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Views of Psychological Counselor Candidates About Psychological Counseling and Guidance Education

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Abstract

Four years undergraduate education has an important effect on offering proper services that are given by psychological counselors. For this reason, deficiencies in psychological counseling and guidance's programs need to be confirmed and reorganized in this way to be high quality, contemporary and meet to the needs of the country. The aim of this study is to determine psychological counselor candidates' opinions about psychological counseling and guidance education that they receive. The 149 university students (71.1% (n=106) female, 28.9% (n=43) male) who receive education in 39 different university are included within the context of the study. It was examined that opinions of participants about psychological counseling and guidance programs and the results were discussed in the light of literature.

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1. Introduction

In Turkey, first studies about psychological counseling and guidance (PCG) services were started under the guidance of American experts in 1950s. For this reason, similar to America, psychological counseling and guidance services primarily start with the services which were given at the schools (Kepceoglu, 1986). In this context, undergraduate education was firstly opened in Ankara University in 1965, and today it is available in totally 63 universities consisting 42 state and 21 founding universities. Psychological counselor candidates who complete their four years undergraduate education in these universities work as psychological counselor in many branches particularly school counseling. From this point of view, it can be said that four years undergraduate education have an important effect on offering proper services that are given by psychological counselors.

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Considering to main purpose of the psychological counseling and guidance's education is to train successful, efficacy and effective counselors, it has to be basic psychological characteristics should be seen at the counselor (Korkut-Owen, Tuzgöl-Dost, Bugay, Owen, 2014). For this reason, psychological counseling education programs must provide not only professional skills but also personal tendencies related to profession.

Deficiencies in psychological counseling and guidance's programs need to be confirmed and reorganized in this way to be high quality, contemporary and meet the needs of the country. That's why the process of evaluation of the programs which are in the Turkey is very important. Likewise, Henderson and Gysbers (1998) and Korkut (2004) point out that considering the process of preparing a program, one of the most important parts of the program is the evaluation part. Program evaluation can be made from a few different aspects (Nazlı, 2011). One of the ways in program evaluation is to take participants opinion about the program. Thus, the programs can be made to work more effectively.

When the literature in Turkey was examined studies about program evaluation are found limited. At the study which conducted among psychological counseling and guidance' graduates (Korkut-Owen, Acar, Haskan-Avcı ve Kızıldağ, 2013), it is seen that graduates finds the most powerful aspects were respectively, the practicum of the received education and program's content (163; 38.9%), faculty and staff (132; 31.5%), acquire professional-vocational qualification (62; 14.7%), contribute to personal development (34; % 8.1), learning environment facilities (21; 5.01%) and professional identity (7; 1.67%). Also it is seen that graduates finds the weakest aspects are the practicum of the received education and program's content (271; 62.3%) and faculty and staff (77; 17.7%). Then to gain professional / vocational qualifications / specialization (34, 7.8%), professional identity (27, 6.2%), learning environment facilities (18, 4.2%) and contributions to the personal development (8, 1.8%) field comes from. In the same study it is seen that at the beginning of the areas which graduates suggest a proposal comes from the practicum of the received education and program's content (243; 60,9%) and faculty and staff (75; 18,8%). Then professional / vocational qualification / gaining of specialization (35, 8.7%), professional identity (23, 5.8%), and learning environment facilities (19, 4.8%) areas come. It is seen that area at least recommendations is contributions to the personal development (4; 1%).

When examining at the literature in abroad related to psychological counseling and guidance program' evaluation, it is said that there is an accreditation system which is called Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs and the psychological counseling and guidance programs' effectiveness are evaluated by this system (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2012). Analyzing the statistics released by the CACREP, it is seen that many psychological counseling and guidance programs are examined according to this standards (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2013). Such evaluation is for whether the program is to provide students with professional confidence or not.

In Turkey, there isn't any institution like CACREP which examine and evaluate the psychological counseling and guidance programs in terms of efficacy. In this context, it is said that it is necessary to, program evaluation can be done with large-scale studies and determine the programs' strong and weak side especially until create the infrastructure of the institution like CACREP. Although this evaluation although nevertheless systematic, it is important because of the implementation of the necessary changes in the psychological counseling and guidance' program and strengthening of the related programs. In this context the aim of this study is to determine psychological counselor candidates' opinions about psychological counseling and guidance education that they receive.

2. Methods

In this study, online questionnaire was prepared and this questionnaire was announced to college students via several facebook and e-mail groups. In this questionnaire, weaknesses and strengths of PCG education, solution offers and different demographic information were asked to the students.

The 149 university students (71,1' % (n=106) female, 28,9% (n=43) male) who receive education in 39 different university are included within the context of the study. While the 7% (n=9) of the respondents are freshman, 18,8% (n=24) are sophomore, 44,5% (n=58) are junior and 13,3% (n=17) are senior; 16,4% (n=21) are studying at the graduate level. Considering the participants' academic average; it is seen that ranged between 1.00 and 4.00 and its arithmetic means is 3,13 ($x=3,1316$, $n=149$).

