

The Role of Dormitory Counseling in Educational Progress of the Students (Case Study: Islamic Azad Universities Regions 5 and 12)

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ABSTRACT

Counseling has been identified as one of influential factors on solving university students. At present, each of Iranian universities an higher education institutes possesses a counseling center that provides counseling service to the students. The current study aims at explanation of the dormitory counseling services on students' progress of regions 5 and 12 of Islamic Azad University in 2010. The theoretical framework consists of factors in field of counseling like improvement of the interpersonal relations in family, leaning or improvement of social skills, positive self-image, seeking job and job satisfaction. The statistical population of the study compromised of all male and female students of the regions 5 and 22 of Islamic Azad University with the total number of 261194 peoples. of this, 15167 subjects were living in dormitory which 480 students were selected through relative random stratified sampling method and Cochran formula. A questionnaire and interview used to collect the data. The researcher-made questionnaire (a five option Liker-like scale) through Cornbach's alpha achieved as 0.83. Additionally, the content validity was used to test the questionnaire reliability within which the questionnaire was confirmed by the experts. The data analysis also through SPSS software performed in two descriptive (frequency, percentile frequency, mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation coefficient, Shapiro-Wilk Test and path analysis) sections. The test results showed that providing counseling services in student centers of dormitories significantly correlate with educational progress of students.

KEY WORDS: counseling, student dormitories, educational progress, social skill

1.INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At present, most of researchers and scholars (Bishop and et al, 1998; Barry, 2002; Lapan and et al, 2002; Mayfield and et al, 1999) believe that student counseling centers contribute to helpful services to the student. Acquisition or/and increase of positive self-esteem, solving the job problems, improvement of family interactions, and learning and/or enhancement of social skills place among the most salient services. Progress in these areas leads definitely to reduction and resolving educational problems of the students and ultimately their academic achievements. In fact, the counseling services centers has been identified as a pivotal factor in preparation of relation and better educational progress as well as future well-beings of students (Rahimian, 1998, Rezazadeh & Yeganeh, 1999, Fazeli, 2002, and Hodges, 2002). Therefore, counseling centers are highly responsible . This responsibility however, becomes more sensitive as a society gets more complicated since in this conditions students experience greater stress and tension (National Organization for Youth ,2001, Borders, 2002; Ghaffarian, 1998; Gilbert, 1992). Considering the students' academic progress, counselors play such a critical role that a few scholars (Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers, 2001) have categorized it as a vital component of the education system.

Although, currently most of universities and higher education centers possess a student counseling center, it looks that some of these centers have not been welcomed by the students or their activities are unsuccessful. In spite of existence of reports on the quality of activities in these centers, less comprehensive and theoretically based studies have been carried out so far. Increased number of students and their tendency to immigrate from small towns to metropolitans , simultaneously have caused special social phenomena that requires wide counseling cervices. As a result, evaluation of counseling effect on educational progress of students seems crucial (Riazi, 2000, National Association for Youth ,2001). University students are a part of a society's elite expected to be active and creative and manage the social survival. On the other hand, students age limit bear certain psychological peculiarities and problems. Generally, the freshman students' experience a transition period in their life. In other words, they transfer from adolescence to primary adulthood (Lewinson, 1978, cited by Breck, 2006). Although students in this period are physically at their peak, from psychological preferences viewpoint, they seek independence from parents, entrance into adulthood period and attempt to create a permanent life structure in future (Nourani pour, 2000). Contrarily, Berck (2006) believed that university admission due to individual's exposure with a new life style and various job choices reinforce identity crisis.

In certain academic environment due to insufficient facilities and educational facilities the freshman students are facing with them makes tolerance of mental stress caused by entering into new condition more difficult.

