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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS) IN A STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

While the university has dedicated considerable resources to student support services development, no comprehensive study offers knowledge about its availability, delivery, and effectiveness as perceived by the students. This study aims to provide information on student support services' effectiveness as perceived by the 300 randomly selected students. Satisfaction level of students toward library services, internet and computer laboratory services, examination and test administration, and curriculum and content delivery were determined. Results revealed that most students are satisfied with library services, examination and test administration, and curriculum and content delivery of the university. However, they were demotivated about the internet and computer laboratory services. Its implication to policymakers and administrations is to provide more volition to enabling support services to benefit students' welfare. The researchers recommend that the administration conduct an annual support services assessment to ensure that the current services effectively address the students' needs and concerns. Moreover, the researchers recommend conducting a rigorous study on student support services to establish the results' integrity and reliability. Using mixed-method research design and the inclusion of other support services areas will shed more light on its effectiveness.

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Introduction:-

Student Support Services (SSS) plays a critical role in the success of any educational institution. It assists in the learning process by connecting the institution to the students through different provisions. Farajollahi and Moenikia (2010) defined student support services as a network of programs and activities to facilitate and improve the learning process, such as advice on study, career choice, accommodation, and part-time employment, personal development, medical issues, scholarships, and other financial problems among others. All of which aim to meet the needs of students. Simpson (2000) described student support services as all activities that help students advance in their studies, apart from developing and providing course content. At the same time, Rashid (1998) described the term "student support services" as the way and means to help distance learners. For NASPA (2012), the student services' concept describes the divisions or groups providing services and support for students in higher education. It helps to ensure the growth and development of the students during their academic experience. Likewise, SSS plays a vital role in preparing students for active social participation by providing learning opportunities and community engagement integrated into the curricula (UNESCO, 2002). In short, student support services assist students in different aspects while they are in school.

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The SSS in higher education performs the same role. Research studies claim that higher education quality is strongly related to the SSS offered by the university (Kaur, 2016). According to him, the effective use of SSS has a positive relationship with academic performance. It can improve the students' learning experiences and contribute to their growth and academic success (Ciubanu, 2013). He further explained that, under ineffective student services, students lacking theoretical, emotional, and social connection with the institution tend to discontinue their studies. Tinto (1993) said that SSS reduces the drop-out rate at universities and increases student experience diversity. Therefore, effective SSS is considered a significant factor for the success of both students and the institution.

However, studies revealed that SSS is commonly a neglected area in higher education (Bridges, 2008). Some challenges are also not addressed adequately regarding student support services despite a wide variety of university activities and programs. This current paper addressed these gaps by determining the effectiveness and delivery of SSS in a state university in the Philippines. While it is common for a state university to offer several support services, no formal studies assess these. Thus, this paper is significant because it provides baseline data about the university's student support services' implementation and effectiveness. Moreover, it can serve as the basis for policymaking and promote enabling SSS in higher educational institutions. This study aimed to explore the students' perceived level of satisfaction with Student Support Services (SSS) in teaching and learning areas such as library services, internet and computer laboratory services, examination and test administration, and curriculum and content delivery.

