The Impact of Service Quality on Students' Satisfaction

Faustina Oduro Twum
Ph.D. Student, Valley View University, Ghana, School of Business
Email: fotwum@vvu.edu.gh

Williams Kwasi Peprah, Ph.D. CSSGB, F.cfia
Valley View University, Accra, Ghana, School of Business
Email: williams.peprah@vvu.edu.gh

Abstract
The development and growth of every economy depend on the contributions of higher education. Universities are responsible for the generation and dissemination of knowledge in the socio-economic benefits of a country. Service quality is vital for higher education institutions to remain competitive and growing. Higher educational institutions have seen the need to place a greater value on improving their activities to meet students' perceptions and expectations to ensure satisfaction. Student satisfaction is vital in determining service quality at higher educational institutions. To have a competitive edge, higher institutions are required to build a stronger bond with students by providing the value for service delivery. The main purpose of this study is to assess student's satisfaction with services provided at the School of Business, Valley View University. A cross-sectional adopted questionnaire survey involving 100 students were conducted using the SERVQUAL Model with five Service Quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. The data were analyzed with SPSS software in generating the mean and standard deviation and the regression results. The results of the study showed that service quality and its dimensions of assurance, tangible, and responsiveness provide at the School of Business were *very satisfied,* however, Empathy was *moderately satisfied.* Indicated that students had high expectations on services provided at the School of Business. It has also confirmed satisfaction can be 100% accounted for by service quality dimensions of Assurance, Tangible, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy. The study recommends that School of Business must attend to student's needs by providing individual attention to solving the unique challenges of students.
Keywords: Service Quality, Higher Education, Students' Satisfaction, Assurance, Tangible, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy.

Introduction

Higher educational institutions are required to play significant role in assessing service quality to encourage students' satisfaction. Student satisfaction measures the perception and expectations of a student relating to a service provided by the School/Faculty and the University at large. University education is the best platforms for students get a lot of opportunities to develop their capabilities, career, and unlocking their potentials which means that the educational service delivery must be of quality.The awareness of quality service delivery in higher education has increased considerably globally.

From the perspective of the students at Valley View University in Ghana, the study assesses students' satisfaction using a tested SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman (1988), which has five dimensions at the School of Busines which consist of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurances. Tangibles are appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and relevant books. Reliability is about how student's problems are handled, whether services are rendered timely without errors, and whether services promised are delivered. Responsiveness entails readiness or willingness of staff to respond to service needs of students. Assurance consist of the capability, knowledge and courtesy of staffs that inspires trust and confidence. Empathy is the care and attention given to individual students based on a particular need.

There have been several studies conducted to assess students' satisfaction and service quality in higher institutions over the years ((Yilmaz,& Gurbuz, (2018); Pedro, Mendes, & Lourenço, (2018); Tijjani, (2019); Weerasinghe, & Fernando, (2018), however, this seems to be the first students satisfaction research at the School of Business at Valley View University. Therefore, the study has found a gap in knowledge to fill it.

The study is to assess the service quality delivery with respect to students' satisfaction at the School of Business as a way of promoting customer care and protecting institutional reputation. It will specifically provide an opportunity to administrators to continuously improve the quality of service rendered to students at the School of Business, and supporting the University-wide core values on passing on a passion for excellence, integrity and service.

For a higher education institution, students are essential stakeholders for universities (Donlagic & Fazlic (2015). According to Abedi (2018), higher education as a source of political, social, and economic growth, and the knowledge provided in the process of acquiring a higher education, a source of national competitiveness. Ei-Hilali et al. (2015) states that universities must demonstrate achievable support to students by enhancing value in service to influence students' level of satisfaction, which is the measure often used to assess educational quality, which addresses a strategic need (Uysal, 2015). Similarly, Tari and Dick (2016) pointed out that higher institutions will continue to feel pressured due to demands from students' expectations on service quality. Several studies have developed measurement tools to reveal the drivers for student satisfaction at the undergraduate level (Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2015; Mendes, & Lourenço, (2018); Tijjani, (2019); Weerasinghe, & Fernando, (2018)). Moreover, the measurement of student satisfaction is a departmental responsibility as a critical factor in knowing the student progress and success. According to Gunawan and Wahyuni (2018), service is an activity that is intangible and represents the fulfilling needs of a customer. It is a level of excellent output that benefits, and meets a customer's expectation.

