# Demographic, Academic and Psychological Profile of Students Attending Counseling Services at the University of Granada (Spain)

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*The Spanish educational system, in general, and particularly at the university level, is characterized by the lack of systematic and quantitative evaluative research. This lack of data based research is particularly problematic due to the significant reforms that are currently taking place. Decisions are being made at political, administrative, and educational levels that are not substantiated by meaningful research. To address these concerns, this study focuses upon providing empirical data from students who attend the University of Granada and who have sought services from Counseling Services. This paper provides data concerning the demographic, academic and psychological characteristics that impact students' adaptation to the University's academic and personal challenges.*

**KEY WORDS:** university student; academic failure; dropout student; personal needs; counseling.

*La situación del sistema educativo español en general y universitario en particular, se caracteriza por la falta de datos sistemáticos e investigación evaluadora. Esta falta de datos procedentes de investigación es particularmente problemático debido a las importantes reformas que están teniendo lugar actualmente. Se están tomando decisiones en el ámbito político, admnistrativo y educativo que no están sustentadas por investigación rigurosa. Para paliar estos déficits, este*

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*estudio pretende aportar datos empíricos de estudiantes que han sido atendidos en el Gabinete Psicopedagógico (Servicios de Counseling) de la Universidad de Granada. Este artículo aporta datos sobre variables demográficas, académicas y psicológicas que están condicionando negativamente la adaptación de los estudiantes a los desafíos académicos y personales que les plantea la Universidad.*

For the last few years, the Spanish University System has undergone continuous reforms that have impacted the careers of both professors and students. In spite of the lack of meaningful consideration accompanying the relevant decision-making processes (Bricall, 2000), there has been evaluative research that has yielded data that is now influencing tertiary education. Some of the issues that have been identified include: (a) students' growing dissatisfaction with the quality of education, (b) teachers' complaints about the lack of motivation in students, (c) the continuing pressure from the University for growing accountability, (d) the increasing internationalization of education and the diverse demands of a multicultural clientele, (e) the need to reduce student attrition caused by the high rate of failure among students who need assistance with adjustment, transition, and the development of improved academic skills, as well as (f)the presence of more people on campus who are managing psychiatric disorders and who look to the counseling services for ongoing support during their studies.

For example, in 1993 60,000 students left universities in South Africa without obtaining a qualification compared to 54,775 students who received their degrees. The fact that many of these students did not seek or obtain the help they needed may have contributed to the number of students who dropped out (Simkins & Hofmeyr, 1995). Students still attach some stigma to seeking counseling and therefore hesitate to utilize this resource (Nicholas, 1997). However, in countries with several decades of experience providing counseling services to students, like the United States (Archer & Cooper, 1998), Canada (McCormick & Paterson, 1996), or Australia (Quintrell & Robertson, 1996), trends suggest that: (a) the demand for this kind of services has grown continuously since 1981 (Stone & Archer, 1990), (b) resources are tightening and the average university counselor's workload is increasing (Quintrell & Robertson, 1996), (c) counselors believe that the level of complexity of client presenting concerns is increasing (Gallagher, 1993; Gallagher & Bruner, 1994, 1995), and (d) the number of "non-traditional" students and students from diverse populations will continue to challenge the ability of counseling centers to respond to the increased range of needs.

Subsequently, even though it looks as if it would be beneficial to survey the concerns of students who are using counseling services and the degree to which these concerns impact student functioning (McCormick & Patterson, 1996;

Wilson, Mason, & Swing, 1997; Nicholas, 1997), these factors are not reflected in any of the current legal reforms, policies, initiatives, or financial priorities in Spain. Instead, over recent years the process of determining the range of counseling services that are offered has been based on non-empirical perceptions and other factors unrelated to student needs (Arco & Fernández-Balboa, 2003; Vidal, Díez, & Vieira, 2001; Arco, Heilborn, & Salmerón, 2002). With the exception of a single study with students from the University of Granada, there is an absence of empirical studies of this kind based upon Spanish university populations, leaving us in the unfavorable position of having to compare our data to populations from other countries and cultures. According to Flisher and De Beer (2002) this comparison is not recommended due to the variances in how students from different cultures and academic environments present counseling concerns.

