Al-Kindi

| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Fighting Stigma: Remedial vs Supplemental Instruction

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| **ABSTRACT**

Remedial classes targeting at-risk students in the pre-college preparatory programmes in Oman appear to be doing a disservice to the very students the programme intends to support. The 'culprit' behind this situation remained a matter of guesswork until this study was initiated. This two-stage study aimed at (a) investigating the reasons behind the lack of motivation of those who were referred to remedial classes and (b) trialling and assessing a non-remedial academic support intervention. A mixed methods approach was used during the two stages to triangulate all stakeholders' perceptions qualitatively and to corroborate the qualitative findings with statistical data from questionnaires targeting tutors and tutees. The remedial intervention was found to suffer from serious issues related to labelling. Unlike the remedial programme, the non-remedial, non-segregationist intervention, with its two-thronged focus on content and attitude, was found to be a better fit for the pre-college students.

1. Introduction

A growing number of students in Oman graduate from schools and join tertiary education annually. However, in spite of having finished a supposedly demanding secondary education, many of these graduates are still unable to meet college entry requirements (Al'Adawi, 2020), particularly in English and mathematics. Internal placement test data shows that around 90% of them were placedat the A1 level according to the CEFR criteria. These students have to spend on average one-year doing foundational subjects (English, maths and computing) to bring them up to speed with college requirements (Samaranayake et al., 2022). As classes get underway, some students are found to be still struggling with English and maths, hence the need for some type of remediation to help them cope with what they deem hard subjects.

This situation has pushed many foundation programmes in Oman to devise remedial intervention programmes aimed at struggling students (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012) -- otherwise called "students at risk". Remedial sessions outside class time are created to address the issue and help this category of students to cope with concurrent mainstream classes. Both volunteering teachers as well as classmates with suitably high proficiency run these sessions. Although attendees of these sessions report some improvement and a better understanding of the subjects, the 'mystery' remains in student turnout. Attendance is, at best, fluctuating and generally lower than expected. This seeming lack of motivation has triggered this study to probe into the reasons behind this apparent lack of motivation. Needless to mention that the consequences of the lack of motivation for these students are numerous: repeatedly failing the level or having to drop out before they are able to step into college.

This study had two stages, with the second stage being dependent on the first one. The first stage aimed at investigating the existing remedial programme to find out the reasons behind the lack of motivation on the part of the students who need it most.

The second stage aimed at trialling and assessing the usefulness of a non-remedial academic support intervention—supplemental instruction, in the same context.

2. Literature review

Considerable literature shows that providing academic support to struggling students beyond regular class time can increase the chances of their success(Balfanz et al., 2002). These support programmes traditionally target students at risk, aiming at increasing their academic performance to enable them to catch up with their peers and pass. One of the most known academic support is tutoring. Tutoring programmes usually provide individual attention, direct instruction, error correction and motivation to improve performance. With their focus on targeting students at risk, these programmes are deemed traditional and are sometimes likened to a medical model based on diagnosis and referral (Martin et al., 1996). Students are first diagnosed with the problem based on "prior history and diagnostic testing" (ibid, p. 1) and are then left to do either self-referral or referral by a professor. This system has been deemed to suffer from a number of serious issues. One of these is the stigma the at-risk students feel, prompting them to ignore their teachers' referrals or skip self-referral. However, failure of referral seems to do nothing but compound the problem as students who need help most are the least likely to ask for it (Martin et al., 1996).

Given these issues, a non-remedial, non-referral system was developed originally by Deanna Martin in 1973 at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, US. Instead of putting the blame on students, the non-remedial model, called supplemental instruction, shifted the blame away from students and placed it on historically difficult, high-risk subjects, aiming at improving students' academic performance in high-risk courses (Hurley et al., 2006). The model builds upon a broad range of peer learning theories (Martin et al., 1996) such as behavioural learning theories, cognitive learning theories, social learning theories and interpretive-critical theories (Hurley, Jacobs & Gilbert, 2006). Historically, peer learning has its origin in Vygotsky's (1978) learning theory and Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. These theories are premised upon the recognition that students learn through interaction with one another (Oxford, 1997).

Unlike the traditional remedial system, supplemental instruction (SI) is a non-remedial and non-referral system that provides regular, peer-facilitated review sessions for students to discuss and process information (Arendale, 1994). It is a voluntary intervention programme that requires no pre-screening of who should or should not attend. This leaves the door open for all students, not just those diagnosed with 'symptoms'. SI is nevertheless argued to be effective even when made mandatory (Hodges et al., 2001). The open-door policy in SI shrouds at-risk students in some sort of anonymity that enables them to save face in front of peers. Unlike the diagnosis and referral-based remedial intervention system which is still practiced in many colleges and universities till date, including the ones in Oman, SI is premised on free choice and hence preserves privacy and saves face, which encourages at-risk students to engage in them.

