Students' Satisfaction and Service Quality of HEIs

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Abstract
The present study was undertaken to evaluate students' satisfaction on services provided by the universities of Bangladesh. To establish and test dimensions for measuring service quality in higher education. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate students' satisfaction on services provided by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Specifically, the study found significant relationship between the five dimensions of service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) or SERVQUAL and students' satisfaction. General survey guided by a well-structured questionnaire had been administered across a valuable sample of 160 students of four public universities. The findings generally indicate that the majority of students are satisfied with the facilities provided by universities. Such findings help universities make better strategic plan as to enhance students' satisfaction in particular and its overall performance in general. In general, the results indicated that all the five dimensions of service quality were correlated with student satisfaction.
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Introduction and Background
Student satisfaction is an important facet for HEIs and specifically, it is highly related to service quality. Such development is highly related to the intensity of rivalries of today's business

environment (Lee & Hwan, 2005). Consumers are not only concerned with how a service is being delivered but most importantly with the quality of output they received. Positive perception on quality of services being delivered occurs when it exceeded customers' expectations. In the context of ensuring sustainability of higher learning, institutions require them to continuously strive towards meeting and exceeding students' expectations (Anderson, et al., 1994). Universities have seen that higher education has become a product and have been driven by competition to examine the quality of their services, to redefine their product and to measure student satisfaction in ways that are familiar to service marketing specialists (Kotler, 1985). Universities have realized that without providing quality services their long-term survival is impossible (Aly and Akpovi, 2001; Kanji et al., 1999). Education services are often intangible and difficult to measure, since the outcome is reflected in the transformation of individuals in their knowledge, their characteristics, and their behaviour. Therefore, there is no commonly accepted definition of quality that applies specifically to the higher education sector (Michael, 1998). Further, when we assess quality of HEIs, issues such as autonomy and independence complicate the whole process (Middlehurst and Gordon, 1995). In this context, accreditation agencies that are operated in each country have been trying to assess the quality offered by the institutions by evaluating and accrediting their degrees and the educational work offered. However, the perception of quality has not been greatly influenced by the operation of these agencies in the sector or clarified issues on institutional quality assessment (Parri, 2006). A simplistic approach to quality assessment would be to briefly describe what quality is, set certain standards that can be assessed compare these with the work done in each institution and draw a conclusion on the quality of the institution in question. Unfortunately, it is not a simple issue to measure the quality in HEIs (Parri, 2006). The perception of quality is multilateral: quality means different things to different people (Gerson, 1993) and from the perspective of quality's dimensions (input, process and output) and from the perspective of the stakeholders, there are many views of quality (Reichheld, 1996). The coexistence of many understandings of quality in education sector is a justification for a plenty of quality management models. However, some of these models are appropriate for the educational organizations only in part. Responding to the challenges to facilitate the individual's participation in economic and social life, the educational organizations need to focus on the perspective of the learners and on the final result of learning process – *the successful learning*. More organizations emphasize on service quality due to its strategic role in enhancing competitiveness especially in the context of attracting new customers and enhancing relationship with existing customers (Hokanson, 1995). This study focuses on the determinants of service quality within the Higher Education sector and attempts to assess their individual weight in defining quality from a student perspective. More specifically, this study's objective is to evaluate the students' satisfaction on quality of education provided by the universities of Bangladesh, with specific reference to students following undergraduate and postgraduate taught programs and to measure student's preferences in the available educational services. The specific objectives are to know the factors influence to the quality of higher education, to measure the relationship between dimensions of service quality and student satisfaction, assessing service gap through SERVQUAL model, to identify the problems faced by the students of quality students, to provide important suggestions to overcome the problem.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the students' satisfaction on quality of education provided by the universities of Bangladesh. The specific objectives are

- To know the factors influence to the quality of higher education.
- To measure the relationship between dimensions of service quality and student satisfaction.
- Assessing service gap through SERVQUAL model.
- To identify the problems faced by the students.
- To provide important suggestions to overcome the problem.