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Similarly, it looks that because of cultural limitations are exposed on Iranian girls, at the onset of university entrance, they have lower adaptation abilities, and independence as well as higher dependency to family. Additionally, because of dense emotional aspects of girls' personality, the emotional gap derived from family separation is more touchable. This in turn sometimes leads to hasten reaction in compensating this gap and consequently making relationship with opposite sex. Negative consequences of such relationship finally put girls into trouble. Studies on mental disorders showed that compared to men, women are more vulnerable toward mental diseases like behavioral and stressful disorders (Kaplan & Sadouk,2003). Although most of universities use from students' counseling centers , they have not greatly welcomed by students or their activities are unsuccessful. However, increased number of students are willing to immigrate from small towns to large cities augments the importance of counseling services at universities (Fazeli, 2004). In spite of presence of centers providing mental health services at universities and allocation of funds for their activities, these centers are not as productive as it expected to be and several problems exist in this field as well. Also, researches that evaluate the function of these centers from the time of foundation till present have not been performed so far, therefore conducting the current study aims at identification of obstacles and failures as well as proposals for improvement of mental health conditions of this educated and vulnerable social class would be significant. Appropriate counseling and familiarizing the dorm students can protect them against harmful factors which in addition to knowing about the problems, students would be able to react logically. Through realization of traumatic and vulnerable factors and making prevention policies hinder students to suffer from damaging problems. To do this , students must undertake counseling sessions and counselors also need to teach students how to properly design their curriculum and take into consideration their life process after counseling sessions and guide them when they encounter with a problem. Therefore, regarding the above mentioned points, the current research is going to investigate on whether counseling centers at students' dormitories affect on educational progress of students in regions 5 and 12 of Islamic Azad University. As the second purpose, the study aims at exploring the students' probable problems as well as available solutions for increasing effectiveness. The research hypothesis is stated as "there is a relationship between providing services in students' counseling centers at dormitories and students' progress. Accordingly, the conceptual model of research is presented in Fig. 1.

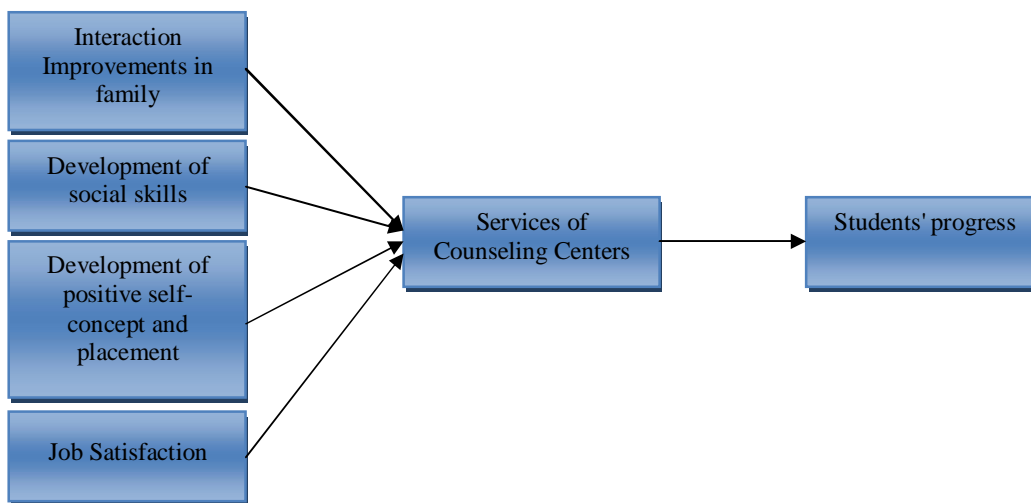


Figure1: Research conceptual model (made researcher)

