**The Role Of Counselling In Preparing Undergraduate Students To Undertake Postgraduate Education At Cukurova University**

**Abstract**

Advancement of education is increasingly becoming a determinant for promotion, or acquisition of management positions in employment organizations. Due to an increase in the number of graduates who join the labour market, there is a demand for increased skill, expertise and experience, which postgraduate studies offer. The research analyses the impact of counselling on motivating undergraduate students to undertake postgraduate education, either through a second degree, a master’s degree or doctoral degree. The study investigated the impact of career counselling on the advancement of education, at Cukurova University, in preparing undergraduate students to further their studies through postgraduate degrees. Through the use of questionnaires, the researcher collected data from both undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University. The approach used to analyse the information was the qualitative-descriptive method and theme analysis. The research revealed that counselling of undergraduate students is crucial to the advancement of education, which is essential for the labour market and self-actualization.

**Keywords:** *Counselling, Education Advancement, Career, Postgraduate Education, self-actualization, labour market*

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# **Study Background**

Educational advancement is a determinant of career progression, remuneration and success in life (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). The labor market has a high number of graduates and as such, further educational credentials enables a person to attain better positions of employment. Postgraduate studies are no longer relegated to students who aim to be employed in academia and in the finance and commerce sector. Master’s degrees were considered an essential requirement for career advancement to the managerial positions in the business industry, hence the notable increase in students undertaking Master in Business Administration degree programs at various universities (Negash, Zewude, & Megersa, 2014). However, the requirement for postgraduate education is increasingly becoming a phenomenon in all careers. Auerbach, Buerhaus, and Staiger (2015) posit that further training among nurses increases their chances of acquiring better employment opportunities in the labor market. The need for increased knowledge amongst employees is driven by constant societal changes and increased research, which impacts on the mode of business operations. Lack of educational advancement can, therefore, lead to a declaration of redundancy. An analysis of remuneration packages of employees reveals disparity in the compensation of employees with doctoral, masters and undergraduate degrees. A significant increase in salary is noted in individuals with postgraduate qualifications (Auerbach, Buerhaus, & Staiger, 2015). Postgraduate education further improves research in different areas thereby improving societal outcomes (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2015).

Despite the ease of access to education in the 21st century and the advancements in technology and research, which make postgraduate education a necessity, many undergraduate students lack clarity on the thematic areas that can be chosen to advance their knowledge. Many learners also lack knowledge of the challenges that they may face while undertaking postgraduate studies, due to an increase in pressure and responsibilities (Mayhew, et al., 2016). Counselling programs for undergraduate students focus on career selection and social issues that affect students in institutions of higher learning (Getachew & Daniel, 2016). Although such topics are crucial for students’ development and transition into employment, there is a lack of congruent programs for mentoring students to seek educational advancement beyond the undergraduate level of studies. As such, graduates who choose to undertake postgraduate education are motivated by their personal experiences in the labour market and only realize the necessity of improving their education from critically examining job specifications and employment requirements for senior-level staff. Furthermore, many students do not access counselling services at institutions of higher learning due to the prevalent use of e-learning by students who cannot physically access their universities, either due to financial or time constraints (Goyal, Kukreja, Agarwal, & Khanna, 2015). As such, counselling does not sufficiently address the importance of postgraduate studies or the approaches to educational advancement after acquiring the first degree and joining the labour market.

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## **Statement of the Problem**

Globalization, technological advancements, and increased research are some of the factors that affect the postgraduate educational programs at institutions of higher learning (Subramanian, Anderson, Morgaine, & Thomson, 2013). Although postgraduate studies were previously uncommon in professional careers such as medicine and law, where practical experience was considered more important than the advancement of education, an increase in research and information sharing globally has created a need for specialization amongst learners (Sethi, Schofield, McAleer, & Ajjawi, 2018). The challenges faced by graduates who wish to further their studies include lack of information on the most relevant areas of study to choose as thematic areas; time constraints, as employment opportunities and family life take up most of their time; and financial constraints after heavy investment in undergraduate studies (Schartner, 2016). As such, counselling at the undergraduate level is critical in preparing students to advance their vocational training through postgraduate education. The existence of counselling programs that are aimed at preparing undergraduate learners for further studies is crucial in developing the skills, knowledge, and competencies imparted to learners at any tertiary institution.

