

SERVICE QUALITY INDICATORS AND STUDENTS' SATISFACTION AMONG VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated service quality indicators and students' satisfaction among VTE students in higher educational institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the service quality indicators, level of students' satisfaction, and influence of service quality indicators and students' satisfaction. The study was a descriptive research of survey type. Population of the study consisted of VTE students of higher institutions in Ekiti State which were 585 students as at 2021/2022 academic session. A total of 400 sample were obtained using proportionate sampling technique. A well-structured questionnaire titled: Service Quality Indicators and Students Satisfaction Questionnaire was used to collect data used for the study. Face and content validity was used to ascertain the instrument's validity which was ascertained by experts in Business Education and Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The reliability of the instrument was done using test-retest method and a reliability co-efficient of 0.73 was obtained. The findings of the study revealed that the top three service quality indicators in higher educational institutions in Ekiti are academic performance, management trust and personnel quality while the level of students' satisfaction of higher educational institutions in Ekiti is moderate. It was also revealed that academic performance ($t=2.654$, $p<.05$), personnel quality ($t=6.204$, $p<.05$), support services ($t=3.815$, $p<.05$), and management trust ($t=2.410$, $p<.05$) significantly influence students' satisfaction of higher educational institutions in Ekiti State while physical environment of institutions does not ($t=1.346$, $p>.05$). Hence, the need for higher institutions to improve on quality of personnel, support service provided to students and effective communication of policy and procedures with students.

Keywords: Students' satisfaction, service quality indicators, higher institution, VTE students.

Introduction

The pursuit of excellence in vocational and technical education (VTE) within higher institutions stands as a cornerstone in nurturing skilled and empowered professionals. Higher educational institutions can be considered as a part of service industry whose primary objective is to provide desired learning experience to its

customers who are mostly students (Mohammad, 2019). Higher education institutions also offer students the chance to improve their academic pursuits and attain their desired professional development objectives. For these objectives to be achieved there are important stakeholders who play different vital roles. These stakeholders include the workers (academic and non-academic)

and students. The students actively participate in learning process and provide valuable feedback while workers contribute their expertise, knowledge and support services (Chapleo & Sims, 2010).

To ensure the effective and efficient performance of these activities in this technology era, the use of ICT facilities is employed. This enables students to access the university portal and make payments, while both academic and non-academic staff members have services to render. These services are expected to meet the standards that will enable students to enjoy the services they have already paid for. In a bid to ensure good service quality, the employees, who are the staff must understand the need of the students, treat them with utmost respect and be empathetic of their issues, quickly and correctly respond to their requests, and have a means of getting feedback among others.

The concept of service quality, and the importance of high service quality in higher institutions cannot be underestimated because it helps to create institutional goodwill while maintaining a positive reputation, attracts quality employees, boost the students' choice of institutions through their overall experience. It can also be perceived as the overall students' impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the institution and its services (Mohammed, 2019). In higher educational institutions, the components or dimensions through which service quality can be measured include academic performances, quality of personnel, physical facilities and environment; supporting services; safety, security and trust.

Student satisfaction refers to the level of contentment and fulfillment experienced by students in their educational journey. It encompasses a

wide range of factors, including the quality of teaching, learning resources, campus facilities, administrative services, social experiences, and overall support provided by the educational institution (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017). Eliot and Shin also defined students' satisfaction as students' disposition by subjective evaluation of educational outcomes and experience.

Academic performance is the result of evaluating students' attainment of specific objectives. Most students attend higher educational institutions with the objective of gaining expertise in their chosen courses or disciplines. The extent to which they achieve these objectives helps to reflect their performance. Narad and Abdullah (2016) stated that academic performance is determined by the knowledge acquired and assessed through grading by teachers or the achievement of educational goals set by students within a specific timeframe. Students' academic performance reflects the effectiveness of teaching methods, curriculum design, and overall institutional support provided to students (Sibanda, Iwu & Olumide, 2015). The quality of personnel also remains crucial to reflecting service quality of higher educational institutions. The services provided by the personnel determine the quality of what the students receive (Rouf et al., 2016). Therefore, highly qualified and competent faculty and staff members are essential for delivering an exceptional educational experience. Their expertise, teaching methodologies, and ability to engage and inspire students directly impact the quality of education provided.

In addition, the availability of dedicated and knowledgeable support staff ensures smooth administrative processes and effective student support services (Kevin, Keerati, & Ashleigh,

2022). The qualifications, experience, and commitment of the personnel reflect the institution's investment in hiring and retaining skilled professionals who can meet the diverse needs of students. A strong and capable personnel team is indicative of the institution's commitment to delivering high-quality services and fostering a positive learning environment. Engaging quality staff or personnel for higher institutions in Ekiti State has been grossly compromised as many incompetent staff has been employed based on nepotism without prioritizing the interest and competency of such personnel to positions thereby affecting the quality of services delivered. This will therefore affect satisfaction of students in a negative way.