Measuring students' satisfaction is vital to institution's performance and continuous improvement services provided (Hassan 2019). Jabbar et al. (2019), the satisfaction of students depends greatly on their cultural impact and perception. It explains that every student is different in terms of cultural background, which largely affects their expectation on satisfaction. Further, it states that satisfaction is an understanding of a situation before experiencing it. In the absence of consensus about how satisfaction should be assessed and analyzed from an academic perspective, the difficulty of student satisfaction is further illustrated. (Cheng et al., 2016). An approach to evaluate student's satisfaction is by student survey, which will capture their educational experiences into an overall satisfaction score (Douglas et al., 2015).

According to Kara et al. (2016), satisfaction is an overall customers' attitude towers a service provider, the emotional reaction that anticipates that service received is of higher quality. The author further states that student satisfaction is related to institutions having knowledgeable and specialized lectures, who are accessible to students for consultation, and who are will to provide feedback promptly. Also, student's satisfaction is achieved when actual experiences meet or exceed students' expectation in higher education institutions, where students are considered as primary customers (Paricio, 2017).

 For a service organization like Educational Institutions, it is vital to know how services are perceived by their students. Student satisfaction is associated to human activities, aimed at satisfying the customers' needs and wants through products and services. In the educational environment, the quality of qualifications is identified with the degree of satisfaction of their students. Al-Sheeb et al. (2018), showed that student satisfaction examines four educational dimensions such as lecturer's expertise, programmes offered, the environment, and classroom facilities. Quality of the higher education can be referred by the appropriate usage of modern teaching aids, state of the art library facilities, research facilities, and the quality of curriculum (Islam and Salma, 2016). According to Tsai et al. (2017), Higher Education Institutions raises the level of student satisfaction by improving academics such as quality of teaching, variety of courses offered, interaction with faculty out of class, and knowledge assessment. Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016) and Usman and Mokhtar (2016) indicated that service quality affects students' loyalty after having a satisfied experience.

Paricio (2018) further states that high students' satisfaction is creating a collaborative network of graduates with massive potential of promoting organizational reputation and position in the competitive market. Murray (2018) states that understanding students' university experiences is to statistically test student perception and expectation on service quality to ensure that the students' needs are addressed thoroughly. A study conducted by Douglas et al. (2015) showed that students' satisfaction entailed receiving value for money such as promptness of feedback on performance, availability of staff to attend to student's needs, adequate textbook and teaching materials, the responsiveness of faculty on individual academic needs.

Educational institutions are recognized as 'service industry' and has a more significant emphasis on meeting the expectations and needs of their customers, referred to as students (Afridi, 2016). Service quality, from the institution's perspective, means establishing requirements and specifications to satisfying customers' needs. Service quality is a concept that has inspired considerable interest in research (Islam and Himel, 2018). The author further explains that service quality in the educational institutions are fundamental to excellent achievements. Kandeepan et al., (2019) defines service quality as the extent, to which a service meets customers' needs or expectations. Service quality can be explained as the

difference derived from a customer expectation and perceived service. However, when expectations are greater than performance, then expected quality is less satisfactory (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Outstanding service quality gives an organization a competitive advantage which maximizes growth (Mustaffa, 2019). Similarly, Afthanorhan et al., (2019) points out that if the perceived service quality gives organization an expected service, where customers recommend the services to others due to the satisfaction experienced. The School of Business at Valley View University, as service provider will be assessed on service quality using the SERVQUAL model. A student's perception and expectation on service exceed expected service, there is the possibility of recommending potential students to enroll in the institution.

Higher education today is highly competitive in that students have many attractive options available to choose and belong. "… universities are forced to establish and improve their relationships with new and existing stakeholders…" (Schuller, Chlebovsky, Doubravsky, & Chalupsky, 2014; p.75). As a university, there should be effective strategies to woo potential students through quality service delivery. Educational quality service model states that educational process should train students to possess the knowledge, right working attitude, professionalism, environmental adaptability, sense of corporation and competition, mental endurance capabilities and moral cultivation (Peprah 2018). According to Saleem et al. (2017), service quality is an evaluation of how good a provided service approves a client/student's expectation. Further, they indicated that satisfied clients/students are committed and loyal to the brand. Thus, in higher education, the five SERVQUAL framework is more applicable in assessing service quality since it has been tested to be the most certain instrument over the years. Parasuraman et al. (1988) identified the following dimensions of service quality:

Table 1
Quality Dimensions in Higher Education

Variables	Definition	Attributes (confirmed by Ziethaml et al. (2003)
Tangibles	The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and personnel	It provides a physical representation of the service that clients/students use to evaluate service quality. It enhances the institution's image and provides customer continuity.
Reliability	The ability to perform the promised services accurately, and dependably	It helps retain customers. It ensures clients/students' willingness to re-do business with the organizations.
Responsiveness	Willingness to assist students and to provide prompt services	It focuses on attentiveness and promptness in dealing with clients/ students' requests, questions, complaints and problems. It captures the notion of flexibility and ability to customize the service to the customers' needs.

Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence	It seeks to ensure that providers courteously deliver service. It is expected to attract the needed trust and confidence from their customers.
Empathy	The ability to convey trust and confidence to customers	It is about treating clients as special and unique individuals. It connotes a positive impression to clients.

Source: As modified from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988)

Parasuraman's SERVQUAL model would be used to measure service quality in the theoretical framework for this study. This model is relevant assessing service quality in higher education. The independent value is service quality consisting of five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The dependent variable is students' satisfaction. Its equation is Y= a + bx where Y represents the dependent variable, x is representing independent variable, and b is the unstandardized regression coefficient and the constant.

Independent Variable   Dependent Variable

SERVICE QUALITY Tangible Reliability Responsiveness Assurance Empathy	⟶	**STUDENTS' SATISFACTION**
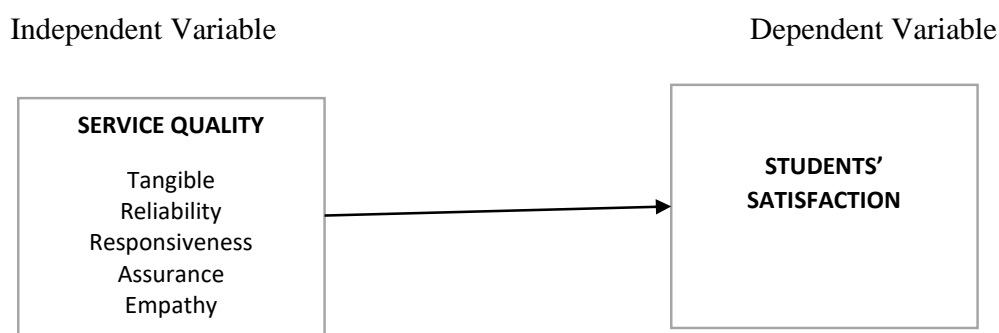
Research Framework

Methodology

The Study used a descriptive-correlational research design. The researchers used a cross-sectional survey approach in obtaining the data from the respondents. The research paradigm indicated a correlational effect of service quality on students satisfaction and investigated based on parametric statistics. The research question one is analyzed from a descriptive perspective based on central tendency of mean and standard deviation. The question two which is to make prediction is based in association of statistical trends of linear regression. SPSS version 23 was used in the data analysis.

The objective of this study is to determine the quality of service at the School of Business:
Research Question:
1) What is perception of service quality received by the students in terms of:
    a) Tangible
    b) Reliability
    c) Responsiveness
    d) Assurance

     e) Empathy
2) Which of the following service quality factors below predict students' satisfaction:
    a) Tangible
    b) Reliability
    c) Responsiveness
    d) Assurance
    e) Empathy

Research Hypothesis
1) None of the following service quality factors below predict student's satisfaction:
    a) Tangible
    b) Reliability
    c) Responsiveness
    d) Assurance
    e) Empathy

A total students' body of 445 at the School of Business constituted the population for the study. It included both males and females at level 200-400 from each of the programmes. All first-year students are exempted since they were new and are yet to experience the service quality delivery at the School of Business.

A stratified sampling technique is used to select respondents. The entire population were divided into three primary strata, comprising three departments: Accounting, Banking and Finance, and Management Studies (Human Resource Management, Management, Marketing, and Diploma in Business Studies). The sample were randomly selected from the stipulated number of respondents in each category. The selected respondents formed a sample for the research. The research uses simple random sampling technique because it gives each member in the population an equal chance of being selected. Questionnaires were distributed and retrieved by the researcher.

Primary data was collected and analyzed for the research. An adopted SERVQUAL questionnaire (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1988) was used as instrument for data collection where, a five-point Likert scale was used as scaling technique. Questionnaires were personally administered to 100 respondents and 86 retrieved. The scoring system and the scaled response for verbal interpretation is shown below:

Table 1
Scoring System Table

Numeric Scale	Numerical Likert Scale average weight	Scaled Response
5	4.6 – 5	Extremely Satisfied
4	3.6 – 4.5	Very Satisfied
3	2.6 – 3.5	Moderately Satisfied
2	1.6 – 2.5	Slightly Satisfied
1	0.6 – 1.5	Not at all Satisfied

Results and Discussion

Below is the demography details of the respondents. A total number of 41 or 47.7% of respondents were males, while 45 or 52.3% of respondents were females. It shows that the majority of the respondents were females. Per the programme of study, the total of respondents was 86, Management Studies comprising (Human Resource Management, Management, Marketing, and Diploma in Business Administration) had 39.6%; Accounting had 45.3% and Banking and Finance had 15.1%. It means that the highest number of students were from Accounting, and the lowest from Banking and Finance. The level sequence also indicated that level 200 respondents were 29, level 300 were 21 and level 400 being 36, with a percentage of 33.7, 24.4 and 41.9, respectively.

