

# The Effects of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

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## Abstract

The study investigated service quality and customer satisfaction within Tanzania higher learning sector using the Service Quality model (SERVQUAL). The two aspects: service quality and customer satisfaction are used interchangeably to mean the same thing by many people and practitioners. In this study, customer satisfaction is an outcome of the service quality and service quality is what brings about the customer satisfaction. The results showed that, students are satisfied with the reliability of the services offered since it received an average positive gap score, but other dimensions of service quality received negative gap score, meaning students are not satisfied with the services. Students are disappointed with the services since the overall service quality was a negative average score. Managers and policymakers at public higher education institutions should focus on monitoring service quality on a regular basis so that they are always informed of their situation. Measuring their service quality will also allow them to keep track of their students' satisfaction levels and evaluate what they need to do to maintain satisfaction and a competitive edge. Students who are satisfied with the institute's services become loyal consumers, for example, by desiring to continue their studies at the same institution.

## Keywords

Quality, Satisfaction, Higher Learning Education, Tanzania, SERVQUAL

## 1. Introduction

Post-secondary education is referred to as higher learning education. Education is a service that is delivered to clients, i.e. pupils. As a client might be loyal and

continue to purchase tangible or physical things from a certain vendor, manufacturer, or supplier, a customer can also be loyal and continue to seek and purchase a specific service when they are happy and distributing positive information to others (Malik, Danish, & Usman, 2010).

As a result, when students at schools, colleges, institutions, or universities receive the best service, they will be satisfied with their service providers. It is critical for service providers to understand if the service they give is of high quality and whether students are happy. To maintain the institute's positive image, it is also necessary to evaluate what services are required and most valued by clients (Twum & Peprah, 2020).

The research was conducted at the Dar es Salaam Campus of Tanzania Institute of Accountancy, to discover the level of satisfaction of students. Also, the results of the research helped to determine what necessary changes to make on the services provided by the institute. The research included all Basic Technician Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's Degree and Post Graduate students. The institute currently offers 23 programmes including Bachelor's Degree, Diploma and Basic Technician Certificate in Accountancy, Procurement and Logistics Management, Business Administration, Human Resources Management, Marketing and Public Relations as well as Public Sector Accounting and Finance. It also offers Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting and Postgraduate Diploma in Procurement and Logistics Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration and Postgraduate Diploma in Project Planning and Management.

Students begin experiencing the services of the institute during application and registration. And they continue to do so when they finally get admitted to continue with education. It's essential for the institute to be aware of the level of their service quality as well as discovering whether students are satisfied with them or not, and what does and doesn't satisfy them. From their study, Douglas, Douglas, McClelland, & Davies (2015) revealed that student's satisfaction involves receiving value for the money they paid to the institute, such as, immediate feedback, availability of staff willing to attend students' needs, adequate books and teaching materials, faculty responsiveness on student's academic needs.

Educational institutions are part of the service business, which strives to suit the requirements and desires of their consumers (Afridi, Khattak, & Khan, 2016). Customers or consumers find it difficult to define quality, but they recognize it when they see it. Others describe quality as something that provides a competitive edge in the marketplace. Others see it as client satisfaction. Quality is a characteristic, a degree, or a representation of anything good or exceptional (Mortimore & Stone, 1991). Quality is a step that must be attained in order to meet the needs of clients (Ellis, 1993).

Genuine attention or observation to service quality provided by institutes, colleges and universities is essential because when the service quality provided is

superior, then student satisfaction will be higher (Chandra, Ng, Chandra, & Priyono, 2018). There is notable effect between the quality of academic services on student satisfaction (Sudiharto, Anggraini, & Irwansyah, 2019). By using the SERVQUAL tool, Kundi, Qureshi, Khan, & Akhtar (2014) concluded that, there is a noteworthy relationship between tangibles and assurance because students consider them as necessary elements for the development of service quality in HEIs. The authors further concluded that students not only pay attention to the bookish knowledge, they also pay attention to other factors before deciding to enrol in any academic institute, college or university. They found there is a notable and positive effect of the five service quality dimensions on the customer satisfaction.

The dimensions of service quality, such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, have a positive effect on student satisfaction (Ariyanto, Aima, & Sari, 2020). Also, Swallehe & Mandari, 2013; Yahaya, Asante, & Alhassan (2020) concluded that, students were pleased with the degree of services provided by the University, and were ready to tell others about it. They further stated that, students were more satisfied with the tangible services of the University.

