



Student services in higher education: impact on academic success amid and after the pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The influence of student support services on academic success cannot be overstated, as they play a pivotal role in shaping student performance and overall well-being. In response, educational institutions have established dedicated student affairs offices to cater to the diverse needs of students, ensuring their welfare and holistic development. In particular, during the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, these support services have emerged as even more vital, prompting adaptation and innovation within student affairs offices to uphold student well-being and academic progress.

This study delved into the experiences of students from the College of Education at Rizal Technological University, specializing in various fields, such as a bachelor's degree in secondary education and a bachelor's degree in technical vocational teacher education. These students, who hailed from campuses in Mandaluyong City and Pasig City were selected based on their exposure to student support services before, during, and after the pandemic. Having completed the requisite coursework, they provided valuable insights into their competencies and experiences with support services.

Utilizing a descriptive quantitative approach, this study explored students' perspectives on support services before the pandemic, shedding light on the challenges encountered and issues faced during their utilization. Furthermore, it assessed students' satisfaction levels regarding the efficacy of support services in addressing their welfare and development needs. Finally, the study examined post-pandemic changes and enhancements in student support services, offering valuable insights for ongoing improvement and adaptation in the face of evolving circumstances.

RESUMO

A influência dos serviços de apoio ao estudante no êxito acadêmico não pode ser exagerada, pois eles desempenham um papel fundamental na formação do desempenho e do bem-estar geral dos alunos. Em resposta, as instituições de ensino criaram escritórios dedicados aos assuntos estudantis para atender às diversas necessidades dos alunos, assegurando o seu bem-estar e desenvolvimento holístico. Em particular, durante os desafios sem precedentes colocados pela pandemia, esses serviços de apoio tornaram-se ainda mais vitais, estimulando a adaptação e a inovação dentro dos escritórios de assuntos estudantis para sustentar o bem-estar dos alunos e o progresso acadêmico.

Este estudo analisou as experiências de estudantes do Colégio de Educação da Universidade Tecnológica de Rizal, especializados em diversas áreas, como o grau de bacharelado em ensino secundário e o grau em formação técnica profissional de professores. Estes estudantes, que vieram de campi em Mandaluyong City e Pasig City foram selecionados com base em sua exposição a serviços de apoio ao estudante antes, durante e após a pandemia. Tendo concluído os cursos necessários, eles forneceram informações valiosas sobre suas competências e experiências com serviços de apoio.

Utilizando uma abordagem descritiva quantitativa, este estudo explorou as perspectivas dos alunos sobre os serviços de apoio antes da pandemia, esclarecendo os desafios enfrentados e as questões enfrentadas durante a sua utilização. Além disso, avaliou os níveis de satisfação dos alunos relativamente à eficácia dos serviços de apoio na resposta às suas necessidades de bem-estar e desenvolvimento. Finalmente, o estudo examinou as mudanças e melhorias pós-pandêmicas nos serviços de apoio ao estudante, oferecendo insights valiosos para a melhoria contínua e adaptação face às circunstâncias em evolução.

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Introduction

Student development support services are crucial at all levels of education for promoting academic success and personal growth. These services provide personalized mentoring and resources designed to address the needs of students and support their academic lives. Additionally, they play a significant role in ensuring students' well-being by offering a range of support, advice, and resources. Studies have shown that student support services directly impact academic performance, which encompasses the multifaceted needs of a student's life, including emotional and physical well-being, and economic capabilities. These services aim to empower students to reach their full potential and recognize their inherent humanity rather than just being recipients of intellectual instruction. Schools offer various support services to students such as student development and welfare programs. Student development is a comprehensive process that addresses the intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and ethical aspects of a student's life, aiming to empower them with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed academically. It often involves fostering self-awareness, critical thinking, and life skills through activities and initiatives. Student development programs and welfare services are the two distinct aspects of student support. The development programs included workshops, seminars, mentoring, leadership training, and experiential learning. Welfare services prioritize students' overall well-being and quality of life by providing a supportive environment that addresses their physical, mental, and emotional needs. These services may include healthcare, counseling, financial aid, disability support, and access to resources that promote health and well-being.

The pandemic caused by the spread of COVID-19 has placed student support services in a state of uncertainty as establishments, workplaces, and schools have closed. Many households struggle to meet their daily needs because of a lack of income resulting from job loss, which causes mental health issues among family members. Additionally, schools have shifted to online learning, which is challenging for students who do not have internet connectivity or technical knowledge to navigate the online learning environment. This has a significant impact on students' mental health, as highlighted by Navarez (2022) and Da Silva et al. (2020).

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, educational institutions have implemented online classes, and student support services are expected to assist students during this difficult time. This aligns with the Commission on Higher Education's emphasis through CMO No. 9, a series of 2013 policies and guidelines on student affairs services.