Table 2
Distribution of respondents' demography

Demography	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	41	47.7
Female	45	52.3
Totals	86	100
Programme of Study		
Accounting	34	39.5
Banking and Finance	11	12.8
Management	11	12.8
Human Resource Management	5	5.8
Marketing	11	12.8
Diploma in Business Administration	14	16.3
Totals	86	100
Level		
200	19	22.1
300	29	33.7
400	37	43.0
Totals	86	100

In answering research question one, The mean of student satisfaction and standard deviation shows the five dimensions of SERVQUAL, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as ranked per students' satisfaction at the School of Business. Among the dimension of service quality, Assurance ranked highest (M= 3.8, SD= .6808), followed by Reliability (M= 3.7, SD= .7111), Tangibles (M= 3.6, SD= .5546), Responsiveness (M= 3.4, SD= .7682), and Empathy scoring the lowest (M= 3.3, SD= .7166). The students at the School of Business in totality are *very satisfied* (M=3.6, S.D = 0.456) with service quality delivered to students with the exception of Empathy which the students indicated a *moderate satisfaction.* The moderate satisfaction result on Empathy implies that the students *moderately* felt as special and unique individuals at the School of Business based on the treatment they received from their Lecturers.

Table 3
Perception of the students' satisfaction of Service quality

	Tangibles	Reliability	Responsive ness	Assurance	Empathy	Total Service Quality
N Valid	86	86	86	86	86	86
Mean	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.3	3.6
Standard Deviation	0.5546	0.7111	0.7682	0.6808	0.7166	0.4546
Scaled Response	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied

The findings of the study is confirmed by Gong, and Yi, (2018) and Jafarnejadj and Shafie (2013) that this positive attributes of service quality can maintain students' satisfaction during their undergraduate experience and emphasizes that students university experience is an avenue through which a competitive advantage is gained. According to Elliott and Shin,(2002), it is a focal point for the university's quality strategy. The benefits of understanding student's expectation and providing satisfaction through knowledge acquisition, problem-solving, courteousness, and giving individual attention is paramount to institutions receiving some level of students' loyalty, higher retention and higher acquisition of new students.

Research question two was addressed with predictors of service quality based on Linear regression analysis approach to assess the five SERVQUAL dimensions as independent variables to predict students' satisfaction as shown in Table 4. After the analysis, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 100%, F (0) = 140.693, p < .000. The predictive result indicates that, the explained variables on Tangibles (6.7%), Reliability (20.3%), Responsiveness (5.5%), Assurance (58.4%), and Empathy (9.2%). The SERVQUAL model based on the unstandardized beta for this study is **SS = 1.66 +.190 TAN +.339 REL +.153 RESP +.474 ASSU + .212 EMP.**

Table 4
Prediction on students' satisfaction

	R Square Change	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant		1.666			9.927	.000
Tangibles	.067	.190	.0000	.267	27.613	.000
Reliability	.203	.339	.1974	.475	8.879	.000
Responsiveness	.055	.153	.1121	.278	8.120	.000
Assurance	.584	.474	.2739	.764	10.857	.000
Empathy	.092	.212	.1500	.360	7.853	.000
R=1.000			**R2=1.000**	**F=0**		**P=.000**

In answering question based related to the null hypothesis statement that there is no significant relationship between students' satisfaction and service quality, the study *reject* the null hypothesis. The study concluded that base on the service quality dimensions there is a significant relationship between service quality and students' satisfaction (F=0, p = 0.00) at p < 0.05.

The implications this study informs that providing quality services in entirety in every perspective is vital to gain students' satisfaction, which attracts belongingness even after graduation. The School of Business should, therefore increase awareness of giving quality services to influence student's experience, which will, in turn boost the institutional success. The results of this study using the SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy has established a significant impact on students' satisfaction at the School of Business.

Conclusion AND Recommendations
This study has clearly shown that student's perception of service quality provided at the School of Business is very satisfying. It means that students at the School of Business are very satisfied with services provided based on the SERVQUAL dimensions. It has also confirmed that satisfaction can be 100% accounted for by service quality dimensions of Assurance, Tangible, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy. The study recommends that School of Business must attend to student's needs by providing individual attention to solving the unique challenges of students.

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