

DO STUDENTS GO TO COUNSELLING ACTIVITIES?

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Abstract: *At the beginning of the 20th century in the U.S., psychological intervention one might say that have been born. This research started from the following hypothesis: there is a correlation between the awareness of the existence of counseling offices and the degree of addressability to the services offered by counseling offices. The method used was a questionnaire survey (Alpha Cronbach coefficient is .790), applied on 207 students. The existence of the counselling office in the university is unknown for 54.6% of students (113 subjects) and there are 55.1% (114 subjects) who do not know that there is a counselling office within the university, registering a correlation of .657** ($p < 0.01$). Due to not knowing about the existence of this office and the services offered by it, the 152 subjects – there are 73.4% who never called the counselor, and they come as a negative consequence, unfortunately. Out of 23 students - 11.1% very rarely addressed counselling services and 16 students - 7.7% rarely called the services of the counseling office. Only 1 student - 0.5% and 3 students - 1.4% say they have very often or often turned to the counselling office in their student life. A number of 12 students - 5.8% declare that they have turned to the school counsellor every now and then.*

Keywords: *academic advising; counselor; students.*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century in the U.S., psychological intervention was born. Frank Parson, in 1905, opened a counselling services center in Boston for young people undecided about what profession to pursue and eight years later, in 1913, the National Career Guidance Association was founded. From the very beginnings, counselling was seen as a preventive

rather than a curative activity, with clear links to educational rather than medical contexts (Adamo, et al., 2010). Continuing the history, in 1941 psychoanalyst Peter Blos was setting up an academic counselling service at Brooklyn College. In Europe, universities have participated in shaping the world and its development. Universities were created as a social entity capable of creating, storing and transmitting knowledge (Godelek, Kaya, 2012). The end of the second millennium, brings the significant processes of transformation associated with the transition to post- industrialism and the postmodern era into a position to alter many aspects of social, organizational and individual life. New career models are emerging accompanied by career counselling methods that originate from postmodern approaches (Kirovova, 2010). In Romania, in the context of the development of career services, the need to counsel students is real and growing (Cojocariu, Puiu, 2014; Cojocariu, Cojocariu-Ciotir, 2015). Universities are expected to further invest in career counselling services in order to increase graduates' chances of integration (Richițeanu-Năstase, Stăiculescu, 2015).

Background

Counselling is a complex process that encompasses a wide range of interventions that require specialized training (Mara, Mara, 2010). The Society of Counselling Psychology (American Psychological Association, 2007) describes the field as "a psychological specialty that facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the lifespan, with a focus on emotional, social, occupational, educational, health-related, personal development, and organizational concerns" (Godelek, Kaya, 2012). Academic counseling is considered as one of the important factors of student success because it guides students towards academic success and helps them to cope with all academic challenges, especially students with learning disabilities (Thawabieh & Atallah, 2011). Ghasemzadeh & Saadat (2011) conducted research showing how systematic motivational counseling (SMC) has the effect of increasing motivation for academic achievement and reducing anxiety in assessment situations. The effectiveness of a counselling intervention indicated that reductions in indecision, anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity were slightly but significantly greater. (Obi, 2015).

It's been a few decades since to face-to-face counselling was added to telephone counselling and then video counselling. Liu & Gao's (2021) research results showed that in the client stance, parents and children choose face-to-face counseling, clients with mental illness are more likely to choose online counseling, and career counseling clients prefer video consultation and chat-messaging counseling (Liu & Gao, 2021). The pandemic of the 2020s has brought social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as ways to conduct counselling (Ahmad, et al., 2021). The contact with counselling

activity, face- to-face or mediated through electronic means, is done by the counsellor (Bjorklund, 1983). This is the person who sums up basic knowledge, communication skills, cultural skills and counselling skills (Setiyowati, et al., 2019). The counselling profession faces various challenges: the need for a clear and unified professional vision, a high counsellor - client (student) ratio or culturally relevant solutions and theories. In addition to these, a legislative framework for the accreditation of counselor education programs, how counselors are licensed or tools for measurement or techniques used in counseling (Köse, 2017). In support of counselors comes the American Counseling Association, the National Council of Certified Counselors (Hohenshil, 2010) as well as various professional counseling organizations, including community college counselors (Epstein, 2015). Counsellors work in Counselling Centers encompassed by colleges and universities. By the mid-1960s, half of American colleges and universities had established counseling centers and provided students with educational, vocational, and psychological counseling services (McCarthy, 2014). The reasons for an academic institution to establish a counseling service, are related to: providing support to students who are experiencing difficulties in determining their career path, support to decrease dropout rates, support to reduce student fears related to: failure, anxiety, exclusion, emotional disturbances, etc. (Adamo, et al., 2010; Atik & Yalçın, 2010; Gasteiger, Fleming, Day, 2020).

