The Evaluation of Students' Satisfaction with Educational Services Quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful Based on SERVPERF Model

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Abstract

The current research aims to evaluate the students' satisfaction with educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on SERVPERF Model. The methodology used in this research was descriptive-survey. The statistical population included 3000 male and female students at associate level in all existing majors in the university in 2012-13 out of which a sample of 303 students was selected using relational stratified sampling method. The data were collected using a questionnaire. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics methods such as (percentage) frequency, mean, standard deviation were used for inferential statistics, chi-square was drawn upon. The results showed that the students had evaluated the dimension of responsiveness as desirable.

Keywords: SERVPERF, Educational Services Quality, Azad University

1. Introduction

Today's changing era is the era of competition for resources and capitals. The skilled and experienced human resources are a part of very important resources and capitals in each country. The dynamic and productive economy of every country depends on its skilled and experienced human resources (Andisheh, 2012). All educational institutions seek to satisfy the country's need for abled and skilled workforce in each economic and social part favorably. In fact, the status of universities in regard with educational quality and responsiveness is highly complex. The studies have shown that universities can offer best services to the developing countries if they constantly think of improving their services quality (Weber, 2003). Therefore, paying attention to the quality of services corresponding to customer needs in different areas must be regarded as a very vital factor in the program of higher education.
institutes and their affiliated centers (Bazargan, 2001). In Iran where universities have shifted their attention away from quantity to quality, carrying out such research has become important (Kebriaei and Roodbari, 2005). The scholars have put forth a variety of methodologies and models for quality evaluation of service providing organizations among which SERVQUAL, SERVPERF and SERVIMPERF models are the most well-known ones (Anvari Rostami et al., 2005).

However, SERVPERF's instruments have been proposed to develop that of SERVQUAL, which only measures customer's understanding of quality as a scale in order to evaluate (Wong et al., 2010). Customer's satisfaction with a service can be defined as a comparison of his/her expectations from services with his/her impression of the provided services. SERVPERF services quality assessment model determines the level of services quality from customers' viewpoint by investigating different dimensions of the provided services (Gorgi et al., 2010). This model includes the following dimensions:

1. Physical aspects: physical aspects and elements related to the organization in order to offer services
2. Reliability: the organization's ability to offer services properly and on time
3. Responsiveness: tendency toward helping customers and offering prompt services
4. Assurance: employees' courtesy, knowledge and ability to create confidence and trust in customers
5. Empathy: caring and individualized attention to customers' needs (Hosseini et al., 2010).

Accordingly and given the development program of Islamic Republic of Iran along with the policies of Islamic Azad University in order to develop educational and vocational training in the country, the compatibility of these trainings with the new global changes in new areas of education is necessary and this will not come true but with reviewing the structure of the (educational) system by evaluating and creating new areas of education in the body of universities.

Given the understanding and effect of using services quality assessment in enhancing the efficiency of universities and higher education institutes, the current research was done to assess the students' satisfaction with educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on SERVPERF Model.

2. Research Question

1- How is the students' satisfaction with educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on responsiveness dimension?
3. Literature Review

The results of a MA thesis done by one of the students of Islamic Azad University of Dezful suggest the favorable but average status of all educational services quality in this university (Tafi, 2013). In Yazd College of Carpet, services quality were evaluated using a fuzzy approach and SERVPERF and SERVQUAL's questionnaires. The results showed that the provided services quality in this college was at an acceptable level (Assadi et al., 2012). The results of another research which investigated educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful indicated that there had been a gap between students' expectations and their perceptions and in two areas of expectations and perceptions, they had prioritized tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance (Soltanifar, 2012). A research group also examined the services quality provided in Tehran Paramedical School by polling 170 students of this university and it was found that the students' expectations were beyond their perceptions of the status quo and none of their expectations were satisfied in any of quality dimension (Tofighi et al., 2011). In a study which was done to determine Chinese students' expectations and perceptions of educational services quality, it was revealed that there was a negative gap in all dimensions of services quality (Barnes, 2007). In the library of JNU in India, a research was also conducted to measure the library services quality. The results showed that although this university was in a good condition in regard with providing services to the students, offering more services for easier access to the existing information led to the satisfaction of the students (Sahhu, 2007). Two researchers found in their study that students' expectations for educational consultative services quality was at a high level but responsiveness was at the lowest level in this research (Tyran and Rose, 2006). The results of determining academic services quality from students' viewpoint in the USA indicated that no favorable academic services were provided to hem (Richard and Adams, 2006).

