

Furthermore, in order to increase the ethical protection of the research participants, the real name of City X was not referenced in the thesis. The researcher discussed the ethical consequences of naming the City X in detail with the two research supervisors, Dr Belinda Harris and Dr Max Biddulph. The researcher also discussed with the Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham, Professor Pat Thompson PSM PhD, for her independent professional opinion on the approach to be taken to research ethics in the research. After research ethics discussions carried out with these individuals the researcher believed that the best approach to upholding the anonymity, security, and privacy of the research participants would be not to name the research city in the written research thesis.

### **PART C: RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS**

The use of all personal data obtained followed the guidelines and recommendations provided in section 4 of the University of Nottingham's Research Ethics Code (REC).

### **Personal Data (paragraph 4.1.5 rec)**

All personal data obtained during the research study was not kept for longer than is necessary for the purposes of the PhD research study. This is to protect the rights of the research participants in relation to the storage of personal data about them. BERA (2011, p.7) states "In essence people are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available."

### **Data Security (paragraphs 4.1.4 and 4.2.2 rec)**

Bond (2004) states that the researcher needs to give careful consideration to how to adequately protect personally sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure, and also regarding best contemporary practices and legal data protection requirements. Bond (2004, p.7) states that this should include:

...ensuring adequate consent; restricting the collection, storage and use of data gathered to the purpose for which the participant's consent has been given; the accuracy of data; providing adequate protection for the data against unauthorised access, use or disclosure; and limiting the duration of the storage of the data to the purpose or time limit for which consent has been obtained.

All research data was stored securely on a password protected laptop or computer at all times (BERA, 2011). The data was stored with me in a lockable drawer inside room C06 in the Dearing Building of the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. I also intended to keep all the research data securely stored for a period of at least 7 years following the completion of the final PhD thesis. This provided the research participants with certainty as they knew for how long I intended to use the data and information used in the research study. The right to withdraw from the research at any time either prior to or after completion of the research study was stated in the informed consent form provided to the research participants.

### **The Accuracy of the Research Data**

I am well acquainted with many of the research participants because of my prior role as the director of school counselling in City X. Prior to the interviews, I discussed the potential for inaccuracy of research data (i.e. because research participants might not answer honestly or accurately regarding the research question in order to please the researcher, or because they fear negative consequences for answering honestly) arising in the research with my supervisors. What I was seeking was the accuracy of the subjective view of each research participant, so that what the research participant truthfully and accurately reflected his opinions and beliefs.

In this way it was intended that I would end up with an accurate set of subjective views of all the research participants. I therefore made it very clear to all the research participants that anything that they said before, during, and after the interview was completely confidential in nature, and that there would be absolutely no repercussions on them (e.g. in terms of job security or reprimands) no matter what they disclosed. I also clearly stated to all the research participants, that the research participants should state their own personal beliefs and opinions, and not what they might think that I wanted to hear.

### **Use of Research Findings**

BERA states that "The Association considers it good practice for researchers to debrief participants at the conclusion of the research and to provide them with copies of any reports or other publications arising from their participation" (BERA 2011, p.8). Each school was provided with a copy of the research findings and an electronic copy of the final PhD research thesis. BERA also states that "Researchers have a responsibility to seek to make public the results of their research for the benefit of educational professionals, policy makers and a wider public understanding of educational policy and practice" (BERA 2011, p.10). In light of this ethical guideline, the research findings will also be used to develop new research papers which may be submitted to an academic research journal or journals for consideration for future publication.

### **Thematic Content Analysis**

The analysis of the qualitative data was carried out using 'thematic content analysis' (TCA) which is an analysis of qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts, carried out in order to identify common 'themes' in the data (Dey, 1993; Creswell, 1994). Burnard (1994, p.113) explains that interview data needs to be categorised in some way, because the researcher is looking for patterns within the data, i.e. similarities and differences in the responses that respondents have to offer in their interviews. Burnard (1994, p.113) notes that "The use of a category system allows for the presentation of findings from the data." He also says that there are at least two types of categories that are available, including 'literal categories' and 'descriptive categories' (Burnard 1994, p.114). Literal categories label the contents of an interview in a literal way, for example 'definitions of counselling', 'educational issues', or 'training courses', whereas descriptive categories try to describe the meaning in the content, for example 'learning the role', 'becoming a counsellor', and 'facing the fear' (Burnard 1994, p.114).

King and Horrocks (2010, p.149) also remark that although it is a common-sense way of looking for patterns in data that reveal something of interest, there is actually little discussion in the literature of what is meant by the term 'theme'. The definition of a theme



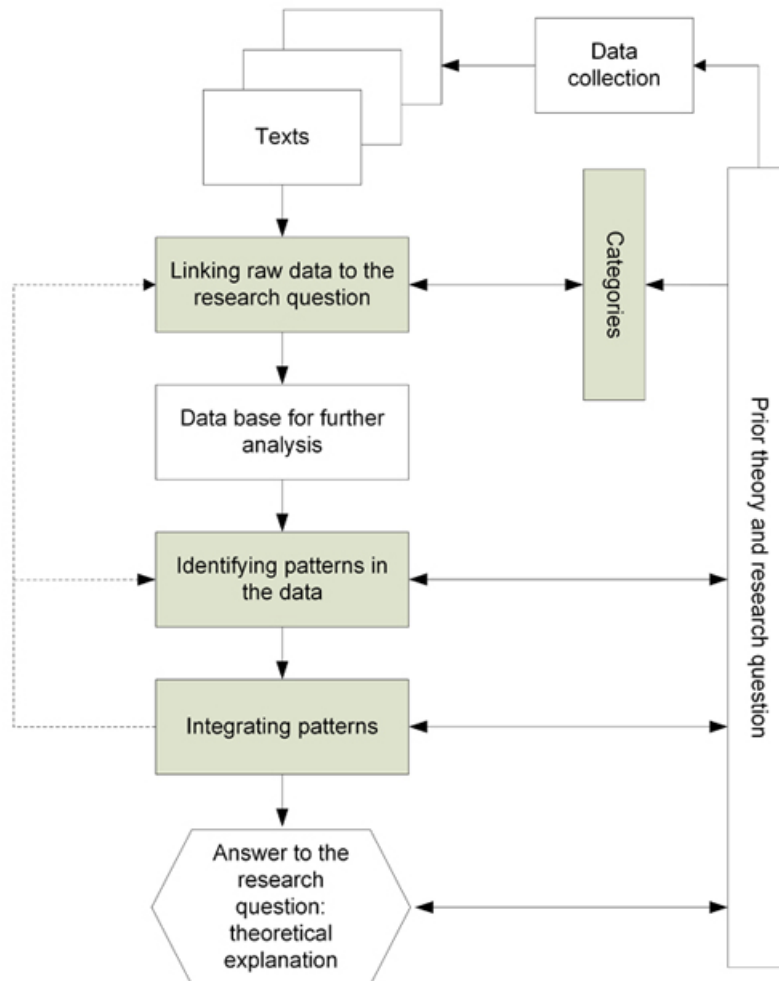
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provided by King and Horrocks (2010, p.150) is: "Themes are recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question." They propose three things to look out for when trying to identify themes. The first is that identifying themes always involves the researcher making choices about what to include, what not to use, and how to interpret the participant's words (King and Horrocks 2010, p.149).

The second is that theme means repetition, and so something must be repeated either in an interview or ideally across different interviews (King and Horrocks 2010, p.149). The third is that themes are distinct from each other, meaning that although there may be some degree of overlap, there should not be a widespread blurring of boundaries between themes (otherwise it was difficult to identify what data belongs in which theme (King and Horrocks 2010, p.149). When reading and interpreting the transcripts it is important to look out for possible outliers and contradictions, or things that do not neatly fit into a particular theme. An overview of the TCA process can be seen in **Figure 3** below.

**Figure 3: Steps between texts and explanation (Gläser and Laudel, 2013)**



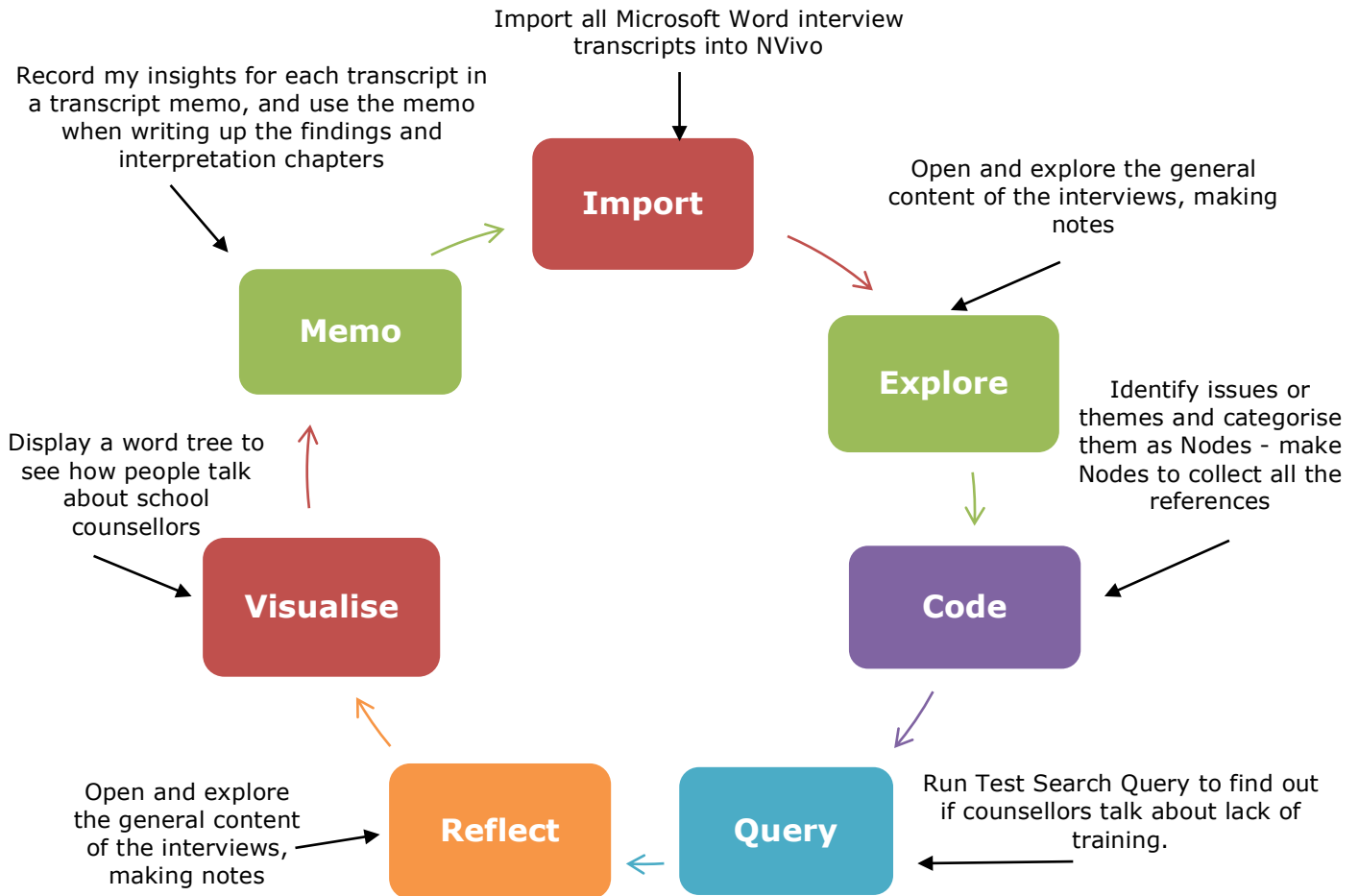
### **Nvivo Encoding and Analysis of the Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data research process first started with me digitally recording all the semi-structured interviews undertaken with all the research participants. These interviews were carried out in the Arabic language and therefore I then transcribed these digitally recorded interviews into written form in Arabic. The interviews were then translated from Arabic into the English language. The interviews were documented in 'Microsoft Office Word' in a structured transcript format. The research study used the qualitative research software 'NVivo 10 for Windows' (NVivo). NVivo is a software platform which is used for analysing all different types and forms of unstructured data, it allows users to use powerful search, query and visualisation tools in order to identify the "Uncover subtle connections, rigorously justify findings, and effortlessly share your work" (QSR International, 2014).

In order for me to understand how to use NVivo, I attended several NVivo software workshops at the University of Nottingham so that I could become familiar with NVivo and how to code transcripts using the NVivo software programme. QSR International is the company that created and developed the NVivo software programme. QSR International

(2014) state that although there is no agreed 'industry standard' process for approaching a qualitative project, qualitative research is an iterative process which often uses certain recognised strategies and steps when exploring particular themes (**Figure 4**).

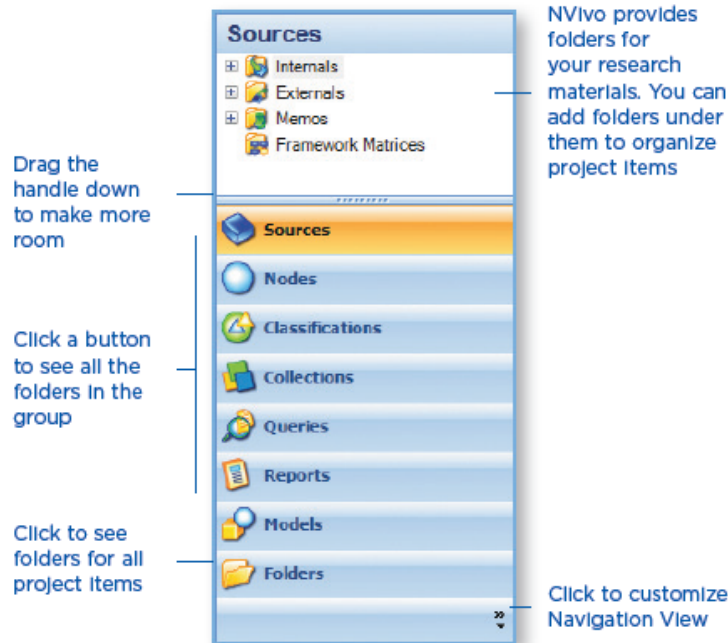
**Figure 4: NVivo approach to exploring themes**



There are key terms which are used when working with Nvivo. The first is 'sources' which are all the main research materials such as audio, video, pictures, documents, PDFs, and datasets (QSR International, 2014). The second is 'coding' which is "the process of gathering material by topic, theme, or case. For example, selecting a paragraph about water quality and coding it at the node 'water quality' " (QSR International, 2014, p.7). These 'nodes' are containers for coding, they allow the researcher to gather all related material into one area in order to look for emerging patterns and ideas (QSR International, 2014). There are 'source classifications' which allow the researcher to record information about sources (e.g. bibliographical data), and there are 'node classifications' which let the researcher record information about people, places, etc. (e.g. demographic data about people (QSR International, 2014) (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Navigation View (QSR International, 2014, p.12)

Navigation View helps you to organize and easily access all of the items in NVivo:



There is a sample project in NVivo (Environmental Change Down East) which I opened and looked in it to see what it was, what it contained, and what things had been done inside. This helped me to see how an NVivo project might look. It included Internal Sources such as Interviews, News Articles, and Survey, and External Sources such as Literature. It also included Memos and Framework Matrices that had been written and used for the project. Following on from this I created a new NVivo (nvp) project entitled "School counsellors, City X, Saudi Arabia" and imported the 24 Microsoft Word documents into the NVivo Sources folder using the External Data – Documents tab. I then created the 26 Nodes with names and descriptions that formed part of the Final Coding Framework. In addition to this, I created two additional Nodes entitled "Important" and "Potential Quotes", so that I could organise words, phrases, or paragraphs that I felt were particularly important, and also so that I could quickly access potential quotes when writing up the findings and interpretation chapters of my thesis.

Figure 6: The NVivo Workspace (QSR International, 2014, p.11)

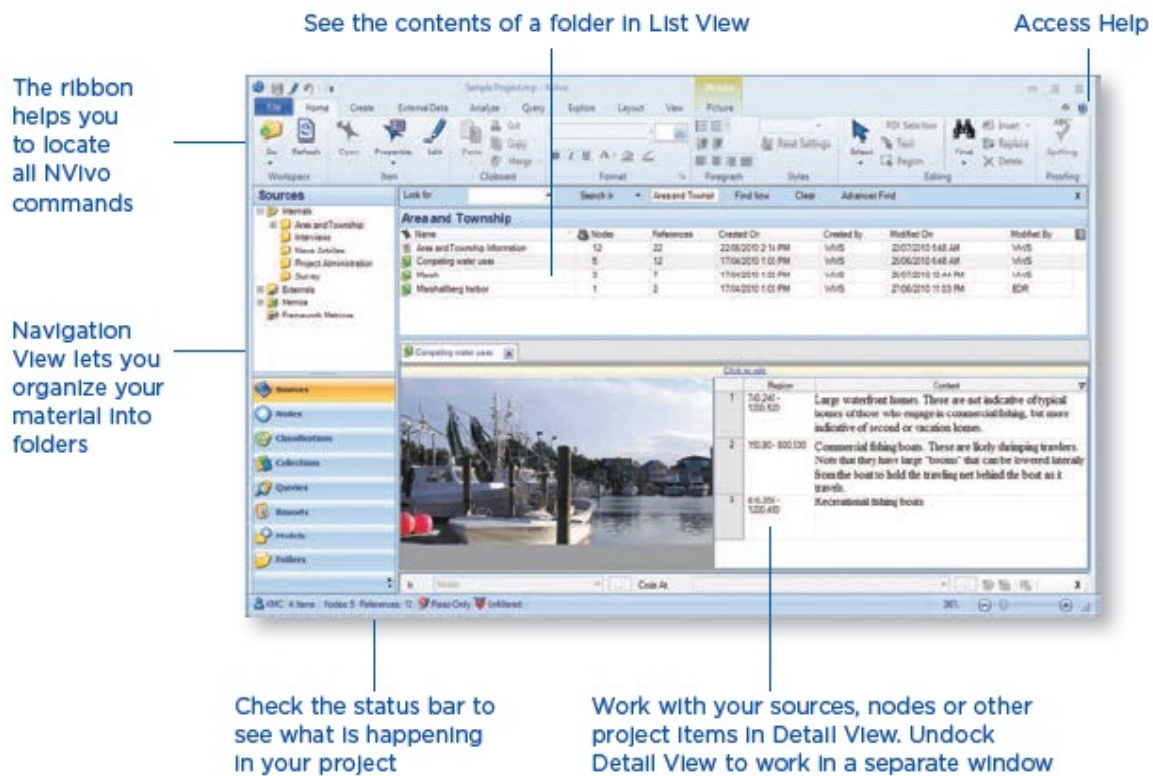
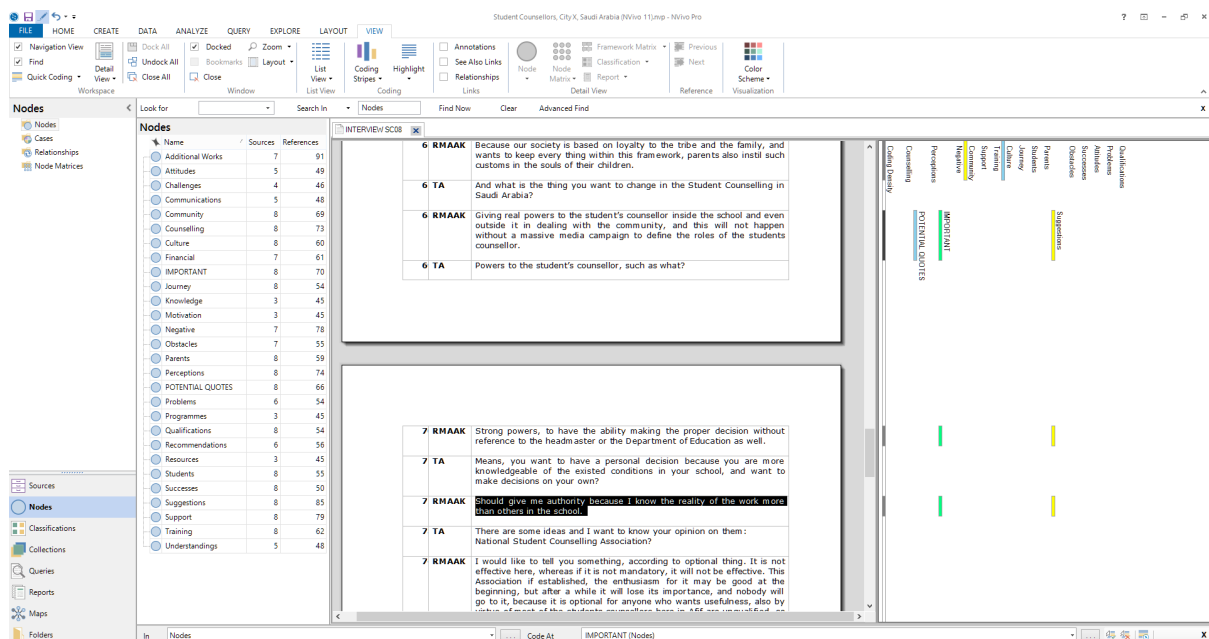


Figure 7: Coding in NVivo with Nodes from the Final Coding Framework




Coding in NVivo involved me opening up each interview source file and going through and coding the entire transcript with all relevant nodes (Figure 5). There are a number of different approaches to coding that were suggested and which I found to be helpful in guiding me with my coding (Figure 8). For example, these include 'topic coding' (i.e. topic being discussed), 'analytical coding' (i.e. meaning in the content), or 'descriptive coding'

(i.e. who is speaking and about what) (QSR International, 2014). Coding can be carried out for single words, sentences or entire paragraphs by selecting the text, and then coding at the current node (Control + F9). Words, sentences, and paragraphs can have multiple nodes coded onto them. So for example, one single paragraph might be coded with a community node, a counselling node, and a parent node.

Alternatively, a sentence might be coded with a culture node but might also be coded with a Potential Quotes node because I thought that the sentence might be useful for a quote in the future. I found that coding the transcripts was a long process because some sentences and paragraphs needed to be coded more than once, and it was not easy to carry out multiple codings on one day because it required a lot of concentration and was tiring. I found that it was easier for me to work on just a few transcripts every day, and then to also make notes when coding.

**Figure 8: Approaches to coding (QSR International, 2014, p.24)**



### Approaches to coding

The way you approach coding depends on your methodology and research design but here are some ideas to get started:

- Start with 'broad-brush' coding to organize the material into broad topic areas (you can use Text Search queries to help with this)—then explore the node for each topic and do more detailed coding. For example, gather all the content about *water quality* and then explore the node looking for interesting perceptions, contradictions or assumptions.
- Or, you could get straight into detailed coding (making nodes as you need them) and then, later on, combine and group your nodes into related categories.
- As you reflect on a piece of content, think about these different types of coding:
  - Topic coding—What is the topic being discussed? For example, *water quality, real estate development, tourism* and so on.
  - Analytical coding—What is this content really about? Why is it interesting? Consider the meaning in context and express new ideas about the data. For example, *ideals vs reality, tension between developers and residents*.
  - Descriptive or 'case' coding—Who is speaking? What place, organization or other entity is being observed?

However, after I had coded quite a few transcripts, the coding became easier for me because I began to see patterns in the coding and the nodes that I used. For example, the nodes relating to 'Suggestions' and 'Recommendations' were mainly used at the end of transcripts. The nodes 'Journey' and 'Counselling' were usually found at the beginning of the transcripts when the school counsellors talked about their experience with counselling

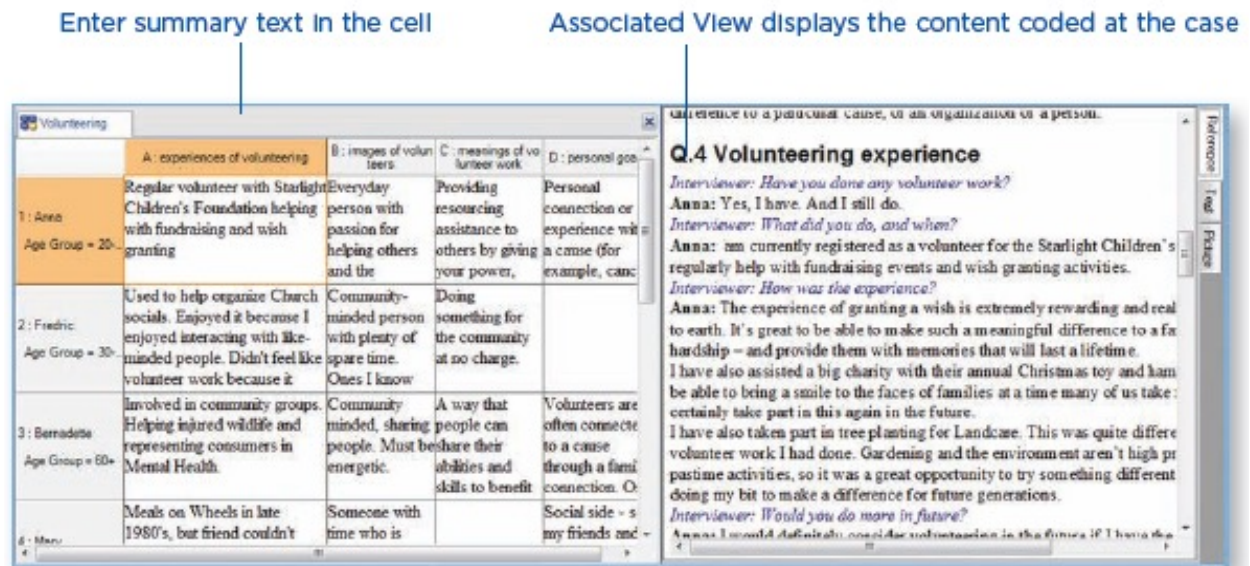
and how they got into counselling. Other nodes were also commonly used together, such as 'Parents', 'Negative', and 'Perceptions'.

Although this process took a long time, after a while I saw the interview transcripts more clearly, and the patterns and themes that emerged. I think that this was because I had read the transcripts a few times and coded them manually first, and then I had come back to them and coded them again using NVivo. I started to identify specific areas which the school counsellors often referred to and I made notes when coding to identify and remember these areas.

There were other NVivo tools I used to help me during the NVivo process. NVivo also has 'memos', which are similar to documents which can be linked to sources or nodes, and it also has 'annotations' which allow the user to record comments, observations, or other scribbled notes in the margin (QSR International, 2014, p.30). There are different types of memos that can be used. For example, there are project memos, interview or participant memos, node memos, query results memos, analytical and procedural memos, and NVivo memos (QSR International 2014). Interview memos are used to summarise the key points in an interview, and they allow the user to make notes of contradictions, surprises, early hunches or the interview setting (QSR International, 2014).

I therefore created a memo for each of the interviews and when I was coding each transcript I would write summary notes about the transcript each time I came back to the transcript. Node memos allow the user to explain why the user thinks a theme is significant, and can be updated or changed as the research progresses (QSR International, 2014). QSR International (2014, p.31) states "By writing as you go, you won't face the pressure of staring at a blank document when it comes to writing up your project". I therefore thought it was important for me to create node memos to help to remind me when I wrote up the thesis.

**Figure 9: Framework matrix (QSR International, 2014, p.35)**



I also used annotations in the margin to write brief observations or thoughts I had on the interview, or on what the school counsellor was saying. Once the interview transcripts had been coded, there were a number of NVivo tools available to help me to analyse the data. For example matrix coding queries can help the user to compare respondent's comments based on demographic attributes (e.g., age, professional, time in education, time in counselling) (QSR International, 2014).

Framework matrices can make it easier for users to see everything about a theme by looking down a column, and by seeing how different themes relate to each other for a particular individual (QSR International, 2014) (**Figure 9**). Other NVivo tools that I found very useful in the TCA process, were 'Text Search Queries' (search for a word or phrase in source material and view all matches); 'Word Frequency Query' (list most frequently occurring words in sources); 'Coding Query' (gathering all the coding at any combination of nodes); and 'Matrix Coding Query' (matrix of nodes based on search criteria, e.g. attitudes about school counselling and community (QSR International, 2014). Screenshots of the data coding in NVivo are set out in **Figure 10** below.



**Figure 10: Coding in NVivo with Nodes from the Final Coding Framework**

The screenshot displays the NVivo Pro interface for a coding session. The top menu bar includes FILE, HOME, CREATE, DATA, ANALYZE, QUERY, EXPLORE, LAYOUT, and VIEW. The toolbar contains icons for Navigation View, Find, Quick Coding, Dock All, Undock All, Close All, Close, Annotations, See Also Links, Relationships, Framework Matrix, Classification, Report, Previous, Next, and Color Scheme. The main workspace is divided into three panes:

- Left Pane (Nodes):** A list of 28 nodes with columns for Name, Sources, and References.
 

Name	Sources	References
Additional Works	7	91
Attitudes	5	49
Challenges	4	46
Communications	5	48
Community	8	69
Counselling	8	73
Culture	8	60
Financial	7	61
IMPORTANT	8	70
Journey	8	54
Knowledge	3	45
Motivation	3	45
Negative	7	78
Obstacles	7	55
Parents	8	59
Perceptions	8	74
POTENTIAL QUOTES	8	66
Problems	6	54
Programmes	3	45
Qualifications	8	54
Recommendations	6	56
Resources	3	45
Students	8	55
Successes	8	50
Suggestions	8	85
Support	8	79
Training	8	62
Understandings	5	48
- Center Pane (Interview SC08):** Displays interview transcripts with highlighted segments and their corresponding codes.
 

Code	Text
6 RMAAK	Because our society is based on loyalty to the tribe and the family, and wants to keep every thing within this framework, parents also instil such customs in the souls of their children.
6 TA	And what is the thing you want to change in the Student Counselling in Saudi Arabia?
6 RMAAK	Giving real powers to the student's counsellor inside the school and even outside it in dealing with the community, and this will not happen without a massive media campaign to define the roles of the students counsellor.
6 TA	Powers to the student's counsellor, such as what?
7 RMAAK	Strong powers, to have the ability making the proper decision without reference to the headmaster or the Department of Education as well.
7 TA	Means, you want to have a personal decision because you are more knowledgeable of the existed conditions in your school, and want to make decisions on your own?
7 RMAAK	Should give me authority because I know the reality of the work more than others in the school.
7 TA	There are some ideas and I want to know your opinion on them: National Student Counselling Association?
7 RMAAK	I would like to tell you something, according to optional thing. It is not effective here, whereas if it is not mandatory, it will not be effective. This Association if established, the enthusiasm for it may be good at the beginning, but after a while it will lose its importance, and nobody will go to it, because it is optional for anyone who wants usefulness, also by virtue of most of the students counsellors here is 155-see unqualified as
- Right Pane (Coding Density):** A visualization showing vertical bars representing the frequency of codes across different nodes. The nodes listed are: Qualifications, Problems, Attitudes, Successes, Obstacles, Parents, Students, Journey, Culture, Training, Support, Community, Negative, Perceptions, Counselling, and POTENTIAL QUOTES. The bars are color-coded: green for IMPORTANT, yellow for SUGGESTIONS, and blue for POTENTIAL QUOTES.

The bottom status bar shows: TA 28 Items Linked Nodes: 18 References: 52 Editable Line: 15 Column: 0

### **An Overview of Biographical Details of Each Interviewee**

Biographical detail of each interview are summarised below, relating to their age, length of time they have spent in counselling, in the education sector, and any qualifications they hold.

**Figure 11: Biographical details of each interviewee**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Working in Counselling</b>	<b>Working in Education</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
SC01	44 years	12 pages	10 years		Bachelors degree in Social Work Higher Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC02	36 years	9 pages	6 years	7 years	Masters in Health and Psychological Care Bachelors degree in Psychology Masters degree in Psychology
SC03		7 pages	15 years	10 years	Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering
SC04	34 years	9 pages	3 years		
SC05	50 years	9 pages		25 years	Middle College Diploma
SC06	55 years	7 pages	20 years	31 years	Intermediate College Diploma
SC07	39 years	8 pages	8 years	11 years	Bachelor of Islamic Studies Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC08	39 years	6 pages	1.5 years	17 years	Bachelors degree in English
SC09	40 years	7 pages	7 years	12 years	Bachelors Degree in Islamic Studies Diploma of Guidance and Counselling
SC10	39 years	7 pages	9 years	16 years	Trained in History and Geography
SC11	46 years	10 pages	19 years	25 years	Masters in Sociology

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<b>Code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Working in Counselling</b>	<b>Working in Education</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
SC12	43 years	9 pages	12 years	21 years	Bachelors Degree in Quranic and Islamic Studies Diploma in Guidance and Counselling Working towards Masters Degree in Islamic Education
SC13		8 pages			
SC14		6 pages	12 years	19 year	Bachelors Degree in Geography
SC15	42 years	8 pages	13 years	8 years	Bachelors Degree in Physical Education
SC16		8 pages	5 years		Bachelors Degree in History
SC17	46 years	6 pages	15 years		Bachelors Degree in Mathematics
SC18	49 years	8 pages	21 years	24 years	Medium College Diploma in Islamic Education
SC19	53 years	6 pages	20 years	10 years	Medium College Diploma in History and Geography
SC20	38 years	5 pages	7 years	9 years	Bachelor's Degree in Media Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC21	41 years	5 pages	9 years	12 years	Bachelor's Degree in Sports Education High Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC22		5 pages	6 years	14 years	Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry
SC23	41 years	6 pages	9 years	11 years	Bachelor's Degree in Islamic Sharia
SC24	38 years	5 pages	8 years		High Diploma in Guidance and Counselling

## **The Interview and Transcription Process**

The interviews took place in schools located in City X in Saudi Arabia. I contacted each school personally and arranged a date and a time for the interview to take place at the school. I asked if each school could provide a quiet room located somewhere where the school counsellor and I would not be disturbed. When I arrived at each school I introduced myself to the school counsellor and we had an informal discussion about what he had been doing and what had been happening in his life. I personally knew many of the school counsellors I interviewed. After that, I spoke to the school counsellor about the interview itself, about what it would be about, and the background to the research study. I also emphasised to each school counsellor that what they said in the interview would be confidential and they would not be referred to by name in the PhD research or the PhD thesis.