Considering the political and institutional circumstances limiting the development of counseling services in Spanish universities, these propose to establish a research based profile of university students who are at risk of academic failure and /or personal difficulties. This profile will be based upon demographic, personal, academic and vocational problems of concern to those students attending counseling services at the University of Granada. Through developing this profile the authors also hope to improve the efficacy and efficiency of providing counseling services, especially in light of the current decrease in resources and other adverse institutional circumstances surrounding the practice of providing these critical services.

## METHOD

### Sample

The population for this research study consisted of 165 students from the University of Granada who were clients of Counseling Services during a period between January 2002 and January 2003. The average age of this group of students was 23.48 years, with a range that extended from 18 to 38 years old. 55.15% of the students were females and 44.85% male. A total of 97.58% of these students were single with 2.42% being married. These students came from 20 Colleges and Faculties and represented 37 different degree programs. The academic class of this population ranged from sophomore to Doctoral students.

### Procedure

Students who presented themselves for counseling at Counseling Services were asked to complete a checklist of problems and concerns. A total of 165 students completed the short checklist of the Protocol of Psicopedagogic Information (PIP) for demographic and academic data. Eighty-five students completed

the long version of the PIP that provided additional academic, psychological, interpersonal and vocational information. The time required to complete the PIP was also recorded. In addition, a Counseling Services professional staff member was available to answer any questions or to address any concerns related to completing the PIP. Subsequently, all data from the PIP was recorded in a complete database.

## Instruments

The Protocol of Psychopedagogic Information (PIP) is a checklist consisting of 80 items that cover a range of symptoms for which students seek counseling. Students check off the items that best describe the reasons they sought counseling prior to the first session. The concerns are divided into five categories: demographic, academic, psychological, interpersonal and vocational-professional. The complete PIP also includes additional open-ended questions that allow the student to address his/her problem, the kind of objectives s/he pursues when they come to Counseling Services, and the amount of effort students make in pursuing counseling. The checklist was developed over a one-year period by identifying the presenting concerns of students who came to Counseling Services, and by analyzing and combining other protocols adopted from other counseling services. The content validity of the PIP, therefore, rests appropriately on the development and revision of the list of presenting student concerns. A similar method was used by Lubwitz (1989: cited in Nicholas, 1997), and Gallagher, Golin and Kelleher (1992) who constructed the Survey of Student Needs, an instrument based upon the presenting concerns of students collected in a variety of counseling centers over a decade.

## Access Database

All records from the PIP are recorded for research purposes on a PIP.

## RESULTS

In the following tables, data is presented in two parts promote a clear understanding of the results. Table I reflects demographic data including Sex, Age, and Marital Status from 165 students. The three columns, from left to right, provide the respective percentages of Individual Attention (IA), Workshops (W), and Total data. Approximately ten percent more females are represented in the Total number of respondents than males.

There are also significantly more females, 27% more females than males, who attended Workshops. This trend is reversed when examining the number of students who received IA where there were 6% more males receiving services than females. The average age of the Total group is 23.21 with a range of 18 to 38.

**Table I.** Basic Demographic Data

| Demographic variables | IA | | W | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Total demand | 85 | 51.52 | 80 | 48.48 | 165 | 100.00 |
| Sex | | | | | | |
| Female | 40 | 47.06 | 51 | 63.75 | 91 | 55.15 |
| Male | 45 | 52.94 | 29 | 36.25 | 74 | 44.85 |
| Age | | N | | N | | N |
| Age (average) | | 23.00 | | 23.42 | | 23.21 |
| Age (range) | | 18–32 | | 18–38 | | 18–38 |
| Marital status | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single | 84 | 98.82 | 77 | 96.25 | 161 | 97.58 |
| Married | 1 | 1.18 | 3 | 3.75 | 4 | 2.42 |

The vast majority of clients in the Total, 98%, were single with 2% being married. Additional information indicated that 8% of the students receiving services came from countries other than Spain. In addition, 36% of the students receiving services came from Granada, 12% came from Andalusia, and 12% came from other provinces in Spain.

