

Student Support Services in the Ethiopian School System: Grades Four, Eight, Ten and Twelve in Focus

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Abstract: Student support services are key activities carried out by schools in order to improve students' academic and non-academic skills. Students at various grade levels who received support from their respective schools tend to achieve and adjust better than those who did not have such an experience. This study was conducted to survey the support services students receive in Ethiopian schools and examine the availability, adequacy and importance of these services. To serve this purpose, a survey research design was employed. A total of 2243 students from grades four, eight, ten and twelve participated in the study from Amhara and Gambella regions, and Addis Ababa city administration. Multistage sampling technique was employed to select the participants. A questionnaire containing demographic characteristics and support services such as academic areas, counseling, material, special needs, health care, extra-curricular activities, physical school situations and parental involvement was employed to gather empirical data. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study showed that though over 50% of participants of the study indicated the presence of the services, they disclosed the inadequacy of the support services. However, a considerable number of students indicated the absence of such services and at the same time expressed the need for such services at all levels. Based on the findings, implications of the study are indicated.

Key terms: student support services, academic support, counseling support, material support, special needs support, health care support, extra-curricular activities, physical school situations and parental involvement

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Introduction

The mere attendance of school might not lead to academic and life success for students, and they should rather receive a variety of services that could enhance the quality of their academic performance and school life. Students come to school from different background with different ability, disability, and interest to mention a few. Provisions of support services could serve to enhance success of students in their academic and non-academic endeavors. Studies (e.g., Prebble et al, 2004; Abrams and Jernigan, 1984; Sanders, 1998) indicated that students with student support services achieved better in academics than those who did not get while they were in need of the services. Moreover, students who had higher levels of attendance in academic support centers had better academic performance and graduation (Troiano, Liefeld, and Trachtenberg, 2010). In a meta-analytic study conducted by Greenwald, Hedges and Laine (1996), variety of studies consistently confirmed that a broad range of school resources were positively related to student outcomes.

Student support services in areas such as academic, counseling, parental involvement, material support, special needs, health care, extra-curricular activities, and physical school environment are significantly impacting students' academic achievement, adjustment, and retention. Beyond the benefits of academic success, these services are found to ensure psycho-social adjustment and school retention of students (Peach, 2005; Lamb et al, 2004).

Although all students benefit from student support services, high risk students were more benefited than students with low or no risk. Abrams and Jernigan (1984) asserted that high-risk students' academic achievement improved after receiving support services. Students at risk of dropping out schools but who received collaborated services by teachers in the form of tutorial and counseling made strides towards increasing in their academic achievement, self-esteem and classroom behavior (Edmondson and White, 1998). Edmondson and

White's (1998) study also revealed that students made the greatest gain on achievement after receiving a counseling service coupled with tutorial than those who took only tutorial support.

Counseling is one of the student support services provided to students in schools and positive outcomes of counseling services are documented. Counseling services are provided to students to improve math, language, conduct, behavior ratings and attitude towards school (Lee, 1993). It improved students' behavior related, cognition, social and academic skills (Birgman and Cambell, 2003). Group counseling and classroom guidance intervention which targeted improving student academic achievement and school success behavior brought a significant change in math (Lee, 1993; Brigman and Campbell, 2003) and reading achievement (Brigman and Campbell, 2003). Webb, Brigman and Cambell (2005) also confirmed, in a replication study, the importance of counseling to improve students' academic achievement. A local study conducted at Bole senior secondary school in Addis Ababa, identified counseling as a factor that positively affects academic achievement (Mathewos, 2000).

An extensively studied area in connection with student support is parental involvement. Several studies convincingly confirmed its impact on achievement of students (e.g., Sui-Chu and Williams, 1996; Hill and Taylor, 2004; Fan, 2001). In meta-analyses conducted by Fan and Chen (2001) and Jeynes (2003; 2005; 2007), a significant relationship was consistently observed between parental involvement and academic achievement. Apart from the materials and equipment support for students, parents' aspiration for their children's education attainment had a consistent and positive effect on students' academic growth (Fan, 2001). Parental involvement is found to be the most important and effective support system in Ethiopian context for students' success. Mathewos (2000), Raju and Asfaw (2009), and Sintayehu (2015) confirmed at different time points that parental involvement is a significant contributor of academic achievement for Ethiopian students.

Another area of student support service is extra-curricular activity. Active participation in extracurricular activities is positively related to academic and non-academic performance of students (Silliker, and Quirk, 1997). Interestingly, several studies have confirmed that extracurricular activities are linked to academic achievement and the association is positive (Branch, 2003; Broh, 2002; Gerber, 1996). Studies also indicated that less-privileged and at-risk students not only make more gains in their academic achievement (e.g. Dumais, 2006) but also lower rate of drop out (Mahoney and Cairns, 1997) as a function of participation in extracurricular activities. Participation in extracurricular activities was also related to resilience and prosocial peers (Fredricks, and Eccles, 2008). Studies related to extracurricular activities are also conducted in the Ethiopian context. However, students' participation in extracurricular activities, practices and challenges in implementing extracurricular activities were on focused areas (see Dejene, 2006; Demes, 2014).

Furthermore, research findings concluded that healthy children learn better, and they cautioned that no curriculum can compensate for deficiencies in student health status (Symons et al, 1997). In a systematic review conducted by Murray et al (2007), school health programs hold promise for improving academic outcomes for children. The health status of students directly relates to their academic achievement. Health problem can adversely affect students' academic achievement, cognition, school connectedness, absenteeism, and may be a pushing factor for dropping out of school. Among others, the factors that limit the motivation and learning ability of students include, sensory impairments, asthma, teenage pregnancy, aggression, inattentiveness and hyperactivity (Basch, 2011). Students' perceptions of school environment are also found to influence their academic achievement directly or indirectly (Wang and Holcombe, 2010).

