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ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS RATES IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF CONSULTATION HOURS

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ABSTRACT

Student retention and success remain critical concerns in management education worldwide. While both students and institutions invest significant resources in the learning journey, persistent challenges such as poor academic performance and high dropout rates undermine these efforts. The diverse abilities, backgrounds, and career aspirations of management students call for tailored support mechanisms that nurture both educational progress and professional growth. This study examined the role of consultation hours in enhancing student success within management education programmes, with the aim of identifying effective strategies and best practices for their implementation. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative framework, the research drew on existing literature, institutional records, and the researcher's personal observations and experiences as a management lecturer. The findings revealed that consultation hours provide critical individualised support, creating opportunities to address students' specific needs. These sessions strengthen academic performance and promote satisfaction by fostering leadership capacity, strategic thinking, and the practical application of management theories. When effectively implemented, consultation hours have the potential to reduce dropout rates, improve learning outcomes, and build student confidence. This study highlights the importance of embedding structured consultation hours in management education as a humanistic learning approach that accommodates student diversity and enhances academic and professional success. It further offers practical insights that can inform institutional policies and teaching practices, ensuring that consultation hours are leveraged as a vital tool for student support and development.

KEYWORDS: Consultation Hours, Student Success, Management Education, Higher Education Institution, Student Retention, Qualitative Research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic niche of management education faces significant challenges in student retention and success due to factors such as rigorous curriculum, the need for practical application of theoretical knowledge, and sprouting employer expectations. The diverse backgrounds and learning styles of students further necessitate adaptive teaching methods and support systems (Wang et al., 2023). Despite substantial institutional investments, Aina et al. (2022) affirm that poor academic performance and high dropout rates persist, particularly in management education. These challenges are especially pronounced in management education, where the diverse abilities, backgrounds and career aspirations of students demand tailored support mechanisms to foster both academic and professional growth (Morrow-Howell et al., 2022). Management education programs are expected to address these diverse needs by developing and implementing effective strategies that provide personalised and comprehensive support to students. Without such tailored support, students may struggle to steer the complexities of their courses, leading to increased dropout rates and diminished academic achievements (Austin et al., 2022). This necessitates the facilitation of innovative approaches such as consultation hours to offer individualised guidance and support to students. Educational institutions can enhance student success rates by understanding and addressing the specific needs of management students through structured and targeted interventions, thereby maximising the return on investment for both students and the institutions themselves.

In South African context, the role of management education is more critical than ever. Management programs are designed to equip students with the necessary skills to know the complexities of their business environments, develop strategic thinking, and assume leadership roles (Kezar, 2023). However, achieving these educational outcomes requires more than just traditional classroom instruction. There is a growing recognition that individualised support through mechanisms such as consultation hours can play a critical role in enhancing student success (Bryceson & Sheridan, 2022). In the view of Tomlinson and Jarvis (2023), consultation hours offer a unique opportunity for students to receive personalised guidance tailored to their specific needs. These sessions can address a wide range of issues, from academic difficulties to career planning, thereby providing a holistic support system that can significantly impact educational experiences and

outcomes of students. Despite the potential benefits of management education, the implementation and effectiveness of consultation hours have not been extensively explored (Ndebele & Legg-Jack, 2022).

This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the role of consultation hours in promoting student success within management education programs. This study seeks to provide actionable insights that can enhance student support mechanisms and ultimately improve retention and academic performance by identifying effective strategies and best practices for implementing consultation hours. The research adopts an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative framework while utilising data from existing literature, and personal observations and experiences of the researcher as a management lecturer. This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of how consultation hours can be used to support students. The study highlights the potential of consultation hours to reduce dropout rates and improve both academic and professional outcomes for students. More importantly, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on student support mechanisms in higher education by emphasising the importance of structured consultation hours. The insights gained from this study will inform policies and practices within management program and ensure that consultation hours effectively meet the diverse needs of management students through humanistic learning approaches. As institutions strive to improve student retention and success, the implementation of effective consultation hours stands out as a crucial strategy for fostering academic and professional growth in management education.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Enhancing the success rate of students in management education is paramount for both academic institutions and students (Figueiró et al., 2022). In the same direction, Al Hassani and Wilkins (2022) sustain that high retention rates and strong academic performance are indicators of effective educational programs and contribute to the reputation and attractiveness of institutions. For students, success in their studies translates to better career prospects, higher employability, and a return on their educational investment. At Walter Sisulu University South Africa, consultations are a critical component of student support services. However, the current structure and limited time allocated for these consultations may not adequately meet the diverse and complex needs of management students.

Consultation hours at Walter Sisulu University are designed to provide students with personalised guidance and support and to address their specific academic challenges and career goals. Despite their potential benefits, these consultations are often limited in duration and frequency, also restrict students access to the help they need. Furthermore, many students do not take consultations seriously, missing out on the valuable support they offer. Given the varied backgrounds and abilities of management students, extended and more frequent consultations could play a vital role in enhancing their academic performance and retention rates. There is a pressing need to explore and optimise these consultation practices to ensure they effectively contribute to student success. To address these challenges, soluble measures should be facilitated by the university to ensure that consultation hours are structured, promoted, and utilised effectively to support students in achieving their academic and professional goals. This study uncovered the proactive measures to enhance student success rates in management education through the adoption of consultation hours.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The success rates of students in management education have become a growing concern and this reflects broader challenges in student retention and academic performance within the field (Stone et al., 2022). Despite the recognised importance of consultation hours as a key support mechanism, the current system at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) may not be effectively meeting the diverse and complex needs of management students. The limited duration and frequency of these consultations, combined with a lack of student engagement, hinder their potential impact. As a result, many students are not receiving the personalised guidance necessary to navigate the academic challenges inherent in management education which leads to suboptimal outcomes such as high dropout rates and lower academic achievements.