Service quality much effect students' satisfaction in numerous dimensions (Malik, Danish, & Usman, 2010; Swallehe, 2021; Pseiridis, Agiomirgianakis, & Lianos, 2017). The authors further state that, students' satisfaction depends on the standard of teaching and learning environment of the institution since they require the services of eligible and knowledgeable lecturers for their educational and professional growth (Pseiridis, Agiomirgianakis, & Lianos, 2017).

Also, the study by Malik, Danish, & Usman (2010) showed that, collaboration, teamwork, warm-heartedness and receptiveness of employees, is essential in maintaining students' interest in the institution. They further concluded that, the management should be wary and serious in teaching the employees, so that they'll meet and exceed the students' expectations. There should also be additional important facilities like a well-managed cafeteria, play grounds, parking facilities and physical and mental health facilities. All of these can pull many students to join and to continue their studies at the institute, hence, having the institution's name in the leading educational institutions.

A study by Twum & Pephrah (2020) confirmed that, satisfaction can be 100% regarded by dimensions of service quality, i.e. Tangibles, Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy, and that, students' needs must be attended to by giving discrete focus to taking care of different problems of students.

Customer satisfaction is influenced by the tangibles, assurance, empathy, responsiveness and reliability dimensions. Customers' perception of each dimension of service quality relies on the conditions of the environment where service is occurring, (Twum & Pephrah, 2020).

In their study, Twum & Pephrah (2020) excluded all first-year students in their research because they were new and were yet to experience the service quality

delivery. However, as customers of the institute, students start having experience with the institutes' environment and staff during the registration process. Therefore, the research discovered about the qualities of the services provided by the institute, if students are satisfied, what satisfies them to the point of leading to loyalty by using convenience sampling to select respondents and all students were involved, existing and new, none were excluded.

According to Ariyanto, Aima, & Sari (2020), the variable dimensions of service quality, have a positive effect on customer satisfaction, however, there's low level of degree of causality, hence, and they concluded that, the service quality dimensions are not good antecedent variables for measuring students' satisfaction. Also, Temba (2013), stated that, the service quality model is not the best instrument to use for measuring service quality because the dimensions received average negative gap scores.

Also, apart from assessing the perceptions and expectations of students, the demographic influence or effect should also be looked into, i.e. how gender, ethnicity and religion effect the satisfaction of students (Malik, Danish, & Usman, 2010). Thus, these reasons raised gaps that needed to be investigated, giving an opportunity to the researcher to study further and understand more about the connection between service quality and customer satisfaction.

## 2. Literature Review

### Theoretical Literature Review:

A service is an assurance of satisfaction (Levitt, 1983). Service refers to actions, processes and performances (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). A service is the non-material equal of a good. It does not result in ownership but implies a trade of value between the seller and the buyer. A service is a type of product that involves activities, benefits or satisfaction offered for sale, that are intangible and don't result in the ownership of anything (AMA, 1960; Kotler, 1984).

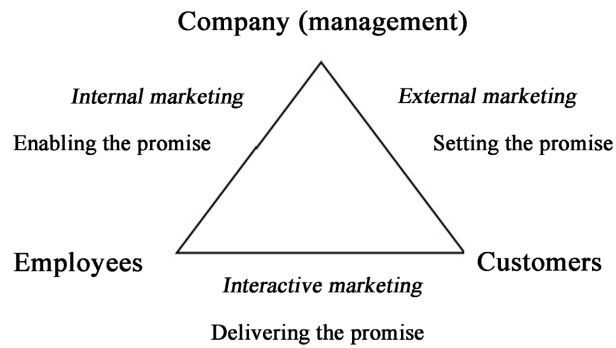
### Service Marketing Triangle

The service marketing triangle shows how people are needed in the activities and abilities of organisations to satisfy consumers, customers and clients and successfully build and maintain customer relationships. The key interlinked groups in the triangle are the Organization, Customers and the Employees. (Figure 1)

### Service Marketing Mix

According to McCarthy (1960), marketing mix refers to marketing elements that an organization uses to achieve its marketing goals. The author proposed the 4p's of marketing, which involves the decisions that marketers have to make about the product to produce and sell, pricing of the product, promotion and placement or distribution of the product.