In addition to saving face for not being stigmatized, struggling students make use of stress-free peer assistance during these non-remedial sessions. This peer assistance takes the form of collaborative learning, cooperative learning or, simply, student-student interaction. Where Topping (2005) positions peer learning within the realm of cooperative learning, Martin et al. (1996) believe that it falls under collaborative peer group learning. Notwithstanding which category it belongs to, peer learning is argued to lead to the establishment of learning communities (Tinto, 2019) which is characterized by student centrality. These learning communities seem to benefit most from the four principles that underpin SI. These are positive reinforcement, breaking complex tasks into their component parts, cause and effect relationship and modelling (Hurley et al., 2006). Positive reinforcement helps students acquire new study habits and learning strategies that can improve their performance in class and during exams. Students also learn how to break down complex tasks into small manageable bits, making the assimilation process less daunting for them. During these non-remedial classes, students establish causality relationship which helps them to improve their study strategies and hence their readiness for exams. As SI depends heavily on student leaders who act as models to demonstrate to the learners how they approach studying and solve educational challenges, learners tend to conceptualize these behaviours, then internalize them and ultimately acquire them.

In addition to borrowing principles from behaviourism, SI also borrows from cognitive theories: Bruner (1968), Piaget (1932, 1973), and Flower and Hayes (1981) (Hurley et al., 2006). For example, students are usually shown how to organize, assimilate and integrate new information and learning experiences. This causes students to develop their cognitive assimilation processing of knowledge and leads to better comprehension and retrieval of information. During discussions, students also learn how to think critically about a concept, leading them to see things in a different light. Students are also urged to use their schemata to understand a piece of information, connecting new concepts to prior knowledge. Such connections equip the learner with the know-how to grasp new knowledge, leading to a solid understanding and deep absorption.

Hurley et al. (2006) also believe that SI borrows the concept of social interdependence from social theories drawn from Geertz (1983), Vygotsky (1986), Bakhtin (1993), and Doyle (1983). This is demonstrated in the notion of working cooperatively and interdependently with peers. Students attend the sessions voluntarily and interact with one another to produce knowledge, not

just receive it passively. Knowledge is construed through discussion and collaboration while students are working towards achieving the same goal. Walker (2021) argues that learners can achieve some outcomes on their own, but need the assistance of the more capable others to achieve many other outcomes. Learning happens in SI as learners collaborate on activities within their Zone of Proximal Development.

Lastly, unlike the tradition remedial programmes, SI combines content and attitude (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). In addition to content, student leaders also discuss attitude towards learning. Discussions usually centre on learner autonomy, self-management, self-motivation, and collaborative learning (Malm et al., 2012). Therefore, the benefits gained from the combination of attitude and content in an interactive, non-segregationist, non-referral and non-threatening environment seem to outweigh their counterparts in the tradition remedial student academic support programmes

3. Methodology
This research is an empirical case study that is made of two stages. Stage I investigates an existing remedial academic support intervention targeting students at risk in the foundation program at a university in Oman. Stage II trials and assesses another non-remedial academic support intervention known as supplemental instruction. During the two stages, the study uses a mixed method inquiry combining the qualitative and the quantitative approaches (Yu, 2009). During stage I and II, the qualitative inquiry uses in-depth individual interviews with the deputy director of the foundation programme and the head of the student academic support committee—the two are in charge of the student academic support. The qualitative inquiry also draws on focus group interviews. These interviews involved five people who were charged with managing the two interventions. The quantitative inquiry, on the other hand, focused on surveys targeting 48 tutors and 58 tutees during stage I of the study and 10 tutors and 41 tutees during stage II (Figure 1 below shows the respondents involved). During the two stages, the qualitative and quantitative inquiries were conducted simultaneously. Data from the individual and focus group interviews was analysed and thematised using NVivo, whereas data from the surveys was analysed using SPSS.
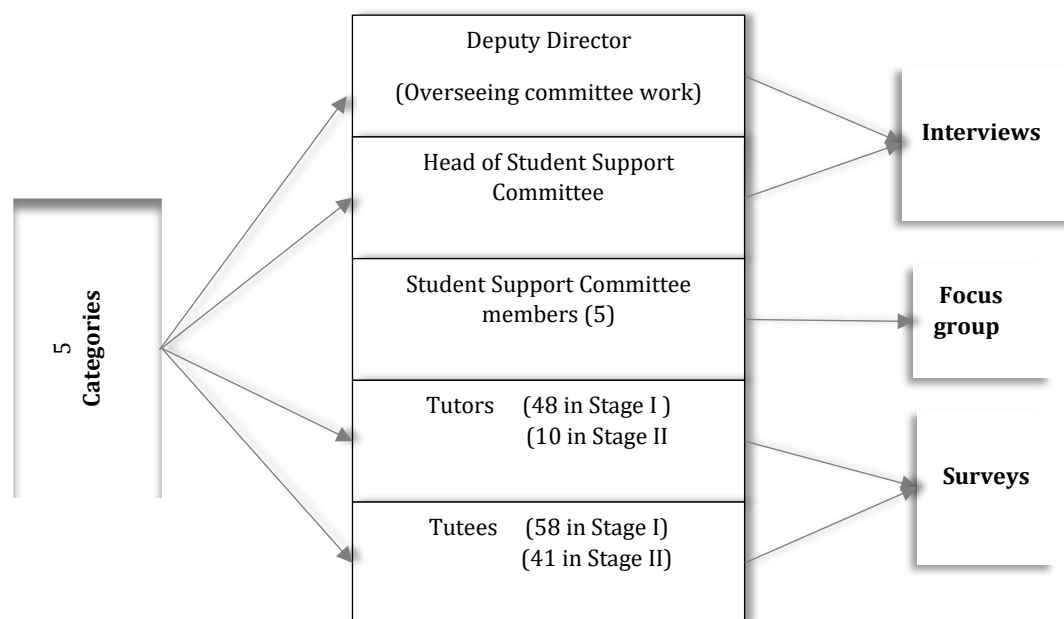

