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SERVICE STANDARD AND STUDENTS' SATISFACTION: A STUDY ON SETABGANJ DEGREE COLLEGE, BOCHAGANJ, DINAJPUR, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The intention of the study was to explore service quality or standard in higher-secondary and higher education in Bangladesh. Particularly, the study investigated the five dimensions of SERVQUAL Model or RATER (R=reliability, A=assurance, T=tangibles, E=empathy, and R=responsiveness). A total number of 250 students from a college participated in this study. The study found that the higher-secondary and higher education institutions did not meet the students' expectation. In five dimensions of service quality, a gap was noticed between the students' expectation and perception. The gap analysis between service expectation and perception showed that all scores for perception were lower than their expectation scores. It suggested that there are a lot of service improvements attempts need to be fulfilled to promote service quality. Therefore, for the institution to improve the service quality it needs to upgrade facilities in order to minimize the gap between students' expectation and the perception that may be helpful in higher-secondary and higher education in Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foremost basic human need among the fives. Education plays a significant role in the progress, economic development, up-gradation of the standard of living, etc. in any country (Manzoor, 2013). Countries like Bangladesh take education as one of the major tools for human capital improvement (GED BPC, 2015a). There is no doubt that Higher-secondary and higher education plays an imperative role in heightening of an individual's quality of life. In line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs), the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) of Bangladesh identifies human resource development as a priority sector and highlight more on quality education at all levels (Primary, Secondary and Higher education) (GED BPC, 2015a and UNDP, 2016). Without ensuring the quality, students' satisfaction is going to be a mere dream (Wikiversity, 2016).

The scrutiny of service quality has got ample consideration and become an important issue nowadays. Service quality in higher-secondary and higher education is currently measured by student satisfaction and quality in higher-secondary and higher education can be determined by the extent to which student needs and expectations are being met. "Service quality is the expectation of customers

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furthermore they explained that customers are having expectations from service providers and if perceived service quality is meeting or exceeding their expectation they would be delighted and if less than expectations, it will create disappointment” (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Service quality is the important variable for competitive advantage in Bangladesh. Service quality in education sector is very important as public and private universities are growing rapidly in our country which enhances competition (Kalam and Mahonta, 2017). It is seen that the number of student enrollment at the higher-secondary and higher education institutions are increasing day by day in our country. There is continues demand for skillful and competent human resource in different sectors in Bangladesh. But the question is whether they are getting such quality education from their respective institutions or not. It is the high time for the concerned authority related to higher education of Bangladesh to focus on the customer- centered principles in order to achieve a higher level of satisfaction as the changing nature of the higher education marketplace impacted profoundly on the overall student satisfaction (Mahmud *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the satisfaction level of the students, which will ultimately help the proper authority to formulate effective strategy and to provide suitable environment of education to meet the demand of the competitive market.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Every year, a large number of students of higher-secondary and higher education level are completing their degrees from Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur. But there is a problem that most of the students’ performance is not satisfactory. So, our intention was to identify what was the problem and where was the problem behind their quality. Education plays a vital role in improving an individual’s quality of life. There is a demand for compatible human resource in different sectors in Bangladesh. But the question is whether the educational institutions in our country are providing such quality education or not.

1.2. Importance of the study

Educational institutions like any other service organization should encounter to gain excellence in service quality. The study has a number of practical implications for the higher-secondary and higher education sector where authorities seek to identify service standard and student satisfaction level in their particular institutions: Firstly, the results of the study are significant for authorities who mention that students are likely to become more demanding in terms of the level of service they believe to be satisfactory. Secondly, authorities should take into account the tangible facilities of the institutions if they are to improve the quality of services. Students expect institutions to have modern equipment and pathetic materials related to the service. Authorities should consider the material service so as to promote perceived service quality and acquire student satisfaction. Finally, authorities should ascertain that employees are well trained and understand the level of service that the institution expects to provide for its students.

Therefore, the study helps to imagine a conceptual framework for service standard in the higher-secondary and higher education sector by assessing the gap between expectation and perception of service quality. Thus, the study has a look at the factors which contribute towards the student satisfaction of various institutions in Bangladesh either they are public or private.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to measure the students’ satisfaction level regarding various services provided by Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur. To fulfil the main objective, the following specific objectives were considered.

- a) To identify the standard services related to students' satisfaction level.
- b) To know the expectation of students regarding those services.
- c) To know the experience of the students' after enjoying the services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has shown that numerous studies used the SERVQUAL Model or RATER to measure service quality in higher-secondary and higher education.

Beer, (2003) defines service as “a complete package which consists of all the activities that are important for customer satisfaction”.