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## **Aim**

The aim of the study was to analyse the perceptions of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Cukurova University, Turkey on the need for counselling programs on the advancement of education through postgraduate studies; and to examine the necessity of further learning in the current labour regime.

## **Objectives**

1. To explore the views of postgraduate and undergraduate students on the necessity of counselling programs in preparing a learner to undertake postgraduate education
2. To analyse whether the students at Cukurova University in Adana Turkey deem postgraduate education as a necessity in the current labour market

## **Study Questions**

1. What are the views of postgraduate and undergraduate students on the necessity of counselling programs in preparing a learner to undertake postgraduate education?
2. What do the students of Cukurova University in Adana Turkey perceive on the necessity of postgraduate education in the current labour market?

The study focused on the viewpoints of both undergraduate and postgraduate students at Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey, to determine the impact of counselling on the engagement of students in postgraduate education at the tertiary institution. The research provided detailed findings that can be utilized by the university’s management to enhance the retention of students in the postgraduate programs offered at the school. Moreover, the recommendations from the study will guide counsellors at institutions of higher learning to address the low rate of advancement in education within different disciplines and other disparities in the advancement of education, including age and gender. The results from the study will also provide guidance to policy formulators to assess salary and promotion criteria in the labour market, especially the private sector.

# **Literature Review**

## **Overview of Counselling on Postgraduate Education at Cukurova University**

Studies indicate that counselling is an effective tool for the management of student choices and preparation of learners for future outcomes including career choice and progression (Thomas & George, 2016); (Azad & Rahim, 2015). In most tertiary institutions, postgraduate education programs have been developed to include advancement in technology, global perspectives, and mandatory research through thesis writing (Ryan & Zuber-Skerritt, 2017). According to Mahmoud and Bennett (2015), unlike undergraduate studies where a student acquires novel information, postgraduate studies are often marked by collaborative learning between students and course facilitators, which requires more effort by learners. Azad and Rahim address the necessity of counseling programs at the postgraduate level, to improve student outcomes in the labor market. The study, which was performed on undergraduate participants undertaking dental studies, showed that students base their decisions on career progression and educational advancement on the demands of the job market. Due to an increase in the number of students who take master’s programs, more learners experience the pressure to compete with their peers although they lack sufficient knowledge of postgraduate programs.

Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey, offers counselling programs to undergraduate students, on career selection and progression. However, the necessity for postgraduate studies offered at the learning institution is not adequately conveyed to the undergraduate students. The consequence of the lack of knowledge on the various approaches to enhance one's education results in low rates of enrolment of postgraduate students, compared to the undergraduate level. The rate of retention of students of Cukurova University, after attainment of a first degree by learners, is very low. Counselling is, therefore, necessary to improve individual perspectives on the necessity of postgraduate studies in the labour market and for self-actualization.

## **The Postgraduate Learning Experience and Necessity for Counselling on Advancement of Education**

Counselling provides awareness of the necessity for postgraduate studies, as well as the challenges that hinder learners from advancing their education. According to Galante et al. (2018), stress is the most common challenge faced by students in educational institutions. Counselling is important in assisting students to cope with the pressure that they face from various spheres of life, including education, social problems, financial constraints and emotions (Holdsworth, Turner, & Scott-Young, 2018); (Carkhuff, 2017). There are more pressures on a student at the postgraduate level due to an increase in social responsibilities after undergraduate studies. A postgraduate student has to juggle a career, family, their finances, social responsibilities, and their education. Furthermore, Furlonger and Gencic (2014) postulate that the postgraduate requirements of preparing theses to enhance the pressure experienced by learners. Counselling at the undergraduate level should, therefore, be programmed to focus on mechanisms of effectively handling pressure and stress.

