

July, 2021

Practices and Challenges of Learner Support Service in Ethiopian Private Distance Education Institution of Alpha University College Gondar Branch

Birhanu,Zewditu

<http://ir.bdu.edu.et/handle/123456789/12196>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository



BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICE

IN ETHIOPIAN PRIVATE DISTANCE EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONS –IN CASE OF ALPHA

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GONDAR BRANCH

BY

ZEWDITU BIRHANU

July, 2021

Bahir-Dar, Ethiopia

BAHIR-DAR UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICE
IN ETHIOPIAN PRIVATE DISTANCE EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONS –IN CASE OF ALPHA

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GONDAR BRANCH

By: Zewditu Birhanu Golla

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Adult Education and Community Development

Advisor: Turuwark Zalalam Warkneh (Ass.prof)

July 2021

Bahir-Dar, Ethiopia

@2021[Zewditu Birhanu]

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled as practices and challenges of learner support service in Ethiopian private distance education institutions –in case of alpha university college Gondar branch is my original work and no portion of the work referred to in the thesis that has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this and any other universities or other institutions of learning. All the sources included in this study have been acknowledged.

Name

Signature

Date

Zewditu Birhanu Golla

BAHIR-DAR UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Approval of Thesis for Defense

I hereby certify that I have supervised, read, and evaluated this thesis titled “the practices and challenges of learner support service in Ethiopian private distance education institutions –in case of Alpha university college Gondar branch” by Zewditu Birhanu prepared under my guidance. I recommend the thesis be submitted for oral defense.

_____	_____	_____
Advisor’s name	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Department Head	Signature	Date

BAHIR-DAR UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Approval of thesis for defense result

This is to certify that this thesis is prepared by Zewditu Birhanu Golla entitled with practices and challenges of learner support service in Ethiopian private distance education institutions –in case of alpha university college Gondar branch; it is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Adult Education and Community Development and complies with the regulation of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Board of Examiners

Internal Examiner's name: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

External Examiner's name: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chair person's name: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My advisor Turuwark Zalalam, I found no word satisfactory to express how much I am grateful for your excellent suggestions, constructive comments, encouragements, and feedbacks you gave me throughout this research. Especially, your friendly and sisterly approach helped me to freely ask every question and doubts throughout this research. You have been helpful far beyond your call of duty.

My mom Migbnesch Birhanu, you are my heroine in my life and you have taught me many things I will never get. No one has ever given me unconditional support and love like you. I love you so much. You are the base of all my life time successes.

Asnakew Yigzaw Wubetie, my beloved husband, thank you; for being by my side during my difficult times and your professional support, for your careful work in the time of data collection and instrument development, for your kindness and an endless love which is beyond count. Words cannot express what you mean to me. I can only say may God bless you now and then, Amen!

It is my proud privilege to release the feeling of my thankfulness to all my best friends and colleagues especially Legesse Adgo, Samuel Getnet, Samuel Zinabu, Tilahun Adamu and Betelhem Yalew for your moral, professional and material support to accomplish this study.

Finally, yet importantly, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the participants (Alpha University College distance learners and coordinating center staffs) who filled questionnaires, gave interviews and provided document for this study.

Abstract

Research into private distance education sector, particularly on student support system, is very rare in Ethiopian context. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the practice and challenges of learner support system in Ethiopian private distance education institutions in case of Alpha University College Gondar Branch. To this end, mixed research approach was used. From the total of 253 populations (male=132 and female= 121), 134 (male=68 female=66) sample participants were selected through available sampling technique. Comprehensive sampling was employed to select center staffs in Alpha University College Gondar Branch. The relevant data were collected through questionnaire, document analysis and semi-structured interview. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one sample t-test, independent samples t- test and one way ANOVA) whereas; the qualitative data were analyzed through verbal description. Based on the analysis, it was found that learner support service was not implemented in the expected manner and the learners were dissatisfied by the services which were delivered by the institution. That is, the implementation of learner support was minimum and not properly practiced. Appropriate feedback was not provided and various modes of delivery were not used in the implementation. It was also found that the practice of learner support was challenged by many factors of which individual related challenges including expensiveness of communication and travel, work overload of learners, employers challenge to give leave and conflicting commitments of learners; institutional related challenges including lack of resources and low commitment of the institution to deliver effective learner support service and instructional related challenges including inadequate content of instructional materials and insufficient knowledge of tutors were the most serious ones. Based on those findings, the institution were not able to implement effective learner support service and challenges were not taken by the concerned bodies. Hence, some recommendations were forwarded as a solution for the identified problems.

Key words: learner support, Practice and Challenges

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background of the study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	5
1.3. Research questions	7
1.4. Objectives of the Study	7
1.4.1. General Objective of the Study.....	7
1.4.2. Specific Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.5. Significance of the Study	8
1.6. Delimitation of the Study	8
1.7. Operational definition of basic terms	9
1.8. Organization of the study	9
CHAPTER TWO	11
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	11
2.1- Concept of distance education.....	11
2.2- Theoretical underpinnings of distance education.....	12
2.2.1- Theories of autonomy and independence	12
2.2.2- Theory of Industrialization-Otto Peters	13
2.2.3- Theory of guided didactic conversation-Borge Holmberg	14
2.2.4- Theory of transactional distance	14
2.2.5- Theories of interaction and communication	15
2.3- Distance education in Ethiopia.....	15
2.3.1- Private higher education institutions in Ethiopia	16
2.4- Concept of student support/learner support	17
2.4.1- Types of student support system.....	18
2.5- Stages of student support in distance education.....	28

2.5.1-	Support Services at Pre-admission or Pre-entry Stage	28
2.5.2-	Support Services at Programme and/or Course Stage	28
2.5.3-	Support Services at Post-programme and/or Course Stage	29
2.6.	Why student support?.....	29
2.7.	How student support systems are delivered?	32
2.8.	Learner Support and Learner Needs in Distance Education	34
2.9-	Student support service and learners satisfaction.....	37
2.10-	Challenges related to student support system.....	38
2.11-	Current trends of Student support.....	40
CHAPTER THREE		42
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		42
3.1-	Research paradigm	42
3.2-	Research Approach	42
3.3-	Research Design.....	43
3.4-	Sources of Data	43
3.5-	Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques	44
3.6-	Data Collection Instruments.....	45
3.6.1-	Questionnaire	46
3.6.2-	Interview	46
3.6.3-	Observation.....	46
3.6.4-	Document Review.....	47
3.7-	Validity and Reliability	47
3.6.1-	Validity	48
3.6.2-	Reliability.....	48
3.8-	Data Collection Procedures.....	49
3.9-	Data Analysis Techniques.....	49
3.10-	Ethical considerations	50
CHAPTER FOUR.....		51
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION		51
4.1	Data Analysis	51
4.1.1-	Background Information of Respondents	51

4.1.2- The practice (Implementation) of student support service	53
4.1.3- Learners satisfaction on student support system.....	71
4.1.4- Challenges of student support service.....	81
4.2- Discussion	95
CHAPTER FIVE	104
SUMMERY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	104
5.1- Summery	104
5.1.1- Major findings of the study.....	105
5.2- Conclusions	106
5.3-Limitations of the study	107
5.4-Recommendations.....	107
References.....	109
Annexes.....	113

List of Tables	page
Table 1: Population, sample and sampling technique.....	45
Table 2: Background Information of distance learners.....	51
Table 3: One sample T-test result on the frequency of administrative support service	54
Table 4: One sample t- test result on cumulative administrative support services	56
Table 5: One sample T-test result on the implementation of counseling support services	57
Table 6: One sample t- test result on cumulative counseling support services.....	58
Table 7: One sample T-test result on the implementation of academic support services	59
Table 8: One sample t- test result on cumulative academic support services	64
Table 9: Independent sample t-test result on frequency of student support service across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status	65
Table 10: One way ANOVA on frequency of student support service across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income.....	66
Table 11: Providers of student support service.....	67
Table 12: Evaluation of methods used to deliver/address student support system	69
Table 13: One sample t- test result on the evaluation of learner's satisfaction in administrative support service	72
Table 14- One sample t- test result on the evaluation of learner's satisfaction in counseling support service	74
Table 15: One sample t-test result on learner's satisfaction in cumulative administrative support services including consultation service.....	75
Table 16: One sample T-test result on satisfaction of learners in academic support service.....	76
Table 17: One sample t test result of learner's satisfaction on cumulative academic support services.....	79
Table 18: Independent sample t-test result on satisfaction of learners on student support service across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status.....	80
Table 19- One way ANOVA result on satisfaction of learners on student support service across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income.....	81
Table 20: One sample T-test result on student support service challenges (learner related challenges) ...	82
Table 21- One way ANOVA result of individual related challenges across age, educational background and monthly income of respondents	85
Table 22: One sample t-test result on student support service challenges (institutional related challenges)	87
Table 23- One way ANOVA result of institutional related challenges across different demographic factors	91
Table 24: One sample t-test result on student support service challenges (instructional related challenges)	92
Table 25: Independent sample t-test result on instructional related challenges across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status	94
Table 26: One way ANOVA result on the instructional related challenges across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income.....	95

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACDS	Alpha College of Distance Studies
AUC	Alpha University College
COL	Common Wealth of Nations
DE	Distance education
DL	Distance learner
HERQA	Higher Education relevance and quality agency
ICT	Information communication technology
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
SSS	Student support service
TMA	Tutor Marked Assignment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa Higher
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Education provides a foundation for development, the groundwork on which much of the economic and social well-being is built. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital (Ozturk, 2001). Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. It increases the value and efficiency of their labor; it helps to raise the poor from poverty and it improves people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. Moreover it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution (Ozturk, 2001).

Education not only improves individual choices available to mankind, but an educated population provides the type of skilled labor necessary for industrial development and economic growth (Dreze and Sen 2002). Thus nations work increasing access to education in various ways, among which open and distance learning is one, to all citizens contributes in developing human capital which eventually increases gross national product and wealth of a nation (Teshome & Mohammed 2012).

Distance education has a major and varied impact worldwide. ODL enhance development efforts in various ways such as by tackling the shortage of trained manpower, facilitating accessibility, equity and continuity in education and maximizing technical skill, and quality of manpower (Teshome & Mohammed, 2012).

Both developing and developed countries are using distance education extensively for various purposes. Because of the increased demand for trained and educated manpower by various sectors in developing countries, the need to run distance education was widely realized (Tefera, 2010).

Distance education does not have a clear-cut, single definition of its own and different authors defined distance education differently and their definitions were colored by the authors' experience and their philosophy of education. But distance education theorist lists the basic characteristics of distance education and it can encompass most definitions of distance education. Keegan (1993) characterizes distance education as: it has a semi-permanent separation of teacher and learner; it is influenced by the educational organization in both the preparation of the teaching materials and the support of the students; it uses technical media; it is a two-way process and it has a semi-permanent absence of a learning group. Consequently, this characteristic appears superfluous to any definition of the concept. Distance education is, therefore, defined here as those forms of education in which organized learning opportunities are usually provided through a technical medium to learners who normally study individually, and removed from the teacher in both time and space (Keegan, 1993).

The concept of distance education has emerged in very early years. It was in the late 1800s, the first pioneer correspondence programme in the USA was established at the University of Chicago, in which the student and the teacher were at different locations (Kumari, 2018). In Europe in the year of 1840, England's newly established penny post allowed Isaac Pitman to offer to the students by mailing the texts transcribed into shorthand on postcards, and afterwards, he was receiving transcriptions from his students in return for correction (Simonson et al., 2015). It was the first distance course in the modern sense. However correspondence education has been known for several generations, mainly as part of adult education (Holmberg,1995).

To reflect the development in the field and its longstanding use of audio and newer use of video media, to span the distance between teacher and learner correspondence education changed its name in the 1970s to distance education (Evans & Pauling 2021). International Council for Correspondence Education also changed its name to the International Council for Distance Education in the year 1982(Kumari, 2018).

In the developed world, distance education presents a very bright and prospective picture for the twenty-first century and countries like UK, USA, Canada, Germany, France, Japan and Australia developed a system of distance and open learning which is functioning very effectively in various forms which are flexible enough to cater to the varied needs of their different learner clientele (Kumari, 2018).

In Africa the practice of distance education started very late mostly in its traditional form. The endeavors covered a range of applications from formal degree programmes offered by University of South Africa (UNISA) from 1946 onwards to a broadly based adult education campaign conducted by the Institute of Adult Education (University of Tanzania) during the 1960's (IGNOU, 2012).

Like any other part of the world distance education in Ethiopia, trace back its origin in the form of correspondence study. It was initiated in the 1950s with the objective of developing senior secondary correspondence courses for adults working in various ministries, factories military organizations through a bilateral agreement of the Ethiopia – USA cooperative education program and the first implemented by the former Haile Selassie I university from 1968 to 1972 (Aytenfesu, 2008).

A mass of under- educated people, an expanding population, major global crises, and an expanding knowledge economy all combine to sustain a massive demand for basic, further, higher, continuing, and lifelong education. This demand cannot be met solely in the world's classrooms; even if there were enough classrooms, many people will be unwilling or unable to attend them to learn (Evans & Pauling 2021). Due to this, today, there are distance education courses which are being offered by a number of public and private organizations and institutions as well as schools, colleges, universities, the military and a large number of corporations(Kumari, 2018).

In recent years as distance education is offered by different institutions and organizations, it is felt that for the success of any distance education programme, the learner support system is very important. It is recognized as an integral and important component in distance education. It is therefore imperative that while providing distance education to the learners, it is to be ensured that good quality of learning support should be provided to them (Kumari, 2018).

Learner support is a generic term which is applied to the range of services that are developed by institutions in order to assist their students to meet their learning objectives; to gain the knowledge, expertise and skills to be successful and complete their course or studies(Arko-Achemfuor, 2017).

According to Mills (2003) learner support system is designed to help the individual student learn from the teaching materials may be academic, administrative, or personal, can be provided through a range of media and by a range of people.

Since distance students do not attend the regular classes in daily base, they need considerable support. However, one significant challenge facing distance institutions is the provision of convenient and effective support services for those isolated students (Maeverylyn & Pitano, 2001).

Poor national socio-economic infrastructure, insufficient funds, limited use of Information and Communication Technology (limited usage of mobile phones, devices that didn't support internet connectivity and low ICT literacy amongst learners, poor internet connectivity), lack of satisfactory expertise and knowledge in distance education by both the academic and support staff in many universities around the globe and lack of supportive skills by the tutor are a major challenges that limits the provision of quality learner support services in most of the developing countries' open and distance learning institutions (Monyamane & Monyamane , 2020).

As it has been indicated in the sections above, the effectiveness of distance education is largely depending on the application of effective student support systems and the system is challenged by different factors. Therefore, the concern of the study is to investigate the practice and challenges of student support system in private distance education institutions in Ethiopia in case of Alpha University College Gondar Branch.

Alpha College of Distance Studies (ACDS) is one of the private higher distance education institutions and it was established by a committed Ethiopian in 1981. The ministry of education (MoE) recognized the institution originally as institution of National Vocational and Technical Distance Education enterprise. At that initial stage the training programs were limited in technical skills like mechanics, wood work electricity and the like and Alpha Education and Training Share Company (AETSCO) were established in 1994 with the aim of providing quality education to citizens. Since its establishment, AETSCO has been engaged in accredited distance higher education programs leading to certificates, diplomas and degrees. Now ACDS has successfully carried out distance, regular and extension programs in various fields of study (ACDS, 2010).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Distance education students needs for a variety of student support services can be well justified. In the literature on student support, many researchers (Sewart, 1993; Brindley, 1995; Rumble, 2000; Simpson, 2000; Tait, 2003; Mills, 2003 and Kumari, 2018) express their belief that student support services can personalize and humanize distance education systems and as an integral and important component in distance education.

According to Mills (2003), one important means of measuring and analyzing the effectiveness and quality of the learning experience in a distance education system is through the evaluation of the student support system. Support systems contribute to the process of a course as do the learning materials and support systems developed in recognition of student needs help the distance learner become competent and self-confident in learning, social interactions and self-evaluation (Möwes, 2005). But Usun (2004), observes that the effectiveness of the student support system in open/distance learning has not been adequately evaluated.

Concerning the issue i.e. student support system few researches were conducted in the world by different researchers at different parts of the country on similar and different time periods. For instance Gao (2012) conducted a research in China on the implementation of learner support in six ICT based institutions and the finding shows that in distance education; institutional support, peer support, family support and societal support plays different roles in the various aspects of students learning.

In Africa Musingafi et.al in the year 2015 studied the challenges of open and distance learning students in case of Zimbabwe Open University. They found that delayed or ineffective feedback, lack of instructor's contact and /or inadequate academic support, unhelpful course information and lack of direction and poor course design /inappropriate learning materials, lost assignments and test scripts, delayed study materials, administrative service problems, lack of an effective institutional network of technical assistance, lack of responsiveness from main centre, lack of students support services in areas of guidance and counseling and inadequate academic support and administrative services at the coordinating centre affect distance education and distance learners too. The other researcher Möwes conducted her dissertation on the evaluation of student support services in open and distance learning at the University of Namibia in the year 2005. The

result shows that inadequate attention to student support services including lack of interactive telephone and face to face tutorial sessions, lack of approachability of administrative staff, low quality of feedback on learner's performance and assignments, inadequate knowledge of tutors and lack of information and communication technology (ICT) skills among distance learners affect the learner's success in distance education institution.

In Ethiopia, Kimo (2006) conducted a research on the evaluation and effectiveness of support services in teachers college on the area of Oromia region. He identifies major findings such as unwise use of technological materials, unorganized library and laboratory services, poor service delivery (orientation, counseling), poor coordination at tutorial centers, and ineffectiveness of tutorial sessions and non-commitment of tutors on distance teaching affects the success of learners. However, the study is limited on teachers training under the project and did not examine the implementation of learner support system in other private higher education institutions.

Tsegaye (2014), conducted a research on the implementation of learner support services in alpha and select secondary level distance education centers. This study mainly focused on the support services the institution delivered for learners and the learner's awareness toward the student support system. The study is limited to identify the challenges that hinder the proper implementation of student support system in the selected institutions.

Tefera (2010), also conducted his thesis on the effectiveness of tutorial program in Alpha and Admas university colleges. However, the study focuses on only one single aspect of student support service (tutorial program) and limited to address other support services like administrative and other Academic supports.

In public distance education institution Megerssa (2019), studied the practices and challenges of distance education in Bahir-Dar university. To some extent it assesses the support services in the university. The study is concerned on distance education in general and not specific in student support service and geographically the research is focused up on one public distance education institution which is Bahir-Dar University. Methodologically the research is limited to employ multiple statistical tools to analyze demographic factors with the practice and challenges and it is analyzed by using one statistical tool.

Thus, the implementation of a student support system in private higher education institutions is regarded as crucial in order to facilitate the full development of each student and to ensure success in the learning process. Concisely, there are a number of researches conducted on the issue; however, it is hard to find research that mainly focuses on the practice and challenges of student support service in distance education institutions. Some researches emphasized only on the implementation of student support systems and others focused up on the single issue in student support system like that of tutorial service. Thus the previous researches are limited to address all issues in student support system including academic and administrative services which are essential components in distance education institutions. Therefore; the situation becomes a good rational ground for the researcher to decide conducting the study on the practice and challenges of student support in Ethiopian private higher distance education institutions in the selected university college. It is hoped that this study will help to fill the gap in the limited information available regarding the topic under investigation.

1.3. Research questions

The following research questions were raised to be addressed by the research finding:

1. How student support service is implemented in the selected institution vis-à-vis the expectations in the literature?
2. To what extent learners are satisfied by the student support system delivered by the institution?
3. What are the challenges that institutions and learners encounter during the implementation of student support?
4. Is there a significant difference among learners on the practice and challenges of student support based on their sex, age, place of residence, marital status, educational background and income level?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study is to investigate the overall practice and challenges of student support system in Ethiopian private distance education institutions particularly in Alpha University College Gondar Branch.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were aimed:

1. To examine the implementation of student support system services in the selected institution
2. To examine learners satisfaction regarding with the student support system
3. To identify the major challenges to implement student support system in distance education institutions

1.5. Significance of the Study

The finding of the study among others, shows that the evaluation of current practices and challenges of student support service system in distance education institutions which have an implication for policy and curriculum designers, decision makers, and implementers in the field of distance education to know the status and make the program effective by implementing effective student support mechanisms to overcome the challenges and to develop quality assurance framework/policy in distance education program. It would be beneficial for distance education institutions in the sense that it would clearly show their practical implementation of student support and the challenges they faced. Learners would be benefited from the proper implementation of student support by the institution. Education leaders would be benefited from the result of the research finding which would give clear picture about distance education institutions student support system and the practice and challenge so that they can get an opportunity to strengthen good practices and to improve poor performance thereby distance education institutions be able to succeed in realizing their mission through producing all rounded students and from this, learners also would gain an advantage from their better performance. In addition, the research finding would serve as source of information for other researchers who are interested to conduct a more detail investigation on the area either in breadth or width.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

The finding of the study would be more relevant if the scope of the study covers all distance education institutions (secondary and higher distance education of both the government and the private) in Ethiopia. But, due to different constraints including time and budget limits, the study was geographically delimited only on private distance education institutions particularly in Alpha University College Gondar branch. Conceptually, the study was delimited to investigate

the practical implementation and challenges of student support system under the selected institution. The practices of the program were assessed in terms of the two broader support services which are; administrative support services (supporting learners during their application, registration, exam and tutorial sessions by giving adequate information and facilitating situations, distributing course materials and giving the counseling service in different academic and non-academic issues) and academic student support services (in time tutorial service, feedback, assignment and library services). The support services implementation was assessed respecting with their frequency of implementation, providers of those support services and modes of delivery to address both academic and administrative support services. In addition to the support services implemented in the studied institution the research also assesses the learner's satisfaction regarding with the support services they have got from the institution. Finally, the research also covers the challenges which hamper the implementation of student support system including learner related, institutional and instructional related challenges. Methodologically, the study was delimited to apply descriptive survey design supported with mixed research approaches.

1.7. Operational definition of basic terms

- ❖ **Distance learners:** learners who pursue their degree program through distance mode of study in Alpha University College.
- ❖ **Student support service:** refers the student support system with the aim of facilitating students learning including academic and administrative services.
- ❖ **Practice of student support:** refers the overall implementation of student support with respect to its mode of delivery, level of frequency and support service providers.
- ❖ **Challenges of student support:** refers factors that hinder/limit the implementation process of student support in the studied institution.

1.8. Organization of the study

This study was organized with five chapters. The first chapter deals about the introductory part in general and about background of the study, statement of the problem, significance, scope, limitation and definition of important terms in particular. Review of related literature which is organized to present the conceptual frame work for the study is treated in the second chapter.

Chapter three is all about the methodological aspects of the study and chapter four is concerned with the analysis data and result discussion on important issues. In the last but not the least chapter, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study are included. Besides those major chapters, the preliminary sections are also part of this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1- Concept of distance education

Before writing about student support in distance education, one first must have an understanding of the question: What distance education is? To say that this is a “loaded” question is an understatement, because there is not one clear-cut answer that is universally accepted. As mentioned by different authors, the word “distance” has multiple meanings...the term, ‘distance education’ has been applied to a tremendous variety of programs serving numerous audiences via a wide variety of media (Sewart, 2006, Phillips, 2003, Holmberg, 1995).

Johnson(2003), defined distance education simply as a form of education in which learner and instructor are separate during the majority of instruction and it usually implies the presence of an institution that plans curriculum and provides resources and services for its students. The other author (Daniel,1997) defines distance education as the offering of educational programs designed to facilitate a learning strategy which does not depend on day-to-day contact teaching but makes best use of the potential of students to study on their own.

Rumble (1989), also offered a definition of distance education. He noted that, in any distance education process, there must be: a teacher; one or more students; a course or curriculum that the teacher is capable of teaching and the student is trying to learn; and a contract, implicit or explicit, between the student and the teacher or the institution employing the teacher that acknowledges their respective teaching/learning roles.

Distance education is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium, either electronic or print (UNESCO, 2002 p.22).

As it is a generic term “distance education” encompasses many different terms such as, correspondence study, home study, independent study, external study, distance learning, distance instruction and distance teaching, although the terms are not synonymous (Keegan, 2001).

According to (Simonson et al., 2015), there are four components in the definition of distance education: first, distance education is carried out through institutions and it is not self-study, second, geographic separation is inherent in distance learning, and time might also separate students and teachers, third, interactive telecommunications connected the learning group with each other and with the teacher and finally, distance education, like any education, established a learning group, sometimes called a learning community, which might composed of students, a teacher, and instructional resources.

In the separation of the teacher and learner and the general characteristics of distance education necessitate the provision of an effective learning support system for learners(Tefera, 2010).Distance education institutions employ a variety methods of learning support system, such as residential courses, regional courses, face-to-face tutorials, guided study groups, mediated tutorials, computer mediated communications, internet, and web-based services, depending on the availability of resources and the students' needs, and the institution's capacities (Holmberg, 1995).

2.2- Theoretical underpinnings of distance education

Holmberg suggested that distance education has been characterized by a trial-and- error approach with little consideration being given to a theoretical basis for decision making. He suggested that the theoretical underpinnings of distance education are fragile(Simonson, Smaldino and Zvacek, 2015).

The design, development and provision of learning support system for distance students is based on the foundation and theories of distance education (Tefera, 2010). In distance education there are five theories which have been widely referred to during the past few decades, and until today they remain relevant as underlying principles of distance education practice.

2.2.1- Theories of autonomy and independence

These contributions come mainly from the late 1960s and early 1970s and the major representatives are Charles A. Wedemeyer and Michael G. Moore. They point out that the

independent learning of a learner is the essential component of distance learning, featured with self-directed learning and self-regulation (Gao, 2012).

Theories of autonomy and independence lay the basic foundation of distance education practice. Independent study is an effort to organize instruction so that greater freedom in learning is possible for learners. It enables learners to carry out learning tasks and responsibilities on their own pacing and patterns, provide learners with opportunities to continue learning in their own environments, and develop learners the capacity to carry on self-directed learning (Tefera, 2010).

Wedemeyer noted four elements of every teaching/learning situation: a teacher, a learner or learners, a communications system or mode, and something to be taught or learned. He also proposed a reorganization of these elements that would accommodate physical space and allow greater learner freedom. Key to the success of distance education, Wedemeyer believed, was the development of the relationship between student and teacher (Simonson et al., 2015).

As Moore's view of theory of learner's autonomy, he examines two variables in distance education programs: the amount of learner autonomy and the distance between teacher and learner. In his point of view there is a gap between teacher and student, so the student must accept a high degree of responsibility for the conduct of the learning program. The autonomous learner needs little help from the teacher, so that communication is mediated (Simonson et al., 2015).

2.2.2- Theory of Industrialization-Otto Peters

Otto Peters of Germany developed a view of distance education as an industrialized form of teaching and learning. He proposed the idea that distance education could be analyzed by comparing it with the industrial production of goods (Simonson et al., 2015). Peters argued that for distance teaching to become effective, the principle of the division of labor is a constituent element of distance teaching. The teaching process in the theory of industrialization is gradually restructured through increasing mechanization and automation.

