Teachers', Students' and Academic Support Staff Views on the Effectiveness of Female Students Academic Support Programmes at Bahir Dar University

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1.1. Background of the Study

It is known that education is the determinant factor that has direct relation to development of a society and a country as a whole. As education contributes directly to the growth of national income by improving the productive capacities of the labor force, all states and governments in the world are giving prior attention among other sectors.

According to the United Nations Population Fund, countries that have made social investments in health, family planning, and education have slower population growth and faster economic growth than countries that have not made such investments (UNFPA, 2002). Hence, education is a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development.

However, for education to bring the aforementioned outcomes in a country, all citizens must get equal opportunities regardless of their sex, age, socio-economic status, etc. In doing so, both male and female citizens should get this opportunity to invest their full potential in all aspects of development (economic, political and social). Even, some scholars suggested female education to be prioritized over that of males. For instance, Sullerot (1974) wrote, "Without female education progress can be transmitted to each generation either not at all or very slowly, since it cannot be passed on in the home."

Asserting the importance of women education in predicting the educated generation of the future, Bown (1990) said, "Women bear and raise the children, so women prepare the future, how can a future be good if women are ignored?" Similarly, Ballara (1992) indicated the importance of educating women for wellbeing of the family since they play a significant role as educators of future generation, fulfill economic functions and are vital for the survival of the family. According to him, women education, moreover, contributes for their personal development as acquiring it enable women to increase their self-esteem, improve their income earning capabilities and to play active role in the family and community decision-making. Similarly, as to Asresash, Shinebaum and Kassahun (2002) educating women is the most important measure as it enhance their social status and self - image, empower them to make decisions independently and result in the well-being of society in which they are living. Hence, female education must be given equal, if not more than, weight to male education.

Especially in a country like Ethiopia, where the number of female population exceeds that of male, empowering females equipped with better education is the issue which should be given priority so as to bring about sustainable development the country is aspiring.

However, history tells us that due to various hindering factors, females were limited from participating in the issues that concern them of which education is one. With regard to their participation in higher education, referring to African countries, Bunyi (2003) reported that among the constraints which hinder women enrolment at higher institutions identified include inadequate qualified female candidates to join tertiary institutions (TE), insufficient places in the institutions, unfriendly institutional environments, socio-cultural values, beliefs and practices that militate against the education of girls and insufficient female role models. Similarly, Odaga and Heneveld (1995) in Teshome (2002) described socio-economic and socio-cultural, factors related to the school environment and political and institutional as major factors affecting women education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Understanding all these problems, in order to minimize and compensate, if possible, the scare on the history of females, different mechanisms have been proposed. To this end, the World Declaration on Higher Education (1998), Article 4 (a) that focuses on enhancing participation and promoting the role of women states:

> Although significant progress has been achieved to enhance the access of women to higher education, various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles continue in many places in the world to impede their full access and effective integration. To overcome them remains an urgent priority in the renewal process for ensuring an equitable and non-discriminatory system of higher education based on the principle of merit.

In order to compensate the different constraints which make women not to be competent with their men counterparts, different interventions are being made (Bunyi, 2003). In Ethiopia, too, attempts are being made to improve the participation of women in all sectors. For instance, the constitution of federal democratic republic of Ethiopia clearly put that women and men have equal right before the law (FDRE, 1995). Moreover, the

issuing of women policy and the attention given to the importance of girls' education on the new education and training policy are worth mentioning (MoE, 1994).

To improve females' achievement, academic support strategies have also been proposed at all levels of education. As part of this strategy, Bahir Dar University, one of the higher institutions in Ethiopia, is also providing academic support for female students. Hence, this study intends to investigate the effectiveness of these academic support programs.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As it is repeatedly mentioned above, the exclusion of women from education and development in Ethiopia could partly be the effect of the traditional elements that have been operating against women for longer period of time. Different researchers in Ethiopia also claimed that culture influences the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). Strengthening this idea, Asresash, Shinebaum and Kassahun (2002) have stated that the participation of women in different sectors seriously affected by cultural barriers and low expectation towards them.

It is believed that if females are helped not only participate but complete their education, they can contribute a lot in betterment of their life and that of the society. According to Teshome (2005), enabling females to complete their education is to invest in future progress and better standards of life with multiplier effects. In other words, education of females, if complete, not only changes their current life but also is a guarantee to their future lives and that of their families and of the society they live in at large.

Although Ethiopia is achieving satisfying results in enhancing the education of females, particularly; the participation of females in primary and secondary education has been dramatic, the participation of women in higher institution is still a problem. In this case, Asresash, Shinebaum and Kassahun (2002) citing personal conversations held with a person from Ministry of Education, reported that in higher institutions, females represent only 10% of the total number of students.

