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The Importance of Psychological and Educational Counseling from the Students' Perspective

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the importance of Psychological and Educational Counseling Department at Al-Istiqlal University from the students' perspective. It also examines the nature of counseling services and the obstacles encountered in the counseling process. In order to achieve these objectives, questionnaire was distributed to a randomly selected sample of 150 students. The findings revealed that the Department of Psychological and Educational Counseling at Al-Istiqlal University is highly important. Besides, the students of Al-Istiqlal University need different counseling services. The study recommends that there is a need to pay more attention to psychological and educational counseling at Al-Istiqlal University through holding lectures and seminars that can help to enlighten the students on the importance of psychological and educational counseling.

Keywords: Psychological and Educational Counseling, Al-Istiqlal University, Counseling Services.

Introduction

Psychological and educational counseling refers to the way of helping individuals to tackle their problems, particularly behavioral problems, which may develop into serious behavioral disorders if they do not received any attention at the initial stages. In this case, the interest is shared between the counselor and the counselee by providing the necessary guidance to help the individual tackle and overcome any behavioral disorders that may occur (Kafafi, 1999).

This study focuses on the importance of Psychological and Educational counseling department at Al-Istiqlal University from the students' perspective. The main question was: How important is the Department of Psychological and Educational Counseling at Al-Istiqlal University from the students perspective?

The researcher hypothesized that there are no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ significance levels in the importance of Psychological and Educational Counseling Department at Al-Istiqlal University considering the variables of gender, specialization, and place of residence. The researcher used descriptive analytical method in the study, being the most suitable as it involves detailed description of the phenomenon. The study population consists of the first semester students of Al-Istiqlal University in 2017/2018 academic session in the Western Bank of Jericho city, Palestine, totaling 1098 students according to the statistics of Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education. A random sample of 150 students was selected from the university students. The researcher developed a questionnaire as data gathering instrument for the study by referring to the previous literature in education. For validity purpose, the questionnaire was sent to a group of experts in the fields of psychological and educational counseling and statistics. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each item. The values of the coefficient revealed high reliability and consistency of the research instrument.

Previous Studies

Al-Safiyah (2013) conducted a study to examine the students' educational needs in the Faculty of Education at Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University in the academic, psychological and social fields and their relation with the academic level. The study used a random sample of 160 female students in the Faculty of Education at all levels (1-4) and from various departments in the faculty. The findings showed that the academic field provides the counseling needs of the female students and became the most important among female students. The responses from the study sample indicated the urgent need to improve their academic achievement and reduce burdens and responsibilities.

Zaid (2010) conducted a study to test the effectiveness of a counseling program for the development of rational thinking among a sample of Ain Shams University students and its influence on the variables of anger and life satisfaction. The study used measured rational thinking, anger and life satisfaction, in addition to the counseling program which was designed according to Ellis' (1955) rational emotive behavior therapy applied to the participants in the experimental group. The results showed the effectiveness of the program in developing rational thinking, reducing the level of anger, and increasing the degree of life satisfaction among participants in the experimental group participating in the program compared with those in the control group.

Shaheen (2009) conducted a study to identify students' problems at Al-Quds Open University and the differences between these problems according to gender and age group variables. The study also evaluated the students' counseling needs to provide counseling services and support for students at the university in order to tackle the problems they face in the educational, social and psychological aspects. For this purpose, a research instrument was developed, containing 46 items administered to a random sample of 613. The results showed that the most significant problems facing by the students at Al-Quds Open University were unfavorable condition of examinations, unfavorable atmosphere for study, and failure of the academic supervisors to ease dealing with the curriculum and increase motivation required for the students.

A study conducted by Nuri (2007) aimed to identify the educational and psychological needs among students of Mosul University in order to identify the differences of moral significance in the counseling needs according to educational level and gender variables. The study population consisted of 422 students. The researchers developed a questionnaire to specifically measure the counseling needs after reviewing the previous educational literature and conducted a survey consisting of a sample of 50 students. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items, which were statistically validated using Fisher equation and Chi-square test. The study found that there were serious counseling needs including educational, psychological and social needs.

Al-Bardini (2006) conducted a study to identify the reality of educational counseling in government schools and the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza Governorate. The study also examined the most important problems facing educational counselors and appropriate solutions. The researcher developed a questionnaire consisting of 45 items. It included problems related to planning and training, administration, teaching staff, and working conditions for counselors. The variables were statistically analyzed using descriptive analytical method. One of the most important findings of the study was that there is agreement and disagreement in the significance of the problems facing educational and psychological counselors.

