# THE OPINIONS OF NURSING STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC CONSULTANCY SERVICES

# OPINIA STUDENȚILOR DE LA ASISTENȚĂ MEDICALĂ GENERALĂ CU PRIVIRE LA SERVICIILE DE CONSULTANȚĂ ACADEMICĂ

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**Abstract:**

*Aim*: This study aimed to determine nursing students' opinions on academic consultancy services.

*Methods:* Forty nursing students were included in the research by using the maximum variety sampling. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, a qualitative research method. They were analyzed using the inductive content analysis.

*Results:* The interviews showed that nursing students' opinions of consultancy services were classified into eight categories. The following themes and subthemes related to the categories were identified: Perception of Academic Consultancy, Services to Receive Help With, Benefits, Encountered Problems, Expectations, If I Were an Academic Consultant, Limitations and Recommendations.

*Conclusions:* Opinions about academic consultancy were affected by the course load of the instructor and the number and perceptions of students. The study recommended education programs that develop academic consultancy–related knowledge and skills of instructors for them to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of this role and for students to benefit from academic consultancy services.


**Rezumat:**

*Scop:* Acest studiu a avut ca scop să determine opiniile studenților de la asistență medicală generală cu privire la serviciile de consultanță academică.

*Metode:* Patruzeci de studenți de la asistență medicală generală au fost incluși în cercetare, metoda eșantionării. Datele au fost colectate prin interviuri aprofundate, o metodă de cercetare calitativă. Au fost analizate folosind analiza conținutului inductiv.

*Rezultate:* Interviurile au arătat că opiniile studenților de la asistență medicală generală despre serviciile de consultanță erau clasificate în opt categorii. Au fost identificate următoarele teme și subteme legate de următoarele categorii: Percepția consultanței academice, serviciile pentru a primi ajutor, beneficii, probleme întâlnite, așteptări, dacă aș fi consultant academic, limitări și recomandări.

*Concluzii:* Opiniile despre consultanța academică au fost afectate de încărcarea cursului instructorului și de numărul și percepțiile studenților. Studiul a recomandat programe de învățământ care dezvoltă cunoștințe și abilități legate de consultanță academică a instructorilor pentru ca aceștia să îndeplinească eficient responsabilitățile acestui rol și pentru studenți să beneficieze de servicii de consultanță academică.


**Key-words:** *Academic consultancy, nursing student, perception of counseling*
**Cuvinte cheie:** *Consultanță academică, student la asistența medicală, percepția consilierii*

**Introduction**

Young people studying in universities are one of the most important classes that form the future of society. The most remarkable feature that separates young people studying in universities from other youngsters is that they are able to direct their social life with their knowledge and decision-making characteristic (*Erdoğan S, et al, 2005, Kulaksızoğlu A, 2006*). Differently, the university period, which coincides with adolescence, may also be a crisis period (*Young-Jones AD, 2013*). Therefore, individuals may experience some negative outcomes due to the effects of adolescence and changes caused by university life (*Kulaksızoğlu A, 2006, Young-Jones AD, 2013*). These difficulties may include separation from family, a new environment and responsibilities, new people and different problems, and adapting to the education process (*Bektaş Köser D, et al, 2010, Erdoğan S, et al, 2005, McKenzie K, 2001, Pektaş İ, 2007, Peyrovi H, 2009*).

The main objective of higher education is to enable individuals to be decision makers as qualified citizens in terms of improvement in society and culture regarding ideas and actions (*Shaterloo A, 2011, White ER., 2015*). Consultancy services have an important place in solving adaptation problems that students encounter during transition to university education (*Bektaş Köser D et al, 2010, Creeden JE. 1990, Gaughf N W, 2013, Kuzgun Y, 1997, Topkaya N, 2013*). Academic consultancy services are services expected to be provided by academic consultants of students (*Ergin Ekinci C, 2007*). The legislation includes the definition and scope of these services. The Official Journal defines a consultant as "an instructor who is assigned by the dean, director, head of department, or head of the sub-department to deal with students' education-related and other problems" *(resmigazete.gov.tr, 2016)*. Another definition explains academic consultancy as a service that students can apply for their education-related or social problems (*Schertzer C.B, 2004, Smith JS, 2002*). Academic consultancy as a metaphor can be defined as educating, mentoring, counseling, and coaching (*Yıldırım A, 2005*). The most important objective of the student-centered academic consultancy services is to ensure that students get efficient education before taking up a career (*Kuzgun Y, 1997, Topkaya N, 2013*).

Strategic missions of administrators and university as well as perceptions of students are important for the planning of academic consultancy services (*Kım J, 2011*). The quality of communication and relationship between students and instructors is an important determinant for the quality of consultancy services. Students assessed academic consultants' ability for empathy as low in a study (*Keçeci A, 2009*). Moreover, academic consultants perceived themselves more positively than students did (*Keçeci A, 2009*). However, the ability for empathy is a significant ability to better understand problems encountered by students since the day they start university. Another study on academic consultancy emphasized that university students paid importance to academic consultancy and guidance services; however, they were not satisfied with the quality of these services (*Ergin Ekinci C, 2007*). Students'

expectations from academic consultancy services included notifying students about changes in the testing system, explaining new legislation and rules that are binding in the faculty, introducing the context of elective courses and guiding students about these, explaining necessary principles for being successful in the sector, and having regular interviews with students in small groups (*Şahin İ, 2010*). However, students said that their expectations were not fully met (*Moghadam F, 2018*). Academic consultancy services can be beneficial for improving students' adaptation to the sector and developing their professional identity (*Yavuzer H, 2005*).

