

Effective factors on desirable quality of advisory services from perspective of students and academic advisors

Elahe Ramezanzade Tabriz¹, Aghadas Saadati¹, Zahra Alizade Mehdi-mahale², Arezo Orooji^{3,4}

¹Nursing Department, Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences, Neyshabur, Iran

²Students Research Committee, Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences, Neyshabur, Iran

³PhD candidate of biostatistics, Student Research Committee, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran

⁴Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Faculty of Health sciences, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran

⁵Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences
Razi Street
Neyshabur, 9318614139, Iran

Tel: +98 051 43344011
Email:
e.ramezanzade@gmail.com

Background: Academic consultation will help students in achieving educational goals and success. The aim of this study is to investigate the factors affecting desirable quality of advisory services from the perspective of students and academic advisors.

Methods: This study is a cross-sectional study. 25 academic advisors and 318 students were chosen using convenience sampling of Neyshabur University of medical sciences. Data were collected by self-designed questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential tests including Mann-Whitney, Kruskal, Wallis, Chi-Square tests with SPSS software version 16.

Results: In an evaluation of effective factors on quality of advisory services, "mutual respect between advisors and students" was determined as a most important factor from the academic advisor's point of view. However, from the view of the students, "academic advisor's communication skills" had highest priority.

Conclusions: It is suggested that academic advising can be improved by holding consultation workshops and training courses, encouraging advisors for cooperating better, student's awareness of academic adviser's duties, and mutual respect.

Keywords: Academic advisor, Students, advisory system

العوامل المؤثرة على جودة خدمات الأستاذ المستشار من وجهة نظر الطلبة والأستاذة المستشارين

مقدمة: يساعد الإرشاد التعليمي الطلاب على تحقيق الأهداف التعليمية وحل المسائل الدراسية. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في العوامل المؤثرة على نوعية خدمات الأستاذ المستشار الأمثل من وجهة نظر الطلاب والمستشارين. **طريقة العمل:** الدراسة الحالية هي دراسة توصيفية مستعرضة، حيث تم اختيار الأستاذة المنتسبين البالغ عددهم ٢٥ أستاذًا و ٣١٨ طالبًا مؤهلًا للدراسة باستخدام طريقة أخذ عينات بالتعداد. تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيانات أجراها باحثون. كما تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج التحليل الإحصائي SPSS ذو النسخة ١٦ والإختبارات التوصيفية والإستنتاجية مثل إختبارات Mann-Whitney Kruskal, Wallis, Chi-Square.

النتائج: في دراسة العوامل المؤثرة على جودة خدمات الأستاذ، من وجهة نظر الأستاذة "الاحترام المتبادل بين الأستاذ والطلاب" هو أهم عامل مؤثر. أما من وجهة نظر الطلاب، "امتلاك قوة وكفاءة الأستاذ الاستشاري" له الأولوية القصوى.

النتيجة: يمكن تحقيق وضع الإرشاد الأكاديمي من خلال عقد ورش عمل تعليمية وإرشادية، وتشجيع الأستاذة على التعاون بشكل أفضل وأمانة، وتقدير الطلاب حول واجبات الأستاذة المستشارين وخلق الاحترام المتبادل بين الطلاب وأعضاء هيئة التدريس وفاعليتها في مختلف جوانب الحياة الطلابية. **كلمات مفتاحية:** أستاذة مستشارين، طلاب، نظام إستشاري.

عوامل مؤثر بر كفاءة خدمات يك استاذ مشاور مطلوب از دیدگاه

دانشجویان و اساتید مشاور

مقدمه: مشاوره تحصیلی، دانشجویان را در دستیابی به اهداف آموزشی و موفقیت و حل مشکلات یاری خواهد نمود. هدف از این مطالعه، بررسی عوامل مؤثر بر کیفیت خدمات یک استاذ مشاور مطلوب از دیدگاه دانشجویان و اساتید مشاور بود. **روش کار:** مطالعه حاضر توصیفی از نوع مقطعی است که با روش نمونه گیری سرشماری، کلیه ٢٥ نفر اساتید مشاور دانشکده و ٣١٨ نفر دانشجو واجد شرایط وارد مطالعه شدند. اطلاعات بوسیله پرسشنامه های پژوهشگر ساخته جمع آوری شد. اطلاعات پس از جمع آوری با نرم افزار SPSS نسخه ١٦ و آزمون های توصیفی و استنباطی شامل آزمون های Mann-Whitney Kruskal Wallis, Chi-Square, شامل آزمون های مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفتند

یافته ها: در بررسی عوامل مؤثر بر کفاءة خدمات استاذ مشاور از دیدگاه اساتید "احترام متقابل بین استاذ و دانشجو" مهم ترین عامل مؤثر مشخص شد و از دیدگاه دانشجویان نیز "داشتن قدرت و فن بیان استاذ مشاور" دارای بیشترین اولویت است.

