

## **Perceived Quality Services Of Students towards Educational Institution, Kovilpatti Tamil Nadu State**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to confirm the explanatory framework that elucidates the impact of perceived quality of service by students pursuing arts and science college. This impact is mediated by certain variables, namely perceived value, expectations, and satisfaction. The employed methodology for validating the measurement scales is exploratory in nature. The analysis of causal relationships proposed in the model is conducted through the application of confirmatory factor analysis. The findings indicate that the primary factors contributing to enhancing students' allegiance to the institution are the calibre of the services rendered and the level of satisfaction experienced by the students. The present study and its findings facilitate comprehension of the correlation between quality and satisfaction, and enable identification of the underlying factors of satisfaction. Additionally, the study provides evidence of the significance of expectations in the model for the development of both perceived quality and satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Students' Perception, Perceived Quality, Expectation, Five Dimension-SQ and Satisfaction, CFA

### **Introduction**

The arts and science colleges have experienced significant transformations in recent times, encompassing globalisation, internationalisation, heightened competition from private entities, decreased funding, and demographic factors such as low birth rates in various nations. These changes have been documented in academic literature by scholars including Maringe and Gibbs (2009), Altbach et al. (2010), Altbach (2004), Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016), and Verčič et al. (2016). The alterations have resulted in the colleges becoming deeply entrenched in fiercely competitive, worldwide, and rapidly evolving markets, vying for enrollees, resources (both human and financial), and prestige. Within this particular context, Arts and Science colleges place a significant emphasis on the student as the primary focal point. As noted by Fernández et al. (2007), the key to achieving future success lies in the strengthening of the relationship between Arts and Science colleges and their students. This entails both the retention of current students and the attraction of new ones. Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective management of an organization's intangible assets, such as those held by Arts and Science colleges, can result in improved competitive positioning (Lev and Zarowin, 1999; Hand and Lev, 2003) and the attainment of both social and economic objectives over the medium and long term (Farrugia and Lane, 2013; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016; Plewa

et al., 2016; Christensen and Gornitzka, 2017). Therefore, intangible assets assume a crucial role in ensuring survival. Within this context, it is imperative for Arts and Science colleges to prioritise factors that are intricately tied to their sustainability, including but not limited to loyalty, service quality, perceived value, expectations, and satisfaction.

The management of service quality is crucial in establishing a competitive edge and distinguishing oneself from competitors in contemporary markets, as it is a significant intangible asset that fosters student loyalty (Paramewaran and Glowacka, 1995). This is particularly important in attracting and retaining the most exceptional students (Helgesen and Nettet, 2007; Stevens et al., 2008; Polat, 2011). Aquino and Vogel (2009) assert that the competitive position and long-term survival of a company or organisation are determined by the customers' perception of the quality of the product or service they receive.

The literature pertaining to perceived service quality is extensive. It encompasses empirical investigations that aim to quantify service quality in organisational settings, as well as inquiries that aim to elucidate the interrelationships among service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Fornell, 1992; Iacobucci et al., 1995; Oliver, 1999; Cronin et al., 2000; Dabholkar et al., 2000; Mahamad and Ramayah, 2010). Nonetheless, limited research has been conducted on the effects of quality education (Chua, 2004; Blass and Weight, 2005; Cornuel, 2005; De Oliveira and Ferreira, 2009) and the correlation between service quality and loyalty within the realm of higher education (Rowley, 1996; Peng and Samah, 2006; Tsuji et al., 2007; Yunus et al., 2010). The present study focuses on examining the direct association between the two constructs, along with the indirect association when the direct relationship has been existed. Further research has been executed by the researcher to do mediation analysis such as satisfaction, expectations, and perceived value. The present study enhances the current body of knowledge by presenting empirical findings on the impact of the antecedents outlined in the proposed framework, specifically, quality, on student loyalty within the arts and science domain. These findings can aid in fostering a stronger bond between the student and the educational institution.

