IRBAS www.irbas.academyirmbr.com April 2023
International Review of Basic and Applied Sciences Vol. 11 Issue.2

Guidance and Counselling for Students: A Need Assessment

Dr. FATIMA BATOOL
Department of Teacher Education
Faculty of Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
Email: fatima.batool@iiu.edu.pk

Dr. FATIMA MAQSOOD
Department of Teacher Education
Faculty of Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
Email: fatima.maqsood@iiu.edu.pk

Prof. Dr. SAMINA MALIK
Vice President, Female Campus
International Islamic University, Islamabad.
Email: samina.malik@iiu.edu.pk

Abstract

This study was conducted to explore educational, vocational, social, personal, and health related guidance & counseling needs of students and their perception about establishment of guidance and counseling service centers at higher education institutions of Islamabad. This study also explored gender and sector wise differences regarding guidance & counseling needs as well as establishment of guidance and counseling service centers. Study was based on quantitative survey and data were collected from 1743 students of BS program from four public and seven private universities. It was perceived that all the students significantly highlighted the need of guidance and counseling centers. Furthermore, the results established that irrespective of gender wise difference all students showed positive perception regarding the establishment of guidance and counseling service centers. Therefore, it is recommended that higher education authorities are required to take prompt initiative for ensuring ample guidance and counseling facilities for students to overcome their educational, vocational, social, personal, and health related problems.

Keywords: *Guidance and Counseling, Higher Education Institutions, Educational, Social, Personal, Health, Vocational, Needs.*

Introduction

The idea of Guidance and Counseling (G & C) is very old; it is common since the beginning of mankind on this earth. Human history proves that the need of guidance and counseling is always required particularly for young generation. Therefore, it is the responsibility of guardians that they must provide satisfactory assistance to their children/students (Landy, 2006). Additionally, relatively a large group of students in the educational institutions are facing the grab of delicate accommodation troubles. Isolation, sense of uncertainty, divergence with fellows and instructors, poor educational performance and awful company, all these entire factors generate nervousness and apprehension in the students. Keeping in view all these factors it can be said that there is dire need to take a firm and practical glance in educational institutions for findings solutions in order to facilitate learners. It is considered that educational institutions must take on this responsibility (Qurrat-ul-Ain & Khattak, 2012) as students spent most of their time at these institutions

and facilities related to guidance and counseling provided by educational institutions can contribute a lot in minimizing students' academic as well as non-academic problems.

Imposing one's opinion on another person is not called guidance; nor a process of making decisions for individuals rather it is a process of providing a ground by experts for taking initiatives by their own (Surbhi, 2017). Relatively, it is a help that is provided to students of every age by competent counselors for minimizing their problems by using their personal capacities (Hasnain, 2004). According to Gururani (2006), guidance is generally understood as control, training or path. Counseling can be used as an emotional procedure of serving a person to accomplish his tasks and intellectual stability. As these areas are essential to compose the utmost adjustment to the educational institutions and community. According to Mapfumo (2001) guidance means providing information to students for successful accomplishment of their tasks, while counseling means to support learners for improving their performance. Need for academic, personal, and vocational guidance has been highlighted by researchers (Keshf & Khanum, 2021; Crisan, Pavelea, & Ghimbulut, 2015) for dealing with stress as well as career related problems and conducting need assessment related studies is prerequisite for offering relevant facilities. Literature also indicated that it is a commonly used notion in several of the industrial states, their educational institutions provide counseling facilities (Watts & Sultana, 2004) to direct learners as well as experts but unfortunately this concept is not acknowledged in developing country like Pakistan.

Rationale and Statement of Problem

In Pakistan only few studies have been conducted on the topic of guidance and counseling and majority of them have been conducted at secondary level as providing guidance & counseling at this level have been proposed in national educational policy 2009. It has been explored by Zahid, Hooley, and Neary (2020) that there is scarcity of guidance and counseling facilities for students to enable them for handling their educational and career related issues. As compare to this in developed countries, much more attention is paid towards providing guidance and counseling at university level as at this level students face several issues such as time wastage, bad academic performance, complexity in handling test nervousness, dissatisfaction of study programs/institutions and poor career choices. Due to these reasons many universities are facing the problems of deteriorating standard and on-campus disturbance.