Khodayari & Khodayari, (2011) examined the perceptions and expectations of Islamic Azad University in Iran, their results showed that there was a gap between student's expectations and perceptions among the dimensions of the service quality. Hence, the findings of Khodayari & Khodayari, (2011) work suggested that reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy were important for students. Furthermore, the University of Islamic Azad Firoozkooh branch must allocate more funds to improve performance.

Al-Alak & Alnaser, (2012) were successful in demonstrating the relationship between service quality dimensions (tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy) and overall service quality with undergraduate students' satisfaction in the Faculty of Business at the University of Jordan. Assurance and reliability dimensions of service quality were the two most important dimensions related to improvement (Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012).

Bagherzadeh & Bagherzadeh, (2010) evaluated the higher educational services in Tabriz through SERVQUAL model. They found that higher educational institutions in Tabriz failed to deliver quality education as they got negative signs for all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL Model. They got the minimum gap for assurance and the highest gap for empathy.

Research work conducted by Aghamolaie *et al.*, (2007) measured the service quality in Hurmuzgan University of medical sciences. Their results showed a gap among all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL Model. They found the highest gap in responsiveness and least gap in reliability.

Manaf and Nooi (2009) used SERVQUAL Model in Malaysia's Hospitals. They distributed 1216 instruments among in-patients and out-patients and did factor analysis which comes up with clinical and physical dimensions of service.

The SERVQUAL model was also used by Kang & James, (2004) in the telecommunication industry in South Korea. They used 464 users of two cellular companies in South Korea. They found that not only the functional quality is important but also technical quality is valued by customer for overall service quality.

Lim and Tag, (2000) used the same SERVQUAL Model with two additional dimensions, “accessibility and affordability”. They used the extended SERVQUAL Model to gauge the difference between patient's expectations and perceptions in Singapore hospitals. They used 25 items paired questionnaire with 3 additional questions for the two extra dimensions. According to Lim and Tag (2000) “Assurance” and “Responsiveness” were the most valued factor for the health sector.

Karassavidou *et al.*, (2009) used SERVQUAL Model in NSH (National Service Hospital) in Greek. Authors modified the original instrument by bringing changes to the words and also added some questions and distributed 26 paired instruments among 137 patients. They found all dimensions highly reliable and got a significant gap between patient expectations and perceived service quality.

2.1. The SERVQUAL (or RATER) model

Service quality dimensions refer to the psychological dimensions that form the basis of a customer's perceived quality of service. The SERVQUAL model is constructed based on its initial 10 dimensions (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Security, Access, Communication, Understanding the customer). These are stated below:

1. **Tangibles:** Tangibles are the physical evidence of the service, for instance, the appearance of the physical facilities, tools and equipment used to provide the service; the appearance of personnel and communication materials and the presence of other customers in the service facility.
2. **Reliability:** Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service in a dependable and accurate manner. The service is performed correctly on the first occasion, the accounting is correct, records are up to date and schedules are kept.
3. **Responsiveness:** Responsiveness is the readiness and willingness of employees to help customers by providing prompt timely services, for example, mailing a transaction slip immediately or setting up appointments quickly.
4. **Competence:** Competence is the possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
5. **Courtesy:** Courtesy is the consideration for the customer's property and a clean and neat appearance of contact personnel, manifesting as politeness, respect, and friendliness.
6. **Credibility:** Credibility includes factors such as trustworthiness, belief and honesty. It involves having the customer's best interests at a prime position. It may be influenced by company name, company reputation and the personal characteristics of the contact personnel.
7. **Feel secure:** Security enables the customer to feel free from danger, risk or doubt including physical safety, financial security and confidentiality.
8. **Access:** Access is approachability and ease of contact. For example, convenient office operation hours and locations.
9. **Communication:** Communication means both informing customers in a language they are able to understand and also listening to customers. A company may need to adjust its language for the varying needs of its customers. Information might include, for example, explanation of the service and its cost, the relationship between services and costs and assurances as to the way any problems are effectively managed.
10. **Understanding the customer:** Knowing the customer means making an effort to understand the customer's individual needs, providing individualized attention, recognizing the customer when they arrive and so on. This, in turn, helps to delight the customers by rising above their expectations.

Further testing suggests that the 10 primary dimensions of service quality were closely related. Thus these 10 dimensions were merged into five dimensions. Therefore, this model is also referred to as the RATER model, which stands for the five service factors it measures. The easy way to recall the five dimensions of SERVQUAL Model are by using the letters of RATER, as follows:

R = Reliability

A = Assurance

T = Tangibles

E = Empathy

R = Responsiveness

SERVQUAL'S five dimensions

1. **Reliability:** Reliability is defined as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and

accurately. In other words, it means doing what you say you will do.

