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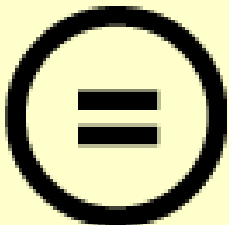
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Cultural Influences on Knowledge Sharing in a Kuwaiti Higher Education Institution: A Case Study Approach

By

Maha M. Said Ali

**A Doctoral Thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Doctor of
Philosophy**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Fawzeyah, my father Mohammad and to my two loving sons, Faisal and Mohammad, for their patience and support for me during this journey and helping me to make this dream come true.

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Praise is to Allah for giving me health, strength, help and blessing to complete this research. I am grateful to the Government of the State of Kuwait, especially the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET), for providing me with a scholarship that enabled me to pursue my higher education, as well as facilitating the collection of data for this study.

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Abstract

Knowledge sharing is an important element of knowledge management initiatives in organisations. It is well established in literature that cultural issues play an important role in influencing knowledge sharing practices. This research addresses cultural aspects that influence knowledge sharing within an academic environment. A single case study approach was adopted to explore the influence of culture on knowledge-sharing practices within a Kuwaiti higher education institution known as PAAET. The complexity of the issues surrounding how PAAET operates necessitates the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, this research brings together evidence from a range of data collection tools. Thus, the literature review, the findings from a questionnaire survey, interviews and focus groups, and information from existing documents were analysed in order to identify how to promote an effective knowledge-sharing culture at the selected case study organisation.

This research adds to the body of knowledge on “knowledge sharing” and extends this knowledge by addressing a total of twenty different factors categorised under four main headings: individual, organisational, national, and cross-cultural issues that both impede and facilitate knowledge sharing within a culture that is very complicated and very different from the Western culture. In addition, this research provides insight into how these issues might be addressed by recommending some actionable proposals for the authorities in the Kuwaiti higher education institute. These proposals offer some issues that could be considered when investigating and implementing successful and effective knowledge-sharing strategies. This research also provides the necessary theoretical underpinning to further develop the topic of knowledge sharing within complex institutions that are influenced by a multiplicity of factors. The research demonstrates that better performance and improved productivity can be achieved by implementing a coherent and balanced knowledge-sharing framework.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, Kuwait, Higher Education, national culture, organisational culture, technology, PAAET.

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List of Abbreviation

KM	Knowledge Management
KS	Knowledge Sharing
HE	Higher Education Institution
IT	Information Technology
CMC	Computer Mediation Communication
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
PAAET	Public Authority of Applied Education and Training
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

Arguably, the business world has recognised the significance and importance of knowledge in the “knowledge age” (Lee, 2005). The emergence of the knowledge age or knowledge economy has given rise to economies based on knowledge where knowledge has become an important resource for both organisations and for society as a whole. It is envisaged that, in the future, societies will be knowledge societies where knowledge will be the key resource (Drucker, 2002, p. 164). Furthermore, knowledge is the main competitive element in the knowledge economy (Drucker, 1993; Nonaka, 1994; Chase, 1997). Thus, the knowledge of an individual and of an organisation has become increasingly appreciated and is now understood to be an essential part of the competitive environment. Using knowledge effectively, and exploring the organisation’s potential in terms of knowledge, has led to a recognition that knowledge management strategies need to be developed. Knowledge management signifies the effective identification, acquisition, development, resolution, usage, storage and sharing of knowledge, leading to the development of systems and approaches for transforming and sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge (Shanhong, 2000, p.1). As a result, knowledge management has become part of the thinking of some organisations when it comes to using their resources effectively (Maponya, 2004, p.1; Dalkir, 2005, p.5). Therefore, when considering the creation of knowledge management initiatives in organisations, it is important to create a culture of knowledge sharing. This is because the main goal of managing knowledge is to make knowledge sharing the norm in an organisation, as Plessis (2006, p. 6) asserted.

However, since there are many factors that can influence the implementation or creation of a knowledge-sharing culture, there is a need to consider these factors in any such initiatives (Reige, 2005; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Sondergaard *et al.*,

2007; Sackmann and Friest, 2007). Therefore, a large amount of research has been conducted in the business and corporate sector relating to knowledge sharing initiatives and culture (McAdam and Reid, 2001; Handzic and Agahari, 2004; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Han and Anantmula, 2007; Sondergaard *et al.*, 2007), the main goal of which is to implement successful knowledge sharing strategies that will support the ability of every organisation to prosper. However, it was identified from the literature that there was a lack of research into investigating cultural factors that might influence knowledge sharing in the context of higher education institutions. Academic institutions are similar to other organisations in terms of the need to develop their abilities and they now face ever-growing demands on the part of their faculties for sharing quality resources and expertise (Kim and Ju, 2008) in teaching and research skills to ensure their survival and success in the global arena. Academic subject experiences represent the key knowledge of higher education institutions and it can be argued that this is the main competitive resource of such institutions (Maponya, 2005). The teaching and technical experience of academic staff in higher education, their research skills and their course-related materials need to be used and shared effectively in order to serve the organisation in improving the performance of individuals as well as the organisation itself (Maponya, 2005; Kim and Ju, 2008).

The main focus of this research is the impact of culture on a range of behaviours associated with, and important to, knowledge sharing in a higher education institute. Culture is a term usually reserved for societies as it is defined as the “transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behaviour and the artefacts produced through behavior” (Kroeber and Parson, 1958, p. 583). However, it can also be applied to any collective group or category: e.g. an organisation, a profession, an age group, an entire gender, or a family (Hofstede, 1997, p.12). In this research, both organisational and national cultures are explored, as organisational culture is related to “the way in which people set personal and professional objectives, perform tasks and administer resources to achieve them” (Sweeny and Hardaker, 1994, p.6) in an organisation while national culture is associated with “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001, p.9). Knowledge sharing can be defined as a process of acquiring

and exchanging knowledge that is needed through both informal and formal channels, and via technical facilities. This process occurs through individual and group interactions in order to develop and create new knowledge that will benefit the organisation.

Studying knowledge sharing and culture requires various factors that may contribute to the nature of the organisation's culture to be considered and one of the most important theoretical approaches in studying organisational culture is the impact or influence of national culture on individual interactions within the organisation. In this regard, culture is often cited as a dominant determinant of behavioural practice in the workplace. Indeed, researchers have identified aspects of organisational culture that include management style, leadership, the organisation's structure and its infrastructure as major factors involved in the failure to implement successfully knowledge management and sharing strategies (Hall, 2001a, p. 20; Jashapara, 2004, p. 186; Pillania, 2006, p.119). Since national culture plays an important role in influencing the behaviour of individuals and groups in organisations (Hofstede 2001). The influence of the values and norms of a national culture on sharing knowledge may also be a factor in the failure to implement knowledge sharing effectively as a considerable amount of research, in different countries and within multi-national organisations, has identified (Chow *et al.*, 2000; Ford and Chan, 2003; Tahir *et al.*, 2006; Michailova and Hurchings, 2006). However, only a very limited number of research studies have addressed the influence of a single national culture in one country on knowledge-sharing practices and activities in organisations.

The State of Kuwait is one of the developing countries that has recognised the importance of the role of knowledge in their public organisations since the government of Kuwait has urged such organisations to improve their performance to meet the Millennium Development Goals (Kuwait Times, 2008). The public organisations and educational institutions in Kuwait, such as Kuwait University (KU) and the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET), are required to respond to these Millennium Goals by attempting to develop and improve their educational standards in order to compete in the international arena (Ibrahim, 2008). Such educational development relies on developing the range of academic experience

in subjects that are related to teaching and learning (Maponya, 2005) and also to building on academic research skills. Since effective knowledge management and knowledge sharing can result in better performance for organisations, it is important to implement such initiatives in Kuwaiti higher education institutions to improve the general organisational knowledge outcomes. It is also important in order to develop the present academic experience with regard to teaching the courses and improving the institutions' problem solving abilities, as well as their capability for conducting a research since no studies have been carried out regarding Kuwait in particular. It is therefore important to explore those factors that facilitate academic staff to share knowledge (or that impede them from doing so) in order to enable the higher education authority to take necessary action to facilitate and enhance an effective knowledge-sharing culture in one of the Kuwaiti higher education institutions: PAAET.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this research was to explore the influence of culture (both organisational and national cultures) on a range of behaviours associated with knowledge-sharing practices within a Kuwaiti Higher Education institution (the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training: PAAET), and to develop tailored strategies or initiatives to create and develop a more efficient knowledge-sharing culture for that institution. The specific objectives of this research were:

1. To identify the current organisational culture that relates to knowledge sharing within the Kuwaiti Higher Education institution (PAAET) by:
 - i. Identifying the main actors (senior management, academic staff, senior librarians) in PAAET that are involved in knowledge sharing and examining their perceptions towards the sharing of knowledge;
 - ii. Identifying the type of knowledge (or the nature of the knowledge) that is shared, as well as the processes of knowledge sharing.

- iii. Identifying the technological infrastructure for knowledge sharing.
2. To identify and assess the role of national culture values and norms on knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti Higher Education.
3. To identify the main and most important factors that impede and facilitate knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti Higher Education.
4. To provide recommendations to the Kuwaiti Higher Education institution under investigation for promoting a more effective knowledge-sharing culture.

1.3 Research Questions

The aim of the research was to answer the following questions:

- Q1. What are the perceptions and attitudes regarding knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti higher education institute (PAAET)?
- Q2. What is the current situation in terms of organisational culture regarding knowledge sharing in the Kuwaiti Higher Education institution (PAAET)?
- Q3. What are the influences of different national culture values and norms on knowledge-sharing practices in Kuwait higher education institution (PAAET) and how does it influence the practice of knowledge sharing?
- Q4: What are the main factors that impede and facilitate knowledge-sharing in this Kuwait higher education institution (PAAET)?
- Q5. What strategies and initiatives should Kuwaiti higher education take to create and develop a knowledge-sharing culture?

1.4 Significance and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of and need for this study has emerged from the ever-increasing importance of knowledge in this global knowledge economy, where knowledge is

now regarded as being as valuable as a product (Chase, 1997, Druker, 2002). The recognition of this importance has increased the significance of managing and sharing knowledge in organisations in order for them to gain a sustainable advantage and to maintain their competitive ability (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Smith, 2001; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Because of its importance, therefore, many studies have been conducted in many organisations relating to knowledge sharing. However, Kim and Ju (2008) found that knowledge sharing in academic institutions was still not well recognised in the literature as only a few studies had addressed the perception and attitudes of academic staff towards knowledge sharing; furthermore, among those studies that exist in this field, most research was conducted in Asia, Australia and the West (Dayson, 2004; Ninck, 2005; Suhaimee *et al.*, 2006; Abdullah and Selamat, 2007; Kim and Ju, 2008). It was also identified that no relevant research had been conducted in the Arabian Gulf States relating to sharing knowledge in higher education. In particular, Dayson (2004) claimed that there was very limited published research on managing knowledge and identifying barriers to the sharing and creation of knowledge in higher education in order to understand the problems that face academics in implementing knowledge sharing initiatives in their institutions.

Because of this lack of comprehensive published research regarding knowledge sharing in public higher education institutions in Kuwait, it was felt important in this research to identify the relevance of the adoption of knowledge management and sharing initiatives in a Kuwaiti public higher education institution. This is because Kuwaiti society has a blended culture consisting of different traditions, values and norms; moreover, some research carried out in Kuwaiti public organisations has identified that certain major managerial problems are related to the cultural traditions, norms and practices of employees, together with governmental policies and priorities (Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2002; Metle, 2002). Such issues might therefore also affect knowledge sharing processes, communications and interactions within an academic community. Thus, identifying cultural issues regarding a Kuwaiti higher education institution (PAAET) could well benefit the authorities by making them aware of the

issues that influence the practice of knowledge sharing in their public academic institutions.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter One introduces the aims and objectives of the research and also contains the research questions, the significance and purpose of the research, as well as offering the structure of the whole thesis.

Chapter Two introduces the concept of knowledge sharing and issues related to knowledge sharing and culture. Information that was found in the literature regarding knowledge management and sharing in higher education is also presented, together with an examination of those factors identified in the literature that influence knowledge sharing initiatives.

Chapter Three provides a general background of the State of Kuwait, in addition to a review of elements of the Kuwaiti national culture and of public organisations, including the higher education institutions and particularly the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

Chapter Four discusses the research philosophy, research methods and the strategy and methods selected for this research while Chapter Five presents the quantitative results using descriptive analysis and employing frequency, mode, median, cross-tabulation and graphs. At the end of this chapter, questions raised as a result of the quantitative analysis and that are therefore addressed in the qualitative analysis are also offered.

Chapter Six presents an analysis of the nine interviews carried out with senior managers and of the eight focus groups completed with academic staff, together with one focus group undertaken with the senior librarians.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings revealed from the literature and both the quantitative and qualitative analyses while, finally, Chapter Eight presents the conclusions of this research. Recommendations to the Kuwaiti higher education institution (PAAET) regarding knowledge sharing are also presented, together with the limitations of the research and suggestions for further studies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the published literature concerning definitions of knowledge sharing, and knowledge sharing and cultural issues in particular. It also offers a review of the published literature concerning knowledge sharing in higher education, together with those factors that are associated with success in terms of their implementation in different organisational settings. These topics were chosen to serve as a logical foundation for the research questions that were formulated for this study.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing

Authors such as Serban and Luan (2002), Davenport and Prusak (1998), Huysman and De Wit (2002), and Awad and Ghaziri (2004) do not distinguish between knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing. The terms ‘transfer’ and ‘share’ are interconnected and are used interchangeably by some authors (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007; Christensen 2007). However, Boyd *et al.* (2007, p. 139) distinguished between knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing as they defined both concepts differently. Boyd *et al.* (2007, p. 139) described the knowledge transfer process as "applying existing knowledge from one context to another". Knowledge transfer has only one owner (the main source of the knowledge) but more than one recipient (Boyd *et al.* 2007, p. 40; Major and Cordey-Hayes 2000, p. 411). This implies that the flow of knowledge occurs in one direction: from the owner to the recipient(s). Knowledge transfer is a process that takes place every day in a working environment as people or employees transfer knowledge whether or not they mean to. For example, knowledge transfer occurs when an employee asks a colleague how to put together a budget

request. In this case, he or she is requesting a transfer of knowledge (Davenport and Prusak 1998, p. 88).

In contrast, knowledge sharing is a two-way, mutual and voluntary process that generally occurs during social and informal interactions among an organisation's employees. The process involves one or several owners and one or more recipients, and each party involved in the process can be a knowledge owner and a recipient simultaneously (Boyd *et al.*, 2007, 140); the knowledge flow in this process occurs in all directions. Jacobson (2006, p.507) defined knowledge sharing as: "an exchange of knowledge between two individuals: one who communicates knowledge and one who assimilates it. Knowledge sharing focuses on human capital and interaction of individuals". A similar definition was also offered by Awad and Ghaziri (2004, p.253). They explained the term as the sharing or exchange of knowledge between individuals or teams, or between individuals and knowledge bases. However, Boyd *et al.*, (2007, p.140) argued that knowledge sharing is not the same as knowledge exchange as knowledge sharing is "the disclosure of existing knowledge to others". In other words, it is voluntary, whereas knowledge exchange is the "imparting of knowledge for something in return"; this is involuntary.

From an academic perspective, knowledge sharing can be defined as "being aware of knowledge needs and making knowledge available to others by constructing a technical and systematic infrastructure" (Kim and Ju, 2008, p. 282). This means that knowledge can be shared through technology and through an organised strategy within an organisation. Other authors, such as Huysman and De Wit (2002, p.40), offered a comprehensive definition of knowledge sharing based on a theoretical understanding that was derived from the knowledge sharing cycle. This identifies three basic types of knowledge sharing which are:

1. Knowledge acquisition: This comes as a result of internalisation or learning from the organisation; the process relates to individual learning.
2. Knowledge exchange: This is a result of internalisation or learning from individuals in order to reuse knowledge; its processes relate to individual learning.

3. Knowledge development: This is a result of externalisation or learning with individuals in order to develop knowledge. This process relates to group learning.

This implies that there are several ways of sharing knowledge in organisations. Examples of knowledge sharing in organisations include interaction, cooperation, the distribution of texts on methods and practices that have been successful elsewhere, and solving problems through seeking assistance from other employees (Kalling and Styhre, 2003, p. 90; Ford and Chan, 2003).

Reflecting on the definitions that are offered in the literature, a working definition has been developed for this research. Knowledge sharing is defined as the process of exchanging and acquiring knowledge that is needed through informal and formal channels and through technical facilities. This process occurs between individuals and group interactions in order to develop and create new knowledge that will benefit the organisation; it can also be both voluntary and involuntary. The next section presents the issue of knowledge sharing and culture as this anticipates a discussion of different issues that have an impact on the behaviour, practices and interactions of both individuals and groups in the workplace.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing and Culture

It is difficult to identify a generic definition of culture due to complexities in the use and meaning of the term culture. However, several definitions of culture can be found in the literature with a general one being mentioned in the previous chapter (p.2). Kidd (2002, p. 5) defines culture as: "the way of life of a group of people". Haralambos *et al.*, (2004, p.790) define culture as: "the whole way of life found in a particular society." Kidd's (2002) definition of culture, while relatively simple, is close to that of Haralambos, given above, since both use the words "way of life" in their definitions. However, culture in the context of knowledge sharing "is one where knowledge sharing is the norm, not the exception, where people are encouraged to work together, to collaborate and share" Dalkir (2005, 186).

The knowledge management (KM) literature illustrates that “culture” has been blamed for the failure of individuals and groups to adopt practices conducive to meeting KM goals. One particular area of interest is culture and knowledge sharing (Hall, 2001; Jashaparra 2004; Pillania 2006). However, some studies in the KM literature argued that it is inefficient to blame or reference culture directly. Rather, organisations should concentrate on the role of different actors in different power relationships that are involved in the creation of that culture (Ekbia and Kling, 2003, p. 20; Hall and Goody, 2007; Wilensky *et al.*, 2008). These different power issues, such as organisational policies, should explain success or failure in attempts to encourage knowledge sharing in organisations (Hall and Goody, 2007, p.181). Kant and Singh (2008, p. 951) also identified that top management commitment and support has a high driving power and low dependency for ICT enablement of knowledge sharing. This can be understood by recognising the management political power within the organisation when implementing knowledge sharing initiatives. Furthermore, Currie *et al.*, (2008, p. 363) suggested in their research into the national health services in England regarding the successful implementation of knowledge sharing, that government policy should consider institutional power and policies together with other issues related to the nature of knowledge and professional cultures. This suggestion reflects the role and the influence of internal organisation activities on knowledge sharing such as professional culture and institutional power.

On the other hand, it is also asserted by Kelly (2007, p. 125) that, when developing successful knowledge sharing initiatives and culture, it is important to frame the relationship between access to knowledge and access to power within an overall organisational context, in which all power resources are seen to be exercised in a legitimate manner. This could enhance an environment of trust that facilitates interactions between individuals and groups in organisations.

Several other studies on knowledge sharing in the corporate and business sector addressed various cultural aspects and issues related to the impact of interactions between groups and individuals in organisations (Handzic and Agahari, 2004; Lichtenstein and Brain, 2006; King *et al.*, 2007; Issa and Hadad, 2008). For instance, the study of King *et al.*, (2007), based in South Africa, found that cultural issues, such

as language proficiency, age, work experience, gender bias, education and political power, have both a direct and indirect influence on the inclination of individuals to share knowledge in a multinational organisation. Further discussion on the various factors influencing and impacting on knowledge sharing and culture are presented later in this chapter (Section 2.5).

From the research into knowledge sharing and culture noted above, it can be seen that several research studies have explored the issue of culture and knowledge sharing in the business, corporate and governmental sectors. However, research which has explored this issue in relation to higher education institutions is limited (Dayson, 2004). The next section presents an outline of the nature of higher education institutions together with the characteristics of academic knowledge; this is followed by an examination of knowledge sharing and research studies that were conducted in higher education institutions. These issues were selected to clarify the logical foundation of this research.

2.4 Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions are organisations that have a mixture of different disciplinary contexts that are embedded in different colleges and universities (Kim and Ju, 2008; Austin, 1990). This means that the organisational culture in higher education includes a number of sub-cultures (Tierney, 1988). The culture of an academic organisation is referred to as an “academic culture” and this term is widely used in the literature (Harman, 1989; Freedman, 1980; Lu, 2002). The academic culture refers to the unique characteristics of an academic organisation’s faculties and the nature of their activities as they have overlapping subcultures: the professional, institutional and disciplinary characteristics (Austin, 1990; Clark, 1980) that shape the way academic members teach or interact with their colleagues and students (Umbach, 2007). However, there is no generic definition for the term academic culture due to the complexity of the activities within academic organisations. Lu (2002, p. 117) defined academic culture as: “the academic pursuits of scholars belonging to one discipline in one particular society.” Harman (1989, p. 36) described academic culture as: “the symbolic dimension of organizational life which embodies the occupational

life and work of academics in their different university worlds". He argued that there is no homogenous academic culture due to the fact that this is complex, elusive and difficult to comprehend.

With the development of different disciplines that exist within the academic culture, the term "discipline culture" was developed as each discipline has its own isolated groups of specialists (Becher, 1989, Clark, 1980). Clark (1980, p. 3) argued that the term "discipline culture" was created due to the "increased specialisation that the modern world witnesses in advanced occupations". He added that it "is paralleled by an increased academic division" that has created new disciplines and specialisms in academic institutions. Academic specialists feel that their department and research groups are part of their discipline and the core membership is united in departments encapsulated by their discipline (Clark, 1980).

Kogan (2000, p. 31) argued that academic identity flourishes through the intellectual self-confidence of the disciplines that academic staff belong to while Becher (1989, p. 19-20) argued that the concept of academic discipline is not a straightforward one. He stated that the concept itself is helpful in providing room for some uncertainties of application and can be convenient to represent disciplines as having distinguishable and reasonably stable identities. He explained that the discipline culture can be looked at via the structure of the higher education institution whereby the institution divides its operation based on disciplines, such as physics, engineering and education, for example. This suggests that higher education institutions are likely to be similar to any other organisations but are unique in terms of the speciality that makes them professional experts. Here, academic staff function in two major areas in higher education: teaching and research. These can depend on the nature of the academic institution and its missions and policies. In general, however, teaching and research are the most important aspects in which academic staff represent their parent institution since they are knowledge producers and re-users (Kim and Ju, 2008, p. 283).

New developments and changes in the demands made by the knowledge economy have created challenges for organisations, including higher education, which are now

placing more emphasis on valuing knowledge as the main product that will help them improve their performance or even survive in the global market place (Drucker, 2002). The challenges include: market pressures from industry (the demand to provide qualified, knowledgeable and skilled graduate employees that are needed in the labour market); the development of new technologies; and globalisation (Naidoo, 2002; Maponya, 2005; Bilosalvo and Tranvcevic, 2007, p. 276). Therefore, higher education institutions must find ways to best use their knowledge to cope with these changes and improve outcomes for both students and their own organisations in order to satisfy the market's needs. Since higher education institutions are the main producers and creators of knowledge to the community, it is important to find strategies to use the knowledge that is embedded in the organisation.

2.4.1 Characteristics of Academic Knowledge in Higher Education

The academic staff could be said to be the most important representatives of their parent institution as they are responsible for the production, creation and distribution of knowledge (Maponya, 2005; Kim and Ju, 2008). There are a number of obligations required of academic staff in any academic institution, depending on the nature and work of their institute. However, the three main obligations are: to teach students, to conduct research and to provide services relating to their discipline (Ratcliffe-Martin, 2000; Kim and Ju, 2008). Academic staff produce a huge amount of instructional material that are reserved by the academic themselves or reserved in their institutional libraries and their repositories concerning their particular subject or discipline such as their course materials, historical materials derived from courses, statistical materials, output from courses, information about their members' research interests, and professional information used in lectures, seminars, etc. Course materials and the professional experience of staff can also result in producing a relevant and meaningful curriculum and effective teaching skills (Petrides and Nodine, 2003; Kim and Ju, 2008).

Academic knowledge can be divided into two main types: tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge is intangible and is embedded in the professional experiences of learning, teaching, in practical and technical academic skills. Explicit knowledge is the

documented reports of the teaching outcomes or designs, research reports or theories, and teaching manuals and policies. These types of knowledge are considered to be a special kind of knowledge and represent the professional intellect (Quinn *et al.*, 1996).

The professional intellect, such as academic knowledge, can be considered a special form of knowledge as Quinn *et al.*, (1996, p. 71-80) asserted. According to their theoretical reasoning concerning professional work, the professional intellect of an organisation operates on four levels. These are presented below:

- Cognitive knowledge (know-what): the basic mastery of a discipline that professionals achieve through extensive training and certification.
- Advanced skills (know-how): related to the ability to apply the rules of a discipline to complex real-world problems. This is the most widespread, value-creating level of professional skills.
- System understanding (know-why): a deep knowledge of the web of cause-and-effect relationships underlying a discipline, as expressed in a highly trained institution.
- Self-motivated creativity (care-why): the will, motivation and adaptability for success. The care-why enables cognitive knowledge to be renewed and offers an understanding of the advanced skills and systems needed to compete in the rapidly changing knowledge context.

These four levels are embedded in the professional mind. However, the last one may be more strongly emphasised in the culture of the organisation (Quinn *et al.* 1996). These levels and types of tacit and explicit knowledge are considered in this research as they are more applicable to the higher education context of professional intellects.

For organisations that are adopting any knowledge-based strategies, it is important to know how the growing collective knowledge that is embedded in organisations (i.e. of know what, know who, know why, know how, know when and where, and care why) is created, captured, codified, disseminated and shared among individuals and groups to ensure the success of any knowledge initiative. This is because successful knowledge-based strategies can benefit an organisation by enabling employees to learn faster, thus saving the organisation cost while allowing it to increase its

competitive knowledge and ability (Whitehill, 1997, p 625). Furthermore, since academic knowledge can be transformed and shared in many ways and through many processes, both the level of knowledge of Quinn *et al.*, (1996) and Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) conversion mode of knowledge were adopted by the researcher to illustrate the academic type of knowledge. These are presented below:

- **Socialisation:** the process of sharing direct (know-what) cognitive knowledge of the basic mastery of a discipline that professionals achieve through seminars, discussions, brainstorming, training and informal meetings between two or more professionals in the discipline or across disciplines.
- **Externalisation:** the process of sharing advanced skills (know-how) that offers the ability to transform the cognitive knowledge of academics into a codifying mode so that their experiences and skills are on paper or in an electronic format. This can then be shared through technological channels to create knowledge for others.
- **Combination:** the process of understanding (know-why) the deep knowledge of a discipline. This involves combining explicit academic knowledge through a collection of telephone conversations, meetings and other forms of documentation relating to the discipline to create more complex knowledge which is then codified and stored to create new knowledge; this can be shared with others using technology.
- **Internalisation:** the process of self-motivated creativity (care-why). This can be seen as the will and motivation involved in acquiring relevant explicit knowledge from professionals in a discipline or from the organisational base. This may be by way of the academic libraries or through other relevant sources of knowledge in the organisation and enables the creation of new tacit knowledge.

If this valuable knowledge and information could be shared effectively among different disciplines or colleges, then staff could develop their academic knowledge

and experience, thus offering high quality teaching courses by providing unified high standard materials and effective teaching outcomes.

2.4.2 Knowledge Sharing In Higher Education

Knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the business sector has been extensively discussed by many academics and researchers (Sayed Ikhsan, 2005). However, few studies can be found in the literature concerning higher education institutions, as Dayson (2004) and Yeh (2005) asserted. New trends in knowledge management, such as the recent increased use and value of both tacit and explicit knowledge, the expanding use of knowledge management and sharing strategies to enhance innovation, and the convergence of knowledge management with business, have encouraged organisations to consider how to use their knowledge assets more efficiently and effectively (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

The new trends that were developed in many organisations, and the expansion and development of ICT, have helped in moving towards a knowledge age since knowledge can be available to everyone through technology (Drucker, 2002). Academic institutions have also adopted knowledge management strategies to promote knowledge as the business of their institutions. Some projects have been implemented in many universities to make an effective use of their information assets such as the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom that developed its own knowledge management tool called the Virtual Science Park (Ratcliffe-Martin *et al.*, 2000), the Knowledge Bank at Ohio State University libraries in the United States of America (Branin, 2003), and Robert Gordon University which established a centre for knowledge management (McManus and Loughridge, 2002).

The projects above were developed to manage their explicit knowledge to be shared with the academic community as they had more emphases on collaboration between librarians or knowledge managers and the academic staff. The other main goals of applying knowledge management and sharing strategies in higher education institutions is to increase the quality and efficiency of the learning processes, and of research and curriculum development (Kidwell *et al.*, 2000; Petrides and Nodine,

2003; Biloslavo and Trnavcevic, 2007). In order to achieve such goals, the implementation of knowledge management initiatives has become vital (Biloslavo and Trnavcevic, 2007).

A knowledge-based strategy offers sustainable development in the light of increased competition among higher education institutions everywhere, especially within developing countries (George, 2006). Therefore, both tacit and explicit knowledge has become an essential asset for all organisations and this has put pressure in recent years on higher education institutions to move forward with the new concept of knowledge management because such institutions are involved with knowledge creation, dissemination and learning. This was mentioned by both Rowley (2000) and Metaxiotis and Psarras (2003). Rowley's (2000) work was based on theoretical reasoning from revising the literature while Metaxiotis and Psarras (2003) noted why managing knowledge is essential by evaluating a successful story in Greek higher education.

One of the most important characteristics of any higher education institution is its tacit assets, such as its best practices, teaching procedures and rules. Maponya (2005, p.909) stressed that there is a need for academic staff to value the collective knowledge of academics. She argued that: "there is a need to recognise and value the collective knowledge that exists within the parent institution in order to improve teaching and learning, research, and scholarship". Furthermore, higher education institutes need to improve their teaching and research in order to satisfy the sponsors of their activities, as well as to attract potentially high-level students (Ngulube, 2005). According to Rowley (2000, p.331), "a methodology for assigning values to knowledge assets will need to be developed as this process will have two valuable outcomes":

- "An enhanced and shared understanding of the role of knowledge in the university.
- The opportunity to monitor the increases and decreases in the knowledge assets embedded in the organisation" (Rowley, 2000).

Maponya (2005, p.908) also offered suggestions concerning how higher education institutions could foster knowledge sharing. These were as follows:

- Knowledge sharing should be grounded in the existing social interactions of the activities of the higher education institutions.
- It is important to bring academics together through regular “brown-bag” seminar sessions, which can provide an opportunity for academics to share their teaching and learning experiences.
- Inter-department and inter-disciplinary collaboration should be established and a knowledge-sharing platform is essential.
- The institutional base must be made available to all members of the academic institution (Maponya, 2005).

The suggestions that were presented by Maponya (2005) can be more effective if the management encourages and supports knowledge sharing in variety of ways, such as by adding knowledge sharing to the academic job description, and/or by creating incentives and rewards in every department for those who share their knowledge. Such initiatives would encourage academic staff to share by recognising their inner motives.

2.4.2.1 Research into Knowledge Sharing in Higher Education

According to Dayson (2004) and Kim and Ju (2008), the literature reveals very few research studies concerning knowledge sharing in academic institutions. It was also recognised that few studies exist that address academics’ perceptions and attitudes towards sharing their knowledge. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth research into investigating those cultural factors that can influence individuals in higher education to share their knowledge although some previous studies have examined different aspects of knowledge sharing. Table 2.1 presents a summary of these studies and the methodologies used in assessing knowledge sharing within higher education institutions.

Authors	Major Areas	Data Gathering Method
Podrigues <i>et al.</i>, (2002)	Identifying and understanding the knowledge generation; transfer and sharing; developing a model to facilitate knowledge sharing within one department of academics	Questionnaires, observations and document analysis
Dayson (2004)	Investigation of barriers to sharing and creating knowledge with academic staff and support	Interviews and document evaluation
Ngulube (2005)	Pitfalls of not sharing knowledge through research procedures to improve research outcomes	Bibliometric research
Suhaimee <i>et al.</i>, (2006)	Exploring the current status of knowledge-sharing cultures among communities of practice	Questionnaires
Yuen and Majid (2007)	Attitudes of undergraduates towards knowledge sharing including preferred communication channels, purpose of sharing, and factors to motivate sharing knowledge	Questionnaires
Kim and Ju (2008)	Perception and attitudes of academic staff towards knowledge sharing to identify the main influential factors for sharing knowledge	Questionnaires
Shim and Roth (2008)	How professors share their tacit knowledge with their mentees	Interviews

Table 2.1: Summary of previous research into knowledge sharing in higher education

Using technology to facilitate knowledge sharing in higher education institutions within the academic community was an interest to some researchers such as Abdullah and Selamat (2007, p.220- 229) and Podrigues *et al.*, (2002, p.77- 82). Abdullah and Selamat (2007, p.220- 229) produced a groupware model to facilitate knowledge sharing and communication for faculty communities in a higher learning institution. They concentrated on the role of information technology in supporting knowledge but provided this without any empirical research. However, the research of Podrigues *et al.*, (2002, p.77- 82) produced a system that was developed within the intranet of the department which was the focus of their study. The system had a user-friendly

interface that included a database of classified scientific areas of interest. Furthermore, it had the ability to send messages to mobile phones if there were new participants in the system. The system played an important role in collecting and locating the intellectual assets of that department.

However, concentrating on technology is not enough; knowledge sharing requires more than IT facilities since sharing knowledge is oriented more to balanced approach of people and technology. Kim and Ju's research (2008), for example, did not find IT to be an important factor in sharing knowledge in higher education; instead, they found that a trust and reward system, rather than IT, was the most significant factor in enabling academics to share knowledge. However, this research cannot be generalised as the study was carried out in one private university in Korea and was a single case study; it also might not be applicable to other countries as they would have a different social context.

Nonetheless, a reward system in higher education was also considered to be an important factor that affected knowledge sharing in Malaysia where Suhaimie *et al.*, (2006, p.354-359) investigated the effect of reward on the implementation of knowledge management. They found a very low level of knowledge sharing culture and therefore argued that the top management should enforce the implementation, further recommending that job assessments, promotions and incentives would help to motivate the IT managers to share their knowledge. Ngulube (2005, p. 39-61), on the other hand, did not argue that top management should enforce knowledge sharing, as Suhaimie *et al.*, (2006) did in their research, but rather suggested that research supervisors should be encouraged to share their research experiences through teamwork and offer their knowledge to benefit the institution's vision in South Africa (Ngulube, 2005, p. 56). This recommendation could help in building a culture of knowledge sharing and in producing highly skilled research graduates. Nonetheless, top management should monitor and support the sharing of knowledge to ensure the institution's vision is realised. This, however, depends on the type of culture as some countries' cultural backgrounds require direction from the top in order to motivate individuals to share their knowledge.

Dayson (2004, p. 33- 36) investigated the barriers to sharing and creating knowledge in an Australian university and found that a lack of knowledge management awareness, lack of time, lack of a common culture and reluctance to share, were barriers to sharing knowledge in higher education. However, these outcomes also cannot be generalised as this study was carried out in only one country and was a single case study. In addition, no recommendations were offered in terms of the solutions that might be presented to break down these barriers in a higher education context. Other barriers were found by Shim and Roth (2008, p. 5- 28) who examined difficulties regarding the practice of sharing knowledge within an American university. They found that the sharing of tacit knowledge was identified as problematic among faculty members and their mentees. The difficulties were as follows: "the teaching expertise was in the form of art"; "teaching was carried out in a specific situation, thus it is difficult to separate from the situation"; "teaching expertise was habitual, and thus becomes the target of subsidiary awareness" (Shim and Roth, 2008, p. 22). These findings are interesting as subject expertise and its very nature seemed to hinder passing it on to others unless others were learning by observing their teachers.

The perceptions of undergraduate students regarding knowledge sharing behaviour were an interest, for example, Yuen and Majid (2007, p. 485-494), in Singapore. They investigated the communication channels preferred by students, the purpose of sharing knowledge, and factors that would motivate them to share knowledge. They found that students had a positive attitude towards sharing knowledge and appreciated the importance of peer learning. However, the students tended to share knowledge less in academic activities. Two main factors were shown to inhibit knowledge sharing: a sense of competition which encouraged students to outperform each other and the lack of in-depth peer relationships among students. The researchers recommended that the academics should make an effort to promote knowledge sharing through their teaching approaches, placing more emphasis on collaborative learning to avoid pointless competition among students and change the students' behaviour by encouraging them to regard colleagues as learning partners. They also recommended that the academic institution should provide informal interaction opportunities. This research could help in changing students' behaviour by encouraging them to share

their knowledge; this could improve their attitudes to learning and collaboration in their future workplace.

From the research into knowledge sharing in higher education noted above, it can be seen that very few studies examined or explored all the factors that might influence knowledge sharing practices in higher education; this could result in presenting an unclear picture of factors, such as those concerning a specific discipline, that are related to higher education. The next section presents the different factors revealed in the knowledge management literature that can influence knowledge sharing, together with steps that could be taken to create a culture in organisations where the sharing of knowledge becomes a norm. Because the final research aim is to provide an effective knowledge sharing culture for higher education institutions, it is therefore important in this study to review and investigate factors that can influence knowledge sharing.

2.5 Factors Influencing a Knowledge-Sharing Culture

Since there are few studies in higher education that have tackled issues regarding the influence of knowledge sharing initiatives, research into various organisations is presented relating to different factors that might influence the creation of a knowledge-sharing culture in higher education institutions.

Lichtenstein and Brain (2006) investigated an Australian education service provider and found that a knowledge-sharing culture cannot be successfully created without considering the strategy, structure and culture of the organisation. Smith and McKeen (2003) carried out a one-day focus group with practising senior knowledge management professionals from a variety of Canadian and American industries to explore the main characteristics of a knowledge-sharing culture and to examine how to develop and maintain an effective one. The researchers did not reach a single set of characteristics of a knowledge-sharing culture as it involves a mixture of social, organisational, managerial and technical components that need many years of continuous effort to develop. These findings are aligned by many authors and researchers in the knowledge management field which assert that knowledge sharing initiatives are influenced by a variety of individual, organisational and technological

characteristics (Davenport and Prusak 1998, p.97; Reige, 2005, p.23; Ma *et al.*, 2008, p. 104; Issa and Hadad, 2008, p. 184).

2.5.1 Individual Behavioural and Cultural Issues

Individual employees within any organisation represent an important element of the organisation's activities and so sharing knowledge among these individuals needs to be promoted through a knowledge-sharing process. There are a number of issues regarding individuals in the knowledge sharing process that need to be identified and analysed which the following section presents and analyses. These issues are trust, willingness and individual motivation; the different cultures and identities of people, including language; and the power of knowledge and job security (Davenport and Prusak, 1989; Chow *et al.*, 2000; Ford and Chan, 2003; Jashapara, 2004; Tahir *et al.*, 2006).

Trust, Willingness and Individual Behaviour

Trust, according to the psychological/behaviour perspective or the strategy/economic school, is a "willingness to be vulnerable" (Mayer *et al.*, 1995, p. 714). This means that an individual is ready to allow others to access his/her own resources (that is, his/her own intellectual, emotional and physical assets). The British Standard Institution (BSI) states that: "Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on the positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another" (BSI, 2003, p.102). Furthermore, Abrams *et al.*, (2003, p. 65) interviewed personnel in twenty organisations to identify the ways in which interpersonal trust can develop in a knowledge-sharing context. They found that interpersonal trust is a central characteristic of relationships that promote effective knowledge creation and sharing in networks.

Trust among employees in various organisations has been identified in several research studies as an important factor in knowledge sharing initiatives, such as in energy supply companies (Lucas and Ogilvie, 2006, p.18); in IT service and consultant organisations in the USA (Han and Anantatmula, 2007, p. 421-439); in large construction organisations in the USA (Issa and Hadad, 2008, p. 182-201); in a UK multinational engineering organisation (Sondergaard *et al.*, 2007, p.423-435); in

project teams in China (Ma *et al.*, 2008, p.97-108); in R&D organisations in India (Manasa and Srivastava, 2006, p. 1); and in different Bahraini organisations from both the public and the private sectors (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007, p.22- 42). From the research studies presented above, it can be concluded that the issue of trust in an organisational context can be identified as one of the most important influencing factors that helps in creating more open access to different knowledge resources, as mentioned previously (p.11).

The individual's willingness (or otherwise) to adopt the organisation's norms can be viewed as an obstacle. Lopez *et al.*, (2004, p. 101) stated that: "individuals are the main subjects of the learning process; they must adopt a sharing position and must commit themselves to meeting the aims of the organization". This emphasises that individuals who cannot adapt to the organisation's values and norms represent an obstacle to the organisation's culture. If the failure of individuals to adapt is on a large enough scale, this could have a significant impact on knowledge sharing and the work or performance of teams. The importance of an individual's willingness to share his/her knowledge is described by Levin *et al.*, (2002, p. 8) as being "about creating an environment in which people are able to discern whether their colleagues are both knowledgeable and willing to extend their knowledge to benefit the others".

Individual willingness can also be affected by gender. Connelly and Kelloway (2003), for example, investigated perceptions concerning management support for a knowledge-sharing culture using questionnaires with part-time MBA postgraduate students in four Canadian universities. They found that: "Women are more sensitive to the social interaction culture" in sharing knowledge in their organisation. They also recommended that more exploration and further research should be carried out in this area to understand reasons for this. Connelly and Kelloway (2003) offered the possibility that, because females might hold less advantageous positions in organisations, they might be hesitant to share knowledge with colleagues if they believed that they would dilute their power (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003, p.300). Connelly and Kelloway's results (2003) could also indicate that the inner motivation of these females concerned the desire to be secure or for reasons of self-esteem; this issue is recognised by the theory of needs (content theory) which can have an effect

on an individual's behaviour in organisations (Maslo, 1954; Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; McGregor, 1960; Cole, 1995). The willingness to share knowledge can also depend on the motivation or personal interest of the individual.

Cultural Differences, Identities and National Culture

Culture, as mentioned earlier in the previous chapter (p.2), is a term that can be applied to any collective human category: an organisation, a profession, an age group, an entire gender, or a family (Hofstede, 1997, p. 12) and understanding culture helps in explaining differences in individual behaviours and identities. The literature indicates that culture influences individual behaviour. For example, Craig and Douglas (2006, p. 322) argued that culture has a deep influence on all characteristics of human behaviour and that one of the main characteristics of culture is its norms and values: “Norms are the culturally prescribed ways or patterns of behavior that a society expects of its ‘normal’ members. Going against the norm is usually referred to as ‘deviant behavior’” (Kidd, 2002, p.17). The notion of values, on the other hand, refers to the normal behavioural patterns people attempt to achieve.

Hofstede (2001, p.10) argued that there are visible and invisible manifestations of culture and stated that it is important to understand these in order to describe culture. Values are the invisible part of a culture until they become evident in behaviour and symbols (clothes and hairstyles, brand names), heroes (role models) and rituals (social and religious ceremonies); these represent the visible part of the culture or, in other words, cultural practices so values are, in effect, the core of the culture (Hofstede, 2001, p.10).

The culture of a nation is widely referred to in the literature as the national culture and this is one of the main drivers of individual behaviour in a society. The term is used widely but an exact definition of national culture is still missing in the literature. However, Hofstede's definition of national culture is one of the most popular, widely used, definitions. He defined national culture as: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). Hofstede argued that, in this context, the “mind” encompasses thinking, feeling and acting (and so consists of the head, the heart and

the hands); as a result, it affects values, beliefs, attitudes and skills. Furthermore, Mammadov and Galusca (2005, p.33) argued that national culture is: " the synthesis of cultures of different layers and groups of one society. The individuality of a national culture, its originality and unique qualities, are expressed in the spiritual and material spheres of life and activity. The awareness of belonging to a culture is quite high among individuals, thus it is often easy to spot the differences between national cultures". However, Wagner and Moch (1986) suggested that there could be different qualitative values within particular national cultures that need to be examined.

The characteristic of subcultures can be found within one national culture that demonstrates highly collectivist behaviour. Straub *et al.*, (2002) argue that individuals are bounded by many types of sub-cultures such as ethnic groups, economic groups and other groups, and these sub-cultures affect interactions. For example, individuals from such cultures may show that belonging and loyalty to their in-groups are stronger than to out-groups from the same national culture, as is often found in the Arabian Gulf countries (Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996, p.130).

Cultural differences among individuals within an organisation represent an obstacle to effective knowledge exchange and sharing because of the different values and norms they have. This problem is important in international organisations particularly and was investigated by von Krogh *et al.*, (2000, p.323). They stated: " a big obstacle to both internal and external knowledge exchange in India was the cultural differences between the Indian and Western partners. While highly qualified Swiss engineers considered their practical approach of "getting down to it" an essential part of the work, their Indian colleagues were eager not to be associated with the "boilersuit men" on the shop floor" (von Krogh *et al.*, 2000, p. 232). Furthermore, a similar finding was noted by Sackmann and Friesl (2007, p. 142-156) who explored cultural influences on knowledge sharing in project teams. They found that the different cultural backgrounds of team members, due to different ethnicities, genders, national cultures or functions, created a context of cultural complexity that had a negative effect on knowledge sharing.

Several models of national culture have been developed in the literature to "compare the similarities and differences between two or more cultures" (Hoft, 1996, p.41) and

many more models exist such as those of Hofstede (1980); Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2001); and Hall (1989); these are all multi-dimension models. Other models are single dimension models such as Fackyoma's analysis of trust model (Morden, 1999) which compares societies in terms of the characteristics of high and low trust culture. Hofstede's model, which was based on thirty years' experience of quantitative research for the IBM Company, is used widely to identify different country dimensions and types in organisations (Hofstede, 1980; Hoft, 1996). Hofstede carried out research into large multinational organisations in 72 countries between 1967 and 1973, resulting in a total of 116,000 completed questionnaires in 20 languages (Hofstede, 2001, p. 41). He identified, by statistical analysis and theoretical reasoning, five main dimensions on which differences in the cultures of countries were revealed. He labelled these five main dimensions as: power distance (people within a society are unequal in terms of their social status); uncertainty avoidance (the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown factor and how comfortable people are with ambiguity); masculinity and femininity (gender roles and identities); long- versus short-term orientation (respect for hierarchy in the status of relationships, together with a sense of shame and thrift, showing respect for tradition, protecting reputations, and the reciprocation of greetings) (Hofstede, 1980).

Finally, Hofstede's fifth dimension is individualism and collectivism. This is "the relationship between the individual and the collective that prevails in a given society" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 209). Studies also have shown that people from collectivist cultures display a greater tendency to cooperate within their groups (Cox *et al.*, 1991; Wanger, 1995). In contrast, members of an individualist culture tend to define themselves as autonomous entities, independent of the group; they have a tendency to place their own needs before the needs of the group and are likely to be more competitive. For example, in Western individualist societies, converting from one ideology to another, or from one religion to another, can be seen as a mainly individual act (Hofstede, 2001, p. 210), with the history of great religions being one of collective rather than individual conversions (Hofstede, 2001, p. 210). This may explain the high level of collectivism in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) nations as they have one main religion (Islam) that influences, to a great extent, the unity of those countries.

In the Individualism and Collectivism dimension, Kuwait scored the lowest as an individualist culture from among the GCC countries in Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza's 1996 research while the GCC countries scored the same in both Hofstede's and in Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza's study: the score was 38. This indicates that the life changes that have taken place since Hofstede's research in the 1970s did not change the value individuals still placed on their groups or tribes; this reflects a high collective culture within their groups (Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996, p. 127). The Kuwaiti tradition of placing trust in and showing loyalty to their groups or tribes can influence their behaviour in organisations as they may place their groups' interest and benefits above the interests of the organisation. This attitude can affect knowledge sharing practices as trust has been identified as one of the most important factors in the success of communication and interaction between in-groups in Kuwaiti organisations; it can also constitute a barrier to out-group members. A further implication is that there are some tribal values that restrict females' communications and interactions with others; this can also affect the practice of knowledge sharing. In fact, many studies concerning Kuwaiti organisations have identified managerial problems relating to traditional Kuwaiti values (Metle, 2002; Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2002; Al-Mughni, 2001).

In another collectivist country in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia), it was found that the culture of the public higher education was affected by cultures external to and beyond their academic culture. With regard to this, Dedoussis (2004, p. 30) noted that the culture at KFUPM (King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals) in Saudi Arabia reflected the broader societal values of Saudi Arabia, values that are largely those of the Arabic culture. He identified respect for authority and hierarchical relationships, obedience, loyalty and compliance, and found that the University's culture also reflected the "affiliation-oriented nature of Arab culture and concern for strong interpersonal relationships." It can therefore be understood that academic culture and disciplines can be influenced by the cultural background of individuals and their personalities in a way that can affect an academic organisational culture just like in other organisations. However, Ford and Chan (2003, p. 24) argued that if the organisational culture is strong, it can overcome the limitations caused by the influences of other cultures. This may well be so as among the main factors that affect

the success of any new implementation, such as knowledge-sharing initiatives in organisations, are strong management style, good leadership and a reward system, as mentioned earlier (Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007; Sondegaard *et al.*, 2007).

A considerable number of studies have been carried out on the influences of national culture on knowledge sharing between different countries and within multicultural organisational settings. This is because one of the issues that must be addressed in studying organisations is the influence of national culture on the individual's behaviour within the environment of the organisation itself (Sweeney and Hardaker, 1994; Joiner, 2001; Craig and Douglas, 2005). These studies include: Michailova and Hutchings (2006); Tahir *et al.*, (2006); Chow *et al.*, (2000); William *et al.*, (2007); Ford and Chan (2003); Crowston *et al.*, (2007). However, a review of the literature reveals a very limited number of studies on the influence of national culture on knowledge sharing within the context of a single national culture in organisations. As a result, researchers such as Michailova and Hutchings (2006, p. 400) recommended that studying different values within the same culture in relation with knowledge sharing in groups and organisations deserved the attention of researchers in order to provide credible alternatives on the influence of national culture.

Regarding the recommendation noted above, two studies have recently been conducted in both governmental (Yao *et al.*, 2007) and private organisations (Ma *et al.*, 2008) using different methods of data collection. Both had similar outcomes. Yao *et al.*, (2007) found that employees welcomed the idea of sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge as it took place but the Chinese culture was a barrier to knowledge sharing. The results indicated that some Chinese characteristics, such as politeness, humility, shyness and lack of confidence, prevented Chinese employees from speaking and confronting others when needed, and this hindered the process of knowledge sharing (Yao *et al.*, 2007, p. 64). Ma *et al.*, (2008) also noted certain Chinese cultural characteristics of face saving, face gaining and guanxi orientation (Chinese relationship network). They found that these cultural characteristics had a significant effect on the intention to share knowledge. While neither of these research studies can be generalised as they are limited to the Chinese context, they could serve

as a base for other research in the field of knowledge management in order to investigate other countries that have distinctive cultural characteristics.

Another important issue regarding different cultures and identities within multi-cultural groups in a single organisation, whether national or international, is that lack of proficiency in different languages might be one of the factors that could hinder knowledge sharing within the organisation (Reige, 2005). For example, Ford and Chan's research (2003, p.11-27) into knowledge sharing in a multi-cultural setting showed that the language of employees represented a barrier to knowledge sharing when there was a mixture of English and Japanese employees. A great deal of knowledge was lost, either through translation or through the difficulty of articulating knowledge in a second language (Ford and Chan, 2003, p. 23). Davenport and Prusak (1998, p. 96) also argued that different cultures and languages could be said to be one of the frictions that affect the culture of knowledge transfer. Language proficiency is also one of the main factors to have a negative influence on the practice and interaction of knowledge sharing as academic knowledge in higher education institutions cannot be presented in other languages unless it is translated. It can also hinder the participation of academic staff in attending conferences or writing or sharing experiences with other academics in the same field.

Power of Knowledge and Job Security

The critical problem facing knowledge management, which includes the knowledge-sharing process, is that knowledge is often seen as power (Zack, 1999; Al-Athari and Zairi, 2001; Maponya, 2005). So, an employee may hold on to his/her knowledge or information to ensure that he/she is indispensable (Zack, 1999; Al-Athari and Zairi, 2001; Abrams *et al.* 2003; Maponya, 2005; Plessis, 2006). Reige (2005, p.24) argue that: "in the old school of thinking where profitability was reflected by an organisation's output, knowledge hoarding rather than sharing was believed to benefit career advancement". Petrides and Nguyen (2006, p.28) also outlined a critical challenge to the sharing of knowledge. They stated that: "...cultural issues associated with information hoarding and overall disincentives for sharing and cross-functional cooperation can undermine KM implementation strategies in educational institutions". Furthermore, Biloslavo and Trnavcevic (2007, p. 278) asserted that

knowledge is considered to be private property by many academic staff and this can hinder the process of sharing knowledge. This situation can be imagined in many organisations in real life as some older employees with a long history of previous experience can fear sharing their knowledge. However, increasing awareness of the value of knowledge and sharing in various organisations including higher education institutions can reduce the fear of losing power (Maponya, 2005; Lee, 2005). Thus, higher education institutes need to set up a motivation strategy to encourage those who are reluctant to share their knowledge (Maponya, 2005; Suhaimie *et al.*, 2006).

2.5.2 Organisational Cultural Issues

There are many organisational cultural factors concerning the practice of knowledge sharing that reflect the culture of organisations, such as the structure and size of the organisation; management support and leadership; and the reward system and recognition that could motivate employees to share knowledge (Jashapara, 2004; Syed-Ikhsan, 2005; Pillania, 2006; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Hall and Goody, 2007). Hall (2001a) commented on the supporting role of culture concerning knowledge creation and transfer by stating: “It is the culture of the organization that supports or impedes knowledge creation and transference both internally and to its customers” (Hall, 2001a, p. 20).

The above statements acknowledge the importance of taking organisational culture into consideration in any design or strategy for managing knowledge. Further to this, Park (2005, p. 155) argued that organisations should deal with issues of culture before implementing knowledge management strategies while Pillania (2006, p.119) confirmed the importance of the role of an organisation’s culture in the success of knowledge management initiatives. He stated that: “Organisational culture is one of the major reasons behind failures of KM initiatives and it has become crucial for successful knowledge management” (Pillania, 2006, p. 119).

An organisation’s authorities need to establish practices and strategies that reflect the organisation’s own culture; they should avoid directly copying practices that have been developed for different ones (McDermott and O’Dell, 2001, p. 85). Furthermore, the organisational surroundings of societal cultures need to be taken into consideration

in any cultural analysis (Joiner, 2001, p. 240). This is due to the differences in national, organisational and individual cultures (Morden, 1999, p.19).

Structure and Size of the Organisation

The hierarchical structure of an organisation can affect knowledge-sharing activities in respect to the flow of knowledge (Riege, 2005; Plessis, 2006). Riege (2005, p. 31) argued that flat hierarchical structures and open organisational structures play an important role in knowledge flow within organisations; they also provide a culture of continuous learning. Handzic and Agahari (2004, p. 135-142), who carried out an exploratory study of a knowledge sharing culture in a large Australian consulting firm, found that organisational structures had a major effect on knowledge-sharing behaviour. They discovered that a high level of knowledge sharing, where managers and superiors interact together both formally and informally, gave employees a sense of motivation. They also noted that an open office workplace, where workers of all levels were located within the same environment, aided the sharing of knowledge. Moreover, Al-Alawi *et al.*, (2007, p. 38) offered, in their research recommendations, that a flat structure within an organisation could be a facilitator for interaction and the sharing of knowledge as this could increase the level of participation in decision making and could reduce: "the boundaries between organisational levels to enable easier information flow vertically".

The other important organisational issue that, it is argued, influences knowledge sharing is the size of an organisation (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Reige, 2005). It is argued that the organisation's size plays an important role in locating the existing knowledge and in getting it to where it is needed; it can also influence the effectiveness of the knowledge-sharing culture (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Connelly and Kelloway, 2003). The organisation is where all the actors interact to achieve the organisation's goals and missions and it is argued, based on empirical studies in a British oil firm company by Davenport and Prusak (1998) that small and medium enterprises of two to three hundred employees tend to be more active in generating and sharing knowledge. The population and geographic location of such enterprises tend to encourage social interaction. As a result, employees are closer and good communications contribute to facilitate knowledge sharing (Davenport and Prusak,

1998, p. 17; Riege 2005, p. 22). However, a study conducted by McAdam and Reid (2001, p. 231) comparing the perceptions of large and small to medium-sized organisations regarding knowledge management initiatives, found that large organisations were more developed than small and medium-sized ones in terms of implementing such initiatives. McAdam and Reid (2001) found in their research that the main reason for this was that large organisations had a greater understanding and recognition of the benefits and use of knowledge management. This indicates that not all small organisations can implement successful knowledge-sharing activities unless they have a high level of awareness of the benefits of knowledge management in creating a knowledge-sharing culture.

The Role of Management and Leadership

The role of management support in organisations is recognised to be a significant factor in creating a knowledge sharing culture and managerial behaviour is one of the key issues in correcting problems that are related to sharing knowledge (Abrams *et al.*, 2003; Connelly and Kelloway, 2003; Voelpel and Han, 2005). Using 126 questionnaires, Connelly and Kelloway (2003, p.298) explored the importance of management in creating a knowledge sharing culture and found that this could be achieved by managers acting as role models to their employees in terms of knowledge sharing by supporting any activities that enhanced such sharing. This includes supporting, within the organisation, training programmes and face-to-face social interactions with more knowledgeable colleagues. Such activities lead to knowledge sharing and improve the environment for social interaction within the organisation. Alalawi *et al.*, (2007, p. 37) suggested that improving office design in some organisations could encourage higher levels of communication and interaction among staff.

From the employees' point of view, Connelly and Kelloway's (2003) research suggested that employees generally wish to acquiesce to management directions and organisational rules to achieve their goals: "employees are interested in acting in accordance with management direction" (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003, p.298). Furthermore, Smith (2001, p. 317) argued, after reviewing three companies, that if management does not make any clear statements regarding knowledge sharing,

employees are likely to share only explicit knowledge because this is easier to codify, document and transfer.

