

Service Quality and Student's Satisfaction in Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

This research explores fundamental principles and prior investigations concerning service quality, student happiness, and the higher education system's role as a service provider. Its goal is to enhance the current knowledge base and set the foundation for a comprehensive examination of service quality and student satisfaction within the realm of higher education. It examines dimensions of service quality within higher education and explores how service quality influences student satisfaction in the context of higher educational institutions (HEIs). By exploring these subtopics, this literature review aims to offer a thorough comprehension of the factors contributing to student satisfaction and the importance of service quality in shaping students' experiences in the higher education setting. In essence, this literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the concepts and previous research concerning service quality, student satisfaction, higher education as a service, dimensions of service quality in higher education, and the impact of service quality on student satisfaction.

Keywords

Education, Institution, Quality, Service, Student, Satisfaction

1. Introduction

This study scrutinizes the notion of service quality within the framework of higher education institutions. It dissects elements of service quality, evaluates conceptual models employed, encompassing responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). This review underscores the significance of service quality as a predictor of student satisfaction and its role in meeting or surpassing student expectations. The subsequent discourse dissects the concept of student satisfaction and its relevance within the realm of higher education. It probes diverse factors influencing student satisfaction, such as instructional quality, student-faculty interaction, administrative assistance, campus facilities, and student social life. This segment underscores the importance of grasping student satisfaction to enhance the overall student journey.

Higher education has evolved into a service-oriented sector, mirroring the broader shift in the economy towards viewing customers as the focal point of business operations (Berry, 1980; Gronroos, 2008). This transition has fundamentally altered the dynamics of higher education institutions (HEIs), transforming them into providers of educational experiences tailored to the needs and expectations of their students (Peters, 1997; Spooner, 2015). Adopting a service-oriented approach in HEIs necessitates a holistic understanding of service quality and its impact on student satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 2000). Service quality encompasses a range of dimensions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1988). HEIs must strive to excel in these dimensions to provide students with a positive and engaging educational experience (Abdullah & Al-Jubouri, 2010; Altunel & Yildiz, 2014). The range of services offered by HEIs extends beyond traditional academic instruction to encompass a comprehensive support system for students (Denison & Mishra, 1999; Pasca-Palacio & Martinez-Costa, 2010). This includes academic support, counseling services, career guidance, library resources, administrative procedures, and student support systems (Abdullah & Al-Jubouri, 2010; Altunel & Yildiz, 2014).

Despite contributing to the understanding of service quality and student satisfaction in higher education, previous studies offer avenues for further research. Primarily, past research focused on a single university within a specific region, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to other universities and regions with different cultural and educational contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported student data may introduce bias as individual perceptions and experiences vary. Further research incorporating data from faculty and staff could offer a comprehensive understanding of service quality factors from multiple perspectives. Moreover, exploring the impact of technology and digital resources on service delivery and student satisfaction could shed light on emerging trends in the field. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking student experiences over time could reveal valuable insights into the long-term effects of ser-

vice quality on student outcomes and institutional success.

This literature review culminates in the correlation between service quality and student satisfaction in the context of higher education institutions. It reviews past studies that illustrate a correlation between service quality and student satisfaction. The review delves into the link between students' perceptions of service quality and their overall satisfaction, academic accomplishments, retention, and likelihood to endorse the institution. The flow of this literature review was guided by the questions; 1) How can universities effectively balance investments, in infrastructure with a focus on intellectual development and human resources to enhance the quality of their services? 2) How does the reputation and image of education institutions influence their advantage and long-term sustainability? 3) What strategies do universities use to create an image for students, employers and funders? 4) To what extent does students' social engagement and sense of belonging within the university community impact their satisfaction in the higher education environment? 5) How do different types of student faculty interactions, including conflicts and mentoring opportunities affect students' academic achievements and satisfaction levels? 6) What teaching practices create a learning environment that positively influences student achievement and satisfaction in education? 7) How do student interactions with staff affect aspects such as academics, socio emotional wellbeing, behavior and how does this impact student achievement and satisfaction? 8) What role do support services play in bridging the gap, between institutions and students including the factors that moderate the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction in education such, as university culture and reputation?