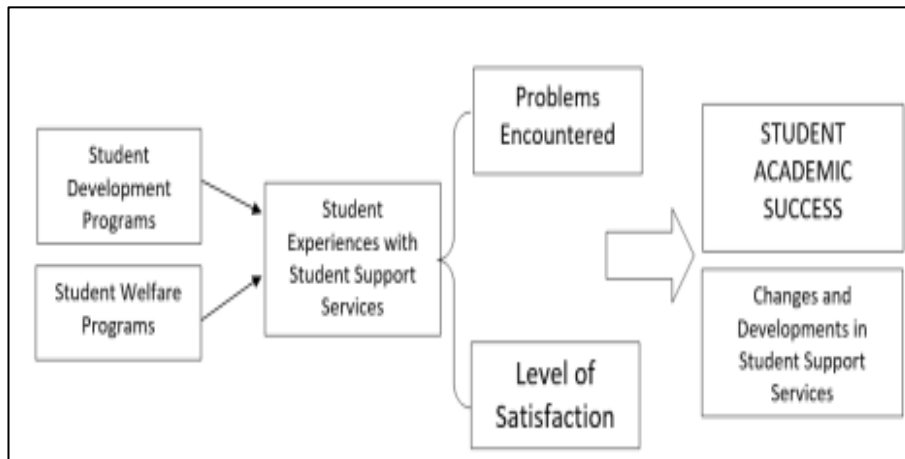
The purpose of this study is to investigate the level of satisfaction of higher education students with the student support services provided to them during the pandemic and their impact on their academic success. The study aims to identify and discuss support services

that need improvement and change by analyzing the level of satisfaction and identifying relevant differences associated with the identified variables.

The researchers hope to contribute to the continuous improvement of these services and programs to meet the changing needs of students and to support their overall success in this changing society.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.
Research Paradigm



The conceptual framework outlined below centers on the university's student support services both during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period. Researchers have established a correlation between assessment of student support services and academic success. Validating the connection between these two variables will contribute to strengthening programs to improve the overall quality of student affairs services. This study collected data on respondents' experiences and interactions with student support services, focusing on aspects such as student development, student welfare, academic performance, and the anticipated changes and developments expected from these services after the pandemic.

Methodology

This study used a comprehensive six-part questionnaire to gather information on student support services. The questionnaire comprised demographic information in the first section and a self-assessment questionnaire in the second section to evaluate students' competencies in a teacher education program based on the common program outcomes specified in the teacher education curriculum. The third section aimed to collect feedback from students regarding their views on the student support services provided by Rizal Technological University before the pandemic, while the fourth section aimed to identify any difficulties students faced with the RTU's student support services. The fifth section aimed to

determine students' satisfaction with support services regarding their welfare and development.

The questionnaire was designed to assess the effectiveness of RTU's student support services and identify any necessary improvements after the pandemic. A validation process was conducted with the help of several experts to ensure that the questionnaire was valid and comprehensible to all the students. The questionnaire was also test-piloted with 100 students who had graduated during the 2022 school year. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a result above the recommended threshold of .700. These results indicated that the questionnaire was reliable and could be used in this study.

Participants

This study used a total of 1145 third- and fourth-year students from the College of Education of the Rizal Technological University, specializing in Bachelor of Secondary Education with majors in English, Filipino, Mathematics, Sciences, Social Studies, Bachelor of Technical Vocational Teacher Education with majors in Animation, Computer Systems Servicing, and Visual Graphic Design from the Mandaluyong and Pasig Campuses. These students were selected based on specific characteristics: having experienced student support services before, during, and after the pandemic; completing their respective program's minor and major courses; and being able to self-assess their competencies. A purposive sampling scheme, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, was used (Campbell et al. 2020).

Table 1.
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

No	Demographic Characteristics	Mandaluyong		Pasig	
		Total	%	Total	%
Gender					
1.	Male	209	32.01	168	34.15
	Female	444	67.99	324	65.85
Specialization					
2.	Animation	59	9.04		
	Computer Systems Servicing	62	9.49	77	15.65
	English	89	13.63	103	20.93
	Filipino	117	17.92	124	25.20
	Mathematics	97	14.85	72	14.63
	Sciences	87	13.32		
	Social Studies	102	15.62	116	23.58
	Visual Graphics Design	40	6.13		

Year Level					
3.	Third Year	215	42.36	158	43.26
	Fourth Year	438	57.64	334	56.74

The demographic profile of the respondents revealed that most participants were female (67.07%). For both campuses, most students who completed their programs were under the specialization Filipino: 17.92% for the Mandaluyong Campus and 25.29% for the Pasig Campus. Both campuses had more fourth-year students, accounting for 57.03% of the distribution.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed and interpreted by tallying and recording responses to the questionnaire and using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Since normality assumptions could not be provided in line with the obtained data non-parametric tests were used the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences between two independent groups (sex, year level, and campus), and the Kruskal-Wallis test (specialization) was used to compare differences among four or more groups. To specifically identify the variable that establishes a significant difference, A Dunn-Bonferroni test was used to compare the groups in pairs. Spearman's correlation coefficient was also used to assess the relationship between student satisfaction and self-assessed competencies.