نتیجه گیری: وضعیت مشاوره دانشگاهی می تواند با برگزاری کارگاههای آموزشی ارتباطی و مشاوره ای، تشویق اساتید جهت همکاری بهتر و صادقانه و آگاهی دانشجویان از وظایف اساتید مشاور و ایجاد احترام متقابل بین دانشجو و اساتید بهبود یافته و کارایی آن در جنبه های مختلف زندگی دانشجو مشاهده گردد.

واژگان کلیدی: اساتید مشاور، دانشجویان، سیستم مشاوره

ایڈوٹور اساتذہ اور طلباء کی نظر میں ایڈوٹور اساتذہ کی کارکردگی پر اثر ڈالنے والے

اسباب

بیک گراؤنڈ: تعلیم کے دوران مشورہ لینے سے طلباء کو اپنے تعلیمی اہداف حاصل کرنے میں کافی مدد ملتی ہے اور ان کی تعلیمی مشکلات حل ہوتی ہیں۔ اس تحقیق کا هدف ایڈوٹور اساتذہ کی کارکردگی پر اثر انداز ہونے والے عوامل کا جائزہ لینا ہے۔ **روش:** یہ تحقیق پچیس ایڈوٹور اساتذہ اور تین سو اٹھارہ طلباء کی شرکت سے انجام پائی۔ تحقیق میں شرکت کرنے والوں کو سوالنامہ دیا گیا تھا، ڈیٹا کا تجزیہ ایک پی ایس ایس سولہ، چی اسکور، میں ویٹی کرسکل والیس کے ٹولز سے کیا گیا۔ **نتیجے:** ایڈوٹور اساتذہ اور طلباء کی نظر میں ایڈوٹور اساتذہ کی کارکردگی پر مؤثر عوامل میں اساتذہ و طالب علم کے درمیان باہمی احترام سب سے اہم ترین عامل قرار دیا گیا ہے۔ طلباء کی نظر میں اہم ترین عامل "استاذ کو قادر الکلام اور فن بیان میں ماہر ہونا چاہیے۔"

سفارشات: یونیورسٹی میں ایڈوٹورنگ کو ورک شاپس لگا کر، اساتذہ کو بہتر اور صدق دل سے تعاون کرنے کی ترغیب دلا کر بہتر بنایا جاسکتا ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ طلباء کو اساتذہ کی ذمہ داریوں سے آگاہ کر کے نیز طلباء اور اساتذہ کے درمیان ایک دوسرے کے احترام کو فروغ دے کر طلباء کی مختلف طرح سے مدد کی جاسکتی ہے۔

کلیدی الفاظ: ایڈوٹور اساتذہ، احترام، مدد، طلباء۔

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counseling at different educational levels provide not only appropriate solutions for students' problems, but also opportunities for personality development (1). The purpose of academic counseling is guidance of students in order to achieve educational, professional, and personal goals (2-4). In the educational system, guidance and consultation should be started at the beginning of entrance to university and continued until the end of the academic, educational period because the university environment has significant differences from previous educational environments and students will face new issues and problems. So, being an academic advisor beside the students is necessary (5). In order to implement the consultation program, advisor regulation which consisted of 36 articles and 14 notes has been adopted at the ninth session of the supreme council of programming of medical sciences (6).

The academic advisor who can have an effective role in solving of educational, research, individual, social, and welfare problems is considered as a first level of communication between students and educational system (7). He/she is often a faculty member familiar with all regulations and guidelines and performs consultation as an important professional responsibility (8). His/her proficiency in providing consulting services increases students' confidence and satisfaction (9). A good relationship between students and academic advisors leads to not only students' academic progress and more motivation, but also more efficiency of the educational system (10-11). In contrast, inefficient consultation may cause students' stress, insecurity, frustration and even may cause students to drop out (12-13). Unfortunately, the consulting system at Iran universities is not efficient because of some problems such as advisors' lots of educational activities, lack of consulting knowledge, and lack of interest and enough time for this (14). However, the effect of counseling on academic progress of students has been demonstrated in various studies (13, 15-17). The results of one study in Golestan University of Medical Sciences have also shown that just one quarter of the students are satisfied with their supervisor and only 40 percents of them are pleased with their supervisors' sufficient information regarding educational and disciplinary rules (7). Adhami et al. have also reported that the advisors have failed to achieve a satisfactory status among students (9).