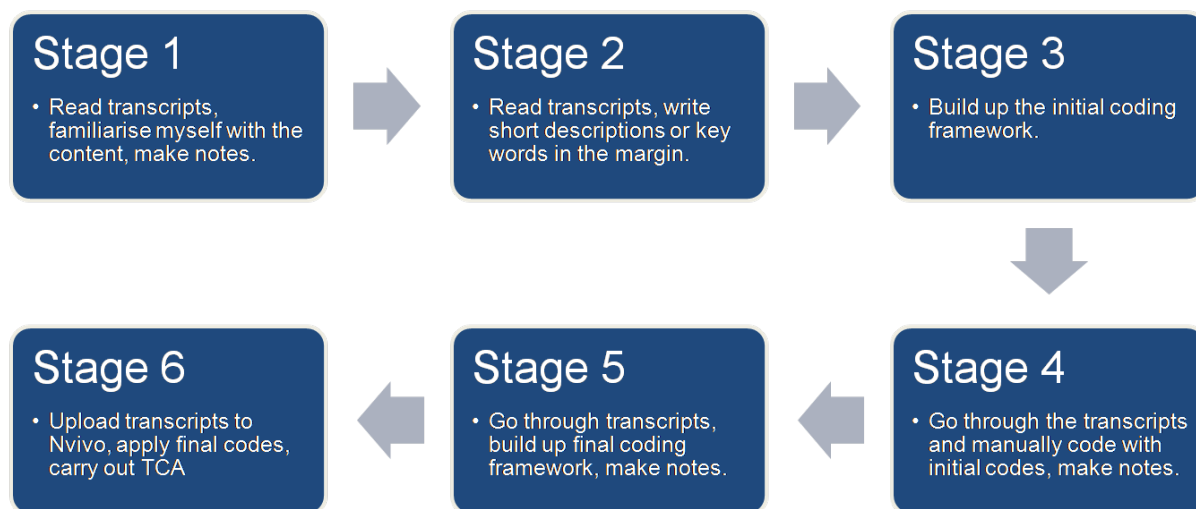
I also said to them that if they needed to take a rest at any time, or felt that they needed a break because they felt emotional, we could stop at any time. I also told them that if they did not want to answer any question they did not have to answer. I guided each school counsellor through the research informed consent form and informed that I would be recording each interview. I then recorded each interview and stored the digital recordings in a safe and secure location following on from each interview. When I had finished each interview I thanked the school counsellor for his participation in the research study. I then translated and transcribed the recordings into unformatted English transcripts. An example of an unformatted English transcript is contained in **APPENDIX 13**. After that, I formatted each English transcript so that each question and answer was contained in a separate numbered line in order to be able to identify each question and answer systematically. An example of a final formatted English transcript is contained in **APPENDIX 14**.

## **Developing the Coding Framework**

The transcript coding framework was developed through a series of stages which can be seen in **Figure 12**. I used an inductive approach to analysing the data. Burnard *et al.* (2008) state the inductive approach involves analysing qualitative data with little or no predetermined theory or framework. Instead, the inductive approach uses the data to develop the structure of analysis and is a comprehensive way to investigate an area where little is known about the study phenomenon (Burnard *et al.*, 2008). Although I have spent my career in school counselling in Saudi Arabia, I did not want to approach the research with any pre-existing beliefs or opinions about school counselling. I did not want to test theories that I may have developed from the literature or from my own experience.

Therefore, I believed the choice of the inductive approach to be best suited to analysing the data obtained from the interviews.

**Figure 12: The coding framework process**



I began the coding framework process by reading through each of the transcripts and taking brief notes of my thoughts as part of my reflexivity journal. This included my general thoughts about the interview such as how I felt and remembered how the interview went, and also whether I thought the interview was positive or provided new insights. I also wrote down words that might be of use during the data analysis stage. There were short descriptive words which might help me to remember my thoughts on that particular interview. My main aim when carrying out this process was to try to come up with words that described what the school counsellor was saying during the interview in one idea or concept. I then read the interview transcripts again and made some more notes.

### **Initial Coding Framework**

Burnard *et al.* (2008) note the process of thematic content analysis (TCA) involves identifying themes and categories that may emerge from the research data. The researcher uses TCA to discover themes in the interview transcripts, and then the researcher tries to verify, confirm and qualify the themes by looking through the data and repeating the process again and again to identify other themes and categories (Burnard *et al.*, 2008). This process begins with the researcher reading through every transcript and making "notes in the margins of words, theories or short phrases that sum up what is being said in the text" (Burnard *et al.*, 2008, p.430).

An example of an 'Initial Coding Framework' is given below. I looked through a number of research articles in order to provide me with examples of different types of initial coding

frameworks. This was very helpful to me, as it guided me as to what kinds of words and meanings I should be looking for. These initial coding framework examples helped me to understand what types of ideas and themes that I should be looking for in the school counselling interview transcripts.

Interview transcript	Initial coding framework
Interviewer: 'Can you tell me about what you like to eat?'	
Child: 'I like crisps, chips, sweets. I like sweets and chocolate the most. I like apples, grapes and oranges. Oh and pizza, I really like pizza.'	Food preferences
Interviewer: 'What do you like about those things?'	
Child: '..Well the apples and the other fruit I just really like the taste and they are healthy I suppose. We eat those in school now and my friends like them, so I eat them with my friends.  'I really like sweets and chocolates though, they are my favourites but I know they aren't really good for you. If you eat too many they can be bad for your teeth. They can make them go brown or drop out.'	Food preferences Healthy foods Food choices in school Peer influence  Effects of sweets and chocolate

**Figure 13: An example of an initial coding framework (Burnard *et al.* 2008, p.430)**

The open coding stage consisted of me reading the interview transcripts and putting down words or short phrases that I believed described what was being discussed, or summarised what was being discussed (Burnard *et al.* 2008). At the beginning this process was difficult for me because it was hard to describe everything in one word or short phrase. Burnard *et al.* (2008, p.430) note:

The aim, however, is to offer a summary statement or word for each element that is discussed in the transcript, the exception to this is when the respondent has gone off track and begun to move away from the topic under discussion. I initially felt I had to put down a lot of descriptions or phrases, but I stopped myself from this because I believed it would not benefit me if it became too confusing.

After coding the first ten interview transcripts this process became much easier for me as I could see that some comments were repeated, or some issues were the same as in other transcripts. I went through all the transcripts twice in order to develop the first initial manual coding framework. Once I had done this I identified all the initial codes and created the initial manual coding framework below.

**Table 2: Initial manual coding framework**

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1.	Additional works	27.	Obstacles
2.	Administrative	28.	Parents
3.	Attitudes	29.	Perceptions
4.	Behavioural	30.	Plans
5.	Budget	31.	Preparation
6.	Burdens	32.	Proactive
7.	Challenges	33.	Problems
8.	Communications	34.	Programmes
9.	Community	35.	Promotion
10.	Counselling	36.	Qualifications
11.	Courses	37.	Recommendations
12.	Culture	38.	Religion
13.	Customs	39.	Resources
14.	Emotional	40.	Role
15.	Extra work	41.	Skills
16.	Family	42.	Society
17.	Financial	43.	Specialization
18.	Health register	44.	Student motivation
19.	Image	45.	Students
20.	Incentives	46.	Successes
21.	Journey	47.	Suggestions
22.	Knowledge	48.	Support
23.	Literature	49.	Tasks
24.	Monitoring	50.	Training
25.	Motivation	51.	Treatment
26.	Negative	52.	Understandings

This Initial Coding Framework was then applied manually to the paper transcripts.

Interview Transcript	Initial Coding Framework
Interviewer: <b>"What type of works carried out by you as a school counsellor?"</b>	
Work is diverse, if there is no program, we follow up students and receive any emergency cases submitted to us, whereas most of problems are emergent, and we try to solve his problems.	Programme Role Problems

<b>Interview Transcript</b>	<b>Initial Coding Framework</b>
<p>Of course attendance to the school must be early, because the school counsellor works on fighting the delay, and also he is one of the symbols that seek to eliminate the delay.</p> <p>So he must begin by himself, and come to school early and not late, and be a role model for students and teachers, the second thing is the morning queue, following up students in the morning queue completely, to know if it is conducted properly or not, also the students counsellor can implement a specific program in the morning queue or deliver a short speech to the students.</p>	<p>Role Student Motivation</p> <p>Role Student Motivation</p> <p>Programme Student Motivation</p>
<p>Interviewer: <b>"What are the difficulties and challenges which you face in your work as a school counsellor?"</b></p>	
<p>Difficulties in performing the work well, according to my point of view, lack of understanding of the students counsellor's tasks, whether by the same counsellor or the school deputy headmaster or headmaster and teachers.</p> <p>Not everyone is aware of what is the work of the students counsellor originally, means, they do not understand the work and tasks of the students counsellor, and as I said earlier, the large number of programs hinder the work of the students counsellor,</p> <p>For example, the doctor as you know is specialized in a particular field, such as ophthalmology and other, whenever focus is on specific things, the productivity will be greater, and perhaps the students counsellor innovates in his work, for example, drugs and smoking programs should be carried out or supervised by a person who</p>	<p>Challenges Understandings Tasks Perceptions</p> <p>Understandings Programmes</p> <p>Programmes Training</p>



Interview Transcript	Initial Coding Framework
understands and specialist, for example, to be a doctor or specialist.	
Interviewer: <b>"Very nice words, do you carry out additional works or are entrusted to you?"</b>	
Never, I have been asked to carry out, but I refused.	Additional works Extra work
Interviewer: <b>"Well, what is the opinion of the headmaster on your work or role as a school counsellor in general, regardless of you as a person, does he understand your work, how does he think of the students counsellor's role in general at school?"</b>	
Unfortunately, the point of view on counselling, despite its importance, is very weak and very negative, may be counselling is misunderstood or the reality forces them to downplay counselling and its importance.	Negative Perceptions Counselling
Interviewer: <b>"Why?"</b>	
Because its effectiveness is weak and it is not activated well, and the person who is responsible for this thing is either the students counsellor himself because he does not perform his work properly, or perhaps that the headmaster and the school members do not consider school counselling from within the important works at school.	Negative Perceptions Counselling  Perceptions School counselling
Interviewer: <b>"And what is the reason for this in your opinion?"</b>	
Education here is weak in general, and counselling is of weakest education episodes, education is weak in	School counselling Role

Interview Transcript	Initial Coding Framework
<p>general, and this is a reality and tangible and everybody knows this, counselling is known as the first weakened in education, in my view and at the level of the Kingdom also, on one occasion we met with the general manager of the school counselling in the ministry of education last year, and he talked about an important point, he said that everyone in the Kingdom consider the profession of the school counsellor is a profession for comfort!</p>	<p>Culture Society</p>

**Figure 14: An example of my initial coding framework**

### Final Coding Framework

The initial manual coding framework contained 52 categories and I therefore developed the final coding framework by aiming to narrow these categories down. Burnard *et al.* (2008, p.430) note that:

In the second stage, the researcher collects together all of the words and phrases from all of the interviews onto a clean set of pages. These can then be worked through and all duplications crossed out. This will have the effect of reducing the numbers of 'categories' quite considerably.

**Figure 15: An example of a final coding framework after reduction of the categories in the initial coding framework (Burnard *et al.* 2008, p.430)**

Final coding framework	Initial coding framework
1. Contrasts and contradictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of food</li> <li>• Positive notions of food and consequences</li> <li>• Negative notions of food and consequences</li> <li>• Healthy/unhealthy foods</li> </ul>
2. Copying friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer influence</li> <li>• Copying</li> <li>• Food choices in school</li> <li>• Food choices and preferences of friendship groups</li> </ul>
3. Diet in adulthood and childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diet in childhood</li> <li>• Food preferences</li> <li>• Expected diet as a 'grown up'</li> <li>• Perceptions of adult/child diets</li> <li>• The need to be 'healthy' as an adult</li> </ul>
4. Single item consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects of sweets and chocolates</li> <li>• Effects of 'junk food'</li> <li>• Effects of fizzy drinks</li> </ul>

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I reviewed and compared the initial and final coding frameworks provided by Burnard *et al.* (2008), and I could see that the categorisation was aimed at grouping initial codes into wider categories (**Table 3**). I therefore did this by going through the initial codes and checking for duplications. I also narrowed the initial manual coding framework by reviewing the transcripts in general to look for rarely used codes. For example, "budget" was deleted as I grouped it into the code "financial". The code "burdens" was deleted and grouped together into "problems". The code "behavioural" was deleted because it was rarely used in the transcripts. The code "emotional" was deleted because it was rarely used I the transcripts and I felt it could be covered by other codes.

The code "family" was deleted because it was rarely used and was more regularly covered by the code "parents" in the transcripts. The code "incentives" was deleted because it was rarely used. The code "plans" was deleted, because I grouped it into the code "programmes", to cover both daily, weekly, and student programmes. The code "proactive" was deleted because it was rarely used in the transcripts. The code "society" was deleted, because it was grouped into "community" and "culture". The code "literature" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "monitoring" was deleted and grouped into "programmes". The code "health register" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "image" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "courses" was deleted because it was grouped together with the code "training". The code "preparation" was deleted because it was very rarely used.

The code "role" was deleted because it was grouped together with the code "counselling" which I used to describe the role and practice of counselling. The code "student motivation" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "tasks" was deleted because it was covered by the "additional works" and "counselling" codes. The code "specialization" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "religion" was deleted because it was very rarely used. The code "skills" was deleted because it was grouped together with the code "training". In this way, by eliminating duplications and by grouping codes together, I was able to reduce the Initial coding framework by half, down to a total number of 26 codes contained in the Final NVivo coding framework. These final 26 codes were used to create 26 individual Nodes that were used to encode the transcript, pin NVivo.

**Table 3: Final NVivo coding framework**

1.	Additional Works	14.	Parents
2.	Attitudes	15.	Perceptions
3.	Challenges	16.	Problems
4.	Communications	17.	Programmes
5.	Community	18.	Qualifications

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6.	Counselling	19.	Recommendations
7.	Culture	20.	Resources
8.	Financial	21.	Students
9.	Journey	22.	Successes
10.	Knowledge	23.	Suggestions
11.	Motivation	24.	Support
12.	Negative	25.	Training
13.	Obstacles	26.	Understandings

This Final Coding Framework was used to create Nodes in NVivo and to electronically code the transcripts in NVivo.

**Table 4: Final coding framework**

<b>Final Coding Framework</b>	<b>Initial Coding Framework</b>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Courses</li> </ul>
Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions</li> <li>• Image</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations</li> <li>• Suggestions</li> </ul>
Additional Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Works</li> <li>• Administrative</li> <li>• Extra Work</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Financial</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS – THE ACCOUNT OF DATA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will set out the findings of the research based on a qualitative interpretation of 24 semi-structured interviews that were carried out on school counsellors in the unnamed Research City in Saudi Arabia. The chapter will set out the distinct themes that were developed from the Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) that was carried out on the transcripts, both manual TCA and TCA carried out in NVivo. The chapter will set out how the respondents felt towards school counselling in order to show what the school counsellors felt about their work and their role within the school setting. It will also set out the six themes that emerged from the transcripts.

Theme 1 will cover the general attitudes that school counsellors felt others had towards the school counsellors. Theme 2 will cover the general perceptions that school counsellors felt others had about them, their work, and their role within the school setting. Theme 3 will cover the knowledge of school counselling practices that others had within the school and home setting. Theme 4 will cover the understandings that stakeholders such as head teachers, parents, students, and teachers had about school counsellors and school counselling practices. Theme 5 will cover a range of cultural influences that emerged from the transcripts and that the school counsellors identified. Finally, theme 5 will cover a number of sub-themes that have been generally grouped together under the umbrella theme of lack of support felt by school counsellors.

### **RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

Following on from an analysis of the transcripts I found that the majority of the school counsellors I interviewed believed that school counselling was very important within the school. This is important to note because many of the other themes that will be identified relate to negative views of school counsellors and problems that school counsellors face. Therefore, if school counsellors view school counselling as necessary within the school setting, then this may help them to positively focus on their role, rather than becoming demoralised over time. Most of the school counsellors were asked about the importance of school counselling at the beginning of the interview.

The majority of the interviews revealed strong positive attitudes by the school counsellors towards the importance of school counselling in Saudi schools. Both qualified and non-qualified school counsellors felt that school counselling played an important role for

students in the school environment. SC01 stated that he believed school counselling to be very necessary and said:

**"I think that it's the most important element in the educational process, because of rapid changes in the modern era, modern inventions and emerging things, where every person needs someone who guides him in the correct path" (SC01 Transcript, Line 10).**

SC07 said that he believed the school counsellor was a **"safe haven for students"**, because he supported the students and helped students achieve a balance between his mental and scientific needs **(SC07 Transcript, Line 12)**. SC08 considered school counselling to be a cornerstone of the educational process **(SC08 Transcript, Line 16)**. SC04 believed that student guidance and counselling was very necessary in schools, because students had a range of psychological, educational, and social problems **(SC04 Transcript, Line 10)**. It was interesting to note that many of the school counsellors had been in school counselling for a long time, and yet they still maintained positive attitudes towards school counselling.

Overall, SC01 believed that school counselling was **"very necessary" (SC01 Transcript, Line 10)** in Saudi schools, but was also **"essential for all members of the community" (SC01 Transcript, Line 12)**. SC01 provided practical examples of the reality of school counselling work in Saudi schools, including counselling students with health difficulties, dealing with regular absences, superiors honouring, and emergency situations between students and their colleagues. SC01 noted that he sometimes dealt with one or two students a day, and sometimes up to ten students in one day. SC02 believed that school counselling was very necessary in Saudi schools, and stated that:

**"It is one of the most important pillars in the educational field" (SC02 Transcript, Line 12).**

SC15 believed that counselling played an important role in the school as the school counsellor tried to balance a student's life at school, as well as his social life and psychological well-being. SC03 had strong views about the role and importance of school counselling in Saudi schools. SC16 began his journey into counselling because he felt teaching was boring, and believed that counselling was very necessary in Saudi schools. SC17 believed that school counselling was very, very important in Saudi schools since students suffered from a range of psychological, educational, and social problems. SC17 adopted a pro-active approach to counselling because of the closed nature of Saudi Arabian society.

SC22 considered school counselling to be the cornerstone of the educational process. He showed enthusiasm for his role at school, and when asked about his successes as a school counsellor he replied:

**"There is no great successes I have achieved during my time in school counselling, but every effort I make in this school I considered it success" (SC22 Transcript, Line 36).**

Like many of the other school counsellors interviewed, SC21 believed that counselling was very necessary in schools, but he noted that there had to be cooperation available for the school counsellor. However, he did note that he had achieved success in school counselling in the school:

**"I think the biggest success for me is I built an excellent relationship with the school students, and I became a friend for them" (SC19 Transcript, Line 46).**

SC23 believed that school counselling had a **"big and important role in schools if it is done well"** (SC23 Transcript, Line 5). He also believed it was necessary in schools in order to help to resolve the educational and family problems of students in general. SC14 believed the school counselling service was important in Saudi schools as it helped to guide students socially and psychosocially. SC05 believed that counselling was necessary in Saudi schools as well as in the community and society. SC20 viewed school counselling as necessary in schools as the school counsellor could help to guide students and support their psychological and academic needs. SC19 felt very strongly about school counselling and felt that it was very necessary in Saudi secondary schools. SC03 stated:

**"I think that the primary role of counselling is that of creating a balance for student between inside and outside of school, as well as helping the student educationally, psychologically, socially and behaviourally" (SC03 Transcript, Line 8).**

SC13 showed that he cared about school counselling and believed it to be very important in Saudi schools. With regards to school counselling SC13 said:

**"It is inevitable and very necessary in the schools in Saudi Arabia" (SC13 Transcript, Line 8).**

SC09 had a very positive attitude to counselling and indicated a strong desire to work in counselling. He said that:

**"Counselling is very, very, necessary, the school and its administration must provide the school counsellor with cooperation, in order to allow him to perform his work accurately" (SC09 Transcript, Line 6).**

SC12 believed that counselling was important in Saudi schools and provided a clear benefit for students. Although SC10 said that he believed school counselling to be necessary, he also said that there were a large number of flaws in school counselling, including the larger number of counselling programs and overcrowding. SC11 believed that school counselling in schools was very necessary, but that it was very focused on the educational part of counselling, and neglected the social and psychological sides. SC04 also believed in the importance of school counselling, he noted that:

**"Guidance and counselling are very necessary in schools, due to the presence of many psychological, educational and social problems of students, as well as the problems of teachers" (SC04 Transcript, Line 10).**

Overall, it can be said that a majority of the school counsellors displayed strong and positive views and feelings about school counselling and school counselling practices in Saudi schools. Although there were a range of explanation behind the importance and role of school counselling in school, the school counsellors made it clear that they believed that school counselling was necessary in school. They also had clear knowledge of the ways school counselling could benefit students and the role of the school counsellor, the student, and the student's family. Many of the school counsellors were of the view that school counselling could help to guide students with their educational, psychological and academic needs.

## **THEMES**

After developing the final coding framework and working with NVivo, I identified eleven main themes that emerged from the interview transcripts (**Table 5**). The first four themes reflected the aim of this research study, and were grouped into attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and understandings. The other two themes reflect distinct themes that could be identified from the research data following on from the NVivo and TCA analysis processes. There are also a number of sub-themes contained within each theme that I could identify and which I grouped together. For example, for theme 6 (Lack of support within and beyond the school community), I felt that this theme covered a general lack of support felt by school counsellors. But there were also a number of sub-themes that could be identified. These included a lack of communication, a lack of cooperation, a lack of financial support, and a lack of qualifications and training.



**Table 5: TCA themes emerging from the research data**

THEMES
<b>Theme 1:</b> Negative stakeholder behavioural attitudes towards student counsellors.
<b>Theme 2:</b> Negative stakeholder perceptions towards school counsellors.
<b>Theme 3:</b> General lack of knowledge of modern school counselling practices.
<b>Theme 4:</b> Dissension between school counsellors and other stakeholders regarding their role.
<b>Theme 5:</b> Cultural and religious influences on Western models of school counselling.
<b>Theme 6:</b> Lack of support within and beyond the school community.

## **THEME 1: NEGATIVE STAKEHOLDER BEHAVIOURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCHOOL COUNSELLORS**

Attitude is defined as an individual perception and reaction to a task which is expected to be carried out or executed in a group, institution, school setting or an organisation (Ubom, 2001). Eyo *et al.* (2010) note that attitude is high, or positive, when individual responses to a task or programme are favourable, i.e. showing a commitment to their duties. Alternatively, attitude is low, or negative, when students express a nonchalant response, with regard to anything that is expected of them in a given situation (Eyo *et al.*, 2010). Overall, there were clear negative attitudes that could be identified in the transcripts. There were negative attitudes described by the school counsellors on the part of head teachers, teachers, other school staff and parents. There were very clear negative attitudes towards school counsellors and the role of school counselling in schools described by the school counsellors. SC10 noted that

**"...this is the reality that we live in, 90% of the community consider school counselling as a pace to rest and not to work" (SC10 Transcript, Line 36).**

The transcripts showed that there were a number of different reasons why this was the case. SC08 was able to explain what reasons he believed to be behind these negative attitudes. SC08 noted that there were negative attitudes to school counsellors by teachers and parents, he believed that:

**"Parents in this region do not care about the education of their children, but are more interested in breeding sheep, camels, and perhaps more" (SC08 Transcript, Line 34).**

SC08 said that in the two years he had been at the school, he had only met with approximately five parents. SC08 believed that this might be because of a mixture of lack of education, the nomadic environment, and the closed community culture and private social relationships. SC08 believed this affected his relationship with the students because there was a lack of trust in the school counsellor. Another reason behind these negative attitudes seemed to be that head teachers, teachers and parents did not understand the role of the school counsellor and what the school counsellor did. This meant that they considered that the school counsellor did nothing, and therefore this may have generated feelings of resentment or negative attitudes towards school counsellors by other teachers. For example, SC02 stated that

**"The teacher does not comprehend the role of the school counsellor. The culture and understanding of the actual work of the school counsellor is not understood by many teachers" (SC02 Transcript, Line 26).**

SC02 also believed that:

**"the administration of the school is usually not aware of the role of the school counsellor, and not aware of the sensitivity of his work" (SC02 Transcript, Line 26).**

SC05 stated:

**"We are trying to persuade the members of the school, including the headmaster and the teachers, of the nature of our work, but unfortunately I consider their minds fossilized" (SC05 Transcript, Line 30).**

SC05 meant that the teachers and even the head teacher was firmly convinced that the work of school counsellors was easy and that all school counsellors wanted to do was to relax. SC04 said that the negative attitudes of teachers towards school counsellors meant that the teachers were uncooperative with school counsellors **(SC04 Transcript, Line 28)**. SC12 described these negative attitudes towards school counsellors as **"a conflict of powers between teachers and school counsellors" (SC12 Transcript, Line 58)**. He said that

**"Teachers look contemptuously to the school counsellor thinking that he has nothing to present or they envy him for his position that he has few job duties" (SC12 Transcript, Line 46).**

On the other hand, many of the school counsellors believed that parents' negative attitudes towards school counsellors was because of their lack of knowledge of the role of the school counsellor, or because of their lack of education. SC12 believed that one of the greatest problems faced by school counsellors was that the community did not understand the work of the school counsellor. He believed that this was partly because there was a different and secretive culture in Saudi Arabia, but partly because the Ministry of Education did not educate the public about school counselling practices. Therefore, it would seem to be the case that there are a number of different reasons that explain negative perceptions towards school counsellors, both at a local level and a national level.

SC01 explained that he believed that most of the parents in the region were uneducated and old, and lived within a nomadic culture, the parents therefore had a lack of interest in the role of the school counsellor (**SC01 Transcript, Line 64**). Other school counsellors such as SC14 and SC17 agreed, and thought that it was because parents were uneducated and simply wanted their children to get a job, that they lacked an interest in school counselling and its importance in the school. In practice what this meant was that school counsellors found it very hard to get cooperation from parents with regards to school counselling. School counsellors said that they often contacted parents again and again without any response from them. SC10 stated that:

**"The relationship with the parents is non-existent with me and with the whole school" (SC10 Transcript, Line 42).**

### **Theme conclusion**

This theme showed that overall a majority of the school counsellors believed that there were strong negative attitudes displayed towards school counsellors. The negative attitudes came from other teachers, headmasters, and parents. Some of the school counsellors explained that they believed that these negative perceptions could be explained by a lack of understanding or comprehension of the role and work of the school counsellor. For example, if other teachers believed that the school counsellor did little in terms of work every day, this might lead to resentful attitudes and/or other teachers viewing the school counsellor as a non-professional. There was evidence given by the school counsellors that other teachers believed the role of the school counsellor was easy and/or the school counsellor was a lazy person.

Many of the research studies undertaken in Western developed countries that can be found in the literature have often identified a range of positive attitudes towards school counsellors and towards school counselling services. Nevertheless, in other developing countries there are also negative attitudes that have been identified in the literature. For

example a research study undertaken by Edet (2008) in Nigeria found that teachers and principals were the greatest obstacle to the success of guidance programmes in schools. The study found that there were negative attitudes towards guidance services and to school counsellors (Edet, 2008).

Achebe (1986) identified different reasons why school counsellors and counselling services were resisted in schools. Achebe (1986) noted that the school counsellor was seen as a newcomer, and so there was a sense of suspicion and caution and distancing that occurred. Achebe (1986) noted that principals rejected the role of the school counsellor in the school on the basis that historically the school had operated fine without a school counsellor and so no school counsellor was needed. Denga (2001) also identified some issues in relation to attitudes held towards school counsellors. It was noted that principals in schools knew little about the role of school counselling in the school setting, consequently, the school counsellor was set a heavy teaching load and co-curricular duties. Principals also withheld budgetary allocation for counselling services and therefore the role of school counsellors was heavily stifled within schools.

It is interesting to compare two research studies that were carried out on attitudes towards school counselling practices in Nigeria. In the first study the attitudes of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Yakurr Local Government Area in Cross River State were investigated (Ubana, 2008). It was found that students' attitudes towards guidance and counselling services were negative overall (Ubana, 2008). However, another study investigated the attitudes of secondary school students towards guidance counsellors in the entire Cross River State in Nigeria (Eyo *et al.*, 2010). The research study used a stratified random sampling technique to select 400 secondary students (Female, N=200, Male, N=200) from both urban and rural secondary schools (Eyo *et al.*, 2010).

The study found that students' attitudes towards guidance and counselling services was significantly positive, and that school location and gender significantly influenced students' attitudes towards guidance services (Eyo *et al.*, 2010). It was argued that the reason Ubana (2008) identified negative attitudes towards school counsellors was that the study covered rural and village schools. Eyo *et al.*, (2010) argued that students in urban schools may have had more awareness of the guidance and counselling available through workshops, seminars and the media (i.e. television, radio, newspapers) (Eyo *et al.*, 2010). In addition, all schools in urban areas had counselling units and school counsellors, whereas the awareness of these services was very poor in villages and rural secondary schools may not have adequate counsellors in the schools (Eyo *et al.*, 2010).

## **THEME 2: NEGATIVE STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SCHOOL COUNSELLORS**

Overall, the transcripts showed that there were some strong negative perceptions of school counsellors demonstrated by teachers, parents and sometimes headmasters. For example, SC02 stated that there were many problems for school counsellors, including a lack of school counselling programmes, counsellors lacking the will or motivation to do counselling, a lack of trust from students, and negative perceptions of the school counsellor. In general, a majority of the school counsellors believed that there existed strong negative perceptions towards them, in terms of their actual role within the school and the actual work that they carried out. There were a few outlier interviews where the school counsellor did not view negative perceptions towards them as strongly as other school counsellors.

SC05 said that one of the main problems that he had encountered was trying to change the negative attitudes and views of members of the school such as teachers and the headmaster. SC05 also said that there was a lack of cooperation by teachers with school counsellors and this made the work particularly difficult. SC24 believed that there were negative perceptions by other teachers of school counsellors in the school, and that this had led to a "cooling in the relationship" between teachers and school counsellors (*SC24 Transcript, Line 28*). SC15 believed that one of the biggest problems encountered by school counsellors was that they were wrongly perceived by teachers and students who viewed a school counsellor as a school deputy or administrator.

However, it should also be noted that in general the school counsellors also believed that the students had positive or good perceptions of the school counsellors themselves. SC10 said that some students believe that the school counsellor is a friend of the student, because he treats them well and softly without severity, and so the student thinks that he is a good person who supports them (***SC Transcript, Line 38***). SC19 explained his ideas about the perceptions of school counsellors. He said that he had worked from twenty years as a school counsellor and he believed that some directors in the school believed that the school counsellor only sat in his office writing on paper, or pretending to write, or reading newspapers (***SC19 Transcript, Line 27***).

SC03 noted problems with school counselling that he had experienced, such as parents and the community not knowing anything about school counselling, lack of financial support, and negative perceptions of teachers towards school counsellors. SC03 stated:

**"...another part of the teachers believe that the school counsellor is one of the administrative staffs of the school and he has nothing to offer" (SC03 Transcript, Line 20).**

This is quite a strong negative perception of school counsellors from other school professionals. Yet this negative perception on the part of other teachers about the school counsellor was shown in a majority of the interview transcripts. For example, in relation to the school counsellor, SC02 noted that:

**"...they also see him as a person who is without work, and with no clear tasks, just exploiting the occupation of school counsellor to pass the time without doing any work" (SC02 Transcript, Line 36).**

SC17 explained that teachers did not cooperate with the school counsellors and did not look at them in a good way (SC17 Transcript, Line 32). This was because some teachers believed that the school counsellor had no work to do, and other teachers believed that each person should be responsible for his work so there was no cooperation with the school counsellors (SC17 Transcript, Line 32). Alternatively, SC13 did not know exactly why other teachers behaved this way, and thought that it might be jealousy because they thought that the school counsellor had no work to do (SC13 Transcript, Line 38). SC13 even believed that **"about 75% of teachers"** demonstrated these negative attitudes towards school counsellors and their role in school (SC13 Transcript, Line 40).

SC13 was very concerned that this type of perception of school counsellors had to be changed, but he believed it could only be changed by habilitating and training school counsellors so they would be considered to be professionals (SC13 Transcript, Line 110). SC16 felt strongly about this, and said

**"...some teachers say to us school counsellors you are not busy you don't have anything they don't view school counsellor in a good view, there is a negative perception of the school counsellor from most of the teachers" (SC16 Transcript, Line 38).**

SC06 said that the lack of cooperation of parents with school counsellors and also the community, made counselling students very difficult. An outlier noted by SC06 was that he could see that perceptions towards school counsellors were improving, whereas many of the other school counsellors believed perceptions towards school counsellors to be fixed. SC06 said

**"...current generations are better, whether teachers or headmasters, in other words, the new generations understand the work of the school counsellor more than ever before" (SC05 Transcript, Line 42).**

Although it has been noted that many school counsellors believed that students perceived school counsellors in a good way, other school counsellors said that the perception of them by students was not good. For example, SC02 noted

**"The answer of one of the students surprised and shocked me. He said the role of the school counsellor is that he has his photograph taken with the headmaster during 'Plant a tree week' "(SC02 Transcript, Line 34).**

SC09 said that

**"Most of the students, and I'd say 50 percent of the students do not understand the work of the school counsellor and do not understand what is his role at school" (SC09 Transcript, Line 30).**

Overall this would suggest that some students either do not understand the role of the school counsellor, or perhaps worse actually believe that the school counsellor does nothing. So it would seem to be the case that many school counsellors find themselves perceived negatively by others within the school environment. Teachers, students and even some headmasters were noted to view school counselling in a negative way. Not only may this undermine the self-esteem of the school counsellors, but it will also clearly make it more difficult for school counsellors to do their job properly and bond with students. SC04 said that this was a real challenge for school counsellors, and added

**"I want and hope to change the perception of the society and family towards the student guidance and counselling, their benefits, and tasks regarding the students and community" (SC04 Transcript, Line 108).**

### **Theme conclusion**

This theme showed that the majority of school counsellors believed that they were negatively perceived by other stakeholders, including teachers, headmasters, and parents. In practice many of the school counsellors believed that these negative perceptions towards them negatively impacted their work, for example, in terms of a lack of cooperation from other teachers, headmasters, and parents. There were a number of different reasons why the school counsellors believed these negative perceptions existed. Some of the school counsellors believed it was a local and cultural issues, for example

because of a lack of education that existed in parents – they did not understand the role of the school counsellor, or did not see how it could be beneficial. If the role of the school counsellor is not understood, then this will clearly impact the way the school counsellor is perceived, as well as his work in the school.

