

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF A SRI LANKAN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

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Abstract: Satisfying customer need is a key to obtain sustainable competitive advantage in the business world. Due to high competitiveness in Sri Lankan private higher education industry “Student Satisfaction” is a crucial success factor for institutes to remain in the industry. Therefore there is a growing need to understand factors that affect satisfaction of students of private sector higher educational institutes. This study empirically examines factors affecting student satisfaction of Business Management undergraduates’ of a leading Sri Lankan private higher educational institute. Previous research done under various environments has recommended a variety of factors affecting user satisfaction. This study developed a model which adopted recognition of the programme, quality of the teaching and academic administration from HEDPERF model of Firdaus (2005) with two other dimensions facilities and skill match taken from other studies. The study was conducted in correlation with UN Sustainable Development Agenda – 2030 (Aim No-4 <<The High Quality of Education). A survey questionnaire was conducted to investigate the critical factors affecting student’s satisfaction. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. The data analysis categorized under two main statistical techniques such as, “Descriptive Statistics” & “Inferential Statistics”. The relationship between all the five independent variables and overall student satisfactions were tested using bivariate analysis. Further this study also tries to answer if there any differences in perception of satisfaction in terms demographic variables such as gender and level of study semester. The results highlighted that recognition of the programme and academic administration are the critical factors affecting overall student satisfaction. The results also showed that there were no differences in perception in terms of gender and level of study semester.

Keywords: undergraduate student, Business management, Student Satisfaction, Private Higher education

Introduction

Background of the Study

Sri Lankan Higher Education System consists of combination of two main areas. They are Sri Lankan Government Free Education System & Sri Lankan Private Higher Education System where educational facilities are provided at a fee. All the Private Higher Educational Institutes are registered under the Company Act with Foreign University collaboration since there is no provision under the local universities Act of 1978 to establish private universities in Sri Lanka (University Grants Commission, 2006)

Due to the high competitiveness for the entrance of Sri Lankan Universities in recent years there is a huge boom in Sri Lankan Private Higher Education Institutes & it clearly shows from their high market growth with improved facilities & comparatively high number of student enrollments. Most of the time the main reason for this is even though Sri Lankan students get qualified with excellent G.C.E A/L results it is not assured admission of Sri Lankan Government Universities due to high competition among students & the low capacity level of the Sri Lankan Government University sector. Because of that students are enforced to search for other

suitable alternatives in the market & most of them end with Sri Lankan Private Higher Educational Institutes which are affiliated with foreign universities.

When considering the universities which are affiliated with foreign universities “Students” are the main target market where the services are directed at. Also in the other hand from the business perspective “Students” are the customers who generate income of their business. According to Huang (2009) he defined “Students” as the “Customers” of profit – oriented Universities. So the requirements of the students and their satisfaction are paying a major role by being a “critical success factor” to the whole organization structure & management of Sri Lankan Private higher education Institutes. “Delighting the Customers” is the core message of the total quality approach according to Owlia and Aspinwall (1996).

Due to the booming demand of Knowledge based economies, highly skilled & competent workers, the demand for higher education in Sri Lanka is increasing rapidly by opening a vast opportunity for “Sri Lankan Higher Education Industry”. Because of high competitiveness in the industry Private Higher Education Institutes should satisfy their Students. As Schreiner described in 2009, Higher Education Institutes should care about “Student Satisfaction” because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts and fundraising. In 1993, Seymour explained developing “Satisfied Student” should be a primary goal of Higher education & developing customer (Student) satisfaction at universities level is crucial because as he suggested it will facilitate the strategic objectives of the university more effectively.

When it comes to the higher education system one of the most important educations is “Undergraduate education” because it is the level taken in order to acquire one’s first tertiary degree. Sri Lankan education system consists main three educations namely, Primary education which lasts five years which directs to Scholarship examination, Junior Secondary education for six years which directs to G.C.E. O/L Examination & Secondary education for another two years which directs to G.C.E. A/L Examination. So undergraduate education is playing a vital role because from that they get opportunity to obtain their first ever experience of Higher education & their first Degree as well.

Currently there are 15 state Universities in Sri Lanka & main dominant higher educational institutes in Private sector are ACBT (Australian College of Business & Technology), APPIT (Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology), ICBT (International College of Business & Technology), and ANC (American National College). Since State universities are absorbing only 20% from the qualified A/L students, Sri Lankan Government is encouraging foreign degree awarding Private higher educational institutes to set up their branches in Sri Lanka in various fields such as Business Management, Information Technology, Bio-Medical, Quantity Surveying, and Engineering etc. Out of these streams “Business Management” is having high potential as it’s a live subject which directly involved in the Business world & management skills.

This research has conducted with related to on one of the most competitive & quality assured award winning, foreign degree awarding Private Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka and the taken case is from “Business Management Undergraduate full time students”

Research Problem Identification

Symptoms of the problem

Currently there are some certain indications which express even though undergraduate programmes help to generate profits, there is a problem to be concerned in regards with “Student Satisfaction” such as, Indication of student drop- outs from the payment details, Inadequate Student Attendance, Assignment late submissions, not attending for the classes even after doing the full payments of the course fee and high tend to attend half sessions.

Justification of the Problem

According to the identified symptoms there is a high impact towards the reputation of the Institute. Because when students show these kinds of indications it directly affects to the Reputation of the institute since “Student” is the end customer of the organization and from their “word of mouth” they can spread their own perceptions regarding the organization to the market. So it will impact on market leadership and in the other hand these will make a high impact on long – run as well.

