

Received: 17 July 2024, Accepted: 05 August 2024

Exploring the Holistic Impact of Counseling Services on Academic Development in University Students

Dr. Haleema Akbar¹, Anum Irshad² Sumbal³

1.Assistant Professor Department of Education, Women University Mardan)

drhaleemaakbar@wumardan.edu.pk

2.Ph.D. Scholar, Institute of Education &Research, UOP)

Anumirshad161@gmail.com

3M.S., Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar)

Sumbal.afsar45@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to 'to explore the importance of Counseling Services for Educational development at University level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. This research is quantitative in nature. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire from sample students; the objective of study is to sought information about students' perceptions about the importance of counselling services for educational development. The finding of this research show that every student needs educational counseling such as, how to improve their writing, reading and speaking skills, best career opportunity, to identify the challenges which they are facing in university. It is recommended that All parties including the education minister, secretary education, vice-chancellors of universities, head of the departments, instructor, counselors and even parents are required to perform their dominant role in its own way/dimension in the counseling of students.

Keywords:Counseling, Student, Educational development, University and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Introduction

The success and well-being of university students in the ever-changing world of higher education go much beyond the conventional measures of academic performance. Counseling services have a crucial role in influencing students' educational paths as educational institutions work to create environments that promote holistic development (Simbolon, & Purba, 2022). This study aims to explore the complex web of ways that counseling services have a significant and all-encompassing influence on higher education institution students' academic growth. According to

Zia, A., Bashir, I., & Hassan, R. (2024) academic challenges, personal development, and navigating various social landscapes are all aspects of the modern university experience. Although academic excellence is still a top priority, there is growing awareness of the connection between mental, emotional, and academic health. Traditionally marketed as a tool for mental health issues, counseling services are becoming more widely acknowledged for their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the wider range of student development (Ali, West, Teich, Lynch, Mutter, & Dubenitz, 2019).

Zahid, Hooley, & Neary, 2020 and Kyauta, Shariff, & Garba, (2018) says that in all educational institutions around the country, counseling services are lacking component, particularly in universities. There are many obstacles that every university student must overcome in order to advance their studies. Uncontrollable issues arise for young adults when adolescents fulfill the demands of academics and the expectations of parents and teachers (Kushendar, & Maba, 2022). When they are required to choose a major, subject, and career at the B.S. level, they regrettably choose a field and career that are inappropriate for their interests and personalities. The counselling program's contribution to enhancing students' self-reflection and facilitating improved academic performance. For this reason, the students require appropriate counselling in order to grow academically.

The goal of this study is to go beyond the conventional paradigm, which only considers counseling services from the perspective of crisis intervention. Rather, it seeks to investigate how these services, when used effectively, might be essential parts of a proactive strategy to promote academic success. This study intends to clarify the complex ways counseling services affect university students' entire educational growth by taking into account their holistic demands, which include not only academic difficulties but also personal and interpersonal aspects.

As we begin this investigation, we recognize that the higher education landscape is changing, characterized by a greater understanding of the varied requirements and backgrounds of students (Batool, Z., & Qureshi, R. H. 2007). Universities dedicated to offering complete support systems that enable students to prosper academically and psychologically must have a thorough understanding of the complex relationship between counseling services and academic success

(Gueldner, Feuerborn, & Merrell, 2020). This study aims to provide insightful information that can guide practices, policies, and the continuous development of counseling services in higher education thorough inquiry and analysis. Objective of the study is that to pursued students' perceptions about the importance and need of counselling services for educational development.

Literature Review

Recent scholarly discourse has focused more on the relationship between academic progress and counseling services in the university setting. Researchers have examined a number of factors that contribute to the comprehensive effect of counseling services on university students' academic journeys, revealing a complex link. According to research there is a substantial association between high levels of stress and poor academic performance (Azizi, Soroush, & Khatony, (2019). Reddy, Menon, & Thattil, 2018). Academic stress is a common worry among university students. It has been shown that counseling services are crucial in offering coping skills and stress-reduction techniques, which in turn improves academic performance (Kassymova, Kosherbayeva, Sangilbayev, & Schachl, (2018, September and Eperthener, & Miller, 2022).