And Booms & Bitner (1981) proposed a model of 7p's of marketing, that includes product, price, promotion, placing, people, process and physical evidence, which are more useful to service marketers and more applicable to service marketing. (Figure 2)



Source: (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996; Gronroos, 2000; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Kachniewska, 2006).

**Figure 1.** Services marketing triangle.



Source: (Nguyen, 2018).

**Figure 2.** The seven PS of marketing.

### Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Service quality involves comparison of service expectations and service experience. The service provider should meet or exceed customer expectations in order for the service to be considered of good or high-quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

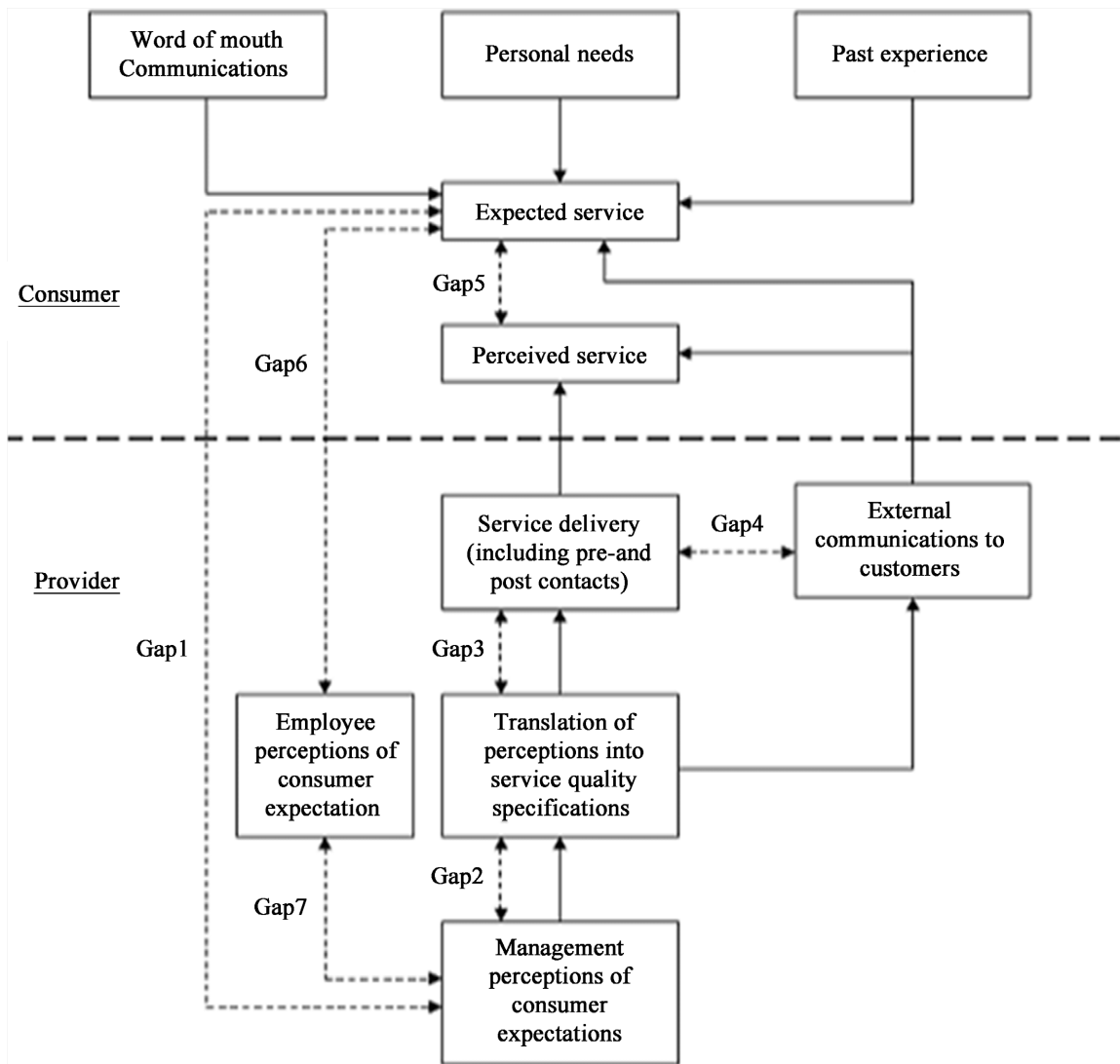
Consumer satisfaction is the positive response of consumer indicating contentment (Oliver, 1997). Also, consumer satisfaction is the consumer's reaction after they compare their expectations and experience and find that the product or service that they have used has pleased them (Tse & Wilton, 1988).

