

The Impact of Campus Life on Student Retention

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Abstract

This article addresses the argument that in order to keep high retention rates of students in higher education, institutions need to involve students in the academic, quasi-academic, and social life of its environment. The institution under investigation in this article suffered student attrition during last semester in one of its programs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons behind large numbers of students drop out and to propose some solutions that might help decision makers develop high rates of students' retention in the future. The context of this quantitative research is a Middle Eastern private university and participants were selected from a professional diploma teaching program. The only instrument used in this paper is a survey with five sections and the participants were 86 out of 89 total students who completed their first semester of study in the academic year of 2014-2015. Social Constructivism Theory which is largely attributed to Lev Vygotsky was used to link literature with research findings. This theory emphasizes the important connection between culture and context in understanding the circumstances of how the knowledge is constructed (Derry, 1999). Results of the study substantiated the theory and revealed that students retain in case they are satisfied with university life and social services. The results also indicated that decision makers should consider seriously the importance of campus facilities specifically the cafeteria, the Wi-Fi service, and the rest areas in the place in order to motivate students to stay. Moreover, good conduct and quality of orientation programs were indicated to be crucial in their retention.

Key words: Retention, campus life, Organizational development, engagement, higher education.

1. Introduction

There is no single reason for students' withdrawal from institutions and research tends to conclude that there are a variety of reasons which are complex and inter-related (Crosling, Heagney & Thomas, 2009). According to a synthesis of UK research on student retention by (Jones, 2008), the following categories explain the withdrawal: *poor preparation, weak institutional and course match, lack of commitment, unsatisfactory academic experience, lack of social integration, financial reasons and personal circumstances*. However, there are personal reasons beyond the institution's circumstances that make them

withdraw like; wrong selection of major, second choice course selection or movement to other courses which meet their interests (Crosling et al., 2009).

From the perspective of quality assurance, Stensaker (2008) stated that the quality of teaching and learning and the way they are improved impact students retention and success rates. Tinto (2005) in line with the perceptions of researchers of this article concluded a range of factors in contemporary higher education that impact students' retention. These factors include: pre-entry information, preparation and admission processes, induction and transition support, learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum development, social engagement, student support (including financial issues), and effective application of institutional data and services. Among all the reasons mentioned above, enhancing *student engagement* is considered the key factor in successful retention rates (Chen, Lattuca, & Hamilton, 2008; Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007; McInnis, James, & McNaught, 1995).

The writer of this article pointed out that providing student-responsive curriculum development promotes highly student engagement. He confirmed the importance of collaborative learning situations which are challenging and relevant to students' lives and future. It is the active learning with peers and teacher inside and outside the classroom which is followed by formative assessment that shows their academic development at a particular time (Crosling et al., 2009). The idea of giving continuous feedback on performance is also important to manifest the efficacy of active learning (Tinto, 2000).

There is a body of evidence on the importance of integrating social and academic forms of academic life of students (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1997). They mentioned that some student groups may live off-campus and have work and family responsibilities which prevent them from participating in extracurricular activities in the institution, thus the formal learning experience is a good chance to managers and teachers to create social events which encourage them to be part of the experience. In other words, this category of students will persist and feel their sense of belonging if the institution allows them to take part in academic and social events (Thomas, 2002).

Moreover, some researchers highlighted the importance of student-centered induction in order to enable freshers to learn about and understand the expectations and culture of higher education (Crosling, 2003; Yorke & Thomas, 2003). This way of induction helps new comers to assimilate with old students and staff with a possible wide range of activities which help them feel they belong to the community (Quinn et al., 2005). Academically, interactive opposed to didactic teaching plays a vital role in retention rates (Crosling, As-Saber, & Rahman, 2008; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Parker, Naylor, & Warmington, 2005). They agree that the benefits of student-centered and self-discovery learning can be connected to social and emotional aspects of learning as this form of learning engagement motivates students and influences their sense of belonging and achievement (Askham, 2004; Thomas, 2002). In another study, Warren (2003) reviewed the benefits of active learning and indicated its importance in improving communication among students in culturally diverse classes and better adjusting to university circumstances.

Crosling et al., (2009) concluded their article by pinpointing some issues which affect student retention. They emphasized that the best ways to improve retention are to early engaging students through pre- and post-entry induction activities, understanding their diversity including where they come from and what are their aspirations, providing authentic and relevant curricula with building on students' experience, activating student-centered learning, integrating effective study skills habits and implementing continuous formative assessment into their learning experience in a timely manner.

