

Perceived Quality of Higher Educational Institutions in Maharashtra: Students Perspective

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Abstract:

In recent times, Indian education system has seen an upsurge in post graduate management institutions due to growing demand of management discipline. Mere existence to function in the system will certainly not help the institutions in the long run. Service quality is often seen as a good competitive strategy that not only service organizations, but also educational institutions worldwide employ to increase their competitiveness in the tertiary sector. Hence, providing quality education is the need to be addressed here. Given a fact that students have become more informative and are exposed to different educational platforms, institutions are readily being at their disposal. The present study was carried out in Maharashtra, India where 26 Institutes from three regions Pune, Nagar and Nashik participated in the study. The objectives of study were to analyze students' perception on the quality of higher education based on their demographic profile and impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived quality of education. SERVQUAL was used to collect the data. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics viz chi-square eta and regression analysis. The results of the study revealed that students' perception on the quality of higher education and their gender, graduation and region are independent. There is no impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived service quality of HEIs.

Keywords: Management Institutions, Service Quality, Tertiary Sector, Students' Perception, Students' Expectation, SERVQUAL.

Objectives:

1. To analyze students' perception on the quality of higher education based on their demographic profile.
2. To analyze the impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions.

Hypothesis

1. Association between demographic profile of students and perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions.

The relationship between gender and perceptions of the quality of higher education is not statistically significant. There is evidence to suggest that there may be gender disparities in the way that higher

education quality is perceived. Educators should carefully assess how the gender gap in admissions affects students' perceptions of quality of higher education. Region, age, and previous academic accomplishment have a big impact on how students perceive the quality of higher education (Akreem & Hossain, 2016). Gender, graduation, and region being important independent variables that impact the dependent variables i.e., perception and expectations, validation is required further for study in Indian context.

H₀₁: Demographic profile of students and perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions are independent.

H_{a1}: Demographic profile of students and perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions are dependent.

Specification of information needed

To suffice the said objectives and testing of hypotheses following data is required.

1. Information on number of HEIs affiliated to SPPU.
2. Number of HEIs affiliated to SPPU in rural and urban regions.
3. Services provided by these Institutions.
4. Total number of students appearing for Final University Examination.
5. Demographic profile of students.
6. Various dimensions that affect students' perception of service quality provided by HEIs.
7. Various dimensions that affect students' expectations of service quality provided by HEIs.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The research is undertaken in three districts viz Pune, Ahmednagar, and Nashik of Maharashtra state. Postgraduate management institutions affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) in all these districts were covered in this study. Only MBA Institutes affiliated to SPPU were studied. The number of these higher educational institutions (HEIs) in all the above-mentioned districts was 128. Out of these only 26 institutes were selected for the study. All five dimensions i.e., reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness were covered to measure service quality of selected post graduate management institutions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is crucial because it will gauge how students feel about HEIs and what they anticipate from them. The results of this study may also be used as a guide and a mirror for postgraduate management institutions as they reevaluate the quality of their services to remain viable in today's cutthroat marketplace.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design adopted here is descriptive. The present study was conducted to evaluate service quality of HEIs for which hypotheses based on literature review were framed and validated. This again comes under the purview of positivist approach. A survey method used is quantitative in character. Use of a single cross-sectional design was done, as the information related to perception and expectation was collected from the students of the study only once at a single point of time.

Sampling Design

Sampling Frame: MBA Institutes affiliated to SPPU, Pune

Sampling Area: Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik District, Maharashtra

Total Number of MBA Institutes Affiliated to SPPU: 128

Total number of Institutes selected for study: 26

Sampling Unit: Students

Sampling Technique: Stratified Simple Random Sampling

Total Number of Post Graduate Management Institutes Affiliated to SPPU considered for the study.

District Region	Pune	Nagar	Nashik	Total
Urban	55 (11)	01 (01)	10 (02)	66 (14)
Rural	41 (08)	12 (02)	9 (02)	62 (12)
Number of Institutes	96 (19)	13 (3)	19 (4)	128= 26

(Source: DTE Website- Pune, Ahmednagar & Nashik Region)

As per the data published by the DTE, the total number of institutes in Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik region are 128. As a thumb rule, 20 percent of total population of institutes is considered for the present study. This brings the total number of institutes to be included in study to 26. As the study covers three districts, the total number of institutes in urban and rural parts of these regions are identified from the DTE website. It is observed that Pune region has 96 postgraduate management institutions affiliated to SPPU offering MBA program, Ahmednagar has 13 institutes and Nashik region has 19 institutes. Again, general rule of thumb is applied here. 20 percent of total population in all these three regions is calculated making the number of institutes to 19, 03 and 04 in Pune, Ahmednagar, and Nashik respectively. Thus, the total number of institutes considered for the study is 26.