Measuring service quality and hence, determining customer satisfaction, involve objective and subjective processes. According to Lisch (2014), service quality has effects such as adjustments in viewed worth, contentment and loyalty of customers.

The Service Quality Gap Model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985), highlights the important elements needed to provide superior service quality. Five gaps that lead to bad service delivery are shown by the model. If the experience of the customer with the service does not meet their expectations, then there is a gap. The model specifies the most important dimensions of service quality. The service quality dimensions are Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibles. The scale for measuring service quality is SERVQUAL. (Figure 3, Figure 4)

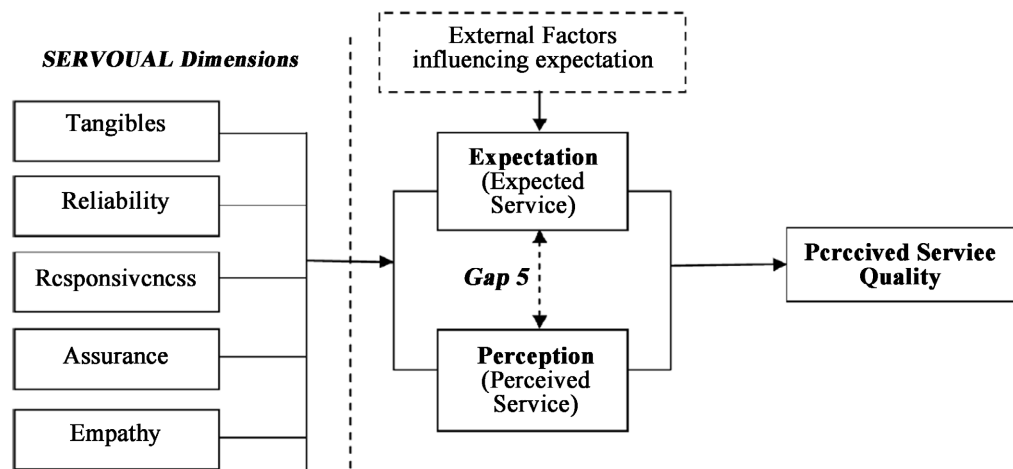
**Customer Expectations**

Service organizations assure customers in a direct and indirect way and stimulate customer’s expectations (Bitner, 1990). Customer expectations are the pre-purchase confidence of a service (Olson & Dover, 1979). Customer’s expectation is caused by information spread by people, individual requirements and



Source: Parasuraman et al. (1985).

**Figure 3.** Services quality gap model.



Source: (Kumar, Manshor, & Kee, 2009).

**Figure 4.** Servqual model.

wishes as well as past experiences (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

#### Customer Perception

Experienced service quality is the assessment of the total service excellence (Zeithaml, 1988). Experienced service quality is the customer's overall perspective of the service (Edvardsson, 1988) and it is the customer's sense for the standard of service (Ghobadian, 1993).

#### Empirical Literature Review:

##### Service in Higher Education Institutions

According to Twum & Pephrah (2020), the improvement of every economy depends on the benefactions of higher education, hence higher educational institutions must play a significant role in assessing service quality to encourage students' satisfaction. Also, according to Malik, Danish, & Usman (2010), students who are at higher education level want superior education and good environment of studying because it pleases their admiration and develops their capabilities to be effective educational personalities.

Students aren't perceived as contributors to the activity of education but clients of the activity (Yahaya, Asante, & Alhassan, 2020). Also, students are significant partners and an important segment to the business achievement of higher education institutions or establishments. Hence, numerous organizations and governments have been prompted to conduct researches to discover students' satisfaction (Hussain, Jabbar, Hussain, & Rehman, 2014).

##### Student Satisfaction

According to Muhonen, Puttonen, Pakarinen, Lerkkanen, & Poikkens (2017), non-academic aspects refer to any activity that excludes academic action. They further state that, students' reaction and satisfaction can be affected by staff's commitment in assisting students and capability to deliver the service with fast delivery. Also, the staff should have good manners, skills and be willing to assist students when they need them (Silva et al., 2017).