This study is motivated by the critical need to enhance the effectiveness of consultation hours at WSU, to improve student success rates in management education. Given the varied backgrounds, learning styles, and career aspirations of students of WSU, it is essential to explore and implement tailored support strategies that address these unique needs. Without such interventions, the university risks continued challenges in student retention, ultimately affecting its reputation and the return on investment for students. Therefore, this

study aims to identify and propose measures to optimise consultation hours, ensuring they are structured, promoted, and utilised effectively to support students in achieving their academic and professional goals. The study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on enhancing management education and improving student outcomes in higher education institutions by addressing these issues. Based on the background provided above, the objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the roles of consultation hours: Assess how consultation hours can help to improve student performance and success.
- ii. Evaluate the impact on student success: Investigate the effectiveness of consultation hours in improving academic performance, retention rates, and overall student satisfaction within management education programs.
- iii. Identify best practices: Determine the best practices for implementing consultation hours that address the specific needs of management students, considering the constraints and resources of Walter Sisulu University.
- iv. Recommend improvements: Provide actionable recommendations to enhance the structure, frequency, and duration of consultation hours to support the academic and professional development of students.

1.4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study adopted Tinto's model of student integration and Bean's student attrition model. These models are explained subsequently to show the importance of fostering a strong sense of belonging and academic engagement among students.

1.4.1 *Tinto's model of student integration (Tinto, 1993)*

Tinto's Model of Student Integration, first articulated in 1975 and significantly revised in 1993, offers a foundational framework for understanding student retention in higher education (Cottrell, 2022). Developed by Vincent Tinto, a sociologist and education researcher, the model emerged from his work on how students interact with their educational environment and the impact of these interactions on their decision to persist or withdraw from their studies (Tinto, 1993). Tinto's model builds upon earlier theories of organisational behaviour and student socialisation which emphasise the role of academic and social integration in student retention.

Tinto's Model posits that student retention is significantly influenced by academic and social integration (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023). According to

the theory, students who become more integrated into their institution both academically and socially are more likely to persist in their studies (Tinto, 1993). Academic integration in this case, refers to how well students connect with their academic environment, such as their interactions with faculty, engagement in coursework, and academic performance, with successful integration marked by students feeling competent and achieving their academic goals (Hadjar et al., 2023). Social integration involves the participation of students in campus life, forming relationships with peers, and developing a sense of belonging within the institution, where strong social integration contributes to a greater sense of community and personal fit within the educational setting (Hadjar et al., 2023). Tinto's model also introduces the concept of "student departure," where students are more likely to leave an institution if they perceive a lack of fit or connection with both academic and social aspects of their experience (Brunsdon et al., 2000; Halpin, 1990). The model emphasises the need for institutions to foster environments that support both forms of integration to enhance retention rates.

The adoption of Tinto's Model for this study on consultation hours in management education is motivated by its framework for understanding student retention. The model provides a comprehensive approach to examining how academic and social factors influence students' decisions to stay in or leave their programs. Through the application of this theory, the study explored how consultation hours contribute to both academic and social integration, thereby affecting student success and retention. The theory offers a valuable lens through which to assess the impact of consultation hours on student success in management education. Consultation hours are intended to enhance academic integration by providing personalised support, addressing academic challenges, and facilitating engagement with the curriculum. They also have the potential to improve social integration by fostering relationships between students and faculty and promoting a sense of belonging. This study evaluates how effectively these sessions contribute to academic and social integration by analysing consultation hours through the framework of Tinto's Model. This, in turn, helped to know how consultation hours serve as a strategic tool for improving student retention and success, and aligns with the broader objectives of management education programs.

1.4.2 *Bean's student attrition model*

Bean's Student Attrition Model was developed by John P. Bean and Robert L. Metzner in 1985. The model emerged from Bean's research on student persistence and dropout rates and focused on non-traditional students in higher education (Harp, 1998). Unlike earlier models that primarily addressed traditional students, Bean and Metzner's model looked into the unique challenges faced by students who do not fit the traditional college profile, including working adults, part-time students, and those with family responsibilities (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Their work was influenced by psychological and sociological theories of behaviour and decision-making, also aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of why students leave their academic programs (Hirschy, 2015).

Bean's Student Attrition Model highlights the importance of various factors that influence the decision of a student to persist in or withdraw from their studies (Park et al., 2011). It considers background and defining variables, such as age, work commitments, and family responsibilities, as critical in shaping the academic experiences and decisions of students (Anderson, 2001). The model also incorporates psychological factors, which include attitudes, beliefs, motivations, self-efficacy, commitment, and the perceived value of education to the students, all of which significantly impact their academic persistence (Harp, 1998). Furthermore, environmental factors play a crucial role as the model highlights the significance of institutional support, such as academic advising, financial aid, and student services (Woods, 2016). The perceptions of students about their environment such as their interactions with faculty and access to resources are assumed to greatly affect their retention (Willging & Johnson, 2009). While Bean's model does not use the same terminology as Tinto's, it parallels the concept of academic and social integration by focusing on how the experiences of students within the academic and social environment influence their likelihood of remaining in their programs.

