

## Retraction Notice

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no

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no

## Comment:

Due to conflicts of interest.

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# Perceived Quality of Service for International Students at Tongren City, China

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## Abstract

The objective of this paper was to investigate the factors influencing international students' satisfaction level including positive word of mouth to others and retaining for further study. Due to the breakout of COVID-19, a survey questionnaire online was used to collect data from 225 international students and 220 complete questionnaires retrieved and a quantitative method via SPSS version 22.0 was used to analyze the variables and test hypothesis. It is clear that the factors from HESQUAL model have significant influence on satisfaction level.

## Keywords

International Students, Perceived Service, Satisfaction Level, Service Quality, Tongren City

## 1. Introduction

As the process of globalization and internalization is all over the world, service quality is becoming more and more important in the context of business as well as the context of education field as the process of globalization and internalization. However, Hamzaha and Abdullahb (2017) found that there was little research on the relationship between the service quality and international students' satisfaction in public universities in Malaya. Many researchers (such as Dinh et al., 2021 & Fuchs et al., 2021) studied service quality in educational institutions in Eastern Asia, Europe, USA, UK, and other developed countries, but no study has been conducted on the service quality in China education institution, especially on the service quality in public universities (Ilias et al., 2008).

The research investigated and found out the service quality of public universities in China using Tongren city's universities (including Tongren University, Tongren Polytechnic College, and Tongren Preschool Education College) as a

case. The study was to investigate the factors concerning the “gap” between expectations and perceptions of international students at Tongren city.

The research was conducted to investigate the level of service quality from the public universities in international students’ perceptions, and find out the factors influencing service quality provided by Tongren city.

Based on the objectives of the paper, the researcher presented the following questions to investigate the factors that affected the perceived service quality of students and how the factors affected the perceived service quality.

1) How did factors impact the service quality provided by Tongren city’s universities?

2) What were the factors that made international students satisfied with service quality they received from Tongren city’s universities?

The research was conducted to find the gap between service quality and perceived quality as for the satisfaction of international students at Tongren city, in order to help the stakeholders of the universities to adjust the admission policies for attracting more international students to study at Tongren city (Zhang, 2018).

The paper is organized as follows: Part one is to introduce the research background and the significance. Part two is the review for the literature and the research gap as well as the way to fill the gap. Part three is the tool and method to conduct the research. Part four is the research result and discussion, and part five is the conclusion, the research limitations and the future research.

## 2. Literature Review

Based on literature review of many articles and the rankings of universities evaluated and assessed by (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2019). After the researcher’s investigation and analysis, the researcher found that the private universities of the world are ranked on the top list of ranking both in the USA and Europe. Service quality has been done by many researchers during the past decades in the education sector (Adamu, 2017; Pouzesh et al., 2016; Berbegal-Mirabent, Mas-Machuca, & Marimon, 2018). Moreover, perceptions of service quality are closely related with customer satisfaction, and in the context of higher education, the satisfied international students would use positive word of mouth to advertise and recommend the host universities to others (Alves & Raposo, 2010).

Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced a model named SERVQUAL to measure the gap between customers’ “expectations” and “perceptions”. The gap between expectations and perceptions is to indicate what the stakeholders should do to improve the service in the information era (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005: p. 5).

The characteristics of the service quality increase the difficulty for researchers to evaluate the results from customers and researchers have to modify SERVQUAL’s measurement elements to the real needs of research based on actual cases (Yoon & Suh, 2004: p. 342).

Quality as defined for higher education has been identified by Harvey and Knight (1996). They suggested that quality reflects exceptional, consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformative. Consequently, akin to business organizations that are under the stringent obligation to constantly satisfy their customers to thrive, universities need to satisfy their students. While there is competition in outcomes such as research and innovation, universities are also expected to deliver high service quality. Therefore, the assessment of the service quality in higher education can provide an important contribution and inputs which will be useful for management and staff to continue improving the quality of education (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). Table 1 & Table 2 showcase the five dimensions of HESQUAL model and the literature sources of five dimensions in HESQUAL model, respectively.