It has been proven that a positive relationship between academic advisor and student affect student's more academic progress. Moreover, consulting services can be improved by exact study of consulting quality in order to prevent academic failure and its related problems. So, the aim of this study is to find effective factors on desirable quality of advisory services from perspective of students and academic advisors, also they improve the quality of education and increase students' motivation and academic progress.

METHODS

This study is a cross-sectional study. 25 academic advisors and 318 students were chosen using convenience sampling.

After obtaining approval from the ethics committee of the research council of Neyshabur University of medical sciences, the researcher selected qualified individuals for this study and insured them about the confidentiality of the information. After obtaining written consent, the questionnaire was offered to sample group and it was asked to complete the questionnaires within 24 hours. Data collection lasted from April to August 2016. Finally, the results of the study have been offered to faculty authorities so as to improve the advisory services.

Inclusion criteria for advisors were being an academic advisor for at least two semesters and having at least ten students under supervision while for students were having an academic advisor for at least two semesters and meeting his/her at least twice, unchanging academic advisor during the academic education period and not to be a guest student. The questionnaire involved five sections. These sections are as follows:

1-The personal information section for advisors consists of eight items including gender, marital status, age, academic degree, work experience, type of employment, history of being academic advisor, and academic rank and for students consists of seven items including gender, marital status, age, academic degree, Grade Point Average (GPA), number of semesters, discipline and place of residence (native, non-native).

2-The section of quality of consulting services had 34 items about academic advisor's duties in the field of students' education, personal, social, and cultural issues, which it is scaled questions based on a five-points Likert scale (excellent (1), good (2), neutral (3), poor (4), totally unsatisfactory (5)). The range of the scores was determined based on the mean score of 1-5 for each item that higher mean reflected undesirable quality of advisory services.

3-The section of effective factors on desirable quality of advisory services had 24 items about advisor attributes such as the ability of communication and consultation. The respondents' options for each item were presented as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree with 1-5 score scale. This section was completed jointly by advisors and students so that the researcher can compare their opinions. Total mean scores were between 1-5 that one was the best score while five was the worst. How much the mean score was lower, that factor was more effective on quality of advisory services.

4-The section of advisors' self-assessment about their activities included 14 items which were based on minimum basic activities of an academic advisor and the professors were asked to answer yes/ no questions.

5-The section of views about academic advisor's duties consisted of 20 items and it is related to the advisors' opinions about specified tasks. This section had five-points Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree with the scoring between 1-5. The higher mean score for each item indicated that academic advisors disagreed with the assigned task more.

The processes of face and content validities of all sections were performed by 12 faculty members of nursing and midwifery school, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences,

who were not among the subjects under study.

RESULTS

25 academic advisors from Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences participated in this study. The mean age of the academic advisors was 34.6 ± 7.9 years and the mean work experience was 8 ± 5.87 years. 318 qualified students also participated and the mean age of the students was 21.6 ± 2.5 years and Grade point average of the students was (GPA) 16.6 ± 1.27 (Table 1).

In this study, 81.9% of students believed the necessity of academic advisors in education periods. There was a significant difference in referring to the academic advisor with gender, academic degree and being non-native ($P < 0.05$).

Although advisors' self-assessment demonstrated that 60.9% of academic advisors have an idea that they performed 75%

of their tasks to the students, the mean score of advisor evaluation by students was 11.82 ± 6.5 of 20.

Academic advisors' opinions about their duties showed that "consult with appropriate experts to find ways to help students" had most agreements (1.30 ± 0.47), however; "follow up the students after graduation from the college" had the most disagreement (1.78 ± 0.67) (Table 2).

The quality of consulting services in the perspective of the students showed that "academic advisor's knowledge about educational rules and regulations" (2.6 ± 1.21) was best services. Nonetheless, "arrangement of group meetings for an explanation and educational planning" (3.47 ± 1.22) was mentioned as worse services (Table 3).