Figure 1 Respondents involved in Stage I & II

4. Findings and discussion
What follows is a discussion of the findings from the two stages of the study, starting with stage I and then stage II.

4.1 Stage I
The following section presents findings from the interviews and focus group discussions, followed by the findings garnered from the surveys.

4.1.1 Findings from the interviews and focus group
The interviews and focus group discussions have identified three main factors that can account for the students-at-risk lack of motivation to attend the remedial sessions. These are time, stigmatization and shyness.

i. Time constraints

Known for not being particularly very strong at time management, students at risk usually tend to lack the skill of making the most of their free time (Bowering, Mills & Merritt, 2017; Nadinloyi, et al., 2013). This is usually compounded by a clear inability to work under stress, coupled with a tendency to lean towards relaxation due to the lackadaisical attitude they seem to carry from the school days. Students at risk, one of the interviewees asserted, are "not motivated to give up their time to participate in study groups" (N. Lotz., personal communication, March 4, 2020). Although remedial classes run for only two days a week from 11.40 a.m. to 12.20 p.m., students were reluctant to spare 20 minutes only from their daily one-hour break (from 12.00 to 1.00). The discussion with the focus group pinpointed time as a factor in students' lack of motivation, though some of them thought this could be an excuse (Focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Some students, usually those at risk, tend to see themselves as scapegoats and hence blame external factors for failing to do a particular task. Although the respondents agree that time could be a factor in choosing not to attend remedial classes, the 'true' reason for forfeiting such valuable sessions might need searching beneath the surface. Situational factors aside, the researchers decided to dig deeper to find out if there was an affective element to students' refusal to refer themselves once 'diagnosed' at-risk.

ii. Stigmatization

Struggling students who fail courses or are found to be unable to catch up with their peers, are officially labelled 'at-risk students'. These are in need of extra academic support to help them all along the way. The interviewees think that the 'at-risk' label is a major factor that is driving students away. One of the interviewees stated that "no survey has ever been made, but the anecdotal evidence was that students felt stigmatised slowly by the label and that's I think is unfortunate" (N. Lotz, personal communication, March 4, 2020). He added, "Students at risk were noticed to lack motivation, but what the label has done is to turn the lack of motivation to demotivation" (ibid). The focus group discussions confirmed the 'stigmatization' syndrome that some of the at-risk students were suffering from – silently though. A member of the focus group described it as some sort of an "identity crisis". Another member called avoiding remedial classes a "face saving" strategy, especially in a culture where students come from the same or a nearby tribe, with either blood or matrimonial relationships. Another member saw the students' apathy towards 'an academic saviour' as symptomatic of an "ego clash". It is as if the at-risk students were saying, 'we are not going to cheapen ourselves in front of others and attend those denigrating classes'. Usually, in a clash between ego and reality, the former usually wins out in the end. This seemed to have happened with the at-risk students who, because of the label, were thrown in the survival fray – my ego against my need. This confirms what Martin et al., (1996) had to say about the referral system, "whether through denial, pride, or ignorance, students who need help the most are least likely to request it" (p. 2). In our case, it is self-pride that has subdued a need for requesting support or accepting referral.

iii. Shyness

A sub-product of stigmatization, shyness is highlighted as another culprit behind students' reluctance to pay due diligence to their remedial classes. Respondents asserted that "[students] feel shy" (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020) to ask for help publicly. Attending those remedial classes simply meant overcoming that symptomatic shyness—a barrier which many of the at-risk students had no clue how to circumvent. The said students were careful not to showcase their weaknesses publicly in front of peers, many of whom happened to be neighbours, relatives or friends.