Counseling centers also play an important role in primary care, diagnosis and subsequent placement of students with disabilities (Kreß, et al., 2015). A basic condition for students to access counselling services is, information accessibility, which can be achieved by providing information about the location of the service through good publicity. Then we talk about the choice of location. Alpturer & Uslu (2010) in their research identified three criteria with regard to the location of the counselling practice/office: accessibility, privacy and convenience. The comfortable environment that students requested referred to both the interior of the room and the physical surroundings of the room (Alpturer, Uslu, 2010). In the U.S. in the middle of the last decade there was an increasing number of students requesting counseling services. This trend has influenced the provision of counseling services and how they are changing the college and university communities (Prince, 2015).

More than 50% of students prefer to deal with their problems themselves and seek specialized help (counselling) mainly in career and their academic activities (Ishak, Bakar, 2010). For interested students, universities provide specialized services through counselling centers. These specialized services cover:

- personal counselling for self-discovery (Vasilescu, Moraru, Sava, 2015);

- support in managing emotional difficulties (Lindsay & Langevin, 2017);
- managing destructive behaviors by improving the knowledge, attitudes, confidence, and skills of students in addictive situations (alcohol, drugs, food, medication, etc.) (Xia, et al., 2021);
- exploring the field of cross-cultural therapy for youth who are divided between family and school cultures (Ilhan, et al., 2012; Cecchini & Toffle, 2014; Hwang, Bennett, Beauchemin, 2014);
- delivery of interventions: anti-bullying, educational counselling (dropout prevention, adaptation to academic life, loss recovery);
- crisis management (serious illness, divorce, death, pandemics (Ahmad, et al., 2021);
- integration of students with disabilities (hearing, visual, motor) and sensitizing colleagues to the issue of special educational requirements (Pisano, Miller, 2018);
- supporting talented and/or gifted students (Ishak & Bakar, 2010);
- career counselling. People are challenged by increasing career transitions in the 21st century. Each of these transitions involves making a career decision, usually by locating promising alternatives, gathering information about them, comparing short-listed alternatives, and choosing one (Kulcsár, Dobrean, Gati, 2020).

Research has shown that the addressability of counselling services in universities is due to: (1). Educational - assessment anxiety, inappropriate study habits, fear of failure, managing procrastination, various academic pressures; (2). relational - relating to faculty, fear of public speaking, fear of being assertive, other relationship difficulties; (3). emotional - finding meaning in life, emotional instability, shyness, temper control and career issues - career uncertainty, anxiety in finding a job.

Methodology

The present research aims to investigate: awareness of faculty/university counselling office services, students' addressability to faculty/university counselling office services and the relationship between them. The research started from the following hypothesis: there is a correlation between the awareness of the existence of the counselling office and the degree of addressability to these counselling office for their services. The questionnaire survey was the **method** used in this research. The instrument developed for this research has 27 items, coupled on 6 dimensions: addressability of students to the counselling office, services offered by the counselling office, counselling needs of students, reasons for addressability to the counselling office, strategies to promote the counselling office and socio-demographic data. Items were closed, dual or multiple choice or open-ended.

The questionnaire was developed and validated specifically for this research (Cronbach's Alpha = .902, coefficient high). Strictly for the dimensions that address the research hypotheses, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient value is .790, a high coefficient.

The data were collected between May and June 2022. The questionnaire was self-administered. Participants were assured of data confidentiality. On average, completing the questionnaire took 10 minutes per participant. The completion of the instrument was done by approximately 90-95% of the students of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - Transylvania University of Brasov - specialization in Educational Sciences. Initially 215 instruments were collected, from which the incomplete ones were eliminated. Consent was obtained prior to the application of the instruments, explaining to the subjects the purpose of the research, the research method and instrument, the related risks and the rights as a research participant. The group of participants had a total of 207 subjects, students from the 1st and 2nd years of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - *Transylvania University of Brasov - Romania - specialization in Educational Sciences*. Of these, most of them, 93.7% (194 subjects) were female, the remaining 6.3% (13 subjects) were male. Taking into account to their background, there were: 92 subjects (44.4%) from urban areas, the most 115 subjects (55.6%) from rural areas. Looking at where they live, with most students coming from rural areas, it was found that 39.6% - 82 subjects live in a dormitory, then 31.4% - 65 subjects live in rented accommodation and 27.1% - 56 subjects live in Brasov with their families. Very small percentages, 1.5% - 3 subjects, respectively 0.5% - 1 subject declare that they live in a personally owned apartment, alone, respectively live with their family but commute. If we look at the group of subjects in terms of age, the majority of subjects are aged between 18 - 20 years, namely 144 subjects (69.6%), followed by 57 subjects (27.5%) aged between 21 - 25 years; 5 subjects (2.4%) aged over 31 years and 1 subject (0.5%) aged between 26 - 30 years. All of them were undergraduate students in the daytime form of education. More specifically, 51.7% (107 subjects) were 1st year students, the remaining 48.3% (100 subjects) were 2nd year students. Most of them aged 18-20 years, as marital status, were unmarried (94.7% - 196 subjects), only 5.3% - 11 subjects, were married.

