

Student Perceptions and Utilization of Office Hours

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the research is to survey student attendance in office hours from different academic departments as well as identify the factors responsible for their high engagement and satisfaction levels. Many students choose not to participate in these programs or show strong preferences towards certain departments. This paper encompasses the exploration of these preferences, considering departmental differences in attendance and satisfaction among the school's student body, and also proposing strategies that could help us improve the effectiveness of academic support within the high school. This topic was inspired by observation of the fact that while office hours have been proven to hold strong benefits, students often overlook its capabilities. A survey was conducted to collect student perceptions about the various office hours and their personal preferences. Results from this showed significant engagement with math courses while english and technology classes were the least utilized. Further examination showed that programs composed of more personal interaction in the form of flexible in-person formats that are easily accessible and have individual time were the most effective. Further investigations should explore how these factors can be incorporated within office hours of departments, increasing their success.

Introduction

Referring to the academic environment, office hours are defined as the time allocated where a professor or instructor designates a place for students to ask questions about any subject outside regular class time. These hours have been the pillars of the academic support systems which have not only helped the students improve but these hours have also earned them confidence. Unlike traditional classroom settings which mostly offer the same level of teaching to all students regardless of their learning pace and comprehension level, an individualized approach to teaching is presented at office hours where each student's need is catered for by virtue of addressing any educational gaps. With schools now tapping more into individualized instruction and student support, it becomes a vital factor to be able to detect student engagement during their office hours. They play a major role in STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, and math courses and it is a common characteristic of all these classes to offer office hours. These sessions can take various forms, including individual support, virtual sessions, and test preparation, depending on teachers and focus. However, despite their potential benefits, office hours may not be equally utilized across different academic departments, which in return raises questions about the effectiveness of the existing structures. The present study will be conducted by understanding student engagement patterns in order to determine the differences and the place where the process of improvement should be started. With the knowledge of the elements that affect student turnout during this time, teachers and administrators can try targeted approaches to eliminate barriers and thus increase the frequency of indicating. In addition, being aware of the disparities in the working hours of the academic departments allows the administration to manage their resources productively and to take a student centered approach to office hours.

Literature Review

Originating in universities and colleges, office hours were initially intended to provide students with opportunities for one-on-one interaction with instructors and additional academic support. Over time, the practice of office hours expanded beyond higher education to include secondary schools. The era through which this was considered necessary followed a better understanding of the need for individualized instructions and personal assistance. Alongside the increase in curriculum complexity and students' standardized testing scores, educators began looking for different types of supplements which could be used for improving student understanding, providing student support, and also improving their performance (Harris).

Scholarly studies have consistently highlighted the positive relationship between students' engagement with office hours and their academic performance. Notably, an experimental study conducted by the Journal of Political Science Education examined this correlation within the scope of political science coursework. Spanning across a four-year duration, this study documented students' frequency of office hour attendance alongside their corresponding academic achievements. The findings revealed quantitative evidence that supported the statistically significant correlation between these key factors (Guerrero and Rod). Similarly, the Rochester Institute of Technology instituted a new policy mandating students' participation in office hours as a graded component of their academic curriculum. This initiative caused a rise in student engagement with office hours, helping provide a comprehensive study of the impact on academic performance. Investigations have been indicative of there being a significant positive relationship between attendance of office hour meetings and academic achievement, specifically the long-term implications of such activity on mastery of academics over time (Resko et al.). Additionally, while aiming to introduce effective measures that would combat the negative impacts on academic achievements associated with the coronavirus pandemic, the American Progress highlighted high dosage tutoring as one of the most effective strategies (Deming, et al.). It should be also mentioned that office hours served as the best strategy for intensive tutoring as per the latest research which shows that it can dramatically improve students' results in the national tests. Statistical analyses revealed that engagement with office hours could increase an average student from the 50th to the 66th percentile in national testing scores, demonstrating its crucial role in improving national test scores (Fantuzzo, et al.).

Apart from the fact that tutoring projects produce tangible academic advances, they also assist students in gaining a better sense of themselves as intelligent beings. That in turn influences the psychological well-being of the students and their attitudes towards their studies. To explain the effects of the math workshops on students' confidence levels in their math competence as shown in the study in the Journal of Student Research, several factors were taken into account. These include taking more tutoring hours ($p=0.0227$), having a passionate tutor ($p<0.0001$), and higher perceived community environment in the math team ($p=0.0028$) (Drew).