2. Literature Discussion

This section explores service quality in higher education, emphasizing its impact on student satisfaction. It defines service quality, discusses evaluation models like SERVQUAL, and highlights the importance of meeting student expectations. The narrative touches on school image, student social life, faculty interaction, teaching quality, support services, and campus facilities, all influencing student satisfaction. It concludes by emphasizing the global impact of service quality on student loyalty, considering tangible elements and academic services.

2.1. Service Quality

Kandeepan et al. (2019) emphasized that service quality pertains to the extent to which a service meets customer demands or expectations. (Saleem et al., 2017) also underscored the challenge of addressing quality within higher education institutions (HEIs). Focus should be directed toward two primary domains: academic excellence and service quality. Academic quality accentuates learning outcomes and skill development, while institutional services are typically linked to service quality. Both tangible and intangible components constitute these services. Since HEIs often possess a limited grasp of the service supply concept, emphasis gravitates toward quantifiable aspects like equipment, physical envi-

ronment, and assets. As a result, the evaluation and funding allocation by entities like CHED are based on these perceptions. Philippine HEIs should prioritize intellectual development over facilities investment and prioritize human resources over infrastructure.

In the context of service quality within tertiary educational institutions, the comparison lies between students' expectations and their perceptions of the institution's performance, ultimately gauging their level of customer satisfaction, a key metric for evaluating service efficacy (Fauzi et al., 2016). Gunawan and Wahyuni (2018) define service as an intangible activity that fulfills a client's needs, achieving a distinguished standard of output that meets and satisfies client expectations. Evaluating student happiness is pivotal to an institution's performance and services for continuous enhancement (Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019). There is no generally accepted definitions that describe the concepts of policies and policy implementation thus, they can be viewed from different perspectives. School policy can be viewed as consisting of action plans having the intent to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters (Tinapay & Tirol, 2022).

Research has illustrated that positive student perceptions of service quality can enhance new student recruitment (Sultan & Wong, 2013). To comprehensively chart students' perceptions of service quality in higher education, empirical investigation is imperative (Sultan & Yin Wong, 2013). Our study hypothesizes that comprehending students' cognitive processes regarding service quality in higher education institutions serves as a primary research goal. Students' perceptions of service quality can catalyze student satisfaction, a significant driver of overall university performance (Hwang & Choi, 2019). Beyond assessing service quality perceptions, comprehending interconnections between constructs such as student satisfaction, school image, student-faculty interaction, teaching quality, administration support, student services, and campus facilities is essential.

2.2. Models for Evaluating Service Quality

The bulk of educational service quality research has centered on the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991) and the SERVPERF scale (Cronin Jr. & Taylor, 1992; Brochado, 2009; Sultan & Yin Wong, 2013). Despite a unanimous recognition of the significance of service quality in higher education, consensus remains elusive regarding the specific dimensions and metrics for measuring service quality within this context (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). Evidently, service quality within education demands a multidimensional approach, incorporating various dimensions (Teeroovengadam et al., 2019; Gupta & Kaushik, 2018). SERVQUAL assesses service quality by contrasting expectations and perceptions across service dimensions, necessitating adaptation to measure appropriate characteristics of education services in HEIs (Min & Khoon, 2013).

SERVQUAL and SERVPERF have emerged as the predominant scales for gauging service quality, extensively utilized by researchers and industry practi-

tioners. [Silva et al. \(2017\)](#) found the SERVQUAL scale referenced or employed in 495 articles, spanning from 1988 to 2016. However, adapting these scales for the higher education sector often emphasizes quantifiable activities rather than the holistic student experience. The applicability of these scales in higher education service quality remains ambiguous.