Despite the presence of policies and efforts made by the government so far, females' participation in higher learning institutions is still limited because of various reasons. For instance, recent studies show although most cut off their education at primary and secondary levels because of different factors (Asresash, et al., 2002; Bookie Kethugisile, et al. in Wudu and Getahun, 2009), few who managed to enter tertiary education also face the same problem and hence, the majority of new students entering higher education leave their initial university without completing a degree resulting in high attrition rate. Similarly, in most countries, the attrition rate of females is higher than that of their male counterparts (Tinto, 1998; Berger & Braxton, 1998). For instance, research findings by Berger and Braxton (1998) portray that approximately 50% of students entering two-year colleges and 29% entering four-year institutions depart by the end of their first year.

To combat this problem, the government and concerned institutions have been proposing mechanisms to improve female performance and there by minimize their attrition rates in higher institutions. Yet, it is said that student performance, retention and attrition rates in institutions of higher education demand the attention of both academia and the public and even that of the students themselves as the problem is severe and deep rooted (Larose & Roy, 1995).

To increase the participation of females in higher institutions, most universities have been trying to do various activities. In fact, for researchers like Junio-Sabio(2012) provision of such services should be major function of all higher education institutions "as the students form at the very heart of HEI business." The supports are provided with the aim of assisting students to attain their full potential. These supports are referred by some academic support services (Moore, 2000; Prager, 1991; Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman & Coles, 2009) and others call them student support (Carey, Cahalan, Cunningham and Agufa, 2004) . As to Savitz-Romer, et al (2009: 6) academic support is "the formal and informal strategies that build, strengthen, and promote students' mastery of subject matter and skill development through deliberate activities, structures, policies, and expectations." For these scholars, therse are five categories of support namely; Emotional, Instrumental, Informational, Appraisal and Structural.

Although Student support services and academic support services phrases interchangeably used by different institutions (Junio-Sabio, 2012), Carey, Cahalan, Cunningham and Agufa (2004) asserts that academic support is one component of student support as there are four components of student support services academic instruction, academic support services Counselling and mentoring , and cultural and enrichment activities. From the above discussions, it is apparently understood that while academic supports are directly related to making the students academically competent, student support programs are used indirect means of making students use their potential. Asserting this idea, other researchers argue that academic support includes any support, direct or indirect, help students concentrate on their studies there by enhance their academic performance (Braxton & Hirschy, 2004; Commission for Academic Support in Higher Education, 2009; Tinto, 2006–2007 in Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011). The services universities provide to their students as academic support so as to enable them complete their studies include: counselling, academic skills advice, and welfare support.However, for the purposes of this

study academic support programs include orientation programs; counselling; academic advising, tutorial programs and financial and material supports.

Although researches show that all types of students, regardless of their entry credentials, benefit from the use of academic support services (Abrams & Jernigan, 1984; Moore, 2000; Hrabowski & Maton, 1995; Hrabowski & Pearson, 1993) and only a small number of institutions fail to offer academic support (McInnes, 2003), the targeted students do not avail themselves to take advantage of such supports (Harvey, Drew, & Smith, 2006 in Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011). This is probably why most students, especially females, are seen to withdraw and fail to achieve up to their potential, regardless of the supports provided by their respective institutions. Adams (2006) also asserts that despite the efforts of universities to provide a wide range of academic supports to their students, students are under utilizing them because of lack of awareness about the presence of such services and reluctance.

For long period of time, as in the case of most of the universities in Ethiopia, the attrition rate of women students is higher than that of males in a university which is also true in Bahir Dar University. As the case in most universities, the university is providing academic supports like tutorial on some courses and counseling services to both males and females with the aim of reducing attrition. When we see the attrition rate of first year female students taking 20011/12 data, it is less when compared to their sex counterparts and compared to years before. According to the data taken from the office of registrar of Bahir Dar university (March, 2013), the attrition rate of females decreased from 27% in 2006/07 to only 4% in 2011/12. As to our observation, however, one needs to study whether this reduction of attrition rate has something to do with support programs provided to female students or not.

