

SCHOLARS' EVALUATION OF SCHOLARSHIP SECTION AT DUBAI HEALTH AUTHORITY

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Abstract

Postgraduate education plays very important role in enriching the society with the knowledge required to increase the welfare of the community. It is well-known that employees' satisfaction with their training, working environment and incentives directly affects their performance and eventually the quality of services provided. The objective of this study is to analyze the level of scholars' satisfaction at Dubai Health Authority (DHA) with the provided services and offers, and to determine any factors that have an impact on the level of satisfaction.

A descriptive cross-sectional analysis was used and an electronic online questionnaire was distributed among Dubai Health Authority's scholars abroad. The questionnaire was sent to 49 scholars abroad and only 27 of them participated in the study. Most of scholars (48%) were continuing their postgraduate education in North America (USA and Canada). The majority of the participants are in the age group between 35 to 39 years (37%), then the next age group between 30 to 34 years old (30%). The male scholars participated in this study are (56%). Almost half of the participants are married (52%). The majority of the participants were dissatisfied with most of the provided services such as: the process required to attend training courses, quality of supervision, communication role of CED, health/malpractice insurance, flight ticket arrangement and salary and allowances. The degree of dissatisfaction was affected by gender, marital status, duration of study spent abroad and the organization which provide the scholarship. The overall scholars' evaluation of the scholarship section is between "bad" to "fair".

Keywords: Scholars, Satisfaction, Scholarship, Postgraduate, Health Authority, Policy, Higher Education.

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Introduction

Scholars were generally dissatisfied with the services provided by continuing education department due to quality of services, procedures and the financial issues

“Postgraduate education involves studying for degrees or qualifications for which a first or Bachelor's degree is required, and is normally considered to be part of tertiary or higher education”. Postgraduate education plays very important role in enriching the society with the knowledge and in updating the community.

Dubai health authority realized the importance of postgraduate education and the importance of qualifying the human resources in achieving the aim of being the world class leading healthcare center in quality and excellence by providing curative, supportive, and rehabilitation services to the community in compliance with the internationally established quality criteria within an integrated health policy.

In line with Dubai health authority’s policy to encourage UAE nationals to pursue higher education, scholarship section at Continuing Education Department was established to facilitate and organize postgraduate education. There are more than 45 trainees (scholars) abroad and more than 100 trainees in the UAE who are employees of DHA and pursuing higher education training at different institutions around the world e.g. USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Sweden, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

The purpose of postgraduate education can not be achieved without paying attention to the trainees themselves because they are the core element of the educational process.

Objectives:

The objective of this study is to measure the satisfaction level among all DHA external scholars with regard to different services and offers provided to them. Also, the objective is to help in determining the factors that impact the level of satisfaction. After all the aim is to improve the provided services and to identify the weaknesses there.

Significance of the study:

This significance of this study is to understand the current status of the continuing education department in regard of quality of services provided to UAE international scholars. It helps in identifying the efficiency and effectiveness of provided services which will subsequently guide the ongoing efforts to expand and improve UAE scholarship section in particular.

Hypothesis:

Ho: Scholars, who are continuing their postgraduate educations abroad, are not satisfied with the services provided by the Continuing Education Department at Dubai Health Authority. The services include university tuition fees, annual tickets, health insurance, children school allowance, annual employees allowance, expenses of training courses, follow up with the program directors, and facilitating the communication between scholars and the hospitals they work for at Dubai Health authority.

Definition of Terms

- **Scholar:** is a trainee who obtained a study leave to pursue postgraduate education outside the UAE.
- **Satisfaction:** the contentment one feels when one has fulfilled a desire, need, or expectation
- **Continuing Education Department:** is one department of Dubai Health Authority which involve in providing innovative continuing educational opportunities for the employees of DHA in order to improve the quality of Health care.

