

# Service Quality Dimensions Assessment In Higher Education: An Empirical Analysis

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**Abstract:** *In India as the higher education institutions numbers is growing, so does competition, and with that comes improvements in quality. In recent years, "the importance of service quality in higher education has become more prominent". Individual customers' opinions on the level of service they received varied widely. While one student may rate the situation as excellent, another may rate it as only average in educational environment. "The purpose of this paper is to assess the students Service Quality Perception in Higher Education".*

**Keywords:** Higher education, Perception, Service, Quality

## I. INTRODUCTION

"Research and publishing, service to society, and education" are the primary roles of higher education institutions. These institutions are also supposed to suit the interests of students in the fields of culture, the arts, and athletics in addition to providing education. Higher education institutions expansion impacts both quantity and quality. Basic educational possibilities must be available to students at these institutions. "Provision of needs such as classroom, instructors, faculty members, civil servants, heating, and accommodation, security and social activities would influence the perceptions towards the institution". It is much more difficult to evaluate service quality than it is to evaluate product quality. The comparison between present quality of service and relevant customer expectations is the starting point for the impression of service quality. Not only are assessments of service quality outcome-oriented, but they also involve evaluations of quality of service in terms of its underlying processes. Developing performance metrics in higher education may pose certain challenges. This is owing to the fact that measures of performance tend to focus on measuring efficiency rather than the educational services quality provided to students.

## II. CONCEPT OF SERVICE QUALITY

Harvey and Knight (1996) defined Quality in higher education. Although, in a service company, quality may be measured by the manner in which the expectations of customers are met and the quality of the service is given. The fundamental characteristics of service are its interdependence, intangibility, and diversity. A study found that quality always indicates exceptionality, the objective of fitness, the worth of money, and the constancy of transformation. According to Lewis and Booms (1983), service quality may be measured by matching client expectations to the actual level of service provided. There are two aspects to consider when it comes to quality: functional and technological. (Gronroos, 1984). Technical quality evaluates the service's actual output, while functional quality looks at how it performs. The first time the term "service quality" was used was by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), who used the disconfirmation model to present the idea. Customers' expectations and views are better understood with this method. There is an internal gap that is hampered by the direction and the extent of the services provided. Because of this, SERVQUAL is employed as a method of evaluation.

There are four gaps: "Gap 1 (It is the gap between the management's perception and expectations of consumers, also known as positioning gap) followed by Gap 2 (It is the gap between the firms's service quality in regards to management perception and expectations of customers is called specification gap), Gap 3 (It is the service delivery by the employee and specifications of services called delivery gap), and Gap 4 (It is the communication spread for the service for the customer, also known as positioning gap)" (Sesmiarni and Ilmi, 2019).

The five aspects of SERVQUAL are dependability, responsiveness, ability, and will. Confidence and trust are conveyed via assurance. Empathy is a process that involves a person's care and attention to their customers. The most significant approach to communicating information is via tangible means, including physical appearance, equipment, staff, and written or spoken communication materials. SERVQUAL instrument has been used in several assessments of the literature in higher education to evaluate the quality of the service characteristics.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality has been a hot topic since the 1980s, when consumers began to pay more attention to it. While concrete goods' quality has been defined and quantified, service quality has yet to be thoroughly defined and examined (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). There is still a knowledge gap between what we know about product quality and what we know about service quality. It is important to recognise the following characteristics of service quality: its intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability. According to the appropriate service literature, there are three key aspects to consider: "(1) Customers have a more difficult time evaluating the quality of service than the quality of the goods. (2) The comparison of current service performance and relevant customer expectations results in the impression of service quality. (3) Evaluations of the service delivery process are included in quality evaluations as well as those of the service product" (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In reality, comprehensive quality management, customer service, and marketing research all contribute to improved service quality. Service quality is defined as the conviction that a company exists only to serve consumers (Heron & Nitecki, 2001). Defining quality ideas in 'service quality' and 'educational quality' is quite tough. The level of service that a client receives might vary widely depending on the specific demands of that consumer. Many people consider a university's courses and programmes of excellent quality in an educational setting, yet others may find the same thing a disappointment (Quinn et al., 2009).

The importance of service quality as a strategic power and a management priority has grown. Service quality measurement is a shared interest of practitioners and academics, who want to better understand the causes and consequences of service quality in order to improve service quality and gain a competitive edge (Abdullah, 2006a). There are two main schools of thought among scholars. The 'Nordic' approach is the first, and it identifies global functioning and technical excellence as the aspects of service quality. Secondly, there is the 'American' viewpoint on service, which determines its characteristics. In spite of this, there seems to be no agreement on which of the two conceptualizations should be preferred (Prakash & Mohanty, 2013).