In an interview between Charles Schroeder and George kuh in 2003 (Schroeder, 2003) about how are institutions doing at engaging students, Kuh – who used the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to investigate retention rates and college quality on different forms – provided **five** benchmarks of quality education practices that support retention rates. He indicated that challenging intellectual and

creative study environment is conducive to retention. Second, when students are more integrated into active and collaborative learning, they are more likely to retain and persist in the place they study. Third, interacting with faculty members through discussions about courses and careers plans or working on a research project will influence students' choices and impact positively their feelings. Fourth, supportive campus environment including academic, social and administrative connection with offices and services enhance their belonging. Lastly, enriching learning with experiments and outside practices augment their satisfaction and retention.

In their study, Chickering & Gamson (1987) highlighted **seven** principles for good practice in undergraduate education which keep retention rates high and ensure sustainability of program courses. These include; encouraging contact between students and faculty, developing reciprocity and cooperation among students, encouraging active learning, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Lawrence (2005) provided a model called the *Model for Student Success Practices* to include three inter-related practices that assist students to adjust themselves in the new culture and hence stay in the institution. The practices include reflective, socio-cultural and critical practices. Reflective practice includes student's capacity to observe, watch and listen to the cultural practices occurring on the site. Socio-cultural practice includes becoming familiar with the new university culturally and socially. Critical practices, on the other hand, include students' self-awareness of their belief system and their cultural practices and their awareness of power configurations impacting their retention.

2. Research Problem and Purpose of the Study

The program under investigation in this paper is a qualifying program in teaching for students who already passed their bachelor degrees and want to earn a professional diploma of teaching. Table 1 below illustrates the number of registered students in the program from 2006/ 2007 to the first semester of 2014-2015. As the table shows, while enrollments during the first two years were rather modest (all in all n =30 students), the numbers jumped dramatically in 2008-2009 to 179 students and to more than 500 students in each of the following years. But suddenly, the number dropped sharply to 89. Accordingly, *writer of the paper is trying to investigate the reasons behind large numbers of students drop out and to propose some solutions that might help decision makers develop high rates of students' retention.*

Table 1: Registered Students in the Program

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	10	20	179	537	596	568	571	533	89

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 social constructivism theory.

In this paper, *social constructivism theory* will be used to link literature with research findings. This theory emphasizes the important connection between culture and context in understanding the circumstances of how the knowledge is constructed (Derry, 1999). The theory has four assumptions (*Reality, Knowledge, Learning* and *Intersubjectivity of social meanings*) concerning learning and context. To social constructivists, reality is constructed through human activity (Kukla, 2000), and knowledge is a human product that is constructed through social and cultural practices (Ernest, 1998; Gredler, 1997). Therefore, individuals learn through interactions with each other and with the environment they are living in. Thirdly, theory proponents view learning as a social process where individuals are engaged in social activities and hands-on projects (McMahon, 1997). The final assumption is the intersubjectivity of social meanings which

postulates that the ground for social communications between individuals and learners in specific is the common interests and assumptions between the groups (Rogoff, 1990).

So, if any individual wants to construct a new knowledge, he/she should be influenced by the intersubjectivity of the community through conforming to the agreed-upon social and cultural factors which make it easy for him/her to extend the understanding of new information and activities among community members (Gredler, 1997; Schunk, 2000; Vygotsky, 1987).

In addition, Social Constructivism Theory has four general perspectives regarding social context and learning. First, students should be involved in hands-on project-based methods which focus on the learning of cognitive skills. This *cognitive tools perspective* imposes meaning on the product (Gredler, 1997). Second, constructivism sets priority in education to important concepts in various fields and disciplines. *This idea-based social constructivism* expands learner's vision and establishes foundations to construct more social meanings (Gredler, 1997). The *pragmatic approach* asserts that the implementation of social constructivism in class should be applied as the need arises (Gredler, 1997) and knowledge and understanding of the entire world is addressed from two views; individual learner & entire class. Finally, the *transactional or situated perspective* is the core element of this theory and which explains the relationship between learners and their environments (Bredo, 1994; Gredler, 1997). This perspective emphasizes the importance of environment in constituting individuals and that accordingly learning should not take place in isolation from the environment.

