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Investigating the Duties and Performance of Advisors from the Perspective of Students at Shahroud University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background: Providing guidance and counseling services by advisors provides students with appropriate solutions to solve problems, which increases insight, growth of social relationships, and greater efficiency of the educational and training system.

Objectives: This study was conducted to investigate the duties and performance of advisors from the perspective of students at Shahroud University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: This descriptive-analytical study was conducted using a stratified random sampling method on 336 students of Shahroud University of Medical Sciences in the academic year 2023 - 2024. To collect data, a demographic information checklist and a questionnaire on the duties and performance of consulting professors by Ebrahimi Pour et al. were used. After collection, the data were entered into SPSS18 and analyzed using descriptive and analytical statistics.

Results: In this study, a total of 336 people participated in the study, with the average age of the participants being 21.25 ± 1.70 years, most of the participants were female (59.8%), 201 were in the 18 - 21 age group (61%), 311 were single, 116 were in the medical field (34.5%), 122 were in the medical school (36.3%), 211 were in the undergraduate level (62.8%), 300 were in the full-time program (89.3%), 255 were non-native (75.9%), and the duration of counseling was between 0-12 months (87.5%). And except for age group and tasks (0.288), faculty and performance (0.027), section and performance (0.317), and the duration of counseling and tasks (0.071), there was no significant relationship, and there was a significant relationship between the other variables and the mean, standard deviation of the task score 73.27 ± 15.92 and the lowest score was 20 and the highest score was 100. In the case of performance, it was 27.38 ± 7.91 and the lowest score was 14 and the highest was 42.

Conclusions: Although most students were satisfied with the duties and performance of the advisors, it is still necessary to achieve the desired goals and maintain the conditions, and to provide various facilities to provide better advisory services.

Keywords: Duties, Performance, Professors, Advisor, Student

1. Background

Students need academic counseling and guidance during their studies to be empowered, successful, and prevent academic problems. Supporting, counseling, and guiding students during their studies is one of the most important tasks of universities (1). Counseling and guidance refer to a set of activities that help an individual overcome his or her problems and teach him or her to know himself or herself and understand his or her relationships with others. Academic counseling is a dynamic and purposeful relationship that is carried out based on the participation of the professor and the student and with methods that are in accordance with

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the student's needs. Student guidance is considered as one of the duties and responsibilities of university faculty members in article 44 of the employment regulations for faculty members of medical sciences universities. Student guidance and counseling is part of the duties of university faculty members in order to overcome preventable problems and the resulting academic decline (2). The advisor is usually a faculty member who, by mastering all educational, cultural, research, and counseling regulations and guidelines, provides guidance and counseling services as an important professional responsibility (3) and regularly evaluates the student in terms of academic progress and also assists him in matching his interests and abilities with the educational program at the university (4). Familiarizing the student with educational, research, student, and disciplinary regulations and rules, guiding and planning the curriculum, and advising students on the correct methods of study and encouraging them to participate in extracurricular scientific and cultural activities, and counseling in career fields and how to continue their education and prepare them to accept professional responsibility are other duties of the advisor (5). The advisor has a direct impact on student success by enhancing social and academic integration within the university environment. He or she helps the student successfully complete their educational program and provides them with the necessary opportunities for advancement (6). Since universities are responsible for educating and training students, the need for a program to provide academic advice and guidance to students at the university from the beginning of their studies to the achievement of their higher goals is quite evident (7). Despite the emphasis of the educational system and relevant regulations, advice suffers from an implementation gap and has not been seriously welcomed not only by students but also by advisors, making it difficult to achieve the important goal of supporting and guiding students (8). Research conducted on students' psychological, emotional, and social problems and some other limited researches raise the importance and necessity of serious and organized action in selecting advisors in order to overcome preventable problems and academic decline caused by them (9). In a study by Abhari et al. titled "investigating advisors from the perspective of medical students," they conducted a descriptive-analytical study on 231 people. The results showed that 7.71% of the students had few visits to their advisor. Only 13.4% of them had a good knowledge of how the advisor works. 87.1% of them agreed with the presence of a senior student next to the advisor. The level of satisfaction of most students with the performance of advisors at the university was unsatisfactory. The number of students' visits to advisors and the students' field of study were predictive factors of their level of satisfaction with the performance of advisors. The students in the study had very little knowledge of the duties and role of the advisor and were dissatisfied with the performance of their advisor. In this regard, establishing appropriate relationships between the student and the advisor is highly recommended (10). It is obvious that lack of guidance or provision of inadequate and inappropriate counseling not only disrupts the achievement of educational goals and professional skills of learners but also causes irreparable losses in terms of providing qualified human resources for society (11). Lack of counseling services not only has poor feedback on student education, but also causes dissatisfaction, insecurity, laziness, and more stress during the student's education. In addition, it may delay the achievement of educational and professional goals (12).

2. Objectives

The present study was conducted to investigate the views of students at Shahroud University of Medical Sciences regarding Counseling Professors.