A research study was conducted with 100 teachers from 13 private schools based in Lebanon (Khansa, 2015). It was found that there were mixed perceptions of school counsellors by teachers (Khansa, 2015). There were negative perceptions of school counsellors by older teachers (Khansa, 2015). It was argued that this might be because those teachers might have been working in the school a long time and at a time when counselling was not present, and counselling services were looked down upon or misunderstood (Khansa, 2015). Another research study investigated the perceptions regarding the role of the school counsellor in Romanian schools (Andronic *et al.*, 2013). The study used 65 school children and high school students and 15 counsellors in schools located in Brasov County, Romania (Andronic *et al.*, 2013).

The study found that students positively perceived the activity of the counsellor (Andronic *et al.*, 2013). However, it was also noted that there was still not enough awareness of the role in the school and what services were offered for free within the psycho-pedagogical counselling office (Andronic *et al.*, 2013). It was concluded that the trust capital had to be improved by providing better information and awareness of the counselling services offered, along with improved relationships with teachers and student families (Andronic *et al.*, 2013). Another research study undertook an investigation of students' perceptions of the role of counsellors in the choice of career in two schools in the Mfantseman Municipality in Ghana (Awinsong *et al.*, 2015). It was found that student positively perceived the school counsellor in helping them to make a career choice (especially if the personality and professional commitment of the counsellor were very attractive and convincing) (Awinsong *et al.*, 2015). These studies tend to show that perceptions towards school counsellors can be varied depending on a multitude of factors.

### **THEME 3: GENERAL LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF MODERN SCHOOL COUNSELLING PRACTICES**

There was a clear theme that emerged from the interview transcripts, and that was that in general the school counsellors believed that they lacked sufficient knowledge about modern school counselling practices. This was reflected in the comments by school counsellors about their lack of qualifications and training for school counselling. Only some of the school counsellors that were interviewed had formal counselling and guidance qualifications. Many of the other school counsellors had received some type of short



training, but they said that it was not enough, or that they received training a long time ago, or that they did not receive regular training. Given that the school counsellors in general all noted that they received insufficient financial support, it is perhaps to be expected that there is not enough financial aid or budget allocated for their training needs. SC13 said that although he had been working as a school counsellor for eight years, he had only been on three or four training courses which were very short, and which were **"very weak" (SC13 Transcript, Line 64)**.

SC13 believed that this shortage in training stopped school counsellors from innovating in counselling, and he believed that without such training school counsellors would only achieve 30%-40% of the total percentage of work that a school counsellor had to carry out. SC08 noted that he had received a simple four day course as training, but he believed that it was not enough to train him for counselling work. SC11 believed that 'field trials' would be the most important types of training that a school counsellor could obtain **(SC11 Transcript, Line 86)**.

By field trial he explained that he meant that workers in the field of school counselling would guide school counsellors on practical experiences in the field **(SC11 Transcript, Line 86)**. SC05 said that the current training school counsellors were given was not suitable for the role of school counsellor, because it was not relevant. He noted:

**Not like the current training, where some unqualified persons come and they perform what they call 'training', but unfortunately it is a waste of time and useless. Imagine throughout the period of my service in the school counselling at schools, which is about 25 years, we have not joined any proper or useful training (SC05 Transcript, Line 88).**

SC07 explained in more detail what particular type of training was needed by school counsellors. He said that school counsellors needed training on how to study a **"case study"**, how to identify behaviours and their treatment method, and that this type of training should be carried out for a longer period of time **(SC07 Transcript, Line 90)**. SC19 said that it was unfortunate that there was very little training available, yet as a school counsellor he needed **"intensive and ongoing training" (SC19 Transcript, Line 13)**. There were some outlier cases however, relating to the training needs of school counsellors. For example, SC07 had acquired sufficient knowledge and training:

**"I felt that I have comprehensive knowledge of the school counselling work in terms of students, studying their cases, and my dealing with them" (SC07 Transcript, Line 8).**

This identification of practical and professional school counselling training needs by school counsellors was a pattern that clearly emerged from the majority of the school counsellors, including those school counsellors that were qualified. It would seem to be that this type of training is necessary and even essential to the job of the school counsellor. School counsellors need to be able to know how to deal with psychological and emotional problems, and they need to be able to identify types of behaviours in students. They also need to be able to develop good interpersonal skills so that they can build trust and bond with students. If school counsellors have not been trained in these types of skills, then they will find it very difficult to do their job effectively. Yet although this type of training need was identified by most of the school counsellors, it was not being offered to them, or made available to them.

### **Theme conclusion**

This theme showed that the majority of the school counsellors believed that they had received insufficient training and/or did not have sufficient and relevant qualifications. A lot of the school counsellors noted that they had only received very short training courses, and that these had been undertaken a long time ago. Some school counsellors noted that they had no formal qualifications or training in school counselling. The general lack of training and qualifications may be undermining school counselling practices, both in terms of the quality of school counselling services, and the self-confidence of the school counsellors, i.e. self-confidence in their own abilities. The general lack of training and qualifications is also something that is important for schools to take note of and urgently address.

Chinonyelum (2013) carried out a research study into the role of guidance and counselling in effective teaching and learning in schools in Nigeria. It was found that there was a lack of appropriately trained counsellors in schools as they lacked the skills necessary for school counselling practice (Chinonyelum, 2013). It was also noted that there was a limited number of trained counsellors in Nigerian schools and those who were already trained chose to go into non-school settings (Chinonyelum, 2013). Kamore and Tiego (2015) undertook a study into the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in Meru South District High Schools located in Kenya. The study targeted 196 students and 25 teachers in charge of counselling departments from 25 secondary schools in Meru South (Kamore and Tiego, 2015).

It was found that the majority of peer counsellors did not receive quality training (Kamore and Tiego, 2015). It was found that many schools offered inadequate training to the peer counsellors despite the significance of the peer counselling programme in enhancing the psychological health, academic performance, and discipline of the students (Kamore and

Tiego, 2015). It was found that a majority of the teachers (88%) indicated that training was very necessary and the rest indicated that it was necessary (12%) (Kamore and Tiego, 2015). Kamore and Tiego (2015) argued that training should be based on what peer educators need to do for planned activities, and that training should be practical and focused on the prospective peer counsellors' values, attitudes, beliefs, and weaknesses. It was also noted that the literature had identified that countries with effective peer counselling programmes conducted needs assessment within schools in order to develop relevant training for peer counsellors to make counselling programmes successful (Kamore and Tiego, 2015).

If school counsellors receive little training or have no relevant qualifications for counselling students then this may lead to a number of issues arising in practice. The first issue is that of confidence. How can school counsellors feel comfortable and confident about the work that they do if they have not received sufficient training to be able to adequately and effectively carry it out? The second issue relates to perceptions. If other stakeholders perceive the school counsellor to lack qualifications and training how can they have confidence in his or her abilities? How will students place their trust and faith in a counsellor that lacks the relevant training and experience? The third issue relates to school counselling services. If schools intend to provide a high quality of education for their students then they must ensure that they have a good quality school counselling programme in place. If school counsellors receive little or no training then schools are not offering good quality school counselling programmes to students.

#### **THEME 4: DISSENSION BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE**

The sub-themes that emerged from this theme highlighted a clear dissension between school counsellors and other stakeholders with regards to their role in the school. The sub-themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were:

- (1) the 'internal' understandings of the school counsellors;
- (2) the 'external' understandings of teachers, head teachers, and parents; and
- (3) a misunderstanding of the role of the school counsellor.

The internal understandings of the school counsellors were consistent and more or less the same. These seemed to be that the majority of the school counsellors thought that school counselling was important and played an important and valuable role within the school environment. Many of the school counsellors were trying to do their best given the limited conditions in which they found themselves working. The majority of the school

counsellors were dedicated to the role of school counselling and were committed to trying to deliver a good service in a professional way to the students.

But it would seem to be that this internal understanding was in complete contrast to the external understandings of the teachers, head teachers, and parents. These groups of people either did not understand the role of school counselling within the school environment, or they misunderstood the work that a school counsellor did. SC16 believed that there was no real understanding of the role of the school counsellor in the school, and that teachers believed school counsellors to have no work. SC11 said that:

**"The most significant problems I faced was the lack of understanding of the school members of the school counsellor's real role in the school" (SC11 Transcript, Line 18).**

SC04 believed that students did not understand the role of the school counsellor or did not even know the school counsellor existed. To make his point clear, SC04 said that he had once distributed a questionnaire to students at the school and one of the questions on the questionnaire was whether the school counsellor was necessary in the school. SC04 found that 80% of students strongly believed that the school counsellor was not necessary. SC02 noted that:

**"The biggest obstacle present in counselling is the lack of understanding of the members present in the field of schooling to the concept of counselling" (SC02 Transcript, Line 46).**

SC04 explained what he thought about this lack of understanding. He said that there was confusion by others between the work of the school counsellor and the work of the head master (**SC04 Transcript, Line 38**). He believed that there was a very large mixing of understandings and a general lack of understanding of the school counsellor's work (**SC04 Transcript, Line 38**). SC04 even said that in that particular school, a large group of students believed that the school counsellor did not exist in the school, and that they did not consider the presence of the school counsellor in that school (**SC04 Transcript, Line 40**).

Although SC18 believed that school counselling was important in Saudi schools, he also believed that the conservative and old Bedouin community and culture in City X strongly affected school counselling. He said that many students were not interested in studying and were just waiting to finish to get a job, and that was the same attitude adopted by their parents. There was therefore no motivation in children and the parents did not understand the role of the school counsellor. SC18 also believed that there was a lack of understanding from the school director, teachers, and even official of the Department of

Education about the role of the school counsellor. SC18 said that they believed that all school counsellors did was sit in the office and relax and not work. Therefore SC18 said that the significant lack of understanding of his role, and lack of cooperation from teachers and parents made his work very difficult.

SC23 noted that he did not think that many of the other school staff or teachers understood the work of the school counsellor and what he did in the school. He therefore believed that there were negative perceptions of the school counsellor that existed at school. SC24 said that there was a real need in the school to change the understandings that workers had in the school towards school counsellors and the role of school counselling in the lives of students. SC01 noted that teachers often used school counsellors as a way to get rid of problems that they might have with students. He said that the teachers refused to understand the actual role of the school counsellor and insisted that the school counsellor punish the student.

These kinds of understandings about the role of the school counsellor would seem to make it very difficult for the school counsellor to carry out school counselling properly. SC10 believed that there was a lack of understanding in the school about the role and work of the school counsellor. SC10 also added that the view of counselling was very weak and negative, and he believed that this might be because counselling was misunderstood. SC24 stated that among the challenges, difficulties and problems he faced, he found that there was a lack of cooperation between teachers and their lack of understanding of the role and importance of the work of the school counsellor (**SC24 Transcript, Line 15**). SC23 said that not everyone was aware of what the work of the school counsellor was, and this included the Director, the Deputy Director, teachers, and even the school counsellor himself (**SC23 Transcript, Line 13**).

SC24 stated that

**"There is a wrong understanding of the functions and duties of the school counsellors by teachers" (SC Transcript, Line 24).**

In reality, this theme of understandings can be identified at different levels, which might help us to comparatively measure understandings in any particular Saudi province. The first is the individual level of understanding. The school counsellors themselves demonstrated that in general they have an understanding that school counselling is important and can provide benefits to the students at the schools they work at.

The individual level of understanding relates to the levels of understanding of the individual teachers, parents, students and headmasters at each school in City X.

The second level of understanding relates to the overall level of understanding at each particular school in City X.

The third relates to the overall level of understanding of society in the Saudi province in which the schools are located.

It is important to identify these three levels of understanding because these levels can help us to compare understandings relating to school counselling. When a school counsellor from one particular school states that other teachers have a lack of understanding of the role of school counselling, there is no way to quantify this using the research data. How big is that school? How many students are there? How many teachers are there? How many teachers is the school counsellor referring to? All the teachers, or just the teachers in a particular department? So these types of understanding by school counsellors provide us with an internal view of what the school counsellor believes to be happening, but they do not provide us with a way to verify if what the school counsellor is saying is true or not. Neither do these viewpoints allow us to identify nor measure the level of understandings or misunderstandings referred to, i.e. the extent to which what the school counsellor is saying is true or not.

Another area that was identified within this theme was a general misunderstanding of the role of the school counsellor within the school. In practice, this meant that many school counsellors were often allocated additional tasks which had nothing to do with their role as a school counsellor. This caused numerous difficulties for the school counsellors. Indeed many school counsellors were regularly assigned additional tasks, jobs, or roles. They were seen by the school faculty as someone to use to fill in and stand in for other people or teachers whenever necessary. For example, SC17 stated that he was given jobs to do which had nothing to do with the role of the school counsellor (**SC 17 Transcript, Line 22**). SC17 explained this in more detail. He provided examples of jobs he had been asked to do:

**"Such as some classes where I do the job of some of the teachers who are absent or school management and organization of the examinations during the course of the school exams" (SC 17 Transcript, Line 24).**

SC17 attributed this to the views of the director, he said the school director:

**"sees the school counsellor as just as just a reserve for any emergency or additional work needed by the school so the school counsellor should be ready for this job without hesitation!" (SC17 Transcript, Line 26).**

SC17 explained that he believed that this was because there was a mix up between the job of the school counsellor and the job of the school secretary (**SC17 Transcript, Line 28**). SC20 stated that he was given additional tasks to do such as carrying out the work of the school deputy, or performing the work of absent teachers (**SC20 Transcript, Line 21**). SC14 was asked to fill in for absent teachers and to be a representative of the school sometimes (**SC14 Transcript, Line 34**). SC15 was asked to do additional administrative jobs, or the work of absent teachers, or the work of the School Director (**SC15 Transcript, Line 26**).

SC16 noted that the first person the School Director would use to fill in for other staff would be the school counsellor (**SC16 Transcript, Line 32**). SC22 said that he did jobs that had nothing to do with counselling, such as the work of the school deputy, or observation during test days, or sometimes working in the place of an absent teacher (**SC22 Transcript, Line 17**). SC22 believed that his handing out of additional tasks was because:

**"there is no understanding of the importance of the work of the school counsellor" (SC22 Transcript, Line 17).**

SC21 believed that this additional burdening of school counsellors was because of a lack of understanding of what work the school counsellor did. He stated:

**"Of course, all counsellors assigned to them additional work because of the lack of understanding of the importance the work of school counsellor and we accept them for the sake of cooperation" (SC21 Transcript, Line 19).**

In relation to accepting these additional tasks, SC11 explained that it was socially accepted because of the fellowship with colleagues at school, and it would be difficult to reject such additional tasks because of professional courtesy in the school. When I asked SC23 whether he performed or had been asked to perform any work that had nothing to do with the role of the school counsellor he replied:

**"In reality sometimes I am asked to do certain work, for example, I do the work of the school Secretary or that I will be in place of some absent teacher and so on" (SC23 Transcript, Line 15).**

SC23 said that he accepted it because he saw it as a way of cooperation between members of the school (**SC23 Transcript, Line 15**). SC15 said that sometimes he was asked to do extra administrative tasks that had nothing to do with the work of the school counsellor. SC17 also noted that he was frequently asked to carry out additional tasks which had

nothing to do with his role as school counsellor. These included taking the classes of teachers that were absent and organising and monitoring examinations.

### **Theme conclusion**

This theme demonstrated that a majority of the school counsellors felt misunderstood by other stakeholders such as teachers, headmasters, and parents. Many of the school counsellors noted that there seemed to be a general lack of understanding of the role of the school counsellor in the school, and what they actually did in practice. The school counsellors noted that this lack of understanding could be seen not only in parents, but also in teachers and head teachers. This lack of understanding of the role is quite alarming, because it very much undermines the whole role of the school counsellor in the school setting. If other teachers misunderstand the role of the school counsellor, this may negatively impact students and the quality of education services provided.

This theme also showed that many of the school counsellors were allocated a number of additional tasks that were not part of their job description. This included acting as a stand in teacher, being involved with examinations, or other administrative tasks. There were three main points that arose out of this theme. The first was that many of the school counsellors felt as if they had no choice but to carry out the additional tasks. They felt that they had to help out at school, and that they were helping out their colleagues. The second point is that by undertaking these additional tasks, the school counsellors were taking on additional duties on top of their existing duties, and therefore it was challenging for them because they were being asked to do this on a regular basis.

The third point that arose out of these additional tasks is that because the school counsellors were undertaking additional duties and different roles, this had the potential to undermine the role of the school counsellor within the school. Others would see the school counsellor as someone whose job it is to anything else that is required, like a school caretaker. Kuhn (2004) argued that when school counsellors were used as stand-in principals, disciplinarians, and registration officers, this reduced the students' value for the roles as counsellors and were less inclined to go to them for professional guidance. It has also been noted that school counsellors who are required to pay more attention to other responsibilities such as teaching and administrative work have been graded very low by students (Walker *et al.*, 2006; Menon, 2010). Awinsong *et al.* (2015, p.84) note:

The lesson is that the availability of the counsellor in the school when truncated by other callings like teaching and administrative work can affect the decisions of students to seek counselling services.



This is a complex issue that has arisen for schools and school counsellors residing in City X. There would seem to be an interaction between the understandings of teachers, head teachers, and parents which in practice results in school counsellors being misunderstood or viewed negatively. In addition to this a general misunderstanding about the work and role of the school counsellors means that school counsellors face an uphill struggle to advance school counselling programmes in schools in City X.

### **THEME 5: CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON WESTERN MODELS OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

Cultural and religious influences on Western models of school counselling was a theme that emerged from the interview transcripts. There were several ways in which culture influenced school counsellors and school counselling in schools in City X. SC11 emphasised that negative attitudes towards school counsellors were partly explained by the impact of the community, society, and culture on the role of school counselling. This was because the conservative society in Saudi Arabia and in Research City X meant that families did not want to discuss family affairs and give out family secrets to strangers. SC01 explained that parents might view school counsellors differently to the role that school counsellors were actually supposed to play in schools.

He said that the old community would look at someone with psychological or behavioural problems as someone who had a mental disorder or was crazy. Because of this, the community would not deal with him and would avoid him. SC01 said:

**Our society does not know the importance of the school counselling role, and importance of it for the student... guidance is one of the modern disciplines in Saudi society, till now its susceptibility is weak (SC01 Transcript, Line 40).**

SC06 noted what he believed to be happening with the students. He said that the student would speak with his father about what had been done in school. Then the father would dismiss the importance of the matter and would not recognise what had been done by the school counsellor in school. SC06 said the father

**"...believed that what is happening in the school, must stay in the school and not outside it" (SC06 Transcript, Line 24).**

SC12 explained that the environment in City X was different to environments that might exist in big cities. SC12 said that in big cities schools might be more accepting of the role of the school counsellor but that in the environment in City X he did not think that people there were convinced of the role of counselling. SC12 said that people were less willing to

accept the role of counselling because of old cultural habits:

**"Habits and traditions, secrets of families, limited environment and they are afraid from spreading their secrets among others" (SC12 Transcript, Line 34).**

SC05 believed that this culture deeply influenced students. He said that students cared a lot about confidentiality and that school counsellors would not be able to know any information about the family of the student. SC05 even said:

**"...the student my lie or not tell you any information about him, his family and his personal conditions" (SC05 Transcript, Line 110).**

He explained that students:

**"...were brought up not to reveal their family secrets as they think to anyone outside the family, even if you asked him about his sister or mother name, he will never tell you" (SC05 Transcript, Line 112).**

SC01 noted that a student might look at himself as a weak person if he goes to the school counsellor and discusses some problems with him, as he might be criticised by others (SC01 Transcript, Line 38). This theme of culture and close family ties, bonds and secrets was raised by many of the school counsellors. SC18 noted:

**"...the employment status of the parents and also the culture of the community to not trust strangers outside their family as I already told you. They like to keep their secrets within the family" (SC18 Transcript, Line 42).**

SC04 called this a 'culture of shame':

**"Yes, the culture of shame, they told their sons that there will be a scandal, may someone laugh at them, so this idea became existed in the souls of their sons" (SC04 Transcript, Line 140).**

SC04 noted that students did not want to go to see the school counsellor:

**"...but they do not dare to go to the school counsellor for fear of divulging their secrets as they think" (SC04 Transcript, Line 46).**

Therefore culture clearly plays a role in school counselling practices in some Saudi schools. It applies in different ways. It can be seen to apply in the way others view school counselling practices, perhaps in terms of whether the school counsellor is viewed as a professional or not, and whether or not school counselling is worthwhile. Culture can also

be seen to apply within the context of the functioning of the family. The Saudi culture of close familial networks and traditions may make it difficult for the Saudi school counsellor to carry out his or her duties effectively. If customs and traditions influence students to the extent that they do not want to see or talk to the school counsellor, then it makes it very difficult for the school counsellor to be able to counsel students and gain their trust and confidence.

SC17 commented that he believed that the son [student] would not dare to speak with his parents about school matters or school work at home, and the father would not speak with his children about school or what is happening in school. SC17 also noted that there was a religious part to this culture as well as

**"...the mother cannot communicate with the school because of Islamic customs and religion, which prevents the mother from speaking with strange men" (SC17 Transcript, Line 34).**

In theory this family setting would make it very difficult for the children and also for the school counsellor. If students cannot speak to the school counsellor about their problems and they have been raised in a culture where sons should not speak to their father about school and what happens in school, the student will become isolated. If mothers are not able to intervene because of Islamic customs and religion then there will be a lack of communication and support between the school and the family home.

SC05 believed that many old ideas, habits and culture were holding back the development of school counselling. SC05 believed that the situation was particularly difficult in the smaller City X, but that in larger cities like Qassim and Riyadh these problems would not be as strong. Therefore, culture would seem to play a part in a local and regional way. For example, it may be that the culture in City X strongly affects the school counsellor in many different ways in comparison to the school counsellor in larger developed cities in Saudi Arabia. It may affect the role of the school counsellor, how the school counsellor is viewed by others, and whether or not the school counsellor is trusted by students, teachers, and parents. Culture in City X may affect the need for the school counsellor, i.e. whether other stakeholders believe that the school counsellor is needed within the school or not.

It might seem to be that the usefulness of school counselling might potentially be lost in some ways in City X because of cultural rules and traditions. This may also be felt more in smaller urban or rural communities than in larger cities which are more developed and have developed more progressive ways. For instance, SC18 believed that there was a Bedouin, nomadic, or desert culture influence in City X. He stated that:

**Desert society not civilized somewhat, is closed to itself community and there is power and old ideas from the elderly, in other words, society of [City X] is conservative society and adheres to Islamic teachings and customs of the old Bedouin community (SC18 Transcript, Line 12).**

It would seem to be that school counsellors are working in schools in City X without significant professional qualifications and training. They are trying to work hard to improve the lives of students in the schools but other teachers, parents and sometimes even head teachers would seem to view them negatively. They sometimes or regularly see school counsellors as people who come to school to do an easy job, or even worse, they may see them as lazy because they do not do any real work. School counsellors have problems building trust and relationships with students and parents because of deep cultural rules and traditions.

In this kind of environment the whole idea behind school counselling, that of helping students to develop academically and personally, seems to get lost. Instead of working as a team at school with teachers cooperating with school counsellors, teachers are wrongly jealous of school counsellors or they do not want to cooperate with them because the evidence would seem to suggest that the teachers see school counsellors as lazy people or not professionals. Even worse some teachers seem to view school counsellors as people who should discipline students.

### **Theme conclusion**

This theme highlighted a clear influence of culture on school counselling practices in City X. Because of its location and small provincial size, the city is more strongly influenced by Bedouin and Saudi collectivist cultures. A majority of the school counsellors believed that this cultural influence had a negative impact on the school counselling role within the school. The school counsellors noted that students were reluctant to approach school counsellors and to discuss personal issues and problems, because this went against family beliefs. There seemed to be a clear view that personal or family secrets or problems should not be discussed with the school counsellor who was viewed as a 'stranger'. The idea of the school counsellor and the role that the school counsellor plays in the school was therefore clearly affected by existing cultural traditions.

Thresholds (2012) notes that there are three broad challenges that may arise when working with clients around spirituality, spiritual issues, and religion. The first is that the client may present issues relating to their spirituality and/or religious faith (Thresholds, 2012). The second is that experiences within the counselling session that either the client

or therapist or both regard as spiritual (Thresholds, 2012). The third is that when working with a client's spirituality leads to spiritual or religious issues arising for the therapist (Thresholds, 2012). Cotton *et al.* (2006) argue that spirituality may positively influence health in adolescents by providing social support, positive role models, and by providing coping mechanisms such as prayer. However, they also noted that religion and spirituality can also have a negative effect on the lives of teenagers, e.g. increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases due to a disbelief in contraception (Cotton *et al.*, 2006).

Plumb (2011) also believes that that religion and spirituality can either help or hinder the healing process. Benefits cited include greater strength and decision-making, enhanced social support, and personal coherence and wholeness (Plumb, 2011). Drawbacks may arise however, because of rigid religious beliefs based on sin and guilt which may deepen mental illness and depression (Plumb, 2011). Other research also supports the belief that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are beneficial for improving and maintaining good mental and physical health (Larimore *et al.*, 2002).

It would seem to be the case that there is a complex mix of culture and religion that exists in schools in City X. In theory the counsellor is well placed to guide students both academically and religiously in the Islamic ways. The benefits of religion and spirituality have been noted in the literature and so students would certainly benefit from both academic and religious guidance in schools in City X. However, it would seem to be the case that the prevailing culture, because of the provincial nature of City X, combined with old Bedouin ways and viewpoints, would seem to be preventing school counselling practices and programmes from being supported.

If the prevailing culture is stopping school counsellors from being able to deliver good quality school counselling services and programmes, then it is difficult to see how anything can change for the school counsellors in City X right now. Unless this "cultural block" is effectively addressed, school counselling practices in schools in City X will continue to suffer. If parents do not see the value in school counselling services they will not encourage the use of school counselling in schools, and may potentially prohibit students from attending school counselling. If head teachers and teachers cannot understand the role of the school counsellor or the benefits of the school counsellor, the school counsellor will remain marginalised.

## **THEME 6: LACK OF SUPPORT WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Overall, there was a general lack of support within and beyond the school community that was found. This can be broken down into sub-themes that include a lack of communication, a lack of cooperation, a lack of financial support, and a lack of qualifications and training.

### **Lack of communication**

Many of the school counsellors believed that there were real problems relating to a lack of communication, mostly with parents, but also with other teachers and school staff. The lack of communication with other teachers and school staff may have related to the negative perceptions of school counsellors held by them. It might be the case that other teachers and school staff close lines of communication with school counsellors because they see their role as not a real job, or they see school counsellors as lazy.

Alternatively, they may not actually understand what school counsellors really do or they may believe that each person should do their own job in the school without the help of others. It is difficult to identify more accurately the reasons why there would seem to exist a lack of communication with teachers and other staff if we only have the personal accounts of school counsellors and not other teachers and staff. This is certainly an area that could benefit from further in-depth investigation.

What was also seen was lack of direct and frequent communication with parents. Many of the school counsellors found communicating with parents to be very difficult. SC19 said that he found communicating with parents very difficult and that parents were very negative in their responses to him. He said that he often rang parents and sent them messages to their house but that he got no responses from them at all. He believed that it was a problem because many of them cannot read or write so they could not read the letters sent by the school, or they were located or worked outside of City X, and so getting hold of them was difficult.

SC16 also identified a lack of effective communication between parents and the school counsellor, as parents either didn't respond to the school counsellor or said they were too busy. SC06 said that no matter how hard they tried to highlight their efforts, communicating with the parent was difficult because they never responded or appreciated the school counselling efforts. SC06 believed this to be the biggest obstacle he faced in his work as a school counsellor. SC10 noted:

**"The whole school suffers, the communication is weak, and is almost non-existent" (SC10 Transcript, Line 94).**

SC01 said that because most of the parents in the region were old and uneducated, and came from a nomadic culture, there was a complete lack of interest by them regarding the role of the school counsellor in the school. SC01 also said that the fact that there existed a conservative society also affected school counselling practices, because parents did not want their sons to display their problems outside the family to strangers. SC09 also agreed with this thinking. SC09 said that he believed the lack of education and knowledge among parents, and the fact that they were busy, meant that they did not have any interest in communicating with the school.

He said that the parents believed that the school was responsible for the student from morning until the end of the school day and there was no need for them to attend or ask about their son, or follow up with the school about their son. In practice this lack of communication makes it very difficult for school counsellors to do their job properly because they do not know what may be happening at home or whether there are any family problems. The school counsellor may find it difficult to counsel students properly without involving the family in some personal way.

In practice, this lack of communication may reflect internal and external environments. The external environment relates to the existing culture and state of development in City X. The existing culture may mean that some of the issues raised by some of the school counsellors (e.g. a lack of importance placed on education) may be impacting the student-school-parents relationship as much as it impacts the student-school counsellor-parents relationship. The state of development in City X may also be directly contributing to the lack of communication. The rural area of City X may mean that parents may not have telephones, or access to the internet, or may not be able to read any of the letters that the school may send to contact them. The internal environment relates to the lack of communication within each school in City X, and how teachers there view the particular school counsellor(s), and school counselling in general.

### **Sub-theme conclusion**

This sub-theme showed that school counsellors encountered a general lack of communication, on the part of other teachers and parents. Taking into account all the other themes that have been identified, this lack of communication can be seen as linked with the other themes. The lack of communication with parents can be linked to the theme relating to a general lack of understanding of the role of the school counsellor shown by parents and teachers. The lack of communication can also be linked with the theme relating to Saudi culture. The lack of communication with parents and teachers would seem to be negatively affecting the quality of school counselling services provided. If school counsellors are not able to communicate effectively with parents and with other teachers,

their work within the school will suffer and their ability to deliver school counselling services will be undermined. This is one theme that schools should urgently address.

### **Lack of cooperation**

In the same way that the interviews identified a real lack of communication, there was also a lack of cooperation on the part of other teachers and staff and parents as well. It follows that where there is a lack of communication it may also be the case that there will be a lack of cooperation. There is a reason behind the lack of communication, either from the teachers or other staff, or the parents. This may also be the reason behind the lack of cooperation that the school counsellors said they faced in their daily work. It has been identified that negative attitudes by teachers and other staff to school counsellors may be the reason behind the lack of cooperation from other teachers and staff. For example, SC03 said that:

**"...another part of the teachers believe that the students counsellor is one of the administrative staff of the school and he has nothing to offer" (SC03 Transcript, Line 20).**

So other teachers and staff may not see school counsellors as a teacher or a professional, and so may dismiss them and not cooperate with them because of this. SC03 also explained that:

**"The community also does not know something called "school counsellor" at school" (SC03 Transcript, Line 20).**

SC06 noted that in addition to a lack of administrative and financial support, there was a lack of cooperation in the environment within the smaller research city, but SC05 said that he had colleagues that were based in Riyadh that had good cooperation from parents. So it is possible that this lack of cooperation exists specifically within the context of the rural provincial setting of City X. SC20 believed that negative views of the school counsellor were the reason behind this lack of cooperation:

**"There is no good cooperation from teachers with school counsellor because of their negative view of the school counsellor not only here in our school but in all schools in [City X]" (SC20 Transcript, Line 28).**

SC20 provided no evidence for his opinion on the negative views in all schools in City X. For instance, it is difficult to see how SC20 would be able to know this about all the schools in City X unless he visited them all personally. But his comments would actually seem to be supported from the other comments and views provided by the other school counsellors



in City X. For example, SC20 even noted that he faced both lack of cooperation from other teachers and parents. He said:

**"Within the school there is no cooperation from the teachers with me, and outside the school there is no communication and cooperation from the parents" (SC20 Transcript, Line 19).**

SC15 said that he believed that the level of education of the parents in City X affected their thinking about the importance of education for their children. He said that they did not see the importance of education because they only wanted their son to look for a job, and they did not understand or want to understand the role of the school counsellor at school. So it is possible that local community and culture plays a part in explaining this theme of lack of cooperation that has emerged from the data.

SC07 also said that there was a lack of cooperation from parents and the cooperation of teachers at school was not good. SC07 believed that this might be because the culture at school meant that school counsellors were viewed as people who did not work because there were no set class periods. SC05 said that he considered that only 20% of parents were cooperative, and he said that many parents were soldiers or worked in the military service and so most of them lived outside of City X and were difficult to get hold of. This meant that children were living with their maternal uncles, other uncles, or grandfathers, and so they had little interest in communicating and cooperating with the school.

SC23 also noted that parents were the "**weakest link among all**", since there was a lack of cooperation with them in order to benefit students (**SC23 Transcript, Line 22**). Overall, this internal and external lack of cooperation must in practice make life very difficult for school counsellors. Counselling is all about providing reassurance, support and guidance in an environment of trust and confidence. If school counsellors cannot obtain support or cooperation from parents then this will make guiding students at school a very difficult task to do. This difficulty is made worse because school counsellors also have a lack of cooperation from teachers and other staff who might be able to help school counsellors or coordinate with them regarding students' problems. When asked what was the biggest obstacle that he faced as a school counsellor, SC04 said that it was the weakness of dealing with the headmaster and teachers (**SC04 Transcript, Line 78 and 80**). This lack of cooperation seemed to be stressful for him, he said:

**"Because I find that I do not have any role to perform here!" (SC04 Transcript, Line 82).**

### **Sub-theme conclusion**

This sub-theme demonstrated that many school counsellors encountered a general lack of cooperation with other teachers and also parents. This theme can be linked to the themes of lack of understanding and lack of communication. If other teachers and parents do not understand the role of the school counsellor, then they will not understand why they have to cooperate with the school counsellor. Also, if there is a lack of communication with the school counsellor, then it makes sense that there will also be a lack of cooperation with the school counsellor. However, this theme also showed that the lack of cooperation also arose because of other issues, such as other teachers viewing school counsellors as lazy, or having an easy job. This caused other teachers to not cooperate with school counsellors because they believed that if they were cooperating with the school counsellor they would be doing his job for him. This lack of cooperation in practice is an issue which the school should address.

### **Lack of financial support**

In schools, teachers normally need books, articles and other materials to teach children classes such as maths, history, or religion. These cost money and the school normally allocates a financial budget which teachers can use to plan their classes for the year. But one clear sub-theme that arose from the interview transcripts was that there a lack of financial support for school counsellors in City X. Indeed sometimes there was a complete lack of financial support for school counsellors from the schools.

SC09 noted there was no allocated budget to counselling and that:

**"...there is no financial support... support is very weak, sometimes we are forced to pay from our own money to develop these programs" (SC09 Transcript, Line 48).**

He believed this lack of financial support was the biggest obstacle, as he only received a small percentage of the income from the school cafeteria which was very low. SC01 said that although there were school counselling plans and programs in place, he still encountered a number of practical problems every day, such as a weak internet connection, a lack of school counselling literature, a lack of school counselling training and qualifications, and a lack of informed support from the Saudi community and society in general. This shows that lack of financial support is hindering school counsellors from performing their role properly.

