Institutional Student Support Programs in Higher Education: A Three-Year Analysis of Outreach, Participation, and Satisfaction in the Teaching and Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

An institutional student support program is part of the wider teaching and learning environment that offers opportunities for student learning and support resource engagement. However, institutional program evaluations tend to focus on activity counts, participation, and satisfaction without clearly distinguishing program reach and participation from learning outcomes. This study was conducted to describe three-year trends in program implementation, recorded participation and satisfaction, and their implications for institutional support in higher education teaching and learning. Non-sensitive aggregated administrative data from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Dungun Campus, 2023–2025 were used for this retrospective descriptive institutional case study. Descriptive analysis was carried out on three-year program counts, attendance instances and reported satisfaction percentages. The results revealed that the program activities counts were 34, 26 and 29; while recorded attendance instances were 5,129, 5,070 and 8,112 for the years 2023, 2024 and 2025, respectively. Program satisfaction was 90%, 90%, and 93% for the same years. Between 2024 and 2025, recorded attendance increased by 60.0%, while there was only an increase of 11.5% in program activities. Generally, the study results indicated an expansion in recorded program reach, but it does not indicate an increased number of unique students participating in the program or learning outcomes improvement. The study discussed the importance of distinguishing program implementation, implementation participation, participant satisfaction and learning outcomes when evaluating institutional student support program. The evidence from the study assist in more responsive program planning, and consequently, enhance the alignment of student support programs with higher education teaching and learning environment

Keywords: Higher education; learning environment; teaching and learning; student

INTRODUCTION

The higher education environment extends beyond classroom instruction to encompass institutional conditions for shaping students' educational experiences (Kahu, 2013; Baik et al., 2019). Student-support initiatives, including career guidance, psychoeducational outreach, and student-development programs, could complement formal teaching. This can be done by providing important developmental opportunities and access to relevant resources (Baik et al., 2019; Tinto, 2017). Evidence from preventive intervention research suggests that the effectiveness of these support programs could depend on their design and delivery (Conley et al., 2015). The findings from previous research indicate that structured skills-based interventions appear to demonstrate stronger

outcomes than information-only approaches (Conley et al., 2015). Evidence shows availability of programs, participation figures, and satisfaction ratings should not be interpreted as improvements in achievement, retention, or well-being without outcome measures (Kahu, 2013; Conley et al., 2015).

Previous research reported that accessible support systems appear important for university students' well-being and help-seeking (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Auerbach et al., 2018). Recent research on Malaysian higher education also highlights significant gaps in student mental health attitudes and help-seeking. All of these warrant contextual attention (Kotera et al., 2021; Muda & Ahmad Raphaie, 2025; Omar Ali et al., 2022). Furthermore, these important studies provide consideration of campus support provision. Nevertheless, the findings do not validate any particular outreach program in the present setting. Studies show relevance.