Most of the students who received services (48%) lived with roommates in rented flats, 22% lived with their parents, 12% lived with other relatives, and 18% lived under other conditions (alone, as couples, or in dorms). Most students, 73% do not work and 14% hold part-time jobs.

The way students learned about counseling services is important as it yields information as to what kind of publicity is most effective. The majority of students seeking services, 35%, learned about the services from friends. Eighteen percent found out about counseling services from our web page and 4% were referred by instructors. Other ways that students found out about counseling services included posters and leaflets.

Forty percent of clients who received counseling services are preparing for Social and Legal Sciences careers, 26% are preparing for Experimental and Technological careers, 17% are preparing for careers related to Humanities, and 10% are preparing for Health Sciences careers. The remaining 5% of students include 4% who are working on their thesis and 1% who are taking other kinds of coursework.

The largest percentage of students, 19%, registered for courses from several different academic areas. These courses also reflect different levels of difficulty and represent some of the academic problems in the system. Students must complete six courses before they graduate. The majority, 18%, of the students are registered for their fourth course, 15% are registered for their second course, 12% are registered for their first course, and another 12% are registered for their third course. Table II reflects the course level of the remainder of the students.

**Table II.** Students by Registered Courses

| Course | IA | | W | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 1st | 10 | 11.76 | 10 | 12.50 | 20 | 12.12 |
| 2nd | 11 | 12.94 | 14 | 17.50 | 25 | 15.15 |
| 3rd | 13 | 15.29 | 7 | 8.75 | 20 | 12.12 |
| 4th | 16 | 18.82 | 14 | 17.50 | 30 | 18.18 |
| 5th | 3 | 3.53 | 8 | 10.00 | 11 | 6.67 |
| 6th | 1 | 1.18 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 0.61 |
| Several courses from Several academic courses | 21 | 24.71 | 11 | 13.75 | 32 | 19.39 |
| Graduated | 4 | 4.71 | 10 | 12.50 | 14 | 8.48 |
| Doctorate | 4 | 4.71 | 3 | 3.75 | 7 | 4.24 |
| Others | 2 | 2.35 | 3 | 3.75 | 5 | 3.03 |

Table III reflects the results of a Chi-Square test that compares students who receive counseling services to those in the general population of the University. The results are clear in that they reflect that the observed distributions related to sex, career, and nationality, support the hypothesized distribution in that there is no difference between those students who seek counseling services and those in the general population of the University on these three variables.

Next, we will examine data concerning the IA condition of our study; those who received individual attention. Additional information about this group of 85 students will be provided concerning psychological, interpersonal relationship, and vocational-professional issues.

In examining the 85 students who received individual attention, 33% of those cases were active, 18% were not active, 12% had been referred to other resources, 8% were on a waiting list, 22% had been partially discharged from the counseling services and 7% had been fully discharged.

In serving these 85 students, Table IV demonstrates that 291 appointments were scheduled, 255 (88%) were provided, 12 (4%) had been rescheduled, and 24 (8%) had resulted in no-shows. The average number of sessions provided for each student was 3.26. The distribution of cases used by these 85 students ranged from 0 (7%) all of whom were on a waiting list, between 1 and 2 sessions (40%), between 3 and 4 sessions (15%), between 5 and 6 sessions (18%), between 7 and

**Table III.** Output for the Chi-Square Test

| | Sex | Carreer | Nationality | Course | Several courses from several academic years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-square | .060 (a) | 6.579 (b) | 4.466 (c) | 48.710 (d) | 13.441 (e) |
| Df | 1 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| Asimp. Sig. | .806 | .087 | .107 | .000 | .000 |

