

## Original Article

# Consultation Needs Assessment in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences: Viewpoints of Medical Students

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Consultation can play an effective role in accommodating students to conditions and can be followed by academic achievement. This study was aimed to determine the consultation needs assessment among medical students in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (KUMS).

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted among 300 students from undergraduate basic sciences of medical faculty of KUMS during 2016. Two structured questionnaires were applied for collecting data: demographics and consultation needs assessment. Data were analyzed by SPSS version 16 using bivariate correlations, t-test, and ANOVA test.

**Results:** The age range of participants was 19 to 31 with the average of  $22.78 \pm 2.30$ . Gender was associated significantly and statistically with the areas of individual growth and promotion needs, educational needs, employment needs and emotional needs; girls in these areas acquired a higher score compared to boys ( $P < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the domain of individual growth and promotion needs acquired the highest score.

**Conclusion:** Our findings indicated that most of the students' needs were in the field of individual and educational growth and promotion. Furthermore, the average scores of guidance and consultation needs assessment of the female students was higher, with the necessity of paying more attention to the consultation problems among them.

**Keywords:** Needs assessment, Employment, Training, Emotional, Consultation

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## Introduction

Embarking on higher education is like entrance to a new environment with a clear educational difference from the previous training environments posing its new issues and problems (1). Since the improvement and development of students' academic

performance as the basis of success and progress is the most important goal of universities (2), academic guidance and consultation while training the correct ways to make decisions related to life's events leads to the solution of the internal conflicts and growth of

constructive relations with others (3), and eventually causes a more efficiency of educational system and reduction of lowering educational standards (4), facts which can be considered as potential outcomes of consultation needs assessment.

Consultation can play an effective role in accommodating student's conditions and be effective in solving problems of learners and their academic achievement (5). Consultation is a targeted and dynamic relationship; it is done in accordance with the needs of students and causes students' satisfaction with studying in college. It also encourages students to achieve educational transcendent goals and increase their hard work (6).

The inadequate academic consultation may cause despondency of students from school (7, 8). In addition, dealing with the problems of students is of great importance and failing to control them is liable to their lowering of educational standards (9). Consultation and guidance as a regular and organized activity was begun in Boston in 1908 by Frank Parsons, celebrated as the father of professional guidance; it entails a set of activities through which the individual is helped to overcome problems (10).

In Iran, some consultation service centers have been created since 1988 in universities and higher education institutions and since 1994 in the universities of medical sciences with the aim of helping clients for better self-understanding to improve intellectually and promote their competences (11). Also according to common processes in Iranian universities of medical sciences, at the start of each academic year, a number of accepted students are introduced to each faculty member to investigate their problems and difficulties and provide the necessary consultation and guidance with the hope that an appropriate space is prepared for their educational improvements (12).

Knowing of a variety of students' needs, prioritizing them, and determining their relationship with demographics and background variables can be useful in orienting the training programs and consultation to universities and ultimately solving the students' consultation problems. Therefore, determining the students' academic, personal, social and job needs will help successful planning in this field (13). Due to the importance of the subject and doing similar pieces of research at the universities of medical sciences and the observed gap in this regard at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (KUMS) and health services, the present study was carried out to determine the needs of guidance and consultation for students of medicine at KUMS in 2016.

## Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted on 300 students from undergraduate basic sciences of the School of Medicine at KUMS in 2016. For sampling, first the incoming students of basic sciences level were considered as a cluster; then, using simple random sampling with a probability proportional to the size on each of the stratum, the participants were selected and the standard self-report questionnaires in this regard were given to them and the required data was collected. Participants were briefed on the procedure for doing the study, the confidentiality of data, and also the aim of this study. All of them entered the study upon their volition. After eliminating the incomplete questionnaires, 295 questionnaires were analyzed (the response rate in this study was 98.3%).

The tool of collecting data consisted of two parts to collect data as students' self-report. The first part constituted the questionnaire of demographic information, including age (year), gender (male, female), marital status (single, married), residence in dormitory (yes, no), employment status (student only, student and employed), and parents' education (under diploma, diploma and university education).