Leadership characteristics are also recognised as an important factor in the success of creating a knowledge culture and in knowledge sharing (Hasanali, 2002; Tiwana, 2002; Handzic and Agahari, 2004; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Sondegaard *et al.*, 2007). Trice and Beyer (2001, p. 264) asserted that: "leadership can create, change, embody, or integrate the cultures of organisations" while Oliver and Kandadi (2006, p. 12) suggested that: "empowering subordinates, allocation of resources, openness towards change and experimentation, developing trust, tolerance to mistakes and building long- term perspective of the organizational goals among employees" are the attributes of positive leadership. Furthermore, Sondegaard *et al.*, (2007, p. 429) argued that: "The leaders act as role-models for the manner in which knowledge sharing occurs, as well as setting the incentives for doing so. The leaders furthermore facilitate networks of knowledgeable members of the organisation and provide best practice of coordination and collaboration activities".

Reward System and Recognition

The literature of knowledge management and sharing has recognised that the organisational reward systems motivate employees to share knowledge in organisations (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006; Plessis, 2006). Chow *et al.*, (2000, p.12) found in their research that individuals within an organisational context respond to a reward system. This highlights the idea that individuals react according to their own benefits and losses. They stated: "individuals are responsive to the company's performance-evaluation and reward system" (Chow *et al.*, 2000, p.12). Furthermore, a research study into higher education in Malaysia also identified that the incentives of an annual bonus, holiday trip or special vacations for academics, highly contributed to the knowledge-sharing process and represented a motivator for knowledge sharing (Suhaimie *et al.*, 2006, p.357).

However, this is not always the case; there are always individuals within the organisation that may not respond to a direct financial reward system. They may, however, respond to other forms of motivation, such as peer recognition and in

gaining a greater reputation (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Hall, 2001b; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006, p.15; Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007). A study by Lucas and Ogilvie (2006) argued that reputation and the culture of the organisation are significant factors in knowledge transfer within an organisation and have a positive impact. This, however, must depend on the type of culture as each culture has its own way of doing things. They also argued that the main practical implication of this finding was that knowledge transfer and sharing "is a social activity occurring within a social context" (Lucas and Ogilvie, 2006, p.7).

2.5.3 Technological Issues

It is well established in the literature that technology and IT constitute one of the main elements of the organisational knowledge management system besides the employees and the organisation's processes (Tiwana, 2002; Awad and Ghazi, 2004). There are now many different kinds of new technologies and communication or media channels that will allow knowledge to be captured, codified and retrieved. These include: knowledge repositories, groupware, the Internet, Intranets, video and telephone conferencing. These can facilitate communication and interaction between individuals within organisations as well as facilitating organisational learning and the sharing of knowledge (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003, p. 296; Dalkir, 2005, p. 226; Rehman, 2005, p. 215; Han and Anantamula, 2007, p. 432).

The literature argues that developments and changes in technologies also require organisational changes to be made in order to ensure the effective use of technology to facilitate knowledge sharing. For example, Hall and Goody (2007, p. 183) argued that it is not enough to install new technological hardware as the organisations must also address the social contexts of the implementation as well as the use of the technology. These contexts include cultural issues in terms of the implementation of technology and the adaptation of the organisation's processes. Developments in communication technology have also helped to break down physical barriers and have facilitated communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. This was the conclusion from Craig and Douglas's (2005, p.338) work in analysing literature from different perspectives of culture-related communication. In addition, developments in CMC (computer mediated communication) (Handzic and Lee, 2005),

such as Web 2.0, have facilitated communication and knowledge sharing in organisations as it is much more dynamic internet computing where people in an organisation can connect their ideas and can increase the content development (Levy, 2007).

The main barriers to the implementation and use of technology in knowledge-sharing processes in an organisation may include an unwillingness on the part of employees to use these applications because of the following reasons: a mismatch between the technology and the needs or requirements of employees; unrealistic expectations of the technology; lack of technical support for immediate maintenance; a lack of training to ensure familiarity with new IT systems; difficulties in building, integrating and modifying technology-based systems; and poor design and usability (Riege, 2005; Smith and Mackeen, 2005).

From a motivational point of view, technology is the last and least important motivator for knowledge sharing (Smith and McKeen, 2005, p. 12). Instead, there is an emphasis on issues concerning organisational culture as the main motivators for knowledge sharing while technology is presented as a facilitating tool (Cross and Baird, 2000; Hall, 2006).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the basic concepts of knowledge sharing. In addition, the chapter reviewed research studies that have been carried out in relation to knowledge sharing and the cultural factors that affect the success of a knowledge-sharing culture. The main factors that affect success include the individual, the organisation and technological aspects. A critical evaluation of the literature revealed that most attention to date has been paid to culture within the organisation, as opposed to the impact and influence of external cultural factors, such as national cultural traits. More attention has also been paid to western business environments as opposed to eastern academic institutions; furthermore, there are limited references to gender. This work attempts to fill this knowledge gap. After reviewing a range of research studies that were conducted in higher education institutions, it can be concluded that there is also

a gap in the literature as no in-depth studies exist which are related to creating a knowledge-sharing culture in higher education. Also, according to Kim and Ju (2008), a review of the literature reveals a lack of in-depth research into the factors that influence knowledge sharing in higher education institutions. Moreover, there is no comprehensive research that concentrates on knowledge sharing in public higher education institutions in Kuwait. A gap was also found in relation to in-depth or comprehensive studies concerning the influences of organisational culture on knowledge sharing in higher education as most of the studies were conducted in other organisations rather than in an academic institute. Moreover, there were few references to the issue of subcultures or the influence of one national culture on knowledge sharing in general. This study endeavours to contribute to filling this gap in the Kuwaiti context. The research background is presented in the next chapter in order to introduce the Kuwaiti culture, national culture and the public organisations; a description of Kuwait higher education is then offered.

Chapter Three

Research Context and Background

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a background to the State of Kuwait to help in understanding its current situation. The chapter focuses on two main characteristics of the State namely its national culture and the higher education institutions. This chapter is used as a base for this study and is divided into two sections: the first section discusses the geographical, historical, demographical, cultural and governmental features of Kuwait, while the second section introduces Kuwaiti public organisations and describes the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET) as this is the focus of the study.

3.2 The State of Kuwait

This section provides a description of the State of Kuwait in terms of its geography, religion, population, national culture, economy and public organisations; this also includes the public higher education institutions.

3.2.1 Geography

Kuwait is an Arabic Islamic country that is situated in the south west of Asia (the Middle East). It is located to the northeast of Saudi Arabia, to the south of Iraq and at northern end of the Arabian Gulf. Kuwait is ruled historically by the Al-Sabah family, the head of the State is a sheikh and is referred to as the Ammer (Prince) of the State. The total area of Kuwait is 6,880 sq. miles (17,819 sq. kms). See Figure 3.1 (Information Please Database, 2006).



Figure 3.1: Map of the State of Kuwait (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008)

3.2.2 Language

Arabic is the official language of the State of Kuwait and is the language that is spoken in government. English is the State's second language as it is taught in schools from grade one (starting from age 6) onwards and is therefore widely spoken and used (Kuwaiti offshore service, 2005).

3.2.3 Religion

The official religion in Kuwait is Islam, as the vast majority of the population (85%) is Muslim. There are two main Islamic sects in the State: Sunnis represent 70% of the State's Muslims while Shias account for 30%. The State also has other religions

such as Christianity, Hinduism and Parsi. These represent 15% of the population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

3.2.4 Population

The State's population, as recorded in government statistics up to the end of 2007, is 3,399,637. The majority of the population is made up of foreign workers as they represent nearly two thirds (2,345,039) of the population in Kuwait while Kuwaiti citizens represent nearly a quarter (1,054,598) (PACI, 2007). It is also worth mentioning that the labour force consists of a total of 2,092,509 people although Kuwaiti citizens amount to less than a quarter (324,304) of these (PACI, 2007). The non-Kuwaiti workers are mostly from other Arab countries as well as from India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines. The reason for this is the shortage of human capital in Kuwait so foreign workers are brought into the country to take up positions in the skilled and technical professions in both the Kuwaiti governmental and private sectors. Thus, Kuwaiti society is a mixture of various national groups.

3.2.5 Economy

Since the discovery of oil in 1934, Kuwait's economy has been highly developed to become one of the largest oil producing countries in the world. It is considered to be one of the richest countries and to have the highest standard of living in the world (Kuwait Information Centre, 2004; Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2007). Kuwait also has oil reserves of about 104 billion barrels or 10% of the total oil reserves in the world. Moreover, in 2007, the State of Kuwait changed its currency peg from the US dollar to a basket of currencies to reduce its openness to external shocks to its economy (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

3.2.6 National Culture

The literature review suggests that each nation has its own culture (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, it is difficult to establish a generic national cultural model that can be applied and used to analyse highly complex cultural and sub-cultural differences. This

difficulty emphasises the need for any study that is related to national culture to understand, evaluate and analyse the implications of the national culture on organisations. Some research, such as that of Al-Kazemi and Ali (2002, p. 374), stressed, in research based on Kuwaiti organisations, that the main managerial problems in Kuwaiti organisations are related to the cultural traditions, norms and practices of employees, together with government policies and priorities.

The following section presents and discusses dimensions of the Kuwaiti culture in order to provide an overview of the main factors that contribute to and influence this culture.

3.2.6.1 Elements of Kuwaiti Culture

As an Arab country, Kuwait shares many cultural values with other Arab nations, such as the Islamic religion, the Arabic language and history. Kuwait has many social characteristics close to those of other Gulf Co-operation Council Countries (GCC) due to their tribal origins and their highly collectivist behaviour (Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996). Wilkins (2001, p. 265) argued that the nations of the Arab world have their own unique culture and this cannot be ignored in any analysis of an organisation. This argument is mainly due to the sharing of a number of cultural values and norms. In this research, it was important to develop a Kuwaiti cultural template as the Kuwaiti culture has many elements that influence the behaviour of individuals in Kuwaiti organisations. For example, these include Bedouin traditions (tribal origins), traditional values in terms of gender issues, religious issues and factors concerning the authority of government. Furthermore, there are issues regarding non-Kuwaitis who are working in Kuwait. These elements are presented below in order to describe the Kuwaiti context.

Tribal (Bedouin) issues

In Arabic, Bedu (plural) and Badawi mean 'dweller of the desert' or 'nomad' (Al-Sabah, 2001, p. 23) and the characteristics of the Bedouin culture today represent an essential element of the Arab culture (Abu-Zied, 1987, p. 22). Al-Mughni (2001, p. 20) emphasised the importance of understanding the Bedouin culture since it has a major influence on the political and social life of Kuwaiti society and its

organisations. Bedouins historically moved from one place to another in large groups, searching for green areas and water for themselves and for their animals. Although modern Bedouin society has changed in the oil era, as its members are no longer always on the move, many of the traditional features of the Bedouin culture, such as kinship, continue to be firmly entrenched (Al-Mughni, 2001, p. 20).

Therefore, the Bedouin tribes have strong kin relationships and powerful values such as loyalty and trust to each other within their groups. They also place restrictions on females within the family and within the tribe they support each other (within the group) no matter what, even when tribe members have done something wrong. These values stem from the nature of their culture and their living environment. Such strong kin relationships are still cherished today and are still part of the Bedouins' activities in their traditions and values (Al-Sabah, 2001, p. 25). Al-Sabah (2001, p. 15) also notes that the tribes have kept: "the traditional value system of the desert and thus maintained the important tribal principle of genealogy as the basis of their stratification system", as this stratification was based on high social position in terms of genealogy and wealth. Ali (1996, p.6) describes the Arab culture as traditional and conservative, and notes that this society still has: "commitments to honour, honesty, respect for parents and older persons, loyalty to one's primary group, hospitality and generosity". Al-Mughni (2001, p. 188) agrees that the structure of the State of Kuwait is still based on the tribal cultural system of Ashira (the tribe).

Furthermore, one traditional aspect of Bedouin culture is that members hold strong views concerning women's interactions with men; it is not the norm for Bedouin women to interact with males apart from their close male relatives or "Mohram" (i.e. a husband, father, brother or uncle). In fact, any interaction outside the Mohram is considered a crime according to Bedouin cultural values (Abu-Zied, 1987; Al-Sabah, 2001) and this tradition is still part of their social behaviour. The main reasons behind this are religious and cultural. Another significantly large group in Kuwaiti society is called Al-Hadar. Their "lifestyles are based in and around settled communities; they are those who are permanently settled" (Bauder, 2004). They do not share the same strict values of the Bedouin culture as they are more open to new ideas and to change. Nonetheless, Bedouin society represents a large proportion of Kuwaiti culture and its

values can influence the workplace as Bedouins work in every part of most Kuwaiti organisations, including in higher education institutions. Therefore, in this study, it was important to examine academics' attitudes and interactions with other members in the organisation and consider how this might affect and influence the knowledge-sharing practices in PAAET.

In the next section, interactions between the sexes, and especially attitudes towards women, are examined. This helps in understanding Kuwaiti behaviour towards women in general in organisations; it also benefits this study as the practice of knowledge sharing requires formal and informal communication and interaction with and among employees of both genders; it is necessary to see how the Kuwaiti culture deals with these factors in PAAET.

Gender issues

To understand gender issues in Kuwait, it is first important to discuss the changes that have taken place in the lives of women during both the period before the discovery of oil and afterwards. This has helped in shaping the development of women in terms of their education and their importance as a part of society. Research into gender issues in Kuwait are also reviewed to help in understanding the attitudes of Kuwaitis towards women.

As mentioned above, the lives and experiences of Kuwaiti women can be divided into two distinct periods that represent dramatic changes for them. The first period was the pre-oil era (before the 1950s) while the second period was after 1960. The pre-oil era represented oppression and hardship for women since, during this period, Kuwaiti families lived in towns built of mud, divided into quarters, and surrounded by thick walls to prevent Bedouin raids (Al-Mughni, 2001, p. 42). The second period, starting in the 1960s and after the discovery of oil, represents the beginning of modern Kuwait society. This could be termed the "Birth of Women's Societies" in Kuwait according to Al-Mughni (2001, p. 68). This research noted that, at this time, women from the merchant class had almost everything they had ever wished for: they discarded the veil, studied at the best foreign universities, took up paid employment, and drove cars.

This represented a revolutionary period for Kuwaiti women compared with the lives of their mothers.

Since the development of women's education in Kuwait and the GCC countries, a considerable amount of research has been carried out into the role of women and their interactions with men. Al-Mughni's research (2001) suggests that the perceptions, images, rights and roles of women have been affected by two main factors: religion and the traditional Arabian or Bedouin culture that has been passed down from one generation to another, as mentioned earlier. These factors have created values, norms and traditions regarding the position of women within the minds of individuals.

Another research study was conducted by Metle (2002, p.256) on the influence of traditional culture on attitudes towards work among Kuwaiti women employees in the public sector. This study found that: "Kuwaiti women employees in the governmental sector are negatively affected by Kuwaiti tradition and culture". In contrast, Askar and Ahmad's research (2003) on the main factors concerning attitudes towards Kuwaiti women occupying supervisory positions, found that there is a relatively positive attitude towards Kuwaiti women working in such positions. They also found that gender is a significant factor in determining such attitudes: females had more positive attitudes than males. This suggests that the position of women in Kuwait is developing continuously as a result of their social, economic and educational levels, as well as their interactions with other cultures because of advances in communications and transport. However, male attitudes and their dominant behaviour remain a challenge for the future roles of women and their contributions to society. Thus, the influences of traditional Kuwaiti culture cannot be ignored in any further studies about women or gender issues in Kuwait.

As shown above, a significant number of research studies have been carried out on attitudes towards women in organisations but no research exists on issues related to knowledge-sharing practices and gender in the Kuwaiti context.

Religious issues

Islam is the main religion of the State of Kuwait and religion in the Arab world is an influential force that: "moulds and regulates individual and group behaviour and outlook" (Ali, 1996, p. 6). Islam is a way of life that aims to produce a unique personality and a distinct culture in a society (Haneef, 1979; Esposito, 1991). This means that individuals who behave according to Islamic instructions create a group with common values and norms. It is clear that religion can affect the attitudes of people in a society and this can manifest itself as collectivism where the interest of the group comes before the interest of the individual (Al-Twajiri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996; Hofstede, 2001). In turn, this can facilitate the flow of knowledge, cooperation and interaction between individuals. Furthermore, Ali (1996) also noted the importance of the Islamic work ethic, as preached by the Prophet Mohammed, that no one eats better than he that eats from his work (Jasim, 1978, Ali, 1996). This work ethic has an influence on both individuals and organisations. Therefore, it is important to analyse and understand the influences of Islamic life on individual employees in this study to know whether or not they influence the practices of knowledge sharing in a Kuwaiti institution.

Islam and its five basic obligations of faith, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage are still fundamental to Kuwaiti society. Indeed, this is categorically stated in Article 2 of the Constitution: "The religion of the State is Islam, and Islamic Law shall be one of the main sources of legislation" (Royal Scottish Museum, 1985). Furthermore, Islam is open to interpretation as Metle (2002, p. 250) stressed: "it is important to see Islam as a disquisition which defines a set of rules and practices that are important in shaping gender relations". Sidani (2004, p. 508) argued that some strict scholars in Saudi Arabia have provided religious justifications for various cultural values and norms and that the main drivers for these justifications are due to their cultural background. The significant role of Muslim scholars (the Ulama) was emphasised in Sidani's research (2004, p. 508) on women's work and how it is affected by interpretations of Islam. He argued that the cultural impact of religious understanding has led to a lack of economic involvement on the part of Muslim women. Table 3.1 presents the discourse of some Islamic scholars (Ulama) and of some Arab feminists, showing the different attitudes towards women. All these different interpretations can

have an influence on men's attitudes concerning having women as colleagues in the work place.

Ulamas' (Scholars') discourse	
<p>Traditional Ulama (e.g. Binbaz -Saudi Arabia)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Satisfaction with women staying at home and devoting their lives to their families. ⇒ Woman can work in certain "female" jobs only. ⇒ Engagement of women in "male-dominated areas" should not be permitted. ⇒ Strict separation between men and women should be observed. ⇒ Face veil must be worn.
<p>Modernist Ulama (e.g. Al-Ghazalli - Egypt)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Dismayed by the situation of women in Arab societies and the lack of their economic and political participation. ⇒ Women's work and participation should be encouraged and welcomed.
Feminist discourse	
<p>Mernissi (Morocco)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Islamic societies have developed institutions that attempt to contain women and control their power. ⇒ "Male elite" refuses to understand the economic dimension of females and exploits them in work situations. ⇒ Prevailing Muslim thinking uses space as a device for sexual control and exploitation.
<p>Ra'auf (Egypt)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Advancement of women's causes requires a revival of Islamic thought and a renewal within Islamic jurisprudence. ⇒ The veil (headscarf) is a means of liberation not oppression as it neutralises women's sexuality in the public sphere. ⇒ Women have a role to play in both the private (family) and the public (economic and political) spheres. ⇒ Each woman should be given the choice between different roles at different stages of her life.

Table 3.1: Ulamas' discourse vs feminist discourse (Sidani, 2005, p.509)

Governmental issues

The rapid expansion of Kuwait's economic wealth has led to many social developments and good progress is being made in terms of governmental activities; these include improvements in health services and education, and in advancing the role of women in society, as the Kuwaiti Prime Minister noted in one of his interviews (Kuwait Times, 2008). The Kuwaiti government is also aiming to divert its economy away from oil by becoming a regional financial centre. The State is preparing a five-year plan worth 130.9 billion dollars in order to attract tourists from places such as Dubai. It was reported that a draft of this plan would shortly be sent to the State parliament (Middle East News, 2008).

Laws and legislation in the State of Kuwait are usually produced via both the government and the National Assembly (Majlis al-Umma). The Kuwaiti Assembly consists of 50 members who are chosen every four years by Kuwaiti men. After a long argument and debate between the government and the strict Islamic groups in the national assembly (Deabis, 2005), Kuwaiti women, in 2005, were given the right to vote in the elections and also to run for office as long as they adhered to Islamic laws and ways. Women's right to vote and to be nominated for the Kuwaiti national parliament offers the opportunity for women to enhance their rights and roles in society. The National Assembly has an influence on many organisations in Kuwait, especially public organisations, such as male and female segregation in education policy. This resulted in much opposition from the liberal members of parliament who felt that this law could cause a huge amount of damage to education and involve financial losses through rebuilding separated locations and for not using human and physical resources effectively. However, the conservative and Islamist members of parliament insisted that this was in line with Islamic law (Izzak, 2008). The region's political and economic power since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 has helped strengthen fundamentalism in Kuwait. Kuwaitis became closer to the more conservative societies, such as Saudi Arabia, due to their support during the invasion and in the liberation of Kuwait.

In the general election for the State parliament in 2001, the Islamists won a considerable number of seats: more than ever before. As a result, they attempted to introduce various new laws and regulations to serve their fundamentalist views. So it is interesting to speculate what might happen if the fundamentalists gain a larger number of seats in the parliament. This shift in political power and in society has led the government to respond by adopting a more explicit Islamic stance (Al-Mughni, 2001, p. 186). Government legislation can influence all the public organisations including higher education institutions in Kuwait.

Non-Kuwaiti (cross-cultural background) issues

Kuwait is a small country with a strong oil industry. The activities of the State's public and the private sectors need manpower in excess of the national manpower that is available. This has led to the importation of a large number of non-nationals to meet the State's need for both skilled and non-skilled manpower. The number of non-nationals represents 60% of the State's population (Raven and Welsh, 2004, p. 198).

Non-Kuwaiti national groups bring with them the values and norms of their own national cultures to Kuwaiti society and its organisations. Moreover, these values and norms are expressed through their interactions and practices within various organisations in Kuwaiti society: for example, in the way they dress, celebrate their festivals and so on. Non-Kuwaiti national employees from Arabic backgrounds may display individualistic attitudes because of their different economic backgrounds and, with such individualistic attitudes, employees with Arabic backgrounds (non-Kuwaiti) may place their own needs before the needs of the group (Al-Faleh, 1987). This may influence cooperative activities among employees in an organisation.

3.3 Public Organisations in Kuwait

Kuwait, like other countries which signed up to the Millennium Development Goals agreement (MDGs), committed to achieve the MDG targets by 2015 (United Nations Development Program, 2005). One of the MDGs in Kuwait is the need to improve levels of human development, such as improving the public and private sectors, with more emphasis placed on meeting the global development network and

in capitalising on knowledge and experience. Therefore, many efforts have been made to improve public sector organisations in line with the economic growth of the State, as well as to address growth and changes in knowledge to meet the Millennium Development Goals put forward by the Kuwaiti government (Kuwait Times, 2008). These efforts have centred on expanding financial investments and social developments in different public sectors, such as the Kuwaiti Institute for Scientific Research (KISR). This body has become directly responsible for carrying out applied scientific research that is related to industry, energy and the national economy in order to help the economic and social development of the State of Kuwait (Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research 2000). KISR has carried out many research projects to improve its activities and fulfil its mission. It has been engaged in developing and implementing knowledge management initiatives in its organisation in order to develop electronic data and resources to upgrade the Institute's capabilities and support decision making (Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, 2000). The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has also started to implement knowledge management initiatives but with more emphasis on the IT infrastructure in order to capture and share knowledge (Marouf, 2004).

Since there has been a high level of interest on the part of the public sector in implementing knowledge management and sharing initiatives, empirical research projects have been conducted in Kuwaiti organisations relating to knowledge management and knowledge sharing such as those by Al- Athari and Zairi (2001), Al-Azmi (2003) and Rehman (2005). Al-Athari and Zairi (2001) examined the situation and availability of knowledge management systems in 77 Kuwaiti organisations using survey research and found that half of their respondents felt that knowledge is important to their organisation. Additionally 65% public sector and 75% private sector respondents viewed knowledge as a source of power and noted that changing employees' behaviour to share knowledge was one of the most difficult issues in managing knowledge in those 52 Kuwait organisations. Al-Azmi (2003) investigated the implementation of IT-based knowledge management systems and found four main critical success factors for implementing knowledge management in Kuwaiti organisations: (1) technology, (2) knowledge management processes, (3) change management, (4) top management commitment. The other

study in Kuwait related to the effectiveness of communication channels for knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti companies (Rehman, 2005). This study found that the Kuwaiti socio-cultural context plays a major role in the choice of media communication for knowledge sharing. This indicates that the Kuwaiti culture can have a major influence on knowledge-sharing practices which cannot be ignored in any studies related to implementing effective and successful knowledge-sharing initiatives.

No comprehensive research was found that concerned cultural influences that related to knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti organisations and in public higher education institutions in Kuwait. Higher education institutions are supported by the government as it is trying to improve standards and performance in education by developing the curricula, research and the quality of teachers in higher education. The intention is to reach the same level of educational development as in the international arena (Ibrahim, 2008). This educational development relies on academic experts and teachers using modern teaching methods and learning from each other to improve their knowledge, research skills, qualifications and performance. Such activities could improve their institutes and allow them to compete with other private universities and higher education institutions in Kuwait (Ibrahim, 2008). Knowledge management initiatives could help Kuwaiti higher education to improve its performance by implementing a number of strategies and methods to create a more effective culture of learning and teaching.

The section below introduces the public higher education system in Kuwait with special focus on the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training Institute (PAAET) as this study was carried out in PAAET.

3.3.1 Public Higher Education Institutions

The State of Kuwait began to concentrate on improving education and higher education to provide academic, technical and professional training, and to provide the country with qualified manpower in a range of different fields. The Amiri Decree, passed in 1966, concerned the organisation of higher education and Kuwait

University (KU) was established in the same year. Further advances included the establishment of the Higher Institute for Theatre Arts in 1973, the Higher Institute for Music, and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in 1982 (Kuwait Information Office, 2005).

3.3.1.1 The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET)

PAAET (the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training) was established in 1982 by Decree Number 63 (Kuwait Information Office, 2005). The long-term aim of this was to meet the shortfall in skilled manpower by developing the nation's human resources through education and training in response to the needs of the country's industrial and economic development as a result of oil production and export. The State of Kuwait had already begun to establish training centres in the 1950s through the Ministry of Education in order to prepare the necessary manpower for the new oil industry. Other ministries then established training centres and institutes of their own. Because of this, the State found it necessary to create a central body to oversee the activities of these institutes and so established the Department of Technical and Vocational Education in 1972. The Central Training Department was also formed to coordinate and supervise training centres that had been set up by the ministries. These departments continued to operate until 1982 when PAAET was established as an enterprise to create and implement an overall plan for the technical and vocational training sector (Kuwait Information Office, 2005).

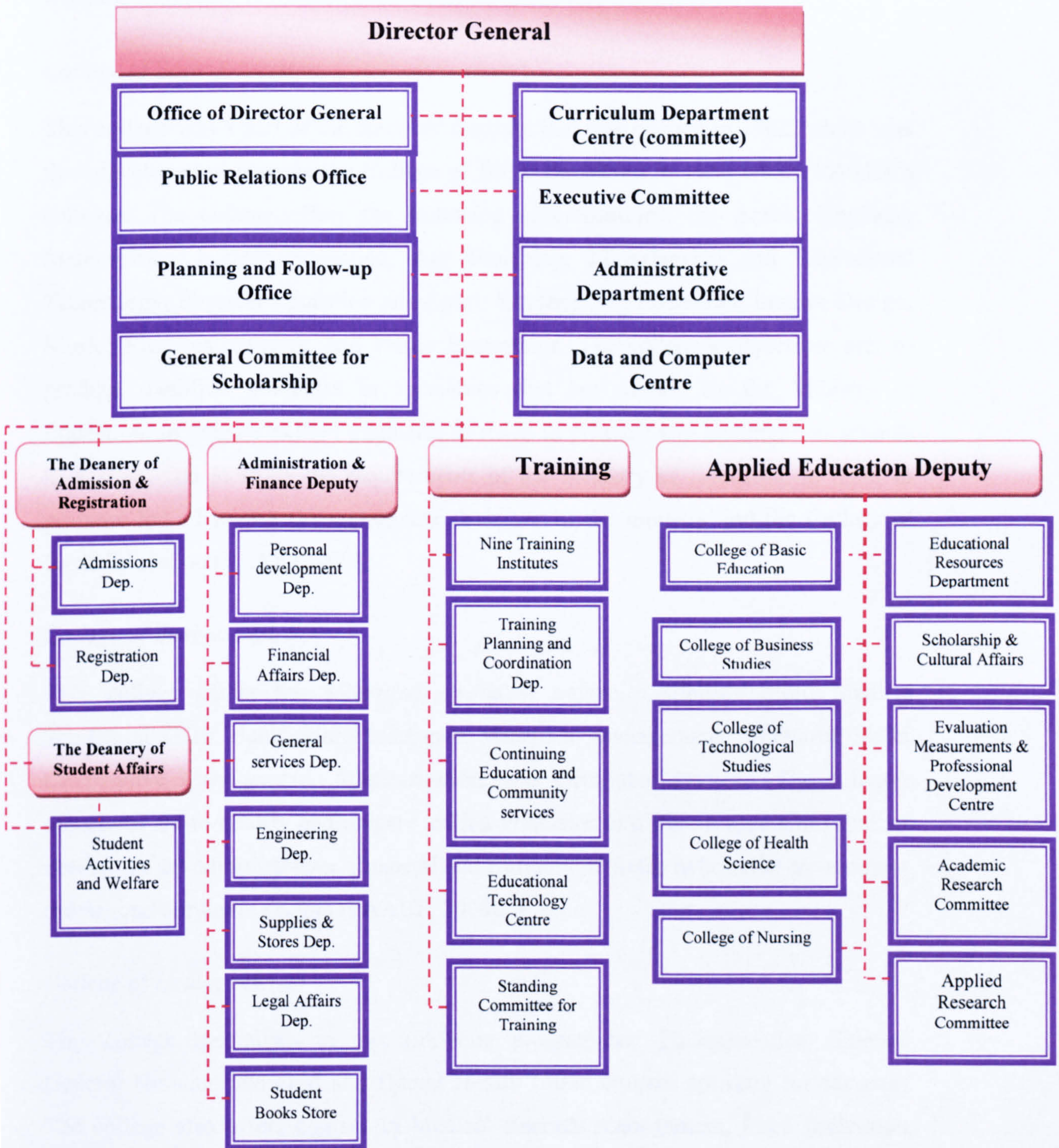
PAAET's goal, therefore, is different from other traditional higher education institutions such as Kuwait University, as its goals are to develop, through both education and training, a qualified, highly skilled, technical workforce to meet the needs of the country. The higher education institute comes within the applied education sector that consists of five colleges: the College of Basic Education, the College of Business Studies, the College of Technological Studies, the College of Health Sciences, and the College of Nursing, as well as a number of training institutes that are related to the training sector: the Institute of Telecommunications and Navigation, the Institute of Electricity and Water, and the Industrial Training

Institute, as shown Figure 3.2. In the buildings of all of these institutes, males and females are separated (Kuwait Information Office, PAAET, 2005).

PAAET has many goals and objectives that it aims to achieve in its colleges such as developing its performance and research activities in different specialised areas in order to solve social and economic problems in Kuwait. PAAET also wishes to foster and develop the performance of its institutional assets and aims to develop its technological systems and database networks within the institute in order to connect these with other state databases so that they can work closely with each other (Enjazat Alhaya alama letalem al tatbeqi wal tadreeb, 2006). Furthermore, in 2008, PAAET's authorities realised the importance of its academic and institutional knowledge and so began to introduce a project called the "Expert Project". This project aims to provide the academic community, including PAAET's students, with the collective knowledge of academic staff. The goal is to facilitate cooperation with top management by learning from different academic experiences to accomplish a range of tasks in their work. This project also aims to facilitate cooperation with other scientific and academic institutes as this will help academics at PAAET raise the level of their academic performance in different fields (PAAET, 2009).

Figure 3.2: Organisational Structure of

The Board of Directors



Profiles of PAAET's Colleges

This section introduces the five colleges of the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Each of these colleges has separate buildings for males and females.

College of Basic Education

This college was a part of the teachers' institute that was opened in 1962, which was then developed to become the College of Basic Education in 1986 within PAAET's colleges. The college offers the following specialisations: the Arabic language, Mathematics, Islamic Education, Art Education, Librarianship and Educational Technology, Physical Education and Sport, Kindergarten Education, Interior Design, Music, Electrical Studies, and Home Economics. The college's objectives are: to produce qualified graduates in specialties that are needed by the Ministry of Education, to prepare skilled graduates to teach in primary and kindergarten schools in Kuwait, and to study the requirements of the Ministry of Education in order to promote links between the appropriate divisions of the ministry and the College of Basic Education (PAAET, 2008).

College of Business Studies

This college offers the following specialist courses: Administration, Medical Secretarial Skills, Banking and Insurance, Materials' Management, Secretarial Skills, Cooperative Management, Administration, and Computer Studies. The college's objectives are to qualify and prepare skilled graduates in different specialties that are needed for the administrative, financial and commercial fields in both the government, private and corporate sectors (PAAET, 2008).

College of Health Science

This college specialises in the following programmes: Pharmaceutical Science, General Nursing, and Oral and Dental Health (these courses are only for females). The college also offers courses in Medical Records management, Food Inspection, Occupational Health, and Dietary Assistance. The college's objectives are to cover the need for skilled manpower in the field of the paramedical service and to qualify

students to work in medical centres, pharmacies and hospitals, as well as in other state institutes (PAAET, 2008).

College of Nursing

This college prepares students for a general skilled nursing qualification that enables them to serve both the Ministry of Health and the private sector, and to provide the skilled labour that is needed in this field in Kuwait (PAAET, 2008). In March 2009, the College of Nursing held the fourth International Nursing Conference that offers members an opportunity to exchange and share ideas, knowledge and experience at both a local and international level. The college also wishes to be involved with the surrounding community by sharing and participating in school nursing programmes (PAAET, 2008).

College of Technological Studies

This college offers specialised programmes in: Mechanical Automotive and Marine Engineering Technology, Mechanical Power and Refrigeration Engineering Technology, Civil Engineering, Laboratory Technology, Electrical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, and Electronic Engineering. The college's objectives are to qualify skilled graduates and to prepare its students to work at high levels in their fields of specialty (College of Technological Studies, 2006).

PAAET's Libraries

All the colleges and training institutes have their own library buildings for males and females (a total of 19 in all) that are controlled by the Department of Educational Resources. The Department's responsibility is to plan and organise the services offered to users and to supply the necessary technical expertise in the colleges and training institutes in order to maintain the collections and multimedia resources (Kuwait Information Office, 2005).

The aims of the Department of Educational Resources can be summarised as studying what information resources, information services and multimedia are required in the colleges and training institutes of PAAET; supplying the libraries with up-to-date technology such as libraNet. The database centre is connected with databases of other

academic institutes such as the American University in Kuwait and the Gulf University for science and technology. Web 2.0 has been recently installed in PAAET's libraries which provides instant messages and also a shared learning environment. It provides the materials and services that will best meet the needs of students and academic staff; records conferences and lectures relevant to PAAET and preserves the resulting materials; evaluates the performance of employees and then provides relevant training courses to improve the quality of services (PAAET, 2008).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a general background of Kuwait, together with elements of the national culture of the State of Kuwait and the State's public organisations, including the public higher education institutions, particularly PAAET. It also offered important information regarding PAAET's goals and objectives and supplied details of PAAET's colleges in relation to this research, as this study aims to provide an effective knowledge-sharing culture for PAAET. It can be concluded from this chapter that there are some studies in the State of Kuwait relating to knowledge management but there are no research studies in Kuwait related to knowledge sharing and culture in higher education and in the public sector. Since many efforts are being made by PAAET's authorities to develop its performance, knowledge sharing initiatives would have the potential to help the institute to do this and enable it to be more competitive. PAAET's five colleges, their libraries and the top management were selected for this study and the next chapter offers a logical explanation of the choice of methods and the selection of the sample for this research.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

One fundamental element of the research process is the selection of the most appropriate methods to achieve the research objectives. Bernard (2000, p.66) argued that a well-designed research process must embrace extensive planning to select the most appropriate approaches for identifying a sample and collecting data.

The main focus of this research was to explore the cultural influences of knowledge sharing practices within an academic community in a higher education institution in Kuwait (PAAET). After reviewing the literature it was found that there is a lack of research in this area. Therefore, there is a need to explore in-depth issues that help to achieve the research objectives and thus to fill the gap in the literature within the Kuwaiti context.

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss research methodologies and to provide a rationale for selecting the methods for this study in order to achieve its aims and objectives, as set out in Chapter One. Figure 4.1 shows the three steps involved in selecting the methodologies adopted for this research. The first stage involved identifying different research philosophies, approaches, strategies and methods while the second stage involved exploring the most appropriate methods for this study. The third stage of the process outlined the systems used for coding and sorting the responses and the methods of analysis that were adopted.

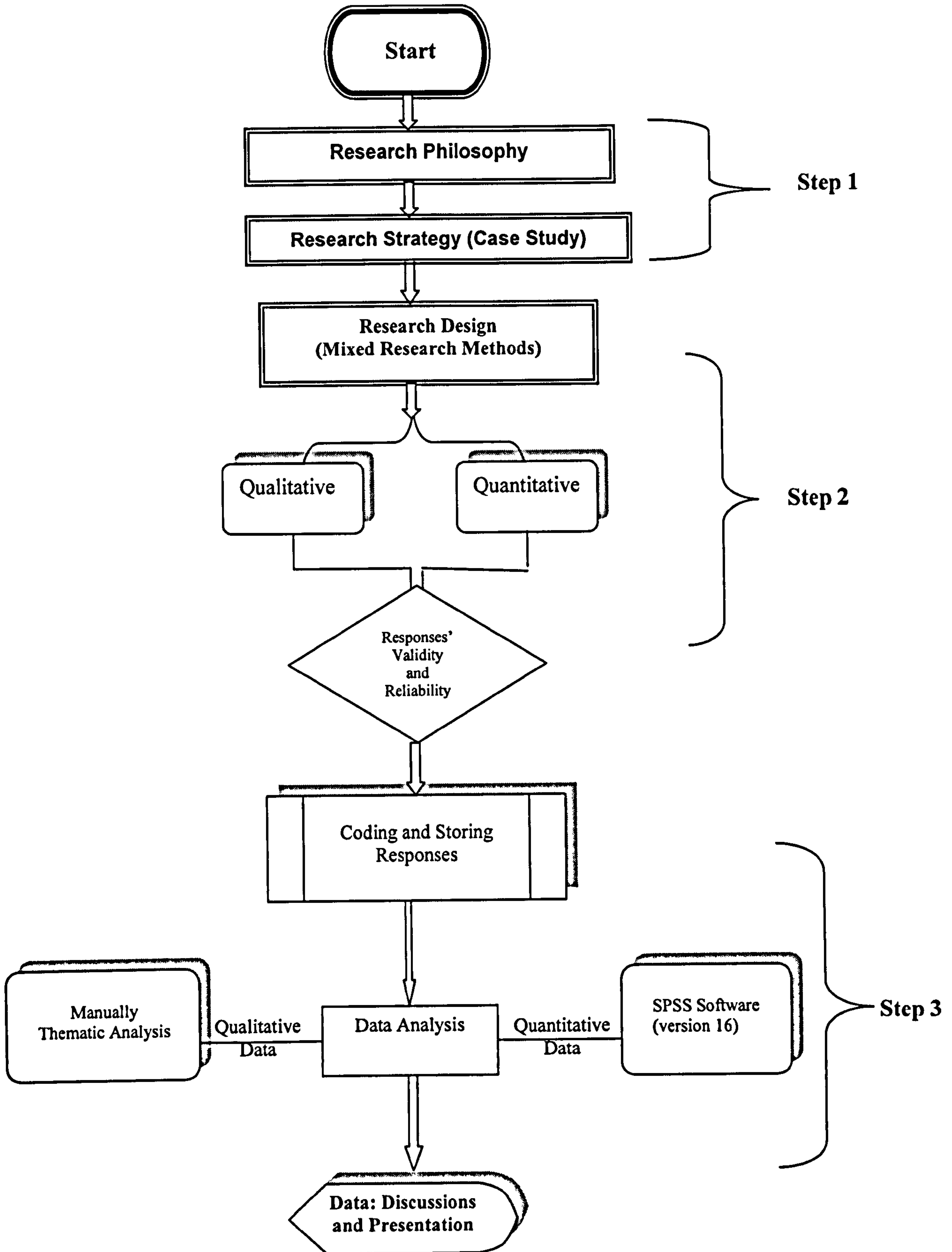


Figure 4.1: Flow chart for the research methodology process

4.2 Definition of Research

It is critically important for the researcher to understand what research is in establishing his/her research process. Several authors have defined research according to perspectives which reflect their own interests and backgrounds. Reaves (1992, p. 8) defined research as "...a systematic way of answering questions about the world" while Walliman (2005, p.8) defined it as "a term loosely used in every day speech to describe a multitude of activities, such as collecting masses of information, delving into esoteric theories, and producing wonderful new products". The definitions presented above recognise the aims of conducting research: identifying and formulating questions and confronting uncertainties in order to enhance knowledge and to encourage further enquiry. The sections below introduce issues relating to the philosophical strands, research strategy and the research methods that include both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Within this context, this study addresses the research questions that are related to knowledge sharing within the Kuwaiti higher education institution which is the subject of this research study.

4.3 Research Philosophy

Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Sexton (2003) identified many philosophical perspectives that are related mainly to ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology studies the nature of existence in terms of whether the realities of the social world are perceived from an objective or subjective nature (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.1). Epistemology, which is the study of the nature of knowledge (i.e. the theory of knowledge), spans two philosophical extremes, namely positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is mainly concerned with a search for general laws of cause and effect, and the precise relationships between variables (Murphy *et al.*, 1998; Plack, 2005; Kim, 2003; Neuman, 2004). Myers (1997) argued that the positivist paradigm seeks to test theory in order to understand the measured phenomena. Therefore, it is not surprising that some researchers prefer a positivist approach because it emphasises "getting objective measures of 'hard facts' in the form of numbers" (Neuman, 2004, p. 42). However, the positivism paradigm has its critics, particularly qualitative researchers, who argue that positivist methods are only one

way of gaining insights into the social world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.11). As a result of these criticisms, researchers developed another paradigm: postpositivism.

The postpositivist paradigm relies on a multiple method approach in order to capture as much of reality as possible from the phenomena observed. The paradigm also emphasises the discovery and verification of theories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.11). The main postpositivist challenge to traditional positivism is the absolute nature of knowledge. Postpositivism contends that there is a reality that needs to be understood and captured by research; this allows using both quantitative and qualitative data in order to acquire a better common understanding regarding both the nature of knowledge (reality) and the conduct of social and behavioral research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 8). Critical realism is one of the most common post-positivism philosophies. This philosophy suggests that all observations are weak and contain certain errors; thus, the theory is revisable (Trochim, 2003). Therefore, the main reason that postpositivism emphasises the importance of using triangulation in research is to look at something from multiple points of view to improve its accuracy and validity (Neuman, 2006, 149).

On the other hand, interpretivist researchers are unconvinced by positivist attempts to create accurate quantitative measures of objective facts because they view social reality as very fluid and not easily measured (Neuman, 2004, p. 43). Interpretivism is a search to comprehend human action by understanding the way in which the world is understood by individuals. Interpretivism also takes a scientific research approach but differs in important ways from a positivistic approach (Neuman, 2004, p.43) which sees reality as being embedded and existing within the mind. Interpretivism has three main characteristics: (i) the research focus under exploration; (ii) it represents the researcher's main understanding through interpretation but is limited by the frames obtained from his/her own life experiences and; (iii) the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of ideas. Subjectivity implies that the researcher's own views and how they have been constructed may affect outcomes, while inter-subjectivity suggests that the researcher's views are restructured through interaction with others through oral language and written texts (Gribch, 2007, p. 8). The interpretive paradigm is a "basic set of beliefs that guide actions" (Guba, 1990, p. 17).

From the major research philosophies, a link can be made between quantitative data and the positivist approach, and between qualitative data and an interpretive approach.

Quantitative and qualitative methods are different in the way they are designed and in the way in which research is carried out. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be used in combination in a single research study as a means of cross validation. A mixed method approach uses triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). The mixed method approach involves collecting both numeric and text information which represents quantitative and qualitative data.

Methodology, or the science of methods, is comprised of the necessary elements of the research process. It is related to the framework design of the research, its philosophy, an evaluation of the research steps, and justifications of its data collection methods. Methodology was defined by Jayaratna (1997, p. 37) as " An explicit way of structuring one's thinking and actions. Methodologies contain model(s) and reflect particular perspectives of reality based on a set of philosophical paradigms. A methodology should tell you what steps to take and how to perform those steps but most importantly the reasons why those steps should be taken, in that particular order". Therefore, it is important to understand the requirements of a particular research study in order to select the most appropriate methodological approach (Meyer, 1997).

It is also worth noting that different methodologies can be used for a given ontological or epistemological perspective. This research has adopted the case study approach (discussed later in this chapter) using mixed methods. It is thus positioned between the positivistic and interpretivistic perspectives as it encompasses both quantitative (positivist) and qualitative (interpretive) approaches in parallel, which is reflected in postpositivistic philosophy. The reason for adopting a mixed method approach is to allow a better understanding and flexibility in using multiple perspectives via both quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to explore complex issues that will meet the research's aims and objectives. This will also allow a greater confidence in the research findings since a single perspective could fail to achieve this in the context

of this study. Furthermore, Sekaran (1992, p.219) states that: " because almost all data-collection methods have some biases associated with them, collecting data through multi-methods and from multi-sources lends rigor to research".

4.4 Research Strategy

The next logical step in a research process, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) asserted, is to adopt a particular research strategy for the study. Different research strategies require different designs for collecting and analysing the empirical evidence and so the choice of research design is important (Yin, 1984; Creswell, 2003). The section below presents the research strategy that was selected for this study.

4.4.1 Case Study Research

In case study research, the researcher studies a single or limited number of events or people in great depth (Beins, 2004, p. 94). A case study is an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1984, p. 23). The strength of this research is that the researcher "can study people in their complexity and take their specific characteristics into account in trying to understand behaviour" (Beins, 2004, p. 94). The case study design can be based on any mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence (Yin, 2003, p. 15) but, in general, it allows "investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events - such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries" (Yin, 1984, p. 14). The main reasons for selecting a case study strategy are as follows:

- The complexity in the relationships between various cultural and organisational factors and knowledge-sharing practices (processes) illustrates the appropriateness of a case study enquiry. This is because a case study methodology is used to cover complex multivariate conditions (Yin, 1984, 2003) and in this study the final research aim is to develop a knowledge-

sharing culture that will include several factors such as organisational processes and strategies, national cultures and technological issues.

- The case study strategy embodies a number of methods or multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1984, 2003; Creswell, 2003; McQueen and Knussen, 2002). Using multiple sources of acquired data, and using both quantitative and qualitative methods, offers flexibility; also, using mixed methods serves the purpose of this research as it needs to gather, explore and analyse the empirical materials from several organisational sources to answer the research questions that are related to "what" and "how" questions (Q1, Q2, Q3 , Q4 and Q5).
- A case study strategy has been adopted in this research because this is an exploratory in-depth study which explores various issues relating to knowledge sharing attitudes, practices, processes and activities in a Kuwaiti public higher education institute (PAAET). Case study research is essential for the development of social science as it helps in understanding the degree to which certain phenomena are present in a given group or how they vary across cases (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 87). A single case study research also helps in theory development as it is likely to have important strengths such as novelty, testability and empirical validity, which arise from the intimate linkage with empirical evidence that is independent from prior literature or past empirical observation (Eisenhardt, 1998, p. 548).
- This case study research has adopted a single case study approach (PAAET) as this is the only public education institution in Kuwait of an applied vocational nature that requires extensive theoretical subject knowledge, updated technical experience and practical skills to serve directly the Kuwaiti Government workforce (PAAET, 2009). Even though this research deals with a single case study, the case study covers five colleges and every one of the five colleges can be considered as a micro case study as the five colleges operate in different ways according to their academic discipline of theoretical, technical and practical skills; thus, they encompass a complexity of multivariate conditions. However, a single case study may attract some criticism as it

cannot be generalised and cannot represent people in general (Beins, 2004, p. 94). This case study has limitations in terms of generalisation to another country as it is specific to the Kuwaiti context. This is because of the different social contexts, such as issues of social norms and cultural values, which can be a hidden factor that influences knowledge-sharing practices. However, as Yin (2003, p. 40) asserted, a single case study can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building and can help to refocus further investigation. In this respect, this research can be a base for further research investigation to consider cultural dimensions and issues that may influence knowledge-sharing practices in Kuwaiti and countries with similar backgrounds in the Arabian Gulf.

Case study research by nature is not value free and there is an element of bias that needs to be addressed and managed (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Sexton, 2003). Another criticism is that case study research has purely qualitative data instruments that cannot be easily detached from their objects of study. Moreover, its informants are members of a particular culture at a specific historical moment and thus will be undeniably affected by what they hear or observe in an unnoticed way (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The researcher works for PAAET and this brings a solid understanding of the institution and its culture but, at the same time, the researcher can be seen as an influencing agent. However, the researcher was aware of this matter and made sure that she was passive and not involved in reporting the data in order to avoid being biased since that might affect the validity and reliability of the results. As a matter of fact, being from the same culture as that under scrutiny has helped the researcher to understand clearly the complexity of the situation under investigation and explore the cultural factors in more detail. Being sponsored by the case study organisation has also helped the researcher by offering the opportunity to access and conduct all the data collection adopted for this study at PAAET. Furthermore, this research used mixed methods and the results from the quantitative analysis are derived from unbiased behaviour.

4.5 Research Design

The third step in the research process is the research design which deals with at least four issues: what questions to include in the study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyse the results (Philliber *et al.*, 1980). In the research design, it needs to be noted that the research questions of why, how, what, how many or how much are very important as each design has its own ways of answering the enquiries concerning the phenomenon being studied; this includes many purposes of descriptive, exploratory or explanatory research (Reaves, 1992; Yin, 2003; Neuman, 2004).

The research questions were drawn from the literature review in Chapter Two and Chapter Three (the research context of Kuwaiti culture). This identified many issues relating to knowledge and knowledge sharing that need to be investigated when implementing knowledge-sharing strategies. Furthermore, the literature revealed many factors that could influence initiatives for creating a knowledge-sharing culture and that there were few references to those factors in the literature of knowledge sharing in higher education. In addition, the background of the researcher and her familiarity with the study context and its environment played an important role in selecting the most appropriate methods to collect data so that the aims and objectives of this research could be achieved.

Therefore, this study is an exploratory piece of research designed to explore the cultural factors that were identified in the literature, together with individual, organisational and technological factors that can influence knowledge-sharing practices and processes in higher education that have not previously been investigated, particularly in Kuwait. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the nature of how to create an effective knowledge-sharing initiative in the Kuwaiti higher education context. In this research, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied as in case study research. This offers the freedom and flexibility to use mixed methods, as mentioned in the previous section.

This research is also descriptive as quantitative statistics are provided to describe the characteristics of the sample used in this study relating to their perceptions and

attitudes concerning knowledge-sharing issues. It also uses cross-tabulation between variables through the chi-square test to identify statistically significant differences in the responses to give a general picture of the differences between responses regarding demographic data. The qualitative data also describe and explore the current situation (as of date) regarding respondents' understanding, awareness and attitudes, and the processes and the problems associated with the practices of knowledge sharing. The research questions were put before a variety of different parties to help in understanding the situation as the issues of knowledge sharing are related to both organisational and academic parties who are closely related to the subject of knowledge strategies and processes; these are the main stakeholders as identified from the literature. The different levels of parties involved and the mixed method approach helps in cross-relating the findings of this study.

4.5.1 Choice of Methods

This section presents the methods that were chosen for this research as both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods) were adopted. The methods chosen were a questionnaire survey and focus groups, interviews and documents. The questionnaire survey was adopted to identify trends and key issues whereas interviews and focus groups were used to get a richer picture and explore issues in detail. Only academic staff were selected for the questionnaire survey as they are the centre of academic knowledge within PAAET, they are the main contributors to teaching and research, and constitute the largest number of PAAET's employees so a large number of responses could be obtained. Finally, the institution's performance depends highly on their achievements and productivity. Non-academic knowledge was outside the scope of this study. The focus groups included academic staff from five colleges and senior academic librarians that work in these colleges in order to explore in depth issues, experiences and concerns through a social network setting. Interviews had to be conducted with senior managers due to their commitments and availability; it was not practical to include them in the focus groups. Existing documentation was used as a reference for some existing practices. It has to be stressed that the choice of research methods was influenced by the perceptions and preferences of participants in taking part in a phenomenon related to knowledge-sharing activities within a Middle Eastern

setting (Kuwait in particular). For instance, religious beliefs, values, perceptions, interpretation of eastern knowledge as an unquestionable entity, and preference for collecting data were major factors in selecting the most appropriate research methods.

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey was selected in this research to obtain data on topics related to knowledge-sharing issues, national culture and technological preferences for communication. It was issued to academic staff in order to obtain a descriptive and general picture of differences in the respondents' views over a large population. This survey was adopted to answer research question one but also reflects part of objectives 1 and 2. The majority of research studies that have investigated knowledge sharing in higher education have employed the questionnaire survey on its own (e.g. Suhaimee *et al.*, (2006); Yuen and Majid, (2007); Kim and Ju, 2008) or have combined it with other data instruments (e.g. Prodrigues *et al.*, 2002). The questionnaire survey is often the only way available for developing a representative picture of the attitudes and characteristics of a large population, as Saunders *et al.* (1997, p. 244) asserted. A questionnaire is "a preformulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers" (Sekaran, 1992, p. 200). It is commonly used in quantitative research to obtain numeric data and to gain opinions in a structured manner (Ajetunmobi, 2002).

The questionnaire survey can be an efficient data collection mechanism when it is known in advance what is required and how to measure the variables of interest (Sekaran, 1992). It can also be administered in many ways (either by mail, in person or electronically), to wide geographical locations, at a low cost (Sekaran, 1992; Walliman, 2001) and using a large population sample as it is important to avoid findings being unrepresentative and to ensure the results are statistically significant (Bell, 1993). There are two types of questions that can be used in questionnaires: close-ended and open-ended questions (Sekaran, 1992, p. 19).

In closed-ended questions, respondents to the questionnaire respond to an offered set of answers to the questions provided (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p.

242). The main advantages of closed-ended questions are: it is easy to compare answers from different respondents; the answers are simple to codify and analyse statistically; the choices of response can clarify the meaning of questions for respondents; respondents are likely to offer an answer even when topics are sensitive; there are fewer irrelevant or confused answers to questions; and replication is easier (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p. 242; Neuman, 2004, p. 178). The main disadvantages of closed questions are: respondents may be frustrated because their desired answer is not a choice so the scale of response, such as a Likert scale, for example, must be carefully selected; some respondents might have no knowledge or real opinion but will answer anyway (this can occur as a result of a poor choice of sample or when the introduction to the topic of the research is not clear); and they force people to respond or make choices that they might not select in the real world (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p. 242; Neuman, 2004, p. 178).

However, with open-ended questions, there is no specified given choice and the respondents' answers are simply recorded (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p. 242). The main advantages of these types of question are: they allow an unlimited number of possible answers; they allow respondents to answer in detail and to clarify their response; they permit respondents to express themselves and to provide rich detail; they allow satisfactory answers to be made to complex issues; and they can reveal unanticipated findings. The main disadvantage of these types of question are that different degrees of detail may come from different respondents; the respondents may offer irrelevant or useless details, making comparisons and carrying out statistical analysis difficult; coding the responses takes the respondent time; and the answers take up a lot of space on the questionnaire (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p. 242). The questionnaire is appropriate in this study as one tool for gathering evidence since it can cover a large number of populations and can enable comparisons to be made between groups in the study.

4.5.1.2 Focus Groups

The focus group method was considered to be appropriate for providing more information, exploration and explanation on issues relating to knowledge sharing with

the academic staff and senior librarians since they have a direct relation to the subject of knowledge. This is reflected in research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 and also in objectives one, two and three. A focus group is simply a group interview (Morgan 1998, p. 1). However, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, p. 4) argued that focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of group interaction to generate data. This method produces qualitative data generated by discussions with a number of participants, usually between 6 -12, gathered in a room with a moderator in order to focus on a situation or some issues of a research topic (Neuman, 2004, p. 300). The discussions and debates of such a group will focus on certain group activities that are raised and managed by the moderator; these usually last for around 90 minutes. In the focus group situation, the moderator should be non-directive and should support free, open discussion by the group so the members should not include relatives or close friends in order to avoid any bias. Focus groups can be used to discuss many issues, such as public attitudes, personal behaviours and political issues (Neuman, 2004, p. 300). There are certain advantages and disadvantages of this technique, however, which are discussed below.

The main advantage of the focus group is that it provides an insight into the function of group/social processes in the articulation of knowledge. Focus group activities should encourage a greater discussion from participants of the group. This allows the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the explored issue (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 271). The focus group is useful to explore concepts and participants' ideas. It helps to gain information on the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of participants towards a topic and why they think or feel the way they do (Litosseliti, 2003, p 18). It also raises a number of ideas that can be generated or evaluated in an innovative way by a dynamic group and this helps the researcher to explain and explore concepts (Saunders *et al.*, 1997, p. 233). The decision to use focus groups was mainly influenced by the idea that participants in focus group sessions often challenge and argue against one another's views and such discussion could help the researcher to observe closely the real opinions related to knowledge-sharing issues as participants might reconsider their opinions. The other main reason for selecting this method was because of cultural issues: some males might hesitate to talk freely with a female interviewer alone but would be more likely to talk and discuss freely within a group.

On the other hand, Morgan (1997, p.13) and Morgan (1998, p.33) noted some limitations of focus groups. Participants with similar views or with strong personalities may control the discussion while others may stay silent; it is the role of the moderator to ensure this does not occur. Another weakness is that members of the group might produce fewer ideas than in individual interviews as sometimes only one or a few topics can be discussed in a focus group session, unlike in an interview when a researcher can ask about many topics (Neuman, 2004, p. 301).