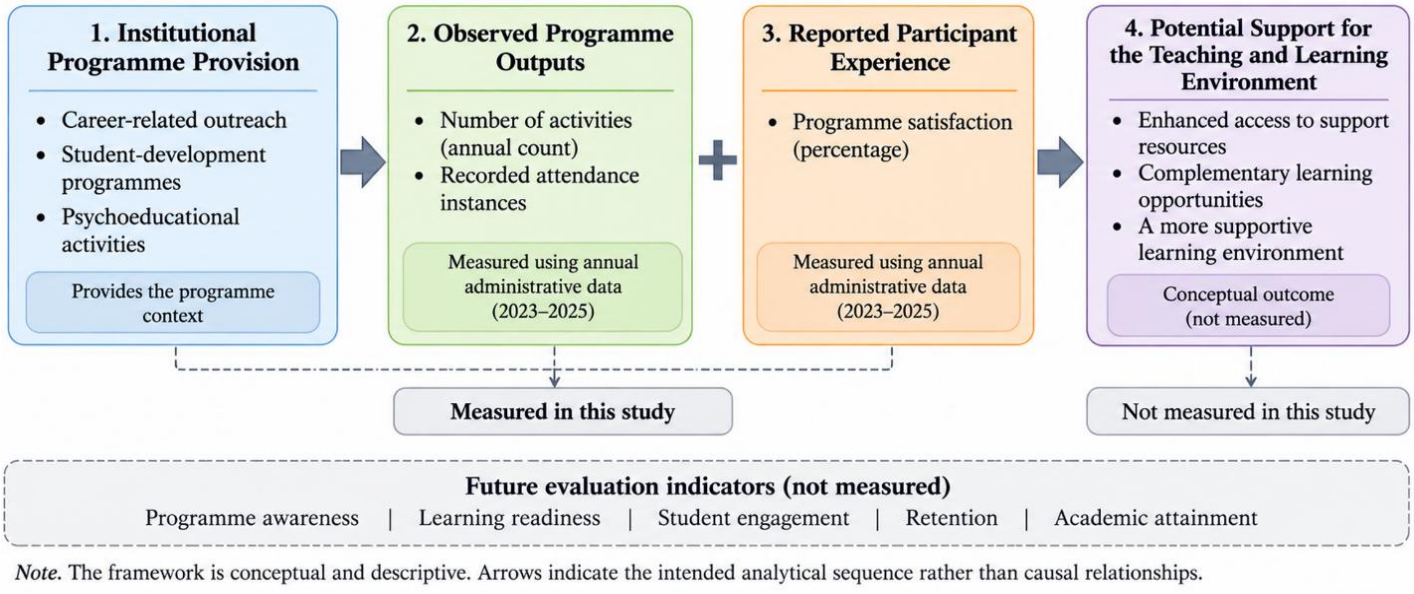
Previous scholarship has examined university student support needs, help-seeking behaviors, and intervention outcomes (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Conley et al., 2015; Auerbach et al., 2018; Ismail & Mohsen Kahwa, 2020; Musa et al., 2025). However, the evidence may not demonstrate that routine institutional program reports could provide interpretation when universities consider connecting student-affairs provision with the teaching and learning planning. Moreover, the analytical gap might indicate that the distinction between annual program outputs, participant-reported experience, and the educational outcomes appears important. Furthermore, this study suggests that these elements require separate measurement approaches. Evidence shows activity volume, attendance, satisfaction need distinction. Given that these distinctions appear explicit in the three-year campus case, the results could demonstrate that the study provides a replicable approach to the program monitoring. Nevertheless, this investigation indicate that the study does not establish intervention effectiveness evidence. Additionally, the findings could suggest that the study does not present national representativeness claims.

This study examines that three years of aggregated program activity, attendance, and satisfaction records may reveal important findings about institutional support provision relevant to the teaching and learning environment. Moreover, the three objectives of this study could demonstrate that: (1) annual patterns in program implementation, recorded participation, and reported satisfaction appear significant; (2) year-to-year changes and attendance-to-activity ratios might indicate important trends without treating attendance as unique student coverage; and (3) the implications of these patterns may suggest critical considerations for institutional planning of a supportive teaching and learning environment. Nevertheless, the study could establish that no individual-level service records or sensitive case classifications appear in the analysis. The study shows no sensitive data analyzed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The authors differentiate institutional support provision [career-related outreach, student-development and psychoeducational activities], observable program outputs [number of activities and recorded attendance instances], participant experience [reported program satisfaction], and potential contributions to a conducive teaching and learning environment as distinct concepts. The annual administrative data capture only the latter three concepts. Program awareness, learning readiness, student engagement, retention, and academic attainment are reasonable candidates for future evaluation but are not observed and do not represent tested causal pathways in this study.

Figure 1 illustrate the proposed institutional outreach–teaching and learning framework. The framework comprises four important components. The first component related to career-related outreach, student-development programs, and psychoeducational activities. This establish the key foundation for the framework. The second component indicates the number of activities. The recorded attendance instances provide significant evidence of the program outputs. Meanwhile, the third component appears to demonstrate that the reported program satisfaction could indicate the participant experience. Framework shows structure conceptual, not causally tested.



Note. The framework is conceptual and descriptive. Arrows indicate the intended analytical sequence rather than causal relationships.

Figure 1: Proposed institutional outreach–teaching and learning framework

The fourth component suggests that institutional outreach could demonstrate the potential contribution to a supportive teaching environment. This appears to be achieved through access to important support resources and complementary learning opportunities. Furthermore, this contribution may not have been measured directly. Nevertheless, the main structural tracking gap lies between the administrative indicators and the educational outcomes. Data show that awareness, readiness, engagement, retention, and attainment are unassessed.