The existing body of knowledge discloses the importance of student support services and the integrated and comprehensive support service enhances both students' academic achievement and non-

academic skills. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994) has also acknowledged the educational support and indicated it in terms of inputs which are limited to educational materials, technology, and facility as a direction. However, little is known about the status, adequacy and importance of student support services in Ethiopian schools as reported by students themselves whether it is adequately or inadequately present, or whether they are important or not if they are not present in their schools.

Despite small scale studies of student support in specific schools, a comprehensive, nation wide study is rare or non-existent. A study conducted by [Amare et al \(2006\)](#) about the perceptions of teachers and principals for the quality of education in four of Ethiopia's regional states – Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPRS), and Tigray shed some light by relating support services and quality of education. Their study identified that both teachers and principals connected quality of education with the availability of resources and noted the importance of sufficient resources such as textbooks, desks, teaching-materials, libraries, and adequate classrooms.

There is a knowledge gap about the status of students support services at the national level, and thus this study is aimed at surveying student support services in Ethiopian schools. The study would then help schools strengthen, initiate and improve their student support systems and the Ministry of Education would also find it important for actions to be taken accordingly. Against this backdrop, this study is conducted to survey the situation of Ethiopian schools in providing support services at primary, secondary and preparatory schools. Thus, it attempts to identify (1) the availability, (2) adequacy, and (3) importance of student support services in the Ethiopian schools.

Methodology

Design

This specific study is meant to survey not only the availability of student support services but also to determine the adequacy of service. If it is available, the quality of the service is further explored. If it is not available, the importance of the service is asked. Therefore, survey research design is employed in as it fits to the purpose.

Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique is applied in the process of selecting the participants; i.e., regions and cities, zones and sub-cities, schools, and students were involved. In order to take fair sample that represents Ethiopia, regions and city administrations were categorized as follows considering their development and experience. Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray regions were in one category. Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari and Somali regions were in another category and Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations were in another category. From these categories, first, at the regional and city administration levels, Amhara, Gambella, and Addis Ababa were selected to represent regions of different development levels and city administrations. Second, from the regions and cities, zones and sub-cities were selected. Subsequently, from Amhara region, West Gojjam, South Gondar, North Shewa and South Wollo zones were selected. Gambella region was represented by Gambella preparatory school and Eley School. When it comes to Addis Ababa, the sub-cities included were: Arada, Nifas-Silk Lafto, Akaki-Kaliti, Addis Ketema, Kolfe-Keranio and Gullele. Third, primary, secondary and preparatory schools were selected from the respective research sites. The number of zones, city administration, schools and students were as many as the size of the regions and city administration.

Due to practical problems, the researchers faced while using probability sampling and the non-proportional nature of the schools and students at 'Zonal', 'Woreda' and 'Kebele' level, study sites were selected with the assumption of the representativeness of the Ethiopian school system in the urban and rural settings. Data were collected from schools located in rural and urban areas. The grade levels included within this study were 4,8,10 and 12. This decision was made that grade four could represent the first cycle and grade 8 the second cycle of the primary education. Besides, grade ten and twelve were taken to represent the secondary and preparatory levels, respectively.

In total, 2243 students participated in the survey. Among these, 54.3% were female students, 703 (31.4%) fourth graders, 683 (30.5%) 8th graders, 501(22.4%) 10th grades and 353 (15.8%) 12th graders. Region wise, 1270 (56.6%) students were from Amhara, 95 (4.2%) from Gambella and 878 (39.1%) were from Addis Ababa. A sample size 2243 is adequate to represent a large population (as Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler, 2010 claimed).

Instrument

A very detailed questionnaire that included the possible support services in Ethiopian schools was developed by the research team. The questionnaire has two parts: Personal Information, and Support Services. The Personal Information section captured the demographic characteristics of the participant students and their family backgrounds. The Support Services Scale contains 82 items and focuses on service provisions areas such as academic, counseling, material, special needs, health and hygiene, extracurricular activities, school environment and parental involvement.

Five university faculty members with the rank of assistant professor and above were involved in the instrument development process. Each item was evaluated by experts and the research team and accepted after consensus was reached. No major change happened in the

instrument validation process. The instrument was pilot tested before the actual data collection. The Support Service Provisions Scale has eight sub-scales. They are Academic Support Services, Counseling Support Services, Material Support Services, Special Needs Support Services, Healthcare Support Services, Extracurricular Activities, School Environment, and Parental Involvement.

The internal consistency reliability of the scale was calculated using Cronbach alpha. For each sub-scale and for the full scale, Cronbach alpha is presented as follows:

Table 1: Internal consistency reliability of the instrument in Cronbach alpha

| Scale | No. of Items | Cronbach alpha |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Academic Support Services | 15 | .93 |
| Counseling Support Services | 4 | .83 |
| Material Support Services | 6 | .85 |
| Special Needs Support Services | 8 | .94 |
| Healthcare Support Services | 11 | .94 |
| Extracurricular Activities | 20 | .96 |
| School Environment | 12 | .94 |
| Parental Involvement | 6 | .92 |
| Full Scale | 82 | .98 |

Data Analysis

As the objective of the study is just to survey the situation of Ethiopian school system in terms of student support services, and implying possible interventions for improvement, descriptive statistics are found to be sufficient for the data analysis. Therefore, mean, standard deviation and percentage are used for data analysis.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

In this survey, 2243 fourth, eighth, tenth and twelfth graders participated from two regional states and one city administration of Ethiopia. Among these, 56.6% were from the Amhara region (female =50.9%), 39.1% from Addis Ababa (female= 59.5%) and 4.2% from Gambella region (female=53.5%). Gender wise, 2149 respondents reported their gender (male= 45.7%). This proportion of males and females is expected since female students out number male students in Ethiopian schools.