Comment on the Previous Studies and their Relation with the Present Study

The previous studies stressed the importance of the role of psychological and educational counseling in universities to tackle the problems and obstacles facing students. Some studies also revealed inadequate counseling services in universities and recommended the need to improve the services. This study is related to the previous studies because it focuses on the importance of educational counseling in universities and its role in tackling what the previous studies established regarding the difficulties continuously faced by students. This is to avoid psychological compatibility with themselves and the environment, which prevents their progress and creativity in many areas such as scientific, social and professional aspects. The relationship is also evident in the fact that this study was intended based on some previous studies on the presence of weaknesses in the psychological and social counseling centers and departments in universities and educational institutions. This indicates the need to examine the importance of the role of these departments and centers and identify their strengths and weaknesses with the aim of developing programs and making recommendations that will address the weaknesses and improve the strength.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this study are merged and interpreted according to the research questions and hypotheses, taking into consideration the scale used for each item in the questionnaire as follows.

Table 1: Scale for the questionnaire

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

Based on the above scale, the statistical mean value found in this study will be used to interpret the data as follows.

Table 2: Level indicator for the mean value

High	Medium	Low
3.66 and below	and 2.33-3.65	2.32 and above

Therefore, if the statistical mean value of the item is greater than or equal to 3.66, the level of perception is high. This means that the population sample agree with the statement to a great extent. If the mean of the mean value of the item is between 2.33 and 3.65, the level of perception is medium and if the mean value is 2.32 or below, the level of perception is low. The following is a detailed presentation of the findings and discussion.

Response to Question 1: "What is the importance of psychological and educational counseling department at Al-Istiqlal University?"

In responding to this question, the mean and standard deviations were calculated according to the perception of the population sample of the study for each statement on the importance of Psychological and Educational counseling department. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3:

Statistical mean values and standard deviations of the study sample's perceptions on the importance of psychological and educational counseling department.

SN	Grade	Statements	Mean value	Standard deviation	Level
1	1	The presence of psychological pressure among the university students.	4.44	.81	High
2	6	Psychological and educational counseling contributes to reducing the university students' problems	3.73	1.11	High
3	7	Psychological and educational counseling helps the students overcome the problems and obstacles they encounter in their university life.	3.72	1.02	High
4	3	Psychological and educational counseling provides an opportunity for students to disclose their problems.	4.15	.93	High
5	2	Psychological and educational counseling leads to construction of the students' social identity	4.20	.88	High
6	4	Psychological and educational counseling promotes the students' belonging and identity.	4.15	.98	High
7	5	Psychological and educational counseling contributes to the students' self-esteem	4.05	.97	High
-		Total	4.07	.64	High

Table 3 indicates that the mean value of the perceptions of the study sample on the importance of psychological and educational counseling was high, with a mean value of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 0.64. Item 1: "Psychological pressure among the university students" ranked first with a mean value of 4.44 and high level of agreement. Item 3: "Psychological and educational counseling helps the students overcome the problems and obstacles they encounter in their university life" ranked last in the items, with a mean value of 3.72 reflecting a high degree of agreement.

Response to Question 2: "What are the psychological and educational counseling services provided for students?"

In responding to this question, the mean and standard deviations were calculated according to the perception of the population sample of the study for each statement and the overall mean. The result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4:
 Statistical mean values and standard deviations of study sample’s perceptions on the counseling services provided for the students.

SN	Grade	Statements	Mean value	Standard deviation	Level
8	9	The counseling service provides professional models in the field of psychological guidance and counseling for the students.	3.32	1.25	Medium
9	4	The counseling service provides information in all areas of psychological and educational guidance in collaboration with relevant public institutions.	3.86	1.18	high
10	7	The counseling department studies and follows up the cases referred by the Department of Guidance and Counseling and take advantage of the specialized centers available in the community to provide counseling support for the students.	3.69	1.10	high
11	1	The counseling service is provided in a professional manner and provides appropriate educational guidance for the students and their guardians.	3.99	.98	high
12	6	It provides awareness programs for the family and the community on the importance of psychological and educational guidance and counseling through lectures, publications, and participation in various forms of media.	3.79	1.10	high
13	3	It provides a series of counseling programs related to crises, emergencies, counseling courses and late morning program.	3.90	1.03	high
14	5	It provides appropriate counseling services for psychological and social disagreement among them.	3.82	1.00	high
15	8	It employs certain curriculum subjects to develop their spirit of cooperation.	3.40	1.19	Medium
16	2	It provides of a range of counseling and psychological services related to social problems facing the students.	3.96	1.10	high
-		Total	3.74	.79	high

Table 4 shows that the overall mean of the study sample’s perceptions of the counseling services provided is high, with a mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 0.79. Item 11: “The counseling service is provided in a professional manner and provides appropriate educational guidance for the students and their guardians” ranked first with a mean score of 3.99 and high level of agreement. Meanwhile, item 8: “The counseling service provides professional models in the field of psychological guidance and counseling for the students” ranked last, with a mean score of 3.32 reflecting medium level of agreement.