Importance of the Study

This study can play a vital role to create the qualitative students as well as an educated nation. By this study the teachers will able to know the necessity of students and the teachers will try best to the student's satisfaction. By doing this they can produce quality products (students). This study would help the management of HEIs to provide better service for the students. The students would then get proper service when management would aware about their services. The study helps to find problems in HEIs and provide suggestions to overcome the problems. Ensuring service quality of HEIs is not only a national issue but also it should be viewed as a global issue as because a significant number of graduates from the universities are now working abroad. There are 39 public universities in Bangladesh. Some of them are newly established. These universities have no adequate facilities and they also have inappropriate infrastructure. However, the service quality at this level is questionable due to lack of fulltime faculty members, updated curriculum, infrastructure facilities, and libraries, teaching aid, session jam, students-teachers politics and proper monitoring. In HEIs, service quality is the key parameter to improve performance and to gain student satisfaction. Today, many universities in Bangladesh are being driven towards commercial imposed by environmental challenges and performance measurement of service quality at higher learning institutions is strongly embedded to the matching between students' expectation and their experience of a particular service. Therefore, now it becomes very important issue to measure service quality of HEIs in Bangladesh.

Literature Review

Service Quality: Service quality is one of the most important research topics for the last few decades (Gallifa & Batalle, 2010).The service quality in the field of education and higher learning particularly is not only essential and important but also an important parameter of educational excellence. Positive perceptions of service quality have a significant influence on student satisfaction and thus satisfied student would attract more students through word-of-mouth communications (Alves & Raposo, 2010). The students can be motivated or inspired from both academic performance as well as the administrative efficiency of their institution. Ahmed & Nawaz (2010) said that service quality is a key performance to measure the educational excellence and is a main strategic variable for universities to create a strong perception in consumers' mind. Moreover, at higher learning institutions performance measurement of service quality is strongly prohibited to the matching between students' expectation and their experience of a particular service (Tahar, 2008).

Student Satisfaction: Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the

expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Kotler and Clarke (1987) define that satisfaction as a state felt by a person. Satisfaction is a function of relative level of expectations and it perceives performance. Satisfaction is also known as the intentional performance which results in one's contentment (Malik & Usman, 2010). According to Sapri et al., (2009), customers are the lifeblood for private and public organizations. Student satisfaction plays the significant role in evaluating accuracy and authenticity of the system being used. The expectation of the students may be high before entering and engaging in the higher education. In contrary, Hasan & Ilias (2008) assumed that actually satisfaction includes issues of perception and experiences of students during the college years. Student satisfaction is being shaped continually by repeated experiences in life on campus. The results of previous research reveal that satisfied students may attract new students and may inform their friends and acquaintances that they could go back to the university to further continue their study or take other courses (Helgesen & Nesset, 2007; Gruber et al., 2010).

Service Quality and Student Satisfaction: Parasuraman,et al., (1991) agreed that service quality is one of the important factors of customer satisfaction. In addressing the relationship between service quality and satisfaction, they studied a model developed by Oliver (1993). Oliver's model combines the two concepts and proposes that perceived service quality is prerequisite to satisfaction. The outcomes showed that service quality leads to satisfaction. Parasuraman et al., (1988) compared service quality with satisfaction. They defined service quality is a form of attitude, a long run overall evaluation, on the other hand satisfaction is a transaction-specific measure. Based on such definition, it is considered that perceived service quality is a global measure and the direction of causality was from satisfaction to service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Parasuraman, et al., (1991) assumed that reliability was basically related to the outcome of service and the process of service delivery considered as tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. Therefore, customer satisfaction can be dependent not only on the rule of customer about the reliability of the service provided but also on the experience of customer with the service delivery process.

Methodology of the Study
The study was basically descriptive in nature and based on both primary and secondary data. The area of this study was four public universities of Bangladesh (University of Dhaka, University of Rajshahi, Begum Rokeya University and Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University. Students of public universities in Bangladesh are the population of the study. The sample size was 40 from each university. Both undergraduate and postgraduate full time students were selected for this study totalled (4x40) =160. A quantitative data collection method is used for the research. A structure questionnaire is designed. The questionnaire comprises questions of the independent and dependent variables. Each item is rated on a likert scale of (1 to 5) which ranges on a continuum from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfy. The questionnaires were surveyed personally at the four universities of Bangladesh. The questionnaire is designed on the basis (Parasuraman et al., 1991). The questionnaires were based on the five dimensions of service quality (tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness and empathy) and used the Likert scale from 1 for strongly disagree at all to 5 for strongly agree. The questionnaires were distributed using survey method and respondents were identified through random sampling approach. The validity test was conducted using the content and face validity approached. The Data Analysis will be done

using for an in-depth investigation of the data. Step-wise regressions are used to test hypothesis and find the mean and standard deviation to know the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. MS Excel is also used to carry out calculations in some cases. SPSS software was used to analyze the collected data. Following techniques was used to analyze the data: descriptive analysis, correlation and multiple regression analysis as well.