Table 2: Demographic Information

| Variables | Category | N (%) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Grade | 4-8 | 1373 (61.1%) |
| | 9-10 | 514 (22.9%) |
| | 11-12 | 354 (15.7%) |
| | Total | 2241 (100%) |
| Age | 8-14 | 900 (42.0%) |
| | 15-16 | 535 (25.0%) |
| | ≥17 | 702 (32.8%) |
| | Total | 2139 (100%) |
| Impairment | No impairment | 1925 (94.6%) |
| | Visual Impairment | 35(1.7%) |
| | Hearing Impairment | 18(.9%) |
| | Communication Impairment | 19(.8%) |
| | Physical Impairment | 16(.78%) |
| | Others | 21(1.0%) |
| | Total | 2034(100%) |
| Residence | Urban | 1287(60.5%) |
| | Rural | 546(25.6%) |
| | Suburban | 292(13.7%) |
| Total | 2125 (100%) | |
| Father's Education | Cannot read and write | 296 (16.1%) |
| | Can read and write | 612(33.2%) |
| | Primary | 301(16.4%) |
| | Secondary | 274(14.9%) |
| | Certificate or Diploma | 166(9.0%) |
| | Degree and above | 189(1.0%) |
| Total | 1838(100%) | |
| Mother's Education | Cannot read and write | 536(28.7%) |
| | Can read and write | 479(25.7%) |
| | Primary | 337(18.0%) |
| | Secondary | 268(14.4%) |
| | Certificate or Diploma | 162(8.6%) |
| | Degree and above | 84(4.5%) |
| Total | 1866(100%) | |

As can be seen from the above Table 2, a larger proportion of participant students were within the age range of 8-19 years which goes with their grades' level. When students were asked about their previous semester average performance, they reported as follows:

15.12% scored 50-59, 17.8% scored 60-69 points, 49.3% scored 70-79 points, and 6.6% got an above average point of 80. However, a considerable percentage (11%) of students reported to have scored below 50 points. Furthermore, students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction on the scores obtained. As a result, close to half of participant students (48.6%) were happy with their grades. Over a quarter (26%) of participants were dissatisfied, however. The rest were not sure about it. As regards the prevalence of disability, over 5% of the participants reported to have some forms of impairment.

Among the students who participated in this study, 60% have lived in urban areas, 13.7% in suburban, and 25.6% in rural areas. In all urban areas, data were collected from all levels, whereas in rural areas only grades 4 and 8 were available. That is why urban students constituted 60% of the participants. Regarding with whom they are living, most of the participants indicated that they are living with both of their parents (60.2%), those who are living with only the mother are 13.3%, followed by those who are living with relatives (9.9%). Regarding educational status of parents, relatively a larger number of fathers of the participants can read and write (33.2%), those who have had primary education are 16.4%, followed by those who are unable to read or write (16.1%). Fathers with higher level of education are less frequent; that is, 14.9% have secondary education, 9% diploma and 1% degree holders. Most of the mothers of the participants have not gone beyond secondary education. A larger portion of the mothers (28.7%) is unable to read or write. The above data show, the demographic characteristics of Ethiopian students and one can imagine about the importance of student support system for Ethiopian students as majority of them have parents who could not read and write.

Support Service Provisions

As indicated in the above section, students with different grade levels participated in the survey that assessed the student support services of the Ethiopian schools. In connection with this, a range of service

provision areas were identified and addressed in the assessment. Students were presented with the possible areas of support services to indicate whether the service is available or not and then to rate the *adequacy* and *importance* of each area of support service. Specifically, service provision in areas such as academic, counseling, material, special needs, health care, extra-curricular activities, physical school situations and parental involvement were covered in this survey. Findings on each area of service provision are presented separately in the following sub-sections.

Academic Support Services

This specific area of service is the major concern for students themselves, teachers, parents and other stakeholders for students are supposed to succeed in their academic endeavor. As a result, different academic related services have been provided to students of different grade levels. Specific academic related service provisions surveyed were peer support, one to five grouping for academic support, teachers' support for individual and group students, tutorial, laboratory, study skill, English language, math and science improvement, practical/workshop, internet service, audiovisual aids, and library services.