These statistically significant findings, shown by low p -values, reveal a rise in reported student confidence following tutoring interventions.

Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by the Association for Psychological Sciences studied 73 evaluations of mentoring programs tailored to children over the past decade. The synthesis of these investigations discovered an overarching enhancement in behavioral and motivational outcomes among participants. It then continued to explain that these results might be due to the fact that mentored individuals are less susceptible to the detrimental effects of setbacks, thereby highlighting the positive psychological impacts of mentoring interventions (Abdul-Wahab et al.).

However, an article authored by Giurge and Woolley explored shifts in intrinsic motivation during non-standard work hours. In this meta-analysis, they used Young and Melin's research which found that people often associate non-standard work time with more desirable activities than working. This causes upward counterfactual thoughts within students. With further research, Giurge and Woolley were able to synthesize that these thoughts were associated with decreased intrinsic motivation, leading to a decrease in students' motivation to complete coursework as well as a loss in their sense of autonomy (Giurge, et al.). This reveals a counter

perspective to surrounding research, indicating that students working out of typical class time may not always be highly beneficial.

Another crucial dimension to consider is the enhancement of student-teacher relationships. The faculty does a lot to help the students through their different approaches they may use from being academic advisors, extra academic support or regular mentoring. Multiple research articles support the role of educators in reinforcing a range of positive student outcomes, including heightened retention rates and sense of belonging (Chapman, et al.). Office hours present a platform for strengthening these relationships. A study conducted by Ankiewicz revealed the perceptions of certain students using both pre and post course surveys. This research uncovered the extent to which this issue prevailed. Approximately 47% of students justified their attendance at office hours with the explicit aim of increasing interactions with their instructors. Significantly, those students who attended office hour opportunities reported favorable ratings regarding their comfort levels within the classroom setting. Conversely, instances of low attendance at office hours correlated with heightened levels of anxiety surrounding the course material among students (Ankiewicz).

Overall, school-based interventions like office hours have the potential to significantly influence students' academic paths and contribute to their overall success. However, students have shown a consistent pattern of choosing not to utilize this resource. Research on student engagement of office hours has revealed varying patterns and attitudes across different academic settings. Smith found that a significant proportion of students at several universities do not regularly attend office hours, often considering them a last resort for seeking academic assistance. This trend highlights the need to explore students' perceptions and attitudes towards office hours to better understand their utilization patterns. For instance, a survey conducted among undergraduate students to investigate their attitudes towards office hours. While many students recognized the potential benefits of attending office hours, such as personalized assistance and clarifying course material, others expressed concerns about the fear of judgment associated with seeking help (Smith, et al.). Such outcomes point out the range of factors, which students take into account while determining if one or another session would be useful and prove their attendance in office hours, student perception of benefits, social climate, and instructor approachability.

Gap

Based on existing research, it is clear that there is a significant level of evidence indicating that regular attendance of office hours is attached with overwhelming beneficial effects such as academic outcomes improvement, psychological shifts, and strong student-teacher relationships.. Parallel studies have explored students' generally negative attitudes towards office hours along with their low attendance rates. However, there is a notable gap in the literature relating to the reasons for this pattern observed. Despite efforts to promote office hours and highlight their benefits, many students still refrain from attending, suggesting that additional research is needed to understand the underlying factors for this reluctance and develop more effective and preferred interventions. By understanding the variations in effectiveness of different tutoring styles and their impacts, it is possible to come up with strategies aimed at increasing student engagement with office hours. These methods for teaching may include variations to the order, duration, and intensity of exercises, yet direct evaluations of the effectiveness of these programs are limited.

Furthermore, students' perceptions are typically neglected when formatting these hours in educational settings. Capturing how different students experience or view an event is critical because it can consequently influence the student's actions. Students' views need to be factored in since they turn out to be immediate recipients of the instruction, hence the need to capture their feedback to perfect the curriculum. Therefore, this research aims to explore student attendance during office hours across various academic departments, illustrating the factors influencing participation and the implications for academic tutoring systems. By addressing this

gap, it is possible to develop interventions and initiatives focused on promoting student success and enhancing the overall effectiveness.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a student perception survey. As part of the background for this research, I reviewed the existing literature which similarly followed peoples' perceptions. The review revealed that standardized surveys distributed across a random sampling are often the most effective tool for research with aims such as mine, stating that school administration and decision-makers view student surveys as a versatile tool designed to discover the layers of student engagement, preferences, and satisfaction.

