

The degree of satisfaction of preparatory year students regarding academic guidance services at prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz university: A case study

Abdul-Wasea Abdul-Ghani Almekhlafi ^{1,*}, Galal Abdulqader Ahmed Alashaari ²

¹Community College, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

²College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 August 2020

Received in revised form

29 November 2020

Accepted 1 December 2020

Keywords:

Satisfaction

Guidance services

Preparatory year

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to examine the students' degree of satisfaction towards the academic counseling or guidance services during the preparatory year at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for the academic year 2020-2021 and report the difference, if any, in the level of this satisfaction based on the difference of the students' gender. This study used a self-administered survey as an instrument for data collection. The final sample consists of 440 students in Medical and Engineering Colleges. We find that there is a moderate level of satisfaction towards the services of academic guidance offered to the students. In addition, we find that there is a significant difference in the level of satisfaction towards the services of academic guidance by the gender at 5% level. The findings of this study are important for policymakers at the university and college levels. This study suggests that the colleges should increase their academic guidance services offered to students during their studying the preparatory year. Moreover, unifying the level of academic guidance services provided to both male and female sections in a manner to achieve the quality of this service provided to male and female students.

© 2021 The Authors. Published by IASE. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The preparatory year, the common year or the supporting year are all names for the first university stage in the life of the academic student, and it is considered as the most important stage in his/her life as it is in building and refining the student's skills and enabling him to choose his preferable major in which he can complete his scientific and practical life. The Saudi universities, including Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University, have intended to devise the preparatory year as a mechanism to confront the problems and hindrances that prevent the achievement of education goals and maintain the desired quality levels (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013) in order to improve the university's inputs through rationalizing admission and directing students towards appropriate fields to their capabilities and skills based on their desires and

averages, and giving students the opportunity to discover their scientific capabilities in the university's milieu in order to improve the outputs in line with the Kingdom's 2030 vision that seeks to raise the level of higher education and fill the gap between higher education outcomes and labor market requirements. In the same dimension, a research study by Engberg and Mayhew (2007); mentions that there is an effect of the preparatory year on educational outcomes. Also, the research study of Jensen et al. (2012) affirmed the keen role of the preparatory year in improving learning outcomes and integrating into learning courses through achieving effective behavioral intentions.

For the success of purpose for which the preparatory year was created, academic advisory services come as one of the most reliable methods in directing the student, sharpening his abilities and expanding his selections and opportunities for success in his studies and university education, where academic guidance plays a pivotal role in enabling the student to decide his scientific major Hence, without such academic advisory services, the student becomes in an endless maze because the role of the guide is to defeat the difficulties that stand in front of the student and help him overcome the obstacles that face him in the course of his studies to

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: a.almekhlafi@psau.edu.sa (A. W. A. Almekhlafi)

<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2021.04.003>

Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4145-6384>

2313-626X/© 2021 The Authors. Published by IASE.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

proceed in this path in the best possible way for the purpose of achieving the maximum level of success and academic excellence (Peluso et al., 2011). Academic counseling is an important key to academic success. The correlation between the quality of guiding and student success is direct, and that is the reason behind a widening of the campus participation circle is expanding in such process, and faculty teaching-staff actively contribute to the mentoring process (Hamdi, 2007).

1.1. Research problem

The research problem lies in identifying the degree of satisfaction of the preparatory year students at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University towards the guidance services provided to them, and this problem can be summed up into two important questions or inquiries:

1. What is the degree of students' satisfaction with the guidance services provided to them?
2. Are there significant differences in students' contentment due to the gender variable?

1.2. Significance of the research

As highly related to teaching and learning processes during the predatory year, this research is obviously considered as too important as having a direct impact on improving the university incomes, identifying the students with the academic milieu nature, and experiencing the university educational process directly. Besides, the recent research can effectively share on establishing the culture of evaluation or measurement as a principle for setting the plans of continuous improvement and development to fulfill the needs of students and hence contributing to achieving quality standards and academic accreditation.

1.3. Objectives of the research

1. To measure the students' satisfaction with the services provided to them.
2. To know the differences between the levels of student satisfaction due to gender.
3. To support the university with data and indicators that help it carry out the process of planning and continuous improvement.

