Professor of social services at Kuwait University (KU), Dr. Zakia Al-Hashemi, conducted a field study on the uses of mobile phones by students of the university. The survey population was 500 male and female students, equally, all of whom were Kuwaitis. The results indicated the factors, data related to phone use and reasons for using it. Based on this, the researcher made a number of recommendations. However, due to the importance of this topic, the researcher is currently studying distraction while driving, as well as driving skills. This is done through a self-evaluation of participants in the survey.

Factors and data

The population was aged 20-21, most of whom were single (87%) and enrolled in arts colleges (52.2%). The majority were full-time students (88.2%), and most of them used Nokia phones (86.2%). Three quarters of the population used the type of phone they were personally convinced of.

The study showed that 57.2% of the population used the mobile while on campus, and there was no specific time of day that they spoke through it. Also, they personally bore the costs of use.

It also indicated that three quarters of the population used the mobile while driving, despite being involved in accidents (90.8%), which is a cause for concern. Getting involved in a conversation, receiving and sending SMS messages can be a distraction for the driver, who may unknowingly speed up and cause a serious accident.

The researcher noted that 95% of all traffic accidents in Kuwait resulted from lack of concentration and distractions while driving, and the use of a mobile phone is mostly behind this.
She said this was a cause for concern, noting that traffic issues were social in the first degree and were of the minds of all Kuwaitis. Traffic accidents have become a danger that threatens us all.

**Uses**

The study showed that students used their mobile phones for “social exchange,” which reflects the importance of social communication for them. This is consolidated by two other researchers who conducted a study on relations between students and parents.

Second comes “need,” especially for female students, where the use of the mobile phone is linked to feelings of safety and liberty. Next comes “entertainment” for male students, but this fell behind the importance of using mobile phones by students for social exchange and for necessity.

**Recommendations**

The study called for conducting more field studies on used of mobile phones by students and polling their views on a regular basis over why they used phones.

It also stressed the need for greater emphasis on traffic issues through conducting more specialized studies on the hazards of using the mobile while driving and the distraction it causes – the mobile phone needs to be looked at, while the driver needs to concentrate on the road in order to avoid an accident that could cost the lives of innocent people.

Moreover, it underscored the importance of raising social awareness on the dangers of talking and driving, as well as the human and material losses and permanent handicaps that may result.

The study said that we, in Kuwait, were in need of awareness programs that were based on responsible character structure that was aware of the danger. It stressed the need for issuing laws that prohibited the use of mobile phones while driving, or restricted its use to emergencies and necessity. It noted that many countries realized the dangers of using mobile phones while driving and issuing laws that prevent its use on highways, as was the case in Britain.

**Conduct and skills**

The study also noted the need for further theoretical study of two important aspects of driving – driving behavior and a driver’s skills – as a measure of safe driving. Moreover, college students must be regarded as an important human resource – especially as they confess to using mobile phones while driving, which endangers them and others as well – in order to achieve social development. Remember that social advancement is not measured by what is consumed, but by what is achieved in the different walks of life.

It also noted the importance of realizing the value of time, while having patience and benefiting from the experiences of others. There is a need for raising awareness on health hazards of phone use, while brings about fatigue, headaches, tingling and heat in the ear and skin, as well as hypertension.

**Our say**

As a specialized magazine, we hope that many more researches and studies are conducted on the need for using mobile phones while driving. This needs to cover all segments of the society, and results must be taken into account in future planning. We look forward to an accident-free future, and this is not just for students. We wish you all safe driving.