Findings

Table 2.

Self-assessment of the student's competencies as a teacher education student

Statement	WM	Interpretation
I can apply knowledge to solve problems or real-life situations.	3.01	Competent
I can understand the key concepts and principles of the lesson.	2.93	Competent
I am familiar with foundational theories and frameworks of education	2.94	Competent
I can analyze and evaluate information from various sources.	2.92	Competent
I can identify assumptions and biases in arguments.	2.73	Competent
I can construct well-reasoned and logical arguments.	2.83	Competent
I can locate relevant and credible sources.	2.81	Competent
I am proficient in using the library and online resources for research.	2.83	Competent
I can synthesize information from different sources to create coherent arguments.	2.87	Competent
I can express ideas clearly and effectively in written form.	2.81	Competent
I can create presentations with confidence and clarity.	2.86	Competent
I can actively listen and engage in meaningful discussions.	2.89	Competent
I can demonstrate mastery of the subject matter.	2.86	Competent
I can apply creative solutions to complex problems.	2.84	Competent
I can explain education rootedness in a philosophical, sociological, and political context.	2.98	Competent
I can set realistic goals and manage my time effectively.	2.90	Competent

I can prioritize tasks and meet deadlines.	2.86	Competent
I can demonstrate a variety of thinking skills in planning, monitoring, assessing, and reporting learning outcomes.	2.86	Competent
I can work effectively in teams or group projects.	2.82	Competent
I can resolve conflicts and foster a collaborative environment.	2.92	Competent
I can take the initiative to explore topics beyond the classroom.	2.82	Competent
I can seek out opportunities for continuous learning and growth.	2.82	Competent
I can adapt to new challenges and learn independently.	2.87	Competent
I can apply skills in the development and utilization of ICT.	2.87	Competent
I can engage in ethical behavior in academic and personal contexts.	2.86	Competent
I can embrace change and adjust to new learning environments.	2.91	Competent
I am open to trying new approaches and methods.	2.88	Competent
I can facilitate learning using various teaching methodologies and delivery modes appropriate to specific learners.	2.71	Competent
Overall Mean	2.86	Competent

Data from students' self-assessments of their competency as teacher education students were analyzed by calculating the means. The grand mean was 2.86, indicating that the students generally assessed themselves as competent. Among the items, applying knowledge to solve problems or real-life situations scored the highest, with a mean score of 3.01. This was followed by explaining education based on philosophical, sociological, and political contexts with a mean of 2.98, and understanding the key concepts and principles of the lesson with a mean of 2.93. The lowest score was for facilitating learning using various teaching methods and modes, with a mean score of 2.71.

Table 3.
The Students' Level of Satisfaction with the Student Support Services Offered by the University Before the Pandemic

No	Statement	WM	Interpretation
Student Welfare			
	The student support office shows sincere interest in solving it.	3.14	Agree
	The new student orientation seminar guides first-year students	3.21	Agree
	Conduct awareness programs on health issues.	3.23	Agree
	Ensure the safety of students inside and outside the school premises.	3.15	Agree
	Provides activities that safeguard students' mental health.	3.14	Agree
1	When students face challenges in their personal lives, emotions, or studies, a guidance counselor is available to help.	3.20	Agree
	Ensure a secure and inclusive learning environment.	3.24	Agree
	Create a respectful environment where everyone treats each other with respect.	3.19	Agree
	Provide opportunities for students to share their stories, feelings, and opinions while respecting their privacy.	3.13	Agree
	Promote the interests and coordinate all activities related to the welfare of students.	3.16	Agree
	Regularly evaluate student experiences after an activity or program	3.19	Agree