4.5.1.3 Interviews:

It was decided to carry out interviews with the senior management as they are the official representatives in PAAET's authority and colleges. This reflects objectives 1, 2 and 3. Furthermore, the literature review regarding knowledge management revealed the importance of the support of management and leadership in implementing knowledge-sharing initiatives. Clarke and Dawson (1999, p. 72) described the interview as "a conversation with purpose". Interviews are conducted to obtain specific information; they can also be used to investigate feelings and motives through face-to-face or telephone conversations, depending on the structure's approach (Moser and Kaiton, 1985; Sekaran, 1992; Have, 1999). There are three types of interview: structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews are conducted when the interviewer knows exactly what information is required (Sekaran, 1992; Robson, 2002) while semi-structured interviews include questions on a particular topic or incorporate general discussion (Have, 1999). On the other hand, the objective of an unstructured interview is "to surface some preliminary issues so that the researcher can formulate a good idea of what variables need future in-depth investigation" (Sekaran, 1992, p. 190). This allows the interviewee to express his/her own opinions more freely to formulate a larger or other enquiry. As an explorative research case study, this method was selected in order to obtain specific information that could give the researcher face-to-face insight into the area being investigated since the face-to-face interview is a purposeful conversation between participants who are physically in the same place (Oishi, 2003, p. 1). The benefits of face-to-face interviews are many as they allow observations to be made of the surroundings; they also offer in-depth information.

4.5.1.4 Documents

It was decided to review PAAET's annual reports, the annual reports of the colleges, policy documents, internal reports and libraries' policies to help the researcher to investigate any knowledge-sharing strategies, plans or processes that could help in allowing a better understanding of the organisation's vision. Documentary information is often relevant in case study research (Yin, 1984, p. 79) as documents are important in providing evidence for investigation; they are also important for confirming and enhancing evidence from other sources. The types of documentation used may include: administrative documents, such as internal papers or progress reports, letters, agendas and other written reports (Yin, 1984, p. 79-80).

4.6 Data Collection

The methods that were chosen for data collection for this research are explained the section below.

4.6.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to be easy, unambiguous and short for academic staff to complete. Frazer and Lawley (2000) argued that the questionnaire must be clear and understood by respondents and must also reflect the research objectives: in this case, the research objectives 1 (part i) and 2. A clear and well-designed structure is important for obtaining valid results; it should also encourage the respondents to answer the questionnaire as this helps in increasing the response rate. The structure of the questionnaire is explained below (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire).

Introduction

Sekaran (2003, p. 245) asserted that an introductory paragraph including information regarding confidentiality, instructions and the researcher's details is considered to be very important in encouraging respondents to participate in the questionnaire. In this research a cover page was included at the beginning of the questionnaire to make clear the purpose of the survey. It included information about this study, its purpose, a

definition of the term “knowledge sharing”, a statement regarding confidentiality, information about the researcher, and contacts for any further inquiry regarding the questionnaire.

Section One: Knowledge-sharing issues

This section was aimed to explore the attitudes and perceptions of academic staff regarding knowledge sharing and the issues that can influence knowledge-sharing processes. The section began with a definition of knowledge sharing and asked if respondents had heard of the concept before or not. Here, the researcher was exploring respondents’ awareness of the concept of knowledge sharing as this is not widely known or used in Kuwait. Scaled responses were used in this section of the questionnaire. A scaled-response question is a type of question that is designed to use a certain scale to measure the quality of a construct. They are commonly used to measure respondents’ attitudes towards particular issues (Frazer and Lawley, 2000, p. 28). Responses were also elicited by using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) and a preference scale from 1 (Least preferred) to 7 (Most preferred) to give respondents a variety of choices that were most appropriate for them. It was also decided to mix the statements rather than to illustrate them together; this was so that respondents were not directed to the issue that was being raised. The statements and issues in the questionnaire came from the literature review in Chapter Two and the literature regarding the Kuwaiti cultural context in Chapter Three as these examined some factors that influenced knowledge sharing, such as its importance, trust, willingness, national cultural issues and preferred methods of communication. The statements are recorded in the tables below (i.e. Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7.). The first question that was in the questionnaire was " Have you ever heard about knowledge sharing?" and offered three answers: " yes, no, not sure".

Table 4.1: Importance of knowledge and knowledge sharing

Statements
Knowledge is power It is important to share my knowledge with other academic staff Academic staff should share their knowledge and best practices Knowledge sharing helps PAAET to stay competitive with other higher education institutions in Kuwait

Table 4.2: Problem solving

Statement
I prefer to resolve work related problems by myself without seeking help from others

Table 4.3: Trust

Statements
I trust the people that I need to share my knowledge with I trust women in knowledge sharing

Table 4.4: Willingness

Statements
I am willing to share my knowledge with others I am willing to share knowledge with academic staff from the same cultural background I am willing to ask the opposite sex questions in informal social activities

Table 4.5: National culture

Statements
National culture is important in knowledge sharing It is culturally embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question I am too shy to ask the opposite sex questions

Table 4.6: Kuwaiti-specific culture

Statements
I do not communicate in discussion with the opposite sex (Gender issues)
Showing my face in online discussion is against my culture (Gender issues)
Women should only communicate with women (Gender issues)
Tribal culture influences knowledge sharing (Tribal Issues)
It is easy to share knowledge with academics from the same tribe (Tribal Issues)
Academic staff from the same tribe trust each other more than others (Tribal Issue)
My religion encourages knowledge sharing (Religious Issues)
My religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex (Religious Issues)
The State has an influence on knowledge sharing through their instructions (State-Governmental issues)
The State has an influence on national culture (State-Governmental issues)

Table 4.7: Methods of communication

Statements
E-mail
One-to-one communication
Phone communication
Video link communication
In writing

The respondents were also asked, through an open-ended question, to express their opinion about the preferred methods of communication. The other open-ended question gave academic staff the opportunity to add any comments on cultural issues that affected knowledge sharing in PAAET; this was presented in the last section (Section Three) of the questionnaire.

Section Three: General Information

One factor which motivates respondents to complete the questionnaire is the order of the questions (Frazer and Lawley, 2000, p. 28). This was taken into account by leaving the personal questions to the end to avoid any negative attitudes towards the questionnaire. The structure and layout of the questionnaire were designed to be simple and to encourage the respondents to complete it. The questions were related to the academic gender, academic profession, qualification, age, experience, full- or part-time employment, nationality and college.

4.6.1.1 Pre-Testing and Pilot Study

Pre-tests are needed in the questionnaire process to identify and eliminate any potential problems with the questionnaire (Frazer and Lawley, 2000, p. 33). Oppenheim (1992, p.47) stressed the importance of pre-tests by stating that: "every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure it works as intended". Table 4.8 shows the two stages used to pilot the questionnaire in this research. It also shows sample size, the targeted sample and the main reasons for undertaking each stage. In the first stage, the questionnaire was distributed to twelve postgraduate Kuwaiti students at Loughborough University as they were academics working in the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Comments were received about the wording of some statements and the layout of the questionnaire. All the comments were considered and changes made. Furthermore, the questionnaire was produced both in English and Arabic as the study was carried out in Kuwait. The Arabic version was sent to a translator to compare the two versions as they had to be accurate in terms of the statements having precisely the same meaning before distribution. The second stage involved piloting the questionnaire by sending it by e-mail to five academic staff from PAAET. The comments from the five participants concerned the instructions, information on the cover page, and the questionnaire's layout. All changes were made to produce the final version of the questionnaire that is presented in Appendix 1.

Stage	Sample Size	Target Sample	Reasons
Stage 1 Pre-Fieldwork visit	12	Kuwaiti Postgraduates (Loughborough University)	Same culture Easy to contact No cost involved
Stage 2: Pilot Study	5	PAAET Academic Staff	Reflect real situation Relatively cheap

Table 4.8: Pre-test and pilot study stages

4.6.1.2 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

The final stage of the design process concerns the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher needs to assess the reliability and validity of the research instruments to estimate their accuracy and consistency (Sproull, 1988, p. 73). Frazer and Lawley (2000, p. 35) stated that: "a questionnaire is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure and it is reliable if the responses are consistent and stable". Reliability is concerned with the consistency of measurement of the instrument (Sproull, 1988, p. 74; Bryman, 2004, p. 70). The reliability and confidence of the collected data are tested during the analysis processes by measuring the data's internal consistency in order to ensure there is no conflict in the respondents' responses. Three main factors need to be considered in determining the reliability of the instrument. These are stability, internal validity and inter-observer consistency (Bryman, 2004, p. 71). Stability is concerned with whether the instrument produces consistent responses over a period of time. It is not possible to show this type of reliability check in this research due to lack of time and the issue of the convenience of the research subjects.

Inter-observer consistency requires the significant involvement of subjective judgment in cases where there is more than one observer, more than one data record, or more than one translator used in the research. This raises the possibility of a lack of consistency (Bryman, 2004, p. 71). It is not necessary to show this type of reliability in this research as the research was carried out solely by the researcher. Internal reliability testing is carried out mainly to check whether the scores of the research respondents on any one indicator tend to be related to their scores on the others (Bryman, 2004, p. 71). This research used reverse forms (negative statements with reversed scale values) in some of the statements to check the reliability of the questionnaire as the secondary questions were formulated not to be included in the quantitative analysis but to check the accuracy of the primary questions; two examples are presented in Chapter Five (Figure 5.10 and Figure 5.13).

Validity is simply the accuracy of measurement of the research instrument (Sproull, 1988, p. 73). There are three main types of validity that can be considered in validating the accuracy of measurement. These are content validity, criterion validity

and construct validity. Content validity is defined as "the representativeness of the content of instrument to the objectives of using the instrument" (Sproull, 1988, p. 76). There are two main types of validity which need to be considered in this process: internal and external validity. Internal validity requires a certain degree of confidence on the part of the researcher in the cause and effect between variables (Frazer and Lawley, 2000, p. 35). External validity is necessary if the main outcomes of the research are to be generalised to a larger range of population and settings. This research used mixed methods to increase validity and to reduce the self-reporting bias by using various data collection methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and from different stakeholders (senior management, academic staff, librarians); this allowed the responses from both methods to be correlated.

4.6.1.3 Questionnaire Sample

Table 4.9 shows the academic staff population, the target sample and the percentage of the target sample from different PAAET colleges. The target sample comprised 450 academic staff out of total number of 1181 (38%).

Academic Staff: Questionnaire Sample			
College	Population	Sample	%
College of Basic Education	489	170	35
College of Business Studies	267	100	37
College of Technological Studies	332	125	38
College of Health Science	73	35	48
College of Nursing	20	20	100
Total	1181	450	38%

Table 4.9: Questionnaire sample

Selection of Academic Staff

A stratified sampling technique was used to identify the research sample for this survey. Fink (1995, p. 11) defined stratified sampling as "[.... one in which the

population is divided into subgroups or 'strata' and a random sample is then selected from each group". Since there were small numbers in both the College of Nursing and the College Health Science, the researcher decided that the best way to have a representative sample in those colleges was to cover the whole population of the College of Nursing and select large sample size for College of Health Science. The following procedure was used:

1. PAAET was divided according to its main colleges (College of Basic Education, College of Business Studies, College of Technological Studies, College of Health Science and College of Nursing); these were then further divided into the departments of each college.
2. Names from the academic staff list were obtained from the departments in each college's administration office.
3. Numbers were assigned to the names on the academic list from each department.
4. A number was selected randomly from the prepared numbers.
5. The corresponding name from the list of academic staff was then found to identify academic staff for the questionnaire.
6. Step Five above was then repeated until the required sample size was reached.

4.6.1.4 Questionnaire Distribution

The questionnaire distribution strategy was based on the following:

- English and Arabic versions of the questionnaire were prepared so that academic staff could select the language they felt most comfortable with to complete the questionnaire. This was necessary as there was a considerable number of non-Arabic speakers in PAAET.
- The Arabic and English versions of the questionnaire, including a covering letter, were placed in an envelope which also contained a self-addressed envelope.

- The questionnaires were distributed and collected via the colleges' departmental secretaries. This strategy was designed to increase the number of responses as the secretaries manage and administrate academics' mail and are in the same buildings.
- A regular system of contact was established with the departmental secretaries, using telephone and personal contact, in case there were problems or a need for clarification of any issues.
- Reminder letters were sent via the department's secretary to those academic staff who had not responded within a given period.

4.6.2 Interviews

A semi-structured interview instrument was developed for top managers, senior managers and deans using a purposive sample selection as these personnel play a significant role in the development of knowledge-sharing strategies and policies in their institute and colleges. The interviews were also intended to obtain additional information concerning their views about knowledge-sharing issues in their institute. Four sets of interviews were designed for face-to-face interviews with members of the management of PAAET and these interviews were conducted with senior managers, faculty deans, the Head of the Educational Resources Department, and the Head of the Information and Computer Centre. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide regarding the areas that were to be covered (see Appendix 2 for the interview guide).

PAAET Senior Management

These senior managers were chosen because they are decision makers with regard to knowledge-sharing policies or strategies; they are also the budget holders for any knowledge-sharing initiatives and they are actively involved in any knowledge-sharing strategic planning for the institution. The interviews provided an in-depth insight into the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of senior managers towards the importance of knowledge sharing and any current strategic planning for knowledge sharing. Their opinions concerning the role of cultural differences and backgrounds in influencing knowledge sharing activities and processes were also sought.

Faculty Deans

Deans play an important role in the management structure of PAAET, as well as playing a critical role in the implementation of PAAET's strategy in their colleges. An interview schedule was designed for the deans of the five PAAET colleges (Dean of the College of Basic Education, Dean of the College of Business Studies, Dean of the College of Technological Studies, Dean of the College of Health Science and Dean of the College of Nursing). The questions mainly focused on the current practices of knowledge sharing and the role and influence of different cultural backgrounds on knowledge sharing in their colleges at PAAET. The questions were also designed to obtain their opinions concerning the main knowledge-sharing implications in their colleges. The key statements and points were tape recorded during these interviews. However, some of the deans were reluctant for the interviews to be recorded and two deans asked that only notes were taken during the interview. Another obstacle to the interview process included setting up appointments with one college dean as she had a large number of commitments.

Head of the Educational Resources Department

19 libraries are responsible for planning and managing resources across PAAET's colleges. These are also responsible for developing and delivering training programmes for academics in using the library resources and in searching skills that are related to staff's academic discipline. Therefore, the opinions and views of the Head of the Educational Resources Department are important regarding departments' activities and the librarians' roles in enhancing knowledge-sharing interactions within and beyond the library at PAAET. Moreover, questions were required related to PAAET's strategic plans and the problems it faces in developing a knowledge-sharing culture. This interview was also needed to help shed light on the data collected by the other method, namely, the focus group with senior librarians in order to increase the understanding of their role and interactions with academic staff. The interview was recorded at the start but the tape was then stopped as the interviewee did not feel comfortable; thus, the researcher had to take notes.

Head of the Information and Computer Centre

Technology and computing resources in PAAET are managed by the Information and Computer Centre. This centre provides technical services and advice to PAAET departments and to academic staff. It is also responsible for developing and maintaining electronic resources, electronic systems and the PAAET website. The centre has considerable experience, gained through interactions in solving the technical problems of both individuals and departments, regarding cultural issues. Therefore, experiences concerning technical and cultural issues were explored to enhance the research aims and objectives through an interview which was designed for the Head of the Information and Computer Centre. The interview questions focused on the role of technology in enhancing knowledge sharing, the systems in place for enhancing communication and knowledge sharing, and what role culture plays in influencing knowledge-sharing systems.

4.6.2.1 Interview Sampling

As noted above, the senior management of PAAET plays an important role in any planning and decision-making regarding knowledge sharing. Therefore, the opinions and attitudes of senior management toward the current situation concerning plans for knowledge sharing, together with barriers and obstacles to knowledge sharing, are important. Nine interviews were carried out with the main senior managers of PAAET, including the Director General of PAAET, the Deputy of Applied Education, the five PAAET deans, the Head of the Information and Computer Centre, and the Head of the Educational Resources Department as they are directly related to the knowledge management and sharing initiatives (see Table 4.10).

Interview Sample of PAAET's Senior Academic Staff
Director General of PAAET
Deputy of Applied Education
Head of Information and Computer Centre
Head of Education Resources Department
Dean of College of Basic Education
Dean of College of Business Studies
Dean of College of Technological Studies
Dean of College of Health Science
Dean of College of Nursing
Total: 9 interviews

Table 4.10: Senior staff samples

4.6.3 Focus Groups

Focus groups were appropriate in this research as they can provide individuals with an opportunity to express their attitudes and discuss issues in more depth when the participants interact together. This might possibly provide new insight into cultural issues, in terms of both the organisation and individuals, which influence knowledge-sharing activities, communication and processes in the Kuwaiti higher education institution (PAAET). Thus, the focus groups helped in exploring knowledge-sharing issues. In this study, discussions with nine focus groups were carried out as a part of the research and five main issues were explored, as presented below (see Appendix 3 for the focus group guide).

Issue 1: Knowledge Sharing

The main purpose of this issue was to explore attitudes to definitions of knowledge sharing, together with respondents' awareness of and opinions regarding the need for knowledge sharing among the academic community at PAAET; preferred methods of communication were also explored.

Issue 2: Current Situation

This issue aimed to explore and identify the current situation concerning knowledge sharing and included: the types of knowledge being shared and the processes for knowledge sharing; the current encouragement and motivation to share knowledge; and the current knowledge-sharing systems that respondents were aware of.

Issue 3: National Culture

This issue focused on exploring cultural issues, including specific aspects of elements of the Kuwaiti culture in relation to gender, tribes, religion and the government (state), together with how these influence the practice of knowledge sharing.

Issue 4: Cross-cultural

This issue focused on exploring the cross-cultural behaviour that influences the knowledge sharing practices and activities in PAAET's colleges.

Issue 5: Specific Problems and Obstacles

This issue explored the main problems and obstacles regarding knowledge sharing in the five colleges at PAAET.

4.6.3.1 Focus Group Sampling and Purpose

The focus group sampling strategy was similar to that used for the questionnaire sample which used stratified sampling. A stratified sampling strategy chooses the participants based on the research goals and, in this study, participants were selected from both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic staff from each department in all five colleges. Official permission was sought from PAAET's authorities to conduct the focus groups and a letter was sent to deans to inform departments about the research.

The procedure that was used for the academic staff focus groups was to identify the Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic staff from each department in the five colleges where numbers were assigned to the names on the Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic lists from each department. A number was then selected randomly from the prepared numbers. The corresponding name from the list of academic staff was then found to identify academic staff and they were asked to participate in the focus group. This process was then repeated using the same selection process until the required sample size from each of the different departments was reached. Two focus groups from each college (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti nationals) were selected. Only one focus group was selected from the College of Nursing and the College of Health Science, however, as the majority in the College of Nursing were non-Kuwaitis and there were fewer than four non-Kuwaiti nationals in the College of Health Science. The focus groups were carried out in the meeting room of each college and the librarians' focus group was set in one of the library department meeting rooms.

For the sampling of the senior academic librarians, all the senior academics who worked within the five colleges in PAAET were selected as their number was limited and all were Kuwaiti. One focus group was also formed from senior librarians to represent the views of academic library staff who interact with academic staff. Table 4.11 shows the focus group samples. The main aim of the focus groups in this

research was to gain in-depth insight, understanding and knowledge through direct interactions with the academic community. This included academic staff and senior academic librarians as they deal directly with academic knowledge and resources. Focus groups, as explained earlier, can be used to explore perceptions of knowledge-sharing issues and practices that the research design may not have taken into account; they also provide information that could be used to enhance the findings from the questionnaire analysis and the interviews.

PAAET		
Academic Staff: Focus Groups		
College of Basic Education	Kuwaiti nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 10	1
	Non-nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 8	1
College of Business Studies	Kuwaiti nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 8	1
	Non-nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 7	1
College of Technological Studies	Kuwaiti nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 8	1
	Non-nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 6	1
College Health Science & College of Nursing	Kuwaiti nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 6	1
	Non-nationals (6-12 Academic Staff) 6	1
Senior Librarians	Kuwaiti nationals 6	1
Total No. of Participants (65)		9

Table 4.11: Focus Group Samples

4.6.3.2 Focus Group Strategy

All the focus group lasted between 80 to 110 minutes. The strategy that was used for implementing and managing the focus groups with academic staff included the following considerations:

- Academic staff were asked to participate in a focus group.
- Permission was sought to record the focus group discussions.
- Suitable times were identified for the academic staff to participate.
- A suitable place was also identified to carry out the focus group session.

- The researcher ensured that the venue was equipped with the necessary technical equipment of mini microphones and the recorder.
- The necessary stationery of papers and pencils was prepared.
- Refreshments were prepared for the participants.
- Methods, e.g. note taking and recording, were used to record the outcomes from the focus groups.

The management of each specific focus group depended on several factors. These included the venue, the academic staff that were selected, and the group activities. However, the following general procedure was adopted:

- At the beginning of each focus group discussion, the researcher gave a clear introduction regarding the agenda and outlined the ground rules for the focus group. The researcher tried to create an atmosphere of trust and openness, reassuring participants concerning issues of anonymity and the value of all participants' opinions and views regardless of how different or unusual.
- Participants were encouraged to write their definitions, opinions and ideas on A4 paper which was provided.
- Participants were encouraged to contribute in the discussion and express their opinions and views.
- A white board was used to write the issues and points raised by participants; this encouraged other participants to comment on and discuss the issues.

4.6.4 Documents

As a part of the case study research, organisational documents were investigated to examine any knowledge-sharing strategies, systems or processes being used across PAAET, as well as PAAET's annual reports, colleges' annual reports, policy documents, strategic planning reports, libraries' policies and annual reports, and internal reports. The main advantage of reviewing these documents was that they provided evidence concerning why and how any existing knowledge-sharing strategies were established. They also provided evidence regarding the value of knowledge sharing and shed light on what knowledge can or cannot be shared.

Several types of document from PAAET were chosen. They were deemed useful since they were prepared and written by PAAET itself and therefore offered explicit evidence regarding any policies, strategies and practices for the case study. In July 2007, permission was obtained to gain access to several PAAET documents that were available for internal access. The scholarship and cultural affairs department at PAAET facilitated access by providing the researcher with a supporting letter to PAAET colleges. Five annual reports, from 2003 to 2007, related to PAAET's achievements and progress and these reports were examined to identify any policies, strategies or guidelines related to any knowledge-sharing practices; the reports also corroborated and augmented the evidence that was collected via the other data collection methods such as the questionnaire, interviews and focus groups. Achievement reports from four colleges were also examined to identify statements, objectives and policies regarding knowledge-sharing practices and activities. By the end of the data collection, it emerged that the examined documents lacked evidence of formal strategies, initiatives or statements regarding knowledge sharing. However, in the period after the data collection, the researcher observed the beginnings of an awareness and steps being made towards developing knowledge-sharing activities within PAAET. The researcher therefore argues that this research's fieldwork activities helped to explore the importance and awareness of knowledge sharing within PAAET that led to initiatives to promote knowledge-sharing projects. This is mentioned later in the discussion chapter.

4.7 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the fieldwork at PAAET using the data collection methods described earlier (questionnaires, organisational documents reports, interview transcripts, and focus groups transcripts). The quantitative and qualitative data that were gathered from the research methods were analysed separately in different stages as the quantitative data were analysed first, followed by an analysis of the qualitative data to complete the main outcomes that were explored in this research. The quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented below.

4.7.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data were gathered through the questionnaires and these were analysed using SPSS software version 16. SPSS is commonly used in quantitative analysis and the researcher was trained in using this software. The first step before starting the quantitative analysis process was to screen and clean the data. This involved checking for errors where the values might fall outside the range of possible values for a variable; the errors were then located and corrected by going back to the original questionnaires (Pallant, 2005, p.40). The quantitative data analysis that was used in this research included a range of descriptive analysis to describe respondents' characteristics; statistical techniques, such as cross-tabulation and the chi-square test, were also used to explore relationships among different variables. To get a better understanding of the data that were collected from the respondents, personal backgrounds were analysed with the statements of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to explore the perceptions of academic staff and identify any influences of national culture on their perceptions of knowledge sharing and their practices in PAAET. The researcher developed a template of a range of specific Kuwaiti cultural constructs (presented in Chapter 3) that had not been explored in past research in relation to knowledge sharing. Three main characteristics of academic staff (nationality, gender and colleges) were chosen to be the focus of the analysis. The main reasons for selecting the above independent variables were to assess their direct and/or indirect relation to cultural issues. Details of the precise use of the above techniques are discussed in Chapter 5 before the qualitative analysis as questions were raised as a result of the quantitative findings. These were addressed in the qualitative data and analysis as the qualitative data (from focus groups and interviews) were designed to explore further the academic staff's perceptions of knowledge sharing, their current practices, and how their national culture influenced the practice of knowledge sharing.

4.7.2 Qualitative Analysis

A considerable amount of qualitative data were collected from the interviews, focus groups, documents and the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the data

(Braun and Clarke, 1996; Boyatzis, 1998) as this describes the data in rich detail and produces thematic maps that describe the analysis. The phases of the thematic analysis were carried out by reading the transcripts over and over again. The relevant data were then codified together and thematic map thus generated. This, in turn, leads to generating definitions, naming the themes and finally reporting them together (Braun and Clarke 1996, p.87). It is also worth noting that a good code may appear or emerge from one or more original theme; it is also beneficial to present both positive and negative examples to eliminate possible confusion when looking for a theme (Boyatzis, 1998). Patterns or themes that emerged from the issues raised in both the focus groups and interviews, and that were important to the research questions, were codified manually because the language of the transcripts was almost exclusively Arabic and the researcher would have had to translate the findings into English; it would then have taken much longer to enter the data into software such as Atlas 05. The qualitative data from both the interviews and focus groups were coded together. However, some of codes were general and had to be re-coded to more specific sub-themes; these were then integrated to provide the analysis results that informed the objectives of the research. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in Chapter Six after the quantitative results in Chapter Five.

4.8 Limitations and Strengths of the Research in Practice

Several obstacles were encountered due to the use of the questionnaire method. Most of these were faced during the distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires. In the distribution process, the main barrier was locating and communicating with the selected respondents. Some of the academic staff were not available during the administration of the questionnaire due to holidays or other commitments. It took a considerable amount of time and effort to ensure these respondents completed the questionnaire. Another problem was the dependence on the secretary or administrator in each department. Most of the secretaries were very helpful and supportive but a few were not cooperative, possibly due to workload, stress or other reasons. However, a response rate of 70.8% (319 out of 450) is considered high and representative for this type of research.

From the point of view of the fieldwork management of the interviews, it was very difficult to arrange some appropriate times for the interviews and to convince some interviewees of the importance of the research. The management of the interview time is critical in ensuring that the interviewee is focused on the questions as in one interview the interviewee tried to shift the focus to his own agenda. One of the main advantages of the fieldwork and of the data collection process, however, was that the personal experience, knowledge and feelings of the respondents were obtained, as well as an understanding of the organisation (PAAET).

In terms of strengths, several methods were used to collect data information. The face-to-face interviews with senior staff and academic focus groups helped in exploring several issues that would have been impossible to consider using any other data collection method. The interviews and focus groups also provided a wealth of in-depth information to inform the research objectives as the researcher was passive and observed the participants' reactions; this helped in understanding the situation better. The focus group participants were motivated to participate in the discussions and this helped in obtaining in-depth information. Moreover, the fact that the participants represented various disciplines and cultural backgrounds helped to enrich the discussion because it was informed by several points of view.

On the other hand, one of the main difficulties in the focus groups was to find an appropriate time and place that was convenient to all participants for each focus group. The tremendous efforts that were made by department secretaries, and the patience and flexibility of the researcher, helped in finding appropriate times and places to conduct these focus groups. One of the limitations of this approach was that some participants in one focus group tried to shift the focus of the discussion to their own area of interest and specialisation in order to demonstrate their own knowledge and interests. The other limitation was that there were difficulties concerning disagreement among some participants in one of the focus groups.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research philosophy, strategy and design of the chosen methods. It was clear that this research was a single case study design, as there were some cultural issues related to knowledge-sharing influences that cannot be generalised to other organisations or institutions. Furthermore, a mixture of methods, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, was adopted to answer the research questions and to fulfil the aims and objectives of this research. Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups were carefully selected as methods and were designed to avoid ambiguity.

It is also important to mention that the researcher, who is being sponsored by the case study organisation, made sure that she was passive and not involved or influenced by her situation in order to avoid being biased since this might affect the validity of the results. However, being sponsored by the case study organisation has helped the researcher in having the opportunity to access and conduct all the instruments adopted for this study at PAAET.

The next chapter presents the quantitative analysis. The main purpose of the quantitative analysis, as mentioned earlier, is to obtain general opinions concerning knowledge and knowledge sharing, together with preferred methods of communication. The quantitative analysis also provides general opinions regarding the influence of certain issues concerning national culture that can affect the interaction and communication that was mentioned in the literature review (Chapter Two) and the research context chapter (Chapter Three). Furthermore, the chi-square test was used to quantify the significance of the statistical independence of the cross-tabulations and to demonstrate how far differences in perception were related to characteristics of cultural background (nationality, gender and college); this was required to respond to the study's aims and objectives.

Chapter Five

Quantitative Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the questionnaire responses gathered during the survey of Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET) between July 2007 and September 2007. The results presented were generated using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for Windows. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed to academic staff in the five PAAET Colleges and the survey was completed by 319 respondents, a response rate of 70.8%. Several forms of analysis were used to examine the data collected from the responses. These included descriptive analysis, using frequency, mode, median and range, cross-tabulation, and graphs. A chi-square test was used to find relationships between the groups in terms of the variables being investigated. The researcher rejected any non-statistically significant results and only significant results are presented in this study. The chi-square test table for the themes are presented in Table 5.4 at the end of this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two main sections: section one represents the demographic data and section two presents the opinions and attitudes of academic staff regarding knowledge sharing. The chapter closes with a summary of the main findings and conclusions of the main outcomes of the quantitative analysis. Figure 5.1 shows the framework used in the analysis of the quantitative data.

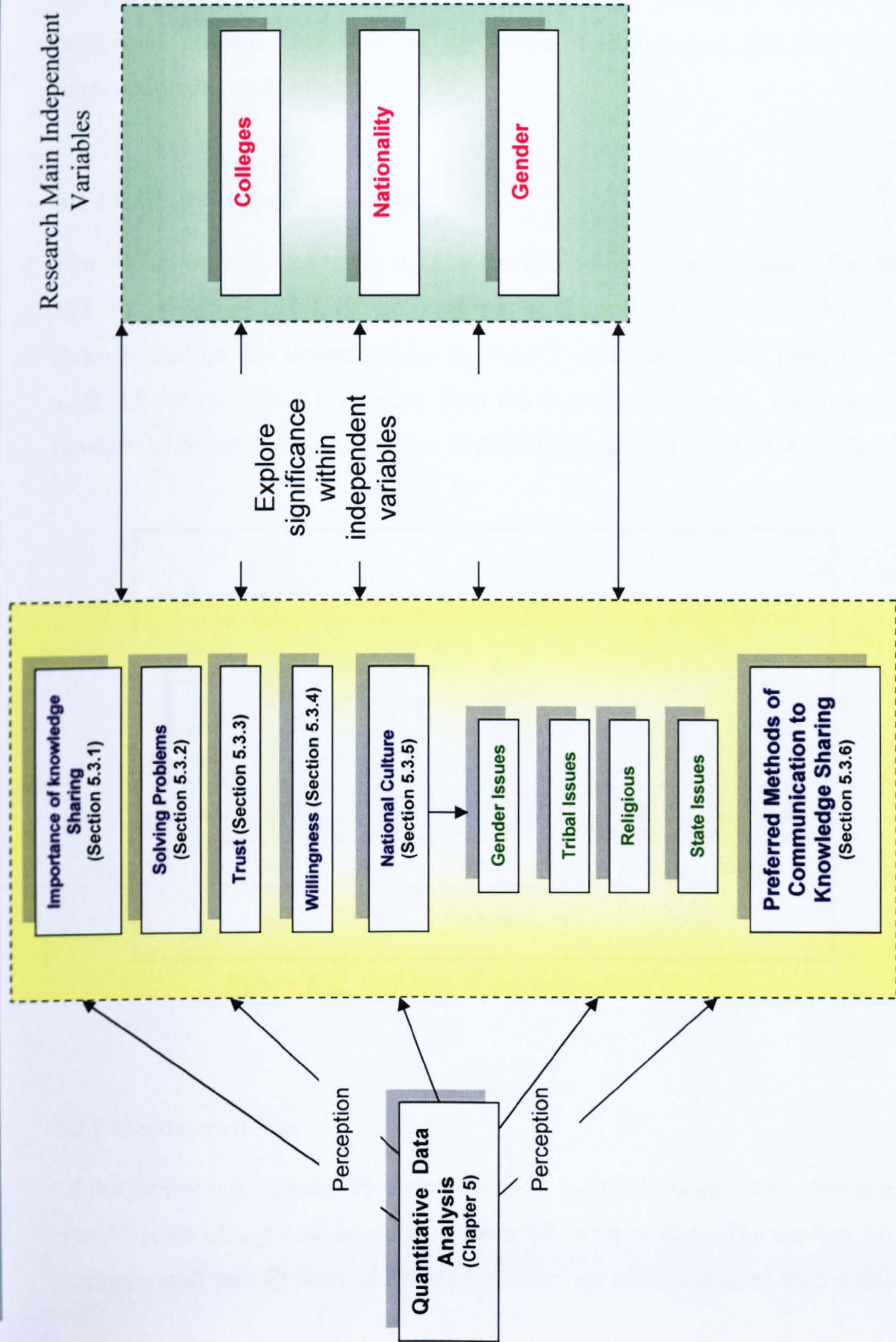


Figure 5.1: Quantitative Analysis Framework

5.2 Personal Background of Academic Staff

In this section, information is provided on the background of the academic staff who participated in this survey. The personal background of academic staff was sought in the last part of the questionnaire and included the following: gender, academic profession, academic qualification, age, years of employment, full time job or part time, nationality and college.

5.2.1 Colleges of Academic Staff

The survey covered academic staff in PAAET’s five main colleges. The majority, 128 out of 319 (40.1%), of the academic staff surveyed were from the College of Basic Education, the largest college in PAAET while the smallest group of academic staff, 13 out of 319 (4.1%), were from the College of Nursing, which is relatively newly established compared to other PAEET Colleges. See Figure 5.2. for details.

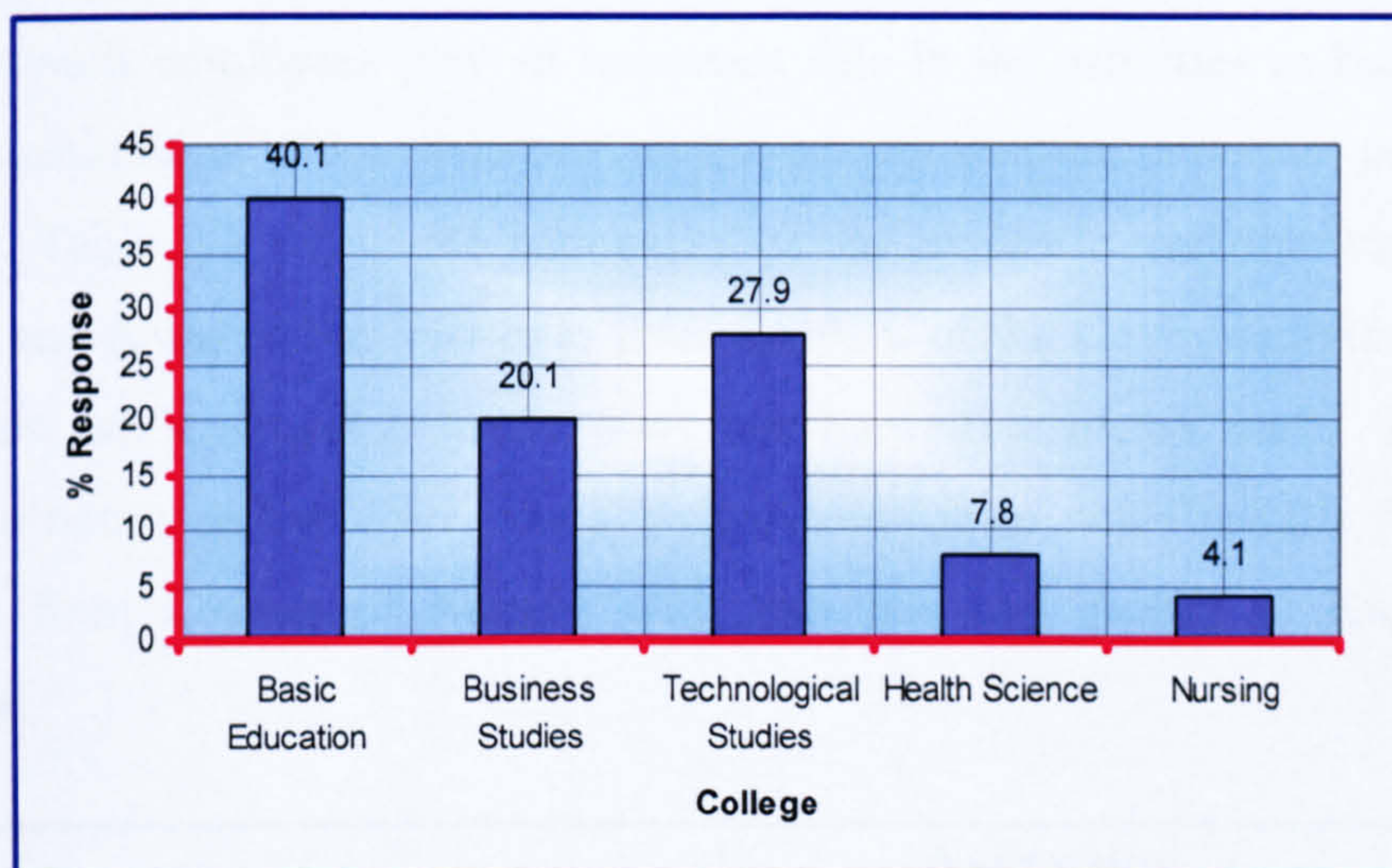


Figure 5.2: Colleges of Academic Staff (N=319)

5.2.2 Gender and Age

Of the survey respondents, 35% were females and 65% males. The oldest respondent was 70 years of age and the youngest was 27 years of age. The median age of the academic staff was 42 years old while the mean age of the surveyed staff was 43 years

old with a standard deviation of 8.41. Figure 5.3 shows a cross tabulation of gender and age group of the academic staff.

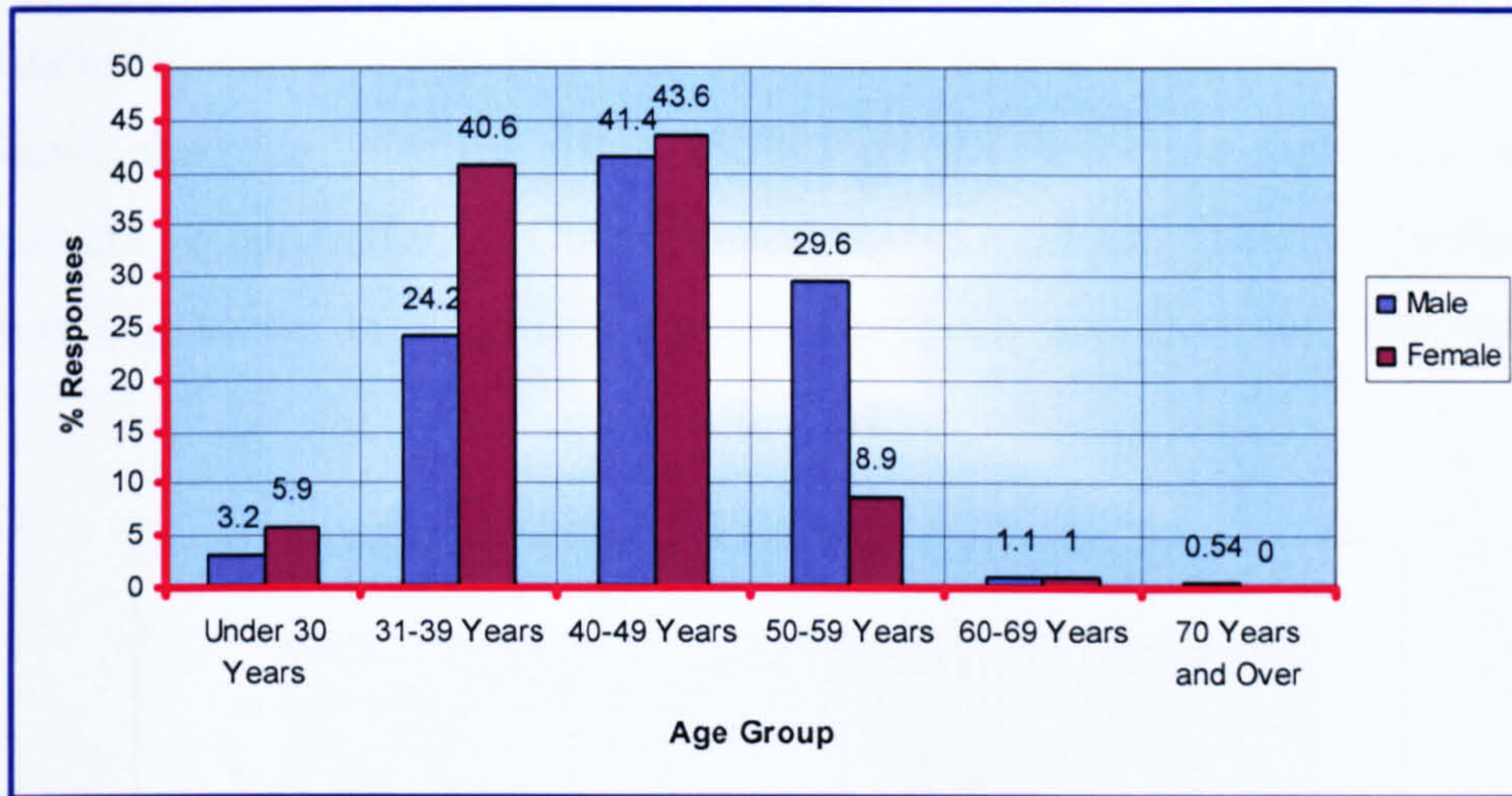


Figure 5.3: Gender and age of Academic Staff (N=287)

5.2.3 Nationality

Non-Kuwaiti employees play an important role in the activities in both private and public institutions in the State of Kuwait and represent an important part of Kuwaiti society. Table 5.1 shows the nationality of the academic staff that took part in the survey and revealed that just over three quarters of the survey sample were Kuwaiti nationals, while almost a quarter were non-Kuwaiti academic staff. An interesting point to note was that there was a high percentage of non-Kuwaitis (84.6%) in the sample from College of Nursing with less than one quarter of Kuwaitis in that College.

		Nationality		Total (N)
		Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	
College	College of Basic Education	90 (70.9%)	37 (29.1%)	127
	College of Business Studies	55 (85.9%)	9 (14.1%)	64
	College of Technological Studies	72 (82.8%)	15 (17.2%)	87
	College of Health Sciences	21(84.0%)	4 (16.0%)	25
	College of Nursing	2 (15.4%)	11 (84.6%)	13
Total		240 (75.9)	76 (23.8%)	316 (99.1%)

Table 5.1: Nationality of Surveyed Academic Staff (N=316)

5.2.4 Education

Academic staff were asked to indicate the highest level of qualification they had completed. The PhD qualification was both the mode and the median of the qualifications completed; this had been attained by 66.6% of the respondents. Figure 5.4 shows that the vast majority (88.9%) of the academic staff had attained postgraduate qualifications. Other qualifications, which include postgraduate diplomas and some uncategorised Eastern European qualifications, accounted for 0.6%.

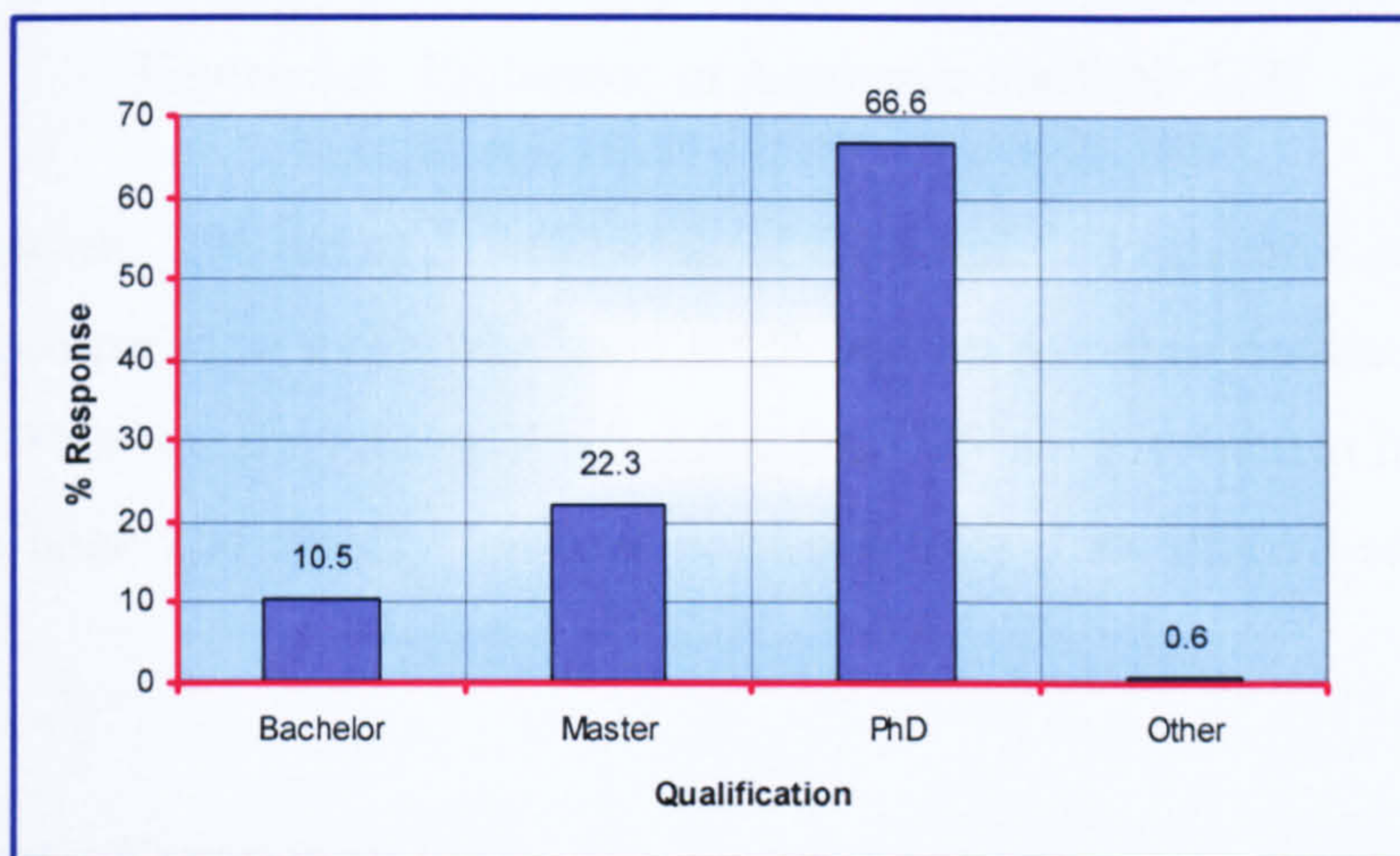


Figure 5.4: Educational Attainment of the Academic Staff (N=312)

5.2.5 Academic Profession and Types of Employment

The academic position which accounted for the largest proportion of the sample was that of assistant professor (academic staff members with a PhD): 189 out of 313 or 60.4%. (See Figure 5.5.) Other positions of a significant size were lecturers and assistant lecturers (mainly degree holders working as instructors). The least frequent response was professors counting for 7 out of 313 (2.2%), and associate professors (20 out of 313: 6.4%) (i.e. academic staff who were PhD holders with a record of publications).

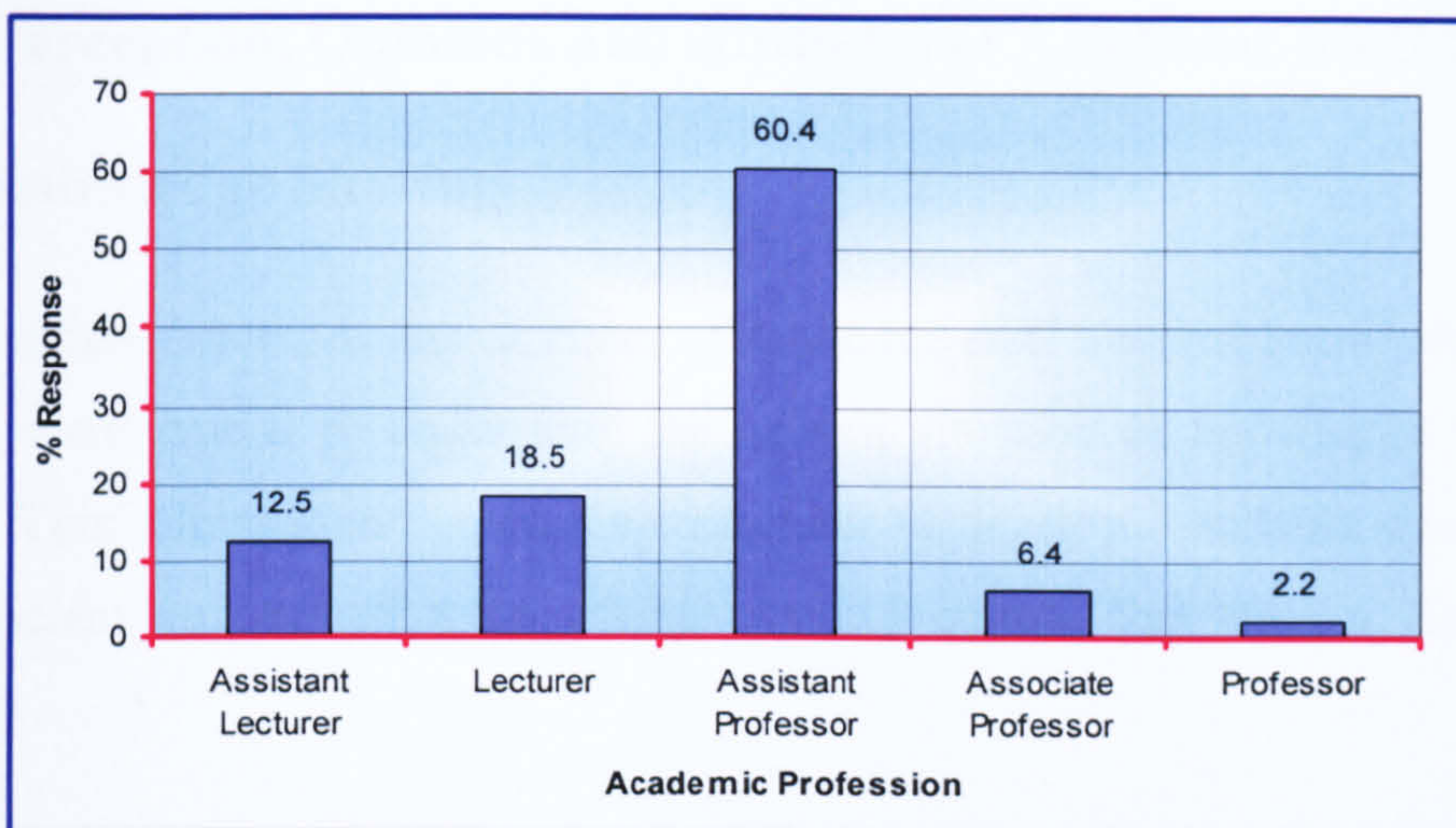


Figure 5.5: Profession of Academic Staff (N=313)

The vast majority, 296 out of 319 (92.8%), of the employed academic staff held full-time posts compared to those who were employed on part-time contracts: 23 out of 319 (7.2%). This is mainly due to the fact that PAAET is a government institution and its policy is largely to employ full-time academic staff (Law of civil service, no 15, 1979).

5.2.6 Academic Experience

94 out of 319 (29.5%) of the sample had 6 to 10 years of experience, which was also the average length of experience. Figure 5.6 shows the years of experience and gender distribution. The lowest level of work experience was less than one year, which accounted for 14 out of 319 (4.4%) responses.

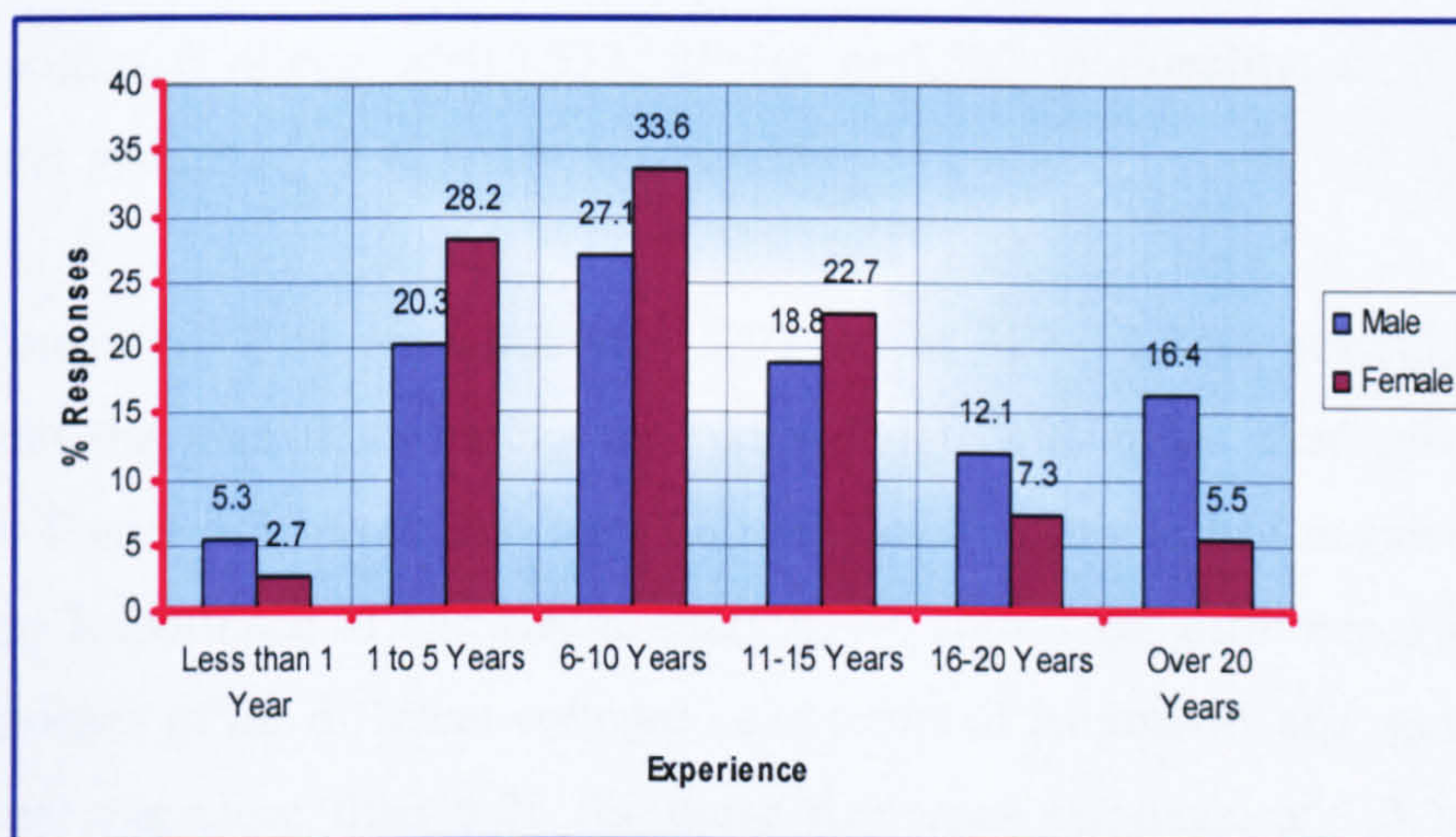


Figure 5.6: Experience of Academic Staff and Gender (N=317)

5.3 Perception, Opinions and Attitudes of Academic Staff towards Knowledge Sharing

The perceptions, opinions and attitudes of academic staff towards knowledge sharing practices were crucial to understand the current situation of knowledge sharing in PAAET. This information helped the researcher to develop a suitable strategy for a more efficient and effective knowledge sharing culture that suits a Kuwaiti HE institute.

5.3.1 Importance of Knowledge Sharing

Academic staff were asked to indicate whether they had ever heard of the concept of knowledge sharing. The vast majority of them, 226 out of 319 (70.8%), indicated that they had heard of it while only 33 (10.3%) indicated that they had never heard of knowledge sharing. 60 (18.8%) indicated that they were "not sure" whether they had heard about this concept.

The majority of respondents showed strong opinions when asked to consider the idea that 'knowledge is power'. 307 out of 319 (96.2%), of the sample strongly agreed or agreed that knowledge is power, while 6 out of 319 (1.9%) had a negative attitude (strongly disagreed or disagreed) towards this concept, and 6 (1.9%) were neutral (see figure 5.7). No significant differences were indicated in terms of the responses from different colleges, nationality and gender in that the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (College: $\chi^2=15.333$; $df=16$; $p=0.500$ - nationality: $\chi^2=3.213$; $df=4$; $p=0.523$ and gender: $\chi^2=2.423$; $df=4$; $p=0.658$).

The vast majority of the academic staff, 293 out of 319 (91.8%), strongly agreed or agreed with the idea that sharing their knowledge with other academic staff was important. Figure 5.7 shows that only 8 (2.6%) of the sample had negative attitudes towards the importance of knowledge sharing. No significant differences were found in the responses of the different colleges or in terms of nationality and gender in that the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (College: $\chi^2=15.323$; $df=16$; $p=0.501$ - nationality: $\chi^2=2.898$; $df=4$; $p=0.575$ and gender: $\chi^2=1.577$; $df=4$).

