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ABSTRACT

High school students must grapple with a host of issues and encounter difficulties when studying at schools, such as peer pressure, test anxiety, cyberbullying, unhealthy relationships, psychological distress, depression and possibly domestic issues. These obstacles create the need for academic consulting in order for high school students to develop essential skills and then solve problems. This study aims to examine the high school teachers' perceptions and the quality of academic consulting competence in the Vietnamese educational context. This study surveyed 1089 high school students and 289 teachers in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam with the 43-item questionnaire. The main results showed that academic consulting competence had been noticed and trained professionally for high school teachers. Additionally, both students and high school teachers recognized the essential role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence in educational settings.

Keywords: academic consulting, students, high school, teacher, satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

In the development process, people always have to face many difficulties and challenges. Especially in deepening innovation and integration, those difficulties and challenges become more diverse and complex. Nowadays, high school students have to grapple with a host of issues, and encounter difficulties when studying at school, such as peer pressure (Inguglia et al., 2019), test anxiety (Sari et al., 2018), cyberbullying (Mishna et al., 2010), unhealthy relationships (Eaton et al., 2007), psychological distress (Lin & Yusoff, 2013), depression (Osborn et al., 2020) and possibly domestic issues. Specifically, Inguglia et al. (2019) highlighted the positive and significant relationship between students' peer pressure, binge eating, and drinking. A large number of students participating in the study of Mishna et al. (2010) claimed that they had been bullied online and then felt sorrowful, angry, and depressed. Depression and anxiety symptoms in high school students were investigated in a study by Osborn et al. (2020), which reported a high level of depressive and anxiety symptoms among Kenyan students. These obstacles create the need for academic consulting (Sculli, 2011) for high school students to develop essential skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills and reinforce a positive outlook.

After receiving effective assistance and guidance on academic concerns and personal issues from the academic consulting process (Kuhn, 2008), students can be more proud of and confident in themselves, interested in and enthusiastic about participating in learning activities, involved in completing academic tasks effectively (Legum & Hoare, 2004), self-esteem (Flitton et al., 2005). Ender et al. (1982) also agreed that students could recognize educational potential determine and make great efforts to achieve important goals.

Cuseo (2003) defined the academic advisor as to the one who "helps students become more self-aware of their distinctive interests, talents, values, and priorities; which enables students to see the 'connection' between their present academic experience and their future life plans; who helps students discover their potential, purpose, and passion; who broadens students' perspectives with respect to their personal life choices and sharpens their cognitive skills for making these choices, such as effective problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective decision-making" (p. 15). A study by Branham (2009), who interviewed guidance counsellors, a principal, and students participating in college preparatory coursework, revealed that counsellors' opinions about the values they brought to students were not the same as high school students' opinions. Additionally, the amounts of attention and time, guidance or recommendations for college preparation that high school received from counsellors differed in each individual. The author also reported that high school students who were not provided with enough information about college preparatory could miss a string of opportunities for scholarships, knowledge and information related to university programs and crucial objectives that need to be achieved.

Besides the student's satisfaction with academic consulting, the effectiveness is also crucial to evaluating and improving. The evaluation of results achieved from academic consulting could be linked to students' academic achievement if consulting is considered as a learning process (Hemwall et al., 2003). Discovering and studying the relationship between academic consulting and students' academic achievement or performance can improve essential skills and general knowledge through academic consulting. Dellana and Snyder (2004) conducted a

study to investigate how race, gender, grades and grade level affect students' perception of counselling quality. The findings showed that female students had a higher level of satisfaction with counselling than males because of their improvement in math and communications grades. Additionally, Dellana and Snyder (2004) also reported that students with lower communications grades need more academic consulting through longer counselling time than other students.