I designed my survey to collect data on students' perceptions, experiences and thoughts in their high school settings regarding office hours. The survey that was undertaken was a mixed method in nature, gathering both qualitative and quantitative information. Before the start of the survey, each participant was required to show that they have read through the guidelines and are willing to participate in this completely not-obligatory research. Further, no personal identifiers were collected in the process and participants are ensured that their responses will remain completely anonymous. This was vital to ensure that the research followed the ethical regulations. The design of the questions itself were formatted in several ways. The survey included likert-scale questions in order to monitor attributes like frequency of visitation, pleasure with availability, and designs concerning office hour patterns. Additionally, students were asked to rank their most satisfied departments and identify barriers to attending office hours. This allows for perceptions to be translated into a quantitative value used for analysis. Following the quantitative data collection, qualitative analysis was implemented on open-ended responses allowing participants to provide detailed explanations and insights into their office hour experiences. Responses were categorized and coded to identify recurring themes related to the effectiveness of office hours, including barriers to participation and suggestions for improvement.

The sample population for the survey was drawn from a diverse high school setting to ensure a representative sample. Demographic information such as grade level gender were collected to eliminate any potential biases related to correlations with office hour utilization patterns. Additionally, the survey was conducted online to ease the participation and maximize response rates. The survey distribution utilized multiple methods to reach the target population of high school students. Initially, the survey was displayed on digital screens within the school premises and made accessible through the school website. However, to enhance participation rates due to initial limitations, individual QR codes were distributed during school hours. To incentivize participation, candy rewards were offered to encourage student engagement with the survey.

Data analysis involved both descriptive statistics of each question to summarize quantitative findings and thematic analysis to identify patterns and trends in qualitative responses. This mixed-method approach made it possible to conduct a thorough analysis of the effects of various office hours and the factors which played a role in their satisfaction levels. In the end, this methodology closely aligned with the main objective of the research, which was to offer student insights into areas of improvement in the formatting of office hours.

Findings

When analyzing student attendance during office hours, significant trends emerged across academic departments. Table 1 illustrates the frequency in which students attend each of the departments' office hours using a scale which ranges from 1 (never visited) through 5 (always visited). The Mathematics department stood out distinctly as the most frequently visited. Notably, it was also the only department to receive any responses with a rating of 5. Approximately 42% of surveyed students reported engaging with office hours frequently, indicating a rating of 3 or higher. This outpaces the engagement levels observed in other academic departments within

the study. In contrast, each of the other departments had less than a 9% reporting of a 3 or higher. Despite the absence of higher ratings, certain differences highlighted variations in student engagement among departments. English/Language Arts and Technological/Career departments included the highest number of 1 ratings, revealing that 83% of surveyed students had never utilized the support offered by these departments during office hours. Following closely behind, 75% of students reported never using office hours in History/Social Studies classes, while 66% had not done so in Science. To calculate the significance of the data, the p-value was calculated using the Kruskal-Wallis test. It was found to be .0002, with the data becoming statistically significant at 0.05. This allows us to conclude that there is evidence to support that there is a difference in office hours attendance rates across the academic departments.

For each department, indicate how often you utilize office hours for support. Use this scale for rating - 1: never, 2: rarely, 3: occasionally, 4: frequently, 5: always

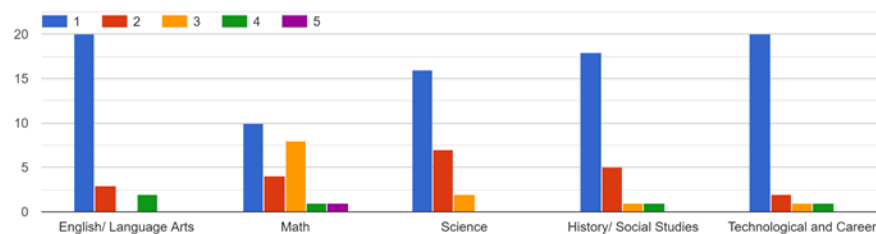


Figure 1.