When the respondents were asked whether or not academic staff should share knowledge and best practices, the vast majority of the academic staff, 296 out of 319 (92.8%), strongly agreed or agreed that academic staff should share knowledge and best practices; only 9 (2.8%) strongly disagreed or disagreed, and 14 (4.4%) were neutral (see figure 5.7). No significant differences were indicated in the responses of the different colleges or in terms of nationality and gender in that the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (College: $x^2=19.057$; $df=16$; $p=0.266$ - nationality: $x^2=3.305$; $df=4$; $p=0.508$ and gender: $x^2=6.186$; $df=4$; $p=0.186$).

Academic staff also showed a strong positive attitude towards the idea that "knowledge sharing would help PAAET to be competitive with other HE institutions in Kuwait". 299 out of 319 (93.7%), agreed or strongly agreed with this while only 14 (4.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6 (1.9%) were neutral (See figure 5.7, mean = 4.38, Std Deviation = .761). No significant differences were indicated in the responses of the different colleges or in terms of nationality and gender in that the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (College: $x^2=16.672$; $df=16$; $p=0.407$ - nationality: $x^2=3.133$; $df=4$; $p=0.536$ - gender: $x^2=3.688$; $df=4$; $p=0.450$).

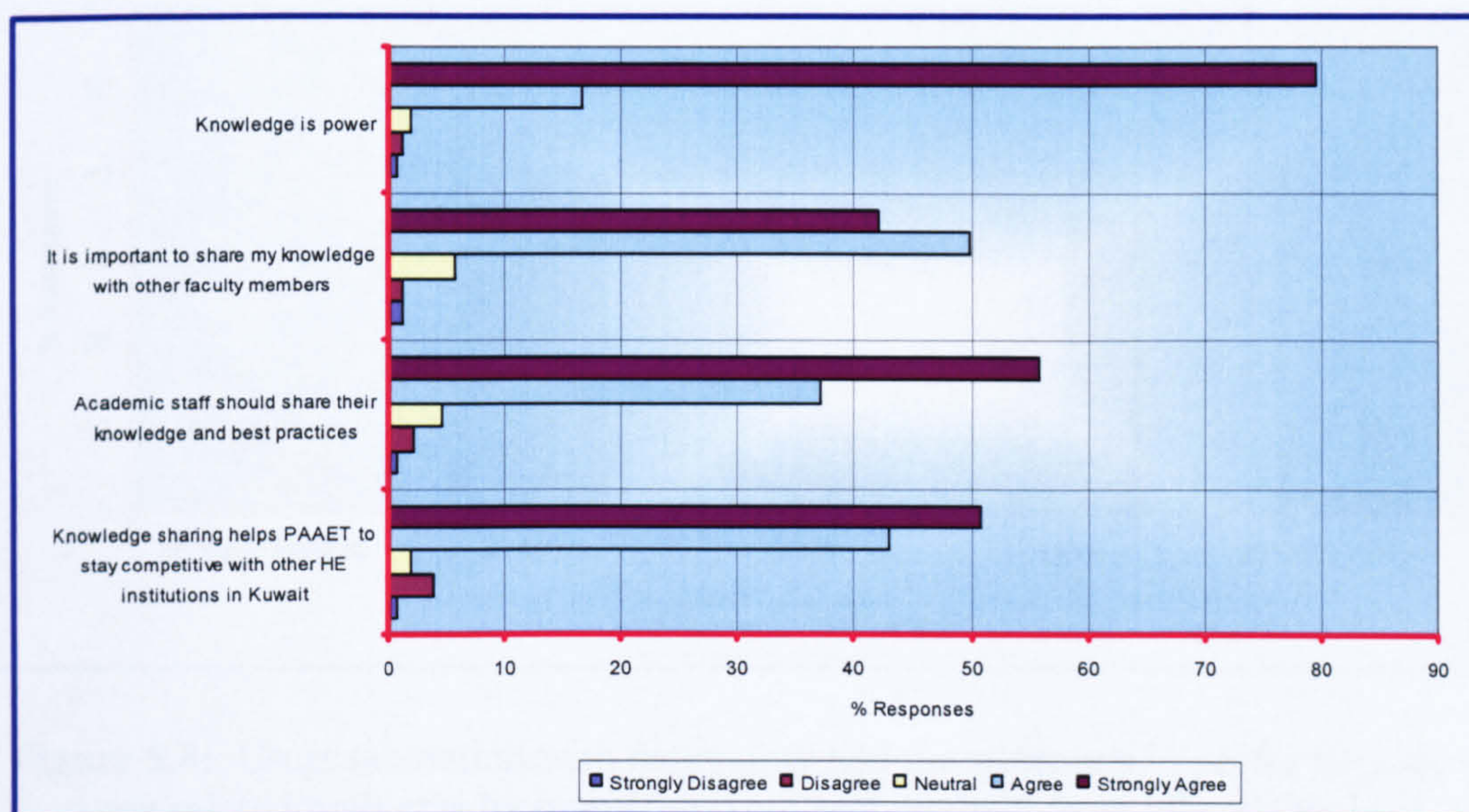


Figure 5.7: Responses to the benefits of knowledge sharing section (N=319).

5.3.2 Solving Problems

Academic staff were asked whether they preferred to resolve work related problems by themselves without seeking help from others. Just over a quarter, 85 out of 319 (26.6%), supported this statement compared with 210 (65.9%) who strongly disagreed or disagreed.

A chi-square test was conducted for the statement 'I prefer to resolve work related problems by myself without seeking help from others' and other independent variables (nationality, college and gender). The chi-square analysis revealed that there was just one statistically significant difference between the nationality of academic staff ($\chi^2=11.973$, $df=4$, $p=0.018$) as the other independent variables were more than the alpha level (Colleges: $\chi^2=19.266$; $df=16$; $p=0.255$ - and gender: $\chi^2=7.042$; $df=4$; $p=0.134$).

The non-Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to prefer to resolve work related problems by themselves (38.1%), compared to Kuwaitis who were in agreement with the statement (23.3%). The cross tabulation is presented in Figure 5.8.

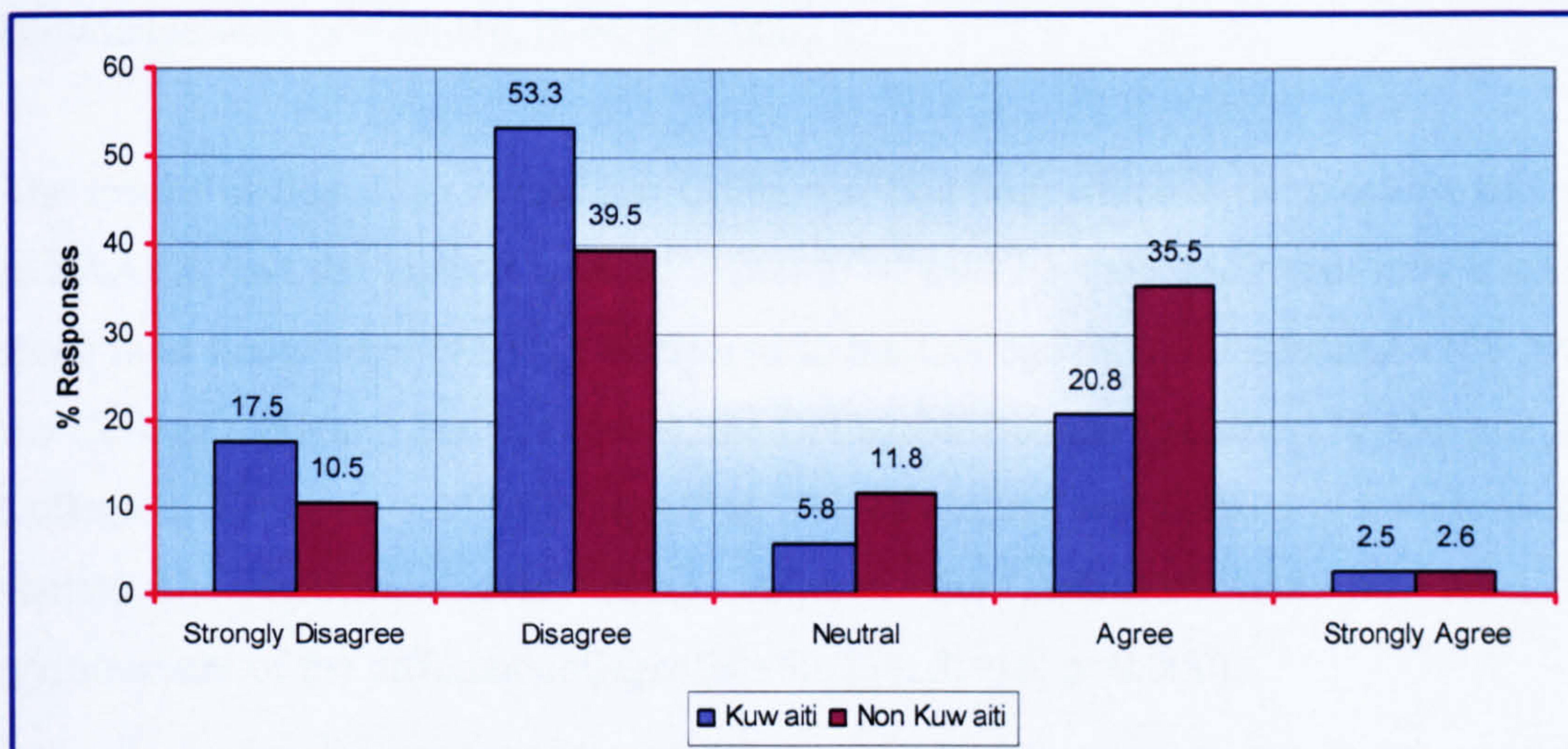


Figure 5.8: Cross tabulation with nationality and the statement 'I prefer to resolve work related problems by myself without seeking help from others' (N=316)

5.3.3 Trust

The role of trust in knowledge sharing is explored in several statements in the research questionnaire. When the respondents were asked whether or not they trust the people that they need to share knowledge with, the majority of academic staff, 249 out of 319 (78.1%), agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while only 37 (11.6%) of the academic staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. No significant differences were indicated in the responses in terms of gender as the alpha level was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=32.506$, $df=20$, $p=0.714$).

Analysis was carried out using cross-tabulations between endorsements of the statement on trust and knowledge sharing and the respondents background variables such as: nationality and college. The results showed that 88.2% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff trusted the people that they need to share their knowledge with compared to 74.6% of Kuwaiti academic staff. The analysis also suggested that Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to endorse the statement of not trusting the people that they need to share the knowledge with (12%), compared to non-Kuwaiti academic staff (10.5%). The chi-square test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between nationality and not trusting the people to share knowledge with ($\chi^2=20.016$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$).

The results of this study reveal that College of Nursing, which is the smallest college in PAAET, had the highest rates of approval of trusting the people that they need to share their knowledge (92.3%), compared to the College of Basic Education (88.3%), the College of Health Science (88%), the College of Business Studies (70.4%) and the College of Technological Studies (64%). The chi-square test showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the statement and the level of endorsement of the different colleges ($\chi^2=50.754$, $df=16$, $p=0.000$).

When the respondents were asked if they trust women in knowledge sharing, just over a half of the academic staff, 172 out of 319 (53.9%), agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I trust women in knowledge sharing' compared with about a third, 103 (32.2%), of the academic staff who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. 44 (13.8%) were neutral in their views concerning this issue. No

significant differences were indicated in the responses of the different colleges that the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (College: $\chi^2=24.752$; $df=16$; $p=0.074$).

When this data was further analysed using cross-tabulation between gender and trusting women in knowledge sharing, it was found that 78.2% of the female respondents had more positive attitudes to trusting other women in knowledge sharing compared to male respondents (41%) who were much less likely to trust women in knowledge sharing. These results were statistically tested and showed a statistically significant difference between gender and trusting women in knowledge sharing ($\chi^2=41.316$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$).

When further analysis was conducted on the relationship of the same statement to nationality, it was found that non-Kuwaiti academic staff had more trust towards women in terms of knowledge sharing (61.8%) compared to Kuwaiti academic staff (51.2%). The chi-square test suggested that it is a statistically significant relationship between the statement and nationality ($\chi^2=9.880$, $df=4$, $p=0.043$). When further two-way cross-tabulation were conducted on the nationality and gender relationship to the same statement, it was found that Kuwaiti female academic staff had more positive attitudes (79.3%) towards trusting other women in knowledge sharing compared to Kuwaiti male academic staff (34.1%). This relationship is supported by the fact that 46.9% of the sample of Kuwaiti male academic staff did not trust women in knowledge sharing compared to the sample of Kuwaiti female academic staff (9.8%). These results suggest a statically significant difference in those responses to the statement as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=51.108$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$). There was no apparent statistically significant difference in non-Kuwaiti male and female responses to the statement as the p-value was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=2.407$, $df=4$, $p=0.661$).

5.3.4 Willingness

The individual's willingness to share knowledge is explored in this section. It was found that the vast majority of academic staff (298 out of 319 or 93.5%) agreed or

strongly agreed that they were willing to share their knowledge with others, while only 11 (3.4%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed and 10 (3.1%) remained neutral (see figure 5.9. - Mean = 4.21, Std Deviation= .701). No significant differences were indicated in the responses in terms of nationality and gender since the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (nationality: $\chi^2=4.926$; $df=4$; $p=0.295$ and gender: $\chi^2=3.245$; $df=4$; $p=0.518$).

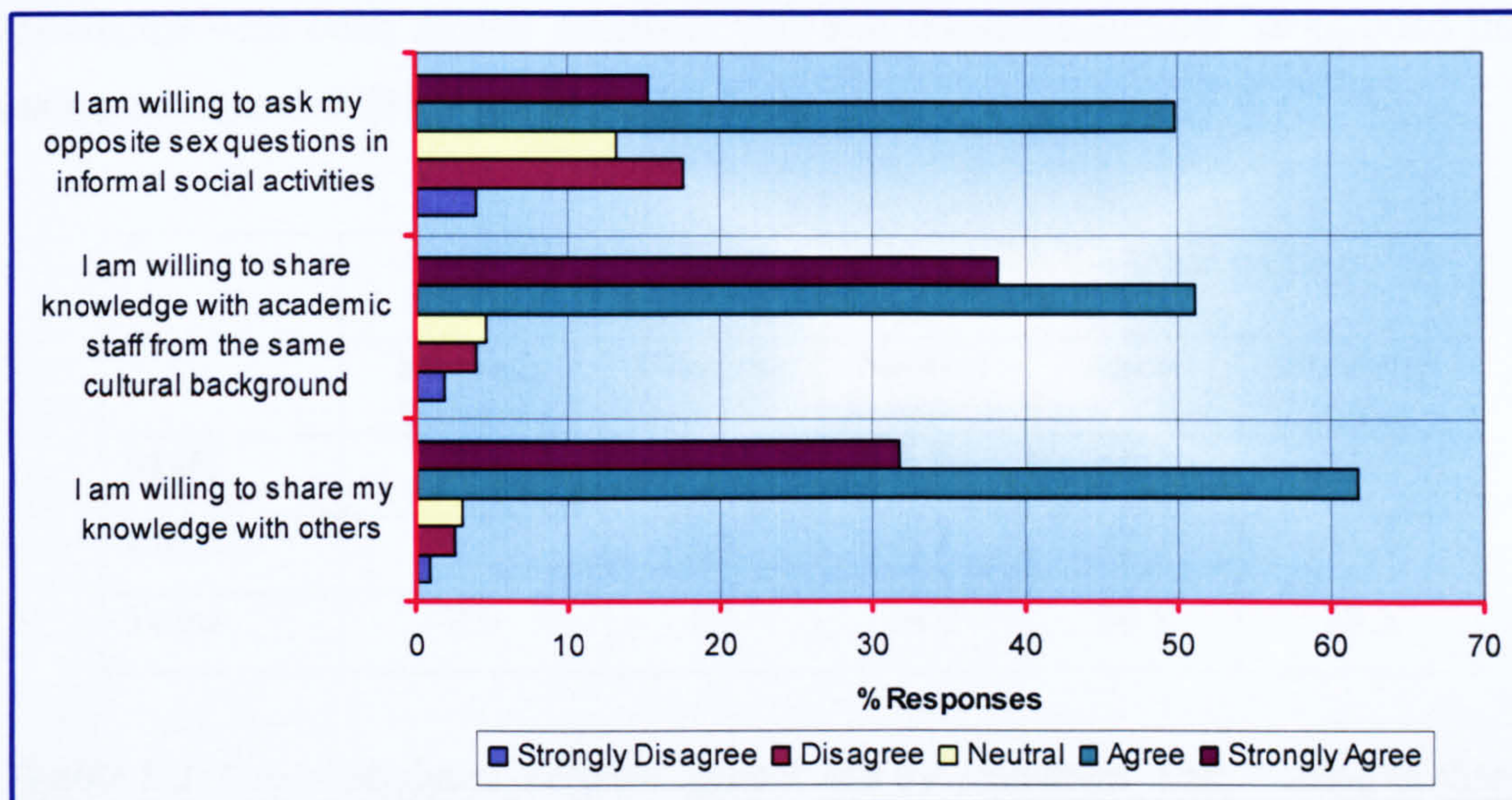


Figure 5.9: Responses to the willingness statements (N=319).

All 13 (100%) respondents from the College of Nursing endorsed a willingness to share their knowledge with others compared to the respondents from the other four colleges in PAAET (College of Basic Education 93.7%, College of Business Studies 92.2%, College of Technological Studies 93.2%, and College of Health Science 92%). The chi-square test showed that this relationship was statistically significant as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=40.994$ $df=16$, $p=0.001$).

When the respondents were asked to express their opinions as to their willingness to share their knowledge with other academic staff from the same cultural background, the vast majority of academic staff, 285 out of 319 (89.3%), agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to share knowledge with academic staff of the same cultural background compared with only 19 (6.0%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed. 15 (4.7%) were neutral (Mean = 4.20, Std Deviation= .851 -see figure 5.9). No

significant differences were indicated in the responses in terms of different colleges and nationality since the p-value was more than 0.05 for those responses (colleges: $\chi^2=22.968$; $df=16$; $p=0.115$ and nationality: $\chi^2=9.216$; $df=4$; $p=0.056$).

Further analysis using cross tabulation of the relationship between willingness to share knowledge with academic staff from the same cultural background and gender, showed that the female academic staff were more willing (94.5%) to share their knowledge with other faculty members who had the same cultural background than male academic staff (86.5%),(See Table 5.2).

	Willing to share knowledge with the same culture (%)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Male	2.9	4.85	5.8	55.1	31.4
Female	-	2.7	2.7	42.7	51.8
Total	2.9	4.1	14.7	50.8	38.5

Table 5.2: Cross tabulation between gender and the statement ‘I am willing to share knowledge with academic staff from the same cultural background’

The chi-square test showed a statistically significant difference between the statement above and gender ($\chi^2=15.330$ $df=4$, $p=0.004$). A knowledge-sharing culture requires interaction among individuals within the organisation regardless of their sex. When the respondents were asked about their willingness to ask the opposite sex a knowledge questions in informal social situations, 208 out of 319 (65.2%), of academic staff said they were willing to ask the opposite sex question in informal social activities, while 69 (21.7%) said they were unwilling to ask and 42 (13.2%) were neutral (see figure 5.9). No significant differences were indicated in the responses by gender and the statement as the alpha level was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=4.482$, $df=4$, $p=0.345$).

When the relationship between nationality and the willingness to ask the opposite sex questions in informal social situations was further analysed using cross-tabulation, it was found that non-Kuwaitis were more willing (78.9%) to ask the opposite sex

questions in informal social activities than Kuwaitis (60.5%). The chi-square test shows that there was a statistically significant difference between nationality and the statement above ($\chi^2=34.084$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$).

Further analysis indicated that staff from the College of Nursing were more willing to ask the opposite sex questions in informal social activities (100%) compared to other colleges who were more unlikely to approve the statement. The College of Basic Education was the least likely (61.7%). The researcher also found that the scientific colleges, College of Technological Studies (66.3%) and the College of Health Science 88%, were more willing to ask opposite sex questions in informal social situations than those non scientific colleges (College of Business Studies 54.7%). The chi-square test suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between the colleges and their willingness to endorse this statement ($\chi^2=63.887$, $df=16$, $p=0.000$).

5.3.5 National Cultural Influences

One of the main aims of this research was to explore the influence of national culture on knowledge sharing practices between faculty members in PAAET as there might be some aspects of the practice of sharing knowledge that are influenced by the national culture of Kuwait. This section presents an analysis of the responses of academic staff at PAAET to questions regarding national culture and Kuwaiti culturally specific issues.

The respondents were asked whether the national culture is important in knowledge sharing or not. The majority of academic staff, 265 or 83.4% of the total responses agreed or strongly agreed that national culture is important in knowledge sharing. Only 22 of the responses (6.9%) strongly disagreed or disagreed while 32 (10%) were neutral, (N=319), (mean=4.8, Std Deviation=.865).

Further analysis of the data shows that the College of Nursing had the lowest endorsement of the statement that national culture is important in knowledge sharing (53.9%) compared to other colleges in PAAET who were more likely to agree or strongly agree to the statement (College of Business Studies 73.5%, College of Health

science 84%, College of Technological Studies 88% and College of Basic Education 86.7%). The analysis suggests that there was a statistically significant relation between the response of the different PAAET colleges and this statement ($\chi^2=27.733$; $df=16$; $p= 0.034$). (N= 319).

There was no significant difference between the variable of gender and the importance of national culture in knowledge sharing: $\chi^2=8.825$, $df=4$, $p=0.066$, (N=317). The same results were also found for nationality of the respondents and the importance of national culture in knowledge sharing, as the alpha value was more than 0.05, which suggests that there was no significant relationship ($\chi^2=.774$, $df=4$, $p=0.942$) (N=316).

Figure 5.10 shows a comparison between a positive question and a negative question concerning the importance of national culture in knowledge sharing. The responses were reliable as there were no major differences in opinions with the question reversed. The analysis shows that 50.2% agreed with the statement compared with 49.2% disagreeing when the question was reversed, which is a 1.0% difference in response. 32.9% strongly agreed with the statement compared with 37% who strongly disagreed with the reverse question, a 4.5% difference. 10% and 8.8% were neutral for both questions respectively, a 1.2% difference. These differences are low, less than 5%, and can be considered a reliable difference, suggesting that respondents read the questions carefully before answering the questions.

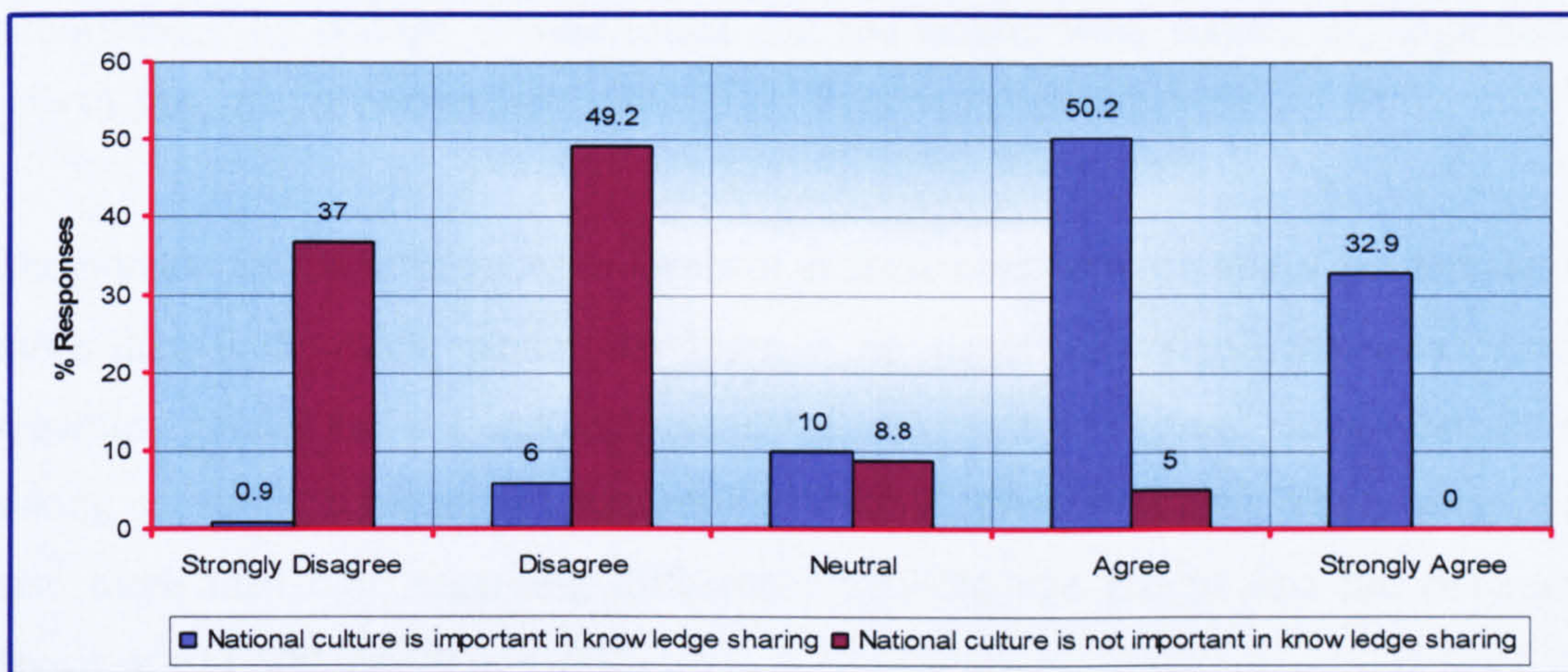


Figure 5.10: Comparison to check reliability of responses (N=319).

Regarding the options on whether or not it was embarrassing to ask a colleague a question concerned with knowledge, 153 of the total respondents (47.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement while 111 (34.8%) agreed or strongly agreed and 55 (17.2%) were neutral (N=31 - Mean= 2.76, Std Deviation= 1.140).

Investigation of the relationship between this statement and nationality of the respondents showed that Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to agree or strongly agree that it is embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question (37.1%) with 45% disagreeing, while 26.3% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and 59.2% disagreed that it was culturally embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question, It was found that there is a statistically significant difference between endorsements of this statement and nationality with an alpha value of less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=10.824$, $df=4$, $p=0.029$), (N=316).

Further analysis of the relationship between the same statement and the different colleges, demonstrated that 92.3% of the respondents from the College of Nursing disagreed strongly with the idea that it is culturally embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question and only 7.7% who agreed. In comparison, 56% of respondents from the College of Health Science disagreed; College of Technological Studies had 47.2% in disagreement. 40.6% from the College of Business Studies disagreed with the statement. Finally, 46.1% of respondents from the College of Basic Education disagreed. By running the chi-square test for a relationship between this statement and endorsement by college, it was found that the results were statistically significant ($\chi^2=30.556$, $df=16$, $p=0.015$).

The p-value for the differences in levels of endorsement between males and females is more than 0.05 which means that there is no statistically significant relationship regarding gender and the endorsement of the statement on cultural embarrassment to asking questions concerning knowledge ($\chi^2=6.047$, $df=4$, $p=0.196$). The p-value was also more than 0.05 regarding differences between age groups and the statement above ($\chi^2=11.509$, $df=20$, $p=0.932$).

The respondents were asked whether they felt shy when asking the opposite sex questions or not. The results showed that 154 out of 319 (48.3%) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: 'I am too shy to ask a person of the opposite sex a question' compared with 125 (39.2%) who agreed or strongly agreed while 40 (12.5%) were neutral (N= 319, mean=2.79, Std Deviation= 1.399).

Investigations of possible relationships between the respondents' nationality and levels of endorsement of the statement on shyness revealed that these were statistically significant at a level of 0.043 and $\chi^2=9.841$, (N=316). 63.2% of non-Kuwaiti disagreed with the statement and 25% agreed, compared with Kuwaiti nationals of which 48.8% disagreed and 43.4% agreed.

Further analysis suggested that non-scientific colleges were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement (College of Basic Education 37.5%, College of Business Studies 54.7%) than scientific colleges who were less likely to endorse the statement (College of Technological Studies 39.3%, College of Health Science 24%, College of Nursing 7.7%), (See Figure 5.11)

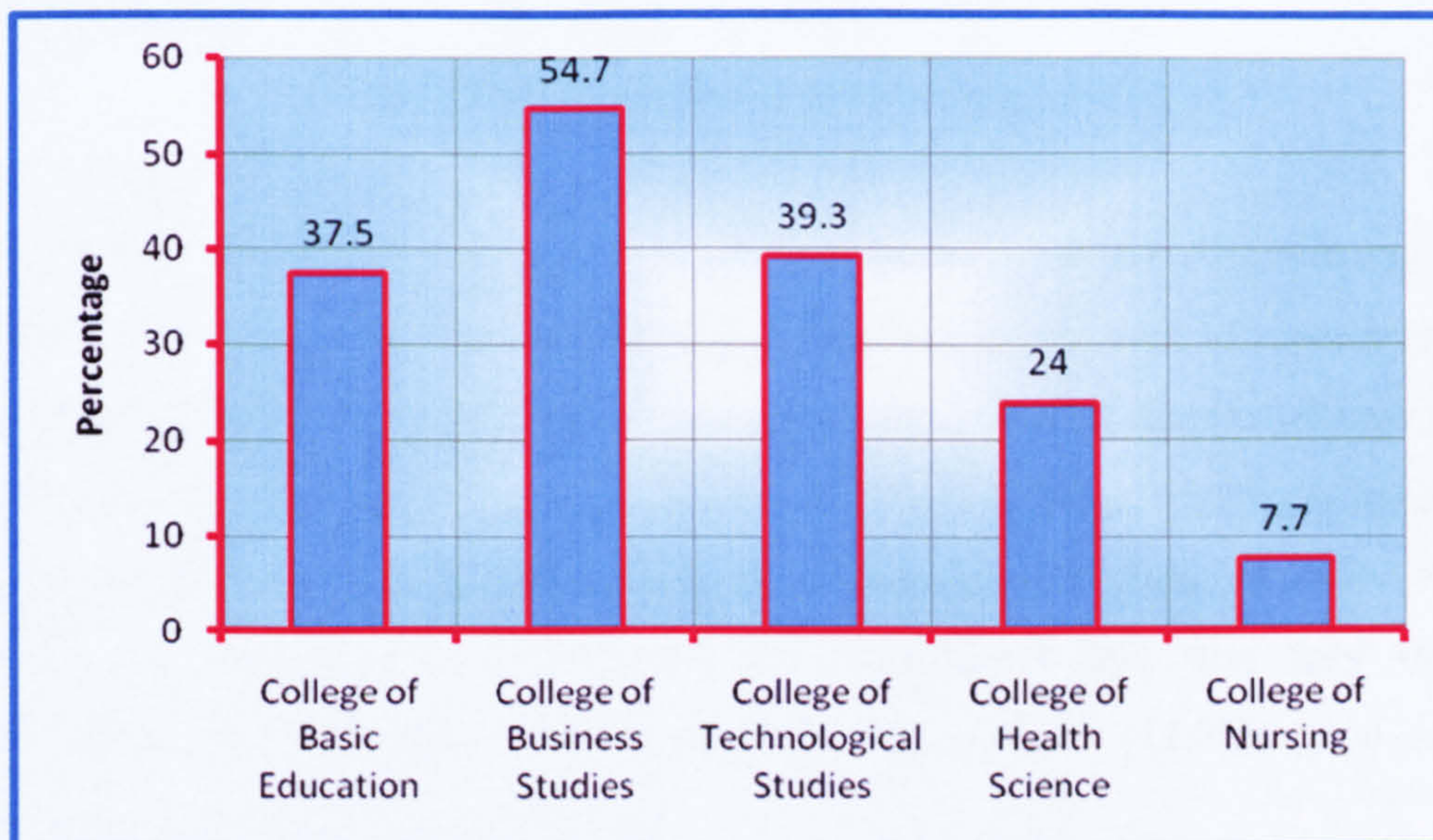


Figure 5.11: Colleges' response to the statement 'I am too shy to ask the opposite sex questions'

The differences in the findings can mainly be attributed to the fact that faculty members are required to interact with members of the opposite sex in specialised

classes i.e. labs, group discussion, team projects etc,. The chi-square test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between this statement and the level of endorsement by different PAAET colleges ($\chi^2=58.962$; $df=16$; $p=0.000$), (N=319).

An examination of differences in endorsements of the 'shyness' statement between the male and female academic staff suggested that male academic staff were slightly more likely to endorse the statement (39.6%) than female academic staff (38.2%). The p-value for the difference in agreement was more than 0.05 which suggests that it was not statistically significant ($\chi^2=8.132$; $df=4$; $p=0.087$), (N=317).

5.3.5.1 Kuwaiti Specific Culture issues

The researcher developed a template of Kuwaiti specific cultural traits from the literature review and this was used to develop some statements to investigate the effect of these traits on knowledge sharing in PAAET. The effect of Kuwaiti culture on knowledge sharing is considered in terms of the following categories: gender, tribal issues, religion and governmental influence, which are discussed in the following section.

Gender issues

Traditionally, in Kuwait and the GCC, people usually do not communicate with members of the opposite sex unless they are relatives or in cases of emergency. To investigate the effect of this issue, respondents were asked if they communicate in discussions with the opposite sex. 170 out of 319 (53.3%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they communicate in discussion with their opposite sex at PAAET, In contrast, 113 (35.4%) of the respondents said that they do not communicate in discussion with the opposite sex, and 36 (11.3%) gave neutral responses.

Further analysis showed that 123 out of 207 (59.4%) male academic staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement regarding communicating with the opposite sex, compared to 47 out of 110 (42.7%) female academic staff that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 51 (46.3%) of female academic staff stated

that they do not communicate in discussions with the opposite sex, compared to 61(27.4%) of male academics. (See Table 5.3).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Male	43	80	23	57	4	207
Female	23	24	12	49	2	110
Total	66	104	35	106	6	317

Table 5.3: Cross tabulation between gender and the statement concerning communication in discussions with the opposite sex

There was a statistically significant difference between gender and communication with the opposite sex ($\chi^2=12.424$; $df=4$; $p=0.014$), ($N=317$). An investigation into the relationship between communicating with the opposite sex and the respondents' nationality revealed that there was a statistically significant difference of $\chi^2=53.288$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$, ($N=316$). 89.4% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff endorsed the statement on interaction with the opposite sex compared to 42% of Kuwaiti academic staff responses while 42.9% Kuwaiti academic staff disagreed with the statement compared to the 10.5% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff. Further analysis showed that Kuwaiti male academic were more likely to interact with the opposite sex (48.3% agreeing), compared to Kuwaiti female academic staff (54.4% disagreeing). The non-Kuwaiti female academic staff strongly endorsed communication with the opposite sex (94.5%), compared to 87.9% of non-Kuwaiti male academic staff.

Further analysis was conducted for the same statement and the different PAAET colleges; it was shown that there was a statistically significant difference between the colleges and endorsements of the gender communication statement ($\chi^2=63.686$; $df=16$; $p=0.000$), $N=319$. 100% of respondents from the College of Nursing agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, compared to College of Basic Education (56.3%), College of Business Studies (46.9%), College of Technological Studies (41.5%) and College of Health Science (72%).

When the respondents were asked to express their opinions on whether showing their faces in online discussion is culturally inappropriate or not, it was found that 81 out of 319 (25.4%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it was inappropriate to show their faces in online discussion, while 206 out of 319 (64.6 %) disagreed or strongly disagreed while 32 out of 319 (10%) were neutral. (See Figure 5.12).

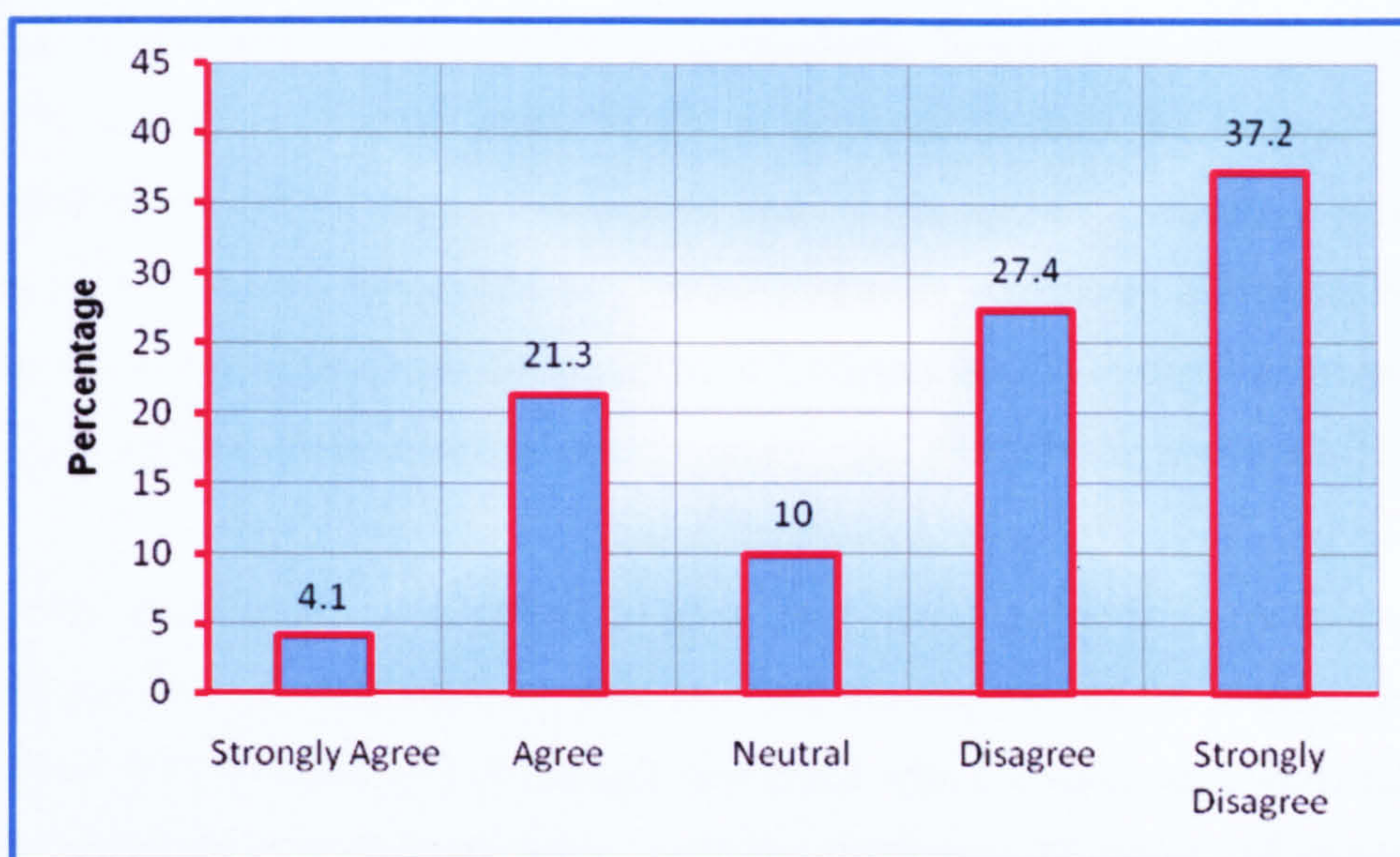


Figure 5.12: Showing my face in online discussion is culturally inappropriate

The chi square test values of $\chi^2=17.455$; $df=4$; $p=0.002$ for nationality and $\chi^2=119.414$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$ for gender suggest there are significant relationships between these variables and endorsements of the statement on revealing faces in online discussion. The value for both nationality and the gender are less than the alpha value of 0.05. The proportion of males who believed that 'showing my face on online discussion is against my culture' is significantly different from the proportion of females who said they believed this. It also indicates that there is a significant difference between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti towards the same statement. The results indicate that female Kuwaiti academic staff (71.7%) constituted the majority of those who agreed or strongly agreed compared with only 3.4% for Kuwaiti males. It is also interesting to observe that only 5.6% of non-Kuwaiti females agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'showing my face in online discussions is against my culture'.

Further investigation of a relationship between endorsements of the same statement for the five PAAET colleges revealed that 92.3% of respondents from the College of Nursing strongly disagreed with the statement while 7.7%, disagreed. 80% of respondents from the College of Health Science disagreed or strongly disagreed with only 12% agreeing with the statement, 85.4% of respondents from the College of Technological Studies disagreed or strongly disagreed with 4.5% agreeing. For the College of Business Studies, 42.2% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 50% agreed or strongly agree. 54.6% of respondents from the College of Basic Education disagreed or strongly disagreed and 32.8% agreed or strongly agree with the statement. The chi-square test showed a statistically significant difference between endorsements by respondents from different Colleges on the cultural appropriacy of staff showing their faces in online discussion ($\chi^2=105.838$; $df=16$; $p=0.000$) (N=319).

When the respondents were asked to give their views towards the statement that 'women should only communicate with women', the majority of the respondents (230 out of 319: 72.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while 62 out of 319 (19.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 27 out of 319 (8.5%) were neutral,(See Figure 5.13).

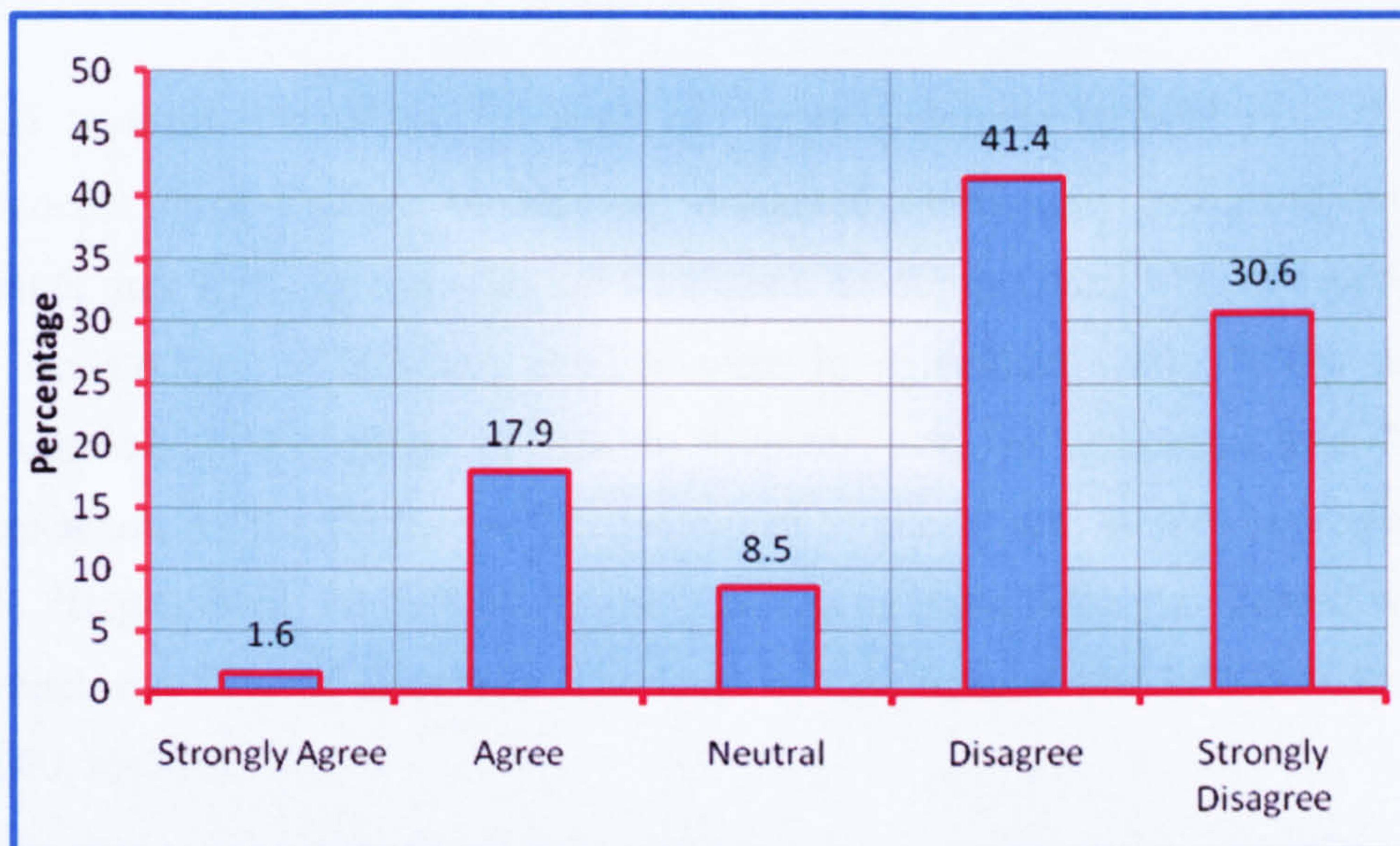


Figure 5.13: Responses to the statement ‘women should only communicate with women’

When responses to the statement above were tested against gender, a statistically significant difference was found using cross tabulation and chi-square test with an alpha value of less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=19.428$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$), (N=317). 26.1% of the male respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women should only communicate with women while only 6.4% of females agreed or strongly agreed with this idea.

An investigation of respondents' attitudes towards this statement on the basis of nationality found a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=38.165$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$), (N=316). 96% of non-Kuwaiti respondents had highly negative attitudes to the statement with only 2.6% having positive attitudes compared to 24.6% of Kuwaiti respondents who endorsed the idea that women should only communicate with women and 64% who disagreed with the statement. When two-way cross-tabulations were conducted, it was found that Kuwaiti male academic staff were much more likely to agree or strongly agree (34.7%) that women should only communicate with women compared to Kuwaiti female academic staff, 7.6% of whom agreed or strongly agreed. These results were statistically significant for the responses of Kuwaitis as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=27.676$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$). However, the responses were not statistically significant for the responses of the non-Kuwaitis as the alpha value was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=4.456$; $df=3$; $p=0.216$).

Further investigation of this variable and same statement showed that 92.3% of respondents from College of Nursing disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 7.7% agreed with the statement. In comparison, 14% of respondents from the College of Business Studies were in agreement while 76.6% were in disagreement, 20% College of Health Sciences were in agreement and 76% in disagreement, for the College of Technological Studies it was 40.4 % agreement and 50.6% disagreement while 8.6% of the College of Basic Education agreed with the statement and 82% of disagreed. The level of significance was ($\chi^2=75.503$; $df=16$; $p=0.000$, N=319).

Tribal Culture

The tribal culture is one of the main cultural characteristics of Kuwaiti society and it was explored in the questionnaire to find out if tribal culture affects knowledge sharing among faculty members in PAAET.

The respondents were asked if tribal culture influenced knowledge sharing among faculty members in PAAET. 93 out of 319 (29.2%) strongly agreed with the statement, 124 out of 319 (38.9%) of the respondents agreed, 14 out of 319 (4.4%) strongly disagreed, 37 out of 319 (11.6%) disagreed with the statement and 51 out of 319 (16%) of the respondents were neutral (mean=3.77). (See Figure 5.14.)

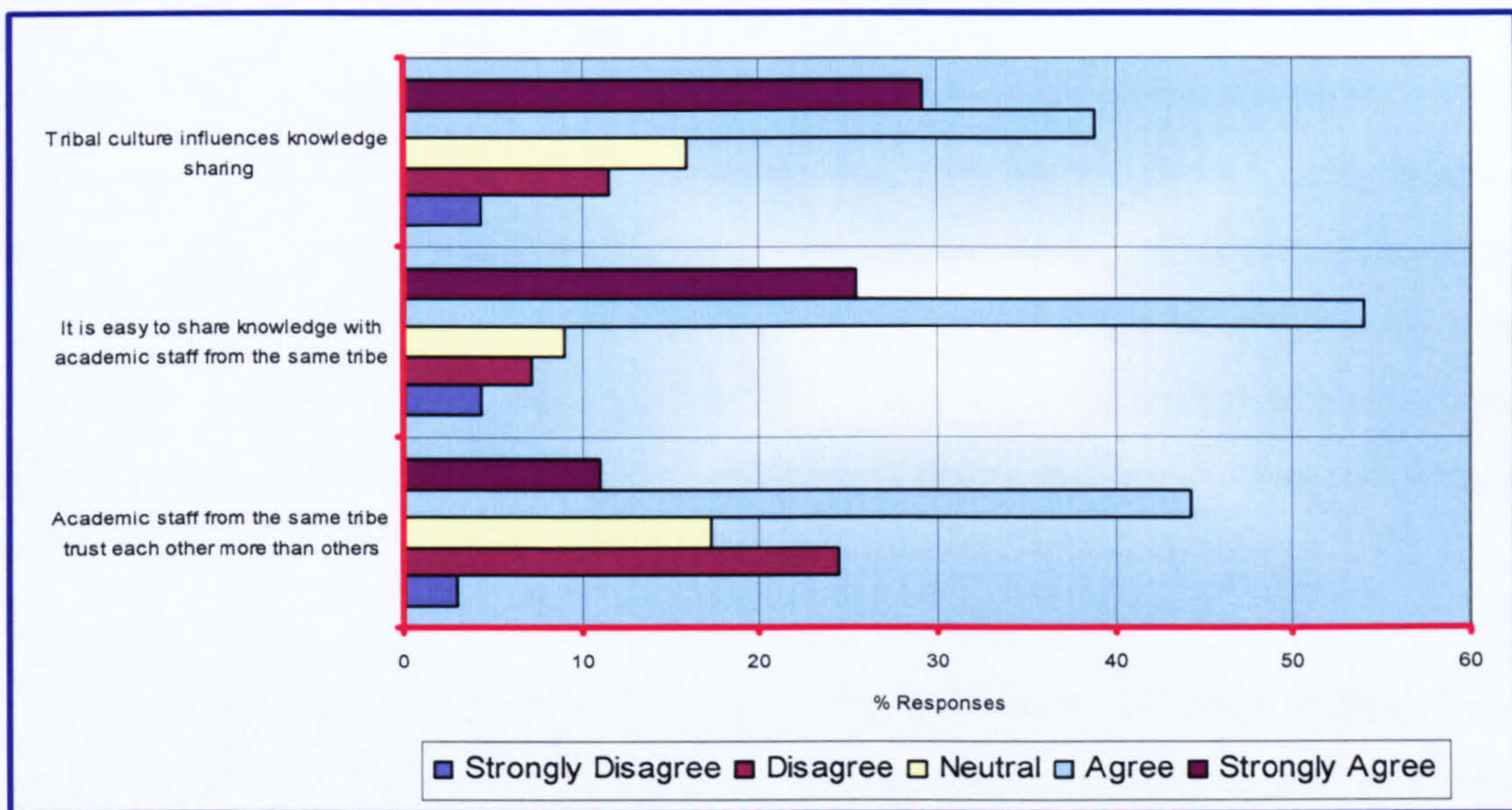


Figure 5.14: Responses to statements regarding tribal issues

Figure 5.15 shows another comparison between two statements on tribal cultural influence, one positive and the other negative. It was found that the respondents' percentages were very close (1.0% for agreement, 2.5% for neutral, and 0% for disagreement). This suggests respondents are consistent in their responses and allows for more confidence in the findings.

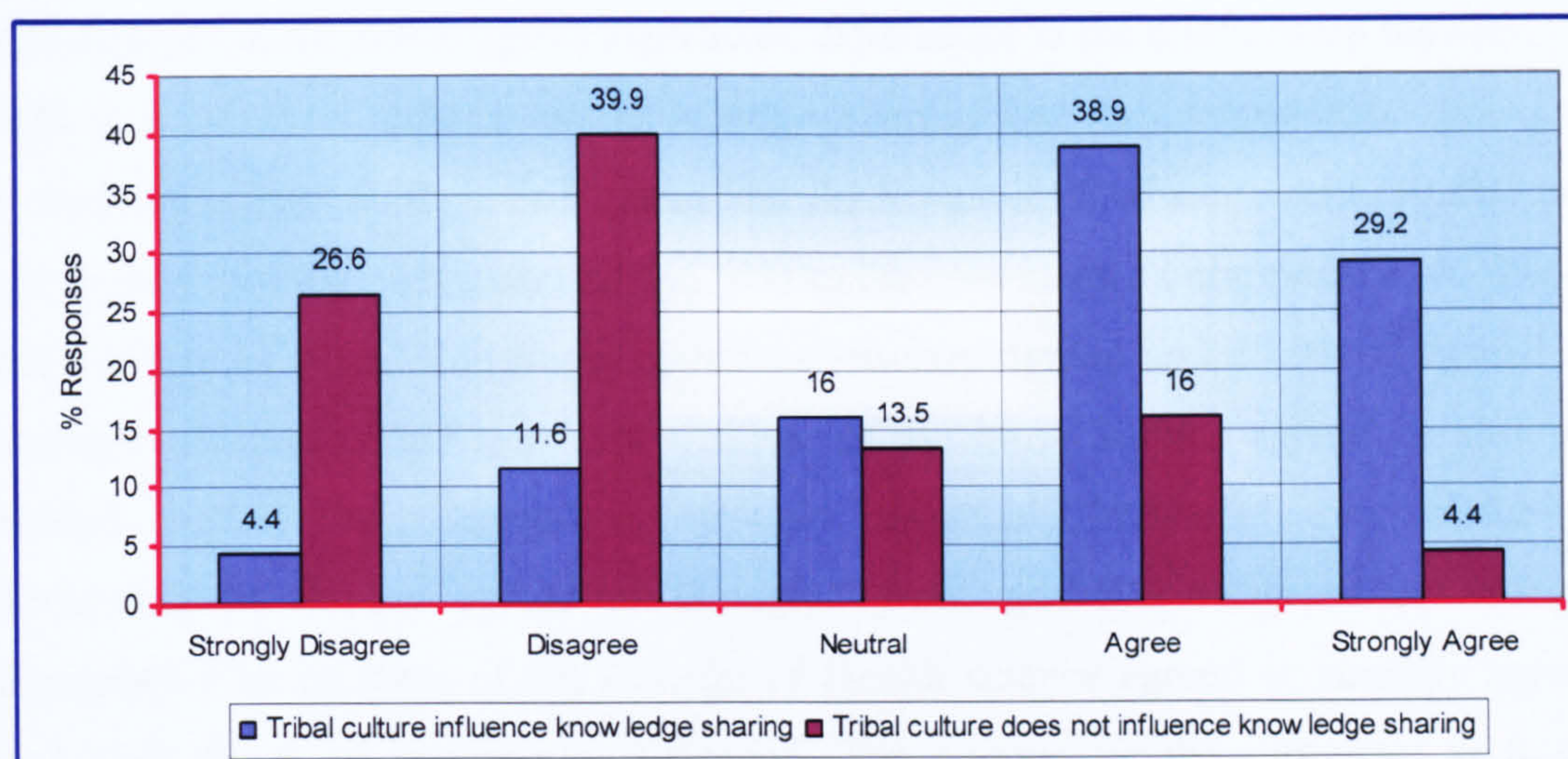


Figure 5.15: Comparison between the statement that the tribal culture influences knowledge sharing and its negative statement (N=319)

In terms of the respondents' nationalities and their attitudes to whether tribal culture influences knowledge sharing, it was found that 171 out of 240 (71.3%) Kuwaiti academic staff agreed or strongly agreed that tribal culture influences knowledge sharing between faculty members. In comparison, non-Kuwaiti academic staff were less likely to agree with the statement (57.9%). Tests showed a statistically significant difference in response to the statement and respondents' nationalities as the p-value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=25.745$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$).

An investigation of responses to the same statement in terms of gender indicated that 80 out of 110 (72.7%) of female academic staff agreed or strongly agreed that tribal culture influence knowledge sharing. In comparison, 135 out of 207 (65.2%) of male academic staff agreed or strongly agreed that tribal culture influenced their knowledge sharing practices. 20 female academic staff (18.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 31 (15%) of male respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. The chi-square test suggested that there is a statistically significant difference between the gender of academic staff and endorsement of the idea that tribal culture influences their knowledge sharing as the p-value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=11.894$; $df=4$; $p=0.018$).

Chi-square testing also suggests significant differences in the relationship between the influence of tribal culture on knowledge sharing and the respondents' colleges. Respondents from College of Nursing had the lowest level of agreement (30.8%) and the highest level of disagreement (61.5%) to the statement. In comparison, 63.3% of the College of Basic Education agreed or strongly agreed and 14.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 76.6% of the College of Business Studies agreed or strongly agreed and 10.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 79.8% of the College of Technological Studies agreed or strongly agreed and 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, 48% of the College of Health science agreed or strongly agreed and 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The p-value for the difference is 0.000 suggesting a statistically significant difference between colleges in regard to levels of endorsement on the statement ($\chi^2=69.523$; $df=16$; $p=0.000$).

Investigations regarding the level of comfort respondents had in sharing knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe, suggested this is not to be a problem for most of the respondents as the survey showed that the majority 253 (79.3%) of academic staff agreed or strongly agreed that it is easy to share knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe compared with only 37 (11.6%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 29 (9.1%) were neutral, (N=319, Mean=3.89). (See Figure 5.14.) When responses were analysed with regard to gender, it was shown that the female respondents had stronger positive attitudes towards the ease of sharing knowledge with the same tribe as 35.5% strongly agreed with the statement. Male academic staff (19.8%) were less likely to strongly agree with same statement, however. Generally, both male and female academic staff were in broad general agreement with the statement with 79.2% of males and 79.1% of females in total agreement with the statement "it is easy to share knowledge within the same tribe". Statistically the chi-square test showed that there was a significant difference in the levels of endorsement by gender ($\chi^2=10.870$; $df=4$; $p=0.028$), (N=317).

In terms of differences in responses from the five colleges of PAAET and the same statement, the respondents from the College of Nursing were the most likely to strongly agree (53.8%) with the ease of sharing knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe compared to other colleges. The scores of the other colleges were as

follows: College of Basic Education 30.3%, College of Technological Studies 22.5%, College of Business Studies 21.9% and College of Health Science 4%. However, in terms of broad, general agreement with the statement, the College of Basic Education respondents were the mostly likely to agree or strongly agree (88.3%). This difference in college endorsements is likely to be statistically significant as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=33.682$; $df=16$; $p=0.006$), (N=319).