Otto Peters predicts that it would develop into a post-industrial style, in which students are treated as clients and provided with the commercialized services. According to his ideal, distance

education should be an independent, self-study, enhanced with social intercourse, within a non-formal and individually controlled manner (Garrison & Baynton, 2013).

2.2.3- Theory of guided didactic conversation-Borge Holmberg

It is called Holmberg's theory of distance education. The theory views that distance education should be embedded in friendly conversation and fostered by well-developed self-instructional materials resulting in feelings of personal relation ... intellectual pleasure and study motivation (Holmberg, 1995). The conversation refers to both real and simulated conversations. For achieving simulated conversations, the course developers should produce well-written materials for creating the simulated conversation (Garrison, 1989). From his assumptions, Holmberg formed his theory that distance teaching will support student motivation, promote learning pleasure, and make the study relevant to the individual learner and his or her needs, creating feelings of rapport between the learner and the distance education institution (its tutors, counselors, etc.); facilitating access to course content; engaging the learner in activities, discussions, and decisions; and generally catering to helpful real and simulated communication to and from the learner (Simonson et al., 2015). In this theory distance education serves individual learners who cannot or do not want to make use of face-to-face teaching and it needs support service to enable learners to achieve their learning objective. Thus this theory is a base for this study.

2.2.4- Theory of transactional distance

Moore 1983, as cited in IGNOU (2012) introduced the expression transactional distance 'which defines the nature and degree of separation of teacher and learner in educational process. The transactional distance is a function of two variables called 'dialogue' and 'Structure'. Dialogue describes the extent to which, in any educational program, learner and educator are able to respond to each other. This is determined by the content or subject matter which is studied, by the educational philosophy of the educator, by the personalities of educator and learner, and by environmental factors, the most important of which is the medium of communication.

Thus, the greater the transactional distance then lower the level of structure and dialogue and vice versa. Starting from this, he added on another variable or dimension learner autonomy. In

addition, the extent of a learner's responsibility for his or her own distance learning is in proportion to the degree of the transactional distance (Gao, 2012).

In the context of learner support system transactional presence deals with the way distance learners are afforded the support services they need, such as the tutoring and mediated programs that enable them to perform and realize their academic goals (Arko-Achemfuor, 2017). Transactional presence as the degree to which learners sense the availability and connectedness with an ODL institution and its staff, learning centre coordinators, tutors, peer learners and significant others. In the ODL context, tutors, faculty, administrative and other resources are key to students' success. The availability of such services has the potential of enabling learning transactions that satisfy learners' academic needs.

2.2.5- Theories of interaction and communication

Theories of interaction and communication were formulated by Bååth (1982), Daniel and Marquis (1979). According to this theory the continuous interaction between the students on the one hand and on the other hand the tutors and counselors and other representatives of the institution administering the study program is seen as a kind of conversation. In this theory all learning involves interaction, that is, activities where the student is in two-way contact with another person involving reactions and responses which are specific to the two party's requests. Interaction includes activities such as counseling, tutoring and contacting students; teaching over interactive telecommunication; bringing students together into discussion groups; and engaging in residential gatherings(Aoki, 2012).

2.3- Distance education in Ethiopia

Like any other part of the world distance education in Ethiopia, trace back its origin in the form of correspondence study. In Ethiopia, initially most correspondence courses under taken by Ethiopians were administered by foreign institutions. British correspondence schools were preferred and more popular because they prepared students for London matriculation, which was later replaced by Ethiopian school learning certificate examination(Karanja, 1997). In 1970, the MOE created an Extension Division, which was, renamed Distance Education Unit of the Mass media Department. Today, this unit is still functional providing secondary-school-level

correspondence education to learners such as unqualified teachers and school dropouts as well as learners in national defense, the police force and the merchant class(IGNOU, 2012).

After some years of interruption in 1976, the program was transferred to the department of adult and continuing education of the MOE and teaching began in 1978. Since 1978, the distance education division has been working out correspondence courses on senior secondary level from grade 9-12 (Flinck cited in Aytenfsu, 2008).

2.3.1- Private higher education institutions in Ethiopia

The widespread emergence and development of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. Among other things, this is the result of the fact that government higher education institutions alone could not absorb the high educational demand from the society. Many countries of the world, both developed and developing, have never been successful in responding to the educational demand of the public through conventional institutions alone-institutions established on the basis of the customary classroom teacher-student interactions mode. Their educational history shows that they are extensively using other alternatives chief among which is the introduction of distance mode of education into their educational system (Getachew, 2003).

Many private higher educational institutions have been established and provided higher education level including degree and diploma since the introduction of the Education and Training Policy of the country and they are playing their part in producing skilled manpower that can be employed in different organizations at different capacities (Getachew, 2003). There is also the beginning at masters 'level. In fact most of the masters 'level programs are given in cooperation with foreign institutions. Some examples in this respect include the cooperation between St. Merry University College and Indra Gandhi Open University and Addis Ababa Commercial College and UK Open University. University of South Africa (UNISA) has also opened a distance education campus in Addis Ababa and started offering programs at second degree level(Tsegaye, 2014). In addition, private educational institutions like AUC, Jigdan University College, and Yom, Admas University College and Select distance education centers and few others are emerging to provide distance education program to the tertiary and secondary distance learners.

2.4- Concept of student support/learner support

Self or independent study is one of the main features of distance education which distinguishes it from face-to-face instruction. For realizing success of distance education programmes, the distance education universities and/or institutions facilitate their learners by extending necessary facilities and services to create interest and motivation among them(Phillips, 2003). Such services and facilities which support distance learners to continue and complete their courses and/or programmes successfully are called learner support services (or student support services which is a widely used and familiar term in distance education) and consist of different facilities and activities which make instructional process easier and more interesting for them (Hussian, 2018).

In distance education, student support services are described differently by different authors (Krishnan, 2012; Tait, 2000; Arko-Achemfuor, 2017; Simpson, 2000; Thorpe, 2002). Nonetheless, the sense that these definitions give is that student support services are activities that are meant to assist students to perform well in their studies.

As Mays, 2000 cited in Arko-Achemfuor (2017) student support system refers to the entire range of methods and strategies employed in the presentation and delivery of courses aimed at assisting and enabling learners to comprehend fully, assimilate and master the skills and knowledge needed to achieve success in their studies.

Student support service is the most important factor for the successful learning in distance education. This element of distance learning is a large and important component of instruction, and must be considered as one of the ingredients in planning the technology mixture(Tefera, 2010).Learning support enhances the supportive functions during-the actual process of learning, helping students to act for their best.

In recent decades, learner support in distance education draws more and more attention, and is regarded as-a theme of core importance to open and distance learning at the present time (Tait, 2003). The function of learner support services in reducing rate of dropout, increasing retention and improving the quality of learning has been recognized (Gao, 2012). Tait (2003) perceives learner support as-the range of activities which complement the mass-produced materials or

learning resources that are uniform for all learners, and which are often perceived as the major offering of institutions using ODL. In this way, he categorizes learner support into cognitive, affective and systemic support, according to the primary functions: establishing administrative processes and information management systems that are effective, transparent and overall student-friendly.

2.4.1- Types of student support system

There have been various arguments and understandings of the concept of learner support. Some researchers such as Garrison, Simpson, Johnson, and Tait divided or categorized learner support into two or three parts or functions.

According to Johnson 2003, Student support services are divided into three categories: administrative services, services for students taking courses, and special services. Within the three categories different student support service systems are included. For instance administrative service includes information for prospective students, Recruitment, a comprehensive electronic information system or web site application for admission, financial aid, placement testing, registration, orientation services and academic advising. Services for students taking courses include: the course web site, course syllabus, faculty office hours, grades, examination procedures, technical support services, library services, bookstore services and services to promote a sense of community. In the last special services include: career services, services for students with disabilities, personal counseling, instructional support and tutoring (Johnson, 2003).

From another point of view (Garrison, 1989) considers learner support as-a range of human and non- human resources that helps students to finish and pass their-educational transaction.

The forms of learning support services to distance students can be categorized academic and non-academic support. Generally, academic support is provided to facilitate the development of cognitive, knowledge and learning skills aspects of the course. The non-academic support is provided to help the development of students 'affective areas, advising and the administrative assistance to facilitate the students' learning process (as TOJDE 2007, cited by Tefera,2010). With the same manner as to common wealth of nations and Asian development bank training Kit

1999, learner support services are divided into two categories. The first one is Instructional support which mainly provides tuition and academic advice. The second category is non-instructional support though less visible than instructional support and less central to the actual process of learning, non-instructional support is vital to the smooth operation of distance learning and must be integrated with instructional support. It includes admissions and registration (marketing; facilitating applications; making offers; registering learners; and matching learners appropriately with courses by level, subject, and so on), counseling (learner problems including financial difficulties; family problems; difficulty in maintaining motivation; problems in finding sufficient time to study; balancing conflicting commitments; and physical difficulties or barriers, including limited mobility, hearing, or sight impairment), administrative support (the office hours; the best times to call for advice; any days when the office is closed; the name of the learner's tutor; how to contact the tutor; who to write to or telephone about different matters; deadlines for sending in tutor-marked assignments; and dates of examinations), Library services (circulating books and other resources from the institution's own library by post, providing copies of reference books and other resources in the access centers; providing mobile libraries, usually buses, which are fitted out with shelves and books and which travel from community to community; making arrangements for learners to have access to the libraries of institutions or agencies in their local area such as schools and colleges; encouraging learners to apply for reading or borrowing privileges at local libraries; for example, the British Council has libraries in major cities throughout the world; and training learners in how to find, select, and download resources from the Internet and in particular the World Wide Web.), Finance (scholarship and bursary funds, which entails fundraising as a function)(Asian Development Bank and Commonwealth of Nations, 1999).

Similarly according to Hussain 2018, there are two broader areas of student or learner support services: firstly, the academic services which include tutorial support services. These facilitate students in the areas of cognition including intellectual development and knowledge building regarding particular course or courses. Secondly, there are non-academic or counseling services which support distance learners in affective domain and organizational aspects of their studies (Hussain, 2018).

In general the learner support can be divided into two areas:

1. Academic support services
2. Non-academic support/administrative support

2.4.1.1- Academic support services

The academic support is provided through teachers, counselors, tutors and distance education facilitators who facilitate the learners to enable them to solve their academic problems. As Simpson 2000 cited in Kumari (2018), distance education deals with supporting the students to solve their problems or issues related to cognitive, intellectual domain which can be the outcome of pursuing their course or courses of studies. These issues or problems might be related to the development of learning skills, knowledge and literacy. With the technological advancement, comprehensive support is provided to the learners, besides the traditional technologies such as print material, broadcast television and radio. In this way, new technology enhances the comprehension of the subject matter and also brings the qualitative teaching and learning support. In this way, these facilities include various interactive multimedia, computer-based learning packages, use of audio and video tapes, audio and video teleconferencing and video on demand (Kumari, 2018).

Students who do not come to the campus need access to academic advisory services. Student contact with trained academic advisors is crucial because both the students and the credit-granting institution need to be confident that information given to students is appropriate and accurate. Advising can be accomplished by telephone or e-mail, or by providing periodic on-site advice at off-campus location (Usun, 2004).

The academic counselors provide different kinds of academic support at the initial stage of studies, during the course of studies when the learners are pursuing the different programmes and also when they have completed their studies. This type of help is provided to the learners in the learner support centers as well as in the laboratories/workshops, the Sunday/holiday classes, extended contact programmes, summer/winter schools, etc. Tutorials are also organized with the help of local area networking through ICT (Kumari, 2018).

2.4.1.1.1- Tutoring

According to Hussien 2018, tutor and tutorials are regarded as the backbone of distance education system. A tutor provides continuous guidance to distance learners on how to study the self-instructional material, how to prepare assignments and how to prepare for getting through the examination. Guidance is provided through correspondence, personal visits of learners to study centers and/or to the tutors for face-to-face individual or group tutorials. The tutorials are organized by the respective regional offices at a study centre in evening or afternoon hours (Hussian, 2018).

Tutors facilitate and guide the learning of their students so that the students gain knowledge and understanding. To achieve this, tutors develop and practice a multitude of skills and strategies. It is arguable that these skills are no different to those employed by teachers in contiguous environments, and this may well be true (Lentell, 2003).

The programme expects students to have worked through a particular section of the course by doing the in-text tasks, and that they come to the tutorial ready to articulate their learning, and to apply it to different scenarios. Tutors are not expected to lecture the course material, but to facilitate various activities which provide opportunities for students to articulate their understanding and discuss issues with other students (Ukpo, 2006).

(Mills, 2003) indicated that tutorials and support services are important in answering the many needs students may have in distance education. Effective distance learning programs depend upon the good learning materials, effective student support and efficient logistics. Study materials must be distributed in a timely fashion, feedback on student performance should be communicated without delay in order to sustain student motivation and guide learning.

The crucial relationship for the student is that with their tutor who is there as an academic guide throughout the course. The tutor marks the student's assignments; offers correspondence teaching on the script as well as assessment; offers help and support by telephone and correspondence both written and electronic; and runs face-to-face group tutorials, which students are encouraged, but not compelled, to attend. Behind the tutor there is a raft of staff who gives academic, personal and administrative support, again by telephone, correspondence, and email or

via face-to-face meetings. Support materials and events, like learning skills workshops, are available and students are encouraged to make use of them. This support system has been in place from the start, but has been developed so as to be delivered by an increasing range of methods and technologies (Johnson & Barrett, 2003).

Early forms of student support were usually course-content based. The tutor became the human interface between the learner and the course package. Instructional support helped to personalize and humanize an essentially industrial model of education, the main feature of which was the mass production of instructional materials that could be efficiently disseminated to large numbers of students. As open and distance learning systems became a more common way for people to gain access to formal education, concern about learner success grew, along with interest in how it might be promoted (Brindley, 1995).

Tutorial methods allow learners and tutors to interact, so learners can benefit from the advice of tutors and get the most from their materials. At a minimum, in all learning systems ways have to be found to inform learners of who is their tutor; to inform tutors of who their learners are; and to enable learners and tutors to communicate (Common Wealth of Nations, 1999).

In distance education there are three different types of tutoring to be considered, namely the one actually provided at a distance (by some kind of correspondence or over the telephone), the one offered in recurrent, more or less regular personal consultations or tutorials supplementing distance study, for instance in regional study centers, and finally tutoring at concentrated residential refresher courses. Tutoring at a distance is by far the most important form of tutoring activity in distance education. It derives its particular importance from the fact that it is a basic component of the system of distance education whereas all kinds of contact with tutors physically present are contingent on special conditions (Holmberg, 1985). In case many students cannot or do not want to use their time for face-to-face sessions as long as they manage by means of non-contiguous communication. They prefer phoning (or writing to) their tutor to travelling, perhaps for an hour or more by car or train, to a tutorial (Gao, 2012).

As Lentell's view point tutoring is an undervalued activity in distance education. In most distance education provision tutors occupy a second class position and are on the periphery of

the academy, and this is true even when they may be prestigious academics elsewhere. This lowly status stems from the lack of significance attributed to teaching and supporting learning by academic staff in universities: research counts for much more. The employment position of tutors in most distance education provision part time and paid on some form of piece-work system gives them the precarious status of casual session staff. Inevitably the university committees and decision-making processes privilege those with permanent, full-time status (Lentell, 2003).

2.4.1.1.2- Assignments

According to Hussian, 2018 Assignment is an important feature of distance education. Writing an assignment develops creativity, critical thinking and analytical approach among students. There are certain compulsory assignments for each of the courses which a distance learner has to write and submit to the respective tutor according to the schedule. Generally, as a requirement, the learners have to submit two or four assignments according to the nature of the course. The tutor assesses the assignments, writes comments and sends back to the students. It is a type of formative assessment of distances for learners to record their performance continuously. The cumulative scores of assignments are credited to final evaluation of the learners (Hussian, 2018).

2.4.1.2- *Non-academic support/administrative support*

In distance education system, the second category of student support system is non-academic support, and it means other than the academic support (Kumari, 2018). This student support deals in terms of the organizational aspects of their studies. There are various examples given by which we can understand the type of support given to the learners; these are counseling services, course registration, orientation programmes, news bulletin and the student's association. The learner support system is an important service in distance education because through this support which is provided to the learners by educational institution because of the characteristics of distance learners, as these learners are isolated from their teachers as well as peer groups and also come from diverse backgrounds, for example, economic, social educational and occupational (Kumari, 2018).The provision of such an educational support to the learners ensures to facilitate easy communication between the teacher and the taught as well as academic

and other supporting staff like administrators which cater the administrative needs of the students (as Kember and Dekkers cited in Kumari, 2018).

Administrative support can be provided by making the use of technology like emails, sending messages to the learners or uploading the information on websites or passing it through newsletters, newspapers, radio, television, mobile, teleconferencing or through regional centers or learner support centers (Kumari, 2018).

2.4.1.2.1- Counseling

Counseling has been described as a ‘systematic exploration of self and/ or environment by a client with the aid of a counselor to clarify self- understanding and/or environmental alternatives so that behavior modifications or decisions are made on the basis of greater cognitive and affective understanding’ (Pratt, 2010). From the counselor’s point of view, Sewart divides the counseling function into four different groups of tasks: referral (to the proper agency), vocational (career planning), information provision, and coping with students’ personal study problems(Sewart, 1993).

Counseling is very much necessary in distance education system. The isolated distance learners always need the opportunity of face-to-face meeting with their peer groups and teachers. Counseling sessions are one of the best channels through which the learners interact freely with the counselors and peers and solve majority of their problems. It is, therefore, imperative on the part of distance education institutions to see that counseling classes are organized systematically and good counselors are entrusted with this noble cause. This will bring motivation to a great extent and help to satisfy the very purpose of distance education (Kumari, 2018).

There is much experience to show the importance of counseling services both of the types mentioned and frequently in the form of moral encouragement. Students need information about the paths of study that interests them, where they lead, and what they are like (Holmberg, 1985).

Learner problems that require referral to counselors include: financial difficulties; family problems; difficulty in maintaining motivation; problems in finding sufficient time to study; balancing conflicting commitments; and physical difficulties or barriers, including limited mobility, hearing, or sight impairment (Common Wealth of Nations, 1999).

In many cases they also wish to have access to personal advice both before their study decision and during their studies. The fact that distance students are usually on their own in their study, with the anxiety and problems that they encounter, makes it important for distance-teaching organizations to find ways to offer counseling service. As a rule, students are adults who have a job, social responsibilities, and often a family. A number of everyday circumstances influence their study. Many of them may need help to master difficulties that crop up as a result of their endeavors to combine study with their other commitments. Combinations of study difficulties and personal problems sometimes become so considerable that psychotherapeutic advice is necessary. Few distance-study organizations, unlike many conventional universities, are equipped to deal with difficulties of this kind (Holmberg, 1985).

Counseling includes supporting study skills which is helping students to develop effective study skills. A number of rules have been worded for what is sometimes called study technique. One rule of this kind tells students to read with pencils in their hands, to underline what seems important, to list key words, etc. This applies on condition that students are deep-level readers. The general rules that are frequently given about hygienic conditions for learning, for example requirements for sufficient sleep and exercise, healthy food, and fresh air, as well as reasonably undisturbed study (not too much noise, say) are uncontroversial (Holmberg, 1985).

Counseling is usually provided by correspondence, on the telephone and, where possible, face-to-face. The telephone plays a particularly important part in counseling at a distance. Proper advice must be based on knowledge not only of study paths and study methods but also of students' prerequisites, their formal and informal but real qualifications, and their hopes and wishes. In fact, counseling presentations in print, which inform would-be students (making them realize what their study situation, requirements, benefits, advantages, and problems are likely to be, if and when they register), have proved to be very valuable. There is much experience testifying to this in all parts of the world (Rumble, 2000).

In the field of teaching and learning process, motivation is one of the most important factors. As the distance learners are generally the adult learners and they are simultaneously engaged in various social and other economic activities while pursuing their studies. It is very difficult for them to sustain motivation for completion of their studies. But with lots of efforts and proper counseling, the motivation level of these learners can be restored. Without motivation, nobody

would like to spend their money and time to be successful in their studies. It is only the motivation by which the learners develop their interest to complete the programme. Motivation from distance teachers, tutors and counselors at various stages helps the learners overcome their difficulties and give up the idea of dropping out from the programme (Kumari, 2018).

On the other hand according to Tait (2000) in distance education student support services are a three-part system which namely are cognitive: services that cater for learning (academic) needs. These involve tutoring and assessment, affective: Services that cater for social and emotional needs and administrative: services involving the administration of the distance education system.

1. Cognitive: supporting and developing learning through the mediation of the standard and uniform elements of course materials and learning resources for individual students;
2. Affective: providing an environment which supports students creates commitment and enhances self-esteem;
3. Systemic: establishing administrative processes and information management systems which are effective, transparent and overall student-friendly.

These functions are both essential and interdependent. It can be argued that student support is primarily seen as to do with administrative process, often from the perspective of efficiency. But where this limited view governs, there will be a diminishment in the second function, relating to the extent to which a student feels committed and comfortable with the institution, and drop-out is more likely to occur. Equally however, an institution where administrative procedures or information management are ineffective, for example not being timely, or being obstructive through admitting no leeway or exceptions, then students will be pushed out. What is less often recognized is the cognitive function of student support, certainly where these services include tutoring and assessment. Such an understanding of the role of student support comes primarily out of social constructivist ideas that knowledge is in a real sense made and re-made by participation in learning. Where the support of students mediates teaching embodied in courseware, then it clearly relates to learning, and thus to cognitive outcomes. They also thus relate to the objectives of providing an environment where students feel at home, where they feel valued, and which they find manageable. In this way we can see that the three core functions are truly inter-related and interdependent (Tait, 2000).

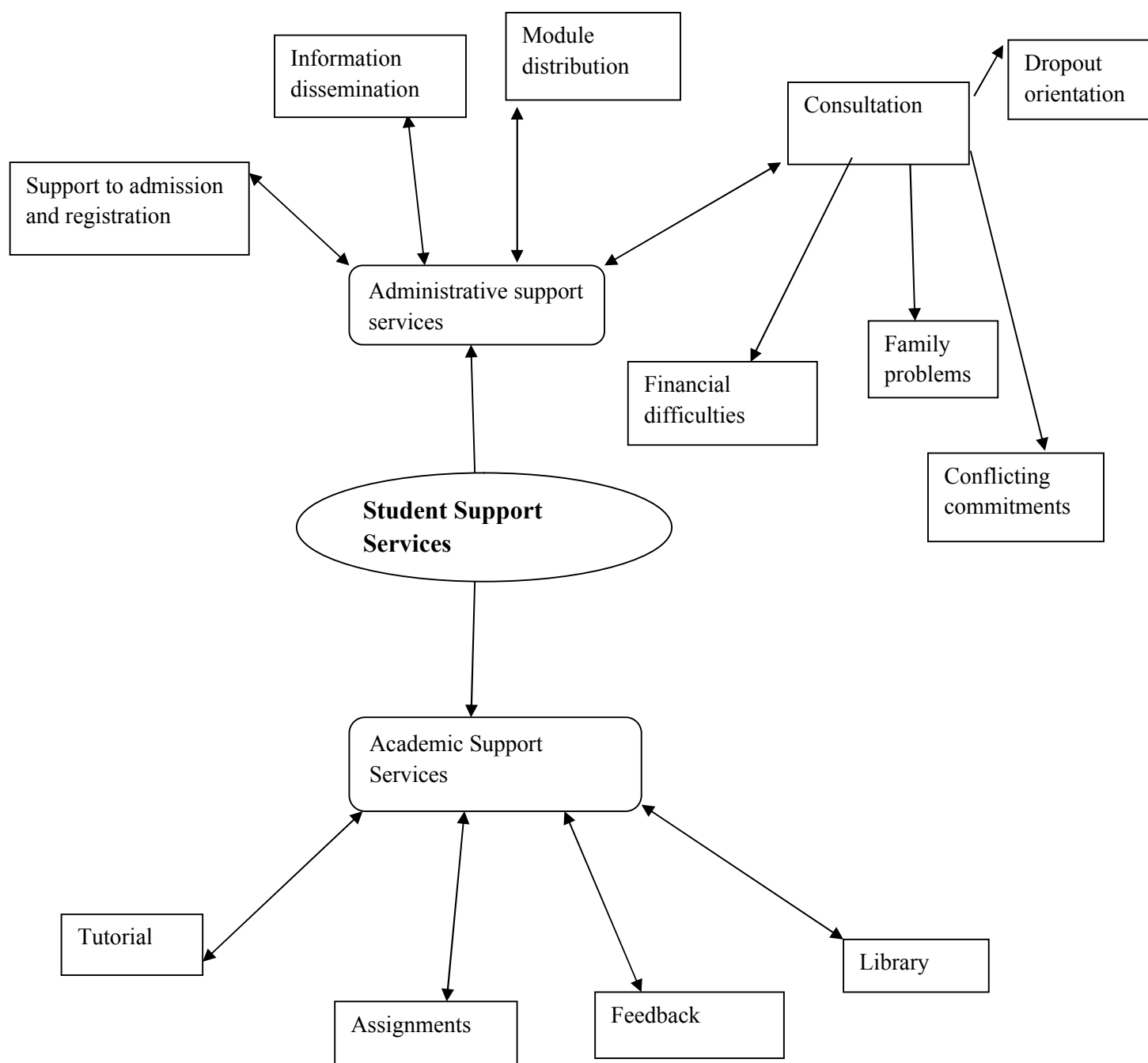


Figure 1- Conceptual framework of the study

Source- researcher's own conceptual frame work based on reading of literatures

2.5- Stages of student support in distance education

2.5.1- Support Services at Pre-admission or Pre-entry Stage

The pre-admission or pre-entry student support services facilitate prospective or potential learners and attract them to getting into the varsity. At pre-admission level, the potential learners need information on or about different programmes and/or courses offered by the distance education institution. They also want to know admission criteria, instructional and assessment processes, fees and dues, programme duration, etc. They need guidance on selection of academic programme (s) suitable for them and their career in future. The potential learners need a mix of information, advice and counseling services to getting into distance education university or institution (Hussian, 2018).

Accuracy and timely supply of information about the course and programme at the initial stage would help the learners decide about their strategies of learning. Timely admission, timely dispatch of study material, dispatch of counseling schedule and assignments submission schedule instill confidence in the learners and inspire them to study hard. If these services are not properly monitored, the students face difficulty and their performance level gets affected (Kumari, 2018).

Course choice is a critical process for the student and much of the Open University's advice and guidance is geared to helping students make the right choice. The consequence of such choice, however, means that not all students choose appropriately and sometimes find themselves on courses for which they do not have the prerequisite knowledge and skills. The Open University therefore provides preparatory advice and activities and a good deal of on course support in order to help students develop the necessary skills (Johnson & Barrett, 2003).

2.5.2- Support Services at Programme and/or Course Stage

This stage begins when a potential learner becomes formally a distance learner by getting admission in a certain programme or course(s). On completion of admission process, the correspondence study materials along with questions for assignments and guidelines for studying the materials and completing and submitting assignments are dispatched to the learners on their given addresses. As it is a self, independent and individualized study, therefore, at some point

during the study a distance learner may feel isolated and less motivated which may lead him/her to drop out. Some personal and non-academic problems may also arise from the situation and need facilitation. All such issues can be addressed through student support services (Hussian, 2018).