History of Dubai Health Authority (DHA):

Health care services by the Dubai government started with a small center that provided Medical Consultation and Medications to the Community in 1943 had out-grown as Department of Health and medical Services (DOHMS), currently being expanded as Dubai Health Authority (DHA) with the aim of being the world class leading healthcare center in quality and excellence by providing curative, supportive, and rehabilitation services to the community, by using qualified and experienced human resources, in compliance with internationally established quality criteria within an integrated health policy.

Dubai Health Authority (DHA) is the main governmental healthcare provider and regulator in Dubai. It provides healthcare services in Dubai through three main hospitals: Rashid Hospital (Trauma & Surgical Specialties), Al Wasl Hospital (Maternity & Child Health), Dubai Hospital (Multi-Specialties) as well as 20 Primary Health Care centers, and 7 specialty centers.

There are more than 9,000 employees working in DHA including medical, nursing, paramedical, administrative staff and others.

About eight years ago, Dubai Health Authority (DHA) took a strategic decision to establish the Continuing Education Department (CED) with the purpose of providing innovative continuing educational opportunities for the employees of Dubai Health Authority (DHA) in order to improve the quality of Health care to its customers.

Continuing Education Department is authorized to facilitate educational activities that satisfy the standards for accredited educational events and approve programs that are conducted by Dubai Health Authority (DHA) and Private Health Sectors.

The department consists of four main sections Library Section, Postgraduate Dean's office, Training Centre and Scholarship section.

Scholarship Section was started as one of the integra

l division of Continuing Education Department and works in coordinating educational opportunities and identifying professional needs of (DHA) specialties for Administrative, Medical, Paramedical and Nursing staff internally (within UAE) and Externally (outside UAE). The section also coordinates Bachelor Nursing Programme and Diploma in Dental Nursing for secondary school graduates in collaboration with the University of Sharjah and Higher College of Technology for women. The grant for education is provided mainly by Dubai Health Authority and the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE).

This Project focuses on services provided by scholarship section to the DHA's external scholars (outside the UAE) in particular

Research Methodology

This project has used cross-sectional survey using electronic administered questionnaire distributed to all DHA's scholars abroad.

The sample size covered all 49 scholars abroad and emails were sent to all inviting them to participate in the survey. Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5) was used to measure their satisfaction. Reminders were sent twice to encourage them to participate in the survey. Zoomerang website (<http://www.zoomerang.com>) was used to conduct and analyze the result.

Limitations:

The main limitation to the study is that the response rate from scholars was relatively poor (about 55.1%) despite reminding them two times after the initial invitation. Two recipients' emails were not responding, and add to that the time of conducting the survey was Easter.

Since electronic survey questionnaires are susceptible to some bias in responses (e.g same person may respond several times to the survey), this study accepted only one response from each server and the remaining responses which come from the same server were ignored.

Research Population and Sample:

The population of the study in this research is Dubai Health Authority. The study sample is the scholars who pursue postgraduate education abroad (outside the UAE). The whole sample of scholars abroad was taken because of the small size of the research sample. The total number of targeted research sample was 49, twenty two of which were excluded because either there were no response or were not filled correctly. The research sample contained both genders (Males & Females) studying in many countries including USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Singapore, Australia and NewZeland. Also, the sample contained scholars with different qualifications' backgrounds (medical, nursing, paramedical and administrative) and with different degrees (bachelor, master and PhD). Also, there were four categories of scholarship providers: DHA with ministry of higher education, DHA with EDAAD, DHA alone, and self sponsored scholars.

Data Collection:

The study was a cross-sectional survey and was conducted using a self-administered electronic questionnaire (created using Zoomerang website).

The electronic questionnaire was developed based on the services conducted to the scholars by scholarship section. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

1. Demographic Data.
2. Satisfaction with Specific services given to scholars.
3. Overall evaluation of the provided services.
4. Invitation for additional comments or suggestions.

The electronic questionnaire was launched on April 27, 2016 and responses were accepted only till April 29, 2016 then the access closed afterwards.

A consent letter (email) was sent along with the link to the electronic questionnaires and reminders were sent twice after the initial invitation encouraging participation to fill up the survey.