Positive learning environment in educational institutions also requires adequate physical facilities. These include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other infrastructure support student engagement, research, and practical learning. The quality of these facilities and their maintenance also influence students' judgment and satisfaction of institutions. Service quality is influenced by the availability and accessibility of these facilities, as they enhance their learning experience, comfort, and convenience on campus (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2021). These services include academic advice, counseling, career services, financial aid, library services, IT support, and student affairs. They play a crucial role in supporting students' academic and personal needs, fostering a positive campus experience, and facilitating their overall success. Johnson et al., (2022) noted that effective support services demonstrate the institution's commitment to student well-being, success, and holistic development.

Management trust in higher institutions is also another vital dimension of service quality that is a product of effective leadership and organizational success. When leaders demonstrate trust in their faculty, staff, and students, it fosters a positive work culture, encourages collaboration, and promotes innovation. Trust empowers individuals, strengthens relationships, and contributes to the overall growth and reputation of the institution. For instance, Eisingerich (2008) posited that higher level of trust fosters a sense of empowerment, accountability, and ownership, which translates into a higher level of commitment and dedication to providing quality services.

The issue of students' satisfaction has been a major concern in higher educational institutions in Nigeria and among students in Ekiti state. There have been verbal complaints among students of most higher institutions in Ekiti State on the level of satisfaction being received in the course of their studentship that is below expectations. Also, parents of students in these institutions are found of complaining about the manner and relationship of operations of members of staff as affecting the students' performance and morale. For instance, during registration, students seem not to be well addressed. They express frustration with the treatment received, highlighting instances where their needs are not adequately addressed or their issues remain unresolved. Additionally, errors in documentation have been observed, adding to the students' frustration and signaling inefficiency within the administrative procedures. This seems to have impact on satisfaction of these students as some of the services that should be provided seem not to be readily made available.

A lot of studies had been conducted by different scholars on service quality indicators. For instance, on academic performance Mahad and Nor (2016) conducted a correlational study investigating the impact of student satisfaction on academic performance. The study revealed a robust link between student satisfaction and academic success. Additionally, it highlighted the role of satisfaction in promoting both academic achievement and student retention. Similarly, Ridzuan et al., (2018) examined the role of students' satisfaction on academic performance of public relation students utilizing a survey distributed to all Public Relations students (n=94) at UiTM Melaka, the findings revealed significant factors influencing students' academic performance, including the relationship among UiTM staff, the university's surroundings, and facilities. In contrast, Jamshed and Mahammad (2016) study indicated that students were generally satisfied with learner-learner interaction, learner content interaction, learner technology interaction, and learner instructor interaction. On personnel quality Ali, Javed, and Khan (2020) studied personnel quality and students' satisfaction from higher education institutions in Pakistan. The findings indicated that these personnel qualities had a significant impact on students' satisfaction levels. The study shows a link by considering an aspect of service quality in higher institutions. Similarly, Chen, Zhang, and Liu (2019) studied personnel quality and students' satisfaction in Chinese higher institutions. This research focused on Chinese higher education and aimed to investigate the relationship between personnel quality and students' satisfaction. The study found that there is a positive link between students' satisfaction and quality of

personnel in the higher institutions Nsobiari et al., (2022) on service quality delivery and students' satisfaction in the University of Calabar, Nigeria considered reliability responsiveness, empathy and tangibles on students' satisfaction. The findings of the study revealed that all the service quality variables have significant effect on customers' (students) satisfaction. Studies also showed a positive relationship between students' satisfaction and physical environment (Mary & Kathryn, 2010; Hamid, & Somayeh, 2018). Support services in higher institutions has also be discovered to influence students' overall satisfaction (Kim, Park and Choi, 2020). Johnson, Smith, and Lee (2020) emphasized the importance of management or leadership trust and satisfaction in learning environment. In similar study Kim et al., (2020) established a strong positive association between management trust and student satisfaction at private colleges. Students who perceived higher levels of trust in the college's management also reported higher levels of satisfaction with the institution's overall support services and academic experience. In view of the foregoing, it has been observed that a study of this nature had not been carried out in Ekiti State, despite the observed inadequacies in the quality of services provided by the management of these institutions. It is on this note that the researcher delved into the intricate impact of services quality indicators on satisfaction of VTE students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There have been complaints among students of higher institutions in Ekiti State on the level of satisfaction being received in the course of their studentship that it is below expectations. Also, parents of students in these

institutions usually complain about the ways and mode of operations of members of staff as affecting the students' performance and morale. For instance, during registration exercise of new students seem not to be well addressed. They express frustration with the treatment received, highlighting instances where their needs are not adequately addressed or their issues remain unresolved. Also, errors in documentation have been observed, adding to the students' frustration and contributing to a sense of inefficiency within the administrative procedures. All these seem to have negative impact on satisfaction of these students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the service quality indicators and students' satisfaction among VTE students in higher educational institutions in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study:

- i. highlighted the predominant service quality indicators in higher institutions in Ekiti State;
- ii. investigated the level of students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State;
- iii. determined the service quality indicator that will best contribute to students' satisfaction in Higher Institutions in Ekiti State.