Keeping in view all these problems present study was conducted to explore guidance & counseling needs of students and perceptions of students about establishment of guidance and counseling service centers at higher education institutions of Islamabad. This study further explored gender (between male and female students) and sector wise (among the students of public and private universities) difference regarding guidance and counseling needs and establishment of guidance and counseling service centers

Significance and Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to those universities of Islamabad that have no guidance and counseling centers (information about guidance and counseling service centers were taken from the official websites of all universities). This study was further delimited to students of initial semesters (1^{st}, 2^{nd}, & $3^{rd)}$ of bachelor programs as it was observed that students of these semesters are facing adjustment and academic related problems.

Objective of the study

1. To Identify the students' needs regarding educational, vocational, social, personal and health guidance and counseling,
2. To explore the students' perception about the establishment of guidance and counseling service centers at higher education institutions,

3. To find out gender (between male and female students) and sector wise (among the students of public and private universities) differences regarding guidance and counseling needs and establishment of guidance and counseling service centers.

Literature Review

Transition of students from colleges to universities may lead students towards various social, personal and vocational problems that may be only handled by effective guidance and counseling facilities (Nyaga, 2013). Lack of awareness does not permit people to focus on the importance of guidance and counseling related services in educational setting, although there are few universities which are offering guidance and counseling facilities for their students, but these facilities must be available at all educational institutions to enable students to deal with their problems effectively (Singh, 2007). Guidance and counseling in the field of education is a basic requirement to motivate for participation in curricular and co-curricular activities (Barki, 2008). As Aristotle said a sound mind is only possible in sound body. It enables students to understand criterion of good health and for ensuring good health necessary steps need to be taken. It has been further explored by Nyaga (2013) that by getting adequate guidance and counseling facilities; students of private universities performed well as compare to students of public universities. And it has been highlighted by Keshf and Khanum (2021) that need for guidance and counseling may vary from individual to individual and from institution to institution but nearly all students required adequate guidance, awareness, as well as better information.

At higher education institutions guidance and counseling facilities serve two major purposes: first is career orientation and second is selection of courses for further studies (Santamaria & Watts, 2005). It has been reported by Lemesa (2018) that if universities want to ensure successful completion of degree programs by students and high enrolment then they must focus on provision of adequate guidance and counseling facilities for students. Alutu (2004) stated that guidance and counseling facilities at educational institutions may improve academic performance of students, diminish malpractices in examination, minimize drop out, improve deviant behavior and provide assistance to students in course as well as career selection. Mowbray et al. (2006) indicated that establishment of guidance and counseling service centers is very essential in educational institutions for supporting students, staff members as well as parents regarding educational services and available facilities.

At higher education institutions students are facing many stress and health issues and in these cases trained counselors can play an important role for ensuring secure and safe environment at campuses (Perry & Aaron, 2016). Effective guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions may prove very beneficial to support students for dealing with social, personal and career related problems (Day, 2004). For enhancing the quality of educational programs and improving students' success, guidance and counseling is considered as a most important factor in universities (Yifrashewa, 2011). Adequate funds may be allocated for endorsing guidance and counseling centers so that support may be provided to students for dealing with stress related issues (Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers, & McCabe, 2014). It has been also highlighted by Arslan and Kilinc (2019) that if students will be properly guided at educational institutions then their decision making ability related to academic and career related decisions may be maximized. Next section of this study describes methodology of data collection and analysis as well as it reports key findings and conclusions of study.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Population

This study was quantitative in nature and survey method for exploration of students' perceptions. All those public and privates universities of Islamabad in which facility of guidance & counseling do not exist

constituted the population of study. Four public and seven private universities and their 17,433 students of BS program were target population.