The personal email addresses of scholars abroad were obtained from the Database of Scholarship section at Continuing Education Department (CED) and the list included only those scholars who are currently on study leave regardless of the duration spent abroad.

Data Analysis

The electronic questionnaire was saved and analyzed by Zoomerang website (<http://www.zoomerang.com>) which was used as well to create the online survey. Registration in the website for one year was done before conducting or saving the questionnaire.

Research Result**1. Demographic Data**

The electronic questionnaire was emailed to all 49 scholars abroad who are registered at scholarship section. All of them visited the electronic questionnaire's URL but only 27 (55.1%) out of the 49 fully completed the electronic questionnaire correctly. Therefore, the data used was of those 27 who completely answered the questionnaire.

Table (1) shows the characteristics of the respondents that have completed the electronic questionnaire.

Demographics of the Participants (n=27). Values in numbers & percentages		
Age Group		
24-29	7	26%
30- 34	8	30%
35-39	10	37%
40 & older	2	7%
Gender		
Male	15	56%
Female	12	44%
Marital status		
Single	13	48%
Married	14	52%
Country of study		
Australia, New Zealand	1	4%
Canada	9	33%
France, Italy	2	7%
Germany	5	19%
Ireland	1	4%
Jordan, Egypt	1	4%
KSA	0	0%
Sweden	2	7%
Singapore	0	0%
UK	2	7%
USA	4	15%
Specialization		
Medical	8	30%
Surgical	1	4%
Pediatrics	1	4%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	2	7%
Psychiatry	1	4%
Dental	3	11%
Paramedical	0	0%
Administrative	1	4%
others	10	37%

Table (1)

The majority of the participants are in the age group between 35 to 39 yrs of age (37%) then followed by the age group between 30 to 34 yrs of age (30%).

Most of the participants were males. They represent (56%) of the total respondents. Half of the participants are married (52%) and almost one third of the participants are continuing their postgraduate studies in Canada.

The majority of the participants are obtaining their studies in medical fields (e.g surgical, medical, pediatrics, gynecological, dental or psychiatric) .

2. Satisfaction with provided services

Table (2) below summarizes the degree of satisfaction with each different service:

Degree (%) of satisfaction with different provided services by CED					
Services	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Procedure required initially to approve the study leave or get a scholarship	7%	15%	41%	22%	15%
Process required to approve training request to attend a conference or a workshop	4%	41%	33%	15%	7%
Role of Continuing Education Department (CED) in facilitating the communication between you and your department or hospital	19%	19%	37%	26%	0%
DHA coverage of health insurance / Malpractices insurance	19%	26%	41%	15%	0%
Arrangement of flight ticket from or to the country of study	15%	19%	48%	7%	11%
Role of CED in communicating between you and the HR department in regard of receiving children school allowance	17%	17%	61%	4%	0%
Annual reward (Bonus) as a result of appraisal by CED	22%	26%	48%	4%	0%

Table (2)

It has been noticed that (41%) of participants considered the quality of supervision and support provided by Scholarship Section is fair as shown below in (Figure 1):