Table 3: Support Services for Academic achievement

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | No | | | | |
| Academic | Adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | NotSure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| Peer support | 802(40.5) | 462(23.3) | 159(8) | 1443(71.8) | 510(25.7) | 24(1.2) | 24(1.2) | 558(28.2) |
| One to five support | 763(38.5) | 544(27.4) | 139(7) | 1446(72.9) | 438(22.1) | 72(3.6) | 27(1.4) | 537(21.7) |
| Teachers' support individual | 569(28.8) | 616(31.2) | 167(8.5) | 1352(68.5) | 519(26.3) | 61(3.1) | 44(2.2) | 624(31.5) |
| Teachers' support group | 659(33.4) | 552(28) | 167(8.5) | 1378(69.9) | 525(26.6) | 25(1.3) | 43(2.2) | 593(30.1) |
| Tutorial | 673(34.2) | 612(31.1) | 118(6) | 1403(71.3) | 492(25) | 47(2.4) | 27(1.4) | 566(28.7) |
| Laboratory | 517(26.4) | 687(35) | 147(7.5) | 1351(68.9) | 531(27.1) | 27(1.4) | 53(2.7) | 611(31.1) |
| Computer assisted learning | 376(19.2) | 679(34.7) | 156(8) | 1211(61.9) | 644(32.9) | 38(1.9) | 64(3.30) | 746(37.1) |
| Study skill training | 399(20.1) | 609(30.7) | 191(9.6) | 1199(60.4) | 699(35.3) | 32(1.6) | 51(2.6) | 782(39.6) |
| English improvement | 404(20.5) | 651(33.0) | 132(6.7) | 1187(60.2) | 713(36.2) | 33(1.7) | 38(1.9) | 784(39.8) |
| Math improvement | 497(25) | 619(31.1) | 126(6.3) | 1242(62.4) | 690(34.7) | 24(1.2) | 34(1.7) | 748(37.6) |
| Science improvement | 482(24.6) | 592(30.2) | 139(7.1) | 1213(58.1) | 671(34.2) | 36(1.8) | 42(2.1) | 749(41.9) |
| Workshop/practical | 321(16.5) | 596(30.6) | 200(10.3) | 1117(57.4) | 676(34.7) | 58(3) | 99(5.1) | 833(42.6) |
| Internet service | 225(11.4) | 580(29.5) | 176(8.9) | 981(49.8) | 813(41.3) | 73(3.7) | 101(5.1) | 987(50.2) |
| Audiovisual teaching aids | 342(17.4) | 590(30) | 172(8.8) | 1104(56.2) | 714(36.3) | 55(2.8) | 92(4.7) | 861(43.8) |

The presence, adequacy and importance of these service areas were rated by participants of the study. In general, the majority of participant students reported the presence of each service areas. However, among these students who reported the presence of the services, a significant number indicated that the services are not adequate (see Table 3). Considerable number of students (more than a quarter) also indicated that the services are important for academic success but are not available in their respective schools. For example, 41.3% of the respondents believed that the internet service is important but not available in their schools. Over 36% of the students also found English language improvement service important but it is not being provided to them. Similarly, audiovisual teaching aids (36.2%), study skill training (35.3%), math improvement (34.7%), workshop (34.7%), science improvement (34.2%), and computer assisted learning (32.9%) were areas over 30% of the respondents indicated as important services for academic achievement but not available in their respective school system. If one can see the academic service provision, in all areas presented here, over 20% of the respondents indicated that the services are not provided though important for their academic activities.

To mention some, 27.1% of the students recognized the importance of laboratory but the service is not available in their school. Peer support (25.7%), teachers' support individually (26.3%) and in group (26.6%), and tutorial (25%) are areas mentioned by over a quarter of the respondents as nonexistent. This is a huge proportion of students that reported the absence of services. Care, however, must be taken while interpreting these results as participants were from different grade levels who might understand academic services from different perspectives. Still, these findings are alarming for indicating the existing gap which calls for the need of intervention in this area.

Counseling Support Services

As regards the availability of the counseling services such as general counseling, academic guidance and counseling, job and vocation enrichment counseling and creation of model personality guidance were considered. With similar pattern to the academic services, fourth,

eighth, tenth and twelfth graders were asked to indicate the presence or absence of the service, their adequacy and importance.

Table 4: Counseling support Services

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | | No | | | |
| Counseling Services | Adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| General counseling | 693(34.6) | 540(26.9) | 148(7.4) | 1381(68.9) | 540(26.9) | 42(2.1) | 41(2) | 623(31.1) |
| Academic counseling | 426(21.6) | 542(27.4) | 227(11.5) | 1195(60.5) | 642(32.5) | 63(3.2) | 75(3.8) | 780(39.5) |
| Job and vocation enrichment | 343(17.5) | 554(28.2) | 217(11.1) | 1114(56.8) | 708(36.1) | 61(3.1) | 79(4.0) | 848(43.2) |
| Model personality creation | 348(17.8) | 539(27.5) | 216(11) | 1103(56.2) | 690(35.2) | 65(3.3) | 102(5.2) | 857(43.8) |

As can be seen from the above table, majority of students reported the availability of counseling services in their respective schools. However, significant proportion of students reported the inadequacy and absence of the counseling services. For example, close to 27% of the participant students confirmed the presence of the general counseling service although it was rated as inadequate. The same percentage of students (26.9%) reported that general counseling is absent but important in their respective schools.

When it comes to the academic achievement counseling, job and vocation enrichment and model personality creation, the services in the form of counseling was observed to be inadequate by the students, and all these services rated by a quarter of the participants as inadequate. Even worse, over one third of the participants indicated that the counseling services are important to the students but they are not available in their respective schools. In this area of service, 32.5% of the participants indicated the academic achievement counseling service important but nonexistent in their respective schools. Similarly, 36.1%, and 35.2% of the respondents indicated the importance and

absence of counseling services in relation to enrichment of job and vocation, creation of model personality respectively. This result is indicative of the importance of counseling for students to deal with their academic and nonacademic issues. Counseling services might be overlooked in the schools or students might not have used the services as this significant number of students reported as important but absent. However, it is the general practice in the country that psychology graduates are placed only in secondary schools to serve as guidance and counselor officers.

Material Support Services

This area of support includes financial, books, stationery, uniform, housing and food. This area of support might determine the fate of the student either to stay in the school or leave the school system. Over half of students indicated the absence of supports such as house rent and food which are important for students to pursue their education.