Bean's Student Attrition Model was adopted for this study as it focuses on the diverse factors affecting student retention. The model provides a relevant perspective on student attrition for analysing how consultation hours can address various aspects of the academic and personal lives of students. This model is relevant to this study because it offers a broad framework for understanding student retention challenges that go beyond traditional academic integration. Consultation hours can be examined through this model to assess how they address both the psychological and environmental factors that

influence the decisions of students to persist. For instance, Picton and Kahu (2022) confirm that effective consultation can enhance the perceptions of students towards institutional support, address personal and academic challenges and reinforce their commitment to their goals. The study can evaluate whether consultation hours provide the necessary support to mitigate factors leading to student attrition, thus improving retention and academic performance by adopting this model.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS

This study explored how to enhance student success rates at WSU through the roles of consultation hours. The study adopts an interpretivist research paradigm, which is rooted in understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of the individuals involved (Creswell, 2014). As a non-empirical study, it primarily relies on existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and qualitative insights rather than direct empirical data collection (Ursin et al., 2024). The study elicited the roles of consultation hours to generate recommendations based on a synthesis of prior research and conceptual understanding. The qualitative research approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the roles of consultation hours, impact on student success and best practices for implementing consultation hours that address the specific needs of students of WSU.

In this study, a traditional literature review was conducted as the primary source of data collection where secondary sources were reviewed to gain insights into the study problems. A literature review provides a comprehensive summary of existing research on a specific topic, shedding light on unanswered questions and highlighting the relevance and potential contributions of the current

review within the field (Paul & Criado, 2020). This study employs a conceptual narrative approach, as justified by Luft and Jones (2022), to delve into the literature surrounding the enhancement of student success rates in management education through the role of consultation hours. In a narrative literature review, the researcher identifies a research problem (Hall et al., 2021)—in this case, the challenges in student retention and success—and subsequently locates relevant existing literature that offers new perspectives or solutions to this problem. Unlike reviews with a prescribed structure, a narrative review is conventional, lacking a specific protocol or predetermined strategy for synthesising the topic of interest (Demiris et al., 2019). Consequently, this approach involves a qualitative presentation of data (Creswell, 2014). The adoption of a qualitative approach allows the study to synthesise existing knowledge and propose solutions to the identified research problem. The search for relevant data was conceptualised within the research topic, with data sourced from various channels, including journals, conference papers, policies, and books. The identified themes were then used to develop a framework for understanding the challenges in enhancing student success rates in management education through the role of consultation hours. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of factors that impact student performance and retention. Furthermore, the study identified key contributions relevant to both educational institutions and academic literature. The conclusions and recommendations of the study aim to offer actionable guidance for improving student support services at WSU and other institutions facing similar challenges. Figure 1 presents the structural approach employed in analysing data, following the guidelines outlined by Demiris et al. (2019).

Step 1 Identify Problem	Identify the relevant topic for a narrative review from the existing literature.
Step 2 Conduct search	Identify relevant topics, sentences, or keywords to ensure a transparent selection of documents with the relevant content to the research problem.
Step 3 Review document	Search for relevant documents addressing the research problem.
Step 4 Document results	Synthesize and summarize the content of documents and integrate into the narrative as appropriate.

*Figure 1: Steps utilised in analysing data
Adapted from Demiris et al. (2019).*

1.6 MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT IN STUDENT SUCCESS

Management education faces unique challenges in promoting student retention and success. The field is characterised by its diverse student population, including varying levels of prior knowledge, career goals, and educational backgrounds. This diversity necessitates tailored strategies to support students' academic and professional growth. Effective management education programs not only aim to impart theoretical knowledge but also seek to enhance students' practical skills, ensuring their success in a competitive job market. Student retention in management education is influenced by a range of factors. High dropout rates are often attributed to inadequate academic support, lack of engagement, and insufficient career guidance (Kuh et al., 2006). Management students may face challenges related to balancing academic demands with professional responsibilities, as many are simultaneously working or pursuing internships. The need for effective support mechanisms is crucial to address these challenges and improve student outcomes (Tinto, 1993). The subsequent delineations expound upon the roles of consultation hours, impact of consultation hours on student success and the best practices for enhancing student success through effective consultation hours in management education.

1.6.1 The roles of consultation hours

Consultation hours play a critical role in the educational process by providing students with valuable opportunities to receive personalised guidance and support outside of regular class time. Here are some key roles of consultation hours in education.

Personalised academic support

Personalised academic support through consultation hours is essential in helping students clarify course material and better understand complex concepts (Picton & Kahu, 2022). Doyle (2023) highlights that opportunities for students to ask questions and receive tailored explanations are crucial for enhancing their comprehension and retention of challenging topics. This personalised interaction is especially crucial in management education where students may struggle with abstract ideas that require contextual understanding. Richlin (2023) affirms that addressing these issues in one-on-one or small group settings allows instructors to cater explanations to individual learning styles, thereby fostering deeper understanding and critical academic and professional success. The provision of detailed feedback on assignments and exams during consultation hours is also a critical component of personalised academic support. Silver et al. (2023) affirm that effective feedback is one of the most potent influences on student achievement. Consultation hours provide an ideal platform as they enable instructors to engage in dialogue with students (Doyle, 2023). This dialogue helps students reflect on their work, understand their mistakes, and develop strategies for improvement. Stevens and

Levi (2023) further uphold that feedback is most effective when it is timely, specific, and focused on the learning process rather than the outcome. In the same vein, Hooda et al. (2022) sustain that personalised feedback helps students become more aware of their strengths or weaknesses and provide the guidance needed to address their challenges and enhance their academic success.

