

Developing Academic Administration Guidelines to Enhance the Physical and Mental Health in Xinxiang City Vocational School, China

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were 1) to investigate problems and needs of academic administration to enhance the physical and mental health, 2) to develop academic administration guidelines to enhance the physical and mental health. The samples were 286 students and 44 teachers/administrators obtained through stratified random sampling at vocational school of Xinxiang City Vocational School. The research instruments were questionnaires and a set of questions for the focus group discussion. The statistics were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The research results indicated that 1) for students' opinion, the problems to enhance the physical and mental health were rated at the moderate level (Mean=3.00 S.D.=0.93). In the teachers/ administrators' opinion, the problems to enhance the physical and mental health were rated at the moderate level (Mean=3.10 S.D.=1.01). In addition, in the students' needs to enhance the physical and mental health were at the moderate level (Mean=3.20 S.D.=0.99). In the teachers/ administrators' needs to enhance the physical and mental health were at the moderate level (Mean=3.18 S.D.=0.97). 2) The developed guidelines to enhance the physical and mental health consisted of psychological health support services, learning stress management, career development guidance, promotion of healthy living, career development guidance, and establish a support system.

Keywords : Academic Administration Guidelines, Physical and Mental Health, Vocational School

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Introduction

Vocational schools are essential for workforce development. They provide specialized education and hands-on training to equip students with industry-specific skills. Students' holistic development, including physical and mental well-being, is crucial in vocational education. However, the demanding academic environment and the increasing pressure on students to excel academically can have detrimental effects on their overall health and well-being. Therefore, vocational schools should prioritize the enhancement of students' physical and mental health through effective academic administration strategies. The integration of physical and mental health into academic institutions has gained increasing attention due to its profound impact on student outcomes, educational experiences, and future employability. (Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012 : 1189-1204). Moreover, addressing the mental health challenges faced by students and staff can lead to a more positive and inclusive learning environment, enhancing the overall sense of belonging and reducing dropout rates (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri & Goel, 2011 : 1-13). In recent years, research has highlighted the concerning prevalence of stress, anxiety, and burnout among students in vocational schools (Smith et al, 2019 : 11-16; Johnson & Brown, 2020 : 189-202). This phenomenon not only negatively impacts students' academic performance but also hampers their personal development and future career prospects. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, with remote learning and isolation posing new obstacles to students' well-being (Gao et al, 2021 : 321-334). To address these critical issues, the implementation of a strategic guideline for academic administration becomes imperative. This guideline should focus on integrating comprehensive measures that foster a supportive and nurturing learning environment, ultimately promoting both physical and mental health among vocational school students. Research has indicated that academic institutions with effective well-being initiatives experience increased student engagement, improved academic performance, and reduced dropout rates (Brown & Johnson, 2018 : 46-52; Lee et al., 2020 : 320-335). To support

students' physical well-being, vocational schools should focus on two key areas: safety and structured fitness programs. First, workshop safety protocols are essential, as vocational schools often encompass hands-on training that requires robust safety measures. Guidelines may include regular equipment maintenance schedules, safety drills, and training on handling machinery (Johnson, 2020 : 20-34). Secondly, the implementation of structured physical fitness programs can enhance the overall physical health of students through collaborations with health experts to design balanced routines and diets (Brown & Thompson, 2019 : 175-190). Additionally, academic administration must actively monitor and balance workloads to prevent burnout, and regular feedback loops with students can assist in achieving this balance (Taylor, 2021 : 44-60). Importantly, collaboration with local community and healthcare providers allows for the creation of tailored programs to suit specific demographic and cultural needs, ensuring that interventions are not only theoretically sound but also practically relevant in the Xinxiang City context (Lee & Wu, 2020 : 98-113). This research aimed to develop the guidelines for academic administration to enhance the physical and mental health. Through an in-depth exploration of existing literature, case studies, and expert opinions, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for educators and administrators to create a well-rounded learning experience that empowers students not only academically but also emotionally and physically.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the problems and needs of academic administration to enhance the physical and mental health in vocational school.
2. To develop the academic administration guidelines to enhance the physical and mental health in vocational school.

Research Methods

Population : The population was divided into 2 groups; namely, 1) 1,000 students in 2023, and 2) 50 teachers/administrators in Xinxiang City Vocational School.