Depending on the four assumptions aforementioned, social constructivism stresses the collaboration among learners, collaboration between learners and environment and collaboration between learners and practitioners in the society in order to develop student's academic, cognitive and collaborative abilities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; McMahan, 1997).

4. Research Questions & Hypothesis

The researcher intends to answer the following questions regarding students' experience and their degree of satisfaction with academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university. By doing so, they aim to correlate answers with each other and find out significant relations that interpret the reasons of the problem of drop out numbers.

Question 1: How do students describe academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university?

Question 2: Do students record high percentage of retention when they are satisfied with the academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university?

5. Methodology

This study used a quantitative design that investigates the relationships between students drop out and their degree of satisfaction of academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university. Data for this study was obtained in the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015 from the program in a private university in the Middle East.

5.1 participants.

Participants of the study were 86 freshman students from the whole population of students (89) who finished their first semester of study. Table below shows demographic information of study participants.

Table 2: Frequency of Personal Information

	N	%		N	%		N	%
Marital Status			Gender			Age		
Single	51	59.3	Male	4	4.7	21-25	59	68.6
Married	35	40.7	Female	82	95.3	26-30	27	31.4
Major			Job Status			Study Type		
Arabic	1	1.2	Employed	3	3.5	Personal Fund	86	100
English	38	44.2	Unemployed	83	96.5	Scholarship	0	0
Sciences	13	15.1						
Instructional Technology	34	39.5						

In the study, gender is not a significant factor since 95.3% are females. In addition, all students spend personally on their studies and 96.5% are unemployed.

5.2 instrument and data collection procedure.

One instrument was used in the study: First Year Experience Student Opinion Survey which was created by Rutgers University as a pilot study and was used by permission. After it has been modified to fit the environment and conditions of the study, the survey contained **five** sections: *Demographic Information, Goal Achievement, Academic and Extracurricular Experience, Student Life, Academic Effort, and Facilities and Services* in addition to demographic information of the sample. All the sections contained four-point Likert-type statements. The survey was used only once before this study; the response rate was so low that the University did not repeat its use; as such there are no reliability or validity data on the survey. The Data was collected from students after getting the approval from the Dean of the College of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences.

6. Results

6.1 answer to question 1: How do students describe academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university?

The first descriptive statistics are the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of all variables of the study. Among all the 35 variables (excluding personal information variables), seven variables were recorded as having the lowest means from maximum of 3; cafeteria, freshman orientation, recreational facilities, community service, health services, financial support, and quality of advising with means 0.38, 0.44, 0.58, 0.65, 0.83, 0.86, 0.89 respectively and in a descending order. These variables are grouped into five categories namely; goal achievement, Academic and Extracurricular Experience, Student Life, Academic Effort, and Facilities and Services. After all statistics made, it was found out that facilities and services recorded the lowest mean (8.17) of a maximum degree of 20. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the survey sections.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Five Sections

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Goals Achievement	86	.00	15.00	9.60	4.21
Total Academic Experiences	86	.00	24.00	12.65	5.27
Student Life	86	.00	19.00	10.12	4.61
Academic Challenge	86	.00	15.00	9.58	3.60
Recreation and Services	86	.00	20.00	8.17	4.46

Next are some noteworthy results from the results. Students were divided in their opinions regarding meeting with their teachers during office hours. Forty two students (58.4%) reported that they rarely to never talked to their teachers during office hours. Moreover, 46 students (53.5%) mentioned that they rarely to never used internet for their assignments and online discussion with their classmates or teacher for research purposes. An astonishing result is the degree of students' satisfaction of their overall academic experience during their first year of study. Only 5 students (5.8%) reported it was excellent, and 54 (62.8%) found it unsatisfying. Furthermore, only 2 (2.3%) students recorded that orientation is satisfying and excellent. On the other hand, 77 (89.5%) stated that new freshman orientation was fairly poor and unsatisfying.

On social belonging to university, only 9 students (10.5%) showed that the sense of engaging and participating in social activities among students is excellent, but 26 (30.2%) students reported that it was very poor experience getting along with others. Indeed, students were very dissatisfied in terms of the availability of community service and contribution to local society and volunteering initiations. Forty seven out of 86 (54.7%) students reported that opportunities for community service were very poor, and only 4 (4.7%) students claimed it was excellent.