Without an internet connection, the school counsellor is not able to view counselling websites, counselling articles, or other counselling news. Without financial support the

school counsellor may not be able to afford to obtain school counselling literature. Without financial support, the school counsellor is not able to attend school counselling training courses. It seemed like the role of the school counsellor was not properly understood in the school, or that there was a belief in the school that the school counsellor did not need any, or needed only a very small budget for their work. This is something that was quite alarming for me. Indeed it moved me how some of these school counsellors were committed to carrying out their work without dedicated financial support. For example, SC10 stated:

**"We do not have financial support, we do not get anything, but I pay from my own account to spend on many programs" (SC10 Transcript, Line 52).**

SC23 acknowledged that he was in need of more financial support from the school, as he believed it was important to the success of any school counselling project. In theory, school counsellors need a financial budget to put in place counselling programmes, to buy training materials such as books, magazines, and article on counselling, and also for promoting counselling work. But a majority of the school counsellors interviewed noted that there was little or no real financial support available to school counsellors. Many school counsellors noted that they had no separate budget, and some school counsellors even noted that their budget was part of the profits from the cafeteria, and that was very little (SC21 Transcript, Line 17). SC20 considered that school counsellors lack sufficient financial support for training programmes, and that school counsellors should instead be given an independent financial budget. SC05 stated:

**"There is no budget, it is only a small part of the school cafeteria, and it is not enough, most of the headmasters maintain this part for other works rather than counselling" (SC05 Transcript, Line 58).**

SC09 also had this problem. He stated:

**"There is no budget, we only get a small percentage of the school cafeteria, and the income of the canteen is weak and insufficient to implement only one program!" (SC09 Transcript, Line 12).**

SC05 stated that the small budget for counselling was a strong concern for him, he said:

**"imagine if you get 100 or 150 Riyals, and you have ten or more programs! How can this simple amount cover the large number of programs?" (SC05 Transcript, Line 60).**

To put this into perspective, I converted 150 Saudi Arabian Riyals (SAR) online (1 SAR = 0.184134) and this gave me £27.62. This would seem to be the figure that SC05 said he had as a financial budget to carry out his school counselling work, undertake school counselling ongoing training, and to implement school counselling programmes in this school throughout the year. In fact this trend was worrying for some of the school counsellors, because they needed or wanted to run counselling programmes such as raising awareness of the harms caused by smoking and drugs, and competition programmes to encourage students whose academic achievements were weak (**SC24 Transcript, Line 9**). SC2 stated:

**"There is a budget allocated to counselling from the school clinic, but this is not enough for the execution of many counselling programmes" (SC02 Transcript, Line 44).**

SC09 said that these programmes were important to the students, but that sometimes they were forced to cancel some of the programmes due to a lack of financial support (**SC09 Transcript, Line 48**).

Indeed, SC21 believed that this lack of financial support was the biggest obstacle that he faced. SC21 stated:

**"The biggest problem or obstacle is financial support to establish programs and is weak, and also there is no training for us, and as you know we need training dramatically" (SC21 Transcript, Line 42).**

SC14 also identified a lack of financial support:

**"In fact there is no support in the real sense all there is, is just real effort only, and cooperation between us colleagues" (SC14 Transcript, Line 80).**

An outlier case can be seen in the case of SC15, who worryingly noted that school counsellors received:

"no financial support whatsoever" (*SC15 Transcript, Line 40*), no special budget, and limited administrative support.

SC11 noted that financial support did exist, but that it was limited, and that it was not one of the school's priorities (**SC11 Transcript, Line 66**). SC11 believed that school counselling was lower down on the list of the school's priorities, after sports and technical activities (**SC11 Transcript, Line 66**). SC11 even believed that school counselling was:

**"not even among the concerns of the Ministry of Education" (SC11 Transcript, Line 66).**

What he wanted was for independence of financial support, for an independent budget to be allocated to the school counselling department (**SC11 Transcript, Line 68**).

From the transcripts it is not completely clear whether the lack of financial support comes from the school (e.g. because of a lack of willingness on the part of the school administration), or because of the small budget allocated from the cafeteria to fund school counselling activities. But this theme of lack of support has clearly emerged from the transcripts. SC16 worryingly noted that there was very weak financial support for the school counsellor and there was no allocated budget. He also said that he paid for counselling programmes out of his own pocket. One possibility is that the lack of financial support arises because of the bureaucratic set up in schools of rules regarding school counsellor budgets:

**The Ministry of Education decided in the rules and regulations to allocate a certain percentage of the monthly income of the school cafeteria to the students counsellor, but unfortunately it is not enough at all, we have the Islamic awareness activities, like the closing ceremony, the cultural, Sport and artistic activities, all these activities get a percentage of the school canteen, so how can the income cover all that, of course it will not be sufficient, add to this if the income of the school canteen (school cafeteria) is very weak (SC Transcript SC04, Line 76).**

### **Sub-theme conclusion**

This sub-theme showed that school counsellors face a number of practical problems and challenges in schools, partly arising because of a lack of financial support. Because of the way the financial budget for school counsellors is set (i.e. as part of cafeteria revenues) many of the school counsellors reported that they had very little finances to undertake any kind of school counselling programme. They had insufficient funding to purchase school counselling materials (e.g. magazines or books), and they had insufficient funding to attend training courses or to undertake school counselling qualifications. This lack of financial support was very evident, and the amount of money that the school counsellors discussed meant that in practice school counsellors were prevented from effectively carrying out school counselling programmes by the Ministry of Education. This is another area that schools should urgently address.

### **Lack of qualifications and training**

One area that emerged from the transcript findings was that most if not all of the school counsellors felt that they were lacking in relevant school counselling qualifications, training, or both. A small proportion of the school counsellors had obtained higher degrees in school counselling, and some had obtained Diplomas in counselling. However, most of the other school counsellors had learnt school counselling through the job. Most of the other school counsellors also said that they had not had very much training in school counselling, and the training courses they had attended were either very short or not very good. SC13 said that:

**"I am sure that the biggest obstacle is lack of courses and programs obtained by the school counsellor" (SC13 Transcript, Line 64).**

Even though SC13 had no formal qualifications in counselling or school counselling, he believed that it should be a requirement that school counsellors have qualifications related to counselling. He said he was suffering in his work because of his lack of qualifications. SC14 also strongly believed that only qualified persons should be allowed to be school counsellors, otherwise there was a decline in the quality of counselling services available. SC22 was asked what training he had attended in order to prepare him for school counselling. SC22 responded that he had attended **"very simple courses"** which were short (**SC22 Transcript, Line 40**). What he really wanted was **"long training in school counselling"** (**SC22 Transcript, Line 42**).

SC08 had attended a four day simple course in counselling. SC07 had been a school counsellor for 8 years but had only attended 90 or 91 hours of training in all that time. SC08 wanted training on how to study a case (i.e. student), and how to be able to identify negative emotions and behaviours and how to treat them accordingly. SC19 noted that there was a:

**"lack of training for us, there is no training that helps us to work properly" (SC19 Transcript, Line 44).**

SC13 believed the biggest obstacle he faced was the lack of courses and training programmes for school counsellors. He said that he had only attended three or four courses which had been short and were not specialized courses dealing in school counselling. SC21 noted that:

**"Before I became a school counsellor there is no training, but after I became school counsellor there was no proper or adequate training" (SC21 Transcript, Line 48).**

When asked about his qualifications SC17 replied

**"With regret I have nothing" (SC17 Transcript, Line 48).**

When asked about his training he replied:

**"There is no real training" (SC17 Transcript, Line 50).**

SC14 said there was no training available for school counsellors, teachers were more important than school counsellors, there were negative perceptions of school counsellors from the head teacher, and no support. Many of the school counsellors also believed that school counselling should be carried out by individuals with the right qualifications. The lack of qualifications and training is a clear problem for many of the school counsellors in City X. SC05 said:

**"I think the most important thing is that counselling must be performed only by those who are qualified, who have a qualification in school counselling" (SC05, Transcript, Line 80).**

The reason he gave for his belief was:

**"I think that the reason for the decline and lack of importance of counselling... is the lack of qualified school counsellors" (SC05 Transcript, Line 80).**

The lack of adequate or appropriate qualifications and training may be a real problem for school counsellors. School counsellors may not be viewed as professionals or peers by other teachers:

**"...some other school principals think that the school counsellor comes to school for sleeping, so he does not ask him to solve any problem" (SC12 Transcript, Line 42).**

The lack of training may also add to the negative perceptions that school counsellors must cope with in City X:

**"Teachers look contemptuously to the school counsellor thinking that he has nothing to present, or they envy him for his position that he has few job duties, so people in [unnamed Research City] say that: if you want to get comfortable become a school counsellor" (SC12 Transcript, Line 46).**

The lack of qualifications and training is a sub-theme that can be identified in the data, and it ties in to the other themes and sub-themes that have been identified. For example,

the theme of lack of financial support demonstrates that school counsellors in City X have little financial support for the school counselling department or school counselling programmes. It is therefore highly likely that they will have little to no financial support to attend training programmes or courses, or to buy school counselling books, articles, or journals, or to pay for online counselling training courses.

In practice this may mean that school counsellors in City X are not able to apply professional school counselling theories and techniques in their work. It may also mean that school counsellors are not able to undertake modern continuing professional development (CPD) practices in their work as a school counsellor. This lack of qualifications and training presents a big difficulty or challenge for many of the school counsellors that were interviewed.

SC20 said that there was still a lack of real ongoing training for school counsellors. He believed that school counsellors should have mandatory training every six months. SC08 said that he did not have any qualifications related to counselling, and could only draw on his experience in teaching (**SC08 Transcript, Line 48**). When I asked him whether he had undertaken any training for counselling he replied that he had attended a simple course for four days (**SC08 Transcript, Lines 49 to 52**). When I asked him if he thought that this course was enough he replied

**"Even if it was for a year, also it would not be enough, if you are not qualified for counselling work; I think the benefit of the training will be low" (SC08 Transcript, Line 54).**

When I asked him what extra training he would like to improve his counselling skills he replied:

**"Frankly, I do not know by virtue of my little experience in counselling, and also by virtue of that I do not have a qualification in counselling, so I do not know the names of the courses" (SC08 Transcript, Line 56).**

So SC08 had no qualifications in counselling and had attended a simple four day training course to train him for his job as a school counsellor. He was 39 years old and had been in counselling for one and a half years, and had been working in the education field for 17 years. He held a Bachelors Degree in English, but confessed that because he was not experienced in counselling, he did not know what courses would help him in his role as a school counsellor. Whilst he was very happy for becoming a school counsellor he acknowledged that he did not have enough qualifications or training, and wanted to seek such qualifications and training, but did not know how. When I asked him if there was anything else he wished to add he replied:



**"No thanks, and excuse me I do not have enough experience, but I wish I helped you" (SC08 Transcript, Line 98).**

### **Sub-theme conclusion**

This sub-theme showed that the majority of the school counsellors found that they felt that they had a general lack of qualifications and training. They were able to identify that they had undertaken some training, but that in general this training was inadequate, or had been undertaken a long while ago. School counselling is something that requires regular development and training in order to ensure that school counsellors have the skills and knowledge required to help them to provide good quality counselling and help to students in schools. Without suitable qualifications and training, school counsellors may find it very difficult to provide suitable counselling and guidance to students. This may mean that it is the students and the overall quality of the educational experience that is negatively affected. Therefore this is an area that schools should urgently address.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

This chapter will set out the findings of the research based on a qualitative interpretation of 24 semi-structured interviews using the thematic content analysis (TCA) method. The chapter sets out the research question and the approach taken in trying to answer this question. It sets out my interpretation of the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of the school counsellors from the data. It also sets out my interpretation of the other themes that emerged from the data, and a commentary on the views of school counsellors on the recommendations for reform that I proposed to them during each interview.

### **THE PHD RESEARCH QUESTION**

***'What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of school counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?'***

The doctor of philosophy (PhD) research question aimed to discover the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and understandings of school counsellors in schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia). In order to answer this question I carried out twenty four interviews with school counsellors working in schools based in City X in Saudi Arabia. Many of the school counsellors were of different ages, with different educational backgrounds and qualifications, and varied in their direct experience of school counselling. Therefore the data that was obtained in the research represented a broad range of school counselling views, and can be said to be representative of the views of school counsellors in schools in City X.

In the research findings chapter there were eleven primary themes that emerged from the research data. However, if we group some themes together, the themes most closely related to the research question can then be narrowed to the following six themes (a final theme of lack of support groups together a number of sub-themes).

- (1) negative stakeholder behavioural attitudes towards student counsellors;
- (2) negative stakeholder perceptions towards student counsellors;
- (3) general lack of knowledge of modern school counselling practices;
- (4) dissension between school counsellors and other stakeholders regarding their role;
- (5) cultural and religious influences on Western models of school counselling; and

(6) lack of support within and beyond the school community.

These will be discussed individually, and then commented on together.

## **THEME 1: NEGATIVE STAKEHOLDER BEHAVIOURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENT COUNSELLORS**

The research data clearly showed that the majority of the school counsellors interviewed felt very positively about working as school counsellors in schools in City X. Many of the school counsellors believed school counselling was an important or very important part of the school curriculum, and many of the school counsellors felt that they were achieving positive results from their work. Many of the school counsellors that were interviewed felt that they got on well with the students in the schools, and had been able to develop real and positive working relationships with the students. Some of the school counsellors were even able to share personal success stories with me that they felt proud about. Two examples for SC02 are written below.

**The greatest pride for me is when I see the same student accepting me as a school counsellor, and it is my greatest pride, when the student knocks on the door, and mentions family secrets" (SC02 Transcript, Line 50).**

**From this, I feel there is trust between me and the student, and this is the biggest success, because it is difficult in our society, for a student to speak about things or secrets relating to his family, or about problems in the family (SC02 Transcript, Line 50).**

What I found in general was that the school counsellors in City X felt that school counselling was important and that it had the potential to help students in their schools. They showed positive attitudes towards counselling. This was despite the fact that most of the school counsellors in City X were facing an uphill struggle. They had little financial and administrative support. Many did not have enough financial budget to cover school counselling programmes. Some school counsellors said that they paid for the programmes out of their own pocket.

Many of the school counsellors faced negative perceptions of them by other teachers, staff, directors and sometimes even headmasters. Many had to work in small offices. Many of the school counsellors were often asked to do additional tasks and jobs that had nothing to do with their role as school counsellor. Students often did not want to open up with them, or approach them, because there the culture and community of the local area meant

that parents did not know about the role of the school counsellor, or talking to strangers (i.e. the school counsellor) about family issues was not allowed.

Many of the school counsellors were not directly qualified in a counselling or a counselling related qualification. Many had received some training in counselling, but this type of training had been short, some school counsellors said the training courses had been three or four days long. Many of the school counsellors wanted training but they could not obtain it. Many of the school counsellors wanted to make positive changes to help students, but found that they received little or no cooperation from other teachers, or from parents. Overall, it would seem to be the case that the majority of the school counsellors in City X are trying to do their job of counselling students as best as possible given the limited resources at their disposal. Taking all these other issues into account, it is also possible that they feel a sense of frustration and perhaps even powerlessness because they are not able to do what they would really like to do effectively.

## **THEME 2: NEGATIVE STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS STUDENT COUNSELLORS**

It would seem clear from the data that the majority of school counsellors perceived that they were viewed negatively by other teachers, staff, parents, and sometimes headmasters. Many of the school counsellors perceived that their role was not understood, by teachers, students, and parents, and that they experienced many problems because of this. These problems included a lack of communication, a lack of cooperation, and the assigning of a number of additional administrative tasks or jobs. For example, SC18 said "...they have formed an idea about the School counselling and that is it is a job for those who want to relax and not work" (**SC18 Transcript, Line 26**).

These negative perceptions of the school counsellor in practice undermine the importance of the role of the school counsellor in the school, and the potential benefit that the school counsellor can provide to students. SC02 had said that when one of the students had been asked about the role of the school counsellor, the student had replied that the role of the school counsellor was to get his photograph taken with the headmaster during 'Plant a tree week' (**SC02 Transcript, Line 34**).

There were a number of explanations put forward by school counsellors to explain these negative perceptions of them. Some of the school counsellors believed it was because other teachers, staff and parents did not understand the role of the school counsellor. SC18 said that he believed that it was therefore important that the school counsellor be introduced to the parents, so that he can learn to communicate with them and show them the importance of that communication (**SC18 Transcript, Line 84**). Another explanation

put forward by SC15 was that the parents' level of education in City X was low because of the Bedouin environment. SC15 believed that parents did not have a great deal of knowledge of the importance of education for their children in City X, and so they just wanted their children to find a job, and knew nothing about the role of the school counsellor in the school (**SC15 Transcript, Line 34**). Over time, these negative perceptions of school counsellors will likely negatively impact the attitudes of the school counsellors.

### **THEME 3: GENERAL LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF MODERN SCHOOL COUNSELLING PRACTICES**

As shown in the findings chapter, the majority of the school counsellors had some type of qualification such as a Bachelor's Degree or a Diploma. Most of the school counsellors were in the thirties, forties, or fifties and had been in the education field for many years. The length of time the school counsellors had been in counselling differed, but most had been in the counselling field for a long time, i.e. generally more than 7 years (**Table 6**).

**Table 6: School counsellor professional background and qualifications**

<b>No</b>	<b>Years in Education</b>	<b>Years in Counselling</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
SC01	16	10	Bachelors Degree in Social Work Higher Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC02	7	6	Masters in Health and Psychological Care
SC03	25	15	Bachelors Degree in Agricultural Engineering
SC04	9	3	Bachelors Degree in Science
SC05	25	22	Middle College Diploma in History and Geography
SC06	31	20	Intermediate College Diploma Geography and Religion
SC07	11	8	Bachelors Degree in Islamic Studies Diploma in Guidance and Counselling
SC08	17	1.5	Bachelors Degree in English
SC09	12	7	Bachelors Degree in Islamic Studies Diploma in School counselling
SC10	16	9	History and Geography
SC11	25	19	Masters in Sociology
SC12	21	12	Masters Degree in Islamic Education Bachelors Degree in Quranic and Islamic Studies Higher Diploma
SC13			Diploma in Directing and Guidance (1 year)

**CHAPTER 5**  
**Discussion, and Recommendations**

No	Years in Education	Years in Counselling	Qualifications
SC14	19	12	Bachelors Degree in Geography
SC15	8	13	Bachelors Degree in Physical Education
SC16	7	5	Bachelors Degree in History
SC17	6	15	Diploma in Mathematics
SC18	24	21	Middle College Diploma in Islamic Education
SC19	10	20	Middle College Diploma in History and Geography
SC20	9	7	Bachelors Degree in Media
SC21	12	9	Bachelors Degree in Sports Education
SC22	14	6	Bachelors Degree in Chemistry
SC23	11	9	Bachelors Degree in Islamic Sharia
SC24	10	8	Bachelors Degree in Psychology

In general, the school counsellors could be described as older intelligent men who had been employed in the education field for quite a long time. However, there was a common theme identified in the findings chapter, and that was that the majority of the school counsellors believed they lacked sufficient knowledge of counselling and counselling techniques. In general, this was explained by most of them not having a counselling or counselling-related degree or qualification, combined with the fact that most of them admitted that they had either received no training in counselling, or very little training in counselling. For example, SC13 said that he had been a school counsellor for eight years, but he had only been on three or four training courses which were very short, and which were "very weak" (**SC13 Transcript, Line 64**).

Therefore, the knowledge levels of the school counsellors, in terms of counselling knowledge, were generally low. Instead, most of the school counsellors said that they had learned about counselling in their job as school counsellor. One of the school counsellors had explained why this was generally the case. It would seem that there was a time many years ago, that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia had identified that there was a shortage in the number of school counsellors in schools. Therefore, to fill that gap the Ministry of Education had allowed teachers and other people who worked in the education sector to apply for positions working as school counsellors in Saudi schools. This was intended to be a temporary solution whilst the Ministry of Education could train larger numbers of school counsellors who were qualified in counselling or a counselling-related qualification.

So it would seem to be that these school counsellors who have no qualifications in school counselling have been left in the role of school counsellor but have not had access to

training, or very little training in school counselling. If this happened in the UK there would be ways in which the school counsellor could slowly train himself to obtain new counselling skills. There are many books on counselling that teach people about counselling and are not too expensive. For example, "Counselling Skills and Theory" (2014), by Margaret Hough (£22.73), or "First Steps in Counselling: A Student's Companion for Introductory Courses" (2011), by Peter Sanders (£16.99). There are short courses in counselling, there are videos on counselling skills and counselling online which are free to watch, and counselling courses and degrees are widely available.

But the difficulty in City X is that none of these types of training materials are available. There are no, or very few, counselling courses, and no books or videos in Arabic on counselling. The schools in City X also have no financial budget to send the school counsellors on training courses on school counselling. So the school counsellors have been left in a difficult position. The majority of the school counsellors said they needed training, so they had identified that they lacked high levels of knowledge of school counselling. It would seem to be the case that many of the school counsellors wanted training, so they were not lazy or complacent, but they simply could not access the training they needed.

#### **THEME 4: DISSENSION BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE**

As was seen in the findings chapter, there was a common theme relating to the internal understandings of the majority of the school counsellors that emerged. This was that the majority of the school counsellors believed that counselling students in Saudi schools was important, and could help students to develop and support them within the school environment. Furthermore, the majority of the school counsellors were committed to school counselling, and it seemed to be that they were trying hard to provide school counselling services to the best of their ability. But, in addition to this theme of understandings that emerged from the data, there may also be other understandings of school counsellors that were unspoken. This is because the findings showed that the school counsellors faced many difficulties and obstacles in their daily lives.

The school counsellors were often viewed negatively by other teachers, staff, parents, and sometimes headmasters. They had little financial or administrative assistance. They often had to cancel school counselling programmes because they had insufficient training. They lacked professional school counselling qualifications and training. They were often asked to do additional tasks that were nothing to do with school counselling. They faced a lack of cooperation and communication with other teachers and parents, and students were

often reluctant to speak with the school counsellor because of the prevailing local Saudi culture.

When school counsellors in City X are facing all these difficulties and obstacles every day, and every week for years, it is very likely that they feel some of these kinds of feelings: tired, exhausted, sad, frustrated, pessimistic, hopeless, irritated, discouraged. So although I was able to identify some understandings of the school counsellors, I was not able to identify the emotional understandings of the school counsellors. Many of the school counsellors said that they generally got on well with the students. For example, SC16 said that students generally like the school counsellor, as he is always gentle with them and treats them well, but that they do not seem to understand the importance of his role or why he is here **(SC16 Transcript, Line 36)**.

This situation would seem to be made worse by many of the school counsellors being given additional tasks and roles in the school. If other teachers and students understand the school counsellor to be someone who disciplines or punishes students then they may not trust or confide in the school counsellor. Instead of being understood to be a neutral individual who will offer guidance and counselling the school counsellor will be seen as someone not to be trusted and perhaps even feared. If other teachers see the school counsellor as someone who came to the profession to sleep and rest, and as someone who does no work, then those teachers may come to resent the school counsellor and may not cooperate with them.

If parents do not understand that there is a school counsellor available in the school, or if they do not understand what the school counsellor does or the role of the school counsellor, then this may make it very difficult to work with parents. This lack of understanding may highlight why other teachers, parents, and perhaps even head teachers have negative attitudes towards school counsellors. In fact this would seem to be a pressing issue which the school counsellors wanted to address and change. For example, SC05 said:

**I want to change the understanding of teachers for school counselling, because once changing this perception and this understanding, the performance of school counsellors will be improved, and I'm sure of that (SC05 Transcript, Line 74).**



## THEME 5: CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON WESTERN MODELS OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING

Culture and religion were areas that emerged as demonstrating a significant influence on Western models of school counselling in City X. SC09 said that he found it difficult to intervene in family problems, because they would not accept it as they did not want to reveal the secrets of the family (**SC09 Transcript, Line 80**). He also said that sometimes it was the students that did not want to open up, because social habits prevented him from doing this because of a

**"culture of shame or perhaps weakness, whereas the student feels weakness if he talks about his problem with you, because he believes that he is now in the manhood stage" (SC09 Transcript, Line 82).**

SC01 also noted that he believed that some students would not disclose problems because of their psychology, because people would look at him as a crazy man, a weak person, which was the vision of some members of the community (**SC01 Transcript, Line 38**). SC01 said

**"he considers this as a defect or a scandal, or maybe he faced some criticism when talking about his problem and this may lead to a delay in solving some of the problems of students" (SC01 Transcript, Line 38).**

The theme of culture tended to reflect the local community nature of Saudi society. This culture was a blend of traditional Saudi conservative society, mixed with local community tribal and nomadic influences. SC11 said the conservative society led to people hiding problems, he said that he found that some problems were deliberately hidden by the parents from the school, probably because of fears of reactions (**SC11 Transcript, Line 54**). So the old traditional ways were seen as strong and powerful and new ways of thinking or new ideas were seen as different or foreign. For example, SC03 said

**"The community also does not know something called 'school counsellor' at school" (SC03 Transcript, Line 20).**

SC18 said

**"Desert society not civilized somewhat, is closed to itself community and there is power and old ideas from the elderly, in other words, society in [City X] is a conservative society and adheres to Islamic**

**teachings and customs of the old Bedouin community (*Transcript SC18, Line 12*).**

SC02 noted that

**"This is the culture and society, and is not a personal disposition. The culture of our society is about secrecy... Don't tell anyone... Don't inform anyone, especially behavioural problems caused by a family problem" (*SC02 Transcript, Line 52*).**

SC04 said:

**...the counselling expression is new in the community, and our society, as I told you, is a conservative society, it is afraid of divulging secrets and scandals... whereas it considers that the counselling profession collects the secrets of students and thus probably may be seen by someone, so the family secrets will be revealed (*SC04 Transcript, Line 136*).**

SC12 noted that in big cities the counselling role may be more generally accepted, but because of the traditions and environment of City X, there was a reluctance to accept the role of counselling (***SC12 Transcript, Line 30***). When I asked SC18 about the community in City X, SC18 said:

**"the culture of the community to not trust strangers outside the family as I already told you. They like to keep their secrets within the family" (*SC18 Transcript, Line 42*).**

It was seen in the literature review that Saudi culture is strongly conservative, and there are still many elements of Saudi Bedouin culture that continue to influence local communities (Farsoun 2013). Tribal communities still exist and Saudi people in these types of communities still move in close familial circles, and may sometimes be wary of Western culture and traditions (Sumari and Jalal, 2008).

The data obtained from the interviews with the school counsellors would strongly support this. It would seem to be the case that the school counsellors find their work difficult because they face a lack of cooperation and trust from the students, their parents, or both. Trying to encourage young students to open up and talk about their own, or their family's problems in a community where family secrecy is encouraged is a difficult if not impossible task for the school counsellors. It would seem to be that many of the parents do not know what a school counsellor is, or the role of the school counsellor in the school. Counselling students may often require the involvement of the family, because this may have the best

chance of success (Thompson, 2012). Indeed Thompson (2012) has argued that school-family-community partnerships can lead to increased educational outcomes for students, can empower parents, and can ultimately help youths to achieve academic and career success.

Thompson (2012) explains that when students do not fully develop their academic skills they develop deficiencies in their education which significantly decrease their economic and social well-being. Thompson (2012) notes that research (Epstein, 1995 Henderson and Mapp, 2002) has shown that school-family-community partnerships improve school programmes and school climate, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families, and improve children's chances of success in school and life. But Thompson (2012) argues that professional school counsellors cannot increase students' educational outcomes alone, they have to team and collaborate with family, community, and school staff members. This must be done in order to "develop and implement comprehensive programs of partnerships to meet the needs of students vulnerable to academic failure" (Thompson, 2012, p.249).

Nevertheless, in schools in City X it would seem to be that the local culture and community is negatively affecting school counselling practices and programmes. There would seem to be a general resistance to the role of the school counsellor and to school counselling practices. Parents of students, and perhaps students as well, may not be willing to openly discuss personal or family matters that are bothering them, or that they may need help with. This not only affects the role and work of the school counsellor, but may negatively impact students as well.

Many of the school counsellors said that parents were not able to communicate with the school because they were so busy working, or were working far away or in the military. Therefore it may be that some students may find themselves with no one to discuss issues or problems that they have. Their family may be too busy, and they may not be willing to discuss the issue or problem with the school counsellor who is actually there to help them.

## **THEME 6: LACK OF SUPPORT WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

The final theme of lack of support groups together a number of different sub-themes which interact together. These are lack of communication, lack of cooperation, lack of financial support, lack of qualifications and training, and additional tasks and burdens. Clearly, when taken together, all these point to a general lack of support that is provided to school counsellors.

## **Lack of communication**

The lack of communication was a theme that emerged from the data. However, there were various types of lack of communication that emerged. First, there seemed to be a lack of communication with other teachers, and sometimes directors and headmasters. There were many school counsellors that said that other teachers did not view their job or role as a school counsellor positively. They considered that it was a role that did not involve much work, or people who wanted to rest and take it easy became school counsellors. Consequently, there were also many school counsellors that said that they suffered from a lack of cooperation on the part of other teachers, and sometimes even headmasters. SC10 said:

**"The whole school suffers, the communication is weak, and is almost non-existent" (SC Transcript, Line 94).**

It is difficult to know exactly what was causing this lack of communication in schools in City X. But the data obtained from the school counsellors would tend to indicate that this lack of communication is likely due to a combination of different factors in different schools. Many of the interviews showed that there was a lack of knowledge about the precise role of the school counsellor, and what he actually did in the school on the part of other teachers, staff, and sometimes headmasters. The interviews also showed that school counsellors believed that other teachers and staff had a fixed idea in their heads that the job or role of the school counsellor, was an easy one, for lazy people. SC21 said that he believed that 50% or less of teachers knew the specific work of the school counsellor, and that there was a general misunderstanding about the role of the school counsellor in the school (**SC21 Transcript, Line 28**).

It is therefore possible that these beliefs about the school counsellor contribute to the lack of communication reported by many of the school counsellors. If other teachers or staff view the school counsellor as being lazy, then it is possible they will be less likely to want to cooperate with him, or to help him in his programmes, and even to communicate with him. If other teachers or staff view the school counsellor as unimportant, or as someone with no role to play in the school, then it is possible that they will be less likely to want to cooperate or communicate with him.

The second type of lack of communication that emerged was a lack of communication with parents of students in the school. For example, SC21 said that the parents cooperation and communication with the school was very weak, there were very few school visits, and there were very low responses to telephone calls made to them (**SC21 Transcript, Line 30**). SC19 said:

**"no matter how we tried to highlight our efforts or communicate with the parent, unfortunately we don't get any response or appreciation for our work therefore this limits the performance of our tasks properly" (SC19 Transcript, Line 44).**

SC14 said:

**"There is no interest from the parents to communicate with school counsellors and that is because of lack of knowledge that they have about the importance of the school counsellor programme" (SC14 Transcript, Line 31).**

In fact, there were a few different reasons given for the lack of cooperation on the part of parents. Some school counsellors believed this was because they did not know about the school counsellor's work in the school, and about the importance of school counselling programmes. Other school counsellors said that it was because many of the parents were in the military and so they were not able to regularly speak with their children (**SC19 Transcript, Line 23**).

Some school counsellors said it was the culture of the local community that in practice meant that parents were not really interested in the academic development of their children, and just wanted them to finish school and get a job. SC19 said that he found communicating with parents difficult because the parents were very negative, and he believed it was their level of education behind this (**SC19 Transcript, Line 23**).

SC14 said:

**"the biggest issue is that the parents are uneducated and the environment and the community in our region are mostly uneducated" (SC04 Transcript, Line 42).**

In practice he believed this meant that the parents did not understand the role of the school counsellor, and were uncooperative with the school (**SC04 Transcript, Line 42**). SC21 said that he believed some parents had a misunderstanding that the school was fully responsible for the child from morning until the end of the school day, so there was no need for the parent to attend school or ask about his son, or follow-up in school (**SC21 Transcript, Line 32**). SC13 said that he considered some parents to be ignorant in some way,

**"so you find he does not ask about his sons at home or know their problems in school, in addition he does not come to school even if you call him to attend" (SC13 Transcript, Line 46).**

## **Lack of Cooperation**

Lack of cooperation was a theme that emerged from the data, and in practice it may be explained by a number of different issues that were raised by the school counsellors. Many of the school counsellors said that they believed other teachers, directors, headmasters, and parents often displayed negative attitudes towards them. Many of the school counsellors also put forward their beliefs as to why this might be the case. For instance, SC18 stated that if he asked other teachers to get involved in his counselling programmes, they would believe this was him trying to evade his job by involving them to ease the pressure on him **(SC18 Transcript, Line 26)**.

He believed that this was because other teachers had formed an idea about school counselling, and that this was that school counselling was:

**"a job for those who want to relax and not work" (SC18 Transcript, Line 26).**

SC18 remarked that the school director saw the job of the school counsellor to be a "sleeping job" or "a place to sleep", so any individual who wanted comfort or laziness should become a school counsellor **(SC18 Transcript, Line 30)**.

Unfortunately, this was something that was also raised by a number of other school counsellors. SC18 even said that there was a lack of understanding from the Department of Education about the role of the school counsellor **(SC18 Transcript, Line 24)**. SC18 also even blamed himself for this negative view, as he said he was not qualified or a specialist in school counselling **(SC18 Transcript, Line 30)**. It seemed to be the case that many of the school counsellors were stuck in a never ending cycle. They were viewed negatively by other school staff and so they suffered a lack of cooperation.

Some of the school counsellors may have believed that this was because they lacked qualifications and training, but there was no financial budget to train the school counsellors. Even if there was sufficient financial budget, given the negative views and lack of cooperation from school directors and headmasters, it is possible that they would not be willing to spend money on the school counsellors who were often viewed as doing nothing in their role at the school.

## **Lack of Financial Support**

The majority of the school counsellors in City X said that they received very little financial support from the school. SC15 even said **"There is no financial support whatsoever" (SC15 Transcript, Line 40)**.

When I asked SC16 what financial support he received, he said financial support was very weak (**SC16 Transcript, Lines 47 and 48**). When I asked SC16 how he implemented his counselling programmes without a budget, he replied:

**"Mostly from my own pocket I, what can I do I want for the work not to stop" (SC16 Transcript, Line 54).**

SC16 noted that:

**"...the school counsellor is now paying out of his own pocket and some school counsellors are not willing to pay from his account" (SC16 Transcript, Line 92).**

SC04 explained that the Ministry of Education had put in place rules and regulations for schools in City X to allocate a certain percentage of the monthly income from the school cafeteria to the school counselling department (**SC04 Transcript, Line 76**). But in reality many of the school counsellors said that this financial support turned out to be very weak, and almost non-existent.