Samples: The samples were divided into 2 groups; namely, 1) 286 students and 2) 44 teachers/administrators. (Yamane, 1973 : 887), The respondents were obtained through the stratified random sampling technique.

Research Instruments : Questionnaire: The questionnaires were divided 2 parts 1) general information and 2) problems and needs of academic administration to enhance the physical and mental health for students 30 questions and for teachers 30 questions. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values were 0.93 and 0.94 respectively. The questionnaires were evaluated for the Index of Congruence scores (IOC scores) by the three specialists, 0.67 to 1.00. The three specialists evaluated the developed guidelines to share ideas and give comments concerning the correctness and suitability of the guidelines.

Data Collection : The researchers collected data using online questionnaires. The researcher submitted a letter of permission to the school director in advance to ask a permission to collect the data and information.

Data Analysis : For the investigation of problems and needs, statistics were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.). The rating scale were used to evaluate the level of need and problem degree. For the rating reference of the five-point rating scale were: mean range 4.51 – 5.00 were highest level, 3.51 – 4.50 were high level, 2.51 – 3.50 were moderate level, 1.51 – 2.50 were low level, and 1.00 – 1.50 were lowest level. (Srisa-ard, 2002, p. 103)

Research Results

The problems encountered by students and teachers in academic management

Based on the data presented, it is evident that there are significant challenges and concerns related to academic support, student well-being, and mental health

within educational environments, particularly at vocational schools. The findings suggest that both students and educators are experiencing difficulties in navigating various academic and support structures, leading to high average scores for several key issues, reflecting considerable dissatisfaction. For example, the total mean value of Q1-Q15 is 3.22, standard deviation of 0.93, indicating a moderately high level of concern across the surveyed items. Among these, Q12 stands out with a mean score of 4.59, indicating that the lack of communication regarding academic activities and opportunities is the most pressing issue. This high score suggests that students feel there is insufficient information and support when it comes to accessing academic resources and opportunities, which may hinder their academic progress and overall satisfaction. Additionally, Q3 and Q4, which address the difficulty of obtaining academic resources and receiving adequate academic guidance, show mean scores of 3.86 and 3.56, respectively. These figures highlight the challenges faced by students in securing necessary academic resources and support, which may directly affect their academic success and overall well-being. Similarly, Q11 and Q14, which focus on the availability of extracurricular activities promoting well-being and support for mental health, also have high mean scores of 3.76 and 3.55, respectively, indicating that students are experiencing difficulties in accessing these essential services.

On the educator's side, the challenges are similarly pronounced, where the mean value of Q1-Q15 drops slightly to 3.10, with an average standard deviation of 1.01. This suggests that educators are facing considerable difficulties in providing adequate support for students' academic and psychological needs. Q2, which addresses the challenge of identifying and addressing the specific pressures faced by vocational school students during the learning process, has a mean score of 3.60. This indicates that teachers find it challenging to understand and effectively address the unique stressors that vocational students face in their academic and personal lives. Furthermore, Q3, which explores the difficulty in collaborating with other teachers and administrators to create a comprehensive support system for student

health, has an mean score of 3.66. This suggests that educators struggle to work together with other stakeholders, such as administrators and mental health professionals, to develop a unified approach to student well-being. The complexity of this issue is reflected in the relatively high score, which underscores the need for better coordination and communication within the school system.

The difficulties faced by both students and educators in addressing academic and psychological challenges at vocational schools are further compounded by the complexity of providing personalized guidance that takes into account both academic and mental health needs. Q12 and Q13, which concern the challenge of offering tailored academic advice while considering students' psychological well-being, receive mean scores of 3.68 and 3.72, respectively. These scores highlight the difficulty in balancing academic guidance with the need to address students' diverse psychological health requirements. The data suggests that vocational school students may have unique and multifaceted needs that require a more individualized approach, but the current systems in place may not be equipped to meet these demands effectively. The high average scores in these items reflect a broader systemic issue, where there is a lack of resources, support, and coordination to address both the academic and mental health needs of students.