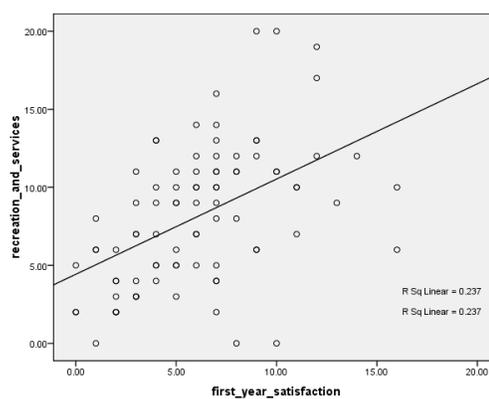
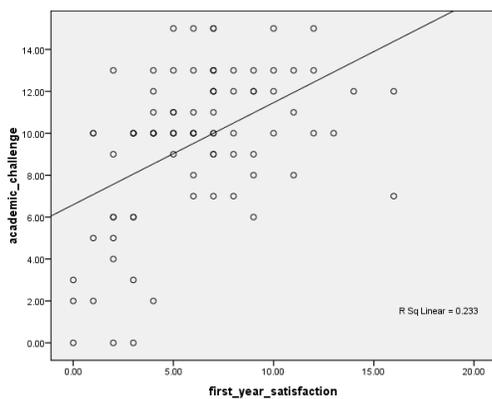
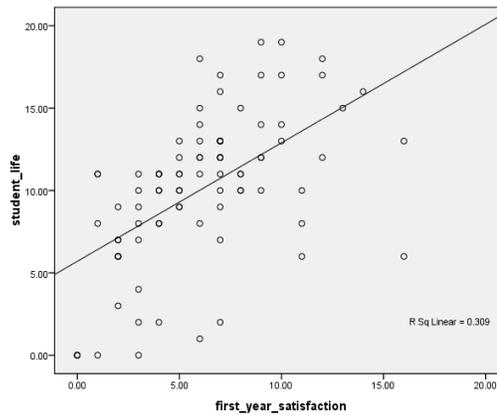
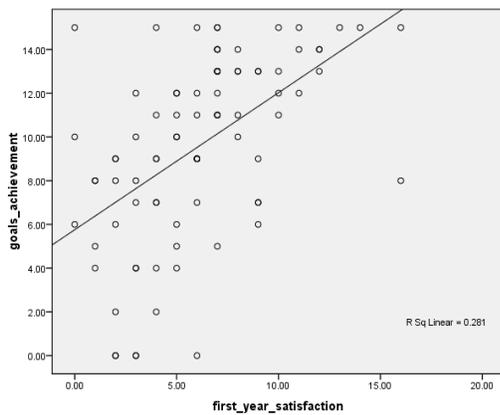
Contrary to the poor performance of university's social life, 52 students (60.5%) stated that the quality of instruction is excellent to good and only 7 (8.1%) students who think this quality is poor. The exception to the good quality of instruction is the high percentage of memorizing practiced in teaching and learning. As indicated in the statistics, 75 students (87.2%) reported that teachers paid quite to very much focus on memorization of facts, ideas, methods and readings in classes. Again, students complained against the quality of academic advising and the availability of teachers to provide enough guidance to students. In numbers, only 5 students (5.8%) reported it was excellent, but 66 (76.7%) students found it fairly poor.

As a total satisfaction of student life during the first year including academic and non-academic issues, only 11 students out of 86 (12.8%) chose to study at the same university if they were given the choice to start again. Forty five (52.3%) students strongly disagree to start with the same university again. Financially, students were also dissatisfied with the study cost at the university. Only 5 (5.8%) students found the cost reasonable, but 53 (61.6%) students disagreed strongly on the cost and found it expensive.

In terms of approaching administrators and officials including deans and department heads, students were dissatisfied with the service as only 5 (5.8%) students strongly agreed that the university provided appropriate support and only 12 students (14%) stated that deans and administrators are approachable to solve students problems.

Regarding facilities and services provided in the university, students were totally dissatisfied with financial aid services, health center services, recreational facilities, and dining services (cafeteria) as they were recorded “very satisfied” 3 (3.5%), 0 (0%), 3 (3.5%), and 1(1.2%) respectively. The highlighted criticism was much paid mainly to cafeteria as 63 students (73.3%) were very dissatisfied with the dining services in the university.