## **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to compare an explanatory framework that elucidates how the perceived quality of service by students in a college impacts their satisfaction about their institution. This will be achieved by examining variables such as perceived value, expectations, and satisfaction. The technique employed to authenticate the proposed model is the structural equation modelling (SEM) methodology. The study was conducted on a specific population such as arts and science colleges students in Kovilpatti, Tamil Nadu state. A total of 224 valid responses were collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire.

The analysis of the relationship between satisfaction and service quality structure holds significant importance as it enables educational institutions to identify the specific dimensions of quality that require attention. This may include enhancing the perceived value of students, managing expectations to improve student satisfaction, and ultimately fostering greater loyalty towards the institution. According to Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016), possessing this knowledge will enable individuals to execute suitable initiatives that foster, establish, cultivate, and sustain prosperous enduring connections with present and past students. The present paper has been organised by researcher into five distinct sections. The introductory section provides a contextualization of the subject of inquiry and presents the research alongside its corresponding objective. The subsequent section elucidates the theoretical framework

underpinning the research, and subsequently presents the operational hypotheses. The Methodology section outlines the methodology employed in the study, including details on the sample, questionnaire, and data analysis. The Results section presents the empirical findings. Ultimately, the findings are analysed, the primary presumptions are made, and the constraints of the investigation are elucidated.

## **Comprehensive Review of the Literature and Hypotheses Development**

The concept of perceived service quality is a crucial aspect in the field of service marketing. It refers to the customer's subjective evaluation of the overall excellence or superiority of a service, based on their expectations and experiences.

The notion of perceived service quality emerges as a result of contemplating quality through a technical lens that prioritises objective quality from the service provider's standpoint. This notion subsequently progresses towards a more subjective perspective that centres on customer perceptions, also known as the external or provision dimension. Adopting such an approach is deemed more suitable within the realm of services. The North American School, headed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, advocates for the definition of perceived service quality to be based on the customer's perception and to prioritise the delivery phase of quality service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). However, the complexity and ambiguity of this concept stem from the inherent characteristics of services, such as intangibility, separability, and expiration. As a result, assessing service quality is challenging, as it requires evaluating intangible aspects that are difficult to discern and measure (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Additionally, these aspects are subject to varying evaluations by clients (Zeithaml, 1988; Rosenbloom, 1991). As per Parasuraman et al.'s (1985, p. 36) assertion, the distinction between a consumer's assessment of the quality of a service versus that of a good lies not in the procedure, but in the inherent attributes that are utilised in the evaluation. Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016, p. 447) assert that the higher education context is characterised by unique features that render it even more intricate. These features include the cognitive participation of students in the service process, the satisfaction of students' needs by various parties, the provision of continuous services, and the delivery of long-term services. The existence of multiple definitions in the field has been attributed to the contributions of various experts, including Grönroos (1982, p. 33), Zeithaml (1988), Carman (1990, p. 33), and Koelemeijer et al. (1993). Harvey and Green (1993) assert that, similar to the service sector, the educational context is a multifaceted concept that lacks a precise definition. Hence, there exists a dearth of agreement within this industry regarding the precise definition and evaluation of service quality, as noted by Clewes (2003) and Sultan and Wong (2012). It is widely agreed upon that educational activities prioritise students as their primary clients, as noted by Gremler and McCollough (2002) and Marzo-Navarro et al. (2005). The present study examines O'Neil and Palmer's (2004, p. 40) proposition for the higher education domain, which pertains to "the variance between a student's anticipated outcomes and their perceived actual outcomes." The authors conducted a literature review to present their proposal, which aligns with the concepts introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988). The authors define service quality as a comprehensive evaluation made by consumers regarding the excellence of a service. This evaluation is based on a comparison between the expectations of the service and the actual performance of the service provider organisation, as described in the works of Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Grönroos (1994). According to Grönroos (1990) and Zeithaml (1990), a service is considered to be of high quality if it meets or surpasses the expectations of the customer. It has been

