

Counseling Needs for Students with Special Needs at the University

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to identify the counseling needs of students with disabilities at the University of Nizwa in Oman, and to determine if there are any significant differences of counseling needs of students with disabilities across gender, type of disability, academic year, college and academic degree. The study sample consisted of 32 students. The results indicated that the highest counseling needs are sexual counseling and vocational counseling. Whilst there are no significant differences of counseling needs of students with special needs across gender, college, and academic year, there are significant differences of counseling needs across type of disability due to physical and multiple disabilities, and academic degree due to master degree.

Keywords: *Counseling needs, Students with disabilities, Special needs, University of Nizwa.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University is the most important of education levels that experienced by students in general and students with disabilities in particular, where it works on building and development their characteristics of all aspects of physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and psychologically (Al-Damen and Suliaman, 2007). The University is crucial and delicate level for students, because it is linked with their professional decision and draws a picture of the future (Guerra and Braungart-Rieker, 1999). The student's personality is shaped during the academic preparation period at university in terms of values and trends and capabilities, in addition to the numerous needs (Nuri and Yahia, 2008).

Recent studies indicated that students with disabilities, especially students with learning disabilities have special counseling needs that are often not addressed in the primary and secondary school (Reis and Colbert, 2004).

According to Thompson and Littrell (1998) the academic needs of students with learning disabilities received much attention in recent years, in contrast to psychological needs that not find the same attention. The lack of researches that addressed the counseling needs of students with disabilities make understanding their problems and needs by counselors and educators more difficult.

Thus, there is need to deal with the needs of students with disabilities properly to avoid the potential future negative results, such as the failure to get a job and social adjustment or even to suicide (Thompson and Littrell, 1998).

Wamocho *et al.* (2008) emphasized that students with disabilities need continues support and guidance, they also need to counseling programs in all their levels and steps, because the students with disabilities often had negative feelings. Wamocho *et al.* (2008) also emphasized that the urgent need to develop counseling programs to face the problems of students with disabilities.

There are many rapid changes due to scientific and technical progress, imposed on students with disabilities great challenges to face personal and professional needs. These challenges emphasize the need of students with disabilities at the university to counseling and guidance.

Many studies addressed the counseling needs of normal students at the university in general. Current researchers found few studies addressed the counseling needs of students with disabilities at both school and university.

Some Arab studies (Almcharf, 2000; Dahiri, 2001) indicated that there are academic, psychological, social, family, and health problems among students at university. Other Arab studies (Al-Tahan and Abu Eita, 2003; Abdulaziz, 2006; Al-Damen and Suliaman, 2007; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2007; Almcharf, 2008; Nuri and Yahia, 2008; Abu Asaad, 2010; Arabiyat, 2011; Jubouri, 2011; Samadi and Marei, 2012; Alsukeh, 2013) tried to identify the counseling needs among normal students at University in professional, academic, psychological, social, ethical and economic aspects. On other hand, there are some non-Arab studies (Reis and Colbert, 2004; Nicliter and Edinonson, 2005; Wamocho *et al.*, 2008) addressed the counseling needs among students with disabilities at both school and university.

Reis and Colbert (2004) determine the counseling needs of students with learning disabilities at university. The study sample consisted of 15 students with learning disabilities. The researchers interviewed students to determine their needs. The results indicated that students with learning disabilities at university have low self-esteem and confidence. In addition, they have problems related to their peers, teachers, and community perceptions about their disabilities and how to deal with them.

Nicliter and Edinonson (2005) identified the counseling services for students with disabilities. The study sample consisted of 66 counselors in Texas. The results showed that the highest counseling service provided for

students with disabilities is individual counseling. On other hand, the lowest counseling service provided for students with disabilities is group counseling. The results also showed that 50% of counselors have readiness to deal with students with disabilities and provide them counseling services needed.

Wamocho *et al.* (2008) determined the problems faced by students with disabilities to develop counseling programs for them in Kenya. The study sample consisted of 229 students with hearing, visual and motor disabilities. The results showed that students with disabilities have many problems such as self-esteem, time management, and others, thus, there is need to develop counseling programs that focusing on their self-esteem and mental health, and helping them to adapt in community.

1.1. Problem Statement

University of Nizwa is modern, but it sought, since its inception, to establish students counseling center in order to provide psychological and educational counseling for all students included students with disabilities at university. Hence the current study tried to determine the counseling needs of students with disabilities in order to help the students counseling center at university of Nizwa to provide the best counseling services for them.