For calculating the sample size of students, the following measure was considered.

The total number of students studying in MBA I & II year of institutes affiliated to SPPU is 32358, the calculated sample size is 395. Dividing this by the number of institutes selected (26), makes it to number of students per institute to 16. Thus, the sample size for students is 416 i.e., $26 \times 16 = 416$.

Sample Size: 416

Data Collection Method:

Self-administered survey was employed. Separate online questionnaires were designed to collect the information from students of the study. Google form as a survey administration software was used to design questionnaires and collect relevant data. The respective form links were shared with the students via mobile and in some cases through email. Students being primary customers of HEIs, large data was required from this sample. However, personal visits to nearby HEIs were carried out and this information was obtained through captive students in classrooms. Initially, the link for the student questionnaire was shared with them. The questionnaire was explained to them. The questions during filling of questionnaire were resolved there itself in the classroom. The students in distant HEIs were sent the questionnaire links via their institute or faculty.

Questionnaire Design

SERVQUAL instrument was used for the present study. The basic SERVQUAL model of 22 statements that measure the dimensions of service quality was modified to 40 statements to study perception of

students for the present study. As the original 10 SERVQUAL dimensions were reduced to five commonly known as RATER framework, these were considered to evaluate service quality of HEIs. To make it simpler to understand for the students, the individual meaning of RATER dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, Responsiveness) was mentioned in the present study. In questionnaire for students, it was like-

Measurement & Scaling Procedure

This study applied the five- point Likert scale to measure the respondents’ perceptions towards service quality of their institutes. The assertive statements had numerical values ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree."

HYPOTHESIS TESTING & DATA ANALYSIS

H₀1: Demographic profile of students and perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions are independent.

Association of Students’ Perception and their Gender using Chi-square Eta.

Directional Measures				
			Value	
Nominal Interval	by	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.040
			Gender Dependent	.135

Interpretation: Eta range from zero which means no association to one which means perfect or strong association.

As the value of Chi-square Eta is 0.040, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their gender are independent.

Association of Students’ Perception and their Graduation using Chi-square Eta.

Directional Measures				
			Value	
Nominal Interval	by	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.141
			Graduation Dependent	.074

Interpretation: As the value of Chi-square Eta is .141, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their graduation are independent.

Association of Students’ Perception and their Region using Chi-square Eta.

Directional Measures				
			Value	
Nominal Interval	by	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.012
			Region Dependent	.077

Interpretation: As the value of Chi-square Eta is 0.012, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their region are independent. Hence, **null hypothesis is accepted.**

Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their demographic profile.

Descriptive Statistics for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their demographic profile.

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
PercepAvg * Gender	416	100.0%	0	0.0%	416	100.0%
PercepAvg * Graduation	416	100.0%	0	0.0%	416	100.0%
PercepAvg * Region	416	100.0%	0	0.0%	416	100.0%

Descriptive Statistics for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their gender.

PercepAvg * Gender

Crosstab				
Count				
		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
PercepAvg	1	5	9	14
	2	10	16	26
	3	30	39	69
	4	96	108	204
	5	32	71	103
Total		173	243	416

Chi-Square Tests for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their gender.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.611 ^a	4	.107
Likelihood Ratio	7.746	4	.101
Linear-by-Linear Association	.676	1	.411
N of Valid Cases	416		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.82.
Chi-Square Eta for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their gender.

Directional Measures				
			Value	
Nominal by Interval	by	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.040
			Gender Dependent	.135

Interpretation: Eta range from zero which means no association to one which means perfect or strong association.

As the value of Chi-square Eta is 0.040, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their gender are independent.

Descriptive Statistics for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their graduation.

PercepAvg * Graduation

		Graduation										Total
		BA	BCom	BSc	B.Voc	BCS	BE	B.Pharm	BB A	BCA	Other	
Percep Avg	1	4	5	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	14
	2	3	5	3	0	2	0	0	7	2	4	26
	3	4	22	8	0	5	12	0	8	3	7	69
	4	15	65	28	2	14	25	1	23	11	20	204
	5	11	30	16	0	7	14	1	11	2	11	103
Total		37	127	56	2	28	52	2	50	19	43	416

Chi-Square Tests for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their graduation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.342 ^a	36	.815
Likelihood Ratio	30.710	36	.718
Linear-by-Linear Association	.439	1	.507
N of Valid Cases	416		

a. 28 cells (56.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Chi-Square Eta for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their graduation.