Research Questions

1. What are the service predominant quality indicators in higher institutions in Ekiti State?
2. What is the level of students' satisfaction in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Methodology

The research design used for this study is the descriptive survey type of research. The population of the study

consists of all Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) students of higher institutions in Ekiti State. In Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, the total number of VTE students were 447 while in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, the total number of Business Education students including those in the affiliated UNN programme were 138, hence, a total population of 585 students as at 2021/2022 academic session. The sample for the study was 400 students. The sample was selected using proportionate sampling technique. The proportionate sampling technique was employed to select 300 students from Ekiti State University students and 100 students from Bamidele Olumilua University of Education. This was done because of difference in the number of students in both universities. In each university stratified random sampling technique was used to select students in order to cater for male and female in the sample. A well-structured questionnaire was designed for the purpose of this study. The research instrument was designed to collect data from students and is titled: Service Quality Indicators and Students Satisfaction Questionnaire (SQISSQ). The instrument contains three sections, A, B and C. Section A contains items on demographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age and religion. Section B contains items on service quality indicators and academic performance while section C contains items on students' satisfaction. Face and Content validity were used to ascertain the validity of the instrument for the study. This was ascertained by experts in Business Education and Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The instrument was modified based on the comments of the experts to meet

the face validity requirements. To ensure the content validity of the instrument, the content of the items was reviewed in terms of clarity to ensure that all the ambiguity capable of creating confusion for the respondents is removed. Also, the experts ensured that the remaining items in the instrument adequately represented the contents specified by the concepts of the study. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using the test-retest method. To this end, a total of 25 copies of instrument were administered on students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko that has similar characteristics with the study area twice within the interval of two weeks. The two responses were correlated and analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment

Correlation (PPMC). The reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained which was considered enough for the study. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). For the descriptive analysis, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used and regression analysis tool was used for the hypotheses which was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the predominant service quality indicators in higher institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Service Quality Indicators in Higher Institutions in Ekiti State

Service Quality Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Performance	3.51	0.17
Personnel Quality	3.18	0.27
Physical Environment	3.12	0.28
Support Service	2.81	0.69
Management Trust	3.33	0.20

Cut-off mean = 2.50

Results obtained on the service quality indicators in higher institutions in Ekiti State revealed that academic performance is identified as the major indicator (Mean=3.51, SD=0.17), followed by management trust (Mean=3.33, SD=0.20), personnel quality (Mean=3.18, SD=0.27), physical environment (Mean=3.12, SD=0.28), and support service (Mean=2.81,

SD=0.69). From the result provided, it is evident that the top service quality indicators in higher institutions were academic performance and management trusts.

Research Question 2: What is the level of students' satisfaction in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 3: Students' Level of Satisfaction on Higher Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (Score = 27.99 – 40.0)	129	33.	25.72	2.263
Moderate (Score = 23.47 – 27.98)	163	42.3		
Low (Score = 10 – 23.46)	93	24.2		
Total	385	100.0		

Results presented in Table 2 students' level of satisfaction in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State revealed that 33.5% of the respondents agreed that their level of satisfaction is high with mean score ranging between 27.99 – 40.0. It was also showed that 42.3% of the respondents showed that their level of satisfaction is moderate with score between 23.47 – 27.98. Lastly, it was revealed that 24.2% of the respondents

experience a low level of satisfaction with score ranging between 10 – 23.46. Furthermore, it was revealed in the table that the overall mean score is 25.72 and a standard deviation of 2.263 which all falls in the moderate category. Hence, the level of satisfaction of students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is moderate while there is also a significant percentage of those in the high and low categories.

Table 3: Relationship between Service Quality Indicators and Students' Satisfaction

Indicator	Student Satisfaction	
	r	p.
Academic Performance	.519	.000
Personnel Quality	.609	.000
Physical Environment	.383	.002
Support Services	.555	.000
Management Trust	.445	.000

In Table 3 on the relationship between service quality indicators and students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State revealed that all the service quality indicators academic performance ($r=0.519$, $p<0.05$), personnel quality

($r=0.609$, $p<0.05$), physical environment ($r=0.383$, $p<0.05$), support services ($r=0.555$, $p<0.05$) and management trust ($r=0.445$, $p<0.05$) have positive and significant relationship with students' satisfaction.