Accordingly, the framework distinguishes measurable program outputs and participant experience from potential educational contributions. The arrows represent a conceptual sequence rather than empirically established causal relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Sources

This study employed a retrospective descriptive institutional case study that used aggregated administrative data from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Dungun Campus, Malaysia. The data coverage spanned from 2023 to 2025. The data were extracted from annual institutional program summaries and supplemented by program reports for contextual information. The findings suggest that the reporting year served as the key unit of analysis.

Institutional outreach activities spanned several broad program categories. The activities fell into three categories: career-related outreach, student-development initiatives, and psychoeducational activities. These programs also addressed different aspects of student support. They ranged from career preparation and personal development to awareness of available support resources. However, the annual administrative summaries did not consistently disaggregate activities. They also provided attendance counts by program category. Based on these, the summaries used these classifications to describe the scope of institutional outreach. Category-specific quantitative comparisons are not conducted.

Measures and Data Analysis

Data show three indicators examined. Nevertheless, the analysis considered that the annual number of program activities, the recorded attendance instances, and the reported program satisfaction percentages might demonstrate relevant patterns. Additionally, the descriptive analysis was conducted to compare the annual values and calculate the year-to-year percentage changes. Given that attendance figures represented participation instances rather than unique students, the satisfaction percentages were retained as reported in the institutional records. Thus, the study indicates that no inferential statistical tests or causal analyses were performed.

Data Quality and Ethical Considerations

Analysis included aggregated program data only. However, the findings could suggest that no individual-level records or confidential service information were included. Moreover, the differences in program coverage, attendance recording, and the satisfaction measurement across the reporting years could not be independently verified. In light of these findings, the results indicate that the findings were interpreted as the descriptive institutional indicators rather than the evidence of program effectiveness or the improvements in educational outcomes

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For data analysis, the annual number of program activities, recorded attendance instances, and reported program satisfaction percentages were carried out to demonstrate relevant patterns.

Annual Programme Activities, Attendance and Satisfaction

The annual institutional outreach indicators demonstrate that recorded data between 2023 and 2025 may reveal important trends. However, the number of program activities indicates that variations existed, with values of 34, 26 and 29, respectively. Moreover, the recorded attendance instances suggest that participation demonstrated significant changes, with values of 5,129, 5,070 and 8,112. Furthermore, the reported program satisfaction shows that these levels remained at 90% in 2023 and 2024, before the data indicated that satisfaction increased to 93% in 2025. Data show variations occurred across years (Figure 2). Nevertheless, the findings suggest that these variations in program implementation demonstrate important differences in the recorded participation across the three reporting years. Given that attendance increased substantially in 2025, the evidence indicates that the number of activities remained below the 2023 level. In light of these findings, the data suggest that this pattern demonstrates a change in the scale of recorded program participation. Additionally, the evidence indicates that this change could appear to reflect scale rather than necessarily an expansion in the number of students reached. As Kahu (2013) emphasized, the analysis may suggest that institutional conditions and participation-related opportunities should be distinguished from student engagement and educational outcomes.