4.1.2 Findings from the questionnaires

To corroborate the findings from the qualitative inquiry, we sought to engage with the tutors (classmates who led the remedial sessions) and tutees (at-risk students who attended the sessions) through statistical surveys. The surveys show that around 90 percent of the tutors believe that the at-risk students were not motivated to show up for remedial classes, although the tutors confirmed that they did their best in touring the classes touting for the remedial programme. Despite the tutors' commendable efforts to raise awareness among struggling students, 84 percent assert that their call fell on deaf ears, as attendance kept vacillating and mostly tending towards low turnout. Eighty-six percent of the tutors think that students at risk were reluctant to be taught by peers, citing shyness as the root cause. Ninety-two percent of the tutors either agree or strongly agree that shyness was one of the challenges students at risk were facing. Around three fourths of the tutors believe that the 'at-risk' label is to blame for the lack of motivation, which may have eventually turned into demotivation. These results, as shown in Figure 1 below, corroborate the qualitative findings about the students' feeling of shyness, lest they appear vulnerable in front of peers. The survey results also support the idea of the stigmatizing label that left many of the at-risk students too abashed to attend the remedial sessions. This has perhaps to be understood in the context of a patriarchal society where men are expected to show strength, not weakness, and women to maintain social status and not demean themselves in front of kith and kin (AbuOaf, 2020).
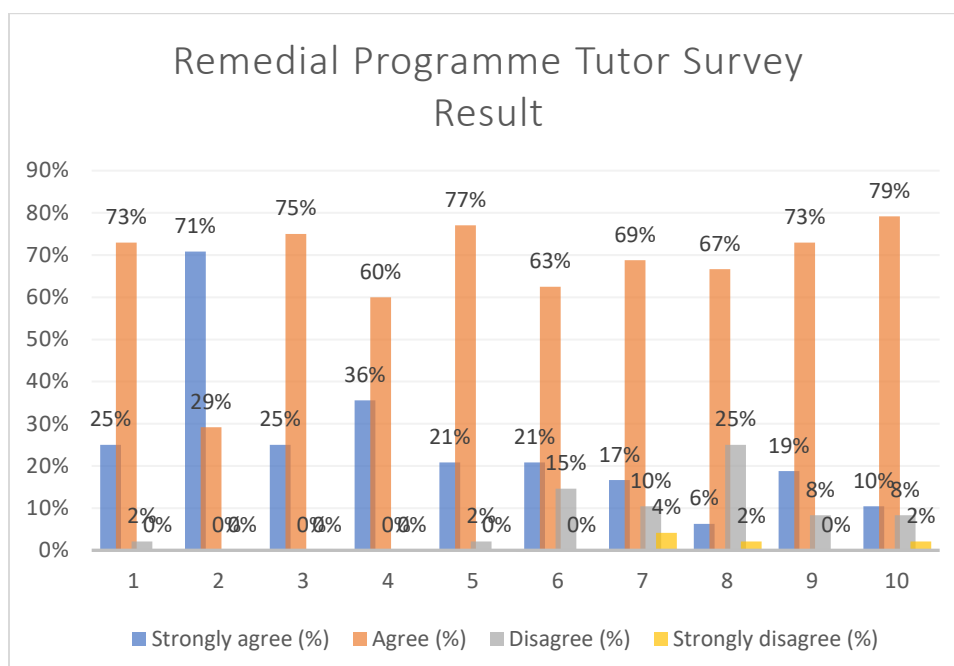
Remedial Programme Tutor Survey Result

