

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS SATISFACTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION SERVICES

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Abstract. University student's satisfaction is very important to institutional success in this effective establishments have satisfied 'customers' as a result of this satisfaction supports the incoming of further students or customers. Ratings of student satisfaction are getting clearer. Higher learning institution are dealing with young adults. This gives some changes toward the higher learning environment and this is important to ensure the survivability of the college. Due to the changes in higher learning industry satisfaction factors' that used to satisfy students are no longer the same especially in this post pandemic of covid-19. In order for this college to sustain and maintain successful, the college really need to look into the new factors. To address this issue, the present study seeks to explore the relationship between students' satisfaction and service quality of higher education institution services.

Keywords: *service quality, customers' satisfaction, students' satisfaction, Higher Learning Institution*

Introduction

Education is widely accepted to be a fundamental resource, both for individuals and societies. Indeed, in most countries basic education is nowadays perceived not only as a right, but also as a duty-government are typically expected to ensure access to basic education, while citizens are often required by law to attain education up to a certain basic level. Education is a process of learning that will be articulated for the systems that enable the learners to achieve their dreams. This is a practice that almost applied all over the world. It is also one of the keys that drive economic growth, significantly to the higher education sector. With the upper education sector becoming a progressively competitive market, university student satisfaction has become a very important element of quality assurance. The concept of quality in higher education can have multiple focuses or definitions with this reflected to the most common focuses. The three are highlighted such as the idea of service, those that explore quality from the student's perspective, and those that approach this concept from the teacher's perspective (Olmos-Gómez et al., 2020).

Maintaining and improving students' satisfaction has been considered an important goal of education and universities with the assumption that student satisfaction is indicative of institutional effectiveness. A key factor of student satisfaction is the quality of the teaching staff. As a result, the use of student rating scales as an evaluative

component of their teaching system has increased. The majority of teaching staff at most universities have been required or expected to administer some type of teaching evaluation form to their students during each course offering for some time. Merchant et al. (2019), examined critical factors considered by students when deciding to enroll in private higher education institutions and their choice. The findings indicated that six factors influence student choice of higher education institutions. Such as, access and opportunity, promotional information and marketing, influence by others, quality of teaching and learning, fees and cost structure, and finally academic reputation and recognition are considered as the most influential factors.

Students prefer higher education that provides better service quality and student satisfaction (Tahir et al., 2010) which either directly or indirectly affects student loyalty (Annamdevula and Bellamkonda, 2016a). When students are highly satisfied, they will be loyal to the chosen institutions (Alves and Raposo, 2009). The research by Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016b) found positive relationships between service quality and student satisfaction, service quality with student loyalty, and student satisfaction with student loyalty. Moreover, there is a study that measures the relationship between the service quality and student satisfaction by Martha-Martha and Priyono (2018), it is to examine the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction, service quality with student loyalty, and student satisfaction with student loyalty in higher institutions. The findings indicated that there is a positive influence of service quality on student satisfaction and a positive influence of student satisfaction on student loyalty.

There are three basic types of education. First is a formal type that includes the formal education teaches of the individual to learn the academic skills and it begins at the elementary level and continues to a higher level of education. This process allows to set up the rules and regulations for accomplishing to the formal degree. While the informal type used with no specific tools to understand the learning process. The person will attain an informal education through reading books, playing chess and learning how to handle the bicycle to balance an equal skill in basic life. The third is non-formal type which is an awareness of the programs such as basic education programs and adult literacy to promote the education system. There is no time table, syllabus and limited age that can be more flexible. According to the data from UNESCO Institute for Statistic (UIS) for ending year of 2018, there are about 259 million children and youth are out from the school. These include the numbers of 59 million students from primary school, 62 million from lower secondary and 138 million upper secondary children. However, there are about 759 million adults are illiterate and do not have the awareness necessary to improve both their living conditions and those of their children.

In India known as Gurukul was the former in the Indian education system, where the students used to learn by living with their gurus. It is an essential tool that eliminates unemployment and poverty in the world. Additionally, it benefits the commercial scenario of the country. Thus, the higher level of education in the country holds to seek a better job platform and opportunities. Nevertheless, education will give advantages to individuals differently. It helps the individual to decide for better choices in utilizing the information and expanding individual success. Additionally, education assumes as part of the obligations in an individual to improve their way of life. For instance, if the places diverse the different professions, it can open more opportunity diversification for individual personal satisfaction. Thus, through education, an individual becomes proficient but not all educated individuals are taught.