	Adheres to school policy to instill and maintain the school's values	3.18	Agree
	Supports the student's participation in institutional governance	3.20	Agree
	Provides activities that encourages students to work in group or individually.	3.17	Agree
	Supports and contributes to the creation of ethnic and cultural diversity	3.21	Agree
	Help students explore and clarify their values	3.19	Agree
	Promotes and enforces the policies and regulations of the institution about student activities as stated in the Student Handbook.	3.16	Agree
	Secure the students with insurance for the entire school year.	3.18	Agree
	Ensure that the atmosphere remains cordial and welcoming.	3.16	Agree
	Provides opportunities for recreation and leisure	3.21	Agree
	Offers basic services like admission, scholarship assistance, records-keeping, guidance and counseling services, medical and dental services, and cultural and sports services.	3.16	Agree
	Provide experiential learning on how to resolve personal and group disagreement.	3.18	Agree
	Establishes programs that encourage a healthy lifestyle and reduce misbehavior	3.22	Agree
	<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>3.18</i>	<i>Agree</i>
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	Student Development		
	Ensure that students can maintain open communication between teachers and students.	3.22	Agree
	Give students the chance to enhance their knowledge and abilities through coaching and feedback.	3.25	Agree
	Let students discover their learning styles and interests.	3.24	Agree
	Allows students to take part in leadership and make responsible decisions.	3.26	Strongly Agree
	Give students the space to change their learning environment constructively and positively.	3.23	Agree
	Support the holistic development of students through active participation and involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.	3.23	Agree
	Provides leadership training and team-building activities for student council officers and officers of accredited student organizations.	3.23	Agree
2	Offer students various learning opportunities to enhance their intellectual growth, cultural and self-awareness, leadership, teamwork, and critical and creative thinking skills.	3.26	Strongly Agree
	Takes a leadership role in crises	3.20	Agree
	Create learning opportunities that allow students to engage in discourses actively	3.22	Agree
	Assists students in their scholarship application and other source of financial and educational assistance.	3.17	Agree
	Provides special programs and services for students who have learning difficulties	3.18	Agree
	Creates opportunities for leadership development	3.23	Agree
	Provides counseling and career guidance.	3.21	Agree
	Conduct college-wide and university-wide activities to interact with other students.	3.25	Agree

Providing technical assistance for online learning platforms, digital tools, and resources that support remote and hybrid learning environments.	3.22	Agree
Contribute to developing research-based activities and programs that enhance the overall college experience for students.	3.25	Agree
<i>Overall Mean</i>	3.23	Agree

Based on a survey conducted before the pandemic, the students generally agreed with the services provided by the student support services office in terms of welfare (GM=3.18). The highest-rated item was "Ensuring a secure and inclusive learning environment" (M=3.24), followed by "Conducting awareness programs on health issues" (M=3.23) and "Establishing programs that encourage a healthy lifestyle and reduce misbehavior" (M=3.22). The lowest-rated item was 'Providing opportunities for students to share their stories, feelings, and opinions while respecting their privacy,' with a mean score of 3.13. In terms of student welfare, students generally agreed with the services provided by student support services (GM = 3.23). Furthermore, two items were rated the highest, the item "Allows students to take part in leadership and make responsible decisions" and the item "Offer students various learning opportunities to enhance their intellectual growth, cultural and self-awareness, leadership, teamwork, and critical and creative thinking skills" were both interpreted strongly agree (WM =3.26). The least rated item by the students was the item "Assists in identifying financial aid resources for further education" (WM=3.17).

Table 4.
Problems Encountered by the Students with the Student Support Services During the Pandemic

No	Statement	WM	Interpretation
Student Welfare			
	It is challenging to connect with guidance counselors.	2.51	Agree
	Access to mental health services is limited	2.54	Agree
	Poor academic advising during enrolment.	2.41	Disagree
	Having trouble requesting academic records	2.55	Agree
	Slow response times to student inquiries and requests for assistance	2.68	Agree
	Inadequate mechanisms for students to voice grievances	2.49	Disagree
	lack of information dissemination for important announcements	2.34	Disagree
1	Unaccommodating staff from student support services offices	2.41	Disagree
	Lack of physical accessibility, such as ramps and elevators for students with disabilities	2.65	Agree
	Poor communication between support services and departments leads to confusion and misalignment in helping students.	2.52	Agree
	Lack of access to the worship and beliefs of various religions.	2.40	Disagree
	Fail to get appropriate help during online classes.	2.65	Agree
	<i>Overall Mean</i>	2.51	Agree

Student Development			
	Inadequate technical support for online learning platforms	2.51	Agree
	Lack of diversity and inclusion programs	2.36	Disagree
	Lack of student workshops, training, and seminars	2.44	Disagree
	Limited access to laboratory equipment and facilities to enhance student skills and competencies.	2.55	Agree
	Limited conducive study spaces that impede students' ability to focus and excel academically.	2.48	Disagree
	Has limited access to library and reference materials.	2.45	Disagree
2	Do not have tutoring services to help students excel in challenging subjects.	2.56	Agree
	Do not have workshops, retreats, and training sessions to develop students' leadership potential	2.51	Agree
	Do not allow organized academic and nonacademic organizations	2.45	Disagree
	Do not have access to books and other reference materials	2.56	Agree
	Have limited access to textbooks, worksheets, and other instructional materials.	2.52	Agree
	Students completing requirements through the learning management system are not provided with technical support.	2.37	Disagree
	Have insufficient access to learning technology.	2.46	Disagree
	<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>2.48</i>	<i>Disagree</i>

The study found that slow responses to student inquiries and requests for assistance (WM=2.65) and limited access to mental health services (WM=2.54) were the most common issues students faced regarding student welfare. However, the students disagreed with the statement that the university lacked information dissemination for important announcements (WM=2.34). The overall weighted mean was 2.48, indicating that students generally disagreed with statements regarding student support services and development. The students also agreed that they faced challenges with insufficient access to library resources and the absence of tutoring services to help them excel in challenging subjects, with a weighted mean of 2.56 for both items.