Despite the role of such support programs in eliminating or at least narrowing the gap between what students brought with them and the expectations of the institutions (McInnis & James, 2004   in Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011), only some studies have witnessed potential differences in the usage and impact of support services on the performance of students under discussion. For instance, research conducted in Jimma University, for instance, showed that supports being given to female students are insufficient to help female students achieve the desired goal (Asresash et al. 2002). Moreover, information gained from Debub University gender office also shows the ineffectiveness of the program because of irregularity of its organization and lack financial support for the program (Tesfaye, 2007). Yet, these researches discuss about the issue partly in other universities, to the knowledge of the researchers, there is none which focuses thoroughly on this issue in Bahirdar University. Hence it is important to examine if the student support programs are effective. In this research, attention was given to investigating the students', teachers', academic support service providers' (participating in providing such services of the university) views on the effectiveness of slected student academic supports. To do so, the following research questions are forwarded:

- What does the trend of provision of student support programs look like at Bahir Dar University?
- How do first year female students of Bahir Dar University and people in charge of the academic support view the effectiveness of the programs?
- What are the challenges in provision of the academic support programs?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was intended to assess the effectiveness of the provision of academic support programs offered for first year female students at Bahir Dar University. Hence, the objectives of the study were:

- Investigate the trend and purpose of academic support provisions at the university
- Understand the views of students, teachers, and officers on the effectiveness of the identified programs
- Find out the challenges hindering the smooth provision of the programs

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to have a number of significances. Among these are:

- It may give the readers awareness on how student support services are being provided
- It may provide ways of improvement for higher learning intuitions in general and Bahir Dar University in particular in their provision of student support services particularly tutorial programs
- It may also give program owners whether the intensions set are effectively met and on how they can improve it.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited geographically to Bahir Dar University, two campuses and critically assessing the effectiveness of major academic supports provided to female students conceptually.

2. Methodology

Design of the study

The concern of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of academic support programs targeted at female

students of Bahir Dar University. To this end, it employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Subjects of the study

This study was conducted at Bahir Dar University, one of the oldest universities in Ethiopia. Hence, all first year female students and academic support service providers who are leading academic support services including counsellors and gender officers were subjects of the study. In doing so, from five campuses of Bahir Dar University, two were purposively selected: main campus and Poly Technic. IOT and IOTEX were taken from poly while FEBS, Humanity and Science College were selected from main campus to collect data on the issue. Stratified random sampling was used to select 129 female students (IOT=33, IOTEX=28, FEBS= 26, Humanity= 13 and Science College=29 (of which 11 were not returned 28 were incomplete) from a total of 1229 freshman female students where only 90 were complete while 4 instructors (two from each compass) were selected purposively so as to include those who were involved in academic advising. In the case of academic support staffs, 2 guidance and counseling service providers, 2 gender coordinators (1 from each compass) and the

Items	Actual Mean	Expected mean	Std. Dev.	t-value
Interesting and interactive	11.32	9	3.14	7.01
Helps to understand difficult issues	7.17	6	2.12	5.17
Addresses individual needs	3.30	3	1.15	2.48
Well organized and consistent	6.90	6	2.10	3.89
Builds confidence and improve achievement	7.80	6	2.37	7.21

previous gender office director of Bahir Dar University were selected using comprehensive sampling as their number was manageable.

Data Collection Instruments

To collect evidences, both qualitative and quantitative instruments and techniques were used. Questionnaire having close ended items was prepared to collect data on the effectiveness of the services for female students whereas interview was conducted with teachers who served as academic advisors and academic support service providers so as to see the trend of the services, their purpose, their effectiveness and challenges faced while delivering the services. Moreover, focused group discussion was made with some female students so as to triangulate data collected through questionnaire.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were employed. The quantitative data was analyzed using means and one-sampled t-test. One sampled t- test was used to compare the mean values. In so doing, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) was employed. On the other hand, data collected through interview were recorded and transcribed, categorized and presented in a narrative form to substantiate the quantitative result.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was intended to assess the effectiveness of student support services namely tutorial, academic advising and guidance and counselling. To do so, data were collected from female students and academic support staffs using questionnaire and interview. Under this section, the findings and discussions of the results are presented. In so doing, the quantitative data analysis was presented first and the qualitative data were made to complement the quantitative results in the discussion part.

3.1 RESULTS

Table 1 *Means, Standard Deviation and One-Sample t-test Results of female students' Views on the effectiveness of tutorial program*

As can be observed from table 1, the actual means were found above the expected mean. Except the one concerned with if the program addresses individual needs, all the differences of the means were also proved to be statistically significant in a one sampled t-test. Hence, this shows that the tutorial program, in view of female students, is being provided effectively.

Table 2 *Means, Standard Deviation and One-Sample t-test Results of female students' Views on the effectiveness of Guidance and counselling program*

Items	Actual Mean	Expected mean	Std. Dev.	t-value
Helps manage homesickness & in adjusting to campus life	6.66	6	2.27	2.83
Helps mange gender related problems	7.11	6	2.37	4.44
Boosts confidence and sense of working together	7.00	6	2.16	4.34
Helps to focus on academics	14.09	12	4.39	4.52
Availability and accessibility of counsellor	6.60	6	2.60	2.19
Service satisfaction	3.14	3	1.33	1.03

As shown from table 2 above, all the items were rated below the expected mean value. To see whether the mean difference found was significant or not, one sampled t-test was employed and the results showed that the difference between expected and actual mean was found statistically significant (df=89, p<0.05) which shows, according to female students, the effectiveness of provision of guidance and counselling.