3. Methods

This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study with a random stratified sampling method (each faculty was considered a stratum). We used the following formula to determine the sample size. Considering previous research (13), the error rate was 0.05 and the total sample size was 1800, so we estimated the sample size to be 320. We considered a dropout rate of 336 people, and we selected each faculty proportionally. Then, a series of entry and exit criteria were considered for the study, with the entry criteria being: (1) Not being a doctoral student or resident; (2) having completed at least two semesters of student education, and the exit criteria being: (1) Not completing the questionnaire, (2) being a guest at the university. And from each faculty, the number of samples will participate in the study, and there are a total of 336 participants. To collect data, a demographic information checklist was used, including information (age, gender, marital status, field of study, academic level, academic period, native status, duration

of receiving advice from the advisor) and the Ebrahimi Pour et al. questionnaire, the validity and reliability of which was confirmed in the study of Rahmani et al. (14) and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.96, which included 34 questions about the duties and performance of professors. The first part of this questionnaire included 20 questions about students' views on the duties of advisors, which were specified in the form of a six-point Likert scale (very little to very much with a score of 1 to 5, and the sum of the scores of the 20 questions of the questionnaire as the score of this section is a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 100). The questionnaire on students' views on the performance of advisors is presented in the form of 14 questions, and students indicate their level of agreement with each of the proposed functions on a three-point Likert scale (most of the time, sometimes, never). Scores from one to three were assigned to the options from completely disagree to completely agree. The sum of the scores of the 14 questions was considered as the score of this section, which was at least 14 and at most 42. Also, after collecting the data, it was entered into SPSS18 and for descriptive statistics analysis (mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage) and analytical statistics were used, which were Pearson's correlation to analyze the relationship between quantitative and quantitative variables, independent *t*-test to analyze the relationship between quantitative and qualitative variables, and ANOVA to analyze the relationship between quantitative and qualitative variables. The present study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Shahroud University of Medical Sciences with the code IR.SHMU.REC.1403.077. Ensuring the confidentiality of the subjects and the lack of influence on the care and treatment process were ethical considerations observed in the present study. The researchers also adhered to other provisions of the Declaration of Helsinki and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

4. Results

A total of 336 students participated in this study, with the mean age of participants being 21.25 ± 1.70 years. Most of the participants were female 201 (59.8%), 18 - 21 years old 205 (61%), single marital status 311 (92.6%), medical field (34.5%) 116, medical school 122 (36.3%), undergraduate degree 211 (62.8%), full-time course 300 (89.3%), non-native 255 (75.9%), and duration of Counseling use 294 (87.5%). (Table 1).

In this section, the results showed that there was no significant relationship except between age group and tasks (0.288), faculty and performance (0.027), section and performance (0.317), and duration of use of counseling and tasks (0.071), and there was a significant relationship between the remaining variables (Table 2).

Finally, the results showed that the mean and standard deviation of the task score was 73.27 ± 15.92, with the lowest score being 20 and the highest score being 100, and for performance it was 27.38 ± 7.91, with the lowest score being 14 and the highest being 42 (Table 3).

5. Discussion

The student period is when a student acquires the necessary preparation for professional activity and playing a role in society, and is usually accompanied by changes in life circumstances, distance from family, and the need to make important decisions. To overcome problems, follow the right path, and achieve the desired goal, the university has measures such as the advisor program to support students, and this study was conducted to examine the duties and performance of advisors from the perspective of students at Shahroud University of Medical Sciences. In this study, a total of 336 people participated, with the average age of the participants being 21.25 ± 1.70 years. Most of the participants were female (59.8%), 201 were in the 18 - 21 age group (61%), 311 were single, 116 were in the medical field (34.5%), 122 were in the medical school (36.3%), 211 were in the undergraduate level (62.8%), 300 were in the full-time program (89.3%), 255 were non-native (75.9%), and 294 were in the duration of Counseling (87.5%). There was no significant relationship between age group and tasks (0.288), school and performance (0.027), program and performance (0.317), and 294 were in the duration of counseling and tasks (0.071). There was a significant relationship between the other variables, and the mean and standard deviation of the task score was 73.27 ± 15.92, and the lowest score was 20. The highest score was 100, and for performance it was 27.38 ± 7.91, the lowest score was 14, and the highest was 42.

In the study by Rafiee et al., the results showed that the average performance score of the advisors was 78.53 with a standard deviation of 22.54, which is considered average. The performance of the advisors in different fields had a significant difference. There was no significant difference between the average performance

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Variables and Subgroup	No. (%)
Gender	
Male	135 (40.2)
Female	201 (59.8)
Age group	
18 - 21	205 (61)
22 - 24	115 (34.2)
24 <	16 (4.8)
Marital status	
Single	311 (92.6)
Married	25 (7.4)
Academic field	
Intelligence	23 (6.8)
Environmental health	17 (5.1)
Occupational health	26 (7.7)
Midwifery	6 (1.8)
Health information technology	23 (6.8)
Medicine	116 (34.5)
Laboratory sciences	20 (6)
Operating room	4 (1.2)
Nursing	101 (30.1)
Faculty	
Medicine	122 (36.3)
Nursing and midwifery	101 (30.1)
Paramedics	70 (20.8)
Health	43 (12.8)
Department	
Bachelor's degree	211 (62.8)
Master's degree	10 (3)
Phd	115 (34.2)
Course	
Daily	300 (89.3)
International	36 (10.7)
Native	
Native	81 (24.1)
Non-native	255 (75.9)
Duration of using the consultant	
0 - 12	294 (87.5)
13 - 24	31 (9.2)
24 <	11 (3.3)