Hypotheses of the Study
The hypotheses of the study are developed as below:
H_1: There is a significant relationship between assurance and student satisfaction.
H_2: There is a significant relationship between empathy and student satisfaction.
H_3: There is a significant relationship between tangibles and student satisfaction.
H_4: There is a significant relationship between reliability and student satisfaction.
H_5: There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and student satisfaction.

Result and Discussion:
Descriptive Statistics
Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Correlation coefficient (r) is a measure of the strength of the association between the two variables. Correlation could range between -1.0 and +1.0, the researcher need to know if any correlation found between two variables is significant or not (i.e.; if it has occurred solely by chance or if there is a high probability of its actual existence). As for the information, a significance of p=0.01 is the generally accepted conventional level in social science research and there is only a 1% chance that the relationship does not truly exist. The correlation matrix between dependent variable and independent variables are exhibited in Table 1 below. The findings from this analysis are then compared against the hypotheses developed for this study. Table 1 shows the mean value depicting the overall students' satisfaction. As far as this description analysis is concerned, students' satisfaction is above satisfactory level (with a mean value of 3.93 on a 5 point Likert scale). As far as the mean values are concerned students are satisfied on tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Students are likely to be satisfied in their educational institution when the service provided fits their expectations, or they will be very satisfied when the service is beyond their expectations, or completely satisfied when they receive more than they expect.

Table 1:
Mean and standard deviation of independent and dependent variables

Variables	Students	
	Mean	**SD**
Student satisfaction	3.93	0.25
Tangibility	3.29	0.75
Assurance	3.63	0.76
Reliability	3.38	0.74
Responsiveness	3.18	0.69
Empathy	3.47	0.30

This research used Pearson Correlation and Regression Analyses. The findings for tangibility show that the mean for the students are 3.29. This means that the students agree with the tangibility of service provided and they were satisfied. The findings for assurance show that the mean for the students are 3.63. This means that the students agree with the assurance of service provided and they were satisfied. The findings for reliability show that the mean for the students are 3.38. This means that the students agree with the reliability of service provided and they were satisfied. The findings for responsiveness show that the mean for the students are 3.18. This means that the students agree with the responsiveness of service provided and they were satisfied. The findings for empathy show that the mean for the students are 3.47. This means that the students agree with the empathy of service provided and they were satisfied.

Multiple Regression Analysis
In this study, the multiple regression analysis is used as a statistical technique to analyze the linear relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Hair et al., 1992). This is a way to recognize whether there is significant relationship between independent variables and dependent variables or not. The model sufficiently explained the variance or coefficient of determination or the R Squared in the effect of control variables relations. According to Hair et al. (1992) the test will be significant if the p-value is less than 0.01.

Hypothesis 1:
H_o: There is no significant relationship between tangibility and student satisfaction.
H_1: There is a significant relationship between tangibility and student satisfaction.

Table 2:
The Relationship between Tangibility and Student Satisfaction

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.294[a]	.368	.364	.45759	.368	91.574	9	150	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, course curriculum offered, overall cleanliness, appearance of lecture, decoration & atmosphere, appearance of personnel, layout of classroom, computer lab, update software.

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Table 3:
Analysis of variance of tangible items
ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.294[a]	.368	.364	.45759	.368	91.574	9	150	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, course curriculum offered, overall cleanliness, appearance of lecture, decoration & atmosphere, appearance of personnel, layout of classroom, computer lab, update software.

1	Regression	.886	9	.098	1.579	.000[a]
	Residual	9.357	150	.062		
	Total	10.244	159			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, course curriculum offered, overall cleanliness, appearance of lecture, decoration & atmosphere, appearance of personnel, layout of classroom, computer lab, update software.

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Decision Rule:
To reject the null hypothesis, the calculated p value must be less than the significance level of 1% i.e. critical p value.

Decision:
The critical P-Value is 0.01 because the confidence interval is 99%. Here, Calculated P value< Critical P value. So, at 99% confidence interval, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Here the relationship between tangibility and students satisfaction was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient for the respondents. The results in Table 2 & 3 indicates a strong and positive relationship between tangibility and student satisfaction exists among students (R Square =.364, n=160, p<.01). This means 36% of their satisfaction is determined by tangibility.