The perception of counseling services has shifted from reactive crisis management to proactive mental health care, according to recent literature. Counseling services are being positioned as important contributors to students' general well-being and, in turn, their academic success as universities recognize the value of early intervention and prevention efforts (Eperthener, & Miller, 2022 and Vetrivel, Saravanan, Maheswari, & Arun, 2024).. There is increasing interest in the relationship between counseling services and student retention. According to Al-Abyadh, M. H. A., & Abdel Azeem, H. A. H. (2022), student's capacity to persevere and achieve is greatly influenced by elements other than academic proficiency, such as social and emotional health. Potential contributors to these non-academic elements include counseling services. The literature highlights the significance of cultural competence in counseling services, especially in light of the growing variety of university student populations. Understanding and addressing cultural nuances are crucial for the effectiveness of counseling interventions, ensuring that they resonate with the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students (Sue, Neville, & Smith, L. (2022).

Counseling has also been demonstrated to support cognitive development by improving students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are crucial for success in the classroom(Beck, 2020). According to studies like Chuang, N. K., Lee, P. C., &Kwok, (2020), counseling helps students reflect on their experiences and make wise decisions, which promotes intellectual growth in addition to emotional well-beingAccording to this all-encompassing approach to student development, students who regularly receive counseling frequently exhibit enhanced focus, better time management, and higher academic achievement. It also highlights the link between emotional well-being and academic advancement.

Researchers have investigated the relationship between academic achievement and personal growth, looking at traits including self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and resilience (Năstasă, Cocoradă, Vorovencii, I., &Curtu, (2022) and MacCann, C., Jiang, Y., Brown, L. E., Double, K. S., Bucich, &Minbashian, (2020).Counseling services are viewed as possible personal development facilitators, offering kids a safe space to improve these vital facets of their overall development.

This study aims to contribute by providing a nuanced view of how counseling services, when strategically deployed, can have a comprehensive impact on university students' academic journeys, since the literature highlights the complex relationship between counseling services and academic development. This study intends to clarify the various ways that counseling services support students' overall educational development in a university setting by combining and extending current information.

Methodology

The study was descriptive and quantitative in nature therefore a survey plan was used for this study.Population of this study was BS students, the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.Questionnaire was used for data collection. The collected data was fed to the SPSS software version 23.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents analysis of the data which is collected through questionnaire from sample population about the need for and importance of educational counseling at university level.

Need for and importance of educational counseling at university level.

I need to knowing; what educational options are available to me when I graduate	274	1.00	4.00	1.3467	0.78461
I need to know what best career option for me.	274	1.00	3.00	1.1241	0.40046
I need to understand what courses, I should take to get a proper program that I like	274	1.00	2.00	1.1861	0.38992
I need to understand the challenges that students have in university.	274	1.00	2.00	1.2482	0.43274
I need to know, how to complete my BS successfully.	274	1.00	4.00	1.4270	0.74872
I need to know, how to improve and develop my knowledge and study skills.	274	1.00	3.00	1.2737	0.51523
I need to know, how to reduce my exam and test anxiety(stress)	274	1.00	4.00	1.2153	0.50017
I need to know where to go to get help when I have a problem concerning my studies.	274	1.00	2.00	1.2591	0.43896
I need to know, how to develop a career plan.	274	1.00	3.00	1.2080	0.53158
I need to develop skills that will help me excel in a discipline that I like to take.	274	1.00	4.00	1.3613	0.66638

4.1 I need to know; what educational options are available to me when I graduate.

Table 4.14 shows that 79.9 percent are strongly agree and 10.2 percent are agreed while 4.7 percent disagree and 4.4 percent respondents are showing neutral response that they want to know about the educational options availability after graduation. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they need to know that how to improve my writing, reading and speaking skills. Figure 4.11 shows the same results.