Students are expected to be members of a profession who are enterprising, can solve their own problems, and have high self-confidence and self-respect with nursing education (*Konuk Şener D, 2011*). The quality of relationship between instructors and students during the educational process affects the accessibility of expected objectives of university-level nursing education. A consultant who is assigned to guide the student's educational process has various responsibilities. The qualified relationship between a student and a consultant makes consultancy more qualified and efficient *(Ergin Ekinci C, 2007, Özkan S, 2010, Topkaya N, 2013)*. Determining students' opinions about efficient academic consultancy services contributes to correcting false perceptions and making these services more active and effective.

Moreover, determining problems encountered by students during consultancy practices helps in reviewing present academic consultancy services and making a series of reformative adjustments.

**Methods**
*Study Design:* This was a qualitative phenomenological study. Phenomenology is not just a philosophic approach but also uses specific methods to understand people's perceptions of their own lives and their interests (*Hesse-Biber S, 2006, resmigazete.gov.tr, 2016*). Interviewing is used as a data collection tool in phenomenological studies. This study aimed to determine nursing students' opinions about academic consultancy services.

*Question:* "What are your opinions about academic consultancy services? Please explain."

Additionally, eight sub-questions were asked. These questions were as follows:

1. What comes to your mind about academic consultancy services? How would you describe them?
2. Do academic consultancy services have any objectives?
3. For what problems did you benefit from academic consultancy services?
4. What are the obstacles you encountered during this process?
5. Do academic consultancy services have any limitation? What are the problems that academic consultancy services are obliged or not obliged to solve?
6. What are your expectations from academic consultancy services?
7. What kind of service would you provide if you were an academic consultant? What would you do?
8. What are your suggestions to improve the general quality of academic consultancy services?

*Population and Sample:*

The study was carried out at Aydın Adnan Menderes University Faculty of Nursing between September 2017 and May 2018. A total of 40 voluntary students and 10 from every grade level were included in the study. Maximum diversity sampling, a qualitative sampling method, was used in this study *(resmigazete.gov.tr, 2016).* Accordingly, students were included in the study based on sex, age, place of residence, economic level, and status of benefiting from academic consultancy services.

*Data Collection:*

A student information form was used to collect general information about students. It included questions about students' grade, sex, age, place of residence, economic status, and use of academic consultancy services. It was developed based on a literature review. Moreover, in-depth interviews were made to reveal students' opinions on the study question. One open-ended question was asked to the students at the beginning of the interview. The researchers explained the aim of the study to students extensively at the end of their courses. They emphasized that this study was based on voluntariness, and the student information form was handed out to voluntary students. The researchers asked students to contact them if they found questions unclear. The study group was determined based on the grade, age, sex, place of residence, economic level, and status of benefiting from academic consultancy services, which were determined within the scope of maximum diversity sampling. Interviews were planned in compliance with suitable free times of voluntary students. The interviews were conducted in the instructor's room and recorded using a tape recorder.

*Data analysis:*

The researchers collated the data on a computer, segregated them based on their meanings, coded the data (open coding), and gathered related codes around a specific meaning (orthogonal coding). Subsequently, themes were determined by combining specified core categories (elective coding) and were made meaningful by interpreting them. Data not included in any category were also considered to prevent possible orientation in the interpretation of findings. The same process was performed by another expert in the field to increase the validity of the study, and the data were rearranged by the expert. The data were then organized, interpreted, and reported by the researcher *(Cresswell, J.W. 2011, Hesse-Biber S, 2006, resmigazete.gov.tr, 2016).*

*Validity and Reliability:*

Some precautions were taken in order to increase the validity and reliability of the study (*Pektaş İ, 2007*).

1. *Participant confirmation:* Transcriptions were made of the recordings following the interviews, and these were sent to the corresponding student. Then participants were asked to review the transcription and give approval. Moreover, in the content analysis, the categories were specified broad enough to include themes and subthemes and narrow enough to exclude irrelevant concepts. The interrelationship between the categories, themes and subthemes were analyzed and coherence was confirmed.
2. *External validity:* The research process and activities were explained in detail to increase the validity of the study.
3. *Internal validity:* Different approaches exist for validity. One of these approaches is peer debriefing, in which a researcher receives

opinions from different specialists [5]. The findings were provided without interpretation to increase the internal validity. Furthermore, the researcher and an academic member who is experienced in qualitative research methods coded the collected data separately, the coding was compared and the category, theme, and subthemes were identified.

4. *External reliability:* The researcher defined the activities in a detailed way to increase the external reliability of the study. Furthermore, the raw data and the coding were retained by the researcher to be examined by another person.