Figure 2 Remedial programme tutor survey findings

The other key stakeholders that were surveyed for their opinions on the remedial programme are the tutees. These can be split into attending and non-attending tutees. Unfortunately, we did not manage to reach out to the non-attending students at risk as they chose to stay under the radar. As to the attending ones, 90 percent of them confirm that they are students at risk and they are chosen on the grounds of their low performance. Surprisingly, 50 percent of these tutees assert that they feel some sort of stigmatization due to the label. We were under the impression that only the non-attending students at risk felt some sort of stigmatization and were on the 'no-for-attending' defensive, but the survey results (as illustrated in Figure 2 below) showed otherwise. Half of those attending the remedial classes still feel stigmatized but could not help to attend remedial classes, though with low motivation, as attested. As to shyness, 60 percent of the attending tutees declared they had some reservations about being taught by peers. This does nothing but confirm the findings from the qualitative inquiry about at-risk students' shyness to appear vulnerable and in need of some sort of academic help in front of fellow students.
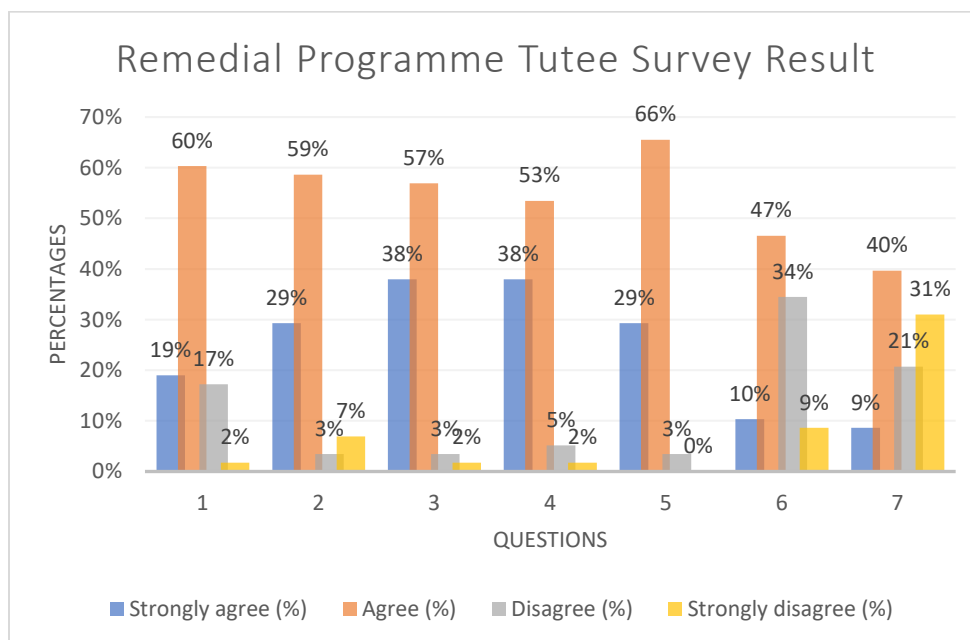
Remedial Programme Tutee Survey Result

Figure 3 Remedial programme tutee survey findings

4.2 Stage II

The findings from Stage I of the study showed that the remedial programme, with its exclusive focus on students at risk, has been defeating the purpose of its very existence and that accounted for the students' lack of motivation. This is because the students who are mostly in need of remedial intervention are the ones most deterred by it. Undoubtedly, however, students at risk continue to be in need of some handholding and some type of academic support— certainly one without a label. Acclaimed as a unique academic support service worldwide (Buchanan et al., 2019), the Supplemental Instruction model offers itself as a viably optimal option. Understandably, one of the strongest features of SI, which convinced the research team of its potential suitability, is its marriage of content and attitude. Although content is of the essence in the acquisition of required knowledge, helping shape the right attitude for that acquisition is of equal importance, if not bigger. The unique features of SI have made the research team keen on trialling it for a semester to check its efficacy as an academic support service for pre-college students. A *Muraje'a* Unit was created to develop and oversee the SI intervention-- 'muraje'a' is the Arabic transliteration of the word 'revision'. The use of Arabic, the mother language for the majority of students, was intended to strike a chord with the learners in an attempt to ramp up their motivation levels. The space for the new remediation intervention was furnished with round tables to facilitate and reap the benefits of collaborative learning (Topping, 2005).

The following findings are garnered from interviews and focus group discussions with the same respondents as in Stage I. The findings from surveys, however are based on questionnaires given to SI tutors and tutees.

4.2.1 Findings from the interviews and focus group

As the SI initiative was handled by the same student support committee under the supervision of the deputy director, the same members as in Stage I were interviewed. Both the interviews and focus group discussions sought to distil the perceptions and viewpoints of these onsite stakeholders who were involved in material building, sessions scheduling and/or overall monitoring. It turned out that the level of satisfaction with the SI system was quite high. Analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions confirmed overall satisfaction, with the responses of the respondents being coded and thematized as follows.

i. Overall satisfaction

Discussions with the deputy director, head of the student support committee and focus group (members of the same committee) confirm that they are quite satisfied with the initial outcomes of the SI intervention. The respondents confirmed that the SI programme brought in a new experience that helped rewire students' perception towards learning and student support. The latter is now inclusive, non-segregationist and non-diagnostic, prompting more participation and increasing motivation (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). The establishment of the *Muraje'a Unit*, with its round tables and enthusiastic student leaders (college students with 85%+ GPA), has revamped student support and increased their level of motivation. The respondents saw the new intervention as encouraging to students and very promising (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). The respondents also feel that with no more diagnoses or labelling, the onus of learning is now on the students. No referrals are now entertained, except self-referral, which is not necessarily based on low performance. When given a choice between going back to the old remedial system and continuing with the SI system, all respondents expressed their preference for the latter, highlighting that going back to the remedial system would be a relapse into wrong practices. What follows are the themes that are extracted from the respondents' interviews and discussions.