Higher education is increasingly recognized as a service industry, and this puts a greater emphasis on meeting the expectations and needs of its participating customers who are the students (Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)). In education, students are customers who come to contact with service providers of an educational institution for the purpose of acquiring goods or services. Higher education has become a global business and universities have to continuously explore options for exporting higher education services.

The quality of higher education as a service is also fundamental to a country's development because universities prepare the professionals who will work as managers in companies and manage public and private resources and care for the health and education of new generations.

**Table 1.** HESQUAL model.

Author (s)	Model	Factor (s)/Findings
Teeroovengadum et al. (2016).	HESQUAL	Administrative Quality, Physical Environment Quality, Core Educational Quality, Support Facilities Quality, Transformative Quality.

**Table 2.** The literature sources of five dimensions in HESQUAL model.

Dimensions identified	Literature Source	Sample Statements from Interviews/Focus Groups
Administrative Quality	Kwek et al. (2010), Sultan and Wong (2011), Narang (2012).	"Administrative staffs should always be willing to help students out"; "Administrative staff should be good to students."
Physical Environment Quality	Wong et al. (2012).	"Having a peaceful environment"; "The campus should have good looking infrastructure"; "Physical resources like library".
Core Educational Quality	Narang (2012).	"A culture of sharing and collaboration"; "Faculty members are willing to help"; "Having lot of interaction with students"; "Research work of academics".
Support Facilities Quality	Sultan and Wong (2011).	"Good transport facilities"; "Opportunities for extracurricular activities".
Transformative Quality	Lomas (2007).	"Developing critical thinking"; "Acquiring job-related skills and knowledge".

Based on the foregoing literature, the proposed conceptual framework as the following in **Figure 1**.

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, there were hypotheses as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between administrative quality (AQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).

H2: There is a significant relationship between physical educational quality (PEQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).

H3: There is a significant relationship between core educational quality (CEQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).

H4: There is a significant relationship between support facilities quality (SFQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).

H5: There is a significant relationship between transformative quality (TQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).

H6: There is a significant relationship between administrative quality (AQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).

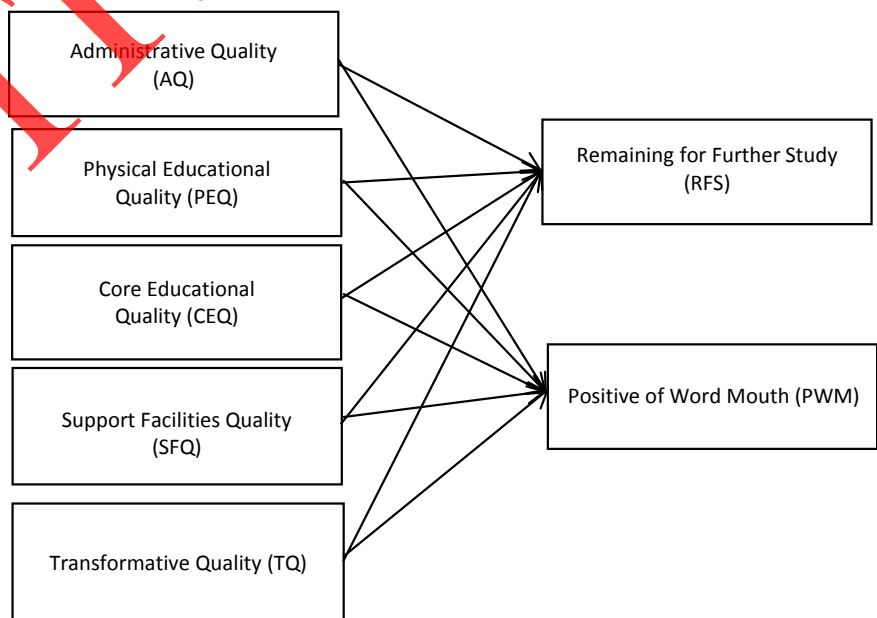
H7: There is a significant relationship between physical educational quality (PEQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).