Due to the above symptoms marketing staff and academic staff will have a high impact when catering correct market segments for the courses and when conducting learning sessions to the students. Main reasons for that are when students don’t attend regularly marketing staff is in a difficult situation to recover the students’ course fees and their word of mouth impact for the market is a negative impact too.

Similarly, when students don’t attend and cut class sessions lecturers face problems in their teaching process.

Because in order to complete their learning outcomes in Assignments they should attend classes regularly if not they can’t achieve good grades and they tend to go for late submissions due to lack of subject knowledge. Also it will make another problem for lectures in the marking process as well. When there is lack of continuity in attendance for the classes they can’t complete their programme on time.

In addition to that when a student becomes a “Drop – Out” the effect of his or her “word – of- mouth” can reduce the “Interest Customers” for “Programmes” at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka.

Defining research problem

“There are some certain critical factors which significantly affect the Business Management Undergraduate Student Satisfaction in XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka”

Research Question

“What are the significant factors affecting to Student Satisfaction in Business Management undergraduate Programmes at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka?”

This Study was conducted to investigate what are the main factors which affect student satisfaction in “Business Management Undergraduate programmes” in terms of learning process & academic life at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka. It leads to identify the level of Student Satisfaction regarding undergraduate Business Management (BM) programmes. Also this study emphasizes the reasons for student drop-outs in the Business Management Undergraduate programmes in the XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka. Most importantly this study helps to realize the gap between student perception & service quality to know whether they obtain “Value for money” service.

Objectives of the Study

Main Objective;

To determine the important factors on Business Management undergraduate student satisfaction at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka

Sub Objectives;

- To evaluate relative impact of the facilities, quality of the teaching, academic administration, recognition of the programme and skill match with Business Management Undergraduate Student satisfaction at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka
- To determine the difference of Student Satisfaction in terms of demographic factors at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka

Significance of the Study

In the field of Higher Education, Private sector which provides service for a “Value”, end customer satisfaction is a highly impacting factor in order to achieve “Sustainable Competitive Advantage” in a high competitive market. Therefore, this study will help to gain “competitive advantage” inside the private higher education industry.

“Student” is the customer for Private Higher Educational Institutes therefore this study will help to remain XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka as the market leader in Market by identifying their customers, means students satisfaction factors.

Also this study will help to improve whole procedure of XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka to cater more students in future by satisfying their needs and wants. Through this study XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka can improve the Quality of the overall programme and it will lead to have “Repeat customers” for the institute.

Furthermore, when identifying Business Management Undergraduate student satisfaction factors of students at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka can reduce the “Drop – Outs” from Business Management Undergraduate programmes. So in the other hand it will increase the number of students at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka sends to the foreign affiliated universities. The findings of this study will also help to make “Loyal Students” for the institute who can make a big impact to enhance the brand image of XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka.

Critical Review of Literature

The main focus of this chapter is to overview literature about “Student Satisfaction” with past similar studies, concepts that would help to identify the most important factors of “Undergraduate Student Satisfaction”.

Concept of Undergraduate Student Satisfaction

Definition of Undergraduate Student

According to the University of Canterbury, “Undergraduate student” is a student who is studying for his/her first (bachelor’s) degree, or a certificate or diploma.

Definition of Service

As Kotler explained “Service” can be identified as a benefit or an activity which one party will offer in the form of intangibility to another party.

Definition of Satisfaction

When concerning the definitions of Satisfaction, Hunts' definition in 1977 can be identified as most used definition for "Satisfaction". He explains "Consumer Satisfaction" totally depends on one's personal evaluation regarding different outcomes and experiences gained by the product.

According to Oliver and DeSarbo (1989), in education context they founded "Student Satisfaction" depend on student's personal evaluation regarding different outcomes and experiences which are directly linked with their gained education.

In 2002 Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Grogard, defined "Student Satisfaction" is student's own estimation on obtained service from their colleges or universities. In the other hand in same year Elliott and Shin described, "Student Satisfaction" is a continuous changing concept in the Higher Education context because of its repeated dealings. In contrary to that Wiers Jenssen *et al.* (2002) explains Students satisfaction as overall satisfaction instead of their learning experience individually.

However, it is identified as a vibrant process which clearly having a positive relationship with Institution and also a complex construct influenced by a variety of characteristics of students and institutions according to Thomas and Galambos in 2004.

Measuring Instruments, Factors of student satisfaction

Different instruments can be found in the past studies related to "Higher educational Student Satisfaction" & the relationship with different variables. Most of the models are different due to the used variables according to the context and in terms of methodologies.

Chickering's Seven Vectors (1969)

This theory focused on the "Overall identity development of College Student". Chickering had taken theorizing the 'Tasks' as the base of this theory that college students should undergo while developing their identity. Below are the identified factors by this theory;

Developing Competence: Intellectual Competence (ability to understand, analyze and Synthesize), Interpersonal Competence (working and establishing relationships with others), Manual skills (ability to physically accomplish tasks)

Ability to manage emotions: recognizing the balance between self-awareness and self-control of their emotions (fear, anger, happiness and sadness)

Movement through autonomy toward interdependence: students must learn to operate on their own, and take responsibility for them selves

Development of mature interpersonal relationships: ability to be intimate and the ability to accept and celebrate unique differences

Establishment of identity: how an individual is perceived by others

Developing purpose: what gives them energy and what they find to be most fulfillments?

Development of Integrity: ability for students to assemble and practice the values that are actually consistent with their own beliefs (Chickering, 1969)

Tinto's Interaction Theory (1987)

Tinto made a model which explains Student Retention/ Drop-out with the engaging of “integration” with Academic and Social. It claims that Student persists or drop out is quite strongly predicted with their degree of Academic integration and Social integration.