Discussion

Education in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the earliest forms of schooling available were Sekolah Pondok literally known as Hut school, Madrasah and other Islamic schools. These schools are listed in early works of Malay literature, such as Hikayat Abdullah and has been suggested to the current secular model of education is pre-dated. Besides that, the secular schools have largely been an invention of the British colonial government in Malaysia. However, there is no Malay-language in secondary schools that established by the British colonial government and forcing those who had learned in Malay to adapt to an English-language education during primary school. Thus, because of this issue many of Malays have failed to seek additional education.

The British formed the Malay College Kuala Kangsar to remedy this issue. It was intended primarily as to educating the low-level civil servants and not as a means to opening the doors of trade to the Malays and the school was never intended to train students for admission to higher education institutions. There are four initial recommendations for the improvement of the national education system, namely the Barnes Report (supported by the Malays), the Ordinance Report (modified by the Barnes Report), the Fenn-Wu Report (supported by the Chinese and Indians), and the Razak Report (a compromise between the two reports). Via the Education Ordinance of 1952, the Barnes proposal was adopted in Chinese protests. In the midst of Chinese protests, the Barnes was planned to enforce by the Education Ordinance of 1952. The Razak Report was adopted as the education system for independent Malaya by the Malayan government in 1956. The Razak Report called for a national school system consisting of middle-level Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil primary schools and middle-level for Malay and English schools.

In the 1970s, the government started to turn English-medium primary and national-type secondary schools into Malay-medium national schools in line with the national language policy. The change in language began progressively from the first year of primary school, then the second year of the following year, and so on. By the end of 1982, the transition was completed. Besides that, the Education Act of 1996 was passed to amend the Education Ordinance of 1956 and the Education Act of 1961. For instance, the Ministries of Education were divided into two in 2004 which are the Ministries of Education and the Ministries of Higher Education. The latter deals with issues relating to tertiary education, however, in 2013 both departments were re-combined to form a new education ministry.

Nevertheless, the scenario in education is a growing industry in Malaysia and the country is gaining acceptance as an established study destination in the region. The education sector offers a variety of higher education programs as well as professional and specialized skill courses that are priced in a competitive manner and of high quality. Concerning this is the existing trend of setting up branch campuses in Malaysia by reputable universities from the UK and Australia. These universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs identical to those of the overseas main campus. Both public and private educational institutions play an important role in providing tertiary education to Malaysian youth and adults (Yusof et al., 2012).

Higher education in Malaysia

Higher education sector is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The national quality agency, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has been approved by the Parliament to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) covering both public and private higher educational institutions. The MQA is one of the agencies under the MOHE. Its role is to implement the MQF as a basis for quality assurance in higher education as well as be a reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications.

Service quality

Parasuraman et al. (1988) state that they see quality of service as a form of attitude, related but not the same as satisfaction, resulting from comparing the expectations and perceptions of performance of customers. The concept of service performance versus customer expectation is seen in further views of service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1988) indicated that the quality of the service relates to the customer's estimation of the service's overall excellence and distinction (Cronin Jr and Taylor, 1992). However, concluded that it was inappropriate to conceptualize service quality as a difference between standards and results. The level of service is a measure of customer loyalty and the success of companies (Seeman and O'Hara, 2006; Lewis, 1989). Service quality has usually been seen as a global mindset or decision, according to Yusof et al. (2012), which refers to the distinctiveness of a service. Other than that, the quality of service often specified that it is more difficult for the client to determine than the quality of goods (Chi and Quan, 2013). They also elaborated that the quality of the service is "intangible" because services are difficult to determine before a transaction. Many companies, including educational institutions, have actually produced systems that evoke the appraisal of service quality by consumers. The following segment will discuss the views, dimensions and aspects of service quality in higher education.

Service quality in higher education

The interests of students' viewpoints have been addressed in much of the studied and published work on service quality in higher education. Many authors have argued on this issue such as Masrurul (2019), Mukhtar et al. (2015) as well as Oldfield and Baron (2000). They further state that, with the presence of students' satisfaction, educational institutions will become highly competitive and students will use the power of their demand in choosing the best institution that suits their preferences. According to (Yeo, 2008), the level of service in the education sector includes connecting teacher engagement with professionalism-intimacy in an attempt to have a significant effect on intermediate and lifelong learning. In addition, he notes that the standard of service is diverse, since it concerns the physical, structural and psychological dimensions of higher education. It is then suggested by Gruber et al. (2010) that student satisfaction would represent the understanding of disparities in service quality extended by educational institutions. In order to attain student satisfaction and sustainability, educational institutions must also offer and track professional services (Yusof et al., 2012). A customer-driven approach was adopted in higher education, focusing on students as primary customers (Langstrand et al., 2014). According to Prakash (2018), one of the top sectors contributing to the literature on service quality is higher education.