Further research highlights the necessity of tailoring the SERVQUAL model to accommodate cultural and contextual variations. Consequently, alternative models have been introduced, expanding and supplementing the SERVQUAL model by incorporating additional dimensions to evaluate higher education service quality. [Abdullah \(2005\)](#) introduced the HEdPERF scale, derived from SERVPERF, accounting for distinct determinants of service quality in higher education. HEdPERF stands as the most comprehensive scale for quantifying service quality in higher education according to [Içli and Anil \(2014\)](#). While some researchers have employed the HEdPERF scale since 2014 ([Silva et al., 2017](#)), its adoption remains more limited compared to SERVQUAL and SERVPERF. Consequently, research into HEdPERF's application for private university students' satisfaction and academic performance, along with considering the mediating role of academic attitude, remains intriguing and significant for academic and managerial pursuits.

[Annamdevula and Bellamkonda \(2016\)](#) developed and tested the SQM-HEI and HiEduQual service quality instruments for potential application in Indian HEIs. [Içli and Anil \(2014\)](#) introduced the HEDQUAL scale, tailored to measure service quality in higher education, particularly for MBA programs.

2.3. School Image and Reputation

The perceptions held by stakeholders have a direct influence on an organization's identity, image, and reputation ([Reed, 2022](#)). [Tesema and Ayele \(2020\)](#) emphasized the importance of reputation and image as key sources of competitive advantage, particularly for higher education institutions. These concepts have become increasingly vital for organizations' competitive edge and long-term viability. To project a favorable image to the public, potential students, employers, and funders, higher education institutions are proactively intensifying their marketing efforts. Universities are also employing marketing strategies to capitalize on their unique positioning ([Qadri et al., 2021](#)).

Investing in the education sector of a nation yields multiplied and diversified returns. Countries excelling in education typically rank higher in global economic, developmental, innovative, and human rights indicators. Education empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty and to prevent and address health issues. The societal benefits of education, however, are directly proportional to the quality, relevance, and validity of the education provided ([Amin & Khuwaja, 2020](#)).

In a study conducted at Nong Lam University in Vietnam, [Van Viet \(2021\)](#) assessed the impact of service quality parameters on the satisfaction of 1825 students. Four dimensions were identified—academic and non-academic aspects,

reputation, and accessibility—and were found to be significant predictors of student satisfaction. Similarly, [Ali et al. \(2016\)](#) investigated the feelings of 260 undergraduate students at a Malaysian public institution regarding service quality dimensions: reputation, non-academic elements, and academic aspects. The ratio of academic and non-academic elements significantly affected students' happiness.

Findings from various studies underscore the role of service quality dimensions, such as academics, reputation, and program difficulties, in influencing student satisfaction. [Muhammad et al. \(2018\)](#) examined the impact of service quality, including academic, non-academic, reputational, and access dimensions, on the happiness of 384 students from 28 Pakistani universities. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of school image and reputation in enhancing service quality dimensions and ultimately improving student satisfaction.

2.4. Student Social Life on Campus

The social experience of university students pertains to their sense of belonging and engagement within the university environment ([Wu & Liu, 2013](#)). [Al-Sheeb et al. \(2018\)](#) emphasized that students' social engagement is derived from feelings of connectedness, support from social circles, and a sense of respect and acceptance within the university community. The social life of students directly impacts their overall satisfaction within the university setting ([Fleming et al., 2017](#)).

According to [Fanreza \(2019\)](#), approximately 54.3% of students exhibit a level of piety toward their social life, influenced by factors such as peer interactions and personal interests. Social interactions play a crucial role in enhancing individuals' social skills and confidence, contributing to their engagement with the broader social environment ([Yang et al., 2016](#)). Social self-efficacy, which encompasses social skills and confidence, is enhanced through interactions with peers and group participation ([Kim et al., 2020](#)). Engaging in social groups not only reduces challenges in academic life but also cultivates social skills and maturity ([Kim et al., 2020](#)).