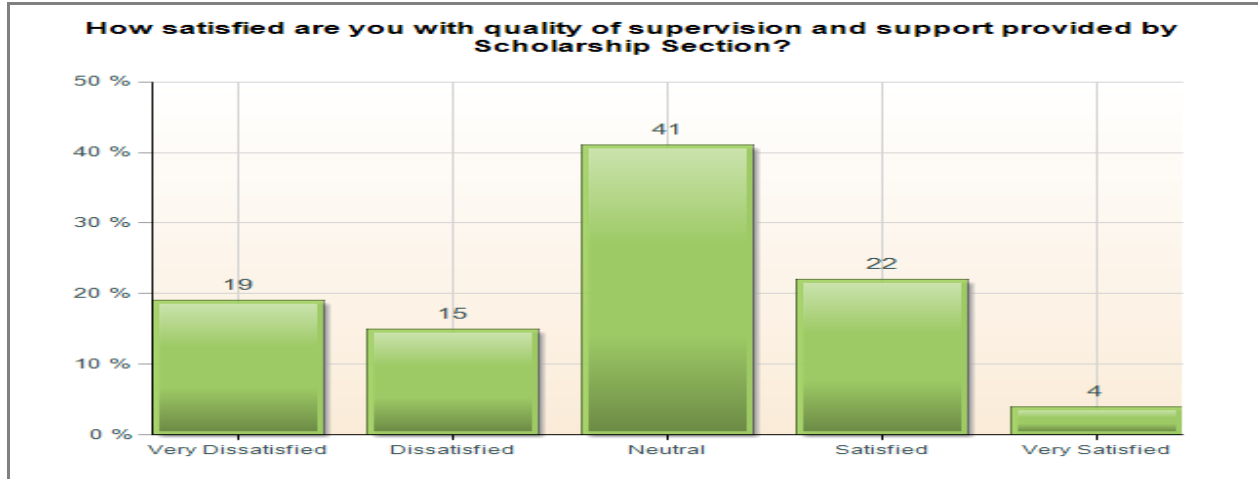
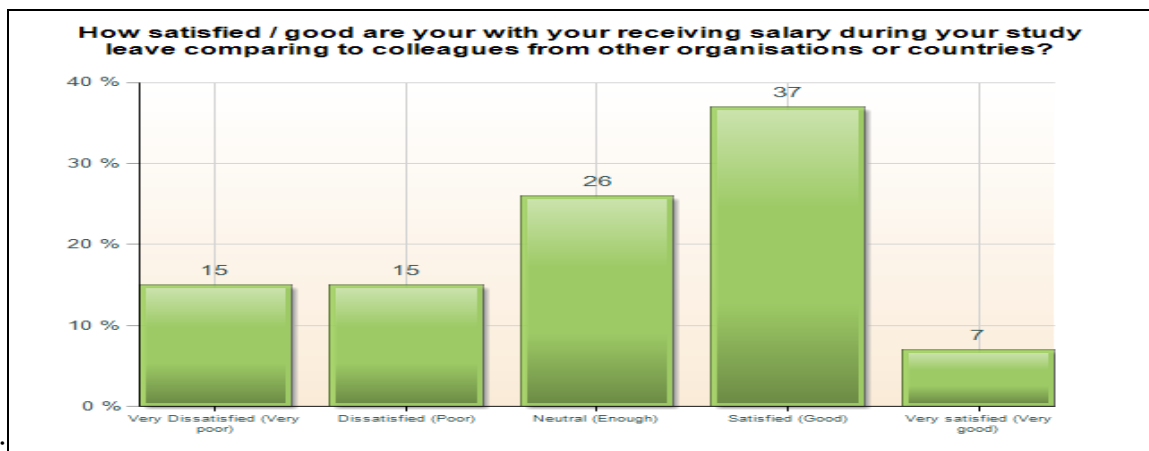


Figure (1)

Also, the study shows that around third of participants are not satisfied with the financial allowances received during their studies as showed in Figure (2)



below:

Figure (2)

Also, the percentage of scholars, who are satisfied with the procedures required initially to approve a study leave or get a scholarship, is more than those who are dissatisfied (figure 3).