Numerous Arab studies (Al-Damen and Suliaman, 2007; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2007; Nuri and Yahia, 2008; Abdulmohsen, 2012; Samadi and Marei, 2012; Ramadan, 2013) indicated that students at university have a multiple pressures due to the multiple changes faced such as physical, mental, emotional, social changes. As well Lifestyle and surrounding academic society changes, which increases the need of counseling services for students in these areas and other areas.

A large shift and change in the needs of students at university has occurred. In the past, students' problems were limited in developmental and academic needs, but now, they include severe psychological problems. These problems will have a great effect on students' academic, cognitive, social and emotional performance (Kitzrow, 2003).

After reviewing of the foreign and the Arabic studies related to counseling needs, it was clear to the current researchers that there is a great interest in foreign countries on counseling needs among students with disabilities. However, in the Arab countries, there are some studies that addressed the counseling needs for normal students, but there are none that addressed the counseling needs among students with disabilities, especially in Sultanate of Oman.

This feedback is supported by field observations and informal interviews conducted with students with disabilities at University of Nizwa by the current researchers. Therefore, there is a great need to identify the counseling needs of students with disabilities in order to obtain better outcomes.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The current study aimed to identify the counseling needs of students with disabilities at University of Nizwa. In addition, this study aimed to identify if there are any significant differences between counseling needs of students with disabilities at university across gender, category of disability, degree, and academic year, and college.

1.3. The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is that it focuses on counseling needs of students with disabilities at the University, which to the researcher's knowledge has not been addressed before. There are no studies in the Arab countries in general or in Oman in particular on this topic.

The results therefore added to the body of knowledge on counseling needs of students with disabilities by providing empirical evidence from the Oman perspective. This study also contributed to fulfill the shortage of literature in Arabic in the field of counseling needs of students with disabilities. Currently, there are a lack of studies and researches in this area. The shortcomings counseling programs are revealed in order to improve and provision of counseling services.

The results will also be beneficial for those responsible for the planning and development of counseling programs for students with disabilities at university. It will provide them with data to clarify the vulnerabilities in these programs in order to improve on them, so that eventually the desired goals of counseling are achieved.

In summary, the identified strengths and limitations of counseling programs at university through analysis of counseling needs of students with disabilities, especially from the contributions of different demographic characteristics will have implications for counseling practice and professional development.

1.4. Limitation of the Study

This study focused on only students with disabilities at university of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman.

2. METHODS

2.1. Study Sample

For the selection of the study sample, current researchers used purposive sampling according to specific terms: first, participants have to be one of students with disabilities at university. Second, participants have to be enrolled at university one year at least. Finally, after administration, the number of students with disabilities (32) who responded on the current study instrument is shown in the Table 1

Table-1. The Number of Students with Disabilities After Using Purposive Sampling

Variables	category	N	%
Gender	Male	14	43.8%
	Female	18	56.3%
Degree	Bachelor	26	81.3%
	Master	6	18.8%
Academic year	First year	4	12.5%
	Second year	10	31.3%
	Third year	11	34.4%
	Fourth year	7	21.9%
College	Arts & Sciences	18	56.3%
	Engineering & Architecture	6	18.8%
	Economics, Management & Information Systems	5	15.6%
	Pharmacy & Nursing	3	9.4%
Category of disability	Hearing impairment	4	12.5%
	Visual impairment	10	31.3%
	Health impairment	4	12.5%
	Learning disabilities	4	12.5%
	Motor & physical impairment	5	15.6%
	Multiple impairment	5	15.6%

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

2.2. Study Instrument

Current researchers developed the counseling needs survey. The process of developing the counseling needs survey involved several steps to accomplish content validity and reliability: First, the current researchers reviewed many of the both previous Arab studies and references (Al-Tahan and Abu Eita, 2003; Abdulaziz, 2006; Al-Damen and Suliaman, 2007; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2007; Almcharf, 2008; Dahadha, 2008; Nuri and Yahia, 2008; Abu Asaad, 2010; Arabiyat, 2011; Jubouri, 2011; Abdulmohsen, 2012; Samadi and Marei, 2012; Alsukeh, 2013; Ramadan, 2013) and previous foreign studies and references (Guerra and Braungart-Rieker, 1999; Kitzrow, 2003; Hatchett, 2004; Güneri, 2006; Stukenberg *et al.*, 2006; Dogan, 2012; Litoiu and Oproiu, 2012) which identify counseling needs for students at university.