Service quality has been accepted and embraced as one of the main drivers in both the production and service industries, from the views shown and outlined in the table above. Understanding customers' needs by identifying their expectation is one of the important steps in order to ensure the providers can match their expectation and reduce the gaps. This study measures the satisfaction of students with the physical infrastructure and the offerings of educational establishments that promote them. There are several models used to study service quality. One of the models is Service Performance called SERVPERF. This SERVPERF model was found by Cronin Jr and Taylor (1992) for measuring service quality based on service performance rather than the service quality gap as measured by the SERVQUAL model. The SERVPERF model consists of five service dimensions that are tangible, reliability, responsive, assurance and empathy, with two sets of 22 item statements for the questionnaire's relevance and perception portions, according to a study conducted by (Rasyida et al., 2016).

The next model is Higher Education Performance (HEdPERF), a modern service quality assessment instrument built by Abdullah (2006) that captures the genuine determinants of service quality within the higher education market. The key goal of the HEdPERF scale was to assess the level of service primarily in the higher education field to consider the points of view of students and enhance the delivery of educational services (Banahene et al., 2018). She then clarified that the HEdPERF model was often used to examine the contribution of particular HEdPERF measurements to enhancing the satisfaction and academic performance of students and how, on the one hand, HEdPERF mediates attitude towards learning and on the other, the satisfaction and academic performance of students. The EduQual, an instrument for assessing service quality in technical education with the following dimensions, was suggested by Mahapatra and Khan (2007), namely learning outcomes, responsiveness, physical infrastructure, growth of personalities and academics. EduQUAL has been developed and an integrative approach to measuring service quality is proposed using neural networks. By factor analysis accompanied by Varimax rotation, EduQUAL's dimensionality is validated. Based on the study by Piramanayagam (2011), there are five dimensions in EduQUAL which are learning outcomes, responsiveness, infrastructure, personality development and academics.

The EDUSERV model was developed by Ramseook-Munhurrin et al. (2010), where it is to tests the expectations and perceptions of service quality of educators in Mauritius secondary schools. They also mentioned in their report that the EDUSERV test was found to be reliable and valid for assessing the level of service in a secondary education setting. Finally in 2011, Senthilkumar and Arulraj (2011) established the Service Quality Measurement in Higher Education in India (SQM-HEI) model. This model is used in higher educational institutions for the assessment of service quality. Teaching Methodology (TM), Environmental Change in Study Factor (ECSF) and Disciplinary Action are three aspects of the models (DA). SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are generic measurement scales which are implemented across industries, based on a study by Ibrahim et al. (2012). With some modification of the items, both tools were applied in the education sector. SERVQUAL is, in addition to SERVPERF, HEdPERF, EduQUAL, SQM-HEI and EDUDSERVE, one of the most popular models used in evaluating service quality, according to Hassan et al. (2019).

Service quality dimensions and elements

Parasuraman et al. (1985) addresses that customers used essentially similar standards in determining the level of service regardless of any form of service. Therefore, he also came up with 10 key categories that were named as 'determinants of service quality' and also called dimensions. The researchers will have an in-depth discussion on five dimensions after refinement (*Figure 1*).

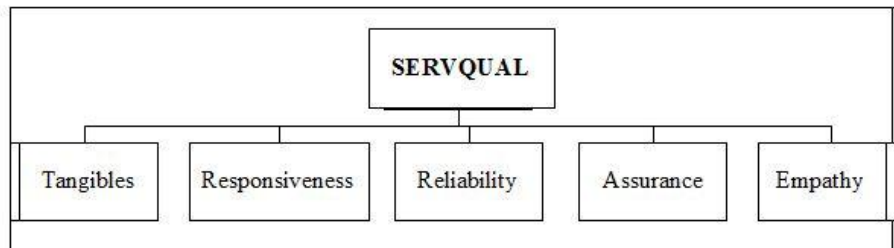


Figure 1. SERVQUAL Model.