5. *Credibility:* The in-depth interview method was used in the study to establish credibility.

6. *Transferability:* In this research, purposeful sampling method was used to establish transferability and the inclusion criteria were determined for the study sample and indicated.

### *Ethical Considerations:*

Consent for the study was obtained from the Aydın Adnan Menderes University Ethics Committee of Educational Studies at the meeting numbered 2017/11. Verbal informed consent of voluntary students was obtained after explaining them the objective of the study and its contribution to the educational process and nursing profession.

### Results

The study group comprised 50% women (20) and 50% men (20). The mean age was 20 years. Of the participants, 42.5% (17) lived with their friends, 35% (14) lived at state dormitories, 17.5% (7) lived at private dormitories, and 5% (2) lived with their parents. Among the students, 82.5% (33) had a middle income level, 12.5% (5) had a low income level, and 5% (2) had a high income level. The researchers asked students whether they availed academic consultancy services. Of the students, 32.5% (13) never availed them, 30% (12) availed them only in the student registration process, and 25% (10) chose other options such as "I do not avail them because I have no access to them when there is a problem, or I can avail them whenever I want."

The answers of students to the question "what is your opinion about academic consultancy services" were separated into eight categories. Themes and subthemes were formed in relation to each category. Table 1 shows categories, themes, and subthemes in this study.

| Category | Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|
| **I.** Perception of academic consultancy | 1. Definition of academic consultancy | 1. Seek a solution for students' problems<br>2. Closer to students<br>3. Comprehensive<br>4. Gather and inform students<br>5. Able to communicate with students<br>6. Guide<br>7. Make course enrollment<br>8. Not just teach courses<br>9. Facilitate lives |
| | 2. Objective of academic consultancy | 1. Help about courses<br>2. Solve students' problems<br>3. Help students in their personal problems<br>4. Support students<br>5. Facilitate school life and students' life<br>6. Motivate students<br>7. Ensure adaptation<br>8. Increase the quality of students<br>9. Understand students' psychology |
| **II.** Fields to receive help about | 1. Course enrollment/Online course enrollment system | 1. Course selection<br>2. How to make online course enrollment<br>3. Test dates<br>4. Overlapping courses<br>5. Summer school |

| Category | Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|
| | 2. Emotional necessities | 1. When I feel valueless<br>2. When I feel suffocated<br>3. When I have personal problems |
| **III.**<br>Benefits | 1. Benefits to students | 1. Assure students<br>2. Decrease anxiety<br>3. May change perspective<br>4. Increase adaptation<br>5. Students behave in a more informed way<br>5. Students feel better |
| | 2. Benefits to system | 1. Know what students want<br>2. Save time |
| | 3. Being unsure about benefits | 1. I do not know too much about details because I do not avail their services. Are they beneficial? Are they harmful? I do not know whether they have a plus |
| **IV.**<br>Encountered problems | 1. Problems about the physical environment | 1. Not knowing the school address<br>2. Problems related to the difference between locations of schools and classrooms |
| | 2. Problems about the excessive number of students | 1. Interest decreases<br>2. Too many students<br>3. We were waiting |
| | 3. Problems about instructors being busy | 1. We have to go after him/her<br>2. We do not know when and where he/she is<br>3. He/She had too much work and was unable to care about us<br>4. I have never met him/her face to face<br>5. He/She does not provide a sufficient amount of information |
| | 4. Problems about the efficiency of consultancy | 1. He/She was unable to provide clear information<br>2. He/She does not solve problems<br>3. He/She did not meet my expectations<br>4. A consultant should search and get information |
| | 5. Problems about instructors' attitudes | 1. He/She does not attend to students<br>2. I have met him/her, but I did not like him/her<br>3. He/She was not sincere<br>4. He/She is nonpermissive and does not care |
| | 6. Problems about students' own habits and attitudes | 1. Prejudgment<br>2. Shyness<br>3. Generally applying to students affairs<br>4. Generally solving problems with friends<br>5. Fear of being misunderstood |
| | 7. No difficulties/problems | 1. I did not have any problem with school<br>2. I am very pleased about my consultant<br>3. I can reach to him/her whenever I try |
| **V.**<br>Expectations | 1. Expectations from students | 1. Students must be respectful |
| | 2. Expectations from the consultant regarding education | 1. He/She should know how efficient the courses are for me<br>2. He/She should be a reconciler between students and the course teacher<br>3. He/She should solve our problems<br>4. He/She should explain time management<br>5. He/She should make recommendations to increase my motivation for courses<br>6. He/She should inform me about applications for grant<br>7. He/She should provide more information about clinics |

