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**INVESTIGATION OF THE PROBLEMS  
FACED BY THE CENTRE NETWORK OF  
THE OUSL IN THE PROVISION OF  
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

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March 2007

**67326**

## ABSTRACT

**The Title: The investigation of the problems faced by the center network of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) in the provision of student support services.**

Just as any other Open University or distance educational institution in the world, the OUSL is concerned about the satisfaction of its students about their studies. One major reason for this is that dissatisfaction leads to dropping out of students. Undoubtedly high rate of dropouts mean high wastage of resources. Therefore these institutions are concerned about student satisfaction and a common approach to ensure satisfaction is to provide support services to the students. The expectation of the institutions is to increase student satisfaction and hence decrease dropouts so that success rate would increase.

A strategy adopted by the OUSL similar to many other open and distance educational institutions in the world is to operate a center network in order to facilitate provision of Student Support Services (SSS). At the same time, the centers of the center network themselves face problems in the provision of support services and these in turn can affect student satisfaction. However, studies on the relationship between student satisfaction and the problems faced by the centres are almost non-existent. The research literature reveals that there are also other factors such as Quality of SSS, Utility of SSS and Personal Factors affecting student satisfaction.

This study aimed to find the effect of the problems faced by the center network on student satisfaction as well as its position in the order of

significance of the factors affecting student satisfaction. In this study, Student Satisfaction was considered as the criterion variable. The four predictor variables were Problems faced by the Centre Network in the provision of SSS, Quality of SSS, Utility of SSS and Personal factors. Two Regional centres and four Study centres were selected for the study from the centre network of the OUSL through stratified random sampling. From those six centres, 1317 students were initially selected through simple random sampling for the study. The instruments, used to collect data from the staff and the students of the centers selected for the sample, were questionnaires and interview schedules. Observation schedules were also used to supplement data. The student questionnaire was mailed to 1317 students initially selected and out of them 718 responded. The analysis of data was mainly quantitative and the technique of multiple regression from SPSS was used. The findings of the study revealed that the factor, Problems faced by the centres, has a significant effect on student satisfaction. The order of significance for the four factors under investigation in their effects on student satisfaction was Quality of SSS, Problems faced by centres, Utility of SSS and Personal Factors. The overall satisfaction of the sample of students about SSS provided to them by the centres was found to be above average. The qualitative data- collected and analyzed- revealed the problems faced by the center network of the OUSL in the provision of student support services. Problems faced by centres in the provision of each support service component were identified and suggestions made to minimize those problems.