Several Vietnamese educators indicated that the poor quality of the academic consulting system is a significant contributing factor leading to students' failures (Nguyen et al., 2013). In Vietnamese educational settings, high school students can receive academic advice from teachers who understand their situation and difficulties in the learning process. The teacher's role is to assist students in acquiring subject knowledge and has the responsibility to support students to solve difficulties encountered in learning and life. Indeed, teachers have close conditions and understand students in all aspects, especially the problems they encounter in the learning process at school. Not only that, but teachers also have the conditions to access official information and have educational functions, supporting students in performing their learning tasks. The results of a survey of more than 400 high school students in Philadelphia about their views on effective teachers published by Corbett and Wilson (2002) showed six characteristics of an effective teacher: regularly motivates students to make efforts to succeed and helps them develop their full potential; manage classrooms by maintaining control over the behavior as well as the activities in the classroom; be able to identify students who need help and help those students; have an effective teaching method to explain the knowledge until all students can understand; organize teaching activities in a diversified way; make an effort to understand students as individuals, not just students in the classroom. Huynh et al. (2019) conducted a study with 1200 students from grades 6 to 12 to investigate high school students need for academic consulting in Vietnam. The authors reported that the number of barriers high school students had to face when learning at school increased the demand for academic consulting.

The academic consulting competence of teachers is not a new topic. However, to the best of our knowledge, a limited study has been conducted to investigate this subject with Vietnamese high school teachers. Therefore, our recent study examines the high school teachers' perceptions and the quality of academic consulting competence in the Vietnamese educational context. The research starts with reviewing academic consulting literature in educational settings. The second section presents the research methodology, followed by results and discussion. The last part is the conclusion.

METHODS

Participants

This study surveyed 1089 high school students and 289 teachers in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. All participants received informed consent after the researchers introduced the aim of the study. The survey questionnaire was distributed and explained to high school students and teachers, none of which were eliminated after they returned and checked.

Measurement

The survey questionnaire includes a question about the perception of academic consulting competence of high school teachers and three scales: 4-item Academic Consulting Competence Scale, 18-item Skills Related to Academic Consulting Scale (Active listening skill, questioning skill, Empathy skill, Responding and reflective skill, information giving skill), and 21-item Academic Consulting Satisfaction Scale. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale, which was used for all items, ranging from one to five (1 = Totally Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree ; 5 = Totally Agree). An informed consent process was used to ensure participation. The contribution was taken on a completely voluntary basis.

RESULTS

The high school teachers' perceptions of academic consulting competence

Table 1: The perceptions of the role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence

The perceptions of the role of high school teachers' counseling competence	Students	Teachers
	%	%
Low	3.57	1.00
Slightly Low	3.57	0.00
Moderate	64.29	34.00
Slightly High	26.19	49.00
High	2.38	16.00
Total	100.00	100.00

With the highest score indicator, a significant proportion of high school students assessed Moderate (64.29%), around twenty-six percent of high school students assessed Slightly High (26.19%), an insignificant amount of high school students assessed High (2.38%) and just an insignificant minority assessed Low and Slightly Low (3.57 % for each level). Meanwhile, approximately half of teachers assessed Slightly High (49%), just over a third of teachers assessed Moderate (34%), less than a fifth of teachers assessed High (16%), just an insignificant number of teachers assessed Low (1%) and none of the teacher assessed Slightly Low. As a result showed in Table 1, the number of teachers (49%) assessed the role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence at Slightly High level was more than students (26.19%) and most of students (64.29%) assessed the role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence at Moderate level.

Table 2: The teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of academic consulting competence

High School Teachers' Academic Consulting Competence	%
Have knowledge about academic consulting, individuals who need academic consulting, problems, and educational context.	90
Have appropriate academic consulting skills for high school students, active listening skill, questioning skill, empathy, responding and reflective skill, and information giving skill.	86
Have the ability to master the necessary knowledge and skills about academic consulting, personal attitudes towards academic consulting for students, and operate (connect) them properly for successful implementation of requirements of academic consulting.	84
Have the will to overcome difficulties and practice in academic consulting for high school students.	82

The characteristics of academic consulting competence were determined with four statements presented in Table 2. Most teachers agreed with four items. In particular, ninety percent of teachers assumed that academic consulting competence is to have knowledge about academic consulting, individuals who need academic consulting, problems and educational context, a very large proportion of teachers (86%) assumed that academic consulting competence is to have appropriate academic consulting skills for high school students, active listening skill, questioning skill, empathy, responding and reflective skill, and information giving skill, a significant majority of teachers (84%) assumed that academic consulting competence is to have the ability to master the necessary knowledge and skills about academic consulting, personal attitudes towards academic consulting for students, and operate (connect) them properly for successful implementation of requirements of academic consulting, and well over three quarters (82%) agreed that academic consulting competence is to have the will to overcome difficulties and practice in academic consulting for high school students.