2.5.3- Support Services at Post-programme and/or Course Stage

This stage comes when a distance learner completes all requirements of the programme and/or course(s). At this stage, the learners need communication of final result, advice regarding and future prospects, and guidance and counseling on their future education or profession (Hussian, 2018).

2.6. Why student support?

In order to attract and retain students in today's competitive higher education system, academic institutions around the globe are devising innovative approaches to better support their students and to prevent attrition that has been reported in related studies to be worse off in ODL environments (Netanda et al., 2017). For instance, as (Netanda et al., 2017 cited in Tello 2018) attrition of students from face-to-face higher education institutions and that of ODL institutions and divulged that ODL institutions encounter higher attrition proportion than traditional face-to-face institutions.

Effective learning takes place through two-way communication between instructor and learner, whereas student support services play an instrumental role in initiating and maintaining two-way communication in instructional process (Hussian, 2018). Different activities are included in student support services including advising and counseling, orientation, individual or group tutoring, promoting learning and examination skills among learners, feedback on assessment and learning progress, career guidance and solving administrative problem logically (Tait, 2003). The main objective of support services appears to be motivating distance learners, helping them select right track of study, encouraging them in making appropriate use of educational facilities and facilitating their learning process to graduate successfully. The learner support services shape the pace of distance education and are regarded to be its basic components. These help

learners in accomplishing their educational objectives and realizing their academic requirements and learning needs (Hussian, 2018).

The learner support services play an important role in imparting quality education to distance learners, but their management is probably the toughest task. When a learner takes admission afresh in distance education system for the first time, he finds himself in an unfamiliar situation, because he has the experience of conventional education system where he receives the full-time support of the teacher in classroom. But in distance education system the course is completed by himself in the absence of a teacher. Another important factor is that the learners in this system are mostly adults and are basically part-time learners who are not sure of their capacities and capabilities.

As Potter 1998, cited in Gao (2012) learner support should have-a much broader meaning to cover-many forms of assistance. Its main function should be to clear up all kinds of learning obstacles in front of a student for their academic success, such as-situational, institutional, dispositional, and informational obstacles.

The provision of effective SSS in higher education institutions (HEIs) is vital, particularly in the ever- changing landscape of distance education. This is significant because HEIs are becoming increasingly competitive, and to stay successful in the market, they should provide quality education. This can be achieved through the provision of effective support services to students (their customers), failing which they would move to other institutions.

Providing support services to the distance learning population is an important part of creating the feeling of belonging for students who do not have access to traditional clues. They may include any or all of these: Record keeping and administration, pre-admission counseling, Admission and registration information-administrative assistance, Books dispatched by mail, library service, Tutoring and counseling, Weekend courses and study centers, Electronic communication technologies such as phones, radio, audio tapes, video, television, etc. With the advent of technology, the list keeps on growing as new innovations are made by the day, especially in the developed world (Usun, 2004).

Effective learning support system has constructive effects on student learning success in distance education. Effective learning support enhances student learning (Tefera, 2010). For making the

learners self-reliant, self-confident and independent, the print course material is to be provided to the learners. While evaluating the assignments which are submitted to the counselors, they write the constructive comments on the assignments which work as two-way didactic communication among the learners and counselors. During counseling, the students are helped to solve their problems related to their study (Kumari, 2018).

All of the supporting activities or services help distance learners to continue their studies through interaction with their faculty and fellow learners, and enhanced communication (as Hussian, 2018 cited in Simpson 2000). Distance learners need support services throughout the entire course of their studies. Even providing assistance to distance learners begins before admission when university announces admission in the media. These services include and range from local study centers, counseling and/or tutorial support to the solution of administrative problem (Hussian, 2018 cited in Rumble 1992) related to studies of distance learners. Student or learner support system in distance education is considered as a contributing factor in retention of students and their success in studies. Therefore, (Kishore 1998 in Hussian, 2018) asserted that learner support services determine the strength or weakness of universities and/or institutions offering distance education programmes. In this regard, learner support services become more significant in creating conducive to learning environment in distance education-facilitating learners in their learning process, motivating them to continue and complete their studies, encouraging their socialization by promoting teamwork and team spirit among them and improving academic standards of the programmes. Similarly, (Moaler et al. 2001 in Hussian, 2018), envisaged main objectives of such services as to helping distance learners in using learning package properly, making better choices of studies, reducing sense of isolation, providing access to learning resources and opportunities, and enhancing learner's interactions through technology-mediated experiences.

According to Möwes (2005) adult distance education students need support services that contribute to: maintaining or increasing student motivation; promoting effective study skills; generating a feeling of 'belonging' to the providing institution through, for example, contact with tutors and peers for both social and academic purposes; providing guidance through the study materials; providing access to resources; and providing answers to administrative queries.

The learning experience for them may be unpleasant experience as they have lost touch with their studies. In the system of distance education, the main purpose of the learner support services is to promote self-study or independent study, particularly in the absence of regular face-to-face contact. However, the process of learning through the mode of distance education system requires the interaction of the learners, both with the materials and with the teacher. The quality of the support system affects learning, and this is the basic rationale for the purpose of learner support services in the system of distance education (Kumari, 2018).

The assignment responses submitted by the learners must be assessed, evaluated and commented upon and returned in time. The purpose of assignments is to teach the learners effectively by giving them timely feedback on their strengths and their weaknesses. This feedback is helpful to the learners in tracking their own progress. The very aim of distance education is defeated if in time feedback on the evaluation of assignments is not provided to the learners (Kumari, 2018).

2.7. How student support systems are delivered?

The learner's support system in distance education mode can be defined to provide all the activities and facilities beyond the production of course material and further the delivery of the same which assist in the progress of the studies of the learners. These can be in the form of all types of facilities, provision of supplementary reading materials and references, administrative assistance, human interaction like interaction between teacher and learner, peer group interaction, advice and even moral support (Kumari, 2018).

In distance education effective learning takes place when students process the material they have studied, and completion of assignments and assimilation of the tutors' responses to them is an essential part of this learning. This is feedback and is a student-led exchange, in which the teaching starts with the student's work: it is individual tuition in the form of a dialogue between a single student and the tutor. Each student presents particular challenges and thus the tutor-student dialogue has to focus on different things accordingly for instance understanding the course, lack of appropriate skills required to demonstrate understanding, lack of presentational skills, etc. (Lentell, 2003).

In the system of distance education, support is provided to the learners in various ways. Generally, a mechanism is evolved by which support is provided to the learners at various stages, for example, pre-entry stage, during studies and post-study stage. In conventional education system, the learner gets maximum opportunities to interact with their teachers and friends, but in distance education mode, the distance between the student and teacher can be bridged by making the interaction through learner support centers and by making use of electronic and communication media (Hussian, 2018).

Distance education institutions approach learning support system for students differently, depending upon the characteristics of their distance students, the availability of technology, the capacity of the institutions, and the learning cultures and styles of students. Learning support for distance students can be provided in face-to-face mode and mediated mode, such as through printed material, telephone, audio/video, radio, television and computer (Aoki, 2012).

There are different tools for student support that distance education institutions use, including face-to-face tutorials, workshops, guidance and counseling, telephones, information and communication technologies (ICT), and audio-visual technologies (Arko-Achemfuor, 2017).

Student support systems have developed in many different ways. The general trend has been to increase the level and sophistication of support. Pre-enrolment counseling is now often more than the provisions of basic information on what courses are available; assistance in interpreting course information can lead to more involved and sensitive interaction between intending students and a distance education institution. Cross-institutional referral services add to the enrolment support. Learning support has developed from situations where students were left pretty well to themselves to cope with correspondence notes and associated assignment work. Tutors are encouraged to engage in meaningful two way communication with their students, in writing or via other media. Seminars, workshops and summer schools are being looked at more critically and, when appropriate and possible, alternative strategies, more suitable to the needs of students, are being used. Student-tutor interaction has also changed significantly. Once upon a time this involved students receiving materials, reading them, submitting written assignments and receiving marks in the form of alphas or numbers (Foks, 1988).

Natarajan 2005, distinguish between media-that is, generic forms of communication (text, face-to-face audio, video and, less clearly though arguably, computing)-and the various technologies that deliver them. These technologies, each with their own characteristics, enable communication to take place in various ways - one to one, one-to-a-group, one-to-many; synchronously (where reception occurs at the same time as delivery), or asynchronously; one-way (message out, nothing back), or two-way (allowing interactivity between the participants)(Natarajan, 2005).

The notion of learner support has been fundamental to the Open University and its systems. This support comprises a mixture of written materials, access to help and advice via the telephone (or latterly electronic means) and the opportunity for face-to-face meetings. Regional coordinating centers are responsible for allocating a tutor (a part-time academic) to a student, for organizing academic support and for providing advice and guidance (Johnson & Barrett 2003).

2.8. Learner Support and Learner Needs in Distance Education

Distance learners have special needs, which include: information to help learners relate to the institution and understand its system; contact with tutors to help maintain motivation and overcome learning problems; institutional identity, which is some means of helping learners identify with a remote institution and to feel that they are part of a body of learners rather than studying in isolation; advice on how to study; as well as that provided within the course itself, learners often need additional support to develop good study techniques (Asian development bank Bank and common wealth of nation, 1999).

It is an accepted fact that adult learners have certain psycho- social needs, which may not be met academically, but are nevertheless important to consider when planning a learning experience, some of these are need for kindness; need for recognition; need for new experiences; and need for exercising leadership, decision making and responsibility. It is therefore, through the identification of learner characteristics that program organization can establish, the learning need of the target group of any given program, content and methodology to be used (Tefera, 2010).

It is accepted by all the educators that the responsibility of learning is in the hands of the learners. The support which is provided to the learners should be learner-centered and meets the learners' expectations and needs. For achieving the educational and personal goals, the learners

themselves are well aware or are in the best position to know what kinds of support systems are important. It is pertinent to mention here that distance education learners are adults and they are in the best position to determine quality according to their individual needs (Kumari, 2018 cited in Mellroy and Walker 1993).

Openness and student centeredness have been in place from the start of the Open University but so, also, have the needs of the learner. It has always been understood that students need access not only to high quality course materials, but also to a wide range of support materials and strategies to enable them to become successful independent learners in an increasingly complex system of open and distance education. If the core of learner needs and support has remained much the same, then the methods of addressing these needs and delivering support has not (Johnson & Barrett, 2003). Adequate student support services in DE should meet or exceed an individual student's needs and expectations (Nsamba, 2016).

Learner services should take into consideration the unique and changing needs of the students being served and the institutional context, and should be revised as appropriate to accommodate changes in student population, the institution, and the environment. Only in this way can an institution be truly responsive to its clientele (Brindley, 1995).

Distance Education system is never something apart from students and their needs. Rather it is the means by which these needs are met and the distance education system which thinks of its existence as something apart from the students will fail to recognize significant problems of the students and the Distance Educational system will not be in a position to deliver the goods (Tefera, 2010).

In considering student support service institutions should begin with students' needs. Identifying and understanding the implications of such needs requires prior knowledge about the characteristics of the student body as a whole. Distance educators stress the heterogeneity of their student body. This diversity is borne out by the extensive surveys that many institutions carry out on their students, in order to establish their distribution by age, gender, geographical location, social class, income, educational background, employment status, language abilities, home circumstances, access to communications and technology and physical disability (Rumble, 2000).

Systems and procedures for learning support system focus on meeting the needs of distance students living in diverse conditions and different circumstances. The aim of systematic learning support in distance education is to facilitate quality student learning process suited to students' learning needs and flexibility, and ensure that students proceed their learning activities through access to various means of learning support (Tefera, 2010).

Distance education institutions approach learning support system for students differently, depending upon the characteristics of their distance students, the availability of technology, the capacity of the institutions, and the learning cultures and styles of students. Learning support for distance students can be provided in face-to-face mode and mediated mode, such as through printed material, telephone, audio/video, radio, television and computer (Tefera, 2010).

The learner support system of any distance education institution varies from institution to institution. In general the support services broadly address the following needs of the learners: (IGNOU, 2012)

1. Information support: Learners should be provide all necessary information prior to admission of their course so that they can make appropriate decisions about their studies and also have access to all resources and support services. This includes information about various programmes, admission criteria, eligibility, fees structure, study material, evaluation system and other support services provided by the institution during course of study.
2. Institutional support: Information about the academic support, who are the academic counselors, where the counseling sessions both theory and practical would be held, provisions of assignments, provision of practical for practical based programmes, use of audio visual aids, teleconferencing, interactive radio counseling facilities etc.
3. Learning centers: Where the students will have the access to the library facility, counseling facilities, submission and evaluation of assignment, term end examinations and other general support.
4. Feed back: Provide feedback to course material developers and to the students on assignment responses.

Institutional perspectives of learner support will either view student support as 'an essential integral component of the teaching/learning system', and as a result build it in and make it complementary to the teaching system; or it will view student support as 'compensatory, regarding students as having deficits in learning that need to be fixed', and establish specialists 'who will relieve tutors of their responsibility for meeting student needs'. Services that are built-in tend to be more robust because it is the students who drive the extent to which the service is used (Rumble, 2000).

2.9- Student support service and learners satisfaction

Student satisfaction assists HEIs to attract new students and retain current ones, improve their overall performance, and increase students' progression rates and employability (Sharyn, 2013). Therefore, HEIs, particularly the ODL institutions should provide effective support services that meet the unique needs of students, enhance their learning experience and academic success, and empower them to be self-directed lifelong learners (Tefera, 2010).

As Möwes, 2005 cited in Nonyongo (1993) endorses that materials writing, support for learning, ongoing analysis of needs and the administration of support services as sub-systems of distance education, are seen to be organically connected, to decrease transactional distance and to promote responsiveness between providers and students.

Even though distance education has been widely adopted in many countries, there is “an elephant in the room of distance education”(Woodley & Simpson, 1974), namely a high dropout rate. In order to tackle this problem, ODL institutions should provide effective support services to meet the needs of academically underprepared students promote student persistence and optimize academic success. Ensuring that learners have access to education is not sufficient to promote equality of educational opportunities unless sound student support is provided.

The effectiveness of any open and distance learning programme is dependent on an institution's responsiveness to its students' needs and expectations. This belief calls for an integrated student support system that is continuously modified and refined as institutional and government policies and procedures change and new student needs and expectations emerge (Möwes, 2005).

Distance learners need support services for their guidance and retention in the system. They need support services at different stages of their study including before/pre-admission stage or pre-entry into distance education, the programmes and/or course stage and the post-programme and/or course stage (as Manjulika and Reddy 1996 cited in Hussian, 2018).

2.10- Challenges related to student support system

Distance education institutions are confronted with limitations in the use of many forms of learning support for students (Tefera, 2010). Distance students need considerable support since they do not attend classes on a daily basis like fulltime students. However, one significant challenge facing distance institutions is the provision of convenient and effective support services for isolated students (Brindley, 1995).

Despite the expanding growth of ODL and its benefits, students who enroll with ODL have been shown to face many challenges related to individual, institutional and instructional (Musingafi et al., 2015). Cross (1981 cited by Musingafi et al., 2015) identified three distinct categories of challenges facing ODL students: Situational, institutional and dispositional. According to Cross, situational challenges include job and home responsibilities that reduce time for study. Institutional related challenges include poor logistics system or a lack of appropriate advising. Dispositional challenges are related to learners' own attitudes and feelings.

Garland (2007) also identified some situational challenges for students to be persistence in distance learning. These include poor learning environment and lack of time. For example, students felt that the course took more time than anticipated because they failed to judge the demands of work, home and school. As Kember 1989 cited in Musingafi et al., 2015 poor time management leads to challenges such as learners' inability to integrate the demands of off campus study with family, work and social commitments

As timely delivering information regarding with different issues in distance education is considered as one of the key area in student support, ODL also presents new challenges in information dissemination, especially in developing countries. Moss berger et al (2003) cited by Musingafi et al.(2015) observes that technical competence needed in order to have effective access to contemporary ICT is a challenge to distance learners. Technical competence refers to

the skills needed to operate the hardware and software of ICT, including the skills of using networked systems to access and share information (Warschauner 2003 cited in Musingafi et al., 2015). Lack of these skills is a critical challenge as learner may fail to use the various services involved ICT.

According to Musingafi et al.(2015) challenges in distance education divides in to three. Namely individual related challenges which include lack of sufficient time for study distance from home to the regional centre, financial constraints, lack of support from family, employer, friends, unfavorable home learning environment, difficulties in learning technically demanding material (both lack of experience in the application of technology and absence of these technologies), lack of experience and/or training with instructional technologies, conflicts between family /Work and study schedule and socio- economic challenges like travelling distance and its accompanied expenses. Related with the personal factors learning style, personal situation, ICT skills, confidence and attitude (Webster & Hackley, 1997 cited in Arko-Achemfuor, 2017) and familiarity (Mason & Bacsich, 1998 cited in Arko-Achemfuor, 2017); background knowledge, motivation, effectiveness of teaching, communication with staff and between students, time to study and access to ICT support affects student support service in distance learning institutions. Students come from diverse backgrounds ranging from school leavers to mature adult learners also have an influence on student support. Their circumstances equally differ in their economic situations, social backgrounds as well as the areas of residence.

The second one is instructional related challenges facing ODL students which include delayed/ineffective feedback from the Instructors (this can add burden to learners who are struggling with the isolation and the remoteness nature of distance learning), lack of instructor's contact and inadequate academic support, difficulty in attending face to face, Poor course material design/inappropriate learning materials, unhelpful course information and lack of direction, issue of dissatisfaction with lecturers and tutors performance (most tutor lecturers are described as ineffective).

The third and last one is challenges related with distance education institutions including delayed study materials, difficulty in administrative services such as registering and paying fee, lack of an effective institutional network of technical assistance, lack of responsiveness from regional

centre / headquarter administrative staff, lack of appropriate students services support and delayed important information.

In the delivery of learner support service gaps are surveyed by Arko-Achemfuor (2017). The finding indicates that there are serious problems for students in accessing the student support services. The challenges that students face in accessing the support services include economic constraints, social factors, physical barriers and institutional administrative problems. In the side of distance education institutions, although most of the support services are in place at the institution and at its regional offices, some of the students, most especially those in the rural areas, are not able to access the support services adequately, which impacts negatively on their studies and learning experiences.

2.11- Current trends of Student support

Over the past decade, but particularly since the rise of the World Wide Web, the nature of student support in developed countries has changed considerably. Programs based on printed materials have traditionally relied on support in various ways; these include regular tutorial sessions, other regular face-to-face contact, telephone tutoring, detailed feedback on Tutor Marked Assignments, formal and informal study groups and support from partners, family and friends (Asbee and Simpson, 1998; Tait, 2000 in Corry & Lelliott 2003).

As Tait's suggestion on student support system there is 'no universal blueprint for the establishment of student support systems', and that any system will depend on a wide range of variation across the elements that comprise the support (Tait, 2000).

While the recent literature on learner support emphasizes the usefulness of technology-based systems, and consider that for many learners, especially but not exclusively those in developing countries, such support practices are inappropriate, costly and unattainable. On-line support includes the use of software tools, automated (and tutor marked) feedback on performance, technical support, as well as more traditional supervision by tutors. However, tutors, instead of providing regular (weekly or monthly) face-to-face sessions for their tutor group, are now challenged to provide 'instant' feedback to their tutees, resulting in excessive time demands and 'interaction fatigue' (Mason, 2001 in Corry & Lelliott 2003).

With the provision of print course material, audio–video cassettes and use of other electronic media, use of educational technology plays an important role in the present days for providing direct communication to the distant learners. ICT plays an important role for the purpose of delivery of student support services effectively and efficiently. It has become inevitable for the distance learners that they may be benefitted by this technology. Distance education institutions also notice the shift from mass produced generic resources to tailored personalized support and communications. This is prevalent in the context of globalization of the economy and the changing expectations of students as consumers (Kumari, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1- Research paradigm

Paradigms play a fundamental role in social sciences. Accordingly, a paradigm refers to the established research traditions in a particular discipline or a philosophical framework (Cohen et al., 2007). Specifically, a paradigm would include the accepted theories, traditions, approaches, models, frame of reference, body of research and methodologies; and it could be seen as a model or framework for observation and understanding (Creswell, 2007).

In such sciences, paradigms affect the practice of research and therefore, they need to be stated. As Creswell (2012) the paradigm of pragmatism applies to mixed methods research in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research. Thus, for the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis. Standing with this point of view the researcher will depend on pragmatism paradigm of research. It is the conviction of the researcher that for the purpose of this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies had to be used in order to follow a suitable research plan and to gather the necessary data that would answer the research questions of this study.

3.2- Research Approach

Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation and the selection of a research approach is based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed (Creswell, 2007). The general objective of this study was to examine the practice and challenges of student support system in private distance education institution. In order to conduct this study the researcher employs mixed method research approach. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative

and qualitative data and integrating the two forms of data by the core assumption of the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. (Mckim, 2015) argued that mixed method design is important in terms of increasing validity of results as it enables to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon than studies that do not utilize both quantitative and qualitative approach. The main rationale to conduct a mixed methods study is when one type of research (qualitative or quantitative) is not enough to address the research problem or answer the research questions(Creswell, 2012).

3.3- Research Design

The researcher employed descriptive survey research design supported with mixed research approach. Descriptive research design was selected due to its function to describe the existing facts, behaviors and situations of a given phenomena and practice of events. Concerning this, Kothari (2004) assert that the major purpose of descriptive research is describing the state of affairs as it exists at present.

Scholars argued that there are different mixed research approaches. (Creswell, 2012) divided mixed research approach in to six based on the weight the researcher give to the qualitative and quantitative data, the sequence of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, how data is analyzed and the stage when both data types will be mixed. These designs are convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, embedded design, transformative design and multiphase design. Among these six designs, this study uses convergent mixed method design. A basic rationale to use this design is, as Creswell, (2012) suggested, one data collection form (quantitative or qualitative) supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form.

3.4- Sources of Data

There are two sources of data in research. Primary sources of data refer to information obtained first hand by the researcher on the variables of interest for the specific purpose of the study. In this study distance education program coordinating office staffs and distance learners in Alpha University College are used as primary sources of data. Whereas Secondary data sources are information gathered from sources already existing and annual plans, minutes and reports are used as a secondary data source in this study.

3.5- Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

Non-probability sampling techniques were employed in order to select the appropriate sample to the study. First, the researcher took one private distance education institution by using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, as the name suggests, is done with a purpose, which means that selection of sampling units is purposive in nature. Purposive sampling can be very useful for situations where the researcher need to reach a targeted sample quickly and where a random process of selection or proportionality is not the primary concern (Singh, 2007). Based on this, the first and prior private distance education institution in Ethiopia Alpha University College was used as the sample of the study because of the researcher's belief that experienced institutions can implement the support systems well when it is compared with inexperienced ones.

Alpha University College Gondar branch has three coordinating centers including the main coordinating center (Gondar branch). The two others are Debark and Debre-Tabour centers which are administered under the main coordinating office (Gondar coordinating office). Out of the 3 distance education centers, the researcher selected 1 center, Gondar coordinating office, by using convenience sampling technique based on its geographical proximity. Because Gondar coordinating office served as a main office for the two coordinating offices and the target population are homogeneous. That is, that there would be no difference in the research results obtained from a nearby sample or a sample gathered in some inaccessible part of the population like Debre-Tabour and Debark centers. .

In Gondar coordinating office; center coordinator, resource center and exam issue expert, registrar expert, accountant and center secretary were selected by using through comprehensive sampling technique.

The population of this study purposely consists of third year undergraduate students enrolled in various degree programmes offered by Alpha University college Gondar branch. This is because of their stay for three years in the institutions so that they can provide resourceful information about the program. To determine the sample size of the graduate class distance learners out of the target population, available sampling technique were used based on availability at a given time. The population of the study was 253 graduate class distance learners in Alpha University

College and until the exam date of learners and data collection date of the researcher, the researcher aimed to use all graduate class distance learners in the study. But the available 134 was used as a sample in Gondar branch coordinating center. The reason for using availability sampling technique is that due to the pandemic of COVID 19 there were no tutorial classes and the exam was also undertaken as a home take. Due to that all distance learners are not attend in the institution and so many delegated individuals come to the center to take and submit the home take exams. Thus to use the available graduate class distance learners in the center, the researcher forced to use availability sampling technique to select the sample size of distance learners.

Table 1: Population, sample and sampling technique

Population of the study	Total	samples	Sampling technique
Alpha University distance education coordinating centers	3	1	Convenience sampling technique
Graduate class distance learners	253	134	Available sampling technique
Center staffs	Coordinators(1)	1	Comprehensive sampling
	Resource center(1)	1	Comprehensive sampling
	Registrar officer(1)	1	Comprehensive sampling
	Secretary(1)	1	Comprehensive sampling
	Accountant (1)	1	Comprehensive sampling

3.6- Data Collection Instruments

The researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments so as to collect the relevant data from the sample respondents.

Prior to the construction of the research instrument, the researcher reviewed the literature and examined a variety of research instruments to determine whether there were existing standard instruments that could be used to gather the necessary information for this study. However, the review of existing instruments did not uncover appropriate instruments that could be adopted for this study. The reviewed instruments were either constructed to evaluate one type of support service or they were designed for distance education students in different instructional issues. Consequently, the researcher found it necessary to design her own instruments to suit the present study.

3.6.1- Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used as a major data collection instrument to collect data from sample distance learners. The instrument is selected since it enables to ask questions to ascertain people's thoughts about, and feeling towards issues, events, behaviors and so on (Tharenou, Donohue & Cooper, 2007). The questionnaire was mainly close ended as it provides greater uniformity of response and easy to process. Thus the questionnaire was divided into six sections. The first section elicited general background information with 6 items; the second section was about the implementation of student support system in terms of frequency with 29 items; the third section was about providers of support services with 6 items, the fourth section contains 8 items to evaluate modes of delivery to address support systems; the fifth section of the instrument set 29 evaluation items regarding with the learners satisfaction towards the support services and the last section was about challenges of student support service with 22 items. However, some open-ended items was included to allow the participant to provide more data in the way they want (Etikan & Bala, 2017) and to get new information or perspective in relation to the issue. Therefore 4 open ended items were included in the questioner.

3.6.2- Interview

Interview is the most widely used data collection instrument in qualitative research(Creswell, 2007, Creswell, 2012, Merriam, 2009). It helps to draw out views, opinions, problem and expectations concerning the issues supposed to be studied as it provides direct access to individual's perception and experience (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study interview was used to collect data from distance education center coordinator, resource center and exam issue expert, registrar officer, accountant and secretary as well as 10 distance learners. An interview was used to address issues that were not being address through questionnaire. Among the three types of interviews (unstructured, semi-structured and structured), this study was employed semi-structured interview as it enables to elicit the interviewees' ideas and opinions on the topic of interest, as opposed to leading the interviewee toward preconceived choices (Merriam, 2009).