SERVQUAL

In 1985 Parasuraman and his colleagues described “SERVQUAL” as a measuring instrument which leads to identify factors of Service Quality. It was identified as a good model which gives in-detail description about “Student Satisfaction” with the provided service level to match whether customer obtained the expected outcomes.

According to this model, researchers used ten factors such as Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Understanding/knowning the customer, Tangibles on their first attempt and later on they summarized these ten factors in to five factors & changed SERVQUAL by giving priority for Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles.

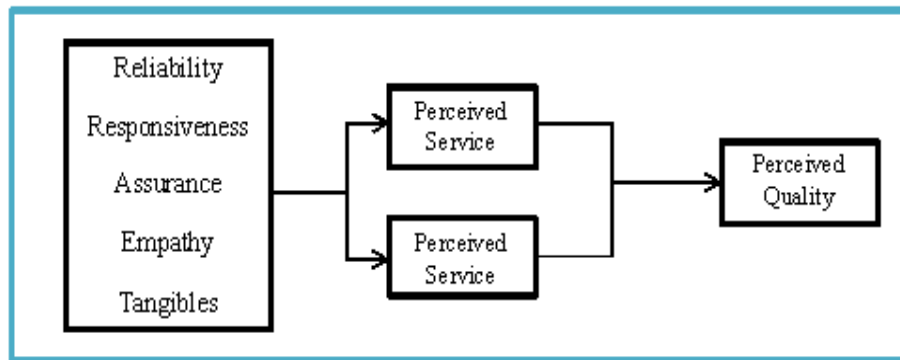


Figure 1: SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, 1985)

Many authors have criticized the SERVQUAL model with the development of it & the major criticism regarding this model highlights lengthy questionnaire, rationality on used five factors and model's power of prediction in related to consumer purchase.

In addition to that as major critics of this model Taylor and Cronin continuously criticized the validity of using this model as a measurement and theoretical base and they proposed another measurement named “ServPerf”.

SERVPERF

In 1992 Cronin and Taylor with the criticisms of “SERVQUAL” they made the “SERVPERF” scale by aiming to measure only the performance instead of expectations. Later this study was replicated and Teas' findings suggested that “Expectations minus from Performances equals to Quality Gap” and he suggested this equation as the base to measure service Quality (Adil et al., 2013)

HEdPERF – Higher Educational PERFORMANCE

The “HEdPERF – Higher Educational PERformance” model was introduced by Firdaus (2005) after testing three different models to identify the most suitable measurement tool for Higher education sector. The HEdPERF was selected as one of the most applicable scale.

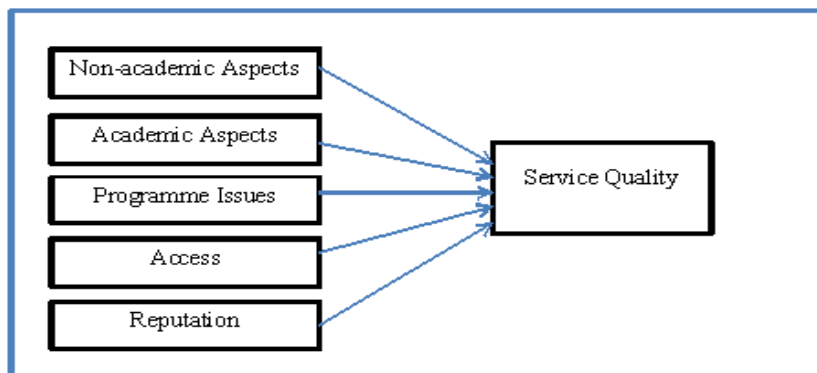


Figure 1: The development of HEdPERF: A new instrument of Service Quality in Higher Education sector
(Firdaus, A, 2005)

“HEdPERF” method was used with SERQUAL, Importance –weighted SERQUAL, SERVPERF, Importance –weighted SERVPERF by Brochado in 2009 for his research of “Identifying performance of five alternative methods in service and quality within Higher Educational context” & his results clearly specify the HEdPERF is the best method which has high ability of determining “Higher Education Service and Quality”.

In Literature, most empirical research studies on “Student Satisfaction” can be found out with specific instrument’s and models developed by different authors. But on the other hand some “Higher Educational Institutes” tend to have identified tools to determine “Student Satisfaction” with certain specific factors belong to their universities or colleges experience of their interests.

Past studies regarding “Student Satisfaction”

By aiming to measure Student’s perceptions of their total learning experience and need, Shago (2005) conducted a study based on “Tshwane University of Technology”, Thailand with the intention of taking Student Satisfaction survey for future Quality improvement of the University. In order to analyze the results, the researcher used the “Noel- Levitz Matrix for prioritizing action (2003)”. Selected sample method was “Convenience Sampling”. Moreover, researcher adapted the questionnaire from University of Technology in Sydney by doing alterations to make it appropriate for the TUT.

Selected seven Independent variables included Learning Outcomes, Programme-related issues, Academic Administration, General Student Services, Access to student Services and study assistance, General Student’s Facilities, Student Representative Council (SRC). With the “Expressive study” researcher was able to examine the areas of high priority but different in the performance levels and findings of the research indicated “Academic Administration, Access to student services and Access to general Student Facilities” as important factors for Students’ Satisfaction. (Shago, 2005)

In 2005, Firdaus did a research regarding same field in Higher Education context but in a different approach of identifying the effective tool to measure the service quality in higher education by comparing three different tools of SERVPERF, his own tool of HEdPERF and HEdPERF-SERVPERF moderate scale. He wanted to identify which tool contained the high capability of measuring with his selected indicators of Validity, Variance, Reliability and Unidimensionality.