disclosed that in order to evaluate a service's perceived quality from a client's perspective, it is imperative to determine the dimensions that are taken into account for its assessment. Presently, there exists a general agreement regarding the multifaceted character of the notion of perceived quality, albeit with no unanimity as to the quantity or substance of the dimensions that constitute it (Parasuraman et al., 1991). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) have identified seven dimensions that are considered in the college education sector. These dimensions include personal contact with teachers, reputation, physical evidence, personal contact with administrative staff, curriculum, responsiveness, and ease of access. The authors Li and Kaye (1998) have employed the five dimensions originally suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1988) in the context of the service industry. These dimensions include tangibility, reliability, security, empathy, and responsiveness. Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) have posited a theoretical framework consisting of four dimensions, namely attitude, content, academic resources, and competence. In their study, Kwan and Ng (1999) examine seven distinct dimensions, namely course content, facilities, assessment, advisory service, communication with the colleges, teachers' concern about students, and social activities. Oldfield and Baron suggest utilising essential elements, desirable elements, and functional elements in their proposal. The present study employs the De la Fuente Mella et al. (2010) scale, which was developed through a comprehensive review of the literature (Cuthbert, 1996; LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1997; Owlia and Aspinwall, 1998; Kwan and Ng, 1999; Alves, 2000; Oldfield and Baron, 2000; Cardone et al., 2003; Alves and Raposo, 2004; Marzo-Navarro et al., 2005), and has been modified accordingly. The construct in question comprises five distinct dimensions, namely facilities, service staff, teachers' attitudes and behaviour, competence of teachers, and career opportunity.

## **Consequences of Perceived Service Quality**

### ***Perceived Service Quality and Its Impact on Loyalty***

According to Oliver (1997, p. 392), loyalty can be defined as a profound and unwavering dedication to consistently repurchase or revisit a favoured product or service in the future, even in the face of situational factors and marketing endeavours that may induce a change in consumer behaviour. The author posits that there exist four distinct phases of loyalty and posits that customers may exhibit loyalty in any of these phases. These phases include cognitive loyalty, which is characterised by an attitude towards the brand that is based on the information provided; affective loyalty, which is characterised by an attitude towards the brand that is developed due to its successful repeated use; conative loyalty, which is related to the customer's behavioural intention towards a repeat purchase; and loyalty, which is characterised by an additional desire to overcome obstacles that could potentially prevent a repeat purchase. Dick and Basu (1994) and Lam et al. (2004) posit that loyalty comprises two interconnected elements: the relative attitude, which is associated with components 1, 2, and 3, and the repeat purchase pattern, which pertains to the retention of repeated client sponsorship. The concept of student loyalty in the context of higher education has been defined by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2001) and Navarro et al. (2005), who have incorporated this perspective into their respective works. Hence, the scholars posit that the allegiance of students comprises both a cognitive aspect and an action-oriented aspect. The concept of loyalty is operationalized as the development of enduring connections between the academic institution and its present and past student body.

Within the context of college education, there exist studies that support the notion of a positive correlation between perceived quality, specifically high quality, and student loyalty. These studies include those conducted by Boulding et al. (1993), Zeithaml et al. (1996), and Helgesen and Nasset (2007). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2001) suggest that the latter is evaluated

both prior to and subsequent to the conclusion of a student's academic programme. Several studies have provided supporting evidence that there exists a relationship between variables, including satisfaction, which is both direct and indirect (Bloemer et al., 1999; Caruana, 2002; Huili and Jing, 2012). Thus, it is possible to propose the following hypothesis: Service Quality Impact on Students Satisfaction