Finally, a Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between overall first year satisfaction in section 2 and the other four variables namely; goal achievement, student life, academic challenge, and facilities and services. The data showed that there were strong and statistically significant correlations between variables as follows: First year satisfaction and goal achievement ($r = .531, n = 86, p < .000$), first year satisfaction and student life ($r = .556, n = 86, p < .000$), first year satisfaction and academic challenge ($r = .482, n = 86, p < .000$), and first year satisfaction and facilities and services ($r = .487, n = 86, p < .000$). The following scatter plots demonstrate the aforementioned correlations. The following graphs illustrate the correlations.



6.2 answer to question 2: Do students record high percentage of retention when they are satisfied with the academic, quasi-academic, and social performance of the university?

A multiple regression analysis is carried to answer question 2 and to predict the value relationship between first year satisfaction (dependent variable) and all other independent variables in the study. The first table in the analysis of multiple regression is the model summary which shows the quality of prediction of

the dependent variable which is first year satisfaction in our case. In this study, a value of 0.655 indicates a good level of prediction for the DV. The third column represents the coefficient determination which indicates how much independent variables can explain the dependent variable. R^2 in our example is 0.429 which means technically that independent variables in this analysis explain 42.9% of the variability of the dependent variable (first year satisfaction).

Table 4: The Model Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.655 ^a	.429	.401	2.757

The second table shows ANOVA test. The F -ratio in the ANOVA table tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(4, 81) = 15.212$, $p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data).

Table 5: ANOVA Statistical Significance for Multiple Regression Analysis

ANOVA^s

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	462.568	4	115.642	15.212	.000 ^a
1 Residual	615.758	81	7.602		
Total	1078.326	85			

The third table shows the statistical significance between variables.

Table 6: Statistical Significance of the Independent Variables for Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.317	.927		-.342	.733
Goals Achievement	.254	.058	.300	2.970	.004
1 Student Life	.225	.091	.291	2.473	.016
Academic Challenge	.097	.111	.097	.872	.386
Recreation and Services	.100	.089	.125	1.128	.262

The table above shows that independent variables are not all statistically significant. It can be seen that *goals achievement* and *student life* are statistically significant on the first year satisfaction ($p < .05$). To achieve a high level of conformity, the researcher conducts a correlation analysis between the dependent variable and the other statistical insignificant variables namely; academic challenge and recreation and services.

Table 7: *Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Dependent Variable*

		First Satisfaction	Year Recreation Services	and Academic Challenge
First	Year	Pearson Correlation 1	.487**	.482**
Satisfaction		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	86	86

A Pearson correlation was run and the data shows that there were strong and positive correlations between first year satisfaction, recreation and services, and academic challenge which were statistically significant ($r = .487$, $n = 86$, $p < .0005$) for recreation and services, ($r = .482$, $n = 86$, $p < .0005$) for academic challenge.

After all, it is indicated that first year satisfaction has a significant correlation with goals achievement, student life, academic challenge, and recreation and services. These variables statistically significantly predicted first year satisfaction $F(4, 81) = 15.212$, $p < .0005$, $R^2 = .429$. All four variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$.

7. Discussion of Results

The discussion of findings is divided according to study categories and all students notes are also groups under their related categories.

7.1 goals achievement.

Students wished that teachers encourage them to discover their potentials and determine their future careers. This comes through engaging them in social and leadership activities. According to them, teaching staff did not help them discover their potentials and personalities. They seldom help them solving their problems. In fact, students need people to listen to them. Moreover, the School itself does not set up workshops for them to develop their interpersonal skills and intellectual development. Roberts & Styron (2010) emphasized the importance of students being socially integrated and connected with other students and with the teachers. They stated that School time is an opportunity for students not only for academic purposes, but also to enhance their well-beings as social humans. Bean (2005) states, "*Few would deny that the social lives of students in college and their exchanges with others inside and outside the institution are important in retention decisions*" (p.227). In addition, Bean himself emphasized that like all other challenges in life, students are more likely to accomplish difficult tasks when they work in groups and in the company of others who share the same challenge. Kuh & Love (2000) stated that the process of social integration of students is complete cycle that includes students' social and psychological comfort with the School and its environment, students' communities, and the feeling of being belonged to the place. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of goals achievement items in the survey.