With the use of five Independent variables of Reputation, Non-Academic aspects, Academic aspects, Access, Program issues his findings came up with an altered “HEDPERF” as the suitable scale to use as a measuring instrument for Higher Educational Service quality. Practical implication from this study was factor “Access” is having clear implications for institutions marketing strategies. (Firdaus, 2005)

Douglas et al (2006) conducted a research at Liverpool John Moors University’s Business & Law Faculty based on the topic of “Student Satisfaction”. Researchers noted the criticisms which have been continued to Parasuraman’s SERVQUAL measurement through all the years. Due to that reason they designed to focus “Service-Product Bundle” concept which contained most important three elements in all the attached offering in terms of goods and services. Those identified three elements are the Physical or facilitating goods, sensual Service provided (explicit services), Psychological services (the implicit services).

By using “Overall Student Satisfaction” as the dependent variable they used lecture and tutorial facilities, Ancillary facilities, the facilitating goods, explicit service, implicit service as independent variables. Proving the previous study findings of Schneider and Bown (1995), Hill *et al.* (2003), Banwet and Datta (2003) this research findings pointed out the same facts that “Student Satisfaction” does not depend on “Physical aspects” of a University services and core services, class notes, class room delivery, materials, the lecture and obtaining knowledge are the most important factors for their satisfaction in addition to that findings it was highlighted University’s physical facilities influence Student’s choice as same with the findings of Price et al.(2003)’s. Identified most significant factor is “Learning experience and the Quality of the Teaching”. (Douglas et al., 2006)

Letcher and Neves (2008) conducted an empirical investigation with the “SAS’s PROC Factor Program” through “Eight Independent Variables” such as Self Confidence, Curriculum, Instruction and Classes, Quality of Teaching of Subject matter, extra-curricular activities and Career opportunities, Student Advising, Quality of Teaching and feedback, Student quality & Interaction, Computing Facilities with the Dependent Variable of “Student Satisfaction” by having the purpose to identify the factors of Undergraduate Business Students Satisfaction.

In order to identify the strength of the relationship between those eight factors researchers used “Stepwise Regression Analysis”. From the findings it pointed out positive regression coefficient with all eight independent variables by highlighting positive correlation with “Students’ Overall Satisfaction”. “Student Self-Confidence” factor which consists Students’ confidence in Own abilities and skills was identified as the most significant factor. Next to that extra-Curricular and Career Opportunities and Quality of the teaching identified as other significant factors for Business Undergraduate students’ satisfaction. As an interesting finding this research emphasized “Advising” does not impact on Business Undergraduates’ Students Satisfaction. (Letcher & Neves, 2008)

Billups (2008) prepared his study with the purpose of identifying college student satisfaction factors through Tinto’s (1987) ‘Interaction Theory’ & he customized it according to “Chikerings’s (1969) Theory of “Vectors leading to Student Maturation a self – actualization while in college” to made his Conceptual Frame work. His Conceptual framework contained six Independent Variables and those are Educational Experience, Development of Skills and Knowledge, Faculty Control, Personal and Social Growth, Sense of community, Overall Commitment to and Satisfaction with College.

Identified results indicate all the used six dimensions’ impact on “Student Satisfaction” and “Quality of instruction, Academic rigor, Student identification & Integration with the campus community” were identified as factors highly contributing for Student Satisfaction. In addition to that researcher identified "Close Relationship of faculty for advising process” as a main factor to students Connectedness. As a major result of the study research pointed out “Institutional Commitment” can be taken as a measure for persistence which leads to feel the “Institutional fit”. (Billups, 2008)

According to the empirical investigation of Roberts and Styron's in 2008 they wanted to identify factors vital to student retention. Research was conducted through the interactions, experience in the College of Education & psychology in USA and Student's perceptions of services by using six variables such as Social Connectedness, Involvement/ Engagement, Faculty Approachability, Academic Advising, Business Procedures and Learning Experience. They used a Five-point Likert scale to prepare the questionnaire and it consisted 51 items, 13 focused on demographic and status, and 32 focused on attitudes and perceptions of above mentioned six variables.

With the statistical analysis "Learning Experiences" contained highest overall mean and "Social Connectedness & Involvement, Engagement contained the lowest. To conclude the significant differences within any variables MANOVA was used. In this research "Drop- Outs" was identified with some student's personal reasons as "Stopped- out" for some time period and they will return in a future day to continue. (Roberts & Styron, 2008)

Hildrew (2008) conducted the Annual Student Satisfaction Survey of University of Winchester & it was a web-based Survey with adapted academic questions from "National Student Survey" and its' scale. By aiming to collect data on specific aspects to identify the most important aspects for students and associated level of satisfaction he analyzed and presented Data with 3 main sections as, Academic Provision, Support Services and Generic Details.

As results researcher founded "Staff's effort of making subject so interesting" having a greater impact on Student Satisfaction under academic provision. In professional services identified most important aspects is "all the students should get the opportunity to be independent". (Hildrew, 2008)

Fuente and his colleagues investigate on possible factors which will impact on the level of student satisfaction with the Teaching-Learning in the European Credit Transfer System in year 2010. Using 149 samples from a Spain university, analyses of variances carried out by having five Independent Variables.

Used IV's are Student's grade average, Year in school, Study discipline, Credit loan in terms of ECTS Credits assigned to subject and the e-learning approach. Analyzed data highlights "Student's Grade average, year in school, ECTS load and e-learning are most significant factors for their satisfaction (Fuente et al. 2010).