H8: There is a significant relationship between core educational quality (CEQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).

H9: There is a significant relationship between support facilities quality (SFQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).

H10: There is a significant relationship between transformative quality (TQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).

The past research mainly concerned more theoretical than empirical research,



**Figure 1.** The proposed conceptual framework.

and the sample size was small. Especially in western part of China, like Tongren city, Guizhou province, fewer researchers conducted research concerning the perceived service quality on international students. The researcher conducted the kind of research was to find the factors influencing the satisfaction level of international students. Hence, the stakeholders of the universities at Tongren city would adjust the admission policies for attracting more international students to learn at Tongren city (Zhang, 2018).

### 3. Methodology

Due to the breakout of COVID-19, this study is a structured quantitative research design using an online survey questionnaire to collect data from the international students at Tongren city's universities. The research will deliver the questionnaire to international students in a self-administered way to collect data and information and the study is a cross-sectional research from October 10 to October 25, 2021.

#### 3.1. Population

Population in the current study was 225 international students studying presently at Tongren city's universities from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), mainly from Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia ranking the first three, respectively ([www.gztrc.edu.cn/](http://www.gztrc.edu.cn/)).

#### 3.2. Sample Size

The number of international students was 225, so based on the known sample size, the research was to use the Taro Yamane sample formula to determine the sample size as below:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

where

$n$  = corrected sample size,

$N$  = population size, and

$e$  = Margin of error (MOE),  $e = 0.05$ .

However, during the research conducted, most of international students were in their own countries, and there were not any international students on campus. The researcher collected data from 225 samples online, and obtained 220 complete questionnaires to analyze the data.

#### 3.3. Quantitative Method

The researcher conducted a quantitative research method and distributed 225 questionnaires to collect data and analyze the data. Then 220 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher, and the return rate was about 98 percent.

### 3.4. Sampling

Due to the research respondents confined to the international students at Tongren city's universities, the researcher used the purposive sampling to collect data and information from the research respondents at Tongren city's universities.

### 3.5. Data Collecting

Because this research was a quantitative research design, the feedback data concerning perceived quality from the sample (international students) was collected through self-administrated survey questionnaire to collect data and information in a cross-sectional study from October 10 to October 25, 2021.

The questions in the survey questionnaire are developed from the information based on the independent variables, and the relationships between independent variables and variables in the study.

### 3.6. Questionnaire Design

The researcher designed a structured quantitative questionnaire with closed-ended questions and one open-ended question named suggestions in the format of a typical five-level Likert scale as below:

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree, using the number from 1 to 5 indicating Strongly disagree to Strongly agree, respectively.

The questions in the questionnaire were designed according to the concepts and theories of service quality. The author read concepts and theories also the journal articles and use the information obtained from books and journals to design the questions.

### 3.7. Data Analysis

After the researcher collected the data from the samples, the data will be analyzed as follows:

#### 3.7.1. Descriptive Analysis

For quantitative data, descriptive analysis was used to analyze demographic data of the samples and the results from the analysis. The data was mainly from the choices reflected in the questions of the survey questionnaire, and the choices concerned the ideas and opinions of the respondents. Thus, the researcher used inferential statistics including One-way ANOVA and Multiple regression to test variables and to test the two hypotheses in the research.

#### 3.7.2. Mean Scores Assessment Criteria

For the Mean Scores of questions in five-point Likert scale, there is a criterion table to evaluate and assess the questions' scale as below in **Table 3** width of class interval.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The research identified the independent variables into 2 groups, which were



demographic factors (age, gender, and educational level), and factors in HESQUAL (administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, support facilities quality, and transformative quality), meanwhile the dependent variables were positive of word mouth for the international students' perceived service quality at Tongren city's universities. **Tables 4-7** in the following showcase the descriptive statistics including participants' gender, age, and country origin, respectively.

**Tables 8-11** in the following showcase the descriptive statistics of one-sample, the analysis of one-sample test, factor analysis of the items in the questionnaire, reliability analysis, respectively.