ii. Inclusiveness

According to the findings, one of the main "culprits" behind the 'unpopularity' of the traditional remedial system among the at-risk students is the label. Unsurprisingly, this system, segregationist at best, led to the demotivation of the very students it intended to serve. With the open door policy and an integral philosophy of inclusiveness, the SI model appears, according to the onsite observers, just the 'panacea' for the maladies of the remedial programme. One of the interview respondents remarked that "[t]he new muraje'a is open to everyone and that is the biggest difference" (N. Lotz, personal communication, December 27, 2020). He also added, "it is just a wider focus" (ibid.). Before commenting on its inclusiveness, one of the interviewees, stated that *muraje'a* is "one of the best resources" (R. Iqbal., personal communication, March 10, 2020). As to inclusiveness, the same interviewee highlighted that *muraje'a* is "larger in scope and reach", with "a much larger spectrum" (R. Iqbal, personal communication, March 10, 2020). Similarly, the focus group discussions confirm that muraje'a is inclusive and open to all regardless of their performance. "It is for everyone," states a respondent, adding, "there is no targeting" -- unlike the remedial system, (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020), hence the stigma-free learning environment. This environment, where labelling has no grounds any more, is by extension no fertile ground for demotivation. The overall feeling is that SI has given a new lease of life to students who suffered from the label. With inclusiveness, students at risk, among others, can walk into the SI sessions while under the cover of anonymity.

iii. Affectivity

The blending of the study skills component with content seems to have influenced the affective skills of the learners. By affective skills we mean the learners' interest, feelings and attitude towards learning. The interviewees have noticed that students seeking

academic support are gradually taking an upward trend. Similarly, the level of confidence of those attending SI has gone up, prompting an increase in class participation and homework completion. An interviewee commented that SI "is inculcating in them the good study habits," adding that this is "affect[ing] their overall study skills and ability to learn" (N. Lotz, personal communication, December 27, 2020). Focus group findings were no different. The group stated that students were happy not to be labelled and that was the crux of the matter (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). They added that the word 'muraje'a' has resonated well with many students, making the new intervention all the more ''appealing'' (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). The focus group discussion confirmed that the "ambience is really good" (Focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). The same favourable comments regarding the setup of the *Muraje'a Unit*, space design and selection and training of student leaders were made. The tutors themselves were reported to be "very enthusiastic'' and "very excited" to be part of this new experience (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). As a change of attitude started to take shape among students, some maths tutors were reported to have attended English sessions as tutees and vice versa. Respondents in the focus group noticed that code-switching, moving back and forth between English and Arabic, has sidelined pressure and given room for more uninhibited discussions between tutors and tutees and among tutees themselves. Language is no longer seen as an inhibitor to learning during the SI sessions, making way for in-depth assimilation of concepts and ideas.

iv. Guided collaboration
Unlike the remedial programme which is usually run by better-abled classmates or sometimes teachers, the SI programme is guided by student leaders who are outstanding senior college students. Respondents from the interviews and focus group noticed that that the presence of Student leaders seemed to have influenced motivation, stating that the learners were noticed to relate more to Student leaders than teachers at times (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Student leaders were trained to tout themselves as models that have successfully gone through a steep learning curve, disciplining themselves to overcome learning challenges. It should be highlighted that Student leaders were not meant to be teachers in the traditional sense of the word, but facilitators that were required to intervene when a need arose. Their job was to ensure that students discussed the topic at hand collaboratively until they reached saturation, i.e. no more questions are raised seeking further understanding. Student leaders then wrap up and ask students to do the accompanying worksheets to allow for practical knowledge application. Student leaders toured the groups to make sure students were on task, while answering correctly. Respondents maintained that guided collaboration seemed like an incubator that helped to straighten up incorrect or shallow understandings (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Overall, the SI sessions were reported to operate like a nurturing environment that solidified learning through guided collaboration.

v. Autonomy
With the new programme, referrals have become something of the past, putting the onus of learning on students themselves. The focus group respondents noticed that students were no longer asking if they should attend the sessions or not; they just went there (focus group, personal communication, March 9, 2020). There was enough evidence during the interviews that the SI programme was pushing students to take the reins of learning into their own hands—a noticeable development that the remedial programme has never attempted. With its attempt to steer away from spoon-feeding and handholding, the SI intervention seemed to strengthen a sense of autonomy in students. One of the interviewees commenting on this said, "it's solidifying what they are already learning and I think that puts more onus on students to be learning on their own" (N. Lotz, personal communication, December 27, 2020).