3.6.3- Observation

Observation can be employed in both quantitative and qualitative researches. Quantitative observation is systematic and structured in form, whereas qualitative observation is unstructured (Given, 2008). In this study, observation protocol was prepared to record information before the

observation take place. The observation protocol was contained a descriptive and reflective note side by side. Permission was requested from the center coordinator to observe; what the actual student support system looks like such as the computer they use for data base, the announcement boards they use for information delivery, the library services and interaction of learners and distance education institution. One of the main reasons to conduct observation is to record behavior as it is happening and when fresh perspective is needed (Merriam, 2009).

3.6.4- Document Review

Document review as data gathering tool was also used in this study to have pertinent data concerning the issue under the study in order to substantiate the data obtained by questionnaire and interview. This document was including the annual plan and report of the University College, student handbooks, minutes and computer data bases to answer the first basic question in terms of the institution plan to deliver student support service and in what way the support services are addressed. In relation to the challenge of student support service instructional materials adequacy was evaluated by the standard of easiness to understand (with the course objective, clear explanations, chronologically arranged chapters, spaces for taking notes, illustrations and graphics ,tutor marked assignments, activities with the time limit and chapter summaries). In addition to the content the layout also evaluated by the font size of the texts and printed form (black and white form) because of as the clients are adult learners the font size matters them as they face physical difficulties like unable to read small font sizes.

3.7- Validity and Reliability

The validity of any research is highly dependent on the quality of instruments that employed for data collection. Thus, to have valid research results, data collection instruments need to be well developed based on essential development process. To ensure the quality of questionnaire, as (Creswell, 2012) recommended the researchers to follow the following six fundamental stages: (1) identifying first thought of the items from the literature (2) formulation of the first draft of the questionnaire, (3) face validity of the questionnaire, (4) pre-test of the questionnaire and (5) piloting of the questionnaire, and (6) adoption of the questionnaire. Similarly, to ensure the quality of the questions, which will be developed for interview, as it has developed, will be provided for experts for comments.

3.6.1- Validity

Validity refers to the ability of an instrument to measure what one intends it to measure. In other words it describes the extent to which we measure what we purport to measure (Teherdoost, 2016). However, according to Coletn and Covert (2007), an instrument is or is not intrinsically valid, as validity is a characteristic of the responses. Consequently, it is important to pretest the instrument to obtain preliminary data that can be used to assess validity. As one of its important aspect according to Gronlund (1988:136), “validity is expressed by degree (high, medium and low)” (cited in (Endawoke, 2005). That is, a measure cannot be categorized as valid or invalid in absolute term, but only as a matter of degree. Therefore, before the actual data was collected, items constructed by the researcher were evaluated by the research advisor and four staff members (1 from EdPM, 1 from SNIE and 2 from AECD) departments to get their professional judgment on the face and content validities of items constructed by the researcher. Based on the comments provided from those evaluators mentioned above, the researcher made some modification on the contents of some of the questionnaire items.

3.6.2- Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which an instrument produces the same information at a given time or over a period of time (Coletn and Covert, 2007) (Colten and Covert, 2007). Reliability tells the consistency of measurement that we employ. Thus, after some correction has made on items for their validity, pilot study was conducted to be sure about the reliability levels of items. For instance on the developed instrument some unnecessary and vague questions like occupation of the respondents, relevancy of the support services, learners year of attending in the institution were discarded because they were not related with the basic questions. The pilot study was held in Admas University College only by participating 25 students. In order to assess the reliability (internal consistency) of the instrument, Cronbach’s Alpha (α) analysis was conducted for the piloted items under the three themes of the basic research questions of the study. Therefore, for the three basic research questions which were related to the implementation of student support service, learners satisfaction in student support service and the challenges of student support services, the reliability test was found to be $\alpha = .71$, $.76$ and $.75$ respectively. Thus the results are acceptable and the questioners are reliable to collect data from sample population.

After the reliability of the items were checked by the pilot study result as it is mentioned above and little modifications on some ambiguous words in statements, the actual data were collected from 134 sample distance learners.

3.8- Data Collection Procedures

In this study both the qualitative and quantitative data types were collected concurrently. Thus there were assistants to gather the data from distance learners in the coordinating office. Before directly let each participant to fill questionnaire and to be interviewed, both data gathering instruments was designed in English language in relation to the basic questions. After, taking comments from advisor and colleagues the questionnaires were translated in to Amharic aimed to overcome language difficulties in the side of distance learners. The researcher was briefly introduced herself and the purpose of the study for each research participants before they agree to voluntarily participate in the study. Qualitative data was collected by Amharic language from coordinating center staffs and 10 early comer distance learners, then the coding and transcribing was done properly. In the last interpretation was done by composing the data obtained from questioner, interview, observation and document analysis.

3.9- Data Analysis Techniques

The choice of data analysis depends on several factors such as type, nature, shape of the distribution of a variable and the study design adopted to collect information about variables (Singh, 2007). This study employed descriptive survey research design; hence for the quantitative data collected by five point's Likert scale questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for the purpose of data analysis. Percentage and frequency count were used to analyze the demographic data's of participants, the methods to address support services and providers of student support service. Whereas, frequency of student support, learner's satisfaction and the challenges they face in the system of student support were analyzed by one sample t-test. One way ANOVA and independent t-test were also used to show whether there is statistically significance mean difference among learners concerning on challenges of student support system based on their sex, age, residence, income level, marital status and educational background. Independent t-test was used to analyze those demographic variables with two groups such as sex, residence and marital status whereas; one way ANOVA was employed to analyze variables such as age, income level and educational

background with more than three groups. All these analysis procedures were done through the support of SPSS version 23. As Creswell, (2012), in convergent parallel design, a side by-side analysis is possible, and hence, the themes emerging from the qualitative data was used to compare the statistical analysis and vice versa. In doing so the researcher analyzed qualitative data with the quantitative one in parallel.

3.10- Ethical considerations

As Creswell (2007) suggested, there are many ethical considerations during the process of research. These ethical issues generally can be seen in terms of respecting participants; protecting the participants from any kind of harm; and conducting and reporting the research in well manner. Foremost, each respondent was informed about the objectives of the study to know whether they are voluntary to participate in the study. The decision to participate in this study was entirely up to participants' willingness. Sensitive questions, which probably make participants uncomfortable, were not asked so as not to harm a participant. Anonymity is one of essential ethical issue in research. In this study, no information about participants' identity was disclosed. The records of this study are kept in a locked file and information are coded and secured using a password protected file to make it strictly confidential. According to Creswell (2007), ethical consideration is not only considering issues related to research participants but also it includes soundness of conducting and reporting the research appropriately. Hence, this study is free from bias and plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Analysis

In order to present the results of this study as a logical fashion as possible, it was necessary firstly, to refer to the demographic details of the respondents; secondly, to report on the implementation of student support service; thirdly, students satisfaction on student support services; fourthly; examining the challenges of student support service that students face, and fifthly the relationships and differences between demographic variables and challenges that can hinder the student support services. In the process of data analysis the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (such as one sample t-test, independent t-test and one way ANOVA), whereas, the qualitative data were analyzed through verbal narration. Tables have been used in most instances for clarity, ease of understanding and interpretation

4.1.1- Background Information of Respondents

In order to provide clear image about the respondents involved in the study some major characteristics of them were presented

Table 2: Background Information of distance learners

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of Respondents	Male	68	50.7%
	Female	66	49.3%
	Total	134	100.0%
Age of respondents	20-30	70	52.2%
	31-40	41	30.6%
	41-50	23	17.2%
	Total	134	100%
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	14.9%
	Diploma holder	80	59.7%
	others	34	25.4%
	Total	134	100%
Marital status	Single	51	38.1%

	Married	83	61.9%
	Total	134	100.0%
Residence	Rural	44	32.8%
	Urban	90	67.2%
	Total	134	100%
Monthly income	No income	16	11.9%
	Up to 1500	33	24.6%
	1501-3000	40	29.9%
	3001-4500	24	17.9%
	Above 4501	21	15.7%
	Total	134	100%

According to the data in Table 2, from the total of 134 research participants, 50.7% were males and the rest 49.3% were females. Concerning their age, 52.2% of the respondents were 20-30 years range, 30.6% were between 31-40 age range and the rest 17.2% were between the ranges of 41-50. This implies that the majority of distance learners are around the age range of 20-30, a young adulthood stage. With regard to educational background of participants 14.9% of the respondents were grade 12 completers, 59.7 % were diploma holders and the rest 25.4% were others (degree holders and they were joined to alpha university college to study other departments which are competent in labour market). Regarding with this in the demographic variable (Möwes, 2005) study also stressed that many mature aged students enter university after long periods away from study, without the requisite skills to ensure their success. Therefore, in her study responses to qualifications obtained by students reveal that more than half of the respondents had a teaching diploma or a teaching diploma with further qualifications.

Their marital status showed that 38.1% were single, 61.9% were married and there was no widowed and divorced respondent in this study. This implies that, most of the respondents (above 50% of the sample) were married and having different responsibility in relation to their social life. In this respect, Möwes (2002) similarly found that students considered that their families, jobs and other commitments exerted a significant influence on the number of study hours available as well as on the conditions under which they study. Regarding with their place of residence, 32.8% of respondents were from rural and 67.2 % were from urban area (centers of zone and woreda).

Concerning with monthly income of participants 11.9% were with no income, 24.6% were the monthly income of 1-1500 ETB, 29.9 % were with the income of 1501-3000, 17.9% were with the 3001-4500 and the rest 15.7 % were above the monthly income of 4501 ETB.

4.1.2- The practice (Implementation) of student support service

In the evaluation of student support system, the overall implementation status was examined from three perspectives; support systems in terms of frequency, providers of each support service and the use of various modes of student support service delivery.

4.1.2.1- How often the institution does provide students support services for learners?

To measure the implementation of student support service based on their frequency , Students were asked to respond in terms of a five-point rating scale ranging from always (1) to never(5). The statements covered several aspects relevant to measure the frequency of various student support services available to distance education students enrolled at Alpha University College. These statements were grouped into two categories of student support services, namely administrative support and academic support services. Most of the respondents reflected their rating on the frequencies of student support services by either rarely, never or occasionally with the statements. Very few respondents indicated their rating on the frequency of student support services by either always or often with some statements. The statistics result of their responses is summarized in the table below.

4.1.2.1.1- Practice of administrative support services

In the distance learning context, the availability of administrative support services are the key to students' success. The availability of such services such as providing adequate information, facilitating the process of admission, application and registration and distribution of course materials among administrative support services has the potential of enabling learning transactions that satisfy learners' academic needs (Arko-Achemfuor, 2017).

Table 3: One sample T-test result on the frequency of administrative support service

No	Items	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
1	Administrative support services: the institution								
1.1	Provides adequate information for students when they come for application	2.75	.994	-2.955	133	.004	-.254	-.42	-.08
1.2	Provides services like attaching the relevant documents and giving ID card during registration	2.84	.830	-2.185	133	.031	-.157	-.30	-.01
1.3	Notifies students when it changes its address	1.99	.555	-21.007	133	.000	-1.007	-1.10	-.91
1.4	Notifies the exam center timely	4.28	1.242	11.962	133	.000	1.284	1.07	1.50
1.5	Informs students about examination procedures (requirements for sitting on the exam) timely	2.94	.763	-.905	133	.367	-.060	-.19	.07
1.6	Notifies the deadline to submit assignments and TMA ¹ to students on time	3.88	1.393	7.318	133	.000	.881	.64	1.12
1.7	Distributes educational materials to students in a timely manner	1.41	.834	-22.073	133	.000	-1.590	-1.73	-1.45

*statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Note: **M**: mean **SD**: standard deviation **T**: table value **df**: degree of freedom

In the above table the results show that, in item number 1, there is a statistically significant difference between observed mean (2.75) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of -.254 (condition, $t(133) = .994, p = .004$). This implies that Alpha University College gives adequate and enough information for students during their application rarely.

With regard to supporting learners during the registration process, the mean score of the respondents were 2.84. The one sample t-test result showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the observed mean (2.84) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of -.157 (condition, $t(-2.185), df(133), p = .031$). This indicates that the university college rarely provides services like attaching the relevant documents and giving ID card during learner's registration. In the item of informing students about examination procedures (requirements for

¹ Tutor Marked Assignment

sitting on the exam), the mean score was 2.94 and the expected mean was 3. In this case there was no statistically significant difference between the observed mean and the expected mean with a p value of ($P=.367$) and the University College informs examination procedures occasionally.

With respect to the issue of adequate information provision by the institution during learners registration and application, the result of the interview with distance learners confirmed that adequate information is provided for learners occasionally: Accordingly DL9 said that:

when the service of information provision is compared with other services like module distribution, counseling and tutorial services, the institution performs better and gives us adequate information about the schedules of exam and tutorial, registration date and the required documents for first time applicants as well as grading and examination procedures in the University College.

On the issue of informing students when the institution changes its address, the mean score of the respondents was 1.99. The one sample t-test result showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the observed mean (1.99) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of -1.007 (condition, $t (.555)$, $df (133)$, $p=.000$). This indicates that the university provides the service of informing change of address in a rarely manner.

On the listed items under administrative supports the respondents report their answer only on the two items always and often. On the issue of notifying the exam center the mean score of the respondents were 4.28 and there was a statistically significant difference between the observed mean (4.28) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of 1.284 (condition, $t (1.242)$, $df (133)$, $p=.000$). The result indicated that the institution always notifies the exam center timely. On the notification of the deadline to submit assignments and TMA the mean score was 3.88 and there was statistically significant difference with the value of $P=.000$. This indicates that the institution often notifies the assignment submission date.

In administrative support services, almost all the students complain the issue of course materials distribution. The one sample t-test result shows that, there was a statistically significant mean difference between the observed mean (1.41) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of -1.590 (condition, $t (-22.073)$, $df (133)$, $p=.000$). Thus the result indicates that Alpha

University College never distributes educational materials in a timely manner. Besides to the one sample t-test result, one third year student on the interview said that:

The tuition fee of the institution is very high. It's around 150 birr per credit hour. We know that it includes the cost of course modules. But from 2011 up to now I have taken the modules once a time. I asked them what the reason behind in the shortage of course materials. They replied that the cost of paper, duplication and ink is very expensive.

In addition to the information obtained from distance learners through questioner and interview, I have also made an interview with the center coordinator in Alpha University College coordinating office with regard to the administrative support systems available and their frequency of implementation. Accordingly, center coordinator responded that:

I don't think that we have provided effective administrative support for our learners. The head office of this coordinating center is located in Addis Ababa and all the directions are stated by the head office. In the center level to support our students, we deliver on time information for our learners on the issues of exam centers, assignment submission dates, and registration schedule and also we distribute the available course modules for our learners as much as possible.

Table 4: One sample t- test result on cumulative administrative support services

	Test Value = 21							
	M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Administrative support services	20.097	3.639	-2.872	133	.005	-.90299	-1.5249	-.2811

As shown in the table above, the cumulative one sample t test value on the administrative support services, indicated that administrative service were not implemented frequently. The actual value of the result were (M=20.097, SD=.3.639; $t(133) = -2.872$, $P = .005$).

4.1.2.1.2- Counseling support services

Counseling is one of the student support system (SSS) in educational setting. The practice of counseling is seen to be of more important in distance learning system; this is due to the nature of the study under open and distance learning system and method of delivery. Counseling can help distance learners to realize the instructional objective of the course by minimizing the negative impact of isolation and lack of regular personal contact. It can overcome the difficulties related with finance, family and work and also it builds strong relationship between students and staffs and it removes negative attitude towards studying through distance mode(Kabate, 2016).

Table 5: One sample T-test result on the implementation of counseling support services

No	Items	Test Value=3					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
2	Consultation services: the institution								
2.1	Sets consultancy hour/time to provide counseling services to students	1.49	.891	-19.693	133	.000	1.515	-1.67	-1.36
2.2	Provides counseling services for students who are in difficult financial situations	1.62	1.046	-15.275	133	.000	1.381	-1.56	-1.20
2.3	Provides counseling service for students when they experience family problems(such as illness, conflict or similar problems)	1.51	.891	-19.400	133	.000	1.493	-1.64	-1.34
2.4	Encourages students when their motivation towards learning declines	1.65	.960	-16.291	133	.000	1.351	-1.51	-1.19
2.5	Advises students to assign adequate time and to study hard	1.64	.945	-16.635	133	.000	1.358	-1.52	-1.20
2.6	Provides counseling services for students with disabilities	1.57	.880	-18.857	133	.000	1.433	-1.58	-1.28
2.7	Provides counseling service for students on how they can balance different responsibilities (work, family, etc.) and learn properly	1.83	1.205	-11.257	133	.000	1.172	-1.38	-.97
2.8	Provides personal counseling service for students on confidential matters	1.58	.960	-17.096	133	.000	1.418	-1.58	-1.25
2.9	Provides adequate information on the benefits of distance learning when students get confused in choosing distance modality	1.90	1.194	-10.632	133	.000	1.097	-1.30	-.89
2.10	Provides counseling services for students when they are tempted to withdraw or quit their education for various reasons	1.66	1.098	-14.168	133	.000	1.343	-1.53	-1.16

Counseling is the other essential element of administrative support service which distance education institutions should provide for their learners. In response to the all items listed under the counseling service as shown in table 5 above, the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the observed mean and the expected mean with a P value of ($p=.000$). In the listed ten items under counseling service provision, the total mean score was $M=1.64$ with a mean difference of -1.35 (condition, $t (-1.355)$, $df (133)$, $p=.000$). This implies that Alpha University College does not provide counseling service for learners because the mean value ($M=1.64$) indicated that the counseling services are never implemented.

On issue of counseling, resource center and exam issue officer in the interview says that:

Our distance learners have not a desire to ask questions about the counseling services. They only want to complete their three years and receive their certificate. The institution have a contract with one social counseling professional aimed to deliver counseling service for our students, but the learners never ask about this kind of service. Only some students contact with me to talk about their family problems and financial constraints. Regarding with this Alpha University gives a discount of 25% for military staff learners to reduce their financial problems.

Table 6: One sample t- test result on cumulative counseling support services

	Test Value = 30							
	M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Counseling support services	16.44	4.466	-35.145	133	.000	-13.559	-14.322	-12.796

As shown in the table above, the cumulative one sample t test value on counseling support services, indicated that counseling service is not implemented in the institution ($M=16.44$, $SD=4.466$; $t(133)=-35.145$, $P= .000$).

4.1.2.1.3- Practice of academic support services

Providing academic support services to the distance learning population is an important part of creating the feeling of belonging for students who do not have access to conventional classroom teaching- learning environment (Usun, 2004). This academic support services includes giving face to face tutorial, assignment (both measured and tutor marked), feedback provision on their project works and overall academic performance and accessing library service to overcome the problems relating with studying through distance mode.

Table 7: One sample T-test result on the implementation of academic support services

No	Items	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
3	Academic support services: the institution								
3.1	Provides face to face tutorial sessions timely	2.82	1.445	-1.435	133	.154	-.179	-.43	.07
3.2	Allows students to send their queries through postal service	1.39	.735	-25.392	133	.000	-1.612	-1.74	-1.49
3.3	Assists learners to contact their tutors via phone when they have questions	1.46	.837	-21.358	133	.000	-1.545	-1.69	-1.40
3.4	Learners exchange academic related information with the institution by using email and other technologies	1.61	1.075	-14.941	133	.000	-1.388	-1.57	-1.20
3.5	Displays students' academic results timely	1.46	.801	-22.338	133	.000	-1.545	-1.68	-1.41
3.6	Assigns academic advisors for learners	1.26	.574	-35.051	133	.000	-1.739	-1.84	-1.64
3.7	Provides measured assignments (which is done at distance)for students	4.01	1.422	8.200	133	.000	1.007	.76	1.25
3.8	Provides assignments during the face-to-face tutorial sessions (TMA)	3.84	1.576	6.139	133	.000	.836	.57	1.11
3.9	Provides timely feedback on students overall academic performance	1.22	.580	-35.604	133	.000	-1.784	-1.88	-1.68
3.10	Gives timely feedback on students' assessment results	1.31	.709	-27.541	133	.000	-1.687	-1.81	-1.57
3.11	Assists students to access library services in their vicinity	1.31	.728	-26.943	133	.000	-1.694	-1.82	-1.57
3.12	Provides online library services for learners	1.34	.917	-21.003	133	.000	-1.664	-1.82	-1.51

Since distance students are separated from the institution and teachers, tutorial support is one of the basic elements to help learners academically. With this consideration learners were asked if they receive on time face to face tutorial sessions or not. Accordingly, the one sample t-test result shows that there was no a statistically significant difference between the observed mean (2.82) and the expected mean (3) with a mean difference of -.179 (condition, $t (-1.435)$, $df (133)$, $p=.154$). This indicated that face to face tutorial session in the institution implements occasionally. In addition to the result of quantitative data the interview with center coordinator revealed that:

In each semester we have prepared two faces-to- face tutorial programs and this is announced for learners with their SLIP during the time of registration. To renounce the tutorial schedule, we use our bulletin boards. Like that of exams, tutorial programs are also provided in ‘‘Hibret’’ full cycle elementary school. But our students miss the tutorial sessions because of their conflicting commitments.

In addition to the coordinator’s idea about the tutorial programs, coordinating office resource center and exam issue officer also supports the idea of center coordinator and says that:

In each semester Alpha University College allocates budget for school rent, tutors paradigm and other logistical issues. But learners have not a desire to attend the program. Because they don’t want to spend their time and money for the tutorial program and they prefer to invest their resource for exam schedules.

Regarding with the same issue (tutorial service) center registrar office officer also stressed that;

The tutorial services are provided depending on the academic calendar schedules. Two round tutorial classes are provided in each semester and (there are six tutorial sessions in three semesters) in one academic year. The tutorial is planned and delivered in two continuous days and it is conducted in weak end days with the belief of employed learners are free from their regular work in the weak end.

The researcher also had an interview with distance learners and DL6 said that;

I am full time employee in governmental office. I want to attend the tutorial session at least once in a semester. But my living area is 200 Kms from the center and I know the tutorial

session is very short; the maximum of one hour for each course. In addition to the remoteness of the tutorial centers the schedule also not suited with my work. Due to that I prefer to miss the tutorial sessions.

As it is shown in the above table the respondents reveal their negative responses with regard to the listed academic support service except the issues related with assignments. Giving a variety of assignments (both measured and tutor marked) to the students are considered as an academic support in distance education. Concerning this issue the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant mean difference under the condition of ($M=4.01$, $SD=1.422$; $t(133)=8.200$, $P= .000$) in measured assignments. I have interviewed students to understand the nature of assignments in the institution. Accordingly, most of the interviewed learners confirmed that they took measured assignments. As DL5;

In Alpha University College assignment is one of the assessment methods and it is measured out of 30%. The rest 70% is final exam. Thus in each semester the institution gives us prepared assignments for each course and inform their submission date. But we don't give any attention for assignments and they are worked by other individuals (graduated from public universities in regular program) mostly we pay for them.

Another interviewed distance learner (DL5) also says that;

The institution gives us assignment papers when we register in each semester. They give the time up to two months to submit our work on assignments. But we start to think about assignments in the last week or the left initial days of the submission date. It is good, if we have a chance to copy from other individuals who have done previously, unless and otherwise we are obliged to pay for individuals to do such things.

In the implementation of tutor marked assignment, the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant difference between expected and observed mean with the value of; ($M=3.84$, $SD=1.576$; $t(133)=6.139$, $P= .000$).

In my interview on tutor marked assignments, DL4 said that:

Tutor marked assignments are not provided in a separate sheet of paper like measured assignments. Rather TMAs are included in course modules. At the end of the chapter there are tutor marked assignments which are expected to do by students and asking clarification on them during our tutorial session. But all distance learners reject them to do because the

institution and tutors are not obliged us to do and also TMAs have not any value for our grade.

For distance learners displaying their result on time is one of the essential issues. Regarding with this the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the observed mean and the expected mean under the condition of ($M=1.46$, $SD=.801$; $t(133)=-22.338$, $P=.000$). The result indicates that Alpha University College never displays the learners result on time.

In addition to the data collected by close ended questioner from sample distance learners, my informal observation and interview also confirmed the result of problems in displaying students result on time.

The students are complained about their grade reports and assessment results. I asked some students about this serious issue

DL6 revealed that:

I was registered for this program before three years to study my BA degree in Alpha University College. I have paid all the fees required for each semester and course. But I never had seen my grade reports for three years. Lastly when I asked them to give my degree they say you have incomplete cases in three courses. I was very angry and why it is occurred? But they explain that it is not the problem of the center and correcting the exam and displaying the result is the mandate of head office. Due to that I have not received my degree for one additional year besides to the required three years duration.

DL8 also gives the interview emotionally about the institution and says that:

We are obliged to pay the tuition fee during my registration and we have to do that. We distance learners fully mastered our responsibilities. But the institution has not any respect about our rights. Displaying our result on time is their mandate. But it does not do it and only they collect their money. It looks like profitable organization without considering their customers. Due to that I have no idea about my results for previous semesters and I lost my hope to receive my degree on my plan.

The researcher was also conducted an interview with center coordinator and he revealed that:

As a coordinating office, our role is to give exams that are prepared from the head office. The assignment and exam correction is done by the head office in Addis Ababa and the grade is also

prepared. Some times during the process of packing the student's examination paper and assignment or in the time of transportation exam sheets and assignments are lost and the grade report will be incomplete. I know it is a challenging issue for our learners. But it is not the problem of branch coordinating office.

The other academic support is giving feedback for distance learners about their assignment and learners overall performance. In this regard the one sample t-test result shows that the institution never gives any feedback on learner's assignments and on their overall academic performance.

The interview with distance learner about feedback provision on their assignments and academic performance indicates that the institution does not give any feedback. Accordingly, DL5 said that:

I submit the assignments on the predetermined schedule. After that I don't know anything about it. I don't know what questions are done in a better way and what questions are not and also, I have no idea about my result out 30%. Even I don't know my cumulative GPA in all courses and semesters. I hope I know it when I receive my official transcript after this semester.

I have also conducted an interview with the center coordinator with regard to feedback provision. Accordingly, he said that:

It is distance education institution and can't be treated as regular programs in private and public universities. Distance education system by its nature is difficult to provide feedback. The students are far from the institution and we have a contact only on exam schedules. Their exam also is not corrected by center staffs. All exam sheets and assignments are prepared and corrected by the head office in Addis Ababa. So in what way we provide feedback on their academic performance?

The other interviewee in the center, registrar office officer also says that:

Frankly speaking raising the issue of feedback in distance education institution is an amazing. In what way we give feedback for our learners? Are learners really wanted to know their academic performance? I don't think so. The intent of distance learners is only to accomplish the required year and receive their certificate.

Lastly on the issue of library services the one sample t-test result shows that the respondents reported that they never got library service in the students living area and online library service. The t-test result on the two items shows that ($M=1.32$, $SD=.623$; $t(133) = -31.175$, $P = .000$). Besides to the respondents report on the issue of library service my observation result shows that there is a shelf with some reference books in the center located in one office. The center staff members call it as it is a library but it serves as an office by the resource center and exam issue officer. In my interview with distance learners DL5 said that:

There is library service in the center and I think accessing library service is not a mandate for distance education institutions. Because learners are far from the coordinating center and they should be treated as distance learners not as conventional classroom learners. I have no any complain about library services.