2. Research concepts

2.1. A preparatory year

The preparatory year is a system used in some institutions of higher education, where its idea has emerged in some international universities as a transitional stage between general education and university education, and it is defined as the first year in the stages of university education in Saudi universities. Also, the student has to be prepared for

the undergraduate stage by providing specialized courses in English, mathematics skills, computer, and personal aspects. As well, Students have to be distributed according to future specializations for them, and meanwhile, the preparatory year fields indeed include medical, scientific, geometric, and human streams. Different programs focusing on the targeted skills are offered according to specialization (Al-Saud, 2013). The idea of implementing the preparatory year came at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University in order to qualify new students after graduating from secondary school, to get involved in the university environment so that the student does not feel with more obstacles while moving from general education to university education.

2.2. An academic guidance

Academic counseling is a systemic process based on the close relationship between the student and the mentor intending to help students achieve educational, professional, and personal goals through the use of institutional capabilities and resources. According to Grites (1979), An Academic Guidance simply is providing advice within the framework of the "decision-making process" in which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and exchange of information with the advisor (Fricker, 2015). Also, Academic counseling is defined as the need for students to communicate with the concerned mentor from the university community that contributes to the success of a student in learning and overcoming thoughts of scaring (Larson et al., 2018).

3. Literature review and hypotheses

- 1) Khalil and Williamson (2014) aimed to identify the role of the academic advisor in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Southern Polytechnic (SPSU), where there is only one academic advisor to fulfill the counseling needs of more than 1,200 engineering students. It shed light on the importance of professional advice and the need for a higher proportion of mentors compared to the number of students. The views of the counselors and students were taken into account, and the students' data was collected through a survey to analyze their understanding of the difference between the academic advisors and the faculty members. The survey revealed the significance of the academic advisor in the success of engineering students in progress and graduation.
- 2) Alghamdi (2015) aimed to evaluate the level of satisfaction of preparatory year students at Al-Baha University with the academic and non-academic services they receive and to determine whether there are any differences in students' satisfaction based on personal variables as (gender, college, distance). The study data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of fifty items within seven main dimensions of

satisfaction. It was distributed to a stratified random sample of 350 students in the preparatory year for the 2014-2015 academic year. The results of the study showed the average level of satisfaction of the preparatory year students with the student services they receive, and the results revealed statistically significant differences in the level of students' satisfaction due to the variable distance between the university and housing. According to the results, the study presented a set of recommendations aimed at developing students' services and fulfilling their expectations in order to achieve quality in university incomes and outcomes.

- 3) [Kebriyai et al. \(2005\)](#) aimed to identify the nature of attitudes of King Faysal University students towards educational and student services provided to them as represented in the competence of faculty members, registration of decisions and tests, and study through television management, laboratories, educational aids, libraries, academic guidance, student activities, health care, and public facilities such as arenas, restrooms, restaurants, cafeterias, student parks, and readiness of buildings and their capacity, the level of ventilation, air conditioning, cleanliness, and the university's electronic website. Moreover, it patently intended to reveal the differences in students' attitudes towards educational services provided to them due to gender, specialization, academic level, and academic achievement. The study was conducted on a sample of 900 male and female students. It used the scales of a trend towards educational and student services. The results showed that the attitude of university students towards educational and student services provided to them reached an average-degree, and there are differences in the level of a trend towards educational and student services in favor of students of scientific fields. There are no differences in the level of the trend towards student and educational services, depending on the academic level and achievement.
- 4) [Abu Hasan et al. \(2008\)](#) aimed to identify the level of academic contentment among students of the Faculty of Education at the Islamic University of Gaza and the ways to improve them. In order to achieve the aims of the study, the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach and a questionnaire consisting of 36 paragraphs distributed in three dimensions. The sample of the study was composed of 264 students from the students of the College of Education at the Islamic University in Gaza in a random manner. The results of the study showed that the level of academic satisfaction for students of College of Education at the Islamic University had reached a relative weight (74.40%) with a high degree of appreciation, and the field of the faculty teaching-member got the first rank with relative weight (74.73%) with a degree of appreciation whereas the fields of guidance, counseling, and the educational environment got the repetitive second rank with relative weight (74.73%) in a colossal degree of appreciation and there are no differences between the estimates of the members of the study sample for the level of academic satisfaction among the students of the Faculty of Education in teaching, but there are differences in favor of the cumulative average of 75% or less. The study also suggested a set of proposals to improve the level of academic satisfaction among students. And hence, on the basis of the previous results, the researcher recommends that the university should hold regular meetings and debates for students to discuss their problems or hindrances and work keenly to remedy them.
- 5) [Tan and Kek \(2004\)](#) aimed to elucidate the effect of the quality of educational services on the students' satisfaction at Al-Baath University and to achieve the goals of the study. A special questionnaire was developed and distributed to a sample of Al-Baath University students. Hence, more than 300 questionnaires have been retrieved from the distributed valid (384) ones equivalent to 80% of the distributed questionnaires. Then, by the using of appropriate statistical methods in SPSS statistical programs, the study concluded that there is a significant effect of each dimension of the qualities of the educational service on the satisfaction of the university students, and several recommendations were made to improve the quality of the educational service provided to students.
- 6) [McMullen \(2014\)](#) aimed to study the effects of gender and geographical location on students' perceptions in Saudi universities regarding the value and properties of English preparatory programs. Data were collected during the fall of 2013 from three universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia using an online survey of the study participants in English language programs for the similar introductory year in the Kingdom and totaled (184) male students (295) female students, and obviously, the results indicate that Saudi university students realize the value of the general English program in most cases, and they share common perceptions about the features required to ensure the success of any program. Furthermore, the results also showed that there are colossal differences due to gender and geographical location.
- 7) [Gaughf et al. \(2013\)](#) aimed to reveal the reality of academic guidance at King Saud University from the viewpoint of students and faculty members in the light of gender, college, academic level, and an average variable for students as well as the quality of counseling services provided and their methods in relation to mentors. The student study sample consisted of 450 individuals, 283 male students, and 167 female students, whereas the sample of academic advisors was composed of 78 persons, 26 male guides, and 52 female

