



2023 Middle Eastern Student Wellbeing Survey

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Research carried out by TGM Research
January 2023

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Foreword



Dear Colleagues in Higher Education,

This is the first time we have run the Studiosity Student Wellbeing report in the Middle East region. We specifically sought responses through an independent research partner (TGM Research), who surveyed 1,054 students at universities in the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The large-scale survey and report seeks to add another avenue for students to share their voice, thoughts, feelings, and expectations of study and university life.

While we have run this survey for eight years in Australia, and a number of years in the United Kingdom and Canada, we wanted to explore students in the Middle East who may have more diverse cultural backgrounds, and different societal norms than those in the previous surveys. It is our intention to understand further how study impacts their wellbeing, through this research.

It is also our hope to assist the higher education sector in the Gulf Region, as we know that the examination of students' wellbeing, and their overall university experience, plays a role in improving outcomes for entire institutions, as well as their regional and global university rankings.

We will look at 2023 as a historical moment for academic integrity - with university leaders deciding whether to prioritise detection or integration, or a third path - to use this seismic social and technological shift as an opportunity to act, to fundamentally change the student experience for the better. This will inevitably look like an investment in students' sense of belonging and satisfaction with the university and their learning experience.

The findings here show a notable parallel between the awareness of cheating, and the awareness of academic integrity issues, with both being around the 50% level. While the majority of students report feeling well-supported by their universities, there are still high levels of stress, competing priorities and students pulling all-nighters to manage their workload.

Overall, this survey points to many positive indicators for Middle Eastern students in 2023, reflecting student expectations and how the sector has risen to meet them with support, inclusive treatment, care for a student's personal circumstances - and also how we will need to do more in coming years.

Professor Judyth Sachs

Chief Academic Officer, Studiosity

Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Provost Macquarie University and
Former Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching at Sydney University

Introduction



Background

Universities around the world partner with Studiosity to grow student success at scale, via 24/7 formative writing feedback, discussion about core skills, and peer-to-peer connection.

For seven years, Studiosity has commissioned an annual Student Wellbeing Survey with Australia's university students (via research partner YouthInsight), for three years with the UK's university students (via RedBrick), and for two years with Canada's university students (via Angus Reid).

In late 2022, Studiosity expanded its services in the Middle East region, adding a few pilot partnerships at local UAE universities to its existing partnerships.

TGM Research was commissioned by Studiosity to help better understand local students in the region.



Research objectives

This study aims to explore university students' general attitudes, needs, and behavior in the Middle East, to better understand the landscape around students' general wellbeing as it relates to their studies.

This report's focus is specifically university students in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The specific objectives of the study were:

- to measure levels of stress and its causes related to studying;
- to understand students' time management;
- to recognize universities' current level of support and potential areas for improvement;
- to understand the level of confidence in practical skills needed at university (eg. avoiding plagiarism, preparing references, etc.);
- to understand the relevance of English communication and writing skills;
- to understand students' perceptions of academic integrity.



Methodology & Sample

Studiosity produced the questions for this survey, and TGM Research gathered the responses from university students in UAE and KSA via an online survey.

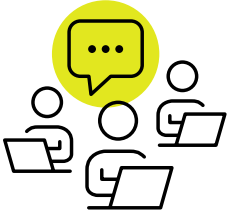
The survey ran from December 21st, 2022, to January 19th, 2023, and gained a total of 1,054 responses [523 respondents from UAE and 531 respondents from KSA].

All responses were gathered from university students aged 18 to 40 years old who speak English and consisted of a mix of both domestic (33% for UAE and 40% for KSA) and international (67% for UAE and 60% for KSA) students.

Data has been weighted to match a nationally representative profile of students by gender.

Executive summary

The results for both countries are very similar.



English skills

Both in the UAE and the KSA, English writing and particularly academic English are essential skills that university graduates are expected to master. In KSA, 44% of students state that they speak only English at home, while in the UAE one quarter (27%) claim so. Nevertheless, the majority still use another language at home.

9 in 10 respondents from both UAE (93%) and KSA (89%) feel confident writing in English. For Saudi Arabian students, males more often admit to feeling confident than female respondents. In both countries, students feel that good communication and written English skills will be essential for their future careers (95% for UAE and 90% for KSA). There appears to be a strong focus on English skills at the university level, as 89% in UAE and 84% in KSA feel supported by their university to study in English.

Feelings of stress caused by study

Overall, students from both countries experience a lot of stress - a third at least once a day (30% in UAE and 31% in KSA), and over half at least once a week (57% in UAE and 61% in KSA). The reasons are almost the same for both countries - most often students struggle with balancing work or social commitments and study - a little more for UAE (54%) than KSA (40%), a 14-percentage point difference.

The other common reasons for students' stress are the amount of study and difficulty of the topics. Additionally, 1 in 10 respondents in both countries don't know where to turn for help if they have a study problem.

Struggling with their studies makes many students think about quitting their course from time to time. This occurs more often in KSA, where 58% think about quitting at least occasionally, while in UAE it is 51%.

It is very common for students to sacrifice an entire night to study, usually because of too many work/life demands - this is more prevalent with older students (60%) in UAE as well as males (46%) and older students in KSA.

Students' expectations and sense of belonging

Despite the stress, universities in UAE and KSA are meeting and even exceeding students' expectations. About 4 in 10 students from both countries say their university meets their expectations - 42% for UAE and 44% for KSA. Moreover, even more students say the university exceeds their expectations - 49% for UAE and 46% for KSA. In both cases, male representatives and older students are more likely to think so, and in the case of KSA, additionally international students. 1 in 10 respondents admits that the university does not meet their expectations. Those disappointed students say their reasons are too few skills useful in business life, not enough study support, and limited access to expert help.

The vast majority of students (89% for UAE; 83% for KSA) feel a strong sense of community, and almost the same percentage feel they belong at the university (83% for UAE; 80% for KSA). Again, in both cases, it is more often older students and men. To increase the sense of community, respondents indicate a desire for additional help with study and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and more face time with teachers/lecturers.



● **University support**

The overall assessment of academic support also does not differ by country, as the vast majority say they feel supported by their universities - 90% for UAE students and 86% for KSA. In the case of UAE, it is more often older students, while in KSA it is older, male, and international students. The topics that differentiate satisfied and dissatisfied students are the availability of staff members, 24/7 study support, and flexible timetables.

● **Perceptions of cheating and Academic integrity**

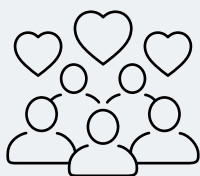
More than half of the students are aware of another student who has cheated in 2022. However, the students have less awareness on what academic integrity and the consequence of cheating is. If awareness can be increased on both academic integrity and consequences of cheating, it could help to reduce the number of students who participate in cheating behaviors.

Key findings



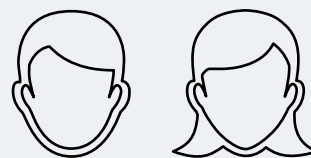
The results for the two countries, the UAE and the KSA, differ in only minor details.

The overall tone of the findings is the same for both countries.



The majority of students speak very positively about their university and belonging to their university community.

The university exceeds the expectations of the majority, and it supports its students. Nevertheless, about 10% of students don't feel this way.



Results show differences in experience based on gender.

Male, older, and international students (the latter only in the case of KSA) more often feel part of the community and that they belong, experience more support from the university, and generally, speak better about their experience with the university.



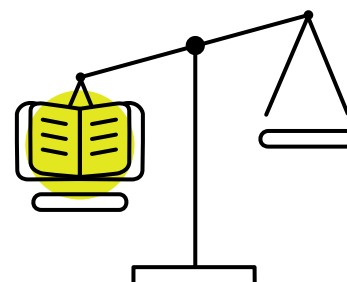
1 in 10 students do not know where to turn for help if they have a problem.

For universities they are more often females, younger people, and students at the lower study level.



The majority of students reported that they knew a student who cheated in 2022.

In both countries, over half confirmed they knew of cheating. However, many do not have a strong understanding of what academic integrity means or where to get help with it. An opportunity exists for additional resourcing and promotion.



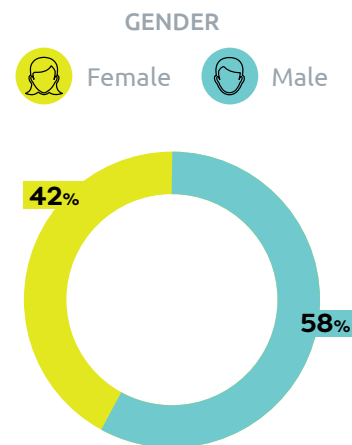
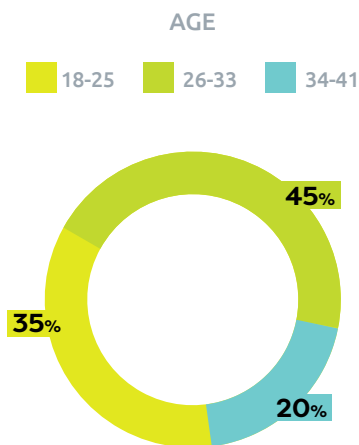
Study findings

Student profiles - UAE



Demographics

The majority of the respondents were males aged 26-33 years old (28%) followed by males aged 18-25 years old (18%) and females aged 18 – 33 years old (17% for 16-25 years old and 16% for 26-33 years old). The 34-40 year old age group recorded the lowest number of students.



Enrolment

Among the respondents, only 30% are currently studying and 70% just finished their studies in 2022. Of those that have just completed their studies in 2022, 60% completed postgraduate studies and 40% were undergraduates.