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with students' guidance and consultation needs assessment; it has 35 items in five areas (score range 34-136). The area of individual growth and promotion needs (8 items, score range 8-32), for example "Learning how I can increase my concentration"; the family and marriage needs (7 items, score range 7-28), for example "Learning how I can confront with life problems"; the training needs (7 items, score range 7-28), for example "Learning how I can study correctly and use the study time optimally"; the employment needs for a job (6 items, score range 6-24), for example "Learning how I can be informed of my country's job opportunities"; the mental-emotional needs (6 items, score range 6-24), for example "Learning how I can confront with my life stresses". Answering to the items was done on a 4-option Likert spectrum (from I do not need to I need strongly, score range 1-4). This questionnaire has been used in several studies in Iran and its validity and reliability has also been approved (4). According to the pilot study among 30 students, we found that the reliability of questionnaire based on Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha in the present study was equal to 0.95.

The collected data were entered into the statistical software SPSS version 16 and analyzed by descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation (SD) as well as the analytical statistics. In order to assess the relationship between the different areas of the questionnaire of guidance and consultation needs, the

Pearson correlation was used. For measuring the relation of gender, residence in dormitory, father's education, mother's education and employment status with various areas of the questionnaire of guidance and consultation needs, the t-test and ANOVA were used. Also in order to determine the relationship between the age with the different areas of the questionnaire of guidance and consultation needs, the Pearson correlation was used.

## Results

The age range of participants was 19 to 31 and its average was  $22.78 \pm 2.30$  (Table 1). As the findings suggest, most participants in the study were female (66.4%), single (82%) and had parents with academic education (58.3% of fathers and 37.6% of mothers). Also, as reported, 78% of the students were only studying and 43.1% of the students were residing in dormitories.

**Table 1. Status of the context and demographic variables among KUMS students**

Variable	Number	Percentage	
Gender	Female	196	66.4
	Male	99	33.6
Marital status	Unmarried	242	82
	Married	17	5.8
	Without answer	36	12.2
Job	Student only	230	78
	Student & employee	8	2.7
	Without answer	57	19.3
Father's education	Under diploma	31	10.5
	Diploma	72	24.4
	Connoisseur	124	42
	Above connoisseur	48	16.3
Mother's education	Without answer	20	6.8
	Under diploma	62	21
	Diploma	97	32.9
	Connoisseur	90	30.5
	Above connoisseur	21	7.1
Residence in dormitory	Without answer	25	8.5
	Yes	127	43.1
	No	168	59.9
<b>Total</b>		295	100.0

The mean, standard deviation, maximum score acquirable of 100%, as well as the correlation of the various areas of students' guidance and consultation needs were determined.

All the different areas of students' guidance and consultation needs represented a significant statistical correlation of 0.01 (Table 2). Also, the area of individual growth and promotion needs acquired the highest score.

**Table 2. Mean, standard deviation and correlation of the various areas of KUMS students' guidance and consultation needs**

Guidance and consultation needs areas	Individual growth & promotion needs	Marriage & family needs	Training needs	Employment needs	Mean (SD)	Score range	Maximum score acquirable of 100%
Individual growth & promotion needs	1				20.76 (5.62)	8-32	64.87%
Marriage & family needs	0.716**	1			16.53 (5.30)	7-28	59.03%
Training needs	0.739**	0.586**	1		17.78 (5.18)	7-28	63.50%
Employment needs	0.625**	0.630**	0.574**	1	14.36 (4.61)	6-24	59.83%
Emotional needs	0.818**	0.689**	0.692**	0.619**	14.23 (4.40)	6-24	59.29%

The relationship between demographic variables and the different areas of students' guidance and consultation needs was determined. As the results of emotional needs show, between the context variables, gender was associated significantly and statistically with the areas of individual growth and promotion needs, educational needs, employment needs and emotional needs; female in

these areas acquired a higher score compared to male. Also the students living in the dormitory acquired a score higher than other students in the area of family and marriage needs. There did not exist any significant statistical relationship between other demographic variables under study (student's job, marital status and parents' education) on the one hand and the different areas

of students' guidance and consultation needs on the other hand. The correlation of age with various areas of students' guidance and consultation needs was also examined, and the findings showed that no significant

statistical difference existed between the age and the various areas of students' guidance and consultation needs (Table 3).