| Category | Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|
| | | 8. He/She should inform me about works of various associations related to the profession<br>9. He/She should provide information about career and future planning in terms of profession |
| | 3. Expectation of communicating for emotional problems | 1. He/She should know students' psychology very well<br>2. He/She should make us feel valuable<br>3. He/She should listen<br>4. He/She should be sincere<br>5. He/She should be reassuring |
| | 4. The expectation of knowing the job definition of consultancy services | 1. Not knowing the exact roles of consultants<br>2. We would have more expectation if we had known more about what they do |
| | 5. I do not have any expectations | 1. I did not encounter a problem that I need to administer to my consultant<br>2. I generally can solve my problems<br>3. I do not have any moral expectations |
| **VI.**<br>If I were the academic consultant | 1. In relation to professional values | I should make the best of the money I earn |
| | 2. To increase student's adaptation to university | 1. I would hold a meeting<br>2. I would meet with students regularly<br>3. I would guide students<br>4. I would plan social activities<br>5. I would inform students about their profession and educational process<br>6. I would motivate them by sharing my experiences |
| | 3. As a way to approach students | 1. I would empathize<br>2. I would be sincere and open-hearted<br>3. I would care about them<br>4. I would communicate with them during course enrollment<br>5. I would make eye contact<br>6. I would try to get to know students |
| | 4. As a way to approach problems | 1. I would be a reconciler<br>2. I would do more activities with more anxious students<br>3. I would gain students' trust<br>4. I would personally want to solve students' problems and talk to them<br>5. I would spare time for students<br>6. I would encourage them<br>7. I would inform them about imperishableness<br>8. I would make an observation<br>9. I would handle all kinds of problems of students |
| | 5. Unable to put oneself into consultant's shoes | 1. I need to be a teacher to answer this |
| **VII.**<br>*Limitations* | 1. There are no limitations | 1. There are no limitations. Guide students even if he/she does not solve personal problems |
| | 2. Problems that he/she is obliged to solve | 1. Courses and tests<br>2. Course enrollments<br>3. Students with low motivation about courses |
| | 3. Problems that he/she may not be able to solve | 2. Personal/Family problems |
| **VIII.**<br>*Recommen-dations* | 1. Recommendations about the ways to reach an academic consultant | 1. Consultant should have a separate room<br>2. Consultant should be reached through institution's phone rather than his/her personal phone<br>3. There might be other units students can consult in the |

| Category | Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|
| | | case of not reaching the consultant |
| | | 4. An online system can be founded. There might be correspondences |
| | 2. Recommendations to improve the consultant's role | 1. Education about consultancy can be provided |
| | | 2. Constant research can be conducted; communication skills should be improved |
| | | 4. They should have problem-solving skills |
| | | 5. Various activities should be organized with students |

*Table 1. Nursing students opinions on academic consultancy services (n=40)*

The findings were examined by separating them into categories, themes, and subthemes. Accordingly, eight main categories were determined based on the questions asked to students: perception of academic consultancy, fields to receive help about, benefits, encountered problems, expectations, if I was the academic consultant, limitations, and recommendations. Students explained their opinions and ideas about academic consultancy services based on these categories. The students were coded according to their grade, sex, and age.

*Perception of academic consultancy*

Nine subthemes were determined under the perception of academic consultancy theme. The majority of students answered the questions "What academic consultancy means? How do you interpret it?" as "a person who solves problems." 19 K, a first-grade student, defined it as "consultants gathering their students separately and informing them." 21 E, a second-grade student, also defined it as "a position that they can get information about courses and test marks." 24, a third-grade student, defined it as "a student consulting the consultant teacher when he/she needed." Another theme related to students' perception of academic consultancy was the objective of academic consultancy. Nine subthemes were determined in this category. Most of the students said that the objective of the academic consultancy was to help and guide students. 18 K, a first-grade student, defined it as "solving students' problems." 20 K, a third-grade student, defined it as "a system to help students adapt to the environment." 23 E, a fourth-grade student, defined it as "a thing that is guiding for us." Students said that academic consultancy services had an objective to facilitate education life and did not have an objective regarding moral subjects.

*Fields to receive help about*

Two themes named course enrollments/online course enrollments and emotional necessities were determined in the scope of fields to receive help about. Majority of the students used academic consultancy services to get help about education-related subjects such as courses and course selection. Moreover, some of them got help with their personal problems. Some other students did not use these services for any reason, while some used them the previous year but not this year. Five subthemes were determined in relation to course enrollments/online course enrollments. 19 K, a first-grade student, said the following; "I had missing courses. I was not sure how to enroll for the courses. I did not know how to make online course enrollment. I consulted my consultant about these." 20 K, a second-grade student, said that "I consulted my consultant when I had problems about courses." 21 K, a third-grade student, said that "I get help about course enrollments. I do not consult my consultant when I have course-related problems." Students mostly tried to get help about online course enrollments because they did not know how to fully do it. The second theme of the fields to receive help about was emotional necessities. Some of the students got help from their consultants about their emotional problems. 22 E, a third-grade student, said that "for my personal problems. Sometimes when I felt valueless and suffocated, I consulted my consultant. He/She helped me feel good," and also said that "I consult him/her when I need to."

*Benefits*

Three themes were determined in the scope of this category: benefits to students, benefits to the system, and being unsure about benefits. In relation to these themes, 19 K, a first-grade

student, said that "students feel closer to university and feel better about themselves when their problems are solved." 20 K, a third-grade student, said that "my consultant helps me about everything. I feel secure." Accordingly, 22 E, a fourth-grade student, said that "consultancy services save time. System works better when problems are solved by our consultants." In relation to the category being unsure about benefits, 18 K, a first-grade student, said that "I do not actually know too much detail as I do not use it. Are they beneficial? Are they harmful? I do not know whether they have a plus." Most of the students were not able to express different opinions about the benefits of consultancy because they did not consult their consultant teachers.