Table 4: Multiple Regression summary table showing the influence of variables of service quality on students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State

Variable	Beta	t	p	R	R ²	F	Sig.
Academic Performance	.143	2.654	.008	.681	.464	65.62	.000
Personnel Quality	.328	6.204	.000				
Physical Environment	.070	1.600	.110				
Support Services	.205	3.815	.000				
Management Trust	.112	2.410	.016				

The regression summary result presented in Table 4 to establish the contribution of service quality variables on students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State. The result revealed that academic performance ($t(385)=2.654$, $p<.05$), personnel quality ($t(385)=6.204$, $p<.05$), support services ($t(385)=2.410$, $p<.05$), and management trust ($t(385)=2.41$, $p<.05$).

However, physical environment ($t(385)=1.60$, $p<.05$) does not significant influence quality of higher institutions in the institution. The personnel quality has the most significant impact on service quality on students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State. In addition, it was revealed that the variables interactively contribute to students' satisfaction ($F=65.62$, $p<.05$).

Discussion and Findings

Findings on the predominant service quality indicators in higher educational institutions in Ekiti State revealed that academic performance and management trust were the used as key indicators by students on the quality of service in the higher institution of learning. This is followed by personnel quality, physical environment, and support services. These indicators shed light on the critical aspects influencing students' perceptions of the quality of their educational experience. This finding aligns with that of Olawunmi et al., (2017) that the key indicators of students' satisfaction for most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria majorly focuses on the academic performance and management trust. The focus of the students is usually attracted towards their academic performance and how the management decisions and trust could influence this. This is also true similar finding by Onditi and Wechuli (2017) that holds that many of the institutions do not see their relationship with students as a customer and service provider relation and should ensure that all aspects are of good quality as they can be major service quality indicators.

The finding on students' satisfaction level indicated that a substantial portion of respondents reported moderate satisfaction level, with a smaller percentage reporting high and low levels of satisfaction. The overall mean score fell within the moderate satisfaction category suggesting that the level of satisfaction of the students on the higher educational institutions in Ekiti state is moderate. In other words, they were moderately satisfied with quality of service offered in these institutions. This finding is in tandem with that of Asiyai (2015) who expressed in a study that a

positive service quality rating is dependent on lots of factors particularly those that are directly accessed by the students. In addition, it was revealed that many of the higher educational institutions hardly invest in other factors that could influence the level of satisfaction of students. In support of this findings Rozsa (2013) also found that many institutions have been lagging behind in providing a supporting learning environment for the students which has contributed significantly to students' satisfaction rating.

The study also showed that there is a significant positive relationship between academic performance and students' satisfaction while corroborates with that Mahad and Nor (2016), between quality of personnel and students' satisfaction as also discovered by Chen, Zhang and Liu (2019). It was also revealed that a positive link exists between physical environment students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State. Supporting services also has a significant relationship with students' satisfaction in higher institutions. On the relationship between management trust and students' satisfaction, it was shown that there is a significant and positive relationship between management trust and students' satisfaction in higher institutions in Ekiti State. This implies that better management trust could influence students' satisfaction. This finding provide support for that of Kim et al., (2020) that showed the role of leadership trust on students' satisfaction. The study emphasized importance of transparent communication and responsive decision-making in building management trust and enhancing student satisfaction.

The regression result revealed that academic performance, personnel quality, support services, and management trust have significant

influence on students' performance while physical environment does not significantly influence students' satisfaction. Additionally, the interaction of these variables interactively impacted students' satisfaction levels, indicating a combined effect on overall satisfaction. This finding of this study aligns with the study of Nsobari et al., (2022) who also discovered in their study that all service quality variables have a significant effect on students' satisfaction. However, the findings of this study are in contrast with that of Mary and Kathryn (2010) whose study discovered that institutions' physical environment enhances students' satisfaction. Similarly, Hamid and Somayeh (2018) also discovered that school architecture has a significant influence on the satisfaction of students. Some of the factors that aid this satisfaction include; flexibility, spatial dimensions, readability, accessibility, beauty of space and environmental comfort. These factors, although quite relevant, do not play a significant impact on students' satisfaction ratings in higher educational institutions in Ekiti State.

Conclusion

Students are key actors in higher educational institutions because they serve as the customers. Therefore, the issue of customer satisfaction relates to how well they are served and the extent to which their educational goals are achieved. This study explored service quality indicators and students' satisfaction among VTE students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. The study found that academic performance and management trust were the two major service quality indicators in higher educational institutions in Ekiti State and the level of students' satisfaction is satisfactory. The study also revealed

that all service quality variables (academic performance, personnel quality, management trust, support services) except physical environment relate to influence students' level of satisfaction in Ekiti State higher education institutions. It can be concluded that an increase in service quality will bring about an increase in students' satisfaction.

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