**Table IV.** Distribution of Sessions Per Case

| Sessions | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Total number of sessions | 291 | 100 |
| Atended | 255 | 87.62 |
| Put-off | 12 | 4.12 |
| Non-show | 24 | 8.24 |
| Average sessions per client | 3.26 | *** |
| Session per week | 7.13 | *** |
| Hours per week just attending sessions | 12.47 | *** |
| Waiting list | 7 | *** |
| Zero sessions | 6 | 7.06 |
| Between 1 and 2 | 34 | 40.00 |
| Between 3 and 4 | 13 | 15.29 |
| Between 5 and 6 | 15 | 17.65 |
| Between 7 and 8 | 5 | 5.88 |
| Between 9 and 10 | 3 | 3.53 |
| More than 11 | 2 | 2.35 |

8 sessions (6%), between 9 and 10 sessions (4%) and those students using more than 11 sessions (2%).

As previously indicated, student needs were divided into several categories: academic, psychological, interpersonal and vocational-professional. Psychological needs were divided into thoughts, feelings and motor behaviors, as demonstrated in Table V. Seventy-Six percent of the students indicated they felt down, 61% felt anxious, 55% did not feel Ok about themselves (low self-esteem), 39% felt alone, 35% felt "too sensitive," 34% felt hopeless, 34% felt guilty, 15% felt helpless, and 13% felt out of control. When asked about thoughts, 81% of these students indicated they thought too much when making decisions, 56% thought they lacked motivation, 51% found making decisions difficult, 32% were overwhelmed by thoughts they couldn't control, 8% had thought about committing suicide, and 1% had thought about hurting someone. In relation to other behaviors that were evaluated, 48% had serious difficulties when making decisions, 44% couldn't sleep, 32% cried frequently without apparent reason, 14% said that they ate poorly, 11% stated they ate excessively, 8% behaved aggressively without being able to control it, 6% took drugs, and 5% were worried about their alcohol consumption. In relation to interpersonal relations, 33% indicates that they had difficulties asking for what they wanted from others, 32% had relational problems with their family, 26% had problems making or keeping friends, 26% had problems with their partner, 24% had difficulties mixing with people they felt attracted to, 20% were worried about issues related to their sex life, and 15% had difficulties interacting with others.

Additional data was collected from students who utilized counseling services. Four factors related to desired outcomes were identified through qualitative analysis. The first factor reflected Self-Control Needs and included such statements as,

**Table V.** Distribution of Students' Psychological Needs

| PIP Indicators | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Psychological needs* | | |
| Fellings | | |
| Don't feel OK with myself | 47 | 55.29 |
| I feel irritated-annoyed | 30 | 35.29 |
| I feel anxious | 52 | 61.18 |
| I feel out of control | 11 | 12.94 |
| I feel alone | 33 | 38.82 |
| I feel down | 65 | 76.47 |
| I feel hopelessness | 29 | 34.12 |
| I feel helplessness | 13 | 15.29 |
| I feel guilty | 29 | 34.12 |
| Thoughts | | |
| It Takes me a hot of hard work to make decision | 43 | 50.59 |
| I have thought about committing suicide | 7 | 8.24 |
| I think I lack motivation | 48 | 56.47 |
| I have thoughts I can't control | 27 | 31.76 |
| I think over things too much | 69 | 81.18 |
| I have thought about hurting someone | 1 | 1.18 |
| Behaviors | | |
| I frequently cry without reason | 27 | 31.76 |
| It is difficult for me to overcome a hard experience | 41 | 48.24 |
| I can't express my feelings easing | 31 | 36.47 |
| I can't get to sleep | 37 | 43.53 |
| I behave aggressively without being able to control it | 7 | 8.24 |
| I almost do not eat | 12 | 14.12 |
| I do eat too much | 9 | 10.59 |
| I am worried about my alcohol consumption | 4 | 4.71 |
| I take drugs frequently | 5 | 5.88 |
| Interpersonal relationships | | |
| I feel rejected by others | 12 | 14.12 |
| I have dificulties to ask someone else what I want to need | 28 | 32.94 |
| It is difficult for me to make new friends or to keep them | 22 | 25.88 |
| I have problems when trying to know other people I feet attracted to | 20 | 23.53 |
| I am worried about my sexual life | 17 | 20.00 |
| I have troubles with my partner | 22 | 25.88 |
| I have problems with my family | 27 | 31.76 |
| I have dificulties when talking to profesors | 13 | 15.29 |