80% of the students were enrolled at a local university in the UAE and 20% of them study at an international university. Among the local students, 41% studied at 19 different universities in Abu Dhabi, and 37% of the students were enrolled at 42 different universities in Dubai. Fujairah was the region with the lowest number

of respondents with only 1% enrolled at 2 different universities there.

Among the 88 local universities in UAE, respondents to this survey were mostly enrolled at Abu Dhabi University, followed by Al Ain University, Khalifa University of Science and Technology and the University of Sharjah.



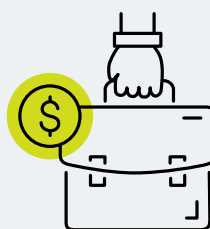
67% of respondents were full time students, and almost half of them were studying via a mix of both on-campus and remote study modes.

Study circumstances



The most common courses students were enrolled in are Business at 33%

followed by STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) at 28% and Medicine at 9% where 64% of the students who participated in this survey record distinction and high distinction grades (above 75% grade), and only 1% of the students reported failing.



90% of all the respondents are currently working

as most of the respondents (70%) finished their studies in 2022. Of those in employment now, 40% work on a full-time basis.

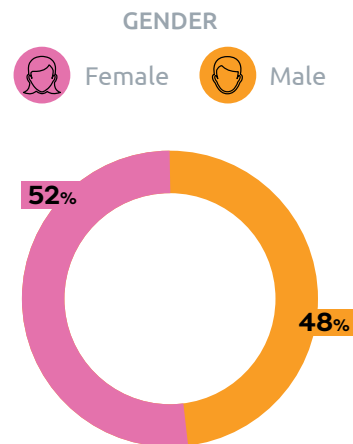
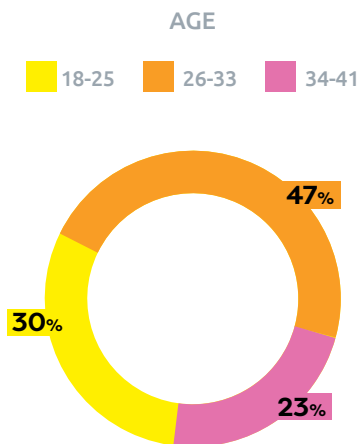


67% of the respondents were international students

and 71% of the international students are carers of a child or other family member. The majority - 93% - of the international students were working in some capacity, either casually, part-time or full-time.

Demographics

The majority of the respondents were females aged 26-33 years old (25%) followed by males aged 26-33 years old (22%) and females aged 18 – 25 years old (18%). Males aged 18-25 years old and females aged 34-41 years old recorded the lowest number of responses at 12% and 9% respectively.



Enrolment

Among the participants, 40% are currently studying and 60% finished their studies in 2022. Of those that have just completed their studies in 2022, 61% completed a postgraduate degree, and 39% completed their undergraduate studies.

89% of the students were enrolled at a local university in KSA and 11% of them study with overseas institutions. Among the local students, 54% were enrolled at 17 different universities in Riyadh, and 20% of were enrolled at 17 different universities in Jeddah. For smaller areas such as Al Kharj, Buraydah, Ha'il, Najran, Qatif, Sakakah and Yanbu there was only 1 recorded response

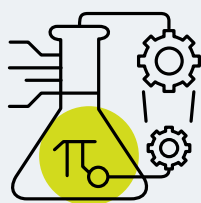
for each.

Among the 69 local universities in KSA, King Saud University recorded the highest number of students in this survey, followed by King Abdulaziz University, Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University and Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University.



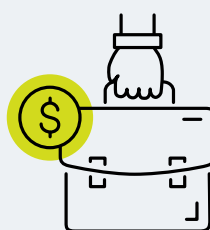
76%
of the respondents were full time students and almost half of them (46%) studied in a mix of both on-campus and remote study modes.

Study circumstances



The most common courses students were enrolled in are STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) at 27%

Followed by Business (19%) and Medicine (13%). 61% of the students who participated in this survey reported distinction and high distinction grades (above 75% grade), and only 2% of the students reported failing.



87% of all the respondents are currently working

as more than half of the respondents (60%) finished their studies in 2022, 32% of them are now working on a full-time basis.



60% of the respondents are international students

and 80% of the international students are carers of a child or other family members. The majority - 94% - of the international students were working in some capacity, either casually, part-time or full-time.

Most students speak languages other than English at home, as their primary language. This represents a potential challenge, as a large number of universities in the UAE conduct their courses primarily in English.

UAE Results – English skills and confidence

Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

Three-quarters (73%) of UAE respondents report that their home language is a language other than English, and only a quarter of respondents (27%) report speaking English only. Older students are more likely to speak English only at home – a 13-percentage point difference between the 18-25 and 34-41 age groups.

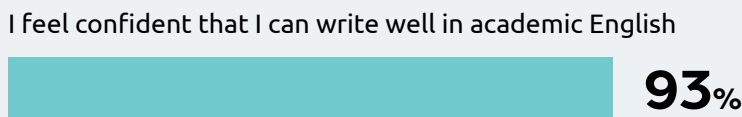
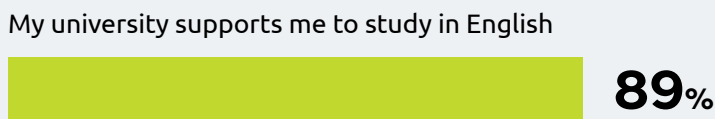
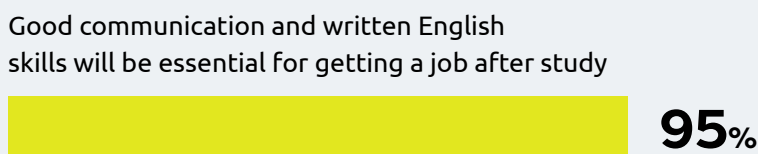


73%
speak a language other than English at home



27%
speak only English at home

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements...



Most students note the necessity of fluent spoken and written English for their future, especially for their professional careers. The vast majority (95%) of UAE respondents agree, and 71% strongly agree, with the statement “*good communication and written English skills will be essential for getting a job after study.*”

Perhaps it is the result of the support from the university, as the majority (89%) of the UAE students feel supported to study in English from the university side. The UAE students are consistent in their general assessments of their own English skills - their high confidence does not significantly vary by gender, age, or level of study.

Moreover, UAE students feel very assured about their writing abilities in English, as more than 9 in 10 respondents (93%) agree and strongly agree with the statement “*I feel confident that I can write well in academic English.*”

Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

The situation in the KSA appears a bit more varied. Just over half (56%) of the KSA respondents admit that they speak a language other than English at home. The languages they specified include Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, and many more. Nevertheless, 44% of the KSA students speak only English at home. As in the UAE results, older students are more likely to speak only English at home - a 16-percentage point difference between the 18-25 and 34-41 age groups.



56%
speak a language other than English at home



44%
speak only English at home

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements...



Good communication and written English skills will be essential for getting a job after study



My university supports me to study in English



I feel confident that I can write well in academic English



The vast majority (90%) of KSA students agree with the statement "good communication and written English skills will be essential for getting a job after study." Men strongly agree with this statement more than women (58% vs. 66%).

The majority (87%) of KSA students feel confident in their academic English writing ability. Men feel more confident about their level of written English than women - 59% strongly agree with the statement "I feel confident that I can write well in academic English," compared to 48% of women. In addition, those with less experience as students, namely those in their 1st year undergrad, feel

less confident writing in academic English than those with postgraduate degrees (77% vs. 93%).

The majority (87%) of the KSA students agree with the statement "my university supports me to study in English." However, there is a significant difference here around enrolment status - 53% of full-time students strongly agree that their university supports them to study in English, while only 39% of part-time students strongly agree with that statement.

Q. How often do you feel stressed by studying?

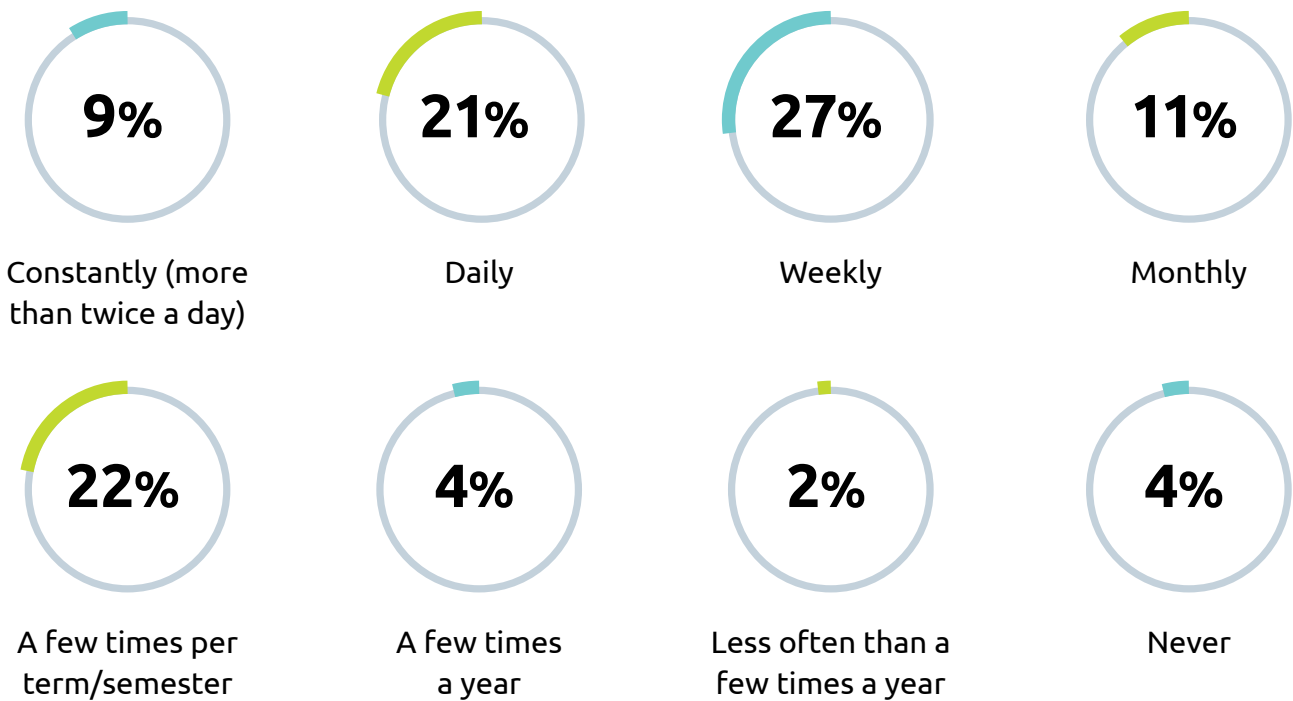
Nearly a third (30%) of UAE students say they feel stressed by studying at least once a day, and the majority (57%) at least once a week. One-fifth (22%) of students feel stress several times per semester.