### ***Perceived Service Quality and Satisfaction***

Numerous studies have been conducted in the service sector examining the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty (Nguyen, 2009). There is a consensus among scholars that these concepts are interrelated, with service quality being a key determinant of satisfaction (Ahmed et al., 2010; Clemes et al., 2013). Improvements in service quality have been found to lead to increased satisfaction (Bloemer et al., 1999; Gronholdt et al., 2000; Caruana, 2002; Mahamad and Ramayah, 2010; Huili and Jing, 2012; Olsen et al., 2012), which in turn leads to increased loyalty (Annamdevula and Bellamkonda, 2016). Currently, despite the extensive research conducted on the mediating function of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and loyalty, there remains a lack of agreement regarding the antecedents of satisfaction and their association with quality. This has been supported by various studies, including those conducted by Huili and Jing (2012), Jiewanto et al. (2012), and Clemes et al. (2013). This study examines three antecedents of satisfaction, namely perceived quality, perceived value, and students' expectations.

The concept of perceived value is a crucial aspect in marketing and consumer behaviour. It refers to the subjective evaluation that a consumer makes about the benefits and costs of a product or service, based on their individual needs, preferences, and expectations. The perceived value of a product or service can influence the consumer's purchasing decision and their willingness to pay a certain price for it. Therefore, understanding and managing perceived value is essential for businesses to create and maintain a competitive advantage in the market.

The management of services considers perceived value as a crucial element (Cronin et al., 2000) that can provide a competitive advantage (Woodruff, 1997) through the analysis and prediction of consumer behaviour (Huber et al., 2007). Various methods have been employed to conceptualise this notion, given its inherent ambiguity and subjectivity, which may vary across clients (Flint et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2004). Zeithaml (1988, p. 13) proposed an initial definition of consumer satisfaction as "the comprehensive evaluation made by the consumer regarding the utility of a product, which is based on their perceptions of the delivered and received value." Thus, it can be inferred that achieving equilibrium between the advantages gained by the consumer and the costs incurred in procuring the service is crucial (Zeithaml, 1988; McDougall and Levesque, 2000; Hermawan, 2001; Ledden et al., 2007). Within the realm of higher education, Hermawan (2001), LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999), and Ledden et al. (2007) adopt Zeithaml's viewpoint, which posits that the overall evaluation of a service is contingent upon the perceived value of what is received versus what is given.

The analysis of value creation towards students has received limited attention in the context of higher education, as evidenced by the existing literature (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1999; Ledden et al., 2007; Suki et al., 2008; Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Floyd et al., 2009; Yeop et al., 2009; Alves, 2010; Lai et al., 2012). The existing body of literature on services has examined the direct influence of perceived quality on perceived value, as evidenced by studies conducted by Brady and Robertson (1999), Teas and Agarwal (2000), and Tam (2004). Furthermore, this relationship has been found to have a positive impact on client satisfaction, as demonstrated by Heskett et al. (1997) and Tam (2004). Regarding this matter, it has been

observed that the students' perception of the service quality surpassing the costs incurred in obtaining the service leads to a higher level of perceived value of the service. Consequently, this results in a higher level of satisfaction among the students (Tam, 2004).

## **Methodology**

The present study employs a Universe Study approach, utilising a questionnaire as the primary means of data collection. The measurement of variables is conducted through the questionnaire.

The study's focus is on the student who pursuing higher studies in arts and science colleges in Kovilpatti, Tamil Nadu. The total number of undergraduate students enrolled in the fields of arts and science is 544. The data was collected through an online structured questionnaire (Google Forms) that was made available on the platform for a duration of one month. A total of 224 valid questionnaires were obtained as a result. The study yielded a response rate of 41.17%. The sampling error was calculated to be 6% with a confidence level of 95%, using a Z-score of 1.96 and assuming equal probability of success and failure ( $p = q = 0.50$ ). The Harman single-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) was utilised to verify the presence of common method bias (CMB), and the results confirmed the absence of this issue in the present study.