This is therefore clearly a very big problem for school counsellors in schools in City X. They have to rely on a financial budget that is a percentage of an unknown monthly income from the school's cafeteria, which in practice turns out to be very small. Some of the school counsellors even said that they had to pay out of their own pocket to fund some of the school counselling programmes. In the United Kingdom (UK) schools receive an annual financial budget from local county councils. This budget is then allocated by the school to different departments and managed by the school administration.

It would be very strange if the school nurse or the school health education department had no financial budget allocated it by the school, but instead had to rely on the money received by the school cafeteria. So, it would seem to be the case that the rules and regulations that the Ministry of Education has put in place, have been put in place to reduce the amount of money that the Ministry of Education has to provide schools, by making certain types of school academic activities self-funded.

In practice, it would seem to be that what is happening is that the school counselling department and school counsellors in schools in City X, are in reality receiving very little to no financial budget to work with. So school counsellors are not able to put in place counselling programmes for the students in the schools, they are not able to attend training courses or programmes to help them to improve their counselling skills, and they are not able to buy counselling books, articles, journals or other training materials.

It would seem to be the case that the school counsellors cannot complain because it is the Ministry of Education that has put these rules in place, and if they ask the school for additional funding, it is likely that the school will say that the school counsellors have already been allocated a budget from the school cafeteria. Many of the school counsellors have identified this problem and have said that what they need is a separate and independent financial budget to work with.

SC23 suggested that what was needed was a financial budget for the school counsellor **(SC23 Transcript, Line 73)**.

SC05 said that the first thing he needed was **"substantial financial support" (SC05 Transcript, Line 120)**.

SC24 said **"We need more financial support" (SC24 Transcript, Line 40)**.

SC06 said:

**"We wish to increase financial support" (SC06 Transcript, Line 108)**.

SC01 said:

**"we need a big budget in order to be able to implement more programs and more effectively" (SC01 Transcript, Line 80)**.

This lack of financial support clearly raises problems for school counsellors in City X, and may be likely the same situation in other regions in Saudi Arabia. It would seem to be that by making the school counselling department self-funding, the Ministry of Education saves costs because it no longer has to provide a financial budget to fund school counselling services. But in doing so the school counselling department is no longer able to provide sufficient, or even adequate counselling services to the schools in City X. The rules and regulations put in place by the Ministry of Education in City X would therefore seem to be harming the overall quality of the educational experience that students receive in City X.

### **Lack of Qualifications and Training**

Without a doubt there was a real concern by the majority of the school counsellors over the training, or rather lack of training, that the school counsellors were given. Many of the school counsellors were not qualified in directly relevant degrees such as counselling, social work, or psychology. Instead, many of the school counsellors had degrees in English, science, geography or engineering, and had learnt about counselling on the job. The difficulty that this presented was that they were only given very short training in counselling and counselling methods, sometimes simply for a period of 4 days. The majority of the school counsellors said that there was no annual training in counselling



techniques and methods, and that they did not have the qualifications needed to be able to carry out school counselling effectively.

When I asked SC01 whether he read anything about counselling during the week such as counselling articles or magazines, he replied:

**"Unfortunately, we do not have a source or a place where we can get what you are talking about" (SC01 Transcript, Line 30).**

SC09 suggested that in order to improve the function of the school counsellor what was needed was access to training and courses regarding the development of the school counsellor **(SC09 Transcript, Line 96)**.

SC17 said that there was no real training available, and what he needed was training in understanding the basics and the skills of the school counsellor **(SC17 Transcript, Line 52)**. SC13 said he was sure that the biggest obstacle he faced was a lack of courses and programmes for school counsellors, he said that the courses that were available were very weak and there was a shortage of courses **(SC13 Transcript, Line 64)**. The majority of the school counsellors interviewed said that they lacked the right qualifications and training to provide effective school counselling services. School counsellors either lacked the right counselling, psychology, or social work diploma or degree, or they could not acquire such a qualification, or both. In addition, they were not able to regularly attend school counselling training courses, or these training courses were not available, or both.

In the UK The Open University (OU) offers a Foundation Degree in Counselling (The Open University, 2015). The Degree enables individuals to qualify as a professional counsellor, and combines prior work-based learning at a local college with OU knowledge-based modules (The Open University, 2015). It takes 3 years full time, 4 years part time, and study can be either classroom based or distance learning (The Open University, 2015). The degree costs approximately £5,400 per year making the total cost £16,200. Even if this type of degree were made available to school counsellors in Saudi Arabia, it is highly unlikely that they would be able to pay the tuition costs.

If the Ministry of Education is not willing to directly fund the school counselling departments in schools in City X, it is highly unlikely that they will be willing to pay for the tuition costs for all school counsellors in City X. So it seems to be the case that school counsellors are stuck, because they have no money to access training courses and many of them lack the correct qualifications and training to be able to provide effective school counselling services to student in schools in City X.

## **Additional Tasks and Burdens**

The data showed that many of the school counsellors that I interviewed had regularly taken on additional tasks that were not part of the role of the school counsellor, and which may have additionally burdened the workload of the school counsellor. For example, SC15 said:

**"Sometimes I am asked to do administrative jobs and jobs that have nothing to do with the work of the school counsellor, such as the work of an absent teacher or I sometimes do the work of the School Director" (SC15 Transcript, Line 26).**

In practice there may be many difficulties that arise because of this burdening of the school counsellor with additional tasks. Clearly if school counsellors already feel that they are viewed negatively by other teachers and staff, they will feel more compelled to not reject carrying out additional tasks. But by carrying out additional tasks they may be increasing their workload and reducing their ability to carry out school counselling services effectively. It may also have the potential to confuse the role of the school counsellor in the eyes of other teachers, staff and students.

If the school counsellor is seen as someone who can simply be used whenever necessary to carry out any other role, then this may weaken professional respect and courtesy from other school colleagues. It may reduce the status of the school counsellor in the eyes of other teachers and staff. In addition, if students are being disciplined by a school counsellor one day who is acting as a stand in Director, and then they must talk with him another day as a school counsellor, it may be difficult for them to place trust and confidence in the school counsellor.

If school counsellors are seen working as stand-in teachers, as school administrators, to monitor exams, or to discipline students as a stand-in director or headmaster, this can negatively affect school counsellors in many ways. It may confuse students as to the actual role that an individual has to play in the school. It may also cause them to resent the school counsellor, for example if the school counsellor must discipline students one day when acting as a stand-in director, and then seek to earn their trust and confidence another day when they have returned to their school counselling role.

The regular burdening of school counsellors with additional tasks may also cause long-term resentment by the school counsellors. For example, if the school counsellors are regularly taking on other tasks that are not within their job description, but other teachers and staff are not treated in this way, then they may feel resentful that they are treated as inferior to other teachers and staff. If we potentially add this to the feelings of isolation

that student teachers may currently feel, for instance because of a lack of financial support, administrative support, and negative views by teachers, parents, and headmasters, then this has the potential to make school counsellors feel unhappy, of no value to the school, or even depressed.

### **CURRENT SCHOOL COUNSELLING PRACTICES IN CITY X**

Cooper (2013, p.4) estimated that there were approximately 70,000-90,000 *episodes* of school-based counselling delivered in the UK every year. Cooper (2013, p.5) noted that data from the Welsh counsellors' survey in the UK suggested that school-based counsellors in the UK were predominantly female (85%), white (90%), had a master's level qualification or above (70%), and were members of a professional training body (85%). He noted that most of them had some training in therapeutic work with children and young people (80%), and most of them (80%) generally felt supported in their role (Cooper 2013, p.5).

If we compare this to school counsellors in City X, most school counsellors did not have a master's level qualification or above, some of them had Bachelor's degrees, but not in counselling or a counselling-related subject. None of them were members of a professional training body, most of them had not received substantial training in therapeutic work with children and young people, and most of them did not generally feel supported in their role.

The value of counselling students in schools to improve wellbeing and quality of life has been increasingly recognised around the world (Bor *et al.* 2002; Baginsky, 2004; Harris, 2013). In theory, school counsellors in Saudi schools located in City X could offer students an important and valuable service, by providing them with personal academic and social guidance and counselling. In theory, the Ministry of Education states that it provides educational, religious, and cultural oversight of school counselling programmes in Saudi schools. The Official guidelines note four areas of counselling in Saudi schools:

- (1) educational counselling;
- (2) preventive counselling;
- (3) religious and moral counselling; and
- (4) vocational counselling (General Administration of Counselling, 1991).

The official duties of school counsellors set out by the General Administration of Counselling (1991) are:

- Assisting students socially, educationally, and psychologically;

- Creating and implementing counselling plans;
- Facilitating disabled students in appropriate and suitable ways;
- Following up on high achieving and low achieving students;
- Helping students to take full advantage of their abilities;
- Identifying students that are skilled or talented;
- Improving the positivity with regards to the Islamic faith; and
- Maintaining harmony among all members of staff in the educational establishment; and
- Maintaining harmony between the school and parents.

In the October 2014 edition of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) Children & Young People magazine, I commented on what I believed to be the ideal school counsellor's role:

Wherever they may live, many parents have very difficult lives today. If they have children then they most likely have to work full time to provide for the child or the children, and also to support them personally and socially. Unfortunately the reality is that sometimes parents may not often have enough time, or as much time as they would like, for their children. At other times children and adolescents may find it easier to talk to another adult in confidence and in private about personal issues, or other issues which they may not feel comfortable discussing with their parents. This is where the school counsellor can play a key role in their personal and social development... So, I think in an ideal world the school counsellor plays a supporting role in the lives of school children and adolescents. The school counsellor will be someone who is qualified and knowledgeable about school counselling practices, and may have acquired significant school counselling experience in practice. The ideal school counsellor would be respected but would still be approachable. The ideal school counsellor would be seen and known around school, his or her door would be open to all students who need help or advice in any way, or even if they just feel that they need someone to talk to. For example, many times nowadays young children and adolescents may feel depressed or may even feel isolated and suicidal. These are difficult issues to deal with and young people may not want to talk about these kinds of things with their parents or friends, because

of a fear of being labelled or seen in a negative way. So I think in an ideal world the school counsellor is someone who can be there for students and can talk with them easily, and will not judge them. A school counsellor should be able to offer the most relevant advice without letting personal feelings or beliefs get in the way. (BACP, 2014).

### **The Views of School counsellors in City X**

In reality, the themes that have been identified as emerging from the data show that what the Saudi Ministry of Ministry of Education and the General Administration of Counselling aspire for counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia, is not being fulfilled in all or the majority of schools in City X. From the themes that have emerged from the data, the attitudes of the majority of school counsellors I spoke to were positive. They viewed school counselling in a positive way and they believed that they could help guide and counsel students if they were given a real chance. But it would seem to be that the conditions in which they are currently providing school counselling services are stopping them from effectively doing this. The knowledge levels of the majority of the school counsellors in advanced counselling skills were low, and many of the school counsellors had no or very little formal training in school counselling. Many of the school counsellors had no formal counselling or counselling-related qualifications.

Many of them demonstrated that they wanted to receive more training to improve their own skills and provide better services to the students and the schools, but they were not given the chance. The rules and regulations that the Ministry of Education has put in place are stopping the school counsellors from providing an effective and professional service. So in principle the Ministry of Education states that it wants Saudi schools to provide educational, preventive, religious and moral, and vocational counselling, but in reality the school counsellors in schools in City X cannot effectively do this. They have no access to school counselling training or materials, the financial budget they are allocated is so minimal that many of them say that they are regularly forced to cancel school counselling programmes, or even pay for programmes out of their own pocket.

Many of the school counsellors say that they are viewed negatively by other teachers, staff, parents, and sometimes even headmasters, who may (wrongly) believe that school counsellors are lazy, or have no work to do, or their role is not important. The majority of the school counsellors said that they receive very poor cooperation from other teachers, staff, and parents. However, as we have seen, Thompson (2012) has argued that school-family-community partnerships can often lead to better educational outcomes for students, they can empower parents, and can also help children and youths to achieve academic and career success. So in reality it is possible that the educational experience

for children and youths in schools in City X is suffering because of the current situation. Although this was a qualitative research study and scientifically not generalizable to other cities in Saudi, the rules and regulations that the Ministry of Education has put in place mean it is possible that other schools in rural areas in Saudi Arabia are suffering from the same conditions.

### **The Quality of School counselling Services in City X**

This research study has shown that there is a real and continuing problem regarding the provision of school counselling services in schools in City X. The academic needs of the students in schools in City X may be being met. However, it would seem to be that the overall quality of the social and educational experience provided to students in schools in City X is lowered because of the lack of effective and supportive school counselling services. Some of the school counsellors reported that they had to work in dirty conditions to provide counselling services. SC12 said

**"Office of school counsellor is only (2x2 meters) and dirty and not attractive, but if it is elegant and attractive, all people motivated to enter it" (SC12 Transcript, Line 139).**

There are many changes that could be made to improve school counselling services in schools in City X, but it remains to be seen if the Ministry of Education, the General Administration of Counselling, or schools in City X are willing to make any changes. Akkary (2014) has argued that initiatives for educational reform are driven by political agendas, and a top-down approach to change in the Middle East. Akkary (2014) believes that planning for implementation of reform is widely neglected, and there is a lack of professional capacity for those participating in educational reform. Akkary (2014) therefore argues that in order to implement effective educational reform, Middle Eastern countries need to develop new strategies, including:

- (1) changing the prevailing beliefs on educational reform and organizational change (e.g. by adopting a transformative view of change and a systemic view of the goals for reform;
- (2) by building capacity for change at the individual, social, and institutional level; and
- (3) by making action research embedded in the design of reform initiatives.

## **School counsellor Recommendations to Improve School counselling Practices**

The school counsellors that participated in the research had many ideas about what was needed in order to improve existing school counselling services in schools in City X. Some school counsellors believed it would help to give school counsellors increased freedom and decision-making powers. I asked SC17 if he could change one thing about school counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would he want it to be **(SC17 Transcript, Line 55)**. SC17 replied that he wished and hoped to change the views of society or the view of the family about student guidance and counselling, and its benefits and functions for students and society in general **(SC17 Transcript, Line 56)**. He believed the way to start to do this was to increase administrative and financial support for school counsellors, increase staff cooperation with school counsellors in schools, and to provide media support about the importance of school counselling and its role in Saudi schools **(SC17 Transcript, Line 76)**.

SC14 noted two things that might help to improve the quality or effectiveness of school counselling. These were:

- (1) a programme about school counselling to be run at the beginning of each academic year for new teachers, to provide them with a full picture and explanation about counselling and its importance in the school; and
- (2) quarterly training for school counselling skills; and school counsellors should be allowed to attend university to train in school counselling qualifications **(SC14 Transcript, Line 84)**.

SC21 said:

**"The most important suggestion I think it is training... it will improve the tasks and work of the school counsellor. As well as setting up specified financial budget for school counsellor (SC21 Transcript, Line 77).**

SC01 noted a number of practical problems that he encountered in counselling. He said that the internet connection in the room he worked was very weak and he could not access websites when he needed to **(SC01 Transcript, Line 28)**. He also said that his office was close to the headmaster's office, so he believed that because of this, students might be too shy to enter his office **(SC01 Transcript, Line 28)**. So there may be some practical issues that may be negatively affecting counselling practices, that could potentially be remedied (e.g. by changing office to a different office location).

SC20 suggested that school counsellors needed an independent financial budget, mandatory training every six months, and some way of changing the negative views of school counsellors (**SC20 Transcript, Lines 71 and 73**). SC16 said that in order to change the wrong perceptions of school counsellors (i.e. that they only want a life of comfort), what was needed was to intensify training for school counsellors (**SC16 Transcript, Line 94**). In this way he believed that by showing that school counsellors had to be qualified and trained, then they would earn the respect of other staff and teachers.

SC10 that in order to improve the quality of his work, he would like to change the reporting line to be direct with the Ministry of Education and not with the headmaster, and he also wanted to appoint a special officer whose task would be to directly communicate with the parents of students (e.g. like a parent and community liaison) (**SC10 Transcript, Line 92**). SC23 suggested that three things that would improve the quality and effectiveness of his counselling would be:

- (1) to obtain training;
- (2) to put specific financial aid for the school counsellor; and
- (3) to motivate teachers to cooperate more with the school counsellors (**SC23 Transcript, Line 71**).

The data seems to suggest that there is a distinct lack of understanding of the role of the school counsellor. So it could be that school counsellors need to aim to promote school counselling more in a pro-active way, and to demonstrate to parents, teachers, principals and students that they can help students in many positive ways, and that the role that they play in the school is important and valuable. They may have to try to hold school counselling awareness days in order for other teachers, staff, students and parents to understand the role, function and importance of school counselling in schools. Indeed SC05 suggested that what was needed was community programmes that would educate parents about their responsibilities to their children and the benefits of the school counselling programme (**SC05 Transcript, Line 124**). In this way he believed that the whole community, teachers, parents, and headmasters would understand the work of the school counsellor in the school (**SC05 Transcript, Line 124**).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL COUNSELLING PRACTICES IN SAUDI ARABIA**

The cultural issues that have been identified allow us to better understand how Saudi societal cultures may affect the beliefs, feelings and emotions of students and parents. In



turn this may help Saudi school counsellors to put in place new practical ways to make school counselling in schools in City X more effective. Below are examples of responses provided by the school counsellors when four potential recommendations for reform were proposed to them during the interviews. I think these help to show in general the school counsellors positive reaction to the proposed recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: National School counselling Association (NSCA)**

In the UK the BACP is a professional association that represents counsellors and psychotherapists, and seeks to promote education and training, to raise awareness of counselling issues, and to increase public understanding of the benefits of counselling and psychotherapy. There are similar associations in America (e.g. the American School Counselor Association) and Australia (e.g. the Australian Guidance & Counselling Association). This type of association in Saudi Arabia would be very useful for school counsellors in schools there. Indeed, overall this recommendation was strongly supported by the majority of the school counsellors.

I asked SC04 for his opinion on a NSCA, and he asked what its works and tasks would be (**SC04 Transcript, Lines 109 to 110**). I replied that it would specialise in counselling, and might issue periodicals, bulletins, monthly magazines, conferences, seminars, and lectures (**SC04 Transcript, Line 111**). SC04 replied:

**"Excellent, I support it strongly, by virtue of I am not specialized in counselling, it will be beneficial to me, and unqualified students counsellors" (SC04 Transcript, Line 112).**

SC18 viewed this recommendation as a **"very, very excellent"** idea, as he believed they would gain experiences from it and it would provide school counsellors with the origins, concepts and latest ideas in school counselling (**SC18 Transcript, Line 68**).

SC13 viewed this recommendation as an excellent idea, as it would be a reference point for every school counsellor in the Saudi Arabia (**SC13 Transcript, Line 84**).

SC03 viewed this recommendation positively, he said:

**"Very excellent, especially because it will be a reference for all school counsellors and will provide them with everything they need regarding the information and skills of counselling" (SC03 Transcript, Line 68).**

SC07 also found this recommendation to be very excellent idea, as he believed it would help school counsellors to exchanges experiences (**SC07 Transcript, Line 106**). He also

noted that if there were school counsellors in Saudi Arabia that had carried out studies or research, other school counsellors could take advantage of them (**SC7 Transcript, Line 106**).

SC14 believed this recommendation to be a good idea:

**"I think that the establishment Assembly in support of school counselling will be a powerful leap not only in [City X] but in all Saudi Arabia" (SC014 Transcript, Line 68).**

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: National School Counselling Qualification (NSCQ)**

Many of the school counsellors found this recommendation to be a good one. They felt that it was important because there was currently nothing like this available in Saudi Arabia. SC13 said that it was **"necessary"**, and more important than the NSCA because this was one of the priorities of the school counsellor (**SC13 Transcript, Line 86**).

SC10 said that the NSCQ was an excellent idea, because it would habilitate the unqualified school counsellors (**SC10 Transcript, Line 82**). SC19 also believed this to be a good recommendation, as he believed it would help to train school counsellors as well (**SC19 Transcript, Line 61**).

SC16 said that this was important because it would train and qualify school counsellors and provide them with experiences in school counselling (**SC16 Transcript, Line 76**).

SC01 also agreed that the NSCQ was **"very necessary"**, because it could contain workshops for work and education in the field of school counselling skills, and is needed by all counsellors in Saudi Arabia (**SC01 Transcript, Line 113**).

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Online or E-learning**

SC18 believed this to be an excellent idea because it would make training for school counsellors easy and affordable (**SC18 Transcript, Line 72**).

SC19 also believed this to be an excellent and useful idea because it would provide easy access to school counsellors at any time (**SC19 Transcript, Line 63**).

SC05 thought this would be useful because what he called the **"big training centers"** were located in cities such as Riyadh and Jeddah, and this idea would make training easy and accessible for school counsellors (**SC05 Transcript, Line 90**).

SC14 commented:

**"Excellent because it is easy to get at any time, you can find both at home in school, anywhere, especially with existing technology" (SC14 Transcript, Line 72).**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: School counselling Chat Groups**

Many of the school counsellors did not favour this recommendation. They thought that it would not be useful or helpful. SC17 even said they had done this before:

**"We've tried but it was not useful because most members are not qualified and not specialists in school counselling" (SC17 Transcript, Line 64).**

SC18 considered that it would not be a good idea:

**"I think it will be boring and useless as required and may also be annoying" (SC18 Transcript, Line 74).**

SC12 said:

**"I think they are nonsense and just a waste of time, because they discuss useless matters" (SC12 Transcript, Line 123).**

SC08 thought that this recommendation would be useful, provided that the participants in the group were qualified in school counselling (**SC08 Transcript, Line 82**).

SC07 said that their school had created this type of group to communicate with the supervisor of school counselling in the Ministry of Education (**SC07 Transcript, Line 114**). He said that it was helpful as some counsellors shared a problem and other counsellors helped to try to find a solution for it and other problems (**SC07 Transcript, Line 114**).

#### **LACK OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING SUPPORT**

In the US there are national organisations and professional bodies such as the 'American School Counsellor Association' that promote school counselling services and provide training and education of counsellors. In Australia there is the 'Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools' Association, and in the UK there is the BACP. But in Saudi Arabia there are no Saudi school counselling training courses or qualifications available. There is no national Saudi school counselling association, nor is there a Saudi national counselling association. This lack of school counselling support at a national level is worrying.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Discussion, and Recommendations**

This situation is made more difficult because of Saudi Arabia's government 'Saudization' policy, which aim to encourage employment of Saudi nationals in the private sector and decrease Saudi Arabia's high reliance on expatriate workers. All Saudi public schools must hire Saudi nationals for the role of school counsellors, and now the Saudization policy has developed into rules that exclude expatriates working as school counsellors in private Saudi schools. Expatriate school counsellors that might have the qualifications, skills, and abilities to be able to successfully develop school counselling practices in Saudi schools can no longer do so. But at the same time many Saudi nationals who are in the role of school counsellor may not be sufficiently qualified, experienced, or skilled enough to be able to effectively guide and counsel thousands of Saudi youths in Saudi schools.

It is suggested that in order to ensure that Saudi schools are better able to offer high quality school counselling services, there are many steps that may need to be taken. New Saudi school counsellor training courses or degrees might be a good start, or Saudi counselling degrees might be able to include school counselling components or modules. There needs to be an increased awareness of the issues facing school counsellors in Saudi schools, as well as more academic research studies carried out on school counsellors and school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia.

The creation of a new Saudi government sponsored National Saudi Association for School counsellors (NSASC) and perhaps a NSASC School counselling Qualification (NSASCQ), would also be extremely beneficial to Saudi schools (e.g. by allowing school counsellors across Saudi Arabia to share learning experiences and collectively develop). Saudi schools also need to investigate their own school counselling practices, in order to ensure that Saudi social and cultural attitudes are not excluding or isolating school counsellors (e.g. by parents, other teachers, or head teachers). They must also investigate whether school counsellors feel that they are sufficiently qualified, trained, and experienced enough, and whether they feel that they have enough financial, social, and administrative support within the school.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

### **CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

This chapter will initially set out a summary of my journey along the research study. It is important to reflect on and document how I have developed as a researcher, as a school counsellor, and also as a person. It will also reflect on how the research study has affected me. The chapter will then set out the conclusion and will draw together parts of the literature review, the findings, and the interpretation chapters. The chapter will also set out recommendations for schools in City X. Finally, the chapter will identify the limitations of the research study and will provide recommendations for future research.

### **MY JOURNEY ALONG THE RESEARCH STUDY**

Carrying out this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research study has been a long and challenging journey for me. I feel very different now than I did at the beginning of the process, in both positive and negative ways. I have progressed a great deal in terms of my knowledge of the literature relevant to school counselling and school counselling practices. I have been able to develop my skills as a researcher and now have a much better understanding of research methodologies and research skills. There were particular areas that I found very challenging, such as learning about thematic content analysis (TCA) and applying it in practice via NVivo. I also found researching philosophical perspectives quite complicated and challenging.

From the beginning I committed myself to working steadily and consistently and that has been helpful in allowing me to develop the research study and not feel overwhelmed by the work involved. I am extremely grateful to my supervisors who have at all times supported me and provided valuable feedback, comments, and guidance. They have really allowed me to feel supported throughout my journey and have helped my confidence throughout my research study. I am positive in that I have learned a great number of different research concepts, theory, and skills. I am able to understand the whole research process in a great deal more depth. Some of the key learning skills that I believe I have acquired are set out below.

**Table 7: Key Learning Skills**

<b>No</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>KEY LEARNING SKILL</b>
1.	Autobiography	I have learned what an autobiography is in terms of a research method, and what the characteristics of an autobiography are.

No	AREA	KEY LEARNING SKILL
2.	Communication skills	I have improved my communication skills by developing communication skills with my supervisors, with the research participants and by attending conferences and communication to the audience via presentations.
3.	Confidence in abilities	I have increased confidence in my own abilities in terms of carrying out research, carrying out research interviews, writing and communicating my research findings, and presenting my research findings.
4.	English language	I have improved my English language skills and I am better able to present my beliefs, opinions, and thoughts about my research study by speaking with others.
5.	English writing	I have improved my English writing skills and I am better able to present my beliefs, opinions, and thoughts about my research study on paper.
6.	Informed Consent Form	I understand what informed consent is and why it is important in terms of research ethics and I know how to create an informed consent form for a research study.
7.	Interviews	I understand the different types of interviews (structured, unstructured, and semi-structured) and what the disadvantages and advantages of the different types are. I also know how to carry out face-to-face interviews with research participants.
8.	Literature Review	I understand the different types of literature review that can be carried out and I have written an extensive literature review as part of the research study.
9.	Narrative	I understand what a narrative is and I have written a personal narrative as part of the research study.
10.	Networking skills	I have attended and presented at conferences and I have developed my networking skills.
11.	NVivo	I have attended classes on NVivo and what it is and how it works. I have also used NVivo to carry out Thematic Content Analysis on the interviews and used the software programme to help me to identify themes in the interview data.

No	AREA	KEY LEARNING SKILL
12.	Presenting skills	I have attended conferences and I am better at presenting and communicating presentations before large audiences.
13.	Project Information Sheet	I understand what a project information sheet is and why it is important in terms of research ethics, and I am able to create a project information sheet for a research study.
14.	Reflexivity	I understand what reflexivity is and its importance when undertaking a research study.
15.	Research design	I understand what research design is and how the research design is both guided by the research aim and objectives and affects the research aim and objectives. I am able to create a research design that is most suitable for a research study.
16.	Research ethics	I understand research ethics in general and I have read through and understood a number of different research ethics codes and how they will affect the overall approach to a research study.
17.	Thematic Content Analysis	I understand what thematic content analysis is and how to carry out thematic content analysis on research interview transcripts.

I was able to fly to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia), conduct semi-structured interviews with twenty four research participants and then fly back and undertake TCA on the research transcripts. Clearly for some established researchers that would not be too challenging, however for me I am satisfied that I was able to do that as part of my research study. As I noted previously, there are also ways in which I feel different in negative ways. Speaking with the school counsellor research participants I felt very emotional. I really saw the difficulties and challenges they face on a daily basis. It saddened me in many ways especially when I could see that all the school counsellors wanted to do was to help the students. One school counsellor had told me that he had even paid for materials out of his own pocket because he had no budget. That was a gesture that touched me. That he was so committed to his work that he would rather pay for something himself rather than go without the materials necessary for the school counselling programme.

The research study has impacted me negatively because I have identified real problems in school counselling practices in nearly all schools in City X. However, it seemed as if no

one seemed to care about school counsellors or school counselling programmes in schools in City X. The evidence seemed to show that stakeholders such as parents and teachers did not regard school counselling as important, they did not understand it or its objective, or they viewed school counsellors negatively. This was extremely worrying for me as I could see the difficulties that the school counsellors faced in real life and how they believed they could not do anything about it.

## **CONCLUSION**

The review of the literature has identified a number of key themes which are relevant to any conclusions that are drawn. The literature review was able to identify and define what school counselling is in practice, what it involves, and how it can be used and applied in schools to help children and adolescents in schools. School counselling can help students by providing them with emotional and psychological support (Bor *et al.*, 2002). School counselling can be used as an effective intervention strategy to help young people with family relationships, it can help them manage their anger, it can help them cope with bereavement, and it can help with other issues such as bullying and eating disorders (BACP 2013c). Counselling of children and adolescents in schools has been proven to work in practice and it is well established around the world (Baginsky, 2004; Harris, 2013).

In some countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) school counselling has become a formal profession and is practiced professionally throughout schools and higher education institutions (Cooper, 2013). The literature identified that school counselling in the Middle East is somewhat different. Abi-Hashem (2014) identified that most Middle Eastern societies are characterised by: (1) a strong family bond; (2) a strong sense of community and social identity; (3) a strong rootedness in the land and a long generational heritage; and (4) a strong sense of hospitality. These characteristics influenced school counselling practices in the Middle East. It was found that few schools had school counselling services in Kuwait (Al-Sarraf, 1983; Saleh, 1987). Alternatively it was Kuwaiti culture that made Kuwaiti people prefer to seek traditional healers rather than rely on professional counselling services (Khansa, 2015).

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) it was found that there was a lack of professional counsellors leading to a lack of counselling in schools (Shahbandari, 2012). In Lebanon it was found that school counselling was still a relatively new profession and had not been formally included in the education process (Khansa, 2015). Moracco (1978) argued that before school counselling can make an impact in the Middle East it had to develop an indigenous philosophy of counselling. Moracco (1978) noted that the Middle Easterner was a product of an authoritarian society and so approaches to counselling which depend on counselling initiative such as a strict non-directive approach, may not be appropriate. If



we put this argument together with the characteristics of Middle Eastern societies identified by Abi-Hashem (2014), we can see that culture and context potentially plays a very significant role in school counselling practices in the Middle East.

Previous research on school counselling in Saudi schools has highlighted a number of difficulties or problems that may exist in practice for school counsellors. These include negative cultural and mixed social attitudes towards school counselling and school counsellors; a general lack of administrative, social, and financial support for school counsellors from other teachers, parents, head teachers, and the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). In addition to this, it was found that some Saudi school counsellors may feel they have insufficient qualifications, experience, and training to be able to counsel students effectively (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c). In practice this lack of trust and social acceptance within the school may sometimes lead to school counsellors feeling misunderstood, excluded from the school setting, and becoming de-motivated in their counselling work (Alotaibi, 2014a; Alotaibi, 2014b; Alotaibi, 2014c).

School counselling in the UK has become widely established and practiced, and can offer a range of different approaches and significant benefits for students (e.g. reducing psychological distress in children and adolescents in schools (Cooper 2013)). The objectives of school counselling may be adapted to suit different schools in different countries, and for different types of students. A practical example is that in the US many states practice the 'practical' model of school counselling, meaning that school counselling had broader aims such as academic and personal factors (Harris, 2013, p.1).

Cooper (2013, p.5) has noted that the work of US school counsellors "Is more orientated towards educational and vocational guidance; with one-to-one, on-going therapy often only a small part of a counsellor's workload". School counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia may in principal be adapted to suit the specific needs of Saudi children and adolescents. It may include helping them with behavioural and psychological problems, or with academic support and career guidance. However, there are barriers and challenges to the effective development of school counselling in Saudi schools that exist that have been identified by the research findings. There are social and cultural issues such as lack of trust and lack of support by other school staff that may be preventing the development of more effective school counselling practices.

Drawing together the literature, the research findings, and the interpretation of the findings, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, it is clear that the school counsellors face problems in their work. They are viewed negatively by teachers, parents, and sometimes school principals. There are different explanations that have been given for this

behaviour. Some school counsellors believed it was because others did not understand the role of the school counsellor in the school. Other school counsellors noted that it was because others believed school counsellors to be lazy because they carried out no work all day long. It can also be concluded that the research findings also identified Saudi Shari'ah religious, cultural, and Bedouin perspectives that may be influencing school counselling practices in schools in City X. These influences affect the way school counsellors are viewed and affect the understanding of school counselling practices by parents.

Essentially, it would seem to be the case that many parents and families of students do not understand the role of the school counsellor in the school or what the school counsellor does. They also often may not even be aware of the existence of the school counsellor in the school. In addition to this, cultural and Bedouin influences may affect students. Parents and family may often just want children to finish school so they can work at home or obtain a job elsewhere. They may often place little importance on school counselling and see no connection between school counselling and job prospects for students in schools in City X. Because some parents may be illiterate it is problematic when sending written materials to parents updating them on the role of the school counsellor or school counselling programmes.

In terms of stakeholder understandings of school counselling, it can be concluded that stakeholders in schools in City X are confused about the role of the school counsellor or do not understand the role of the school counsellor. It can also be concluded that school counsellors in schools in City X face a great deal of lack of support. They are not financially supported, they face a lack of support from other teachers and sometimes principals, they lack qualifications and good quality training, and they have to deal with a lack of cooperation on a regular basis. It can be concluded that the majority of the school counsellors felt that in general they had a lack of knowledge of school counselling practices. This was attributable in part because of their lack of relevant qualifications, part because of a lack of regular good quality training, and part because of a lack of access to school counselling materials, e.g. school counselling magazines or update briefing materials, training videos, etc.