Academic consulting competence of high school teachers

Table 3: The evaluation of high school teachers' academic consulting competence

The group of skills	Students		Teachers	
	M	SD	M	SD
Active listening skill	3.07	0.25	3.16	0.68
Questioning skill	2.99	0.41	3.17	0.51
Empathy skill	3.03	0.41	3.17	0.51
Responding and reflective skill	3.00	0.39	3.22	0.50
Information giving skill	3.04	0.38	3.42	0.51
Total	3.03	0.28	3.21	0.41

The survey result of information giving skill showed a significant difference in the evaluation of students and teachers, with teachers ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.51$) assessing a higher score than students ($M=3.04$, $SD=0.38$). Responding and reflective skills scores had a difference between students' evaluation ($M=3.00$, $SD=0.39$) and teachers' ($M=3.22$, $SD=0.50$). Similarly, teachers ($M=3.17$, $SD=0.51$) assessed Empathy skill with a higher score than students' score ($M=3.03$, $SD=0.41$). There was a significant difference in scores of Questioning skills, with teachers ($M = 3.17$, $SD=0.51$) assessing with a higher score than the score of students ($M=2.99$, $SD=0.41$). The score of teachers ($M=3.16$, $SD=0.68$) was a little higher than students ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.25$) when assessing the Active listening skill.

The students' satisfaction about the academic consulting competence of high school teachers

Table 4: Students' satisfaction with academic consulting skills

	The evaluation criteria	M	SD
1	What students discuss with the teacher is kept confidential unless the problem requires the help/support of a third party.	3.49	0.853
2	After receiving academic advice from teachers, I can focus more on my studies as well as other activities.	3.33	0.851
3	Maybe I will continue to look to the teacher for help if I have difficulties.	3.32	0.820
4	I will refer my friends to the teacher if they have difficulties.	3.32	0.876
5	Receiving the teachers' academic advice is an effective way to solve the problems.	3.35	0.881
6	Teachers quickly found out the problems and helped me to solve them.	3.36	0.961
7	Teachers always help me.	3.35	0.908
8	Teachers are not too busy to give me advice when I have difficulties.	2.98	0.901
9	If teachers don't have enough information or knowledge about my problems, they will spend their time looking for that information or knowledge to give me effective advice.	3.37	1.046
10	Teachers' behavior and verbalism made me trust them.	3.38	0.816
11	I feel safe when sharing my problems with the teacher.	3.11	0.773
12	Teachers have enough knowledge to help me solve problems.	3.21	0.861
13	Teachers did not give me advice arbitrarily when I did not understand my problems.	3.31	0.914
14	I can share and discuss my problems with teachers.	3.23	0.823
15	Teachers can understand my difficulties and my feelings.	3.26	0.743
16	Teachers have no prejudices about my problems.	3.05	0.756
17	Teachers do not impose their values and opinions on me when giving advice.	3.25	0.816
18	Teachers' outfits and appearance make me comfortable.	3.18	1.00
19	The way teachers communicate and listen to problems encourage me in sharing my problems.	3.25	0.771
20	Space for sharing and discussing is quiet and ensures privacy.	3.26	0.834
21	The conversation time is suitable, not too short, and not too long.	3.23	0.823

The mean scores of twenty-one items about the students' satisfaction with the academic consulting competence of high school teachers are shown in Table 4. The participants scored in the average range on the questionnaire. The mean score for the students on the students' satisfaction about the academic consulting competence of high school teachers was 3.27 (SD=0.858).