Table 8: *Descriptive Statistics of Goal Achievements Category*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career guidance	86	.00	3.00	1.87	1.07
Personal Growth	86	.00	3.00	1.73	1.14
Cognitive development	86	.00	3.00	2.22	1.03
Critical thinking	86	.00	3.00	1.91	1.03
Personal interests	86	.00	3.00	1.87	1.02

There is also a good amount of evidence from the US research that the more students are engaged with environment and interact with other students and staff, the more likely students stay in the place (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1997). Crosling et al., (2009) mentioned that social and emotional dimensions of learning influence the decisions of students to stay and feel their belonging to the School which support their motivation and achievement. The above shown table demonstrates the fact that students are not satisfied with the social interaction and personal growth in the School (M= 1.73). They wish the campus provide them with activities that support their social development and help them get along with others to improve their leadership skills.

7.2 academic effort and extracurricular experience.

This section includes the descriptive statistics for academic issues including teaching and advising along with non-academic issues like engagement in activities and orientation to freshmen.

Table 9: *Descriptive Statistics of Academic and Extracurricular Experience*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Talking to teacher inside	86	.00	3.00	2.02	0.89
Talking to teacher outside	86	.00	3.00	1.60	0.94
Talking to teacher during office hours	86	.00	3.00	1.51	0.98
Internet for education	86	.00	3.00	1.37	1.13
Total academic experience	86	.00	3.00	1.22	0.85
Freshman orientation	86	.00	3.00	0.44	0.75
Social engagement	86	.00	3.00	1.15	0.98
Community service	86	.00	3.00	0.65	0.85
Quality of instruction	86	.00	3.00	1.78	0.93
Quality of advising	86	.00	3.00	0.90	0.89

As the table shows, welcoming freshman students is the least satisfactory among students' answers to all variables. Orientation and welcoming new students is very essential and important for them to be psychologically prepared for the academic life, because through orientation students would get answers to all their questions especially their advisors names and the facilities and services available in the campus. Crosling et al., (2009) confirmed the importance of orientation and induction on loading students with the related information pertaining to their School status and the system of study practiced in the place. The effect of welcoming new students is multi advantageous. Students are assimilated and socialized with the

college staff and with current students by providing a range of activities which ensure the achievement of their belonging to the place they are coming to study (Quinn et al., 2005). Providing students with effective orientation can benefit students in preparing them for their courses, demonstrating what is expected from them, and helping them get assimilated in the School.

Another least satisfactory result is the quality of advising and guidance. Students have demonstrated the importance of advising in their retention and achievement and complained that advising needs to be more activated in the department. Baker & Griffin (2010) stated that an academic advisor is the person responsible for helping students navigate academic rules and regulations and share their knowledge of major and degree requirements to help students schedule their courses, and generally facilitate progress to degree in a timely manner. Academic advising contextualizes students' educational new experience within the framework of their targets and abilities (Drake, 2011). Moreover, advising helps students evaluate teaching processes, make choices and tolerate its consequences, and set priorities. It also helps them build a relationship with somebody who cares about them and listens to their worries and solve them.

Drake (2011) defined the job scope of advisors in his article *The Role of Academic Advising in Student Retention and Persistence*, 2011 as "to helping students identify their self interests, talents, and priorities; connect their present study with their future goals and careers; and discover their potentials and passion to major". For the aforementioned reasons, advising plays a vital role in accepting students and engaging them with the new environment to help them persist and retain. If orientation is not achieved and activities are not set up, students will not feel their belonging to School because they are not included in activities or national celebrations, and so they will feel that they are strangers.

Another weak result is the curriculum design of some courses that do not contribute to students' academic and social development. Crosling et al., (2009) stated that curriculum should engage students academically and socially in their university experience. Curriculum is viewed as a way to engage students at all forms to build institutional commitment and belonging (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003). Also, curriculum ought to be culturally relevant to participating cultures that prepares students to live in a diverse society of students (Crosling, Edwards, & Schroder, 2008). One bad example is instructional technology course which should be practical and include actual practices of classroom teaching rather than stiffing the course with a huge amount of theoretical material that is -in most of it -is not related to 21st century students.