The results vary by age, student status, and whether they are international or domestic students. The frequency of daily stress increases with age, with 27% of students in

the 18-25 age group feeling stressed at least once a day vs. 33% in the 34-41 age group. Full-time students more often feel stressed daily and constantly compared to part-time students (35% vs. 22%). The latter, in turn, are more often stressed a few times per term/semester. In addition, international students more often feel stressed by studying daily than their domestic counterparts (24% vs. 16%).



FREQUENCY OF FEELING STRESSED



Q. Out of the following options, what makes you feel the most stressed about studying?

The causes of stress vary across gender, age, level of study, and enrolment status. One prevalent factor affecting the majority (54%) is the challenge of balancing work or social commitments with studies concurrently. This issue tends to affect women more than men, with an 11-percentage-point difference. Another significant cause of stress, reported by 46% of respondents, is the workload itself. Notably, younger students (58% in the 18-25 age group versus 39% in the 26-33 age group) are more commonly affected by this factor. Both of these leading causes of stress are related to time management skills.

When asked to elaborate, some students gave more detail around their organizational skills:

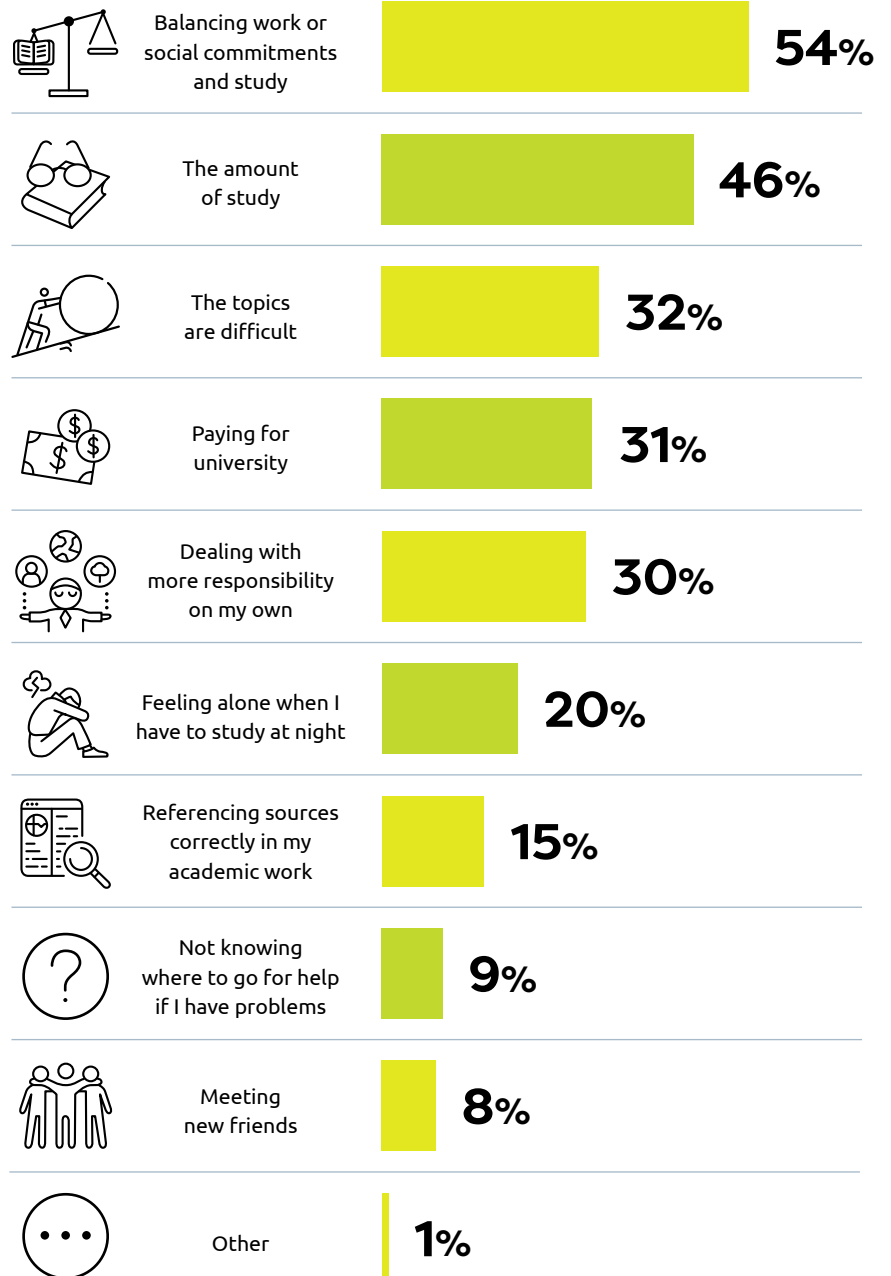
“Sometimes there are more commitments than the time I have,”

“I mostly get depressed by the time management, and tiredness.”

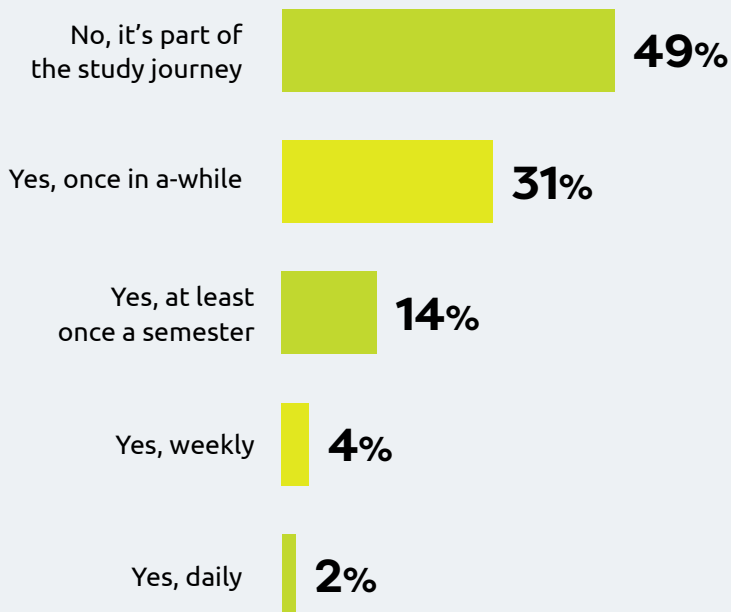
More reasons concern the difficulty of the topics (32%), dealing with more responsibilities (30%), payments for university (31%), and the feeling alone at moments of study at night (20%). One-sixth (15%) also struggle with academic skills, such as referencing sources correctly.

It is worth noting that 1 in 10 students (9%) do not know where to turn for help if they have problems at university. They are more often females, younger people, and students at the lower study level.

CAUSES OF STRESS



Q. Do you think struggling with study when you're alone (after class or when you leave campus) makes you think about quitting your course?



Studying alone can be difficult for some people. Half of the students (51%) think about quitting their course while struggling with studying alone. These are more often 1st-year undergraduates and older students.

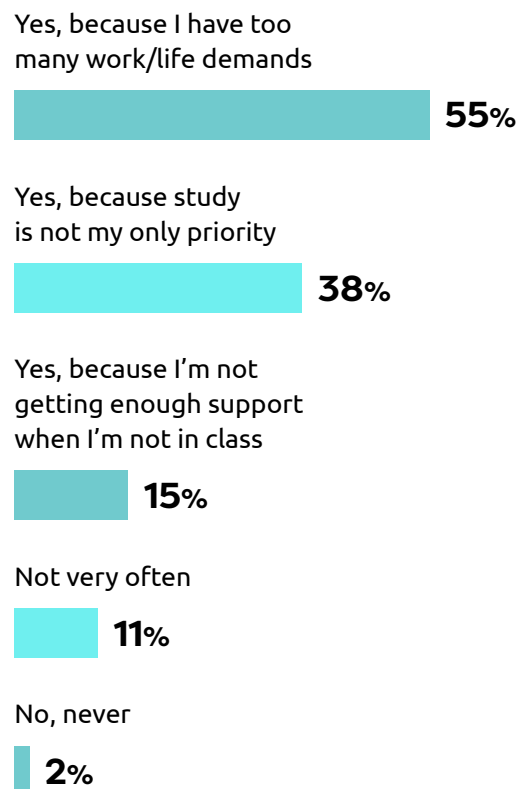
Around half of the respondents (49%) claim that struggling with studying while studying alone is simply a part of the study journey, and doesn't make them want to quit their course.

“When I find it difficult to understand or comprehend a certain course and there is nobody around to help with a better and clearer explanation on how to crack or decode it, I always feel like giving up.”