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Various theories including psychoanalysis, individual theories, client-centered therapy, Gestalt theory and rational –therapy or cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) theory have been developed in field of counseling and psychotherapy. Since the cognitive-behavioral theory considers either behavioral or cognitive aspect of an individual, it is more practical than other theories (Ellis, 1973). Also, regarding the human's status and dignity, the client –centered theory dominant on other theories (Patterson,1986,Shafi Abadi, 1987). Therefore, the principal theoretical basis will be introduced in the following section. In 1955, Albert Ellis, a clinical psychology expert at University of Columbia introduced the theory of cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) theory. In establishment of his theory, Ellis benefited from humanistic philosophy and behavior therapy. Similar to Adler, Ellis considers an individual's emotional and behavioral reactions derived from his/her own attitudes and beliefs. Ellis believed that the source of personal problems could not be found in external events, though they are rooted in an individual's interpretation of that certain event or phenomenon (Ellis, 1973; Hawton et al,1993; Viney,1998). Therefore, based on this theory, when an individual think and behave rationally , he/she would be hopeful, efficient and capable.

Guided supportive services in most of time can help anxious people to review their deviant thinking or behavior as well as inappropriate emotions. As a result, the belief will be changed and becomes rational and this ultimately leads to logical thinking and mental health. Psychotherapy which principally take into consideration the

principles of CBT, in addition to making good relationships with the individual and unconditionally confirming him/her, remind the irrationality of the thoughts and feelings and through training new beliefs and thoughts intervenes in the process of treatment and encourage the person to replace the correct thoughts and beliefs with the incorrect ones (Gysbers, 2001; Tyler, 1969). Thanks to the current agreement upon CBT theory among psychologists, and its concordance with objectives of the present research, the theoretical framework of the study is planned in accordance with CBT theory. It is assumed that guided supportive services of students' counseling centers may be beneficial in removing or moderating family, social, mental and professional problems of students. Besides, by resolving or reducing such problems, the students' academic problems would be rapidly solved and they show higher educational progress. As Paulson et al (1999) found about the impact of counseling a psychotherapy in removing problems and students' difficulties, the most momentous effects of counseling supportive services and psychotherapy refer to facilitation of improvement of family interactions, acquisition or increase of social skills, aid to learning or enhancement of positive self-esteems and job search, as well as job satisfaction. Through decrease of removing these problems, the students' educational problems would be abort and academic progress would result.

2.1. Research background

Several different studies have been so far conducted on the effect of counseling and psychotherapy on modification of an individual's problems. The obtained results indicated that applicants reported counseling or psychotherapy influential on solving their problems (Sodaee, 1996m Shokri, 1996, Fazeli, 2002, Kiani, 1995, & Yaghoubi, 1997). According to the National Organization for Youth (2004) studies stated about the impact of counseling on solving youths' problems including educational problems, the counseling play a vital role in today's youths' life that is becomes day after day more important.

One of currently performed researches in this field which is in close connection with the theoretical model of the present study is the work of Paulson et al (1999). They carried a research on the impact of counseling and psychotherapy in moderating problems of a number of 18 years old over youths who at least had referred eleven times to counseling centers of one of Canadian universities and had been trained there. These youths believed that the most noteworthy supportive services and psychotherapy effects on them were as: 1) acceleration of improvement in family interactions, 2) learning or increase of social skills, 3) help to gaining a positive self-esteem, and 4) job-search and job satisfaction. According to Paulson et al (1999), their obtained results are in accordance with findings of other researchers. However, in generalizing the results, it should be remembered that the statistical population was only one university health center and the samples were limited.

A second study in this domain is the work of Kenneth and Roger. It is a type of empirical study in order to examine the quality of solving students' educational problems and academic progress thanks to providing counseling services in few American universities. The findings indicated that counseling plays a significant role in learning a positive self-esteem, enactment of social skills and students' progress. Resolving the problems leads to solving difficulties and consequently development of educational abilities.

Another research was performed by Feller (2003), job advisor of state university of Colorado, to investigate about the impact of counseling on self-esteem and job search . In his study, Feller found the inevitable impact of counseling on acquisition and improvement of positive self-esteem and discovering individuals' capabilities in planning for job-search and job satisfaction.