Further analysis of the same statement above suggests that there were no significant differences between the respondents' nationality and their endorsements of the statement on the ease of sharing knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe ($\chi^2=3.881$; $df=4$; $p=0.422$) as the p-value was more than 0.05.

With regard to the statement on trusting academic staff from the same tribe more than others, 176 out of total respondents (55.2%) agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 88 of the respondents (27.6%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed and 55 (17.2%) of the respondents who were 'neutral', (N=319, Mean=3.35). (See Figure 5.14). When a comparison was made between nationalities of respondents, 60.9% of Kuwaiti academic staff either agreed or strongly agreed compared to 38.1% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff. The chi-square test suggests there is a statistically significant difference between the nationality of the respondents and their endorsements ($\chi^2=17.383$; $df=4$; $p=0.002$), (N=316). This suggests Kuwaiti staff are more likely to trust staff from the same tribe than other members of staff.

Further analysis regarding responses to the same statement and the gender of respondents' showed that 64.6% of female academic staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 50.8% for male academic staff. Statistically, a chi-square test showed there was a significant difference in the levels of endorsement and gender with an alpha value of 0.05 ($\chi^2=12.718$; $df=4$; $p=0.013$, N=317).

A statistically significant difference in response was found for the statement 'Academic staff from the same tribe trust each other more than others' was for the different PAAET Colleges, as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=40.695$; $df=16$; $p=0.001$, N=319). The results showed that 62.5% of the respondents from the College

of Business Studies agreed or strongly agreed with the statement above compared to 15.4% for the College of Nursing.

Religious issues

Kuwait as a State has one strong main religion and religious issues are likely to affect people in their daily activities. Therefore, respondents in this survey were asked two main questions (shown in Figure 5.14). The first concerns whether or not their religion encourages knowledge sharing or not. The vast majority of academic staff, 291 (91.2%), agreed or strongly agreed that religion encourages knowledge sharing and only 14 (4.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed while 14 (4.4%) of the academic staff were neutral (N=319, mean=4.42, Std Deviation=.031). (See Figure 5.16.)

Then those data were further analysed for a relationship between gender and the role of religion in knowledge sharing. It was found that 95.5% of female respondents agreed and strongly agreed in comparison to 88.8% of male academic staff. The results of the chi-square test indicate that there was a statistically significant difference with an alpha value that is less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=12.823$; $df=4$; $p=0.012$), (N=317). The chi-square analysis did not show any statistical difference between the same statement above and nationality of the respondents as the alpha value was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=19.410$; $df=16$; $p=0.248$).

When the respondents were asked about their beliefs regarding whether their religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex, it was found that 247 (77.4%) of academic staff agreed or strongly agreed and 32 (10%) of the academic staff disagreed or strongly disagreed while 40 (12.5%) of the academic staff were neutral in their responses to the statement (N=319, mean= 3.87). (See Figure 5.16.) The only statistically significant difference that was found in the responses for the statement above was with the nationality of the respondents as the alpha level was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=9.539$; $df=4$; $p=0.049$). Non-Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to endorse the statement by strongly agreeing or agreeing (89.5%) that their religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex, compared to Kuwaiti academic staff (73.7%). The chi-square analysis suggested that there was no statistically significant relationship for the respondents by gender and colleges as the alpha level was more than 0.05 (gender $\chi^2=5.610$; $df=4$; $p=0.230$ and colleges $\chi^2=18.319$; $df=16$; $p=0.306$).

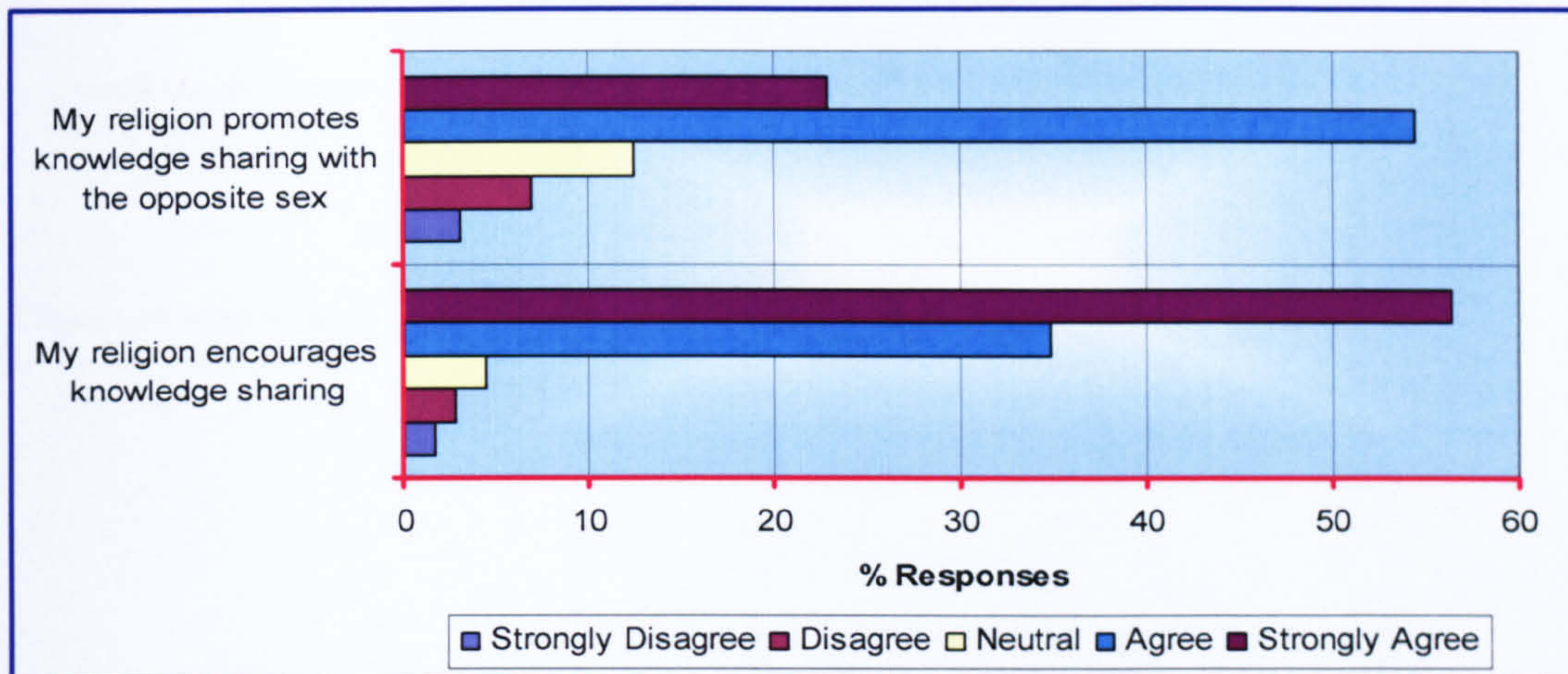


Figure 5.16: Responses to statements concerning religious issues (N=319)

Governmental (State) issues

Across PAAET, there is separation of gender in the work place, which is enforced by the law. Therefore, the role of the state in influencing knowledge sharing was explored as shown in Figure 5.15. When the respondents were asked if the state had an influence on knowledge sharing in their instructions, the vast majority of academic staff agreed or strongly agreed (244 or 76.5%) that the state has an influence on knowledge sharing practices in their instructions and only 33 (10.4%) of the academic staff disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 42 (13.2%) were neutral (N=319). (See Figure 5.17.)

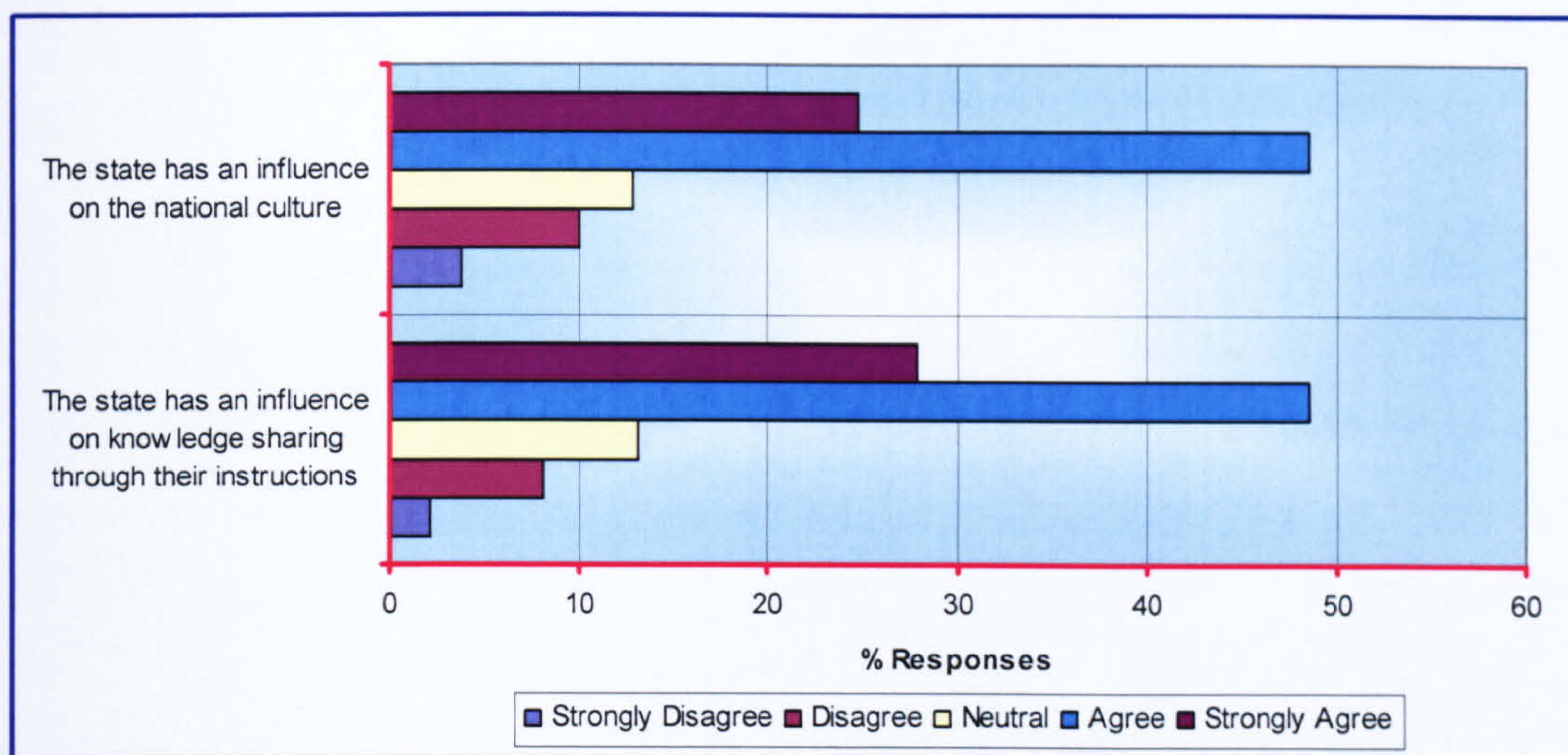


Figure 5.17: Responses for issues concerning governmental influence

When further analysis was conducted on responses to the statement above and the respondents' nationality, it was found that Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement (78.7%), compared to non-Kuwaiti academic staff (69.7%). However, the chi-square suggested that the results were not statistically significant as the alpha level was more than 0.05 ($x^2=7.419$; $df=4$; $p=0.115$).

No more statistically significant differences between the responses and the statement above were found as the gender p-value was more than 0.05 ($x^2=6.125$; $df=4$; $p=0.190$). The same was found for different PAAET colleges ($x^2=24.923$; $df=16$; $p=0.071$).

Academic staff responses to 'The state has an influence on national culture' showed that 234 (73.4%) agreed or strongly agreed with that statement and 44 (13.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 41 (12.9%) remained neutral. ($N=319$, $mean=3.81$). (See Figure 5.17.) In terms of respondents' nationality, 77.5% of Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to endorse the idea that the state influences their national culture by agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement compared to 59.2% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff, while 30.3% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 8.7% of Kuwaiti

academic staff. These differences were found to be statistically significant as the alpha level was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=31.008$; $df=4$; $p=0.000$), (N=316).

An investigation of responses to the same statement by PAAET college showed that respondents from College of Technological Studies were the most likely to agree or strongly agree (82%) with the influence of the state on their national culture compared to other colleges (College of Basic Education 77.4%, College of Nursing 69.3%, College Business Studies 61% and College of Health Science 56%). The chi-square analysis suggested that the alpha value was less than 0.05 which means that there was a statistically significant difference between the different colleges and the endorsements of this statement ($\chi^2=32.839$; $df=16$; $p=0.008$), (N=319).

Further analysis with other independent variables using chi-square tests showed no significant differences between the same statement and gender as the alpha level was more than 0.05 ($\chi^2=7.154$; $df=4$; $p=0.128$).

5.3.6 Preferred Knowledge Sharing Communication Methods

Communication plays an important role in knowledge sharing whether through face-to-face interaction or through technology. Therefore, academic staff were asked to rate their preferred methods of knowledge sharing to help set a suitable strategy or system that would enhance the knowledge sharing in PAAET and that would fit the Authority's culture.

5.3.6.1 E-mail Communications

Almost three quarters of academic staff (74%) preferred e-mail-communication. Just over one third (34.2%) rated it as the most preferred method of communication for knowledge sharing while only 3.1% of the academic staff rated e-mail communication as the least preferred method (mean=5.41, N=319). (See Figure 5.18).

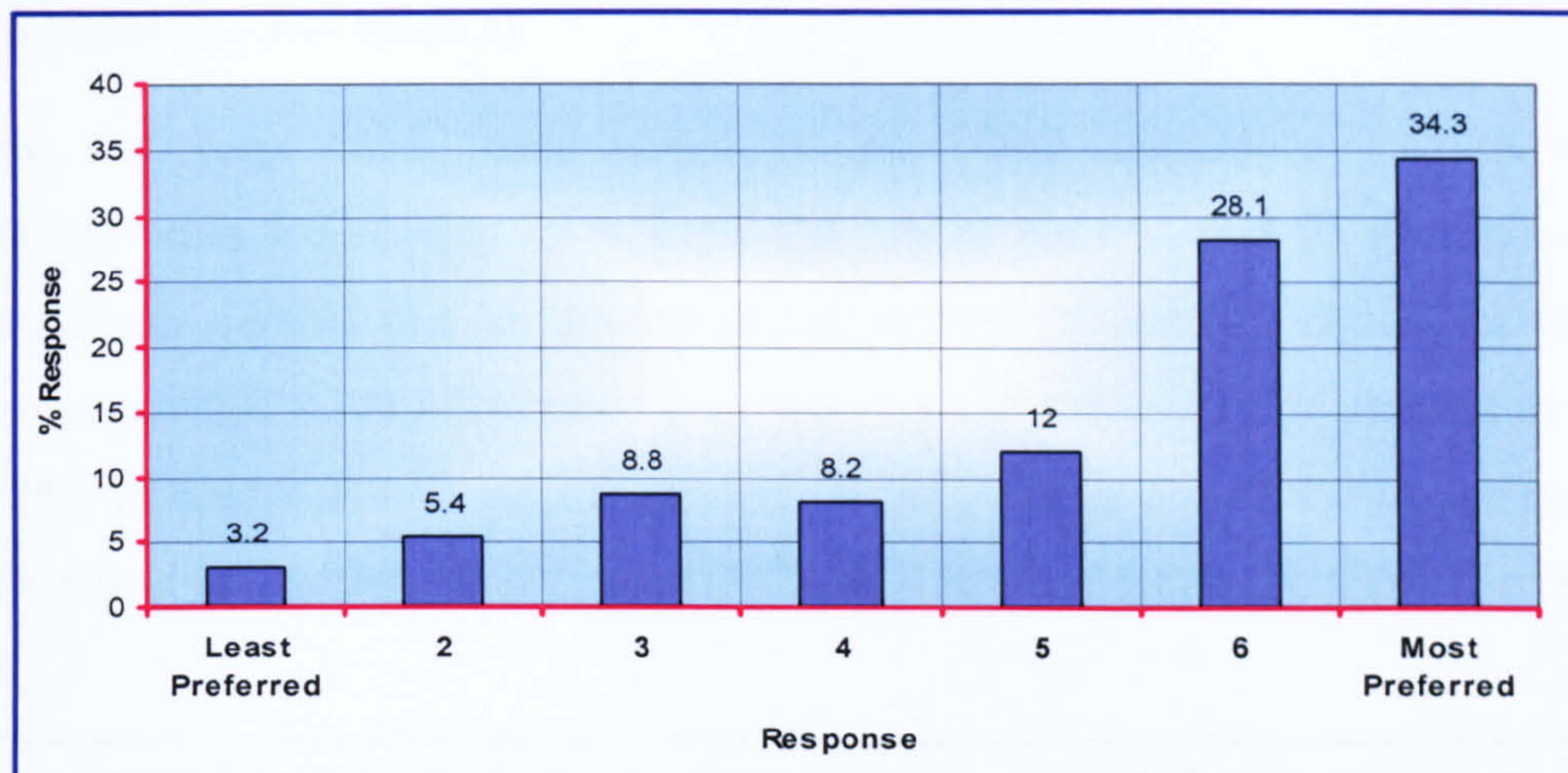


Figure 5.18: E-mail communication preferred in knowledge sharing.

In relation to the gender differences in responses, female academic staff (81%) were more in favour of communicating through e-mail than male academic staff (70.5%). On the other hand, 15.4% of male academic staff rated email as their least preferred method, while 7.2% of female academic staff rated it as their least preferred method. The different in preferences to e-mail communication within PAAET was statistically significant as the alpha level was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=25.206$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$), (N=317).

With regard to respondents' nationalities, the results showed that 84.1% of non-Kuwaiti academic staff rated e-mail communication as their most preferred method, compared to 70.8% Kuwaiti academic staff who rated it as their most preferred. The chi-square test suggested that the difference was statistically significant as the alpha level was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=25.284$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$), (N=316).

Respondents from the College of Nursing had the lowest preference (61.6%) for e-mail communication compared to other colleges: the College of Technological Studies (62.9%), College of Health Science (72%), College Basic Education (77.4%) and College of Business Studies (86%). These differences in the responses from the five colleges of PAAET are statistically significant as the p-value on the chi-square test was 0.000 with an alpha level less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=66.039$, $df=24$, N=319).

5.3.6.2 One-to-One Meeting

When the respondents were asked to rate their preference for one-to-one communication for sharing knowledge, the results showed that 98 (30.7%) of the respondents ranked this as their preferred system of communication for sharing knowledge while 47 (14.7%) rated it as their least preferred. It also showed that 207 (64.2%) of academic respondents rated (5, 6 and 7) in favour of one-to-one meeting communication and 98 (30.7%) rated (1, 2 and 3) less preferable (N=319). (See Figure 5.19).

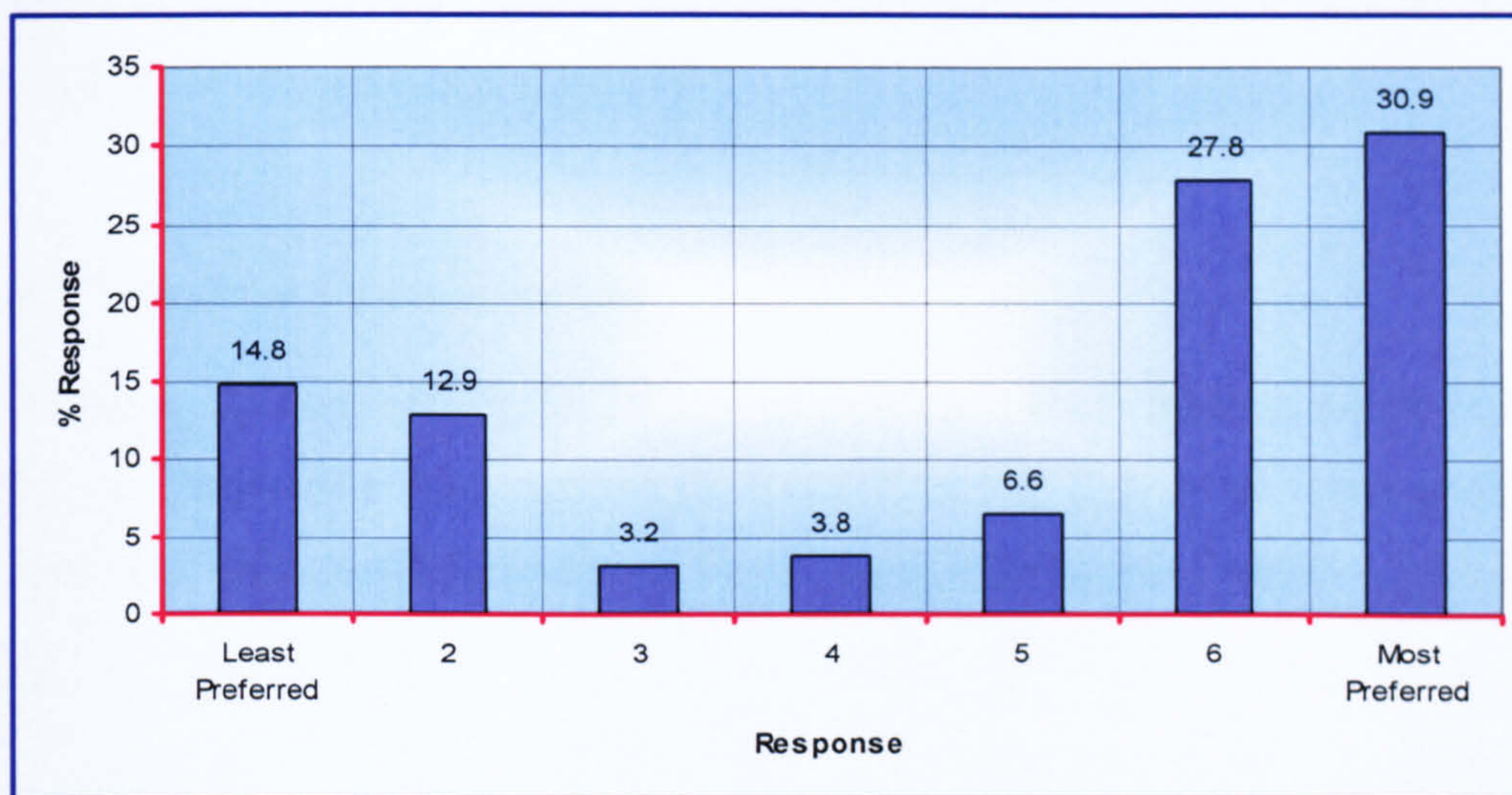


Figure 5.19: Rate of preferring one-to-one meeting communication in knowledge sharing

Further analysis showed that 75.4% of male academic staff were in favour of communicating in one-to-one meetings compared to 44.5% of female academic staff while 34.5% of females rated one-to-one meetings as the least preferred method compared to male academic staff (4.3%). The differences in those responses were statistically significant in terms of the preference for one-to-one meetings as the alpha level was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=70.841$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$), (N=317).

When looking at the preference of one-to-one communication and the respondents' nationalities, it was found that Kuwait academic staff (68.7%) were more in favour of one-to-one communication than non-Kuwaiti academic staff (51.4%). Analysis of these results suggested a statistically significant difference in preference for one-to-

one meeting by nationality at less than 0.05 level ($\chi^2=18.604$, $df=6$, $p=0.005$), (N=316).

In terms of respondents' preferences across the PAAET colleges, 84.6% of the respondents of College of Nursing rated one-to-one meetings as their most favored method of communication, compared to the College of Health Science (80%), the College of Technological Studies (76.3%), the College of Basic Education (67.2%) and the College of Business (34.4%). Analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference in preference for one-to-one communication across the colleges ($\chi^2=70.012$, $df=24$, $p=0.000$), (N=319).

5.3.6.3 Telephone Communication

The majority, 203 out of 319 (63.7%), of the academic staff endorsed higher levels of preference for phone communication (5, 6 and 7) and 80 (25%) had lower preference (1, 2 and 3), while 36 (11%) endorsed a mid range of preference (N=319). (See Figure 5.20.)

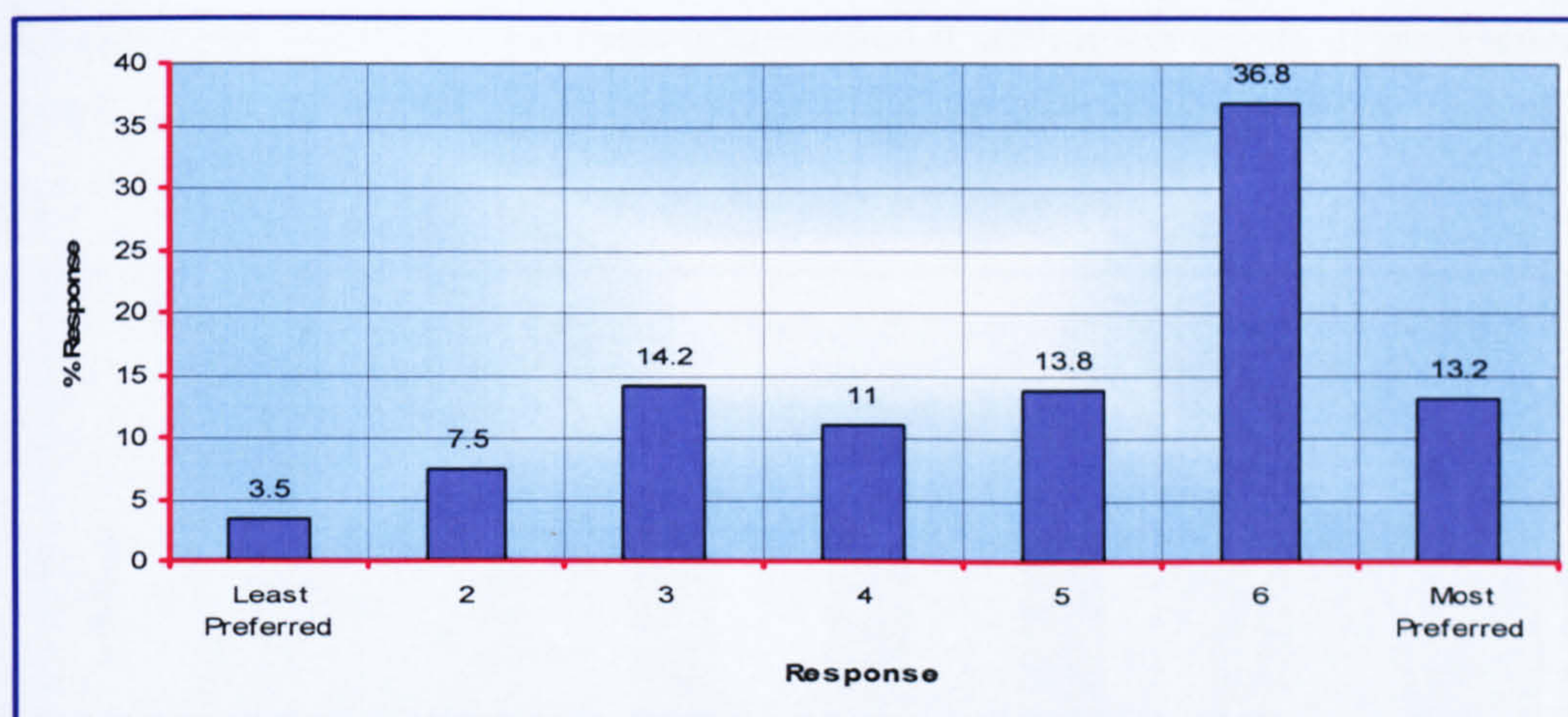


Figure 5.20: Rate of preferring phone communication in knowledge sharing

Analysis by cross-tabulation revealed that Kuwait academic staff were more likely (67.1%) to prefer phone communication for knowledge sharing than non-Kuwaiti academic staff (52.7%). The analysis also showed that 36.8% of non-Kuwaitis rated this as their least preferred form of communication, compared to Kuwaiti academic

staff (19.9%). The chi-square test suggested that these differences in preference were statistically significant ($\chi^2=21.818$, $df=6$, $p=0.001$), ($N=316$). The gender of respondents showed non-statistical significant difference in preference for phone communication as the alpha value was more than 0.05 level ($\chi^2=4.136$, $df=6$, $p=0.658$).

A significant difference in preference was found across the colleges of PAAET, as the alpha value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=44.272$, $df=24$, $p=0.007$). 84.7% from College of Nursing were the highest to rate phone communication as their most preferred method compared to the College of Technological Studies (67.4%), the College of Basic Education (61.7%), the College of Business Studies (61%) and College of Health Science (56%). In comparison, 36% of the College of Health Science rated this as their least preferred form of communication.

5.3.6.4 Video-link Communications

With regard to preferences for video-link communication, 117 out of 319 (36.7%) academic staff rated video-link communication as their most preferred method (5, 6 and 7) and 148 (46.4%) of the respondents rated it with lower levels of preference (1, 2 and 3) while 54 (16.9%) endorsed a mid range of preference, ($N=319$). (See Figure 5.21.)

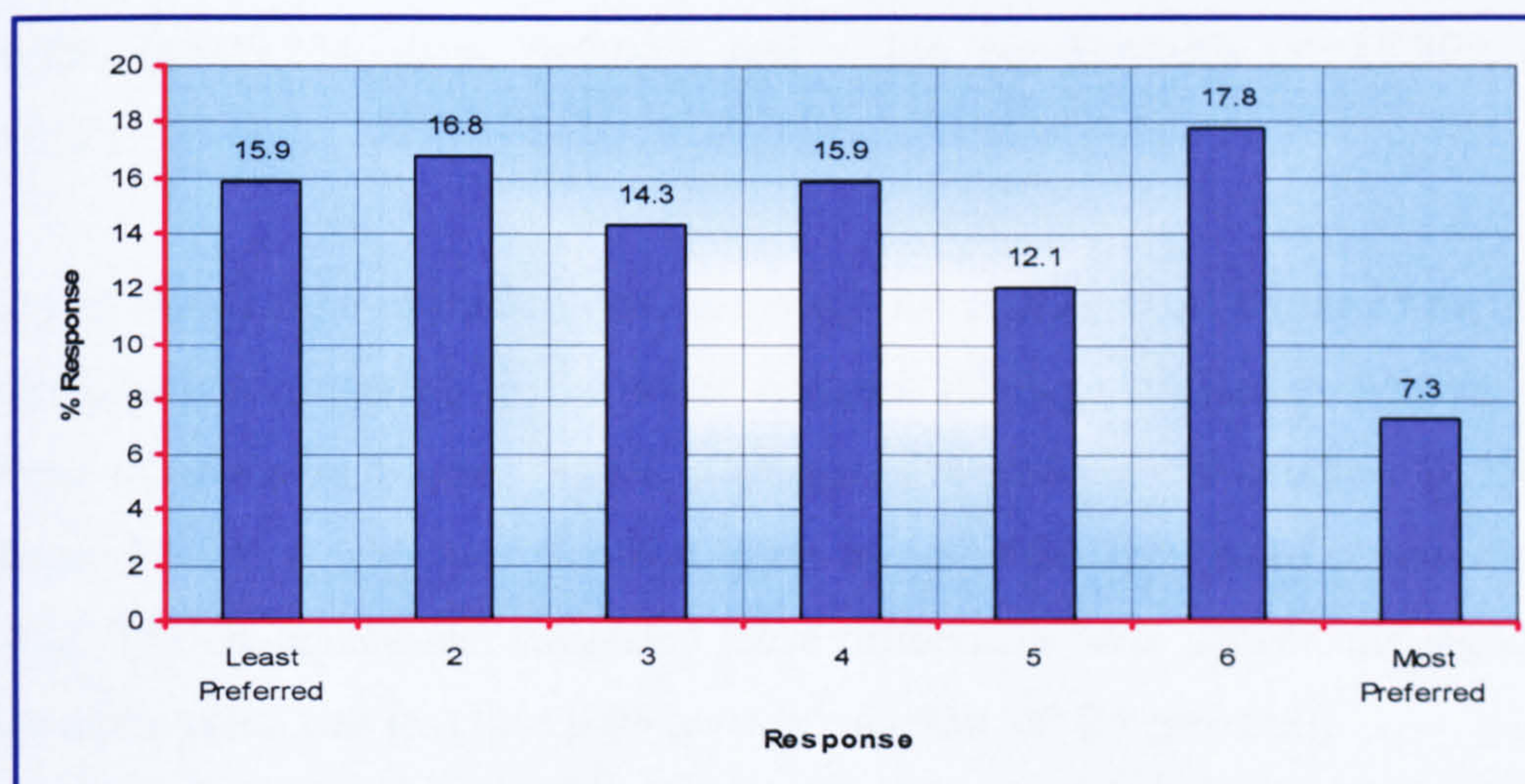


Figure 5.21: Preferring video-link communication in knowledge sharing

A statistically significant relationship was shown between the nationality of respondents and the responses to the video-link communication, as the p-value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=34.855$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$). Non-Kuwaiti academic staff in their total most preference, were more in favour (40.8% rating it as their most preferred method) of video-link communication compared to Kuwaiti academic staff (29.6%).

Further analysis showed that 44.9% of male academic staff rated video-link communication as their most preferred method compared to female academic staff (20.9%). Female academic staff were most likely to endorse the lower end of the preference scale (63.6%) compared to male academic staff (37.1%). These differences in preference were shown to be statistically significant as the alpha value was $p=0.000$ which is >0.05 level ($\chi^2=33.350$, $df=6$). When these data were further analysed using two-way cross-tabulation for nationality and gender and preference for video-link communication, it was found that 65.5% of non-Kuwaiti male academic staff had stronger preferences for video-link communication, compared to non-Kuwaiti female academic staff (38.9%). In contrast, Kuwaiti male academic staff had a higher preference (36.8%) than Kuwaiti female academic staff (17.4%). In addition, 71.7% of Kuwaiti female academic staff rated it as a less preferred method of communication compared to Kuwaiti male academic staff (42.8%). Checking the chi-square results for non-Kuwaitis' and Kuwaitis' responses, it showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the preference of video-link communication and within Kuwaitis ($\chi^2=29.234$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$) and within non-Kuwaitis ($\chi^2=16.309$, $df=6$, $p=0.012$).

42.2% of the College of Basic Education rated this as their most preferred method of communication compared to the other colleges (College of Health Science 40%, College of Business Studies 34.4%, College of Technological Studies 32.6% and College of Nursing who were the least likely to prefer this method of communication 15.4%). The chi-square test suggested those differences were statistically significant as the alpha value was less than 0.05 level ($\chi^2=64.930$, $df=24$, $p=0.000$).

5.3.6.5 Communication in Writing

Almost half of the respondents (159 out of 319, 49.9%) rated written communication as their least preferred method for knowledge sharing (1, 2 and 3 rate) while over one third of the respondents 113 (35.5%) rated it as their most preferred (5, 6 and 7 rate) and only 47 (14.7%) rated it in the mid range of preference. (See Figure 5.22.)

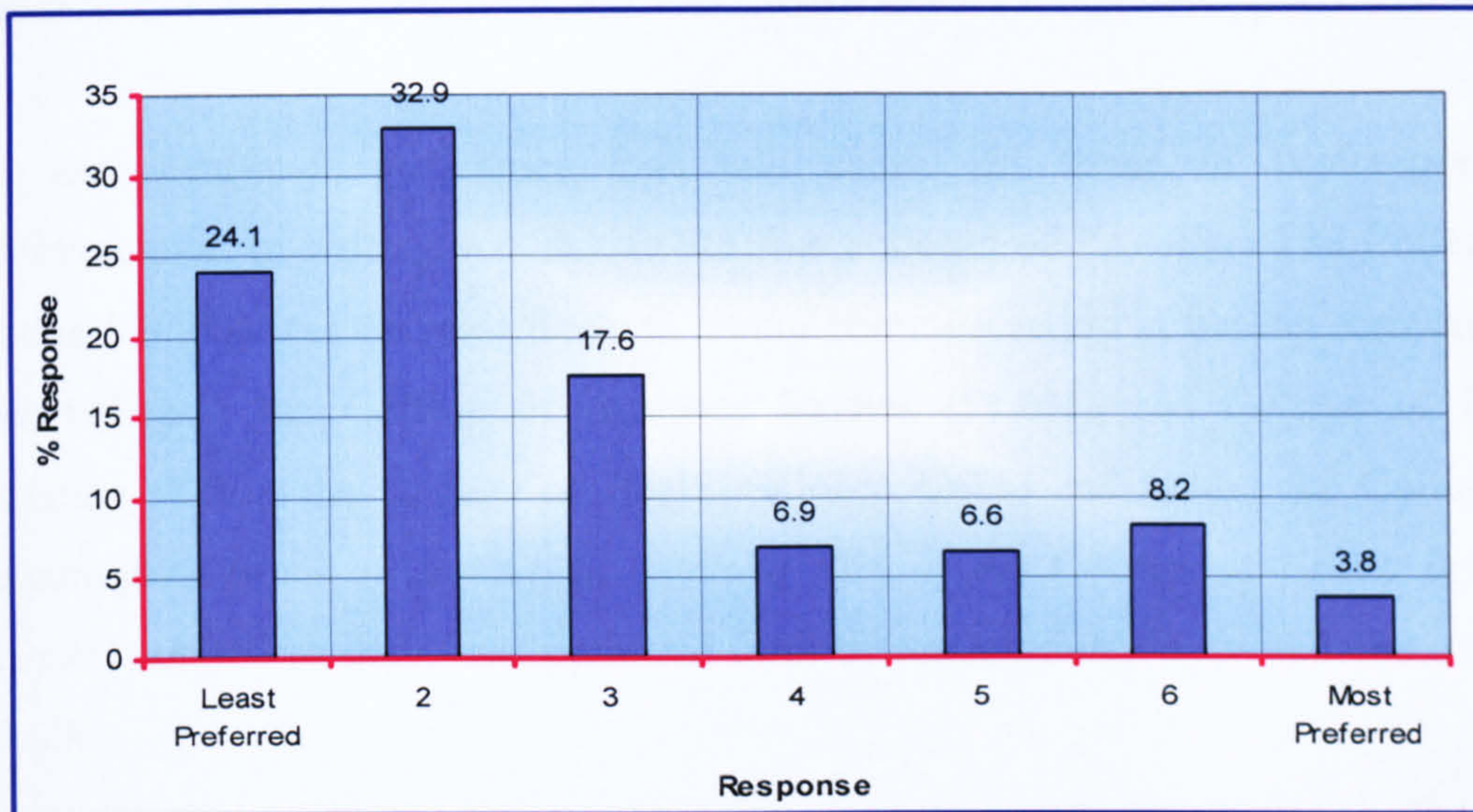


Figure 5.22: Rate of preferring written communication in knowledge sharing

Female respondents were more in favour of communicating in writing (46.5%) compared to male academic staff (29.9%). 23.7% of male academic staff rated this method as their least preferred method of communication compared to only 7.3% female academic staff who rated it as their least preferred. The chi-square test suggested that those differences were statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=26.076$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$). 31.6% of Non-Kuwaiti respondents rated this method as their least preferred method, compared to 14.2% of Kuwaiti academic staff who rated it as their least preferred method. In general, the total most preferable (5, 6 7) of both non-Kuwaiti and Kuwaitis for this method were similar with 35.8% of Kuwaitis and 35.6% of non-Kuwaitis who rated this as their most preferred method of communication. Statistical analysis suggested the preference for communication in writing by nationality was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 ($\chi^2=20.136$, $df=6$, $p=0.003$).

Further two-way cross tabulation showed that 55.6% of non-Kuwaiti female and 44.6% of Kuwaiti female academic staff rated communication in writing as their most preferred method compared to non-Kuwaiti male (29.3%) and Kuwaiti male (30.5%) academic staff. Those differences across nationalities were also shown to be statistically significant as the alpha level was less than 0.05 for both nationalities (Kuwaiti: $\chi^2=18.794$, $df=6$, $p=0.005$, non-Kuwaitis: $\chi^2=13.733$, $df=6$, $p=0.033$).

The last significant difference that was shown in terms of preference for communication in writing was across the five colleges of PAAET. The College of Nursing (69.2%) was the most likely to favour communication in writing compared to other colleges: the College of Business Studies (57.8%), the College of Basic Education (32%), the College of Health Science (24%) and finally the College of Technological Studies (22.4%). In contrast, 72% of the College of Health Science rated this method as their least preferred form of communication. ($\chi^2=63.489$, $df=24$, $p=0.000$).

5.4 Main Findings of the Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the fieldwork was analysed using SPSS version 16 to identify and explore the opinions and attitudes of academic staff towards knowledge sharing and the influence of national culture on knowledge sharing. The main outcomes of the analysis are summarised in Table 5.4 and the main independent variables that were taken in consideration for this study were the colleges, nationalities and gender. Age and experience were also analysed to see if there were any interesting results that could be used in this study. (NS: not statistically significant, Sig.: statistically significant.)

Themes	Statement	Independent Variables				
		College	Nationality	Gender	Age	Experience
Importance of Knowledge And Knowledge Sharing	Knowledge is power	NS	NS	NS	Sig. 0.001 40 +	Sig. 0.003 16-20 years
	It is important to share my knowledge with other academic staff.	NS	NS	NS	Sig. 0.016 40+	NS
	Academic staff should share their knowledge and best practices.	NS	NS	NS	Sig. 0.000 60+	Sig. 0.019 1-5 years
	KS helps PAAET to stay competitive with other higher education institutions in Kuwait.	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Solving Problems	I prefer to resolve work related problem by my self without seeking help from others.	NS	Sig. 0.018 Non-Kuwaiti	NS	NS	Sig. 0.034 0-1, 1-5 years
Trust	I trust the people that I need to share my knowledge with.	Sig. 0.000 Nursing	Sig. 0.000 Non-Kuwaiti	NS	Sig. 0.038 50+	Sig. 0.001 0-1 years
	I trust women in knowledge sharing	NS	Sig. 0.043 Non-Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Female	NS	Sig. 0.013 11-15, 16-20 years
Willingness	I am willing to share my knowledge with others	Sig. 0.001 Nursing	NS	NS	NS	NS
	I am willing to share knowledge with academic staff from the same cultural background	NS	NS	Sig. 0.016 female	Sig. 0.004 50+	NS
	I am willing to ask my opposite sex questions in informal social activities	Sig. 0.000 Nursing	Sig. 0.000 Non-Kuwaiti	NS	Sig. 0.004 Less than 40	Sig. 0.001 1-5 years
National culture	National culture is important in knowledge sharing	Sig. 0.034 Nursing (Negative)	NS	NS	NS	NS
	It is culturally embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question	Sig. 0.015 Nursing (Negative)	Sig. 0.029 Kuwaiti	NS	NS	Sig. 0.006 16+ years
	I am too shy to ask my opposite sex questions	Sig. 0.000 Business Studies (Nurs.-)	Sig. 0.043 Kuwaiti	NS	NS	NS
Kuwaiti specific culture (Gender issues)	I do not communicate in discussions with the opposite sex	Sig. 0.000 Nursing (Negative)	Sig. 0.000 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.014 Female	Sig. 0.012 Under 40	Sig. 0.004 0-1 year
	Showing my face in online discussion is against my culture	Sig. 0.000 Nursing (Negative)	Sig. 0.002 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 female	Sig. 0.000 Under30	Sig. 0.037 0-1 years

	Women should only communicate with women	Sig. 0.000 Nursing (Negative)	Sig. 0.000 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Male	Sig. 0.000 40-49	Sig. 0.033 6-10 years
Kuwaiti specific culture (Tribal issues)	Tribal culture influence knowledge sharing	Sig. 0.000 Nursing (Negative)	Sig. 0.000 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.018 female	NS	NS
	It is easy to share knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe	Sig. 0.006 Nursing +	NS	Sig. 0.028 Female	Sig. 0.003 40+	NS
	Academic staff from the same tribe trusts each other more than others	Sig. 0.001 Business Studies	Sig. 0.002 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.013 Female	NS	NS
Kuwaiti specific culture (Religious issues)	My religion encourages knowledge sharing	NS	NS	Sig. 0.012 Female	Sig. 0.009 50+	NS
	My religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex	NS	Sig. 0.049 Non-Kuwaiti	NS	NS	NS
Kuwaiti specific culture (state issues)	The state has an influence on knowledge sharing through their instructions	NS	NS	NS	NS	Sig. 0.042 16+ (Negative)
	The state has influence on the national culture	Sig. 0.008 Technological studies	Sig. 0.000 Kuwaiti	NS	NS	NS
Methods of communication	E-mail	Sig. 0.000 Business studies – Nursing (lowest)	Sig. 0.000 Non-Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Female	Sig. 0.001 50+	NS
	One-to-One meeting	Sig. 0.000 Nursing	Sig. 0.005 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Male	Sig. 0.009 50+	Sig. 0.013 20 years and over
	Phone communication	Sig. 0.007 Nursing	Sig. 0.001 Kuwaiti	NS	NS	Sig. 0.011 0-1 years
	Video link communication	Sig. 0.000 Basic Education (Highest), Nursing (Lowest)	Sig. 0.000 Non-Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Male	NS	Sig. 0.020 11-15 years
	In writing	Sig. 0.000 Nursing	Sig. 0.003 Kuwaiti	Sig. 0.000 Female	NS	NS

Table 5.4: The chi-square test table for the themes

Knowledge sharing attitudes:

- Academic staff were aware of knowledge sharing. They also believed that knowledge is power and that knowledge sharing could help their organisation to stay competitive in the higher education environment. Academic staff agreed that they should share their knowledge and best practices.
- Academic staff were less enthusiastic concerning solving work-related problems by themselves without seeking help from others. Nationality of academic staff were shown significant with regard to this statement. Non-Kuwaiti academic staff were more reluctant to solve work-related problems by themselves than their Kuwaiti colleagues.
- The results indicated that there is a high percentage of trust in PAAET and three quarters of the academic staff stated that they trusted others with regard to knowledge sharing. Non-Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely to trust others compared with their Kuwaiti colleagues who showed less trust to others. From the point of view of colleges, respondents from the College of Nursing showed the highest level of trust in others compared to those from other colleges. This college has the highest percentage of non-Kuwaiti academic staff.
- From the point of view of trusting women in knowledge sharing, the results showed that 46% of the academic staff did not trust women in knowledge sharing. These percentages were interesting and needed further exploration via the qualitative data analysis. The results showed that non-Kuwaiti academic staff, regardless of their sex, trusted women regarding knowledge sharing more than Kuwaiti academic staff. They also revealed that Kuwaiti male academic staff were least likely to trust women in knowledge sharing while Kuwaiti females were the most likely to trust women since three quarters of these respondents indicated that they trusted women in knowledge sharing.
- Academic staff showed a positive attitude towards the willingness to share knowledge with others. Results also showed that respondents from the College of Nursing were the most willing compared to respondents from other colleges. The academic staff showed differences in their attitudes towards their willingness to interact with the opposite sex in asking knowledge questions in

informal social activities. Kuwaiti academic staff showed less inclination to interact with the opposite sex in informal social activities than non-Kuwaitis.

National Culture and Cultural Attitudes Specific to Kuwait

- Academic staff from the College of Nursing, were less likely to agree that the national culture is important in knowledge sharing compared to respondents from other colleges of PAAET. They also disagreed that it was embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question or that they were shy about asking the opposite sex knowledge questions compared. Academic staff from the College of Nursing approved of communicating with the opposite sex in discussions and felt that it was more acceptable to show their faces in online discussions than respondents from other colleges. They also disagreed that tribal culture would influence knowledge sharing. However, over half of the academic staff from that college (i.e. the College of Nursing) agreed that it was easier to share knowledge with people from the same tribe. Finally, these respondents showed the lowest level of agreement with the idea that academic staff from the same tribe would trust each other more than they would trust others.
- No significant differences were found between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic staff regarding the statement of the importance of national culture in knowledge sharing. Kuwaiti academic staff showed higher levels of agreement than non-Kuwaitis with the notion that it is culturally embarrassing to ask a colleague a knowledge question. Nearly half the Kuwaiti respondents were too shy to ask a colleague a knowledge question while non-Kuwaitis showed much higher levels of disagreement with that issue. Kuwaiti academic staff showed stronger view to the approval of Kuwaiti specific culture issues, as that was in the questionnaire than non-Kuwaitis, as nearly half of the Kuwaitis agreed that they did not communicate with the opposite sex while nearly three quarters of the Kuwaiti female respondents stated that showing their faces in online discussions was against their culture. One revealing result was that over a quarter of male Kuwaiti academic staff stated that women should only communicate with women; Kuwaiti females were much less inclined to agree with that statement. Kuwaiti academic staff showed a strongly positive attitude

towards the influences of tribal culture on their knowledge sharing and asserted that Kuwaiti academic staff from the same tribe were more likely to trust each other more than they would trust others. Results regarding non-Kuwaiti academic staff were not clear. Regarding religious issues, non-Kuwaiti academic staff had stronger positive views concerning the promotion from their religion to share knowledge with the opposite sex, than Kuwaiti academic staff that were less in approving that. Results also showed that Kuwaiti academic staff believed that the state has an influence on the national culture than non-Kuwaitis who less approved the statement.

Preferred method of communication in knowledge sharing:

- It was shown clearly that Kuwaiti academic staff did not prefer video-link communication as they most preferred e-mail, one-to-one and phone communication. In contrast, non-Kuwaiti academic staff were more likely than Kuwaiti academic staff to employ video-link and e-mail communication.

5.4.1 Questions raised from the quantitative data

The quantitative data analysis raised several questions that need to be checked in terms of their authenticity through using multiple methods. These were explored, checked and referred to in the light of the qualitative data analysis. The main questions which were raised are as follows:

1. Are the senior PAAET staff aware of their academic staff's practices in knowledge sharing?
2. What are the main roles for senior managers to play in encouraging knowledge sharing in PAAET?
3. To what extent are informal social activities promoting knowledge sharing and how?
4. To what extent do male perceptions and attitudes towards women affect knowledge sharing?
5. Why did Kuwaiti academic staff prefer personal contact in knowledge sharing?

6. Why did female Kuwaiti academic staff prefer non-personal contact in their knowledge sharing?
7. How can the Kuwaiti national culture, particularly tribal culture, gender, religious and governmental issues play a role in the behaviour of Kuwaiti academic staff in the knowledge-sharing process?
8. Why did small colleges and the colleges with high percentages of non-nationals seem to endorse the effect of cultural issues less and why did they report having more knowledge-sharing channels?
9. What are the main strategies that need to be adopted to improve knowledge sharing?

5.5 Conclusion

It was found that all respondents had a positive attitude towards the benefits and importance of knowledge sharing; furthermore, most respondents had the trust and willingness to share their knowledge with others. In relation to the issue of national culture, Kuwaiti respondents were more affected by their national culture in their organisation. Most of them showed positive attitudes towards interaction with the opposite sex and felt that tribal culture facilitated trust in knowledge sharing. Finally, they felt that both religion and governmental issues would not really affect their knowledge sharing as their religion encourages the sharing of knowledge. However, Kuwaitis showed less approval regarding the idea that their religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex; they also felt, more than non-Kuwaiti academic staff, that instructions from the state influenced their knowledge sharing. In terms of non-Kuwaiti respondents, it was found that all of their responses were more positive than the responses of their Kuwaiti counterparts regarding knowledge sharing issues except concerning the issue of preferences for resolving work-related problems by themselves without seeking help from others. In relation to methods of communication, respondents from PAAET preferred, in order of preference, e-mail, telephone, one-to-one meetings, video-links and, finally, communication in writing.

In addition to the quantitative data that was obtained from the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews (see Chapter 6) were also held to gain support and answers to

the questions raised from the quantitative analysis. They were also organised to provide more explanation for the empirical findings, as both quantitative and qualitative investigations were incorporated in the analysis of the results and then discussed in Chapter 7. This was needed in order to introduce a tailored strategy and recommendations (presented in Chapter 8) that would help in the development of a knowledge sharing culture.

Chapter Six

Qualitative Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a qualitative analysis of the findings from both the interviews and focus groups to establish a rich, in-depth picture of the issues explored in this study in order to increase the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

In the interviews, the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of interviewees regarding the value of organisational knowledge in their institute in general, and sharing academic knowledge specifically, is crucial in identifying any plans or strategies to promote a knowledge-sharing culture across the PAAET colleges. The other main issue that was explored in the interviews was the influence and barriers of both the Kuwaiti national culture and cross-cultural influences on the practice of Knowledge-Sharing (KS).

Interview details

In the face-to-face interviews the researcher used semi-structured questions; the interviews involved nine key members of staff of the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET), as shown in Table 6.1 below. The interviewees included the Director General and the Deputy of Applied Education, both of whom are the senior, decision-making managers for creating knowledge-sharing initiatives. Interviews were also conducted with the Head of the Information and Computer Centre, the Head of the Educational Resources Department and the Senior Academic Deans of the five PAAET colleges (College of Basic Education, College of Business Studies, College of Technological Studies, College of Health Science and College of Nursing); these were conducted between July and August 2007. The researcher began the interviews by describing the importance of their contribution to this study, with regard to the fact that they are the key decision makers for promoting any strategies or policies regarding knowledge.

PAAET Interviews		
Director General	Male	Interview 1
Deputy of Applied Education	Male	Interview 2
Head of Information and Computer Centre	Male	Interview 3
Head of Educational Resources Department	Male	Interview 4
Dean of College of Basic Education	Female	Interview 5
Dean of College of Business Studies	Male	Interview 6
Dean of College of Technological Studies	Male	Interview 7
Dean of College of Health Science	Male	Interview 8
Dean of College of Nursing	Female	Interview 9

Table 6.1: Interview participants in PAAET

Focus group details

It was decided that focus groups would be the most suitable data collection method for this research due to the nature of the research which seeks to explore cultural issues and influences in an institute of higher education. The focus groups provided a deep understanding of the opinions and attitudes of academic staff towards knowledge and also gave these academic staff the opportunity to discuss issues based on their experiences and cultural backgrounds. Eight focus group discussions were conducted with academic staff of the five colleges of PAAET. Respondents were randomly selected from the list of staff in PAAET using a stratified sample. In addition, one focus group was conducted for academic senior librarians that serve the five colleges of PAAET. The researcher explained to the participants the importance of their contribution to this study and made it clear their participation was needed to explore their perceptions and attitudes regarding knowledge sharing issues, practices and obstacles, together with cultural aspects that influence knowledge sharing process. Finally, confirming the participants the confidentiality of their responses.

The focus groups discussions were undertaken during the period from July to October 2007 with Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic staff; these were all recorded in Arabic,

with one being conducted in English with the participants' permission. Table 6.2 below shows the colleges that participated in the focus groups. The researcher explored five main issues related to knowledge sharing in these groups: firstly; attitudes to knowledge sharing, its definition, the need for knowledge sharing and its influence on the performance of both individuals and on the organisation, the types of knowledge that can be shared, and preferred methods of communication for knowledge sharing. Secondly, the current situation regarding knowledge sharing processes and practices in PAAET's colleges was explored together with, thirdly, issues concerning Kuwaiti national culture and other organisational issues that influence the culture of the organisation in knowledge sharing processes and practices. Fourthly, external cultural influences on knowledge sharing were considered as well as specific problems and obstacles that face knowledge sharing issues in these institutions.

PAAET		
Focus Groups		
College of Basic Education (1)	Kuwaiti nationals	Focus Group 1
	Non-nationals	Focus Group 2
College of Business Studies (2)	Kuwaiti nationals	Focus Group 3
	Non-nationals	Focus Group 4
College of Technological Studies (3)	Kuwaiti nationals	Focus Group 5
	Non-nationals	Focus Group 6
College Health Science (4) & College of Nursing (5)	Kuwaiti nationals	Focus Group 7
	Non-nationals	Focus Group 8
Senior Librarians	Nationals and Non-national	Focus Group 9

Table 6.2: Colleges' Focus Group Indices

In all the focus groups, the researcher arrived early and prepared the rooms for the discussions to ensure the appropriate environment for discussion. While waiting for all the focus group sessions to begin, two questions crossed the researcher's mind. The first question concerned how male academic staff might react when observing a female who was monitoring unofficial discussions on cultural issues, particularly

issues that concerned women. The second question concerned how academics from different academic positions would react and discuss issues. Regarding the first question, the researcher did not feel uncomfortable discussing these issues in the focus groups; in fact, the researcher found the male respondents to be very helpful and supportive. Being a female may actually have helped the focus group discussions as in the Kuwaiti culture men are taught to highly respect women and the males responded well to the researcher's questions. The second issue was highlighted in two of the focus groups where one male academic staff tried to show off his knowledge in the subject areas under discussion, which seemed to make the other focus group participants uncomfortable and to feel that their knowledge was being challenged.

Conducting focus groups is a challenging task; it requires training to moderate this type of data collection technique effectively. On a personal level, conducting the focus groups was an excellent experience and gave the researcher the opportunity to understand the feelings and beliefs of both males and females. Another advantage of the focus groups was that they allowed the researcher to observe and understand the respondents' paralinguistic communication (body language, changes in tone of voice and facial expressions) to better gauge their attitudes and feelings towards the issues that were raised.

6.2 Major Issues

The qualitative analysis of the interviews (with senior management and deans) and the focus groups with academic staff and senior librarians (using thematic analysis) has revealed that knowledge sharing is affected by various factors that have been categorised and grouped under the following themes:

- Specific individual issues that includes perceptions, awareness, understanding of knowledge sharing, the need of knowledge sharing and the preferred methods of communication for knowledge sharing.
- Organisational issues that included management strategies, support and leadership, reward system and motivation, types of knowledge that is shared and knowledge sharing process.

- Technological issues that includes IT infrastructure, IT skills and IT maintenance.
- Kuwaiti national cultural issues that included gender, sub-cultural groups (including tribal, religious and sectarian groups), Kuwaiti governmental issues that include policies and regulations.
- Cross- cultural issues.
- Effects of academic disciplines and size of colleges issues.

It is worth noting at this stage that economic/cost factors were not raised as PAAET is funded and supported by the Kuwaiti Government.