Schartner (2016) studied foreign postgraduate students who study in British universities, showing the stressful factors that they experience. A case study conducted by the author revealed the intense pressure faced by foreign students who advance their education in Britain, who are also affected by the new culture that they face. Consequently, the intense stress they undergo and the lack of social support from close family members may affect their educational performance. According to Fenton-Smith and Humphreys (2017), language barriers can be a challenge to learners who advance their studies, thereby affecting those who cannot adequately handle the intense pressure. Undergraduate students, therefore, require advice on the choice of universities to apply to for further studies. Although foreign universities may have better academic records, a student who immigrates for educational purposes may face numerous challenges.

Stoliker and Lafreniere studied the impact of loneliness, perceived stress and burnout on the learning experiences of university students (Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). The findings of the study showed a high response rate of students who acknowledged experiencing stress, loneliness, and burnout, thereby affecting their ability to excel in their studies (Stliker & Lafreniere, 2015). Although the study was conducted on undergraduate students, the findings are similar to other levels of education (Saravanan & Wilks, 2014); (Bergin & Pakenham, 2015). A study conducted by Stein (2016) consequently showed the necessity for counselling postgraduate students to improve their learning outcomes and promote wellness amongst the student fraternity of any tertiary institution.

## **Student Perception on the need for Counselling on Postgraduate Studies**

There is a lack of research on undergraduate students’ perceptions of the need for counselling on postgraduate studies. Deasy et al. (2014) however conducted a mixed method inquiry to determine the experiences of postgraduate nursing students with regards to psychological distress, as well as their coping mechanisms. According to the research, 83% of postgraduate students require counseling services at tertiary institutions due to the challenges faced by learners from various spheres of life (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan, & Mannix-McNamara, 2016). According to the study, counseling programs for postgraduate students were ineffective or lacking in most universities. Moreover, some of the participants of the study reiterated that due to time constraints, they were unable to seek counseling from the institutions despite requiring psychological help. As such, counseling sessions at the undergraduate level would be important to address the impending problems faced after completion of a first degree.

Abdulghani et al. (2015) addressed the inability of postgraduate students to effectively function after exposure to pressure from both work and advanced studies, which affects all spheres of their lives, including job performance. The study was conducted on junior doctors who were engaged in residency training while advancing their studies. The researchers noted that due to the psychological distress that the young doctors were under, they were unable to function effectively, especially during the day (Abdulghani, Al-Harbi, & Irshad, 2015). The findings from the study show the necessity for counselling of undergraduate students, to prepare them for the increased pressures at the postgraduate level of education.

## **Influence of Counselling on Advancement of Education through Postgraduate Studies**

Nielsen et al. (2017) elucidate the importance of psychosocial support, in promoting the well-being of postgraduate students and improving their work and educational performance during the period in which they undertake further studies. Due to anxiety, the pressure to complete their education and juggling working life, postgraduate students work under immense pressure, which they should be psychologically prepared for, prior to attainment of their first degrees (Shete & Garkal, 2015). Due to the increasing requirement for highly educated professionals in the labor market, there is a necessity to begin inculcating a culture of advancement of education amongst undergraduate students. Counselling provides an avenue for students to increase their knowledge on potential areas for specialization. Furthermore, counseling would psychologically prepare learners for the psychosocial pressure at the postgraduate level.

## **Theoretical framework**

The postmodern theory of education, as elaborated by Kincheloe (1995) elaborates the importance of aligning education with the social, political and economic environment in which a graduate is supposed to fit in after completion of their educational training. Kincheloe (1995) consequently asserts the importance of making learning as practical as possible, through offering vocational training to learners at the earliest opportunity. The theory is important to this research as it enunciates the challenges faced by students after their undergraduate studies, including the lack of knowledge on the importance of advancement of education, resulting in adverse career outcomes. Moreover, the economic factors that affect the need for further education should be acknowledged in curriculum development, to ensure there are counseling programs at tertiary institutions, for preparing students for postgraduate studies. Kagitcibasi (2017) further asserts that there are external pressures that affect an individual in their quest for self-development through education, including family and financial pressure. As such, through the postmodern theory, it is evident that there is a need to not only impart knowledge to students but also to prepare them for the social and economic responsibilities as they undertake postgraduate studies.