Considering the present issue, in Iran few disparate studies have been performed. Moreover, these studies have not followed a specific theoretical basis, their results are not consistent and sometime refute each other. For instance, Sodaee (1996) investigated about the effect of counseling (individual/group) in decrease of irrational attitudes of single boy students studying science in years 1995-1996 at Kermran University focusing on rational-emotive therapy. The obtained results indicated that group counseling is influential on certain irrational opinions as the personal counseling on some others. However, Kiani (1995) in his study about the effect of personal and group counseling methods on reduction of stress in bachelor girl students within years 1995-1996 at Tarbiat Moallem University of Tehran found out that either method are useful in decreasing the rate of certain mental disorders like anxiety and no significant difference observed among them.

Similar results were reported by Kaboli (1996) worked on the comparison of group and personal counseling methods in increase of positive self-esteem of single boy students studying engineering aged 18 to 24 years old at Shahroud University during years 1995-1996.

It is likelihood that factors like different population, sex or way of gathering data have caused disparities among the results. Since Shokri (1996) indicated that solving the problems of students referred to students' counseling center of Tarbiat Moallem University was dependent on age, sex, education, marital status, frequency of their referral to counseling and counseling method used by the counselor.

Other study surveyed by a number of Iranian researchers (Khazaeili et al, 1995, Reza zadeh & Yeganeh , 1999, Kafi et al , 1994, 1998, Molavi, 1998, Hormozi, 1997, and Yaghoubi, 1997) in order to measure students' mental health and their need to counseling at some of universities. The achieved results were mostly similar though in some part different. The common points in most of these surveys were , first between 3 to 12 % of students admitted at universities suffered from family , educational poor mental problems. Second, at the onset of academic period, an inconsiderable variance existed among local and aboriginal students from suffering mental disorders viewpoint. Though, after passing few semesters, their total score of mental test of local students was better than aboriginals. Finally, although girls are educationally better than boys, boys have less mental problems and therefore girls need more supportive counseling services.

3. METHODOLOGY

Due to the descriptive aspect nature of the data, a survey method was used as the research method. The present paper is of a relationship investigations (causal-correlation) were carried out in two descriptive and analytical levels. That is, first the responses were described and in this step two documentaries and field studies methods were enjoyed. in documentary method, for developing the theoretical framework of the study, previously held researches as well as experts' opinions were reviewed. In this regard and for performing exploratory research and attaining research indicators, the related professionals were interviewed. Then after, according to the theoretical basis of the research and the results of interviews, the study variables as the measurement instruments were prepared. The statistical population of the current article consisted of whole boy and girl students of regions 5 and 12 of Islamic Azad University in academic year 2010 which is a total number of 261194. From this number, 15167 subjects were living at dormitories (cited by Director of Student Services of Islamic Azad University). Through Cochran's formula the sample size was estimated.

$$n = \frac{Nt^2(p.q)}{Nd^2 + t^2(p.q)}$$

$$n = \frac{15167 * (1.96)^2 * (0.5 * 0.5)}{15167 * 0.0025 + (1.96)^2 * 0.25} = 478$$

For the formula, the population variance was determined in the highest level of 0.25. On the other hand, the least

level of confidence was defined as 0.95. Therefore, $\frac{Z_{\alpha}}{2}$ equals as 1.96. The rate of sampling error was measured 0.05. After computation, the sample size estimated about 480 subjects. The sampling method was relative random sampling that allowed the researchers to list the students living at both male and female dormitories and then randomly select them.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. results of demographic characteristic

In this study, 83.1% of participants were male and 14.8% of subjects were female, though 2.1% of participants did not responded the demographic questions. The most frequent age of testees was 20-25 years old. Also, 58.83% of students aged 20-25, 24.2% younger than 20, 14.2% from 25 to 30 and 3.3% older than 30 years old. About the respondents educational level, it could be said that most of them were bachelor students (94.8%), and 5.2% were master students.

4.2. test of hypothesis

Considering the research hypothesis "providing counseling services at student's centers correlates with student's educational progress", to examine the hypothesis the bivariate chi-square test and Kendall-tau b correlation coefficient were used to determine the relationship and strength of the relationship.