Table 5.
Students' Level of Satisfaction with the Student Support Services During the Time of the Pandemic

No	Statement	WM	Interpretation
Student Welfare			
	The student support office shows sincere interest in solving it	3.13	Satisfied
	Student Support Services conduct awareness programs, especially under COVID-19 and other health issues.	3.19	Satisfied
1	Ensure the safety of students inside and outside the school premises.	3.20	Satisfied
	Provides activities that safeguard students' mental health.	3.12	Satisfied
	When students face challenges in their personal lives, emotions, or studies, a guidance counselor is available to help.	3.11	Satisfied

	Ensure a secure and inclusive learning environment.	3.15	Satisfied
	Create a respectful environment where everyone treats each other with respect	3.19	Satisfied
	Provide opportunities for students to share their stories, feelings, and opinions while respecting their privacy.	3.15	Satisfied
	Promote the interests and coordinate all activities related to the welfare of students.	3.17	Satisfied
	Evaluate the social experiences of students to improve program efficiency	3.17	Satisfied
	Supports the institution's values by developing and imposing student' standards	3.17	Satisfied
	Supports the student's participation in institutional governance	3.16	Satisfied
	Represents the institutional resource to work with students individually or in groups.	3.17	Satisfied
	Supports and contributes to the creation of ethnic and cultural diversity	3.17	Satisfied
	Help students to explore and clarify their values	3.19	Satisfied
	Promotes and enforces the policies and regulations of the institution about student activities as stated in the Student Handbook.	3.19	Satisfied
	Secure the students with insurance for the entire school year.	3.16	Satisfied
	Encourages the development of friendship relationships and a sense of belonging to a campus.	3.19	Satisfied
	Provides opportunities for recreation and leisure	3.16	Satisfied
	Provides essential services such as admissions, registration, counseling, financial aid, health, housing	3.16	Satisfied
	Provide activities that teach students how to solve personal and group conflicts	3.16	Satisfied
	Establishes programs that encourage a healthy lifestyle and reduce misbehavior	3.18	Satisfied
	<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>3.17</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>
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	Student Development		
	Ensure that students can maintain open communication between teachers and students.	3.16	Satisfied
	Provide students with the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge through feedback and guidance.	3.17	Satisfied
	Let students discover their learning styles and interests.	3.18	Satisfied
	Allows students to take part in leadership and make responsible decisions.	3.20	Satisfied
	Give students the space to change their learning environment constructively and positively.	3.15	Satisfied
	Support the holistic development of students through active participation and involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.	3.19	Satisfied
2	Provides leadership training and team-building activities for student council officers and officers of accredited student organizations.	3.16	Satisfied
	Offer students various learning opportunities to enhance their intellectual growth, cultural and self-awareness, leadership, teamwork, and critical and creative thinking skills.	3.17	Satisfied
	Takes a leadership role in crises	3.13	Satisfied
	Create learning opportunities that allow students to engage in discourses actively	3.14	Satisfied
	Assists in identifying financial aid resources for further education	3.10	Satisfied
	Provides special programs and services for students who have learning difficulties	3.11	Satisfied

Creates opportunities for leadership development	3.15	Satisfied
Provides counseling and career guidance, helping to clarify professional goals and exploring options for further study or employment.	3.14	Satisfied
Encourages student-university / college interaction through programs and activities	3.17	Satisfied
Providing technical assistance for online learning platforms, digital tools, and resources that support remote and hybrid learning environments.	3.13	Satisfied
Contribute to developing research-based activities and programs that enhance the overall college experience for students.	3.14	Satisfied
<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>3.16</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>

The survey results showed that student support services provided during the pandemic were well received, with an overall weighted mean score of 3.17. The highest-rated item was ensuring the safety of students both on- and off-campus, which received a weighted mean score of 3.20. Other highly rated items included fostering friendships and a sense of belonging, promoting personal growth, creating a respectful environment, and conducting COVID-19- and health-related awareness programs. Although the availability of guidance counselors was still considered satisfactory, it received the lowest weighted mean score of 3.11. In terms of student development, services received an overall weighted mean score of 3.16. The most highly rated service was the opportunity for students to take on leadership roles and make responsible decisions with a weighted mean score of 3.20. The services closely followed were those that supported students' holistic development through participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities as well as those that helped students discover their learning styles and interests. The lowest-rated service was assisting students in identifying financial resources for further education, with a weighted mean score of 3.10.