The structured questionnaire was developed through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, with the aim of identifying the measurement scales of the constructs that were incorporated in the model utilised by previous studies. The study utilised a 40-item service quality measurement scale adapted from De la Fuente Mella et al. (2010), and Satisfaction, on the other hand, was assessed using Schlesinger et al.'s (2014) three-item scale, which was adapted from Fornell's (1992) research. A Likert-type scale with a range of values from 1, indicating "strongly disagree," to 5, indicating "strongly agree," was employed.

## **Data Analysis**

The process of examining and interpreting data to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions is referred to as data analysis.

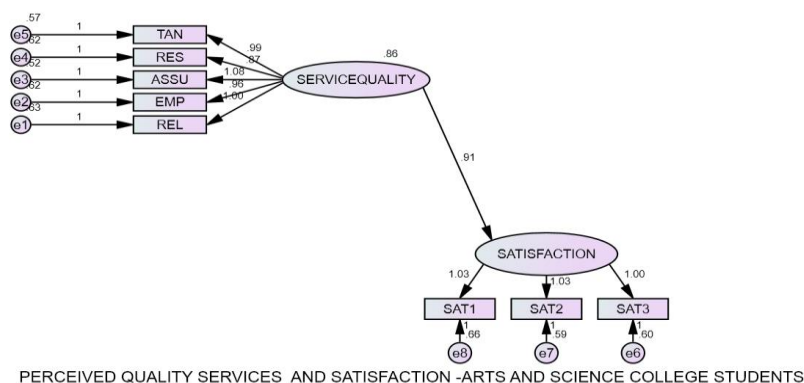
The study employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as methodologies to authenticate the measurement scales. The exploratory analysis was conducted using the statistical programme SPSS 19.0, which stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Additionally, the confirmatory analysis was carried out using AMOS 20.0, which is an abbreviation for Analysis of Moment Structures software.

### ***The process of confirming the accuracy and reliability of the measurement model.***

The psychometric properties of the scales were initially examined through an exploratory analysis to establish their reliability and unidimensionality, as per the methodology proposed by Anderson and Gerbing in 1988, before proceeding to apply a CFA. Initially, an assessment was conducted on the dependability of the scales, or the extent to which a quantification is devoid of chance inconsistencies. The measurement is evaluated using two indicators, namely the Kuder-Richardson method. The first indicator involves the item-total correlation, which should be greater than 0.3 as per Nurosis (1993). The second indicator is Cronbach's alpha, which should be greater than 0.7. The second method assesses the internal coherence of the measurement instrument by examining the correlation between each variable and the remaining items on the scale. Upon conducting a contrast, the unidimensionality is examined, thereby enabling the