4.2.2 Findings from questionnaires
Qualitative findings indicate that the level of satisfaction with the new academic student support programme is quite high. It remains, however, to find out whether these findings can be substantiated by quantitative data. Ten tutors and 41 tutees were the respondents of the quantitative inquiry. They were given surveys and asked to answer questions related the rating and best features of the programme and whether they would recommend it to peers. When asked to rate the importance of SI on a scale of 1-10, six tutors gave the rating of 9, one the rating of 10, two the rating of 8, and one rated it 7. This high rating is a clear indication that the new programme is seen as important and therefore beneficial to the learners. Answering another question about whether SI is benefiting students, 80 percent of the tutors opted for "agree" and 20 percent for "strongly agree", bringing agreement to 100 percent. The tutors were also asked to rank six features that have made SI rewarding. *Peer-to-peer learning* came in first, with 80 percent of the votes, *collaboration* came in second, with 60 percent, *participation* third, with 50 percent, *activity-based* and *stress-free* both secured the fourth position, *hands-on* came in last. The last question wanted to check if the tutors would recommend SI for students in the future. Eighty percent of them confirmed they would "strongly" recommend it, with 20 percent opting for "very strongly", again bringing agreement to the highest point possible.

This said, the study would not be complete without taking the opinion of the tutees – who are at the centre of the initiative. Forty-one tutees were surveyed, asking them similar questions put to the tutors. Eighteen of the tutees gave SI the rating of 10, two the rating of 9, seven the rating of 8, four the rating of 7, five the rating of 6 and the last five, the rating of 5, with no one rating it below 5. As to the most rewarding features, the tutees rated *collaboration* the highest, with 63 percent of the votes, followed by

task-based, with 34 percent and then *participation*, with 29 percent. The features of *stress-free*, *peer-to-peer learning* and *hands-on* followed successively, with 15, 7 and 5 percent, respectively. When asked what SI helped them improve, they listed *understanding*, *attentiveness*, *readiness* for tests, *interaction*, *confidence*, and *interest in learning*, in a descending order (see Figure 3 below). As to recommending SI to fellow students, not a single tutee ticked the 'not at all' option. The rest (100 percent) confirmed that they would recommend SI either 'very strongly', 'strongly' or 'moderately'.
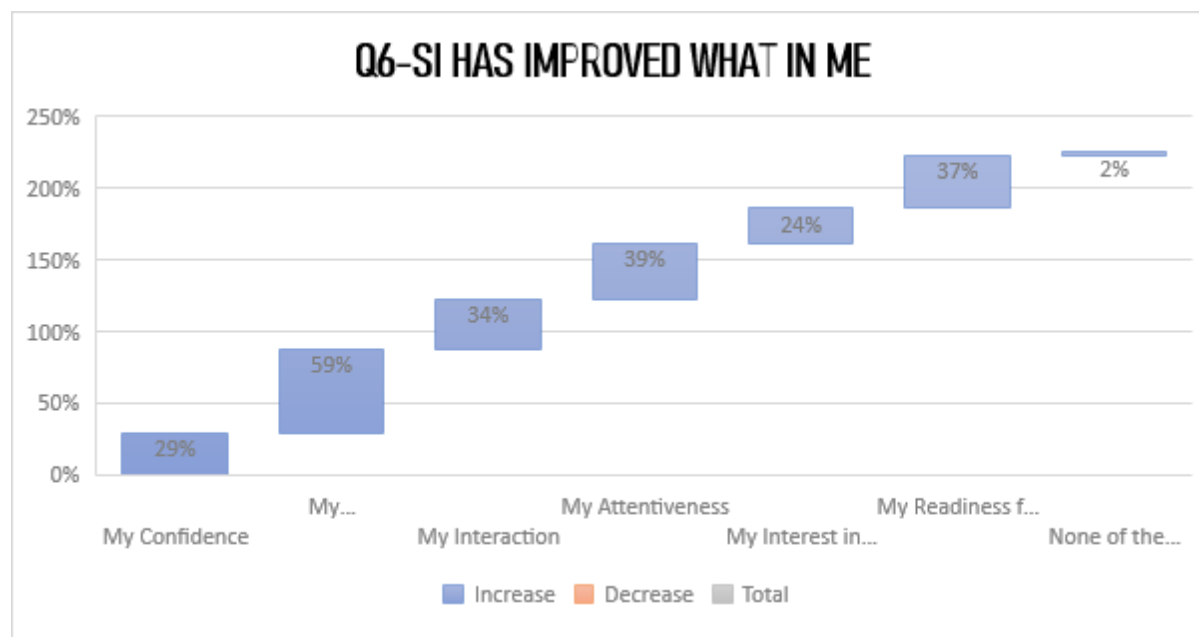

Figure 4 Things SI Improved in Tutees

5. Insights and recommendations

The findings from the qualitative and quantitative inquiry seem to endorse the SI remediation as a better fit for the pre-college students. Although a longitudinal study of this SI intervention may shed deeper and more nuanced insights into the long-run benefits of the SI remediation, the current findings seem to have highlighted the disservice the traditional remedial system is still doing to the category of students it claims to serve. Given the findings, the study suggests the following recommendations in the hope that the harm the at risk students may be inadvertently prone to be minimized.