Enhanced student-faculty interaction

Enhanced student-faculty interaction through consultation hours plays a critical role to foster stronger relationships and provide valuable mentorship and career guidance (Trolan & Parker, 2023). Building these relationships helps to create a more supportive and engaging learning environment. Consultation hours allow students to develop a rapport with faculty members which increases their comfort levels in seeking help and contributes significantly to their academic integration (Evans et al., 2022). This increased interaction helps students feel more connected to their academic community and enhances their learning experience as they are more likely to engage in meaningful discussions and seek clarification on complex topics (Mellow et al., 2023). Beyond academic support, consultation hours offer students opportunities to receive mentorship and career advice, which are crucial for their professional development. Faculty members can provide personalised guidance on career paths, share insights into industry trends, and assist students with networking and professional growth. This mentorship aspect of consultation hours helps bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world application, preparing students for successful careers in their chosen fields (Trolan & Parker, 2023).

Support for diverse learning needs

Supporting diverse learning needs through consultation hours is essential in creating an inclusive educational environment that caters to individual student challenges (Ní Bhroin & King, 2020). These challenges may include learning disabilities, language barriers, or varying learning paces (Evans et al., 2022). Consultation hours provide a unique opportunity for instructors to offer individualised attention, addressing each student's specific challenges. This personalised support helps ensure that all students, regardless of their unique needs receive the assistance necessary to achieve academic success. Focusing on the difficulties of each student helps instructors create a more equitable learning experience that promotes success for all

students (Landsman & Lewis, 2023). Consultation hours allow instructors to work closely with students to develop tailored learning strategies, study plans, and time management techniques. These strategies are personalised to align with the strengths and weaknesses of each student and to enable them to enhance their learning process (Hooda et al., 2022). Tailoring these approaches ensures that students can overcome obstacles that may impede their academic performance which leads to better outcomes and higher retention rates.

Encouragement of active learning

Consultation hours play a pivotal role in promoting critical thinking and fostering independent learning among students (Lin et al., 2021). These sessions encourage students to engage actively with course material and move beyond mere rote memorisation to explore topics critically by providing a space for in-depth discussions. This interactive environment allows students to question assumptions, analyse different perspectives, and develop the analytical skills necessary for deeper understanding (Alsaleh, 2020). Furthermore, through guided problem-solving and research techniques, instructors help students become more independent learners. This guidance supports students in overcoming immediate academic challenges and equips them with the tools and confidence to tackle future academic endeavours on their own, thereby enhancing their ability to learn independently and think critically (Stone et al., 2022).

Improvement of academic performance and retention

Consultation hours are crucial in enhancing academic performance and reducing dropout rates by offering targeted support and fostering a supportive learning environment (Hoyt, 2023). Picton and Kahu (2022) confirm that regular use of consultation hours allows students to receive personalised feedback and guidance, which can significantly improve their academic performance. This support helps students tackle academic challenges more effectively and leads to higher grades and achievement. For instance, personalised feedback from faculty during consultation hours can clarify complex concepts, address learning gaps, and boost the confidence of students which contributes to better academic outcomes. Consultation hours play a vital role in reducing dropout rates. These hours help students address academic difficulties before they escalate into major issues. This proactive approach prevents students from reaching a crisis point and

strengthens their connection to the academic community (Hoyt, 2023).

1.6.2 Impact of consultation hours on student success

Consultation hours play a vital role in supporting student success by providing a dedicated space for individualised academic assistance and mentorship. These sessions help students overcome specific challenges and contribute to their academic achievement, motivation, and retention. The following are the impacts of consultation hours on student success.

Academic performance

Consultation hours offer a critical platform for students to engage with faculty outside regular class time and provide a structured opportunity for personalised feedback and guidance (Murtagh, 2022). This direct interaction allows students to address specific academic challenges, seek clarification on complex topics, and deepen their understanding of course material (Doyle, 2023). Murtagh (2023) emphasises the effectiveness of these sessions in enhancing academic performance. Students who take advantage of consultation hours often show notable improvements in their grades and academic achievement (Doyle, 2023). For example, Hoyt (2023) highlights that personalised academic support such as the tailored advice and targeted assistance available during consultation hours correlate strongly with better learning outcomes. This support helps students understand their coursework more effectively, resolve difficulties more efficiently and develop a clearer grasp of the subject matter and leads to higher academic performance and success.

Engagement and motivation

Regular engagement with faculty during consultation hours significantly boosts the motivation and academic engagement of students (Bryceson & Sheridan, 2022). When students receive tailored advice and encouragement, they often experience a good sense of support and validation which can greatly enhance their motivation to excel (Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2022). This personalised attention helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement and make them more invested in their academic journey (Ndebele & Legg-Jack, 2022). As a result, students are more likely to adopt better study habits, actively participate in class discussions, and engage more deeply with their

coursework. This increased engagement contributes to a more robust learning experience and translates into improved academic performance. The ongoing support and feedback from faculty foster a more dynamic and interactive learning environment and encourage students to stay committed to their studies and achieve higher levels of academic success (Bryceson & Sheridan, 2022).