guides. Besides, the two tools of the study prepared by the researcher were applied to them. The results of the statistical analysis showed that there is a general level of satisfaction from students on the various dimensions of the questionnaire on the level of academic counseling services provided in the various units of the university such as departments, colleges, centers of students' guidance and counseling. Also, the results revealed that there are significant differences between male and female students in the dimensions of the relationship with the counselor and awareness wholly. The results of the analysis of the counselors' responses exposed that they provide basic services in the descriptive academic guidance.

Thus, it is evident that previous studies have reflected the importance of measuring the degree of student satisfaction with what is provided to them by advisory services, whether at the level of the preparatory year or at all other levels of university study and that academic guidance directly affects the improvement of the student's abilities in educational achievement through the choice of specialization that is commensurate with his capabilities. Consequently, it affects the outcomes of university education, which enhances the importance of measuring students satisfaction with those services, as the measurement shows how safe it is to move profoundly towards the goals for which the preparatory year was established, helps the university to develop continuous improvement and development plans, and determines the level of student awareness of the extent of the services provided to them by the university. Moreover, it bridges the gap between this realization and the actuality of real services, and perhaps what distinguishes this research is its concentration on the preparatory year only and the large sample dimension, as it is distinguished by being the first research at the university level and from a few pieces of research at the local and Arab level.

4. Hypotheses of the research

1. An occurrence of a high degree of satisfaction among the preparatory year students at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University towards academic advisory services provided to them.
2. There are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance 5% between the averages

of the satisfaction of preparatory year students at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University due to the gender variable.

5. Research methodology

The researchers used the descriptive analytical approach to analyze and formulate the theoretical approach and the statistical survey method to remedy the problem and describe it objectively through quantitative measurement for the levels of students' satisfaction with academic counseling services in the preparatory year.

5.1. Statistical methods

Statistical, descriptive, and analytical methods such as averages, standard deviations, and T-test were used using the SPSS program.

5.2. Research tool

Like the questionnaire, the study's measurement tool, which was distributed to a sample of 440 male and female students from different tracks. The questionnaire consists of 22 paragraphs distributed on 4 axes. Each axis deals with a single service. Also, each axis was including a set of items.

5.3. Scope and sample of the research

Students of the preparatory year at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University, in both genders, represented the whole community of study. A random sample of 440 male and female students were chosen and distributed as [Table 1](#).