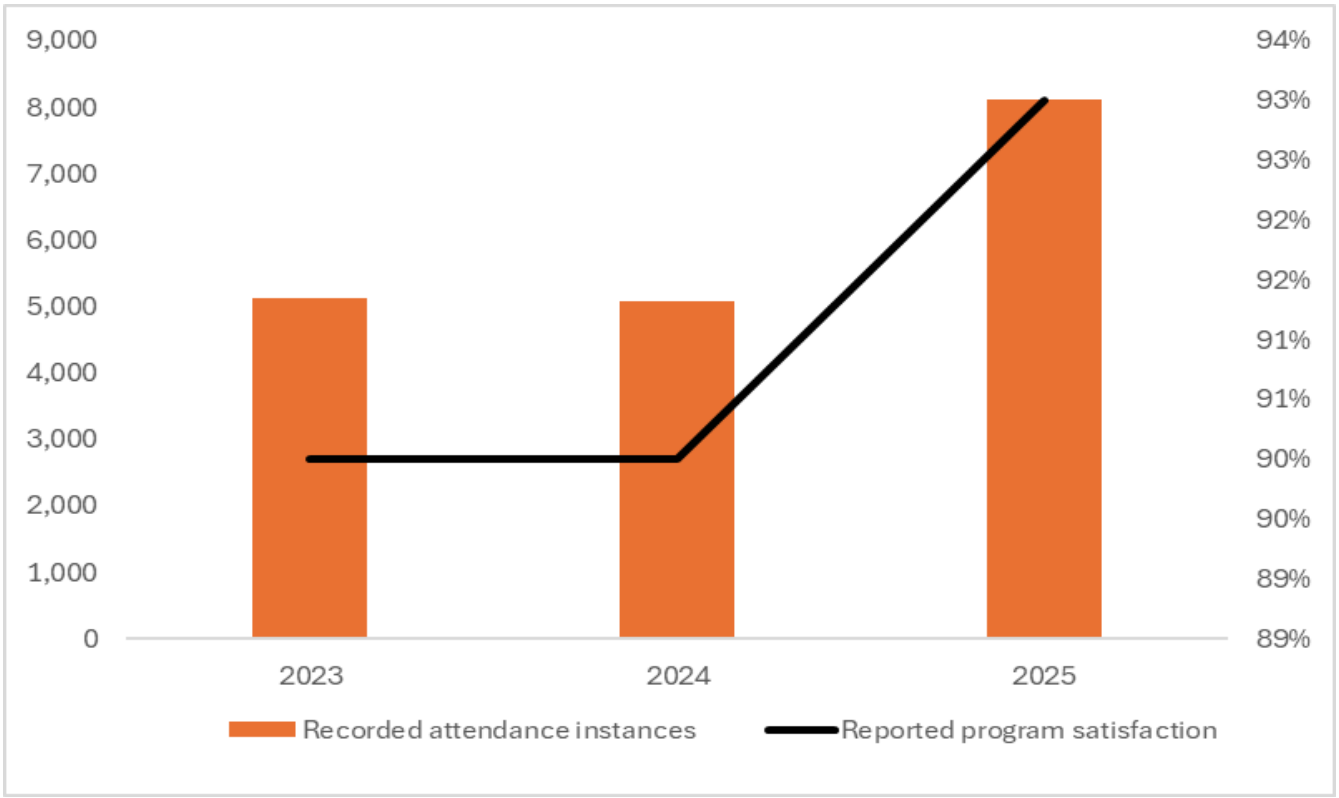


Figure 2: The annual institutional outreach indicators recorded between 2023 and 2025.

Changes in Program Reach and Participation Patterns

The number of program activities declined by 23.5% between 2023 and 2024 before increasing by 11.5% in 2025. In contrast, recorded attendance decreased slightly by 1.2% in 2024 but increased by 60.0% in 2025. In 2025, institutional outreach activities were delivered through both face-to-face and online formats. This encompassed various student-development and awareness-related programs. However, the available administrative records did not establish whether specific delivery formats or larger-scale activities contributed to the 60.0% increase in recorded attendance instances. Overall, attendance instances increased by 58.2% between 2023 and 2025, despite a 14.7% reduction in program activities. The descriptive changes in institutional outreach indicators are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive changes in institutional outreach indicators

Indicator	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Attendance instances per activity	150.9	195.0	279.7
Annual change in program activities	-	−23.5%	+11.5%
Annual change in attendance instances	-	−1.2%	+60.0%
Annual change in satisfaction	-	0 pp	+3 pp

Note. Attendance-per-activity values are ratios calculated from annual aggregates, not verified program-level means. pp = percentage points.

The ratio of annual attendance instances to program activities increased from 150.9 in 2023 to 195.0 in 2024 and 279.7 in 2025. This represents an 85.3% increase over the three-year period. Moreover, the increasing attendance-to-activity ratio may suggest that greater recorded participation occurred relative to the number of programs delivered. However, the differences in event size, delivery mode, repeated attendance, and reporting practices could have contributed to this important pattern. Furthermore, the findings might indicate that establishing whether more unique students participated appears difficult. Nevertheless, the data may suggest that determining whether program accessibility improved remains uncertain. Findings show that pattern origins are unclear.