Dropout prevention

According to Ndebele and Legg-Jack (2022), consultation hours are pivotal in reducing dropout rates by providing early intervention and addressing academic difficulties before they escalate into significant issues. These sessions offer a proactive approach to identifying and resolving challenges which helps prevent students from becoming overwhelmed and considering withdrawal from their studies (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022). Students receive the guidance they need to handle their academic challenges effectively through regular engagement with faculty members. This sense of support and connection helps students overcome challenges but also fosters a stronger sense of belonging to their academic institution. When students feel supported and valued, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their educational goals. This enhanced sense of belonging and access to resources plays a critical role in improving retention rates, as students who feel integrated into their academic community are more inclined to persist and complete their studies (Figueiró et al., 2022).

Development of skills

Beyond providing immediate academic support, consultation hours play a vital role in the development of essential skills that contribute to long-term success (Stone et al., 2022). Through these sessions, students receive help with current coursework and gain valuable guidance in areas such as problem-solving, time management, and self-regulation (Cottrell, 2022). Faculty often use these interactions to impart strategies for effective learning and academic planning which are deemed crucial to handle academic challenges. For example, students might learn techniques for breaking down large projects into manageable tasks, setting realistic goals, and developing a structured study plan. These skills are beneficial for academic performance and personal development as they equip students with the tools needed to handle various challenges throughout their academic and professional lives. Samoilă and Vrabie (2023) attest that students are

better prepared to succeed both in their current studies and in their future endeavours by integrating these skills into their routines which make consultation hours an investment in their broader educational journey.

1.6.3 Best practices for enhancing student success through effective consultation hours in management education

Effective consultation hours are a critical component of student success in management education which offers personalised support and guidance outside of regular class time. Implementing best practices in these sessions can significantly enhance academic outcomes, foster student engagement, and improve retention rates.

Structured and accessible consultation hours

Structured and accessible consultation hours are crucial for maximising student engagement and support. Regular scheduling of consultation hours, as emphasised by Stone et al. (2022) help establish a predictable routine that encourages student participation. Consistent and well-publicised times ensure that students are aware of and can plan for these opportunities thereby increasing their likelihood of attending. Also, providing flexible options, such as multiple time slots and virtual consultations, accommodates diverse student schedules and preferences, improving accessibility and participation. Cottrell (2022) supports this approach, noting that flexibility in academic support services enhances the ability of students to seek help and engage with resources effectively. Educational institutions can create a more inclusive support system that better meets the needs of all students which will lead to increased engagement and academic success by combining regular scheduling with flexible options (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023).

Personalised and targeted support

Personalised and targeted support during consultation hours significantly enhances student success by addressing individual needs and fostering continuous improvement (Bryceson & Sheridan, 2020). Providing individualised guidance allows for tailored feedback on assignments, projects, and exams, which has been shown to improve academic performance by directly addressing specific challenges of the students (Stone et al., 2022). Personalised support helps students understand their strengths and areas for growth and this leads to better outcomes. More so, working with students to set clear, achievable goals and regularly tracking

their progress is important for sustained academic success. Studies by Cottrell (2022) and Hadjar et al. (2023) demonstrate that goal setting and monitoring are effective in boosting motivation and performance as they help students stay focused and adjust their strategies as needed. Consultation hours can provide comprehensive support that drives student achievement and development by integrating personalised feedback with structured goal setting and tracking.

Proactive engagement

Proactive engagement through consultation hours plays a critical role in preventing academic issues and supporting student success (Picton & Kahu, 2022). Early intervention where students who may be struggling are identified and invited to consultation hours. This can effectively address problems before they escalate. Research by Samoila and Vrabie (2023) highlight that timely academic support helps prevent minor difficulties from becoming significant barriers. In the same view, Hadjar et al. (2023) pinpoint that regular check-ins with students to discuss their academic progress and address emerging issues further enhance support. Tomlinson and Jarvis (2023) emphasise that periodic reviews and physical engagement help students stay on track and receive timely assistance which fosters continuous improvement and academic success. Consultation hours can provide essential support that addresses issues proactively and maintains student progress throughout the academic term by implementing early intervention and regular check-ins.

Skill development focus

Focusing on skill development during consultation hours is vital for long-term student success, as it equips students with essential competencies beyond immediate academic support (Palombi, 2022). Pendakur (2023) avers that teaching study skills such as time management, organisation, and effective study techniques during consultation hours helps students develop strategies they can use independently. Research by Bingham et al. (2023) affirm the importance of these skills in enhancing academic performance and fostering self-regulation. More so, guiding students in developing problem-solving skills relevant to management education such as critical thinking and decision-making further supports their academic and professional growth. Wang et al. (2023) confirm that problem-solving and critical thinking are crucial for success in management education and beyond. Educators can provide comprehensive support that enhances the

overall academic abilities of students and prepares them for future challenges by integrating study skills training and problem-solving strategies into consultation hours,

Encouraging student engagement

According to Aina et al. (2022), encouraging student engagement during consultation hours is essential to foster a productive and supportive learning environment. Management should create a space where students feel comfortable to ask questions and participate in discussions. This in turn promotes active engagement and open communication which has been shown to enhance learning outcomes (Bryceson & Sheridan, 2022). A supportive atmosphere encourages students to interact more freely with faculty and peers and this leads to greater academic involvement and satisfaction (Aina et al., 2022). More so, Tomlinson and Jarvis (2023) attest that providing constructive and actionable feedback helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement which is crucial for their academic growth. Morrow-Howell et al. (2022) affirm that effective feedback guides students in their learning and motivates them to improve. Consultation hours can effectively support student engagement and development which leads to improved academic performance and satisfaction.