In order to further investigate the factors that contribute to the absence in attendance rates, the survey explored the availability and accessibility of each department using a similar scale from 1 (least satisfied) through 5 (most satisfied). Math, once again, displayed a dramatically higher rate than any other department with 37.5% of students rating it a 5, claiming they are extremely satisfied with the accessibility of it. English and Technological/Career departments had a mode of 1 in the students' rating. However, the Science and History/Social Studies departments showed the ratings of N/A to be equal to or surpass the other satisfaction levels. This could imply that the availability of office hours does not consciously affect their decision to attend. This data was then compared to the satisfaction ratings of each department received in order to examine the correlation between the two factors. I compared these variables using the spearman's rank correlation coefficient which measures the strength and direction of association between variables using a scale which ranges from -1 (a perfectly negative correlation) to 1 (a perfectly positive correlation). The coefficient correlation for my comparison was 0.843 which indicates an extremely strong positive statistical correlation between availability of office hours and reported satisfaction.

On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the availability and accessibility of office hours in each of these classes. 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.

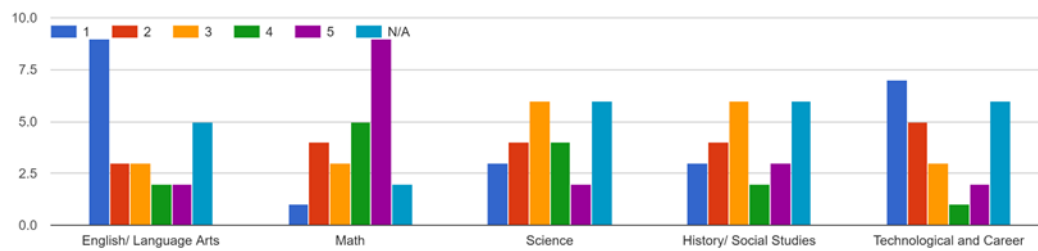


Figure 2.

Besides the timing, the format of office hours and the material covered play significant roles in students' perceived effectiveness. The format of office hours varies, with options including traditional in-person sessions to virtual alternatives, which are supported by the growth of digital learning. A vast majority of students, 91.7%, said that they frequently attend in-person office hours, indicating a preference for face-to-face interactions. Approximately 25% of students preferred attending scheduled appointments, which provide individualized time with a particular teacher, suggesting a preference for personalized support. In contrast, the virtual option for office hours appears to be less utilized, with only 16.7% of students stating they use it frequently.

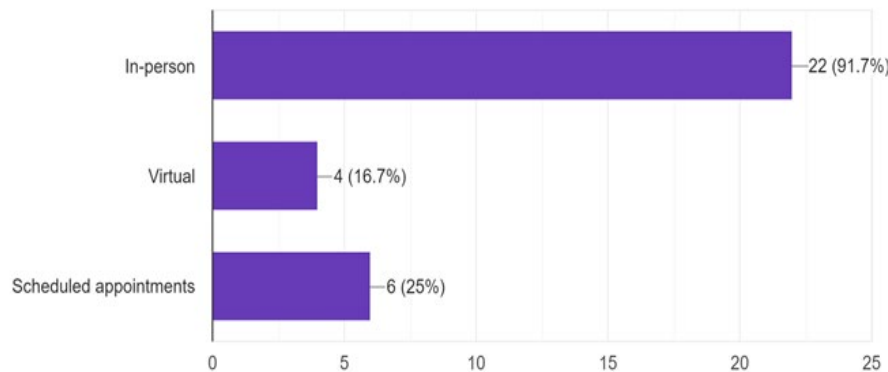


Figure 3.

More than 50% of the students express a preference for shorter durations, typically around 30 minutes. This may be due to factors like outside commitments and short attention spans, which make shorter sessions more manageable. Sessions lasting between 45 minutes to 1 hour were also popular among students, offering slightly more support while still maintaining a relatively brief duration. Nevertheless, it is important to also note that 12.5% of students took it as irrelevant to them whether office hour duration was shorter or longer, showing that, for some students, the duration may not be the factor by which they evaluate efficiency of office hour visits.