Table 6.
Differences in the Level of Satisfaction with Student Support Services when Grouped According to the Demographics

No	Variable	p-value	Statistics	Decision/Remarks
Student Welfare				
	Sex	0.022507	U - 71816	Significant
	Specialization	5.63195E-05	H - 31.233	Significant
1	Year Level	0.8215	U - 15220	Not Significant
	Campus	0.00002782	U - 134914.5	Significant
Student Development				
	Sex	0.3519	U - 94982	Not Significant
2	Specialization	0.005	H - 20.3705	Significant

Year Level	0.4669	U - 14777	Not Significant
Campus	0.0638	U - 13624.5	Not Significant

The data revealed a substantial difference in the level of satisfaction with student welfare services when grouped according to sex, specialization, and campus. This is shown in the computed p-value, which was less than the significance level of 0.05. When comparing male students, female students were substantially more satisfied with the student welfare services, although there was not much difference. Further, when grouped according to specialization, it also showed a significant difference, as the computed p-value for specialization was less than the computed H- statistics. To determine the specific specialization that establishes differences, the Dunn-Bonferroni test was used, which revealed that the pairwise group comparisons of Animation and Filipino, Animation and Mathematics, and Filipino and Social Studies had an adjusted p-value of less than 0.05. Thus, based on the available data, it can be assumed that these groups are each significantly different and significantly different in pairs.

On the other hand, different results were revealed in the difference in the level of satisfaction with the student development services when grouped by demographics yielded no significance when grouped according to sex, campus, and year level. Only specialization showed a significant difference in student development services. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was equivalent to 20.37, $p = .005$, with a mean rank score of 563.77 for Animation, 528.24 for Computer System Servicing, 487.65 for English, 435.82 for Filipino, 474.9 for Mathematics, 539.16 for Sciences, 523.7 for Social Studies, 479.7 for Visual Graphics and Design. Based on the results of the post hoc test, pairwise group comparisons of Filipino and Social Studies had an adjusted p-value of less than 0.05. Thus, based on the available data, it can be assumed that the data for said specialization are significantly different in pairs.

Table 7.
Relationship of Respondent's Assessment of their Competency and their Satisfaction with Student Support Services

Services	Coefficient	Test Statistics	p-value	Remarks
Student Welfare	0.024901	0.776581	0.437595	Not Significant
Student Development	-0.00436	0.135877	0.891947	Not Significant

After analyzing the data using the Spearman score coefficient, it was found that there was no relationship between the respondents' competency and their satisfaction level with the student support services in terms of welfare and development during the pandemic. Based on the table, the computed p-value for student welfare is 0.437595, and -0.00436 for

student development, which are both greater than the significance level of 0.05; hence, rejecting the null hypothesis as implied by the lack of correlation between the coefficient and the test statistics.

Table 8.

The Needed Changes and Development in the Student Support Services After the Pandemic

Statement	WM	Interpretation
An online appointment system will be institutionalized for student services needed	3.17	Agree
There must be access to mental health services for all students in need	3.19	Agree
Academic records must be requested online and will be delivered to the student	3.30	Strongly Agree
There must be a hotline application that will answer the students' queries	3.15	Agree
There must be an electronic bulletin Board and social media platform for important announcements	3.27	Strongly Agree
The student should be allowed to access laboratory and facilities to develop skills and competence	3.18	Agree
Frontline staff must be accommodating to the needs of students	3.32	Strongly Agree
There should be a place of worship for various beliefs, and religion should be recognized	3.19	Agree
Institutional programs and activities should be conducted to safeguard mental health	3.18	Agree
There must be psychological tests available at the Guidance and Counseling Center	3.19	Agree
Technical support must be available during online classes	3.16	Agree
An inclusive education must be recognized inside the school premises	3.15	Agree
An institutional training and workshop must be in place to enhance students' leadership skills	3.12	Agree
Online access to reading and reference materials should be in place	3.16	Agree
The library must be designed to cater to the needs of modern learners and researchers	3.16	Agree
There must be an offering for tutorial services to help students excel in challenging subjects.	3.17	Agree
There should be institutional workshops, retreats, and training sessions to develop students' leadership potential	3.16	Agree
Students must be allowed to organize academic and nonacademic organizations	3.19	Agree
There must be a provision for access to learning technology.	3.17	Agree
<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>3.19</i>	<i>Agree</i>

Based on comprehensive data analysis, it is evident that students collectively support the implementation of changes and improvements in student support services. Notably, students rated the statement "Frontline staff must be accommodating the needs of students" with the highest weighted mean of 3.32, signifying a strong consensus (Strongly Agree) among students. Another significant aspect that garnered substantial support was the transition toward online platforms for academic processes. The item "Academic records must be requested online and will be delivered" received a weighted mean of 3.30, indicating a strong alignment (Strongly Agree) with this proposed alteration. Additionally, establishing

an "electronic bulletin board and social media platform for important announcements" was well received, as denoted by a weighted mean of 3.27, reflecting a notable degree of agreement (Strongly Agree) among students. As per the students' perception, they would appreciate an improvement in immediate services, such as accommodating staff, innovation, and automation.