Results

We begin by examining the first hypothesis of the research: there is a relationship between the knowledge of the existence of the counselling office and the degree of addressability to these services offered by the counselling office. We wanted to see whether students know about the existence of the counselling office in the university, respectively the one from the faculty. The degree of unawareness was roughly equal for both offices. The existence of

the university counselling office is unknown for 54.6% of students (113 subjects). Roughly the same, 55.1% (114 subjects) are unaware that there is a counselling cabinet in their faculty. Lower percentages were recorded for knowledge of the existence of the counselling office in the faculty: 45.4% (94 subjects) know that there is a counselling office in the university, respectively 44.4% (92 subjects) know about the existence of the counselling office in their faculty. There was a high-level positive correlation between the knowledge of the counselling office in the university and the one in the faculty - .657** (p-0.01).

We wanted to see if 1st year students (N-104 students - 51.69%) are better informed than second year students (N-100 students - 48.31%) about the existence of the counselling office in the college or university respectively. First year students were introduced to counselling services by their year coordinators. For the counselling office of the faculty, there is a higher degree of knowledge recorded by first year students: 52 students (25.12%) compared to 40 students (19.32%) of the second year. If we refer to the university counselling office, the situation is the same: 56 students (27.05%) from the first year compared to 38 students (18.36%) in the second year know about the existence of the counselling office.

A comparison was then made between the knowledge of the existence of the counselling office by urban students compared to rural students. We started from the premise that in urban areas, almost every school/high school has a school counsellor so urban students should be aware of counselling services. Wrong. Rural students know about the college counseling center at a higher rate than urban students. Perhaps the prospect of counselling services that they have had less access to / have not had access to has made 51 of the rural students (24.64%) aware that there is a counselling office at their college compared to only 41 (19.81%) urban students, who knew about the existence of the counselling office within their college. In contrast, knowledge of the existence of the university counselling office is very slightly higher for urban students: 48 subjects - 23.19% compared to rural students: 46 subjects - 22.22%.

There were a number of positive medium level correlations: between knowledge of career counselling activities and information on job opportunities and career development (.557 with p - 0.01), which Crişan, Pavelea, Ghimbuluţ (2015) also supported; between knowledge of career counselling activities and counselling for career path choice (.474 with p - 0.01); between knowledge of career counselling activities and assisting students in exploring alternative career plans (.442 with p - 0.01); between information on job placement and career development opportunities and career counselling (.543 with p - 0.01); between information on job placement and career development opportunities and assisting students in exploring

alternative career plans (.495 with $p = 0.01$); between counselling on career pathways and group counselling on career management or educational/personal issues (.426 with $p = 0.01$); between counselling on career pathways and assisting students in exploring alternative career plans (.495 with $p = 0.01$).

We wanted to see, however, which counselling services are known by students (see Table 1). Most students: 113 - 54.6% know about career information and counselling. Then in a roughly equal percentage they know about information on employability and career development opportunities (113 subjects - 46.4%) respectively, career counselling (93 subjects - 44.9%). The least known services are: employment counselling for final year students (71 subjects - 34.3%), individual counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (70 subjects - 33.8%) and group counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (66 subjects - 31.9%). Surprisingly, personal and group counselling are activities that students knew from high school / middle school as specific to a counselling office.