It can be concluded that overall, school counsellors face negative attitudes towards them by school stakeholders and also negative perceptions of them by school stakeholders. School counsellors find themselves in an extremely difficult position. The findings showed that all the school counsellors supported and believed in the benefits of school counselling and they were highly motivated to carry out school counselling services. However, in practice they faced negative attitudes by teachers, parents, and often school principals. In practice, they faced a lack of support, lack of cooperation, and lack of communication.

Even if they wanted to run a number of beneficial school counselling programmes, in practice this was difficult for them to achieve since they were not allocated a separate financial budget and the money that they did receive was very little. It was certainly not enough to run effective counselling programmes.

Essentially, the attitudes shown by others seemed to be that the school counsellor was lazy so he did not need any money as he did not work anyway. What has become clear from the findings is that there is a clear need for something to be done. Currently the situation is that school counsellors are not able to provide effective school counselling services in schools in City X. If they are not able to provide these services then it is the students in schools in City X that suffer. The literature has demonstrated that there are a number of health problems that children and adolescents suffer from across Saudi Arabia. These include issues such as a high prevalence of diabetes, a high prevalence of overweight and obesity, and a high prevalence of anxiety and depression in Saudi school students. These are not the only issues and problems that many children and adolescents in Saudi schools may be suffering from. It would seem to be the case that the lack of effective school counselling services may in practice mean schools in City X are letting their students down.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE SCHOOL COUNSELLING PRACTICES IN CITY X**

The literature has shown that school counselling is an effective way to positively help and encourage students (McArthur *et al.*, 2012; BACP 2013c). It has also shown that school counselling is not only widespread around the world, but it is taken seriously by governments and professionals in many countries such as the UK and the US (Harris, 2013). In developed countries such as the UK and the US, the literature showed that school counselling has developed as a profession and that students are benefitting from school counselling services more because of more widespread social, behavioural, and psychological problems, e.g. bullying, depression, self-harm, suicidal tendencies, problems with overweight and obesity.

I believe there is an increasing need to make sure that students in schools around the world have access to high quality school counselling services. These types of services should be able to provide students with school counsellors that are sufficiently qualified, trained, and experienced enough, to be able to effectively handle the wide range of problems that many students face in their daily lives at schools. School counselling services allow students to talk over these types of emotional and behavioural issues and problems with non-judgmental individuals in confidence.

The findings were based on interviews with 24 school counsellors from 24 different schools in City X. Overall, it was seen that significant problems exist for school counsellors across City X. These problems are not isolated as they seem to affect all secondary boys' schools in City X. This means that in reality there is a clear need to develop school counselling practices in City X. The themes that have been identified demonstrate that school counsellors currently face a wide range of problems that significantly limit their school counselling services. Yet, the review of the literature has demonstrated that school counselling practices present many opportunities, as they can be an effective way to help students in schools to better cope emotionally, academically, and personally. In light of these problems there are a number of recommendations that will be made for schools to potentially implement in City X.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS IN CITY X**

There are a number of recommendations for schools in City X that can be made for schools in City X and these are listed below.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Systemic Change**

The first and most important recommendation is that there needs to be systemic change applied in City X in order for any improvements in school-based counselling practices to occur. In light of the strong cultural, religious, and social influences identified in the research study, without systemic change there will be no improvements in school-based counselling practices in City X. From a high level perspective this means that there needs to be systemic change implemented from the very top, that is the Ministry of Education must implement changes to be rolled out at a local government level. This will require not only policy changes in local government educational policies, but also policy changes at the school level.

This means that schools should implement clear policies and guidelines which set out the role of the school counsellor within schools so that all stakeholders understand the role of the school counsellor and the importance of school counselling programmes. Without such types of policies and guidelines the confusion about the role of the school counsellor identified in the study will continue. Each school must work with the school counsellor to review existing counselling programmes in order to identify and rectify deficiencies. This must be done on the basis that all stakeholders recognise the importance of school counselling programmes within schools, and how effective school counselling programmes can help students and can help to fulfil the Saudi Vision 2030.

The management of counselling services should be undertaken at both a local level and a school level. That is, in order to implement effective systemic change all schools in City X

need to work together to devise effective school counselling programmes and to put in place best practices. In this way school counsellors can work together to improve school counselling practices and to learn from each other. The management of school counselling services should therefore be undertaken by head teachers with the support of the school counsellors and any other administrative and school staff that are necessary to implement change.

It must also be recognised that the management of counselling services must be undertaken in a professional way. For example, if school counsellors continue to be allocated a financial budget with which they cannot undertake effective school counselling programmes, then this is not managing counselling services in a professional way. By way of further example, if school counsellors are not provided with materials to carry out counselling services, and regular counselling training, then again, this is not managing counselling services in a professional way. The Saudi government has committed itself to providing high quality educational services for children and young people in Saudi schools. The Saudi government has also committed itself to providing school counsellors in schools across Saudi Arabia.

In light of such commitments, this research study has found that schools in City X are not honouring those commitments made by the Saudi government. The counselling services that the Saudi government has committed itself to are not being implemented effectively in schools in City X. As a result, it is the children and young people in schools in City X that cannot currently benefit from effective counselling services to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing. It is the responsibility of the schools in City X to implement systemic changes required in order to provide those effective school-based counselling services.

This requires, at a minimum, more training and support for school counsellors, which includes administrative support, stakeholder support, and financial support. School counsellors need to be trained to be more assertive, effective and respected within the school community. Otherwise, there will be no changes in school counselling services provided and it will be the children and young people in schools in City X that are the ones that lose out. This also requires schools to recognise such existing problems and challenges, and to work with school counsellors to bring about change, for example, changes in the understandings of parents in order for them to recognise the benefits of school-based counselling for their children.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: Increasing Funding for School counselling Programmes in City X**

It is recommended that schools in City X allocate a fixed monthly or annual budget for school counsellors. The research findings clearly show that school counsellors face a lack of financial assistance for school counselling materials and programmes. There is no point in having a school counsellor in schools in City X if the school counsellor cannot carry out his work effectively or cannot plan out school counselling programmes that are relevant for students but which have no funding. School in City X must acknowledge that a lack of effective school counselling programmes is detrimental to students in schools in City X. They must recognise that it is vital to fund school counselling programmes that can be highly beneficial to students in schools in City X.

School counsellors must sit down with head teachers and argue a case before them as to why they need a certain financial budget. They must write detailed plans that show the school counselling programmes that they wish to carry out that year, what they require, and how they will benefit students in the school. It is important that school counsellors view the school counselling department as a business unit within the school. In that way they must make a business case to the head teacher as to why the department should be allocated a financial budget and what that financial budget is. If school counsellors are not provided with school counselling materials such as magazines and books then they should make a business case to the head teacher as to why they require such school counselling materials.

School counsellors should research and identify the materials that other teachers are provided with and put these together in a table to show head teachers that other departments are allocated materials and that it is necessary and fair for the school counselling department to have access to relevant school counselling materials. By making a real business case school counsellors can prove the necessity and benefits that school counselling programmes can bring to schools in City X. If school counsellors encounter resistance or have fixed financial budgets declined then it is necessary for school counsellors to seek direct help from local education council or the education ministry. This is one of the most important areas that needs to be addressed and it should be the duty of each school counsellor to ensure they do all they can to try to remedy a situation that is not fair to the school counsellors, to school counselling programmes, or to the students in schools in City X.

Without a fixed set budget to fund school counselling programmes in schools in City X, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to provide good quality school counselling programmes in schools in City X. In theory school counselling has much to offer students

in schools throughout Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Over the past decade the government of Saudi Arabia has invested a large amount of time and money in developing education and training programs for Saudi citizens in order to develop their employment potential. Schools and other educational institutions have been granted increased funding and young Saudi citizens are encouraged to study abroad to increase their educational qualifications and improve their knowledge.

The Saudi government has sought to improve education enrolment rates and to increase teacher recruitment programmes. The Saudi government has committed 80 billion Saudi riyals (\$21.33 billion) in order to develop the education sector through the establishment of educational centres and similar projects (Reuters, 2014). It was also recently reported that the Saudi government approved a five-year plan worth more than 80 billion Saudi riyals (\$21.33 billion) to develop the Saudi education sector, by for example, providing training for about 25,000 teachers and establishing educational centres and related projects (Reuters, 2014).

However, if schools in City X are not willing or able to invest in providing high quality school counselling services, then this may be potentially harming millions of students across Saudi Arabia. Simply having a school counsellor in the school is not enough. The school counsellor must ideally be qualified with a relevant counselling qualification, or at least have the professional skills and experience needed to provide effective school counselling. Yet in practice the findings demonstrated that school counsellors had to work with extremely limited budgets that were based on revenues from school canteens. There was no separate budget allocated for school counselling services. Sometimes school counsellors had to pay for school counselling materials out of their own pocket.

The Saudi government prohibits schools from asking for financial assistance from the public. This makes it extremely difficult for schools and school counsellors to raise funds externally in other ways. For example, by soliciting donations from individuals who might wish to help school counselling programmes by providing them with funds directly. So the Saudi government is not willing to provide school counselling programmes with financial budgets and at the same time it prohibits schools from soliciting financial donations from the public. Schools are also prohibited from running events (e.g. dances, parties, fairs, etc.) to directly fund school counselling programmes.

This situation makes it extremely difficult for school counsellors to establish sufficient funds in order to run school counselling programmes in schools. They essentially are left with a number of limited options. The first option is that they ask the school principal to increase their allocation of funds, or are provided with a fixed monthly budget to cover the running of school counselling programmes (i.e. materials, documents, equipment, training

materials, etc.). Given the range of negative perceptions and attitudes of school principals to school counsellors, the likelihood of this option being successful is low.

School counsellors could still try to make their case by showing school principals what they could achieve and provide to students with increased funds, but in reality this would be unlikely to persuade school principals. A second option is that school counsellors could write to local councils to try to persuade them to provide them with a fixed set budget that is to be included within the financial budget that is allocated to each school. This option might require school counsellors spend quite a lot of time writing a strong and persuasive letter that is supported by real evidence to justify the need for a fixed separate budget for school counselling programmes. In addition, school counsellors might also be able to use a printed copy of this thesis to show local councils why a fixed separate budget is necessary for school counselling programmes.

Given the bureaucratic nature of the Saudi government education system, it is highly likely that this option would take quite a long time. In addition without the backing of parents, teachers, and school principals it is likely that this option would not be successful. Another option might be for school counsellors to reach out to local companies in order to try to solicit non-financial donations to school counselling programmes. For example, school counselling materials, school counselling magazines, or print companies that might print school counselling materials, booklets, pamphlets for free. Other companies might be willing to donate other items or to donate other services that might be helpful in running school counselling programmes.

For example, school counsellors might reach out to local food and beverage companies, or fast food restaurants, to sponsor a 'healthy eating' at school day. Or school counsellors might reach out to local health clinics, doctors, or counselling and psychological companies in order to run different types of 'awareness' days. For example, these could include talks to discuss the dangers of cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, or overeating and obesity. Although this option would not provide school counsellors with the financial funding they need, it would allow school counsellors to provide substitute counselling services for students in schools in City X. Over time, it is likely that the schools and the students would be able to understand the benefits of school counselling services in practice, and they might come to accept the role of the school counsellor more.

The final solution might be for school counsellors to approach individuals or companies in Saudi Arabia who might be willing to establish an annual charitable 'award', or 'grant', in the name of the individual or company. A practical example is the 'Walaa Insurance Counselling Award'. The benefactor would set out the terms of the award to be awarded annually in a contract that would set out the obligations of the school counselling



programme for that year. In practice, if the school is willing and able to enter into a legally binding agreement that governs the award then this would ensure complete transparency of finances and would allow the school counselling programmes to benefit from external financial aid. In practice, the extent to which this would be able to be undertaken is not known.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Stakeholder Buy-In**

A stakeholder is defined as "any individual or group who has a vested interest in the outcome of an organization's actions" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d., p.1). Internal stakeholders are defined as "people who are already committed to serving an organization as staff, volunteers, executive leadership, and board members" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d., p.1). A key stakeholder is defined as "any stakeholder who is significantly affected by an organization's actions and/or has considerable influence on those actions. For example, specific individuals, groups and organizations may play a pivotal role in helping your planning effort succeed or fail because they have access to needed information and other important resources" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d., p.2.).

External stakeholders are defined as "people who are impacted by an organization's work as service recipients, community members, partners from the public and private sectors, funders, advocacy/interest groups, and others" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d., p.2). Within the context of schools in City X, stakeholders include the students, teachers, other school workers, parents, and the families of students. Key stakeholders are school principals and assistant school principals within the schools, as well as any other individuals that have decision-making power over financial resources in the schools.

Wong (2011) notes that obtaining buy-in involves identifying all of the different stakeholders whose support is required for a project to be successful. It also requires making sure that the stakeholders understand the project's goals and also that they are committed to achieving them (Wong, 2011). The reason stakeholder buy-in is so important is that if stakeholders are left out and identified at a later stage, it is more likely that they will not have time to participate in a project, or may consider it to not be a priority (Wong, 2011). In addition, stakeholders most often operate in a siloed way, So they operate in different departments in different ways, and using different tools and techniques.

If there is no collaboration between stakeholders, or the collaboration is not strong, then any project between the stakeholders will have a higher likelihood of failure (Wong, 2011). A practice example is provided by The National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care (NTAECSC). The NTAECSC notes that the success of child welfare

systems change and reform initiatives hinge on acceptance and application at the practice level (NTAECSC, n.d.). It notes that this means that gaining buy-in from and providing support to frontline workers is a critical aspect of systems change leadership. Gaining buy-in is obtained by a six-step process:

- (1) build shared understanding;
- (2) making staff part of the solution;
- (3) conducting training;
- (4) introducing tangible aids;
- (5) engaging supervisors and middle managers; and
- (6) recognising success (NTAECSC, n.d.).

Obtaining buy-in is crucial to running any type of project or programme, otherwise there is a much higher risk of the project or programme failing. Within the context of the schools in City X, it is clear from the research findings that internal and external stakeholders, as well as key stakeholders, have not bought-in to the school counselling programmes. They do not understand them, or they do not support them, or they do not support the school counsellors who are running the programmes. Obtaining buy-in for the school counselling programmes is therefore the next crucial step that school counsellors in schools in City X must take.

Stakeholder engagement is critical to obtaining buy-in for school counselling programmes in schools in City X. At the moment it is clear from the research findings that the parents of students do not understand what a school counsellor is or what school counselling programmes are. They do not see the benefit, either real benefit or potential benefit. They have not bought-in to school counselling programmes. The teachers at the schools do not understand school counsellors, or they think that they are lazy and do not do anything at the schools. The school principals at the schools do not understand the role of the school counsellor, or they do not see the benefit of school counselling programmes, or they use the school counsellors for other work within the schools.

It would seem to be clear that if school counselling programmes are to have any chance of providing good quality services to students then the school counsellors have to obtain buy-in from the stakeholders in the schools. Without this buy-in, the school counselling programmes will continue to fail to provide good quality services to students. This will not be easy. In fact it will be very difficult, as there may be organisational resistance and also cultural resistance to overcome. Because of this it is useful to use a stakeholder

engagement process model that has been designed to help to facilitate stakeholder engagement, resulting in stakeholder buy-in (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.). The model is listed in summary below (**Figure 16**), and will then be explained in more detail.

**Figure 16: Stakeholder Engagement Process Model (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 1: PLAN AND DESIGN</b>
<b>PHASE 2: INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING</b>
<b>PHASE 3: LISTEN AND ENGAGE</b>
<b>PHASE 4: SYNTHESISE AND STRATEGIZE</b>
<b>PHASE 5: REFLECT AND AFFIRM</b>
<b>PHASE 6: FINALISE STRATEGY</b>
<b>PHASE 7: ADOPT AND LAUNCH</b>
<b>PHASE 8: EVALUATE AND IMPROVE</b>

**Figure 17: PHASE 1 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 1: PLAN AND DESIGN</b>
<i>Align Your Purpose and Process</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define results.</li> <li>• Create work plan and conditions for success.</li> <li>• Identify and analyse relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>• Document process.</li> </ul>

This phase will require the school counsellors to set out in detail what needs to be done and achieved. This should include obtaining increased financial assistance, informing stakeholders about school counselling and school counselling programmes, and obtaining buy-in from the stakeholders. The school counsellors must create a work plan and identify what things are required in order to be successful.

How can relevant stakeholders be convinced? For example, school counsellors may need to create school counselling materials that explain using words and pictures the benefits of school counselling. Alternatively, school counsellors may organise a school counselling day where parents are invited into the school to view a talk and discussion prepared and delivered by the school counsellor.

In order to convince other teachers and school principals (i.e. internal stakeholders), the school counsellor should create an employee job description. This should list in detail the

role of the school counsellor and what skills and responsibilities the school counsellor has. The school counsellor should email this or print and send this to stakeholders so that they are better informed about the role of the school counsellor.

The school counsellor has to be as proactive as possible in promoting himself and the school counselling programme. The school counsellor could also write a short article explaining why undertaking additional tasks undermines the role of the school counsellor. By accepting the current situation, the school counsellors are failing to bring about a change in the way that they are perceived by stakeholders.

**Figure 18: PHASE 2 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 2: INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING</b>
<i>Develop an Effective Guiding Body</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and engage members.</li><li>• Assess training and resource needs.</li><li>• Create a group charter.</li><li>• Develop communications materials.</li><li>• Document process.</li></ul>

School counsellors must put in place a plan to secure internal engagement and to build capacity to support the school counselling programme. School counsellors must engage members one at a time. They must build a guiding body by engaging with individuals they know and which they feel can support them in the school setting. By securing the collaboration of individuals within the school one at a time, they can develop a guiding body that can then jointly approach key stakeholders and other stakeholders.

Convincing other members of the importance of school counselling programmes is an essential first step in the process. School counsellors must create a group charter that identifies the needs of the school with regards to school counselling. The charter must also contain the role of the school counsellor and what the objectives of the school counselling programme are. This must be made available to the entire school so that members understand what school counselling is all about and why it is important.

The development of communications materials is an essential part of this phase. Communications materials may include things like short articles explain how school counsellors can help students with problems and this should list a wide range of common problems seen by school counsellors. These communications materials should aim to communicate how the school counsellor can help members and why students can benefit from school counselling.

**Figure 19: PHASE 3 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 3: LISTEN AND ENGAGE</b>
<i>Encourage Open Exchange and Mutual Learning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and execute an outreach plan.</li> <li>• Conduct engagement with identified constituents.</li> <li>• State clear next steps.</li> <li>• Debrief with Guiding Body.</li> <li>• Document process.</li> </ul>

School counsellors must create an outreach plan. This may include details about how school counsellors can reach out to other teachers, school staff, students, parents, and families of students. The findings showed that school counsellors found it hard to contact the parents of students. In order to overcome this obstacle school counsellors should brainstorm with members of the Guiding Body about how to contact parents.

If mailing communications materials is not working they should think about potential holding briefing events for parents. This might not just focus on school counselling, but for example could incorporate talks about future careers and jobs which will be of interest to parents.

School counselling talks at these types of events might focus on how school counselling can support students academically so that are more likely to obtain a good job when they leave school. The open exchange of ideas is essential at this stage. School counsellors must directly address issues that have been identified in the findings. If school counsellors see negative perceptions of them they must raise this issue directly with other teachers.

If school counsellors are shy or afraid to do this then they will not be able to change those negative perceptions of them. They must be able to explain to other teachers and the school principal of the work that they do in detail. If they continue to allow other stakeholders to view them negatively without challenging those views they will not be able to change those negative perceptions of them. School counsellors must be bold.

**Figure 20: PHASE 4 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 4: SYNTHESISE AND STRATEGISE</b>
<i>Analyse Input and Create Strategies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesise data.</li> <li>• Share findings, identify priorities and develop strategies through co-design process.</li> <li>• Engage Guiding Body.</li> </ul>

This phase requires school counsellors to put together information from different sources in order to propose recommended actions. This will include the views of other stakeholders to show they were heard and their views are being taken seriously. The synthesis will include things such as:

- (1) did parents respond to outreach strategies?
- (2) teacher feedback on school counselling;
- (3) questionnaires on school counselling practices answered by teachers;
- (4) questionnaires on school counselling practices answered by students;
- (5) questionnaires on school counselling practices answered by parents;
- (6) questionnaires on school counselling practices answered by principals;
- (7) information gaps;
- (8) accounts of the amount of money provide to school counsellors each month;
- (9) accounts listing the materials that school counsellors need;
- (10) lists of ideas for school counselling programmes and how they can benefit the school;
- (11) budgets for proposed school counselling programmes.

School counsellors must put together relevant information that can be shared between stakeholders and commented on by stakeholders. This process will allow school counsellors to engage stakeholders and to demonstrate to them the relevance of school counselling programmes.

**Figure 21: PHASE 5 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 5: REFLECT AND AFFIRM</b>
<i>Communicate and Review Proposed Strategies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate proposed strategy to stakeholders.</li> <li>• Engage Guiding Body and conduct reflective review.</li> <li>• Document process.</li> </ul>

This phase requires school counsellors to communicate the strategy to stakeholders so that they are aware of the process. Because all stakeholders are involved this can help

school counsellors to implement the strategy. The stakeholders are then also able to provide feedback to see if the strategy will work, or to improve the strategy. The Guiding Body can then perform a reflective review of all stakeholders communications to make sure the proposed strategy is the best strategy available.

**Figure 22: PHASE 6 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 6: FINALISE STRATEGY</b>
<i>Formalise Strategy and Plan of Action</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate final strategy.</li> <li>• Engage Guiding Body and others in action planning sessions.</li> <li>• Document process.</li> </ul>

Once the reflective review has been carried out, the school counsellor can put in place the final strategy. The Guiding Body can then work with the school counsellor and others in various action planning sessions that will aim to implement the final strategy. For example, if the school counsellor is going to implement a series of workshops the action planning sessions can discuss each workshop and what is required and plan out the creation and implementation of each workshop.

**Figure 23: PHASE 7 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 7: ADOPT AND LAUNCH</b>
<i>Implement and Document Strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate final strategy to stakeholders.</li> <li>• Implement strategy.</li> <li>• Engage Guiding Body.</li> <li>• Document process.</li> </ul>

This phase will require school counsellors to actively work on communicating the final strategy and making sure that they have received it. It is not enough for school counsellors to send materials to stakeholders and hoping that they will read it. School counsellors must check with stakeholders that they have received the final strategy. School counsellors must then actively implement the strategy. They must work on gaining buy-in from stakeholders and increasing the engagement of stakeholders. This phase will require the most effort from the school counsellors.

**Figure 24: PHASE 8 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.)**

<b>PHASE 8: EVALUATE AND IMPROVE</b>
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*Review Lessons Learned and Refine Strategy*

- Engage Guiding Body and stakeholders in evaluation design.
- Evaluate results, process, and customer satisfaction.
- Document process.

In this final phase the school counsellors must work with the Guiding Body to evaluate the strategy to see what part of the strategy is working and what part is not. They must be able to evaluate the process, the results of the strategy, and whether there has been an improvement in school counselling programmes, practices, and knowledge and awareness of school counselling in schools and in the homes of students.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Developing Effective School Counselling Programmes and Supporting Materials**

Developing effective school counselling programmes and support materials is an essential part of the role of the school counsellor within each school. This must be done by the school counsellor as he is in the best position to understand the school environment. The research findings show that current school counselling practices and programmes in schools in City X are ineffective. In general there is insufficient allocated financial budget for school counselling programmes and school counsellors face a lack of cooperation and communication from other teachers and parents.

In such a situation one of the best ways to try to remediate such a situation is for schools in City X to put in place a Construct-Based Approach (CBA) to school counselling as proposed by John C. Carey and colleagues in the book 'Achieving Excellence in School Counselling' (Squier, Nailor, and Carey, 2014). Squier *et al.* (2014) have proposed a CBA approach to counselling in schools which focuses on four primary areas: (1) motivation; (2) self-direction; (3) self-knowledge; (4) relationships. They note that: "...as a result of participating in school counselling program, students are expected to be highly motivated, self-directed learners who are knowledgeable about themselves, engaged in meaningful relationships and developing contributing members of society" (Squier *et al.*, 2014, p.38).

They note that as part of this CBA process, the school counsellor must focus on a number of different areas. These include: (1) academic support; (2) student planning (individual learning plans); (3) college and career readiness; (4) personal growth; and (5) social interaction (Squier *et al.*, 2014). It is also observed that counselling programmes in schools can be designed to provide students with opportunities to learn how to learn (Squier *et al.*, 2014). By being proactive instead of reactionary, CBA school counselling programmes have a better chance of achieving success in the school environment. School



counsellors play a more active role in the lives of students in schools. Squier *et al.*, (2014, p.60) note:

School counsellors help students learn through the acquisition of critical knowledge about themselves, others and the world. Counsellors help students develop skills that can help them achieve at higher levels and successfully pursue college and/or career pathways of their choice. School counsellors help students understand that their attitudes, behaviours, values and habits of mind are critical to their future success. The key to helping students succeed begins with clearly defined and measurable competency statements, and communicating the importance of these results to future success and fulfilment.

The current school counselling practices are responsive services which are on-demand. However, because stakeholders do not understand the role of the school counsellor and hold negative views about school counselling practices, the demand for on-demand school counselling services is extremely limited. Now, if the situation is changed and instead a CBA school counselling programme is put in place, the CBA framework will be embedded into the school curriculum. This will allow school counsellors to actively work with and develop students every day.

Squier *et al.*, (2014) note that the primary vehicle in a CBA for using the student standards is the counselling curriculum. This is the place in the counselling programme where all students can receive equal opportunities for learning and where their progress can be uniformly assessed (Squier *et al.*, 2014). Squier *et al.*, (2014, p.15) note that:

Core curriculum activities that focus on motivation, self-direction, self-knowledge and relationships can be delivered that target those areas that research shows can potentially have a substantive impact on student achievement and success.

Curriculum activities contain clearly defined results that students are expected to achieve, and the core curriculum is an integrated set of activities that can both engage students and personalise their learning experiences (Squier *et al.*, 2014). Counselling curriculum activities contain a number of key features which can deliver tangible goals for students. These include:

- (1) planned learning experiences in which students and counsellors interact to achieve specific results (learning outcomes);
- (2) they are organised in a scope and sequence (delivery schedule);

- (3) they are aligned with CBA counselling student standards and competencies;
- (4) they contain opportunities for students to learn what they are being taught;
- (5) they contain opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in authentic situations;
- (6) they contain opportunities for students to demonstrate their proficiency in applying what they have learned (Squier *et al.*, 2014).

Squier *et al.* (2014) state there are two types of student results that are contained in a learning curriculum. These are:

- (1) proficiency building results which contain context-sensitive competencies (contexts include academic support, student planning, college and career readiness, personal growth, social interaction); and
- (2) end results which contain construct-based standards (constructs include motivation, self-direction, self-knowledge, relationships).

By developing competency statements and adopting a CBA approach to school counselling, school counsellors in Saudi Arabia have the potential to adopt a more proactive role in schools in City X. By incorporating CBA school counselling into the curriculum, school counsellors in City X could over time bring about the change in negative perceptions of school counselling programmes and school counsellors. Incorporating CBA school counselling into the curriculum would also allow school counsellors to play a more active role in the lives of students in schools in City X. A sample competency statement that is aligned with constructs is listed below (**Figure 25**).

**Figure 25: Sample Competency Statements Aligned with Constructs**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Standard</b> Students will:	<b>Level</b>	<b>Competency</b> Students will:
Relationships	Demonstrate fairness, respect and equity in relationships with others.	Elementary	Describe a situation in which taking turns helped them.
Self-Knowledge	Demonstrate how their skills and talents contribute to their success.	Middle	Describe how knowing about themselves helped them reach their goals.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Standard</b> Students will:	<b>Level</b>	<b>Competency</b> Students will:
Motivation	Describe how their own motivation structure and patterns affect their current and future lives.	High	Identify their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and how they impact their learning.

An example of CBA school counselling standards is set out below (**Figure 26**).

**Figure 26: Example CBA School counselling Standards (Squier et al., 2014)**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Standards</b> <i>(As a result of the school counselling programme, students are expected to know and do the following by the time they graduate from high school.)</i>
Motivation	Describe how their own motivation structure and patterns affect their current and future lives.
	Articulate a positive vision of their future that motivates present behaviour.
	Consistently apply effective self-motivational techniques.
Self-Direction	Assess the factors responsible for their academic success and challenges and adjust their behaviour accordingly.
	Demonstrate the self-direction, initiative and skills necessary for achievement and success.
	Maintain focus despite stress, anxiety and setbacks.
Self-Knowledge	Describe how their unique characteristics impact their current and future lives.
	Demonstrate how their skills and talents contribute to their success.
	Discuss how their values and interests inform their decisions and actions.
Relationships	Engage in collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships to promote individual and group success.
	Assess when they need help from others and seek assistance.
	Demonstrate fairness, respect and equity in relationships with others.

The CBA School counselling Standards seek to put in place a programme that seeks to regularly and proactively develop students across a number of different real life constructs. By promoting an instructive rather than reactive school counselling programme, students obtain real tangible benefits in terms of their own social and behavioural development. This type of personal development is not left to the students to develop by themselves, if at all, but is actively pursued within the school curriculum. The objective is to develop students so that they are "Highly motivated, self-directed learners who are knowledgeable about themselves, engaged in meaningful relationships, and developing as contributing members to society and the well-being of our world" (Squier *et al.*, 2014, p.53).

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are a number of limitations of this research study that can be identified. One limitation is that the research study only related to male secondary school counsellors. Because of the Saudi cultural separation of males and females I did not investigate female school counselling practices. Female school counselling practices may be different in practice in City X or in other schools in cities and rural areas across Saudi Arabia. This is a limitation because it would have been very helpful to understand the experiences of female school counsellors in City X in order to see if they encountered similar or different attitudes and perceptions. It would also have been interesting to see what their knowledge and experience of school counselling practices was like.

Another limitation was that I only undertook a qualitative research study into the experiences of school counsellors in schools in City X. It would also have been a more comprehensive study if I had been able to undertake a qualitative research study that included interviewing other stakeholders such as teachers, head teachers, students, and parents at schools in City X. This would have provided more robust data as it would have identified the views of all stakeholders involved in, or affected by, school counselling practices.

Another limitation is that the research study was limited to City X. In practice it would have been very helpful to carry out interviews on other school counsellors in other cities, both large and small, in Saudi Arabia in order to compare the viewpoints of different school counsellors. These might have allowed me to see if there were different views of school counselling practices in smaller provincial cities compared to large major cities in Saudi Arabia.

Another limitation is that I only carried out a study using a qualitative research methodology. In practice it may have been useful to carry out a mixed methods research

study where in addition to qualitative interviews I could also have carried out a quantitative survey of stakeholders. This type of research study may have allowed me to access a diverse range of views and would also have allowed me to triangulate my findings. Another limitation is that the research study only investigated school counselling practices in City X.

In practice, I believe that school counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia is an important area that deserves attention. Therefore a limitation of this research study was that it did not investigate school counselling practices across all schools in Saudi Arabia. It would have been ideal if the target population would have been all schools in Saudi Arabia and then I could have used random sampling to sample different schools across all Saudi Arabia. This would have allowed me to obtain data that was representative of all schools in Saudi Arabia and would have allowed the research findings to be generalizable across all Saudi Arabia.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are a number of areas and research methods that could be used for future research purposes. The research findings have shown that school counsellors in City X encountered significant difficulties in their daily lives related to school counselling practices and school counselling programmes. Therefore future research would be highly beneficial as it might help to identify if these types of problems exist in other cities and towns across Saudi Arabia. Future research might also aim to cover girls schools so that future research might be able to identify whether female school counsellors encounter the same difficulties as male school counsellors.

Ideally, future research might seek to adopt a quantitative longitudinal approach to investigating school counselling practices in Saudi Arabia. For example, future research might use a quantitative research methodology combined with research questionnaires to target school counsellors (male and female), teachers, students, and parents in schools across all of Saudi Arabia. This might be done over a period of time (e.g. one year) to see if school counselling practices change over the course of one year. In addition, future research might seek to undertake a mixed methods approach across secondary schools in both urban areas and rural areas in Saudi Arabia in order to identify if there were any commonalities or differences in school-based counselling practices.

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## **APPENDIXES**



## APPENDIX 1: Saudi Arabian Regions

Region	Capital	Governates
Qassim	Buraidah	11
Riyadh	Riyadh	20
Tabuk	Tabuk	6
Madinah	Medina	7
Makkah	Mecca	12
Northern Borders	Arar	3
Jawf	Sakakah	3
Ha'il	Ha'il	4
Bahah	Al Bahah	7
Jizan	Jizan	14
'Asir	Abha	12
Najran	Najran	8
Eastern Province	Dammam	11

## **APPENDIX 2: Basic Law of Governance**

Royal Order No. (A/91)

27 Sha'ban 1412H – 1 March 1992

Published in Umm al-Qura Gazette No. 3397

2 Ramadan 1412H - 5 March 1992

<b>First Section (General Principles)</b>	<b>Second Section (Law of Governance)</b>	<b>Third Section (Constituents of Saudi Society)</b>	<b>Fourth Section (Economic Principles)</b>	<b>Fifth Section (Rights and Duties)</b>
Articles 1-4	Articles 5-8	Articles 9-13	Articles 14-22	Articles 23-28

## APPENDIX 3: School Counsellor Questionnaire (Al-Ghamdi 2015)

(Questionnaire for Counsellor): Part -I Please rate each statement twice by circling the appropriate number:

1. How often do you perform each function (actual role)?
2. How important is each function to meet the needs of students (ideal role)?