In higher education there has been a rise in interest in the role of service quality over the last two decades because of its significance (Jelena, 2010). Students are more concerned about the quality of their education since it is a societal need. This is a requirement in many countries, and the establishment of independent quality certification boards that focus on student experiences is a result of this (Zafiroopoulos & Vrana, 2008).

Higher education institutions must guarantee that all services are properly administered for students (Jelena, 2010). The procedures and outputs of a service are often used to evaluate its overall quality. Consumers' evaluation of services is aided by the outputs of service quality (such as technical quality) and the fundamental quality of interaction between service providers and customers (Eisingerich & Bell, 2008). Many various groups of people, including "students, employers, academic staff, administration, and family members", are all considered clients in higher education. It is imperative that college and university teachers be held responsible for the quality of education they provide. We are now debating the best ways to bring about more transparency in higher education (Abdullah, 2006b).

The two aspects of service quality in higher education are methods and 'quality dimension'. There have been many studies that used SERVQUAL and obtained favourable results by employing SERVPERF and significance-performance analysis (Angell & Heffernan, 2008; Wright & O'Neill 2002; Yildiz, 2014). Although these measures have significantly influenced service quality research, in higher education SERVPERF may not be an adequate tool for evaluating student perceptions of quality.

One of the most vital aspects of preparing students for successful careers is providing them with a high-quality education. On the other hand, department heads meticulously organise their students' educational programmes and prerequisites based on their future career goals and the unique characteristics of their respective divisions. Although administration has an important role, so do the learning environment, student abilities, and educational counsellors as

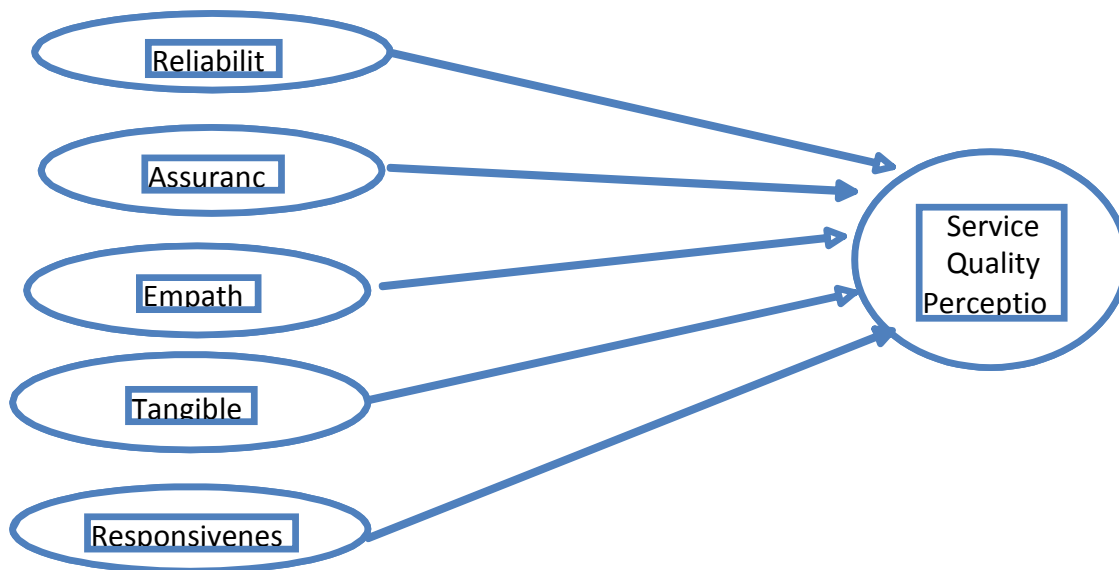


a whole and how well education services are provided. As a result, high-quality service is seen as critical to achieving programme objectives and enhancing students' foundational abilities (Cheng, Tsai, & Lin, 2013). Service quality is more important in institutional environment because institutions concentrate on management of quality service (Kondrotait, 2012).

3.1 Objective and Methodology

“This study aims to determine higher education service quality perception from post graduate students towards the universities at which they studied”. For this, the researchers have collected data from 100 post graduate students from the students' views of service quality in terms of “gender, the years since the formation of higher education institutions, and the student viewpoints”.