Table 4.2: I need to know; what educational options are available to me when I graduate

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	219	79.9	79.9	442.934 (0.0000)
Agree	28	10.2	90.1	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14	5.1	95.3	
Disagree	13	4.7	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.2 I need to know what best career option for me.

Table 4.15 shows that 90.1 percent are strongly agree and 7.3 percent are agree while 2.6 percent respondents are showing neutral response that they want to know about the best career opportunity. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about the best career opportunity. Figure 4.12 shows the same results.

Table 4. 3: I need to know what best career option for me.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	247	90.1	90.1	398.898 (0.0000)
Agree	20	7.3	97.4	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	2.6	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.3. I need to understand what courses, I should take to get a proper program that I like

Table 4.16 shows that 81.4 percent are strongly agree and 18.6 percent are agree that they need to understand about the selection of most suitable program. The chi-square value is shows

that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they need to understand about the selection of most suitable program. Figure 4.13 shows the same results.

Table 4. 4: I need to understand what courses; I should take to get a proper program that I like

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	223	81.4	81.4	107.971 (0.0000)
Agree	51	18.6	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.4. I need to understand the challenges that students have in university.

Table 4.17 shows that 75.2 percent are strongly agree and 24.8 percent are agreeing that they need to know about the challenges of the university students. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they need to know about the challenges of the university students. Figure 4.14 shows the same results.

Table 4. 5: I need to understand the challenges that students have in university.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	206	75.2	75.2	69.504 (0.0000)
Agree	68	24.8	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.5. I need to know, how to complete my BS successfully.

Table 4.18 shows that 70.1 percent are strongly agree and 20.1 percent are agree while 2.9 percent are disagree and 6.9 percent respondents are showing neutral response that they need to know about the successful completion of BS degree program. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about the best career opportunity. Figure 4.15 shows the same results.

Table 4. 6: I need to know, how to complete my BS successfully.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	192	70.1	70.1	314.526 (0.0000)
Agree	55	20.1	90.1	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19	6.9	97.1	
Disagree	8	2.9	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.6.I need to know, how to improve and develop my knowledge and study skills.

Table 4.19 shows that 75.9 percent are strongly agree and 20.8 percent are agree while 3.3 percent respondents are showing neutral response about to know about that how to develop and improve knowledge and skills. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about that how to develop and improve knowledge and skills. Figure 4.16 shows the same results.

Table 4. 7: I need to know, how to improve and develop my knowledge and study skills.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	208	75.9	75.9	236.153 (0.0000)
Agree	57	20.8	96.7	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	3.3	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.7.I need to know, how to reduce my exam and test anxiety (stress)

Table 4.20 shows that 82.1 percent are strongly agree and 14.6 percent are agree while 0.4 percent are disagree 2.9 percent respondents are showing neutral response about to know about that how to reduce exams and tests stress. The chi-square value is shows that the observed

outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about that how to reduce exams and tests stress. Figure 4.17 shows the same results.

Table 4. 8: I need to know, how to reduce my exam and test anxiety(stress).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	225	82.1	82.1	489.358 (0.0000)
Agree	40	14.6	96.7	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	2.9	99.6	
Disagree	1	0.4	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.8.I need to know where to go to get help when I have a problem concerning my studies.

Table 4.21 shows that 74.1 percent are strongly agree and 25.9 percent are agree about to know about that how to reduce exams and tests stress. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about that how to reduce exams and tests stress. Figure 4.18 shows the same results.

Table 4. 9: I need to know where to go to get help when I have a problem concerning mystudies.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	203	74.1	74.1	63.591 (0.0000)
Agree	71	25.9	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.9.I need to know, how to develop a career plan.

Table 4.22 shows that 85.0 percent are strongly agree and 9.1 percent are agree while 5.8 percent respondents are showing neutral response about to know about that how to develop a career plan. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they want to know about that how to develop a career plan. Figure 4.19 shows the same results.