Discussion

This study examined the experiences, level of satisfaction, and the relationship between student satisfaction and student support services regarding student welfare, student development, and academic performance. Based on the data gathered, the students were generally in agreement with the student support services in terms of student welfare and student development and strongly agreed that the university allowed students to take part in leadership, make responsible decisions, and offer students various learning opportunities to enhance their intellectual growth, cultural and self-awareness, leadership, teamwork, and critical and creative thinking skills. Arogo (2022) stated that a significant difference in the Level of Awareness of respondents concerning Support Services offered by the institution was found in leadership training.

The students' satisfaction levels with the student support services expressed their satisfaction with the student support services regarding student welfare and student development provided by the university. However, during the pandemic, respondents agreed that they experienced problems in accessing student support services. Notably, the students agreed that the slow response time to student inquiries and requests for assistance was a common problem. The University's sole reliance on Messenger and other online platforms for support services throughout the pandemic led to confusion among students. This confusion stems from not knowing where to address these concerns. Having multiple platforms in use likely dispersed the assistance-seeking process, making it less efficient and potentially causing important queries to be overlooked. According to Bouchey et al. (2020), the long-term expansion of online and remote access to student support is a critical point of reflection for higher education institutions. Also, some students may lack the skills or have trouble using online platforms. The importance of technical support from the university administration to motivate students to manage technological stresses and develop full readiness for online learning must be emphasized (Al-Maskari et al., 2021). The pandemic has left students without technical support, causing frustration and a lack of assistance.

Modern college students are digitally versed and reliant on technology; therefore, there is a need to the efficacy of expanding access to student support, especially in light of students' additional needs, as they continue to experience the stressors and new tensions of COVID-19. As per Raja (2020), it is of paramount importance to tackle these challenges, which hold significance not only for the future of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within

their respective regions but also on a global scale. HEIs must proactively prepare dashboards, portals, and online applications to address issues related to their student support services effectively. Similarly, a situation akin to the prior study arises when there is a lack of cooperation and coordination between faculty and students within the college. This issue becomes particularly prominent when students require consultation and guidance regarding course withdrawals, semester delays, or course additions. This lack of coordination can potentially imperil and discourage students' academic pursuits, as highlighted by Albashtawi (2014).

Concerning these observations, a noteworthy distinction emerged in the level of satisfaction with student support services, specifically in terms of student welfare and student development, when categorized based on campus location and specialization. Both the Mandaluyong and Pasig campuses adhered to the same standardized operational procedures when interacting with clients or students. Nevertheless, variations in facilities, human resources, and number of students served existed between the two campuses, which consequently accounted for these differences. Since the Mandaluyong Campus has more than three times the number of students than the Pasig Campus, there could be a variation in the turnaround time of the process time and the availability of support services due to the limited number of personnel. These findings align with the analysis conducted by Sapri et al. (2009), who emphasized that the degree of student satisfaction predominantly depends on the campus environment, as cited by Shuaib et al. (2023). Based on the subsequent post hoc analysis outcomes concerning disparities among various specializations, a distinct difference emerged for students when paired, Animation and Filipino, Animation and Mathematics, and Filipino and Social Studies. This notable variance within specializations could be attributed that student satisfaction is influenced by the alignment of instructional requirements and the pertinence of course content. According to (Al-Maskari et al., 2021) since the university is not yet technology-driven in its services, animation students are looking into services that are automated in nature. This analysis concurs with the findings of Zhao et al. (2022), who revealed that cognitive support plays a constructive role in positively shaping students' satisfaction with online learning. This implies that the higher the degree of support provided in terms of educational objectives and instructional design for online learning, the higher the level of satisfaction achieved in online learning experiences.

During the pandemic, many students faced difficulties accessing student support services. As a result, changes and developments are expected to be implemented to improve student support services in institutions. Most students were concerned with the immediate support services they usually avail. Since we live in a technological era and students have experienced the convenience of online platforms, their primary concern is to have an online

appointment system for student services and a hotline for student queries. These developments will allow students access to mental and health services, frontline staff accommodation, psychological tests, tutorial services, and learning technology. This desire for online access is a result of the challenges they encounter, as the school has shifted abruptly to an online setup. According to Netanda et al. (2017), novice online learners are at a greater risk of facing challenges when adjusting to the online learning environment than are more experienced learners. In addition, according to (Al-Maskari et al., 2021) many students expressed that a lack of regular and caring communication from their institutions was a primary stressor during COVID-19. Students expect communications from their HEIs, and checking if have accessibility issues or staying focused during online classes, hence, during the shift of schools to online platforms, many students are grappling with where and how to avail the usual needs that they receive in school.

Another development that students would like to develop is an improvement in the academic support of the university. The students would like academic records that they usually use for applications, and renewal of scholarships can be requested online and delivered to them. Universities should also provide state-of-the-art facilities for laboratories for skill development and open access to learning materials and references. With the changing needs of students, student support services must be dynamic so that they align and adapt to the diverse demographics and needs of students, which satisfy all forms of platforms, such as online or face-to-face.