Mean

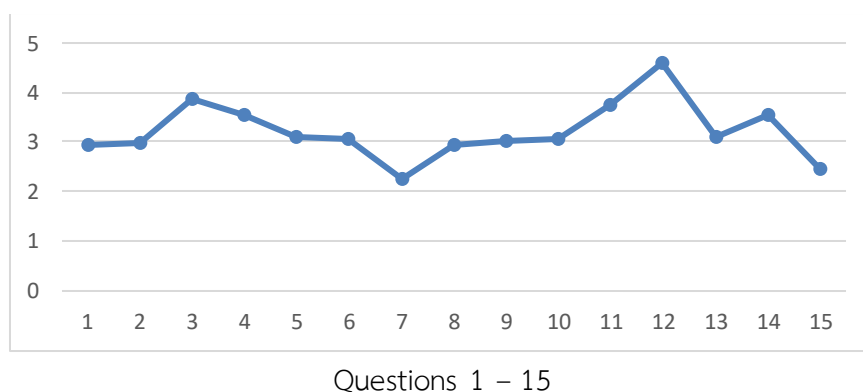
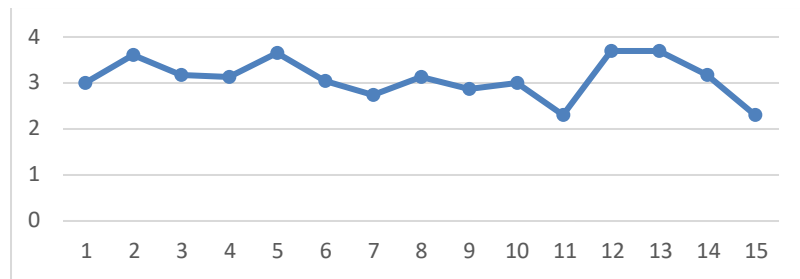


Figure 1 Mean of questions 1 – 15 on problems were opinioned by students to promote physical and mental health in vocational schools

Mean



Questions 1 – 15

Figure 2 Mean of questions 1 – 15 on problems were opinioned by teachers to promote physical and mental health in vocational schools

The need for students and teachers to promote physical and mental health in vocational schools

Based on the data, there are notable trends that indicate significant concerns regarding the academic and mental health needs of vocational school students. The mean value of responses for Q1-Q15 as 3.20, with an average standard deviation of 0.99, reflecting a moderate level of need across various dimensions. Specifically, questions Q3, Q4, Q11, Q12, and Q14 highlight areas where students feel a strong demand for comprehensive support. These include the need for better access to academic resources and materials (Q3), a robust support system for academic and mental health counseling (Q4), a wider range of extracurricular activities for both physical and mental health (Q11), increased exchange of academic opportunities (Q12), and readily available mental health support in vocational schools (Q14). With mean scores ranging from 3.79 to 4.02, these issues are considered pressing by students, indicating a significant gap in the support and resources available to meet their academic and mental health needs.

The responses to Q1-Q15 reflect a slightly lower total average score of 3.18, with an standard deviation of 0.97. This suggests that there is a marginally less acute need for support across the board. Questions Q1, Q6, and Q12 stand out as areas where additional focus is needed. Specifically, students express a need for strategies

and guidelines to balance academic demands with mental and physical health (Q1), for collaborative efforts among teachers and administrators to create a cohesive support network (Q6), and for personalized academic guidance that also addresses mental health challenges (Q12). With mean scores ranging from 3.54 to 3.88, these questions indicate that students perceive a high degree of difficulty in managing their academic workload while maintaining mental health, and they require more targeted support to address these challenges effectively.

Mean

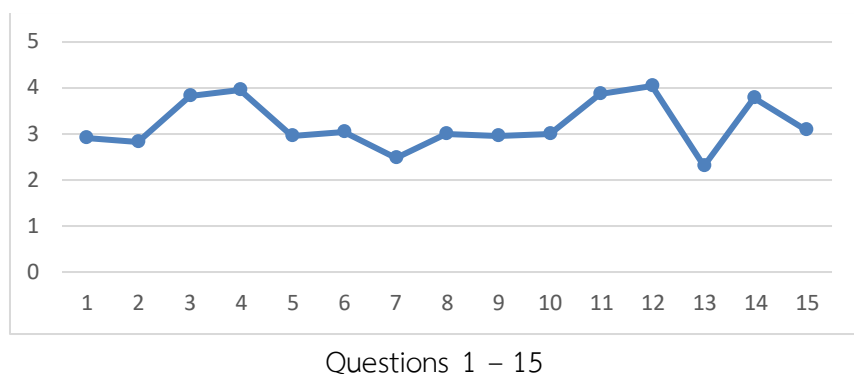


Figure 3 Mean of questions 1 – 15 on needs were opinioned by students to promote physical and mental health in vocational schools