Dissatisfaction is an unwanted feeling after the evaluation of an individual's experience (Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017). The current age of students has more effect and influence, better awareness, and demands about issues coming forth, and best service quality attract students (Cho, Kim, & Kwak, 2016). Hence, it's very important to think of methods to use to pull and maintain students in an institution. Service quality is a necessary ability to survive, sustain and develop in higher education institutions (Mustaffa, Hamid, & Rahman, 2016).

### Perceived Service Quality

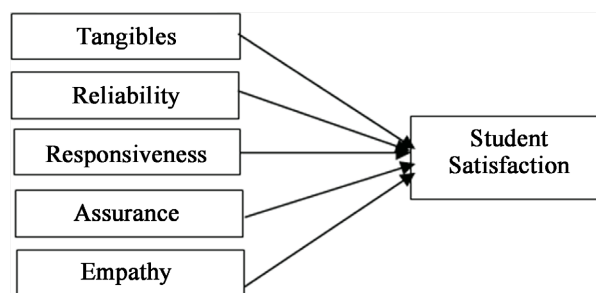
Researchers have examined how service quality dimensions influence customer satisfaction in public and private sector (Kaura, 2013). Some results of previous studies showed there's contrast in customer views due to their different characteristics. A study by Zafiroopoulos & Vrana (2008) showed that, the effect of gender traits of students on the viewed quality of education was little. Female students had higher scores and were more satisfied than male students. The dimension of assurance was the only altered variable. They further revealed that, other dimensions dissatisfied students who were close to graduate, hence, they were dissatisfied with the overall service quality.

According to Lehtinen & Lehtinen (1991), service comprises four basic features, which are intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. Quality is important and all institutions of education should work hard to provide the best quality of services (Gorina, 2016). Perceptions regarding quality don't necessarily reflect personal experiences as people often or sometimes do quality guesses of services that they haven't used, footing such assessments from close people or on knowledge from advertisements (Halvorsrud, Kvale, & Folstad, 2016). Some past studies made conclusion that, the service quality model is appropriate to be used to measure higher education performance (Abdullah, 2006). (Figure 5)

### Research Hypotheses

From the literature and conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were postulated;

- 1) H1: Increase in quality of tangible services increases students' satisfaction.
- 2) H2: Increase in quality of assured services increases students' satisfaction.
- 3) H3: Increase in quality of responsive services increases students' satisfaction.



Source: (Loke, Taiwo, Salim, & Downe, 2011).

**Figure 5.** Conceptual framework.



4) H4: Increase in quality of reliable services increases students' satisfaction.

5) H5: Increase in quality of empathy services increases students' satisfaction.

The hypotheses for the current study have been tested by comparing the mean score of each hypothesis on whether they have positive or negative scores. When the mean score of the dimension is positive then the hypothesis is regarded as having impact on students' satisfaction. The opposite is also the case when the dimension is having a negative score. The comparison has been made between the students' expectations and perceptions. When their perceptions on various dimensions are higher than expectations then the outcome is positive score otherwise it is a negative score.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted using a case study design. This type of research design is involved when a researcher wants to get a rich and deep understanding of the conditions of factors in the research. The case of study was Tanzania Institute of Accountancy, Dar es Salaam Campus. The study involved distributing questionnaires to students and asked them about their expectations of the institute and their experiences with it, to discover their level of satisfaction. Answers were generalised for the institute's population only.

The study involved TIA's student. The institute has two types of enrolments for students, September intake students and March intake students. During data collection, the institute consisted of both September and March intake students. Therefore, the number of study population was 13,662 students.

This study involved studying independent and dependent variables. Independent variable, effects change on dependent variable (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The five service quality dimensions of tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance and responsiveness, were the independent variables in this study since they represented service quality of the institute, and the dependent variable was customer satisfaction.

The expectations and perceptions of students were measured using a 5-point Likert scale and the researcher discovered their level of agreement and disagreement (1-strongly disagree up to 5-strongly agree). When the numbers were high, it indicated that levels of expectation or perceptions were high. Expectations were based on past experiences and information received about TIA, while perceptions were based on the experience the students got in the institute.