“I have to keep pushing no matter how hard it seems, because, in anything you are doing in this life, stress must be included if you want to achieve it.”

Q. Have you ever had to study all night to get through your workload?

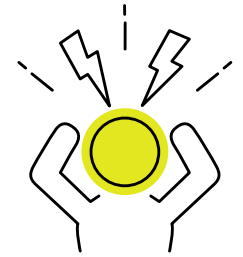
Only 2% of UAE students say that they have never had to study all night to get through their workload and 11% say that they do it but not very often. The majority (55%) admit doing it due to too many work/ life demands. The percentage increases for people aged 34-41 - almost two-thirds (60%) admit to it. 4 out of 10 students (38%) have had to study all night because study is not their only priority. One-sixth did it because they are not getting enough support outside of class.



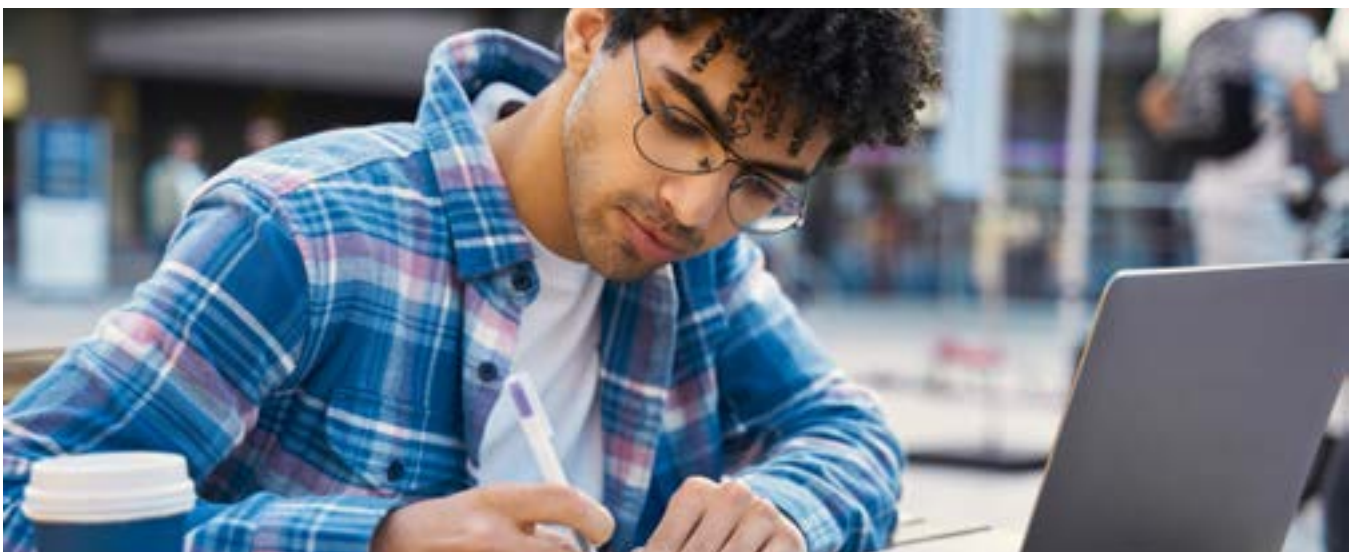
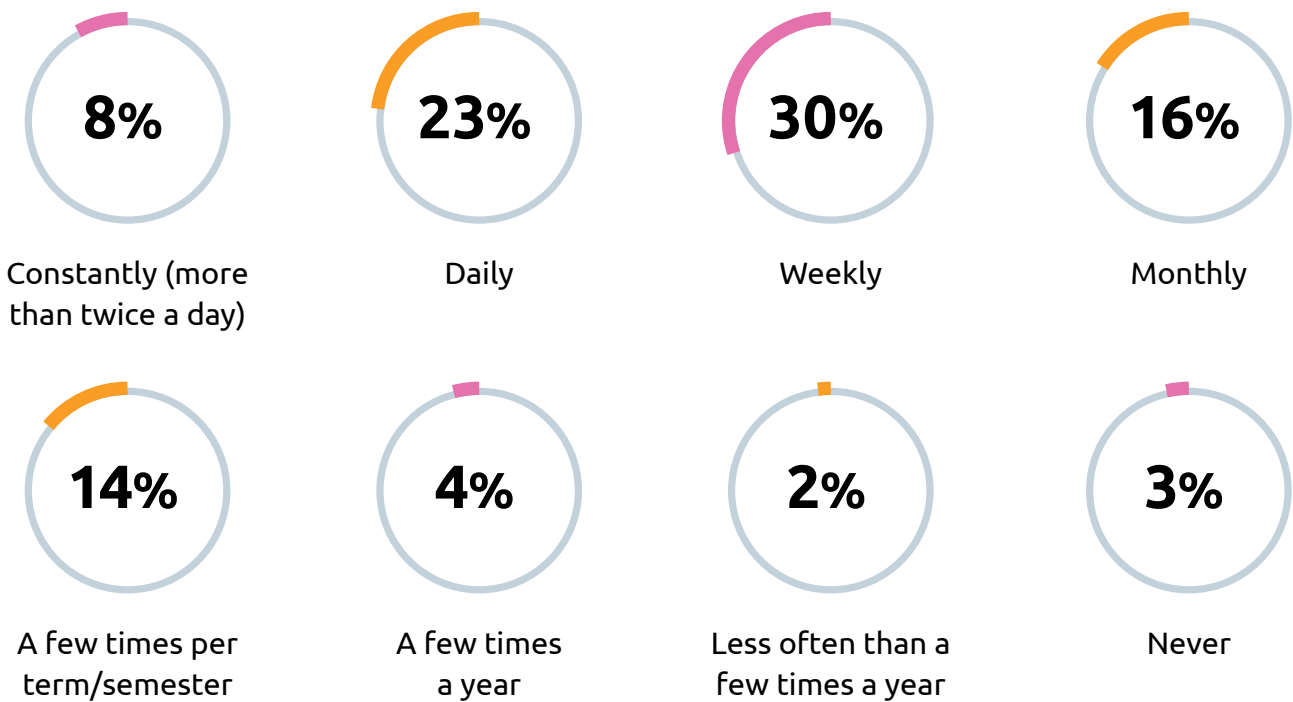
Q. How often do you feel stressed by studying?

The general level of feeling stress caused by studies is similar to the UAE results. Almost one-third of the KSA students (31%) feel stressed at least once a day and almost two-thirds (61%) once a week. In

the case of KSA students, there is not much variation between gender, age, and the level of study. Only international students seem to feel stressed daily more often than domestic students (27% vs. 18%).



FREQUENCY OF FEELING STRESSED



Q. Out of the following options, what makes you feel the most stressed about studying?

The causes of stress among KSA respondents in relation to studying also revolve around time management skills. Firstly, 40% of individuals face challenges in striking a balance between their work or social commitments and their studies. Notably, this difficulty tends to increase as the level of studies progresses.

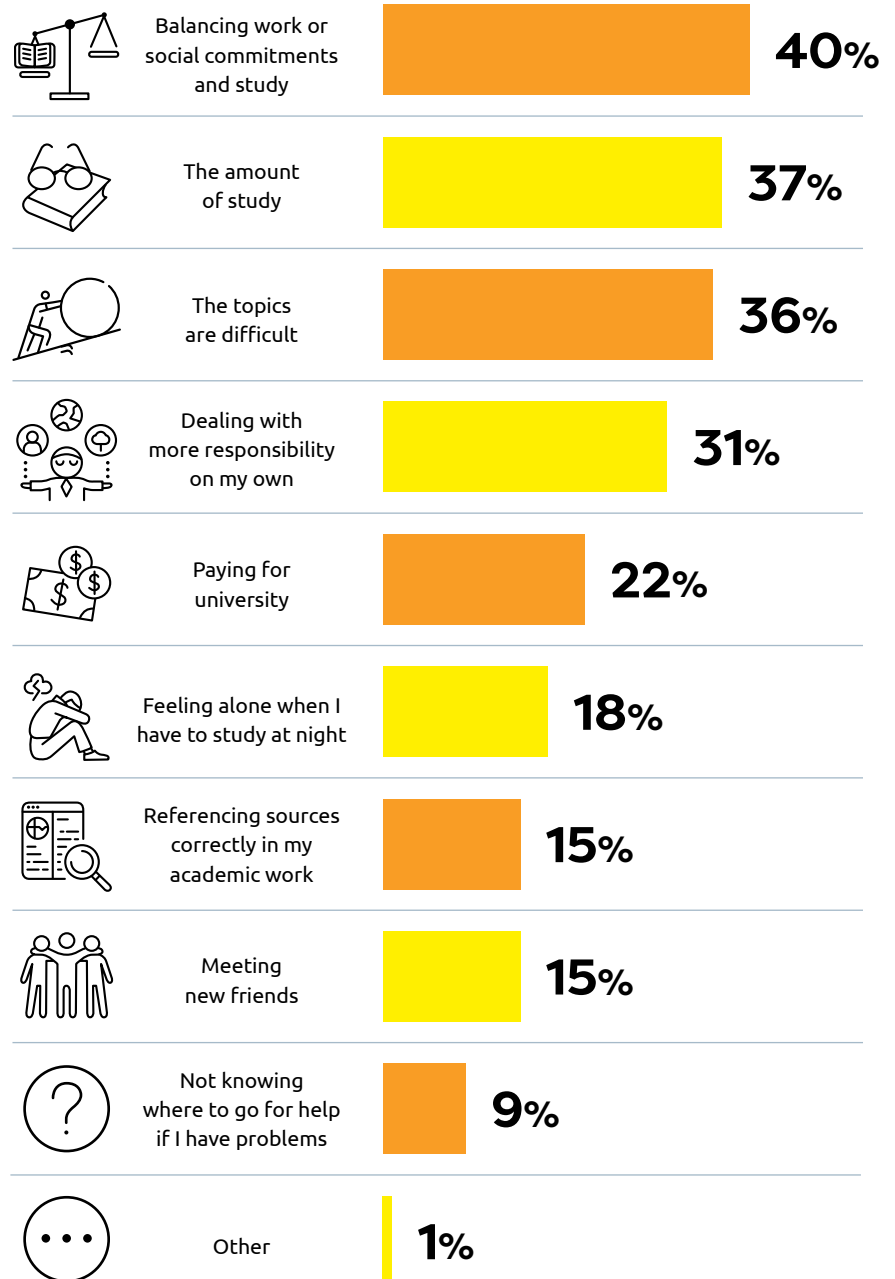
Secondly, 37% of respondents express that the workload itself causes them stress, while 36% attribute their stress to the complexity of the subjects they are studying.

