

Title: EXAMINING PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY OF STUDENT SERVICES AND SATISFACTION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITIES IN INDIANA AND MICHIGAN

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Abstract

Universities in the United States face financial constraints, intense competition for students, declining student enrollment, and constant student attrition. However, an increasing number of international students seek higher education abroad, especially in the U.S. Providing quality services to these international students might help institutions attract and retain more of them. Unfortunately, little empirical research has been done on international students' perceptions of service quality, especially of non-academic services.

The purpose of the study was to examine perceptions of service quality of nonacademic services and satisfaction among international students at universities in Indiana and Michigan. The study also investigated the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction.

This quantitative, descriptive, correlational research used an online survey to collect responses to a SERVPERF questionnaire and eight demographic variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between perceived overall service quality and satisfaction. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were examined to ascertain ratings of service performance and satisfaction. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine international students' perceived service quality and satisfaction on the basis of the demographic variables gender, geographical region of origin, age, the level in the current degree program, duration of stay at the university, race/ethnicity, religion, and type of university.

Based on the research design, data were collected from 376 international students from 77 different countries, attending eight public or private universities in Indiana and Michigan. Of the respondents, 196 were male and 175 were female. The majority of the respondents (185) were aged between 18-24 years. Those who attended private universities numbered 61.7% (232) while 38.3% (144) attended public universities.

A majority of the participants, 55.1% (207), were enrolled in graduate school, and 44.2% (164) in undergraduate programs. Five respondents declined to respond to the question. Fifty-two percent had been at the current university for a duration of over a year while 38.6% had been at the university for a period of less than one year, but more than six months. 9.6% did not indicate the duration of their stay at the current university.

The bulk of the participants, 165 (43.9%), were Asian. The remaining sample was made up of 72 (19.1%) Whites or Caucasians, 62 (16.5%) Blacks or African Americans, 33 (8.8%) Hispanics, and 43 (11.4%) identified as Other. A majority, 227 (60.4%), were Christian, with 51 (13.6%) Agnostic/Atheists, 43 (11.4%) Muslims, 32 (8.5%) Hindus, and 17 (4.5%) Buddhists.

The study found that, in general, international students value the nonacademic services provided by their respective institutions; specifically, the components of reliability, empathy, and tangibles within perceptions of the quality of nonacademic services predicted overall student satisfaction.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted for the analysis of the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction. The results showed that the predictor variables reliability, and empathy, had positive significant weights, while tangibility had negative correlation with satisfaction indicating international students' satisfaction with these dimensions of service quality. The model accounted for 32.1% of variance of international students' satisfaction. The remaining 67.9% of variance in student satisfaction was thus due to other factors not represented in this model.

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