i. Discontinue remedial interventions

This study recommends the discontinuation of the traditional remedial programme, for the potential damage it may cause to the very students it sets out to serve. Although inadvertently, the remedial programme was found to thwart learning rather than foster it. On the other hand, the study recommends the adoption of the SI remediation for the numerous benefits it can bestow on students, particularly learner autonomy (Reinders, 2010).

ii. Change nomenclature

The findings have confirmed that labelling can be at the heart of the issue (the at-risk label in this case), evidencing that nomenclature matters. 'Students at risk policies', 'students at risk registers', 'students at risk remedial programmes' ought to be seen as something of the past and hence ought to change. The study advocates for the use of 'student support' instead of 'students at risk', for the segregation-free overtones as well as the positivity the 'student support' nomenclature invokes.

iii. Add attitude

Diagnostics, mandatory referrals and imposing attendance on students may have benefits, but short-term ones at best. As the learning process is very complex and is certainly affected by the psychology of learning, considerations such as motivation, mindset and attitude (Dweck, 2006; Kuhl & Atkinson, 1986; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) should be part of the support extended to the learners, in addition to content (Knowledge). SI seems to have taken good care of that combination.

iv. Market SI among students

As imposed referrals are limited in long-term gains, self-referrals need to come into play. To ensure that self-referrals happen, students should be aware of the worth and merits of the SI model especially when attempted for the first time. Teacher- or SI leader-led awareness sessions and workshops should be conducted to secure buy-in among students. Promo videos and illustrative

PPTs can also be a helpful tool for promoting the idea. We just have to be reminded that convincing humans to get out of their comfort zones and change gears needs time, effort and patience.

v. Find good SI leaders and train them
SI leaders (Student leaders) are the dynamo of the SI sessions, hence the need for good selection combined with efficient training. Student leaders should act as models of inspiration and function as a 'guide by the side', not a 'sage on the stage', hence the need for apposite selection and training. These successful human models are usually senior college students with high GPAs and a character that is good modelling (Hayes & Fulton, 2019; Smuts, 2002).

vi. Design SI content per subject
Designing content is an uphill task, but it could be achieved if tackled collectively. Enough time should be allocated to the task, with small subject-wise committees created to perform certain tasks with a specific timeframe. A decision has to be made as to the topics that should be included, with an eye to scaffolding difficulty for smooth subject matter absorption. Along with the content, a study skills booklet focusing on a mindset of growth and attitude should be produced to work side by side with the content. The combination of content and attitude is deemed to work wonders.

vii. Set up an SI Unit
Ultimately, an SI unit or centre is needed to act as the incubator for the programme. If the idea of a unit is far-fetched in the early stages of the enterprise, an SI committee can work to roll out the programme until a unit or a centre is financially affordable. The unit can work on its own or else has ties with the international centre for SI at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in Kansas City, Missouri, US. This centre provides academic support and mentoring nationally and internationally. The centre conducts local trainings on its premises. It has trained individuals from 1500 institutions representing 30 different countries. It is worth mentioning that there are SI centres all over the world such as in the University of Wollongong, Australia, Lund University, Sweden, University of Guelph, Canada, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa and many more. The international Center for SI also holds a conference every two years where educators, administrators, SI leaders and students meet to discuss and share the latest research pertaining to SI.

6. Conclusion
This study has come to the conclusion that the remedial programme, with its diagnosis and referral system is segregationist and stigmatizing. The findings show that this programme is inherently labelling and has, therefore, unwittingly nurtured a sense of stigma among the very students the programme intends to serve. This unintended stigmatization seems to account for the lack of motivation that grew to a noticeable level as to trigger this study. With its emphasis on inclusiveness, non-labelling and ownership of learning, the SI showed that it holds a philosophy that is antithetic to the remedial programme philosophy. Where the latter starts from a blame ideology that tells students "you are at risk, to blame and in need of fixing your problem", the SI ideology shifts the blame away from students onto hard subjects, while shying away from labelling and stigmatization. With the remedial programme seeing the at risk student as 'the problem' and the SI viewing the same student as 'part of the solution', the benefits that the SI remediation can bestow on the pre-college struggling students can be innumerable.

Having said this, it should be mentioned that the limitations of the study are twofold. The first is related to the relatively small sample size of both tutors and tutees in both stages of the study. The second limitation has to do with the inability of the researchers to reach out to the tutees who were thought to be badly affected by the labelling. Although these tutees were unreachable due to their decision to shy away from the remedial sessions, interviewing or surveying them could have brought deeper insights on how they felt about the programme and the extent to which they were affected by the label. Building on the findings of this study, it is suggested that further research could study not only pre-college students labelled at risk as is the case here, but college students who had to bear the brunt of this label during the course of their study and the impact of the labelling on their academic performance.

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