In this study, reliability includes:

- Regular Class
- Transparency of the marking system
- Practical Learning
- Internal Examination
- Financial Support

2. Assurance: Assurance is defined as employees' knowledge and courtesy and the ability of the firm and its employees to inspire trust and confidence (combines original dimensions of competence, courtesy, credibility, and security). The assurance dimension is particularly important in service industries offering high levels of credence qualities, such as auto repair and medical services.

In this study, assurance includes:

- Skill and Knowledge of Lecturer
- Punctual and Discipline of Lecturer
- Friendly behavior and courtesy of teachers
- Staff's knowledge of rules and procedures

3. Tangibles: Tangibles are defined as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. Service industries such as hotels and restaurants rely heavily on tangibles. Guests often judge the quality of a hotel experience on the quality of the physical environment and tangible amenities.

In this study, tangibles include:

- Classroom Facility
- Library Facility
- Teaching Equipment facility
- Laboratory Facility

4. Empathy: Empathy is defined as the caring, individualized attention the firm provides to customers (Combines original dimensions of access, communication and understanding the customer). Customers perceive the level of a company's empathy by the degree of personalized service offered. Customers want to be known on an individual basis and feel that the company understands and addresses their individual needs.

In this study, empathy includes:

- Individual attention to students
- Sympathetic and supportive of the need of the students
- Computer Facility
- Common room Facility
- Students' best interest at heart

5. Responsiveness: Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. Customers judge a company's responsiveness by assessing the amount of time it takes and the attentiveness that is offered in response to their requests, questions, complaints and problems.

In this study, responsiveness includes:

- Careful for the students
- Teacher's response to students' requests.
- Address of student's complaint
- Availability of personnel

3. METHODOLOGY

22 set of questions were developed with the help of the SERVQUAL model or RATER. The model considered questions from five dimensions such as reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness of the service quality. The dimensions were divided into two segments: expectation and perception (experience after enjoying the service).

3.1. The population of the study

There are many faculties and departments in Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur. So, all the students from various departments or faculties of Setabganj Degree College were the population of the study.

3.2. Sample of data

There are 3 faculties and 15 departments in Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur. But for the convenience of the study, we selected a portion of students from different departments and faculties. Therefore, the selected students were considered as a sample for the study.

3.3. Sample Area

A large number of students are admitted every year at various departments and faculties in Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur from all over the country. But due to time limitation, we collected response from the students of Dinajpur district under Rangpur division.

3.4. Sample Size

For getting the expected result, sample size is very important. From the mentioned area, we selected 250 students for conducting the research work. A general rule, the sample size must be of an optimum size i.e. it should neither be too large nor too small. It has been suggested that minimum sample size should be at least 5% of the total population.

3.5. Sample selection method

We used judgmental as well as the convenience sampling method for the study. For getting appropriate result, we used these two non-probability sampling method of data selection.

3.6. Statistical analysis of the sample

All the collected data were analyzed by using the statistical software SPSS (version 23) with the help of a computer.

4. FINDINGS

Table 1. Mean score of Tangible dimension of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

List of factors	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
1. Classroom Facility	5.0000	4.3333
2. Library Facility	4.9333	4.3333
3. Teaching Equipment	4.7200	3.5333
4. Laboratory Facility	4.7067	3.6267
Total	4.8400	3.9566

Interpretation:

From the above table, we saw that the mean scores of expectation and perception were 4.8400~5 and 3.9566~4 respectively. The result indicated that students' had high expectation but they were only satisfied regarding the tangible dimension of Setabganj Degree College.

Table 2. Mean score of Reliability dimension of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

List of factors	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Regular Class	4.9600	4.4267
Transparency	5.0000	4.7733
Practical Learning	4.9867	4.0533
Internal Examination	4.8533	4.5867
Financial Support	4.8267	3.8933
Total	4.9253	4.3466

Interpretation:

From the above table, we saw that the mean scores of expectation and perception were $4.9253 \approx 5$ and $4.3466 \approx 4$ respectively. The result showed that students' had high expectation but they were only satisfied concerning the reliability dimension of the institution.

Table 3. Mean score of Responsiveness dimension of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

List of factors	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Carefulness	4.9467	4.0000
Busyness	4.0933	3.7600
Students' Complaints	4.3067	3.8800
Available Personnel	4.4933	4.1733
Total	4.4600	3.9533

Interpretation:

From the above table, we saw that the mean scores of expectation and perception were $4.4600 \approx 4$ and $3.9533 \approx 4$ respectively. The result revealed that students' had expectation and they were satisfied with the responsiveness dimension of the mentioned institution.

Table 4. Mean score of Assurance dimension of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

List of factors	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Skill and Knowledge	4.9867	4.4133
Punctual and Discipline	4.8800	4.1867
Friendly and Courteous	4.6533	3.5467
Rules and Procedure	4.1333	3.8667
Total	4.6633	4.0033

Interpretation:

From the above table, we saw that the mean scores of expectation and perception were $4.6633 \approx 5$ and $4.0033 \approx 4$ respectively. The result exhibited that students' had high expectation but they were only satisfied pertaining responsiveness dimension.