Directional Measures			
			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.124
		Graduation Dependent	.112

Interpretation: As the value of Chi-square Eta is 0.124, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their graduation are independent.

Descriptive Statistics for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their region.

PercepAvg * Region

Crosstab				
Count				
		Region		Total
		Rural	Urban	
PercepAvg	1	10	4	14
	2	17	9	26
	3	38	31	69
	4	127	77	204
	5	67	36	103
Total		259	157	416

Chi-Square Tests for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their region.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.467 ^a	4	.651
Likelihood Ratio	2.460	4	.652
Linear-by-Linear Association	.060	1	.807
N of Valid Cases	416		

a. 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.28.

Chi-Square Eta for Students’ perception on the quality of higher education based on their region.

Directional Measures				
			Value	
Nominal Interval	by	Eta	PercepAvg Dependent	.012
			Region Dependent	.077

Interpretation: As the value of Chi-square Eta is 0.012, students’ perception on the quality of higher education and their region are independent.

Impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions.

Descriptive Statistics for Impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived quality of education provided by Higher Educational Institutions.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PercepAvg	3.86	.974	416
Graduation	4.92	3.415	416

Pearson Correlation between Perception and diverse educational background of students

Correlations			
		PercAvg	Graduation
Pearson Correlation	PercAvg	1.000	-.033
	Graduation	-.033	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	PercAvg	.	.254
	Graduation	.254	.
N	PercAvg	416	416
	Graduation	416	416

Model Summary for Regression Analysis				
Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.033 ^a	.001	-.001	.974
a. Predictors: (Constant), Graduation				
b. Dependent Variable: PercAvg				

The R value (-0.33) shows very weak negative relationship between diverse educational background and perceived service quality. The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.03$) is nearly equal to zero signify no relationship between the diverse educational background and perceived service quality. Whereas the R square of 0.01 indicates 10% of variance in dependent variable is measured by independent variable.

Regression analysis for Impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived quality

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.901	.084		46.552	.000	3.737	4.066
	Graduation	-.009	.014	-.033	-.662	.508	-.037	.018
a. Dependent Variable: PercAvg								

The linear regression equation to determine the dependent variable (Perceived service quality) is obtained from coefficient table.

$$\text{Perceived Service Quality} = 3.901 - (0.009 * \text{Diverse Educational Background})$$

The standardized coefficient (Beta) value -0.33 signifies very less or no impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived service quality of HEMIs.

Findings

1. Students' perception on the quality of higher education and their gender, graduation and region are independent.

Gender

Out of the total 416 student respondents, 173 (41.58%) were female respondents and 243 (58.41%) were male respondents. The findings revealed that the students' perception about the quality of higher education is not based on gender. Perception and gender both variables are independent of one another. It is found that male and female respondents had different perceptions about the quality of higher education.

Graduation

As far as graduation of students in the study is concerned, most students i.e., 127 (31%) belonged to BCom stream followed by 56 (14%), 52 (13%) and 50 (12%) students belonging to BSc, BE and BBA streams respectively. The number of students for BA, BCS and BCA was only 37 (9%), 28 (7%) and 19 (5%) respectively. It was seen that a very less percentage of students, i.e., 1% each, were from both B. Voc and B. Pharm categories. 10% of students i.e., 43 students in the survey belonged to the other category.

The study revealed that though the students for MBA degree come from varied graduation backgrounds, their perception about the quality of higher education was not dependent on the graduation stream they come from. It was seen that graduation status of a student and perception about the quality of higher education was not similar. Students belonging to different graduation streams carried different perceptions when it came to perception about the quality of higher education.

Region

The number of students from rural areas was found to be more i.e., 259 students constituting 62% than the 157 urban students constituting 38%. As their geographical regions differed, so was their perception about the quality of higher education. The perception about the quality of higher education and the region they belonged to was found to be independent of each other.

2. There is no impact of diverse educational background of students on perceived service quality of HEIs.

Conclusion

As the demographic profile and diverse background of students are found to be independent in the study, no strategy that is gender specific or region specific can be adopted. Similar case is with students with diverse backgrounds. Their backgrounds do not impact the quality at the Institute. It is concluded that students' perception on the quality of higher education is not based either on their demographic profile or diverse background. The Institutions need to be inclusive and student centric.

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