6.3 Specific Individual Issues

The qualitative analysis revealed that there are factors such as language that have an impeding influence on knowledge sharing. On the other hand, it was found that awareness and understanding, preferences concerning methods of communication and the needs of academic staff that were facilitating factors in terms of knowledge sharing at PAAET. This is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

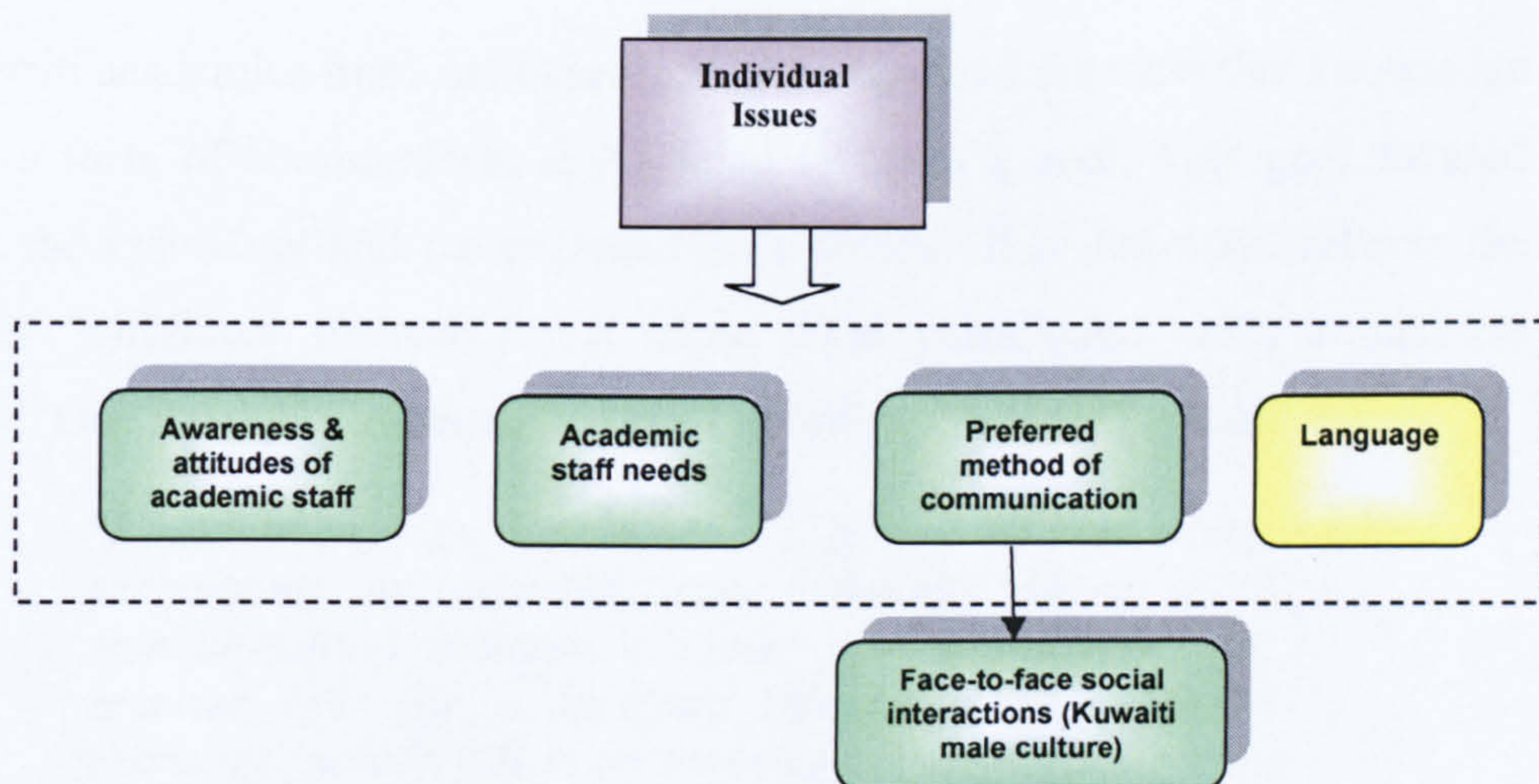


Figure 6.1: Individual Issues

This section focuses on attitudes to knowledge sharing including participants' understanding of knowledge sharing and how they defined knowledge and knowledge

sharing from their own perspectives. The section also focuses on the type of knowledge that is shared and preferred methods of communication to share knowledge, as well as the need for knowledge sharing.

6.3.1 Understanding of knowledge sharing

Focus group participants defined the sharing of knowledge according to their own specific subject backgrounds. This included mainly the exchanging and communicating of their experience, and gathering information that expanded their knowledge. The definitions mentioned below illustrated an understanding of the main process of knowledge sharing. It was found that Kuwaiti academic participants from Art-based colleges defined knowledge sharing as a bi-directional exchange of information and experience, as the following example demonstrates:

"For me, I define knowledge sharing as the process of knowledge exchange between people who agree to share their information or experience. Knowledge sharing can be achieved in many ways, either by using technology or from person to person. It develops and expands his or her knowledge in a certain subject" (Focus Group 1, Academic staff, F).

Other Kuwaiti academics from Art-based colleges expressed the view that knowledge sharing is a form of communication, designed to reach a goal. This goal focused mainly on the individual and the organisation's profits. This definition reflects the participants' individual interests as it came from participants with a business background. One faculty member commented as follows in regard to this:

"I find knowledge sharing to be a way of consulting, exchanging or communicating whereby there is a communication between a sender and a receiver. The receiver asks for a specified thing that he needs to exchange whether it is an exchange of thoughts or data or information or even feelings, and the end of it would have a goal that can be achieved" (Focus group 3, M).

In addition, they added:

"... It is a process of sharing that helps in making profit for both the individual and for the organisation." (Focus group 3, M).

However, non-Kuwaitis in the same Art-based colleges saw knowledge sharing as a one-way transfer of information and experience. Definitions of knowledge sharing from non-Kuwaiti nationals in large scientific and Technology college with an Arabic background included had similar view of knowledge sharing with non-Kuwaiti academic staff in Art-based colleges. However, they had two important ideas: the first was the intellectual assets of individuals and the second was performance. They related these intellectual assets to the improvement of the performance of both the individual and the college.

"I think, from my modest experience in this area, that knowledge sharing is passing your experience and intellectual assets to your colleague or any person seeking such knowledge in order to improve his/her performance" (Focus Group 6, M).

Kuwaiti academic staff from the large Science and Technology college focus groups saw knowledge sharing as a process that took place between individuals, with respondents viewing this as a process of two-way knowledge sharing as demonstrated below:

"You have something and others have something and you share it together, meaning that you expand your knowledge by taking his experience, and he expands his knowledge through your experience with a situation or with a problem" (Focus Group 5, M).

However, respondents from the small Science college focus groups had a greater awareness of the range of knowledge-sharing stakeholders in PAAET, mentioning students, clients and management in their definitions and explanations of knowledge sharing. One of the reasons for this may be that this college is relatively small which makes interaction among academic staff easier in comparison to larger colleges, thus facilitating knowledge sharing with their students and management. This helped in generating mutual understanding and also helped to increase trust in the college:

"Knowledge sharing, as far as I know, is the exchange of information among peers, among students and among

clients and colleagues" (Focus Group 8, Academic Staff, F).

Senior librarians viewed knowledge sharing as an information process. This was mainly due to their experience, their knowledge background and the nature of their daily work. One of the most common definitions from the librarians' focus group was:

"From my understanding, knowledge sharing is a process of passing and receiving information that increases your knowledge" (Focus group 9, senior librarians, F).

6.3.2 Need for knowledge sharing

Locating individuals' different experiences was identified by three out of five deans as an important factor that needs to be considered in the development of individual and organisational performance when needed to share knowledge. The vast majority of the participants agreed that the main driver was that knowledge sharing is needed to improve the individual performance of academic staff. All participants from college with technical activities expressed a more urgent need for knowledge sharing. It was observed by the researcher that there was a need for efforts to be made to capitalise on this enthusiasm and awareness in order to implement an effective knowledge-sharing strategy in their colleges (focus group 5).

"We need to share knowledge across PAAET to improve the performance of our academic staff in teaching and in curriculum development for future courses. It also helps us in developing our knowledge in terms of the latest information in our subjects and practice to compete with other institutions and to provide better outcomes for our students. Therefore sharing knowledge or practices is a must for our institute whether it is in each department or college and even more with our libraries to assure that we have the collection of books and resources that are needed in each course or articles that help research collaboration with other academic staff" (Focus Group5, M).

The other important driver that was noted in five focus groups was that knowledge sharing is needed to improve PAAET's academic performance. Kuwaiti focus groups from large Art-based colleges felt that several mistakes could have been avoided if

knowledge had been shared amongst the academic staff. Similarly, the Kuwaiti focus group participants from technical and health science backgrounds showed a greater awareness of the need for knowledge sharing than those from an Arts background. This is due to their need to share their knowledge because of the technical and practical aspects of their work.

One of the drivers discussed in one of the non-Kuwaiti focus groups was that knowledge sharing is needed to stay competitive in the education market. The participants expressed the view that there has been a surge in establishing new private European and North American universities in the Gulf States, which gives students much greater choice than a few years ago. Therefore, it is important that PAAET's academic staff have a high quality of academic knowledge and high standards of teaching and learning performance if PAAET is to stay competitive and attract students and the support of the Kuwaiti higher education authority. Some non-Kuwaiti female academic staff participants expressed the view that the expansion and growth of knowledge, and the fast development and changes in knowledge worldwide, have led to an increased need for knowledge sharing. It was clear that participants in scientific colleges' focus groups had developed an awareness of the need for and benefits of sharing knowledge by experiencing knowledge sharing instinctively in their college (focus group 8).

No significant differences in the awareness of the need for knowledge sharing in PAAET were observed between Kuwaiti nationals and non-Kuwaiti participants in small colleges. Their attitudes and opinions towards the need for knowledge sharing were positive and related to improving individual and organisational performance. This is due to their common experience with knowledge sharing, together with the nature of their activities and interactions. On the other hand, senior academic librarians expressed the idea that their need for knowledge sharing was based on their experience and knowledge in retrieving information. They believed that knowledge sharing is needed to facilitate the retrieval and acquisition of information among academic staff and the librarians.

An extensive discussion occurred concerning whether or not knowledge should be shared in PAAET. Some mentioned that knowledge is an asset in PAAET; others

mentioned that knowledge contributes in enhancing individuals' knowledge and thus in enhancing PAAET's knowledge assets. They also argued that knowledge is an asset for an individual more than an asset for PAAET and that individuals mainly benefit from knowledge-sharing practices. They felt that, with time, individuals will become knowledgeable and will have competitive skills. Participants from focus groups agreed on some important points concerning the role of knowledge sharing on improving the performance of individuals and the organisation. These included the following points: 1. High quality services would be provided; 2. PAAET's functions would be improved in an effective manner; 3. It would help in achieving PAAET's goals and missions. In all the focus groups, participants identified the following needs for knowledge sharing: (1) Improving individual performance; (2) Increasing individual knowledge assets; (3) Improving PAAET's colleges' performance; (4) Helping in delivering and developing new courses; (5) Solving problems by learning from good practice; (6) Avoiding mistakes; (6) Helping in developing the curriculum that all leads to saving their time as was stressed. However, one of the deans who stressed the need to share knowledge has commented that his management commitments might not give him the time to share knowledge (interview 7). Figure 6.2 captures the main needs for individual and organisational knowledge sharing.

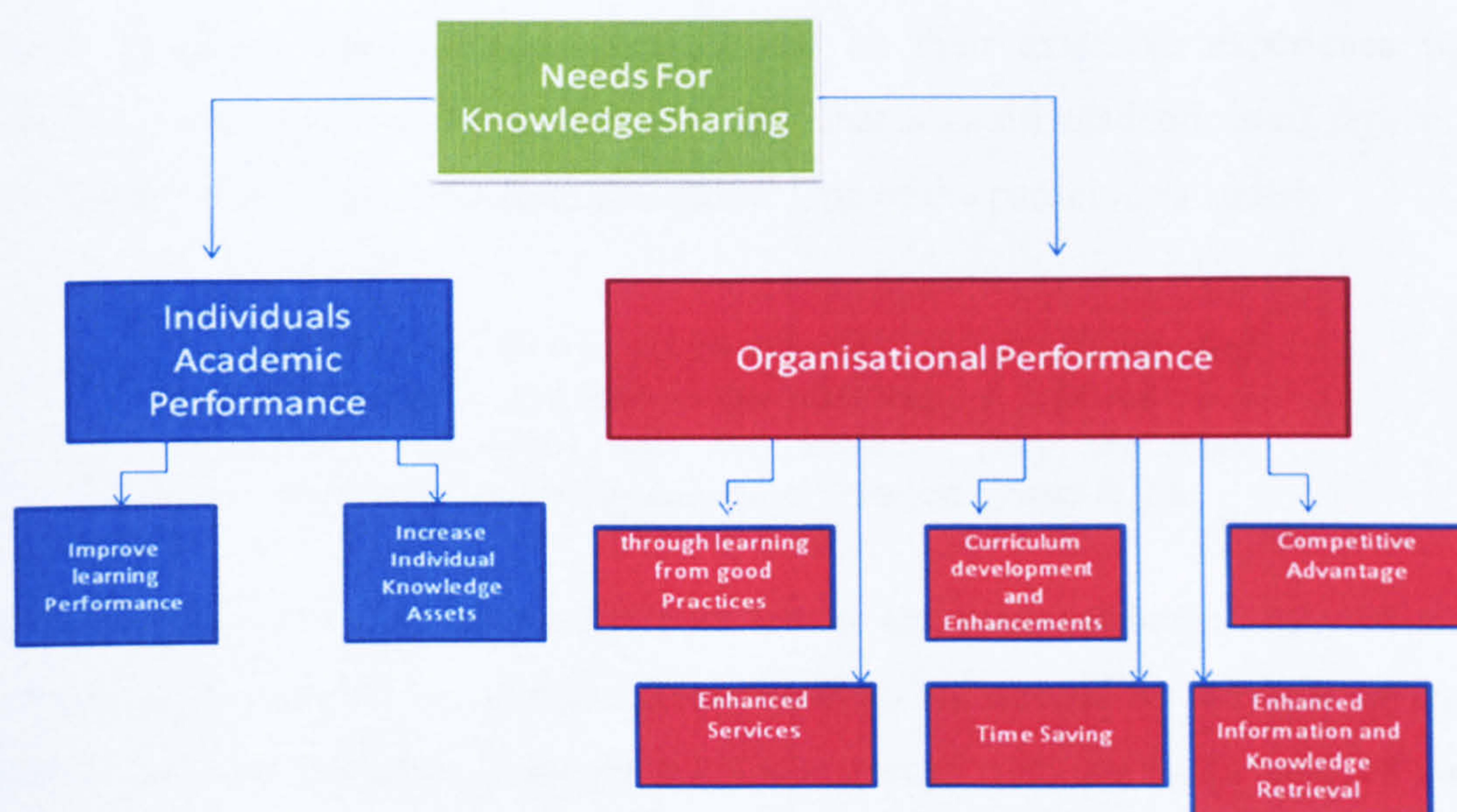


Figure 6.2: Need for Knowledge Sharing

6.3.3 Preferred Methods of Communication in Knowledge Sharing

The preferred ways to communicate in PAAET's colleges (focus groups 1, 3, 5 and 7) were by face-to-face and telephone communications as these methods of knowledge sharing were found by the Kuwaiti academics to be effective and convenient. This preference is probably cultural as the Kuwaiti culture values personalised or face-to-face requests or "TALAB"; it is in fact culturally embarrassing not to respond to such requests in a positive way. Examples are shown below:

" I think when I ask to meet other colleagues who I know well, they won't say no... you know our way...(smil,) we are a community that can't say no to those demands "
(Focus group 5, M).

"I prefer and most of my colleagues that I know prefer to interact with each other to share what we know in some academic cases by gathering directly as it is more helpful "
(Focus group 1, M).

However, Kuwaiti female academic staff preferred telephone communication to face-to-face communication. The main reason for this is to avoid traditional cultural difficulties and/or because it is also easier.

Senior academic librarians also noted, based on their extensive experience with regard to communication with academic staff, that Kuwaiti academic staff feel more comfortable with one-to-one communication. One of the participants stated:

"Within the library, I can say that the academic staff prefer one-to-one knowledge sharing. I find they are more comfortable with this method. They are more comfortable in asking questions" (Focus group 9, F).

It was noticed from the responses of both female and male academic staff that their preference for face-to-face communication can be influenced by the size of their college and their discipline, since the two focus groups were similar in terms of their background and their size. Female participants from small colleges were less enthusiastic about using the telephone in communication:

"... so we do not really prefer the phone, we prefer face to face communication... the scientific subjects most of the time cannot be explained better than face-to face" (Focus Group 8, F).

Closely located or open offices encourage face-to-face communication, which participants seemed to enjoy:

"Currently most of our daily communication is face-to-face communication. This is mainly due to the fact that our offices are close to each other. Also, face-to-face communication is more effective in our work routine and enjoyable; it is social interaction" (Focus Group 7, M).

The following figure (6.3.) illustrates the preferred communication methods according to the size of the college, the academic discipline, nationality and gender and means (channel) of communication (formal or informal). For instance, path A in Figure 6.3 shows that Kuwaiti male academics in large Art-based colleges prefer face-to-face communication.

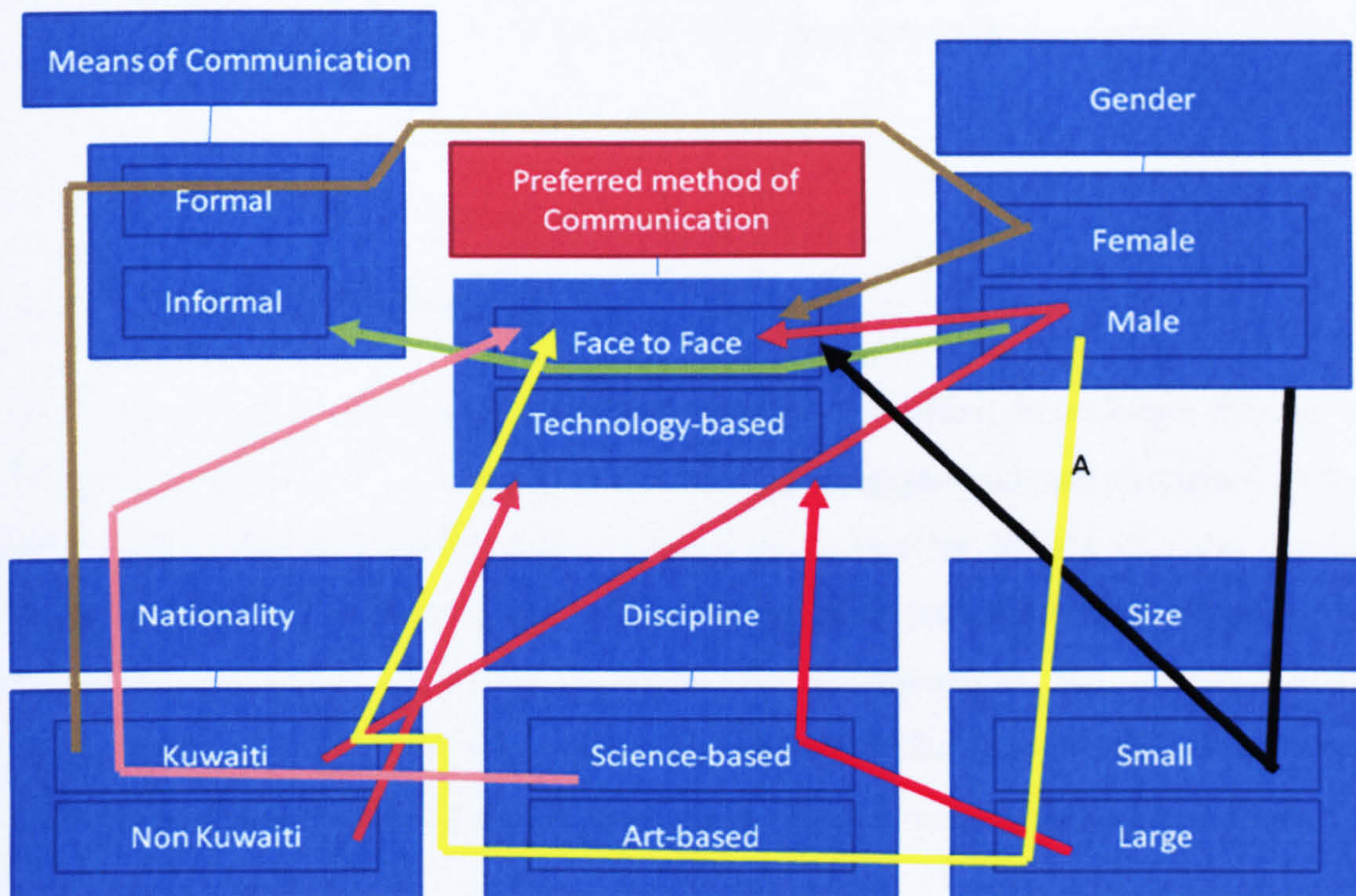


Figure 6.3: Preferred methods of communication

6.3.4 Language

Language competence was seen as an impediment to knowledge sharing as noted by participants from a large college with an Art-based background (Focus groups 1, 3 and 4) when the participants were asked about the problems which faced sharing knowledge. Competence in English was expressed as a critical factor in facilitating knowledge sharing among faculty members. There are a number of seminars, training activities and joint research projects that are delivered in English. Two comments are presented below:

"There is a large number of academic staff who lack competence in English. This problem has restricted their interaction with non-Arab, non-Kuwaiti academic staff. It has also restricted their access to English language materials and to seminars and meetings conducted in English" (Focus Group 1, Academic Staff, M).

"I find that some academic staff can't work with us because of the language; they are not that competent in English when conducting research and getting research materials or writing. So that means the main work load is on the person who is good at English" (Focus group 4, Academic Staff, M).

6.4 Organisational Issues

This section discusses the organisational factors that affect knowledge sharing in PAAET, which was one of the major issues that emerged and was discussed in the focus groups and interviews. The section aims to provide insight into the current knowledge sharing strategies, type of knowledge, processes, leadership, rewards and motivation systems. Figure 6.4 illustrates the organisational factors that are all impeding the development of a knowledge-sharing culture in PAAET. Figure 6.4 shows the organisational issues that were presented as impeding factors.

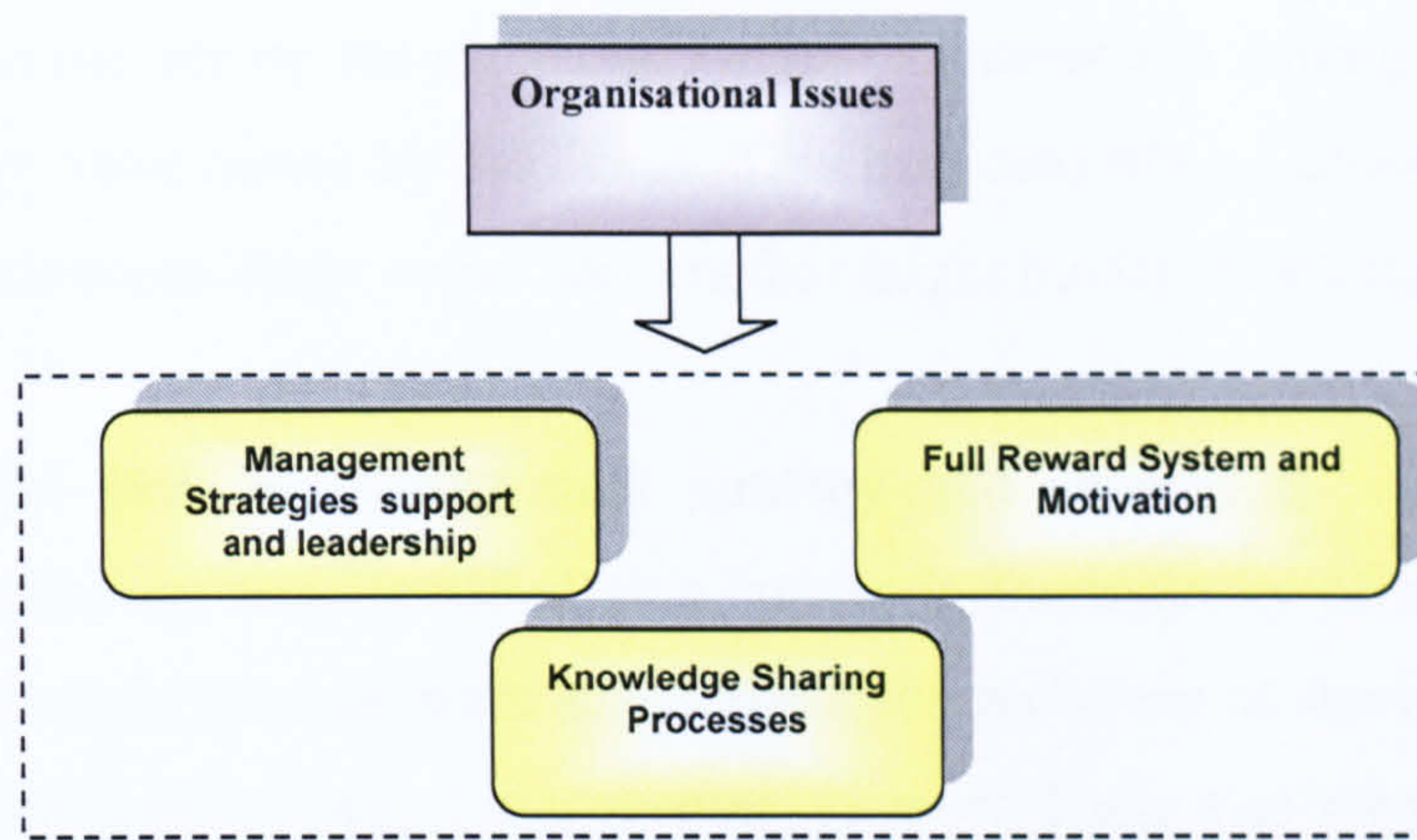


Figure 6.4: Organisational factors that impede KS

6.4.1 Current Management Strategies and Leadership Support

The senior management and deans in PAAET were interviewed regarding the role and importance of knowledge sharing in the organisation. It was revealed that the senior management team has little consideration for the role of knowledge and knowledge sharing in terms of improving PAAET's performance as that was revealed from the General director and Deputy of Applied Education (Interviews 1 and 2). The two comments are presented below:

"There is a certain degree of knowledge sharing that positively affects our performance but in general there are no written regulations to clarify the role or the systems; it just happens" (Interview 1, General Director, M).

"I do not envisage a major impact of knowledge sharing on PAAET's colleges' performance. There is no role for knowledge sharing that I can see ... we have not taken it into consideration in our planning yet. We have not reached the stage of recognising it" (Interview 2, Deputy of Applied Education, M).

It was also made clear that there were no written strategies or policies from the top management regarding the sharing of academic knowledge. The interviews with senior academic deans also showed that the approaches to knowledge sharing in PAAET were not clear or systematic. This is mainly due to a lack of management awareness about the possible impacts of knowledge sharing. It is also due to a lack of formal strategies that encourage and support knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the

lack of opportunities set by management for social interaction among the academic staff was another issue raised by the deans. This may also hinder knowledge sharing as social activities break down social barriers that might hinder interaction.

The issue of the lack of management strategy and support to value academic knowledge and sharing was identified as a barrier in the majority of interviews and focus groups when participants were asked about the problems of sharing knowledge as many raised the issue of lack of management support. There also seems to be a lack of strategic leadership to address current and future knowledge sharing needs.

Participants from the focus groups agreed that a well-planned knowledge-sharing strategy can play an important role in improving individual performance. All five Kuwaiti focus group participants were critical of the management and leadership of PAAET, feeling that the management demotivates academic staff by not acknowledging their knowledge and skills. They also demonstrated that top management needs to create an environment that promotes social activities. One comment is presented below:

"Unfortunately, the current lack of leadership within college, as well as the management style that has been adopted, does not motivate knowledge sharing as there is no recognition to our activities by the top management and there is no support for holding seminars or a conference that would help us to meet experts in our field and share our information and knowledge" (Focus Group 3, Academic staff, F).

Although the vast majority of participants in the focus groups felt that there is a need to share knowledge in higher education, a few expressed the opinion that there is no need to introduce new strategies for knowledge sharing in PAAET. These respondents noted their awareness of the importance and the need for knowledge sharing but felt there is no need to consciously plan or develop knowledge sharing.

Non-Kuwaitis with an Arabic background were reluctant to explore issues regarding the senior management and did not criticise senior management strategies or their leadership style. This may have been because they were worried that such comments

might prejudice their position in PAAET; equally, it may indicate their lack of experience and understanding of the management structure and management style in Kuwait.

However, one of the senior academic deans of a small college with a large number of academic staff of different nationalities stressed the positive role of knowledge sharing was playing in her college. She said that the diversity of nationalities by itself enriches the academic staff's performance. The focus group that was from that college (focus group 8) had similar views to those of their dean.

5.4.1 Current Motivation and Reward System

Senior managers have an important role in establishing guidelines to encourage knowledge sharing in PAAET. In the light of this, the interviewees were asked how academic staff were encouraged to share their knowledge to help improve performance. The senior managers confirmed that there were financial incentives to motivate academic staff to share their knowledge in joint research activities that had increased the number of published papers and thus knowledge sharing. The existence of financial incentives were also confirmed by participants from the focus groups (focus groups 1,7 and 3) who suggested that knowledge sharing could help in creating research ideas and aid work in joint research groups and thus facilitate the publication of research. It was also observed that the main driver for this came from Kuwaiti academic staff who were keen to be promoted to higher academic positions with an increase in salary and enhanced status in society. One college adopted a formal teamwork approach in its department to manage research activities. It was clear from the discussions that academic staff were keen to attend and participate in this type of meeting because of the role research activities played in offering benefits in terms of promotion as well as allied financial benefits.

Exceptionally, one of the senior academic deans mentioned that non-Kuwaiti academic staff in particular were given incentives to share knowledge and as a show of appreciation for their performance throughout the year. This academic dean discussed motivating staff by recognising and valuing their work, as shown below:

"Also, we should recognise the faculty for their contributions. So, that's a way of motivating people: recognition is a way of appreciating the efforts of the faculty" (Interview 9, senior academic dean, F).

However, recognition and not just financial rewards could be a major motivational factor but PAAET is failing to recognise this approach to motivation as other senior academic deans did not acknowledge this factor. The effect of holding regular meetings with academic staff to encourage them to share knowledge was discussed. These meetings motivate staff to air arguments, and to discuss and debate college issues. It was also revealed from the interviews with senior deans that involving academic staff in PAAET's activities, and particularly in decision-making processes, helps them feel part of the organisation; they can then be motivated to share their academic knowledge. However, it appears that there is a lack of awareness among top management on how to motivate academic staff in order to share their experiences and knowledge.

Non-Kuwaiti nationals in the focus groups looked at this issue from a different point of view. The majority were not interested in promotion as they already had, for the most part, senior academic positions. However, they agreed that joint research projects have a motivational effect, as these tend to strengthen their position through increased contributions to the department. The need for knowledge was identified as a factor that can be understood in motivational terms as part of an individual's need fulfilment in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Boeree 1998). In addition, non-Kuwaiti academic staff noted the motivational effect of enjoying their work and achieving job satisfaction. A supportive working environment was seen as a factor for motivating academic staff at PAAET. The majority of participants agreed that motivation also comes from peers and senior management support.

From the above section, it can be seen that many issues were raised in the focus groups and interviews that showed that although there was already a financial reward system, there was also a need for moral recognition and a supportive environment to motivate Kuwaiti academic staff to share knowledge. This was revealed when the researcher asked participants about the problems they faced in sharing knowledge in

their colleges. Figure 6.5 below shows the impeding (yellow) and facilitating (green) knowledge-sharing factors.



Figure 6.5: Reward System and Motivation

6.4.3 Current Types of Knowledge Shared

With regards to the types of knowledge that are shared and can be shared, the opinions of PAAET's senior staff (interviews) revealed that several different types of knowledge can be shared, with the most common type being available in written documents. This is not surprising as all of the interviewees had used documents extensively as a source of knowledge in their educational development and research. One of the common views from senior managers who had responsibilities for the regulations and policies of organisational knowledge and information that are distributed to all colleges in PAAET, suggested that documented information is the most common type of knowledge that is shared in their managerial section in PAAET. However, they also noted that brain-storming sessions were conducted between the management and senior academics to codify tacit knowledge to promote better decision making, which eventually leads to the production of written regulations and policies for all academics in PAAET's colleges. One common view of the top management is stated below:

“Documentation is the most common type of knowledge and information in our sector because we can't work on non-documented information. But, sure, the idea starts with tacit knowledge that needs to be documented and that happens through sharing knowledge with senior academic staff in brain-storming meetings to find the right solutions to problems and then to express a strong and clear decision or policy in a written document” (Interview 2, Deputy of Applied Education, M).

The statement above, which was made by senior manager who largely had responsibility for the regulations and policies concerning organisational knowledge and information that are distributed to all colleges, mirrors a senior academic dean who also stated that they use explicit knowledge for learning processes (teaching) and knowledge related to organisational administration processes as shown below:

"Documentary knowledge is used in its three forms: readable, listenable and viewable forms. These documents and the documentary knowledge relate to the learner and the lecturer. These include curricula and programmes, departments of administration and quality control offices" (Interview 5, Dean of Basic Education, F).

In terms of non-documented knowledge, it was noted that tacit knowledge, such as subject-specific knowledge, was one type that was shared by academic staff through seminars and lectures. Four out of the five senior academic deans expressed the view that they value both tacit and explicit knowledge in their colleges as these are academic institutes and they have to use all types of knowledge for the learning process and activities; as a result, they use both in their daily activities, as expressed in the following:

"We use both types of knowledge in our college and this mostly starts with tacit knowledge from staff from their own practical experience. It is then documented and used for the development of our curriculum and training courses" (Interview 9, Senior Academic Dean, F).

It seems clear that, when developing teaching and academic knowledge, both tacit and explicit knowledge come together in the sharing of experience and practice. This then leads to the growth of documented knowledge which is used to inform decision-making and improve performance.

Academic staff in the focus groups also expressed the idea that both tacit and explicit knowledge can be shared in PAAET. Both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis indicated that it was desirable to share both written documents and the tacit knowledge of academic staff. Librarian participants were very keen to discuss the explicit knowledge in their libraries as well as their role as facilitators in knowledge sharing:

"PAAET has a massive amount of knowledge that can be shared by the academic staff. There are a large number of research papers published by academic staff, handouts developed by academic staff, and knowledge in various ICT systems, for example" (Focus group 9, Senior Librarian, M).

6.4.4 Current Processes for Sharing Knowledge

Academic staff discussed two processes for sharing their knowledge: formal and informal processes. In addition, several participants expressed their concern about the lack of communication within PAAET colleges. They believed this has contributed to a lack of written strategies for knowledge sharing in their colleges.

6.4.4.1 Formal Processes

As a formal method of communication for knowledge sharing, staff meetings were used and some participants in one of the focus groups (focus group 8) mentioned that they meet every week to share their knowledge and brainstorm ideas. This approach was strong in the small scientific colleges due to their own belief in the benefit of knowledge sharing.

Seminars and training are also used as a process to share knowledge and expertise for some academic staff in PAAET. This was discussed in two focus groups. In addition, the senior academic librarians (focus group 9) confirmed a formal training programme on library systems and facilities is provided for academic staff.

6.4.4.2 Informal Processes

Informal processes for gaining knowledge were discussed in several focus groups; some participants thought that this is an important and effective method for sharing knowledge. Kuwaiti male academic staff from large colleges (focus groups 1 and 3) noted the positive role that informal social activities played in knowledge sharing as they were able to use their social skills and cultural values and norms as part of the knowledge sharing process in such activities. This is because the Kuwaiti culture encourages and promotes social activities as a way of building trust. Informal social

activities in small colleges are clearly recognised by the academic staff and are conducted regularly regardless of their nationalities.

Finally, non-Kuwaitis from an Arabic background were also in favour of informal social communication in knowledge sharing as such activities were thought to break down social barriers, as well as offering opportunities to build trust and understanding. Figure 6.6 summarises the current key processes in sharing knowledge as formal knowledge sharing processes were limited to one college and the training and seminars were offered by the library and some individual efforts on the part of academics.



Figure 6.6: The current key processes in sharing knowledge

The analysis from both, types of knowledge (in section 6.4.3) and from the process of knowledge sharing above, shows that both tacit and explicit knowledge are important for all managerial, academic staff and senior librarians at PAAET's colleges and could be in many forms. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) conversion mode of knowledge and Quinn *et al's.* (1996) level of knowledge for the professional intellect noted in the literature review (Section 2.4.1), both academic tacit and explicit knowledge can be converted, as presented in Figure 6.7.below.

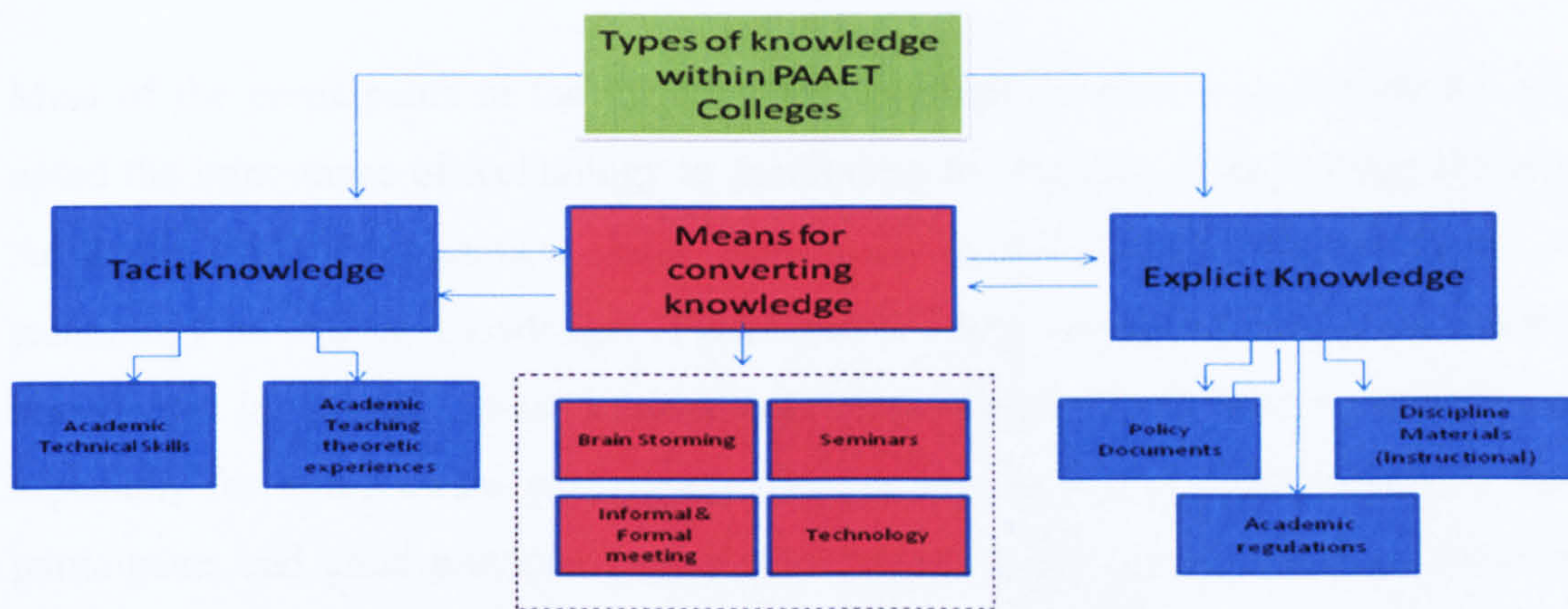


Figure 6.7: Types of knowledge and processes for knowledge sharing

6.5 Technological Issues

In this section technological issues affecting knowledge sharing in PAAET, including the IT infrastructure, IT skills and IT maintenance, are presented.

The use of technology was explored as a tool in sharing knowledge. Currently, as the Head of the Information and Computer Centre noted, there are large numbers of computers in PAAET. These are distributed for academic staff to facilitate knowledge sharing through the Internet, intranet and video-conferencing rooms; they are supported by full maintenance. The Head of the Educational Resources Department also noted that a website (Web 2.0) was newly constructed to promote the sharing of knowledge among academic staff and the Department of Educational Resources. However, the vast majority of the participants in the focus groups stated that no knowledge-sharing system is established or recognised by the academic staff in PAAET as they were not aware of Web 2.0 or the Intranet and only a few knew that there were video-conferencing rooms. Members of the focus group were asked if they used video-conferencing or similar systems. The participants stated that they did not know if this facility was available in PAAET; furthermore, they did not show much interest in this method of communication. Other participants mentioned that they had tried video-link communication to share knowledge with other institutes but it was not effective in PAAET as it was one-off experience.

Most of the participants in the different focus groups stressed a preference for and noted the importance of technology in facilitating the practice of knowledge sharing. Academic staff with technical skills, particularly in ICT, stressed the usefulness of technology in sharing knowledge. Furthermore, using e-mail effectively for sharing knowledge in PAAET was a preference for several focus group participants, especially for non-Kuwaiti participants. Discussions of e-mail issues suggested that participants had good previous experience concerning the use of e-mail in terms of knowledge sharing. It was also reported by participants from large colleges that are using the Internet that this would increase the speed of knowledge sharing; it would also facilitate interactions with their colleagues as they are scattered in various buildings.

However, interviews conducted with senior deans in scientific colleges revealed that there were technological problems in general and it was clear that these interviewees were not happy with their current IT support. It came to light that there is a lack of hardware and CMC (computer-mediated communication) systems to help and support the knowledge-sharing process. Additionally, there is also a lack of training for academic staff on how to use these systems and associated programmes yet these skills and the provision of these resources are critical in facilitating knowledge-sharing processes. From the librarians' point of view, the Internet and intranet are key elements in facilitating the knowledge-sharing process. However, they failed to give a full picture of how they envisaged such a system working. They also noted that the Internet was not being used efficiently and effectively.

Although the management claimed that there was regular technical maintenance, the focus groups (focus groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7) noted that the Internet was not being used effectively to facilitate knowledge sharing due to technical problems; this issue was raised by academic staff. One interviewee made the point that technology and technological know-how are not yet inherent parts of Kuwaiti society and this may also impede knowledge sharing in PAAET; this was also supported by some participants in focus groups 3, 5 and 6. Figure 6.8 illustrates the technological issues that affect knowledge sharing within PAAET.

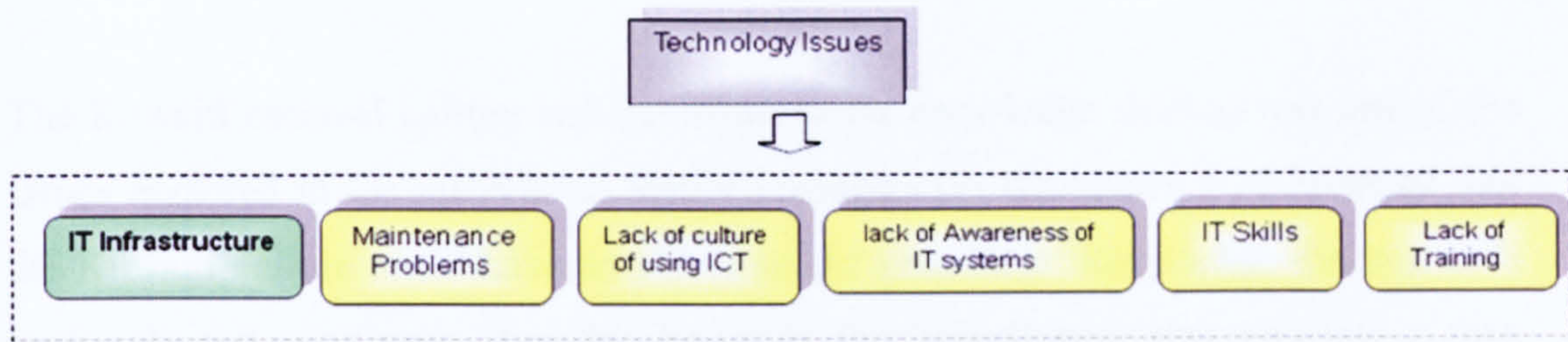


Figure 6.8: Technological issues that affect knowledge sharing

6.6 National cultural issues

This section presents aspects of the Kuwaiti national culture that affect the practice of knowledge sharing within PAAET's colleges. These aspects, which emerged in the analysis of the interviews and focus groups, include issues related to gender, sub-cultural (i.e. tribal and religious) groups and specifically Kuwaiti male face-to-face social interactions within their groups: (it is part of Kuwaiti culture to socialise in a place called Dewaneya) and the issue of reputation. Figure 6.9 illustrates the national cultural issues that both impede (yellow) and facilitate (green) the practice of knowledge sharing. These factors are examined in more detail later in this section.

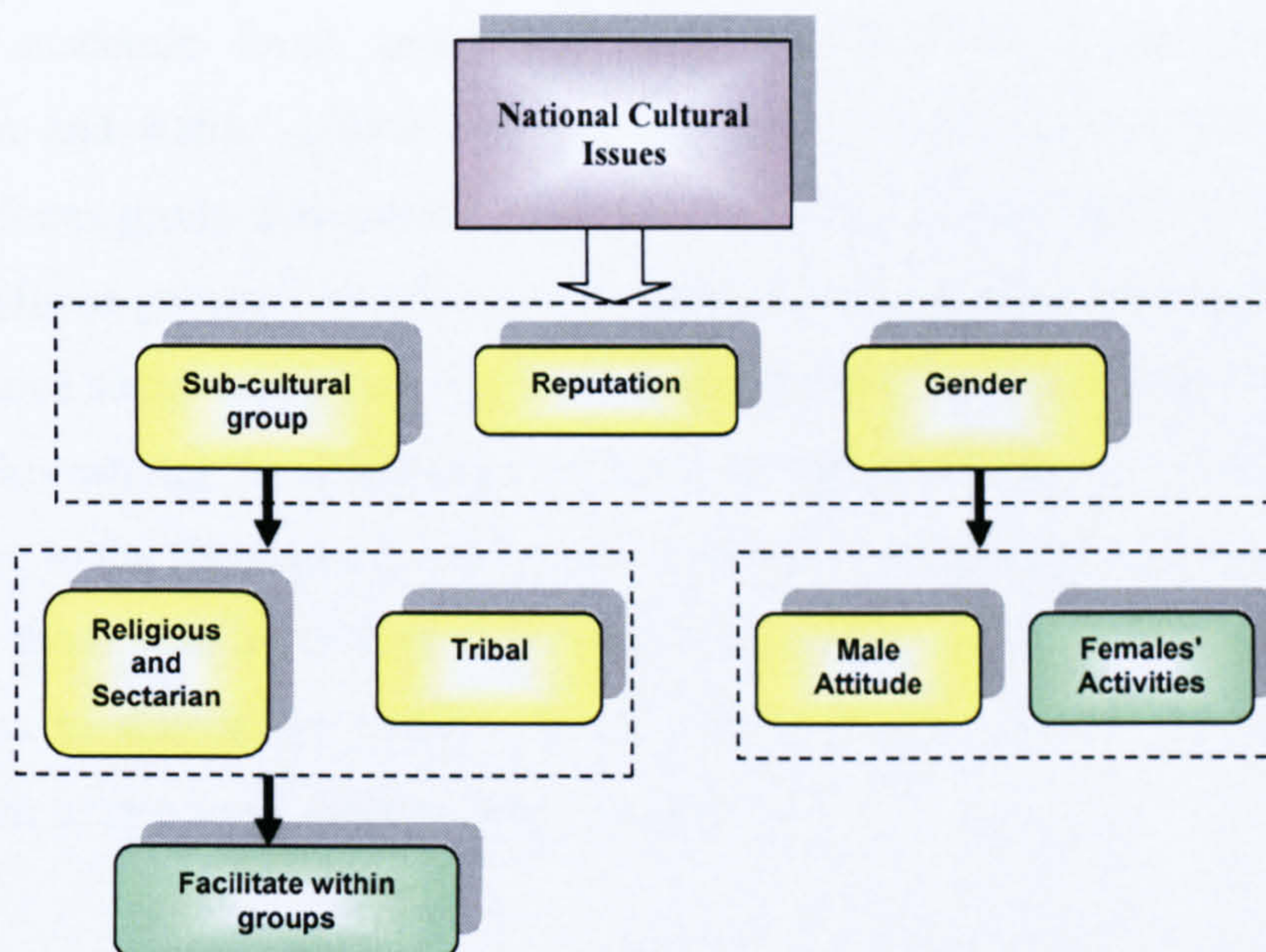


Figure 6.9: National cultural factors that both impede and facilitate knowledge sharing

The Kuwaiti national culture and its influence on knowledge sharing was one of the issues explored in the interviews. Senior managers (in interviews 1 & 2) stated that the Kuwaiti culture could have an effect on the practice of knowledge sharing, both positively and negatively. They felt, however, that its influence was not clear as they stressed that cultural groups have some negative influence on training requirements in PAAET but not on the sharing of knowledge.

It was found in small colleges (in interviews 8 and 9 and in focus groups 7 and 8) that national culture is not an issue. Participants, especially those from small colleges, argued that the size of colleges, the nature of their activities and the modes of delivering the courses have helped to create a sense of understanding and respect among staff for each other regardless of culture. One comment is presented below:

"In general, as the college is small in size, we feel that we are a family and no such cultural issues impact on us" (Interview 8, senior academic dean, M).

6.6.1 Reputation

Kuwaiti academic focus groups revealed that Kuwaiti academics enjoy high reputation and status in their colleges and did not want to lose that power. The Kuwaiti focus group discussions explored this issue in depth, especially in the large colleges (focus groups 1 and 5), as their staff are often individuals whose main target is to achieve social status and reputation through their academic position. Some tried to keep knowledge to themselves in order to maintain this status and reputation. According to the focus groups, this type of attitude is hindering knowledge sharing as there are those who try to keep knowledge to themselves in order to gain promotion, as well as to stay at the same level of social standing. This was mentioned by a participant from a large college (focus group 5):

"There are people who do not share their knowledge in order to stay as the only professor in the department." (Focus Group 5, Academic Staff, M).

Other participants in the focus groups in college 1 (focus group 1) expressed the idea that social status can be gained through achieving the power that comes with academic position. The above opinions and attitudes were not shared by non-Kuwaiti nationals (focus group 8) who explained that their views on social and academic status are different. This is because the nature of their activities and the modes of delivering the courses have helped to create a sense of understanding and respect for each other, regardless of their positions.

6.6.2 The Kuwaiti Specific Culture Influence Issues

In this section, specific dimensions of the Kuwaiti national culture are explored in relation to knowledge-sharing practices. How each dimension affects or influences knowledge sharing practices, and whether specific aspects of Kuwaiti culture, such as gender interaction, and/or tribal and religious factors, facilitate or hinder knowledge sharing are also considered. One senior academic dean from a large science-based college noted that the Kuwaiti culture is not an issue that affects knowledge sharing practices by noting:

"The vast majority of academic staff were educated in Western countries and experienced interaction with other cultures. This should help to reduce such an impact" (Interview 7, senior academic dean, M).

However, the statement above showed some naivety since the results from the focus groups, which are presented later in this section, contradict his view.

6.6.2.1 Gender interaction

Several participants were encouraged to discuss the issue of informal social interaction of females and males. It was clear from the discussions that there are cultural barriers to such interaction; it is not the norm, and it is culturally unacceptable for females to interact with males in informal social activities. The female participants in the focus group explained that at present they only share knowledge with other academic staff within PAAET's defined physical boundaries. The effect of gender interaction on knowledge sharing generated a high level of

interest, discussion and argument in the focus groups from both males and females. Some participants (focus groups 1, 5, 7 and interview 8) argued that PAAET's institutional culture is not helpful in encouraging knowledge sharing between members of the opposite sex. However, it seems that some individuals in large colleges in PAAET have built a culture where interaction with the opposite sex is not an issue owing to the fact those staff have been educated in Western universities and did not have any tribal roots.

Female Activities

During the interview with a senior academic dean it was found that gender is not a critical issue in knowledge-sharing practices as an interviewee from a small college indicated that women are active in knowledge sharing activities. It is well recognised and widely accepted that Kuwaiti society is male dominated and this forces women to work harder to share their knowledge in order to demonstrate their abilities and competencies (interview 8). It was also found that Kuwaiti academics in some colleges (focus groups 1, 3, 7 and 9) acknowledged that female academics were more willing to share knowledge and learn than males as they are motivated to be promoted to leadership positions. The female participants were highly motivated to respond to the gender issues in Kuwait as they are more willing than men to lead and participate in seminars and conferences.

Interaction between female faculty members and librarians, regardless of their gender, was not an issue. In fact it was perceived to be an essential and positive activity in the development of knowledge sharing within PAAET. This is due to the fact that a library environment provides female academic staff with a comfortable setting to interact with colleagues and share their knowledge and experiences.

Male Attitudes towards Women's Interactions

It was found through focus groups 3 and 5 that some male academics are not comfortable interacting with females either in official or informal meetings. It was surprising that one genuine reason for this was that some male academics were concerned about how their wives would react if they interacted with women at work. Another reason was related to Kuwaiti cultural traditions, Alharaj (i.e. it is culturally

unacceptable to interact with women) and religious rules regarding segregation. An extract from one of the focus groups is offered below:

"I prefer not to work with female colleagues out of respect for my wife. I know my wife's feelings" (Focus Group 5, Academic Staff, M).

It is true that interaction between males and females in unofficial activities is not the cultural norm in Kuwaiti society. This has led many people to avoid interaction with members of the opposite sex in order not to be criticised. From a religious point of view, it is not allowed for males and females to be on their own together unless they are first kin. Surprisingly, the discussions (focus group 5) also revealed that there are still some male academic staff who lack trust in the knowledge of women. It was argued that this lack of trust is cultural and is due to the lack of interaction with the opposite sex. An extract from this focus group is given below:

"Personally, I have never shared knowledge with females in the workplace at PAAET. But without doubt, there is a cultural issue and a historical accumulation regarding interaction with women; nobody can deny it. In fact, there is lack of trust towards women's knowledge; this attitude exists in fact and suggests that the experiences of women are not rich. Even when I worked in the Emirates and in Tarablos, I only worked with men and I don't know how will it be if a new woman comes into my department" (Focus group 5, Academic Staff, M).

Figure 6.10 illustrates the main findings regarding gender issues that were revealed in the interviews and the focus groups.

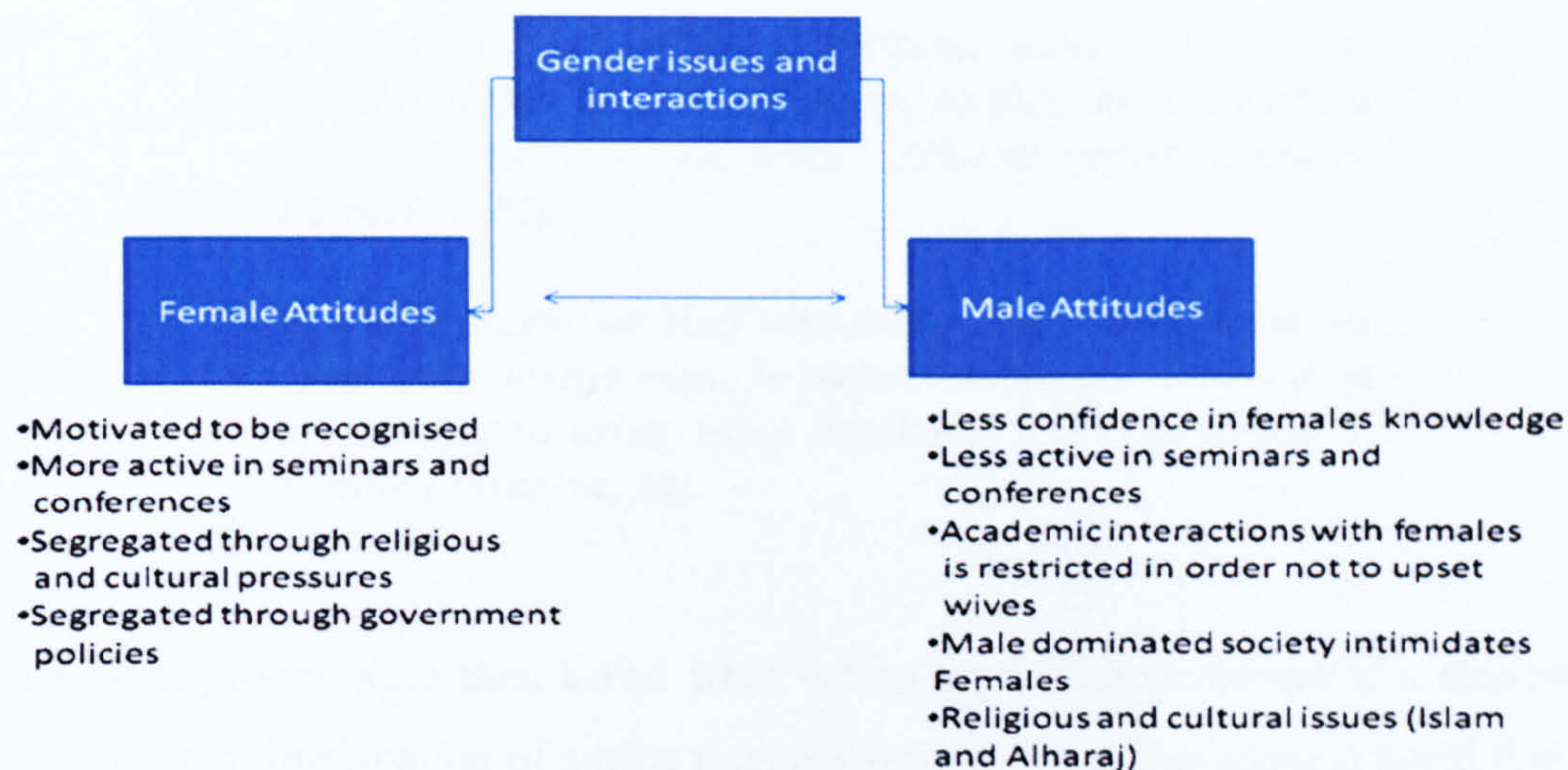


Figure 6.10: Gender issues and interactions

6.6.2.2 Tribal Influence

One of the features of Kuwaiti culture is that of an individual's and group's loyalty and trust towards the tribe, neighbours and friends. In fact, in some cases, individual loyalty is considered more important than the interests of the organisation (nepotism is likely to take place). The impact of this on knowledge sharing was explored in both the interviews and focus groups. Participants noted that the Bedouin culture can facilitate knowledge sharing among academic staff if they are from the same tribe but they are likely to be less motivated to share their knowledge with those who are not from the same tribe (interviews 2 and 3; focus groups 1, 3, 5). However, some interviewees (interviews 1 and 6) did not perceive that tribal factors have any impact on knowledge sharing. This view was shared by the most senior managers of PAAET who confirmed that there were Bedouin and Al-Hadar groups, as well as sectarian Sunnis and Shias in their colleges, but this has little impact on knowledge sharing in PAAET compared to other Kuwaiti institutions. Academic staff from the same tribe showed unconditional trust in each other. This is mainly due to tribal cultural values. A senior librarian discussed this issue from his own experience in interacting with academics in colleges 1 and 2:

"Academic staff from the same tribe trust each other. You are asking me why? They share the same values."