Hypothesis 2:
H_0: There is no significant relationship between assurance and student satisfaction.
H_1: There is a significant relationship between assurance and student satisfaction.

Table 4:

The Relationship between Assurance and Student Satisfaction

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.399ª	.159	.121	.23803	.159	4.115	7	152	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant Courses taught by lecturers, innovative lecturers, staff knowledge, security of university, academic credentials, friendly lecturers and lecturers' research.

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Table 5:

Analysis of variance of assurance items

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.632	7	.233	4.115	.000ª
	Residual	8.612	152	.057		
	Total	10.244	159			

a. Predictors: (Constant Courses taught by lecturers, innovative lecturers, staff knowledge, security of university, academic credentials, friendly lecturers and lecturers' research.

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Decision Rule:
To reject the null hypothesis, the calculated p value must be less than the significance level of 1% i.e. critical p value.

Decision:
The critical P-Value is 0.01 because the confidence interval is 99%. Here, Calculated P value< Critical P value. So, at 99% confidence interval, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Here the relationship between assurance and students satisfaction was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient for the respondents. The results in Table 4 & 5 indicates a positive relationship between assurance and student satisfaction exists among students (R Square =.159, n=160, p<.01). This means 16% of their satisfaction is determined by assurance.

Hypothesis 3:
H_0: There is no significant relationship between reliability and student satisfaction.
H_1: There is a significant relationship between reliability and student satisfaction.

Table 6:
The Relationship between Reliability and Student Satisfaction

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.457[a]	.209	.178	.23009	.209	6.748	6	153	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturers solve students problem, varsity keeps records accurately, teaching capability of teachers, sincere staff, reliability of lecturers, promises to do so

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Table 7:
Analysis of variance of reliability items
ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.144	6	.357	6.748	.000[a]
	Residual	8.100	153	.053		
	Total	10.244	159			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturers solve students problem, varsity keeps records accurately, teaching capability of teachers, sincere staff, reliability of lecturers, promises to do so

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Decision Rule:
To reject the null hypothesis, the calculated p value must be less than the significance level of 1% i.e. critical p value.
Decision:
The critical P-Value is 0.01 because the confidence interval is 99%. Here, Calculated P value< Critical P value. So, at 99% confidence interval, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Here the relationship between reliability and students satisfaction was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient for the respondents. The results in Table 6 & 7 indicates, a positive relationship between reliability and student satisfaction exists among students (R Square =.209, n=160, p<.01). This means 21% of their satisfaction is determined by reliability.
Hypothesis: 4
H_o: There is no relationship between responsiveness and student satisfaction.
H_1: There is a relationship between responsiveness and student satisfaction.

Table 8:
The Relationship between Responsiveness and Student Satisfaction
Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.522[a]	.273	.249	.21993	.273	11.557	5	154	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Queries are with efficiently, availability of lecturers to assist you, lecturers capacity to solve problems, channels for expressing solve problems, staffs capacity to solve problems

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Table 9:
Analysis of variance of responsiveness items
ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.795	5	.559	11.557	.000[a]
	Residual	7.449	154	.048		
	Total	10.244	159			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Queries are with efficiently, availability of lecturers to assist you, lecturers capacity to solve problems, channels for expressing solve problems, staffs capacity to solve problems

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Decision Rule:
To reject the null hypothesis, the calculated p value must be less than the significance level of 1% i.e. critical p value.

Decision:
The critical P-Value is 0.01 because the confidence interval is 99%
Here, Calculated P value< Critical P value
So, at 99% confidence interval, the null hypothesis is rejected.
Here the relationship between responsiveness and students satisfaction was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient for the respondents. The results in Table 8 & 9 indicates, a positive relationship between responsiveness and student satisfaction exists among students (R Square =.273, n=160, p<.01). This means 27% of their satisfaction is determined by responsiveness.

Hypothesis 5:
H_o: There is no significant relationship between empathy and student satisfaction.
H_1: There is a significant relationship between empathy and student satisfaction.

Table:10:
The Relationship between Empathy and Student Satisfaction
Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.506[a]	.256	.232	.22240	.256	10.622	5	154	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturers are sympathetic and supportive, lecturers are unbiased, administration has best interest to students, staff give attention to students, study room is accommodated with students convenient

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Table 11:
Analysis of variance of empathy items
ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.627	5	.525	10.622	.000[a]
	Residual	7.617	154	.049		
	Total	10.244	159			

a. Predictors: (Constant Lecturers are sympathetic and supportive, lecturers are unbiased, administration has best interest to students, staff give attention to students, study room is accommodated with students convenient

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

Decision Rule:
To reject the null hypothesis, the calculated p value must be less than the significance level of 1% i.e. critical p value.