Communication and information dissemination are other concerns of students that need improvement because of confusion regarding important announcements due to the various platforms to refer to. Considering the changing background, demographics, and orientation of students supported by the law on safe spaces, cultural and religious inclusivity must be strengthened further, as Gen Z is celebrated for its commitment to diversity and inclusivity (Trainer 2024). Leadership and personal development support were equally important for students. Students agreed that changes and improvements must be made to institutional training and workshops on leadership skills, retreats, and organizing academic and non-academic organizations. Allowing this generation of students to work on their own through collaboration and team leadership is an important aspect of the 21st-century world. School administrators must recognize that this new generation of students feels empowered to contribute to their unique perspectives that enhance their creativity and problem-solving within the team, which are skills designed for them to master.

This study revealed the absence of a statistically significant relationship between students' satisfaction with student support services during the pandemic and their self-assessed academic performance. This outcome diverges from most research findings, which indicate a connection between the two variables. One reason for the deviation in results from

the same studies is that student support services were accessed online. This outcome potentially signifies that the interim measures and support services implemented due to the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic might not have comprehensively contributed to enhancing students' academic performance because of the difficulty in connecting to it.

According to Butt et al. (2021), a key determinant of a student's perception of an online learning system's quality is user-friendliness, accuracy, adaptability, comprehensiveness, relevance, currency, responsiveness, usability, and connectivity. This framework suggests that the degree to which these elements align with students' needs, perspectives, behavior, and lifestyle influences their contentment and satisfaction with online education. A well-designed online learning experience can be viewed as a choice that conforms to educational requirements and leads to greater satisfaction. Although the results of this study do not indicate a direct connection between satisfaction with support services and academic achievement, the study showed the significance of the quality of online learning systems and their compatibility with students' needs. This observation strengthens the call for school administrators to prioritize investing in programs and online systems that will enhance student experiences through student support services that are readily available to everyone, regardless of their financial status. The results of this study support the findings of Rotar (2022) that the efficacy of strategies and interventions in online student support is contingent on the timing of support provision, recommending the incorporation of support services into the learning curriculum.

Conclusions

Although the study did not find any direct link between student support services during the pandemic and academic performance, it highlighted that the varied experiences, access levels, and satisfaction levels of students with the support services provided by the school resulted in different outcomes. Due to the limited resources available for gaining access to the school's support services during the pandemic, most students had to face the challenges of completing their academic programs remotely, based on their available resources, while also fulfilling their families' basic financial and emotional needs.

To maintain student satisfaction with the support services provided by the school, it is crucial for school administrators to offer additional training and seminars to faculty members and staff. This training will enable them to be more empathetic and inclusive while providing services to students, as student needs are ever-evolving and dynamic over time. Through this training, faculty and staff will understand the importance of communication and interaction when distance is inevitable between them and their students.

Alternative solutions should also be considered to align with the academic needs of

various specializations. Since all curricula are based on the attainment of 21st-century skills, simulated laboratories and other applications that enhance students' competencies in specific fields must be established. More importantly, technical support from the university must be available at all times, especially to students who are not ready for a different means of teaching and learning process.

Recommendations

Given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential for basic and higher education institutions in the Philippines to address pressing issues facing the education system. Educational administrators must ensure that all students, regardless of their financial background and circumstances, have access to high-quality student support services. Learning institutions with multiple campuses should have a system that promotes inclusivity and accessibility in teaching, learning methods, and support services. They should also continue to innovate and automate their services, enabling students to access them from anywhere while upholding their school's values and culture. In addition, it is crucial for schools to adapt to changing circumstances and diverse student needs. Further research is needed to study the effectiveness of remote access to student services.

Limitations

The research focused on engaging third- and fourth-year students from the College of Education in eight specializations – English, Filipino, Mathematics, Sciences, Social Studies, Animation, Computer Systems Servicing, and Visual Graphic Designs—at Rizal Technological University on both campuses. These students were chosen because they had experienced the student support services provided by the Office of Student Affairs Services during and after the pandemic. Furthermore, these students have completed the major courses of their curriculum; hence, they can self-assess their competencies as student teachers. The instruments were distributed using an online platform to reach the majority of respondents.

Ethics Statement

The researchers employed an online platform to gather data from participants. Active consent, a method utilized in this study, involves participants expressing consent through intentional actions (e.g., clicking a link in an online survey). If participants did not provide consent, they chose to withdraw from the study. This ensured that the participation was voluntary.

The consent form explicitly conveyed the researchers' commitment to safeguarding the respondents' identities by presenting the results in a general form, avoiding any mention of individual responses that could lead to identification. Moreover, the participants received no monetary compensation, and the study did not harm any person or organization. To prioritize confidentiality, the researchers securely managed and protected all responses and

disposed them appropriately immediately after completing the study.

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