Table 1: Frequency distribution according to providing services in counseling centers and students progress

		students progress			sum
		High	Medium	Low	
providing services in counseling centers	High	79	62	5	146
	Medium	36	156	6	198
	Low	5	99	32	136
sum		120	317	43	480

Kendall's tau-b= 0.452 sig=0.000 df=4 X2=140/99

As Table (1) shows, the X2 =140.99 which means there is a strong statistical relationship between presenting counseling services at dormitories and students' educational progress with probability of 0.99 and error less than 0.000. On the other hands, the Kendall's tau-b value 0.452 approves that two research variables correlate appropriately. That is, more and better students' services are provided at student's counseling centers, students residing at dormitories show higher educational progress, and their academic problems are resolved. Table (2) presents the results.

Table 2: Correlation test of providing services in students counseling centers in accommodations and progress students

Pearson Correlation	0.482
Significance Level	0.000
Number	480

5.DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding the study results, it can be deduced that a significant relationship exists between providing services at student's counseling centers at dormitories and students' educational progress, development of universities and decrease of problems and deviations at dormitories. That is, if the act of counselors increase and have a comprehensive cooperation with students, students will be more educationally successful. The findings also indicated that student's counseling centers vary according to their professional space and human sources. They in fact perform principally different in case of their ability in solving rapidly increasing students' problems. The Pearson's correlation coefficient also showed that among four key factors of the conceptual model, a suitable amount of correlation happened. Furthermore, the results of regression operation and structural equation modeling (SEM) represented that student's counseling centers can in the mentioned four components of the theoretical model help students that this would lead to their educational progress. The most salient factor in the process of providing these services identified as aiding students' to acquire and increase their positive self-esteem.

Universities' counselors are mostly appointed from the professional faculty of the same university branch who possess special counseling capabilities in different fields that their surveillance would be in the following areas as:

- realization and analysis of problems and deducing materials
- identification and evaluation of innovative ideas
- recognition or feeling of all human emotions like sorrow, hope, sense of happiness, and intimacy
- holding speech sessions
- decision making at time of crisis
- making a proper communication with students and others
- developing knowledge of students and solving their possible problems

As the regulations of students' counseling centers at universities, one of students' services office of the central organization defines as monitoring performance of students; counseling centers carried on in two forms, 1) through reporting monthly performance, and 2) sending experts and supervisors of the office to university units in order to observe their performance and activity closely. Generally speaking, students' services office has to consider and solve the students' problems at dormitories. Monitoring and evaluation of dormitories conditions and problems is up to student's deputies of the university branches that in case of students' dissatisfaction, through sending experts and officers they examine the problem precisely. University counselors are mostly active in the following areas:

- helping students to identify and develop their talents, personal skills, reinforcement of decision –making ability for solving psychological problems
- psychoanalysis of intelligence and personality
- giving advice about educational progress and planning
- attempt to develop adaptation skills among students
- medical counseling
- giving advice about family problem, choosing mate, and sexual relationships
- counseling to increase self-confidence
 - counseling about marriage and divorce
- counseling about reduction of stress and anxiety
- providing group therapy services
- holding training speech about students' problems
- holding life skills classes
- counseling with parents, professors and authorities effective on the improvement of students' problems

Recommendations

1. According to the research findings, it is suggested that students have proper access to the standard educational materials like computer, internet and study room
2. all of educational facilities and required facilities of dormitories must be as much standard as possible that the student department of the university must monitor and supervise them.
3. there is no 24 hour counseling services at dormitories, thus it is suggested that the services performed based on a plan.
4. the counselors of counseling centers must attend at dormitories according to student department time schedule and the authority cooperation in specific days have been previously announced to students and resent group, and personal counseling or holding meetings.
5. outsourcing services a university are available only face –to face, through internet, by telephone and through post box.

6. since most of people for different reasons are undesired to refer student's centers , it is recommended then that the universities settle counselor two or three days a week at dormitories to encourage these students talk to counselor about their problem.

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