Tangibles

Tangibles in this study will be representing as the physical services. This dimension provides physical presentation and visual services to the customers. Physical facilities, equipment that is needed to provide services (Parasuraman et al., 1985). A study by Hamilton et al. (1991) stated that the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel are represented by tangibles. Most companies use this dimension to improve their image, provide continuity, and signal quality to customers, according to Chi and Quan (2013). Elements of tangibles include comfortable facilities, professionalism of staff appearance, modern and up to date equipment. Tangibles give the first impression to the customers on what the visuals appear.

Responsiveness

The willingness to assist and provide timely service relates to responsiveness. This factor reflects on the idea of versatility and the ability to tailor the service to the needs of consumers. This includes the ability to respond to customers' requests on time (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The specific performances are linked to the time they have to wait for support, responses to inquiries, or attention to concerns conveyed to consumers (Wilson et al., 2008). Elements of this dimension include willingness of the staff to attend to students, providing prompt services and friendliness of the staff.

Reliability

Reliability indicates the ability to perform as promised. According to Wilson et al. (2008), reliability ensures that the organization fulfills its commitments: promises of delivery, availability of resources, settlement of issues and pricing. These include the ability to efficiently, correctly and effectively deliver the desired service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This dimension reflects on the desires of the customers. Customers expect the service provider to uphold the guarantee of service performance and key service characteristics (Wilson et al., 2008). Elements that are related to this dimension are the appropriate service provided, ability and knowledge provided by staff and providing service as promised.

Assurance

Assurance relates to the capacity to encourage confidence and trust. This factor is especially important because it is the opportunity to offer clients personal care and consideration (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Assurance also extends to the capabilities of service providers, including the knowledge of faculty members and the ability to implant self-reliance on service providers in students (Afridi and Haider, 2018). Elements that included are high quality services provided, students highly confident with staff ability, skill and knowledge level of lecturers and staff.

Empathy

Empathy covers the care of customers as individuals. This dimension reflects on the ability to express faith and confidence through the services given to customers, that customers are unique and that their needs are understood (Wilson et al., 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1985). According to Hamilton et al. (1991), empathy dimension includes offering caring, individualized attention to users. Elements involved are friendly manner of staff, providing information that is easy to understand and amount of attention given to students. Laroche et al. (2002) discussed that the aggregate sum of difference between the five-dimensional perceptions and expectations forms the global perceived construct of quality. These five dimensions suggest an approach to measuring the quality of the service.

The relationship between quality and students' satisfaction

Previous research has found that the high quality of service for educational services has a significant effect on student satisfaction. Comprehension of student satisfaction was closely correlated to the quality of service. They claimed that satisfaction is a consumer reaction to the service rendered, based on a study by Tse and Wilton (1988). It is well associated with the principle of Parasuraman et al. (1985) which said that regardless of the service offered and the money paid, customers will experience both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), the satisfaction of students is obtained when actual educational service efficiency achieves student expectations. Student expectations are student expectations of the quality of educational services rendered, while success is the actual performance of the quality of services provided by educational services (Kotler and Keller, 2011). According to DeShields Jr et al. (2005), the performance of faculty, staff and classes are the key predictors of student satisfaction with educational services. There are few reports on student satisfaction in higher education because of its complexity (Mercedes et al., 2005).

Theoretically, the connection between the quality of service and student satisfaction remains uncertain (Anderson et al., 1994). The research conducted in India found a favorable association between quality of service and satisfaction of students (Annamdevula and Bellamkonda, 2016a; 2016b), suggesting that the improvement in quality of service was the increase in satisfaction of students. Alves and Raposo (2009) as well as Duarte et al. (2012), who carried out research in Portugal, affirm this. Similarly in Singapore, Khoo et al. (2017) conducted a study which discovered the close relationship between the private tertiary education sector's service quality and student satisfaction. A research on private education institutions in Malaysia found a strong correlation between tangibility, which is one of the facets of quality of service and customer satisfaction (Mansori et al., 2014). They observed that the satisfaction of

students was measured by tangible amenities on the private campus. A research conducted on higher education institutions in Syria, however, found no evidence of the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction (Dib and Alnazer, 2013). Therefore, to get the precise link between these two relationships and aim to find the solutions to enhance the real situation, this analysis goes through individual situations.