They believe they belong to the same name and the same blood and that I am one of them, so they feel easy about asking knowledge questions” (Focus group 9, Senior Librarian, M).

“Usually academic staff who know that we are from the same tribe always come to me or call me for information or training in using some databases” (Focus group 9, Senior Librarian, M).

The focus groups were then asked what would be the consequences if a request for knowledge or information of a tribe member were refused. Participants noted that this could create a negative image among the tribe’s members as such an action would not be acceptable and someone might be labelled as “*MooRejal*” (not a man) or “*MooKafoo*” (someone who is not capable). These labels could have a serious cultural impact on the individual in terms of his/her participation in tribal activities and interactions; some members might even consider this action as an offence. Therefore, it is not surprising that non-Kuwaiti academic staff (focus group 2) identified this as an important factor in their work activities and this indicates a solid understanding of non-Kuwaitis of the tribal system which is dominant in Kuwaiti society. This led to a discussion of how to build cross-cultural relationships within PAAET. Social interaction was commonly identified as the key for successful relationships (focus groups 2 and 4). However, for female academic staff, socialisation with the opposite sex is restricted due to the Kuwaiti culture, particularly within the tribal culture. Several cases were noted where female academic staff did not participate in knowledge-sharing activities carried out outside PAAET, particularly in hotels (focus group 1); this was also confirmed by male academic staff in the same group.

The focus groups discussed the differences between the tribal and non-tribal cultures. They noted that knowledge sharing among Al-hadar (people who are highly exposed to other cultures as they usually live in cities) is easier than with individuals from tribal cultures where loyalty and dedication to knowledge sharing is confined to individuals within this closed system (focus groups 3 and 5). Interestingly, the small colleges from a science background did not report much influence of tribal cultures on

knowledge sharing practices as the minority of their staff come from a tribal background. Figure 6.11 shows the main findings concerning tribal issues.

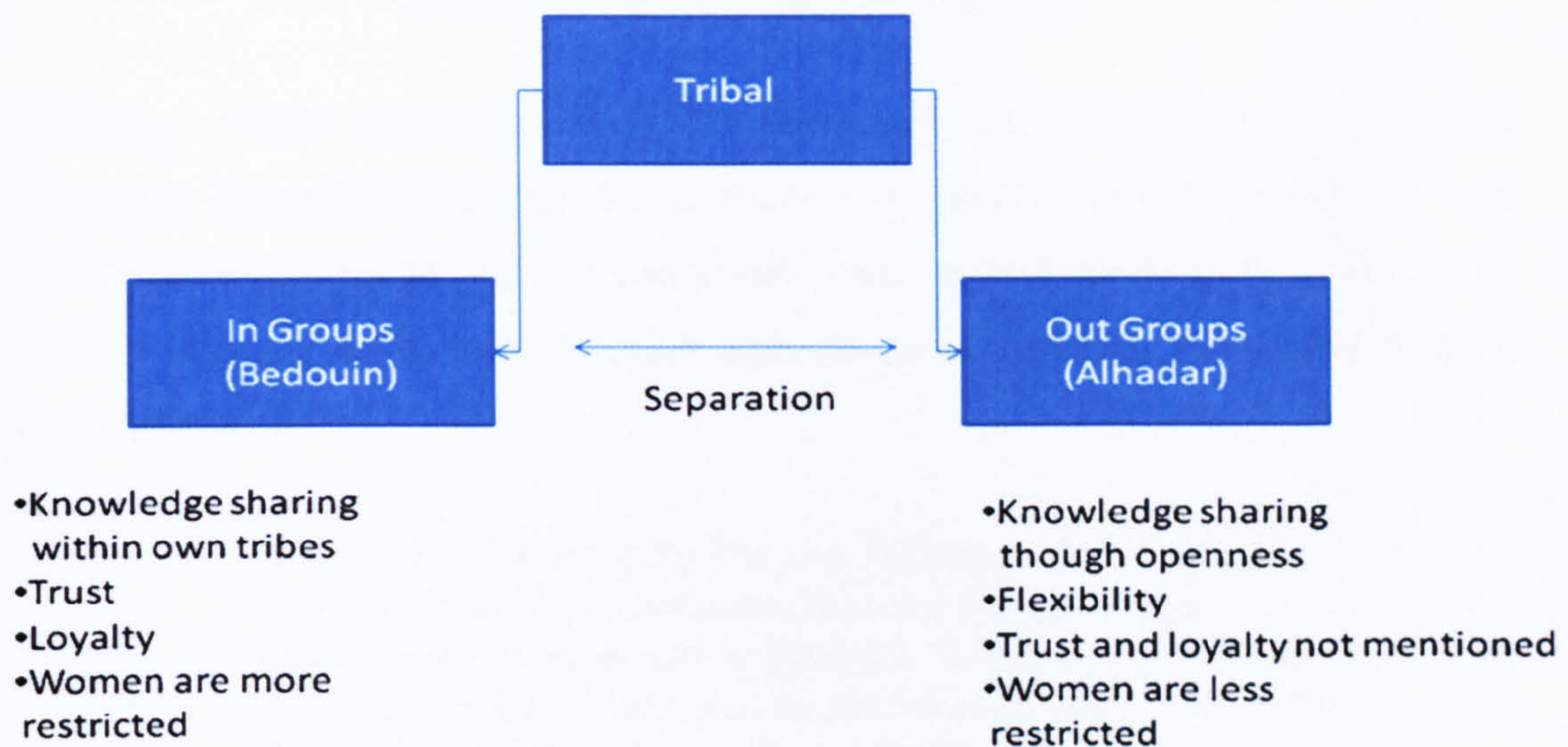


Figure 6.11: Main findings concerning tribal issues.

6.6.2.3 The Influence of Religion

The main religion in the State of Kuwait is Islam. Several interviewees expressed the view that religious principles promote supporting others and senior members asserted that religion does not influence knowledge sharing negatively (interviews 2, 6, 7 and focus groups 2, 5, 8 and 9). In fact, Islam and its holy book (the Quran) promote and encourage knowledge sharing as illustrated below:

"There are Hadiths (the Prophet Mohammed's sayings and practices); there is punishment for the individual who hides knowledge" (Focus Group 2, Academic Staff, M).

All the focus group participants, regardless of their religious backgrounds, agreed that religious principles are likely to encourage, rather than hinder, knowledge sharing. It was agreed that, in Islam, it is the duty of any Muslim to share his/her knowledge to help mankind and that knowledge should be shared for the peace and benefit of humanity. A Christian participant in another focus group noted that Christian principles help and support fellow humans regardless of their religion and/or culture, as illustrated in the comment below:

"It is part of our Christian principle to be kind and helpful to our human fellows regardless of their religion and culture" (Focus Group 8, Academic Staff, F).

Interestingly, there were misconceptions about religion and culture, in that some participants suggested that knowledge sharing by way of direct interactions with members of the opposite sex in a conservative society was likely to be problematic. However, this aspect is cultural rather than religious (focus groups 1 and 5) as is illustrated below:

"I do not think religion has any influence on knowledge sharing. Individual characteristics are the most important factor in my opinion and individuals' willingness to share their knowledge. It depends on their family education and the culture they live in, not their religion" (Focus Group 5, Academic Staff, M).

In one of the Kuwaiti focus groups, sectarian issues within society and within PAAET were discussed. This sectarianism relates to the two main Islamic sects: the Sunnis and the Shias. In principle, they have the same beliefs, for example, sharing a belief in one holy book (Al-Quran) and in Mohammed as their prophet. The differences are mainly based on interpretations of the holy Quran and the Hadith (the Prophet's sayings and works). Within each sect there is a fanatically conservative group (Kuwaiti males) and people from these groups only share knowledge amongst themselves; they exclude females from their activities. This issue was discussed in the statement below:

"In Islam, there is one Holy book but there are several sects. It depends on the sect or some group's interpretation of the holy Quran. We can find a minority which believes that knowledge sharing is permitted only with certain people and is forbidden with those from other groups as they don't trust the source of their knowledge" (Focus Group 3, Academic Staff, M).

This issue was explored further in another focus group (focus group 5). This group noted that each sect has a different cultural background which exacerbates their differences. Some explained that Sunnis were related to Arabian tribes while Shias derive from non-Arabs or "Ajam", a term used to refer to those with non-Arab

Muslim roots and particularly to Iranian Muslims. The participants were reluctant to discuss this issue in detail but acknowledged that it was an issue within society. However, they argued that sects do not influence knowledge-sharing activities in PAAET.

This issue was clearly shown in the large colleges that were Art-based (focus groups 1 and 3) than in the smaller ones. Sectarianism was observed and explored by the researcher in the larger colleges while it was not mentioned in relation to the smaller ones. In the larger colleges there are numerous members of staff in several social science departments in which academic staff are more interested in religion and sectarian issues. The small colleges are, on the other hand, mainly science-based colleges and their interests therefore focus on scientific issues. Figure 6.12 illustrates the findings in terms of religious issues.

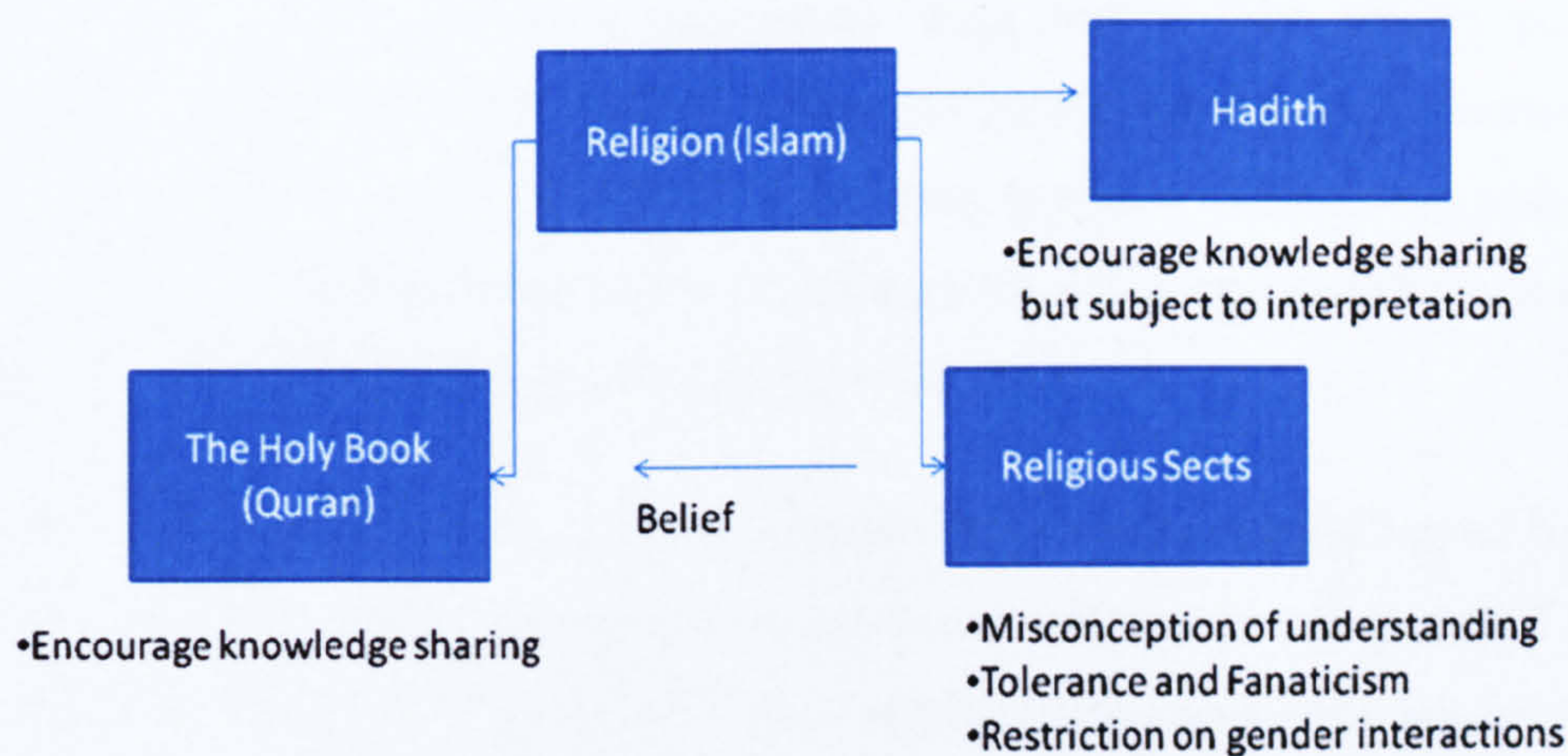


Figure 6.12: Religious influences

6.6.2.4 The Influence of Governmental Policy

The State can play an important role as a facilitator and promoter of knowledge sharing. This can be achieved by establishing a budget for promoting knowledge sharing within organisations through appropriate strategies and by promoting a culture that encourages knowledge sharing. One of the most important issues raised concerning the influence of the State in the focus groups was its segregation policy in higher education. PAAET has had a segregation policy since its inception but, prior to

the invasion of Kuwait, the higher education policy at Kuwait University was that education was mixed with no segregation of male and female students. After the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the Kuwaiti parliament became more conservative. PAAET is a government institution and the state thus largely imposes the main strategies and policies of PAAET, which is another possible barrier to knowledge sharing. This can be seen, for example, in the imposition of the segregation policy regarding males and females.

Segregation and Physical Barriers

In the interviews with senior managers of PAAET (interviews 1 & 2), they noted that the state has an influence on gender issues both within society and within PAAET. The state, in recent years and as mentioned above, has decided to separate the sexes in higher education through its segregation policy. PAAET is a state-run academic institute and therefore needs to implement state policy. The state's policy is recognised as a factor affecting the built infrastructure and the interaction between the two genders. This physical segregation is the main barrier to interaction, rather than gender itself as the physical separation of colleges for males and females was seen as the main reason for the lack of interaction between the sexes.

There are also special barriers to knowledge sharing in the organisation of the built environment. Focus group participants in Art-based colleges (focus groups 2 and 4) noted that the infrastructure of PAAET does not facilitate knowledge sharing among faculty members as college buildings are scattered; this hinders face-to-face communication. This situation has arisen largely because of the rapid physical expansion of PAAET and the positioning of new buildings has not been designed to facilitate such communication. Comments on this issue included the following:

"I think that the different locations of our buildings for male and female colleges would slow the process of sharing knowledge" (Focus group 4, Academic Staff, M).

"Some academic staff don't have the time to go to other buildings of the college to meet other faculty members to share knowledge" (Focus group 2, Academic Staff, M).

However, segregation was seen by a small minority as a given considering their cultural, tribal and religious backgrounds.

"But ... this is against our culture and religion and those are the rules. Respect for women comes from separating them in education in order for them not to be exposed"
(Focus Group 3, Academic Staff, M).

Figure 6.13 shows the main issues that are related to the influence of governmental policy on knowledge-sharing interactions at PAAET's colleges.

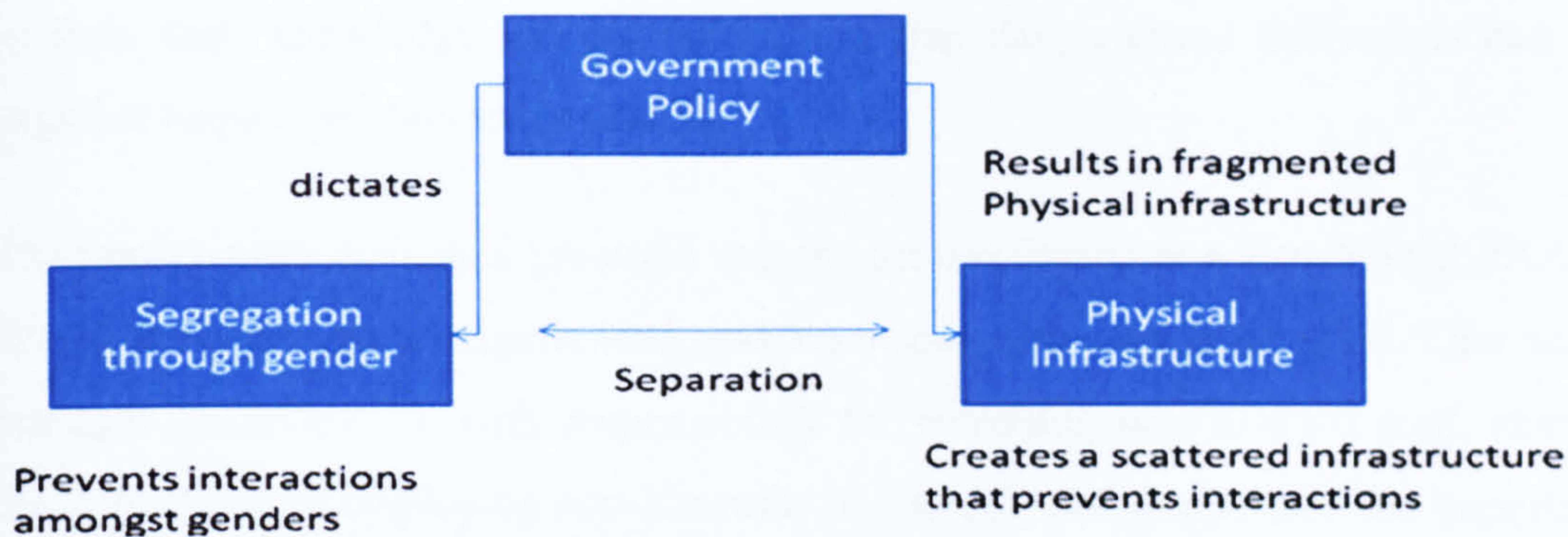


Figure 6.13: Influences of government policy

6.7 Current Cross-Cultural Issues

This section presents an analysis of the cross-cultural issues that are related to knowledge-sharing practices. Figure 6.14 captures the main cross-cultural issues that impede (yellow) and facilitate (green) knowledge sharing within PAAET's colleges. These issues are examined in more detail later in this section.

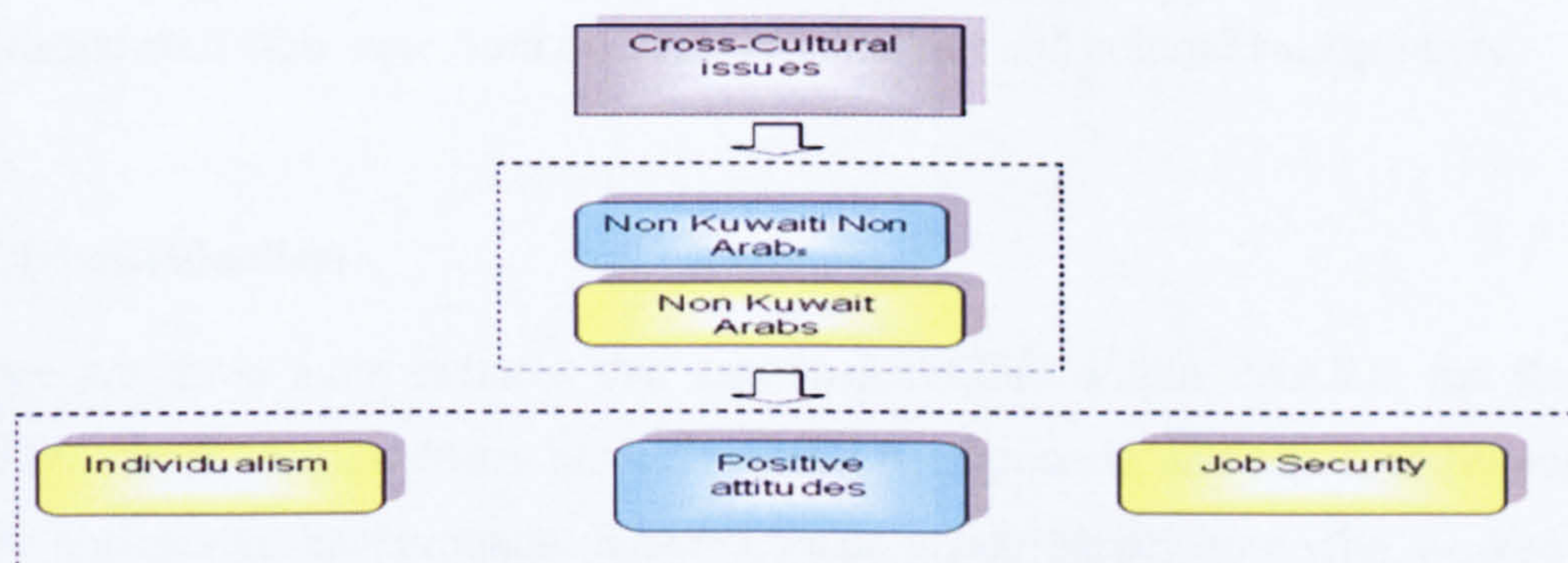


Figure 6.14: Cross-cultural issues

Some participants in both the Kuwaiti focus groups and interviews made the point that cross-cultural issues in knowledge sharing do have a positive influence (focus groups 7 and 8, interviews 2, 7 and 8). Kuwaiti participants in small colleges with a science background stated that having non-Kuwaiti nationals with experience would help in enhancing the knowledge in their college. The majority of non-Kuwaiti female academics in small scientific colleges (focus group 8) were enthusiastic about and happy to interact with colleagues of all nationalities. They showed a willingness to share their knowledge and did not believe that their cultural differences had any negative impact on knowledge sharing.

The interviewees discussed the main reasons for employing non-Kuwaitis at PAAET, noting that they were experienced and knowledgeable academic staff. One senior manager (interview 2), with responsibility for recruiting non-Kuwaiti staff, stressed the importance of employing non-Kuwaitis in PAAET and emphasised the importance of a diversity of knowledge and cultures as he felt that non-nationals helped in building a better learning environment which was better equipped to compete with other organisations outside PAAET. It was also noted by one of the senior deans (focus group 6) that PAAET needs the knowledge of such academics to improve performance through the sharing of their knowledge. Another senior dean (interview 7) agreed that non-Kuwaitis contribute positively to the promotion and speeding up of the sharing of technical knowledge.

After reviewing the positive attitudes towards cross-cultural interactions in the practice of knowledge sharing in PAAET, the next section reviews negative issues, such as anxieties concerning job security and the individualistic behaviour of academic staff who were from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

6.7.1 Individualism

There are three main cultures that can be identified within PAAET: the Kuwaiti culture, non-Kuwaiti cultures but with Arabic backgrounds, and non-Kuwaiti cultures with non-Arabic backgrounds. Kuwaiti focus group participants who worked with

non-Kuwaitis from Arabic backgrounds asserted that they often place their own interests first in their activities (focus groups 1 and 3) as illustrated below:

"Generally, from my experience with non-Kuwaiti academic staff, they place their personal interests and goals ahead of that of the groups in the department or the college" (Focus group 1, Academic Staff, M).

" It's always good to have other non-Kuwaiti academic staff with different experience and from different backgrounds where we can co-operate with each other to develop a better outcome for the bigger organisation. But the problem is that some of them, especially those with a specific nationality or background that I have dealt with, are selfish in the way that they won't collaborate in research unless they gain personal benefits from it" (Focus group 3, Academic Staff, M).

This individualism in non-Kuwaitis, especially those from Arabic backgrounds, is due to two main reasons. The first is that all non-Kuwaiti academic staff are on short-term contracts as mentioned earlier. The second reason is that academic staff believe that knowledge is their main asset within the department and they are concerned that once this has been shared they will become redundant. Therefore, they try to keep their competitive advantage in terms of knowledge. Kuwaiti participants from large-sized, Art-based colleges (focus groups 1 and 3) were in agreement with their colleagues concerning the knowledge-sharing behaviour of non-Kuwaitis.

On the other hand, when this issue was discussed in focus groups with non-Kuwaiti Arabs from large-sized, Art-based colleges (focus groups 2 and 4), it was observed that over half of the participants did not take this seriously. Non-Kuwaiti male participants with Arabic backgrounds (focus groups 4 and 2) believed that their knowledge was vital for others to learn from without indicating that they could also learn from others; this demonstrated an unsupported level of complacency, as noted below:

"Having people from different cultural backgrounds other than Kuwaitis helps PAAET in improving the college's outcomes. Our knowledge helps other faculty members in improving their knowledge" (Focus group 4, Academic Staff, M).

"People like us from other cultural backgrounds help the organization to develop their teaching techniques and research" (Focus group 2, Academic Staff, M).

6.7.2 Job Security

In PAAET, job security for Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academic staff differs. Kuwaiti academic staff have permanent positions and it is usually very difficult to dismiss any such staff member. Therefore, from a job security point of view, Kuwaiti academic staff are relaxed and feel no pressure concerning their job security. On the other hand, non-Kuwaitis are on renewable, short-term contracts, usually of three years' duration and the main criterion for renewing their contracts is the knowledge and skill needed within a particular academic discipline. Therefore, the knowledge and experience of non-Kuwaiti academic staff is their main asset in getting their contracts (usually very attractive ones) renewed. As a result, non-Kuwaiti academic staff are reluctant to share knowledge, which might put them at a competitive advantage when new contracts are negotiated. Participants in Kuwaiti focus groups (focus groups 1, 3 and 5) expressed the view that the knowledge of non-Kuwaiti academic staff is reluctantly shared and they were more willing to undertake joint research projects with the decision makers, such as heads of department or deans, rather than with more knowledgeable academic staff that were not in a position to influence the review or renewal process of non-national contracts. They stated:

"Non-Kuwaiti academic staff in many cases are reluctant to share their knowledge. The main reason for this is that they feel this will weaken their position in the department and they will be easy to replace. They believe their knowledge is their strength" (Focus Group 5, Academic Staff, M).

The same view was shared by a senior manager who stressed that non-Kuwaitis have an advantage in terms of their knowledge; this could impede knowledge sharing. This advantage becomes more important for non-Kuwaitis once they realise that it is the policy of the Kuwaiti authorities to replace non-Kuwaitis with Kuwaitis through their Kuwaitisation policy. One senior manager stated:

"Most of the expatriates working in Kuwait have unstable and insecure job positions. This will lead to deliberate withholding of knowledge, leading to a 'functional silo' or knowledge dam or barricade. This is done because the expat perceives his knowledge to be his source of leverage, and the reason for his continued employment in the face of Kuwaitinisation efforts" (Interview 3, senior manager, M).

However, one of the senior deans argued that non-Kuwaitis' job insecurity can be a driver for knowledge sharing as the non-nationals are keen to impress their Kuwaiti colleagues by sharing their knowledge in order to ensure the extension of their current contracts.

"They are afraid of losing their jobs because they have to have to renew their contracts every year with PAAET, and so they would do what ever they are asked to do, even in sharing their knowledge and co-researching with others" (Interview 8, senior academic dean, M).

6.8 Effects of Academic Disciplines and Issues concerning the Size of Colleges

Following the analysis of the various focus groups and interviews it was found that the size of colleges and their academic backgrounds have a very considerable influence on knowledge sharing. Issues concerning the national culture and individuals' perceptions are affected by the aforementioned size and also by academic disciplines. For instance, in large-based Art colleges, it can be clearly seen that tribal, gender and religious issues are more important as there is a high number of Kuwaiti staff. The findings regarding the various colleges and their disciplines are included in Figure 6.15.

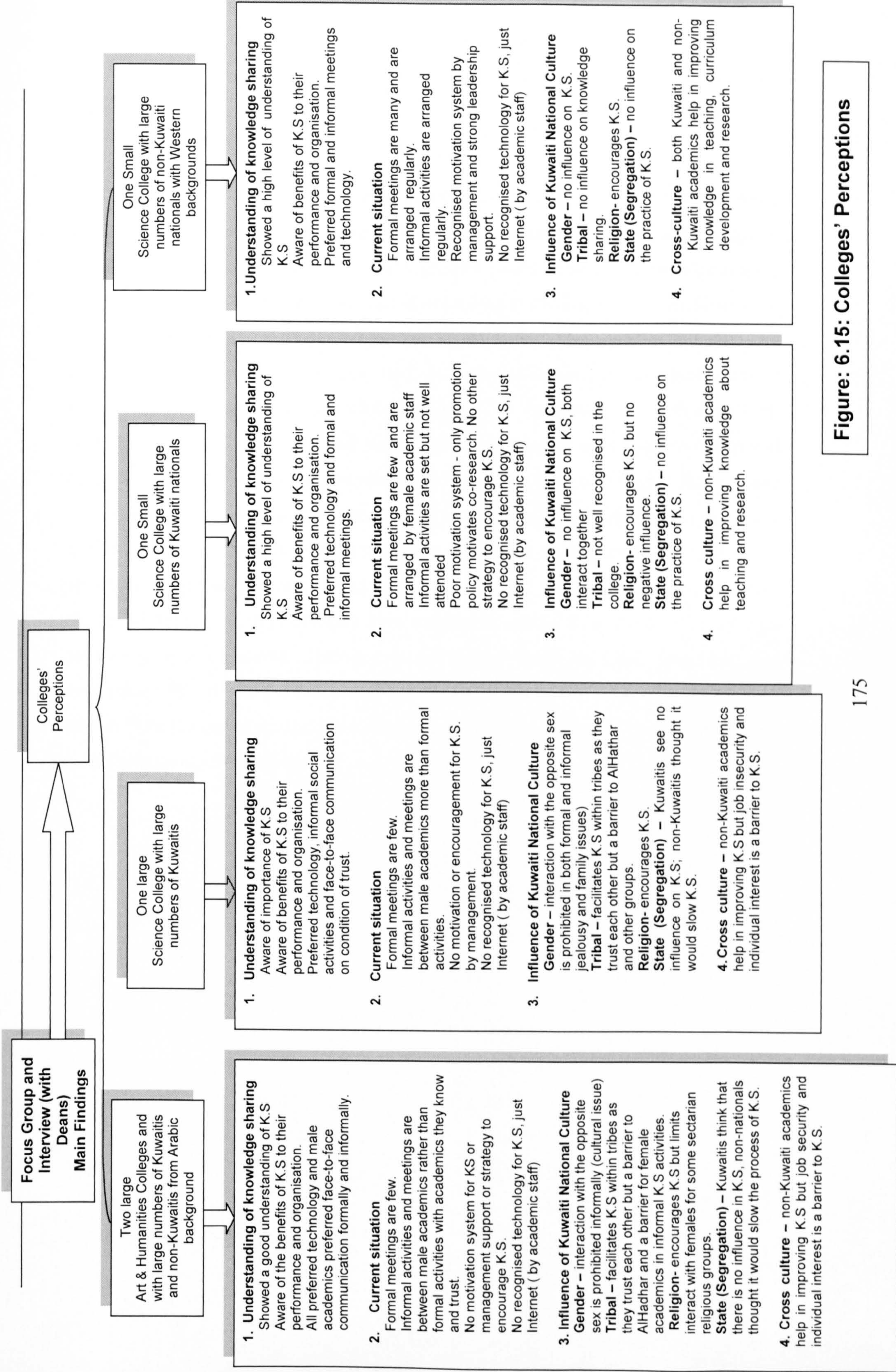


Figure: 6.15: Colleges' Perceptions

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, qualitative data were drawn from the interview and focus group discussions and presented according to their themes. The analysis of the focus group discussions revealed a range of attitudes regarding issues related to knowledge sharing that were explored. These attitudes varied according to the issue itself, the size of the colleges, the cultural background of participants, and management support. All participants in the focus groups and interviews, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, agreed that knowledge sharing is important to enhance their performance. Moreover, deans and staff from small colleges were more aware of and better understood the need for knowledge sharing; they were also more likely to have developed their own strategies for sharing knowledge. The main reason for these differences is that there is more face-to-face interaction among academic staff in the smaller colleges as their offices and buildings are closer to each other compared with the larger colleges. Larger colleges have a different culture from the smaller colleges as they consist of several distinct cultural groups based on tribe, friendship and nationality; this affects the practice of knowledge sharing. The findings from the data drawn from the use of qualitative methods are discussed further in Chapter 7 together with the quantitative findings.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings of this research, which brings together evidence from the literature review, the questionnaire survey, interviews, focus groups and organisational documents in order to find the influences on knowledge sharing practices. These influences can pave the way in promoting an effective knowledge sharing culture at Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Cross referencing between findings from the previous research instruments and factors that have been identified are discussed within the context of a framework involving a collection of issues or factors that have emerged from the research. This chapter discusses the key findings from the literature review, quantitative and qualitative analyses and interpret the results. Figure 7.1 below captures the main headings that are used in the discussion. The main factors that impede and facilitate knowledge sharing in PAAET are discussed within the context of the framework below and are presented at the end of this chapter.

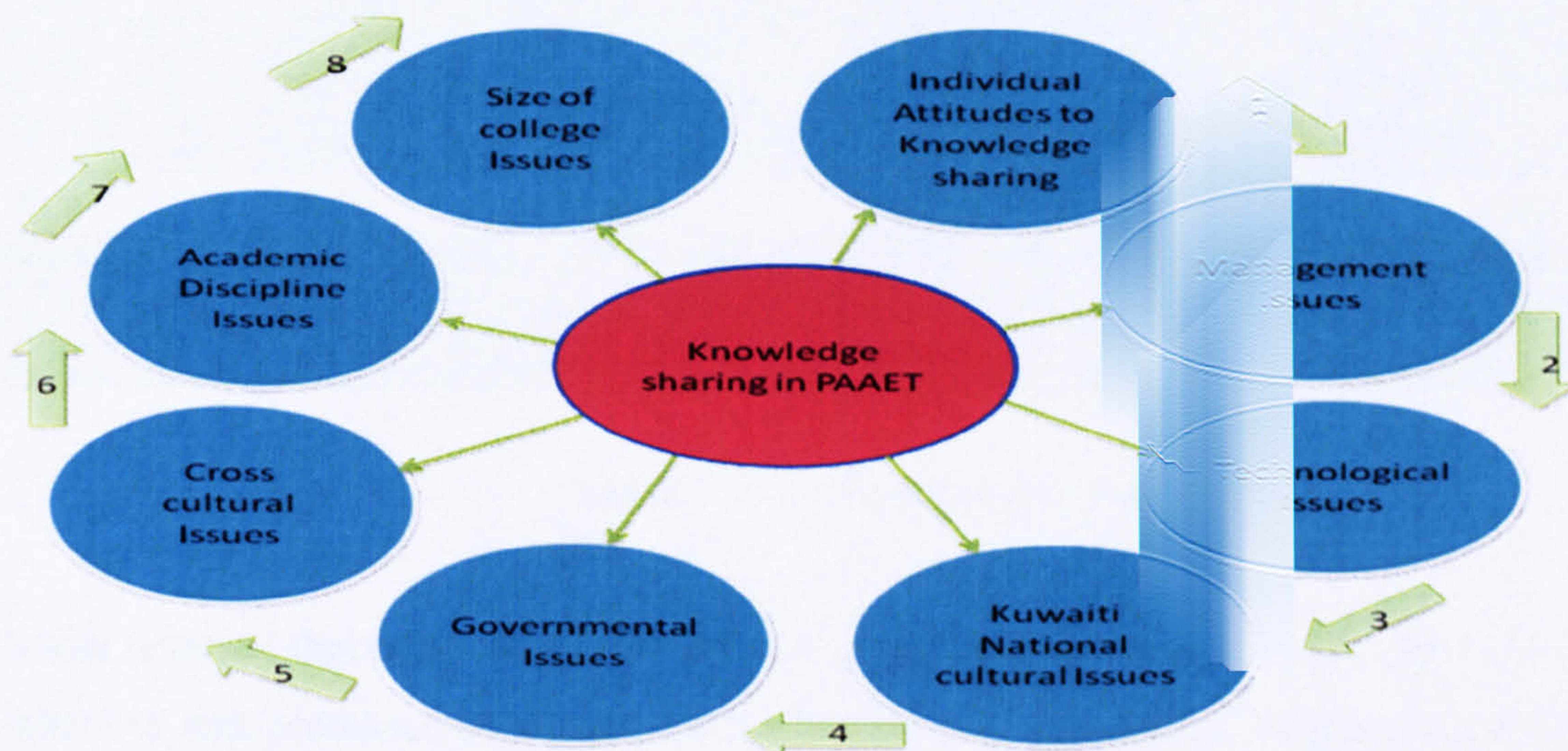


Figure 7.1: A framework for discussing the findings

7.2 Individual Attitudes to Knowledge Sharing

It is evident from the quantitative and qualitative analyses that sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge is an important activity for the long term sustainability of PAAET. Knowledge is a very important asset which needs to be shared effectively in a very competitive world for both individual and organisational performance. Senior academic deans and academic staff are fully aware of knowledge sharing benefits, needs and its competitive advantage, but there is no formalised strategy that helps staff take advantage of this process of knowledge sharing. In addition, the attitudes to knowledge sharing are coloured by the individuals' background, their own personal interests and the complexity of an unusual culture that is influenced by tribal, religious, gender and governmental law issues amongst many others. It is also important to realise that such attitudes are very much related to the size of colleges they are working for and the academic disciplines that they belong to.

It was clearly indentified from both quantitative and qualitative analysis that there were major differences among the five colleges of PAAET in their understanding of (tacit and explicit) knowledge and their knowledge-sharing practices and processes. Their differences are discussed and are classified in terms of their disciplines (as they had different practices), sizes of colleges and nationalities, as shown in Table 7.1

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5
Discipline	Art Based	Art Based	Science Based	Science Based	Science Based
Size	Large	Large	Large	Small	Small
Nationality	High number of Kuwaitis	High number of Kuwaitis	High number of Kuwaitis	High number of Kuwaitis	High number of non-Kuwaitis

Table 7.1: College description

It was revealed that each college had its own organisational culture that influenced the practices and processes of academics in sharing their knowledge. Higher education institutions are usually complex environments as they have multidisciplinary subjects, different academic research, and staff from different national backgrounds. Therefore,

discussing knowledge-sharing perceptions, awareness, needs, activities and practices in each college in PAAET was necessary in order to give a deep insight into the major concerns that influence knowledge sharing there. Both, the qualitative and quantitative analyses demonstrated the importance, understanding and awareness of knowledge sharing within all colleges. The quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed the existence of a set of factors that are most likely to influence the knowledge sharing process, practices and activities in PAAET's colleges. These factors are discussed below

7.2.1 Academic Needs

When considering the perceptions of academics regarding knowledge sharing from the point of view of both the quantitative data and from focus group discussions, there was an apparent need for knowledge sharing in order to develop teaching, research and technical skills by learning from each other and sharing experiences in their field of practice or research, particularly in the area of curriculum development. In addition, there is a need to learn from previous mistakes and to make sure that there are no outdated practices in teaching. These views tended to reflect the participants' knowledge of the rapid changes that had occurred in their field of practice as the majority were from colleges with a scientific academic background and from different cultural backgrounds (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti). On the other hand, academics from art-based backgrounds (colleges 1 and 2) stressed the need for sharing knowledge to update their current teaching practices. These views came mainly from Kuwaiti academics. However, the non-Kuwaiti academics revealed, in the qualitative analysis, more awareness of the need to share other experiences and knowledge in terms of research collaboration and technical skills. This suggests that non-Kuwaiti academics, mainly those who have worked in other academic institutions, had previous experiences in terms of developing their research skills and expertise in order to remain competitive and to enjoy a better job prospects. The main findings in both the quantitative and qualitative results showed that the main drivers for the academic need to share knowledge are to improve both individual and organisational performance that will lead to saving time and gaining a competitive advantage.

Saving Time

The majority of academics from the focus groups' analysis (colleges 1 and 3) stressed that sharing different academic experiences and backgrounds would help in developing better curricula with fewer mistakes, in less time and with greater satisfaction for both students and the college. Kidwell *et al.*, (2000, p. 31) argued that if higher education used knowledge management techniques and technologies effectively, this could lead to a reduced product development cycle time in developing the curriculum and research by learning from good practices that is codified and stored in the databases. Furthermore, findings from Dyson's research (2004) into higher education showed that lack of time presented difficulties in terms of sharing knowledge and that staff faced this problem at all levels of the organisational hierarchy since they were under time constraints to do their own work. Similar concerns regarding lack of time were also stressed by one of the deans (college 4) due to the management commitments and teaching load that made it difficult for him to have the time to share knowledge.

However, many academics from the focus groups, especially those from colleges with a scientific background (colleges 3 and 4), had other concerns about sharing knowledge rather than lack of time. Their concerns were mainly about how to locate both tacit and explicit knowledge from different departments, colleges and library databases for their research and teaching as this could take some time. Therefore, they thought that sharing knowledge with academics through seminars, training and social communication, or even by using technological tools, could help them to save time and would also make it easier for them to locate other experienced academics. It is therefore of crucial importance to look at the trade-offs between developing knowledge-sharing practices in the short term, which may consume more time, and the long-term benefits that will lead eventually to time savings. This is a concern for PAAET and it may be a driver to force the authorities there to consider such benefits in order to develop their mission by implementing knowledge-sharing initiatives in their institution.

Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage as part of knowledge sharing benefits was an issue that emerged strongly in the literature and in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The literature suggests that organisations can gain a competitive advantage by managing the knowledge that exists within these organisations (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Chow *et al.*, 2000; Drucker, 2001). In higher education institutions, where the creation and dissemination of knowledge is central, as Maponya (2005) expressed, then there is great advantage to be gained from developing an effective culture of knowledge sharing that will lead to the development of highly skilled graduates who are needed in the market place.

The quantitative analysis revealed that the majority of academics thought that sharing knowledge could help PAAET to stay competitive alongside other higher education institutions in Kuwait. The focus group discussions also revealed that there is competition between different higher education institutions to attract students and deliver better outcomes. Competitive advantage will lead to better productivity, as the focus group discussions revealed, since sharing different experiences can develop better performance and competency in standards of teaching and research for individuals and at an institutional level. In fact the need for a clear strategy by PAAET was highlighted by the many academics in the focus groups. It was also revealed in one of the interviews with the deans (college 3) that PAAET needs to use its knowledge effectively to support its mission and to remain competitive because of the pressure from new private universities being established in Kuwait.

However, interviews with senior managers revealed that they did not consider knowledge management or knowledge sharing initiatives in their strategies or policies although one of their written aims is to restructure continuously their institute to develop the quality of their education and technologies in order to stay ahead in terms of delivering qualified, skilled labour for the Kuwaiti market (PAAET, 2005) to stay competitive in a changing world. It is paradoxical that an institution with high aspirations has not developed clear strategies regarding knowledge sharing. It is also ironic that such an institution, which is funded by a wealthy government, has not invested or even identified the resources needed (human resources, technological

infrastructure, capabilities and training investment). It is clear that academic staff are paying lip service to knowledge sharing as it can show that they want the support from the management to conduct such initiatives. It is also true that senior managers are not committed to a clear strategy about knowledge sharing as mentioned earlier. PAAET should be seriously concerned about the situation and a clear institution-wide strategy needs to be developed in order to make a step-by-step change in managing and sharing a very important asset (i.e. knowledge).

It is clear that attitudes to knowledge sharing understanding, awareness and needs is a facilitating factor within PAAET. However, the current management strategy regarding knowledge sharing can be seen as an impeding factor; this is discussed under organisational factors later on in this chapter. It is also worth noting at this stage that issues such as the preferred method of communication that has emerged from the both quantitative and qualitative analyses can influence the attitudes to knowledge sharing. The preferred method of communication is discussed under the national culture factors as it is very much influenced by the cultural background of academic staff.

7.2.2 Language

The literature review identified that language can be a barrier in sharing knowledge as language problems arise in most international enterprises with different locations in different countries (Ford and Chan, 2003) and with differences in national culture or ethnic backgrounds (Reige, 2005, p.24). Surprisingly, competence in the English language was an issue in the art-based colleges (colleges 1 and 2). It was surprising to acknowledge this problem in a higher education institute as the academic staff hold high-level degree qualifications. It was indicated that most academic staff in the art-based colleges were graduates from Arab higher education institutes where their research was written only in the Arabic language. This study revealed that a lack of expertise in English can be a hindrance in presenting seminars and in joint research projects or even in understanding discussions or training. These results support previous studies in the literature as poor language skills have been shown to be a

knowledge block and have been cited as a problem in transferring knowledge. The solution to this could be through translation and education, as Davenport and Prusak noted (1998, p.97).

However, this was not perceived as an obstacle in science-based colleges (colleges 3, 4 and 5); neither in focus group discussions nor from the comments of senior managers or deans was language mentioned as a problem in their colleges. This indicates that most academics in those colleges were graduates from foreign countries (i.e. non-Arabic speaking countries). The results suggest that the educational background of academics influences the competence in English of those in Kuwaiti public higher education (PAAET); this could be a factor that impedes the sharing of knowledge. If PAAET is serious about developing a strategy for knowledge sharing, then the language issues have to be resolved by introducing policies concerning English language competencies. This is vital if PAAET is to compete with the new higher education institutions that are being established within the country.

7.3 Management Issues

This section discusses the management issues associated with knowledge sharing strategies that include the management support and leadership and the reward system and motivation. Knowledge sharing processes that were raised in the qualitative analysis as an impeding factor for the majority of colleges resulted from a lack of knowledge sharing strategies which was a responsibility of the top management. Knowledge sharing processes do not exist in isolation and they need to be part of an institution's wide coherent strategies.

7.3.1 Management Support and Leadership

It was clear from the qualitative analysis that management support was recognised in this study as an impeding factor for academics to share knowledge, with the exception of one small scientific college (college 5). In this particular small college, there was a good level of support and leadership from its management; the dean was seen as a role model for sharing knowledge as she has developed a policy of holding regular

brainstorming meetings and discussions in different subject areas in order to share experience and to develop better teaching, research and practice. In this study it was clearly identified that sending out messages to college employees and having regular meetings with heads of department to remind them about the importance of their knowledge mission was considered as a form of management support. However, academic staff did not feel supported as was noted by the academic staff discussions (e.g. in colleges 1, 2 and 3), and they felt that management support in promoting social activities was a more important factor in building a culture of trust among academics. Also, in an interview with one of the deans (in college 3), it was clearly identified that a lack of support and leadership from the top management represented a barrier to supporting a knowledge-sharing culture in this college.

Management support and leadership was acknowledged in the knowledge management literature as a critical step for developing knowledge initiatives (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Hasanali, 2002; Yeh, 2005; Kandadi, 2006). This study highlights the important role of senior deans and top management in developing a knowledge-sharing culture. However, awareness on the part of senior management in terms of valuing and promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives through their policies is more critical as noted by participants of this study. This indicates that creating a knowledge sharing culture would occur only if the senior managers set strategies and policies to develop such activities.

7.3.2 Motivation and Reward Systems

The results of this research confirm the views found in knowledge management literature and research (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Chow *et al.*, 2000; BSI, 2003; Riege, 2005; Chaudhry, 2005) that organisational reward systems motivate employees to share knowledge and promote a corporate knowledge culture. The interviews with senior managers and deans of PAAET confirm that providing financial incentives, personal computers and promotion motivate academic staff in their joint research activities. In this study, some academic staff in the focus group discussions from different colleges (1, 2 and 5) indicated that their involvement in knowledge sharing

activities was because of their natural human need and their personal satisfaction in doing their work.

The results revealed in the qualitative analysis also suggest that these individual behavioural motives can play a role in promoting knowledge-sharing activities and these findings are similar to those found in previous studies that confirm that individual behavioural motives, such as self-based considerations, moral obligations and community interest, are a major players in knowledge creation and sharing (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003, p. 69; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006, p.15). The above findings are in agreement with the findings of a recent study that was conducted in Bahrain in which it was suggested that any reward system should be customised to fit the different needs of employees in order to motivate knowledge-sharing behaviour (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007, p. 36). It is clear that there is an existing financial reward system within PAAET but this should be supplemented with a recognition reward system as this is highly motivational to Kuwaiti academics who are seeking more recognition than financial gains.

7.4 Technological Issues

The results of this study revealed several issues that could influence the processes and practice of knowledge-sharing activities in the higher education sector (PAAET).

7.4.1 IT Infrastructure

The knowledge management literature emphasised the importance of ICT and technology infrastructures as a facilitator to create and share information and knowledge (Al-Athari and Zairi, 2001; Connelly and Kelloway, 2003; Jashapara, 2004; Syed Ikhsan, 2005; Issa and Haddad, 2008). PAAET has an ICT infrastructure and facilities that are available for academic departments and staff. It was evident from the focus group discussions that academic staff were aware of the importance of technology as a tool in knowledge sharing but a major concern was raised that a large number of academic staff were not aware of the availability of technology in PAAET. The majority of academic staff prefer to use e-mails to communicate with others, as

shown in the quantitative and qualitative analyses (especially large colleges 1, 2, and 3) because of many reasons such as speed, ease of use and saving time. At the same time, there were some concerns about the technological infrastructure that is currently available in PAAET, as many academic staff in the focus group discussions called for more tools that could be developed to share different forms of knowledge, such as groupware and blogs.

These findings are in accordance with those of Mohamed *et al.* (2006, p. 104) who indicated that the proper use of IT can speed up knowledge-sharing capabilities in terms of both time and space. These results suggest that the authorities should be aware of the demands for appropriate technologies that can facilitate knowledge-sharing processes without investing in many sophisticated technologies that could waste money and effort when implementing initiatives to create a knowledge sharing culture. It is also clear that staff in PAAET are not aware of the institution's ICT strategy and infrastructure. In addition, the Educational Department that also includes the librarians working in the five colleges and Computer and Information Centre within PAAET has failed to promote the use of technology to academic staff. It is therefore essential that PAAET develops a communication plan that will inform staff about the capabilities and availability of the current technological infrastructure, together with the Intranet, Web 2.0 and video conference facilities.

7.4.2 Technical Problems

It is well established in the literature that user satisfaction is an important driver in the acceptance of technology, as well as in the intention and actual use of such technology (Roca *et al.*, 2006). There are several drivers in terms of user satisfaction and these play an important role in a user's decision to employ technology in a knowledge-sharing process. Technological problems constituted one issue, explored in the focus group discussions, that contributed to the frustration and annoyance of academic staff. These technological problems included malfunctioning, access problems which caused delays in communication, and lack of technical support.

Another concern was that academic staff did not have confidence in the technological services at PAAET, including accessing the Internet and sending e-mails. These technical problems have led to dissatisfaction among academic staff in using technology as a knowledge-sharing tool and this, in turn, has also caused academic staff to shift to other means of communication for these processes. Such technical problems have had an effect on preferences regarding communication media for many academic staff, as many find other forms of communication, such as communicating with other academics face-to-face, more convenient than contacting each other via the Internet. This is a concern for the information and computer centre at PAAET which must solve this problem, as it has caused issues of credibility with regard to electronic usage. This issue is also a concern in terms of how to gain the trust of users regarding the use of technology, as many academics tended not to rely on the technology to share knowledge although they preferred to use it; they noted, however, that they were not keen to use such technology during periods of technological problems.

7.4. 3 IT Skills

Information technology has a relative short life due to changes in users' needs and developments in technology; this requires an organisation to adapt new technologies. Implementing technologies by investing in hardware and software is not enough without appropriate investment in promoting staff skills and competence in coping with technological change. There are several approaches with regards to promoting IT skills and competence that an organisation can adopt; one of these that is well established is through training programmes. The results identified in general that there is a problem with the IT skills of academic staff.

The results from the qualitative analysis indicate that there are two main reasons for this lack of IT skills and competence. The first is that there is a lack of effective IT training to develop the IT competence of academic staff while the second reason seems to be a problem in Kuwaiti society as technology is not inherent within it. This is reflected in Kuwaiti public organisations as some of the academic staff in the focus group discussions (college 3) stressed that the lack of a technological culture could be a reason for the lack of IT skills.

It can be argued, however, that the lack of IT competence among academic staff is not due to just one factor; several factors have combined to contribute to this shortfall. These factors may include the lack of IT training strategies to promote IT competence among academic staff, including the right training not being offered at the right time. The second factor is the lack of a technological culture where academic staff use technology in their daily activities as a habit; this technological culture needs time to be established. Previous studies in the Middle East stressed that "each organisation has its unique culture, which develops over time to reflect the organisation's identity" (Al-Alwai *et al.*, 2007, p. 38). This is well recognised at PAAET as it has its own culture that includes its own management style, leadership, structure, size, processes and people. This could be a concern for PAAET's authorities, however, when they do not have a culture that will encourage the academic community to adapt to a new technological environment.

7.5 Kuwaiti National Cultural Issues

This section discusses the Kuwaiti national culture factors that emerged to be influencing both positively (facilitating) and negatively (impeding) the practice of knowledge sharing practices in PAAET. This section includes reputation, gender, tribal, religious, face-to-face communication. It is important to highlight the importance of these issues within a Middle Eastern context as knowledge sharing is coloured by religious beliefs, individualistic values, and tribal traditions which are not considered as important within a western setting. Knowledge sharing in the Middle East (Kuwait) is very much influenced by the teachings of the Quran and the deep rooted tribal traditions that impede knowledge development and discourage the questioning of accepted norms and values. This is mainly caused by the interpretation of some of these teachings which in many instances lead to misconceptions.

7.5.1 Reputation

The literature revealed that knowledge sharing can lead to higher reputations for personnel (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Hall, 2001b). This might concern PAAET's

authorities as they could present higher reputation as a motivator rather than a barrier for sharing knowledge, as was found in some colleges in this study. In PAAET, academic position and reputation represent a concern for some academics, as these are a facet of social standing that attracts individual academic staff to achieve status. The opinions and attitudes of Kuwaiti society and of authority show great respect to those holding high academic positions; such people are often invited to major social events. They may also be consulted about social problems and be asked to take part in other activities.

The results also revealed that cultural embarrassment in Kuwaiti society can hinder academics with high reputations and knowledge from approaching other academics to ask them for information or to question them about their experiences in a precise subject field, especially if they have had more than 16 years of experience. This attitude was demonstrated by Kuwaiti academics in the quantitative analysis indicating that they enjoyed a high reputation and status in their colleges and did not want to lose that power. The Kuwaiti focus group discussions explored this issue in depth, especially in the large colleges (1 and 3), as their staff are often individuals whose main target is to achieve social status and reputation through their academic position. Some tried to keep knowledge to themselves only in order to maintain this status and reputation. The opinions and attitudes above were not shared by non-Kuwaiti nationals (college 5) who explained that their views on social and academic status were different. This is because the nature of their activities and the modes of delivering their courses have helped to create a sense of understanding and respect for each other, regardless of their positions. Those findings are coherent in studies that are related to Kuwaiti employees in Kuwaiti organisations as they view knowledge as something private that guarantees the protection of their organisational positions (Al-Athari and Zairi, 2001). The results also suggest that there were certain cultural influences on Kuwaiti academics who were seeking to maintain their high status and reputation in front of other academics; this was a hindrance in terms of sharing their knowledge with others. This issue is a cause of concern for senior management in a society like Kuwait, if academics, who are known as knowledgeable in every aspect in their field, can find it difficult to show possible weaknesses to others, especially if these academics are long-serving and changing

their views is difficult. Thus, considering the entire environment and examining ways of changing negative attitudes in future strategies are necessities.

7.5.2 Gender Issues and Interactions

It was also revealed from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses that college 5, which had a majority of female academics, had more face-to-face communication and trust in each other in their college in terms of sharing their experiences and information. These findings align with those reported by Cheng *et al.*, (2008) who found that communication and participation can develop trust-based relationships that, in turn, facilitate knowledge sharing. Furthermore, Gundry (2000) also found a positive relationship between trust and communication.

However, the issue of face-to-face communication and trust also raised a question with regard to college 5. Did the greater degree of trust and communication exist because almost all the academic staff in college 5 were females? It may be because, in that college, the mixture of both face-to-face communication and female academics helped in developing interpersonal trust as female academics trusted the academic knowledge of other females, as shown in the quantitative findings. Similar results were found by Hunter (1998, p.19), who examined women's ways of sharing their ideas and knowledge at professional conferences. Hunter noted that women in their professional lives played a role in "nurturing the confidence of their female colleagues". She also found that "women in higher education administration are active as idea producers and are not passive in contributing their ideas". This indicates that this is not just the case at PAAET; it could be the same elsewhere.

In this study, female academics also showed that they could contribute positively to the practice of knowledge sharing in their colleges. Regarding the issue of females' activities in knowledge-sharing practices, it was also found from the qualitative data from colleges 4 and 5, that Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti female academics conducted the highest number of formal activities of knowledge sharing. This raised another issue, especially in a Kuwaiti institute. Why were women more active than men in formulating formal, knowledge-sharing activities in PAAET's colleges? This was

explained by the fact that, in a society like Kuwait, women need to send out a message that they are well qualified, which was shown in an interview with one of the senior deans (interviewee 8), as many Kuwaiti male academics still do not trust women's knowledge. This was revealed in both questionnaires in college 3 which recorded that 46% of Kuwaiti male participants did not trust women in terms of knowledge sharing. Also, the focus group discussions showed that some Kuwaiti male academics had no trust in the knowledge of female academics. This was explained as being a result of some academics not having the opportunity to interact with their female counterparts in their departments or in their research interest; they might even not have had the experience of meeting specialist female academics in their own subject or field.