"To control my nervousness," "To stop feeling anxious and having a bad time," To be able to control the way I'm thinking," "To stop feeling bad in certain situations," "To balance my feelings," "To reduce my anxiety," "To discover what my real problem is," and other similar goals. This first factor represented about 72% of stated goals. The second factor reflected Self-Esteem Needs and included such statements as, "To increase my self-esteem," "To convince myself that I can be whatever I want to be," "To learn how to face life with more optimism," and similar goals. This second factor accounted for about 29% of the stated goals. The third factor reflected Academic Needs and included such goals as, "To improve my organizational skills," "To improve my academic performance," "To be able

to finish my degree," and other similar goals. This third factor represented 39% of the goals. The fourth and final factor reflected Social Relationship Needs and included such goals as, "To improve my personal situation in relation to social relationships," To be able to establish social relationships without problems," "To improve my social skills," "To increase my knowledge about communication with others" and other similar goals. This fourth factor accounted for about 16% of the stated goals. It is important to note that the total percentages of all four factors exceeded one hundred percent. This is due to the fact that some stated goals fit into more than one factor.

Table VI reflected the kinds of problems that students identified in relation to Academic Needs. Fifty-six percent of the students had problems with getting easily distracted, 55% reflected that they needed to improve their study skills, 52% had problems with time management, 45% had difficulty organizing their academic workload, 41% had problems with test anxiety, 38% skipped classes frequently and lacked the motivation to complete their studies, 34% perceived that perfectionism was a problem, 32% believed that they were overwhelmed by their responsibilities, 28% felt they had difficulty with public speaking, and 24% felt that even when they studied they did not feel they were learning. Once again, the total percentage exceeds100% due to the students being able to identify more than one item. Table VI also reflected the kinds of problems that student identified in relation to Vocational/Professional Needs. Forty percent of the students worried about their professional future, 11% thought about changing their degree program, and 8% worried about completing courses as well as a specialty.

When rating their satisfaction with counseling students gave an average response of 9.72 on a 10 point scale. 36% of the clients had received previous

**Table VI.** Distribution of Students' Academic and Professional Needs

| PIP Indicators | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Academic needs* | | |
| I find difficult to distribute my time of study | 44 | 51.76 |
| I have problems when organizing my study duties | 38 | 44.71 |
| I study but I do not feel I am learning | 20 | 23.53 |
| I feel I am unable to speak in public | 24 | 28.24 |
| I perceive myself as too perfectionist | 29 | 34.12 |
| I get really nervous when taking exams | 35 | 41.18 |
| I think I need to improve my study techniques | 47 | 55.29 |
| I lose my attention easily | 48 | 56.47 |
| I do not attend classes frequently | 32 | 37.65 |
| I feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities | 27 | 31.76 |
| I feel I lack motivation to continue my degree | 32 | 37.65 |
| *Vocational/Professional needs* | | |
| I am worried about choosing courses | 7 | 8.24 |
| I am thinking about changing my degree | 9 | 10.59 |
| I am worried about my professional future | 34 | 40.00 |

psychological and or psychiatric help. Forty-seven percent of the clients did not have a problem with being audio taped and 22% did not mind being video taped.