Having purpose of "Identifying the relationship between Service Quality variables and Student Satisfaction of Graduate Students among the Universities in Thailand", Kayastha conducted a research in year 2011. In addition to main purpose research had alternative questions related to course fee funding and impact from demographic factors. Non-academic aspects, Academic aspects, Design - Delivery and Assessment, Group Size, Programme Issues, Reputation, Access were used seven variables and those were adapted from the HEdPERF by Firdaus (2005) and the study of Afjal and his colleagues.

SPSS was used to analyze data and according to the results all the used variables were indicated "Significant relationship" and satisfaction levels were different when it comes for the funding to the course fees. Mainly students who paid their course fee by their own selves had high expectations on their satisfaction compared to students who funded by their parents or others.

Kayastha (2011) conducted a research on graduate student satisfaction and service quality of Thailand Universities. Main focus was to find out the relationship between service quality variables and graduate student satisfaction. Kayastha used 7 independent variables adapting 5 variables from the model HEdPERF (Firdaus, 2005) & Design, Delivery, Assessment and Group size by Afjal et al. (2009)

Since it did not represent the whole population it was mentioned as the primary limitation of this study. Also researcher stressed out that there may be other variable related to service quality so results may not be generalized to the other Thailand universities. (Kaystha 2011)

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir Salee *et al* (2012) did a research to identify the level of Students' Satisfaction in terms of "Higher Education". Researchers used six Independent Variables such as, courses offer, teachers' expertise, transport facilities, library facility, examination system, learning environment. Also "Gender" used as the Moderate Variable while "Student Satisfaction" was the dependent variable.

Significance of data trends was measured using t-test, correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis. Results highlighted that "Courses offered, Transport facility and Learning Environment" are the important factors for Students in Azad Kashmir. Identified most influential factor among all the variable is the "Learning Environment" (Saleem *et al.*, 2012)

According to the Study conducted by Isaac (2012), Factors determining student's satisfaction based on Sri Lankan Private Higher Education Institute named APPIT, it explains the Student drop outs of the selected Higher Educational Institute. The aim of this research was to overcome operational issues inside the Institute. Primary data was collected through questionnaire distribution and one-one Interviews. To identify the reasons for Drop outs the research conducted interviews with drop out students. Through Graphs and summary statistics data was presented.

Research findings highlighted Students' Drop Outs were occurred mainly due to "University Transfers, Financial constraints and work commitment". According to the research it indicates "Infrastructure and facilities & Academic management and Academic Support Services" have a relationship with "Student Satisfaction" and need to be more concerned to satisfy students. (Isaac, 2012)

Coonghe (2012) conducted a research to identify Students Satisfaction of the Master of Business Studies Programme in University of Colombo. The Study examined five variables such as; Effectiveness of the entry and registration process, Student Facilities and Campus Climate, Academic curriculum and effectiveness support to complete the MBS, Course Financing.

In order to identify the significant factors researcher checked the levels of Importance & findings highlighted that University of Colombo overall has met the expectations of students and satisfactorily delivered to satisfy the customers.

It is clearly evident from the literature that measuring "Student Satisfaction" was a continuous effort by different scholars with variety of instruments and determinants. When considering the past research studies following factors can be identified as most often used factors and gained results when it comes to "Student Satisfaction".

Shago, 2005; Doughlas *et al*, 2006; Letcher and Nerves, 2008; Billups, 2008; Roberts and Styron, 2008; Hildrew, 2008; Kayastha, 2011, Salee *et al*, 2012, Isaac, 2012 and Coonghe, 2012 have taken one of the most important Independent variable as Infrastructure and Facilities with Learning experience to measure the students Satisfaction. According to the Douglas *et al*, 2006; Roberts and Styron, 2008; Salee *et al*, 2012 and Coonghe, 2012 they identified learning environment with Facilities to facilitate learning experience is significant to Student Satisfaction.

Another identified significant factor for Student Satisfaction is "Quality of Teaching". This factor was taken Firdaus, 2005; Letcher and Nerves, 2008; Hildrew 2008; Kayastha, 2011; Salee *et al*, 2012; Isaac, 2012 and Coonghe 2012. With the results of Firdaus, 2005 HEdPERF instrument this is a significant factor for Student Satisfaction.

Firdaus with his HEdPERF instrument in 2005, Shago, 2005; Hildrew, 2008; Kayastha, 2011 and Isaac, 2012 have taken Academic Administration & effectiveness of it as an Independent Variable with Student Satisfaction

& results of Shago's, Firdaus's & Isaac's proves that is a significant factor to be concerned with Student Satisfaction.

"Reputation" was taken as another Independent factor with Firdaus, 2005; Kayastha, 2011 & proved with the results that it is a significant factor.

Another rarely used factor but proved with results of Letcher and Nerves, 2008 and Billups, 2008 that it is a significant factor for Student Satisfaction is Confidence in own abilities & Skills.

With the Study results of Fuente et al, 2010 he highlighted another significant factor is Financial Constrains.

This research study concerns five Independent Variables and some of the factors were based on the Firdaus 2005, HEdPERF's with the customizing according to the study context and those factors were chosen after concerning the overlapping with the previous factors had been used by other researchers and their founded results such as quality of the teaching, administration, recognition of the programme as well as with the consideration of past findings and researchers' concern facilities & skill Match were used as independent variables to conceptualize the Frame work to identify the factors which effect student satisfaction of BM undergraduates at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka.