Types of activities	Frequency	Percent
Career information and advice	113	54.6%
Information on job opportunities and career development	96	46.4%
Advice on choosing a career path	93	44.9%
Assisting students in exploring alternative career plans	82	39.6%
Advising students with special educational needs	81	39.1%
Training sessions for students on their needs	77	37.2%
Employment counselling for final year students	71	34.3%
Individual counselling on career management or educational and personal issues	70	33.8%
Group counselling on career management or educational and personal issues	66	31.9%

Table 1. Awareness of the services offered by the counselling office

The analysis was continued by comparing which of the activities of the counseling office are known by the first year students (N-104 students - 51.69%) and the second year students (N-100 students - 48.31%) respectively knowing that the career counseling needs to differ from one year of study to another (Cojocariu, Cojocariu (Ciotir), 2015) (Atik, Yalçın, 2010). Career information and counselling activities are most known by students of both years of study: 33.33% - first year students, and 21.26% - by the second-year students. First year students, second choice indicates that they are aware of career counselling activities - 28.50%- and second-year

students are aware of information activities on employability and career development: 19.81% (see Table 2). First year students are aware of information activities on employability and career development: 26.57% and the second-year students that are aware of career counselling is 16.43%. Least known, for first year students, are: counselling for employment of final year students (21.26%), group counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (20.77%) and individual counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (19.32%). Somewhat surprising is that individual counselling, was the least known option for the first-year students. The same thing cannot be said for second year students who placed individual counselling onto the fifth position of choices with a percentage of 14.49%. Second year students in the last positions had: training sessions for students on their needs - 13.53%, counselling activities for hiring final year students - 13.04% and group counselling activities on career management or educational and personal issues - 11.11%.

Types of activities	Year 1		Year 2	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Career information and advice	69	1- 33.33%	44	1 - 21.26%
Information on job opportunities and career development	55	3- 26.57%	41	2 - 19.81%
Advice on choosing a career path	59	2- 28.50%	34	3 - 16.43%
Assisting students in exploring alternative career plans	53	4- 25.60%	29	6 - 14.01%
Counselling students with special educational needs	50	5- 24.15%	31	4 - 14.98%
Training sessions for students on their Needs	49	6- 23.67%	28	7 - 13.53%
Employment counselling for final year Students	44	7 - 21.26%	27	8 - 13.04%
Individual counselling on career management or educational and personal issues	40	9 - 19.32%	30	5 - 14.49%
Group counselling on career management or educational and personal issues	43	8 - 20.77%	23	9 - 11.11%

Table 2. Awareness of services offered by the counselling office - comparative analysis of the first and the second-year students

The frequency of referral to the counselling services was afterwards investigated. Not knowing about the existence of the office, not knowing the services offered by it, the 152 subjects - 73.4% who never called the counsellor, come as a negative consequence, unfortunately. Out of the

respondents, 23 students - 11.1% addressed very rarely and for other 16 students - 7.7% rarely summoned the services of the counselling office. Only 1 student - 0.5% and 3 students - 1.4% say they have very often or often turned to the counselling office in their student life. A number of 12 students - 5.8% declare that they have turned to the school counsellor every now and then. About 27% of the students stated that they turned to the services of the counselling office. That's quite a few. Most of the students turned to the counseling cabinet for self-awareness and personal development: 17 students - 8.2%, for crisis support: 10 students came - 4.8% and for career information and counseling: 7 students went - 3.4%. A mean value of 5.47 was obtained, for a standard deviation of 1.01.

The aim was to find out why students approach or avoid the counselling office services. This was done by interpreting the responses given for the two open-ended items of the questionnaire. Five main themes were identified for the item that referred to the reasons why students do not approach the counselling office: (1) not knowing about the existence of the counselling office - 69 subjects (see Crişan, Pavelea, Ghimbuluţ, 2015); (2) not trusting themselves as a person (51 subjects) (Atik & Yalçın, 2010). Other themes identified were (3) not for me, as a student (43 subjects); (4) stereotypes related to counselling work (11 subjects) - which is what Gasteiger, Fleming, Day (2020) also supported when talking about the stigma of poor mental health (see also Alpturer, Uslu, 2010; Liu, et al., 2020). The last theme is (5) distrust of counsellor/counsellor attitudes (11 subjects) (see Liu, et al., 2020). Counsellor support is a main ingredient in counselling, but not of any counsellors, but of a highly qualified counsellor (see Kreß, et al., 2015). The first and last themes had three subthemes each, the other themes had four subthemes (see Table 3).