Furthermore, 9% of KSA students, equivalent to one in ten respondents, feel uncertain about where to seek assistance when needed. Interestingly, this uncertainty is more prevalent among younger students (13% in the 18-25 age group versus 6% in the 26-33 age group) and domestic students compared to international students (15% versus 5%).

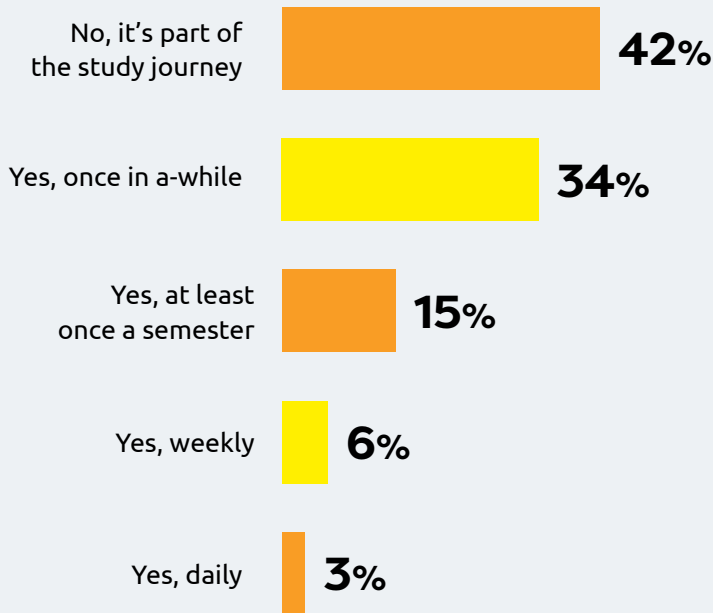
“The difficulty and severity of the curriculum.”

“It is tough to be alone in this journey.”

CAUSES OF STRESS



Q. Do you think struggling with study when you're alone (after class or when you leave campus) makes you think about quitting your course?



In comparison to UAE students, slightly more KSA students think about quitting their course when struggling with studying, but mostly just once in a while (34%). The thoughts of quitting increase with age - 38% of older students

(34-41) think about quitting once in a while compared to 30% of younger students (18-25). More international students think about it once in a while - 38% international vs 28% domestic students. Still, a large portion of respondents (42%) think it is just part of the study journey to struggle with study:

"Everything in life is hard, we just have to adapt and try our best."



Q. Have you ever had to study all night to get through your workload?

Many KSA students experienced having to stay up all night to get through the workload - only 3% have never done it and 14% don't do it very often. There are two main reasons that 4 out of 10 students indicate. Firstly, study is not their only priority (42%), which suggests that the respondents have other responsibilities which are equally important. It is more common for male students (46% men vs 37% women) and older respondents. There are also significant differences between full-time (44%) and part-time (33%) students and international (48%) and domestic (32%) students. Secondly, respondents sometimes stay up all night to get through the workload due to too many work/ life demands (44%). One-sixth of the respondents (16%) said that the reason is not getting enough support outside of class, which is more common for men (19% male vs 13% female) and international students (18% international vs 12% domestic).

Yes, because study is not my only priority 44%

Yes, because I have too many work/life demands 42%

Yes, because I'm not getting enough support when I'm not in class 16%

Not very often 14%

No, never 3%

A significant majority of students in the UAE found their university experience highly satisfactory, with many indicating that their expectations were met or even surpassed. Almost half of the student respondents (49%) state that their university is even better than what they expected. This sentiment is more prevalent among international students (55%) compared to domestic students (38%), and among male students (54%) compared to females (43%). Older students, particularly those in the age group of 26-33, express the highest level of satisfaction, with 57%

reporting that their university experience exceeded their expectations.

A substantial portion of respondents (42%) feel that their university adequately meets their expectations. This indicates a generally high level of satisfaction among students in UAE universities.

However that a small number of respondents (10%) express disappointment, stating that their university fell short of their expectations. Among this group, half

attribute their dissatisfaction to a desire for more practical skills relevant to their future business careers. They mention an overload of coursework that does not align with their majors or real-life applications. Nearly half of the disappointed students (46%) also expected more assistance with time management, while 44% had hoped for higher-quality learning content.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

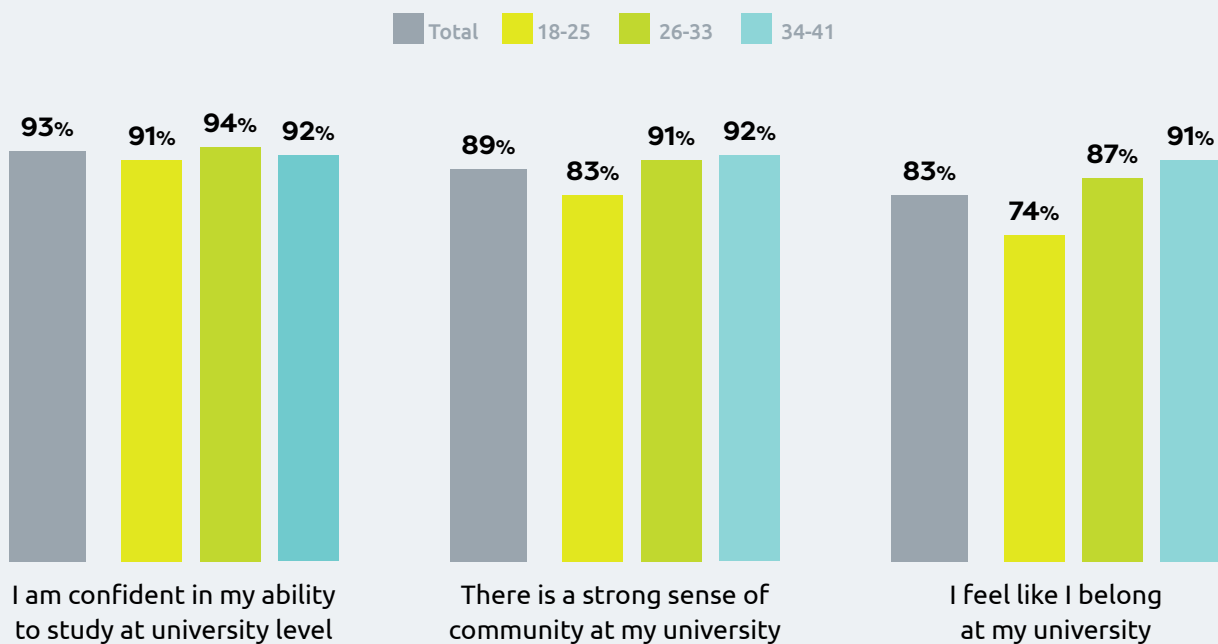
The majority of the respondents (93%) feel confident in their ability to study at the university level. Only 1% of students are not at all sure about their abilities and competences.

Most of the UAE students (89%) claim that there is a strong sense of community at their universities. Groups which strongly agree with this statement are more often older students (57% in the 26-33 age

group; 55% in the 34-41) than younger (43% in the 18-25 group), males than females (57% vs 45%), and international than domestic students (59% vs 37%). Similarly, UAE students mostly feel a sense of belonging. Over 8 out of 10 (83%) people agree or strongly agree with the statement "I feel like I belong at my university." Again, they are more often male, older, and international students.