Table 5: Material Support Services

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | Yes | | | | No | | | |
| Material | adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| Stationery | 575(28.5) | 524(26) | 180(8.9) | 1279(63.4) | 601(29.8) | 68(3.4) | 71(3.5) | 740(36.6) |
| Financial | 388(19.2) | 567(28.1) | 213(10.6) | 1168(57.9) | 605(30) | 111(5.5) | 132(6.5) | 848(42.1) |
| Books | 563(28) | 537(26.7) | 148(7.3) | 1248(62) | 626(31.1) | 41(2) | 99(4.9) | 766(38) |
| Uniform | 586(28.8) | 499(24.5) | 192(9.4) | 1277(62.7) | 588(28.9) | 93(4.6) | 80(3.9) | 761(37.3) |
| House rent | 359(18.4) | 413(21.2) | 174(8.9) | 946(48.5) | 626(32.1) | 197(10.1) | 181(9.3) | 1004(51.5) |
| Food | 383(19.5) | 403(20.5) | 183(9.3) | 969(49.3) | 600(30.5) | 212(10.8) | 186(9.5) | 998(50.7) |

In this regard, close to 30% of the participants indicated that stationery support is important but not available in their schools. Financial support was also indicated by 30% of the respondents as important but does not exist in the form of support service. Similarly, 32% of the respondents rated the house rent service absent in their school but important for their education. Among the participants close to 28% also needed uniform support. Food was also presented by significant number (30.5%) of the students as an important service but not available. Book support was also rated unavailable but important by 31% of the students. Nearly one third of the respondents indicated the material support services are important to their academic success but these services have not been provided in their respective schools. It should be noted that among the students reported the presence of material support services, one fourth of the respondents indicated that services are inadequate. As it can be imagined, significant number of students might come to school from low income families and material support for such students could prevent them from dropping out school. This might be the reason that one third of the participant students indicated the material support is very important.

Special Needs Support Services

The availability of support services for students with special needs such as gifted and talented, behavioral problems, learning difficulties, communication problems, visual impairment, hearing impairment, motor disorders and intellectual disabilities were explored.

Table 6: Special Needs (SN) Support for Students

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | | No | | | |
| For students with SN | Adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| Gifted and talented | 390(19.6) | 609(30.7) | 225(11.3) | 1224(61.6) | 639(32.2) | 53(2.7) | 70(3.5) | 762(38.4) |
| Behavioral problem | 467(23.8) | 668(34) | 188(9.6) | 1323(67.4) | 529(26.9) | 53(2.7) | 59(3) | 641(32.6) |
| Learning difficulties | 481(24.6) | 646(33) | 175(8.9) | 1302(66.5) | 563(28.8) | 44(2.2) | 48(2.5) | 655(33.5) |
| Communication problem | 381(19.5) | 596(30.5) | 222(11.3) | 1199(61.3) | 630(32.2) | 58(3) | 70(3.6) | 758(38.7) |
| Visual impairment | 372(19) | 590(30.1) | 238(12.2) | 1200(61.3) | 629(32.1) | 64(3.3) | 65(3.3) | 758(38.7) |
| Hearing impairment | 334(17.1) | 584(29.9) | 242(12.4) | 1160(59.4) | 646(33.1) | 58(3) | 86(4.4) | 790(40.6) |
| Intellectual disabilities | 305(15.5) | 569(29) | 256(13) | 1130(57.5) | 682(34.7) | 68(3.5) | 85(4.3) | 835(42.5) |
| Physical and motor disorders | 330(16.8) | 583(29.7) | 229(11.7) | 1142(58.2) | 667(34) | 62(3.2) | 91(4.6) | 820(41.8) |

As to the students' report, over 60% of them confirmed that children with special needs were receiving supports from their respective schools. However, it should be noted that significant number of students indicated that the services are not adequate. In almost all areas of special needs, 30% of the respondents indicated that support services meant for students with special needs are available but not sufficient

A close inspection of the results in this sub-topic, over sixty percent of the respondents reported that services for students with disabilities were either inadequate or the non-existent. This is indicative of the limited availability of services for students with disabilities. Unlike the other areas of services provisions, over 10% of the respondents indicated that they are not sure whether the services for students with special needs are available or not. This result may mislead readers as it seems that the great majority of students with special needs are

receiving support services. As this survey was done in regular schools, students with visible disabilities were few in number while student with invisible disabilities were not identified in the Ethiopian school system. For example, among the 2243 students participated only 5.4% were with different types of impairments. This fact may lead many of the respondents to assume that the majority are receiving the services.

Healthcare Support Services

One of the service areas about which students were asked was health related services. In this sub-topic, hygiene, first aid, reproductive and HIV health, drug use and abuse, female genital mutilation, child marriage, life skill training, traffic safety, clinic service, and teeth, eye and ear care were considered.