*Encountered problems*

Eight subthemes were determined under the title of problems encountered by students in relation to academic consultancy services. These themes included problems about the physical environment, excessive number of students, instructors being busy, efficiency of consultancy, students' own habits and attitudes, and no difficulties/problems. 20 E, a second-grade student, explained the difficulty he/she encountered by saying "I selected an elective course last year; however, I did not know where the old school was. I did not attend that course and failed." Majority of the students complained about the number of students assigned to a consultant. Accordingly, 21 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "I went to my consultant once. He/She was not in his/her room when I went another time." 20 E, a third-grade student, said that "students' number is excessive. Thus, he/she attends to me; however, he/she forgets about me later. He/She could attend me better if the number was less. We are obliged to wait at their doors." 20 E, a second-grade student, explained the difficulties he/she encountered by saying "I did not even once see my consultant last year. I tried to reach him/her a few times. Then I tried to solve my problem using my resources. My roommate helped me." Accordingly, six themes were determined: my roommate provided me the information that my consultant should have, we have to go after him/her, we do not know when and where he/she is, he/she had too much work, he/she was not able to attend us, and I have never

met him/her face to face and he/she does not provide a sufficient amount of information. Accordingly, 18 K, a first-grade student, said that "I met my consultant. He/She had too much work and was unable to attend us." 19 E, a first-grade student, said that "I have never talked to my consultant. He/She was unable to provide clear information. We cannot reach him/her, we send emails; however, he/she does not respond. We call him/her on phone but we do not get an answer. We were going to talk more about courses. I was going to ask why he/she did not care about the students." Another theme named problems about the efficiency of consultancy was determined. Some of the students said that they talked to their consultants about summer school and online course enrollment system and they did not get enough information from their consultants. 23 E, a fourth-grade student, expressed various opinions by saying "For example, I cannot get information about every subject. There are things that my consultant does not know. These loosen students' connection with school." 19 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "they did not meet my expectations. I will not want to share my problems with them again." 21 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "they have less information than we have. We do researches, ask upper-grade students. Some instructors do not have information as much as we do because they are new. They do not know about the online course enrollment system. For example, whether summer school courses count as our courses? In which schools we can take these courses? There were various difficulties during that time. Are we going to pass? Are we going to fail? What is happening? They did not inform us." Four subthemes in relation to the category problems about instructors' attitudes were determined. Accordingly, 19 E, a second-grade student, said that "I sought for help. My roommate helped me. I did not feel helpless. However, the hardships of the process made me angry. I thought that our consultant was a bit careless. I do not want to communicate with him/her anymore." Five subthemes were determined in the scope of problems about students' own habits and attitudes. Students said that they solved their problems mostly with their friends and families. Accordingly, 19 K, a second-grade student, explained the reason why he/she did not talk to

the consultant by saying "I had prejudgments. It took a lot of time to overcome my prejudgments. I started asking questions at the beginning of the spring semester. I was feeling shy." 20 E, a second-grade student, said that "I am shy. I was sending emails to my consultant due to shyness. I have never met him/her face to face." Three subthemes about the no difficulties/problems theme were determined. Some of the students said that they had some problems when they first started university, but later they did not have any problem with academic consultancy services. Accordingly, 19 K, a second-grade student, said that "I know my consultant. I am very pleased with my consultant. I talked to him/her when I had problems about courses."

*Expectations*

Five themes were determined in the category of expectations, including expectation from students, consultation regarding education, communicating about encountered problems, expectation of knowing the job definition of counseling services, and I do not have any expectations.

The expectations from students theme included students' being respectful. Accordingly, 21 E, a third-grade student, said that "students should be respectful toward their instructors." Nine subthemes about the expectations from instructor theme were determined. In relation to this theme, 19 K, a first-grade student, said that "I want to be informed about subjects such as how can I explain nursing to people better? How can I explain myself to people? I want to explain about nursing profession to society." 19 E, a first-grade student, said that "I would want to be informed about spring semester. I need information on the courses and tests to be selected." 21 E, a second-grade student, said that "they should be easily accessed for all kinds of problems." In relation to career, 20 K, a first-grade student, said that "I want to be informed about subjects such as how can I explain nursing to people better? How can I explain myself to people? I want to inform society about nursing." 19 K, a first-grade student, said that "I do not just want to be a nurse, I also want to do other things. I want to go abroad. I want to help people. I want to talk about these things with my consultant."

The other theme was expectation of communicating about emotional problems. Accordingly, five subthemes were determined. Accordingly, 20 E, a second-grade student, said that "I would expect them to say and consider me as their friend, not as our teacher." 20 E, a first-grade student, said that "they should listen to us. They are more experienced than me. I want a little bit of sincerity. I want to react to them more easily." 21 E, a third-grade student, said that "the fruit of the academic profession is students. An academician should always be close to students. They should be sincere and trustful. This is quite important. Or else it is very hard to talk to them. You cannot talk if the other person does not listen to you."