Table 3 *Means, Standard Deviation and One-Sample t-test Results of female students' Views on the effectiveness of academic Advising*

Items	Actual Mean	Expected mean	Std. Dev.	t-value
Confidential and makes me freely discuss personal issues	10.25	9	3.83	3.11
Aware us on important issues	9.84	9	3.50	2.29
Available during consultation hours and scheduled appointments	13.54	12	4.67	3.22
Follows-up and feedback	14.04	12	4.53	4.28

As can be observed from table 3, all the grouped items were rated higher than their respective expected mean value. The significances of the differences of the expected and the actual means were tested using one-sample t-test and the result was found statistically significant (df=89, P<0.05). Hence, from the views of female students summarized in the above table, it possible to say that academic advising support is being provided effectively.

3.2 DISCUSSION

Tutorial program

Female students and gender coordinators views of the trend and purposes of tutorial program

Though it is difficult to trace the exact time tutorial program has been started for female students, it is possible to say that it is being given at Bahir Dar University for a short period of time. The tutorial program for female students was offered only during freshman year and on only two courses selected by the students themselves. According to one of gender coordinators, previously, it was gender office that facilitates the tutorial program for females being with faculties/colleges. For instance, the gender office send letter to the respective faculties/colleges to let students select two courses for which tutorial could be prepared and to assign teachers. Afterwards, the gender office was responsible to pay for teacher tutors based on evidence that show they have taught, for instance, the teachers are expected to teach 25 contact hours for a course with 3 credit hours.

The gender director of the university said, though we didn't conduct any research on the effectiveness of tutorial programs and assess its impact on the tutee's performance, it was believed that the tutorial programs were encouraging female students academic performance and has reduced the attrition rate among them and this led male students to request to be included in the program.

However, one of the gender coordinators noted, there was problem of payment for the teachers who offered courses in the tutorial program since there is no clear guide on student support system. Students were not interested towards the program. There is no effort to follow up the process from both the gender office and the concerned faculties and colleges. Besides, some faculty consider it as if pure payment which shouldn't be aligned with the total teaching load of the teachers. Others do not pay unless the credit is overload for the teacher which made teachers not to be interested in the program. On the other hand, gender office couldn't request for budget to be allocated since it is budgeted for student union as double budget is impossible. Thus, currently starting from 2004 onwards, the office do not fund female tutorial program rather it is students union who offer tutorial to all students by assigning senior students with good academic performance in respective departments. Therefore, from aforementioned time onwards, there is no tutorial given to female students independently rather they are being offered for both.

Even though she didn't experience the tutorial program by teachers, one of the female students believed that the one prepared by the students is better, saying:

> *... it is better when it is given by the students because, if your tutors are teachers, you will not dare to ask question on the points you are not clear about. But when your tutors are students, you freely ask them when you don't understand and you even bring questions to the class and discuss with them. We are free to approach them…*

Similarly, the previous gender office director said that among the problems seen during teacher tutoring one is the gap between teachers and students. In other words, even though teachers were very close to them, the students are afraid to request for further explanation and support.

Female students and gender coordinators views of the effectiveness of tutorial program

The results of the analysis of the rating whether the tutorial program is effective or not was found above the expected mean and was also found statistically significant. When we see the first whether the program is interesting and, the actual mean was found above the expected mean where the mean difference is 3.14. The difference, as shown in table 1, in the t-test result was found significant (t=7.01, df=89, p<0.05). Amongst the items included in this category were program attraction which makes the students to attend, provision of opportunity for students to discuss with friends and program interactiveness in making students be active. In addition to comparing the actual and expected mean of the total items, attempt was made to compare the mean of each item. In this regard, all the actual means of each of the items were found considerably above the expected mean. The results of the interview were found in line with the quantitative data. For instance, one of the female student asked about the effectiveness of the tutorial program said that it is effective and one of the reasons for her saying so is "we learn from each other on how we can solve problems and different strategies others use to manage their stress, time and even different learning styles".

The other issue used to see the effectiveness of tutorial program was whether it helps the students understand difficult issues. In this case also, the actual mean was found above the expected mean, mean difference being 2.12. The difference, as shown in table 1, in the t-test result was found significant (t=5.17, df=89, p<0.05). Amongst the items included in this category were if the program helps students understand what they didn't in the regular class and tutors approach the course differently from the regular teachers. In addition to comparing the actual and expected mean of the total items, attempt was made to compare the mean of each item. In this regard, all the actual means of each of the items were found above the expected mean. The quantitative results were found to be in line with the qualitative ones of the interviews were found in line with the data obtained from female students during focused group discussion.