Table 4. 10: I need to know, how to develop a career plan.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	233	85.0	85.0	330.051 (0.0000)
Agree	25	9.1	94.2	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16	5.8	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.10. I need to develop skills that will help me excel in a discipline that I like to take.

Table 4.23 shows that 73 percent are strongly agree and 19.3 percent are agree while 1.5 percent are disagree 6.2 percent respondents are showing neutral response needs to develop skills that will help his/her to the discipline. The chi-square value is shows that the observed outcomes are different from the expected outcomes. Therefore, they need to develop skills that will help his/her to the discipline. Figure 4.20 shows the same results.

Table 4. 11: I need to develop skills that will help me excel in a discipline that I like to take.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Chi-Square (p-value)
Strongly Agree	200	73.0	73.0	355.401 (0.0000)
Agree	53	19.3	92.3	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17	6.2	98.5	
Disagree	4	1.5	100.0	
Total	274	100.0		

4.11. Reliability Statistics

Table 4.12 shows the Reliability statistics, that the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.973 which is greater than the threshold value 0.7. Therefore, this portion of the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 4. 12:Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.973	10

4.12. Analysis of Variance

Table 4.25 shows the results of ANOVA which shows that the F-statistic value is significant at 1% significance level. Therefore, this study rejects the null hypotheses and concluded that the means are different.

Table 4. 13:ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		685.236	273	2.510	33.923	0.0000
Within People	Between Items	20.381	9	2.265		
	Residual	164.019	2457	0.067		
	Total	184.400	2466	0.075		
Total		869.636	2739	0.318		
Grand Mean = 1.2650						

Findings

According to the report, university students indicate a considerable demand for educational counselling in a number of important areas. 79.9% of students expressed a need to learn more about their post-graduation educational possibilities. Likewise, there is an urgent need for career counselling services, as 90.1% of students strongly agreed that they require assistance in choosing the best job possibilities. In terms of academic preparation, 81.4% of respondents stated

that they needed to know which courses to take to match their selected programs, showing a lack of course selection assistance.

Furthermore, a significant number of students (75.2%) expressed a need for assistance in overcoming both academic and personal obstacles, feeling the need to have a better understanding of the difficulties they would encounter at university. Over 70% of students sought guidance on how to properly complete their Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees, showing that many are concerned about achieving academic requirements. 75.9% of students indicated that they wanted to increase their knowledge and abilities in order to do better academically, highlighting the need of improving study techniques. Additionally, 82.1% of students said they needed assistance regulating their stress during tests and examinations, showing that exam anxiety was a serious worry. Finally, a sizable majority stated that they needed assistance in creating a clear career goal (85%) and in knowing where to turn for support when they were having difficulties with their studies (74.1%).

Conclusion

The results show that comprehensive educational counselling services are in high demand at the university level. Students feel unclear about how to overcome the obstacles they encounter in their academic journeys as well as about their educational and career options. Career planning, academic course selection, skill development, and mental health support, particularly with relation to test anxiety—all demonstrate the need for systematic assistance. The responses' consistency demonstrates that students need more easily accessible and customized assistance in order to succeed throughout in their academic journey and become ready for their future life challenges and career.

Recommendations

To address these findings, higher education institutions should explore establishing comprehensive educational counseling programs that provide students with tailored support. Career development programs should be introduced to assist students in exploring career opportunities, developing effective career plans, and connecting their academic choices with their professional goals. Furthermore, improving academic guidance and counselling systems is critical for ensuring that students receive clear assistance on course choices and program requirements. Workshops on study skills, time management, and stress reduction may help

students manage academic expectations more efficiently. The availability of support services including career counseling, mental health counseling, and academic advising should be made more widely known by universities. This could be achieved through student orientation programs, digital platforms, and information campaigns. Finally, increasing chances for skill development, both academic and professional, would guarantee that students have the tools they need to succeed in their chosen subjects and careers. By meeting these needs, institutions can help their students achieve greater academic and personal success.