Two subthemes were determined in the scope of the expectation of knowing the job definition of consultancy services theme. Some students said that they had no expectation from their consultants. Students said that they solved the problems they encountered during their educational process either by themselves or with the help of their friends. Moreover, some other students said that they did not encounter any problem that made them talk to their consultants. A group of students said that they did not have any moral expectations from their consultants.

*If I was the academic consultant*

Five themes were determined for this category: improving students' adaptation to university, attitudes toward students, way of approaching problems, and being unable to put themselves into the consultant's shoes. In relation to professional values, 21 E, a third-grade student, said that he/she had to recompense the money he/she earned no matter what he/she did as an academic consultant. Another theme was defined as improving students' adaptation to university. Six subthemes were determined in the scope of this theme. Accordingly, 19 K, a first-grade student, said that "I primarily would organize a meeting. I would introduce myself. I would learn their opinions. I would learn their expectations from the consultant, and form a messaging group for them to share views. I would organize meetings for them to get closer." 20 K, a second-grade student, said that "I would meet five students a week if I did not attend classes. I would meet them. I would give them my phone number. I would try to get to know

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and observe them to understand whether they came willingly or not." 22 E, a fourth-grade student, said that "I would make my presence felt by students first. I would organize activities to meet and get close to students. I would sit at a cafe and drink tea with students. I would lead them toward activities that would activate them." Another theme was defined as attitudes toward students. Accordingly, 20 K, a third-grade student, expressed his/her opinions by saying "I would try to solve their problems. I would not make it more difficult. Consultant's way of communication is quite important. I would suggest other courses rather than just cutting down. I would use a more positive language. I would tell them to come to me when they have any problem." 21 E, a third-grade student, said that "students talk more easily when you are friendly with them." 20 E, a second-grade student, said that "I would master the subject to make them trust me." Nine subthemes were determined in the scope of ways of approaching problems. Accordingly, 21 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "I would personally want to solve students' problems and talk to them. I would spare time for them." 20 E, a third-grade student, said that "I would learn each student's personal problems. These problems might be course related. I would want to take care of their personal or private problems." 20 K, a second-grade student, said that "I would do more activities with more anxious students. I would do the most important thing and gain students' trust. I would not get rid of them. I would make eye contact. I would help them seek their rights if they encountered a problem or were treated unfairly." 18 E, a first-grade student, said that "I would empathize. I would do my best if they consulted me. I would be sincere and act friendly so that they feel closer to the consultant." The last theme of this category was being unable to put oneself into the consultant's shoes. A student said that "I need to be a teacher to answer this."

*Limitations*

Three themes were determined for this category: there are no limitations, problems that he/she is obliged to solve, and problems that he/she may not be able to solve. In relation to the there are no limitations theme, a group of students said that consultancy services did not

have any limitations, consultants were obliged to do their best to solve any kind of problem, and they could even attend personal problems if students allowed them. Accordingly, 21 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "they may have helped solving personal problems." 20 K, a third-grade student, said that "they may help students solve their personal problems if students allow them." The second theme was the problems that he/she was obliged to solve. Most of the students said that the primary responsibility of consultants was to solve students' educational problems, such as course enrollments and difficulties about courses and tests. Accordingly, 20 E, a first-grade student, said that "I would control his/her success in class. I would search for the reason why his/her grade is low. I would handle personal problems after overcoming these." 21 K, a third-grade student, said that "consultants are obliged to solve problems about course enrollments." The last theme of this category was that the problems that he/she may not be able to solve. The subtheme he/she cannot solve private (personal, family-related) problems was determined in relation to this. 18 K, a first-grade student, said that "consultant cannot do anything about friends and solve family-related problems." 20 K, a second-grade student said that "I do not think he/she can provide psychological support."

*Recommendations*

Two themes about recommendations category were determined: recommendations about how to reach academic consultant and how to improve the role of consultant. Four subthemes related to recommendations about how to reach an academic consultant were determined: consultant should have a separate room, he/she must be contacted through the institute's phone rather than his/her personal phone, there might be other units students can consult in the case of not reaching the consultant or an online system can be found, and there might be correspondences. 21 K, a third-grade student, said that "in my opinion, they can receive education about this. Constant researches can be conducted. Because it is beneficial to bring up qualified students." 21 K, a fourth-grade student, said that "There must be other units when we cannot reach consultants in school." 22 E, a fourth-grade student, said that "First, the

definition of consultancy should be taught. Consultant teachers must improve themselves for seminars and training programs. They can provide information about training and certificate programs."

Five subthemes were determined in relation to recommendations about how to improve the role of consultants: they can receive education about consultancy, they should conduct constant research, they should improve their communication skills, they should have problem-solving skills, and they should organize different activities with students. 20 K, a second-grade student, said that "a student and a consultant should get together more. More activities should be organized such as group activities." 21 E, a third-grade student, said that "a consultant teacher should act more friendly rather than being nonpermissive. I want him/her to listen to us. He/She can be more sincere." 18 E, a first-grade student, said that "student activities (going to cinema, etc.) can be organized. Being friendly ensures trust and closeness. Out-of-class group activities can be conducted. Football games can be organized."