The third issue of concern on the effectiveness of tutorial program was whether the program addresses individual need of the students. For this category, the actual mean was found to be greater than the expected mean and the mean difference was found to be statistically significant (t=2.48, df=89, p<0.05). However, the female students' interview data was found different from this result. For instance, one of the female students said that the program is far from addressing our individual needs because it is impossible in a condition where 60 or more students are in class and where the student tutors are busy as they are students themselves.

The fourth category is concerned with whether the program is being given in a well organized and consistent way. In the category, the items were if the tutors attend the class regularly and if they make well preparation before coming to the session. For this category also, the actual mean was found to be greater than the expected mean and the mean difference was found to be statistically significant (t=3.89, df=89, p<0.05). However, the data obtained qualitatively contradicts with the quantitative result. Most students in a group interview said that the program lacks regularity as the student tutors do not come on time; they are not serious about the program. This, according to the students, was because the students themselves are overloaded as any student and there hardly is any support given to them in the form of incentive which affected the student tutors interest towards supporting junior students.

The fifth category which shows the effectiveness of tutorial program is whether the program helps students build their confidence and improve their achievement. As can be seen from table 1, the actual mean (7.80) is found to be greater than the expected mean (6) and this was found to be statistically significant (t=7.21, df=89, p<0.05). In fact, according to the previous gender office director of the university, building confidence and improving female students' performance there by reducing attrition rate among female students was one of the core objectives of preparation of tutorial program for female students in the university when the tutorial program was first initiated. These results are in concordance with the interview data reflected by female students. For instance, one of the students stated: "it is a program designed for helping us understand what we didn't in the classroom. In the tutorial program, we take the questions and issues to be clarified and get support from our student tutors which helps us achieve better". It has been discussed above that the students feel free to ask the students than their teachers. In explaining how the tutorial program being provided for students help them improve their performance, one of the female student said:

> *…the tutors are students; we do not have problems to ask them. We are confident enough to ask them whatever queries we have, but had the tutors been the teachers, we, especially females, afraid to ask and hence, we come out of class with full of questions and confusions. Besides, even*

> *if we ask the teachers, they don't tell us in a way we can understand.*

Moreover, one of the students noted the power of tutorial in helping them share important issues regarding the nature courses saying:

> *… in tutorial program, we learn a lot about the selected courses focusing on the issues that were difficult for us. But beyond that, we are told by our senior students how teachers prepare exam, where to focus, and how well we can study which we cannot get had our tutors been teachers. This, in turn, gives us relief and makes us confident as far as these courses are concerned*

During interview, when students were asked to rate to what extent the program has been effective, most said that it could be said it is 50% effective as there are a lot of problems.

Guidance and counseling services

Guidance and counseling professionals and female students' view of trend and purpose of guidance and counseling

Guidance and counselling is concerned with guiding and advising people who face different problems. That is why it is seen as the ideal means for understanding and addressing people's needs and problems. Though the exact date of its start in educational institutions is not known, it is not difficult to understand that people were, in one way or another, using the service. It is with this notion that it is expected in every school there should be at least one guidance and counselling provider. It was started taking into consideration the problems the students would face with regard to studying and other problems which arise because of age.

In higher institutions where, in most cases, the students are departed from their parents, the importance of the provision of guidance and counselling is unquestionable. Besides, the students who join higher institutions are stressed as to how to read, whom to select as a friend, where and when to study and for how long, etc. In this regard, the people who work as guidance and counsellors are of great help in supporting students manage university life.

Though people in charge of such service argue the university didn't start the service on purpose as it was forced by the ministry of education to include it in its structure, whatever the reason may be, Bahir Dar University had included it in its structure in 1995 E.C. Even one of the guidance and counselling provide who worked as counsellor for more than eight years didn't agree on the terms which stands for the beginning of the service "starting", "establishing" or "opening " and said "the university just named it for the consumption of report to the ministry of Education". Until recently, only one counsellor with hardly any training on the issue was working as a counsellor. As to the information we had from the office, people who were working as counsellor from the date of its establishment up until 2005 were administration workers and pedagogical science graduates with only one relevant course in this particular area. Even the interviewees made clear that there was no training or experience sharing was arranged for them to help them better give the service. One of the interviewee when asked to explain how he is coping up with the service answered," I am a father, I consider the students as my sons and daughter. When they come to me I approach them accordingly. I wipe their tears and buy them tea from my pocket. I try my best to understand them and resolve their problem." Both of the counsellors we have interviewed stressed the importance of the service and yet complained about lack of attention from top level management.