Statements	Actual Role				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1) Address the developmental needs of students					
2) Engage in continuous personal and professional development					
3) Establish and maintain a "Guidance and Counselling Committee" in the school					
4) Assist teachers in recognising individual differences between students					
5) Keep students informed of the guidance and counselling programme in the school					
6) Collate information and provide workshop for students to help them develop academic skills					
7) Help students with problems of academic achievement					
8) Conduct special educational programmes to deal with specific problems (truancy)					
9) Consult with parents about the needs or concerns of students					
10) Monitor the achievement level of students					

Statements	Actual Role				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
11) Work with students in an effort to prevent psychological and behavioural problems					
12) Develop objectives for the guidance and counselling programme					
13) Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with school staff					
14) Conduct research related to students' needs and problems					
15) Use inventories to assess students' developmental needs and characteristics					
16) Refer students with special needs to appropriate agencies					
17) Consult with principal and teachers about the development of guidance and counselling goals and activities					
18) Collate information and provide workshops for students to help them develop social skills					
19) Assist students in making appropriate decisions					
20) Consult with principal about the needs or concerns of students					
21) Meet with students to discuss academic concerns					
22) Provide students with information about educational opportunities after secondary school					
23) Assist students to cope with and resolve their problems					
24) Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students					

Statements	Actual Role				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
25) Identify students with special educational and personal needs					
26) Conduct research related to the guidance and counselling programme					
27) Follow-up referred students to other agencies					
28) Assist students to understand themselves, their abilities, aptitudes and interests					
29) Consult with teachers about the needs or concerns of students					
30) Evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme					
31) Consult with teachers about students' motivation and students' behaviour					
32) Plan activities to achieve the objectives of the guidance and counselling programme					
33) Help students adjust to the school environment					
34) Provide teachers with information about students' needs and concurrent issues					
35) Work to discover gifted and talented students					
36) Perform administrative tasks and clerical duties (paperwork, records, scheduling...)					
37) Keep parents informed of the guidance and counselling programme					
38) Inform principal and teachers about the guidance and counselling programme					

Statements	Actual Role				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
39) Counsel parents on their children's					

Statements	Ideal Role				
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
1) Address the developmental needs of students					
2) Engage in continuous personal and professional development					
3) Establish and maintain a "Guidance and Counselling Committee" in the school					
4) Assist teachers in recognising individual differences between students					
5) Keep students informed of the guidance and counselling programme in the school					
6) Collate information and provide workshop for students to help them develop academic skills					
7) Help students with problems of academic achievement					
8) Conduct special educational programmes to deal with specific problems (truancy)					
9) Consult with parents about the needs or concerns of students					
10) Monitor the achievement level of students					
11) Work with students in an effort to prevent psychological and behavioural problems					
12) Develop objectives for the guidance and counselling programme					
13) Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with school staff					

Statements	Ideal Role				
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
14) Conduct research related to students' needs and problems					
15) Use inventories to assess students' developmental needs and characteristics					
16) Refer students with special needs to appropriate agencies					
17) Consult with principal and teachers about the development of guidance and counselling goals and activities					
18) Collate information and provide workshops for students to help them develop social skills					
19) Assist students in making appropriate decisions					
20) Consult with principal about the needs or concerns of students					
21) Meet with students to discuss academic concerns					
22) Provide students with information about educational opportunities after secondary school					
23) Assist students to cope with and resolve their problems					
24) Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students					
25) Identify students with special educational and personal needs					
26) Conduct research related to the guidance and counselling programme					
27) Follow-up referred students to other agencies					
28) Assist students to understand themselves, their					



Statements	Ideal Role				
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
abilities, aptitudes and interests					
29) Consult with teachers about the needs or concerns of students					
30) Evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme					
31) Consult with teachers about students' motivation and students' behaviour					
32) Plan activities to achieve the objectives of the guidance and counselling programme					
33) Help students adjust to the school environment					
34) Provide teachers with information about students' needs and concurrent issues					
35) Work to discover gifted and talented students					
36) Perform administrative tasks and clerical duties (paperwork, records, scheduling...)					
37) Keep parents informed of the guidance and counselling programme					
38) Inform principal and teachers about the guidance and counselling programme					
39) Counsel parents on their children's					

**APPENDIX 4: Key concepts and terms that have historically defined the (auto)biographical method (Denzin 2014, pp.15-17)**

<b>Term/Method</b>	<b>Key Features</b>	<b>Forms/Variations</b>
Method	A way of knowing	Subjective, objective
Life	Period of existence; lived experiences	Partial, complete, edited, public, private
Self	Ideas, images, and thoughts of self	Self-stories, autobiographies
Experience	Confronting and passing through events; meanings are constructed	Problematic, routine, ritual
Epiphany	Moment of revelation in a life	Major, minor, relived, illuminative
Autobiography	Personal history of one's life	Complete, edited, topical
Ethnography	Written account of a culture of group	Realist, interpretive, descriptive
Autoethnography	Account of one's life as an ethnographer	Complete, edited, partial
Biography	History of a life	Autobiography
Story	A fiction, narrative	First or third person
Fiction	An account, something made up, fashioned	Story (life, self)
History	Account of how something happened	Personal, oral, case
Discourse	Telling a story, talking about a text, a text	First or third person
Narrator	Teller of a story	First or third person
Narrative	A story, having a plot and existence separate from the life of the teller	Fiction, epic, science, folklore, myth
Writing	Inscribing, creating a written text	Logocentric, deconstructive
Difference	Every word carries traces of another word	Writing, speech
Personal history	Reconstruction of life based on interviews and conversations	Life history, life story
Oral history	Personal recollections of events, their causes and effects	Work, ethnic, religious, personal, musical, etc.
Case history	History of an event or social process, not of a person	Single, multiple, medical, legal
Life history	Account of a life based on interviews and conversations	Personal, edited, topical, complete
Life story	A person's story of his or her life, or a part thereof	Edited, complete, topical, fictional
Self story	Story of self in relation to an event	Personal experience, fictional, true
Personal experience story	Story about personal experience	Single, multiple, episode, private, or communal folklore
Case study	Analysis and record of single case	Single, multiple

## APPENDIX 5: Project Information Sheet



THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

PHD RESEARCH STUDY

### PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

(Semi-Structured Interviews)

**Research title:** *Investigating the Attitudes, Perceptions, Knowledge, and Understandings of Student Counsellors in Saudi Arabia*

**Researcher's name:** Mr Turki Alotaibi

**Research Institution:** The School of Education  
The University of Nottingham, UK

**Supervisor's Names:** Dr. Belinda Harris, The University of Nottingham, UK  
Dr. Max Biddulph, The University of Nottingham, UK

#### Who am I?

My name is Turki Alotaibi and I am from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ("**Saudi Arabia**"). I was a director of the school counselling program in City X before I came to study in the United Kingdom ("**UK**"). I am now in the Second year of my Doctoral research programme which I am completing at the School of Education in the University of Nottingham, UK.

#### What is the aim of the research project?

The aim of the research study is to find more information out about student counsellors working in City X, Saudi Arabia. The research aims to investigate what student counsellors do in their work, what kinds of things they do when counselling students, and what difficulties, problems, and obstacles they face when doing their job. The research will investigate the personal views and opinions of student counsellors working in schools in City X. It will aim to investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of student counselling which student counsellors have. It will also aim to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that student counsellors have in their work. The research study aims to find out whether student counselling is effective in schools in City X.

### **Voluntary Consent**

1. This research study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part in the research study if you do not wish to or you do not want to.
2. The research study is not part of your job requirement with the school and you do not have to take part in the research study just because you are a student counsellor at the school.
3. The research study completely relies on your voluntary consent, and so you have the right to withdraw from the research project at any stage of the research without any consequences, and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
4. If you do voluntarily consent to take part in this research study, the researcher will at all times aim to ensure that your wellbeing and privacy are protected throughout the duration of the research study.

### **What you will need to do:**

1. Provide details of your name and employment details. You will then be allocated a research study code which will be used to refer to you throughout the research. Only the researcher Turki Alotaibi will know your actual identity.
2. Be interviewed by the researcher at a time and date to be arranged which is convenient to the Participant.

## **What we will be done in the research project?**

The research study will use semi-structured interviews as a data collection research tool. The semi-structured interview will be conducted with you as a student counsellor to gain an in-depth understanding of your experiences, attitudes and beliefs towards student counselling in City X. The interview will aim to investigate your perceptions and understandings of your role as a student counsellor in City X, and will also investigate what difficulties or obstacles you have found in your role.

The interview will likely take up to 1 hour of your time and will be recorded. The interview recording will then be transcribed into a written record of the interview by me. You may request to have a written copy of the interview if you would like a copy. The researcher will then analyse what you have said in order to learn from your experiences. This entails producing 'data' or 'themes' which will be set alongside other people's interviews with a view to finding out common points or issues that arise in student counselling. The researcher aims to interview between 15 to 25 student counsellors located in schools in City X for the research study.

## **DETAILS OF RESEARCH ETHICS WHICH MAY AFFECT THE RESEARCH**

1. You may withdraw from the research study at any time without any negative consequences or repercussions.
2. Information gained during the research study may eventually be published, but you will not be named or identified in the publication, and your personal details will remain strictly anonymous and confidential.
3. The data will be stored with the researcher in a lockable drawer inside room C06 in the Dearing Building of the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. All electronic data will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer.
4. You may request to see any data relating to you at any time.

5. The researcher will aim to treat your story, your feelings, and all information you provide to the researcher sensitively throughout all stages of the research.
6. If you require support following the interview the researcher will aim to ensure that he is available to "de-brief" after the interview for up to an hour following the interview.
7. Information arising from the interviews will not be shared with any other person or groups of people apart from the researcher's supervisors and examiners at the University of Nottingham.
8. If you need any other questions answered regarding the interview, or about any other stage of the research study, the researcher will be available to answer any questions by email or by mobile. These details are provided.
9. No undue pressure will be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in the research project at any time.
10. You may also contact my supervisors, or the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if you wish to make a complaint relating to any part of your involvement in the research study.

Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

Kind regards,

*Turki Alotaihi*

Date: .....

.....

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## **APPENDIX 6: First Draft of Interview Questions**

### **School Counselling Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

- 1. What do you actually do as a student counsellor – can you talk me through your typical school week?**
- 2. Do you know how the head teacher perceives the student counsellor's role?**
- 3. What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a student counsellor?**
- 4. Do you perform any work that is not related to the student counsellors' role or job?**
- 5. What qualifications do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of student counsellor?**
- 6. What specific training did you have to prepare you for the role of student counsellor?**
- 7. What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of student counsellor?**
- 8. Do you think if student counsellors could attend a specific student counsellor training course it would benefit your role or job?**
- 9. Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?**
- 10. What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the student counsellor's job?**
- 11. Why do you think school counselling is necessary in Saudi schools?**
- 12. What more would you like to be able to do in your role? (What stops you? What gets in the way?)**
- 13. Who supports you in your role in school? (How do you experience their support? Is there enough support? What more support do you need?)**



- 14. If you could change one thing as a school counsellor in this school, what would it be?**
- 15. If you could change one thing for school counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?**
- 16. Do you think that a national student counselling association in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?**

## **APPENDIX 7: Second Draft of the Interview Questions**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

#### **The role of the school counsellor**

1. What do you actually do as a student counsellor?
  - a. Can you talk me through your typical school week?
  - b. What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a student counsellor?
  - c. Do you perform any work that is not related to the student counsellors' role or job?
2. Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?
3. Do you know how the head teacher perceives the student counsellor's role?

#### **Qualifications and training**

4. What *qualifications* do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of student counsellor?
5. What *training* did you have to prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - a. What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - b. Do you think if student counsellors could attend a specific student counsellor training course it would benefit your role or job?

#### **School counselling practices**

6. What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the student counsellor's job?
  - a. Would a national student counselling association in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?
  - b. If you could change one thing as a school counsellor in this school, what would it be?

- c. If you could change one thing for school counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?
- 7.** Why do you think school counselling is necessary in Saudi schools?
- 8.** What more would you like to be able to do in your role?
  - a. What stops you?
  - b. What gets in the way?
- 9.** Who supports you in your role in school?
  - a. How do you experience their support?
  - b. Is there enough support?
  - c. What more support do you need?

**APPENDIX 8: Third Draft of the Research Questions**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**A Research Study into Student  
Counselling Practices in Saudi  
Arabia**

**Investigating the Attitudes,  
Perceptions, Knowledge, and  
Understandings of Student Counsellors  
in City X**

**Turki Alotaibi**

## **PART 1: Introduction**

### **Background about me**

Hello, my name is Turki Alotaibi. You may already know who I am as I was previously the director of student counselling in City X. I am now undertaking a PhD research degree at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. The main research area of my PhD research degree is student counselling in Saudi Arabia. I have a long background in student counselling as I have been a student counsellor in primary and secondary schools in City X, and I have also previously worked a long time in the Education Department in City X. After I finished my position as director of student counselling in City X I moved to the United Kingdom to study for one year. This was a one year Masters degree at the University of Nottingham in sociology. I therefore have a good knowledge of student counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, and I also have both academic and professional experience.

### **Explaining the aim of the PhD research study**

The aim of the research study is to find more information out about student counsellors working in City X, Saudi Arabia. The research aims to investigate what student counsellors do in their work, what kinds of things they do when counselling students, and what difficulties, problems, and obstacles they face when doing their job. The research will investigate the personal views and opinions of student counsellors working in schools in City X. It will aim to investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of student counselling which student counsellors have. It will also aim to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that student counsellors have in their work. For example, do they find counselling students interesting and exciting work, or do they not like their work? If they do not like counselling students, the research will aim to investigate why student counsellors do not like counselling students. The research study aims to find out the good things and the bad things that may exist

for student counselling in schools in City X, and it will also try to see whether student counselling is effective in schools in City X.

### **Explaining the research procedure**

The research procedure that is going to be used for the research study will use [15] semi-structured interviews with student counsellors from schools located in City X. Each interview will likely last about up to 1 hour. Each interview will be divided into three parts.

The first part, which we have just covered, will be about explaining who the researcher is, what the research is about, and what research procedure will be used. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The second part will discuss potential ethical issues which may affect the research. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The third part will cover a range of questions about student counselling practices and issues. These will include questions about the role of the student counsellor, the qualifications and training that student counsellors have, and other questions about student counselling practices. *This part will likely last about 40 minutes.*

## **PART 2: Discussing Research Ethical Procedures**

### **What ethical protections have been put in place?**

1. Written permission has been obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham University in the UK.
2. Written permission has been obtained from the Education Committee in Saudi Arabia.
3. The participant has been provided with a Project Information Sheet with comprehensive information about the research study.
4. The participant has been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding any part of the research study.
5. The participant has been provided with an Informed Consent Form to complete and sign to authorise his participation in the research study.
6. The name of the participant will not be published and all references to the participant will be anonymised.
7. All recordings, written transcripts, and supporting interview documentation will be kept securely locked and only the researcher will have access to the data and information.
8. The participant will be provided with a written transcript of the recorded interview if requested.

### **What potential ethical problems may arise?**

1. The participant may feel that he should only answer questions positively, and should not be negative about the school, the headteacher, the interviewer, or other staff members, in any way.
2. The participant may feel that he should answer the questions in a way that might please the interviewer or the school, as this might help the research study.
3. The participant may be scared of answering honestly because he may say something that could mean that he loses his job or is reprimanded in some way.

4. The participant may be scared or hesitant to give detailed answers or to answer questions honestly because he feels that he does not want to speak badly about other colleagues, the school, or the headteacher.



## **PART 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

### **The role of the school counsellor**

1. Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?
2. What do you actually do as a student counsellor?
  - a. Can you talk me through your typical school week?
  - b. What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a student counsellor?
  - c. Do you perform any work that is not related to the student counsellors' role or job?
3. Do you know how the head teacher perceives the student counsellor's role?
4. Do you think student counsellors are treated fairly or well by:
  - a. The students?
  - b. Other teachers?
  - c. The parents?
5. Do you think student counsellors have enough administrative support at the school?
6. Do you think student counsellors have enough financial support at the school?

### **Qualifications and training**

7. What *qualifications* do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of student counsellor?
8. What *training* did you have to prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - a. What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - b. Do you think if student counsellors could attend a specific student counsellor training course it would benefit your role or job?

## **School counselling practices**

- 9.** What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the student counsellor's job?
  - a. Do you think a national student counselling association in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?
  - b. Do you think a national student counselling qualification, or set of qualifications, in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?
  - c. Do you think online e-training for student counselling on the internet in Saudi Arabia would be a good idea?
  - d. Do you think if student counsellors could talk to other student counsellors in an online group that would be a good idea?
  - e. If you could change one thing as a student counsellor in this school, what would it be?
  - f. If you could change one thing for student counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?
- 10.** Why do you think school counselling is necessary in Saudi schools?
- 11.** What more would you like to be able to do in your role?
  - a. What stops you?
  - b. What gets in the way?
- 12.** Who supports you in your role in school?
  - a. How do you experience their support?
  - b. Is there enough support?
  - c. What more support do you need?

## **Closing questions**

- 13.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in the school in which you work?
- 14.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in City X, or in Saudi Arabia in general?

**APPENDIX 9: Fourth Draft of the Interview Questions**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**A Research Study into Student  
Counselling Practices in Saudi  
Arabia**

**Investigating the Attitudes,  
Perceptions, Knowledge, and  
Understandings of Student Counsellors  
in City X**

**Turki Alotaibi**

PILOT INTERVIEW

# **PART 1: Introduction**

## **Background about me**

Hello, my name is Turki Alotaibi. You may already know who I am as I was previously the director of student counselling in City X. I am now undertaking a PhD research degree at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. The main research area of my PhD research degree is student counselling in Saudi Arabia. I have a long background in student counselling as I have been a student counsellor in primary and secondary schools in City X, and I have also previously worked a long time in the Education Department in City X. After I finished my position as director of student counselling in City X I moved to the United Kingdom to study for one year. This was a one year Masters degree at the University of Nottingham in sociology. I therefore have a good knowledge of student counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, and I also have both academic and professional experience.

## **Explaining the aim of the PhD research study**

The aim of the research study is to find more information out about student counsellors working in City X, Saudi Arabia. The research aims to investigate what student counsellors do in their work, what kinds of things they do when counselling students, and what difficulties, problems, and obstacles they face when doing their job. The research will investigate the personal views and opinions of student counsellors working in schools in City X. It will aim to investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of student counselling which student counsellors have. It will also aim to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that student counsellors have in their work. For example, do they find counselling students interesting and exciting work, or do they not like their work? If they do not like counselling students, the research will aim to investigate why student counsellors do not like counselling students. The research study aims to find out the good things and the bad things that may exist

for student counselling in schools in City X, and it will also try to see whether student counselling is effective in schools in City X.

### **Explaining the research procedure**

The research procedure that is going to be used for the research study will use **15** semi-structured interviews with student counsellors from schools located in City X. Each interview will likely last about up to 1 hour. Each interview will be divided into three parts.

The first part, which we have just covered, will be about explaining who the researcher is, what the research is about, and what research procedure will be used. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The second part will discuss potential ethical issues which may affect the research. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The third part will cover a range of questions about student counselling practices and issues. These will include questions about the role of the student counsellor, the qualifications and training that student counsellors have, and other questions about student counselling practices. *This part will likely last about 40 minutes.*

## **PART 2: Discussing Research Ethical Procedures**

### **What ethical protections have been put in place?**

1. Written permission has been obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham University in the UK.
2. Written permission has been obtained from the Education Committee in Saudi Arabia.
3. The participant has been provided with a Project Information Sheet with comprehensive information about the research study.
4. The participant has been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding any part of the research study.
5. The participant has been provided with an Informed Consent Form to complete and sign to authorise his participation in the research study.
6. The name of the participant will not be published and all references to the participant will be anonymised.
7. All recordings, written transcripts, and supporting interview documentation will be kept securely locked and only the researcher will have access to the data and information.
8. The participant will be provided with a written transcript of the recorded interview if requested.

### **What potential ethical problems may arise?**

1. The participant may feel that he should only answer questions positively, and should not be negative about the school, the headteacher, the interviewer, or other staff members, in any way.
2. The participant may feel that he should answer the questions in a way that might please the interviewer or the school, as this might help the research study.
3. The participant may be scared of answering honestly because he may say something that could mean that he loses his job or is reprimanded in some way.

4. The participant may be scared or hesitant to give detailed answers or to answer questions honestly because he feels that he does not want to speak badly about other colleagues, the school, or the headteacher.

## **PART 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

### **The role of the school counsellor**

- 1.** Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?
- 2.** Do you think that student counselling necessary in Saudi schools?  
*Tell me more.*
- 3.** What do you actually do as a student counsellor?
  - a. Can you talk me through your typical school week?
  - b. What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a student counsellor?
  - c. Do you perform any work that is not related to the student counsellors' role or job?
- 4.** Do you know how the head teacher perceives the student counsellor's role?
- 5.** Do you think student counsellors are treated fairly or well by:
  - a. The students?
  - b. Other teachers?
  - c. The parents?
- 6.** What administrative support at the school do you have?
- 7.** Do you think you need less or more administrative support?
- 8.** What financial support do you have in your role at school? *Tell me more.*
- 9.** Do you think you need less or more financial support?
- 10.** Can you summarise the biggest challenges that you face in your role as student counsellor?
- 11.** Can you summarise your successes in your role as student counsellor?

### **Qualifications and training**



12. What *qualifications* do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of student counsellor?
13. What *training* did you have to prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - a. What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of student counsellor?

### **School counselling practices**

14. What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the student counsellor's job?
15. If you could change one thing as a student counsellor in your school, what would that be?
16. If you could change one thing for student counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?
17. Can you give me your opinion about the following ideas:
  - a. *A national student counselling association.*
  - b. *A national student counselling qualification.*
  - c. *Online e-training for student counsellors in English and Arabic.*
  - d. *Online student counselling chat groups.*
18. What are the big challenges you face in your role as student counsellor?
19. What more would you like to be able to do in your role?
  - a. What stops you?
  - b. What gets in the way?
20. Who supports you in your role in school?
  - a. How do you experience their support?
  - b. Is there enough support?
  - c. What more support do you need?
21. If you could change 3 things in your role as student counsellor to improve the quality of your work or effectiveness in your role, what do think they would be?

## **Closing questions**

- 22.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in the school in which you work?
- 23.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in City X, or in Saudi Arabia in general?

**APPENDIX 10: Final Draft of the Interview Questions**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**A Research Study into Student  
Counselling Practices in Saudi  
Arabia**

**Investigating the Attitudes,  
Perceptions, Knowledge, and  
Understandings of Student Counsellors  
in City X**

**Turki Alotaibi**

## **PART 1: Introduction**

### **Background about me**

Hello, my name is Turki Alotaibi. You may already know who I am as I was previously the director of student counselling in City X. I am now undertaking a PhD research degree at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. The main research area of my PhD research degree is student counselling in Saudi Arabia. I have a long background in student counselling as I have been a student counsellor in primary and secondary schools in City X, and I have also previously worked a long time in the Education Department in City X. After I finished my position as director of student counselling in City X I moved to the United Kingdom to study for one year. This was a one year Masters degree at the University of Nottingham in sociology. I therefore have a good knowledge of student counselling practices in Saudi Arabia, and I also have both academic and professional experience.

### **Explaining the aim of the PhD research study**

The aim of the research study is to find more information out about student counsellors working in City X, Saudi Arabia. The research aims to investigate what student counsellors do in their work, what kinds of things they do when counselling students, and what difficulties, problems, and obstacles they face when doing their job. The research will investigate the personal views and opinions of student counsellors working in schools in City X. It will aim to investigate the level of knowledge as well as the understandings of student counselling which student counsellors have. It will also aim to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that student counsellors have in their work. For example, do they find counselling students interesting and exciting work, or do they not like their work? If they do not like counselling students, the research will aim to investigate why student counsellors do not like counselling students. The research study aims to find out the good things and the bad things that may exist

for student counselling in schools in City X, and it will also try to see whether student counselling is effective in schools in City X.

### **Explaining the research procedure**

The research procedure that is going to be used for the research study will use **15** semi-structured interviews with student counsellors from schools located in City X. Each interview will likely last about up to 1 hour. Each interview will be divided into three parts.

The first part, which we have just covered, will be about explaining who the researcher is, what the research is about, and what research procedure will be used. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The second part will discuss potential ethical issues which may affect the research. *This part will likely last about 10 minutes.*

The third part will cover a range of questions about student counselling practices and issues. These will include questions about the role of the student counsellor, the qualifications and training that student counsellors have, and other questions about student counselling practices. *This part will likely last about 40 minutes.*

## **PART 2: Discussing Research Ethical Procedures**

### **What ethical protections have been put in place?**

1. Written permission has been obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham University in the UK.
2. Written permission has been obtained from the Education Committee in Saudi Arabia.
3. The participant has been provided with a Project Information Sheet with comprehensive information about the research study.
4. The participant has been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding any part of the research study.
5. The participant has been provided with an Informed Consent Form to complete and sign to authorise his participation in the research study.
6. The name of the participant will not be published and all references to the participant will be anonymised.
7. All recordings, written transcripts, and supporting interview documentation will be kept securely locked and only the researcher will have access to the data and information.
8. The participant will be provided with a written transcript of the recorded interview if requested.

### **What potential ethical problems may arise?**

1. The participant may feel that he should only answer questions positively, and should not be negative about the school, the headteacher, the interviewer, or other staff members, in any way.
2. The participant may feel that he should answer the questions in a way that might please the interviewer or the school, as this might help the research study.
3. The participant may be scared of answering honestly because he may say something that could mean that he loses his job or is reprimanded in some way.

4. The participant may be scared or hesitant to give detailed answers or to answer questions honestly because he feels that he does not want to speak badly about other colleagues, the school, or the headteacher.

## **PART 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

### **The role of the school counsellor**

- 1.** Tell me about your own journey into school counselling, how did you get here?
- 2.** Do you think that student counselling necessary in Saudi schools?  
*Tell me more.*
- 3.** What do you actually do as a student counsellor?
  - a. Can you talk me through your typical school week?
  - b. What are the challenges and problems that you face in your role as a student counsellor?
  - c. Do you perform any work that is not related to the student counsellors' role or job?
- 4.** Do you know how the head teacher perceives the student counsellor's role?
- 5.** Do you think student counsellors are treated fairly or well by:
  - a. The students?
  - b. Other teachers?
  - c. The parents?
- 6.** What administrative support at the school do you have?
- 7.** Do you think you need less or more administrative support?
- 8.** What financial support do you have in your role at school? *Tell me more.*
- 9.** Do you think you need less or more financial support?
- 10.** Can you summarise the biggest challenges that you face in your role as student counsellor?
- 11.** Can you summarise your successes in your role as student counsellor?

### **Qualifications and training**



12. What *qualifications* do you have that you would say are relevant to the role of student counsellor?
13. What *training* did you have to prepare you for the role of student counsellor?
  - a. What further training would you like to have to better prepare you for the role of student counsellor?

### **School counselling practices**

14. What ideas might you suggest in order to improve the student counsellor's job?
15. If you could change one thing as a student counsellor in your school, what would that be?
16. If you could change one thing for student counselling in Saudi Arabia, what would that be?
17. Can you give me your opinion about the following ideas:
  - a. *A national student counselling association.*
  - b. *A national student counselling qualification.*
  - c. *Online e-training for student counsellors in English and Arabic.*
  - d. *Online student counselling chat groups.*
18. What are the big challenges you face in your role as student counsellor?
19. What more would you like to be able to do in your role?
  - a. What stops you?
  - b. What gets in the way?
20. Who supports you in your role in school?
  - a. How do you experience their support?
  - b. Is there enough support?
  - c. What more support do you need?
21. If you could change 3 things in your role as student counsellor to improve the quality of your work or effectiveness in your role, what do think they would be?

## **Closing questions**

- 22.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in the school in which you work?
- 23.** Is there anything else you would like to add about school counselling practices in City X, or in Saudi Arabia in general?

## APPENDIX 11: Project Informed Consent Form



The University of  
**Nottingham**

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

PHD RESEARCH STUDY

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Semi-Structured Interviews)

**Research title:** *Investigating the Attitudes, Perceptions, Knowledge, and Understandings of Student Counsellors in Saudi Arabia*

**Researcher's name:** Mr Turki Alotaibi

**Research Institution:** The School of Education  
The University of Nottingham, UK

**Supervisor's Names:** Dr. Belinda Harris, The University of Nottingham, UK  
Dr. Max Biddulph, The University of Nottingham, UK

### To be read and understood by You:

- I have read the research study **Participant Information Sheet** and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage of the research without any consequences, and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored in a lockable draw at the University of Nottingham or in a lockable filing cabinet at an office.
- I understand that Turki Alotaibi will password protect access to both recordings and transcripts. The only people who will have access to these transcripts will be the supervisors named above and the University of Nottingham examiners. I understand that a research study Participant code will be allocated to me and that the interview transcripts will be held anonymously and confidentially by all involved. *For example, if there are 25 research participants and I am the tenth person to be interviewed my Participant Code will be "010" and this will not identify me in any way.*
- I understand that throughout the research and for all information collected during the research, I will be given rights to confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability.
- I understand that all data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence, but that the researcher will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisors if I require further information about the research, and that I may also contact the Research Ethics Coordinator at the University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

**Signed:** ..... (Research Participant)

**Print name:** .....

**Date:** .....

.....

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Researcher:** Turki Alotaibi

**Contact Details:** [ttxta16@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxta16@nottingham.ac.uk)

Tel: 00447463319433

**PhD Supervisor:** Dr. Max Biddulph

**Email:** [Max.Biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Max.Biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk)

**PhD Supervisor:** Dr. Belinda Harris

**Email:** [Belinda.Harris@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Belinda.Harris@nottingham.ac.uk)

**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**

[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

.....

## APPENDIX 12: Research Ethics Application

### SCHOOL OF EDUCATION – PGR STATEMENT OF RESEARCH ETHICS

(This form should be used by all students studying for a PhD, EdD, Prof Doc, or MPhil)

Name (Student): **Turki Alotaibi** Supervisors: **Dr. Max Biddulph & Dr. Belinda Harris**

Research Topic: **Investigating the Attitudes, Perceptions, Knowledge, and Understandings of Student Counsellors in Schools in Saudi Arabia**

#### Research Ethics Checklist (Part 1 Signed by Dr Max Biddulph)

	Tick where appropriate
1. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the British Educational Research Association's <i>Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research</i> (BERA, 2011).	✓
2. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the <i>Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics</i> of the University of Nottingham. For a copy of this document please click here: <a href="http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx">http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx</a>	✓
3. I am aware of and have discussed with my supervisor(s) the sections of the <i>Data Protection Act (1998)</i> that are relevant to my research study: <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents</a> .	✓
4. Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.	✓
5. The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset.	✓
6. My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	✓
7. Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.	✓
8. All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and,	✓

where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	
9. In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role'.	✓
10. Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	✓
11. The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	✓
12. I will provide participants with my contact details (and those of my supervisor), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so.	✓
13. Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.	✓
14. Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants. (see BERA, 2011)	✓
15. I have considered carefully to what extent, if any, my research might expose me to any kind of risk to my personal safety. I have also discussed this with my supervisor and have taken appropriate steps to respond to any risks identified. Where such a strategy has been agreed a record of it is attached to this submission.	✓
16. At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.	✓
17. The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.	✓
18. The views of all participants in the research will be respected.	✓
19. Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.	✓
20. Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.	✓
21. Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.	✓
22. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in	✓

any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.	
23. Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.	✓
24. Does your research involve (please tick <b>ALL</b> that apply):	
Schools? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vulnerable Adults? <input type="checkbox"/>
Children? <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>None</b> of these groups <input type="checkbox"/>
25. a) Will your research be conducted in (please tick <b>ONE BOX</b> only):	
UK only? <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside the UK only? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	UK & outside the UK? <input type="checkbox"/>
b) If outside the UK, please name the country(ies) involved:	
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	
26. FOR ALL STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS I have received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance <b>through the University of Nottingham</b> and the School of Education Research Office has the reference number: <i>This applies even when data are collected outside of the UK.</i>	
<b>NB:</b> All students <u>must</u> remember to apply for their <b>University of Nottingham</b> DBS disclosure when they are visiting the UK.	
27. FOR ALL NON UK STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS Where available, I have received a Certificate of Good Conduct (or equivalent)* and the School of Education DABS Coordinators have a copy of this**	

\* Countries that produce a Certificate of Good Conduct are: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Irish Republic, Italy, Jamaica, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden & Turkey.

\*\* UK students who have lived in one of the above countries for 6 months or more may also need to apply for one of these.

Please provide further information below in relation to any of the above statements which you have not been able to tick, explaining in each case why the suggested course of action is not appropriate (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):



Please outline any areas of research ethics related risk, which have not been referred to above, associated with your research, and how you intend to deal with these (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

I will be carrying out research involving schools in Saudi Arabia, but the research will **not** involve researching children (under 18) or vulnerable adults, as the research will involve interviewing adult student counselors that work at those schools.

**Checklist:**

**Please check that you have attached 1 – 4 (& 5 where appropriate) and return with the form to the Postgraduate Research Students Office**

- (1) a brief statement of my research aims or questions and proposed methods of data generation (maximum 200 words);
- (2) a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants;
- (3) a draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants;
- (4) a draft consent form to be used with prospective participants;
- (5) a record of the agreed strategy between myself and my supervisor(s), identifying any potential risks to my personal safety,

and stating how these will be addressed during my research study. (Only needed where researcher safety issues identified)

NB Please do NOT include copies of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires).

Signed (student)   Turki Alotaibi   Print Name  
(Student)   Turki Alotaibi   Date 21/10/2014

Signed (supervisor 1)   Max Biddulph   Print Name (supervisor 1) R. Max  
Biddulph Date: 28.10.14

Signed (supervisor 2, \_\_\_\_\_) Print Name (supervisor 2, \_\_\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
where appropriate) where appropriate)

### Research Ethics Checklist (Part 2 Signed by Dr Belinda Harris)

	Tick where appropriate
28. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the British Educational Research Association's <i>Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research</i> (BERA, 2011).	✓
29. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the <i>Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics</i> of the University of Nottingham. For a copy of this document please click here: <a href="http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx">http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx</a>	✓
30. I am aware of and have discussed with my supervisor(s) the sections of the <i>Data Protection Act (1998)</i> that are relevant to my research study: <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents</a> .	✓
31. Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.	✓
32. The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset.	✓
33. My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	✓
34. Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.	✓
35. All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	✓
36. In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role'.	✓
37. Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	✓
38. The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	✓
39. I will provide participants with my contact details (and those of my supervisor), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so.	✓

40. Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.	✓
41. Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants. (see BERA, 2011)	✓
42. I have considered carefully to what extent, if any, my research might expose me to any kind of risk to my personal safety. I have also discussed this with my supervisor and have taken appropriate steps to respond to any risks identified. Where such a strategy has been agreed a record of it is attached to this submission.	✓
43. At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.	✓
44. The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.	✓
45. The views of all participants in the research will be respected.	✓
46. Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.	✓
47. Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.	✓
48. Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.	✓
49. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.	✓
50. Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.	✓
51. Does your research involve (please tick <b>ALL</b> that apply):	
Schools? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vulnerable Adults? <input type="checkbox"/>
Children? <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>None</b> of these groups <input type="checkbox"/>
52. a) Will your research be conducted in (please tick <b>ONE BOX</b> only):	
UK only? <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside the UK only? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	UK & outside the UK? <input type="checkbox"/>

<p>b) If outside the UK, please name the country(ies) involved:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</div>	
<p>53. FOR ALL STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS I have received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance <b>through the University of Nottingham</b> and the School of Education Research Office has the reference number <i>This applies even when data are collected outside of the UK.</i></p> <p><b>NB:</b> All students <u>must</u> remember to apply for their <b>University of Nottingham</b> DBS disclosure when they are visiting the UK.</p>	
<p>54. FOR ALL NON UK STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS Where available, I have received a Certificate of Good Conduct (or equivalent)* and the School of Education DABS Coordinators have a copy of this**</p>	

\* Countries that produce a Certificate of Good Conduct are: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Irish Republic, Italy, Jamaica, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden & Turkey.