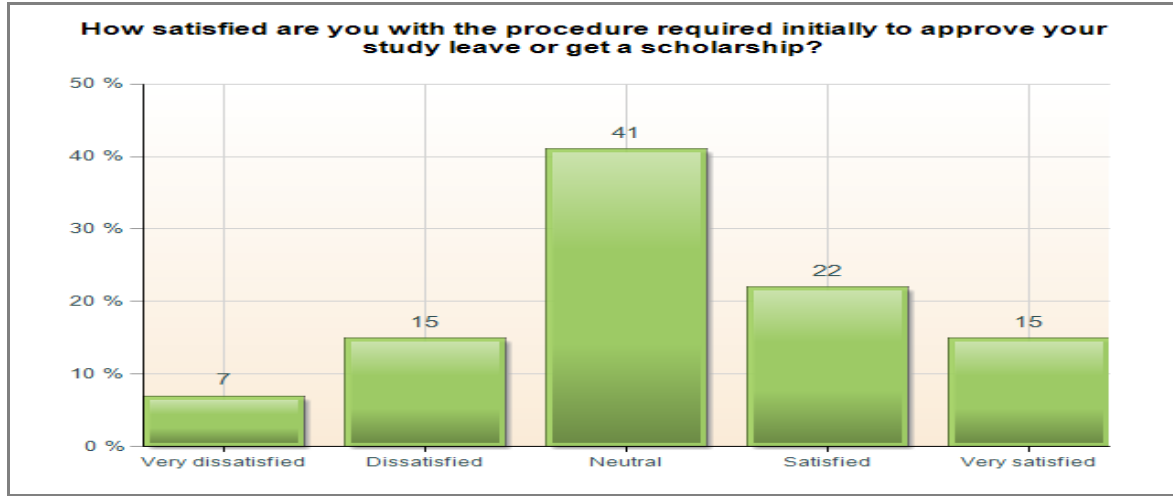


Figure (3)

3. Gender:

It was noted that female scholars were less satisfied compared to male scholars. This might be because of certain reasons. First, the female scholars need more attention especially abroad and most of them are alone outside and Continuing Education Department is not supporting escorts for traveling with female scholars. Figure (4) below is demonstrating the difference:

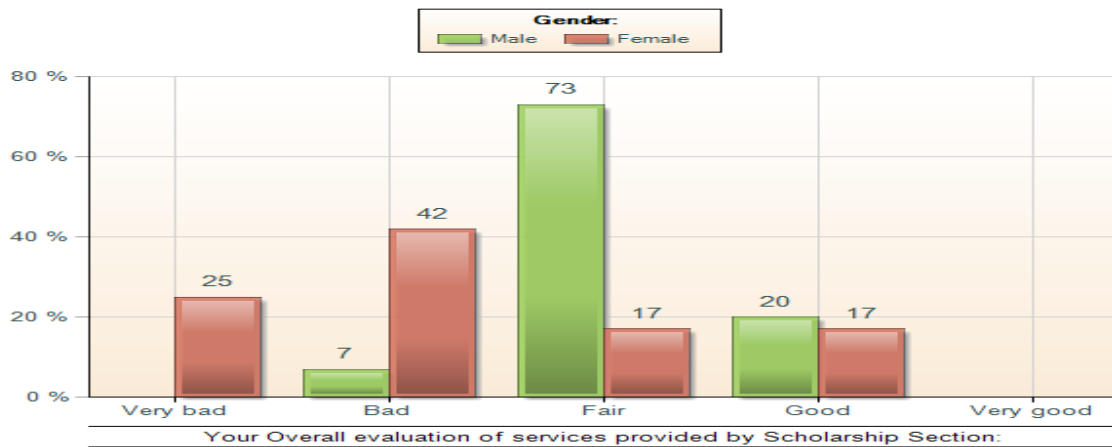


Figure (4)

Also, sponsorship providers play a role in determining the satisfaction. It was found that those who have a scholarship from other organizations like ministry of higher education or EDAAD (DHA still provide them with a paid study leave) are more satisfied (61%) than those who have scholarship from DHA alone (39%). This may be related to the extra services that they get from other organizations and to the amount of financial support comparing to those who are sponsored by DHA alone.

It has been noted also that the longer the scholars been abroad, the more satisfied they were. (59 %) of those who spend more than 3 yrs abroad were satisfied comparing with (41%) of those who spend less than 3yrs abroad .This may be related to the experience they get with the required procedures (including extension of study leave) and the offered services.