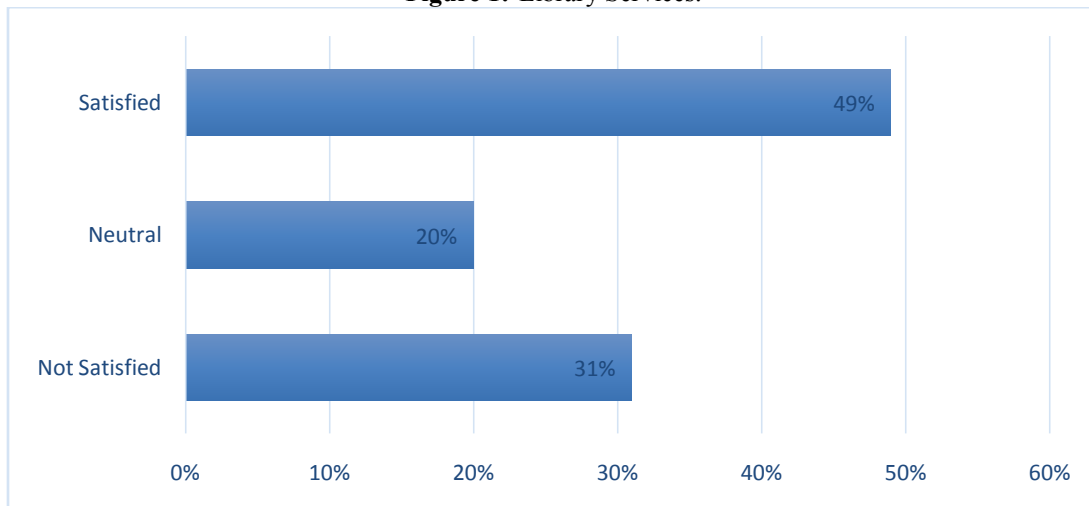
Methods:-

This quantitative study determined the level of satisfaction of the students towards the implementation and effectiveness of the support services of the university. The areas assessed were library services, internet and computer laboratory services, examination and test administration, and curriculum and content delivery. Other areas were excluded from this study. Three hundred students were selected through stratified random sampling. A survey was used to get the perceptions of the students toward the said support services. The data collection was conducted from January to February 2020. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion:-

Enabling support services that assist students is essential. These services help realize the mission and goals of the university and at the same reinforce a conducive academic learning environment for the students. Three hundred students participated in the study. The figures below show students' level of satisfaction in library services, internet, computer services, examination and test administration, and curriculum and content delivery.

Figure 1:-Library Services.



Most of the students (49%) indicated that they are satisfied with the library services they are getting from the university. Their satisfaction can be attributed to the fact that the library building is newly built, spacious, and has more available functional facilities as compared before. However, 31% of them are not satisfied. The lack of some updated books and poor internet connection in the library may have contributed to the dissatisfaction of the students.

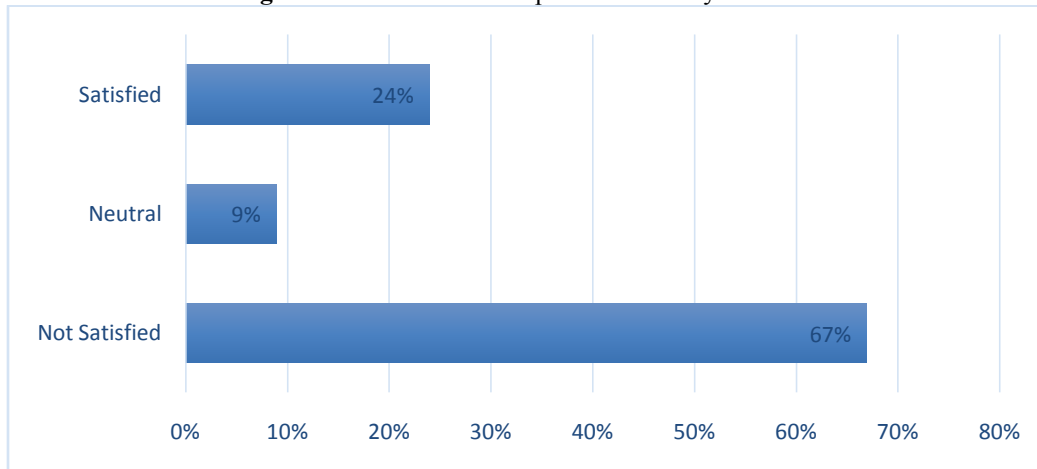
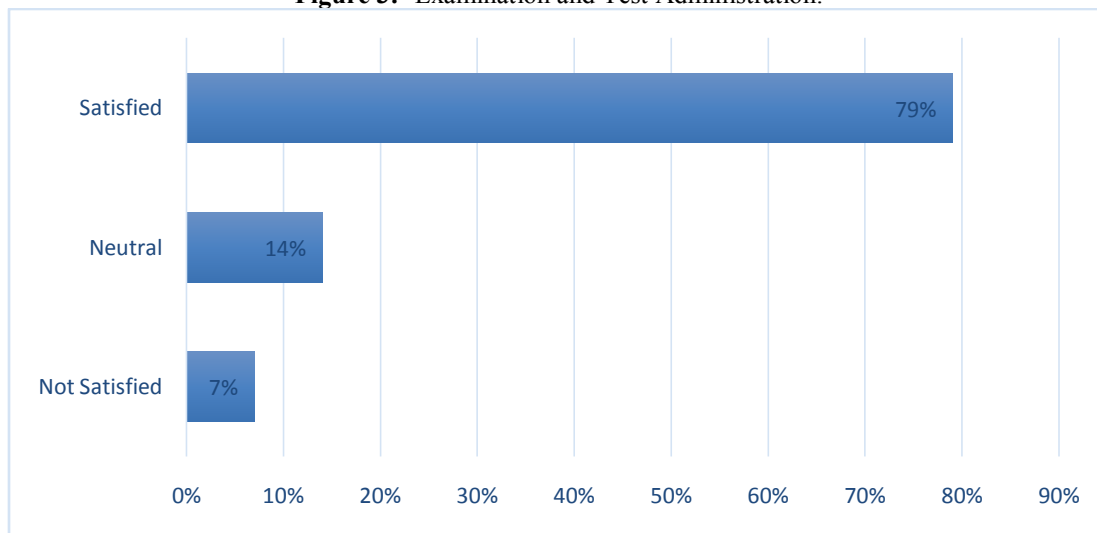
Figure 2:-Internet and Computer Laboratory Services.