Sample of the Study

Stratified random sampling technique was employed for selecting universities as sample of study. Two strata were made which are "public" and "private". It was further divided into two strata "universities having the facilities of guidance and counseling programs" and "universities that not having the facility of guidance and counseling". And then finally those universities were selected as sample of study that has no guidance and counseling facility for their students. 1743 students of BS program from four public and seven private universities were selected by using stratified random sampling technique as sample for the study.

Instrument and Data Collection

This study was descriptive in nature and survey method was used for data collection. Self-developed five point Likert scale comprises 31 statements was used to collect data. For the improvement of research instrument, content validity of the instrument was determined on the basis of experts' opinion. Pilot testing was conducted for checking the reliability of students' questionnaire and calculated value of Cronbach alpha for the said questionnaire was found 0.89.

Table 1: Details of Questionnaire

Criteria	No of Statements
Education related guidance and counseling	5
Vocational guidance and counseling	5
Social guidance and counseling	7
Personal guidance and counseling	5
Health related guidance and counseling	4
Perception related to establishment of G & C centers	5
Total	31

Data Collection and Analysis

Researcher personally visited all sampled universities for data collection. Collected data were analyzed by calculating mean scores, percentages, and t-test. In addition, Oxford's (1990) range to understand mean scores on the 5-point Likert scale was used to construe the results:

1) Low need = 1.0 to 2.4,
2) Medium need = 2.5 to 3.4 and
3) High need = 3.5 to 5.0.

Results and Interpretation

For exploring age wise and sectors wise differences regarding guidance and counseling needs of students, independent sample t-test was conducted. On the basis of objectives, data analysis has been divided into six themes that are:

1. Students' need for educational guidance and counseling,
2. Students' need for vocational guidance and counseling,
3. Students' need for social guidance and counseling,
4. Students' need for personal guidance and counseling,

5. Students' need for health guidance and counseling and
6. Perception of students about establishment of guidance & counseling centers.

Detailed data analysis is as follows:

Table 2: Students' need for guidance and counseling

Category	Positive responses	Neutral	Negative responses	Cumulative Mean Scores
Educational	58%	17%	25%	17.76
Vocational	61%	19%	20%	18.36
Social	58%	21%	21%	25.41
Personal	53%	22%	25%	17.34
Health	65%	19%	16%	15.00

Results indicated that positive responses regarding educational guidance and counseling were 58% and rest of the responses were neutral and negative (i.e., 17% & 25%). Cumulative mean score for students' need of educational guidance and counseling was 17.76 that appear within the range of high need (17.5-25.0) which showed that students' need for educational guidance and counseling was high. Positive responses regarding vocational guidance and counseling were 61% and rest of the responses were neutral and negative (i.e., 19% & 20%). Cumulative mean score of students' need for vocational guidance and counseling was 18.36 that is within the range of high need (17.5-25.0) and showed that students' need for vocational guidance and counseling was high. Positive responses regarding social guidance and counseling were 58% and rest of the responses were neutral and negative (i.e., 21% & 21%). Cumulative mean for students' need for social guidance and counseling was 25.41 that appear within the range of high need (24.5-35.0) and showed that students' need for social guidance and counseling was high. Positive responses regarding personal guidance and counseling were 53% and rest of the responses were neutral and negative (i.e., 22% & 25%). Cumulative mean score of students' need for personal guidance and counseling was 17.34 that appear within the range of medium need (12.5-17.4) and showed that level of students' need for personal guidance and counseling was medium. Positive responses regarding health guidance and counseling were 65% and rest of the responses were neutral and negative (i.e., 19% & 16%). Cumulative mean score for health guidance and counseling is 15.00 that appear within the range of high need (13.5-20.0) and showed that students need for health guidance and counseling is high.

Table 3: Perception of students about establishment of guidance & counseling centers

Positive responses	Neutral	Negative responses	Cumulative Mean Scores
71%	18%	11%	19.36

Cumulative mean score for students' perception related to the benefits of guidance and counseling facilities was 19.36 that appear within the range of 17.5-25.0 and showed positive perception of students regarding the benefits of introducing guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions.

