



Student Satisfaction and Quality of Service: A study on Student Information System at the Al-Buraimi University College

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ABSTRACT

Services provided to students and its quality is one among the critical factors that influence the success of higher education institutions. To maintain the level of competitive advantage in the higher education sector, it is very important to assess the quality of educational services provided to students to get feedback from them. The challenges faced by universities and colleges in the highly demanding environment require that they are continuously updated with the recent trends. Student Satisfaction is the most critical and crucial factor that helps a higher education institution to meet the increasing challenges from current and potential competitors and to enjoy a favorable educational setting. This paper is an attempt to measure student satisfaction based on quality of service of Student Information System (SIS) installed in the college. The results of the study signify that the students are satisfied with the SIS.

KEYWORDS : Higher education, Service Quality, Student Satisfaction

Introduction

Higher Education Institutions have witnessed tremendous changes in their mode of service delivery since globalization. In order to compete and sustain the position in the higher education industry, it has become a necessity for the institutions to understand the needs and requirements of the students. To devise strategies to attract and retain students and to enhance the profitability and credibility of the institution is of primal importance to the top management of the educational institutions (Oscar W, DeShields Jr, Ali Kara, & Kaynak, 2005). The explicit and implicit services offered in a university highly influence the level of satisfaction of the students (Arokiasamy, 2012). Quality of the service rendered is considered to be the most important factor if organizations need to maintain their competitive position and is an antecedent to customer satisfaction (Lassar, Manolis, & Winsor, 2000). This study is an attempt to measure the student satisfaction with regards to the quality of newly implemented customized SIS in BUC. The study focuses mainly on the quality dimensions of the SIS and its influence on student satisfaction. The technical aspects of the software are not taken into consideration. Very few studies focused on the impact of service quality of the student information systems on the student satisfaction. Even though many studies focused on service quality in education, very few focused on developing countries (Athiyaman, 1997).

Higher Education Scenario in the Sultanate of Oman

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have witnessed a paradigm shift. Heavy thrust on Educational institutions especially with private participation was viewed as a solution to the challenges faced by them in the higher education sector (Coffman, 2003; Rugh, 2002). Higher education sector in Oman has grown and made significant development in the last decade. The Omani government invited the participation of the private sector to play a noteworthy role in the expansion of private higher education in order to have room for public's incredible requirement for higher education (Al-Lamki, 2002). Al Buraimi University College (BUC) is the first University College in Al Buraimi Governorate and is affiliated with California State University Northridge (CSUN) which is committed to meet the needs of local labor market to cope with the global economic changes.

Literature Review

Since higher education sector is privatized, and considered like service organization it is of utmost importance to have a clear understanding of student needs and factors influencing their satisfaction. Organizations must focus on the service quality dimensions as it is an important determinant of satisfaction (Lassar et al., 2000). Student satisfaction is of undeniable concern to colleges and universities as they look for continuous improvement in the

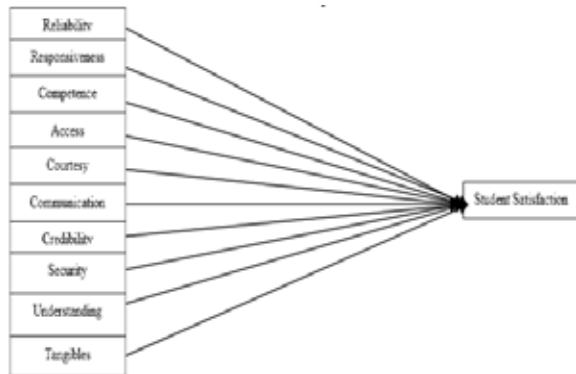
learning environment for students, to meet the expectations of their stakeholders, and reveal the institutional efficiency. Unlike service industries colleges and universities consider satisfaction as a means to an end (Schreiner, 2009). A student's overall assessment of perceived service quality at any time will be influenced by the satisfaction with services received. This satisfaction level is highly influenced by the registration process which helps them to enroll in their preferred courses and sections. Enhanced student satisfaction could be achieved by improving service quality and to a great extent this responsibility lies with higher educational institutions (Helgesen, 2006).

Service Quality Dimensions

"Service Quality is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis" (Lewis & Booms, 1983). It is very difficult to ensure consistency in service delivery because what the firm tries to deliver may be entirely different from what the customer expects (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Several researchers have found that different dimensions of service quality play an important role in determining satisfaction. It is highly critical that the service providers need to focus on these dimensions to enhance the level of satisfaction. This study takes into account ten dimensions of service quality namely Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Understanding and Tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It is found out that the physical facilities offered by higher education institutions have great impact on students satisfaction (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998).

Methodology

The research follows a descriptive pattern and used quantitative methods and questionnaire. The questionnaire used for the study is taken from original article (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Data was checked for missing values, outliers, extreme values and normality. In this research, the population comprised of the students of BUC. A sample size of 200 was drawn using simple random sampling. Primary data was collected using questionnaire, interview and secondary data from articles published in journals, websites, books, reports etc. Cronbach Alpha and KMO measure of sampling adequacy was computed and found to be relevant and valid. Confirmatory factor analysis was done and factor rotation performed. Hypotheses pertaining to the influence of service quality dimensions on student satisfaction were tested. The overall goal of the research is to find out the level of student satisfaction with regards to Quality of Student Information-System.