**Discussion**

Eight related categories were formed in terms of students' opinions about academic consultancy services: perception of academic consultancy, fields to receive help about, benefits, encountered problems, expectations, if I was the academic consultant, boundaries, and recommendations. University education is a new milestone for young people. It is a phase in which they experience various changes. Therefore, students may encounter numerous problems. Academic consultancy services have an important role in helping students adapt to university life and their success *(McKenzie K, Schweitzer R, 2001, Peyrovi H, Parvizy S, 2009).* Moreover, university education is not limited to academic learning. The out-of-class student–instructor relationship includes academic consultancy services of the instructor *(Burgaz B, Ekinci CE, 2007).*

*The perception of academic consultancy*

Two themes, the definition and the objective of academic consultancy, were determined in the scope of this category. Students defined academic consultants as people

who do course enrollment, solve students' problems, and guide and inform them. The responders were to one third (30%) of those who participated in this study and used academic consultancy services. More than half of the students never met their consultants. Kıranşal, Biçer, and Akça (2008), revealed that the majority of students solved their problems either by themselves or with the help of their friends and family. Despite various explanations about academic consultancy, most of the students associated academic consultancy with courses and course enrollments. Students gave different answers to the question "What are the objectives of academic consultancy services?" Responders generally emphasized on solving problems and helping students. However, some students responded with improving students' adaptation, understanding their psychology, and motivating them. The most significant objective of the study was defined as to reach educational goals by solving education-related problems *(Moghadam F, Bagheri S, 2018).*

*Fields to receive help about*

Accordingly, course enrollments/online course enrollment system and emotional necessity themes were determined. Most of the students who used consultancy services said they consulted for course selection, enrollments, tests, and other education-related subjects. Studies showed that students used academic consultancy services mostly for education-related issues *(Kıranşal N, Biçer N, Alkan H, Akça D, 2008).* Getting help from an academic consultant affects students' adaptation to university. Research has also shown that satisfaction with university, career orientation and social support affect academic performance *(McKenzie K, Schweitzer R, 2001).* Academic consultancy services that students used for either educational or personal problems helped them adapt to the culture and identity of the institution *(Peyrovi H, Parvizy S, 2009, Schertzer C.B, Schertzer SMB, 2004, Smith JS, 2002).*

*Benefits*

Three themes resulting from students' opinions about the benefits of academic consultancy were defined as benefits to students, benefits to the system, and being unsure about benefits. Qualified consultancy services had various benefits, such as promoting a student's

academic career, reaching life goals, solving education-related problems, and improving problem-solving and decision-making skills, low life distress, high motivation, positive feelings towards self-efficacy, ability to study, ability to concentrate, and being prepared for attending classes *(Allen JM, Smith CL, 2008, Peyrovi H, et al, 2009)*. Similar to students' statements, the study found that academic consultancy had various benefits, such as changing perspectives, developing a feeling of trust in students, making them feel better, ensuring adaptation to university, and saving time as a benefit to the system. Effective academic consultancy services are important to reduce the stress experienced by students during and after course enrollments. The academic achievement of students was equivalent to the achievement of faculty and even university *(Kım J, Feldman L, 2011)*. Most of the students were unable to express their opinions about the benefits of consultancy because they had never used these services. A relevant study revealed that one of the reasons students found consultancy services of their department ineffective was that they did not know what they should discuss with their consultants *(Şahin İ, et al, 2010)*.

*Encountered problems category*

Students expressed the problems they encountered based on academic consultancy services. Seven themes were determined in relation to. Students expressed various problems based on instructor's preoccupation, attitude, efficiency of the consultancy, and students' habits in relation to accessing consultancy services. A group of students said that they experienced no challenges. Consultants should contact students and develop a strong bond between them to provide efficient and qualified academic consultancy *(Khali A, Williamson J, 2014)*. Accordingly, students said that they did not consider instructors sincere and thus did not tell him/her about their problems, or he/she was careless and they were not able to express themselves. Khali and Williamson (2014) emphasized that students discussed with other instructors whom they felt closer to than their own consultants about their problems. Students tried solving their problems by sharing them with their course instructors if they considered them to be sincere and could communicate easily. A trust relationship in academic consultancy contributes to handling educational problems that students encounter *(Drake JK, 2011)*. Focus group interviews that assessed academic consultancy services revealed that students experienced stress and frustration regarding education/curriculum due to the fact that consultants informed them insufficiently *(Kım J, Feldman L, 2011)*. The same study emphasized that students wanted to learn the answer and the solution for the question they had asked at that moment, and that consultant should be willing to help *(Kım J, Feldman L, 2011)*. According to Peyrovi, Parvizy & Haghani, (2009), educators should not wait for students to seek help, but should make contact with them and suggest help to them. Accordingly, a group of students said that their academic consultant did not give them the expected answer for what they had asked or did not provide adequate information. Therefore, they consulted upper grades or their friends. Burgaz and Ekinci (2007) revealed that the satisfaction levels of university students about academic consultancy and guidance services were "quite low." The results of the study indicated that students experienced various difficulties based on instructors' preoccupation. The role of an academic consultant is another role assigned to instructors. It is inevitable to experience a number of difficulties in providing a good academic consultancy service due to their course load and different responsibilities pertaining to the faculty or the department they work for *(Bektaş Köser D, Mercanlıoğlu Ç, 2010)*.