Other interviewee student also revealed that the unavailability of library service and said that:

I believe that accessing online libraries is a better way to support distance learners who they are living far or near to the college. Learners can use the service wherever they live if there is internet access. The ministry of higher education should work with private distance education institutions on this issue for future generation.

In the researcher interview, resource center and exam issue officer also confirmed that;

Yes there is no library service for learners. I think learners will not have an interest and time to use library in the center. I believe that online library service will be an alternative approach for distance learners. But there is no direction from ministry of higher education as well as other responsible bodies in federal level to access online library service for distance learners. Even online library service will be applied unavailability of internet access and its cost also has an impact on its implementation.

Table 8: One sample t- test result on cumulative academic support services

			Test Value = 36					
	M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Academic support services	23.007	3.762	-39.971	133	.000	-12.992	-13.635	-12.349

As shown in the table above, the cumulative one sample t test value on the academic support services indicated that academic support service was implemented in rarely manner.

Table 9: Independent sample t-test result on frequency of student support service across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status

Demographic variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P-value
Sex of respondents	Male	68	2.07	.3027	.621	132	.985
	Female	66	2.04	.2704			
Residence	Rural	44	2.05	.3081	-.176	132	.838
	Urban	90	2.06	.2772			
Marital status	Single	51	2.09	.2723	1.379	132	.574
	Married	83	2.03	.2935			

In the table above the independent-samples t-test result shows that there was no a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners in the frequency of student support service in the score of (M =2.07, SD = .3027) for males and females (M = 2.04, SD = .2704; t (132) .621,p = .985). Similarly Regarding with their residence there was no a statistically mean difference between learners from rural and from urban with a mean score of rural (M=2.05, SD =.3081) and urban (M=2.06, SD=.2772; t (132) -.176, p=.838). In the same table there was no a statistically significant mean difference between single and married respondents in the value of single (M=2.09, SD=.2723) and married (M=2.03, SD=.2935; t (132) 1.379, p=.574). The independent t-test result on frequency of student support service indicates that there was no a statistically mean difference between male and female, rural and urban as well as single and married respondents.

Table 10: One way ANOVA on frequency of student support service across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income

Demographic variables	Category	N	M	SD	F	Df	P-value
Age of respondents	20-30	70	2.08	.2683	2.062	2	.131
	31-40	41	2.05	.2740		131	
	41-50	23	1.94	.3454			
	Total	134	2.05	.2866		133	
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	2.19	.2907	3.852	2	.024
	Diploma holder	80	2.06	.2613		131	
	other	34	1.97	.3171		133	
	Total	134	2.05	.2866			
Monthly income	No income	16	2.00	.2082	.638	4	.636
	up to 1500	33	2.09	.2934		129	
	1501-3000	40	2.04	.3344		133	
	3001-4500	24	1.99	.2524			
	Above 4501	21	2.09	.2723			
	Total	134	2.05	.2866			

As it is clearly observed the result of one way ANOVA, $f(2,131)= 2.062$; $P=.131$) concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was no a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses on frequency of student support system.

Regarding with respondents educational background the one way ANOVA result $f(2, 131) =3.852$; $p=.024$) with respect to educational background of respondents there was a statistically mean difference between grade 10 completers, diploma holders and other learners on the frequency of student support system. The difference was occurred between groups of grade 12 completers and other learners with the p value of ($P=.006$).

Based on the monthly salary of the respondents the one way ANOVA result $f(4, 129) =.638$; $p=.636$) there was no a statically significant mean difference between groups of the monthly income of no income, 1-1500, 1501-3000, 3001-4500 and above 4501 ETB.

4.1.2.2- Perceived quality of providers of student support services

For effective student support service to take place a provider should be professionally competent that is having enough knowledge and skills on how to provide the support services to a distance learner(Kabate, 2016). Thus in this study the implementation of student support service was measured by the quality of student support service implementers. The result is presented in the table below.

Table 11: Providers of student support service

No	Items	Yes		No	
		No	%	No	%
1	Who provides the administrative supports?				
1.1	A person with good technical and administrative skill	21	15.7	113	84.3
1.2	Anyone in the center who is incapable and inexperienced	113	84.3	21	15.7
2	Who provides counseling services?				
2.1	A person who have professional qualification	23	17.2	111	82.8
2.2	Simply a technician or anybody in the center	111	82.8	23	17.2
3	Who provides academic services?				
3.1	Experienced teachers	26	19.4	108	80.6
3.2	Inexperienced and incapable teachers	108	80.6	26	19.4

Regarding with the providers of administrative support services, 84.3% of the respondents reported that anyone in the center who is incapable and inexperienced provides administrative support services compared with the result of 15.7% of the participant's respond that a person with good technical and administrative skill provides the administrative support service. In my interview with distance learners DL9 said that:

I don't think that the providers of administrative support in Alpha University College are professionally competent to deliver effective support service. The learners also don't expect professional quality from the center. The only thing we distance learners want from the institution is adequate information with respect.

Center coordinator was interviewed on the issue and he responded that:

Our staff members are recruited on the minimum requirement of the position to facilitate the registration and application process and most of them are diploma holders and have no further qualification to support distance learners. Besides to their regular day to day activity in the institution all of the employees have an obligation to support distance learners by giving the information that the learners want to gain.

Thus the result of data shows that implementers of support service in the institution lacks adequate knowledge to support the learners with varied backgrounds and other related responsibilities.

Regarding with providers of counseling service, only 17.2 % of the respondents reported that a person with professional qualification provides counseling service and the rest of 82.8%

respondents reported that implementers of counseling service are simply the individual in the center. In addition to this the qualitative data obtained from the interview was consistent with this quantitative result and DL5 said that:

We are distance learners. Even if we face different social, financial and psychological problems, we try to solve them personally. We don't need help and consultancy from the institution in our personal matters. Even we need the service of counseling there is no professional in the institution to solve our problems by giving adequate advice.

In the center staffs resource center and exam issue officer said that:

"We have a contract with one social counseling professional to deliver counseling service for our learners. But learners never asked to gain this type of service".

Registrar officer also said that:

When students apply for study in the first time they have misconception on how to study under distance mode of delivery. They ask about exam and grade procedures, tuition fee, number of tutorials and exam schedules and the number of years to accomplish.... then I gave the information to students and counsel them, sometimes by combing two or more students so that they know the nature of study in Alpha university college

On the academic issues of tutorial services majority of the respondents (80.6%) reported that tutorial providers are inexperienced and incapable teachers. This implies that student support providers in the studied institution lack professional qualification and there is no standardized guideline to recruit providers of support service for distance learners.

In the interview with distance learner DL7 said that:

In the tutorial sessions the only thing tutors do is reading the instructional materials hastily without adequate explanation in the contents. The tutors also have not willingness to discuss with the doubts of the students and they don't give any feedback on our assignments. Most of them are in experienced in higher education curriculum.

Center coordinator also confirmed that the tutors took the contract to give tutorial programs without the standardized guideline.

4.1.2.3- Methods to address student support system

Even if in the last decades addressing student support service in distance education is limited by traditional systems like printed instructional materials now a time technology has resulted in modes of delivery that can enable a “virtual” multimedia learning environment by including simple to sophisticated technologies (Dominique, Catherine and Greenwood, 2004). Thus in this study the methods the studied institution used to address the support systems was evaluated and the result presented in the table below.

Table 12: Evaluation of methods used to deliver/address student support system

No	Items	Yes		No	
		No	%	No	%
1	One to one/ Face to face	117	87.3	17	12.7
2	Telephone	82	61.2	52	38.8
3	Email	5	3.7	129	96.3
4	Bulletin board	114	85.1	20	14.9
5	Letters via post & text messaging	9	6.7	125	93.3
6	Information desk at provincial centers	95	70.9	39	29.1
7	Audio/video	9	6.7	125	93.3
8	Seminars and workshops	0	0	134	100

In the evaluation of methods used to deliver the support services, the results in the above table shows that 117(87.3%) of the respondents reported that the institution provides the support services one to one /face to face during the time learners come in the center in person. The researcher also interviewed the students about the method of face to face/ one to one.

Related to the quantitative result DL3 on the interview replied that;

I have gained some information regarding to the grade report, exam result and assignment submission dates in the center by asking center coordinator and resource center officer as well as registrar officer. In addition to information I have received the course modules in the distance education center. But I prefer the information delivery shall be by using Email accounts.

The other student I have interviewed also confirmed the first learner idea and DL2 says:

Due to the nature of my job I traveled to Gondar monthly or within two weeks. During that time I always visit the center for new information. Sometimes center staffs have not willingness to answer their cell phone and office telephone. Therefore always I prefer to contact them in person.

The institution uses bulletin boards to announce students about tutorial program, exam schedule and assignment submission date. Concerning with this 114(85.1%) of the respondents confirmed that bulletin boards are used as a method to address support services for them. In relation to this, during my informal observation in the center, I observed that there is a bulletin board in the center and the institution announces the schedule of exam and tutorial programs, the web site of the institution, the requirements of student's delegated body and other information on the board as well as the wall of the office. Regarding with this the interviewed distance learners doesn't prefer bulletin boards as a mode of information dissemination. DL9 said that:

The institution advertises different new information on bulletin boards. But we can't see and use the information unless we come to the center and saw that letter of announcement. Due to the changed date of exam and their advertisement on the board I missed one semester test when I was first year student.

Thirdly the majority of learners reported that 95(70.9%) they gain the student support service by information desk at provincial centers. In my observation there is no a position which is named information desk and there is no man power and office. But my interview with the center coordinator indicates that the center secretary serves as for both services (secretary and information desk). The coordinator said that: Mainly when we recruit the secretary for the center we assume that he/she will be served as a secretary and information desk officer. Because the work of typing is occasional in distance education centers and secretaries are responsible to give information for our learners as information desk officer.

Telephone is the other method which is widely used to deliver support services for distance learners in Alpha University College. Among the total sample of the study 82(61.2%) of the respondents confirmed that they receive the support services via telephone. In addition to the data of the questioner the researcher also interviewed some students and center staffs about the modes of delivery in student support system.

Center coordinator says that: *We inform students about the tutorial session and assignment submission via our cell phone and office telephone. The students also call for us if they want to know about exam and tutorial schedules as well as their grade reports.*

Resource center and exam issue officer also confirmed that:

My position is resource center and exam issue officer. But the name of the position is differing from my duties and responsibilities. Distributing course modules, giving information for learners, calling the students if there is new information and answering the calls from learners and head office via my cell phone, collecting student's worksheet and assignments, packing the work of students and sending to Addis Ababa Alpha University College head office are all my responsibilities in this center.

In the interview with distance learners DL4 said that: In my work place I am too busy by different responsibilities. I came to the center only for the exam schedule. I gained all the information I want via telephone. Sometimes they call for me if there is new information especially if the exam date is postponed. Telephone is the most preferable mode to communicate with the coordinating center.

On the other methods to deliver student support service for learner's insignificant number 5(3.7%), 9(6.7%), 9(6.7%) and none of the respondents show their positive answer for Email, letters and text messages, Audio/ video and workshops and seminars respectively. In these four methods of delivery majority 129(96.3%), 125(93.3%), 125(93.3%) and 134(100%) of the research participants reported that they doesn't receive any support system through email, letter via postal service and text message, audio/video and seminars and workshops respectively. During my informal communication with distance learners they reported that email, face book page and telegram channels should be functional by the center to exchange the messages about different educational issues.

4.1.3- Learners satisfaction on student support system

The task of the distance education program is not to directly increase persistence rates or completion rates but rather to provide services that encourage the student satisfaction that subsequently promotes probability of completion. Satisfying distance learners may not be

possible; however, developing an educational environment that will contribute to student satisfaction is possible. Thus high quality support services will encourage student satisfaction(Tallman, 1994).

4.1.3.1- Learner's satisfaction on administrative support services

The table below answers the question of are the participants of the study satisfied with the administrative support services?

Table 13: One sample t- test result on the evaluation of learner's satisfaction in administrative support service

No	Items	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
1	Administrative supports: : how satisfied are you on:								
1.1	provision of information during the application process	3.86	1.361	7.300	133	.000	.858	.63	1.09
1.2	provision of information (attachment of documents, giving ID, etc.) during registration	3.58	1.437	4.689	133	.000	.582	.34	.83
1.3	Notification of change of addresses	2.99	1.306	-.066	133	.947	-.007	-.23	.22
1.4	Timely notification of place of exam centers	3.81	1.346	6.932	133	.000	.806	.58	1.04
1.5	Provision of information on examination and grading procedures timely	2.19	1.164	-8.086	133	.000	-.813	-1.01	-.61
1.6	Notifying students regarding the deadline to submit the assignments and TMA	3.69	1.283	6.196	133	.000	.687	.47	.91
1.7	Timely distribution of educational materials	2.15	1.242	-7.932	133	.000	-.851	-1.06	-.64

The results of the evaluation of learner's satisfaction on administrative support services indicate that, most of the learners were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the listed items under administrative support service. In the table above, the one sample t-test result shows that, there was no a statistically significant difference on one item only which is informing students when the institution changes address. In this item the mean score was 2.99 with a mean difference of -

.007 in the P value of (P=.947). The result indicates that the learners are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied in the informing of change of address.

In the same table above the one sample t-test result shows that learners reported their satisfaction on four items which are; on the giving of adequate and enough information during application, on the provision of information (attachment of documents, giving ID, etc.) during registration, on the informing of exam centers on time and on the notification of the deadline to submit the assignments and TMA. This implies that when it is compared with other services, the institution works better in disseminating information for distance learners.

The researcher also interviewed the resource center and exam issue officer and registrar center officer about the information dissemination of the coordinating office. Resource center and exam issue officer said that;

Since our customers are distance learners and they are living far from the center, they want to gain information about different issues such as the schedule of exam, submission date of assignments, grade reports and incomplete cases e.t.c. I understood that and gave any information via my cell phone. I hope they are satisfied by this service.

Similar with resource center and exam issue officer, registrar officer also said that: *During the time of registration I received their address with phone numbers. It is keeping in our shelf for a long time. Thus we can call them if there is new information via office telephone as well as our advertisement on the notice boards.*

In the items provision of information on examination procedures timely and distribution of educational materials learners reported their dissatisfaction in the mean score of 3.67 and 3.69 respectively.

The interview with distance learners confirmed the quantitative data. Accordingly DL8 said that:

In Alpha University College there is no efficient number of modules. When we ask to give modules always their answer is “there is no module and we will give you when the head office releases”. Then we lose our hope to get the course modules and set on exams without any preparation. Due to that I am very dissatisfied by the system of module distribution.

4.1.3.2- Learner's satisfaction on counseling support services

Since distance learners are separated from the teacher and the institution they have special needs: the need of information to help learners relate to the institution and understand its system; maintain motivation and overcome learning problems; institutional identity, which is some means of helping learners identify with a remote institution and to feel that they are part of a body of learners rather than studying in isolation; and advice on how to study; as well as that provided within the course itself, learners often need additional support to guide good study techniques (Kabate, 2016). In terms of the counseling services delivered by Alpha University College the learners satisfaction were evaluated and the results presented in the table below.

Table 14- One sample t- test result on the evaluation of learner's satisfaction in counseling support service

No	Items	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
2	Consultation services: how satisfied are you on:								
2.1	assigning of working hours for consultation services	1.49	.891	-19.693	133	.000	-1.515	-1.67	-1.36
2.2	provision of counseling services to students who are in difficult financial situations	1.62	1.046	-15.275	133	.000	-1.381	-1.56	-1.20
2.3	provision of counseling services to students who are experiencing family problems	1.51	.891	-19.400	133	.000	-1.493	-1.64	-1.34
2.4	maintaining student's motivation	1.65	.960	-16.291	133	.000	-1.351	-1.51	-1.19
2.5	the giving of advice to allocate sufficient time to study	1.64	.945	-16.635	133	.000	-1.358	-1.52	-1.20
2.6	Support of students with Physical difficulties	1.57	.880	-18.857	133	.000	-1.433	-1.58	-1.28
2.7	Advice to balance conflicting commitments	1.83	1.205	-11.257	133	.000	-1.172	-1.38	-.97
2.8	Personal counseling services for confidential matters	1.58	.960	-17.096	133	.000	-1.418	-1.58	-1.25
2.9	The counseling service to decide to study through distance mode	1.90	1.194	-10.632	133	.000	-1.097	-1.30	-.89
2.10	counseling services for students when they are tempted to withdraw or quit their education for various reasons	1.66	1.098	-14.168	133	.000	-1.343	-1.53	-1.16

In all ten items of counseling support services the one sample t-test result shows that the respondents reported that they are very dissatisfied and dissatisfied. The mean score of the respondents in all items was under the expected mean with a P value of (P=000). In my interview DL9 also confirmed that the quantitative data and said that;

The institution does not provide the service of counseling for learners in different difficult situations. For instance in two subsequent academic years I filled the drop out form twice without any advice in the institution. They don't care whether we continue or terminate our learning. Thus I feel the issues of distance learners are the neglected one and I am very dissatisfied by the counseling services.

The other distance learner (DL6) also said that;

I filled this questioner and I evaluate the items listed under counseling supports. I am in doubt if there is distance education institution which delivers the listed items for learners in Ethiopia. The only thing the institutions do is delivering information about exams and assignments. I don't expect other services from distance education institution.

Table 15: One sample t-test result on learner's satisfaction in cumulative administrative support services including consultation service

	Test Value = 51							
	M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Satisfaction of students on cumulative administrative support services	41.44	7.798	-14.179	133	.000	-9.552	-10.88	-8.21

As shown in the table above, the cumulative result of administrative support services on one sample t test result indicated that distance learners in Alpha University college reports their dissatisfaction on administrative support services.

4.1.3.3- Learner's satisfaction on academic support services

Academic student support services are an essential element to help distance learners. This academic support service includes mainly tutorial service, feedback provision, assignments and

library services. Regarding with this support service learners satisfaction were evaluated by this study and the results are presented in the table below.

Table 16: One sample T-test result on satisfaction of learners in academic support service

No	Items	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
3	Academic support services: how satisfied are you on								
3.1	provision of on time tutorial session	1.75	.977	-14.771	133	.000	-1.246	-1.41	-1.08
3.2	Allowance of students to send their queries through postal service	1.68	.855	-17.886	133	.000	-1.321	-1.47	-1.17
3.3	Assistance of learners to contact their tutors via phone when they have question	1.60	.814	-19.856	133	.000	-1.396	-1.53	-1.26
3.4	Exchange of academic related information with the institution by using email and other technologies	1.57	.750	-22.103	133	.000	-1.433	-1.56	-1.30
3.5	Timely display of students' academic result	1.46	.583	-30.664	133	.000	-1.545	-1.64	-1.45
3.6	Assigning of academic advisors for learners	1.54	.732	-23.018	133	.000	-1.455	-1.58	-1.33
3.7	Provision of clear and adequate measured assignments	3.81	1.374	6.792	133	.000	.806	.57	1.04
3.8	Provision of relevant tutor marked assignments	3.57	1.558	4.214	133	.000	.567	.30	.83
3.9	Provisions timely feedback on students overall academic performance	1.47	.679	-26.068	133	.000	-1.530	-1.65	-1.41
3.10	Timely feedback on students' assessment results	1.51	.743	-23.242	133	.000	-1.493	-1.62	-1.37
3.11	Assistance of students to access library services in their vicinity	1.54	.837	-20.120	133	.000	-1.455	-1.60	-1.31
3.12	Provision of online library services for learners	1.68	.864	-17.705	133	.000	-1.321	-1.47	-1.17

Despite the fact that the overall results on the evaluation of the learner's satisfaction on the academic support services, the results yielded negative responses. In order to evaluate the satisfaction of students on the academic support service they have received from the institution, respondents were asked whether they are satisfied or not on the issue of tutorial services. Accordingly, the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant mean

difference between expected and observed mean ($M=1.75$, $SD=.977$; $t(133)=-14.771$, $P=0.000$, two tailed). This indicates that the respondents report their dissatisfaction on the item of on time tutorial service provision. On this issue I have interviewed distance learners and they express their dissatisfaction. For instance, DL7 said that;

The tutorial sessions are very short. In the scheduled program the allotted time is two hours but the tutors give one hour tutorial without adequate preparation. In three years, duration I was attended the tutorial session once a time and telling the truth I am not satisfied by the tutorial program.

In the same issue DL10 also confirmed that; *when we think about distance education the matter of tutorial service is integrated with the concept of distance education. But the tutorial sessions are prepared not for the sake of helping learners. It is for flaunt without purpose and I am very dissatisfied by the tutorial services.*

In the second item which is facilitating situations to ask clarification for questions via correspondence there was a statistically significant mean difference between the observed and the expected mean ($M=1.68$, $SD=.855$; $t(133)=-17.886$, $P=0.000$, two tailed). This indicates that distance learners express their dissatisfaction regarding with the academic support services via correspondence.

Regarding with the issue DL3 said that;

The postal service of Alpha University College is served as to send and receive our official transcripts. But the service is not easy and it takes much time and I am not satisfied by the service. But I don't want to say anything about to ask clarifications through correspondence. I don't know if the service is available or not in the institution.

The other academic support service which is communicating with tutors via telephone, the one sample t test result shows that the respondents were dissatisfied by the service with ($M=1.60$, $SD=.814$; $t(133)=-19.856$, $P=0.000$, two tailed). In addition to quantitative data, qualitative result which was collected by an interview also confirmed that learners are dissatisfied by the communication between tutors and learners via telephone. Accordingly, DL4 said that:

I remember that in my first year second tutorial session one tutor gives the phone number and tells us to call him if we want to ask clarification in the module. But when we call

him, the phone was not answered. After that I don't believe that communication with tutors via phone is easy and applicable.

Similarly on the item of learner's communication with tutors and the institution through different medias, the respondents indicated that they are not satisfied by their communication via email and other technologies in different academic issues with tutors and the institution with ($M=1.57$, $SD=.750$; $t(133)=-22.103$, $P= .000$, (two tailed). Regarding with this in my interview DL8 said that;

I am a graduate class student in public university in the field of engineering. To be competent in the labour market after graduation, I was applied three years before in Alpha University College in the field of management. They have an email and telegram and always I try to use them to communicate with administrative staffs and tutors. But the accounts are not functional and I am not satisfied.

The respondents also asked if they are satisfied or not on the issue of on time display of their result. The respondents reported that they are not satisfied with the statement of displaying students result on time with ($M=1.46$, $SD=.583$; $t(133)=-30.664$, $P= .000$, (two tailed). In my informal conversation with learners during my data collection, many learners complain about the system which their result is displaying. The interviewed distance learners DL1 and DL5 also explained their dissatisfaction as follows:

DL1; *I think the mandate to prepare and correct the exams and assignments should be given to coordinating offices. The system of the head office to accomplish the tasks related to display students result is very bulky and time consuming. Due to that learners are dissatisfied.*

DL5; *In Alpha University College taking exams and doing assignments is very easy. But receiving the grade reports in each semester and the official transcript after the accomplishment is very tiresome. We are not satisfied by their system.*

In over all evaluation of the academic support services, learners indicate their satisfaction only on the issue of assignments. On the issues of measured and tutor marked assignments learners were asked if they are satisfied or not by the assignments clarity and adequacy, accordingly there was a statistically significant difference between expected mean and observed mean on the clarity and adequacy of measured assignments ($M=3.81$, $SD=1.374$; $t(133)=6.792$, $P= .000$, (two

tailed) and on the relevancy of tutor marked assignments ($M=3.57$, $SD=1.558$; $t(133)=4.214$, $P=000$, (two tailed). On my interview DL10 indicated that;

I hear that some universities gave only final exams measured out of 100% for learners. But Alpha University College uses two types of assessment methods which are assignment and final exam. It gives a chance for learners to score a good grade result as assignment is a continuous assessment. I know assignment papers are not improved and they are the same with last year papers like exams. But I am happy by the assignments clarity and adequacy.

On the same issue DL7 said that; *Even if we are not giving any attention for tutor marked assignments, the contents in TMAs are very relevant. I think it can improve learners study habit and academic performance.*

On the issue of feedback provision, the one sample t-test result in table above shows that the respondents are dissatisfied by the service of timely feedback on their assignment and overall academic performance. This implies that the feedback provision system of Alpha University College is very weak. .

Lastly on the services of library delivered by the institution research participants were asked whether they are satisfied or not on the issue of library services in the learners locality and online library services. Respondents reported that they are dissatisfied with the value of ($M=1.54$, $SD=.837$; $t(133)=-20.120$, $P=000$, (two tailed) on accessibility of library service in the students living area and ($M=1.68$, $SD=.864$; $t(133)=-17.705$, $P=000$, (two tailed) on accessibility of online library service.

Table 17: One sample t test result of learner's satisfaction on cumulative academic support services

	Test Value = 36							
	M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Learners satisfaction on cumulative academic supports	23.17	3.622	-40.965	133	.000	-12.820	-13.439	-12.201

As shown in the table above, the cumulative one sample t test value on the satisfaction of academic student support issues, the result indicated that distance learners in Alpha University college reports that they are very dissatisfied by the academic support services.(M=23.17, SD=3.622; $t(133)=-40.965$, $P=.000$)

Table 18: Independent sample t-test result on satisfaction of learners on student support service across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status

Demographic variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P-value
Sex of respondents	Male	68	2.25	.3086	.774	132	.566
	Female	66	2.21	.3352			
Residence	Rural	44	2.23	.3115	.354	132	.245
	Urban	90	2.22	.3402			
Marital status	Single	51	2.18	.3515	-1.086	132	.695
	Married	83	2.24	.3109			

In the table above the independent-samples t-test result shows that there was no a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners with the score of (M =2.25, SD = .3086) for males and females (M = 2.21, SD = .3352; $t(132) p = .566$). Similarly regarding with their place of residence there was no a statistically mean difference between learners from rural and from urban with a mean score of rural (M=2.23, SD =.3115) and urban (M=2.22, SD=.3402; $t(132) p=.245$). Concerning with their marital status there was no statistically significant mean difference between single and married respondents. (M =2.18, SD = .3515 for single respondents and for married (M = 2.24, SD = .3109; $t(132) p = .695$).

Table 19- One way ANOVA result on satisfaction of learners on student support service across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income

Demographic variables	Category	N	M	SD	F	df	P-value
Age of respondents	20-30	70	2.24	.2833	.194	2	.824
	31-40	41	2.20	.3665		131	
	41-50	23	2.21	.3744			
	Total	134	2.23	.3249		133	
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	2.36	.4017	2.312	2	.103
	Diploma holder	80	2.22	.2985		131	
	other	34	2.17	.3233		133	
	Total	134	2.23	.3249			
Monthly income	No income	16	2.29	.2133	3.125	4	.017
	1-1500	33	2.31	.3209		129	
	1501-3000	40	2.12	.2899		133	
	3001-4500	24	2.32	.2276			
	Above 4501	21	2.11	.4664			
	Total	134	2.23	.3249			

On the above table the result of one-way ANOVA, $F(2,131) = .194$; $P=.824$) concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was no a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses of learner's satisfaction on student support services.

In the same table the one-way ANOVA result with respect to educational background the respondents shows that there were no a statistically significant mean difference across groups.