Results of Mann-Whitney test showed that there was a significant difference in comparing between students' and academic advisors' opinions. ($P < 0.05$) Both groups indicated that these factors were more effective on quality of

Table 1. Demographic information of Academic advisors and Students

Academic advisors			Students		
Category		N (%)	Category		N (%)
Gender	Female	15(60)	Gender	Female	192(60.3)
	Man	10(40)		Man	126(39.7)
Marital status	Single	4(16)	Marital status	Single	208(65)
	Married	19(84)		Married	110(35)
Academic degree	Msc	20(80)	Academic degree	technician	66(21)
	PHD	5(20)		BS	252(79)
Type of employment	Official	4(16)	Discipline	Nursing	97(30.5)
				Contractual	Anesthesiology
	service commitment	11(44)		Operating Room	39(12.3)
		10(40)		Health	40(12.5)
Academic Rank	Instructor	22(88)	Place of residence	Food processing industry	18(5.7)
	Assistant Professor	3(12)		Medical emergency	66(21)
				dormitory	186(58.5)
				Private home	132(41.5)

Table 2. Professors' opinions about academic advisors' tasks

Academic advisors' agreements Expressions	Mean± SD*
Consult with appropriate experts to find ways to help students	1.30±0.47
Necessary career and educational guidance to students	1.34±0.48
familiarizing students with educational, research and disciplinary rules and regulations	1.34±0.48
Regular attendance to consult in announced time table	1.39±0.49
Repeated evaluation of educational status of the students	1.40±0.56
Academic advisors' disagreements Expressions	Mean± SD*
Follow up the students after graduating from the college	1.78±0.67
Introducing the students to the faculty authorities to encourage and remove their weaknesses	1.73±0.86
Preparing performance report at the end of each semester and submitting to the relevant authorities	1.71±0.68
Signing the registration form and other forms	1.65±0.64
Preparing the students for taking responsibility for the future	1.63±0.57

*Less mean score represents more agreement
 * Less mean score represents more disagreement

Table 3. Students' and advisors' viewpoints about effective factors on quality of advisory services			
Expressions	group	Mean± SD*	P value Mann-Whitney
mastery of communication and consultation skills and ability to answer questions	students	2.18±1.11	<0.001
	academic advisors	1.26±0.44	
advisors' attitude toward the discipline	students	2.15±1.06	<0.001
	academic advisors	1.3±0.47	
Long history of teaching	students	2.25±1.03	0.14
	academic advisors	2.47±0.79	
Advisors' academic rank	students	2.38±1.06	0.002
	academic advisors	3.04±0.82	
Advisors' executive positions	students	2.36±1.04	0.001
	academic advisors	3.08±1.04	
Relevance of advisors' and students' discipline	students	2.06±1.17	0.005
	academic advisors	1.39±0.65	
Advisors' interest in consulting	students	2.20±1.14	<0.001
	academic advisors	1.17±0.38	
Academic advisor's communication skills	students	2.04±1.17	0.01
	academic advisors	1.43±0.66	
Proper examples for academic consulting	students	2.11±1.18	0.058
	academic advisors	1.56±0.58	
Providing an opportunity for students to think about personal problems	students	2.29±1.18	0.002
	academic advisors	1.52±0.51	
Motivating students to research and study more	students	2.18±1.16	0.009
	academic advisors	1.52±0.51	
Observance of exact time of consultation at the beginning and the end of registration and drop and add	students	2.36±1.17	0.001
	academic advisors	1.56±0.5	
Allocating time to answer questions and solve students' problems	students	2.33±1.18	<0.001
	academic advisors	1.43±0.5	
Mutual respect between advisor and student	students	2.06±1.08	<0.001
	academic advisors	1.13±0.34	
Flexibility in students' behaviors	students	2.18±1.06	0.08
	academic advisors	1.78±0.73	
Recognizing students' name	students	2.31±1.15	0.12
	academic advisors	1.86±0.54	
Proper and mutual communication with student	students	2.16±1.16	0.006
	academic advisors	1.47±0.59	
Advisors' decisiveness and seriousness	students	2.43±1.02	0.5
	academic advisors	2.30±0.7	
Advisors' appearance	students	2.29±1.02	0.008
	academic advisors	1.73±0.68	
Gestures and habitual phrases	students	2.30±1.06	0.02
	academic advisors	1.78±0.59	
Voice and accent of advisor	students	2.28±1.11	0.07
	academic advisors	2.17±0.93	
Observance of Islamic values.	students	2.12±0.93	0.09
	academic advisors	3.26±0.62	
Requiring students to observance of educational regulations	students	2.30±1.02	0.002
	academic advisors	1.65±0.64	
Observance of fairness and ethics standards in relation to students	students	2.06±1.09	0.007
	academic advisors	1.43±0.5	

*Less mean score represents more agreement with the expression

advisory services (Table3). These factors were "mastery of communication and consultation skills and ability to answer questions", "advisor's attitude toward the discipline", "taking time for solving students' problems", "advisors' interest in consulting", and "mutual respect between advisors and students".