The relationship of services quality dimensions towards higher education

In the literature, a wide block of studies has been presented attempting to examine, describe, characterize, assess and address the dimensions of service quality in the sense of higher education. According to Crosby (1979) stated that quality in education is directly linked to the achievement of the conformity with specified objectives while Peters and Waterman (1982) stated that service quality in higher education defined as quality with excellence in education. Furthermore, Holdford and Patkar (2003) defined it as an evaluation of the quality of service in an educational environment and evaluated with their education path, facilities that were provided to the students. The level of service at a university was also evaluated by Aghamolaei and Zare (2008). In addition, higher education institutions should analyze the quality of service to enhance the quality of service and ensure higher retention rates (Tu et al., 2012). In another higher education environment, Adikaram et al. (2016) examined service quality and customer satisfaction. They highlighted that the quality of service was associated favorably with customer satisfaction. Tarí and Dick (2016) thus observed that educational institutions would continue to feel the pressure and demands from both their donors and stakeholders in higher education to close the widening gap between the expectations of institutional standards and real performance. The standard of service in the tertiary education sector for instance, most prestigious universities, student choices and overall student behavior can drive institutional decisions. Their questionnaire was built based on the SERVQUAL model and measured students' perceptions and expectations of service quality across five service dimensions (reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness). Their results revealed that detrimental differences indicated that students desired better support than what they felt they had gotten.

A research conducted by Rawas et al. (2012) in Egypt, employed the SERVQUAL model, but proposed that the SERVQUAL model should be used in an Arab region, replacing the "empathy" component with the "image" dimension. This is supported by their claim that the university image is more critical for students in Egyptian higher education institutions to judge the level of service, while the "empathy" component is not. Azoury et al. (2014) who performed similar studies in Lebanon and Randheer (2015) in Saudi Arabia, supported the findings of this research. Senthilkumar and Arulraj (2011) conducted another study in this area, where in Indian universities, they found out three key dimensions are recognized such as exceptional capital, strong faculty and range of disciplines. Hence, the generalization of their study results is constrained by their sampling methods. In their analysis, Fernandes et al. (2013) used a national student survey (NSS), with a group of 187 graduate students at a UAE university campus in the UK (United Arab Emirates). There are two key components of service quality, the instructional method and the basic academic variables of the program have the most significant effect on student satisfaction. The research was however, limited to one UAE university and was not accessible to all UAE universities. The fact that various training services are widely adopted by UAE universities supports this point (i.e., American, British, and French).

The King Fahd Public University of Petroleum and Minerals surveyed 310 Saudi Arabian students (males only) pursuing business studies in a recent study proposed by Sohail and Shaikh (2004) found that there are six major dimensions of service quality that are physical proof, responsiveness, curriculum, communication with staff, credibility and access to facilities. In addition, students with different gender majors will most certainly have different degrees of satisfaction (Abouhedid and Nasser, 2002). Any of the determinants of the quality of education that influence the expectations of students are student scholarships, extracurricular activities (Akareem and Hossain, 2016), best faculty, physical resources (Senthilkumar and Arulraj, 2011) and interactive methods of learning (Cavana et al., 2001).

Conclusion

There is a major challenge to identify and classify the dimensions of service quality and it is comprehensive discussion of the nature, requirements and number of dimensions (Strombeck and Shu, 2014; Parasuraman et al., 1985). A big problem related to the quality of the service is the number of dimensions that compromise the quality of it. Often, after revising, the same researchers should be checking the validity and reliability of their model and relative to different measurements, ending up with different dimensions. For instance, several previous studies summarize into four dimensions (Angell et al., 2008; Gatfield et al., 1999), while other studies listed five dimensions (Lodesso et al., 2018; Asefi et al., 2017; Khan and Fasih, 2014; Sheikh Ali and Mohamed, 2014; Owino, 2013; Sahney et al., 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1988), six dimensions (Mang and Govender, 2017), seven dimensions (Randheer, 2015; Hampton, 1993), nine dimensions (Sultan and Wong, 2010; Parasuraman et al., 1985) and some have even reached to eleven dimensions (Yusof et al., 2012). Cultural diversity, demographic variables and personal considerations all contribute to the variation in the measurements of service quality in different studies, taking into account the place, condition and environment addressed. Another factor adding to such variation is the difficulty of generalizing in many studies due to insufficient sampling procedures and unrepresentative sample sizes.

The dimensions of quality of service outlined and used in major studies aimed at evaluating the quality of service in higher education in different countries, taking into account the debate on the dimensions of quality of service in higher education and the large number of studies examining dimensions of different features and criteria. A detailed influence on student satisfaction between university reputation and service quality and its impact on student loyalty has never been taken into a study especially in this current setting post pandemic of Covid-19.

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