Decision:
The critical P-Value is 0.01 because the confidence interval is 99%
Here, Calculated P value< Critical P value
So, at 99% confidence interval, the null hypothesis is rejected.
Here the relationship between empathy and students satisfaction was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient for the respondents. The results in Table 10 & 11 indicates, a positive relationship between empathy and student satisfaction exists among students (R Square =.256, n=160, p<.01). This means 26% of their satisfaction is determined by empathy.

Assessing service gap
Service gap is the difference between the customer perception of service and customer expectations. The service gap is a function of the knowledge gap, the standard gap, the delivery gap and the communication gap. As each of these gaps increases or decreases, the

service gap responds in a similar manner. In table 18 we assume that the students' expectation average is 4. It means that when the students meet their expectation level or exceeds their expectation level they will be satisfied. But Service gap exists when there is a difference between the student perception of service and student expectations.

Table 12.
Relative position of the dimensions based on service Gap

Dimensions	Perception Average	Expectation Average	Gap
Reliability	3.29	4.00	-0.71
Responsiveness	3.63	4.00	-0.37
Assurance	3.38	4.00	-0.62
Empathy	3.18	4.00	-0.82
Tangibles	3.47	4.00	-0.53

From the above table it is clear that the Empathy dimension has the highest gap based on the students' perception (mean score) and their expectations (mean score). The second large gap is found in the reliability dimension. The third large gap is found in the assurance dimension. The fourth large gap is found in the tangible dimension and responsiveness has the least gap among the dimensions. The following figure represents above table

Conclusion
Although Bangladesh has seen a tremendous growth in the public education sector in higher level studies, the quality of education in this sector has been questioned by several researchers and government regulatory bodies. There are many student satisfaction attributes/dimensions that are important to be studied and understood. The study explored the variables associated with student satisfaction with their educational experiences at the Bangladeshi University. The questionnaire was reliable. To determine and assess the students" satisfaction level with the service quality provided by higher educational institutions is not easy but not impossible. The results can be very helpful in determining the satisfaction level for management of any educational institution to leverage or enhance the services provided. In this study, the results indicated that students have strong relationship with depending variable. The results declared also showed the areas of the university's service quality that attain the requirements and needs of students and their expectations have better potential to build strong relationship with student satisfaction. This study also showed that generally the satisfaction level at higher learning institutions in Bangladesh are correlated with the service quality offered. The results also indicate that generally higher learning institutions' students are satisfied with the service quality performed by the Bangladeshi learning institutions, i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In other words, Bangladeshi learning institutions have successfully implemented their strategic improvement service quality. It is important information to build market positive perception on Bangladeshi learning institutions in serving its students. It will leverage students' intention and brand awareness of Bangladeshi learning institutions' quality. It is one of the main parts of Bangladeshi Higher Education Ministry's strategic platform, which is to attract as many students as possible to study in their universities. Therefore, it is important for Bangladeshi higher learning institutions to work continuously towards ensuring that the service provided can really meet or exceed the expectation of students. It is not about big or small but speed.

Small higher learning institutions, which can make quick and better decision, have better potential to increase their market share i.e. number of students. Further research is needed to determine the parameters of the students, 'zone of tolerance'. This is important for service provider to gradually improve the quality and allocate resource accordingly. Owing to resource restrictions, rules, regulation, as well as policies, in some instances it is almost impossible for public universities to provide everything that student want. Future research should focus on the perception of service quality from other stakeholders (such as internal customer, government, industries, etc.). A comprehensive study would help the faculty to review and 'beef-up' its overall service quality in the education sector.

Limitations of the study

Data were taken only from four public universities of Bangladesh. Inadequate logistics such as limited access to all segments of stakeholders (staffs, employers, sponsors, alumni). Limited numbers of secondary literature are available. The research is the part of our course so the duration of this research was very short. We, the students have to bear all the money of this research and our financial condition is poor. So we couldn't do the research properly for the lack of proper finance. The course duration is six months and due to lack of finance so we have taken small sample size. The research related books are not available in our university library, so we couldn't get proper information from the library.

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