Integration with course content

Integrating consultation hours with course content significantly enhances their effectiveness in supporting student learning (Cojean & Jamet, 2022). Aligning consultation hours with the specific objectives and material of the management course ensures that the support provided is directly relevant to what students are studying in class (Kezar, 2023). This alignment helps reinforce learning by addressing current coursework and related challenges. Furthermore, assisting students in applying theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios and case studies, as suggested by Palombi (2022), bridges the gap between theory and practice and deepens their understanding and practical application of principles. Educators can create a more cohesive and impactful learning experience that reinforces academic concepts and prepares students for real-world challenges by connecting consultation support with course content and practical applications.

Building relationships

Building strong relationships during consultation hours is crucial for enhancing student confidence and

motivation (Gottlieb et al., 2022). Developing supportive connections between faculty and students creates a positive rapport that can significantly boost student engagement and academic success (Feldman, 2001). Research by Palombi (2022) indicates that positive faculty-student relationships contribute to higher levels of student satisfaction and academic achievement. Furthermore, encouraging peer support through study groups or peer mentoring complements the guidance provided in consultation hours by fostering a collaborative learning environment. Cojean and Jamet (2022) affirm that peer interactions can enhance academic experiences and retention by providing support and motivation. Consultation hours can offer a more comprehensive support system that enhances both individual and collective learning by focusing on relationship-building and peer collaboration.

Utilising technology

Utilising technology during consultation hours can significantly enhance accessibility and efficiency thus improving the general support experience for students (Ahmed & Opoku, 2022). Digital tools, such as online platforms for virtual meetings, document sharing, and feedback, offer greater flexibility and convenience and allow students to engage with support services regardless of their location (Enwereji & van Rooyen, 2023). The use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) to integrate consultation hour scheduling and communication streamlines these processes and keeps students informed and organised (Enwereji et al., 2023). Research by Enwereji et al. (2024) emphasise that integrating technology into educational support services can enhance engagement and provide timely assistance, while LMS platforms facilitate better management of academic interactions and resources. Institutions can make consultation hours more accessible, efficient, and responsive to student needs by adopting these technological tools.

1.7 DISCUSSION OF RESULT

This study delves into the role of consultation hours in enhancing student success within management education. It explored how consultation hours provide personalised academic support, a critical element in helping students handle complex learning concepts and receive tailored feedback. Picton and Kahu (2022) emphasise that these sessions are essential for clarifying course material, while Doyle (2023) underlines their importance in improving comprehension and retention of challenging topics. Richlin (2023) affirms

that such personalised interactions are particularly vital in management education, where students often struggle with abstract ideas requiring contextual understanding. Moreover, Silver et al. (2023) highlight that detailed feedback during consultation hours is a potent influence on student achievement which reinforces the necessity of these one-on-one or small-group interactions.

The study also traced the impact of enhanced student-faculty interaction facilitated by consultation hours. Trolan and Parker (2023) argue that these sessions foster stronger relationships and provide valuable mentorship which is deemed instrumental in building a supportive learning environment. Evans et al. (2022) note that the rapport developed during consultation hours increases the comfort of students in seeking help thereby significantly contributing to their academic integration and engagement. Furthermore, the study discusses how consultation hours extend beyond academic support to offer career guidance, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application, as highlighted by Trolan and Parker (2023). This dual role of academic and professional mentorship highlights the comprehensive support system that consultation hours provide while preparing students for successful careers.

Lastly, the study examines how consultation hours cater to diverse learning needs, contributing to an inclusive educational environment. Ní Bhroin and King (2020) stress the importance of individualised attention in addressing student challenges. Consultation hours provide a platform for personalised support, ensuring that all students, regardless of their unique needs, receive the assistance necessary for academic success (Evans et al., 2022). Hooda et al. (2022) add that by tailoring learning strategies to align with the strengths and weaknesses of students, instructors can create a more equitable learning experience that leads to better outcomes and higher retention rates. Through the implementation of best practices such as proactive engagement and skill development focus, faculty can identify struggling students early, provide timely support, and help them develop essential academic and professional skills (Picton & Kahu, 2022; Palombi, 2022). This focus on supporting diverse learners highlights the role of consultation hours in

fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment that promotes student success across the board.

1.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the role of consultation hours in management education by emphasising the importance of personalised academic support. It demonstrates that tailored guidance during these sessions is crucial for improving student comprehension, retention, and academic performance. The study reinforces the idea that individualised attention, as highlighted by Picton and Kahu (2022) and Doyle (2023), is essential for addressing specific academic challenges. This focus on personalisation highlights the need for targeted interventions that cater to the learning needs of students. The study contributes to the literature by identifying and advocating for best practices in conducting consultation hours, such as structured scheduling, proactive engagement, and the integration of technology. These practices, supported by Stone et al. (2022) and Ahmed and Opoku (2022), are shown to significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and retention. Educational institutions can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment by systematically implementing these strategies. The study also highlights the dual academic and professional benefits of consultation hours, as they not only address diverse learning needs but also provide valuable mentorship and career guidance, thereby preparing students for future success. The conceptual insights as presented in Figure 2 combined the roles of consultation hours, the impacts of consultation hours on the success of the students and the best practices for enhancing student success through effective consultation hours. The conceptual insight further incorporated Tinto's model of student integration and Bean's student attrition model to show the importance of fostering a strong sense of belonging and academic engagement among students. These models emphasise that students who feel connected to their academic community and receive consistent support are more likely to persist in their studies, thereby reducing dropout rates.