# **Research Design**

Cukurova University was used as a case study to determine the necessity of counseling of undergraduate students in preparing them for postgraduate education. Yin (2017) posits that case studies are beneficial in research that examine realistic perspectives of individuals affected by a particular phenomenon. Case studies are used to provide specific and thorough details on a topic as they enable examination of various aspects of a problem through analysis of a manageable number of people (Yin, 2017). According to Yazan, case studies are advantageous as they allow in-depth analysis of a problem, which provides novel perspectives that can improve existing knowledge on the topic of research.

## **Selection Techniques of Participants**

The study was conducted at Cukurova University in Adana Turkey. The participants were 50 students of the institution. Half of the participants were undergraduate students while the rest were postgraduate learners at the same institution. The selection technique used was purposive sampling, which entailed selecting students from different departments within the university, including social sciences, mathematics, finance, and health sciences. Willing participants from each department were asked to engage in the study and 50 students were subsequently chosen.

## **Collection of Data through an Interview Form**

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to assist in conducting this research. According to Bryman (2017), a questionnaire is a reliable mechanism for acquiring information in research, as it enables the accumulation of various perspectives on a topic. Moreover, the author asserts that through the use of semi-structured questionnaires, participants of a study are allowed the freedom to introduce their own perspectives on a topic, based on the questions asked. A semi-structured questionnaire utilizes both open-ended and closed questions. The questions used in this study pertained to the role and effectiveness of counseling in preparation of undergraduate students, for postgraduate studies. The students were asked of their perceptions of counseling programs at Cukurova University. The participants were also asked about the impact of counseling on the advancement of education. A question on the necessity of postgraduate studies to the current labor market was also postulated. The usage of questionnaires in similar studies is asserted by Rowley (2014), who states that semi-structured questionnaires have been used in social science inquiries.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part entailed questions that would assist the researcher to know the demographics of the study. Students were therefore asked to state their age and whether they were undergraduate or postgraduate learners at Cukurova University. The first part of the questionnaire utilized closed-ended questions to gather information on the participants of the study since the questions were essential to the determination of whether all participants fit into the criteria for selection, which entailed being students at the university. The second part entailed an investigation of the perception of the learner on counseling services offered at Cukurova University. The learners were therefore asked about their knowledge on counseling services at the institution and if so, whether they had utilized such services in the past. Open-ended questions were also used to determine what areas they had received counseling on. The students were also asked about the role of counseling in career selection and in the advancement of studies. The third part of the questionnaire was solely prepared to capture data on the effectiveness of counseling in preparing undergraduate students for postgraduate studies. The students were therefore asked whether they had information on areas of specialization in masters, doctoral or second degrees, and why they chose the areas specified. Moreover, the participants were also asked about their knowledge on vocational training in postgraduate studies, and what they perceived counselling programs designed to promote educational advancement. The fourth section of the questionnaire entailed an inquiry into the motivation behind the advancement of education. Learners were asked about their perceptions on educational advancement, the necessity of postgraduate education in the labor regime, and for their own benefit. The questionnaire concluded by thanking all participants for undertaking the study to completion.

## **Analysis of Data Collected**

A qualitative descriptive approach will be used in analyzing the data collected through the semi-structured questionnaires applied to students of Cukurova University. According to Kallio et al. (2016), the descriptive approach of qualitative analysis entails the determination of themes, which underlie a study, from the responses gained through the application of a questionnaire. The themes chosen in research are important as they enable the analysis of large data, based on common issues that are crucial to the research. In this case study, the themes developed were: knowledge of vocational training at the postgraduate level, an inadequate structure for counseling on postgraduate studies, stress and psychosocial pressure in the advancement of education and the need for self-actualization. The data collected through the interview forms were thereafter categorized and analyzed to determine the meaning of the information harnessed, based on the themes identified.