Table 7: Healthcare Support Services for Students

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | Total N(%) | No | | | Total N(%) |
| Healthcare services | adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | |
| Health care (hygiene) | 632(31.7) | 594(29.8) | 158(7.9) | 1375(69.4) | 517(25.9) | 46(2.3) | 48(2.4) | 611(30.6) |
| First aid | 398(20.3) | 666(33.9) | 193(9.8) | 1257(64) | 608(31.) | 41(2.1) | 57(2.9) | 706(36) |
| Reproductive & HIV health care | 488(24.8) | 625(31.8) | 218(11.1) | 1331(67.7) | 498(25.3) | 41(2.1) | 95(4.8) | 634(32.3) |
| Drug use & abuse | 451(22.8) | 590(29.8) | 196(9.9) | 1237(62.5) | 544(27.5) | 97(4.9) | 102(5.2) | 743(37.5) |
| Female genital mutilation | 575(29.6) | 590(26.7) | 156(8.0) | 1321(64.3) | 495(25.4) | 115(5.9) | 84(4.3) | 694(35.7) |
| Child marriage | 564(28.9) | 544(27.9) | 147(6.6) | 1255(63.4) | 502(28.5) | 128(6.6) | 64(3.3) | 694(36.6) |
| Life skill training | 444(22.2) | 637(32.6) | 219(11.2) | 1300(66) | 522(26.2) | 73(3.7) | 60(3.1) | 655(34) |
| Traffic safety | 557(28.7) | 616(31.7) | 159(8.2) | 1332(68.6) | 494(25.4) | 53(2.7) | 63(3.2) | 610(31.4) |
| Medical/clinic service | 380(19.4) | 584(29.8) | 196(10) | 1160(59.2) | 660(33.3) | 47(2.4) | 94(4.8) | 801(40.8) |
| Mental health | 316(16.2) | 517(26.2) | 207(10.6) | 1040(53) | 736(37.7) | 62(3.2) | 115(5.9) | 913(47) |
| Teeth, eye and ear care | 396(20.3) | 520(26.7) | 187(9.6) | 1103(56.6) | 702(36.1) | 44(2.3) | 97(5) | 843(43.4) |

In general, over 60% of the respondents indicated that education/training on the areas mentioned above was provided. However, over a quarter of these students indicated the inadequacy of the training/education if the service is present, and over one third of the respondents indicated the absence of the services listed above. More specifically, as can be seen from Table 7, more than 25% of the respondents indicated that healthcare services are important but never given to them. By the same pattern, over a quarter of the respondents indicated the presence of the services but they rated the services inadequate.

A close inspection of the healthcare support services showed that hygiene, HIV and reproductive health, traffic safety were areas where students reported as services that are better compared to the other areas. However, clinic services, mental health services, drug use and abuse, child marriage, first aid, female genital mutilation, and teeth, eye and ear care were areas that the services are low compared to the other areas in their respective schools. The results in this specific topic warranted the dire need for the provision of support services related to healthcare in the school system.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are supposed to be important components supporting the teaching learning process. These activities are believed to help students among others to identify talents, foster social skills, develop moral and work ethics, and career. As a result, a wide range of extracurricular activities were presented to the students to explore the presence or absence of the services, the level of adequacy and their importance. Accordingly, it was found that over twenty areas of extracurricular activities are being practiced in the Ethiopian schools. Among these, about twenty were surveyed in this study and the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Extracurricular Activities in Ethiopian School System

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | | No | | | |
| Extracurricular activities | adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| Music | 497(24.8) | 619(30.9) | 195(9.7) | 1311(65.4) | 527(26.3) | 97(4.8) | 67(3.3) | 691(34.6) |
| Sport | 701(34.9) | 646(32.2) | 164(8.2) | 1511(75.3) | 398(19.8) | 59(2.9) | 39(1.9) | 496(24.7) |
| Literature | 566(28.2) | 697(34.7) | 187(9.3) | 1450(72.2) | 474(23.6) | 48(2.4) | 34(1.5) | 556(27.8) |
| Arts | 460(23.3) | 645(32.2) | 209(10.6) | 1314(66.1) | 540(27.4) | 69(3.5) | 48(2.4) | 657(33.9) |
| Mini-media | 749(38.2) | 606(30.9) | 146(7.4) | 1501(76.5) | 374(19.1) | 56(2.9) | 32(1.6) | 462(23.5) |
| Science and technology | 529(26.9) | 651(33.1) | 200(10.2) | 1380(70.2) | 497(25.3) | 43(2.2) | 48(2.4) | 588(29.8) |
| Anti-HIV | 611(31.1) | 664(33.8) | 167(8.5) | 1442(73.4) | 407(20.7) | 68(3.5) | 50(2.5) | 525(26.6) |
| Anti-drug | 317(16.2) | 519(26.6) | 249(12.8) | 1085(55.6) | 649(33.3) | 107(5.5) | 110(5.6) | 866(44.4) |
| Environmental | 448(22.8) | 602(30.6) | 210(10.7) | 1260(64.1) | 575(29.2) | 74(3.8) | 57(2.9) | 706(35.9) |
| Red cross | 570(28.7) | 596(30.1) | 184(8.2) | 1350(67) | 508(25.6) | 78(3.9) | 47(2.4) | 633(33) |
| Reproductive health | 451(23.2) | 581(29.8) | 225(11.6) | 1257(64.6) | 546(28) | 80(4.1) | 65(3.3) | 691(35.4) |
| Gender | 559(28.3) | 572(29) | 224(11.3) | 1355(68.6) | 503(25.5) | 61(3.1) | 55(2.8) | 619(31.4) |
| Traffic safety | 577(29.2) | 621(31.4) | 202(10.2) | 1400(70.8) | 479(24.3) | 49(2.5) | 47(2.4) | 575(29.2) |
| Special needs and counseling | 407(20.2) | 531(26.4) | 226(11.2) | 1164(57.8) | 710(35.3) | 64(3.2) | 73(3.6) | 847(42.2) |
| Volunteer/scout | 651(32.9) | 562(28.4) | 154(7.8) | 1367(69.1) | 547(27.6) | 29(1.5) | 37(1.9) | 613(30.9) |
| Library | 885(44.6) | 563(28.4) | 107(5.4) | 1555(78.4) | 382(19.3) | 21(1.1) | 25(1.3) | 428(21.6) |
| Know your country | 558(28.2) | 607(30.6) | 204(10.3) | 1369(69.1) | 551(27.8) | 26(1.3) | 36(1.8) | 613(30.9) |
| Civics and ethics | 776(39.4) | 564(28.6) | 157(8) | 1497(76) | 417(21.2) | 26(1.3) | 30(1.5) | 473(24) |
| English language | 472(20) | 623(31.7) | 189(9.6) | 1284(61.3) | 576(29.3) | 49(2.5) | 58(2.9) | 683(38.7) |
| Charity | 284(14.6) | 484(25.2) | 322(17.3) | 1090(57.1) | 563(29.3) | 85(4.4) | 176(9.1) | 824(42.9) |
| Music | 497(24.8) | 619(30.9) | 195(9.7) | 1311(65.4) | 527(26.3) | 97(4.8) | 67(3.3) | 691(34.6) |