Second, current researchers prepared initial survey included 98 items which divided into eight domains: psychological, academic, social, professional, economic, sexual, health, and religious needs.

Third, the initial survey was given to the expert committee consisting of specialists to judge the appropriateness, applicability and the clarity and language of the items of the instrument.

Fourth, certain items were deleted and some items were added based on expert committee opinions. The final developed survey consisted of 111 items.

Fifth, the current researchers used the Cronbach's Alpha test to determine internal consistency reliability (0.85). The Cronbach alpha coefficient is shown in Table 2

Table-2. Internal Consistency Reliability for the Counseling Needs Survey

Domain	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Counseling Needs Survey</i>	111	0.85
Psychological needs	27	0.94
Academic needs	25	0.91
Social needs	21	0.97
Professional needs	12	0.60
Economic needs	7	0.77
Sexual needs	6	0.60
Health needs	9	0.92
Religious needs	4	0.65

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

3. STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the current study results of the statistical analysis that were done. The following analysis looks at the overall mean counseling needs of students with disabilities and in detail according to each domain. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of all the counseling needs means.

Table-3. The Descriptive Statistics of all the Counseling Needs of Students with Disabilities at University

	No. of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Counseling Needs Survey</i>	111	3.75	0.32
Psychological needs	27	2.64	0.99
Academic needs	25	4.09	0.72
Social needs	21	3.76	1.14
Professional needs	12	4.58	0.48
Economic needs	7	3.81	0.78
Sexual needs	6	4.87	0.62
Health needs	9	4.12	0.99
Religious needs	4	4.13	1.08

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

The overall mean counseling needs of students with disabilities is 3.75 and overall standard Deviation is 0.32. The highest counseling needs of students with disabilities were for the Sexual needs ($M=4.87$, $SD=.62$) followed by Professional needs ($M=4.58$, $SD=.48$). On other side, the lowest counseling needs of students with disabilities were for Psychological needs ($M=2.64$, $SD=.99$) and Social needs ($M=3.76$, $SD=1.14$).

Table 4 summarizes the frequency of the mean discrepancy score (counseling needs) of each item in counseling needs survey according to the domains.

Table-4. Frequency of Item Means (counseling needs survey) According to the domains

	No. of Items	1 to 1.99		2 to 2.99		3 to 3.99		4 to 4.99		5 to 6	
		Freq uency	Perce nt	Freq uency	Perce nt	Freq uency	Perc ent	Freq uency	Perc ent	Fre que ncy	Perce nt
<i>Counseling Needs Survey</i>	111	12	10.8%	13	11.7%	37	33.3%	36	32.4%	13	11.7%
Psychological needs	27	12	44.4%	7	25.9%	4	14.8%	3	11.4%	1	3.7%
Academic needs	25	0	0%	1	4%	12	48%	11	44%	1	4%
Social needs	21	0	0%	3	14.3%	10	47.6%	8	38.1%	0	0%
Professional needs	12	0	0%	1	8.3%	1	8.3%	5	41.7%	5	41.7%
Economic needs	7	0	0%	1	14.3%	4	57.1%	1	14.3%	1	14.3%
Sexual needs	6	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	33.3%	4	66.7%
Health needs	9	0	0%	0	0%	4	44.4%	4	44.4%	1	11.1%
Religious needs	4	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

The counseling needs rating for all the items ranged from a very little need to an extremely need as shown in Table 4. It can be seen that 12 items had means which ranged from 1 to 1.99 (very little need) and 13 items had means from 2 to 2.99 (somewhat need), and 37 items had means from 3 to 3.99 (moderate need), and 36 items had means from 4 to 4.99 (high need), and 13 items had means from 5 to 6 (extremely need). This means that all students with disabilities perceived that they need counseling in all the counseling listed in the instrument.

In the students with disabilities sample, there are two independent variables with two different categories (gender and academic level), and one continuous dependent variable (counseling needs). Therefore, for these variables, Independent-Samples T-test analysis was conducted to explore the effect of gender and academic level on counseling needs of students with disabilities.

For the gender variable, the result showed that, as shown in the Table 5, there was no significant difference in counseling needs for males ($M=3.64$, $SD=.28$) and females ($M=3.84$, $SD=.33$); $t(30) = 1.89$, $p=.07$. Possible explanation could be that most of students with disabilities whether male and female at university are very similar in many conditions such as academic year and college.