**Table 3. Comparison of the context variables in different areas of KUMS students' guidance and consultation needs**

Variable/area	Mean (SD)	Individual growth & promotion needs	Marriage & family needs	Training needs	Employment needs	Emotional needs
Gender	Female	21.59 (5.64)	16.93 (5.48)	18.63 (5.18)	14.83 (4.83)	14.66 (4.54)
	Male	19.11 (5.22)	15.47 (4.58)	16.36 (4.86)	13.44 (3.99)	13.38 (4.00)
	Test statistic+	3.66	1.83	3.62	2.61	2.37
	Significance	<0.001	0.068	<0.001	0.009	0.018
Marriage status	Single	20.98 (5.65)	16.46 (5.26)	17.92 (5.09)	14.40 (4.60)	14.28 (4.46)
	Married	20.35 (5.84)	16.05 (5.61)	18.94 (5.47)	13.47 (4.52)	14.17 (4.44)
	Test statistic+	0.444	0.304	-0.791	0.806	0.097
	Significance	0.657	0.761	0.430	0.421	0.923
Student's job	Student & employee	18.62 (4.68)	15.75 (4.16)	18.75 (4.16)	15.5 (4.50) 0	14.62 (3.96)
	Student only	21.02 (5.74)	16.55 (5.38)	18.00 (5.17)	14.40 (4.68)	14.29 (4.55)
	Test statistic+	-1.16	-0.416	0.405	0.648	0.202
	Significance	0.245	0.687	0.686	0.518	0.840
Residence in dormitory	Yes	20.94 (5.69)	17.34 (5.43)	17.74 (5.43)	14.81 (4.78)	14.25 (4.73)
	No	20.62 (5.58)	15.92 (5.13)	17.97 (5.00)	14.02 (4.46)	14.21 (4.14)
	Test statistic+	0.483	2.291	-0.377	1.469	0.088
	Significance	0.629	0.023	0.707	0.143	0.930
Father's education	Under diploma	21.45 (6.52)	17.16 (5.90)	17.16 (6.27)	15.16 (5.08)	14.29 (5.29)
	Diploma	21.30 (5.07)	16.25 (4.99)	18.29 (4.70)	14.29 (4.56)	14.34 (4.17)
	Conoisneur	20.27 (5.59)	16.95 (5.36)	17.33 (5.15)	14.50 (4.34)	13.95 (4.38)
	Above conoisneur	20.20 (5.35)	15.16 (4.34)	18.52 (4.62)	13.58 (4.21)	14.08 (3.85)
	Test statistic++	0.846	1.697	1.043	0.866	0.138
	Significance	0.470	0.168	0.374	0.459	0.937
Mother's education	Under diploma	21.08 (5.70)	16.98 (5.36)	18.03 (5.67)	14.77 (4.87)	14.14 (4.75)
	Diploma	21.21 (5.25)	16.89 (5.35)	18.01 (4.65)	14.43 (4.40)	14.12 (4.25)
	Conoisneur	20.17 (5.72)	16.23 (5.03)	17.50 (5.18)	13.80 (4.36)	14.14 (4.23)
	Above conoisneur	19.76 (4.48)	14.90 (4.04)	17.80 (4.45)	14.66 (3.26)	13.85 (3.39)
	Test statistic++	0.866	1.114	0.201	0.695	0.028
	Significance	0.459	0.344	0.896	0.566	0.994

+ t-student test, ++ ANOVA test

Learning the methods of promoting concentration, learning confrontation with problems of life, learning the correct method of study and optimum use of the study time, being informed of the job opportunities in the coun

try, and learning methods of coping with the stresses of life acquired the highest score among the different items of individual growth and promotion needs, educational needs, employment needs and emotional needs (Table 4).

**Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of various areas of KUMS students' guidance and consultation needs**

	Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Individual growth & promotion needs	Learning how I can increase my self-confidence	2.64	1.06
	Learning how I can increase my concentration	2.91	0.779
	Learning how I can remove my indecision and doubt	2.61	0.369
	Learning how I can communicate correctly with others	2.43	0.779
	Learning how I can think morally	2.55	0.179
	Learning how I can tolerate critiques	2.73	0.439
	Learning how I can defend my own right	2.25	1.560
Marriage & family needs	Learning how I can struggle with disturbing thoughts	2.28	1.540
	Learning how I can confront with life problems	2.96	0.429
	Learning how I can correctly act after marriage	2.63	1.340
	Learning how I can correctly act during nomination	2.43	1.590
	Learning how I can help my family members	2.03	0.689