## DISCUSSION

Wogan and Amdur (1974) established that men are less likely to use counseling services. In a sample taken from the University of Granada (Spain), Castellano (1995) identified that women demanded more help on academic and personal issues than did men. This study indicated that it was also more difficult for men to find the type of help they needed on both academic and personal concerns, as well as other problems. Both of these studies are consistent with the findings of the present study, finding 55% of the clients to be women and only 45% to be men. In an attempt to understand this phenomena, several hypotheses were examined. According to Dunn, Lanning, Patch and Sturrock (1980), Castellano (1985), and Frank (2000), (a) women are less reticent about admitting their difficulties and looking for help, (b) academic competency may generate additional tension among women due to a conflict between alternative roles, (c) women in general show a higher ratio of depression and anxiety than men, and (d) women can suffer more as a consequence of sexist practices. It is evident that several explanations may contribute to the higher utilization of counseling services by women than men, but more research needs to completed to determine exactly why this is.

In most counseling services, males and children are likely to be underrepresented as clients (Quintrell & Robertson, 1996). Younger students are also the ones who have greater needs due to their lack of experience and the special needs they encounter when beginning their university studies (Castellano, 1995).

The percentage of Counseling Services clients who come from foreign countries is 8%. In comparing the percentage of foreign students who utilize Counseling Services with the general population at the University of Granada, there are no significant differences (see Table III). If the number of students coming from other countries continues to increase, Counseling Services will need to address those increases with culturally and linguistically sensitive services appropriate for the diverse populations. As the data from this study reflects that almost half of students who attend the University of Granada live in private flats with roommates, it is important that services be made available that address needed social and personal skills related to such activities as going out, financial planning, life skills, etc. Walters (1970) suggests that students from out of town are more prone to look for counseling than students who live in the same city as the university. The presenting concerns of students who do not come from the local area include feelings of disorientation, emotional-depressive reactions, and feelings of isolation and alienation (Essandoh, 1995). Barrera, Sandler and Ram Say (1981) insist that students' ability to cope with the academic demands of attending a university depend not

only upon their general coping skills, but also upon the number and strength of the social support network that they have access to.

The large majority of Counseling Services clients, 73%, do not work at all and about 14% only work part time. Economic difficulties are often associated with poor academic performance. For example, in order to pay for books and other expenses related to attending a university, students may worry about their ability to pay for these expenses and may need to work in order to cover their expenses (Flisher & De Beer, 2002). The economic pressure and the anxiety it tends to create may increase the probability that students will seek counseling services.

The data from this study is consistent with that of Schwarz (1964) and Walters (1970), in that first year and primer cycle students, those early in their post-secondary educational experience, seek services less often than other groups of students. Actually, the two groups who seek counseling services most often are fourth year students and students who are registered in courses across several different academic areas. One hypothesis based upon this data is that it takes about two years for some students to recognize the differences between secondary and university studies in terms of the responsibilities each requires related to academic performance. After about two years, the students realize the disruptive impact of their psycho-physiological and cognitive responses, e.g. increased levels of distress and anxiety or the inability to focus or concentrate on a particular task, and the negative impact these responses have upon their academic performance. The results on Self-control and Academic goals support this hypothesis. The potential for more severe emotional and psychological issues increases if the student's problems are left untreated.

The results of this study do not confirm the results of Schwarz (1964) who found that engineering students are more likely to utilize counseling services. These results demonstrate that there is no particular group of students that use this type of service more than other students. The difference between these studies may be due to fact that forty years separate them. To determine the current trend in terms of what students from what academic programs utilize counseling services most, more research will have to be completed.

On a number of indicators, the results of this study are similar to those previously completed at other counseling services. Quintrell and Robertson (1996) indicated that students seeking counseling services used an average of 2.5 sessions. McCormick and Paterson (1996) indicated that students seeking counseling services used an average of 3 sessions. Our study also found that students seeking counseling services utilized an average of 3 sessions. McCormick and Paterson (1996) found that 10–15% of counseling center clients utilized more than 10 sessions and Quintrell and Robertson (1996) found that only 5–10% of counseling center clients attended for more than 6 sessions. The results of our study demonstrated that 6% of our clients attended counseling for more than 9 sessions or more, and 11% attended counseling for six or more sessions. All of these studies provided a similar pattern of distribution of cases in relation to the number

of sessions attended. In relation to the number of sessions per week, McCormick and Paterson (1996) found that counselors work about 35 hours a week and see about 20 clients during that time. Our data reflected that the single counselor at the University of Granada works 12.5 hours a week and sees about 7 clients. The ratio of number of clients to number of hours worked is quite similar in both studies. Robertson and Quintress (1995) suggest that the ratio of counselors to students should be at least 1 to 3,000. Considering that the University of Granada has approximately 60,000 students registered the recommended ratio would require 20 counselors. It is easy to see just how far the University is from that goal. There remain other challenges for the University of Granada as well. For example, it remains important that our Counseling Services continue to update their information and training to address the increased specialization in student services positions, including counseling.