Service quality scores (P-E scores) were obtained by subtracting the perception and expectation scores. The service quality scores range from -4 to +4. -4 means a customer is highly dissatisfied and +4 stand for high satisfaction. Service quality is satisfactory when perceptions exceed expectations, or when expectation and perception are equal.

The sampling technique was a non-probability sampling and the sample size was 1004 students. The researcher used a convenience sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling, which involves selecting a sample of people

who are in the reach of the researcher.

Data were collected by distributing questionnaires to TIA students. First, the questionnaire was designed using the SERVQUAL model created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985). Through five dimensions of service quality, the questionnaire consisted of 20 statements on the side of expectations, and 20 statements on the side of perceptions. Also a part collected demographic information of students, such as age and gender to determine the types of people that the researcher interacted with. Lastly, the researcher included an open-ended question that asked students to briefly explain what should be done to improve the service quality of the institute. The questionnaire helped the researcher discover about what students expect from the institute and their experiences with it.

In the study, which used a case study design and non-probability sampling technique, the internal validity would be high because the results obtained are based and generalised only on TIA Dar es Salaam Campus. The external validity would be high because of the reproducibility of the research, which means at another time, another researcher can come and conduct the same research on the same area and can get the same results, or they can conduct the same research on another area. However, it's still possible that the results that will be collected by another researcher could change since students' tastes and preferences tend to change, or because the research will be conducted in a different area.

The researcher used the SPSS v26 to conduct an analysis of the variable dimensions. She first coded the variables and then entered data in the SPSS data sheet. Coding made it easier to conduct analysis. How variables were coded is shown in the appendices. Through the programme, the mean scores for each variable were calculated and obtained. Then, the gap scores and average gap scores for each dimension were calculated manually and entered in **Table 1**.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### Results of the Study:

#### Demographic Characteristics of Students

The demographic characteristics or descriptions of students are such as follows;

The total number of respondents was 1004. Their ages ranged from 17 to 40 years. Males were 44.62% while females were 55.38%, which is 10.76% more than males. There were no missing values for both age and gender characteristics. (**Table 2, Table 3**)

The total number of respondents was 1004. There were 448 males and 556 females who participated in the study, hence 44.62% and 55.38% respectively.

#### Overall Service Quality as Perceived by Students in TIA

From the analysis, the dimensions of tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy received negative average gap scores of -0.13, -0.14, -0.1 and -0.19 respectively. While, the service quality dimension of reliability received a posi-

tive overall gap score of 0.05 and an average gap score of 0.01, meaning that TIA service providers are reliable and that the students are satisfied with such an attribute.

### Discussions of Findings:

#### The Expectations and Perceptions of TIA Students

The expectations and perceptions of students were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. From the analysis or calculation of P-E scores, it showed that, students' expectations were higher than their perception of the institute. The result was an overall negative average gap score. It's usual for customer's anticipations to surpass their experiences. When this happens, it means development or upgrade is required (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

**Table 1.** Mean scores of customers' expectations, perceptions and gap scores and average gap scores.

Dimension	Statement		Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score	Average Gap Score
	Expectation	Perception				
Tangibles	TA1	TA4	4.63	4.38	-0.25	-0.13
	TA2	TA5	4.33	4.22	-0.11	
	TA3	TA6	4.35	4.33	-0.02	
Reliability	RL1	RL6	3.81	4.15	0.34	0.01
	RL2	RL7	4.29	4.20	-0.09	
	RL3	RL8	4.47	4.37	-0.1	
	RL4	RL9	3.86	4.09	0.23	
	RL5	RL10	4.42	4.09	-0.33	
Responsiveness	RS1	RS5	4.57	4.24	-0.33	-0.14
	RS2	RS6	4.08	4.10	0.02	
	RS3	RS7	4.35	4.29	-0.06	
	RS4	RS8	3.80	3.60	-0.2	
Assurance	AS1	AS5	4.25	4.11	-0.14	-0.1
	AS2	AS6	4.25	4.01	-0.24	
	AS3	AS7	4.04	4.12	0.08	
	AS4	AS8	4.38	4.26	-0.12	
Empathy	EM1	EM5	4.34	3.82	-0.52	-0.19
	EM2	EM6	4.23	4.26	0.03	
	EM3	EM7	3.83	3.77	-0.06	
	EM4	EM8	4.48	4.28	-0.2	
<b>Overall Average Gap Score</b>						-0.55
<b>Overall Average Service Quality</b>						-0.11