As can be seen from the table (Table 8), sport, literature, science and technology, mini-media, anti-HIV, traffic safety, library and scout clubs are clubs practiced by most of the students. Over 70% of the respondents indicated that these services are present in their respective schools. However, over 50% of the respondents rated the services either inadequate or nonexistent in their schools.

Close inspection of the responses reveals that one third of the students indicated the services related to extracurricular activities are inadequate whereas a quarter of the respondents claimed that the services are important but not available in their respective schools. Anti-drug, special needs and charity clubs were found to have been rated as inadequate or none existent by many of the participant students. The overall picture tends to show that extracurricular activities are present in most of the schools cover in this study. However, making use of these activities to help students develop holistically needs government and professional intervention.

School Environment

As one of the components of quality educational service provisions, the school environment was explored in this survey. Students rated their schools against classrooms, number of teachers, student-book ratio, teaching aids, sports fields, sports materials, recreational area, safe compound, water supply, telephone service, electric power and toilet.

Table 9: School Environment

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | Total N(%) |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|
| | Yes | | | No | | | | |
| | adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | Not sure N(%) | |
| School situation | | | | | | | | |
| Classrooms | 1142(57.2) | 427(21.4) | 96(4.8) | 1665(83.4) | 274(13.7) | 25(1.3) | 32(1.6) | 331(16.6) |
| Number of teachers | 992(49.8) | 565(28.4) | 133(6.7) | 1690(84.9) | 224(12.3) | 31(1.6) | 26(1.3) | 281(15.1) |
| Student to book ratio | 789(39.7) | 735(37) | 143(6.4) | 1667(83.1) | 257(12.9) | 29(1.5) | 36(1.8) | 322(16.9) |
| Teaching aid | 669(33.2) | 803(40.4) | 160(8) | 1632(81.6) | 300(15.1) | 26(1.3) | 30(1.5) | 356(18.4) |
| Sport field | 688(34.9) | 775(39.4) | 120(6.1) | 1583(80.4) | 327(16.6) | 32(1.6) | 27(1.4) | 386(19.6) |
| Sport material | 480(24.3) | 920(46.5) | 149(7.5) | 1549(78.3) | 371(18.8) | 29(1.5) | 29(1.5) | 429(21.7) |
| Recreational area | 403(20.6) | 811(41.4) | 175(8.9) | 1389(70.9) | 476(24.3) | 49(2.5) | 44(2.2) | 569(29.1) |
| Safe school environment | 614(31.5) | 679(34.8) | 210(10.8) | 1503(77.8) | 373(19.1) | 30(1.5) | 46(2.4) | 449(22.2) |
| Water supply | 656(33.3) | 789(40.1) | 119(6) | 1564(79.4) | 347(17.6) | 27(1.4) | 31(1.6) | 405(20.6) |
| Telephone service | 456(23.3) | 699(35.6) | 228(11.6) | 1383(70.5) | 530(27) | 25(1.3) | 23(1.2) | 578(29.5) |
| Electric power | 715(36.4) | 656(33.4) | 192(9.8) | 1563(79.6) | 370(18.9) | 16(0.8) | 13(0.7) | 399(20.4) |
| Toilet | 754(38.7) | 735(37.7) | 112(5.7) | 1601(82.1) | 291(14.9) | 31(1.6) | 25(1.3) | 347(17.9) |

Unlike the other areas of service provision, over 70% of the respondents confirmed the presence of these service areas. Service areas rated present by over 80% of the respondents were classrooms (83%), teachers (84%), books (83%), teaching aid (81), sport field (80%) and toilet (82%). Apart from indicating the mere presence of the services, 57 percent of the students reported that classrooms are enough in their respective schools. However, teaching aids, sport materials, recreational areas and water supply were indicated as inadequate by more than 40% of the respondents.

Parental Involvement

Involvement of parents in their children's education is inseparable from the teaching learning process. Parental involvement in the form of tutoring, support for homework, parent-teacher discussions about the student, exercise book inspection, advising the child on academic matters and giving time for the child were reported to be practiced by participants.

Table 10: Parental Involvement

| Support Type | Present | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|
| | Yes | | | | No | | | |
| Parental Involvement | Adequate N(%) | Not adequate N(%) | Not Sure N(%) | Total N(%) | Important N(%) | Not important N(%) | NotSure N(%) | Total N(%) |
| Tutoring | 811(40.2) | 571(28.3) | 131(6.5) | 1513(75) | 388(19.2) | 63(3.1) | 53(2.6) | 504(25) |
| Homework | 843(42.8) | 525(26.6) | 120(6.1) | 1488(75.5) | 357(18.1) | 85(4.3) | 41(2.1) | 483(24.5) |
| Parent-teacher discussion | 695(35.1) | 621(31.4) | 173(8.7) | 1489(75.2) | 386(19.5) | 52(2.6) | 51(2.6) | 489(24.8) |
| Inspecting the exercise book | 846(42.5) | 518(26) | 129(6.5) | 1493(75) | 409(20.6) | 48(2.4) | 39(2) | 496(25) |
| Time with the child | 776(38.7) | 574(28.6) | 171(8.5) | 1521(75.8) | 367(18.3) | 65(3.2) | 52(2.6) | 484(24.2) |
| Helping me to focus on academics | 1211(59.7) | 339(16.7) | 85(4.2) | 1635(80.6) | 320(15.8) | 28(1.4) | 47(2.3) | 395(19.4) |