Response to Question 3: “What are the obstacles to providing counseling services for the students?”

To address this question, the mean values and standard deviations were calculated according to the perception of the population sample of the study for each statement and the overall mean. The result is shown in Table 5.

Table 5:

Mean values and standard deviations of the study sample’s perceptions of the obstacles

SN	Grade	Statements	Mean value	Standard deviation	Level
17	3	Inability to follow the students’ problems due to their large numbers in the university.	4.10	.89	High
18	2	The students feel that there are barriers between them and the psychological and educational counselor at the university.	4.13	1.02	High
19	1	There is no specific and fixed time for the students’ visit to the psychological and educational counselor at the university.	4.16	.96	High
20	5	Lack of a specific and equipped place for the practice of students’ counseling in the university.	3.98	1.13	High
21	6	Lack of facilities for the counseling practice in the university.	3.96	1.10	High
22	7	Improper planning and continuous training of the psychological and educational counselors in the university.	3.82	1.00	High
23	4	Lack of exchange of experience among co-workers in the counseling service.	3.90	1.03	High
-		Total	3.99	.80	High

Table 4 indicates that the overall mean of the study sample’s perception of the obstacles facing the psychological and educational counseling was high, with a mean value of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 0.80. Item 19: “There is no specific and fixed time for the students’ visit to the psychological and educational counselor at the university” ranked first with a mean score of 4.16 and a high level of agreement. Meanwhile, item 22 “Improper planning and continuous training of the psychological and educational counselors in the university” ranked last among the items with a mean score of 3.82 reflecting a high level of agreement.

Response to the research hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ significance levels in the importance of Psychological and Educational Counseling Department at

Al-Istiqlal University considering the variables of gender, specialization, and place of residence from the students' perspective.

In responding to this hypothesis, Multivariate Analysis (Multiple ANOVA) was used, and the result is shown in Table 6.

Table 6:

Results of Multivariate Analysis for the differences among the study sample according to the variables of gender, specialization, and place of residence.

Source of variance	Total sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Root mean squares	P values	Significance level
Gender	.887	1	.887	2.053	.155
Place of residence	1.031	2	.515	1.192	.307
Specialization	2.690	6	.448	1.037	.405
Error	47.979	134	.432		
Total	2235.478	140			

* Statistically significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level

The information presented in Table 5 indicates that there are no statistically significant differences at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ significance level in the perceptions of the study sample on the importance of Psychological and Educational Counseling department at AL-Istiqlal University due to the demographic variables of gender and place of residence.

Findings and Discussion

The findings reported in this study are as follows.

1. The findings indicated that there the psychological and educational counseling department at Al-Istiqlal University is of great importance from the students' perspective with mean value of 4.07. This finding is attributed to the need of psychological and educational counseling for students at the university. Students at this level need counseling and guidance to identify the most important needs and obstacles facing them and acquire skills to face and overcome these obstacles, which can help them to enhance their psychological compatibility at the individual and societal level.

2. The study found that there are a variety of counseling services the students need at Al-Istiqlal University. The highest degree of service in the department is provision of professional models in the field of psychological guidance and counseling. This finding is attributed to the students' need for counseling services, which can greatly help them to recognize their potentials and abilities in order to improve their personal, educational, and scientific skills to serve and achieve their goals.

3. The findings showed that there are a number of obstacles facing the psychological and educational counseling of the students at Al-Istiqlal University, with a mean value of 3.99. This might be due to the low level of interest in psychological and educational counseling in the

university attributable to the lack of public culture on the subject of psychological guidance, which makes the students feel shy of going to the psychological and educational counselors and asking for help.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following.

1. There is a need for more attention to psychological and educational counseling at the Al-Istiqlal University through holding of lectures and seminars that can help to enlighten the students on the importance of psychological and educational counseling.
2. Provision of counseling and educational services to help the students develop their potentials and abilities through the application of tests, scientific and educational models to achieve their goal and objectives.
3. The university should deal with all the obstacles that hinder the implementation of psychological and educational counseling programs at the university by guiding and enlightening the students on the psychological and educational counseling.

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