One the other hand, from 2005 E.C onwards, to support female students, gender coordinators were assigned in every campus. The intent of such effort was to enable female students be informed, adjusted and achieve better. Students need counselling but workers in gender office are not counsellors but from experience they try to make students feel free and focus on their studies. However, one of the gender coordinator noted, "as we don't have training in counselling, we, most of the time send our students who need such services to guidance and counselling office, but they may fail to tell to the workers everything they face and the counsellors are not professionals in guidance and counselling who can convince the students and make them talk."

If female students are intended to get maximum benefit from the program, the counselors and gender coordinators should work together. As they are there specifically there for female students, one of the gender coordinators even said, ""Basics of counselling training is required for campus gender coordinators to support female students in their way of learning and campus life"

Asked about the purpose of guidance and counselling all of the interviewees noted that there are no clear purposes that they follow when they are providing these services. They mentioned the lack of documents which guides them in their day to day activities. One of the counsellor interviewee, even said," we don't exactly know our objectives; we don't even have adequate educational preparation and experience. We have reported to the university management our need of training, but no one was concerned about us." But most of the time, in the counsellors' views, students who come to the office come to resolve problems related to time management, stress management , personal problems, to be relieved from habits such as drinking, etc. Students also were asked for what purpose they go to the counsellors and said that they use the program to solve their problems and concentrate more on their academics. One of the female students even reflected, "We use the service to find

alternative ways of solving problem

Guidance and counseling professionals, gender coordinators and female students' view of the effectiveness of guidance and counseling

Effectiveness of guidance and counselling was seen in terms of six categories of items. The first category was whether the guidance and counselling help female students manage homesickness and adjust to campus life. As can be seen from table 2, the actual mean was greater than the expected one where the mean difference is 2.27. The difference, as shown in table 2, in the t-test result was found significant (t=2.83, df=89, p<0.05). In addition to comparing the actual and expected mean of the total items, attempt was made to compare the mean of each item. In this regard, the actual means of both of the items were found considerably above the expected mean. The qualitative data obtained from female students also concords with the quantitative data. One of the female students explained how she managed to stand homesickness and managed to adjust herself to campus life, saying "I had homesickness problem when I came here being a fresh student, however, after sharing my problem, I felt so at ease. The counsellor approach is like a father. Besides, he encouraged me to go and visit him whenever I feel like it."

The second category asks if the guidance and counselling program help female students' manage gender related problems. The items were if the program helped female students overcome problems facing them because of their sex and challenge their prior misconception on their gender roles. As portrayed in table 2, the actual mean for the category was found to be greater than the expected and the same was true for each of the items. The difference, as shown in table 2, in the t-test result was found significant (t=4.44, df=89, p<0.05). The information obtained from interview with female students goes in line with the quantitative result. For instance, one of the female students when explaining how talking to the gender coordinator helped her in this regard, said;

> ....when I came to this campus, I was so frustrated, everyone was studying but I couldn't. I always think that I am going back to my family as I felt it was tough for me, as female, to survive in such condition. However a friend told me to talk to our gender coordinator, and I went to see her and got advice then I started to relax and get used to the campus life.

As can be seen from table 2, the third category sees if the program boosts confidence and sense of working together among female students. In this case also, the actual mean (7.00) was found above the expected mean (6), mean difference being 2.16. The difference, as shown in table 2, in the t-test result was found statistically significant (t=4.34, df=89, p<0.05).

The fourth category, in investigating the effectiveness of guidance and counselling is related with whether it helps female students to focus on academics. In this category also, the actual mean (14.09) was found to be greater than the expected mean (12), mean difference was found to be 4.39. The mean of the four items included in this category was also calculated and it was found that the actual mean was found to be greater and than the expected mean and the mean difference of the items was statistically significant. The difference, as shown in table 2, in the t-test result was found statistically significant (t=4.52, df=89, p<0.05). Similar notion was obtained from qualitative data, for instance, one of the counsellors noted the very purpose of the guidance and counselling service is to help students get used to the life of the university and help the focus on academics. As to him all supports students get in the campus are geared towards improving their performance by helping them focus on their academics. One of the female student asserted that the counselling has a lot to do to help students achieve the intention they are in campus for. When she was asked to explain why, she said:

> The counsellor helped us to see things as simple and achievable. We also see him as one of our parents. He is very much concerned about our future. Since I solved my problem by his support, I afterwards focused on my academics.

The actual mean (6.60) was found to be greater than the expected (6) one in the fifth category which is concerned with the availability and accessibility of the counsellor and the mean difference for the category was 2.60. As shown in table 2, in the t-test result was found statistically significant at t=2.19, df=89, p<0.05. The qualitative data was similar with the views of students collected through group interview. Most of the focused group participant female students affirmed, they found the counsellors during their consultation hours and they were willing for scheduled appointments.