**Table 12 & Table 13** in the following showcase the results of the hypothesis,

**Table 3.** Width of class interval.

Mean Scores	Five-Point Likert Scale
4.21 - 5.00	1-Strongly Agree
3.41 - 4.20	2-Agree
2.61 - 3.40	3-Neutral
1.81 - 2.60	4-Disagree
1.00 - 1.80	5-Strongly Disagree

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of participants.

		Statistics			
		Gender	Age	Origin of Country	Student
N	Valid	220	220	220	220
	Missing	0	0	0	0
		Male			

**Table 5.** Gender of participants.

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	105	47.7	47.7	47.7
	Female	115	52.3	52.3	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6.** Age of participants.

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16 - 20	86	39.1	39.1	39.1
	21 - 25	70	31.8	31.8	70.9
	26 - 30	28	12.7	12.7	83.6
	31 - 35	36	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

**Table 7.** Country origin of participants.

		Country Origin			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	79	35.9	35.9	35.9
	Russia	28	12.7	12.7	48.6
	Morocco	31	14.1	14.1	62.7
	Columbia	27	12.3	12.3	75.0
	Pakistan	26	11.8	11.8	86.8
	Kazakhstan	6	2.7	2.7	89.5
	Tajikistan	23	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

**Table 8.** Descriptive statistics of one-sample.

		One-Sample Statistics			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AQ	The administrative staff is kind and helpful.	220	3.4773	0.91882	0.06195
	The administrative staff is will to solve your problems.	220	3.5455	0.88763	0.05984
	The administrative staff is to take advice good for your staying.	220	3.8273	0.63186	0.04260
	The administrative staff is willing to improve living conditions.	220	3.8455	0.60721	0.04094
PEQ	Adequate learning infrastructure is available.	220	3.8091	0.63383	0.04273
	Adequate dormitory infrastructure is available.	220	3.7864	0.83025	0.05598
	Adequate recreational infrastructure is available.	220	3.3636	0.98600	0.06648
	Adequate sports infrastructure is available.	220	3.4818	0.96734	0.06522
CEQ	Curricular is appropriate for students to study.	220	3.8318	0.59210	0.03992
	Lecturers to guide and advise students are available.	220	3.7773	0.70253	0.04736
	Lecturers have the behavior of instilling confidence in students.	220	4.2591	0.93689	0.06317
	There are adequate extracurricular activities.	220	4.1682	0.72395	0.04881
SF	There are adequate opportunities for sports and recreational activities.	220	3.3227	0.97007	0.06540
	There are adequate sports equipment.	220	3.8182	0.65768	0.04434
	There are adequate IT facilities.	220	3.8773	0.53073	0.03578
	There are reasonable pricing and foods on campus.	220	3.8636	0.46772	0.03153
TQ	Students increase in knowledge, abilities and skills.	220	3.9682	0.17592	0.01186
	Students increase in self-confidence.	220	3.9545	0.20877	0.01408
	Students increase in self-awareness.	220	4.0136	0.17826	0.01202
	Students have developed in critical thinking.	220	4.0227	0.17733	0.01196
RFS	You are willing to remain at Tongren city's Universities for further study.	220	3.8364	0.61973	0.04178
PWM	You are willing to speak positive of word mouth for Tongren city's Universities.	220	3.9864	0.22370	0.01508