derivation of the percentage of explained variance, factor loading of each indicator, and identification of indicators that load on multiple factors. This analysis is conducted with a threshold of loadings  $>0.05$  (Hair et al., 1999) and a minimum explained variance of  $>50\%$ . Initially, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of principal components with varimax rotation, as proposed by Bagozzi and Baumgartner (1994), was utilised. Subsequently, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to investigate the measurement model, including the reliability and validity of measures, as well as the structural and global models of each of the scales. In order to assess the adequacy of the structural measurement model, it is necessary to verify that the critical ratio for regression weight surpasses  $\pm 1.96$  and that the standard regression weight ( $\beta$ ) is greater than 0.5, as stipulated by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1993). In order to assess the effectiveness of the global model, it is necessary to observe the goodness-of-fit indices (GFIs) of the model, as outlined by Lévy-Mangin and Varela-Mallou (2006). These indices include absolute fit indices, such as a GFI greater than 0.9 and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than 0.08. Incremental adjustment indices, such as a normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), must all be greater than 0.9. Additionally, parsimony indices, such as the parsimonious goodness-of-fit index (PGFI), should be considered, with higher values indicating greater parsimony of the model. According to Jöreskog and Sörbom's (1993) recommendation, normalised  $\chi^2$  ( $\chi^2/df$ ) should fall within the range of 2 to 3. In conclusion, the assessment of reliability is reiterated by means of composite reliability (CR) exceeding 0.7. Greater reliability is associated with enhanced internal consistency of its indicators and variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.5. AVE quantifies the total variance of the indicators that is considered by the latent construct. The present study concerns the estimation of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The proposed structural model was evaluated using the SEM technique or covariance structure model. The utilisation of the statistical software AMOS 20.0 facilitated the examination of the causal connections posited in the theoretical framework, as indicated by the  $\beta$  standard regression weight and critical coefficient values exceeding  $\pm 1.96$ . Given the sample size and the deviation from the assumption of normal distribution of the observed variables, as indicated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and analysis of multivariate kurtosis and critical ratio, the maximum likelihood (ML) method was selected for model estimation, utilising a bootstrap approach with 500 samples. Lévy-Mangin and Varela-Mallou (2006) have suggested a four-stage process that includes parameter estimation, adjustment evaluation, model re-specification, and result interpretation (pp. 163-166). The evaluation of the structural and global model was conducted through the previously discussed goodness-of-fit indices (GFIs). The extent to which the exogenous factor accounts for the variance in each of the endogenous factors is denoted by  $R^2$ , which serves as the coefficient of determination for each structural equation (Lévy-Mangin and Varela-Mallou, 2006, p. 245).



**Figure 1 -Item parceling Service quality & Satisfaction**

**Table 1** *Regression Weights*

Dimension		Dimension	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Satisfaction	<--	Servicequality	.912	.064	14.253	***	
Rel	<--	Servicequality	1.000				
Emp	<--	Servicequality	.955	.066	14.491	***	
Assu	<--	Servicequality	1.079	.068	15.917	***	
Res	<--	Servicequality	.867	.063	13.743	***	
Tan	<--	Servicequality	.989	.066	15.031	***	
Sat3	<--	Satisfaction	1.000				
Sat2	<--	Satisfaction	1.027	.073	14.075	***	
Sat1	<--	Satisfaction	1.029	.075	13.726	***	

The findings of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) conducted on the optimal measurement model's scales, namely perceived quality and joint scale of satisfaction is presented in Table 1. All the items exhibit a beta value greater than 0.50 and have achieved statistical significance, as indicated by a critical coefficient exceeding  $\pm 1.96$ . The two models that have been presented exhibit commendable levels of absolute, incremental, and parsimonious adjustment.

The findings of the structural model, as depicted in Figure 1, examine the direct impact of perceived quality on loyalty, as well as its indirect influence through perceived value and satisfaction. These results provide evidence for the explanatory power of the theoretical model that was proposed. The service quality dimension of the student, as indicated by an R2 value of 0.912, surpasses the proposed criteria of 0.67 by Hu and Bentler (1997), thereby signifying a robust explanatory capacity. The model accounts for 91.2% of the variance in satisfaction. t evidence and statistical analysis, indicating a high degree of confidence in their validity.

## Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for future research and practise. The conclusions drawn from the data suggest that further investigation is needed to fully understand the complex nature of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, the implications of these findings for practical applications in various fields should be carefully considered. Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the topic and provides a foundation for future research endeavo

The present study posits and verifies a structural model that affirms the pivotal role of expectations and perceived satisfaction in enhancing students' loyalty and shaping their attitudes towards pursuing a Master's degree at the institution, as well as recommending it to others. These variables are identified as crucial sources of competitive advantage. The observation has been made that expectations constitute one of the three principal variables that are instrumental in attaining satisfaction, alongside service quality and perceived value. The present study and its findings facilitate comprehension of the correlation between expectations and loyalty through identification of the antecedent variables of satisfaction, namely perceived service quality, perceived value, and expectations. Additionally, the study provides evidence of the significance of expectations in the model for the development of both perceived quality and satisfaction.



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