**Table 2.** Respondents age distribution.

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	17	10	1.0	1.0	1.0
	18	25	2.5	2.5	3.5
	19	95	9.5	9.5	12.9
	20	150	14.9	14.9	27.9
	21	88	8.8	8.8	36.7
	22	59	5.9	5.9	42.5
	23	128	12.7	12.7	55.3
	24	116	11.6	11.6	66.8
	25	104	10.4	10.4	77.2
	26	45	4.5	4.5	81.7
	27	47	4.7	4.7	86.4
	28	29	2.9	2.9	89.2
	29	17	1.7	1.7	90.9
	30	23	2.3	2.3	93.2
	31	17	1.7	1.7	94.9
	32	11	1.1	1.1	96.0
	33	22	2.2	2.2	98.2
	34	5	.5	.5	98.7
	35	4	.4	.4	99.1
	36	4	.4	.4	99.5
37	2	.2	.2	99.7	
38	2	.2	.2	99.9	
40	1	.1	.1	100.0	
Total		1004	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data (2021).

**Table 3.** Gender distribution.

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	448	44.6	44.6	44.6
	Female	556	55.4	55.4	100.0
	Total	1004	100.0	100.0	

SOURCE: Field data (2021).

The variables with the highest expectation scores were TIA should have modern tools or equipment (4.63), trustworthiness and loyalty (4.47), keeping records accurately (4.42), making information easily obtainable by customers (4.57) and operating hours of the institute should be suitable for all customers (4.48). But the mentioned scores don't vary much from scores of other variables. Therefore, it means that students have high expectations of the institute.

The variables with the highest perception scores were modern equipment (4.38), well dressed and neatness (4.33) and trustworthiness and loyalty (4.37). The perception scores don't differ much from expectation scores, however, they are below expectations.

The P-E scores range from -4 to 4. They measure service quality and determine customer satisfaction. When perception scores are higher than expectation scores, it indicates that customers are highly satisfied with a service. Therefore, the largest gap scores were promise to do something by a certain time (0.34) and providing services at the time promised (0.23). Those two variables obtained positive gap scores, meaning that students are satisfied with them. Other gap scores included customers are given individual attention (-0.52), records are kept accurately (-0.33) and information is easily obtainable (-0.33). However, the negative gap scores indicate that the perceived service is close to the expected service, but are lower than expectations.

#### **Gap Score Analysis**

In this study, to calculate gap scores and determine the service quality dimensions that bring satisfaction to students, expectations scores were subtracted from perception scores. According to [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry \(1985\)](#), when perception scores exceed expectation scores, it indicates that a customer is satisfied with a service.

It was identified that, students' perceptions of service quality did not reach their expectations because almost all gap scores of the dimensions are negative except for one dimension, reliability, which scored an average positive gap of 0.01.

#### **Description of Dimensions:**

##### **TA- Tangibles**

The average gap score for tangibles was -0.13, indicating students' dissatisfaction with the services. From students' expectations and perception scores, modern equipment received a score of -0.25, physical facilities received a score of -0.11 and employees dressing and neatness received a score of -0.02. Results show that, even though the perception scores are close to expectation scores, generally, they are below expectations. Therefore, to reach and exceed students' expectations, TIA should update its equipment and physical facilities, and employees should always be well dressed and neat.

##### **RL- Reliability**

The average gap score for the service quality dimension of reliability was 0.01, indicating that students think and feel that TIA is a reliable institute or service provider. When TIA promises to do something by a certain time, they always do

so. And they provide their services at the time they promise to do so. Both variables received scores of 0.34 and 0.23, respectively. However, other reliability variables received negative gap scores. Sincere interest in solving customers' problems received a score of  $-0.09$ , trustworthiness and loyalty received a score of  $-0.1$  and keeping their records accurately received a score of  $-0.33$ . Hence, the negative gap scores indicate students' dissatisfaction with those services. To increase reliability and satisfy students, TIA staff should show sincerity in solving students' problems, they should be trustworthy and loyal and they should keep their records accurately.