Figure 2 shows information about the satisfaction level of students towards internet and computer laboratory services. The majority of the students (67%) are dissatisfied with their current internet and computer laboratory services. At present, the computer laboratory or hub can only cater to a small number of students. Also, the internet connection is poor or intermittent sometimes.

Figure 3:- Examination and Test Administration.

A significant number of students (79%) are satisfied with the examination and test administration. This is because the schedule of examination is already determined and posted in the school year calendar prior to the start of classes. Students know the schedules of examinations and can prepare ahead of time. The teachers also use applications like zip grade (if applicable) and can release the results immediately. There is also a provision for the submission and issuance of grades after the examination. Examination and test administration, in general, are carried out effectively.

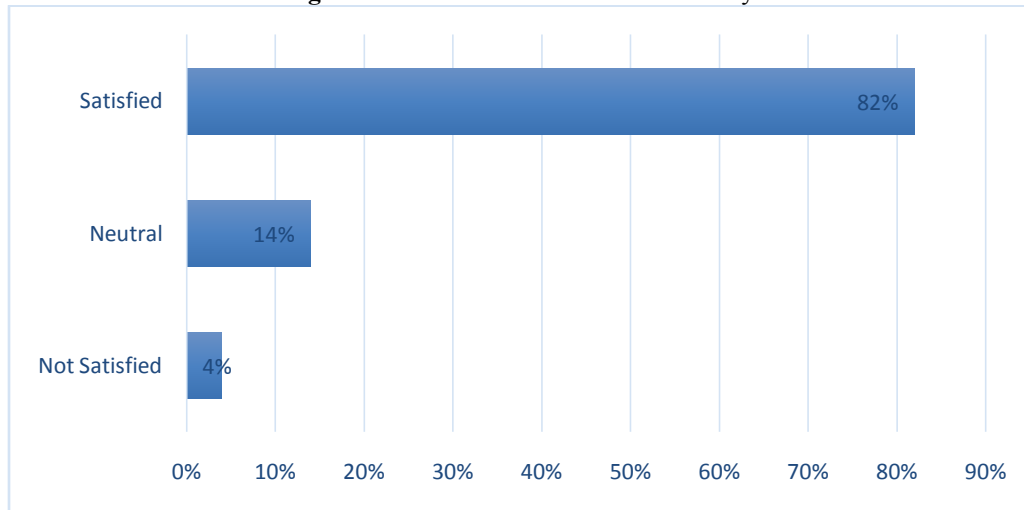
Figure 4:-Curriculum and Content Delivery.

Figure 4 reveals the satisfaction of students in terms of curriculum and content delivery. Most students (82%) are satisfied with how they are taught and received learning from their teachers. The curriculum used in the university is mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The university meets the minimum requirement of course offerings. The curriculum also undergoes revision and redesigning every two years, making it updated and relevant at present. The teachers also employ different teaching pedagogies and integrate innovation and technology in their teaching to address students' needs. Students are afforded well-rounded activities that promote maximum learning. These are the reasons that explain why students are satisfied with the curriculum and content delivery.

These factors are contributory to the success of the students. These are paralleled to the claims of Ciobanu (2013) and Cooper (2010) that student support services are a key player in successful outcomes for students. Nevertheless, the university must continue to improve the support services they afford to students. The study of Bridges (2008) posited that student support services are commonly neglected areas in higher education.

Conclusion and Recommendation:-

The role of student support services in higher education is indispensable. It significantly contributes to the conducive learning environment that supports academic success for every student. Students are satisfied with the library services, examination and test administration, curriculum, and content delivery services. However, they are demotivated by the quality of internet and computer laboratory services of the university. The university has some more services that need improvements. Its implication to policymakers and administrations is to provide more volition to enabling support services to benefit students' welfare.

Student welfare is one of the less heeded or noticed areas that need in-depth and up-to-date analysis in the university. Hence, a student support services evaluation should be implemented annually to ensure that the current services address the students' needs under the changing circumstances they are exposed to. To improve future research related to this, the researchers recommend conducting a rigorous study about student support services' effectiveness. The inclusion of other areas will help evaluate the support services. Moreover, a mixed-method research design will provide better insights into its effectiveness.

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