2.5. Student Interaction with Faculty

Student engagement with faculty members, both inside and outside the classroom, yields positive academic outcomes, including higher GPAs and degree completion ([Park et al., 2020](#)). However, student-faculty interactions may vary based on diverse backgrounds and institutional dynamics, affecting academic persistence ([Cole & Grifn, 2013](#); [Chang et al., 2014](#)). Faculty mentoring's effectiveness is contingent on students' opportunities for engagement ([Kim & Sax, 2014, 2018](#)). Student-faculty relationships are strengthened when values align, but conflicts can hinder satisfaction and communal responsibility ([Diekman et al., 2015](#); [Garibay, 2018](#)).

2.6. Quality of Teaching

Educational developers primarily support lecturers in course design and classroom instruction, both of which impact student achievement (Hora & Ferrare, 2013). Classroom management, learning strategies, and active learning significantly contribute to student success (Schneider & Preckel, 2017; Freeman et al., 2014). Teaching practices fostering a conducive environment positively influence student achievement (Schneider & Preckel, 2017). Modern education and teaching emphasize more in-depth, student-centered learning methodologies that evaluate, develop, create, and demonstrate comprehension (Tinapay & Tirol, 2021).

2.7. Student Interaction with Administration Staff

“Student engagement,” “student partnership,” and “student collaboration” are interlinked constructs that contribute to enriching tertiary experiences (Healey et al., 2014; Kahu, 2013). Student interaction acts as a connecting thread between students, educators, service staff, and institutions, impacting student achievement across academic, social-emotional, and behavioral domains (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Positive engagement can lead to constructive outcomes, while psychological distress can affect peers and staff (D’Errico et al., 2018; Brooker et al., 2017).

2.8. Quality of Student Support Services

Student support services bridge the gap between institutions and students, impacting the learning process (Brooker et al., 2017). Insufficient support can hinder education’s purpose, making student perspectives crucial for enhancing well-being (Baik et al., 2019). Mental health issues are linked to lower self-efficacy, motivation, and academic dissatisfaction, affecting student persistence (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). Effective support systems improve student performance, necessitating a deeper understanding of students’ perceptions (Baik et al., 2019).

2.9. Campus Facilities

Student satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including the availability of campus facilities (Hanssen & Solvoll, 2015). Adequate facilities contribute to overall satisfaction and enhanced performance (Parahoo et al., 2013). Sustainable campus development aligns with institutional missions, promoting energy-efficient and student-centric design (Anthony Jnr, 2021). Campus buildings should optimize energy usage while catering to occupants’ needs.

2.10. Effect of Service Quality on Students’ Satisfaction in Higher Education

Service quality significantly impacts student satisfaction, with various dimensions influencing the overall experience (Saleem et al., 2017). Student perspectives on service quality vary, and the relationship between service quality and sa-

tisfaction is influenced by moderating factors like university culture and reputation (Osman & Saputra, 2019; Rofingatun & Larasati, 2021). Tangible factors, academic service, administrative service, and physical evidence contribute to student satisfaction (Azam, 2018; Cahyono et al., 2020). The impact of service quality on student loyalty and satisfaction is observed internationally (Dib & Alnazer, 2013; Kajenthiran & Karunanithy, 2015; Banahene et al., 2018).

3. Conclusion

The examination of service quality in higher education reveals its crucial role in shaping student satisfaction. The focus on academic excellence, diverse evaluation models, and interconnected factors like school image, faculty interaction, and campus facilities highlights the complexity of the student experience. Positive student perceptions not only impact satisfaction but also influence recruitment and overall institutional success. This underscores the need for ongoing research and adaptation of evaluation models to enhance service quality in higher education continually. This study seeks to bridge the gap between service quality and student satisfaction, offering insights into dimensions that require enhancement. By understanding students' perspectives, the study can provide valuable recommendations to improve the quality of services provided by Higher Education Institutions, ultimately benefiting student well-being and fostering a more positive educational experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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