Table 4: Students 'need for guidance and counseling

Categories of needs	No of statement to assess needs	Cumulative Mean scores	Percentages of mean scores
Health	4	15.00	75.00%
Vocational	5	18.36	73.44%
Social	7	25.41	72.60%
Educational	5	17.76	71.04%
Personal	5	17.34	69.36%

Majority of the students perceived guidance and counseling facilities effective, supportive and helpful for solving their educational, vocational, personal, and social and health related problems. According to majority of students guidance and counseling facilities can play a crucial role in character building and personality development of students. Furthermore, these facilities can contribute a lot in keeping students away from unhealthy activities and in turn make them productive individuals. Cumulative mean scores and percentages of mean scores of students' needs for guidance and counseling facilities may be reflected by this graph in most understandable way that is as follows:

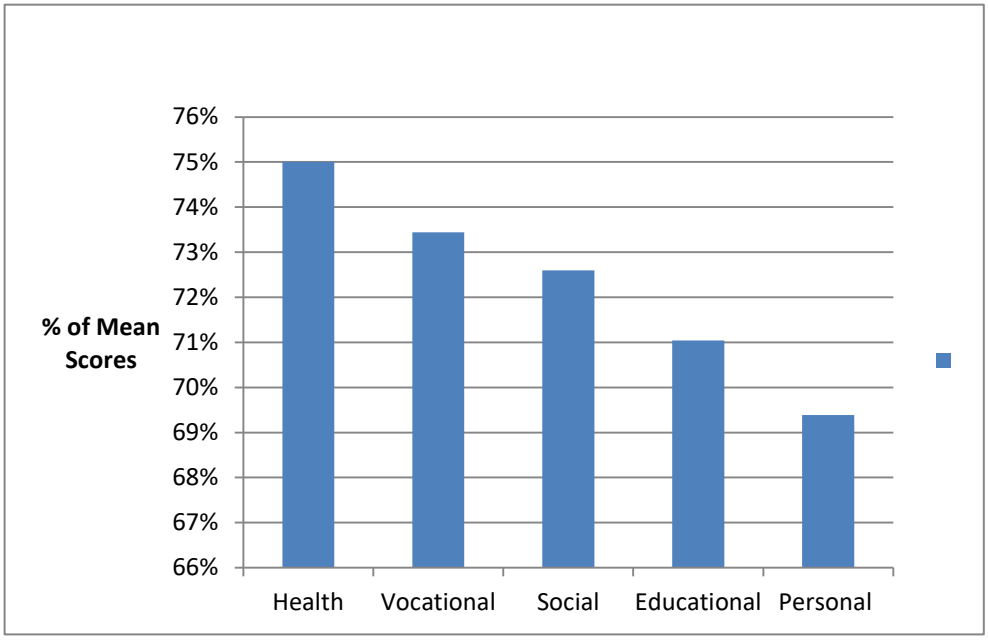

Figure 1: Need for Guidance and Counselling Facilities

Table 5: Gender wise difference regarding guidance and counseling needs

Category	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Educational	Male	1091	21.27	4.345	-.111	1741	.912
	Female	652	21.29	4.304			
Vocational	Male	1091	21.43	4.239	1.030	1741	.303
	Female	652	21.22	4.294			
Social	Male	1091	25.12	5.424	-2.917	1741	.004
	Female	652	25.89	5.169			
Personal	Male	1091	20.14	4.543	.301	1741	.763
	Female	652	20.08	4.445			
Health	Male	1091	17.64	3.760	-.713	1741	.476
	Female	652	17.77	3.317			