References

- Al-Abyadh, M. H. A., & Abdel Azeem, H. A. H. (2022). Academic achievement: influences of university students' self-management and perceived self-efficacy. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(3), 55.
- Ali, M. M., West, K., Teich, J. L., Lynch, S., Mutter, R., & Dubenitz, J. (2019). Utilization of mental health services in educational setting by adolescents in the United States. *Journal of School Health*, 89(5), 393-401.
- Azizi, S. M., Soroush, A., & Khatony, A. (2019). The relationship between social networking addiction and academic performance in Iranian students of medical sciences: a cross-sectional study. *BMC psychology*, 7, 1-8.
- Batool, Z., & Qureshi, R. H. (2007). Quality assurance manual: For higher education in assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications in higher education assurance: A selection of papers from the 3rd European quality Assurance forum. A selection of papers from the 3rd European quality Assurance forum. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org.els.stats.edu_db/def_uoe2.htm.
- Beck, J. S. (2020). *Cognitive behavior therapy: Basics and beyond*. Guilford Publications.
- Chuang, N. K., Lee, P. C., & Kwok, L. (2020). Assisting students with career decision-making difficulties: Can career decision-making self-efficacy and career decision-making profile help?. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 26, 100235.
- Eperthener, A., & Miller, L. (2022). Improving Stress Management and Coping Skills in College Students. *Sociological Viewpoints*, 36(1), 4-17.
- Guelndner, B. A., Feuerborn, L. L., & Merrell, K. W. (2020). *Social and emotional learning in the classroom: Promoting mental health and academic success*. Guilford Publications.

- Kassymova, K., Kosherbayeva, N., Sangilbayev, S., & Schachl, H. (2018, September). Stress management techniques for students. In *International Conference on the Theory and Practice of Personality Formation in Modern Society (ICTPPFMS 2018)* (pp. 47-56). Atlantis Press.
- Kushendar, K., & Maba, A. P. (2022). Peer Counseling as A Coping Strategy for Academic Stress and Burnout in Final-Year Students. *COUNS-EDU: The International Journal of Counseling and Education*, 7(4).
- Kyauta, A. M. A., Shariff, Y. A., & Garba, H. S. (2018). The role of guidance and counseling service on academic performance among students of umarsuleiman college of education, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria. *NIU Journal of Humanities*, 2(2 (B)), 59-66.
- MacCann, C., Jiang, Y., Brown, L. E., Double, K. S., Bucich, M., & Minbashian, A. (2020). Emotional intelligence predicts academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin*, 146(2), 150.
- Năstasă, L. E., Cocoradă, E., Vorovencii, I., & Curtu, A. L. (2022). Academic success, emotional intelligence, well-being and resilience of first-year forestry students. *Forests*, 13(5), 758.
- Reddy, K. J., Menon, K. R., & Thattil, A. (2018). Academic stress and its sources among university students. *Biomedical and pharmacology journal*, 11(1), 531-537.
- Simbolon, R., & Purba, W. (2022). Evaluating the Impact of School Counseling Programs on Student Well-being and Academic Performance in the Educational Environment. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Humaniora*, 11(2), 118-137.
- Sue, D. W., Sue, D., Neville, H. A., & Smith, L. (2022). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Vetrivel, S. C., Saravanan, T. P., Maheswari, R., & Arun, V. P. (2024). Coping Mechanisms for Stress Among Students at Universities. In *Student Well-Being in Higher Education Institutions* (pp. 157-186). IGI Global.
- Zahid, G., Hooley, T., & Neary, S. (2020). Careers work in higher education in Pakistan: Current practice and options for the future. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 48(4), 443-453.
- Zia, A., Bashir, I., & Hassan, R. (2024). Navigating through a New Academic Landscape: Challenges and Coping Strategies of International Students Studying in Pakistan. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 8(2), 639-649.