\*\* UK students who have lived in one of the above countries for 6 months or more may also need to apply for one of these.

Please provide further information below in relation to any of the above statements which you have not been able to tick, explaining in each case why the suggested course of action is not appropriate (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Please outline any areas of research ethics related risk, which have not been referred to above, associated with your research, and how you intend to deal with these (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

I will be carrying out research involving schools in Saudi Arabia, but the research will **not** involve researching children (under 18) or vulnerable adults, as the research will involve interviewing adult student counselors that work at those schools.

**Checklist:**

**Please check that you have attached 1 – 4 (& 5 where appropriate) and return with the form to the Postgraduate Research Students Office**

- (6) a brief statement of my research aims or questions and proposed methods of data generation (maximum 200 words);
- (7) a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants;
- (8) a draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants;
- (9) a draft consent form to be used with prospective participants;
- (10) a record of the agreed strategy between myself and my supervisor(s), identifying any potential risks to my personal safety,  
and stating how these will be addressed during my research study. (Only needed where researcher safety issues identified)

NB Please do NOT include copies of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires).

Signed (student)   Turki Alotaibi   Print Name  
(Student)   Turki Alotaibi   Date 21/10/2014

Signed (supervisor 1)   *Belinda M. Harris*   Print Name  
(supervisor 1) Dr Belinda Harris Date 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014

Signed (supervisor 2, \_\_\_\_\_) Print Name (supervisor 2, \_\_\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

where appropriate)

where appropriate)





## **Project Briefing Sheet for the Research Ethics Committee**

**Turki Alotaibi**

### **(1) Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics.**

The researcher confirms that he has read and understood the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (Version 4, March 2013) (**The Research Ethics Code**).

### **(2) Background to the Project via Literature Review**

In contrast to school counselling which has become well-established in the UK and in other developed countries such as the US, it can be argued that school counselling in Saudi Arabia is relatively undeveloped. There are many possible reasons why this may be the case. For example, it may be a lack of incentives, or a lack of school support or investment, or it may even be because of cultural reasons. But the fact is that counselling has been proven to work. For example, it is noted that the massive research project carried out by Smith et al. (1980), concluded that "all psychotherapies – verbal or behavioural, psychodynamic, person-centred or systemic, - were beneficial to clients, and were consistently effective" (Lines 2011, p.5). As has been seen, school counselling efforts have also been successful in the UK and internationally. Therefore, it is highly likely that more widespread school counselling could benefit Saudi Arabia. Perhaps the real question to ask is what barriers and challenges currently exist to developing school counselling more fully in Saudi Arabia?

Or perhaps even to ask to what extent school counselling is even culturally appropriate within Saudi schools? This is because Saudi society is normally conservative with tribal and familial influences. Therefore in theory it may be the case that students and their parents and family do not want school counsellors who are not family or closely related to listen to what they may consider private and confidential issues. Indeed it was even recently noted that private schools were banned from hiring expatriate school counsellors because of issues regarding the confidentiality of Saudi families (Saudi Gazette, 2014). Western style school counselling practices may therefore have to be specifically modified, changed, or adapted to the Saudi school setting. This is because there may also be cultural barriers that exist, or the Saudi culture may be different in that it does not facilitate openness of students, or school counselling may not be seen as sufficiently 'mainstream' yet (i.e. teachers and head teachers do not believe it will make much impact on students). Alternatively, it may be that it is not receiving enough administrative, social and other support by teachers, head teachers, and the school in general. Equally, it may be that it is not accepted in the same way that general teaching is accepted by schools. Saudi people may view academic training as a positive and necessary experience for young people, whereas social-emotional or psychological developmental approaches to well-being may be seen as unnecessary, excessive, or even disproportionate responses to 'children's problems'.

Some of these issues can be seen in research carried out on school counselling in Saudi Arabia. Abu-Rasain and Williams (1999) carried out a longitudinal study (1 year) of peer counselling in a boys' secondary school in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was to



provide individual support to students, as well as improving the social environment and reducing pupil loneliness. The research used interviews, questionnaires, school records, psychological tests, and focus groups (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999). It was found that there were significant positive changes in 'guidance' and 'reliable alliance', and also that the number of problems presented to the school counsellor were reduced (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999). However, it was also found that "Whilst teaching staff were unsupportive of the programme, clients valued the service and peer counsellors themselves profited through increased self-esteem" (Abu-Rasain and Williams, 1999, p.493). This research provides some support to the argument that school counsellors in Saudi Arabia can provide a valuable service to students and can impact them positively. Although it is accepted that this study was only based on peer counselling, nevertheless, another question that arises from this research is why the teaching staff were unsupportive of the programme?

In answering this question, it may be useful to take a look at the research carried out by Al-Ghamdi and Riddick (2011). They aimed to study the different perceptions of school head teachers (principals), regarding the 'actual' role and 'ideal' role for school counsellors in Saudi intermediate girls' schools. The research used a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews to gather data on principals' perceptions. It was found that many differences existed in what principals thought the role of the school counsellor should be, and that this "suggests a potential for ambiguity and role conflict" (Al-Ghamdi and Riddick, 2011, p.347). In light of problems faced by school counsellors being accepted in schools, Al-Ghamdi and Riddick (2011) therefore recommended that in order to improve the overall quality of counselling services in Saudi schools, there should be an increased awareness of all school stakeholders regarding the availability of counselling services. It may also be that 'Western-style' counselling research or methods may not automatically transfer to Saudi schools. For example, Saleh (1987) argued that the theories, models, research findings and techniques of natural sciences could easily be transmitted from industrialized countries to developing non-western countries. But those of behavioural sciences were more controversial, especially for the Arab world, whose culture was very different to the West, meaning that there were cultural implications for counselling in the Arab World. (Saleh, 1983, p.71).

### **(3) A summary of the project.**

This research study aims to investigate student counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia. The main research question which the research asks is: '*What are the attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of student counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia?*' The research will use the researcher's 15 years' experience as a student counsellor and director of student counselling in a Saudi education department to develop an autoethnographic account of student counselling. The research will also be using semi-structured interviews with Saudi student counsellors to investigate and understanding the attitudes of student counsellors to counselling, as well as the problems and obstacles they face in practice. In principle, student counselling has the potential to significantly help children and young people in schools across Saudi Arabia, yet the research would seek to understand why this potential may not actually be fulfilled in reality. The research is worth of investigation because it will investigate in depth current student counselling practices in Saudi Arabia. There is a distinct gap in the research literature regarding student counselling practices in Saudi Arabia. There is also very little field work that has been carried out in Saudi Arabia on understanding student counselling practices in Saudi schools.

#### ***Initial questions in the interview***

The Interview Schedule including the Pilot Interview Questions have been prepared and finalised, and a copy is included at the end of this Sheet.

#### ***The research methodology***

The research will use up to 25 semi-structured interviews of current student counsellors working in boys secondary schools in City X, Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia there is separation of boys and girls because of religious Islamic law requirements and so the researcher will focus on boys' schools in Saudi Arabia. The single-sex system of schooling in Saudi Arabia also presents practical challenges for researchers who need to gain access to schools for research purposes. Gaining access to institutions of the opposite gender to the researcher is potentially very problematic, and this is another reason for focussing on boys schools in this instance. The semi-structured interviews will use a specially designed interview schedule questionnaire that was developed using feedback and recommendations from the researcher's supervisors at the University of Nottingham. The questions were chosen so that they were open ended, simple to understand, and they were not leading, i.e. they do not direct student counsellors to give certain answers. The order of the questions was also changed around so that the questions are asked in a logical order. The researcher will be pilot testing the interview questions in order to see if they are well understood or to see if any improvements are required. The aim of the research is to advance general understanding of student counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia by (a) providing practical and critical insights into how school counsellors work in Saudi Arabia; (b) providing detailed information and critical analysis about the perceptions, and attitudes of school counsellors in Saudi secondary schools hold about their roles; and (c) providing detailed information and critical analysis about what difficulties, obstacles, and problems school counsellors in Saudi schools face.

***Arrangements for the interviews and the research data***

Each school has one student counsellor and each interview will take place when the student counsellor is available and the school will provide a room at the school for the interview to take place. The language used for each interview will be Arabic. Each interview will be recorded and then the data will be collected into 25 digital files, stored on the researcher's password protected computer, and then transcribed into English. The use of all personal data obtained will following the guidelines and recommendations provided in section 4 of the Research Ethics Code. All personal data which is obtained during the research study will not be kept for longer than is necessary (Paragraph 4.1.5 of the Research Ethics Code). Participant confidentiality will be ensured by using identification code numbers to correspond to research data in any research paperwork and computer files (Paragraph 4.4 of the Research Ethics Code). For example, if there are 25 research participants each participant will be provided with a number code, "001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, etc." All research data will be stored securely on a password protected laptop or computer at all times (Paragraph 4.1.4 of the Research Ethics Code). The researcher will also keep all the research data securely stored for a period of at least 7 years from the date of any publication which is based on the research data (Paragraph 4.2.2 of the Research Ethics Code). Each school will be provided with a copy of the research findings and an electronic copy of the final PhD research thesis. The research findings will also be used to develop new research papers which will be submitted to an academic research journal or journals for consideration for publication.



The research will use semi-structured interviews as a data collection research tool. Up to 25 semi-structured interviews will be carried out. This is based on the actual number of schools in City X, Saudi Arabia (i.e. 25 schools with one student counsellor allocated to each school). Each interview will likely take up to 1 hour and will be recorded. The interview recording will then be transcribed into a written record of the interview by the researcher. A copy of the interview transcript will then be made available to each participant who will be asked to check the document for accuracy before returning it to the researcher.

**(4) Researcher positioning and a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants.**

I was previously the Director of Student Counselling at the Education Department in City X, a city in Saudi Arabia, and I have more than 17 years of professional experience in educational and school counselling roles in the region. Throughout my time there I developed many professional and personal contacts in schools in City X and also in the City X Education Department. I have notified the City X Education Department of my involvement with this research study and have permission to interview in local schools. I would therefore negotiate access to participants via the Department Head at the City X Education Department, and Head Teachers of the schools. I will approach all student counsellors at these schools personally to see if they would like to take part in the research study as a research participant. I will make it clear to all student counsellors that they are under no obligation to take part in the research and it will be completely voluntary. Although I used to be the director of student counselling for schools in City X, I am not in that position any more. Also I will not be returning to that position in the future after I complete my PhD research studies. During each interview I will carefully explain this to each interviewee so that they do not think there will be any problems in discussing any matters with me. All workers in Saudi public schools have protected employment rights, which means that any disciplinary or dismissal process is a very restricted and highly supervised procedure. Therefore under Saudi law the employment of the student counsellors is protected and I have no power or influence in terminating their employment in any way. I will make this clear to all the student counsellors. I will also make it clear to all the student counsellors that I will treat whatever they say to me during the interviews confidential. From an ethical viewpoint I will make sure that I make it absolutely clear to participants that there will be absolutely no negative consequences or repercussions if

they give answers which may criticise the school, teachers, head teachers, parents, or the Education Department in any way.

**(5) A draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants.**

A draft Project Information Sheet is attached.

**(6) A draft consent form to be used with prospective participants.**

A draft Informed Consent form is attached.

**(7) A record of the agreed strategy between myself and my supervisor(s), identifying any potential risks to my personal safety, and stating how these will be addressed during my research study. (Only needed where researcher safety issues identified).**

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

***Potential risks to the researcher:***

No potential physical, emotional, or professional risks have been identified except those connected with issues of self-disclosure relating to the researcher's positioning account. The researcher's positioning account will be incorporated into the final thesis but I will only disclose those personal details that I feel completely comfortable with disclosing in the final published thesis.

***Potential risks to the research participants:***

Lone working risks

The researcher will set up a lone working policy. This will cover the researcher notifying the principal of the school and/or a school supervisor of the date, time, and location of the interview, and the potential length of the interview. This will ensure that the school knows where the student counsellor and the researcher are located when the researcher is visiting the school (e.g. in case of fire or other emergency).

Potential confidentiality risks

The researcher will ensure that all interviews take place within a private and confidential location where the interview will not be disturbed or overheard.

Potential emotional risks

There are no official or government counselling offices based in Saudi Arabia, nor are there any private offices or independent counselling associations in Saudi Arabia. Therefore the researcher will contact each school and jointly agree with each school as to what support service may be available for each student counsellor in the event that interview participants become emotionally distressed. For example, the researcher will be available

to the student counsellor if he wishes to talk. Or alternatively the head teacher may be able to make arrangements with another school for another student counsellor to be made available to the interviewee if needed.

## The University of Nottingham Research Ethics Approval

## School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

The University of  
Nottingham

2014/29/MO

Name Turki Alotaibi  
 Main Supervisor Max Biddulph and Belinda Harris  
 Course of Study PhD  
 Title of Research Project: Investigating the Attitudes, Perceptions, Knowledge, and Understandings of Student Counsellors in Schools in Saudi Arabia  
 Is this a resubmission? No Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 20/11/14

## Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

Thank you for addressing the concerns about voluntary participation, questions to be asked of participants, and collection and storage of the data. The information for prospective participants is clear – you could perhaps offer to provide each participant with a transcript or recording of the interview in case they wish to add / retract or clarify. The student has responded to questions about any possible 'unequal relationships' or 'power balance' concerns and demonstrated an ethical approach in undertaking this research.

I would like to see some care taken with data storage so please look at the UoN requirements for guidance. I am assuming you will and specify how long you will keep these data for (seven years) as well as where and how these will be kept and subsequently destroyed.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. <http://www.educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx>  
<http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines> If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.  
 Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site.  
 Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved Revise and Resubmit Signed: *Mary Oliver*Name: Dr Mary Oliver  
(Research Ethics Coordinator)

Date: 26 11 2014

## **APPENDIX 13: Example of Unformatted Interview Transcript (SC10)**

Thank you for your participation.

Age: 39 Years old

Working in counseling: 9 Years

Working in education: about 16 Years

Q/ What is your qualification?

History and geography.

Q/ Can you tell me the steps of your access to counseling?

It was announced that there is a need for students counsellors and I applied for the job, there were a simple test which included general information, and after that a personal interview was conducted and it was short.

Q/ Your applying for the job based on a prior desire to work in counseling?

Yes,I had a desire.

Q/ Do you think that student counseling is necessary in schools?

Yes, it has a role, if it is activated properly, it will have a great role at school.

Q/What do you mean?

Means, if it is activated properly, and provided with good and proper conditions and all facilities, and the qualified and specialized students counsellors are selected, its role will be perfect at school.

Q/What is its necessity in schools?

Solving problems of students in general, whether their educational or family problems, helping the student in solving his problems and developing his abilities and self-confidence.

But no one will be able to play this role except the students counselor who is qualified and specialized in student counseling, I think that it is necessary to conduct courses to habilitate the unqualified students counsellor, and to work in all school stages, means to range in stages from the primary, to the preparatory, then to the secondary stage, whereas the secondary school will be the last stage because it is the most difficult stage and it contains more problems.

Q/What type of works carried out by you as a students counsellor?

Work is diverse, if there is no program, we follow up students and receive any emergency cases submitted to us, whereas most of problems are emergent, and we try to solve his problems, Of course attendance to the school must be early, because the students counselor works on fighting the delay, and also he is one of the symbols that seek to eliminate the delay, so he must begin by himself, and come to school early and not late, and be a role model for students and teachers, the second thing is the morning queue, following up students in the morning queue completely, to know if it is conducted properly or not, also the students counsellor can implement a specific program in the morning queue or deliver a short speech to the students.

Q/Do you have a daily program?

We cannot say a daily or weekly program, because sometimes may be more than weekly, such as honoring outstanding program or awareness of the harmful effects of smoking program or awareness of the harmful effects of drugs Program, I will not hide that of the flaws of the student counseling in Saudi Arabia is the large number of programs and its overcrowding.



Q/What do you suggest?

I have a suggestion in counseling, which is to reduce the tasks of the students counsellor, because the intensification and large number of his tasks has weakened the focus on the important things in schools that may serve and benefit students.

Q/ What are the difficulties and challenges which you face in your work as a students counsellor?

Difficulties in performing the work well, according to my point of view, lack of understanding of the students counsellor`s tasks, whether by the same counsellor or the school deputy headmaster or headmaster and teachers, Not everyone is aware of what is the work of the students counsellor originally, means, they do not understand the work and tasks of the students counsellor, and as I said earlier, the large number of programs hinder the work of the students counsellor, For example, the doctor as you know is specialized in a particular field, such as ophthalmology and other, whenever focus is on specific things, the productivity will be greater, and perhaps the students counsellor innovates in his work, for example, drugs and smoking programs should be carried out or supervised by a person who understands and specialist, for example, to be a doctor or specialist.

Q/ Very nice words, do you carry out additional works or are entrusted to you?

Never, I have been asked to carry out, but I refused.

Q/ Have you been asked before?

Never ever, I have closed this door and had already dismissed.

q/ Is this a principle?

This is something I made to myself; I want to carry out the counseling work only ,

but sometimes from the principle of cooperation with colleagues, I perform some additional work, but not many.

Q/ Well, what is the opinion of the headmaster on your work or role as a students counsellor in general, regardless of you as a person, does he understand your work, how does he think of the students counsellor`s role in general at school?

Unfortunately, the point of view on counseling, despite its importance, is very weak and very negative, may be counseling is misunderstood or the reality forces them to downplay counseling and its importance.

Q/ Why?

Because its effectiveness is weak and it is not activated well, and the person who is responsible for this thing is either the students counsellor himself because he does not perform his work properly, or perhaps that the headmaster and the school members do not consider student counseling from within the important works at school.

Q/ And what is the reason for this in your opinion?

Education here is weak in general, and counseling is of weakest education episodes, education is weak in general, and this is a reality and tangible and everybody knows this, counseling is known as the first weakened in education, in my view and at the level of the Kingdom also, on one occasion we met with the general manager of the student counseling in the ministry of education last year, and he talked about an important point, he said that everyone in the Kingdom consider the profession of the students counsellor is a profession for comfort!

Q/ This is the opinion of a counseling official?

Yes, and let me refer to the article of an official who works in serving education, when he received his tasks in the student counseling in the ministry of education, he said " now I am relieved after thirty years of work!", this is the words of one of the officials, unfortunately, this is the reality that we live in, 90% of the community consider student counseling as a place to rest and not to work.

Q/How are you treated or seen by both of the following?

Students:

Some students believe that the students counsellor is the friend of student, because he treats them well and softly, whereas we treat them gently and without severity because we want to attract them, so the student thinks that he is a good person who supports them, and I consider this a good thing.

Q/ well, let us move on to teachers and your relationship with them?

My relationship with them is good, despite their lack of understanding of my role in the school, but our relationship is good, only by virtue of the fellowship and not work.

Q/Ok, parents?

The relationship with parents is nonexistent with me and with the whole school.

Q/Do they know that there is a students counsellor?

I think they know everything, but do not know the school, can you believe that some of them do not know his son is studying in any stage.

Q/ What is the reason for this in your opinion?

Ignorance of parents and by virtue of our presence in a nomadic environment, and also because the parents of the students are busy with other things which they believes to be more important than the school and education, such as the job or raising cattle. And when we are in need of the attendance of the parent to the school, we find difficulty in this.

Q/Do you find an administrative support in school?

Unfortunately, there is no direct or indirect support.

Q/ What is the reason for this in your opinion?

As I told you earlier, I attribute this to lack of understanding of the importance of counseling from everyone, and wrong perception to the students counsellor and that he only came to rest.

Q/ What about the financial support?

We do not have financial support, we do not get anything, but I pay from my own account to spend on many programs.

Q/ Does this mean that you need a larger support?

We just want to recognize the role of the students counsellor, whereas those who work with you appreciate the importance of this role, this is just what we want, so if attention is existed, the negative perception to counseling and its importance, I am sure that support will be provided inevitably.

Q/ Can you summarize the biggest obstacle you face in your work as a students counsellor?

The biggest obstacle confronts me in my work, I have been working as a students counsellor for eight years, the biggest obstacle facing me in student counseling is the lack of clarity of the students adviser`s work at the school!

Q/How? Can you explain more?

Lack of clarity of work and non-presence of a specific thing to work upon, I mean, there is no specific rules and regulations and plans for reference.

Q/ Are not there any specific programs that you implement?

Yes, , but there is no specific mechanism of action, let me tell you more, I think that the existing is mercury or ideal things which are difficult to be implemented on the ground.

Q/And the existed systems?

We do not know how to implement these programs, because they need substantial financial support to be implemented as required.

Q/ Do you mean that counseling programs and systems are not clear?

Of course, and usually any employee in this world if there was nothing obvious to work upon and if there are not certain limits obliged to him, he will not be able to production and work as required.

Q/ Does the ministry of education have efforts to clarify the work for you?

There is nothing, also the ministry helps in the existed confusion in the field.

The ministry has helped in this muddling through what it does from the intensification of indicative programs and increasing the work required to be implemented by the students counsellor to be implement without paying attention to the habilitation and training of the students counsellor, and This will increase the pressure on the students counsellor and may lead to reluctance of counsellors to work or to leave it.

Q/good words, can you summarize the successes which you achieved at the school as a students counsellor and you are proud of them?

I believe that our successes is limited to solving the students` problems, by virtue of that we are not specialized in counseling, we will not be able to offer a great deal to the student counseling

q/ Do you have a qualification in counseling?

Unfortunately, No.

Q/ Are there any qualifications which you think are important and want to get them?

Of course, intensive courses in counseling and computer counseling, in order to keep up with technology and the era. But I think no one will be able to work in student counseling except the qualified.

Q/What is the training that you want and think that it will increase the effectiveness and quality of your work?

Any additional training, especially in student counseling, but it should be at the hands of specialists in the Student Counseling, and also, as I said, training in how to use the computer.

Q/good, what is the only thing you want to change in counseling at this school?

I think the cooperation of teachers and the school deputy headmaster with the students counsellor will let the school be better and its situation will be much better, Teachers` dealing here and their cooperation are very weak over the last years, the cooperation of teachers with me is very weak and leads to weakness of productivity, and impacts on the whole school and the educational and behavioral process.

Q/good, and what is the thing that you want to change in counseling in general in Saudi Arabia?

Reducing the tasks of students counsellor, decreasing his tasks to the most important tasks, in addition to providing him with intensive training courses to habilitate him as required which allow him to perform the work of the students counsellor properly.

Q/Can you give me your opinion on some of the ideas, for example: National Student Counseling Association?

Good, and have an important addition to counseling

Q/ Ok, National qualification of student counseling?

This is a very excellent because it will habilitate the unqualified students counsellors, it will also graduate qualified students counsellors because the habilitation of students counsellors here is very weak.

Q/ And what do you think of E-training in Arabic or English?

I think it will not be useful to us by virtue of that we do not have experience in using computer, I speak for myself and I think, but rather I know that many of the counsellors here in City X do not know how to use a computer.

Q/ What is your opinion on chatting group of students counsellors?

May be good to share experiences, especially if members of the group are qualified, but if they are unqualified, I think that the benefit will be few.

Q/ What are the things that you want to do in your work more than the current thing and you think you are able to do them?

On the contrary, I think that my works should be reduced and not to add new things to me Hehehehehe.

Q/ Do you have the ability to perform more works?

No, things more than what I am performing now, I do not think so; I wish to have the ability to perform what I have now.

Q/ If you want to improve the quality of your work, and this will happen through changing three things, what are these things?

I would like to reduce the programs and works assigned to the students counsellor at the school, the second thing, changing the counseling systems currently in force, in addition to developing new things and take the suggestions and opinion of students counsellors on them.

The third thing is to change the correlation of the students counsellor to be direct with the ministry of education and not the headmaster, and I

wish to appoint a special officer with the students counsellor, whereas his tasks is to communicate with the parents of the students.

Q/This shows that you suffer in communicating with parents?

The whole school suffers, the communication is weak, and is almost on-existent, if there is a direct correlation between an employee, especially in the secondary school, and the parent, and the employee knows the homes and telephones of parents, besides becoming responsible for them and their telephones, talking to them, calling them to come to school, preparing meetings with them and attending the meeting of the students adviser with them.

Q/Can you give me your suggestions for improving the situation of counseling?

1. Selecting qualified to work as students counselor.
2. Conducting training courses for students counsellors constantly, and not like the currently case for only one or two days.
3. Reducing the current programs of the student counseling
4. Allocating a financial budget for student counseling
5. The independence of the students counsellor.

Q/ Are there anything we did not mention and you want to add them at the end of this interview?

School as an attractive environment does not exist, Saudi schools in general lack to be an attractive environment, not in terms of shape, or attraction operations, whether the recreational operations or services existing there in.

Q/Is there anything else you wish to add?



On the whole I thank you and appreciate your time, you did not shorten, thanks for your participation with us in the research.

## **APPENDIX 14: Example of Interview Transcript (Formatted) (SC10)**

1. **TA** Thank you for your participation.
2. **SC10** Age: 39 Years old  
Working in counselling: 9 Years  
Working in education: about 16 Years
3. **TA** What is your qualification?
4. **SC10** History and geography.
5. **TA** Can you tell me the steps of your access to counselling?
6. **SC10** It was announced that there is a need for students counsellors and I applied for the job, there were a simple test which included general information, and after that a personal interview was conducted and it was short.
7. **TA** Your applying for the job was based on a prior desire to work in counselling?
8. **SC10** Yes, I had a desire.
9. **TA** Do you think that student counselling is necessary in schools?
10. **SC10** Yes, it has a role, if it is activated properly, it will have a great role at school.
11. **TA** What do you mean?
12. **SC10** Means, if it is activated properly, and provided with good and proper conditions and all facilities, and the qualified and specialized students counsellors are selected, it is role will be prefect at school.
13. **TA** What is its necessity in schools?
14. **SC10** Solving problems of students in general, whether their educational or family problems, helping the student in solving his problems and developing his abilities and self-confidence. But no one will be able to play this role except the students counsellor who is qualified and specialized in student counselling, I think that it is necessary to conduct courses to habilitate the unqualified students counsellor, and to work in all school stages, means to range in stages from the primary, to the preparatory, then to the secondary stage, whereas the secondary school will be the last stage because it is the most difficult stage and it contains more problems.
15. **TA** What type of works carried out by you as a students counsellor?
16. **SC10** Work is diverse, if there is no program, we follow up students and receive any emergency cases submitted to us, whereas most of problems are emergent, and we try to solve his problems, Of course attendance to the

school must be early, because the students counsellor works on fighting the delay, and also he is one of the symbols that seek to eliminate the delay, so he must begin by himself, and come to school early and not late, and be a role model for students and teachers, the second thing is the morning queue, following up students in the morning queue completely, to know if it is conducted properly or not, also the students counsellor can implement a specific program in the morning queue or deliver a short speech to the students.

17. **TA** Do you have a daily program?
18. **SC10** We cannot say a daily or weekly program, because sometimes may be more than weekly, such as honouring outstanding program or awareness of the harmful effects of smoking program or awareness of the harmful effects of drugs Program, I will not hide that of the flaws of the student counselling in Saudi Arabia is the large number of programs and its overcrowding.
19. **TA** What do you suggest?
20. **SC10** I have a suggestion in counselling, which is to reduce the tasks of the students counsellor, because the intensification and large number of his tasks has weakened the focus on the important things in schools that may serve and benefit students.
21. **TA** What are the difficulties and challenges which you face in your work as a students counsellor?
22. **SC10** Difficulties in performing the work well, according to my point of view, lack of understanding of the students counsellor `s tasks, whether by the same counsellor or the school deputy headmaster or headmaster and teachers, Not everyone is aware of what is the work of the students counsellor originally, means, they do not understand the work and tasks of the students counsellor, and as I said earlier, the large number of programs hinder the work of the students counsellor, For example, the doctor as you know is specialized in a particular field, such as ophthalmology and other, whenever focus is on specific things, the productivity will be greater, and perhaps the students counsellor innovates in his work, for example, drugs and smoking programs should be carried out or supervised by a person who understands and specialist, for example, to be a doctor or specialist.
23. **TA** Very nice words, do you carry out additional works or are entrusted to you?
24. **SC10** Never, I have been asked to carry out, but I refused.
25. **TA** Have you been asked before?
26. **SC10** Never ever, I have closed this door and had already dismissed.
27. **TA** Is this a principle?
28. **SC10** This is something I made to myself; I want to carry out the counselling work only, but sometimes from the principle of cooperation with colleagues, I perform some additional work, but not many.

- 29. TA** Well, what is the opinion of the headmaster on your work or role as a students counsellor in general, regardless of you as a person, does he understand your work, how does he think of the students counsellor's role in general at school?
- 30. SC10** Unfortunately, the point of view on counselling, despite its importance, is very weak and very negative, may be counselling is misunderstood or the reality forces them to downplay counselling and its importance.
- 31. TA** Why?
- 32. SC10** Because its effectiveness is weak and it is not activated well, and the person who is responsible for this thing is either the students counsellor himself because he does not perform his work properly, or perhaps that the headmaster and the school members do not consider student counselling from within the important works at school.
- 33. TA** And what is the reason for this in your opinion?
- 34. SC10** Education here is weak in general, and counselling is of weakest education episodes, education is weak in general, and this is a reality and tangible and everybody knows this, counselling is known as the first weakened in education, in my view and at the level of the Kingdom also, on one occasion we met with the general manager of the student counselling in the ministry of education last year, and he talked about an important point, he said that everyone in the Kingdom consider the profession of the students counsellor is a profession for comfort!
- 35. TA** This is the opinion of a counselling official?
- 36. SC10** Yes, and let me refer to the article of an official who works in serving education, when he received his tasks in the student counselling in the ministry of education, he said "now I am relieved after thirty years of work!" This is the words of one of the officials, unfortunately, this is the reality that we live in, 90% of the community consider student counselling as a place to rest and not to work.
- 37. TA** How are you treated or seen by both of the following? Students?
- 38. SC10** Some students believe that the students counsellor is the friend of student, because he treats them well and softly, whereas we treat them gently and without severity because we want to attract them, so the student thinks that he is a good person who supports them, and I consider this a good thing.
- 39. TA** Well, let us move on to teachers and your relationship with them?
- 40. SC10** My relationship with them is good, despite their lack of understanding of my role in the school, but our relationship is good, only by virtue of the fellowship and not work.
- 41. TA** Ok, parents?
- 42. SC10** The relationship with parents is nonexistent with me and with the whole school.

- 43. TA** Do they know that there is a students counsellor?
- 44. SC10** I think they know everything, but do not know the school, can you believe that some of them do not know his son is studying in any stage.
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- 46. SC10** Ignorance of parents and by virtue of our presence in a nomadic environment, and also because the parents of the students are busy with other things which they believes to be more important than the school and education, such as the job or raising cattle. And when we are in need of the attendance of the parent to the school, we find difficulty in this.
- 47. TA** Do you find an administrative support in school?
- 48. SC10** Unfortunately, there is no direct or indirect support.
- 49. TA** What is the reason for this in your opinion?
- 50. SC10** As I told you earlier, I attribute this to lack of understanding of the importance of counselling from everyone, and wrong perception to the students counsellor and that he only came to rest.
- 51. TA** What about the financial support?
- 52. SC10** We do not have financial support, we do not get anything, but I pay from my own account to spend on many programs.
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- 54. SC10** We just want to recognize the role of the students counsellor, whereas those who work with you appreciate the importance of this role, this is just what we want, so if attention is existed, the negative perception to counselling and its importance, I am sure that support will be provided inevitably.
- 55. TA** Can you summarize the biggest obstacle you face in your work as a students counsellor?
- 56. SC10** The biggest obstacle confronts me in my work, I have been working as a students counsellor for eight years, the biggest obstacle facing me in student counselling is the lack of clarity of the students adviser`s work at the school!
- 57. TA** How? Can you explain more?
- 58. SC10** Lack of clarity of work and non-presence of a specific thing to work upon, I mean, there is no specific rules and regulations and plans for reference.
- 59. TA** Are not there any specific programs that you implement?
- 60. SC10** Yes, but there is no specific mechanism of action, let me tell you more, I think that the existing is mercury or ideal things which are difficult to be implemented on the ground.
- 61. TA** And the existed systems?

- 62. SC10** We do not know how to implement these programs, because they need substantial financial support to be implemented as required.
- 63. TA** Do you mean that counselling programs and systems are not clear?
- 64. SC10** Of course, and usually any employee in this world if there was nothing obvious to work upon and if there are not certain limits obliged to him, he will not be able to production and work as required.
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- 66. SC10** There is nothing, also the ministry helps in the existed confusion in the field. The ministry has helped in this muddling through what it does from the intensification of indicative programs and increasing the work required to be implemented by the students counsellor to be implement without paying attention to the habilitation and training of the students counsellor, and This will increase the pressure on the students counsellor and may lead to reluctance of counsellors to work or to leave it.
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- 68. SC10** I believe that our successes is limited to solving the students` problems, by virtue of that we are not specialized in counselling, we will not be able to offer a great deal to the student counselling.
- 69. TA** Do you have a qualification in counselling?
- 70. SC10** Unfortunately, no.
- 71. TA** Are there any qualifications which you think are important and want to get them?
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- 73. TA** What is the training that you want and think that it will increase the effectiveness and quality of your work?
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- 78. SC10** Reducing the tasks of students counsellor, decreasing his tasks to the most important tasks, in addition to providing him with intensive training courses to habilitate him as required which allow him to perform the work of the students counsellor properly.
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The third thing is to change the correlation of the students counsellor to be direct with the ministry of education and not the headmaster, and I wish to appoint a special officer with the students counsellor, whereas his tasks is to communicate with the parents of the students.
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  3. Reducing the current programs of the student counselling
  4. Allocating a financial budget for student counselling
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- 97. TA** Are there anything we did not mention and you want to add them at the end of this interview?
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- 99. TA** Is there anything else you wish to add? On the whole I thank you and appreciate your time, you did not shorten, thanks for your participation with us in the research.