4. Research Methodology

In terms of objective, this is a descriptive-survey research. And the data were collected using relational stratified method.

5. Sample and Sampling Method

In order to find the sample required for this research out of 3000 male and female students of computer, electronics, accounting, electrotechnics, construction, physical education, architecture, automobile mechanics, childcare education, health education, general drawing, surveying, metallurgy and facilities engineering in Islamic Azad University of Dezful, 303 people were selected based on Krejcie & Morgan table (1970) and using relational stratified sampling method.

6. Data Collection Instruments
Most of the research data have been gathered by a questionnaire; the current research questionnaire is based on English version of SERVPERF questionnaire (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) which has been translated by the researcher during the process of doing the research and necessary modifications have been made to be compatible with where the research is carried out. The total reliability for the scale is 70%. The content validity of the research questionnaire has also been approved by some experts and professors of educational assessment; being as 85%.

7. Data Analysis Method

In order to analyze the research data, the following statistical methods have been used by SPSS.

1- Descriptive statistics methods: frequency, percentage frequency, mean, standard deviation.
2- Inferential statistics: chi-square test

In order to analyze the collected data, SPSS has been used. In addition, the significance level of \( \alpha = 0.05 \) has been considered for all questions.

8. Descriptive statistics indices

Table 1 - Standard deviation, the lowest and highest scores in regard with responsiveness from the viewpoint of Islamic Azad University of Dezful's students (n=330)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical Indices Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Lowest Score</th>
<th>Highest Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. The Related Research Question Findings

Given the objective of the research; the evaluation of the students' satisfaction with educational quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful, a research question has been formulated. To examine and answer this question, the following analyses have been done:

a) Presenting percentage frequency for each item of the questionnaire in regard with the research dimensions.

b) Comparing the subjects' viewpoints concerning how the suggested items levels have been selected using chi-square statistical method.
c) Categorizing the participants' responses into two favorable and unfavorable levels (using the data medians) and comparing their viewpoints in regard with each of educational services quality dimensions of Islamic Azad University of Dezful.

10. Research Question

1- How is the students' satisfaction with educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on responsiveness dimension?

Table 2 shows how the students' satisfaction with educational services quality in Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on responsiveness dimension is. In this table, the students' responses have been examined in regard with the frequency distribution of responses to each item of the questionnaire.

Table 2- Subjects' frequency distribution of responses to the items in regard with educational services quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Responsiveness Dimension</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To what extent the instructors have the necessary skills for teaching (manner of expression, teaching method, information and knowledge)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The authorities are present at the determined place and time to meet the students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informing the students of educational conditions (unregistered credits, unannounced test results) by the employees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The appropriateness of the students' waiting time to receive (educational, library, self-service etc.) services</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Compatibility between the number of service providing staff and the rate of students' demands</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To what degree the instructors feel responsible for your learning.</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Are the students' test results announced on due date?</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The university's employees always behave politely toward the students</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in table 2 show that most of the participants have evaluated the items of responsiveness as high and very high. In regard with the items of 1, 3 and 4, the highest frequency distribution is at a very high level. With respect to the items 2, 5, 6 and 7, the
highest frequency distribution is at a high level. However, item 8 has the highest frequency at an average level. Other percentages can be observed in the table.

The results of chi-square test in regard with the research subjects' viewpoint on the responsiveness aspect of educational services are found in table 3.