Table 5. Mean score of Empathy dimension of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

List of factors	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Individual attention	4.9067	3.8667
Sympathetic and Supportive	4.8533	3.7867
Computer Facility	4.4533	4.4267
Common room Facility	4.5333	4.4400
Students' best interest	4.6400	3.7333
Total	4.6773	4.0506

Interpretation:

From the above table, we saw that the mean scores of expectation and perception were $4.6773 \approx 5$ and $4.0506 \approx 4$ respectively. The result informed that students' had high expectation but they were only satisfied with respect to empathy dimension of Setabganj Degree College.

Table 6. Relative position of dimensions of Setabganj Degree College based on students' expectations and perceptions

Dimensions	Mean Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Tangibility	4.8400	3.9566
Reliability	4.9253	4.3466
Responsiveness	4.4600	3.9533
Assurance	4.6633	4.0033
Empathy	4.6773	4.0506

Interpretation:

From the above table, it was clear that students' had a high expectation in tangibility dimension, reliability dimension, assurance dimension and empathy dimension. On the other hand, students were only satisfied regarding all service quality dimensions of Setabganj Degree College, Bochaganj, Dinajpur.

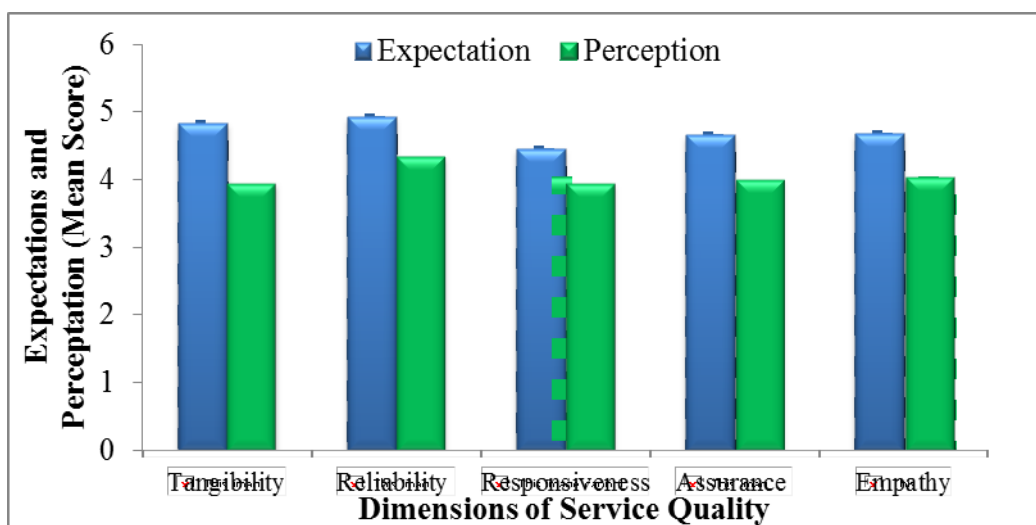


Figure 1. The relative position of dimensions of Setabganj Degree College.

The findings reported by Jalali *et al.*, (2011) and Saif, (2014) support the findings of the present study.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The education industry is taken into account as one of the most prevalent industrial sectors in modern world. As a meaningful service sector in modern times there is much concern from the part of both academics and practitioners regarding the improvement of its students' satisfaction. The study investigated to diagnose the applicability of the perceived service quality measurement scale to students and to diagnose the student satisfaction level in higher-secondary and higher education of Bangladesh. It attempted to diagnose the perceived service quality of managerial units such as services provided by the registrar, library, faculty offices, rector office, dormitories, sports and health centre. Since understanding service quality measures in higher-secondary and higher education sector are still grey, the study engaged methodology triangulation in order to bring out clear answers on both what and why questions i.e. the extent of the influence of SERVQUAL model or RATER on students' satisfaction as well as the detail reason of such influence to judge its applicability in higher-secondary and higher education of Bangladesh. The findings disclosed that the five dimensions of SERVQUAL or RATER were found to have significant impact on the students' satisfaction of the higher-secondary and higher education institutions in Bangladesh.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has some limitations, no matter how well it is conducted. In undertaking the study, we faced some problems. The main problems are stated below:

- **Limited sample:** We conducted our research with only one institution. So, the study covered a limited number of sample size in respect to its real scope. That is why further study is needed with representative number of institutions for better findings and recommendation.
- **Lack of respondents' interest:** Sometimes respondents were not interested to express their honest opinion.
- **Personal limitation:** As some assumptions were made with the help of limited information, there may be some personal mistakes.

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