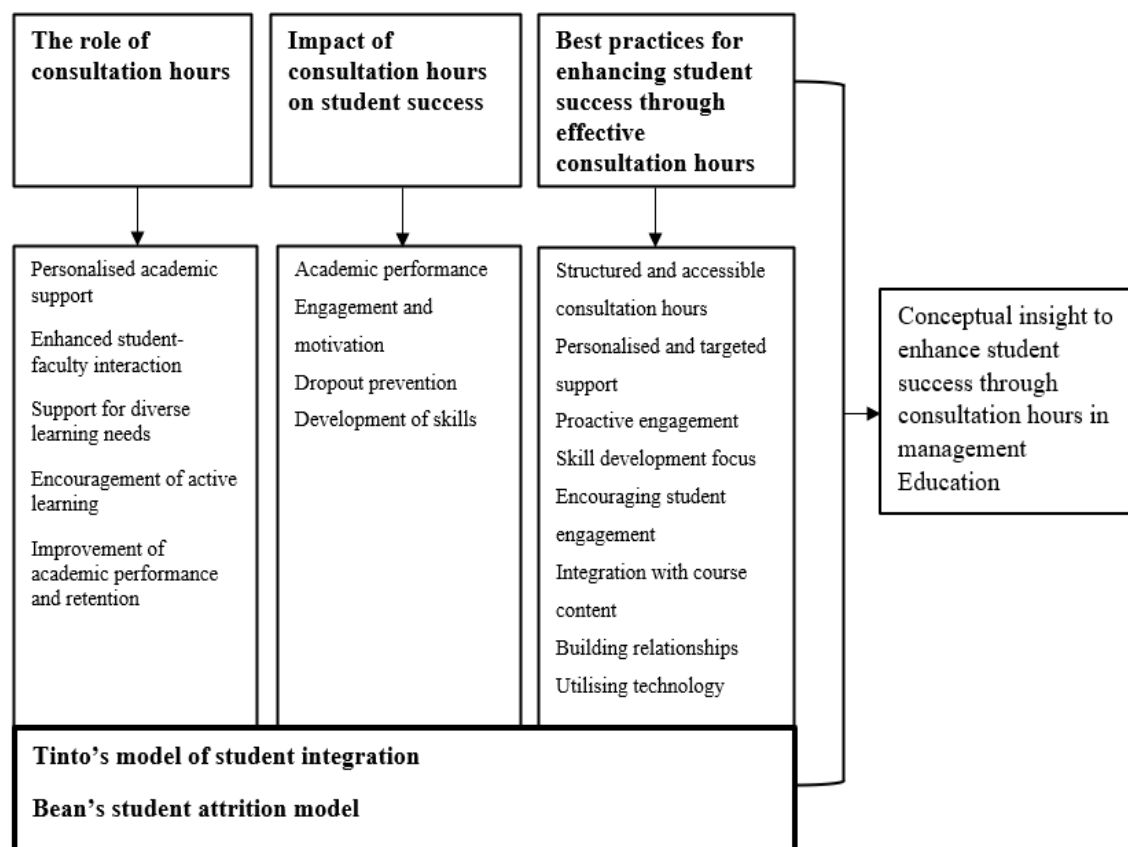


Figure 2: Conceptual insight of the study

Source: Author's conception.

1.9 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The study concludes that consultation hours are a critical component of student success in management education, and this serve as a vital platform for personalised academic support, enhanced student-faculty interaction, and the development of essential skills. Consultation hours, through offering of tailored guidance and feedback, help students overcome specific academic challenges, leading to improved comprehension, retention, and performance. This personalised approach is particularly beneficial in complex fields like management education where students often struggle with abstract concepts that require contextual understanding. The study emphasises the importance of implementing best practices in consultation hours such as structured scheduling, proactive engagement, and the integration of technology. These practices increase accessibility and participation and foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Furthermore, the study highlights the dual impact of consultation hours as they contribute to both academic success and professional development by providing mentorship and career guidance. These findings

highlight the need for educational institutions to prioritise and facilitate consultation hours to enhance student outcomes and ensure their preparedness for future challenges.

1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that educational institutions prioritise the facilitation of consultation hours by implementing structured and accessible scheduling to ensure flexibility through multiple time slots and virtual options. Institutions should emphasise personalised support by offering targeted feedback and setting clear academic goals with students. Furthermore, proactive engagement, which includes early interventions and regular check-ins should be a standard practice to address emerging challenges before they escalate. To further enhance effectiveness, integrating technology into consultation processes such as using online platforms for meetings and feedback is deemed crucial for improving accessibility and efficiency. Finally, aligning consultation hours with course content and fostering strong student-faculty relationships are important strategies to maximise the impact on student success.