Table 3- Chi-square test in regard with the responsiveness dimension of educational services from the research subjects' viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Observed Frequency</th>
<th>Expected Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-square $\chi^2$</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>387</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>465.8</td>
<td>259.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>596</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in table 4 are about the students' viewpoint on responsiveness. Chi-square test for investigating the difference between the responses of the subjects in different levels of the options shows that there is a significant difference for choosing an option between them ($\chi^2 = 259.17$, df = 4 and p<0.001). This difference is significant at 0.01 level. Given that the options average, high and very high have been chosen by the subjects more than other ones, it can be concluded that the students have assessed the responsiveness of educational services as average, high and very high.

Table 4 presents the assessment results of the research subjects' viewpoint on the responsiveness of educational services of Islamic Azad University of Dezful based on two favorable and unfavorable levels carried out through chi-square test. In regard with responsiveness, the expected median is 24.

Table 4- The assessment results of the research subjects' viewpoint on the responsiveness of educational services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Observed Frequency</th>
<th>Expected Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-square $\chi^2$</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>151.5</td>
<td>101.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 4 shows, there is a significant difference between two favorable and unfavorable levels ($\chi^2 = 101.7$, df = 1 and p<0.001). Given the frequency of the responses, the participants have assessed the responsiveness of educational services at favorable level.
11. Research Suggestions

1- Employees are required to behave more professionally than the past to attract the students' attentions
2- In order to increase the favorability level of the services, the authorities and staff should be present on time at the given place.
3- The staff are suggested to make more efforts than the past in order to update their knowledge in regard with their fields.

12. Discussion and Conclusion

Given the frequency of the subjects' response in regard with the responsiveness of educational services of Islamic Azad University of Dezful, on can find out that this dimension has been assessed as favorable. The oral survey of the students conducted by the researcher in regard with the ability and commitment of the instructors for teaching also shows the strength of the instructors in carrying information to them. The survey of the students on their satisfaction with receiving educational services is also suggestive of timely and responsible responsiveness of the instructors and employees in this university. The visitation of the researcher in rush hour to examine the items in regard with the number of the staff providing services and their politeness indicates that the employees meet the students' demands even in rush hour while acting professionally. In respect to the number of personnel, it should be said that the number of the staff has been enough and no student's time is wasted due to the low number of workforce and the employees meet the students' demands while acting providing services properly. The students' satisfaction with the dimension of responsiveness in Islamic Azad University of Dezful suggests the university's success in regard with responsiveness. That is due to the fact those organizations are regarded as successful which focus the roles and capabilities of their educational services employees on meeting customers' demands and attracting their trust (Armstid and Kiley, 2003). According to what was said, the results of responsiveness aspect of the research are in line with the studies done by Assadi et al (2012), and Tafi (2013) but not with Soltanifar (2012), Tyran and Rose (2006) and Cho (2004).

Given the research done by Feeli et al (2010) and Ghalavandi et al. (2012) in regard with the existence of significant difference among education levels (associate degree, BA/BS, MA/MS and PhD) and the quality of educational services, one can conclude that the higher the level of education, the higher the students' expectations favorability level. So, according to the results of the mentioned research, one can conclude that since the research sample has been at associate level and most of the participants have not been to other universities, the aspect of responsiveness in Islamic Azad University of Dezful is evaluated as favorable based on SERVPERF.

Since Azad University is also a private organization, policy makings and their priority go for satisfying students' satisfaction, acting as an advertisement for the university and attracting more students.
Another thing is the use of young and motivated workforce as the university's staff and instructors the most of whom have been employed based on a contract and always obsessed with losing their jobs. Hence, they try their best to maintain their position and behave properly towards students.

And since students are admitted without giving an exam at associate level so that they can continue their studies, their needs and conditions have certainly been compatible with the university's conditions. Thus, their expectations are in agreement with the facilities and features of Islamic Azad University of Dezful.
References