Research Methodology

Conceptual Frame work

This research conceptual frame work was designed by mainly focusing the "HEdPERF" Model which was identified as a new measuring instrument of "Service Quality" for Higher Educational Sector by Firdaus (2005) in the literature. In his study he took five variables such as non – academic aspects, academic aspects, and reputation, access, programme issues regarding "Service Quality". For this research, researcher adapted only three variables originally named as reputation, academic aspects, programme issues in the "HEdPERF" model. Adapted three variables names were customized such as Recognition of the programme, quality of the teaching and academic administration with the similar definitions used in HEdPERF model.

Other two variables such as facilities and skill match were derived with the consideration of overlapped with the past studies.

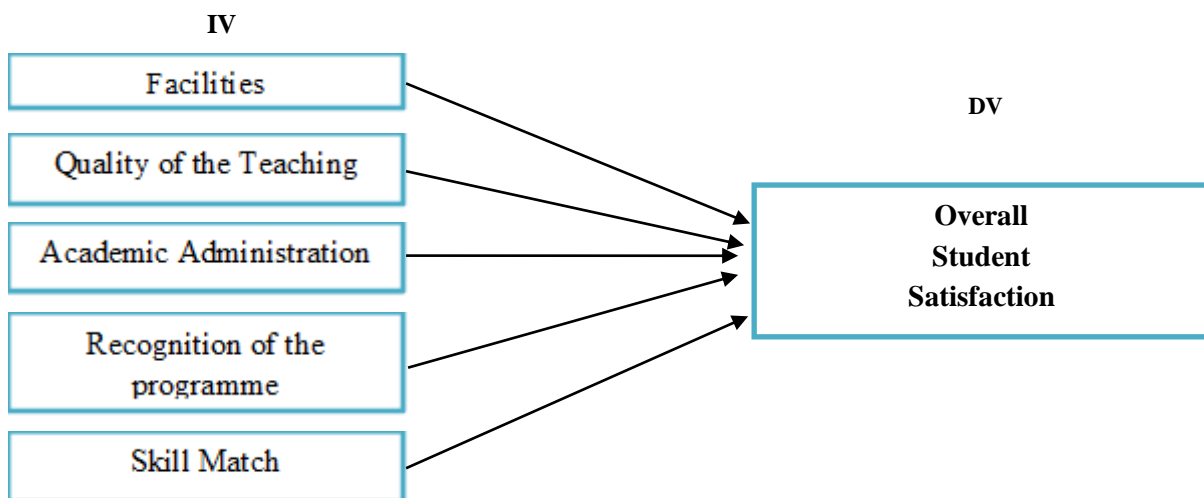


Figure 2

In this research there are five Independent variables such as; Facilities, Quality of the Teaching, Academic Administration, and Recognition of the programme and Skill match and the Dependent Variable is “Overall Student Satisfaction”.

Facilities: refers to the services provide by the institute regarding the programme such as, Library facilities, Recreation facilities including Sports Clubs, Cafeteria, Gym, Cultural Societies & events, Annual dinner dance, Annual Trips, general IT resources, access to specialized equipment and proper rooms facilities for learning and teaching.

Quality of the Teaching: refers to lecturers’ enthusiasm on delivery with the quality to make the subject interesting with clear explanation and the access to get feedbacks from the lectures.

Academic Administration: refers to the substances that describe the aspects that are solely the responsibility of academic administration department such as, good knowledge of the systems, provide caring attention, keep accurate and retrievable records, positive work attitude towards students and convenience & suitable of the scheduling for learning.

Recognition of the programme: refers to Professional image in the Industry, Up- to –date curriculum designing by the awarding body, Global recognition of the programme, Job opportunity availability and offering of wide range of Top-Up Degree programmes in internationally.

Skill Match: refers to students’ confident level of students’ abilities and skills which are necessary to follow the course such as, team working, academic writing, effective communication skills, Information Technology skills and Analytical thinking skills.

According to Elliot & Healy (2001) “Overall Student Satisfaction” defined as “Students’ short – term attitude, derived from the evaluation of the received education service”.

Hypothesis Formulation

Following are the statements of hypothesis the researcher wants to test with the help of empirical findings.

1. Relationship between Facilities and Overall Student Satisfaction

Ho1 – There is no relationship between facilities and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Ha1 – There is a relationship between facilities and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

2. Relationship between Quality of the teaching and Overall Student Satisfaction

Ho2 – There is no relationship between quality of the teaching and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Ha2 – There is a relationship between quality of the teaching and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

3. Relationship between Academic Administration and Overall Student Satisfaction

Ho3 – There is no relationship between academic administration and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Ha3 – There is a relationship between academic administration and overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

4. Relationship between Recognition of the Programme and the Overall Student Satisfaction

Ho4 – There is no relationship between recognition of the programme and the overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Ha4 – There is a relationship between recognition of the programme and the overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

5. Relationship between Skill Match and the Overall Student Satisfaction

Ho5 – There is no relationship between skill match and the overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Ha5 – There is a relationship between skill match and the overall Student Satisfaction of the XYZ Institutes’ BM Undergraduates

Operationalization

According to Veal, 2006 “The Operationalization” comprises how the variables are to be measured.

In the below Table 01, it illustrates the operational components and the measurement of each variable. The study uses a designed “Questionnaire” as a tool for the empirical investigation and in the beginning questionnaire contained a screening question to identify whether the respondents are “Undergraduate Business Management students” or not in order to precede the data collection by asking further questions regarding their experience of facilities, quality of the teaching, academic administration, recognition of the programme and the skill match to measure their satisfaction level.