When the comparison made between the groups based on their monthly income, one way ANOVA, $F(4,129)= .3.125$; $P=.017$) the result showed that there was a statistically significant mean difference among five groups in the responses of learners satisfaction on student support services. The mean difference were between the groups of monthly income of 1-1500 with 1501-3000 p value of ($P=.012$) and with the other group which is monthly income of above 4501 with the p value of ($P=.025$). The other group 3001-4500 has also a mean difference with the group of 1501-3000 with a p value of ($p=0.15$) and with the other group above 4501 in the value of ($p=.026$)

4.1.4- Challenges of student support service

On the above discussions one can understand that academic and administrative support systems are not implemented properly and learners are dissatisfied by the services provided by the studied institution. But even learners have a desire to use the available services in the institution

different challenges will contribute to hinder their participation in the learner support services and those challenges may be personal, institutional or instructional in nature.

4.1.4.1- Learner related challenges

Among different challenges which hamper distance learners to gain the student support service most of them are personal. The most reported challenges which are related with individual distance learner are lack of sufficient time for study, difficulties in access and use of ICT and lack of family support(Musingafi et al., 2015).

Table 20: One sample T-test result on student support service challenges (learner related challenges)

No	I am not benefiting from the support services because of:	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
1	Expensiveness in terms of communication, time and travel	3.81	1.629	5.727	133	.000	.806	.53	1.08
2	Competing commitments (work and family related)	3.64	1.873	3.966	133	.000	.642	.32	.96
3	high workload and lack of time	3.60	1.840	3.756	133	.000	.597	.28	.91
4	Inconvenient of the service provision methods	4.01	1.629	7.159	133	.000	1.007	.73	1.29
5	Lack of technical skill when the support service is via computer	3.78	1.720	5.225	133	.000	.776	.48	1.07
6	Lack of family support to attend support services	3.60	1.852	3.731	133	.000	.597	.28	.91
7	employers challenge to give leave during tutorial and exam schedule	3.58	1.901	3.545	133	.001	.582	.26	.91
8	I don't think I need a support	3.46	1.870	2.863	133	.005	.463	.14	.78

In the evaluation of challenges related with individual distance learners the respondents agreed with the statement of expensiveness in terms of communication, time and travel challenges them to access student support services in the value of (M=3.81, SD=1.629; t(133)=5.727, P=000,(two tailed). In open ended questioner respondents indicate that traveling from their living area to distance education center is time consuming and very costly. Due to that they prefer to call for center staff members and telephone cost is very low and it saves learners' time.

In the same table learners were asked if their conflicting commitments hinder or not to the support provision. With the value of ($M=3.64$, $SD=1.873$; $t(133)=3.966$, $P= .000$, (two tailed) learners report their agreement with the statement. The interview with learners also confirmed the quantitative data.

DL9 said that;

I study this distance education program with many conflicting commitments. I am government employee and my job is very tiresome and it is full time from 2:30-11:30, I am married and the mother of three children. After my office hour I am a care giver for my husband as well as my three little children with other social responsibilities like mehaber. Due to that I have no time to attend tutorial sessions and receive other support services. Most of the time I delegate the other person to accomplish the tasks in the university college like registering and submitting assignments and worksheets.

The other interviewed individual DL5 declared that;

I am a head of one governmental office in remote woreda. Surprisingly in our political system heads of the office have not a right to upgrade their educational status without the scholarship program offered by the government. Thus with many conflicting commitments in the office I attend the program secretly. If the administration knows this I will lose my position. Due to that I came to the center on exam schedules only.

In addition to learners conflicting commitments, the respondents reported that their work overload hinders them to gain support service with the t-test value of ($M=3.60$ $SD=1.840$; $t(133)=3.756$, $P= .000$, (two tailed). The resource center officer in the interview indicated that;

“It is universal truth that majority of distance learners are employed and they work full time in employer organization. Thus they are unable to attend the support services like tutorial session.”

The respondents were asked if their low technical skills to use computers can hinder them to access support services. Concerning this the respondents agreed with the statement of lack of technical skill challenges them when the support service is via computer ($M=3.78$ $SD=1.720$; $t(133)=5.225$, $P= .000$, (two tailed). The interview with DL3 also confirmed that; *To some extent Alpha University College provides course modules via flash disk and CD. But I have not any*

computer skill to read the modules in the computer. I think other learners share this idea. Some students will not have an access to computers and others lack technical skills to use.

Supporting the learner's idea center coordinator revealed that;

When we compare distance learners with regular students in public universities, distance learners are passive to use different technologies. For instance Alpha University College has an email address; (auc@ethionet.et / alpharegistrared@ethionet.et alphaucregistrarr@ethionet.et c.), Website; www.alphauniversitycollege.ed.et. And Face book and telegram "alpha university college". But the learners are not using this opportunities to get information and other support services. In last year due to the pandemic of COVID 19, ministry of science and higher education gives a direction to those learners continue their study at home. That was the great challenge for learners as well as distance education institutions. Learners have not a required skill and also they have not accessibility for technologies to read the modules in online mode.

In the same question resource center and exam issue officer declared that;

To overcome the grievance of learners regarding with their grade report, the head office of Alpha University College implements the student information system (SIS). This system enables the learners to see their grade report in each course wherever they live. Because of not having the simple technical skills, learners come here in the center and ask about their grade report.

Table 15- Independent Samples T-test result in learner related challenges based on their sex, place of residence and marital status

Independent samples t-test was conducted based on the researcher belief that there will be a statistical mean difference between male and female, rural and urban and single and married respondents.

Demographic variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	df	P-value
Sex of respondents	Male	68	3.339	1.463	-2.703	132	.001
	Female	66	3.966	1.203			
Residence	Rural	44	3.39	1.449	-1.523	132	.106
	Urban	90	3.77	1.323			
Marital status	Single	51	3.70	1.286	.379	132	.118
	Married	83	3.61	1.429			

In the analysis individual related challenges by using independent t-test based on respondents sex, and place of residence and marital status there is a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners. Concerning on these issues female learners are more challenged than male learners in individual related challenges.

Based on their place of residence, there were no a statically significant means difference between learners from urban and learners from rural. Thus an individual related challenge affects both groups.

Based on their marital status, there were no a statically significant means difference between married and single respondents. Thus an individual related challenge affects both groups.

Table 21- One way ANOVA result of individual related challenges across age, educational background and monthly income of respondents

One way ANOVA also made due to observe if there is a response difference based on age of respondents, educational background and monthly income.

Demographic variables	Category	N	M	SD	F	df	P-value
Age of respondents	20-30	70	3.85	1.155	9.662	2	.001
	31-40	41	3.82	1.399		131	
	41-50	23	2.71	1.595			
	Total	134	3.64	1.372		133	
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	3.96	1.425	7.004	2	.009
	Diploma holder	80	3.83	1.286		131	
	other	34	3.03	1.391		133	
	Total	134	3.64	1.372			
Monthly income	No income	16	3.30	1.689	3.253	4	0.14
	1-1500	33	4.01	1.098		129	
	1501-3000	40	3.66	1.333		133	
	3001-4500	24	4.03	1.126			
	Above 4501	21	2.86	1.544			
	Total	134	3.64	1.372			

On the above table the result of one way ANOVA, $F(2,131)= 9.662$; $P=001$) concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses on the individual related challenges of student support system. The mean score of the age range 41-50, responded that they are disagree with the listed individual related challenges of student support services, while the other two groups are agreed with the statements.

In the same table the one-way ANOVA result $F(2, 131) = 7.004; p = .009$ with respect to educational background of respondents there was a statistically significant mean difference between grade 12 completers, diploma holders and other learners on the individual related challenges of student support system. With the three groups other learners (degree holders and joined the program to study other field of study) reported that their neutrality in individual related challenges.

Based on the monthly income of the respondents the one-way ANOVA result $F(4, 129) = 3.253; p = .014$ there was a statically significant mean difference between groups of no income, 1-1500, 1501-3000, 3001-4500 and above 4501 ETB on the learner related challenges of student support service. In those five groups the group with no income with the mean score of 3.30 and the group with monthly income of 4501 in the mean score of 2.86 the two groups show their neutrality in individual related challenges.

4.1.4.2- Institutional related challenges

Institutional related challenges greatly affected learner's performance and progress. The challenges including delayed study materials, lack of an effective institutional network for technical assistance, lack of responsiveness from regional centre, lack of appropriate students services support and lack or delayed important information challenges distance learners highly (Musingafi et al., 2015).

Table 22: One sample t-test result on student support service challenges (institutional related challenges)

No	Institutional related challenges	Test Value = 3							
				T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
1	Bureaucracy in the center(bored and worded tedious system)	3.69	1.294	6.140	133	.000	.687	.47	.91
2	Institutions' negative attitude to support students	3.59	1.305	5.230	133	.000	.590	.37	.81
3	Inadequate support service with regard to my need and interest	3.66	1.274	6.035	133	.000	.664	.45	.88
4	Lack of institutions commitment to support students	3.59	1.171	5.827	133	.000	.590	.39	.79
5	Remoteness of distance education center	3.35	1.513	2.683	133	.000	.351	.09	.61
6	support services are not delivered on time	3.34	1.456	2.670	133	.000	.336	.09	.58
7	Insufficient time allocation for support services	3.44	1.479	3.446	133	.000	.440	.19	.69
8	Lack of adequate skill and knowledge of employees to implement student support	3.60	1.361	5.079	133	.000	.597	.36	.83
9	Institutional employees low respect towards distance learners	3.56	1.427	4.496	132	.000	.556	.31	.80

In the evaluation of institutional related challenges which affect the student support system in distance education institutions, one of the items learners were asked in the close ended questioner was if bureaucracy in the center challenges them or not to gain the support services. Accordingly the respondents were agreed with this institutional related challenge with the value of (M=3.69, SD=1.294; $t(133) = 6.140$, $P = .000$, (two tailed). Qualitative result in open ended questioner also confirmed the same. In open ended questionnaire learners revealed that the system is tedious especially in the head office. In the coordinating center the services like module, grade report and official transcript are not available. It is a mandate of head office and the communication between the head office and coordinating center in each and every activity is time consuming and the situation is bad for distance learners.

In the other item which is related with negative attitude of the institution to support students, the respondents were agreed with the statement with the value of ($M=3.56$, $SD=1.305$; $t(133) = 5.230$, $P= 000$, (two tailed). Concerning on the issue a learner whom I interviewed also said that:

It is a well-known fact; distance education is a sidelined issue in Alpha University College as well as other institutions all over the country. The employees in the institution have negative attitude for the program. Even our colleagues and bosses in our employer organization also discourage distance learning.

Thirdly learners were asked if the service provision of distance education institution is convenient. However, the respondents reported that the service provision is inconvenient for them. Some distance learners whom the researcher interviewed also confirmed the result. Accordingly, DL6 said that;

I have bachelor degree in computer engineering from Adama science and technology institute. But there is no job in the market and then I decided to study management in Alpha University College. When I compared the service provision of private higher education institution with public universities, there is a huge gap. The systems in private higher distance education institutions particularly in distance education institutions are very traditional and inconvenient. For instance, the modes they used to deliver the support service like notice boards are very traditional and not accessed for distance learners who are living in remote areas. Why not they prefer telegram and face book accounts to disseminate information?

In the other statement learners were asked if the support service is based on their need and interest. With the value of ($M=3.66$, $SD= 1.274$ and the P value of $P=.000$), the respondents reported that the support service is inadequate and not based on their need and interest. The data obtained from interview also confirmed that;

The issue of need assessment to know the students' interest is not a considerable issue in distance education institution. The institution gives support services as it believes the support services are important for the students. Students are not part of the plan in any service delivery without they are treated as a customer. (Alpha University College center coordinator, April 8, 2021)

Concerning on remoteness of distance education center, with a mean score of $M=3.32$ and $P=.000$ the respondents reported that the remoteness of distance education center challenges them to gain student support service. Besides to quantitative data the qualitative data which are collected through questionnaire also confirmed that the result. The coordinating center is far from my living area and it is around 190 Kms. In previous years there was coordinating office in the nearest district and which was better for me. But now it is closed and we are obliged to come in Gondar coordinating center to gain support services. It is not effective in time, cost and energy for me.

In my interview DL8 also confirmed that;

Alpha University College has not enough branch coordinating offices in Woreda. Other distance education institutions like Rada and St. marry colleges have a coordinating office in each woreda. Thus, students can get the support services easily in the nearest centers. But Alpha University College closes five branch coordinating centers within five years and it increases the cost of learners.

In the institutional related issues, the other factor that students report as a challenge is the delayed provision of support services. In this item with the mean score of $M=3.34$ and P value ($P=.000$) the respondents agreed that the support services are not delivered on time. Regarding with this the qualitative data which were collected through open ended questionnaire also confirmed the quantitative data. Most of the respondents criticize the system as it is delayed to give the support services on time. For instance, the course modules are not distributed on time and it affects students result.

Most of the respondents in the open-ended questioner indicated that insufficient time allocation for support services challenge them to gain the services. As an example, the time allocated for tutorial service is very few and it pushes the learners to decide not to attend the tutorial class.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not institution employees have the required knowledge and skill to implement the support services. Thus, the learners responded that, employees lack the required knowledge and skill to support them.

Under institutional challenges which can affect the support service provision lastly students were also asked whether employees in Alpha University College give respect for them or not.

With the mean score of 3.56 and P value ($P=.000$) the respondents reported that the low respect of employees towards learners in the institution challenges them to gain the support services. Learners have also written on open-ended questions. They said that employees in the institution have no respect to the learners and they despise them to ask clarification about different issues related with module and grade report as well as payment procedures; they also said they do not understand we are the customers of the institution. In addition, an interview was also made with learners. With regard to the employees of the institution, of the interviewed learner (DL2) responded:

Here in Alpha University College the employees have low respect towards their learners. They are unresponsive and also they don't want to support us equally. Some students can get favor by employees due to different reasons and they can receive support services easily from the institution and other learners are regarded as a neglected in this center.

Table 15- Independent Samples T-test result in institutional related challenges based on their sex, place of residence and marital status

Demographic variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	df	P-value
Sex of respondents	Male	68	3.66	.6810	2.059	132	.040
	Female	66	3.39	.8355			
Residence	Rural	44	3.83	3.250	-1.523	132	.014
	Urban	90	3.38	.7936			
Marital status	Single	51	3.66	.7269	1.560	132	.281
	Married	83	3.45	.7891			

In the analysis institutional related challenges by using independent t-test based on respondents' sex, place of residence and marital status there is a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners. Concerning on these issues male learners respond that they are agreed with the statements and female learners were in the range of undecided in the institutional related challenges.

Based on their place of residence, there were a statically significant means difference between learners from urban and learners from rural. Learners from rural area express their agreement with the statements under institutional related challenges and learners from urban area were in the range of undecided.

Based on their marital status, there were no a statically significant means difference between married and single respondents. Thus an institutional related challenge affects both groups.

Table 23- One way ANOVA result of institutional related challenges across different demographic factors

One way ANOVA also made due to observe if there is a response difference based on age of respondents, educational background and monthly income.

Demographic variables	Category	N	<i>M</i>	SD	F	df	P-value
Age of respondents	20-30	70	3.56	.6396	1.552	2	.216
	31-40	41	3.62	.7660		131	
	41-50	23	3.28	1.074			
	Total	134	3.53	.7702		133	
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	3.68	.6574	.845	2	.432
	Diploma holder	80	3.54	.7710		131	
	other	34	3.41	.8299		133	
	Total	134	3.53	.7702			
Monthly income	No income	16	3.61	.7336	.578	4	.679
	1-1500	33	3.45	.6152		129	
	1501-3000	40	3.43	.9268		133	
	3001-4500	24	3.68	.5719			
	Above 4501	21	3.61	.9030			
	Total	134	3.53	.7702			

On the above table the result of one way ANOVA, $F(2,131)= 1.552$; $P=.216$) concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was no a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses on the institutional related challenges of student support system. The same with age groups there were no statistical significant mean difference based on educational background and monthly income.

4.1.4.3- Instructional related challenges

Instructional related challenges also affect learner's success in distance education. It includes delayed or ineffective feedback, lack of instructor's contact and /or inadequate academic support, unhelpful course information and lack of direction and poor course design /inappropriate learning materials (Musingafi et al., 2015)

Table 24: One sample t-test result on student support service challenges (instructional related challenges)

No	Instructional related challenges	Test Value = 3							
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
1	insufficient knowledge of tutors regarding with the subject matter	3.82	1.103	8.618	133	.000	.821	.63	1.01
2	Difficulty to understand tutors language in the tutor session	3.70	1.263	6.431	133	.000	.701	.49	.92
3	Inadequate content of instructional materials	3.60	1.292	5.416	133	.000	.604	.38	.83
4	Lack of timely feedback on students assignment	3.92	1.144	9.287	133	.000	.918	.72	1.11

Concerning the statements under the instructional related challenges, the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the observed and the expected mean on the issue of tutor's knowledge on subject matter and their language easiness to understand. Learners were also interviewed with regard to tutor's knowledge of subject matter and the language they use. They confirmed that there are problems with the language they use and the knowledge they have. DL5 revealed that;

In my first year I was attended two tutorial classes in two subsequent semesters. The tutors are naive and they try only to cover contents of the module theoretically as it is written in the module. Some tutors read it and passed the topic without any clarification. We distance learners want to know theories of the module with some practical examples. Due to that I decide to miss the tutorial sessions.

DL6 also reported that;

Tutors are come to the sessions without any preparation. They don't have any respect to the program as well as the learners. Some tutors are very young and I think they have not an experience in teaching. Just they come in to class and talk about theories in the module without any clarification. They don't care if we understand or not the contents they cover. In this situation how distance learners want to attend the tutorial sessions?

DL1 in the same issue said that;

I was attended at least three times in different semesters. Tutors are inexperienced and they use complex languages to explain theories. There is no difference between reading the module at home and attending the tutor class. Why I invest my time, money and energy without additional value?

The interview with center coordinator shows that they are careless who the tutors are to sign the contract with them. The coordinator said that;

We know some individuals in person who are lecturers in Gondar University and we call them to give tutorial classes in our center. They also recommend other lecturers and we sign a contract for two days in each semester to cover the tutorial sessions. There is no any evaluation mechanism to measure their performance. I believe that being a lecturer in public university is enough to give the tutorial.

In order to deliver effective teaching and learning process in distance learning institutions, well prepared instructional materials play a major role. Regarding with this, sample learners were asked whether the instructional materials content adequacy challenges them or not in the support system. Accordingly the mean score of the respondents was statistically significant with the value of ($M=3.60$, $SD= 1.292$; $t(133), 5.416$ $P=.000$). This indicates that the instructional materials are not adequate enough for distance learners. Besides to quantitative data in close ended questionnaire my interview with distance learners also confirmed the inadequacy of instructional materials. Concerning the issue DL9 said that;

I know the course modules are out dated and the contents are not clear for distance learners. Besides to the content the font size is very small and difficult to read it. I have the problem of long sight and I never try to read the modules. I think they prepared it in such a way to save their paper.

The researcher also tries to see distance education modules in the center and the document analysis result shows that; the modules are not clear about by whom they prepared and time of preparation, the font size is very small, they are printed in black and white form only; it doesn't contain illustrations and graphics as well as examples to be clear for learners, the time limit for tutor marked assignments are not set.

Lack of timely feedback on student's assignment and performance also the other challenging factor to the student support services; and the on sample t-test score was ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.144$; $t(133), 9.287$, $P=.000$ (two tailed).

Table 25: Independent sample t-test result on instructional related challenges across the respondent's sex, residence and marital status

Demographic variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P-value
Sex of respondents	Male	68	3.89	.6611	2.046	132	.134
	Female	66	3.62	.8483			
Residence	Rural	44	3.80	.7994	.479	132	.582
	Urban	90	3.73	.7559			
Marital status	Single	51	3.88	.5228	1.249	1.437	.005
	Married	83	3.68	.8807			

In the table above the independent-samples t-test result shows that there was no a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners on the instructional related student support challenges in the score of ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .6611$) for males and females ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .8483$; $t(132) p = .134$). This indicates that both groups of respondents were challenged by instructional related challenges. Based on their place of residence there was no a statistically mean difference between learners from rural and from urban. In the same table, the independent sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant mean difference between married and single respondents with the value of single ($M=3.88$, $SD=.5228$) and married ($M=3.68$, $SD=.8807$; $t(132)p=.005$). In this respect the response of single respondents tends to extreme response of strongly agree.

Table 26: One way ANOVA result on the instructional related challenges across the respondent's age, educational background and monthly income

Demographic variables	Category	N	M	SD	F	df	P-value
Age of respondents	20-30	70	3.76	.6530	6.573	2	.002
	31-40	41	4.01	.5888		131	
	41-50	23	3.31	1.128			
	Total	134	3.76	.7681		133	
Educational background	Grade 12 completer	20	4.07	.4873	2.075	2	.130
	Diploma holder	80	3.72	.7330		131	
	other	34	3.66	.9392		133	
	Total	134	3.76	.7681			
Monthly salary	No income	16	3.93	.5041	1.068	4	.375
	1-1500	33	3.62	.6735		129	
	1501-3000	40	3.66	.9616		133	
	3001-4500	24	3.95	.4927			
	Above 4501	21	3.80	.8940			
	Total	134	3.76	.7681			

On the above table the result of one-way ANOVA, $f(2,131)= 6.573$; $P=.002$) concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses on the instructional challenges of student support system. The mean score of the age range 41-50, were 3.31 and their response tends to undecided on instructional challenges while the other two groups agree with the listed items. In the same table the one-way ANOVA result on monthly income and educational background shows that there was no a statically significant mean difference between groups.

4.2- Discussion

In this part, the result of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis is discussed in the order of the basic research questions.

Basic research question1- How student support system is implemented in the selected institution vis-à-vis the expectations in the literature?

This basic research question has three sub parts that show the implementation status of student support in the selected institution. Thus, the discussion for the above basic research question is made separately based on the data analysis result for each part.

1- Frequency of student support services

A- Administrative support services

Under the administrative support service, providing adequate information, facilitating the process of admission, application and registration and distribution of course materials among administrative support services was evaluated based on their frequency of implementation. Concerning on giving appropriate information during learners visit in the institution (Simpson, 2000) advised that the institution should give adequate information about grading and examination, exam cites, course choice and registration process. The result of the study also shows that the university college provides services of informing learners about exam centers and assignment submission dates timely. In the items listed to evaluate administrative support services learners mostly complain on the issue of course material distribution and learners revealed that the University College doesn't distribute the course modules timely and the institution reason for the problem is scarce resource, high cost of paper and also transportation. Regarding with this item Tsegaye (2014) also found that the increasing cost of paper and the scarcity of foreign currency needed to import it as well as the high cost of transporting texts over long distances have been the major problems affecting the provision of course materials to distance learners.

B- Counseling support service

In the listed ten items under counseling service provision, the total mean score was 16.44 and the one sample t-test result shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the observed mean and the expected mean (30) with a P value of ($p=.000$). This implies that Alpha University College does not provide counseling service for learners. The same with this result the research conducted by Megerssa (2019), in public university shows that those distance learners need non-academic advising service from distance education providers but there is no counseling support system by the university that helps them to accomplish their study in a successful manner. The other research conducted by (Lerra, 2014) also confirmed that the counseling service is not implemented in the expected manner and the arranged ones are also inadequate.

C- Academic Support service

In the evaluation of academic support services, the finding showed that the academic support services are not implemented frequently and learners complain about the effectiveness of tutorial services, on time display of academic results and library services. Learners revealed that they cancel the tutorial services due to the ineffective delivery of the program. On the issue of tutorial program the study conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) is consistent with this study and the result shows that even if face to face tutorial program is one of the instructional components of the distance education and the distance learners are expected to participate in the face to face programs conducted twice a year at selected tutorial centers, the largest group of distance students were not beneficiaries of the tutorial program.

The study conducted by Tsegaye (2014), is also consistent with this study and the implementation of face-to-face tutorial programs are not adequate in terms of the number of tutorial contact and duration of tutorial session, on the other hand the time and tutorial centers by itself are also inconvenient. The other study conducted by Megerssa (2019), in public university shows that the majority of learners do not participate in the tutorial sessions and the main reason that they mentioned is that the institutions do not involve distance learner's need when setting tutorial schedule.

In academic support service learners also reveal their negative response concerning on in time display of academic results and the reason behind this problem were related with the head office. Consistent with this study the research conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) confirmed that delays in informing examination results to were the major problems of secondary level distance education in Ethiopia. The major causes for the delays in the provision of services are the activities of distance education are too centralized and services are delivered to geographically scattered students from the centers.

The other academic support is giving feedback for distance learners about their assignment and learners overall performance. In this regard the one sample t-test and the interview result shows that the institution never gives any feedback on learner's assignments and on their overall academic performance. In relation to this the study conducted in public university is consistent

with this study. The result shows that there is no feedback at all and no one has ever asked the institution to provide feedback for distance learners (Megerssa, 2019).

On the issue of library services, the one sample t-test result shows that the respondents reported they never got library service in the students living area and online library service. On the contrary the study conducted by (Möwes, 2005) in Namibia state University shows that distance learners are accessed library facilities in their nearest distance education campus.

2- Perceived quality of providers of student support services

Even if provision of student support service requires professionally competent providers having enough knowledge and skills on how to provide the support services to a distance learner, the result of data shows that implementers of administrative support service in the institution lacks adequate knowledge to support the learners with varied backgrounds and other related responsibilities. Other studies conducted by researchers also consistent with this finding. For instance Megerssa (2019) founds that the main challenge in administrative support system is that the administrative support staffs of the distance education unit have no qualification that fits with the requirements of the program; in many cases, these workers are those who were transferred from other offices/units of the university as a punishment due to disciplinary problems. The other researcher Tsegaye (2014), also founds that the administrative support service is not well-organized and there is no responsible person who can give administrative support to distance learners.

Regarding with providers of counseling service, the respondents reported that implementers of counseling services are not professionals and simply the individual in the center. Consistence with this result the study conducted by (Kabate, 2016) confirmed that the providers of counseling service are any staff members in distance education institution and they lack skills and knowledge on how to handle and counsel the distance learner.

On the academic issues of tutorial services majority of the respondents reported that tutorial providers are inexperienced and incapable teachers. This implies that student support providers in the studied institution lack professional qualification. Regarding with this issue the study conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) showed that the tutors are neither well trained nor have ample

knowledge and time to assist their students as well as they could not meet the demands of the distance learners effectively.

3- Methods to address student support system

In the evaluation of methods used to deliver the support services, learners confirmed that the institution uses face to face contact, bulletin boards, information desk and telephone to address learner support services. The learners reveal negative response to postal services, email, audio and video and workshops and seminars. Regarding with the issue, on the contrary the study conducted by (Ejigu, 2002), on the means of communication learners use to interact with the distance education institution, postal service was a preferable one to address learner support services. Literatures indicate that email is one of the most frequent modes to address support services. According to Dominique, et.al, (2004) Email is a fairly expedient way for distance education institution with each student individually and answer questions with a greatest advantages of a student can pose a question at any time, which the instructor can also read and answer a convenient time. But unfortunately, the institution doesn't use Email to address the support services and as a result; students missed the benefits mentioned so far.

