



Interconnected Academic, Personal, Social, and Administrative Challenges: An Anonymous Digital Help Desk for Undergraduates at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna

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Undergraduates may face difficulties throughout their university life due to various root causes. Students navigate a complex blend of academic, personal, social, and administrative challenges that directly affect their well-being and performance. Many state universities in Sri Lanka, including the University of Ruhuna, offer support mechanisms such as mentoring and counseling, but undergraduates are often hesitant to seek help due to inner struggles such as fear of judgment, lack of anonymity, and limited awareness about available services. This study addresses the necessity of an anonymous, technology-based Student Help Desk (SHD) by identifying the types and severity of challenges faced by undergraduates at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna. The total sample consisted of 150 students representing all four academic years, including 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and final year students. A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms using a convenience sampling technique. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were adopted to identify the relationships between variables. Smart PLS Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) clearly explored the relationships among student performance and Academic Challenges (AC), Personal Consequences (PC), Social Issues (SI), and Administrative Issues (AI). The findings revealed that PC strongly influences both administrative ($\beta = 0.662$) and social challenges ($\beta = 0.545$). This highlights how stress, financial struggles, and emotional difficulties spill over into academic performance. Administrative problems ($\beta = 0.558$) and social issues ($\beta = 0.351$) contribute significantly to individual academic performance. Personal Consequences (PC) showed the strongest influence across all domains ($f^2 = 0.548$). Collectively, the model explains 44.9% of academic, 43.8% of administrative, and 29.7% of social challenges, demonstrating interconnected structural barriers affecting student performance. In conclusion, there is an urgent need for an anonymous SHD to provide timely academic, administrative, technical, and psychological support as a transparent platform to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Academic performance, Challenges, Student Help Desk, Undergraduate, University experience