SENSE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY BY AGE GROUP



Q. What would make you feel more connected to your university?

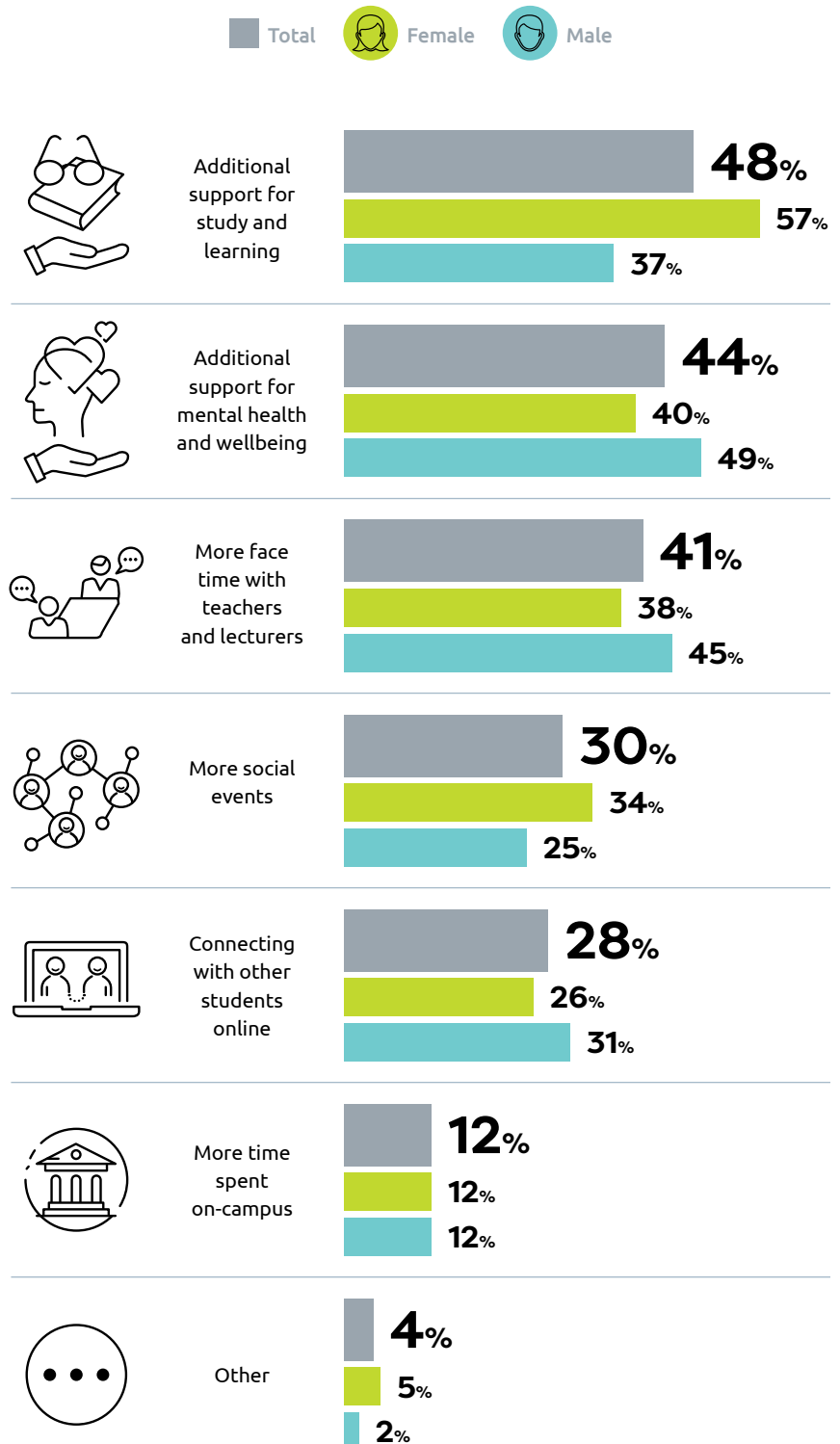
When asked what would foster a stronger sense of connection to their universities, students' results revealed several recurring themes, with the most prevalent responses centering around the desire for increased support in study and learning (48%) and prioritizing mental health and wellbeing (44%).

Additionally, 41% of respondents expressed the need for more meaningful interactions with their teachers and lecturers. Interestingly, the preferences expressed by students vary based on their gender, age, and study status. Women tend to prioritize additional support for study and learning, as well as increased opportunities for social events. In contrast, men show more of a preference for additional support in mental health and wellbeing, more dedicated time with teachers, and greater connectivity with fellow students through online platforms.

Younger students and those pursuing their studies on a part-time basis demonstrate a greater inclination toward seeking additional support in study and learning.

These findings underscore the importance of tailored solutions and targeted initiatives to address the specific needs of different cohorts of students, promoting their sense of connection to the university. By focusing on providing comprehensive support, engaging activities, and fostering more peer connections, universities can create an environment that resonates with students, enhancing their overall wellbeing and academic success.

MORE CONNECTION TO THE UNIVERSITY BY GENDER



The majority of KSA respondents express a high level of satisfaction with their university experiences, with 44% reporting that their expectations have been met and an even more promising 46% stating that their university exceeded their initial expectations. Older students (52% in 34-41 age group) find their university experience more fulfilling than younger students (42% among 18-25-year-olds). Men (50%) tend to feel more satisfied than women (41%), and full-time students (48%) more than part-time students

(39%). Similarly, international students (50%) show higher satisfaction levels than domestic students (38%).

However, 10% of respondents express dissatisfaction, primarily due to a lack of skills for future employment (67%). "I expected to learn more skills in collaboration, but they are only focused on exams studying memorizing and that's not getting me anywhere, I need tech skills and social skills".

56% wanted enhanced study support and expert help, while 35% expected higher-quality content. Additionally, one-third desired stronger community bonding.

Addressing these concerns is vital for improving overall student satisfaction and preparing them holistically for their future endeavors.

"The university was the opposite of what I expected"

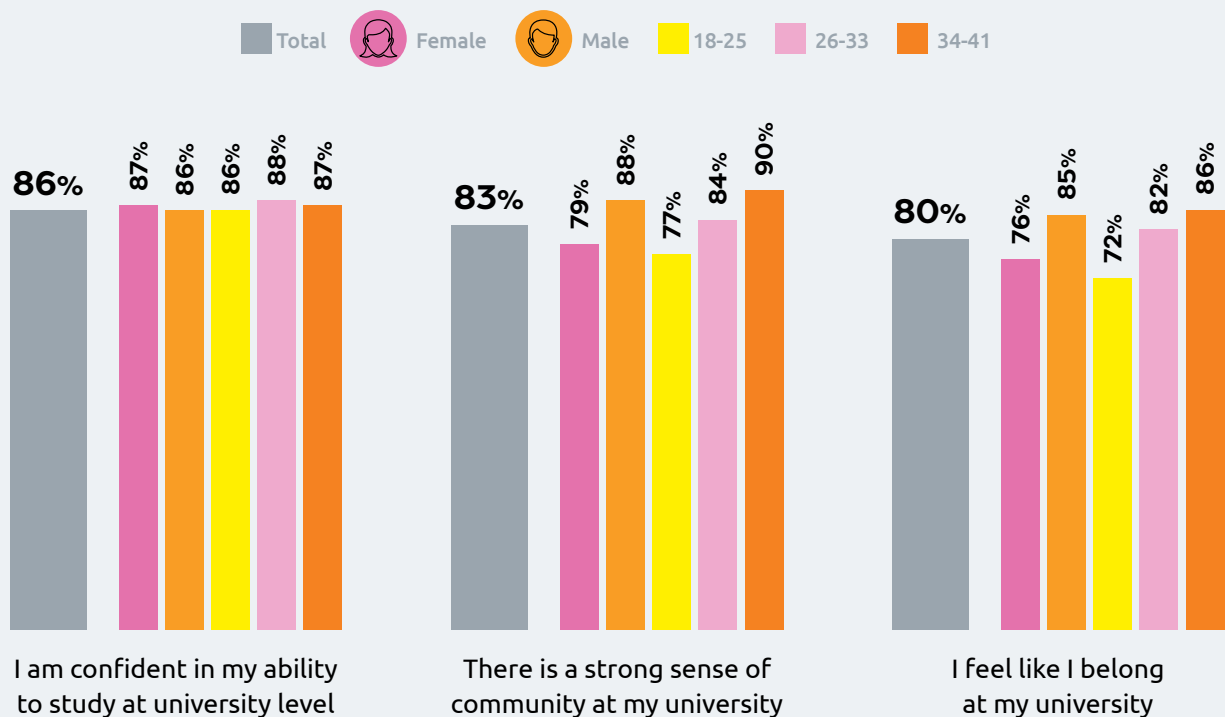
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Most of the respondents (86%) feel confident in their ability to study at the university level. Only 4% of KSA students doubt their competencies. The results do not vary based on gender, age, or study status. Over 8 out of 10 KSA students (83%) agree or strongly agree that there is a strong sense of community at their university. Groups who feel a strong sense of community are more likely to be

older respondents, males, postgraduates, full-time, and international students. Nearly the same percentage of KSA students (80%) feel a sense of belonging to their universities. These are more likely men than women (85% vs 76% agree and strongly agree) and older cohorts (86% for 34-41 vs 72% for 18-25).

Some of the ways students said would make them feel more connected to their university were additional support for study and learning (48%), more face time with teachers/lecturers (40%), and additional support for mental health and wellbeing (36%).

SENSE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP



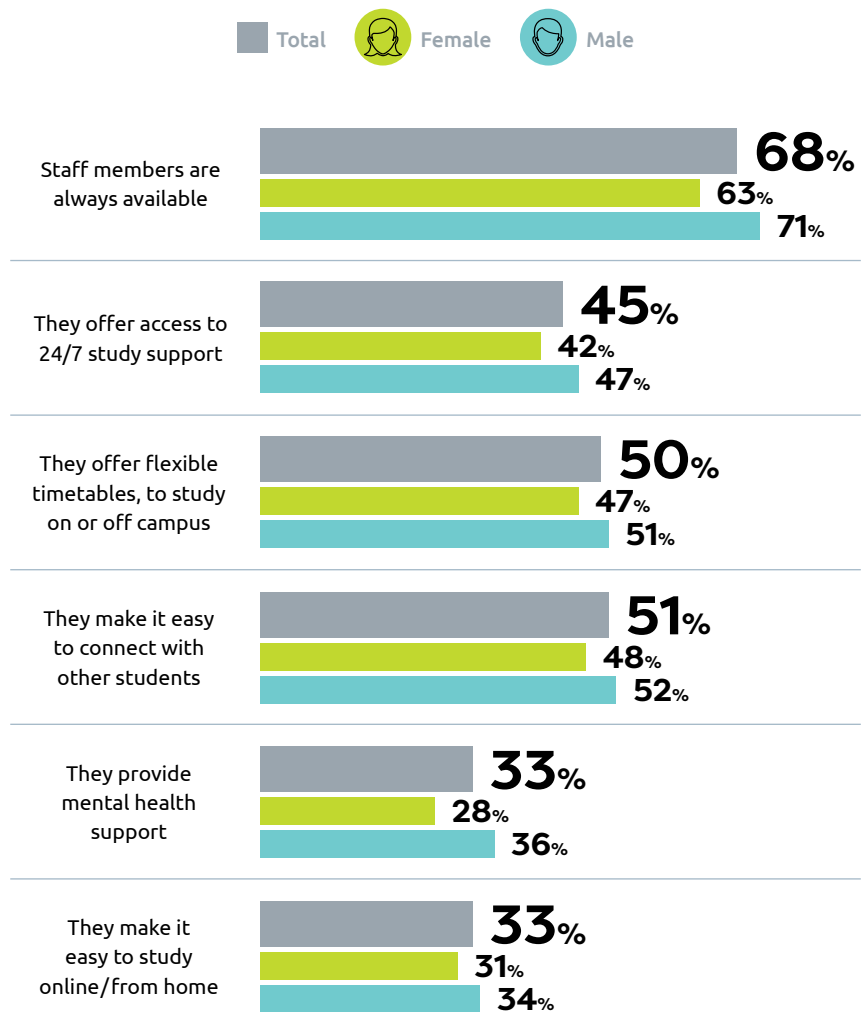
Q. Do you feel supported by your university? In which of the following ways, if any, has your university made you feel supported?