4. Overall Evaluation

The participants were asked at the end of questionnaire to evaluate the provided services overall and the majority of them evaluate these services as “Fair” and “Bad”. Figure (4) below shows the overall evaluation of services provided by Scholarship Section:

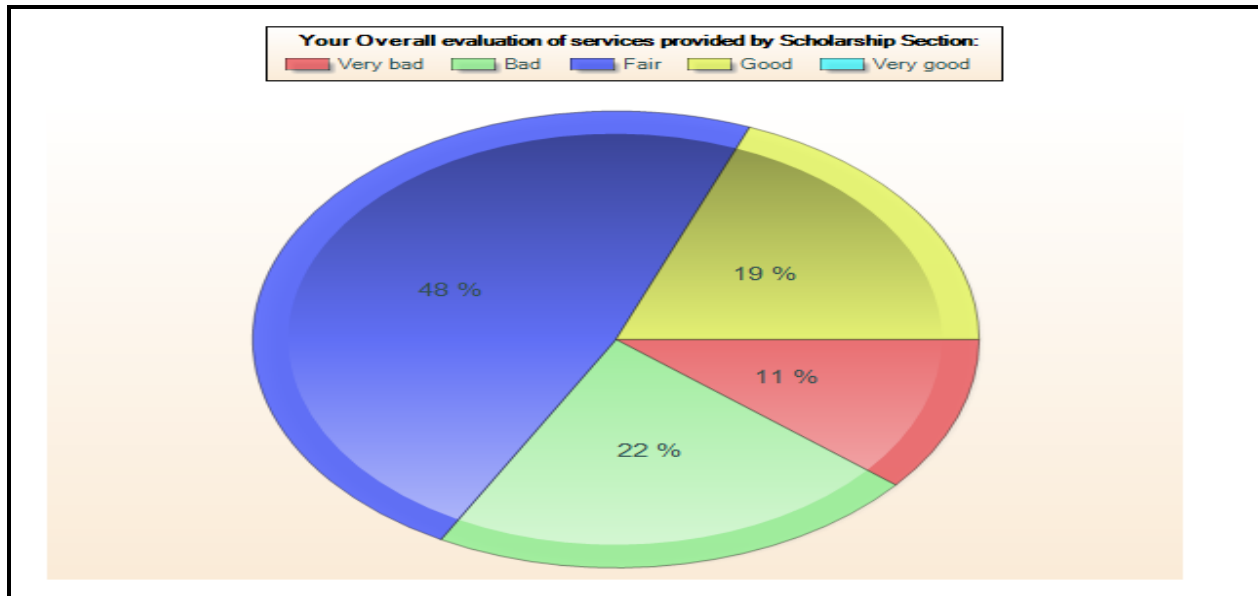


Figure (5)

5. Additional Comments or suggestions:

The participants were given the chance to contribute with some comments and suggestions in the survey in order to help CED in improving the services provided to the scholars. These comments and suggestions can be summarized as follows:

- More rapid and efficient responses are required.
- More attention to be paid to the scholars' needs.
- Provide scholars with more allowances.
- Lack of information about what CED provides scholars with.

- Use clear policy and procedure in regard of scholarships.
- Increase CED staff numbers.
- One participant suggested changing CED staff.

Discussion:

The purpose of this study was to measure the level of scholars' satisfaction with the services provided by CED and identifying factors influencing the scholars abroad.

It was also noteworthy that scholars who are married and accompanied by their families were less satisfied comparing to those who are single and the reason behind that may be related to the increase of life expenses abroad. Also, it might be because Dubai Health Authority is not paying any extra amount of money for the escorts.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

This study shows that the majority of the scholars abroad were dissatisfied with services provided by continuing education department at Dubai Health Authority. The causes of dissatisfaction could be in the clarity of services, the quality of services and the amount of financial support and allowances.

Recommendations:

The recommendations to address the above issues include:

1. Revising all current procedures and services provided to scholars.
2. Establishing a clear guideline and policy for all services related to the scholars' abroad.
3. Benchmarking the services provided by Dubai Health Authority with the best organizations which provide similar services.
4. Improving the communication channels between scholars and their belonging departments.
5. Providing scholars abroad with better financial allowances.

In addition, a follow up study using the same group of scholars should be conducted after the implementation of these recommendations.

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