*Expectations*

In this category, the students were determined to have expectations from themselves for educational and emotional problems. A group of students said that they needed to know the job description of academic consultancy to have any expectation. In a different study found that, medical students with academic difficulties frequently experience inadequate support *(Sayer M, De Saintonge MC, Evans D, 2002)*. A relevant study found that students expected academic consultants to inform them about scholarships, future plans, and career developments *(Creeden JE, 1990)*. Another study found that active consultancy services were beneficial in empowering students in terms of making career plans related to education for

future *(Young-Jones AD, Burt TD, Dixon S, Hawthorne MJ, 2013)*. Clear and accurate communication between consultants, other instructors, administrators, and students is important to improve the quality of consultancy services *(Kım J, Feldman L, 2011)*. Accordingly, participating students said that consultants should be sincere and have active listening skills so that they can share their problems. Moreover, consultants should make students feel valued and should develop a trust relationship. A trust relationship is a key factor for students' personal development, adaptation to academic process, and improvement in motivation *(Smith JS, 2002)*. A study revealed that one of the factors that affected students' reaching their educational goals was instructors' respect for students. The same study found that consultancy was insufficient for personal problems of students *(Şahin İ, Zoraloğlu YR, Şahin Fırat N, 2007)*. Similar to published studies, this study found that students expected consultants to understand their psychology *(Şahin İ, et al, 2007)*. Students expressed various expectations about relationship and communication skills such as consultants listening to students, sincerity, and feeling of trust in the scope of expecting to communicate for emotional problems. Nadler and Smirley (2006) found that a positive relationship existed between the feeling of trust that students felt toward consultants and consultant's way of communication. Similar results were obtained in this study.

*If I was the academic consultant*

For this category included five subthemes based on the statements of the students: in relation to professional values, to increase student's adaptation to university, as a way to approach students and problems, and being unable to put oneself into the consultant's shoes. The findings of this study showed that 32.5% of the students had never used academic consultancy services. Thus, they could put themselves into the consultant's shoes, as expected. Some of the students met and communicated with the instructor during registration and for a little time due to the excessive number of students. They put themselves into the consultant's shoes for the things that they expected from the consultants; however, they were not met. Majority of the students pictured themselves as a consultant who regularly met students, was respectful toward students and cared for them, and tried to help students with whatever their need was by building a trust relationship in the scope of if I was the academic consultant category. A study determined that developing good communication between students and consultants and making consultancy services accessible and flexible are quite significant *(Suvedi M, Gihimire RP, Millenbah KF, Shrestha K, 2005)*.

*Limitations*

Three themes were determined for this category: there are no limitations, problems that he/she is obliged to solve, and problems that he/she may not be able to solve. Most of the students said that the primary responsibility of consultants was to solve students' educational problems, they could not handle personal problems, and it would not be in their scope because they regarded these problems as private. They could only support students if they allowed them to. A group of students said that no limitations and consultants should try to solve any kind of problems. A study supporting these findings emphasized that students used academic consultancy services to improve educational success, improve the professional knowledge level, and acquire information about professional subjects *(Kıranşal N, et al, 2008)*.

*Recommendations*

The last category based on the study findings was recommendations. Accordingly, two subthemes were determined: recommendations about how to reach academic consultants and how to improve the role of consultants. Similar to another study, this study revealed that most of the students emphasized the necessity to improve academic consultancy services and made some recommendations *(Şahin İ, et al, 2007)*. According to Shaterloo and Mohammadyari (2011), academic support programs such as the homework club support students with extra help and strategies to improve academic performance across curricula.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

According to the results, more than one third of the students had never used academic consultancy services, and the other one third used these services only during the registration period.

Students used academic consultancy services for courses, enrollments, and professional and educational aspects.

Students had various problems regarding academic consultancy services based on the excessive number of students, preoccupation of the instructor, efficiency of consultancy, and consultant's attitude toward students. Students wanted consultants who were sincere, understood and listened to students, made them feel valuable. Students pictured themselves as academic consultants who understood and listened to students, cared about them, tried to handle all their problems, and met them regularly. The priority of academic consultancy services was education-related problems. Personal problems could be handled only if the student allowed the instructor and he/she could even refer the student to a psychological consultant if needed.

The recommendations of this study were as follows: University-wide standard and comprehensive student information forms should be prepared. Changes in students should be recorded by the academic consultant. Moreover, periodical training programs should be organized to improve the efficiency of academic consultancy and raise instructors' awareness. Assessments and inspections should be conducted by department administrators to monitor academic consultancy services and rate the efficiency of these services according to the quality standards.

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