9 out of 10 UAE students (90%) feel supported by their universities. Older students tend to acknowledge this support more, with a 10-percentage-point difference between the 18-25 and 26-33 age groups. Conversely, around 10% of respondents do not feel supported by their universities.

Among the students who feel supported, the availability and ease of connection with university teachers and fellow students were cited as the main reasons. A significant majority (68%) reported that staff members are always accessible, while 50% appreciate the flexibility of studying on or off campus through flexible timetables. Additionally, 51% find it easy to connect with other students, and 45% mention access to 24/7 study support. It is worth noting that the preferences for these support options vary based on gender, with men being more likely than women to select each type of support.

On the other hand, students who do not feel supported by their university emphasize the same factors that would make them feel more included and supported. The most popular options include staff members being more available (51%), flexible timetables for studying on or off campus (45%), and access to 24/7 study support (41%). It is possible that some students may not be aware of the available support options provided by their university, or they may have had negative experiences with the support received.

HOW STUDENTS FEEL SUPPORTED BY UNIVERSITIES, BY GENDER



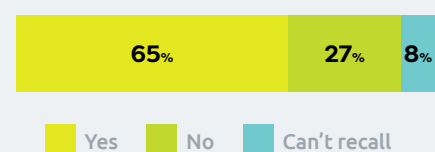
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Most of the UAE students (65%) have used at least one of their university's academic support services. A quarter (27%) did not, and 8% do not recall.

When asked to specify which support they had accessed, the majority claim to have spoken to their teacher / lecturer (62%),

or to have used academic support on campus, e.g., attended an appointment with a Learning Support officer (53%), as well as online (53%). A quarter have attended a peer support group (26%) or a study skills workshop (24%).

Have you ever used one of your university's academic support services?



Q. Do you feel supported by your university?

Over 8 in 10 KSA students (86%) feel supported by their university and one-sixth (14%) do not. Older respondents feel more supported (91% in the 34-41 group vs 80 in 18-25). Similarly, males (88%) exhibit a slightly higher perception of support than females (84%), as do international students (92%) compared to domestic students (78%).

The key reasons identified for feeling supported include the availability of staff members (54%), access to 24/7 study support (44%), and the provision of flexible timetables for studying on or off campus (43%).

“Provides interactive activities that serve the university student”

Interestingly, similar reasons are cited by those who do not feel supported, suggesting these factors could potentially address their concerns and enhance their sense of support. This reveals a notable dissonance between those who feel supported and those who do not.

Regarding academic support services, two-thirds of KSA students have utilized their university’s offerings, while one-quarter have not. Among those who sought support, older students, males, postgraduates, full-time students, and international students are

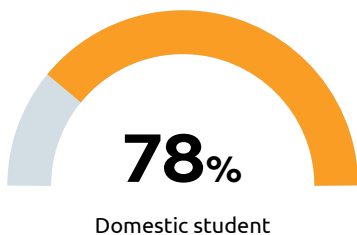
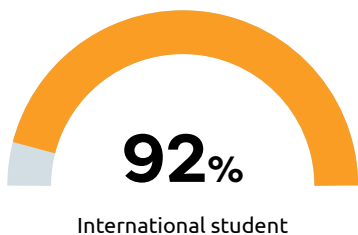
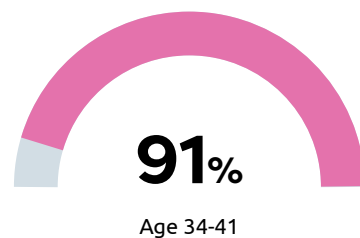
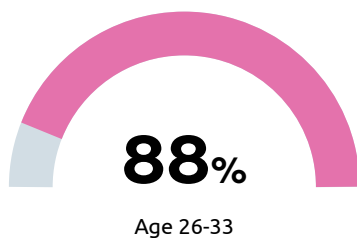
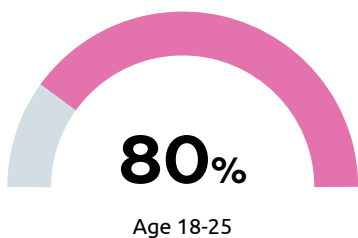
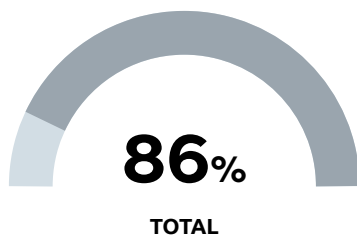
more likely to have accessed these services.

In terms of specific support utilized, half of the students have availed themselves of on-campus academic skills support, including appointments with Learning Support officers (54%), as well as online support (47%). Additionally, engaging with teachers and lecturers has proven to be a common avenue for seeking assistance. A quarter of students (23%) have also participated in peer support groups.

These insights highlight the importance of providing comprehensive and accessible support services tailored to the diverse needs of students, ensuring an inclusive and supportive university environment for all.

PEOPLE WHO FEEL SUPPORTED BY THEIR UNIVERSITIES

■ Total ■ Age ■ Type of student



More than half of respondents know a student who cheated in 2022

In the UAE, 52% of students were aware of fellow students who engaged in cheating in 2022. However, the survey results indicate that the percentage is even higher in KSA, with 60% of KSA students reporting knowledge of individuals who cheated.

In addition, it was found in both countries that local students had less knowledge of others cheating in 2022 than their international counterparts. It can be concluded that international students are either more likely to know of, or more likely to report, incidents of cheating.

UAE Results

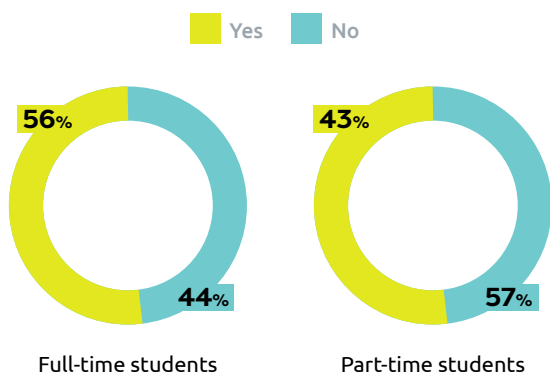
Awareness of cheating



Q. Do you know a student who has cheated in 2022?

The prevalence of cheating among students is concerning, as reflected in these survey results. In the UAE, 52% of students acknowledged being aware of their peers engaging in cheating during 2022. These findings highlight the need for proactive measures and educational interventions to address academic integrity and promote ethical behavior within universities.

DO YOU KNOW A STUDENT WHO HAS CHEATED?



When considering the students' enrollment status, it becomes evident that full-time students demonstrated a higher level of awareness regarding cheating incidents, with 56% reporting knowledge of others who cheated in 2022. Conversely, among part-time students in the UAE, a notable portion (57%) claimed to have no awareness of anyone involved in cheating during the same period.

KSA Results

Awareness of cheating

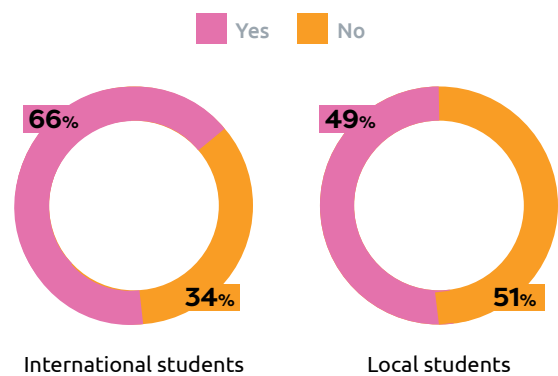


Q. Do you know a student who has cheated in 2022?

Similar to the UAE results, 60% of students in KSA say they know at least one other student who has cheated in 2022.

Across the students' enrollment status, there are differences where international students are more familiar with students having cheated.

DO YOU KNOW A STUDENT WHO HAS CHEATED?



“Sometimes, when doing homework, some students faced some problems that they did not understand, so they discussed them with each other.”