**Table 9.** The analysis of one-sample test.

		One-Sample Test					
		Test Value = 0					
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
AQ	The administrative staff is kind and helpful.	56.133	219	0.000	3.47727	3.3552	3.5994
	The administrative staff is will to solve your problems.	59.245	219	0.000	3.54545	3.4275	3.6634
	The administrative staff is to take advice good for your staying.	89.841	219	0.000	3.82727	3.7433	3.9112
	The administrative staff is willing to improve living conditions.	93.934	219	0.000	3.84545	3.7648	3.9261
PEQ	Adequate learning infrastructure is available.	89.137	219	0.000	3.80909	3.7249	3.8933
	Adequate dormitory infrastructure is available.	67.644	219	0.000	3.78636	3.6760	3.8967
	Adequate recreational infrastructure is available.	50.599	219	0.000	3.36364	3.2326	3.4947
	Adequate sports infrastructure is available.	53.388	219	0.000	3.48182	3.3533	3.6104
CEQ	Curricular is appropriate for students to study.	95.989	219	0.000	3.83182	3.7531	3.9105
	Lecturers to guide and advise students are available.	79.749	219	0.000	3.77727	3.6839	3.8706
	Lecturers have the behavior of instilling confidence in students.	67.428	219	0.000	4.25909	4.1346	4.3836
	There are adequate extracurricular activities.	85.399	219	0.000	4.16818	4.0720	4.2644
SF	There are adequate opportunities for sports and recreational activities.	50.805	219	0.000	3.32273	3.1938	3.4516
	There are adequate sports equipment.	86.110	219	0.000	3.81818	3.7308	3.9056
	There are adequate IT facilities.	108.359	219	0.000	3.87727	3.8068	3.9478
	There are reasonable pricing and foods on campus.	122.524	219	0.000	3.86364	3.8015	3.9258
TF	Students increase in knowledge, abilities and skills.	334.578	219	0.000	3.96818	3.9448	3.9916
	Students increase in self-confidence.	280.952	219	0.000	3.95455	3.9268	3.9823
	Students increase in self-awareness.	333.961	219	0.000	4.01364	3.9900	4.0373
	Students have developed in critical thinking.	336.480	219	0.000	4.02273	3.9992	4.0463
RFS	You are willing to remain at Tongren city's Universities for further study.	91.819	219	0.000	3.83636	3.7540	3.9187
PWM	You are willing to speak positive of word mouth for Tongren city's Universities.	264.316	219	0.000	3.98636	3.9566	4.0161

**Table 10.** Factor analysis.

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.874
Approx. Chi-Square	7497.585
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
	231
	Sig.
	0.000

**Table 11.** Reliability analysis.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.936	0.920	22

**Table 12.** The result of the research.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	943.823	219	4.310		
Between Items	270.732	21	12.892	46.830	0.000
Within People	1266.086	4599	0.275		
Residual	1266.086	4599	0.275		
Total	1536.818	4620	0.333		
Total	2480.641	4839	0.513		

Grand Mean = 3.8107.

**Table 13.** The results of the hypothesis.

Hypothesis	Results
H1: There is a significant relationship between administrative quality (AQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).	Accepted
H2: There is a significant relationship between physical educational quality (PEQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).	Accepted
H3: There is a significant relationship between core educational quality (CEQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).	Accepted
H4: There is a significant relationship between support facilities quality (SFQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).	Accepted
H5: There is a significant relationship between transformative quality (TQ) and remaining for further study (RFS).	Accepted
H6: There is a significant relationship between administrative quality (AQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).	Accepted
H7: There is a significant relationship between physical educational quality (PEQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).	Accepted
H8: There is a significant relationship between core educational quality (CEQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).	Accepted
H9: There is a significant relationship between support facilities quality (SFQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).	Accepted
H10: There is a significant relationship between transformative quality (TQ) and positive of word mouth (PWM).	Accepted

based on the SPSS's analysis of the data, and the results of the hypothesis, respectively.

## 5. Conclusion

The results from descriptive analysis were used to analyze factors influencing international students' perceptions of service quality of one public university

that included administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, support facilities quality, and transformative quality. The results found that the international students were satisfied with the learning choice. The university's tuition and fees influenced their selection decision and the staff's willingness to help was another factor to attract and retain the students.

The results revealed that international students were satisfied with overall services provided by the results of the relationship among stakeholders in the research, and the results also revealed that international students were satisfied with the guide and help from the staff.

Finally, the results revealed that the recreational dormitory infrastructure was a major factor influencing when international students had positive word of mouth to others and recommended the university to others, followed by factors such as recreational places and equipment, reasonable pricing and foods on campus, increase in self-awareness, and increase self-confidence, respectively.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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