Mean

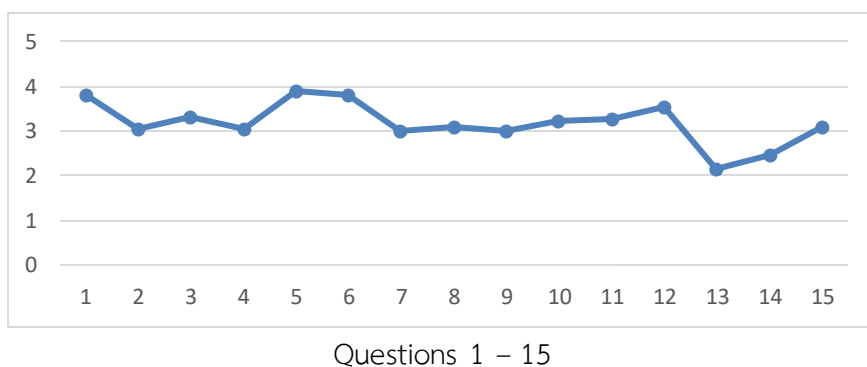


Figure 4 Mean of questions 1 – 15 on needs were opinioned by teachers to promote physical and mental health in vocational schools

Guidelines for Strengthening Academic Administration of Physical and Mental Health in Vocational Schools

The developed guidelines to enhance physical and mental health aims to support students' well-being through a comprehensive academic management framework. The guidelines are developed on six key units identified from the highest needs of both students and teachers/administrators: 1) Psychological health support services, 2) Learning stress management, 3) Career development guidance, 4) Promotion of healthy living, 5) Establishment of a support system, and 6) Regular evaluation and feedback. These units are carefully designed to address the physical and mental health needs of vocational school students and ensure a balanced approach to their academic and personal development. Evaluation by five specialists, based on the Index of Congruence (IOC), showed that the guidelines were well-suited to the needs of the school, with IOC values ranging from 0.67 to 1.0, indicating strong agreement on their applicability and effectiveness.

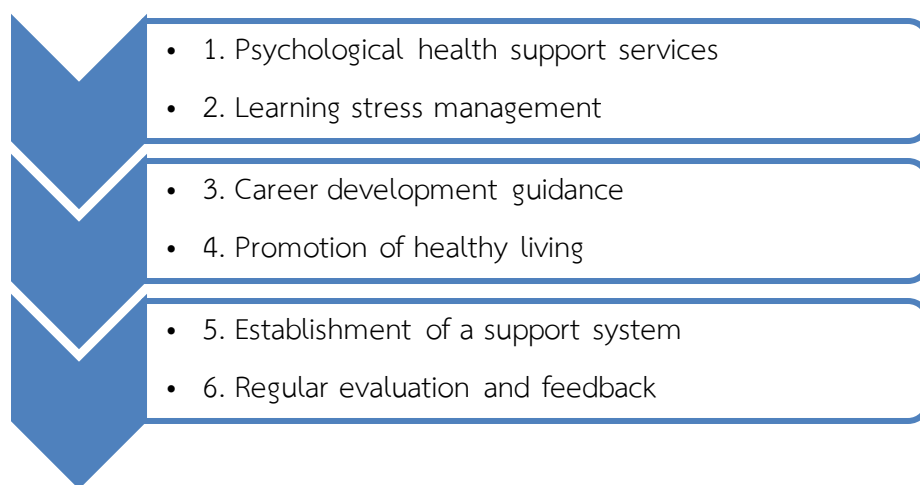


Figure 5 The academic administration guidelines to enhance physical and mental health

The first unit, Psychological Health Support Services, aims to provide a multi-layered support system for students' mental health. This includes individual psychological counseling for personal issues, collective counseling for peer support, and psychological health education to raise awareness about common mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

The second unit, Learning Stress Management, focuses on reducing academic stress and enhancing students' ability to manage their studies effectively. The guidelines recommend teaching students goal-setting and time management skills, as well as effective learning strategies like memory enhancement, note-taking, and study techniques.

The third unit, Career Development Guidance constitutes, aimed at helping students prepare for successful professional futures. The guidelines suggest offering career planning courses and workshops to help students understand their interests, values, and professional aspirations.

The fourth unit, Promotion of Healthy Living, aims to promote a holistic approach to health by encouraging physical fitness, healthy eating, and mental wellness. Schools are advised to organize sports and fitness activities such as basketball, yoga, and badminton to help students stay physically active and relieve stress.