Academic Integrity awareness among university students

Q. In 2022, did you recall hearing about any of these issues from your university?

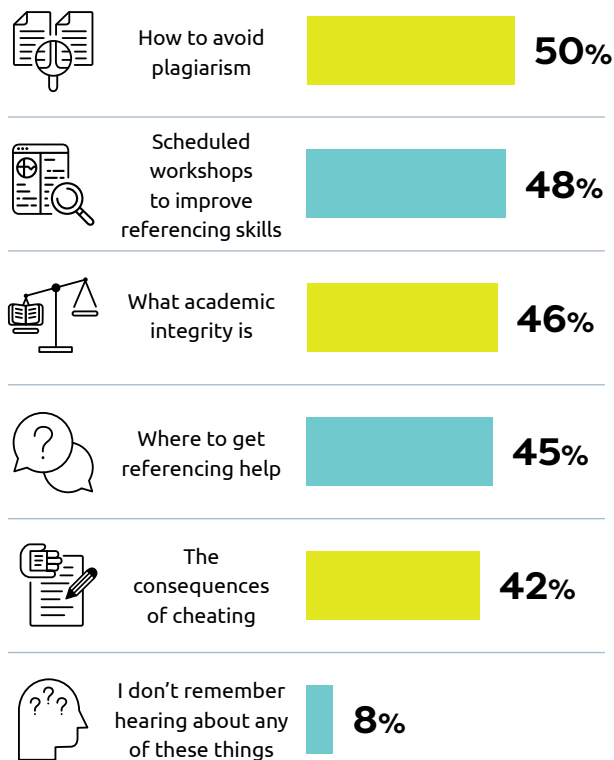
The term 'academic integrity' is widely used as a proxy for the conduct of students, in relation to authentic learning, and the avoidance of plagiarism and cheating. Without academic integrity, there can be no trust or reliance on the effectiveness, accuracy, or value of a university's teaching, learning, research, or public service activities. It is therefore key that students understand these issues. These findings shed light on the areas where educational institutions can focus their efforts to promote a deeper understanding of academic integrity among students.

UAE Results Academic Integrity



In the UAE, the top three issues with the highest awareness among students include how to avoid plagiarism (50%), scheduled workshops to improve inferencing skills (48%), and the definition of academic integrity (46%). Gender-wise, male students exhibit a higher level of awareness regarding referencing workshops, while female students show greater familiarity with the concept of avoiding plagiarism. Interestingly, there are no discernible differences in awareness between local and international student statuses.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AWARENESS

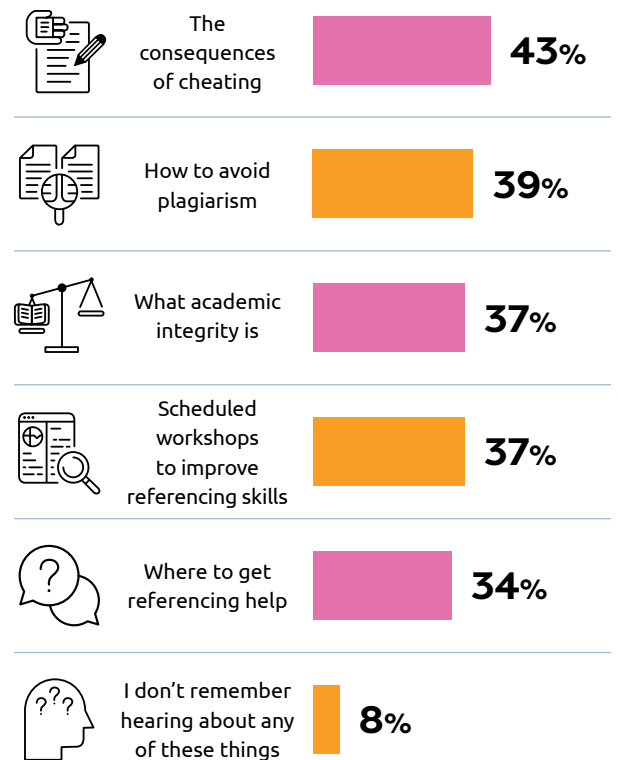


KSA Results Academic Integrity



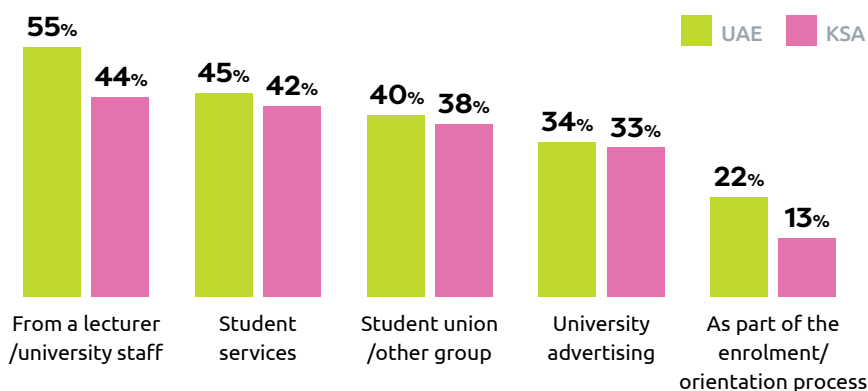
In KSA, the top 3 academic-integrity issues with the highest awareness are the consequences of cheating (43%), how to avoid plagiarism (39%) and what academic integrity is (37%). When examining age groups, it becomes apparent that 18-to-33-year-olds exhibit a greater familiarity with the consequences of cheating, while students over 33 years old demonstrate a stronger understanding of the definition of academic integrity.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AWARENESS



Q. Where did you hear about academic integrity?

In both countries surveyed, around half of the students learn about issues related to academic integrity from their lecturer or university staff, as reported by 55% of UAE students and 44% of KSA students. Comparatively, not many students (22% in UAE and 13% in KSA) learn about academic integrity issues as part of their orientation.



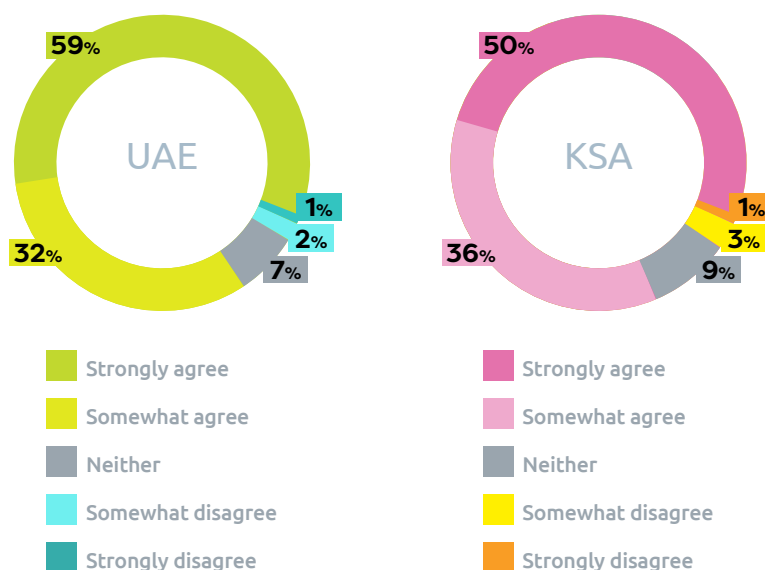
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: I feel confident that I can avoid plagiarism/unintentional cheating.

Not all incidences of plagiarism are rooted in dishonesty or the intention to cheat. Many are inadvertent. Often, students plagiarize because they're unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, in addition to errors like missed citations or incorrect referencing in their writing. Differences in language ability and cultural definitions of plagiarism may also make recognizing mistakes more challenging.

Unfortunately, even unintentional plagiarism can have a negative impact on academic performance and students' confidence in the long run. It doesn't reflect well on institutions either, as plagiarism can drive up academic violations and unsuccessful course completions.

Among the UAE and KSA students surveyed, an average of 89% agree that they're confidently able to avoid plagiarism/unintentional cheating. These data also shown no significant differences across the profile groups.

CONFIDENCE IN AVOIDING PLAGIARISM / UNINTENTIONAL CHEATING



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: I feel confident that I can approach my university any time about getting help with my assignment.

Building confidence can take time, as can building enough self-awareness to know when you need support. Universities can play a role in ensuring that there is a culture of support and openness among their

student cohorts. In this survey, nearly 90% feel confident that they can approach their university any time about getting help with their assignment, showing that this culture largely exists in the UAE and KSA today.

CONFIDENCE IN APPROACHING UNIVERSITY FOR HELP



Conclusion

At the conclusion of 2022 and into the 2023 academic year, the findings here show a snapshot of students' wellbeing in the Middle East regions of UAE and KSA.

The majority of Middle Eastern students feel confident about their ability to study and write in English. However, particularly in KSA, there is a notable difference in confidence levels between women (84%) and men (89%) in their English writing skills.

Most students are juggling work or other commitments with study, and half of the students in both UAE and KSA are experiencing a lot of stress, at least once a week. The causes of students' stress appear to change with age. Younger students tend to know less about their new environment, may not know where to turn for help, and may not have discovered the best study methods yet, while older students usually have more competing responsibilities and obligations. It is worth directing support and resources to both age groups, however, promoting the advantages differently, according to their needs.

The high stress levels and isolation while studying can lead to thoughts of quitting (around half of students admitted they considered dropping out), burnout from sacrificing sleep to study, or even other mental health issues, so universities should take preventative measures when it comes to delivering flexibility of learning and support.

A high majority of students feel that their university experience is meeting or



exceeding their expectations, across both regions. Whether they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with their university support, the reasons were similar: availability of staff members or lack thereof, 24/7 study support or lack thereof, and flexible or inflexible timetables.

Academic integrity, and Middle Eastern students' perceptions of others cheating is a pressing issue. With around half of students in both regions knowing someone who cheated in 2022, and awareness of

academic integrity issues at around 30-50%, there is an onus on the sector to raise the profile of academic integrity, potentially as part of orientation processes.

This first annual survey of Middle Eastern student wellbeing has shed some light on their preferences, attitudes, and needs. It provides an opportunity for the Higher Education sector in the region, and individual universities, to reflect on the experience they are delivering and how it can be improved into 2024.



Acknowledgments

Research report: Studiosity Australia and TGM Research

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