Qualitative analysis is important in the field of psychology because it enables determination of the issues, viewpoints, and perceptions of the subjects of a study, based on the descriptions offered in response to the questions in the interview form. In this research, the qualitative descriptive approach is preferable to ensure that the perceptions of students at Cukuroca University, on the impact of counseling on preparing undergraduate students to undertake postgraduate studies are effectively captured. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) address the use of the qualitative descriptive approach in the field of psychology, asserting its commonality and benefits to counseling discourse. Due to its ability to offer a mechanism for harnessing diverse information and beliefs on a topic, through the use of themes, the qualitative descriptive approach lends credence to the veracity of the results and enhances the determination of new aspects of a topical issue.

The steps used for the qualitative descriptive analysis of the data collected entail coding of data, understanding the different perspectives in the information gathered, determining similarity in thought patterns and themes, data generalization and analysing such generalisations, with regard to the topic of study. The questionnaire responses were used for coding, as they were thoroughly examined to determine the common points that were raised by the students. The basis of the determination was the responses to the open-ended questions that allowed the researcher deeper insight into the perceptions of the respondents on the study topic. The information provided by students was critically examined to understand the similarities and differences that were evident. The information was thereafter assessed to determine the commonalities in responses. From the determinations made, themes were developed to reflect the topical issues raised, which included knowledge on vocational training, the need for self-actualization, inadequate structures for the advancement of education and the psychosocial pressure and stress experienced at the postgraduate level of training. The researcher, however, examined the data further to determine whether there were generalisations made in the interpretation of the collected data and whether such determinations affected the study outcomes. However, due to the development of questionnaires that were designed to guide students to stick to the topic of the study, the generalisations made regarding aspects such as common causes of psychosocial pressure and stress, were inconsequential to the study outcomes, since all research questions were answered through the themes developed.

## **Reliability and Validity**

The validity of a research is based on the reliability of the methods used to collect and interpret data. The reliability of the questionnaire used for the study is therefore crucial to the outcomes of this study. A questionnaire is reliable if it is characterized by internal consistency, which allows the results collected to bear similarity that enables the determination of themes. The questionnaire used for this study was therefore developed with an objective of ensuring that there was the collection of data on the perspectives of the students of Cukurova University on the role of counseling in preparing undergraduate learners to undertake postgraduate studies. The questions were thereafter passed to faculty members of the department of psychology, at Cukurova University, to determine their suitability for the research and effectiveness in data collection on the topic. Expert opinion was taken into account in streamlining the questions chosen for inclusion in the questionnaire.

## **Ethical** **Concerns**

The conduct of the study was in adherence to the ethical standards as outlined by Cukurova University. All participants of the study gave their consent to participate in the study and the use of information provided. A consent form was provided to all participants, who were informed of the research and the utilization of data collected through the study for preparation of a study report. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and as such, they could choose to stop taking part in the study at any point. The researcher however assured the participants in the research of anonymity in case of participation

# **Research Findings And Analysis**

## **Response rate**

The researcher used 50 questionnaires, which were given to students from different departments at Cukurova University. The questionnaires were sent to the heads of different departments who agreed to give them to willing participants. In each department, both undergraduate and postgraduate learners were engaged in the study. There were 50 students who completed the questionnaire, thereby providing the data for the interpretation of their perceptions on the role of counselling in promoting the advancement of education amongst the students. The results of the study are discussed below.

## **Level of Education of the respondents**

Figure 1 shows the statistics on the level of education of the students who chose to take part in the study. From the 50 questionnaires used and the responses derived from them, it was notable that twenty-five participants were postgraduate students at Cukurova University while the other half comprised of undergraduate learners at the same institution.

Figure 1: Level of Education of the Respondents

Figure 2 below shows the age groups of the respondents in the study. From the responses garnered, all undergraduate students were below age 25. Of the postgraduate students, only 7 were between 18-28 while most of these learners ranged between ages 28-38, while only two postgraduate students were above 38 years. The disparity in the age of undergraduate and postgraduate students can be attributed to the challenges faced by undergraduate students, who therefore opt not to undertake postgraduate studies until they are older. The lack of counselling on the necessity of educational advancement makes undergraduate students less likely to begin their master’s degrees immediately after graduating.

Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

## **Thematic Analysis**

According to Smith (2015), a thematic analysis in qualitative studies entails the analysis of information derived from the collection of data, using coding, determining the meanings ascribed to common topics and issues, through the descriptions given by respondents of a study. In this research, 4 themes were derived from the data collected: *knowledge of vocational training at the postgraduate level, an inadequate structure for counselling on postgraduate studies, stress and psychosocial pressure in the advancement of education* and *the need for self-actualization.*

**Knowledge of vocational training at the Postgraduate Level**

According to ten Cate and Scheele (2007), advancement in education is important to the work performance of an individual, due to the vocational training that they undergo at the postgraduate level. Vocational training at the master’s and doctorate level are aimed at equipping a learner with specific skills required in the field of specialization. As such, career guidance is crucial in determining the area to specialize in (ten Cate & Scheele, 2007). Based on the assertions, the research aimed to analyse the students’ perception on the availability of knowledge on vocational training at postgraduate level. The feedback obtained from the respondents showed that 18 of the undergraduate students lacked information on the vocational training at the postgraduate level, in their area of study. All postgraduate students, however, acknowledged that they were well versed with the vocational skills that are acquired while advancing one's education. Figure 3 shows the perceptions of the respondents on their knowledge of vocational training in postgraduate education at Cukurova University.

Figure 3: Student knowledge on vocational training in postgraduate studies

According to Schartner (2016), knowledge of vocational training is crucial to the pursuance of further studies. Kincheloe (1995) further asserts that vocational training helps to align a student’s need for self-actualization with the external demands of the job market, thereby improving their career performance and advancement. Undergraduate students, who lack knowledge of the various areas they should specialize in are therefore unable to make strategic decisions on educational advancement, which would increase their performance in the labour market. Learners who lack comprehension of the demands of the economic regime, therefore, fail to recognize the benefits of specialization in emerging disciplines, whose demand for labour is high. According to the research conducted at Cukurova University, 72% of undergraduate students lack clarity on vocational training in postgraduate studies, thereby affecting their ability to make decisions regarding the advancement of education.

**Inadequate structure for counselling on postgraduate studies**

Nielsen et al. (2017) elaborate on the importance of psychosocial support, for the advancement of education. According to the study, counselling plays a crucial role in the preparation of students for the pressures in the educational experiences. At the postgraduate level, there is increased pressure on an individual learner, due to an increase in their social responsibilities, which causes stress amongst students. The preparation of learners on undertaking further studies should, therefore, begin at the undergraduate level, to educate students on the necessity of postgraduate education, the possible challenges they may face, and the coping mechanisms. Of the 50 respondents of the study, 45 indicated that there was a lack of efficient counselling programs to prepare learners for postgraduate education. Furthermore, 90% of students noted that there was insufficient information provided through counselling at the undergraduate level, on the various approaches of advancement of education after undergraduate training. Figure 4 shows the responses received from the participants of the study.

Figure 4: Existence of efficient counselling programs on educational advancement

Abdulghani et al. (2015) advocate for the use of counselling in preparation of postgraduate students for the pressure and stress experienced in the advancement of education. Counselling programs at the undergraduate level of study should take cognizance of the challenges faced, thereby equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue further studies. According to Shete and Garkal (2015), the changing economic environment has led to an increased demand for highly trained professionals and as such, tertiary institutions should inculcate a culture for the advancement of education at the undergraduate level.

**Stress and psychosocial pressure in the advancement of education**

Postgraduate learning experiences are characterized by increased pressure caused by educational demands, economic concerns and social responsibilities that come about with age (Holdsworth, Turner, & Scott-Young, 2018). Moreover, foreign students who choose to advance their studies in Turkey face stress due to cultural shock and the inability to effectively communicate with others, thereby depriving them of opportunities of gaining friends who can increase their social support (Carkhuff, 2017). The study at Cukurova University revealed that 82% of the students perceived postgraduate studies as stressful. Figure 5 shows the statistics derived on this theme.