Basic research question 2- To what extent learners are satisfied by the student support system delivered by the institution?

Understanding student satisfaction with student services is an essential step for college and universities to work towards improving service delivery. It stands to reason that if students report high levels of satisfaction with their university, they will be more successful as students (Rudge, 2014). But unfortunately, the learners in Alpha University College reveal their dissatisfaction on administrative, counseling and academic support services.

A- Learners satisfaction on administrative support services

In the results of the evaluation of learner's satisfaction on administrative support services indicate that, most of the learners were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the listed items under administrative support service mainly on the timely distribution of course materials. Consistent with this result the study conducted by (Kimo, 2006) revealed that distance learners

are dissatisfied by module distribution mainly caused by late printing, slow delivery and poor distribution.

In general on the issue of administrative support services, the research conducted by (Möwes, 2005) oppose with this finding and the result shows that overall, more than half of the students were satisfied and agreed that adequate and timely administrative support were provided.

B- Learners' satisfaction on counseling support services

In all the listed items of counseling support services the one sample t-test result and the qualitative data shows that the respondents reported that they are very dissatisfied and dissatisfied. The research finding of (Möwes, 2005) also shows that similarity with this study on the counseling services and the finding indicates that students are generally not satisfied with the provision of counseling service.

C- Learners' satisfaction on academic support services

In academic support services, learners' satisfaction towards support services like tutorial service, displaying learners result on time, feedback provision and library service were evaluated. Regarding with the tutorial service learners were dissatisfied by tutorial due to tutors insufficient knowledge of subject matter and way of presentation short time limit for sessions. On the contrary (Möwes, 2005) in her study stressed that the respondents yielded their satisfaction with the support received through face-to-face tutorials and also they are satisfied by tutor's sound knowledge about subject matter and their presentation in systematic, clear and effective way.

In the literature there is evidence to show that while students seem to accept and profit from comments and corrections given within a week after an assignment has been completed, they are usually dissatisfied if the delay is of longer duration (Holmberg, 1995). In Alpha University College learners reveal that they are very dissatisfied by the feedback provision of the institution on their academic performance and on their assignments. On this issue the study conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) also assured that distance students are dissatisfied in the frequency and speed of the feedback system provided by distance education institution.

Basic research question 3- What are the challenges that institutions and learners encounter during the implementation of student support?

A- Individual learner related challenges

In the evaluation of individual related challenges, the respondents agreed with the listed challenges such as conflicting commitments, lack of technical skill to use computers, lack of family support and employers challenge to give leave during tutorial sessions. The same with this result the study conducted by (Ejigu, 2002), confirmed that students cannot attend tutorial programs because of they will face far more serious problems regarding with their commitments. On the other learner related challenge (Möwes, 2005), stressed that the learners did not know how to use computer, internet and e-mail services, while some of the students also indicated that they did not know they had access.

The research conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) also confirmed that the most common reasons for not attending the tutorial sessions and support services were all related to personal factors which are: Family, employer and work commitments.

B- Institutional related challenges

The qualitative data obtained through interview from center coordinator and experts as well as the one sample t-test result ensured that institutional related challenges such as intuitions negative attitude to support distance learners, in adequate support provision, remoteness of distance education center and lack of adequate skill and knowledge of employees to implement student support seen as the major obstacle in the implementation of learner support services.

This finding is therefore in line with the findings of (Nsamba, 2016) who confirmed that Instructor's negative attitude toward off-campus students, inappropriate support service, lack of instructional materials, inadequate infrastructure including poor internet connectivity as major factors for proper implementation of student support services.

C- Instructional related challenges

In the instructional related challenges, tutors insufficient knowledge of subject matter were one of the main challenges for learners to participate in student support service. In line with this result

In the study which is conducted in public university also confirmed this result. Accordingly, tutors are not committed to provide effective tutorial program, and some of them also miss it.

Others try only to cover contents of the module, not to create an in depth understand of the course among the learners. In general the tutorial program is delivered without the necessary monitoring and evaluation procedure (Megerssa, 2019). Regarding with this issue the research conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) stressed that distance learners did not attend tutorial programs because of past experience of unhelpful tutorials.

Lack of timely feedback on student's assignment and performance and inadequate content of instructional materials also the other challenging factor to the student support services. Consistent with this study (Lerra, 2014) confirmed that lack of appropriate academic support for individual candidates, problems of module distribution at the appropriate times, lack of academic feedback before the final (term-end) exam and poor or not well prepared/ organized learning modules are among the critical problems of distance education.

Basic Research Questions 4- Is there a significant difference among learners on the practice and challenges of student support based on their sex, age, place of residence, marital status, educational background and income level?

Based on this guiding question, independent t-test and one-way ANOVA was made on the six demographic variables.

Concerning on the practice of learner support service (in relation to frequency of support services) it was found that there was a statistically significance mean difference among educational background of respondents (between grade 10 completers, diploma holders and other learners on the frequency of student support system. The difference was occurred between groups of grade 12 completers and other learners.

Regarding with learners satisfaction on student support service there was no a statistically mean difference between different age groups and educational background in the result of one way ANOVA analysis. Opposing this result Gao's study (2012), shows that with increasing age, larger percentages of the respondents were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with the support services provided by distance education institution. But concerning the monthly income of the respondents, the significance difference was seen between the groups of monthly income of 1-1500 with 1501-3000 and with monthly income of above 4501. The other group 3001-4500 has also a mean difference with the group of 1501-3000 and with the group above 4501.

In relation to challenges of support service, the analysis of individual related challenges by using independent t-test based on respondents' sex, place of residence and marital status there is a statistically significant mean difference between male and female distance learners. Concerning on these issues female learners are more challenged than male learners in individual related challenges. Based on their place of residence, there were no a statically significant means difference between learners from urban and learners from rural. On the contrary the research conducted by (Ejigu, 2002) shows that learners from rural area due to farness of the locality and high cost of transportation due to the long distance of the centers are the major factors which hinders the learners participation in tutorial sessions. The one-way ANOVA result shows there was a statistically significant mean difference across the age ranges, educational background and monthly income.

In the issue of institutional related challenges there was a statistically significant mean difference between male and female respondents. Concerning on these issues male learners respond that they are agreed with the statements and female learners were in the range of undecided in the institutional related challenges. Based on their place of residence, there were a statically significant means difference between learners from urban and learners from rural. Learners from rural area express their agreement with the statements under institutional related challenges and learners from urban area were in the range of undecided.

Lastly on the issue of instructional related challenges, concerning the age of respondents the result showed that there was a statistically significant mean difference among three age groups in the responses on the instructional challenges of student support system.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1- Summary

The purpose of this descriptive survey study was to investigate the practice and challenges of student support service in Ethiopian private distance education institutions particularly in Alpha University College Gondar Branch. For this reason, four basic questions were developed and answered.

1. How student support system is implemented in the selected institution vis-à-vis the expectations in the literature?
2. To what extent learners are satisfied by the student support system delivered by the institution?
3. What are the challenges that institutions and learners encounter during the implementation of student support?
4. Is there a significant difference among learners on the practice and challenges of student support based on their sex, age, place of residence, marital status, educational background and income level?

In order to get the relevant data for the basic research questions, 134 distance learners were selected through available sampling technique, 1 center coordinator, 1 registrar officer, 1 center resource center officer, 1 accountant and 1 secretary in the center were selected as samples of the study through comprehensive sampling technique. The required data were collected through questionnaire, interview, observation and document review and it was analyzed using both descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one sample t-test, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA).

5.1.1- Major findings of the study

Even if student support services are essential in the system of distance education which helps the learners to fully participate in their learning and achieve their academic goals, the frequency of student support system(administrative, counseling and academic supports) indicates that the support services was not implemented efficiently the results are in the range of never and rarely.

In the evaluation of administrative support services in terms of frequency, the respondents was reported their positive response in the issues of information provision in the time of application and registration, notification of exam center, and informing the deadline to submit assignments. But the respondents reveal their negative response on the issues of educational materials distribution, notification of examination procedures and notification of change of address.

In the counseling services, the respondents were reported that the counseling services are not implemented in the institution. In all the listed items the score tends to never and rarely.

In academic support services, the implementation was low and the respondents revealed that tutorial services, library service and feedback provision are not implemented in the institution and they show their positive result only on assignments. Both measured and tutor marked assignments are available and the contents also relevant.

For effective student support service to take place a provider should be professionally competent that is having enough knowledge and skills on how to provide the support services to a distance learner. The result shows that implementers of support service in the institution lacks adequate knowledge to support the learners with varied backgrounds and other related responsibilities.

Various methods to address student support service were not used by the institution during implementation of student support and the institution uses traditional modes of delivery to address the support services.

In the evaluation of learner's satisfaction on support services the result indicates that, most of the learners were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied regarding with administrative, counseling and academic support services.

The practice of student support service was challenged by many factors including learner related (expensiveness of communication, travel and time, workload of learners, conflicting commitments and employers challenge to give leave); institution related(learner's negative attitude, lack of resource, inadequate and inconvenient provision of support services, low respect of employees towards distance learners and instructional related(delayed feedback, low quality of instructional materials and insufficient knowledge of tutors) were found as the most serious factors that hinder the implementation of student support service.

5.2- Conclusions

Based on the above research findings, the following conclusions were made:

In the studied distance education institution, student support service was not implemented as per indicated in the literature. That is, the implementation of SSS in the institution was not frequent enough; the service provision is not convenient and proper feedback was not given to them. In addition, different modes of delivery were not used in the implementation. Thus, in running student support service in distance education programs as effectively as possible, Alpha University College needs to give due concern to the frequent implementation of student support services, the modes of delivery they use and the implementers quality in service provision.

As the study reveals, the largest group of distance students were not satisfied by the overall implementation of student support system. The most common complaint from students was the delays and distributions of instructional materials delivery, delay of displaying the results on time, delay of the grade report and official transcript which may be a cause for delay of graduation, create additional cost to students and the institutions. Alpha University College is required devising ways so as to minimizing these problems are crucial to maximize the support service.

There are several overlapping and interrelated challenges that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of student support service. Although there are learner related challenges, the main challenge of the support service is related to the institution itself. Unless serious measures are taken by the University College and the responsible bodies like HERQA and if the current practices continued, the overall quality of the distance education program as well as the quality of graduates will deteriorate.

5.3-Limitations of the study

During the interview, students and coordinating office staffs were not volunteered to be recorded. As a result, the researcher was forced to take notes on the elaborations made by the center staff members. Because of this, all of the ideas of the informants might not be jotted down which in turn has negative impact during the data analysis and taken as the limitation of this study. Due to COVID 19 pandemic class room observation was not also used as data collection instrument which was the other limitation of the study to come up with tangible evidences particularly in relation to the implementation of tutorial service which is the major element under academic support services. The sample size of the study also affected by COVID 19 pandemic. Because the exam was home take and most delegated individuals come to the center to take the learners exam paper. Due to that the researcher was forced to use available sampling technique. In addition to the above limitations most of the learners were not willing to fill the questionnaire and they are in haste to do their exam papers and to go their living area.

5.4-Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following points were forwarded as a solution to the problems:

- In the studied institution, student support service was not implemented fully in the expected manner particularly, in terms of frequency, provider's quality of student support, and use of various modes of delivery. Thus, distance education institutions with ministry of higher education have to establish a guideline with a strong and functional supervision and monitoring team that regularly check and recheck the implementation of student support service with the integration of the desired elements.
- Ministry of education with HERQA and other responsible body should design trainings for employees of distance education institutions to enable them effective support service providers.
 - Department of adult education in different universities should give training for employees of distance education institution about how to treat adult learners.
 - Adult education professionals should give a support service for distance learning institution to implement andragogical assumptions

- Meaningful efforts have to be made by the concerned bodies to minimize institutional and instructional related challenges such as inadequate content of modules, institutions low commitment to support learners, inconvenient support provision, delayed feedback on learner's performance and inadequate tutorial services. The prevalence of those challenges in the studied institution entails that there should be integrated efforts among the concerned bodies so as to alleviate the challenges which in turn facilitate the implementation of student support service at the expected level of standard.
- Meaningful student support implementation has to be part of institutions' evaluation/efficiency/ by HERQA and ministry of higher education so that distance education institutions might take the implementation of student support service seriously.
- It is better if further specific studies will be conducted on the student support issues and strategies to improve the system of distance education institutions.

References

- ACDS. (2010). *ACDS student handbook*. Alpha University College.
- Aoki, K. (2012). Generations of Distance Education and Challenges of Distance Education Institutions in Japanese Higher Education. In *The Open University of Japan* (pp. 1–20). Open science.
- Arko-Achemfuor, A. (2017). Student support gaps in an open distance learning context. *Educational Research*, 27(4), 658–676.
- Aytenfesu, C. (2008). *Utilization of instructional media in distance education: The case of two distance institutions*. Addis Ababa University.
- Brindley, J. E. (1995). Learners and learner services: the key to the future in distance education. In E. Roberts & J.M. Keough (Ed.), *Why the information highway: Lessons from open and distance learning* (pp. 102–125). Trifolium Books Inc.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th edi.). Routledge.
- COL. (1999). *Planning and Management of Open and Distance Learning* (Trainers' Kit 003).
- Coletn, D. & Covert, R. W. (2007). *Designing and constructing instruments for social research and evaluation*. John Wiley and sons, Inc.
- Corry, N. & Lelliott, T. (2003). Supporting the masses? Learner perceptions of a South African ODL programme. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Ed.), *Rethinking Learner Support in Distance Education*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. sage publications.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). sage publications.
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Daniel, J. S. (1997). *Why universities need technology strategies* (pp. 11–17).
- Dominique, M., Catherine, S. & Greenwood, L. (2004). *The distance education evolution: Issues and case studies*. Information Science Publishing.
- Dreze, J.P., & Sen, A. K. (2002). *development and participation*. Oxford University Press.
- Ejigu, T. (2002). *Organizational and Managerial Factors Affecting the Secondary Level Distance Education*. Addis Ababa University.
- Endawoke, Y. (2005). *Introduction to educational research [Module]*. Bahir Dar University.
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Developing questionnaire base on selection and designing. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), 219–221. <https://doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2017.05.00150>
- Evans, T., & Pauling, B. (2021). Repositioning and Re- purposing Distance Education for the Future. In F. Cleveland- Innes & D. R. Garrison (Ed.), *An Introduction to Distance Education: Understanding Teaching and Learning in a New Era* (2nd ed., pp. 121–146). Taylor & Francis.
- Foks, J. (1988). Distance education- a developing concept. In Swart & David (Ed.), *Developing Distance Education. Papers Submitted to the World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education .Papers submitted to the 14th World Conference in Oslo 9-16 August* (pp. 31–37). International Council for Distance Education.

- Gao, S. (2012). *Learner Support for Distance Learners: A Study of Six Cases of ICT-based Distance Education Institutions in China*. Stockholm University.
- Garrison, D. R. (1989). *Understanding Distance Education*. Routledge.
- Garrison, D. R., & Baynton, M. (1987). Concepts: Beyond independence in distance education: The concept of control. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 1(3), 3–15.
- Getachew, A. (2003). PHEIs as New Alternatives for Students in Ethiopia : The Case of Distance Education Provision at St . Mary ’ s College. In S. M. C. Distance Education Division (Ed.), *National conference on private higher education in Ethiopia* (pp. 1–19).
- Gibson, C. (1993). Towards a broader conceptualization of distance education. In D.Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education* (pp. 72–82). Routledge.
- Holmberg, B. (1995). *Theory and Practice of Distance Education*. in D. Keegan (2nd ed.) Routledge.
- Hussian, I. (2018). Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)-Based Learner Support in Distance Education in Pakistan. In Anjana (Ed.), *Technology for Efficient Learner Support Services in Distance Education: Experiences from Developing Countries* (pp. 189–210). Springer.
- IGNOU. (2012). *Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education*. IGNOU.
- Johnson, M. & Barrett, C. (2003). Addressing the learning skills needs of students at a distance; A dual medium approach. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Ed.), *Rethinking Learner Support in Distance Education*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Johnson,J.L. (2003). *Distance education: The Complete Guide to Design, Delivery, and Improvement*. Teachers College, Columbia University All.
- Kabate, M. J. (2016). Counseling service for students sustainability in open and distance learning sytem: A case of Ilala regional center of the open university of Tanzania. *European Journal of Alternative Education Studies*, 1(2), 36–48.
- Karanja, W. (1997). *Non-formal and Distance Education in Ethiopia. Lessons and Experiences. Economic and Social Policy Division Working Papers Series ESPD/WPS/97/5*.
- Keegan, D. (2001). *Foundations of Distance Education*. Routledge Falmer.
- Kimo, K. (2006). An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Support Services of Distance Learners of the Project 17,000 in Oromia Region (The Case of Tutorial Centers under Adama Teachers College) Kassim. *The Ethiopian Journal of Education*, XXVI(2), 57–87.
- Kumari, S. (2018). Open and Distance Education System and Learner Support Services: An Introduction. In Anjana (Ed.), *Technology for Efficient Learner Support Services in Distance Education: Experiences from developing countries* (pp. 1–22). Springer.
- Lentell, H. (2003). The importance of the tutor in open and distance learning. In A. Tait & R.Mills (Ed.), *Rethinking Learner Support in Distance Education*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Lerra, M. D. (2014). The Dynamics and Challenges of Distance Education at Private Higher Institutions in South Ethiopia. *Asian Journal of Humanity, Art and Literature*, 1(3), 137–150.
- Maeverlyn, M., & Pitano, K. (2001). *ODL Learner Support Issues and Challenges – Students and Tutors perspective (Solomon Islands National University)* (pp. 1–10).
- Mckim, C. A. (2015). *The Value of Mixed Methods Research : A Mixed Methods Study*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689815607096>
- Megerssa, Y. (2019). *Practices and Challenges of Distance Education: The Case of BahirDar University*. Bahir Dar University.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Jossy-Bass A

- Wiley & Sons. Inc.
- Mills, R. (2003). The centrality of learner support in open and distance learning: a paradigm shift in thinking. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Ed.), *Rethinking Learner Support in Distance Education* (pp. 102–113). Routledge Falmer.
- Monyamane, L. & Monyamane, B. (2020). The provision of Learner Support Services in Open and Distance Education : A case Study of Botswana Open University (BOU), Botswana. *American Based Research Journal*, 9(8), 7–14.
- Möwes, D. L. (2005). *An Evaluation of Student Support Services In Open and Distance Learning at the University of Namibia*. University of Stellenbosch.
- Musingafi, C., Mapuranga, B., Chiwanza, K., & Zebron, S. (2015). Challenges for Open and Distance learning (ODL) Students : Experiences from Students of the Zimbabwe Open University. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(18), 59–67.
- Natarajan, M. (2005). Innovative Teaching Techniques for Distance Education. *Communications of the IIMA*, 5(4), 73–80.
- Netanda, R. S., Mamabolo, J., & Themane, M. (2017). Do or die: student support interventions for the survival of distance education institutions in a competitive higher education system. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1378632>
- Nsamba, A. N. (2016). *Exploring the Quality of Students' Support Services in Distance Learning Environments*. Univrsity of south Africa.
- Ozturk, I. (2001). The Role of EDucation in Economic Development: A Theoretical Perspective. *Journal of Rural Development and Administration*, XXXIII(1), 39–47.
- Phillips, M. (2003). Delivering learner support on-line: does the medium affect the message? In A. Tait & R. Mills (Ed.), *Rethinking Learner Support in Distance Education* (pp. 168–183). RoutledgeFalmer.
- Pratt, K. (2010). Supporting Distance Learners : Making Practice More Effective. *Journal of Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning*, 19(1), 12–26.
- Rudge, N. (2014). *Examining Student Satisfaction with the Student Services Center at a Local Community College*.
- Rumble, G. (1989). On defining distance education. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 3(2), 8–21.
- Rumble, G. (2000). Student support in distance education in the 21st century : Learning from service management. *Distance Education*, 21(2), 216–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158791000210202>
- SAGE, P. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (L. M. Given (ed.)). sage publications.
- Sewart, D. (1993). Student support systems in distance education, Open Learning. *The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 8(3), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268051930080302>
- Sharyn, B. (2013). institutional factors and postgraduate student experiance. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 3(1).
- Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., & Zvacek, S. (2015). *Teaching and Learning at a Distance Foundations of Distance Education* (6th edi.). Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Simpson, O. (2000). *Student support services for success in Open and Distance Learning*. Center for Distance Education, University of London International Program.
- Singh, K. (2007). *Quantitative Social Research Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Tait, A. (2000). Planning Student Support for Open and Distance learning. *International Journal of Distance Education*, 5(4), 3–12.

- Tait, A. (2003). Reflections on student support in open and distance learning. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 4(1), 1–9.
- Tallman, F. D. (1994). Satisfaction and completion in correspondence study: The influence of instructional and student-support services. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 8(2), 37–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08923649409526854>
- Tefera, D. (2010). *The Effectiveness of Tutorial Program in Distance Education at the Tertiary Level: The Case of Alpha and Admas University College*. Addis Ababa University.
- Teherdoost, H. (2016). Validity and reliability of research instrument; How to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in a research. *Electronic Journal*, 5(3), 28–36.
- Teshome, T. & Mohammed, T. (2012). Proceedings of the 10 th International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa. *Distance Education as a Tool for Development: The Prospects Of Private Distance Education In Ethiopia*, 53–78.
- Tharenou, P., Donohue, R., & Cooper, B. (2007). *Management of research methods*. Taylor & Francis.
- Tsegaye, A. (2014). *The Implementation of Learner Support Services in Alpha and Select Secondary Level Distance Education Centers*. Addis Ababa University.
- Ukpo, E. O. (2006). Support for distance learners in a Nigerian distance education programme. *The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 21(3), 253–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680510600953237>
- UNESCO. (2002). *Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Usun, S. (2004). Learner Support Services in Distance Education System (A Case Study of Turkey). *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE*, 5(4), 1–13.
- Woodley, A., & Simpson, O. (1974). Student Dropout : The Elephant in the Room. In O. Zawacki (Ed.), *Online distance education: Towards a research agenda* (pp. 459–484). AU press; Athabasca University.

Annexes



Bahir-Dar University

Department of Adult Education and Community Development

Questionnaire: For third year distance students at Alpha University College

Purpose of the Questionnaire:

Dear students, I am MA student at Bahir-Dar University. Now, I am conducting my Thesis entitled “**The Practice and Challenges of student support system in Private distance education institutions in Ethiopia particularly in Alpha University College Gondar Branch**”. Thus, the purpose of the questionnaire is to gather the relevant data from distance learners like you in order to examine the practice and challenges that hinder the proper implementation of student support. That is why I am requesting you to participate in this research. I strongly believe that your genuine responses to the items in this questionnaire are invaluable to get genuine research finding. The questionnaire will be completed anonymously, and it may take approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The evidences that you provide are keep fully confidential. Therefore, you are kindly requested to fill in your responses to the questionnaire on the basis of the given instructions.

Thank you in advance for your real dedication and cooperation!

Part one- Respondents demographic information

Direction: please tick (√) the appropriate option in the following questions.

1. Sex- Male Female
2. Age- 20-30 31-40 41-50 Above 50
3. Educational level- Grade 12 completer Diploma holder Other
4. Marital status- single married Divorced Widowed
5. Place of residence- Rural Sub-urban urban
6. Income- 0-1500 1501-3000 3001-4500 above 4500

Part Two: Implementation of student support system: For items (1-29), please use the given choices as your response.

1=Never

2= Rarely

3= Occasionally

4= Often

5= Always

A. Type of student support service and their frequency of implementation	Choices				
1. Administrative support					
1.1. Provides adequate information for students when they come for application	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Provides services like attaching the relevant documents and giving ID card during registration	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Notifies students when it changes its address	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Notifies the exam center timely	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Informs students about examination procedures (requirements for sitting on the exam) timely	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. Notifies students when it changes its address	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. Notifies the deadline to submit assignments and TMA to students on time	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. Distributes educational materials to students in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5
2. Consultation services: the institution	1	2	3	4	5
2.1. Sets consultancy hour/time to provide counseling services to students	1	2	3	4	5
2.2. Provides counseling services for students who are in difficult financial situations	1	2	3	4	5
2.3. Provides counseling service for students when they experience family problems (such as illness, conflict or similar problems)	1	2	3	4	5
2.4. Encourages students when their motivation towards learning declines	1	2	3	4	5
2.5. Advises students to assign adequate time and to study hard	1	2	3	4	5
2.6. Provides counseling services for students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
2.7. Provides counseling service for students on how they can balance different responsibilities (work, family, etc.) and learn properly	1	2	3	4	5

2.8. Provides personal counseling service for students on confidential matters	1	2	3	4	5
2.9. Provides adequate information on the benefits of distance learning when students get confused in choosing distance modality	1	2	3	4	5
2.10. Provides counseling services for students when they are tempted to withdraw or quit their education for various reasons	1	2	3	4	5
3. Academic support					
3.1. Provides face to face tutorial sessions timely	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. Allows students to send their queries through postal service	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. Assists learners to contact their tutors via phone when they question	1	2	3	4	5
3.4. Learners exchange academic related information with the institution by using email and other technologies	1	2	3	4	5
3.5. Displays students' academic results timely	1	2	3	4	5
3.6. Assigns academic advisors for learners	1	2	3	4	5
3.7. Provides different measured assignments (which is done at distance)for students	1	2	3	4	5
3.8. Provides assessments during the face-to-face tutorial sessions (TMA)	1	2	3	4	5
3.9. Gives timely feedback on students' assessment results	1	2	3	4	5
3.10. Provision of timely feedback on students overall academic performance	1	2	3	4	5
3.11. Accessing library service in the students living area	1	2	3	4	5
3.12. Accessing online library service to students	1	2	3	4	5

4. If the institution provides other supports to you, please mention them here under -----

5. Please list the type of service you need from the institution that are not currently provided for you? /the type of service you recommend for the future students -----

Part three- providers of student support service. 1=yes 2= no

No	Questions	choices	
1.	Who Provides administrative support?		
a.	A person with good technical and administrative skill	1	2
b.	Anyone in the center who is incapable and inexperienced	1	2
2.	Who provides counseling service?		
a.	A person who have professional qualification	1	2

c.	Simply a technician or anybody in the center	1	2
3.	Who provides the tutorial?		
a.	Experienced teachers	1	2
b.	Inexperienced and incapable teachers	1	2

Part four: How relevant are the services to your academic success? Please use the given choices as your response.