Over 75% of the students indicated that their parents provided the above-mentioned services. On the other hand, over a quarter of the respondents rated the support to be inadequate. Advisement on academic matters is prevalent among parents and close to 60% of the students indicated the support as adequate. This shows us how serious parents are in the education of their children which reminds us the popular Amharic song '*temar lije wogen zemed yelegn habt yelegn imkeje*'. - ተማር ልጄ ወገን ዘመድ የለኝ ሃብት የለኝ በጄ::

Still, close to 20% of the participants indicated the importance of the parental engagement but with no practice on the ground.

Discussion

Support services in Ethiopian schools which covered academic, counseling, material, special needs, health care, extra-curricular activities, physical school situations and parental involvement were surveyed in this study. The majority of the study participants reported that the services are available. However, among these, on the average, only a quarter of them rated the services as *adequate*. While another quarter of students reported the inadequacy of the services.

Alarmingly, one third of these respondents indicated the absence of student support services in their respective schools (see tables above). This indicates that one third of the respondents feel that the support services in schools are either inadequate or nonexistent. This difference in report is observed due to differences across schools. Services could be provided in one school but not in the other. When participants report the situation of their respective schools, they only reflect on their schools' support system. Therefore, we took the average to see the student support system at the country level and care must be taken while interpreting these results. It is obvious that significant number of students reported either the inadequacy of the service or complete absence. Inadequacy and complete absence of support services could jeopardize the academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment of students of students. This assertion is supported by previous studies. Prebble et al (2004) found out that those who did not get student support services achieved less than those who got it.

As regards specific areas of support services, about 40% students reported the absence of academic support services in math, English and science, and over half of (50.2%) the participants indicated the non-existence of internet services in their schools. It is alarming that significant number of students reported that academic and internet services are non-existent. This finding should not be ignored as it might lead to students to achieve low or discontinue their education because studies (see Troino et al., 2010) confirmed that academic support improves academic performance and rate of graduation.

As observed in other areas of support services, over a quarter of the respondents indicated the presence and adequacy of counseling services. However, significant number of students indicated that the counseling service is either inadequate or absent in their schools. Findings of several studies confirmed that student support services are essential dimensions and instrumental to enhance students' adjustment and academic achievement (Greenwald, Hedges and

Laine, 1996, Edmondson and White, 1998, Cambell and Brigman, 2005). Specific to counseling, a study conducted by Mathewos (2000) in Ethiopian context confirmed the relationship between counseling and academic achievement. However, it seems that significant number of students in the Ethiopian schools is not getting this service. The absence and inadequacy of this service might negatively affect students' achievement.

Another area of student support dimension is the health component which is neglected in the Ethiopian school system. In this study, it was found that majority participant students indicated the complete absence of health services. As this service is hardly available in many of the Ethiopian schools, it is expected that some students might fail academically due to health problems. Studies conducted in relation health and academic achievement confirmed that health problems of students adversely affected the academic achievement of students (Basch, 2011). The absence of health support services in Ethiopian schools should not be overlooked. As Symons et al (1997) clearly put, no curriculum can compensate health deficiency and students would not succeed in academics unless their health status monitored, awareness of health promoted and service is provided.

The range of parental engagement was other student support component explored in this survey. Unlike the other areas of support services, parental involvement was rated high as present and adequate in the Ethiopian school system. Over 75% of the respondents acknowledged the presence of parental support which is an encouraging pattern in the Ethiopian school system. Previous students convincingly confirmed that parental involvement significantly positively affect students' academic achievement. Jeynes repeatedly showed that there is a significant relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement (Jeynes, 2003; 2005; 2007).

Extracurricular activities make students active participants and they can get academic and non-academic benefits. The present study

discloses that over 50% of participants reported the service either inadequate or absent. Studies conducted by Branch (2003) and Broh (2002) confirmed the importance of extracurricular activity to academic achievement. So, Ethiopian student might miss this opportunity if they are not provided the service properly.

Finally, other support services such as material support, special needs support and school environment were areas assessed in this study. All these areas were partly present but inadequate and completely absent and considered important by students. Whatever, the case it may be, there is a space to improve the quality of student support to promote safe, secure and enabling learning environment and enhance academic achievement in the years to come.

Conclusions and Implications

This study has clearly indicated the status of student support service in Ethiopian schools. It is clear that student support service in Ethiopian schools is not adequate and complete. In all areas of support services, considerable number of students indicated the inadequacy or the absence of the services. The inadequacy and the complete absence of the services have implications on policy and practice. It has a direct ramification not only students completion rate but also on the learning outcomes of students. Therefore, a clear policy of student support system in Ethiopian schools shall be formulated by Ministry of Education and the student support service provisions shall be adequate and complete in all schools regardless of their location, level and resource. Schools should give due emphasis to student support services and services shall be properly implemented. Service provision in areas such as academic, counseling, material, special needs, health care, extra-curricular activities, physical school situations and parental involvement shall be improved. Revisiting and improving the student support system at all levels of Ethiopian schools would improve the quality of Students' school life by promoting their psychosocial adjustment and academic achievement.

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