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To: Dr Stofile

Title of the manuscript: Enhancing Student Success rates in Management Education: The role of Consultation Hours
You are hereby requested to address the following comments provided by the editor

Editor's Comments

Section	Review Comments
Abstract	The abstract addresses an important issue in higher education by examining the role of consultation hours in enhancing student success within management education. It clearly outlines the purpose of the study, the qualitative approach adopted, and the key findings relating to academic support, retention, leadership development, and student confidence. The practical relevance of consultation hours is well articulated. However, the abstract requires greater methodological precision. The study is presented as a qualitative investigation, yet no empirical data were collected; rather, the manuscript is a conceptual or narrative literature review. Referring to "findings" may therefore be misleading, as the conclusions are derived from literature synthesis and personal observations rather than primary data. The abstract should explicitly state that it is a conceptual or narrative review study. Additionally, the contribution to theory and management education literature should be highlighted more clearly.
Introduction	The introduction successfully establishes the importance of student retention and academic success within management education. The discussion provides a strong rationale by highlighting the unique challenges

	management students face, including diverse backgrounds, learning styles, career aspirations, and increasing employer expectations. The authors effectively argue that personalised support mechanisms are necessary to improve academic outcomes and reduce dropout rates. The South African context and the relevance of consultation hours are also well presented. However, the introduction is overly lengthy and contains extensive literature discussion that could be moved to the literature review section. The research gap is mentioned but not sharply articulated. The manuscript would benefit from a clearer explanation of what existing studies have failed to address regarding consultation hours in management education. The transition from the problem context to the research objectives could also be strengthened to improve coherence.
Literature Review/Theoretical Background	The theoretical background demonstrates a solid foundation through the adoption of Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Student Attrition Model. These theories are highly relevant because they provide useful frameworks for understanding student retention, academic integration, social integration, and persistence. The explanations of both theories are comprehensive and supported by contemporary literature. However, the theoretical discussion remains largely descriptive and lacks critical engagement. The manuscript does not sufficiently compare the strengths and limitations of the two theories or explain how they complement one another in understanding consultation hours. Furthermore, there is no explicit conceptual framework illustrating how consultation hours influence academic integration, student engagement, retention, and success. The extensive review of consultation hour roles, impacts, and best practices resembles a thematic literature review rather than a theoretically integrated analysis. Greater synthesis and theoretical integration would significantly strengthen the scholarly contribution of the study.
Research Methods	The methodology section is one of the weakest components of the manuscript. The authors state that the study adopts an interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach, yet no empirical data were collected. Instead, the study relies entirely on a narrative review of literature, institutional reports, and personal observations. Consequently, the manuscript is more appropriately classified as a conceptual or narrative review article rather than a qualitative research study. The literature search process is insufficiently described, with no explanation of databases consulted, search terms used, inclusion and exclusion criteria, or procedures for selecting sources. The use of personal observations raises concerns regarding objectivity and potential bias. Furthermore, the figure illustrating the literature review process is simplistic and does not reflect a rigorous review protocol. To improve methodological credibility, the authors should either adopt a systematic review methodology or clearly position the paper as a conceptual discussion article.
Findings and Discussion	The discussion provides a comprehensive synthesis of literature relating to consultation hours and student success. The manuscript effectively identifies several important roles of consultation hours, including personalised academic support, enhanced student-faculty interaction, support for diverse learning needs, active learning, retention, and skill development. The discussion is logically organised and demonstrates how consultation hours can positively influence academic performance, motivation, and persistence. However, the section largely repeats findings already presented in the literature review rather than offering new insights. Since no empirical data were collected, the discussion is primarily a summary of previous studies rather than an analysis of original findings. Greater critical engagement with the literature is needed. The authors should discuss contradictory findings, contextual limitations, and practical challenges associated with implementing consultation hours. The conceptual model presented on page 17 is useful but requires refinement and stronger theoretical justification.
Recommendations	The recommendations are practical, relevant, and aligned with the issues discussed throughout the manuscript. The emphasis on structured consultation schedules, flexible access, proactive engagement, personalised support, technology integration, and stronger student-faculty relationships reflects current best practices in higher education. The recommendations provide useful guidance for institutions seeking to improve student retention and academic success. However, the recommendations remain relatively generic and could be strengthened by providing more concrete implementation strategies. For example, the authors could recommend minimum consultation hours, institutional policies, monitoring systems, or staff development initiatives. Additionally, the recommendations should distinguish between institutional-level interventions, faculty-level responsibilities, and student-level actions. This would improve their practical applicability and policy relevance.
Conclusion	The conclusion effectively summarises the central argument that consultation hours are a critical mechanism for enhancing student success in management education. The authors appropriately highlight the benefits of consultation hours for academic performance, student engagement, retention, skill development, and professional growth. The conclusion also reinforces the importance of structured and accessible consultation practices. However, the section largely restates information presented earlier in the manuscript rather than synthesising broader theoretical and practical implications. The authors should explicitly discuss the study's contribution to management education literature and acknowledge limitations associated with the narrative review approach. Furthermore, directions for future research are absent and should be included. Future studies could investigate the effectiveness of consultation hours empirically across different disciplines, institutions, and student populations.
General Recommendation	Minor Revisions Required. The manuscript addresses a highly relevant issue in management education and provides a useful conceptual discussion on the importance of consultation hours for student success. The theoretical foundation is appropriate, and the recommendations have practical value. However, substantial revisions are needed regarding methodological positioning, theoretical integration, literature synthesis, and scholarly rigor. The authors should clearly classify the manuscript as a conceptual or narrative review study, strengthen the literature review methodology, develop a more robust conceptual framework, and provide

	deeper critical analysis. With these improvements, the manuscript could make a meaningful contribution to the student success and management education literature.
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