On the other hand, many Kuwaiti male academics in college 3 and in college 2 preferred not to interact with female academics even though it was for the benefit of the development of their work to share tacit knowledge. This was because they had certain cultural or religious reservations concerning their interactions with the opposite sex. However, senior academics at PAAET did not think that gender was an issue in the practice of knowledge sharing because PAAET was an academic institute. This raises concerns for senior academics. They must think of solutions to this issue if they want to implement knowledge-sharing strategies in PAAET as the lack of awareness of the academic situation can hinder the creation of effective policies or regulations that will affect their missions.

This study suggests that the traditional culture of Kuwait still has a major influence on the social activities of females and males in terms of interactions with the opposite sex with regard to knowledge-sharing practices. Nevertheless, in a Kuwaiti context, the findings of this research show that Kuwaiti female academics felt that informal social interaction and direct face-to-face communication could make their behaviour appear unacceptable in terms of their culture. Such interactions were not encouraged but, because these respondents came from colleges 1 and 2, they were more likely to be from a tribal background. Also, most Kuwaiti female academics from most colleges preferred not to use online video link discussions for the reasons mentioned previously. However, this is not necessarily a major stumbling block to the practices

of sharing knowledge with other academics as all individuals can share information through their own communication channels and through relations with people they know in their departments or colleges. This was observed from the female academics in their focus group discussions since it was felt that the female academics within the departments and other departments in the same colleges had some social communication with each other. This suggests that female activities in knowledge sharing were more positive than those of male academics.

7.5.3 Tribal vs Alhadar Group Interactions

This issue elicited many different views from the Kuwaiti academic staff, since this factor is causing concern regarding the interactions between academic communities in terms of sharing knowledge. Many respondents from the Alhadar groups in colleges 3 and 4 did not think that tribes had an influence on knowledge sharing. However, others stated that this issue did affect the practice of knowledge sharing, especially in colleges 1 and 2. These results suggest that many participants from art-based colleges had tribal roots; others indicated that communication and interaction with Alhadar in terms of sharing knowledge was much easier among the tribal groups. This explains why participants in the focus group discussions, especially non-Kuwaiti academics, identified the need to have strong relationships to survive in PAAET; they said they did not want to feel isolated in their departments and in their college environment to achieve their tasks.

In the interviews with senior managers, they stated that the activities of tribes had little effect on knowledge-sharing practices in PAAET. However, in the discussions with academics, it was indicated that tribal activities could have a significant effect, with tribal members hiding knowledge or information related to seminars or research ideas from others who were not from their groups. This indicates a gap in understanding between top management and academic staff as the academics were more aware of the current situation regarding the implications of sharing knowledge in their colleges. It might also be the case that senior management did not think that the issue of tribes could affect the academic environment as they expected academics to distribute and create knowledge, as one of the senior managers mentioned.

The results from the quantitative analysis indicated that Kuwaiti academic staff from the same tribe trusted each other; this was also revealed in the focus group discussions. This suggests that the favouritism in their attitudes towards communication and interaction with each other make sharing of knowledge easy within their groups. Many participants from different colleges in the focus groups, together with one of the interviewees, noted that Bedouins consider each other to be trustworthy but were suspicious of outsiders as a source of information. Academic staff from the same tribe showed unconditional trust in each other as shown from the qualitative analysis. This is mainly due to the tribal cultural values mentioned in Chapter Three.

These views indicate an understanding that the trust among in-groups of different sub-cultures in PAAET's colleges facilitates knowledge sharing among academics. Several issues were also raised in this research where the subgroups placed their group interest before the interest of individuals or the organisation. The implication of in-groups and out-groups were mentioned by Ardruchvili *et al.*, (2006, p.97) who argued that: "the implication of the in-group versus out-group distinction is that collectivists are more likely to share what they know with their in-group members, thus attempting to serve the interest of the group instead of pursuing mere self-interest." Furthermore, in Dedousis' study (2004, p. 30) on the culture of King Fahad University in Saudi Arabia, he found that the university's culture reflected the broader societal values of Saudi Arabia that are largely those of the Arabic culture. This previous finding was similar to what was found in PAAET, as its culture was highly reflected by the sub-culture of Kuwaiti nationals.

No relevant literature has discussed the influences of different tribes of the same national culture on the practice of knowledge sharing in higher education. In general, the activities of tribes can have a positive effect on the sharing of knowledge within the same tribe or group, especially if these are in large numbers in colleges. However, this can be negative for members of an out-group from the same culture or from another culture if these happen to be in a minority. This issue raises many concerns as the influence of tribes could affect knowledge-sharing practices in PAAET's colleges.

Thus, the main concern and challenge for PAAET is to ensure that collectivism among the sub-cultural groups of different tribes does not result in conflicts of interest in terms of the activities and responsibilities of academic staff in their colleges. Currently, interactions within these in-groups are based on interpersonal trust and loyalty. However, the interactions of out-groups are limited and are based on conditions that could be a major issue that would have an impeding factor that influence on the processes or activities of knowledge sharing communications and interactions. Therefore, PAAET needs to be aware of this situation and should introduce short and long-term strategies to overcome such issues.

7.5.4 Religious and Sectarian Groups

No relevant literature could be found concerning the practices of different religious or sectarian groups that could influence knowledge sharing or such activities. In this study there was general agreement, in terms of both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, that religion supported the distribution and sharing of knowledge. Female academics in all colleges were more likely than their male counterparts to believe that their religion supported their knowledge sharing practices; this was demonstrated as the results from the quantitative analysis showed statistically significant differences between the responses of males and females in terms of the influence of religion on knowledge sharing. This may indicate that women are more active in processes and practices that are related to sharing knowledge; this issue is discussed in the section below on gender issues. Furthermore, the focus group discussions revealed that female academics and senior librarians placed more emphasis on helping others, a basic notion in their religion; this was without being fanatical about different religions or different sects as some of the Kuwaiti male academic staff had experienced. This indicates the ease with which female academics shared their knowledge.

In the focus group discussions (in colleges 1 and 2), some Kuwaiti male academics mentioned that other sectarian religious groups did not want to participate with members of other sects, even though sharing their experience or information was for the benefit of their department or college. However, the participants from scientific colleges (colleges 3, 4 and 5) did not mention this issue (actually, college 3 noted that

this had a very limited effect). This was due to the background and nature of the education of the majority of participants as they were mostly US or European graduates who were less fanatical in their behaviour. Interviews with senior managers and also with the deans did not reveal that the issue of sectarianism might have an influence on the practice of sharing knowledge in PAAET's colleges. These respondents instead believed that sharing knowledge was an unconditional religious requirement. The results here suggest that the educational background or history of academics influence their opinions regarding their religious views and their impact in PAAET.

There were indications of some misconceptions concerning religious and cultural issues in terms of the interactions between male and female academics in some colleges which can present as an impending factor to sharing knowledge activities. The findings from the Kuwaiti focus group analysis from colleges 1 and 3 showed that cultural background and family education influences attitudes regarding sharing information or interacting with members of the opposite sex. Furthermore, different interpretations of their own religion and their cultural backgrounds can lead to the belief that interaction with the opposite sex is prohibited.

The result indicates that some religious fundamentalists can influence negatively the process of communication and interaction between genders in terms of activities that are related to knowledge sharing in their colleges. The findings of this study confirm and are aligned with those discussed by Sidani (2005) who expressed the view that the cultural impact of religious understanding had led to justifying some restrictions on the involvement of Muslim women in the workplace and to imposing restrictions of interactions between the sexes by some strict scholars in Saudi Arabia. This issue is a long-standing matter in many parts of the Islamic world. Therefore, there is a need for further studies to look into the roots of this cultural influence and religious confusion to clarify Islamic views on gender interactions.

7.5.5 Face-To-Face Social Interaction and Communications

Previous researchers reported the effective and rich medium of face-to-face interaction and its importance in knowledge sharing initiatives (Swan *et al.*, 1999). The majority of Kuwaiti male academics stressed the importance of and preference for face-to-face interaction. (There was a statistically significant difference in terms of this factor between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti responses in different colleges of PAAET.) The discussion among Kuwaiti academics in the focus groups showed that there was a feeling of ease in relationships among Kuwaiti academic friends and relatives. This was because it is part of the Kuwaiti culture not to refuse the face to face demands of others as this would lead to embarrassment for them. Research in the field of management development in the Arabian Gulf States showed that those Arabs preferred to talk face to face rather than to read or write as that reflects their culture (Wilkins, 2001).

This indicates that the social contexts of Kuwaiti society play a major role in the choice of a communication medium. Non-Kuwaiti male academics realised that social interactions and relations are important to Kuwaiti academics in their colleges in order to gain the trust of others. These findings can be explained by the collectivistic behaviour within Kuwaiti society, where strong relationships are important in terms of interactions with others. These results indicated that, collectively, Kuwaiti society helps in terms of encouraging informal social interaction, such as face-to-face communication between male academics, which contributes positively to the success of sharing tacit knowledge in colleges.

These results were in line with Rehman's (2005, p.223) research into private companies in Kuwait where he found that the socio-cultural context of social and environmental values play an important role in the choice of communication media. This suggests that the preference of Kuwaiti male academics, which was affected by their social culture, can have a positive (facilitating) effect on knowledge sharing processes and activities.

7.6 Government Issues

It is clear that the State has an influence on Kuwaiti public higher education institutions (Kuwait University and PAAET) as the majority of respondents in the quantitative analysis revealed which presents an impending factor to knowledge sharing social interactions. The strict Muslim groups in parliament stressed the low level of segregation within these institutes, as mentioned in previous chapters (Law number 24, 1996). Senior managers in the interviews also stated that the separation of the genders is a state regulation and asserted that they did not think that this could be a major barrier to interaction as some staff would not interact with members of the opposite sex because of social reasons. Furthermore, one Kuwaiti male academic from a large art-based college (college 2) in a focus group discussion believed that this was a good choice as this confirmed Kuwaiti tradition, culture and religious beliefs. Other non-Kuwaiti male academics in a large, art-based college (college 1) had concerns that segregation could slow the process of sharing knowledge with others, as did the different locations of people in the same department.

These findings indicate that there are certain issues that concern senior managers in these large colleges in terms of finding alternatives to gender segregation when implementing knowledge sharing initiatives, especially since there are difficulties in terms of movement to other buildings that are located in different areas. The findings regarding segregation issues also indicate that the different locations of colleges and departments may be of similar concern to colleges regardless of their size, and that this may influence knowledge sharing practices and processes in PAAET. This physical barrier could be a concern for the top management if they wanted to find a way to resolve the communication problems in PAAET. This concern was also voiced in one of the studies conducted in higher education institutions in Australia where Dayson (2004) found that the separate offices of academics and the design of buildings were two of the main barriers hindering knowledge sharing in higher education. Therefore, the authorities at PAAET will face some problems in this issue in terms of finding appropriate techniques or technologies that are suitable to the preferences and skills of academics as the factor of segregation cannot be overcome and rather it has to find alternative solutions that can go around it.

7.7 Cross-Cultural Issues (Non-Kuwaiti)

Usually nationality can predict cross-cultural differences, as Ford and Chan (2003, p. 22) noted. However, they found in their study that there were not many differences in the knowledge flow between Japanese and Americans as was expected. In this study, some differences were found between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti academics as, in general, the Kuwaiti academics presented different collectivist behaviour within the different communities (Twaijri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996) while the non-Kuwaiti academics showed individual interest behaviour in PAAET's colleges, as illustrated in the qualitative and quantitative analyses. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that non-Kuwaiti academics have both a facilitating and impeding factors that influence knowledge sharing.

On the positive side, they have a high level of trust in others and a willingness to share knowledge, which helps in enhancing the performance and level of knowledge in their colleges. This was revealed by senior managers who employed the non-Kuwaiti academics and in small scientific colleges (i.e. colleges 4 and 5) in their focus group discussions. This showed that those employed in small colleges tended to study rare scientific subjects and were thus needed for those colleges. They could not easily be replaced which made them feel more secure; as a result, they worked freely with others without the fear that was revealed by participants from colleges 4 and 5.

The negative side, which was revealed in the quantitative analysis, was that they were more reluctant than Kuwaitis to solve work-related problems collectively as they preferred to solve problems by themselves. It was also revealed from the quantitative analysis that non-Kuwaiti academics who had fewer than 5 years of experience in their colleges were more reluctant to resolve their problems with other, indicating that the less they knew about the culture of their college, the more they felt that they might lose their power. The qualitative analysis from the focus group discussions confirmed the quantitative analysis confirmed that the job security was the reason and showed that such worries came from the Kuwaiti male academics in large colleges where the experience of those in rare disciplines was not required (i.e. in colleges 1, 2 and 3). Many Kuwaiti male academic staff discussed this issue in relation to working with non-Kuwaiti academic staff, especially with those from an Arabic background. These

results were similar to Al-Faleh's research (1987, p. 24) in Jordan which reported that: "Arabs are individualistic as exemplified by their preference for working alone rather in a team". Thus, it can be understood why the academics from an Arabic background showed a preference for solving problems.

Similar problems have been identified in international joint-venture construction projects where an incompatibility between the foreign and local cultures can be a major barrier to effective knowledge sharing (Dulaimi, 2007, p. 550). Other research, carried out by Yao *et al.*, (2007, p. 65), into the Asian public administration sector also found that "employees might be afraid of losing power and becoming less competitive and this might hamper knowledge sharing". The literature also identified that the fear of sharing knowledge among employees reduces job security because of uncertainty concerning the sharing objectives or the intentions of senior management, as Lelic (2001) and Reige (2005) discussed. This indicates that having less secured people can hinder power sharing. The reduction of job security might be a concern for the top management in finding the alternative solutions when starting to produce policies for sharing knowledge within colleges at PAAET.

Securing jobs in higher education in Kuwait is attractive for non-Kuwaitis due to the high salaries and generous benefits. The importance of job security for non-Kuwaitis in disciplines that were not rare led them to do their best to work more closely with decision makers in order to get their contract renewed; this was shown in the qualitative analysis. There is still no relevant literature that seeks to solve this problem in other organisations while recognising that this problem might be a concern for senior managers regarding whether the problem of job security came from the contract itself or from job descriptions. It may be that the problem stems from both as the temporary contract of non-Kuwaiti academics could lead, in some cases, to them withholding their knowledge from others. This might be in order to stay competitive if the job description does not state there is a requirement to share their experience with other academics or to cooperate in developing the knowledge of their departments.

Another issue might also be raised concerning this matter: is it ethical that academics with temporary contracts hold back their knowledge from others just to stay in power

and remain secure? These questions are a concern for many authorities when dealing with employees on temporary contracts as such contracts could consider the knowledge-sharing etiquette of potential academics. Other questions might also be raised on the subject of temporary contracts, such as whether changing the contract status would lead to a change in behaviour. These questions will be on-going at PAAET until a deep investigation is carried out into this issue in order to solve it.

7.8 Issues Concerning Discipline Culture

The current situation regarding knowledge sharing revealed different perceptions, processes and existing activities in different academic disciplines. As from an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data, colleges with scientific backgrounds, such as colleges 3, 4 and 5, showed more positive attitudes than colleges 1 and 2; this included a better awareness of the importance of both tacit and explicit knowledge in their colleges. This was because the nature of their disciplines made them value more and understand how other technical academic experiences and practices could help in developing their daily tasks in their colleges, whether it was in scientific projects or in team work. Similar findings, with research into higher education institutions in South Africa, were discovered by Ngulube (2005, p.56) who recommended that the teamwork within academic staff community can be one of the most successful elements in the knowledge-sharing processes of a university. Thakur and Thakur (2006) also argue that discussions, seminars and talks could develop a knowledge-sharing culture in educational institutions. This indicates that those activities that were presented in scientific college (college 5) can provide a culture of knowledge sharing. Those findings are also in line with Rowley's (2000) thoughts about scientific environments having a tradition of knowledge-sharing activities. This indicates that academics from scientific backgrounds value collective knowledge more than those from other disciplines because of the nature of their activities.

On the other hand, art-based colleges (1 and 2) had similar backgrounds in terms of disciplines. As noted from the focus group analysis, they did not have common or formal activities in their departments that could motivate them to share their knowledge, as was the case with scientific research, teamwork and co-teaching in

college 5 (scientific college). However, there were some personal efforts to share their knowledge and many respondents from colleges 1 and 2 stressed the need to develop such activities. In the era of the knowledge economy it is necessary to have a culture that value and recognises academic knowledge. The activities concerning sharing knowledge in PAAET's colleges should be a concern for senior management, although the interviews with senior managers showed that they had not considered such activities.

Therefore, forming a strategy that could help in facilitating an environment in which both tacit and explicit knowledge could be shared among academics and senior faculties would be helpful. After collecting the data in 2007, a positive step was taken in the summer of 2008 by PAAET's authorities who began to value the knowledge of academics in different disciplines (PAAET 2009). This was achieved by developing an expert project database to codify academic experience and knowledge in different subject areas, thus helping the authorities and other academics in fulfilling their academic mission. The project also aimed to select experienced academics to represent PAAET in any cooperative studies with other government institutions and with the private sector. This now allows them to gain from different experiences in research, as well as helping in developing both their institute and national projects that will serve Kuwait.

7.9 Size of College

Small colleges, such as college 4 with 73 academics and college 5 with 20 academics, did not reveal that the size of their college affected their knowledge-sharing practices and processes as they felt that closely located offices facilitated communication and interaction; this represents a facilitating factor in terms of knowledge sharing in PAAET's colleges. The qualitative findings from the interviewees (colleges 4 and 5) indicated that the size of their college led to a 'family-type' atmosphere of trust (interviews 8, 9).

On the other hand, It was revealed from the findings that the different locations of colleges had an effect on their knowledge-sharing practices. Colleges 1, 2 and 3 were

large colleges as there were more than 250 academics in each and they felt that the different locations of their departments (each department is divided into two buildings: one for female and one for male colleges) and other departments had become a barrier to them because of their distance from each other. They felt that they could not complain about this because of the law that demands segregation between male and female students; this leads the academic staff from one department to be separated from others. It was also difficult to reach others in most cases and there was no recognised process or technologies to link them together in order to reduce this problem.

According to Riege (2005, p.29), in "large companies with entities in distant geographic locations, there are real knowledge sharing obstacles because basic communication becomes more difficult and the creation of trust-based relationships is harder without face-to-face contact". Studies carried out in large organisations with over than 250 employees show that they have managed to use technological solutions and more sophisticated methods such as people-oriented workshops, training, discussion forums and mentoring to help in facilitating the sharing of knowledge (Beijerse, 2000; McAdam and Reid, 2001). Furthermore, having common shared spaces, such as communal dining halls, discussion rooms, informal meeting tables and internet cafes, can contribute a great deal to the development of a knowledge culture where there is a high probability of interaction taking place between employees in various departments. Oliver and Kandadi (2006) found this in their research into widely distributed organisations. Such common spaces could help PAAET's colleges to increase their interactions within departments and between different departments, if the common spaces were in each college building for both males and females.

7.10 Main Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

Figure 7.2 presents a complete picture of the issues that were discussed previously in this chapter are categorised under the organisational, individual, national and cross-cultural issues: (blue represents facilitating factors and red represents impeding factors). The issues that have been covered in this research revealed as an influencing factors on the practices and process of knowledge sharing. From the twenty factors

that were explored, eight factors were presented as facilitating. These are: academic awareness, needs, females' activities, face-to-face social interactions of males, the interactions of in-groups, IT infrastructure, scientific discipline and small-sized colleges. The impeding factors totalled twelve, and: lack of language competence, concerns about job security, sub-cultural out-group interactions, male attitudes, lack of management support, lack of full reward systems, technological problems, weak IT skills, art-based disciplines, the large size of some colleges, and segregation policies.

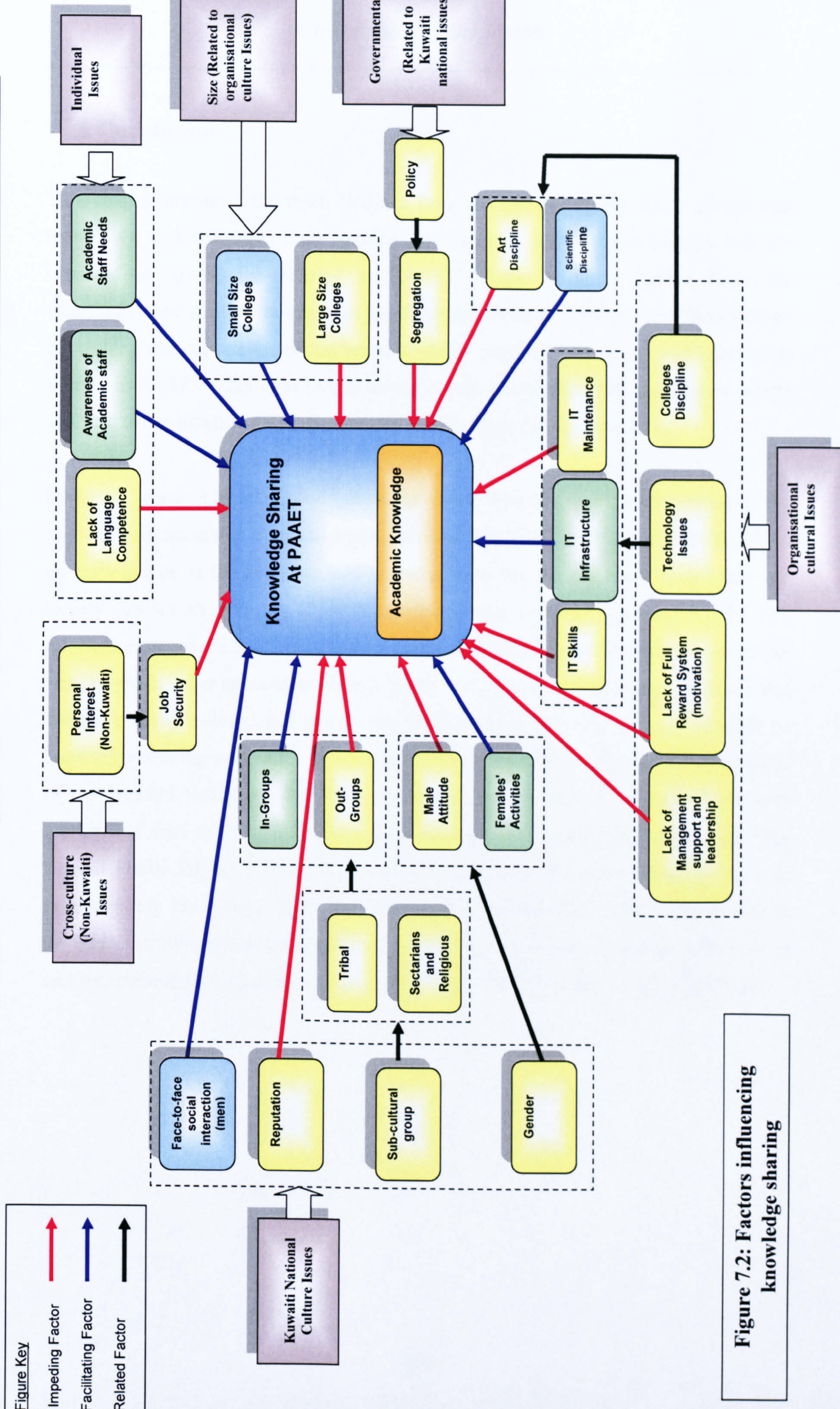


Figure 7.2: Factors influencing knowledge sharing

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the main findings from the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, and considers their implications in terms of the main players that are involved in knowledge sharing at PAAET. From evidence gained from the quantitative and qualitative analyses and from the literature survey, clear facts emerge concerning the importance of the benefits of and need for knowledge and knowledge sharing in PAAET's colleges as this would improve academic performance, save time and lead to the institute gaining competitive advantage for the long term.

However, in terms of taking full advantage of the tacit and explicit knowledge of the academic communities in public higher education in Kuwait (PAAET), this is still in its early stages as the activities and processes that are used to share knowledge are largely present as a result of personal efforts and informal guidance in the five different colleges. Therefore, the authorities need to pay attention to the needs that were raised in order to accomplish their goals and objectives. It can be concluded that there are many cultural influences that both impede and facilitate the practice of knowledge sharing in PAAET (a total of twenty different factors), such as dimensions of the Kuwaiti national sub-culture, the cross cultures and the organisation's own culture and size; this includes leadership, management support and technology. The Kuwait Public Higher Education Institute (PAAET) should move seriously towards implementing knowledge-sharing initiatives to cope with the knowledge era and to develop institutional and governmental satisfaction. The main concerns, conclusions and recommendations for the authorities at PAAET are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main conclusions of the research in relation to the aims and objectives and the research questions. Recommendations are made concerning the development of an effective knowledge-sharing culture in the Kuwaiti public higher education institute (PAAET). Finally, suggestions for further research and the research's limitations are presented.

The research focus was to explore the influences of culture on knowledge-sharing practices within a Kuwaiti higher education institution. The influences included the organisational and national (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) cultures in order to identify the main factors that both impeded and facilitated knowledge sharing. Exploring the current situation regarding the organisational culture concerning perceptions, processes, types of knowledge and technological infrastructure with PAAET's main actors (i.e. senior management, deans, academic staff and senior librarians) was vital in order to identify those factors that can influence knowledge sharing as this would then help in identifying problems that needed to be solved and facilitators that would need to be supported. This was aimed to help in developing an effective knowledge-sharing culture in PAAET that could lead the institution to achieve better performance and meet the expectations of the plans of the Kuwaiti government.

8.2 Objectives of the research

The following objectives of this research have all been addressed, and are as follows:

1. To identify the current organisational culture that relates to knowledge sharing within the Kuwaiti Higher Education institution (PAAET) by:

- i. Identifying the main actors (senior management, academic staff, senior librarians) in PAAET that are involved in knowledge sharing and examining their perceptions towards the sharing of knowledge;
 - ii. Identifying the type of knowledge (or the nature of the knowledge) that is shared, as well as the processes for knowledge sharing.
 - iii. Identifying the technological infrastructure for knowledge sharing.
2. To identify and assess the role of the values and norms of the national culture on knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti Higher Education.
3. To identify the main and most important factors that impede and facilitate knowledge sharing in Kuwaiti Higher Education.
4. To provide recommendations to the Kuwaiti Higher Education institution under investigation for promoting a more effective knowledge-sharing culture.

The first three objectives of the research were met and addressed through the primary data collection methods. The use of case study research strategy was useful in identifying the main stakeholders at PAAET and their perceptions in more depth in relation to knowledge sharing issues. Triangulation of the methods was carried out as the questionnaires addressed the perceptions and attitudes of academic staff regarding their understanding of knowledge sharing, the importance they accorded it, elements of national culture (including the Kuwaiti cultural elements of tribal, gender, religious and governmental issues), and the preferred methods of communication that might influence knowledge sharing. The qualitative methods of interviews and focus groups with all the main actors provided an in-depth coverage of issues related to respondents' understanding, types of knowledge, and processes of knowledge sharing, technological issues and aspects of national culture. The triangulation of methods that consulted the main actors helped in identifying twenty different factors that were categorized under four main headings: individual, organisational, national and cross cultural issues, as there were both facilitating and impeding factors to the practice and process of knowledge sharing. A number of similar issues highlighted in this research have been mentioned in the literature relating to knowledge sharing. Dealing with the

issues that were raised in this research is critical if knowledge-sharing initiatives are to be successfully implemented in Kuwaiti higher education institution.

8.3 Main Issues and Recommendations

The fourth objective was to provide recommendations to Kuwait higher education institutions for promoting a more effective knowledge-sharing culture. A number of important issues emerged from this research. Although the Kuwaiti higher education institution (PAAET) has started to take positive steps during the progress of this research in terms of valuing their academics' knowledge and developing a technological tool (a database) that codifies academic tacit knowledge in different disciplines, much more consideration is still needed if a knowledge-sharing culture is to be successfully implemented. Major issues were identified as factors that impeded knowledge sharing. These are presented below:

- Lack of management support concerning which strategies should be covered and implemented
- Lack of full motivation system on the part of recognition system.
- Lack of communication and interaction because of the size of some colleges and because of the segregation law;
- Lack of ICT promotion, maintenance and IT skills;
- Lack of language competence, especially related to the English language;
- Kuwaiti cultural issues that are related to a lack of out-group interaction. This is mainly related to trust within sub-cultural groups in terms of tribes and religious groups, traditional male attitudes concerning gender interactions, and issues to do with reputation.
- Cross-cultural preoccupations of non-Kuwaiti nationals that are mainly related to job security.

For the successful and effective implementation of a knowledge-sharing culture, senior management must have a major role in beginning to make strategic steps by identifying the long-term advantages of creating a knowledge culture with more emphasis on tacit knowledge sharing. This reflects Eastern thoughts about knowledge management approaches. On the other hand, the short-term advantage of Western

thought that emphasises explicit knowledge could also be considered; this strategy started to be implemented in 2008 at PAAET. However, when considering the long-term advantage of creating a culture of knowledge sharing in PAAET, not all issues regarding the Kuwaiti national culture or cross-cultural issues can be overcome easily. The only realistic approach for starting to create successful tacit and explicit academic knowledge-sharing initiatives is to set up balanced strategic planning involving people and a technological knowledge-sharing approach among the main stakeholders (senior management, deans, librarians and academic staff). It is also worth noting that the Kuwaiti national culture is distinctive and this should not be ignored in the implementation of a knowledge-sharing culture. The following recommendations address all the issues that have been identified in the section above.

8.3.1 Promoting awareness

Misunderstandings about sharing knowledge and subsequent fear concerning loss of power must be combated; some academic staff believed knowledge sharing undermined their position in their academic departments. It is therefore vital to promote an awareness of the importance and the potential advantages of knowledge-sharing practices to the academic community as both individual and organisational benefits could motivate academics to take further steps in creating voluntary knowledge-sharing processes. It was identified from the literature review that increasing awareness is an important initiative to achieve successful knowledge sharing in organisations (Munn, 2001; WMB, 2006; Dalkir, 2005; Maponya, 2005). The concept that knowledge sharing promotes the recognition of academic knowledge needs to be emphasised. This could be achieved by the top management organising seminars, training programmes or a “knowledge-sharing awareness week”; this would also motivate the academic community by knowing that their knowledge is valued by top management.

8.3.2 Formal Processes for Knowledge Sharing

The literature review identified different ways and processes for sharing knowledge effectively (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Stoddart, 2001; Shukla and Sinvassan, 2002; Groff and Thomas, 2003; Plessis, 2006). PAAET now needs to establish guidelines for

formal processes and strategies that will promote knowledge sharing in all five colleges; these formal processes could contribute to breaking down both physical and cultural barriers. Such processes might include setting up research groups, organising monthly seminars for academic staff, inviting external speakers, creating department committees, and sharing the delivery of modules. It is also recommended that a research group should be created which would hold regular meetings and seminars in each department to build up more interaction and trust with other academics not from the same group. This could be achieved by creating research groups in departments based on their own specialisations. Carrying out such processes as those mentioned above would help to establish knowledge-sharing processes and activities (Shim and Roth, 2008, p. 5).

8.3.3 Establishing a Full Reward System

Although PAAET has already introduced some reward initiatives, it still lacks a clear strategy and/or mechanism for rewarding knowledge sharing. The literature indicated that a reward system helps to motivate academic staff to share their knowledge (Chaudhary, 2005, p. 6). PAAET needs to establish a policy for creating a system to motivate staff to share their knowledge. One method of achieving this might be to use a system which could include both financial rewards and recognition; these could be awarded to academic staff who share their knowledge. Such rewards were identified as existing in some colleges but these need to be promoted in others. Rewards could be given for mentoring new academic staff or for organising seminars in different departments or within the whole institute. This would also help in developing and maintaining recognition and reputations among academic staff who are seeking to stay in the lead.

8.3.4 Job Description and Assessment

Top management needs to develop and evaluate job descriptions according to goals set for the whole institute. Knowledge-sharing processes and activities need to be considered as a part of the academic annual job assessment and description to examine how academic staff contribute to sharing their collective knowledge (both tacit and explicit) with others. This could be done through a quarterly evaluation of departments' activities. When first introducing such an evaluation, authorities might

encounter resistance but, in the long term, knowledge sharing activities would become the norm in departments and colleges. Changing attitudes is never easy, but with commitment and strong leadership, and the desire to gain long-term advantage, the academic community could then adapt to the new organisational culture that would become the norm.

8.3.5 Informal Social Interaction Strategy

The research identified a lack of social interactions among academic staff due to PAAET's culture. This lack of interaction has contributed to a lack of understanding among academic staff and this, in turn, has contributed to a lack of trust between in-groups and out-groups. PAAET's authorities need to establish strategies that will promote informal social interaction to reduce cultural and individual barriers; this will consequently promote knowledge sharing. Informal social interactions could help in building understanding and mutual respect among academic staff, thus promoting trust. Social interactions and creating a suitable workspace were identified in the literature as important factors that could promote trust in organisations as employees are more likely to share knowledge with people they can rely on (Anderson *et al.*, 2001; Connelly and Kelloway, 2003; Oliver and Kandadi, 2006). This might be achieved in the following ways:

Common Workspaces and Times for Lunch and Tea Breaks

It is important, wherever possible, to ensure that there are common spaces for academic staff to take lunch and tea breaks at the same time. This helps to increase the possibility of interaction taking place among academic staff from different colleges and departments, and in different buildings, thus including both male and female academics separately. This could be achieved by creating a free slot within the academic staff timetable and providing an appropriate environment for social interactions.

Creating an Appropriate Environment for Informal Social Interaction

Creating an appropriate environment for informal social interaction is an important factor in encouraging academic staff to participate in informal activities. This could increase the participation of male academics in such activities although there are some

cultural implications for Kuwaiti female academics participating in informal interactions. The environment should be designed in such a way that makes it more conducive to knowledge sharing. It should also take into account the interests and culture of academic staff. This issue needs to be addressed by designating rooms for each department for informal meetings and by allocating a designated building for social activities. One popular activity in Kuwaiti society is gathering for dinner for various events and celebrations. PAAET needs to adopt such cultural and social activities as part of its strategy to create an appropriate environment for informal social interactions.

Budget for Informal Social Interaction

PAAET's authorities, at both college and department levels, should maintain a budget to support informal interactions. This could include a budget for organising a social gathering for the families of all academic staff at the beginning and at the end of each semester, as well as for running leisure trips, sporting competitions, and welcoming parties for new recruits, especially new non-Kuwaiti staff.

8.3.6 Enhancing Technological Systems, Maintenance and Awareness

The current physical structure of PAAET does not help in promoting knowledge sharing as the buildings which house staff offices are scattered because of the segregation law; this has implications for knowledge-sharing processes. Separation between academics can be solved with the use of technology. Technology was identified in the literature as one of the main issues in facilitating knowledge sharing within scattered organisations (Mohamed *et al.*, 2006; Mohammed, 2008). Thus, an intranet, chat-rooms and groupware should be developed to break down physical barriers, especially in large colleges. This could reduce the lack of interactions among academic communities and their colleges, and among different colleges. However, issues related to the awareness of the academic community of the availability of such systems are important and training should be provided on the available systems by the library department and information and computer centre to ensure the effective use of such technology. Continuous maintenance of the technology, according to a specified strategy, is also needed in order to ensure that such systems are running efficiently.

8.3.7 Developing Language Courses

The literature identified that lack of language competence can become a barrier to sharing knowledge (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Ford and Chan, 2003). In this research, it was found that poor competence in English could hinder participation in some seminars and meetings. There is a need to develop intensive English courses for academics who are willing to learn and develop their foreign language abilities as PAAET provides many courses related to professional academic subjects and skills development. This is vital in the global knowledge economy as most publications and materials are written in English. It is also possible that translation services at PAAET could help academics to acquire or share knowledge through translating their research papers.

8.4. Reflection on Methodology and the Validity of Findings

To ensure the validity of the research findings, the researcher adopted a variety of data collection tools which used mixed methods approach. Quantitative methods were used to gather basic data and qualitative methods to carry out an in-depth investigation were adopted in the five colleges of the case study. These helped to achieve the research outcomes and to provide information for analysis. A multitude of various factors from a cross section of staff (deans, top management, senior librarians and academic staff) at various levels and across the five colleges provided an in-depth understanding of these factors, as well as ensuring the validity of the findings.

8.4.1 Evaluation of the Recommendations to PAAET

The research recommendations were evaluated to ensure their validity, practicality and achievability. The recommendations were sent to eight different stakeholders including two senior managers, one senior librarian and five academic staff, who showed a great interest in the research and responded to the request to evaluate the recommendations of the research. This section briefly presents their evaluation.

Enhancing Technological Systems, Maintenance, and Awareness

The evaluation participants were strongly in favour of using technology as a tool in facilitating knowledge sharing processes in PAAET. One of the participants stressed

"I am highly in favour of using technology in KS as I believe technology is the only way to break the cultural barriers especially in male/female interactions". They agreed this recommendation is achievable as the technology, finance and resources are available.

Informal Social Interaction Strategy

Evaluation participants strongly agreed with the need to promote an informal social interaction strategy among academic staff. They agreed that the current situation is not flexible for promoting informal social interaction. They also agreed that there are several steps within the power of PAAET's management for promoting such interaction while others are beyond their authority due to the political and national culture. One particular aspect was raised in relation to "common workplaces and times for lunch and tea breaks in order to create an appropriate environment for informal social interaction; a budget should be allocated for informal interactions".

Developing Language Courses

All evaluation participants agreed with this recommendation. They stated that English language competence for academic staff has become a necessity in the activities of the academic sector. They also stressed that PAAET and academic staff are aware of this need but a strategy to promote English language competence has never been established; it has been left to the initiative of individuals.

Establishing Guidelines for Formal Processes and Strategies for Knowledge Sharing

This recommendation received several responses from the evaluation participants. The participants agreed with the need for formal processes and strategies. They agreed that PAAET is falling short in having effective formal knowledge-sharing systems. They stressed the need for the senior management to enforce such processes and strategies as many of these need senior management agreement and backing. They also stressed the importance of reducing academic staff workload in order to have more time and space to contribute to knowledge sharing promotion. One of the respondents stressed the need for a step-by-step strategy in order to change the culture and break down the physical barriers.

Promoting Awareness

Participants were highly in agreement that the promotion and awareness of KS among PAAET stakeholders is highly important. This recommendation is also achievable as PAAET has the financial resources needed for organising seminars, training programmes; one participant was in support of the "Knowledge Sharing Awareness Week".

Establishing a Full Reward System

Based on their personal experiences, evaluation participants stated that financial rewarding systems are a good tool for motivating academic staff at PAAET. Therefore, they were strongly in favour of establishing reward systems at PAAET. The recommended rewards were for mentoring newly recruited academic staff and for managing and delivering academic seminars. They stressed that the financial rewards need to be tightly in line with the PAAET budget and this may need the involvement of the Ministry of Higher Education for budgeting purposes.

Job Description and Assessment

Most evaluation participants are of the view that PAAET currently lacks any formal process for evaluating and assessing academic staff performance based on their job description and their contribution to the institution's knowledge sharing processes. This recommendation is achievable but needs a great deal of effort in terms of administration and planning.

8.5 Contribution of the Research

Knowledge sharing as an important component of knowledge management has attracted serious research efforts in recent years and is relatively well understood within a western culture. However, knowledge sharing within a Middle Eastern culture is less well understood and in some places it has not been researched at all. The literature review revealed that little research on knowledge sharing has been conducted within Kuwaiti organisations and non in Higher Education environments particularly. This research is the first attempt to explore the main issues that exists in

this area such as addressing certain Kuwaiti national cultural issues that affect knowledge sharing within an academic culture. The issues considered relate to the culture of particular disciplines, to gender, tribe, religion, government policies, preferred methods of communication, and organisational issues that influence how people share knowledge. This study provides contextual and situational insight into how a higher education institution in a country with a different background has dealt with knowledge-sharing issues.

This research also provides a practical step to deal with the distinctive Kuwaiti national cultural influences relating to knowledge sharing and offers a direct guide and appropriate strategies that fit the PAAET environment. From the point of view of its contribution to research, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the body of work on the theory of knowledge management within a particular cultural context. This research has confirmed certain factors and identified additional ones to those identified in the literature. A total of twenty factors, under four main headings, were identified in this study as representing issues that impeded or facilitated knowledge sharing. These concerned individual, organisational, Kuwaiti national culture and cross-cultural issues. Some of the knowledge management literature in higher education tends to emphasise some organisational elements that facilitate knowledge sharing that are more related to a technological approach (Ratcliffe-Martin *et al.*, 2000; Branin, 2003; Abdullah and Selamat, 2007). However, more approaches than a merely technological one can be considered when creating a knowledge-sharing culture in higher education, as a balanced approach is emphasised more in the literature. Furthermore, studying cultural influences is very important when implementing a successful knowledge-sharing initiative (Chow *et al.*, 2000; Tahir *et al.*, 2006; Michailova and Hutchings, 2006; Yao *et al.*, 2007; Ma *et al.*, 2008). The contribution of this study is that it discusses knowledge sharing in a higher education setting in an Arabian Gulf state. One of the main findings is that the national culture of the employees' country tends to diminish the operating power of the female workforce and this has an influence on knowledge-sharing practices. The findings can extend understanding of how power issues, in the form of national cultural traits, influence the propensity of individuals and groups to share knowledge in a particular context. The main findings of this research also contribute to the body of knowledge concerning

knowledge sharing in higher education by using PAAET as a case study. The research provides an in-depth analysis of a higher education institution (PAAET) in terms of the influence of various cultural factors in Kuwait. This could help other countries in the GCC, which have similar distinctive national cultures, to address these issues in further research in the field of knowledge management and in creating a knowledge-sharing culture. This research also offers an opportunity to other cultures, such as the Western culture, to understand how the Arab culture (and especially the Kuwaiti culture) influences the practice of knowledge sharing.

8.6 Limitations of the Research

This study was challenging due to its sensitivities and the nature of the research which was based on interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and organisational documents. One of the limitations of the research is the selection of the sample. It is clear that this study is limited to only one case study. Another case study could not be included because of PAAET's uniqueness; it is the only academic institution in Kuwait of a vocational nature which has five different colleges. This research therefore focuses on one higher education institution and the research cannot be generalised. However, the main outcomes can be considered when making the first steps of a knowledge-sharing initiative in another Kuwaiti higher education institution (e.g. Kuwait University). Another limitation of the study concerns the fact that the research identified sub-cultural groups in PAAET; there is no guarantee that all respondents expressed their true opinions due to cultural issues. This can be true of any research study investigating perceptions as there is always an element of bias in studies of this nature.

8.7 Recommendations for Future Research

This research has focused on knowledge sharing among PAAET's academic staff and has explored several issues that need to be investigated and analysed further to help in promoting knowledge sharing within the institution. This section highlights and justifies the need for further research into these issues.

8.7.1 Application of the findings

A logical extension of this study would be to test the usefulness of the research outcomes. Further research is needed into the practical steps that could be taken, together with an evaluation by PAAET, of the proposed list of recommendations and actions. An evaluation of the proposed recommendations could add value to its real-time validity and implications.

8.7.2 Expansion of the findings

This research investigation adopted a single case study approach as justified in the previous section. An important opportunity for further research within institutions of a similar nature may exist in some of the other Gulf States in order to expand the findings of this study by conducting an additional set of case studies. In addition, further work could be important to compare and contrast the findings from more than one country. Furthermore, factors relating to the age of staff and their educational background, which were identified but not considered in this study, should be incorporated into future research.

8.7.3 Expanding the Development and Implementation of Knowledge-sharing Technology

This research was mainly exploratory and examined several issues related to culture that need to be considered further in promoting knowledge sharing in PAAET. Further research is needed to investigate the most appropriate technological system to promote knowledge sharing and to break down physical barriers in PAAET. Because this research showed that there was some positive preference for using technology, a further investigation could be carried out to include the use of technology as a tool in the promotion of knowledge sharing that would fit in both the organisational and the national culture. PAAET's authorities need to sponsor a research investigation that could identify the most appropriate knowledge-sharing system and framework that would reflect PAAET's culture and which would meet its needs.

8.8 Personal Reflection on the Research Process

This section aims to reflect on my own experience as a researcher in the last three years. Reflection is needed to help identify strengths and areas for improvement; this can be followed by designing an action plan to improve the researcher's personal performance. My knowledge and skills today allow me to reflect and critically identify my strengths and areas for improvement due to the experience I have gained throughout the research process. The last three years represent a cornerstone in my personal development in terms of conducting research. The learning and experience gained by way of the research process has contributed to promoting my knowledge, skills and competence in a number of aspects of research in general (such as research strategies and methods), and in knowledge sharing in particular, as well as in searching for and identifying useful electronic information. I have also developed my communication skills in both a social and a formal sense.

8.9 Concluding Remarks

Knowledge sharing in higher education is necessary in order to enhance academic activities such as teaching and research. PAAET's academic staff are aware of the need for and the importance of knowledge sharing to enhance their own and PAAET's performance. Knowledge sharing in PAAET, however, is not carried out formally by academic staff and the senior management in order to take full advantage of knowledge sharing initiatives. This research has explored several factors that both impede and facilitate knowledge sharing in PAAET and PAAET's management needs to consider these factors in its strategic plan for knowledge sharing. PAAET's strategic plan should consider two main factors: first, the creation of an appropriate knowledge-sharing culture. This can be achieved by breaking down the barriers that impede knowledge sharing that were found in this research. The second factor is the need to consider the main actors in knowledge-sharing processes, namely academic staff and the senior academic management. PAAET needs to establish policies, processes and guidelines to promote knowledge sharing. This organisational transformation or change may not be easily made. However, making the first step would begin to change the whole academic environment at PAAET.

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***Questionnaire for
Academic Staff Opinions, Views and
Attitudes on
Knowledge Sharing***

Dear Brothers/Sisters/Members of Academic Staff,

I am a PhD student at Loughborough University, United Kingdom. The research is sponsored by Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET) and aims to explore the role and impact of national culture on knowledge-sharing in Kuwaiti higher education institutions, and particularly in the Colleges of PAAET as a case study, in order to provide strategies, initiatives and measures to create and develop a knowledge-sharing culture.

The concept of knowledge sharing is defined as the process of exchanging and acquiring knowledge that is needed through informal and formal channels and through the use of technical facilities. This process occurs between individuals and group interactions in order to develop and create new knowledge that will benefit the organisation.

Your contribution in this research is valuable and important to the outcome of the research. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you can help and support the research by completing the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

All your completed answers will be treated confidentially. There is no way that you could be identified.

If you have any further comments, please write on the attached sheet.
Many thanks for your interest and support.

Kindly submit the completed questionnaire to your department secretary in the envelope provided no later than within one week of receiving the questionnaire.

Please do not hesitate to e-mail me if you have any questions or require clarification and I will be more than happy to reply.

Maha Said Ali,
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Appendix 1

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q10	It is culturally embarrassing to ask colleague a knowledge question.							
Q11	Showing a face in an online community discussion is a worry.							
Q12	National culture is not important in knowledge sharing.							
Q13	I do not communicate in a discussion with the opposite sex.							
Q14	I prefer to resolve work related problems by myself, without seeking help from others							
Q15	Women should only communicate with women.							
Q16	I am willing to share my knowledge with others.							
Q17	I am willing to ask questions in formal meetings and communications.							
Q18	Academic staff from the same tribe trust each other more than others.							
Q19	Tribal culture influences knowledge sharing.							
Q20	I am too shy to ask the opposite sex a question.							
Q21	It is difficult to share knowledge with academic staff from another tribe.							
Q22	I trust women in knowledge sharing.							
Q23	It is easy to share knowledge with academic staff from the same tribe.							
Q24	It is against Kuwaiti culture for women to share knowledge with the opposite sex.							
Q25	I am willing to ask the opposite sex a question in informal social activities (lunch time break and tea break).							
Q26	My religion encourages knowledge sharing.							
Q27	I do not trust the people that I need to share knowledge with.							
Q28	Sharing knowledge with women is against my cultural values.							
Q29	Showing my face in on-line discussions is against my culture.							

Appendix 1

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q30	Tribal culture does not influence knowledge sharing.							
Q31	I am willing to share knowledge with academic staff from the same cultural background.							
Q32	My religion promotes knowledge sharing with the opposite sex.							
Q33	I am willing to ask the opposite sex a question in formal meetings and communications.							
Q34	I do not trust academic staff from other cultural backgrounds.							
Q35	The state has an influence on knowledge sharing through their instructions.							
Q36	The state has an influence on the national culture.							

B. Methods of communications:

Please rate preferred methods of communication in knowledge sharing in terms of your preference.

Least Preferred							Most Preferred
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q37	E-mail communication							
Q38	One-to-one meeting							
Q39	Phone communication							
Q40	Video-link communication							
Q41	In writing							

Others, please specify

C. Personal Details :

Please tick the appropriate box with (√)

Q42: Gender

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

Q43: Your Academic Profession

- 1. Assistant Lecturer
- 2. Lecturer
- 3. Assistant Professor
- 4. Associate Professor
- 5. Professor

Q44: Academic Qualifications

- 1. Bachelor
- 2. Master
- 3. Higher Education, PhD

Others, please specify;

Q45: Age

Please state your age;

Q46: How long you have been employed at PAAET?

- 1. Less than 1 year
- 2. 1 to 5 years
- 3. 6 - 10 years
- 4. 11 - 15 years
- 5. 16 - 20 years
- 6. Over 20 years

Q47: Are you a full time or part time academic staff member?

- 1. Full Time
- 2. Part Time
- Others, please specify;

Q48: Your nationality

- 1. Kuwaiti
- 2. Non-Kuwaiti
- Please specify your nationality;

Q49: Where do you work at PAAET?

- 1. College of Basic Education
- 2. College of Business Studies
- 3. College of Technological Studies
- 4. College of Health Science
- 5. College of Nursing
- 6. Other, please specify
-

Q50: If you would like to add any comments on cultural issues that effect knowledge sharing in PAAET, please write your comments below.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for completing this form

Interviews with
PAAET Senior Management
(Director General and Deputy of Applied Education)

- Q1: What is the role of knowledge sharing in the performance of PAAET's colleges?
- Q2: What types of knowledge are being shared and how are they shared at the moment?
- Q3: What is the influence of the values and norms of national culture on knowledge sharing in your institute?
- Q4: Does PAAET's culture reflect the national culture?
- Q5: Kuwaiti society has different subcultures. In your opinion, how does this influence knowledge sharing at your institute?
- Q6: There are a number of non-national employees in PAAET's colleges. How does this affect the knowledge sharing from a cultural point of view?
- Q7: Male and female interaction is a sensitive issue within Kuwaiti society. Do you think that this has an impact on knowledge sharing in PAAET?
- Q8: What are the main problems and challenges, in your opinion, impeding the development of a knowledge-sharing culture and how could they be overcome?
- Q9: Do you have any instructions, guidelines, or recommendations from the State authority towards promoting knowledge sharing in your institution?

**Interviews with
Heads of Departments**
Head of Information and Computer Centre

- Q1: What is the role of technology in enhancing knowledge sharing in PAAET's colleges?
- Q2: What are the main Kuwaiti cultural issues that knowledge-sharing systems need to consider?
- Q3: What are the main cross-cultural issues that knowledge-sharing systems need to consider?
- Q4: What are the main cultural-specific problems and challenges in your opinion that impede the development of knowledge-sharing systems and how do you think they can be overcome?
- Q5: What systems do you have that enhance knowledge sharing, in your opinion?
- Q6: Do you have any strategic future plans for developing/enhancing/implementing a knowledge-sharing system?

**Interviews with
Heads of Departments**

Head of Educational Resources Department

- Q1: Do you have any systems that enhance knowledge sharing in your department?
- Q2: What knowledge needs to be shared effectively in your point of view? *Within the library and beyond the library*
- Q3: What is the role of the library/librarians in enhancing a knowledge-sharing culture with the academic staff community? *Within the library and beyond the library*
- Q4: What are the main Kuwaiti cultural issues that any knowledge-sharing strategies need to consider?
- Q5: What are the main cross cultural issues that knowledge-sharing systems need to consider?
- Q6: What are the main culture-specific problems and challenges in your opinion that impede the development of knowledge-sharing strategies and how do you think they could be overcome?
- Q7: Do you have any strategic future plan for enhancing a knowledge-sharing culture in your departments?

**Interviews with
Faculty Deans
(Five colleges)**

- Q1: What is the most valuable knowledge in your college that academic staff should share?
- Q2: How do you encourage academic staff at your college to share their knowledge?
- Q3: Describe the knowledge-sharing culture in your college?
- Q4: What is the influence of the values and norms of the national culture on the knowledge-sharing culture in your college? (Bedouin Culture, Al-Hadar Culture, Women, Religion, State Influences)
- Q5: What is the impact or influence of the non-Kuwaiti nationals (cross-cultural) in promoting a knowledge-sharing culture?
- Q6: What are the main problems and challenges in your opinion impeding a knowledge-sharing culture and how could they be overcome?
- Q7: Is there any strategic future plan for promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives or such a culture?

Focus Group
Academic Staff – Kuwaiti

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Welcome to this session.

My name is Maha Said Ali and I am a PhD student at Loughborough University. Thank you for taking time to participate in the focus group. I understand that your time is valuable, therefore this focus group discussion will take not more than one hour and 30 minutes. Would you mind if I tape-recorded this session? Please be assured that these tapes will not be shared with anybody except those involved in this research (i.e. me as the researcher, my supervisor and the director of the research).

The aim of this focus group is to investigate your perceptions and opinions about five main issues related to your understanding, awareness, and the current situation regarding knowledge sharing types, processes or activities, obstacles and barriers to knowledge sharing. National culture is also one of the issues that will be raised in order to help in promoting a knowledge-sharing culture at PAAET's colleges. As this kind of research has never been done before in Kuwaiti higher education, there are no right or wrong answers; this is just about your personal opinions that we need to understand. If you would like to know about the findings of this interview, I'll be happy to send them to you. Do you have any questions before we start?

Opening question

Can you please tell us your name and the department you are working in?

Issue 1: Knowledge Sharing

Definition of knowledge sharing

Need for knowledge sharing

What is the role of knowledge sharing in the performance of individuals and the institution?

What are the preferred methods of communication for knowledge sharing?

Issue 2: Current situation

List the types of knowledge that are shared and can be shared.

How do you gain and share knowledge (what are the processes for knowledge sharing?)

What are the knowledge sharing systems in your colleges?

What is the motivation to share knowledge?

How does the communication and interaction between faculty members work in sharing knowledge and best practices?

Issue 3: National Culture

Role of women and gender interaction in knowledge sharing

Role of tribal values and norms in knowledge sharing

Role of religion in knowledge sharing

Influences of the State and the institute's policy on knowledge sharing (external cultures)

Issue 4: Cross-culture

Which culture, nationality, do you like to share knowledge with and why?

What and how do other national cultures of academics (non- Kuwaitis) influence the practice of knowledge sharing?

Issue 5: Culture-specific problems and obstacles

List the main culture-specific problems and obstacles

There were five Kuwaiti focus groups: four were with academic staff and one with senior librarians. The issues were the same, as this emphasises their role and interactions with academic staff, as shown below:

Issue 1: Knowledge Sharing

Definition of knowledge sharing

Need for knowledge sharing

What are the preferred methods of communication for knowledge sharing (between librarians and academic staff)?

Issue 2: Current situation

List the types of knowledge that is shared and can be shared (with academic staff).

How do you share knowledge with academic staff (what are the processes for knowledge sharing?)

Knowledge sharing systems

How does the communication and interaction work between librarians and faculty members in sharing knowledge?

Issue 3: National Culture

Role of women and gender interaction in knowledge sharing

Role of tribal values and norms in knowledge sharing

Role of religion in knowledge sharing

Influences of the State and the institute's policy on knowledge sharing (external cultures)

Issue 4: Cross-culture

Which culture, nationality, do you like to share knowledge with and why?

What and how do the other national cultures of academics (non- Kuwaiti) influence the practice of knowledge sharing?

Issue 5: Culture-specific problems and obstacles

List the main culture-specific problems and obstacles

Focus Group
Academic Staff – Non-Kuwaiti

Introduction

Good morning/ afternoon, welcome to this session.

My name is Maha Said Ali and I am a PhD student at Loughborough University. Thank you for taking time to participate in the focus group. I understand that your time is valuable, therefore this focus group discussion will take not more than one hour and 30 minutes. Would you mind if I taped record this session? Please be assured that these tapes will not be shared with anybody accept those involved in this research (me as the researcher, my supervisor and the director of the research).

The aim of this focus group is to investigate your perceptions and opinions about five main issues related to your understanding, awareness, and current situation regarding knowledge sharing types, process (activities), obstacles and barriers to knowledge sharing will be raised. National culture issues are also one of the issues that will also be raised, to help in promoting knowledge sharing culture at PAAETs colleges. As this kind of research has never been done before in Kuwaiti higher education, there is no right or wrong answers, it is just about your personal opinions that we need to understand. If you would like to know the findings of this interview, I'll be happy to send them to you. Any questions before we start?

Opening question

Can you please tell us your name and the department you are working in?

Issue 1: Knowledge Sharing

Definition of Knowledge sharing

Need for knowledge sharing

What is the role of knowledge sharing in individual and institutional performance?

What are the preferred methods of communication for knowledge sharing?

Issue 2: Current situation

List the type of knowledge that is shared and can be shared.

How do you gain and share knowledge (what are the process of knowledge sharing?)

What are the knowledge sharing systems in your colleges?

What is the motivation towards sharing knowledge?

How is the communication and interaction between faculty members in sharing knowledge and best practices?

Issue 3: National Culture

List the cultural values that drive for knowledge sharing

List the cultural values that impede knowledge sharing

Issue 4: Cross-culture

Kuwaiti culture: What are the Perception of individual and groups from working in Kuwaiti institute and interacting with Kuwait academics?

Issue 5: Culture-specific problems and obstacles:

List the main culture-specific problems and obstacles.