For the academic level, The result showed that there was significant difference in counseling needs for students with disabilities in Bachelor ($M=3.68$, $SD=.27$) and students with disabilities in Master ($M=4.07$, $SD=.36$); $t(30) = 3.05$, $p=.05$. Possible explanation could be that students with disabilities in Master have more requirements than students with disabilities in Bachelor, so they need counseling more than bachelor students.

Table-5. independent-Samples T- Test , Mean, and Std Deviation of Gender and academic level Variables

variable	categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	male	14	3.64	.28	.46	.50	1.89	30	.07
	female	18	3.84	.33					
Academic level	bachelor	26	3.68	.27	1.70	.20	3.05	30	.05*
	Master	6	4.07	.36					

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

In the students with disabilities sample, there are three independent variables with three or more distinct categories (academic year, college, and type of disability), and one continuous dependent variable (counseling needs). Therefore, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the effect of academic year, college, and type of disability on counseling needs of students with disabilities.

The results of the analysis of variance indicated that, as shown in the Table 6, there was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ in counseling needs due to academic year variable [$F(2, 30) = .98, p = .42$] or college variable [$F(2, 30) = 1.34, p = .28$].

The type of disability of students with disabilities was divided into six categories (hearing impairment, visual impairment, health impairment, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and multiple disabilities). Levene's test of homogeneity of variances indicated that the Sig. value is greater than .05 (.28), this mean that there was no violation in the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The results of the analysis of variance indicated that was significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the counseling needs between the three categories [$F(2, 30) = 3.60, p = .01$] (see Table 6).

Table-6. ANOVA, Mean, and Std Deviation of Academic Year, College, and Type of Disability Variables

variable	categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	homogeneity of variances	ANOVA	
						F	Sig.
Academic Year	first	4	3.87	.32	.77	.98	.42
	second	10	3.67	.21			
	third	11	3.70	.38			
	fourth	7	3.90	.35			
College	Arts & sciences	18	3.79	.28	.72	1.34	.28
	Engineering & Architecture	6	3.70	.27			
	Economics, Management & Information Systems	5	3.87	.41			
	Pharmacy & Nursing	3	3.45	.46			
Type of Disability	hearing impairment	4	3.79	.15	.28	3.60	.01*
	visual impairment	10	3.73	.17			
	health impairment	4	3.37	.32			
	learning disabilities	4	3.57	.31			
	physical disabilities	5	3.99	.35			
	multiple disabilities	5	3.99	.34			

Source: This analysis by current authors using SPSS

Multiple comparisons by using the Tukey test was then used to identify which categories are significantly different. This post-hoc analysis indicated that the mean for health impairment category ($M = 3.37, SD = .32$) was

significantly different (lower) from physical disabilities category ($M=3.99$, $SD=.35$) and multiple disabilities category ($M=3.99$, $SD=.34$). The post-hoc analysis also indicated that the mean for health impairment category ($M=3.37$, $SD=.32$) did not differ statistically significantly from learning disabilities category ($M=3.57$, $SD=.31$), hearing impairment category ($M=3.79$, $SD=.15$), and visual impairment category ($M=3.73$, $SD=.17$). Moreover, the post-hoc analysis also indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean of physical disabilities category and multiple disabilities category.

However, there is a question here to be answered, as to why there are significant differences between the counseling needs of students with disabilities across: type of disability. In other words, why do students with physical disabilities and students with multiple disabilities have much need of counseling more than students with health impairment. Possible explanation could be those students with physical or multiple disabilities have visible disabilities, whilst students with health impairment have hidden disabilities. So the students with physical or multiple disabilities have much need to counseling to adapt with other students and faculties, teaching requirements, and university environment.

The most important results from this study is that it revealed the type of profile that requires the highest counseling needs among students with disabilities at university. The results from demographic characteristics analysis revealed that the students with disabilities in Master degree who have physical or multiple disabilities are the profile that requires highest counseling needs.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, current researchers suggest some implications to make students with disabilities less need to counseling at university in particular and in the other institutions in general.

The first implication of the study is that there is now evidence to indicate that the counseling needs survey is valid and reliable to be used to determine counseling needs of students with disabilities at university.

The second implication from this study is that there exists a large-scale need for training in all counseling needs domains at university. The decision makers at universities should pay more attention to the development of human resources by providing more programs, courses, and workshops that can improve the students with disabilities and make them more effective and satisfied, in addition, Establish counseling center in each university to guide students with disabilities, and to meet their psychological, social, academic, economic, professional, sexual, health and religious needs, and other problems that they face. Finally, the findings of this study could serve as a baseline to continue future research to develop counseling programs.

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