Even though there is considerable variation between universities in terms of student population and cultural background, some generalizations are still possible. Consistent with Castellano (1995), the concerns expressed by our clients in relation to academic performance, the manifestations of stress and anxiety and/or interpersonal problems identified by Qunitrell and Robertson (1996), the lack students' self-confidence as found by McCormick and Paterson (1996), and the social isolation identified by Pacarella and Terenzini (1979) are all relevant to the problems of students at the University of Granada. The more specific findings of Pascarella and Terenzini that social isolation is the factor that best predicts dropping out of a university, even more so than background and academic performance, is important for all universities to address. The findings of Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) that found items related to the fact that social-emotional adjustment could predict persistence in college as well if not better than items related to study skills, demonstrates the need for counseling at all universities.

It is also important to identify the limitations of this study. For example, this study's sample is too small to make generalizations to the general population. Many of the factors that this study addresses are simply not available in a comparative form that accurately reflects the trends in the general population. For ethical and reasons related to confidentiality, this study was limited in ways that prevent more comparative statistical analysis to check for statistically significant results. In addition, a specific theoretical model has not been followed to guide the process of data selection or the explanation of results. Furthermore, additional information is necessary to provide a more detailed explanation of some of the factors investigated in this study.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although it is clear that we need more conclusive data on the impact that counseling services have on students' academic persistence and performance,

several conclusions can be derived from this study. First, if we analyze the evolution of counseling services over the last half century (Stone & Archer, 1990) and compare it with several indicators like the amount of resources spent on primary prevention, the magnitude of influence on policy development within the university as part of normal institutional structures, the staff composition and experience, or the resources that have been provided to establish and develop counseling services at the University of Granada, it is clear that we are significantly behind what exists elsewhere. The only benefit of being behind is that we can benefit from the mistakes of others as we develop our own counseling services.

Second, if the demand for counseling services continues to increase at our university, as it has everywhere else, we must remain alert to some trends that are disturbing. These trends include continually looking for more sophisticated levels of service delivery, replacing directors of counseling services with coordinators or others with less training and influence (McCormick & Paterson, 1996), or demanding that counseling services keep pace with the ability to respond to disruptive academic and life issues to provide support for academic success. If we fail to support the academic missions of our institutions we will be unable to match our priorities in ways that relate to institutional priorities (Quintrell & Robertson, 1996).

Third, in order to prevent some of the previously described problems from being realized, we continue to need to improve our protocols and ways of gathering more accurate and meaningful information related to personal, academic, and vocational-professional domains. Improved protocols would contribute to reduced time for evaluation and intervention, addressing one of the more challenging problems that impact how counseling services function, and making services more efficient. According to Nicholas (1997), such practices would also assist the process of evaluating the services rendered, training intern psychologists, upgrading the skills of counselors in specialized areas of need, planning counseling service provision, and in maintaining the support of the university by being able to provide information about the extent and kind of counseling services provided.

It remains especially important to know certain indicators like the ratio of counselors to students, the number of cases per counselor, and such things as the relationship between the number of sessions received and retention rates. Wilson, Mason and Swing (1997) determined that the relationship between the number of sessions and retention rates was not linear.

Fourth, professional counseling staff contributing to the main stream of publications on counseling services, is another way of stimulating institutional support for counseling services and stimulating appropriate institutional responses that prevent academic failure and unacceptable drop-out rates among students at the University of Granada, as at other institutions of higher learning.

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