Table 01: Operationalization of the concepts

Operationalization of the concepts

Concept	Definition of the Concept	Measuring Scale
Facilities	It refers to the services providing by the institute regarding the programme such as, Library facilities, Recreation facilities, general IT resources, access to specialized equipment and proper rooms facilities for learning and teaching.	Ordinal Scale
Quality of the Teaching	It refers to lecturers’ enthusiasm on delivery with the quality to make the subject interest with clear explanation and the access to get feedbacks from the lectures	Ordinal Scale
Academic Administration	This refers to the substances that describe the aspects that are solely the responsibility of academic administration department such as, good knowledge of the systems, provide caring attention, keep accurate and retrievable records, positive work attitude towards students and convenience & suitable of the schedules.	Ordinal Scale
Recognition of the programme	It refers to Professional image in the Industry, Up- to –date curriculum design by the awarding body, Global recognition of the programme, Job opportunity availability and offering of wide range of Top-Up Degree programmes internationally.	Ordinal Scale

Skill Match	It refer to students' confident level of students' abilities and skills which are necessary to follow the course such as, team working, academic writing, effective communication skills, Information Technology skills and Analytical thinking skills.	Ordinal Scale
Overall Satisfaction	"Students' short – term attitude, derived from the evaluation of the received education service	Ordinal Scale
Gender		Nominal Scale
Level of Semester		Nominal Scale

Research Design

A quantitative survey was designed in order to investigate the satisfaction factors of Business Management Undergraduate Students in XYZ Institute. With the research instrument of a "Questionnaire" which was consisted of 28 questions subdivided in to 6 categories including five Independent Variables & the Dependent Variable.

Researcher has designed a pre-test to validate the questionnaire by taking 15 students including 5 each from all the 3 semesters. After that research was designed to cover the sample of 140 Business Management undergraduate students out of total population of 210 Business Management Undergraduates.

Exactly 101 questionnaires were turned out from distributed 130 questionnaires to full time Business management undergraduate students. Two questionnaires were rejected and Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 21. Inferential and Descriptive statistics were utilized.

Data Analysis

st 1 Sub Objective Achievement – Hypotheses testing	Results
<p>1. Relationship between Facilities and Overall Student Satisfaction</p> <p>Ho1 – There is no relationship between facilities and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes' BM Undergraduates</p> <p>Ha1 – There is a relationship between facilities and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes' BM Undergraduates</p>	Ho1 Cannot be rejected (P value > 0.05)
<p>2. Relationship between Quality of the teaching and Overall Student Satisfaction</p> <p>Ho2 – There is no relationship between quality of the teaching and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes' BM Undergraduates</p> <p>Ha2 – There is a relationship between quality of the teaching and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes' BM Undergraduates</p>	Ho2 Cannot be rejected (P value > 0.05)

<p><u>3. Relationship between Academic Administration and Overall Student Satisfaction</u></p> <p>Ho3 – There is no relationship between academic administration and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates Ha3 – There is a relationship between academic administration and overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates</p>	<p>Ho3 is Rejected (P value <0.05)</p>
<p><u>4. Relationship between Recognition of the Programme and the Overall Student Satisfaction</u></p> <p>Ho4 – There is no relationship between recognition of the programme and the overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates Ha4 – There is a relationship between recognition of the programme and the overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates</p>	<p>Ho4 is Rejected (P value < 0.05)</p>
<p><u>5. Relationship between Skill Match and the Overall Student Satisfaction</u></p> <p>Ho5 – There is no relationship between skill match and the overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates Ha5 – There is a relationship between skill match and the overall Student Satisfaction of the ABC Institutes’ BM Undergraduates</p>	<p>Ho5 Cannot be rejected (P value > 0.05)</p>

2nd Sub Objective Achievement –

To determine the difference of Business Management Undergraduate Student Satisfaction in terms of Demographic factors (Gender, Level of study)

Independent Sample t-test for “Gender”– No significant difference according to their “Gender Group” in terms of perception of Satisfaction

ANOVA – 3 Different Semesters – No significant difference between the groups (1st, 2nd & 3rd semesters’ students) in terms of perception of Satisfaction

Conclusion of the Study

In conclusion of this study it can be identified that according to the selected context most significant two factors on student satisfaction are “Recognition of the Programme” & “Academic administration”.

These results are similar with past studies done by Firdaus (2005), Kayastha (2011) & Shago (2005). Firdaus & Kayastha said reputation and academic aspects have significant impact on student satisfaction with their results while Shago accepting “Academic administration” is a significant factor towards student satisfaction from his research findings. Their research findings are similar since they have used similar variable with this results.

Interestingly similar results can be found from the Sri Lankan context with the past studies done by Isaac (2012) Coonghe (2012) and Also Wijesisri, B.M (2016). “Academic Administration” was identified as a significant factor by Isaac (2012) with the conducted study to a Sri Lankan private higher education institute named APPIT. On the other hand the study conducted by Coonghe (2012) to the Sri Lankan government university which is

named University of Colombo also came up that “Academic curriculum and effectiveness” is significant towards students’ satisfaction.

Also Wijesiri, B.M (2016) identified “Reliability of academic administration staff and Responsiveness of academic administration staff” in Rajarata University, Sabaragamuwa University and Wayamba University of Sri Lanka is very significant for undergraduate student satisfaction.

Even though for this study researcher has used 5 independent variables such as Facilities, Recognition of the programme, Quality of the teaching, Academic administration and Skill Match by considering the literature the results indicate only two main significant variables as recognition of the programme & Academic administration. This could be due to the influence of other variables which has not taken to this research as independent variables & could be due to the perception difference of Business Management undergraduates in XYZ Institute. Moreover, it could be due to the taken sample because this research did not take the entire population of Business Management undergraduate students if they would have taken the results might be different with the present findings.