Note. Alpha value is 0.05

Independent sample test was used to explore gender wise and sector wise difference regarding guidance and counseling needs. Levene's test significance level is less than 0.05 and results reflected that there was no significant difference between male (M=21.27, SD=4.345) and female (M=21.29, SD=4.304) students' need regarding educational guidance and counseling t (1741) = -.111, p=.912. There was no significant difference between of male (M=21.43, SD=4.239) and female (M=21.22, SD=4.294) students' need regarding vocational guidance and counseling; t (1741) =- 1.030, p=.303. There was significant difference

between male (M=25.12, SD=5.424) and female (M=25.89, SD=5.169) students' need regarding social guidance and counseling; t (1741) = -2.917, p=.004. There was no significant difference between male (M=20.14, SD=4.543) and female (M=20.08, SD=4.445) students' need regarding personal guidance and counseling; t (1741) =.301, p=.763. There was no significant difference between male (M=17.64, SD=3.760) and female (M=17.77, SD=3.317) students' need regarding health guidance and counseling; t (1741) = -.713, p=.476.

Table 6: Gender wise difference regarding establishment of guidance and counseling service centers

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Perception about Establishment of G & C centers	Male	1091	19.21	3.620	-2.262	1741	.024
	Female	652	19.60	3.445			

Note. Alpha value is 0.05

There was significant difference between the perception of male (M=19.21, SD=3.620) and female (M=19.60, SD=3.445) students regarding the establishment of guidance and counseling service centers t (1741) = -2.262, p=.024.

Table 7: Sector wise difference regarding guidance and counseling needs

Category	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Educational	Public	1046	21.05	4.260	-2.639	1741	.008
	Private	697	21.61	4.412			
Vocational	Public	1046	21.13	4.182	-2.708	1741	.007
	Private	697	21.69	4.355			
Social	Public	1046	25.10	5.362	-3.042	1741	.002
	Private	697	25.89	5.279			
Personal	Public	1046	19.92	4.508	-2.230	1741	.026
	Private	697	20.41	4.490			
Health	Public	1046	17.54	3.730	-2.147	1741	.032
	Private	697	17.91	3.387			

Note. Alpha value is 0.05

Sector wise (between the students of public and private universities) difference was explored using independent sample t test and results indicated that there was significant difference between the need of public (M=21.05, SD=4.260) and private (M=21.61, SD=4.412) universities' students regarding educational guidance and counseling t (1741) = -2.639, p=.008. There was significant difference between the need of public (M=21.13, SD=4.182) and private (M=21.69, SD=4.355) universities' students regarding vocational guidance and counseling t (1741) = -2.708, p=.007. There was significant difference between the need of public (M=25.10, SD=5.362) and private (M=25.89, SD=5.279) universities' students regarding social guidance and counseling t (1741) = -3.042, p=.002.

There was significant difference between the need of public (M=19.92, SD=4.508) and private (M=20.41, SD=4.490) universities' students regarding personal guidance and counseling t (1741) = -2.230, p= .026. There was significant difference between the need of public (M=17.54, SD=3.730) and private (M=17.91, SD=3.387) universities' students regarding health guidance and counseling t (1741) = -2.147, p= .032.

Table 8: Sector wise difference regarding establishment of guidance and counseling service centers

Variable	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Perception about Establishment of G & C centers	Public	1046	19.24	3.676	-1.683	1741	.092
	Private	697	19.53	3.372			

Note. Alpha value is 0.05

There was no significant difference between the perception of public (M=19.24, SD=3.676) and private (M=19.53, SD=3.372) universities' students regarding the establishment of guidance and counseling service centers t (1741) = -1.683, p=.092.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the guidance and counseling needs of students at higher education institutions. This study also explored the perception of students about introducing guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions. Results of study showed students need for health guidance and counseling needs is very high. Students also need guidance and counseling facilities for solving their vocational, social, educational and personal at higher education institutions. Students positively perceived the establishment of guidance and counseling centers at higher education institutions. Results of present study are also supported by the results of study conducted by Nyaga (2013), who stated that guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions may support students to handle various social, personal and vocational problems. Results of the study are also in line with the findings of study conducted by Santamaria and Watts (2005) as they stated that guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions can play an important role in assisting students regarding their education and career related issues.