The last category was concerned with the female students' guidance and counselling service satisfaction. In this regard also, the actual mean (3.14) was found to be greater than expected mean (3) and but the mean difference is not statistically significant between the two mean values (t=1.03, df=89, p>0.05). In line with the quantitative data, the qualitative data also shows that satisfactory level of service is not being provided with regard to guidance and counselling. Among reason for its being so, the major one is lack of attention given to the service by university management. On the other hand, the counsellors believe that taking the lack of attention from the management of the university and the limited skills they have as counsellors in to consideration, it is possible to say that it is effective. One of the experienced counsellor said he feels that he is providing effective service because students in other campuses even if they have counsellors assigned there, come to him based on information they get from friends which shows, according to him, that he is working effectively. On the other

hand, the other counsellor believed that it is better to give this kind of services than doing nothing and he is doing everything he can, yet he asserted that it is difficult to say the service as a service is effective because there are a lot of gaps in its provision. Similarly, one of the gender coordinator said that it is impossible to say the service is going properly for especially female students whose counselling need is different from males.

Academic advising

Academic advisors' and female students' view of the effectiveness of academic advising

To see the effectiveness of academic advising, four categories were identified. The first category is whether the student feels what they discuss with their advisors is confidential and if they freely discuss personal issues. As can be seen from table 3, the actual mean was found above the expected mean where the mean difference is 3.83. The difference, as shown in table 3, in the t-test result was found significant (t=3.11, df=89, p<0.05). In addition to comparing the actual and expected mean of the total items, attempt was made to compare the mean of each item. In this regard, all the actual means of each of the items were found considerably above the expected mean. The results of the interview were found to be contradicting with the quantitative data. For instance, with regard to this category, one of the female students reported that she doesn't feel free to talk to her advisor she doesn't believe that the advisor could keep as secret rather she prefers to talk to the counsellor.

The other issue used to see the effectiveness of academic advising was whether it aware students on important issues so that they can prepare themselves. In this case also, the actual mean(9.84) was found above the expected mean(9), mean difference being 3.50. The difference, as shown in table 3, in the t-test result was found significant (t=2.29, df=89, p<0.05).

The quantitative results were found to be in line with the qualitative ones of the interviews were found in line with the data obtained from female students during focused group discussion. With regard to their role of advisors in preparing the students on upcoming issues, one of the female students noted;

> ....especially for freshman students, academic advisors played a great role in encouraging students to be relaxed and take easy things at campus, to participate in classroom and to build their confidence with regard to approaching instructors for any queries. For instance, last year had she [advisor] not been our advisor, we couldn't have been here rather we have gone home.

The third issue of concern on the effectiveness of academic advising was concerned with availability of the advisors during consultation hours and scheduled appointments. For this category, the actual mean (13.54) was found to be greater than the expected mean (12) and the mean difference was found to be statistically significant (t=3.22, df=89, p<0.05).

The fourth category is concerned with whether the advisors follows-up the students' progress and give them feedback.. For this category also, the actual mean (14.04) was found to be greater than the expected mean (12) and the mean difference was found to be statistically significant (t=4.28, df=89, p<0.05). However, the data obtained qualitatively contradicts with the quantitative result. Most students in a group interview said that the advisors assigned to advise them only sign on registration slips and clearances and give them grade report and they don't at all follow up our progresses and give us feedback. For most of the female students, advisors are not willing to support and follow up students. For instance, one of the female students shared her experience regarding its effectiveness

> ... For me it is just the naming that is there, practically we are not using the advisors assigned for different purposes. Because they are not willing to support, when you don't get an inviting face, how can you approach them and tell them to support you? I don't think that they know what is expected of them because our advisor does just one thing, it is giving us the grade report. She doesn't let us approach her and she doesn't follow us up. I think, many students have gone home because of lack of such service.

In general, when we see the effectiveness of academic advising, though the statistical data shows that the actual mean in all is greater than the expected mean, which is statistically significant. However, the data collected through group interview revealed that the academic advising effective. It is possible to conclude this section by putting the following idea, one of the female students put forward regarding the effectiveness of the whole program. She said;

> Though some advisors are working, I don't think that they are working as to the expected level. On one hand, there is a problem of concern. They are not as such concerned about us- they don't care whether we are graduated or not. On the other hand, they are busy and they are I think paid nothing for the support they are giving us.