3. Findings and Results:

Participants were asked if they are satisfied or not to choose any psychological counseling and guidance programs. Participants indicated that 49.7 percent of them are very satisfied, 37.6 percent of them are satisfied, 8.2 percent of them are a little satisfied, 4 percent of them are not satisfied and 0,7 percent of them are not at all satisfied. At the same time they were asked if they are satisfied or not to choose the psychological counseling and guidance programs which they are enrolled. Results showed that 24.2 percent of them are very satisfied, 38.9 percent of them are satisfied, 24.8 percent of them are a little satisfied, 6.7 percent of them are not satisfied and 5.4 percent of them are not at all satisfied.

When participants were asked if they are follow the professional current developments in the field, they indicated that 47 percent of them are following, 48.3 percent of them are partially following and 4.7 percent of them are not following. Perception of counselor candidate on strengths and weakness of the PCG program and solution suggestions were given on the Table 1.

Table 1. Perception of counselor candidate on strengths and weakness of the PCG program and solution suggestions

| Strengths | | Weakness | | Solution Suggestion | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--|----|---|----|
| Characteristic | f | Characteristic | f | Characteristic | f |
| Academic staff | 30 | Lack of practice | 43 | Increase practices | 45 |
| Being Human focused profession | 22 | Course content | 26 | Revision of the program | 20 |
| Self-knowledge and self-improvement | 18 | Unqualified practices | 15 | Increasing qualifies and quantities of the academic staff | 10 |
| Practice opportunities | 14 | Being a new discipline | 9 | Legal regulations | 9 |
| Skill acquisition | 10 | Lack of academic staff | 9 | Professional law | 8 |
| Course content | 7 | Taking part in Education Faculty | 5 | Communication with academic staff | 5 |
| Job opportunities | 7 | School focused | 5 | Decreasing the quotas | 4 |
| Theory information | 4 | Homework | 5 | Changing teaching method | 4 |
| Support academic development | 4 | Over plus theory course | 4 | Taking part in another faculty | 3 |
| Current information | 3 | Lack of elective courses | 3 | Increase research and publication | 3 |
| Field flexibility | 2 | Not having standard program | 3 | Activities in different areas | 3 |
| Openness to development | 1 | Job fields | 3 | Revision of the course content | 3 |
| English education | 1 | Lack of psychometric | 2 | International cooperation | 2 |
| Multi-cultural | 1 | Not having client experience | 1 | Different job opportunities | 2 |
| Raise guidance teacher | 1 | Lack of the sources | 1 | Making social activities | 2 |
| Being a popular profession | 1 | Overcrowded classrooms | 1 | Activities focusing counseling experiences | 2 |
| Teaching approach | 1 | The absence of the ‘‘counselor’’ title | 1 | Feedback about homework | 2 |
| | | Being research focused | 1 | Effective Association | 2 |
| | | Ignoring student’ needs | 1 | Forum, e-mail groups | 2 |
| | | Academic staff’ attitude | 1 | Changing the attitude toward students | 1 |
| | | Inadequate education | 1 | Following the student’s improvement | 1 |
| | | Lack of theory courses | 1 | Increase in the education years | 1 |
| | | Not being a department in the faculty | 1 | Presentation and giving information | 1 |
| | | Lack of scientific activities | 1 | Being a department in the faculty | 1 |
| | | Not giving importance to counseling | 1 | Standard program | 1 |

As can be seen in the table, counselor candidates pointed out that the most three strengths of programs are quality of academic staff, being human focused profession, and giving opportunities to self-knowledge and self-improvement. Also, they have seen lack of practice, course content and unqualified practices as a weakness of the programs. Parallel to these results, they suggested to increase practices, revision of programs, and increasing qualifies and quantities of the academic staff.

4. Conclusions

The results showed that most of the counselor candidates are very satisfied or satisfied for choosing PCG programs. Considering to weakness which counselor candidates have seen in the PCG programs, the satisfaction of the candidates could be increase by resolving the weakness. It can be said that generally they are satisfied for choosing the PCG programs but the satisfaction was decreasing when it comes to the program which they were enrolled right now. Because of the different implementation of the PCG programs in several universities, counselor candidates might not be satisfied of the program which their university executive.

Counselor candidates pointed out that the most strength of the PCG programs are quality of academic staff. Besides this when the results about strengths of the PCG programs were generally evaluated it can be said that quality which the profession requires and individual qualities were the most common characteristics of the PCG programs. Also participants indicated that weakness of the programs is generally about education programs and course content.

According to results of the present study, it can be suggested that there should be more practise opportunities for the students in the programs. Studies with new methods of supervision especially in practices courses could be important for qualify of the practices in PCG education. Thus, learning environment and process can be prepared which helps students to develop practice skills.

Another point which counselor candidate were emphasized in this study is qualify and quantities of the academic staff. Especially when considering the increasing in the number of the universities in Turkey, it comes to the attention that there are a few people who complete their degrees on doctoral programs. It would be student's benefit to increase the number of academic staff in universities. At the same time it is critical for student's satisfaction that revision of the course content and increase the number of the elective courses.

Data collection was made by online survey. In this context, the obtained results could only be generalized to similar groups and this is the limitation of the study.

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