Findings of this study are also supported by the results of study conducted by Lamesa (2018) as it has been reported that for ensuring the good quality of higher education degree programs, guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions are incumbent. Study conducted by Alutu (2005) also provoked that guidance and counseling at higher education institutions can help students in making better academic and career related decisions. Findings of the study also aligned with the findings of study conducted by Perry and Aaron (2016) as they reported that guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions can help in minimizing students' health and stress elated issues. Day (2004) also provoked that guidance and counseling facilities at higher education institutions may help students to deal with social, personal and career related problems in an admirable way.

Results have been supported by Yelfashewa (2011) that for enhancing the quality of educational programs and improving students' success, at higher education institutions guidance and counseling facilities may play an important role. Likewise, Brunner et al. (2014) also stated that establishment of guidance and counseling centers at higher education institutions can provide assistance to students for dealing with stress related issues. In present research study, researcher explored that there was significant difference between the need of public and private universities' students regarding health guidance and counseling; these results are supported by the findings of a research study conducted by Keshf and Khanum (2021) as they stated that need for guidance and counseling may vary from institution to institution. Furthermore, it has been also indicated by Nyaga (2013) that by getting adequate guidance and counseling facilities; students of private universities performed well as compare to students of public universities. As this study was based on need assessment; it has been also described by Keshf and Khanum (2021) that need assessment is very necessary for offering relevant and ample facilities of guidance and counseling to students.

Conclusions

It was concluded that students responded that they need health guidance and counseling as a top priority. Students need for health guidance and counseling is their right as Aristotle (a renowned Greek philosopher) said that sound mind resides in sound body, until educational institutions will not pay attention towards providing health guidance and counseling facilities for their students successful educational process is difficult to ensure. It means that students can solve their social educational and personal problems to some extent with the help of their teachers, parents as well as of their friends but for the solution of their health related problems, they need guidance and counseling from experts. Students' second important need regarding guidance and counseling facilities is guidance and counseling for solving their career related problems and then gradually social, educational and personal problems.

Students showed positive perception regarding the benefits of guidance and counseling facilities and introduction of guidance and counseling at higher education institutions. Students declared that their teachers provide them enough time to discuss their educational problems but their teachers do not provide them enough time to discuss their vocational, personal and health related problems. All the students irrespective of gender reflected that they need educational, vocational, social; personal and heath related guidance and counseling. Need and perception of female students was high as compared to male students regarding social guidance and counseling and establishment of guidance and consulting service centers at higher education institutions. Need of private universities' students regarding educational, vocational, social, personal and health related guidance and counseling was high as compared to need of public universities' students. All the students irrespective of gender wise difference showed positive perception regarding the establishment of guidance and counseling service centers.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings, it was recommended that expert counselors/professional related to fields of medial, sociology, education, psychology and entrepreneurship may be hired for guidance and counseling service centers to facilitate students in order to find the solution of their health related, social, educational, personal and career related problems.

Results showed that there is dire need to introduce guidance and counseling facilities at higher education intuitions, for introducing these facilities, following steps may be taken: Higher education authorities may take initiative in this regard to ensure the availability of these services for supporting students, at higher education institutions training sessions and workshops related to the provision of guidance and counseling facilities may be arranged for faculty members so that they can take the responsibility of students' guidance and counseling till the establishment of proper guidance and counseling service centers and appointment of expert counselors, at higher education institutions, seminars and conference may be arranged to highlight the need and importance of guidance and counseling facilities for students of higher education.

Furthermore, as an initial step, at higher education institution every department can make a separate committee for the purpose of addressing guidance and counseling needs of students. Recommendation letters for the establishment of guidance and counseling facilities as well as detailed notes highlighting the issues being faced by students at higher education institutions may be sent to higher education commission by the administration department of all universities. Faculty members should play their part to create good environment by showing positive attitude towards students so that they may discuss with them all problems that are acting as barriers in way of their high performance without fear or hesitation. Institutional policies may be revised to adjust establishment of a separate guidance and counseling centers.

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