Given that Kahu (2013) and Tinto (2017) highlight the importance of differentiating institutional opportunities from meaningful student engagement, this distinction appears consistent with the evidence. Therefore, attendance figures may provide useful indicators of program reach. Additionally, the data could suggest that these figures should not be interpreted as direct measures of learning. In light of these findings, the evidence might indicate that academic success measurement requires different approaches. Evidence shows attendance indicates reach only.

Program Satisfaction and Participant Experience

Reported program satisfaction stayed at 90% in 2023 and 2024 and then increased to 93% in 2025. A three-point increase. These results indicate that participant evaluations were favorable prior to 2025.

There is no verified information on questionnaire items, number of respondents, response rates and administration procedures available to support comparisons of satisfaction percentages from year to year. As discussed by Cahapay (2021) favorable participant reactions cannot be taken as evidence of learning. Therefore, satisfaction in this study is an indicator of reported participant experience rather than an indicator of educational achievement or student well-being. Future program evaluations should include the use of consistent satisfaction instruments in programs along with measures of perceived relevance, resource awareness and learning related benefits.

Implications for the Teaching and Learning Environment

The findings highlight the potential role of institutional outreach programs in supporting the broader higher

education teaching and learning environment. Career-related outreach, student-development programs, and psychoeducational activities may complement formal teaching by providing opportunities to share information, develop skills, and access institutional resources.

Kahu (2013) conceptualized student engagement as being influenced by institutional and individual factors, while Baik et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of supportive university environments and student-centered institutional practices. Similarly, Tinto (2017) emphasised the importance of understanding students' experiences when developing institutional strategies to support student persistence.

The present findings demonstrate that program provision, participation, and satisfaction appear significant at UiTM Dungun Campus in this context. However, the findings suggest that these data do not establish that improvements could demonstrate learning readiness, academic engagement, retention, or academic performance, given that these important outcomes were not measured. Moreover, the results indicate that the evidence could support the need for a more comprehensive institutional monitoring framework that distinguishes program provision, recorded participation, participant experience, and educational outcomes. Furthermore, the findings show that improved coordination among academic advisers, lecturers, and student-affairs personnel could strengthen program planning. Findings show coordination aligns with students' learning needs.

Future evaluations should incorporate consistent attendance definitions, standardized satisfaction instruments, and appropriate measures of program awareness, perceived relevance, and educational contribution. These improvements would let institutions assess program outcomes more comprehensively without assuming causal relationships based solely on administrative participation data.

Practical Implications

These results imply that institutions should use program identifiers, target groups, attendance-counting procedures, delivery modes, and satisfaction instruments consistently. This helps to facilitate institutional reporting (Hoffmann et al. 2014). A program-level monitoring dashboard could show counts of activity and recorded attendance as two distinct indicators. Thus, institutions can distinguish program implementation from participation.

This separation is good practice, in keeping with principles of evaluation, which distinguish programs from the activities and outcomes generated (Kidder et al. 2024). Anonymous, voluntary pre- and post-program assessments of knowledge related to a program or the extent to which program participants are aware of certain resources could be included in future evaluations. This is rather than relying on measures of satisfaction, which does not demonstrate effectiveness (Cahapay 2021).

Increased collaboration among lecturers, academic advisers, and student-affairs personnel could facilitate a closer alignment of institutional outreach to students' learning-related needs and the wider university support environment (Baik et al. 2019). These recommendations arose from the monitoring gaps identified in the current study, though their utility warrants further investigation.

CONCLUSION

This study describes the institutional student support programs offered at UiTM Dungun Campus in the years 2023 to 2025. The programs considered were student support activities, the number of programs attended, and the level of satisfaction derived from the programs. The results show variation in program implementation. The recorded attendance was enhanced despite fewer programs in 2025 as compared to 2023, and the reported program satisfaction level remained high throughout the three years of the study. The results offer valuable descriptive information for the monitoring and planning of institutional programs in the wider teaching and learning universe. However, the results shown were for program implementation, recorded participation, and reported satisfaction, and not for educational effectiveness. The study has shown the need for systematic monitoring of programs and can serve as a basis for further evaluations of support programs for students in higher education.

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