How would you rate your ideal duration of office hours?
24 responses

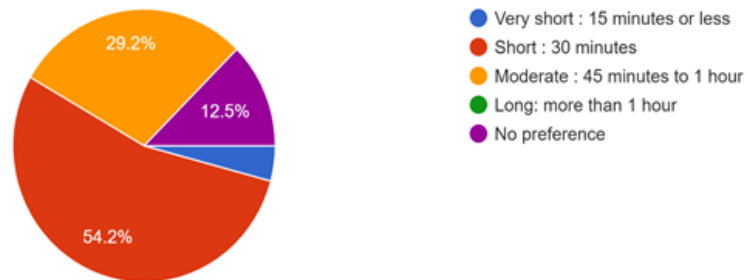


Figure 4.

Moreover, especially considering schools with a larger population, individual interactions with faculty are limited, which can impact the effectiveness of academic support. Almost 67% of students reported that Math office hours offer the most opportunities for individual time with the instructor, indicating a strong focus on personalized attention within the Math department. In comparison, Science office hours were identified by 20% of students as providing individualized support, while only 8% reported similar experiences in English/Language Arts. These large variations in individual interactions across departments highlight potential differences in the effectiveness of academic support systems. When analyzed, the relationship between perceived individualized time and reported satisfaction levels were positively statistically correlated with the p-value being 0.002 and the data becoming significant at 0.05.

Which department do you feel included the most individual time with the instructor?
24 responses

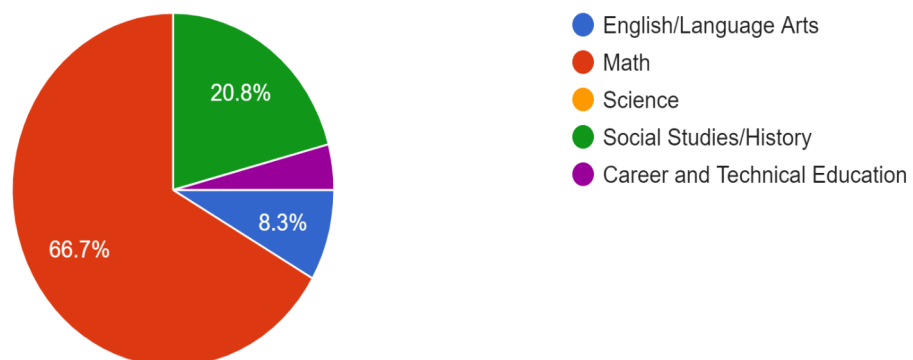


Figure 5.

Further, for the free response segment, recurring themes were noted. When asked about material they prefer to cover during this time, the mode response was students mentioning they favor working through home-

work or test problems which they struggled with. Preference of more flexible and student led interactions indicates the likelihood to attend office hours which follow that format. Overall, students reported encountering specific challenges that deterred them from utilizing office hours effectively. Almost 73% of students commented on experiencing time conflicts, citing other commitments or a reluctance to compromise personal time as primary reasons for their inability to attend. Additionally, a significant portion expressed concerns about the crowdedness of office hours and the consequent lack of personalized assistance they receive. Students noted difficulties in getting individualized attention from faculty due to the high volume of students during office hours. These challenges highlight the importance of addressing these issues to enhance the effectiveness of office hours in providing academic support.

In response to the identified challenges and preferences, several suggestions for improvement were gathered and analyzed. The most common recommendations included enhancing the visibility of office hour schedules to address the issue of many students being unaware of the timings. Additionally, there were calls for increasing the frequency of office hours or seeking input from students to better accommodate their schedules and maximize attendance. Furthermore, to ease the problem of overcrowding and ensure personalized assistance, participants proposed implementing appointment systems with a limited number of slots available for each session. These suggestions highlight the importance of addressing logistical issues and catering to student preferences to optimize the effectiveness and accessibility of office hour sessions.

Analysis

These findings have the potential to offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of office hour programs across various academic departments within high schools. Understanding the details about student engagement and satisfaction levels sheds light on departmental variations and highlights areas for improvement in academic support services. By identifying challenges such as scheduling conflicts and overcrowding it is possible to address these barriers and enhance the accessibility of office hours. This not only contributes to the academic success of students but also improves their overall learning experience. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature on office hours by offering new perspectives and opportunities for future interventions. These findings have the potential to drive positive change within high schools, leading to more efficient and supportive environments for student learning and satisfaction.