The final two units focus on the Establishment of a Support System and Regular Evaluation and Feedback. The support system encourages a multi-level network involving teachers, counselors, student services, and community resources, ensuring that students have access to a wide range of assistance.

Research Discussion

1. The insufficient communication about academic activities and opportunities

Strengthen guidance and stimulate the initiative of graduate students to participate in academic activities. Schools should adhere to the policy of differential

treatment and hierarchical guidance, increase publicity, and encourage participation. (1) Strengthen publicity. Academic activity organizing units should first utilize various platforms such as their own resources, student organization resources, and class resources, and adopt various forms such as verbal notifications, telephone notifications, and QQ group notifications to promote graduate academic activities, forming a school wide atmosphere for graduate academic activities. (2) Differential treatment. For academic activities that are not closely related to graduate research direction, there is no need to externally force them to participate. Try not to hold academic activities for graduate students with low academic content and monotonous and boring forms. (3) Organize more academic activities with strong universality. Schools should treat each level separately. (John, 2003 : 131-134)

2. Obtaining relevant academic resources and materials

The construction of free academic resources in university libraries has important practical significance. Free academic resources on the internet are an important supplement to academic resources in university libraries, and the construction of free academic resources on the internet is of great practical significance. It can not only alleviate the problem of tight funding in university libraries, but also accelerate the speed of academic exchanges and fully leverage the academic energy of free online academic resources.

3. Unsupported in terms of academic advice and guidance

Fully tap into the academic potential of academic master's students and attach great importance to the important role of mentor guidance in providing opportunities for their academic development. Considering the current demand for doctoral education, the cultivation of academic master's students also needs to pay more attention to their academic development plans. (Gong, 2014 : 50-57)

4. Encountered challenges related to the availability of extracurricular activities that promote overall well-being

Addressing the challenges related to the availability of extracurricular activities that promote overall well-being requires some comprehensive methods

and strategies. The following methods can be used to solve the problem: (1) Resource integration: Collaborate with local schools, libraries, community centers, NGOs, etc. to integrate resources to support and promote the availability of extracurricular activities. These organizations may have resources such as venues, funding, and volunteers to work together to promote the implementation of welfare activities. (2) Flexibility: Design flexible activity arrangements that take into account the time, location, and interests of different groups of people. (3) Evaluation and feedback: Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of extracurricular activities and make adjustments and improvements based on feedback from participants.

5. Supporting for mental health and happiness within the academic scope

To address these challenges, the following strategies can be considered: (1) Interdisciplinary collaboration: finding interdisciplinary support networks, including psychologists, mental health experts, social workers, etc., who may provide support and advice from different perspectives. (2) Professional Consultation: Looking for professional mental health services, including psychological counselors, psychologists, or psychotherapists. They can provide professional support and advice tailored to individual situations. (3) Advocacy and Education: Advocate for mental health awareness in academic institutions, provide education on mental health and happiness, and help people understand and recognize the importance of valuing mental health. (4) Establishing a support network: Establishing a support network with colleagues and friends to share each other's experiences and support, and facing pressure and challenges together. (5) Seeking institutional support: Understand whether academic institutions provide mental health support services, such as mental health counseling, employee benefit plans, etc. These resources may be helpful in solving problems.

Research Suggestions

Suggestions for implementation

1. Strengthening physical health education: Regularly carry out physical health education activities, including knowledge and skill training on healthy diet, exercise, sleep management, and other aspects. Schools can invite professional health educators or doctors to give lectures and training to enhance students' health awareness and literacy.

2. Create a support system: Establish a student support group or mentor system to provide emotional support and guidance to students. These support systems can help students better adapt to school life, handle learning and life challenges.

3. Introduce mandatory mental health screenings and provide regular training for faculty to identify early signs of student distress.

Suggestions for further study

1. Survey needs and challenges: Conduct a survey study to understand the physical and mental health needs and challenges faced by vocational school.

2. Interdisciplinary research: Physical and mental health issues often involve multiple disciplinary fields, including psychology, education, medicine, etc. It is recommended to conduct interdisciplinary research and integrate professional knowledge from various fields to gain a more comprehensive understanding and solve problems.

3. Develop effective intervention measures: Based on research results, develop and implement effective physical and mental health interventions for vocational school students.

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