Among twenty-one items of the students' satisfaction about the academic consulting competence of high school teachers that were self-reported by high school students, the top five indicators that have the highest levels of satisfaction are listed in descending order, are respectively: What students discussed with the teacher is kept confidential, unless the problem requires the help/support of a third party (M=3.49, SD=0.853); Teachers' behavior and verbalism made me trust them (M=3.38, SD=0.816); If teachers don't have enough information or knowledge about my problems, they will spend their time on looking for that information or knowledge to give me effective advice (M=3.37, SD=1.046); Teachers quickly found out the problems and helped me to solve them (M=3.36, SD=0.961); Receiving the teachers' academic advice is an effective way to solve the problems (M=3.35, SD=0.881) and Teachers always help me (M=3.35, SD=0.908). The top five indicators that have the lowest levels of satisfaction are listed in ascending order, are respectively: Teachers are not too busy to give me advice when I have difficulties (M=2.98, SD=0.901); Teachers have no prejudices about my problems (M=3.05; SD=0.756); I feel safe when sharing my problems with teacher (M=3.11, SD=0.773); Teachers' outfit and appearance make me comfortable (M=3.18, SD=1.00); Teachers have enough knowledge to help me solve problems (M=3.21, SD=0.861).

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study is twofold: Firstly, survey the perceptions of the role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence; Secondly, evaluate the quality of high school teachers' academic consulting competence.

The main finding indicated that both students and high school teachers recognized the essential role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence in educational settings. Additionally, the academic consulting of Vietnamese high school teachers must be improved to assist students in the learning process. As the results of numerous previous studies, difficulties and challenges that students face created the need for academic consulting in students (Sculli, 2011) to develop essential skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills and reinforce a positive outlook. Vietnamese high school students understood teachers with academic consulting competence could support and assist them in recognizing and solving problems related to learning and private life. This result supports previous research conducted by Van Huynh et al. (2019), who revealed that the number of barriers high school students had to face when learning at school increased the demand for academic consulting.

The archived finding also showed that high school teachers introduced academic consulting competence and effectively trained. Specifically, high school teachers participating in this survey know the definition and characteristics of academic consulting. They recognized that active listening, questioning, empathy, responding and reflection, and information giving were important skills they had to develop to implement academic consulting requirements successfully. However, there were differences in evaluating those skills in the academic consulting process between students and teachers. All high school students participating in our study assessed the teacher's active listening skills, questioning skills, empathy skills, responding and reflective skills, and information giving skills with lower scores than teachers. This result showed that the experience and what students received from academic consulting differed and were less than what teachers thought. Academic consulting competence needs to be training more professionally for high school teachers to motivate students to make efforts to succeed regularly, helps them develop their full potential, and support students to solve difficulties encountered in learning and life. A study of Branham (2009) also revealed that counsellors' opinions about the values they brought to students were not the same as high school students' opinions.

This study also revealed that high school students had a high level of satisfaction about teacher's academic consulting competence because the teacher kept what they shared confidential, gave effective academic advice, quickly found out the problems and assisted them in solving issues, spent time on looking for that information or knowledge to give students effective advice. After receiving effective assistance and guidance on academic concerns and personal issues from the academic consulting process, students can be more proud of and confident in themselves, interested in and enthusiastic about participating in learning activities, involved in completing academic tasks effectively (Legum & Hoare, 2004), self-esteem (Flitton et al., 2005). However, students' satisfaction in this study cannot prove that the academic consulting competence of teachers has met the requirements and has been an effective tool for teachers to support and assist their high school students in the learning process and daily life.

CONCLUSION

High school students must grapple with many issues and encounter difficulties when studying at schools, such as peer pressure, test anxiety, cyberbullying, unhealthy relationships, psychological distress, depression and

possibly domestic issues. These obstacles create the need for academic consulting (Sculli, 2011) for high school students to develop essential skills such as critical thinking problem-solving skills and reinforce a positive outlook. This recent study examines the high school teachers' perceptions and the quality of academic consulting competence in the Vietnamese educational context. The main results showed that academic consulting competence had been noticed and trained professionally for high school teachers. Additionally, both students and high school teachers recognized the essential role of high school teachers' academic consulting competence in educational settings. The academic consulting competence of teachers, especially high school teachers, should be further studied to improve this competence for teachers. Future studies could focus on (i) investigating the factors that influence the quality of academic consulting in educational settings, (ii) building and examining training programs to improve the academic consulting competence for teachers, (iii) studying the potential relationship between the quality of academic consulting and student's mental health or well-being. The recent study provided additional information about the academic consulting competence of teachers, especially Vietnamese high school teachers.

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