Themes and subthemes	Frequency
DISTRUST OF THEM AS PEOPLE	51
• don't have the guts	
• are shy	
• are introverts	
• shame intervenes	
IS NOT THE CASE FOR ME	43
• do not need support from the cabinet services	
• are not interested	
• do not need the services offered by the counselling office	
• don't have time	
UNAWARENESS OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE COUNSELLING OFFICE	69

• didn't know there was such a cabinet	
• were not informed of the existence of the cabinet	
• are not aware of the benefits of the firm's services	
MISTRUST OF THE ADVISOR/ HIS/HER ACTIVITIES	11
• are skeptical about the activities of the counselor	
• do not trust counselling activities	
• I don't know what the councilman's reaction will be	
• I don't know exactly how it will be	
STEREOTYPES RELATED TO COUNSELLING	11
• they fear they will be looked at differently	
• are afraid of being judged by others	
• are afraid of being marginalized	

Table 3. Reasons for not referring students to counselling services

The thematic topic could be set between: counselling activities don't interest me / I don't need them and I would approach but don't have the courage / are shy (Atik & Yalçın, 2010) and between: counselling activities don't interest me / I don't need them and students are afraid that they would be marginalized / perceived differently if they would approached counselling services. There were also emotionally involved responses such as 'I don't know how I would feel, I don't have the courage' or 'It would save me a lot of trouble, if I knew it existed' or 'I'm afraid that others would misjudge me'. The unfortunate thing is that after more than 25 years of counselling, once again in Romania we still have the fear of being judged by others, the fear of being stigmatized. Is the counsellor still seen as a person who works with the insane? Sadly, few students, but they still exist look at the counsellor as they did 30 years ago. Disappointingly, 69 students don't know that there is a counseling office within college and university. The issue of promoting the services of the counselling cabinet should be on our minds as professors, not just as year coordinators. Regarding accuracy, we can state that most students had clear answers to the topic.

Themes and sub-themes	Frequency
THE NEED FOR INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING	105
• need guidance/support with various personal problems	
• the guidance of qualified people is important to them	
• are not sure of themselves / lack confidence	
• have special educational needs	
THE NEED FOR CAREER COUNSELLING	47

• receive career counseling	
• want to find out about job opportunities for career development	
• career development	
• support in choosing a career path	
• knowledge of skills	
NEED FOR INFORMATION	15
• need information / more information	
• have concerns	

Table 4. Reasons for students to seek counselling services

The item that targeted the reasons why students seek counselling services presented three broad themes with 11 sub-themes. The themes were: the need for individual counseling services (Vasilescu, Moraru, Sava, 2015), the need for career counseling (Atik & Yalçın, 2010), and the need for information. The first theme had 4 subthemes, the second theme had 5 subthemes and the last theme had 2 subthemes (see Table 4). There were also responses with emotional involvement, such as 'It is a joy to get help when you need it most', 'I was glad to be able to talk to someone with expertise. It was a real help' or "I found out about my future path. It was important and enjoyable". However, students when asked to state the reasons why students seek counselling services, a large number - 105 subjects cited issues related to individual counselling but in a previous question when asked if they were aware of individual counselling services, they ranked this activity last.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of a counselling intervention indicated that decrease in indecision, anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity were slightly but significantly greater. (Obi, 2015). The existence of the university counselling office was unknown to 54.6% of students (113 subjects). About the same, 55.1% (114 subjects) are not aware that there is counseling cabinet in their faculty. Lower percentages were recorded for knowledge of the existence of the counselling office in the faculty: 45.4% (94 subjects) know that there is a counselling office in the university, respectively 44.4% (92 subjects) know about the existence of the counselling office in their faculty. There was a positive high-level correlation between the knowledge of the counselling office in the university and the one in the faculty - .657** (p-0.01). For the counselling office in the faculty, there is a higher degree of knowledge recorded by year 1 students: 52 students (25.12%) compared to 40 students (19.32%) in year 2. If we refer to the university counseling office, the situation is the same: 56 students (27.05%) in year 1 compared to 38 students (18.36%) in year 2 know about the existence of the counselling office. Most

students: 113 - 54.6% know about career information and counselling. Then in a roughly equal percentage they know about information on job placement and career development opportunities (113 subjects - 46.4%) respectively, career counselling (93 subjects - 44.9%). The least known services are: employment counselling for final year students (71 subjects - 34.3%), individual counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (70 subjects - 33.8%) and group counselling on career management or educational and personal issues (66 subjects - 31.9%). Not knowing about the existence of the counselling office, not knowing about the services offered by the counselling office, the 152 subjects - 73.4% who never called the counsellor, come as a negative consequence, unfortunately. 23 students - 11.1% very rarely called and 16 students - 7.7% rarely called the counselling office services. Only 1 student - 0.5% and 3 students - 1.4% say they have very often or often turned to the counselling office in their student life. A number of 12 students - 5.8% declare that they have turned to the school counsellor when and when not. About 27% of the students stated that they turned to the services of the counselling office. That's quite a few. Most of the students turned to the counseling cabinet for self-awareness and personal development: 17 students - 8.2%, for crisis support: 10 students - 4.8% and for career information and counseling: 7 students - 3.4%. A mean value of 5.47 was obtained, at a standard deviation of 1.01.

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