Table 1: The distribution of the sample population according to the gender research variable

Male	184
Female	256
Total	440

6. Findings of the research

First: Testing the first hypothesis: "Occurrence of a high degree of satisfaction among the preparatory year students at Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University towards academic guidance services provided to them." To verify this hypothesis, descriptive analysis was used according to the gender variable, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of students' opinions according to gender variable and a general estimate

Items	Male		Female		Total	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
General appreciation	3.500	1.205	3.678	1.094	3.604	1.146

[Table 2](#) shows a mid-degree of satisfaction by university students towards counseling services provided to them, as this average reached 3.17 with homogeneity of 1.18 in general, and the level of satisfaction for males reached an average degree of

3.13 with homogeneity of 1.25, and for females an average degree of 3.19 with homogeneity of 1.14.

Accordingly, the first hypothesis of the research stating that "there is a high degree of satisfaction among the preparatory year students at Prince

Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University towards the academic guidance services provided to them” is unfortunately unrealized.

Second: Testing the Second Hypothesis: It states that “There are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance 5% between the averages of the satisfaction of preparatory year students at

Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University due to the gender variable.” To prove this hypothesis, the t-test and the Levene's Test for Homogeneity were used to find out the significance and connotation of these differences at the 5% level of significance. The results of analyzing these differences appeared as in the following [Table 3](#).

Table 3: For T-test results and Levene's test for homogeneity

		Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Academic Advising	Equal variances assumed	3.541	0.061	-2.043	438	0.042	-0.16904
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.016	374.623	0.044	-0.16904
Career counseling	Equal variances assumed	13.103	0	-2.754	438	0.006	-0.29552
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.695	361.266	0.007	-0.29552
Psychological and personal counseling	Equal variances assumed	5.024	0.025	-1.464	438	0.144	-0.14946
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.445	374.447	0.149	-0.14946
Online guidance	Equal variances assumed	1.118	0.291	-1.364	438	0.173	-0.12588
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.357	386.731	0.176	-0.12588
general appreciation	Equal variances assumed	3.169	0.076	-2.143	438	0.033	-0.1776
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.124	381.798	0.034	-0.1776

[Table 3](#) shows the results of the T-test, and Levene's Test for Homogeneity displays as the following:

- The gender variable does not unfold statistically significant differences at the level of psychological, personal, electronic counseling where the value of Sig. (P. Value) exceeded the value of the level of significance 5%, which indicates the equality of the average views of male and female students with regard to psychological and personal counseling and electronic guidance. Hence, the difference between the average male and female students is not significant, and this indicates a high agreement between the opinions of male and female students towards those services provided to them.
- The gender variable discloses differences of statistical significance at the level of academic counseling and at the level of career guidance where the value of Sig (P. value) in each of them is less than the value of the level of significance 5%, which indicates that there is a difference of statistical significance in favor of females.
- The gender variable reveals statistically significant differences in the total summation, where the arithmetic mean for males 3.50 and for females 3.68. We find that the value of Sig (P. Value) for this axis has reached 0.03, which is less than the top 5%, this means that there are statistically significant differences in favor of females at the level of 5% between the responses of male and female students in the overall degree of the level of satisfaction attributed to the gender variable, and this contradicts the operative of the second hypothesis of the research, which states that “there are no statistically significant differences when the level of significance is 5% between averages of students satisfaction due to the gender variable”.

Thus, the two researchers view that although all the counseling services provided to the students of

the preparatory year are supposed to be equal and provided with the same quantity and quality for both male and female students in all university facilities, it is considered students are largely unhappy with the guidance related to the paragraph “The counselor explains the available employment opportunities for me during my graduation” and with a paragraph “The career advisor explains the tasks that must be performed in every allowed job” and with a paragraph “I was able to do the deletion and addition processes of courses electronically” and in a paragraph “The vocational counselor informs me about the fields of work available for graduates of the program.”

7. Discussion

The results reported by this study are in line with the prior studies such as [Alghamdi \(2015\)](#) and [Kebriaei et al. \(2005\)](#), owing to the moderate to low levels of students' satisfaction reported towards the services of academic guidance. In addition, consisting of the recommendations of this study with the prior research, we recommend the increasing of the services of academic guidance at PSAU, achieving the quality of the service.

Consistent with [Tan and Kek \(2004\)](#), our study confirms that there is a relationship between the quality of educational service and the university students' satisfaction.