Conceptual Model of the study**Figure -1****Conceptual Model****Data Analysis and Results**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was found to be 0.722 (>0.6) which ensures that the sample size is good enough to carry out factor analysis. Cronbach Alpha for the sample was 0.864 (> 0.6) which ensures reliability and acceptability of the questionnaire. The mean values of all dimensions of service quality are above 3 which indicate that students are satisfied with SIS.

Table -1**Demographic Profile**

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	129	64.5
	Male	71	35.5
Department	English	26	13
	IT	80	40
Degree	Business	94	47
	Diploma	63	31.5
	Adv. Diploma	17	8.5
	Bachelor	120	60

Hypothesis Testing**Correlation Analysis**

The correlation coefficient between each dimension of service quality and student satisfaction will help the university analyze the relative level of importance of each dimension. In the analysis of correlation, all dimensions exhibited a positive correlation with student satisfaction. It was found out that the highest level of correlation existed between tangibles and student satisfaction ($r=.704$). The results confirmed that tangibles which included the appearance and display of SIS impacted students' satisfaction more than any other dimension. This is in conformity with the literature on service quality (Bouman & Van der Wiele, 1992; Chi Cui, Lewis, & Park, 2003; Siu & Tak-Hing Cheung, 2001). The correlation coefficient between courtesy dimension and student satisfaction ($r=.476$) indicates a moderate positive relation. The correlation coefficients among the dimensions were also found to be positive. The results of correlation analysis are shown in Table: 2.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Student Satisfaction										
Predictor Variables										
1. Reliability			.594**	.519**	.560**	.640**	.603**	.513**	.542**	.642**
2. responsiveness					.590**	.602**	.584**	.641**	.445**	.448**
3. competence				-	.654**	.525**	.612**	.434**	.393**	.541**
4. access						.583**	.655**	.482**	.422**	.505**
5. communication								.483**	.441**	.518**
6. credibility									.579**	.528**
7. security										.590**
8. understanding										
9. tangibles										
10. courtesy										

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multiple Regression Analysis

The calculated VIF's were less than 3 (less than 10 acceptable) indicating that there are no issues with regards to multi collinearity and tolerance levels are less than 1. The Durbin Watson statistic which tests autocorrelation was calculated to be 1.826 ignoring the presence of autocorrelation. It could be recognized from the table 3, that the R-square (R^2) is .645 which indicates that 64.5% of the variance in student satisfaction is described by the dimensions of service quality. The results in the ANOVA table show that the model is statistically significant ($Sig=.000$, $P<0.05$). The beta value for the tangibles dimension is .311 which indicates that the impact of this dimension is more on the model.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.803 ^a	.645	.626	.61126454	1.826

a. Predictors: (Constant), tangibles, Courtesy, credibility, Reliability, responsiveness, security, access, understanding, competence, communication

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	128.381	10	12.838	34.359	.000b
	Residual	70.619	189	.374		
	Total	199.000	199			

a. Dependent Variable: student satisfaction
b. Predictors: (Constant), tangibles, Courtesy, credibility, Reliability, responsiveness, security, access, understanding, competence, communication

Table 4: ANOVA

Model	B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		Std. Error	Beta				VIF	
1	(Constant)	.430	.183		-2.355	.020		
	Courtesy	.125	.051	.125	2.424	.016	.707	1.415
	Reliability	.143	.063	.143	2.268	.024	.471	2.125
	responsiveness	-.051	.064	-.051	-.788	.432	.456	2.195
	competence	.044	.066	.044	.665	.507	.427	2.341
	access	.204	.063	.204	3.244	.001	.476	2.101
	communication	.006	.074	.006	.078	.938	.343	2.919
	credibility	.032	.058	.032	.551	.582	.549	1.823
	security	.034	.061	.034	.563	.574	.510	1.959
	understanding	.178	.064	.178	2.788	.006	.460	2.173
	tangibles	.311	.070	.311	4.462	.000	.387	2.587

a. Dependent Variable: student satisfaction

Table 5: Multiple Regression (Coefficients)

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions and student satisfaction. The interviews with the students indicated that they would like to get access to their study materials online through the portal. Clear and separate list of courses completed and to be completed will significantly reduce the time taken for registration. This implies that the system interface needs to be more user friendly. This research study will enable the management of higher education institutions especially in the admissions and registrations aspect to understand the importance of service quality in enhancing student satisfaction. Hence it could be concluded that the quality of services rendered to students need to be increased to ensure high levels of satisfaction and value which will ultimately lead to higher levels of enrollment thereby guaranteeing high levels of profit.

Recommendations and Limitations

Apart from registration services, the SIS should integrate other services like online fee payment, hostel information, access to academic materials etc to augment the increased level of satisfaction of students. Introduction of mobile application is one among the top recommendations from students as this will enable them to easily access the information. The study has taken into consideration only 200 students from BUC. Since the sample size is small, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to other private universities and colleges operating in the Sultanate. In the future, the study could be conducted on a large scale by increasing the sample size and by comparing with other universities. This study is not incorporating any technical aspect of the SIS.

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