#### **RS- Responsiveness**

The average gap score for responsiveness dimension was  $-0.14$ . This indicates that students are dissatisfied with the responsiveness of the institute's employees. They think information isn't made easily obtainable as it received a gap score of  $-0.33$ . They also think employees are not always willing to help customers and they are too busy to respond to customer requests. These variables received gap scores of  $-0.06$  and  $-0.2$  respectively. However, one variable received a positive gap score of  $0.02$ . That is, employees of TIA give services to customers quickly.

#### **AS- Assurance**

The service quality dimension of assurance received an average gap score of  $-0.1$ , meaning that the students aren't satisfied. Students trust less the employees of the institute ( $-0.14$ ), also students feel less safe in their transactions with the institute's employees ( $-0.24$ ) and students think the institute's employees have less knowledge to give good services to customers as this variable received a gap score of  $-0.12$ . However, many students agree that the employees of the institute are polite ( $0.08$ ).

#### **EM- Empathy**

The service quality dimension of empathy received an average gap score of  $-0.19$ . This means students think that the employees of TIA are not empathetic. Students think and feel that employees don't give customers individual attention ( $-0.52$ ), employees don't give customers personal service ( $-0.06$ ) and the operating hours of the institute aren't suitable to all their customers ( $-0.2$ ). Even so, one empathy variable did receive a positive gap score of  $0.03$ . That is, students agree and strongly agree that the employees of TIA understand the needs of their customers.

Among all negative gap scores,  $-0.52$  is the largest. It indicates that students feel they are not given individual attention by the staff of the institute. Not being given individual attention makes a customer feel isolated and not being cared for by a service provider. Many students agree that employees give individual attention, but few strongly agree. However, students have higher expectations concerning the attention they should be given, hence, the variable received a negative gap.

## **5. Conclusion, Limitations, Implications and Recommendations**

### **Summary of Findings**

The research was conducted to discover how TIA students perceive the service quality of the institute. The research was also about determining which dimensions of service quality bring satisfaction to them. From the research proposal, the researcher postulated five hypotheses and the results showed that, the increase in the quality of all five dimensions, increases customer satisfaction, hence the hypotheses are accepted.

From the gap score analysis conducted, it was discovered that, students are satisfied with the reliability of the institute, since the dimension received a positive gap score. However, they are not satisfied with other services of the institute related to tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Also, it was discovered that, students' expectations are higher than their perceptions of the institute, hence, they're not satisfied. Although, the overall P-E score is not large, that is, the expectations and perceptions scores don't differ much, the overall service quality is insignificant.

The confirmation from the study indicates that, the institute should develop its conduct on all five dimensions of service quality, especially the ones that received negative gap scores, to increase customer satisfaction. This will help them attract and retain many students as well as having a huge competitive advantage.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this study are such that, the results obtained can't be generalised to other higher learning institutions because this study was a case study design involving TIA, and the sampling technique was a convenience sampling technique involving students of TIA only. However, such a study can be conducted in other institutions and get results relevant for them.

Also, other limitations included time, cost and the difficulty the researcher faced in gathering available students to provide the questionnaires and some students were not serious about questionnaire filling, others never brought the questionnaires back.

But these limitations are insignificant in contrast with the momentousness of conducting this type of study. This type of research should be conducted regularly to keep track of service quality and determine satisfaction levels of students and hence, make necessary changes to satisfy and retain them.

#### **Implications**

The management of the institute should focus on or pay attention in developing the service quality of the institute based on the results of the service quality dimensions. Assessment of service quality helps the management to provide dependable data that can be used to track and develop service quality.

They should discover and comply with the needs of their students. Making sure physical facilities are in good shape is vital, and they should improve the infrastructural facilities. The employees of the institute should always be responsive to the requests of customers and they should show and maintain empathy. They should also behave and respond in such a way that it provides assurance to students or other types of customers that their issues are being well-taken care

of.

TIA should focus on each dimension of service quality and work hard to develop them in order to execute superior service that would lead to higher experienced service quality and customer satisfaction.

#### **Areas for further Research**

In the future, more influencers of students' satisfaction, inspiration and improvement should be investigated. That is, dimensions like seminars, trainings, practices and libraries in student learning, also, the demographic effect on students' satisfaction should also be studied, i.e., how students' age, gender, religion and race effect students' satisfaction levels.

Further, researchers can collect data with either cross-sectional or longitudinal data collection methods. From these methods, qualitative data will be obtained and the researcher will gain the broad relevance or pertinence of the results of the research.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

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

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