Figure 5: Stress and psychological pressure in postgraduate studies

Kagitcibasi (2017) postulates that due to the intense psychosocial pressure experienced in postgraduate education, learners require counselling to enable them to complete their studies. Albertyn, Kapp, and Bitzer (2008) address the impact of stress and psychosocial pressure on postgraduate students, stating that it is one of the factors that cause attrition in tertiary institutions. As such, counselling is required from the undergraduate level of training, to prepare the students for the psychosocial and educational requirements while advancing their education.

**The need for self-actualization**

Education is not only a mechanism by which individuals seek to gain the requisite knowledge to sustain themselves but also a beneficial approach to self-actualization. Postgraduate studies offer an opportunity through which learners can acquire further training, specialized skills and practical knowledge that makes them outstanding within their profession, and in society (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Despite the beneficial outcomes that can be achieved through the advancement of education, counselling sessions at many undergraduate universities lack programs that are specifically designed to promote educational advancement (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Based on this determination, the respondents were asked to relay their perspectives on the necessity of postgraduate education on self-actualization. The responses received entailed 100% positive feedback from postgraduate students, while only 56% of undergraduate learners believed that advancement of education was necessary. Figure 6 shows the responses received.

Figure 6: Postgraduate Education and Self Actualization

The discrepancy in the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students who opined that advancement of education is essential for self-actualization is caused by lack of knowledge and counselling programs on further studies. However, according to Arar et al. (2018), one of the motivating factors for undertaking Masters degrees is the need for self-fulfilment. As such, there is a need for undergraduate students to be counselled on the benefits of further studies.

# **Conclusion**

The educational qualifications in the job design specifications of many employment organizations are constantly changing due to an increase in the number of graduates seeking employment (Auerbach, Buerhaus, & Staiger, 2015). The increase in labour supply, due to the growth in the population of educated people, has led to the requirement of highly trained personnel and postgraduate education offers a mechanism for determining a person’s skill and expertise. Graduates are therefore increasingly seeking to advance their education albeit they lack adequate knowledge of the different areas of specialization, as well as the stress and psychological pressures that they may face while undertaking postgraduate studies. Counselling of students at the undergraduate level, therefore, serves to promote their knowledge of the necessity of advancing their education as well as equipping them with the requisite skills to tackle challenges that they may face. Based on the research conducted at Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey, there was an indication that undergraduate students lack sufficient knowledge of postgraduate education. Moreover, the counselling program at the university is ineffective in preparation of learners for the psychosocial pressure that accompanies educational advancement. Majority of the students, however, agreed that postgraduate education was important, not only to meet the demands of the labour market but for self-actualization. Consequently, there is a need for tertiary institutions to inculcate a culture that promotes the advancement of studies through counselling programs that prepare undergraduate students for the advancement of their education. Such programs should be structured to not only provide information on postgraduate studies and thematic areas for specialization but also equip students with skills that enable them to withstand the increased pressure that they will face while undertaking further studies.

# **Recommendations**

Counselling is crucial for the preparation of students to undertake postgraduate studies, which are important for self-fulfilment and success in the labour market. Tertiary institutions should, therefore, provide counselling and education of undergraduate students on postgraduate studies and prepare them psychologically for the challenges that they may face in the advancement of education. The counselling programs should cater to financial constraints, work/life/study balance and the social responsibilities of individuals. Mentorship sessions can also be developed to enhance the efficacy of the counselling programs at institutions of higher learning.

However, it is essential to assert that this research was limited due to data collection from only one institution, that is, Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey. As such, there is a need for more investigation on the role of counselling in preparation of undergraduate students for postgraduate education. Further research should be undertaken at other learning institutions, to determine the impact of counselling on the advancement of education by students of different demographics. The unique challenges faced by some students, in undertaking postgraduate education, due to their gender, for example, should be a subject for further investigation. Furthermore, future studies on the discourse should address the impact of the different types of postgraduate studies, that is master’s, doctoral and second degrees, in career outcomes of students. Any differences in the requirements on educational advancement, especially in technical courses such as Internet Technology, should also be analysed through studies.

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