3.2 Construct Model



IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Mean rank of variables according to gender

Table with 7 columns: Variable, N, Mean, Std. Deviation, Std. Error Mean, Gender, Rank. It contains data for Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Tangible, and Responsiveness, each split by Male and Female.

Gender did not seem to have any difference on students' evaluations of service quality at higher education institutions. Students' gender didn't make any difference in ranking of variables in determining the level of service they received from their institutions.

Table 2: Mean rank of variables according to Years of establishment

	“N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Rank”
Reliability	100	3.9950	1.13641	.08036	1
Assurance	100	2.3850	1.16773	.08257	5
Empathy	100	3.7600	.85207	.06025	3
Tangible	100	2.4000	.98736	.06982	4
Responsiveness	100	3.7650	1.11625	.07893	2

Years of establishment did seem to have an effect on students' evaluations of service quality at higher education institutions. A year of establishment was a factor in determining the level of service they received from their institutions.

Table 3: Mean rank of variables according to students

	“N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Rank”
Reliability	100	1.7974	.72897	.03740	1
Assurance	100	1.4132	.87494	.04488	5
Empathy	100	1.5763	1.07844	.05532	3
Tangible	100	1.5184	.94278	.04836	4
Responsiveness	100	1.6421	.79796	.04093	2

Students' perceptions did seem to have an effect on students' evaluations of service quality at higher education institutions. As per mean score Students ranked reliability on top followed by responsiveness, followed by empathy, followed by tangible and assurance.

Assurance service quality variables in descending order

“Reliability is high among the other factor towards student's perception of service quality (Mean Score). According to a research results reliability > responsiveness > empathy > Tangible> in all the above cases”.

**H1:**“Assurance significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.796	24	.991	6.722	.002
Within Groups	132.743	900	.147		
Total	156.539	924			

The P value is 0.002 which is less than .05 and that implies that the above hypothesis is accepted which means that “Assurance significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

**H2:**“Responsiveness significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.173	13	.321	1.650	.047
Within Groups	177.256	911	.195		
Total	181.430	924			

The P value is 0.047 which is less than .05 and that implies that the above hypothesis is accepted which means that “Responsiveness significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

**H3:**“Reliability significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.265	10	2.227	8.862	.010
Within Groups	229.627	914	.251		
Total					

The P value is 0.010 which is less than .05 and that implies that the above hypothesis is accepted which means that “Reliability significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

**H4:**“Empathy significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.319	1	18.319	112.602	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	80.855	838	.163		
Total	99.173	839			

The P value is 0.000 which is less than .05 and that implies that the above hypothesis is accepted which means that “Empathy significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

**H5:**“Tangible significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.687	1	8.687	25.803	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	167.321	838	.337		
Total	176.008	839			

The P value is 0.000 which is less than .05 and that implies that the above hypothesis is accepted which means that “Tangible significantly affects the student’s service quality perception”.

Based on the hypothesis findings, it can be concluded that the higher education institute's service quality and students' perceptions are affected by all five of SERVQUAL's variables.

“The five factors in the research indicate comparable results to the Parasuraman, Ziethmal, and Berry(1988) study indicating reliability is the most important SERVQUAL dimension. It has a significant impact on how students judge the quality of the services they get. The results of this research conflict with those of Zeshan et al., (2012), who found that the most important influence is not reliability, but tangible. According to the results, students' perceptions were also influenced by responsiveness and empathy. The library, faculty, personal development, and physical look of university facilities have been neglected, resulting in the lowest level of tangibility in student perceptions. When it comes to reliability, prospective students look for perks that live up to the positive reputation the institution has built up over the years. Students strive for excellence in all they do during university, whether it's in the classroom or in the lab. As a result, students are looking for speedy answers to their concerns and questions. As a result, students' perceptions of service quality in higher education are based on reliability rather than tangibility and assurance.

**V. CONCLUSION**

This takes a systemic perspective to see the interplay of the many variables that make up a student's perception in the classroom as a learning partner. Prior to and during the start of a service, universities should ensure that accurate and timely information is communicated. Higher education institutions must make an attempt to respond quickly to every complaint and indicate their willingness to assist students in deciphering all of their questions. When students ask a question, university faculty and staff should be prepared with knowledge and experience to answer them. Students'

perceptions of colleges are also influenced by empathy. Empathy aids in the understanding of pupils' individual requirements. Faculty-student relationships were fostered as well. Schools and colleges may help a country's economy move from an industrial one to one based on information and knowledge. There is, nevertheless, a market for higher education institutions, and students are their consumers, because of this growing significance.

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