7.3 student life and facilities and services.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics of Student Life and Facilities and Services

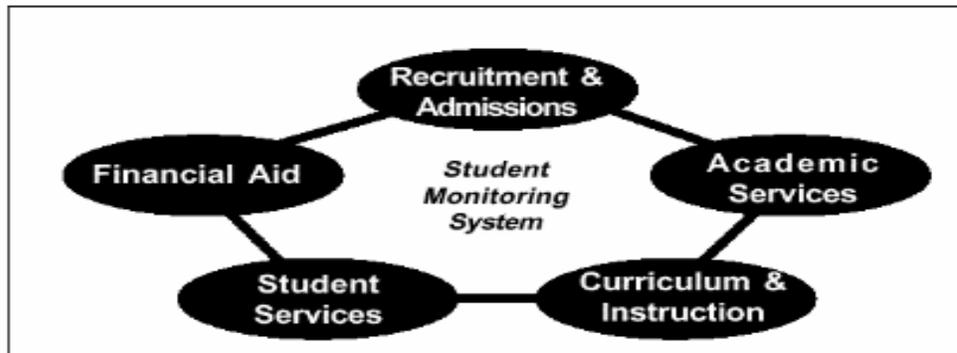
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School again	86	.00	3.00	1.34	1.01
School activities	86	.00	3.00	1.17	0.79
School cost	86	.00	3.00	1.13	0.93
School cultural differences	86	.00	3.00	1.93	0.94
School support	86	.00	3.00	1.29	0.85
School officials	86	.00	3.00	1.51	0.94
School good conduct	86	.00	3.00	1.74	0.95

In this section, students stated that administration support by the school is a vital reason to retain them in the place. They think that the deanship of student affairs is their lawyer in the school and that the

deanship should be more in touch with their needs and queries. Moreover, they ask to have a good conduct by officials at the school including registration and finance department specifically.

Swail (2004) in his handbook “The Art of Student Retention” stated that retention is affected by the ability of the institution to provide appropriate support to students during their course time, both socially and academically. He then suggested a conceptual framework for student retention that includes the availability of several components which administrators can consider to raise retention rates.

Five Components of the Student Retention Framework (Swail, 1995)



The five components in this framework were based on extensive research. Smith, Lippitt, & Sprandel (1985) confirmed that the ability of institutions to work the components together and direct them to the needs of students is a major criterion to achieve success in retention rates. The notable components that are mentioned in this survey by students is the financial aid and student services. They wish the school provides opportunities for grants, scholarships, loans, financial counseling and assistantships. Moreover, students as well as parents would like to be informed about courses prices and the procedures on how to apply for financial aid opportunities.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics of Facilities and Services

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Library	86	.00	3.00	1.57	0.79
Labs	86	.00	3.00	1.40	0.86
Classrooms	86	.00	3.00	1.43	0.86
Academic Guidance	86	.00	3.00	1.13	0.89
Financial Support	86	.00	3.00	0.86	0.84
Health Services	86	.00	2.00	0.83	0.77
Recreational Facilities	86	.00	3.00	0.58	0.74
Cafeteria	86	.00	3.00	0.38	0.71

As indicated above, the astonishing result is the cafeteria dining services. Actually, the mean of (0.38) is very low and it’s the most influential reason that compels students leave the campus. They complained that cafeteria prices and services are very expensive and poor. Tinto (1993) suggested that the role of student services is an important factor for students’ persistence and retention. He continues to say that the atmosphere and climate of the campus and how administrators support students are important factors to generate confidence and engagement for students in the school. Neisler (1992) concluded that the failure

to adjust students to campus life and the feeling of isolation are barriers to retention. He also stated that campuses should develop their atmosphere to be pluralistic, responsive and supportive. Therefore, one of students demands is to have a map for the university that tells where the places are and how to get to them.

Among the factors that affect students' satisfaction and retention in the campus include, but not limited to: Wi-Fi service all around the campus, professional health center with wide range of services, attractive and adjacent classrooms, available and open computer labs, rest areas especially for females, considerate security guys, recreational centers, copying and printing machines, sunshades and umbrellas on driveways between classes, and enough library databases and resources, printed and electronic.

8. Conclusion

The retention of students in higher education is an integrated process that enfolds many inter-related factors. It is an ongoing process and requires extensive care of students' needs on many levels especially academic and social. Researchers like Astin and Tinto pointed to the importance of specifically social integration in keeping retention rates high and steady. Astin (1984) stated that social involvement is a must condition and a requirement for student retention. He continues to say that the more institutions socialize and integrate students into their campus life, the more retention rates they achieve. In addition, social engagement involves many aspects and all of them should be taken seriously although they might seem to others as non-effective. These include, but not limited to: relationships with faculty and staff, peer relations, utilizing campus facilities, extra-curricular activities, orientation programs, and social events.

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