	Learning how I can educate my children	2.03	1.620
	Learning how I can create harmony between my spouse and parent	2.32	1.130
	Learning how I can interact with opposite sex	2.23	1.670
	Learning how I can strengthen my skills of taking examination	2.25	0.289
	Learning how I can study correctly and use optimally the study time	2.67	1.210
Training needs	Learning how I can motivate myself for studying	2.95	1.690
	Learning how I can manage my time	2.37	1.310
	Learning how I can set up my instructional program	2.46	1.430
	Learning how I can get acquainted with educational rules	2.33	0.179
	Learning how I can reduce my examination stress	2.03	1.620
	Learning how I can be informed of my country's job opportunities	2.46	1.330
Employment needs	Learning how I can find a job in my society	2.44	1.001
	Learning how I can know my job interests	2.82	1.410
	Learning how I can adapt with a job	2.72	0.069
	Learning how I can be an entrepreneur	2.24	0.169
	Learning how I can be aware of the existing jobs	2.03	1.700
	Learning how I can live my life joyfully	2.25	1.570
Mental-emotional needs	Learning how I can confront depression	2.74	1.180
	Learning how I can confront my life stresses	2.85	0.559
	Learning how I can confront my aggressiveness	2.54	1.500
	Learning how I can resolve my suspicion and pessimism	2.11	0.599
	Learning how I can adapt with new environment of university	2.01	1.810

## Discussion

The findings of this study showed that two fields of needs, i.e. the individual and educational growth and promotion, received the highest score from the students at KUMS. These findings are consistent with other studies on this subject; several studies have expressed the students' most important consultation needs as mental and individual difficulties, educational issues, and family problems (14-18). For example, in their study Rabiei et al. reported that most of difficulties of students included educational needs, marriage, and problems related to choosing a job (14). The findings of Dogan's study on the reasons of Turkish student's reference to consultation centers showed that educational problems, individual difficulties, and mental-emotional issues were among the most important consulting needs of students (15). In another study in British universities, mental-emotional difficulties and individual-communicational difficulties were the most important causes of students' reference to counseling centers (16). In a study by Karimi et al., job, educational, and individual needs and life skills were introduced as the most important priority of students' consultation in Kenya (17). Some of these differences may be due to differences in the environment under study, characteristic of students, and cultural conditions at KUMS. Just as the findings showed, most of the students' needs were related to individual growth and promotion needs; this shows that the authorities must pay more attention to this priority in the educational planning; in this area, increasing concentration, dealing with disturbing thoughts, and the self-confidence were of higher priority.

According to the findings of the present study, training needs was the second area with the highest average score among students at KUMS; consistent with our findings, several studies have also reported the educational needs among students' three most important counseling priorities (19, 20). The findings showed that, except for the area of family and marriage needs, in the other areas the average scores of females have been significantly more than males among students at KUMS; these results are consistent with other studies in the field (11, 12). It seems that female students are exposed more than others to issues and problems of studentship (11). Of course, some studies have revealed this fact that girls' desires to express their problems as well as their more positive attitude to the use of consulting services compared to boys (it was considered as a sign of weakness) were the major cause of their reference to counseling centers (21, 22). According to the findings of the present study, there was no significant statistical relationship between marital status and different areas of consultation and guidance needs among students at KUMS. In this field, some studies have reported that mental-emotional problems were great among unmarried students (23). Our findings also showed that between the various areas of consultation and guidance needs and parents' education there did not exist any statistically significant relationship.

Other findings showed the average score for the family and marriage needs to be higher among students living in dormitories. In this field, Shakurnia et al. showed that although there did not exist significant statistical differences between living in dormitory and consultation and guidance needs, in general more than two-thirds of

those referring to counseling centers were students living in dormitories and the causes were mostly individual psychological difficulties (11). Due to the multiplicity of problems of students living in dormitories, it is recommended that a wider planning be provided in order to procure amenities for fixing them. One strength of this study can be students' high response rate to the questionnaire; some limitations of this study can also be the collection of information through questionnaires (in which lack of truthful cooperation is possible) and doing study monopoly among medical students (with generalizations to be made cautiously). In addition, with regard to the importance of need assessment in academic centers among teachers and students, particularly in relation to the educational issues (24), it is recommended that similar studies be carried out in this regard among university professors in order to achieve comprehensive results for facilitating appropriate decisions.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that students' most perceived need was in the field of individual and educational growth and promotion needs; this means that the authorities must pay more attention to this priority in the educational planning. Also, the average scores of guidance and consultation needs of the female students were higher; this indicates the necessity of paying more attention to the consultation problems among them.

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