The result of this study supports the fact that quality is a process having a beginning and no end. And, measuring the satisfaction must take place within the framework of a specific assumption and at a specific time.

8. Suggestions and recommendations

In light of the research results, both the researchers recommend the following:

1. Elimination of t differences in the services provided to male and female students and achieve equality between them in concern with quantity and quality of services.
2. Redoubling efforts to raise the level of academic counseling services for students of the preparatory year to contribute so as to share actively to achieving the goal for which those services were established, and to improve the level of counseling services in general and professional and academic counseling in particular.
3. Paying more attention to the satisfaction of the preparatory year students as one of the extents of quality evaluation and obtaining academic accreditation.
4. Multiplying the efforts bestowed to raise the level of services to enhance the improvement of the university environment.
5. A Continuation on an evaluation of the satisfaction degree of the preparatory year students with regard to the services provided to them periodically, as it is deeply important for the continuous improvement and development of the educational process.
6. Carrying out more studies and researches in the field of academic counseling that tackles other variables on the basis of teaching-staff perspectives and making referential comparative studies with distinguished universities and academic institutions to utilize from their experiences to achieve high levels of satisfaction with the academic counseling services.

Acknowledgment

This publication was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Alkharj, Saudi Arabia.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Abu Hasan HF, Ilias A, Abd Rahman R, and Abd Razak MZ (2008). Service quality and student satisfaction: A case study at private higher education institutions. *International Business Research*, 1(3): 163-175. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v1n3p163>
- Alghamdi OS (2015). Satisfaction of preparatory year students with university services. *World Journal of Education*, 5(5): 117-129. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v5n5p117>
- Al-Saud LMS (2013). Learning style preferences of first-year dental students at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Influence of gender and GPA. *Journal of Dental Education*, 77(10): 1371-1378. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.0022-0337.2013.77.10.tb05612.x> PMID:24098042
- Engberg ME and Mayhew MJ (2007). The influence of first-year "success" courses on student learning and democratic outcomes. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3): 241-258. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2007.0023>
- Fricker T (2015). The relationship between academic advising and student success in Canadian colleges: A review of the literature. *College Quarterly*, 18(4): n4. Available online at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1095959>
- Gaughf NW, Smith PL, and Williams DA (2013). Faculty and student perceptions of academic counselling services at an academic health science center. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 2(3): 165-170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-013-0056-1> PMID:23670693 PMCID:PMC3722373
- Grites TJ (1979). Academic advising: Getting us through the eighties. AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 7, American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Hamdi MS (2007). MASACAD: A multi-agent approach to information customization for the purpose of academic advising of students. *Applied Soft Computing*, 7(3): 746-771. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asoc.2006.02.001>
- Jensen AR, Wright AS, Kim S, Horvath KD, and Calhoun KE (2012). Educational feedback in the operating room: A gap between resident and faculty perceptions. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 204(2): 248-255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjsurg.2011.08.019> PMID:22537472
- Kebriaei A, Roudbari M, Rakhshani Nejad M, and Mirlotfi P (2005). Assessing quality of educational services at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences. *Zahedan Journal of Research in Medical Sciences (TABIB-E-SHARGH)*, 7(2): 139-146.
- Khalil A and Williamson J (2014). Role of academic advisors in the success of engineering students. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(1): 73-79.
- Larson J, Johnson A, Aiken-Wisniewski SA, and Barkemeyer J (2018). What is academic advising? An application of analytic induction. *NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising Journal*, 38(2): 81-93. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-38.2.81>
- McMullen MG (2014). The value and attributes of an effective preparatory English program: Perceptions of Saudi University students. *English Language Teaching*, 7(7): 131-140. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n7p131>
- Peluso DL, Carleton RN, and Asmundson GJG (2011). Depression symptoms in Canadian psychology graduate students: Do research productivity, funding, and the academic advisory relationship play a role? *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 43(2): 119-127. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022624>
- Smith L and Abouammoh A (2013). Higher education in Saudi Arabia: Reforms, challenges and priorities. In: Smith L and Abouammoh A (Eds.), *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, Higher Education Dynamics*, Vol 40, Springer, Dordrecht, Germany. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6321-0>
- Tan KC and Kek SW (2004). Service quality in higher education using an enhanced SERVQUAL approach. *Quality in Higher Education*, 10(1): 17-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1353832242000195032>