Challenges in the provision of the selected student academic supports

Among the challenges mentioned by the female students with regard to provision of tutorial program were lacks of skill of teaching among student tutors using different methods and problems related to schedule setting and adhering to them on the part of both students and student tutors. Moreover, female students made clear that the students who are taking part in the program misbehave in the classroom unlike when teachers are there which, according to them, have emanated from the fact that they despise the student tutors.

Guidance and counseling professionals, gender coordinators and female students' view of the challenges faced in the provisioning of guidance and counseling. There are various challenges raised by counselors and female students regarding the provision of guidance and counseling provision. While both students and counselors raised the problem regarding convenient office for the program, problems regarding lack of training which could improve the skill of the counselors, experience sharing and in general the lack of attention given to the service has been emphasized by the counselors.

With regard to office, one of the counsellors even said, "As the office is too small; sometimes I am afraid I would touch the body of my counselee especially when the students are opposite sex. So, I couldn't follow the seating arrangement while counselling as the science advocates because of the small size of my office. So, I talk with my clients, just like any office does for customer." Moreover, the counsellors explained the lack of the culture of coming to the counsellors on the part of the students. Even though attempt is made to aware students on the existence of the service and different mechanisms are used approach them, for instance, one of the counsellors made links with proctors, security officials, people who are working in the cafeteria to identify students who need special attention and tell him so as to make interventions before the problem become severe, a very limited number of students are coming to get the service.

Furthermore, the counsellors complained about the lack of attention and recognition of the service on the part of the university management. As to one of the counsellors, the university didn't yet own the service. Even when there are conferences concerning them such as on harassment, gender issues and HIV/AIDS, they are not told to participate.

The challenge raised by the gender coordinators is that since the female students may afraid to tell some of their personal issues to male counsellors, there should be female counsellors but the counsellors in all the campuses are male and there is no single female counsellor.

Among the challenges mentioned by the students, regarding the provision of cademic advising are the lack of willingness of advisors to support students, overload on the part of the teachers and students' hesitation to go to advisors and tell what they need from them are some.

Conclusions

Though the provision of the identified student academic support services had been relatively old in the university, most lack attention and support from the university. The study found out that tutorial programs provided by student tutors is effective except in terms of addressing the individual needs of the tutee and scheduling problems with both the students and student tutors. This study also revealed that guidance and counselling was effective though there are a number of gaps and constraints which affected the service quality and satisfaction on the part of the students and the service providers themselves. In terms of the effectiveness of academic advising, although the quantitative result showed effectiveness of the service, the qualitative result revealed the opposite. Hence, as most of the evidences show and as to the experiences of the researchers themselves, advisors assigned do not know or want to consider it as one of their responsibilities; it is possible to conclude that the service is not effectively provided.

Challenges affecting the smooth provisioning of female students' academic support were also identified. With regard to tutorial, the major challenges identified in this study include lack of training for student tutors on teaching and incentives to attract them more towards such kinds of services. The study also underscores that the presence of serious challenges in facilities, like office and lack of female counsellors. Moreover, the counsellors have no appropriate training and have rare opportunities to share experiences with fellow colleagues and upgrade their professions. According to this study, there is a serious problem in academic advising as most advisors assume their responsibility is limited to signing on clearances and giving students' their grade reports and hence, do not consider advising and following up of student is their task.

Recommendations

Though the student support services identified have been started a long time ago in the university, their provision qualities have not been improved. Hence, the university needs to reconsider their importance and give attention to them. There has to be capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of the services.

In addition, it is highly recommended that the students who are teaching the students should have the appropriate skill in teaching and managing classrooms. Hence, before students (especially those outside the education related fields) start teaching; they need to be given short training on such matters. Besides, when selecting student tutors, care should be taken to select them based on their teaching skill in addition to their GPA. The university should also think about how to motivate the students to participate in such programs as tutors. The issue of providing students with some incentives is highly recommended to sustain the provision of the program.

With regard to guidance and counselling though the research found its provision generally effective, it is recommended if those assigned are professionals. For instance, it is possible to use instructors with guidance and counselling training or hire a person fully responsible for the service. Besides, the counsellors already

working should be provided with trainings to upgrade their knowledge and skill and experience sharing opportunities where they can learn from each other. Moreover, if female students are to benefit from such services, it is highly recommended that female counsellors are assigned as counsellors.

Concerned bodies and faculty/ deans and directors should find ways through which students could get the most out of academic advising. To this end, they should aware and give the advisors the roles and responsibilities they, as advisors, are expected to do. Moreover, as they are busy with other duties, instructors assigned as academic advisors should be exempted from their load so as to enable them support the students and hold them responsible for not doing so.

Furthermore, it is worth remarking that this study focused on the three academic support programs where in-depth investigation of each couldn't be possible, hence, in-depth investigation of each of the services discussed in this research and other academic support programs need to be made by conducting further research.

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