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed advisors' and students' opinions about effective factors on quality of advisory services. Nevertheless, there was disagreement in assessment of the current situation of consultation. In other words, advisors assessed process of consultation desirable and higher than moderate level, but students believed the process of consultation relatively desirable and in the moderate level. These research findings have been mentioned in similar studies as well (6, 9, 18, and 19).

In the present study, knowing the rules and regulations and allocating enough time to consult from the academic advisors had the highest scores on the quality of services in the students' viewpoints. Academic advisors have mentioned that they helped students as much as possible but believed that they should be more active in this field. In addition, they have enumerated several reasons for their failure, such as: numerous educational and research activities, difference in advisors' and students' discipline, and insufficient knowledge about the consultation principles. On the other hand, in various studies, the students enumerated several reasons for the low quality of advisory services such as: lack of seriousness, low knowledge about educational rules and regulations and advisor's tasks and absence of the advisors at the announced time table (2, 9, and 20).

Most students believed that they would better solve their educational problems with the guidance of the department of education and it is not required to meet academic advisors, also in various studies indicated this finding too (6, 21, 22). Unavailability of academic advisor, ineffectiveness of previous consultations and inappropriate guidance were the main causes of students' unconcern to meet academic advisors (21, 22).

The results showed that the major activities of academic advisors were consulted for registration and transfer request in students' viewpoint. The students did not consider the academic advisors as a reliable and available source to meet their needs of consultation. Unfamiliarity of many students with the campus on arrival, separation from family, lack of interest in their accepted discipline, incompatibility with other people in a new living environment and lack of accommodations caused students to have more expectation for support and guidance but academic advisors' help were lowest in personal, familial, occupational and research problems (6,24,23). Therefore, holding workshops and training courses about communication and consultation skills for advisors could improve academic advisors' performance and students' sense of satisfaction.

Moreover, mutual respect between advisors and students, which was considered as one of main effective factors on quality of consulting services makes an environment with sincere cooperation. However, this factor has been faded out

because of advisors' numerous tasks, unavailability of advisors and lack of understanding of behavioral characteristics of both sides.

In this study, advisors and students emphasized the relevance of the advisor's and a student's discipline. In study of sum et al. (2012) most students believed the necessity this as well (8). In both studies, this issue was observed in paramedical school with different disciplines.

Although advisors compared to students have a more positive attitude about the process of counseling, advisors' opinions indicated advisors' dissatisfaction due to lack of support and appreciation. Academic advisors have stated that they inclined to be more active in this field. Hence, it is recommended that advisors' motivation should be boosted by support and provision of incentives and welfare.

In this study, advisors' interest for consultation, knowledge of regulations and a range of activities as well as passing workshops about consultation and communication skills were the most important factors on consultation from advisors' point of view. Also, advisors' communication skills, observance of fairness in relation to students and offering proper examples for academic consultation were specified as most factors from students' point of view. Undoubtedly, all these items can be effective in increasing student satisfaction. Consequently, it is suggested that advisors' communication skills should be improved by encouraging advisors to participate in consultation workshops. Besides, encouraging advisors for better communication with students, enhancing the sense of responsibility and social commitment of them as well as enhancing job satisfaction can help more effective consultation.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes special attention of authorities on the process of providing consulting services and necessity of use of advisors' and students' opinions in determining effective factors on the quality of the consultation. It is also indicated that the use of the regulatory system within the university, use of motivated advisors being familiar with counseling techniques, holding proper workshops, and improving financial situation and mental status of academic advisors could enhance the quality of consulting services.

LIMITATION

There were some limitations in this study such as students' mood due to attending school and hospitals when responding and same advisors for consultation and teaching. Consultation of students with each other may also have effects on answering the questions as well. All these items were out of control. Moreover, in the study, the advisors and students may provide incorrect information on the assumption that expression of the facts might have an impact on their evaluation because data collection was carried out using self-reported questionnaire. Therefore, it was trying to explain students and academic advisors that all information will remain confidential and without name.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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