A	B	C
Reasons for not coming	Frequency	
time conflicts		
scared of teacher		
don't need it		
Noticed issues	Frequency	
not enough personal time		
not flexible with duration		

Implications

Identifying differences between departments and other factors that impact student attendance and satisfaction can inform the creation of enhanced and student-centric office hour programmes tailored to student needs. This information can lead to practical recommendations for high-school decision-makers that inform evidence-based policies and resourcing to support student success. Teachers could leverage these responses informing strategies to increase office-hour engagement and access by providing clear scheduling information, and offering office hours in formats that address varied types of needs students have. Furthermore, the positive correlation between student satisfaction and the availability of office hours suggests that investing in resources to expand and enhance office hour offerings could yield significant benefits.

Additionally, future research could explore faculty perspectives on office hours. Understanding faculty motivations, challenges, and practices for conducting office hours can help build stronger and more effective formatting. In terms of policy, this research shows that student support services are extremely important and therefore need to be given attention. It also highlights the significance of investing in programs that promote students' involvement in their own education as well as success. Consequently, these results can be used by policy makers to advocate for increased funding and resources for student support services, including office hour programs at high schools where they can be expanded further. In this way, it will enable all learners to get personalized academic assistance through additional office hour options which reduces dropouts and leads to increased graduation rates among students.

Furthermore, policymakers can work with educators and administrators to develop policies and come up with the best approaches in implementing office hours programs. This may include providing common standards which teachers can rely on when setting up their own office hours periods based on a recommended structure. In general, the findings of this research indicate that by tackling obstacles to engagement and allocating resources to broaden and improve office hour services, educators and policymakers have the potential to establish a more supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere that fosters student success and academic achievement.

Conclusion

This research investigated the diverse utilization of office hours across various academic departments by providing an understanding of how variations in formatting impact the student experience with office hours. By examining the connections between these factors and student satisfaction, prominent and statistically significant patterns emerged regarding the understanding of student experiences. Through analysis, I was able to gain valuable insights into the relationship between departmental offerings and student engagement, providing evidence to support the need for targeted interventions to enhance accessibility and promote participation. Specifically, these findings have identified student preferences for certain formats and durations of office hours, revealing common barriers that hinder effective usage. Additionally, it highlights the importance of addressing barriers such as scheduling conflicts and crowdedness to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for students seeking academic assistance. One of the most shocking aspects I discovered from this study was the realization of the diverse challenges faced by students when it comes to accessing and utilizing office hours. While some students expressed concerns about time conflicts and overcrowding, others highlighted issues related to fear of judgment or lack of awareness about the availability of support services. These findings can then be used to modify interventions aimed at enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of academic tutoring systems. Especially departments with lower attendance rates and satisfaction levels may benefit from tailored strategies to increase student engagement. The implications of this work are significant for both high schools and students. In the future, it will be important to build upon the findings of this study through further research

and discussion. By addressing the limitations, such as a small sample size, and exploring new areas of inquiry, researchers can continue to advance the understanding of office hours and their optimal utilization. One example could include the introduction of the proper scheduling or training of the faculty members and then the assessment of their effectiveness in regards to the reduction of students' absences and improvement of academic success. By investigating the factors influencing student engagement with office hours, this study not only enhances the understanding of office hours offered in high schools but it also highlights the importance of modifications to current interventions to optimize student learning experiences.

Limitations

This study provides insightful information on student attendance rates and their perceptions of the helpfulness of office hours, but there are several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. The research was conducted at one high school and involved a relatively small sample size of 30 students. Due to this, the findings may not be generalizable to other educational environments, since the particular student body of the various schools is usually diverse. Besides, the accessibility of the school office is time specific which can vary from school to school. Furthermore, the small sample size would manifest as a narrow scope when assessing students' attitudes.

Moreover, the data come from self-reported student survey responses, which are more susceptible to bias. Students might feel a need to provide a good, socially acceptable response, or they could have trouble recalling their attendance or experience of office hours (Coughlan et al.).

In spite of its limitations, this work sheds light on how students think and behave about office hours, which lays the groundwork for further research that can be modified to address the issues in this area.

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