1=Very dissatisfied 2= Dissatisfied 3= Neither 4= Satisfied 5= Very Satisfied

Satisfaction on student support services	Choices				
1. Satisfaction on administrative supports: how satisfied are you on:					
1.1. provision of information during application/registration process	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. provision of information (attachment of documents, giving ID, etc.) during registration	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Notifying change of addresses	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. notifying place of exam centers timely	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. providing information on examination and grading procedures timely	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. notifying students regarding the deadline to submit the assignments and TMA	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. timely distribution of educational materials	1	2	3	4	5
2. Satisfaction on Consultation supports: how satisfied are you on:	1	2	3	4	5
2.1. assigning of working hours for consultation services	1	2	3	4	5
2.2. provision of counseling services to students who are in difficult financial situations					
2.3. provision of counseling services to students who are experiencing family problems	1	2	3	4	5
2.4. the work of maintaining student's motivation	1	2	3	4	5
2.5. the giving of advice to allocate sufficient time to study	1	2	3	4	5
2.6. the support of students with Physical difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
2.7. the advice to balance conflicting commitments	1	2	3	4	5
2.8. personal counseling services for confidential matters	1	2	3	4	5
2.9. the counseling service to decide to study through distance mode	1	2	3	4	5
2.10. Dropout and withdrawal orientation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Academic support services: how satisfied are you on:	1	2	3	4	5
3.1. the provision of on time tutorial service	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. the situations to ask clarification for questions via correspondence	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. the work of communicating with tutors via telephone	1	2	3	4	5

3.4. the issue of Communicating with the institution through email and other technologies in different academic issues	1	2	3	4	5
3.5. displaying students result on time	1	2	3	4	5
3.6. On assigns academic advisors for each discipline in the institution	1	2	3	4	5
3.7. On the clear and adequate measured assignments	1	2	3	4	5
3.8. On the relevant tutor marked assignments	1	2	3	4	5
3.9. On the in time feedback on students overall performance	1	2	3	4	5
3.10. On the timely feedback on students assignment	1	2	3	4	5
3.11. On the accessing of library service in the students living area	1	2	3	4	5
3.12. On the accessing of online library service	1	2	3	4	5

Part five- The methods used to deliver/address each support system

1= Yes 2= No

no	Methods	Choices	
1.	One to one/ Face to face	1	2
2.	Telephone	1	2
3.	Email	1	2
4.	Bulletin board	1	2
5.	letters & text messaging	1	2
6.	Handbooks	1	2
7.	Information desk at provincial centers	1	2
8.	Audio/video	1	2
9.	Seminars and workshops	1	2

10. Among the above table (part six) listed modes, which mode of support system delivery do you prefer? -----

 ----- why? -----

Part six: Please indicate the challenges in the implementation of student support by using the choices as your response.

1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5= strongly Agree

List of challenging factors	Choices				
1. Individual learner related challenges					
1.1. Expensiveness in terms of communication, time and travel	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Competing commitments (work and family related)	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. high workload and lack of time	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Inconvenient of the service provision methods	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Lack of technical skill when the support service is via computer	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. Lack of family support to attend support services	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. employers challenge to give leave during tutorial and exam schedule	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. I don't think I need a support	1	2	3	4	5
2. Institutional related challenges					
2.1. Bureaucracy in the center(bored and worded tedious system)	1	2	3	4	5
2.2. Institutions' negative attitude to support students	1	2	3	4	5
2.3. Inadequate support service with regard to my need and interest	1	2	3	4	5
2.4. Lack of institutions commitment to support students	1	2	3	4	5
2.5. Remoteness of distance education center	1	2	3	4	5
2.6. support services are not delivered on time	1	2	3	4	5
2.7. Insufficient time allocation for support services	1	2	3	4	5
2.8. Lack of adequate skill and knowledge of employees to implement student support	1	2	3	4	5
2.9. Institutional employees low respect towards distance learners	1	2	3	4	5
3. Instructional related challenges					
3.1. insufficient knowledge of tutors regarding with the subject matter	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. Difficulty to understand tutors language in the tutor session	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. Inadequate content of instructional materials	1	2	3	4	5
3.4. Lack of timely feedback on students assignment	1	2	3	4	5

4. What additional challenges do you face with the learner support service? -----

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Bahir-Dar University

Faculty of Educational and Behavioral science

Department Adult Education and Community Development

Semi-Structured Interview for center staffs

1. What kind of services that your institution provides for learners?
2. How frequently each of the services is given to students?
3. What methods you use to provide each support service for learners?
4. How learners be made part of the student support system?
5. How do you evaluate the satisfaction of learners towards the student support services?
6. What is your perception about the effectiveness of the support systems in helping students to achieve better academic performance?
7. Are there any services that are needed by the students but not provided by the institution? Why?
8. What are the major factors that hinder you from providing academic, administrative and technical support services for learners? How do you rate the extent of challenges?
9. What challenges you face to provide need based and relevant, timely services to the learners.
10. What you suggest to improve student support service?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Bahir-Dar University

Faculty of Educational and Behavioral science

Department Adult Education and Community Development

Semi-Structured Interview for learners

- 1- What types of services are given by the institution for you?
- 2- What methods are used by the institution to provide each student support service?
- 3- How do you evaluate the relevance of each service for your academic success?
- 4- How do you evaluate your satisfaction with the supports you get form the institution?
- 5- Are there support services that you need but not provided by the institution?
- 6- What challenges you faced to access the services provided by the institution?
- 7- What you suggest to improve student support service?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Questions to Guide Document Review

Bahir-Dar University

Faculty of Educational and Behavioral science

Department Adult Education and Community Development

1. What types of student support services are used by the institution to support students?
2. Do these student support strategies indicate in the institution annual plan?
3. Are the instructional materials adequate for distance learners?



ባህር-ዳር ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የትምህርትና ስነ-ባህሪ ኮሌጅ

የጎልማሶች ትምህርትና ማህበረሰብ ልማት ትምህርት ክፍል

በአልፋ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ኮሌጅ ውስጥ ለሚገኙ የመጨረሻ አመት የዲግሪ ፕሮግራም ተማሪዎች የተዘጋጀ መጠይቅ።

የመጠይቁ አላማ፡-

ውድ ተማሪዎች እኔ ዘዉዲቱ ብርሃኑ በባህር ዳር ዩኒቨርሲቲ የኤም.ኤ. ተማሪ ነኝ። አሁን “በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ባሉ የግል ርቀት ትምህርት ተቋማት ውስጥ የተማሪ ድጋፍ ሥርዓት አሠራርና ተግዳሮቶች በተለይም የአልፋ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ኮሌጅ ጎንደር ቅርንጫፍ” በሚል ርዕስ ጥናቴን እየሰራሁ እገኛለሁ። ስለሆነም የመጠይቁ ዓላማ ለተማሪዎች የሚደረግ የድጋፍ አፈጻጸምና ድጋፉን በተገቢው መንገድ ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ የሚያደናቅፉትን ልምዶች እና ተግዳሮቶች ለመመርመር እንደ እርስዎ ካሉ የርቀት ተማሪዎች ተገቢውን መረጃ መሰብሰብ ነው ። በመሆኑም በዚህ ምርመራ ላይ እንድትሳተፉ እጠይቃለሁ። በዚህ መጠይቅ ውስጥ ላሉት ጥያቄዎች የሚሰጡት እውነተኛ ምላሾች እውነተኛ የምርመራ ግኝት ለማግኘት እጅግ ጠቃሚ ናቸው ብዬ አጥብቄ አምናለሁ። መጠይቁ የእርስዎ ስም ሳይጠቀስ ይጠናቀቃል። ይህን መጠይቅ ለማጠናቀቅ በግምት 30 ደቂቃ ሊወስድ ይችላል ። ያቀረቧቸው ማስረጃዎች ሙሉ በሙሉ ለሌላ ወገን የማይተላለፉና በሚስጥር የሚያዙ ናቸው ። ስለሆነም በተሰጠው መመሪያ መሠረት ለጥያቄው የሚሰጡትን ምላሾች እንዲሞሉ በአክብሮት እጠይቃለሁ። ይህንን መጠይቅ ለመሙላት ስለተባበሩኝ በቅድሚያ አመሰግናለሁ!

ይህንን መጠይቅ ለመሙላት ስለተባበሩኝ በቅድሚያ አመሰግናለሁ!

ክፍል አንድ፡-የተሳታፊዎች የማህበራዊና አጠቃላይ መረጃ ሁኔታ።

በትክክለኛው (በመረጡት) ቦታ ላይ ይህንን (✓) ምልክት ያስቀምጡ

- 101. ጾታ፡- ወንድ ሴት
- 102. እድሜ፡- 20-30 1-40 41-50 ከ 50አመት በላይ
- 103. የትምህርት ሁኔታ፡- 12ኛክፍል የጨረሰ ዲፕሎማ ሌላ
- 104. የጋብቻ ሁኔታ፡- ያለገባ/ች ያገባ/ች የፈታ/ች የሞተበት/ባት
- 105. የመኖሪያ ቦታ፡- ገጠር ከተማ(የዞን/የወረዳ ከተማ)
- 106. ወርሃዊ የገቢ ሁኔታ (በብር)-----

ክፍል ሁለት፡-የተማሪዎች የድጋፍ አሰጣጥ አይነትና አፈጻጸምን የሚፈትሹ ጥያቄዎች።

ለሚከተሉት ጥያቄዎች ከዚህ በታች ከ1-5 በተዘረዘሩ አማራጮች መሰረት መልሰዎን በሰንጠረዥ ላይ ያክብቡ፡-

1=በጭራሽ 2= አልፎ አልፎ 3= እንደሁኔታው 4=ብዙ ጊዜ 5=በተደጋጋሚ

ተ.ቁ	የተማሪዎች የድጋፍ አገልግሎት አይነትና ድጋፍ የሚሰጥበት ድግግሞሽ	አማራጮች				
301	አስተዳደራዊ ድጋፎችን በተመለከተ፡-የምርጫበትየኒሽርሲቲኮሌጅ-					
301A	ተማሪዎች ወደ ተቋሙ ለማመልከት በሚመጡ ጊዜ በቂ መረጃ ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
301B	ተቋሙ በመጀመሪያ ተማሪዎችን ሲቀበል የመግቢያ ፈተና ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
301C	ተቋሙ ለምዝገባ የሚያበቃ በቂ መረጃዎችን ማያያዝ፣መታወቅያ መስጠትና የመሳሰሉ አገልግሎቶችን ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
301D	ተቋሙ አድራሻ በሚቀይር ጊዜለተማሪዎች ያሳውቃል	1	2	3	4	5
301E	የፈተና ቦታን ለተማሪዎች ባግባቡ ያሳውቃል	1	2	3	4	5
301F	የፈተና ቅድመ ሁኔታዎችን (ፈተና ላይ ለመቀመጥ የሚያስፈልጉ ነገሮችን) ለተማሪዎች ወቅቱን ጠብቆ ያሳውቃል	1	2	3	4	5
301G	የተግባር ስራዎችን(assignment)የማስገቢያ ጊዜን ለተማሪዎች በሰዓቱ ያሳውቃል	1	2	3	4	5
301H	የትምህርት ቁሳቁሶችን ወቅቱን ጠብቆ ለተማሪዎች ያሰራጫል	1	2	3	4	5
301I	የምክር አገልግሎት					
301J	ተማሪዎችን ለማማከር የሚሆን የስራ ሰዓት መድቦ ይሰራል	1	2	3	4	5
301k	አስቸጋሪ የፋይናንስ ሁኔታ ለሚያጋጥማቸው ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301L	የቤተሰብ ችግር (ለምሳሌ ህመም ካለ፣ፀብና ተመሳሳይ ችግር)የሚያጋጥማቸውን ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301M	የተማሪዎች የመማር ፍላጎትሲቀንስ ያበረታታቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301N	ተማሪዎች በቂ የጥናት ጊዜ መድቦው እንዲያጠኑ ምክር ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301O	አካላዊ ችግሮች ላለባቸው ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301P	ተማሪዎች የተለያዩ ሃላፊነቶችን (የስራ፣ የቤተሰብ እና ሌሎችንም) እንዴት አቻችለው መማር እንዳለባቸው ምክር ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301Q	ሚስታቸው ለሆኑ ጉዳዮች በግል የምክር አገልግሎት ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301R	ተማሪዎች በርቀት ለመማር ሲወዘገቡ፣ በርቀት መማር ያለውን ጠቀሜታ በማብራራት በርቀት ለመማር እንዲወስኑ ምክር ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
301S	ተማሪዎች በተለያዩ ምክንያቶች ትምህርት ለማቋረጥ ሲገደዱ ትምህርታቸውን እንዲቀጥሉ ምክር ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5

302	ትምህርታዊ ድጋፍ					
302A	ወቅቱን የጠበቀ የገጽ ለገጽ ትምህርት ለተማሪዎች ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
302 B	ተማሪዎች ጥያቄ ሲኖሯቸው በፖስታ በመላክ እንዲጠይቁ ይደረጋል	1	2	3	4	5
302C	ተማሪዎች ጥያቄ ሲኖሯቸው ቱቶር ለሚሰጡ መምህራን ስልክ ደውለው ይጠይቃሉ	1	2	3	4	5
302D	በማንኛውም ትምህርታዊ ጉዳይ ላይ ኢሜልና ሌሎች ቴክኖሎጂዎችን በመጠቀም ከተቋሙ ጋር መልዕክት ይለዋወጣሉ	1	2	3	4	5
302E	የተማሪዎችን ዉጤት በሰዓቱ ይገለጻል	1	2	3	4	5
302F	ለተማሪዎች በየትምህርት ክፍሎች የትምህርት ጉዳይ አማካሪ ይመደብላቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
302G	የተግባር ስራ (Assignment)					
302H	ለተማሪዎች የተግባር ስራ (ባሉበት ቦታ ሆነው የሚሰሩት) የተለያዩ ጥያቄዎች ይሰጧቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
302I	በገጽ ለገጽ ትምህርት ጊዜ የሚመዘን የተግባር ስራ ይሰጣቸዋል	1	2	3	4	5
302J	ግብረ-መልስ					
302K	ተማሪዎች በትምህርት አፈፃፀማቸው ዙሪያ ግብረ መልስ ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
302L	በተማሪዎች የተግባር ስራ ላይ ወቅቱን የጠበቀ ግብረ-መልስ ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5
303	የላይ-ብራሪ አገልግሎት					
303A	ተማሪዎች ባሉበት አካባቢ የቤተ መፃሕፍት አገልግሎት እንዲያገኙ ያደርጋል	1	2	3	4	5
303B	የአንላይን ላይ-ብራሪ አገልግሎት ይሰጣል	1	2	3	4	5

304. ከላይ ከተዘረዘሩት በተጨማሪ ተቋሙ የሚሰጣችሁ ሌሎች አገልግሎቶች ካሉ እባክዎ ይጠቀሱ? -----

305. እባክዎትን በተቋሙ ያልተሰጠ ነገር ግን ማግኘት ነበረብኝ ብለው የሚያስቧቸውን አገልግሎቶች ይዘርዝሩ። ወይም ደግሞ ወደፊት ተማሪዎች ማግኘት ይገባቸዋል ብለው የሚያስቧቸውን አገልግሎቶች በተመለከተ አስተያየት ይስጡ?-----

ክፍል ሶስት:-የተማሪዎች ድጋፍ አገልግሎት ፈጻሚዎች ሁኔታ።

1=አዎ 2= አይደለም

ተ.ቁ	ጥያቄዎች	አማራጮች	
401	አስተዳደራዊ ድጋፎችን ማን ነው የሚሰጣችሁ?		
401A	ጥሩ ሙያዊ እንዲሁም አስተዳደራዊ ችሎታና ብቃት ያለው ግለሰብ	1	2
401B	ተቋሙ ውስጥ የሚሰራ ነገር ግን ችሎታና ብቃት የሌለው ግለሰብ	1	2
402	የምክር አገልግሎት የሚሰጣችሁ ማን ነው?		
402A	በዘርፉ ሙያዊ ብቃት ያለው ግለሰብ	1	2
402B	ማንኛውም ቴክኒሻን ወይም ተቋሙ ውስጥ የሚሰራ ማንኛውም ግለሰብ	1	2
403	የገጽ ለገጽ ገለጻ ትምህርት የሚሰጣችሁ ማን ነው?		
403A	በዘርፉ ብቃትና ልምድ ያላቸው አስተማሪዎች	1	2
403B	በዘርፉ ልምድና ችሎታ የሌላቸውና ብቁ ያልሆኑ አስተማሪዎች	1	2

**ክፍል አራት:- ተማሪዎች በሚደረግላቸው የድጋፍ አገልግሎት ያላቸው የእርካታ ሁኔታን የሚፈትሹ ጥያቄዎች።
ከ1-5 በተዘረዘሩ አማራጮች መሰረት መልሰዎን በሰንጠረዥ ላይ ያክብቡ:-**

1=በጭራሽ አረካሁም 2=አረካሁም 3=ለመወሰን እቸገራለሁ 4=በመጠኑ እረክቻለሁ 5=በጣም እረክቻለሁ

ማስታወሻ:ከዚህ በታች ከተዘረዘሩት ውስጥ በጭራሽ የማይሰጥ አገልግሎት ካለ ይለፉት።

ተ.ቁ	ተቋሙ በሚሰጥዎ የድጋፍ አገልግሎቶች ምን ያህል እረክተዋል	አማራጮች				
401	አስተዳደራዊ ድጋፎች					
401A	ተማሪዎች ወደ ተቋሙ ለማመልከት በሚመጡ ጊዜ በቂ መረጃ በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
401B	ተቋሙ ለምዝገባ የሚያበቃ በቂ መረጃ(መረጃዎችን ማያያዝ፣መታወቅያ መስጠትና የመሳሰሉ አገልግሎቶችን) በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
401C	ተቋሙ አድራሻ በሚቀይር ጊዜ ለተማሪዎች በማሳወቁ	1	2	3	4	5
401D	የፈተና በታን ለተማሪዎች በአግባቡ በማሳወቁ	1	2	3	4	5
401E	የፈተና ቅድመ ሁኔታዎችን ለተማሪዎች በሰዓቱ በማሳወቁ	1	2	3	4	5
401F	የተግባር ስራዎችን(assignment) የማስገቢያ ጊዜን ለተማሪዎች በሰዓቱ በማሳወቁ	1	2	3	4	5
401G	የትምህርት ቁሳቁሶች በወቅቱ በመሰራጨታቸው	1	2	3	4	5
402	የምክር አገልግሎት					
402A	ተማሪዎችን ለማማከር የሚሆን የስራ ሰዓት መድቦ በመስራቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402B	አስቸጋሪ የፋይናንስ ሁኔታ ለሚያጋጥማቸው ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402C	የቤተሰብ ችግርየሚያጋጥማቸውን ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402D	የተማሪዎች የመማር ፍላጎት ሲቀንስ ማበረታቻ በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402E	ተማሪዎች በቂ የጥናት ጊዜ መድቦው እንዲያጠኑ ምክር በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402F	አካላዊ ችግሮች ላለባቸው ተማሪዎች የማማከር አገልግሎት በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402G	ተማሪዎች የተለያዩ ሃላፊነቶችን (የስራ፣ የቤተሰብ እና ሌሎችንም) እንዴት አቻቸለው መማር እንዳለባቸው ምክር በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402H	ሚስጥራዊ ለሆኑ ጉዳዮች በግል የምክር አገልግሎት በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5

402I	ተማሪዎች በርቀት ለመማር ሲወዘገቡ፣ በርቀት መማር ያለውን ጠቀሜታ በማብራራት በርቀት ለመማር እንዲወስኑ ምክር በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402J	ተማሪዎች በተለያዩ ምክንያቶች ትምህርት ለማቋረጥ ሲገደዱ ትምህርታቸውን እንዲቀጥሉ ምክር በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
403	ትምህርታዊ ድጋፍ					
403A	ወቅቱን የጠበቀ የገጽ ለገጽ ትምህርት ለተማሪዎች በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
403B	ተማሪዎች ጥያቄ ሲኖሯቸው በፖስታ በመላክ እንዲጠይቁ በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
403C	ተማሪዎች ጥያቄ ሲኖሯቸው ቱቶር ለሚሰጡ መምህራን ስልክ ደወለወ እንዲጠይቁ በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
403D	በማንኛውም ትምህርታዊ ጉዳይ ላይ ኢሜልና ሌሎች ቴክኖሎጂዎችን በመጠቀም ከተቋሙ ጋር መልዕክት ኢንዱላላኩ በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
403E	የተማሪዎችን ዉጤት በሰዓቱ እንዲገለጽ በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
403F	ለተማሪዎች በየትምህርት ክፍሎች የትምህርት ጉዳይ አማካሪ እዲመደብላቸው በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
404	የተግባር ስራ (Assignment)					
401	ለተማሪዎች የተግባር ስራ (ባሉበት ቦታ ሆነው የሚሰሩት) የተለያዩ ጥያቄዎች በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
402A	በገጽ ለገጽ ትምህርት ጊዜ የሚመዘን የተግባር ስራ በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
405	ግብረ-መልስ					
405A	ተማሪዎች በትምህርት አፈፃፀማቸው ዙሪያ ግብረ መልስ በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
405B	በተማሪዎች የተግባር ስራ ላይ ወቅቱን የጠበቀ ግብረ-መልስ በመስጠቱ	1	2	3	4	5
406	የላይ-ብራሪ አገልግሎት					
406A	ተማሪዎች ባሉበት አካባቢ የቤተ መፃሕፍት አገልግሎት እንዲያገኙ በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5
406B	የአንላይን ላይ-ብራሪ አገልግሎት እንዲኖር በመደረጉ	1	2	3	4	5

ክፍል አምስት:- የተማሪዎችን ድጋፍ አገልግሎት ለመስጠት ጥቅም ላይ የሚዉሉ ዘዴዎችን የሚፈትሹ ጥያቄዎች:-
h1-2 በተዘረዘሩ አማራጮች መሰረት መልሰዎን በሰንጠረዥ ላይ ያክብቡ:-

1= አዎ 2= አይደለም

ተ.ቁ	ከላይ የተዘረዘሩት የድጋፍ አይነቶች ለተማሪዎ የሚሰጡት እንዴት ነው?	አማራጮች	
501	ተማሪዎች አገልግሎት መስጫ ጣቢያዎች ላይ በአካል ተገኝተው	1	2
502	በስልክ	1	2
503	በኢሜይል	1	2
504	የማስታዎቂያ ሰሌዳ	1	2
505	ደብዳቤዎችና አጭር የጸሀፍ መልእክት	1	2
506	ተማሪዎች በዋና ማእከል የመረጃ ዲስክ በአካል ተገኝተው	1	2
507	በድምጽ/በምስል መረጃዎች ተቀርፀው	1	2
508	ትምህርታዊ ጉባኤና ወርክሾፕ በማድረግ	1	2

509. ከላይ በክፍል ስድስት ሰንጠረዥ ከተዘረዘሩት የድጋፍ መንገዶች ዉስጥ እርሰዎ ይበልጥ የትኛውን

**ክፍል ስድስት፡-በተማሪዎች የድጋፍ አገልግሎት አፈጻጸም ላይ የሚያጋጥሙ ችግሮችን የሚፈትሹ ጥያቄዎች።
ከ1-5 በተዘረዘሩ አማራጮች መሰረት መልሶዎን በሰንጠረዥ ላይ ያክብቡ፡-**

1=በጭረሽ አልስማማም 2= አልስማማም 3=ለመወሰን እችላለሁ 4=እስማማለሁ 5=በጣም እስማማለሁ

ተ.ቁ	በተቋሙ የሚሰጡ የድጋፍ አገልግሎቶችን በግባቡ እንዳይጠቀሙ የሚያደርጉ ምክንያቶች	አማራጮች				
601	ከግለሰቡ ጋር የተያያዙ ችግሮች					
601A	የመገናኛ ዘዴዎችና መጓጓዣዎች ወድ መሆን	1	2	3	4	5
601B	ከትምህርቱ ጋር የሚጣረሱ(ስራ፣ቤተሰብ...) ሃላፊነቶች ስላሉብኝ	1	2	3	4	5
601C	የስራ ጫና መኖር እና የግዜ እጥረት ስለሚያጋጥመኝ	1	2	3	4	5
601D	አገልግሎቶቹ የሚሰጡበት መንገድ ለኔ አመቺ ስላልሆነ	1	2	3	4	5
601E	የድጋፍ አገልግሎቱ በኮምፒውተር የታገዘ ሲሆን ለመጠቀም ክህሎቱ ስለሌለኝ	1	2	3	4	5
601F	በድጋፍ መስጫ ጣቢያ ተገኝቼ ድጋፍ ስንዳላገኝ ባለቤቴ/ቤተሰቦቼ ስለሚከለክሉኝ	1	2	3	4	5
601G	አሰሪዎቹ ለድጋፍ አገልግሎት ፈቃድ ስለማይሰጡኝ	1	2	3	4	5
601H	በድጋፍ መስጫ ጣያዎች ድጋፍ ለማግኘት ስሄድ ልጄን የማስቀምጥበት ቦታ አለመኖሩ	1	2	3	4	5
601I	የድጋፍ አገልግሎት ያስፈልገኛል ብዬ ስለማላስብ	1	2	3	4	5
602	ከርቀት ትምህርት ተቋሙ ጋር የተያያዙ ችግሮች					
602A	የተቋሙ አሰራር ቀልጣፋ አለመሆን (የተንዘዘ እና አሰልፎ መሆን)	1	2	3	4	5
602B	ተቋሙ ለተማሪዎች መልካም አመለካከት ስለሌለው	1	2	3	4	5
602C	የድጋፍ አገልግሎቱ በምፈልገው አግባብ ስለማይሰጠኝ	1	2	3	4	5
602D	ተቋሙ የድጋፍ አገልግሎቶችን ለማቅረብ ፍላጎት ስለሌለው	1	2	3	4	5
602E	አገልግሎቶቹ የሚሰጡባቸው ቦታዎች ሩቅ መሆን	1	2	3	4	5
602F	የሚሰጡ አገልግሎቶች ወቅታቸውን ጠብቀው ያለመሰጠታቸው	1	2	3	4	5
602G	ለሚሰጡ አገልግሎቶች የሚመደበው ጊዜ በቂ አለመሆን	1	2	3	4	5
602H	የተማሪዎች የድጋፍ አገልግሎት ስራን ለማከናወን በተቋሙ ውስጥ ያሉ ሰራተኞች በቂ እዉቀት አለመኖር	1	2	3	4	5
602I	አገልግሎቶችን የሚሰጡ ባለሙያዎች ትህትና እና ጥሩ አቀባበል ለተማሪ ስለሌላቸው	1	2	3	4	5
603	ትምህርት ነክ የሆኑ ችግሮች					
603A	የገጽ ለገጽ አስተማሪዎች በሚሰጡት ኮርስ ዙሪያ ያላቸው እዉቀት በቂ አለመሆን	1	2	3	4	5
603B	የገጽ ለገጽ አስተማሪዎች የሚጠቀሙት ቋንቋ ለመረዳት አስቸጋሪ መሆን	1	2	3	4	5
603C	የመጽሃፍቱ ዝግጅትና ይዘት አግባብነት የሌለው መሆኑ	1	2	3	4	5
603D	በተግባር ስራዎች ላይ ወቅቱን የጠበቀ ግብረ-መልስ ስለማይሰጥ	1	2	3	4	5

604. ተማሪዎች በተቋሙ የሚሰጡ የድጋፍ አገልግሎቶችን በአግባቡ እንዳይጠቀሙ እንቅፋት የሚሆኑ ሌሎች ችግሮች ካሉ ቢዘረዝሩልኝ?-----

ይህንን የጥናት ወረቀት ለመሙላት ስለተባበሩኝ አመሰግናለሁ!