When considering Literature most of the researchers Shago(2005), Firdaus (2005), Douglas et al(2006), Letcher and Nerves (2008), Roberts & Styron (2008), Hildrew (2008), Kayastha (2011), Salee et al.(2012), Isaac (2012) used “Quality of the Teaching” as an Independent variable having thought that it would be a significant factor to the Student Satisfaction. But interestingly it was not come up as a significant factor in most of the studies. Similarly, it was not a significant factor to this research as well.

It is to be noted that Isaac’s (2012) study which was conducted in similar context in Sri Lankan Private Higher education industry also “Quality of the Teaching” was not a significant factor. On the other hand, it can be identified from the Coonghe’s (2012) study in Sri Lankan government higher education context as well. So this is an area where more future researches are needed to be concerned to identify whether this result can be generalized for Sri Lankan context or not.

Most of the time when “Students” enter to the undergraduate studies, they are more concern about the “Recognition of the programme”. So this is important to Sri Lankan context because most of the Private Higher Education institutes do not have the right to give their own Degrees. They have to affiliate with a recognized foreign partner university because institutes only can provide facilities to study the same curriculum by been in Sri Lanka. Therefore, with the “High investment” from the student’s side there one of the most significant factors is “Recognition of the Programme” to know whether they obtained “Value for Money”. Also time –to –time lecturers change according to the modules in private higher education institutes and government universities. But students have to deal with “Academic Administration” continuously within the time period that they spend. So this can be another reason to identify “Academic Administration” as a significant factor to the student satisfaction instead of “Quality of the Teaching”.

According to the analysis there is no significant influence from the demographic factors on overall student satisfaction. But with the demographic factor of “Level of study semester” there is a little decreasing pattern from 1st semester to 2nd semester. This may be due to a gap between “expectations that they had” and “obtained expectations”. So this gap should be covered by identifying the relevant reasons and solutions.

On the other hand, there is an increasing pattern in Quality of the teaching, Recognition of the programme and Skill match when it comes to their level of study semesters. This can be due to the improvement in “Self-awareness” regarding those factors. Because when they gradually pass to their next level they get more awareness regarding the recognition of the programme when they find out there is a wide arena for top-up degrees after completing this programme.

Also increasing pattern of Skill match may be due to the improvements of their skills during the semesters through the quality of the teaching and learning. So there may be a good self-awareness regarding teaching quality of the programme among the 3rd semester students with their experience in hand compared to 1st semester students.

Recommendations

Recommendations were given based on “Descriptive statistical Analysis”.

From the respondents it was found that students are not satisfied with General IT resources accessibility whenever they need. So XYZ Institute need to concern on this area by providing sufficient general IT resources for Business Management undergraduate students as well. Because most of the time “Business Management Undergraduate Students” need to update & obtain new knowledge regarding “Business world”.

On the other hand, students expect more effort from in terms of making the subject interesting for them. Since private sector higher educational institutes do not consider special teacher training programs for lectures this might arouse in an institute. Therefore, it is high time to consider in giving advanced teacher training programmes and psychology courses for the lectures to identify student mentality and to approach with necessary and relevant teaching techniques and media.

In addition to that students are dissatisfied with class schedules for their convenience for learning. Since the organization is a profit generating organization with high number of batches this might occur due to the limited class room capacities. Even though it could be a reason academic administration of XYZ Institute should take necessary actions to make class rooms suitable for the students to learn by scheduling convenient times.

Also XYZ Institute should be concerned giving psychology courses for academic administration staff as well. Because “Academic Administration” was identified as a main significant factor to the students’ satisfaction of Business Management undergraduates of XYZ Institute & staff members of academic administration are deal and involve lot with student matters such as scheduling class time tables, assignment submitting, giving extensions for assignments, grading releases, corresponding with parents and lecturers etc.

By highly satisfying with the professional image in the industry students are dissatisfy due to the difficulties of finding out a job in the industry. Though this can be due the high competitiveness among the knowledge workers. XYZ Institute can have partnerships with Industries and Organizations to give “Internships” for the students. This is possible and easy task to implement due to the high professional crowd of XYZ Institutes’ MBA programmes. Since this is the most significant factor out of used other independent variables XYZ Institute needs to pay attention on this matter immediately. It will help to remain XYZ Institute as the “Market Leader” in market too.

In addition to that students have identified that they don’t have enough report writing skills which are needed to the XYZ Institute. So the administration of the institute can improve their on-going bridging programme by giving more priority to teach “Report writing Skills”. Since the programme is an assignment based one in order to enhance students grading it is needed to be concerned this as a high important issue.

Suggestion for Further Research

The study was conducted based on three adaptive variables from HEdPERF model with additional two variables from past studies.

Study was aimed to answer the research question of “*What are the main factors affecting Student Satisfaction in Business Management Undergraduate programmes at XYZ Higher educational institute in Sri Lanka?*”

Since the survey was only conducted among the Business Management full-time basis undergraduates, future studies can target population including Degree students or both full – time and part-time undergraduate students.

Only the Business Management undergraduates were covered by this study. So in future research can be conducted in other study areas such as IT, Bio-medical, Quantity Surveying, Civil engineering, Electric engineering etc. in study context.

Identified semester wise decrease pattern in overall student satisfaction may be due to the students other expected factors which are not included in this study. So this study recommends doing future studies based on this study to find out what are those significant factors.

Used demographic factors for this study are gender and Level of study. So in future, researchers can use other demographic factors such as ethnicity etc. to check the influence on variables.

The future research can be tested in other branches in XYZ Institutes' branch network with the use of additional variable to identify the student satisfaction factors to those contexts.

This study can be tested in other private higher educations and they can compare research results to improve their institutes, since the taken context is from a market leader in Sri Lanka.

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