score according to the gender of the professors and the gender of the students. The performance of the advisors of the same sex as the student was significantly higher compared to the cases of the opposite sex. They were satisfied with the existence of the advisor program at the university. The groups that had more visits had a higher frequency of satisfaction with the existence of the advisor program, but the average performance score of the advisors was lower. It is necessary to identify and remove the obstacles to the proper implementation of the advisor program. The necessary measures and incentives to allocate sufficient time by the professors and also strategies for greater student participation in choosing the supervisor, the possibility of the advisor and the student being of the same sex, and the use of a senior student alongside the advisor should be considered. It is necessary to conduct a performance

Table 2. Relationship Between Demographic Characteristics and the Duties and Performance of Advisors

Demographic variables	Tasks	Function
Gender	0.001 [a]	0.001
Age group	0.288 [b]	0.003 [b]
Marital status	0.001 [a]	0.001 [a]
Major	0.033 [c]	0.007 [c]
Faculty	0.003 [c]	0.027 [c]
Section	0.001 [c]	0.317 [c]
Course	0.001 [a]	0.001 [a]
Native	0.001 [a]	0.001 [a]
Duration of use of counselor	0.071 [b]	0.001 [b]

[a] *t*-test.
[b] Pearson.
[c] ANOVA.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Duties and Performance of Advisor Professors

Variables	Mean ± SD	Minimum- Maximum
Tasks	73.27 ± 15.92	20 - 100
Performance	27.38 ± 7.91	14 - 42

review of the program with a standard and uniform tool by the ministry of health in affiliated universities (13).

In another study by Rahmani et al., in a descriptive-analytical study, they concluded that more than half of the students agreed with the current duties of the advisor, and from the students' perspective, "providing guidance on career and continuing education", "assessing the student's current academic status" were the most important duties, and "consulting the advisor with other experts about existing problems" and "introducing the student to relevant units to meet his needs" were the least important duties of the advisor. The performance of the advisor was considered good by 31.6% of the students. The results of this study showed that in general, students had a good view of the duties of the advisor, which indicates the existence of appropriate potential for improving student counseling. According to the results of professors' performance, there is a need to make fundamental changes in the academic counseling process of supervising professors (14), which is consistent with the studies in question, which emphasize the importance of the issue of professor advisors in universities and paying attention to them.

In a study conducted by Rafiee et al., the results showed that most of the samples were aged 20 or 21 (48.2%), 77.2% were female, and 86.6% were single. The performance criteria that were most desirable among students were: "Availability of the advisor during the announced hours according to the schedule" (47.1% good or excellent) - the advisor's knowledge and understanding of the student's field of study (43.5%) - the appropriateness of the time and place for the advisor to provide advice (41.7%). However, the performance criteria that have the highest dissatisfaction and undesirability among students are: "Encouraging students by carrying out extracurricular scientific and cultural activities in the field of correct study and planning methods" (43.5% unfavorable or completely unfavorable) - "ability to take appropriate measures for vulnerable students" (42%) - "organizing group meetings to explain to students the duties of the advisor, planning related to educational and student affairs" (41.7%). And in this study, although the opinion of more than one third of the students in general towards their advisor for academic counseling and guidance was good or excellent, in the field of providing a plan for students' educational progress, as well as psychological, emotional and social problems, as well as

discovering and examining students with academic failure, efforts and development of effective solutions are needed (13).

Also, in a study at an American university, 62.3% of students were satisfied with their relationship with their advisors (15), and in the study by Moulana et al., only 1.3% of students were very satisfied with their advisors' activities (16). Most studies are consistent with our study, but the lack of consistency in some studies depends on the location of the study, the facilities of that university, and the importance of the advisor at that university. One of the strengths of this study is the lack of such a study at the university level, and one of its limitations is the large number of questions in cyberspace, which most students did not cooperate with. It is suggested that, considering the role of professors in helping students grow and the importance of the advisor project in achieving the goal, other research should be conducted in other statistical communities and with qualitative and quantitative methods based on the limitations of the research. The present study should also be conducted in other medical universities so that, using the findings, more coherent planning can be carried out in the educational vice-chancellor of universities and the ministry of health to promote the advisor project in the country.

According to the results of this study, it is obvious that Shahroud medical students had a good view of the advisor. Considering the impact of the presence of advisors and their provision of guidance and counseling services in the academic life process of students, it is necessary to continue to identify problems and solutions to them from the perspective of students and professors, and the results can be used to improve the project implementation process.

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Footnotes

Authors' Contribution: Study concept and design: S. P. and O. G.; Analysis and interpretation of data: M. D. and SAH. T.; Drafting of the manuscript: N. J.; Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: F. D., O. G., and S. P.; Statistical analysis: M. D.

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Data Availability: The Data presented in this study are uploaded during submission as a supplementary file and are openly available for readers upon request.

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