

Factors Influencing Student Satisfaction of Support Services At Thai Nguyen University

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Abstract: Nowadays, higher education in the world as well as in Vietnam is being regarded as a kind of service, of which the institutions of higher education act as the providers for the customers who are the students. As a result, higher education institutions bear the pressure of working in compliance with the accomplishment of modern quality management with a great focus on the students. This study was carried out with a survey of students from 7 member universities of Thai Nguyen University and employed Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients Analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis to find out factors influencing the student satisfaction of the support services at Thai Nguyen University. The measurement tool implemented is the SI index. Basing on the research outcomes, member universities of Thai Nguyen University are supposed to have an overall plan for the enhancement of student services in order to better meet the students' demands and improve their satisfaction.

Keywords: Support services, service quality, satisfaction, students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a number of universities have been concerned about student satisfaction with the services it provides because they identify students as one of the most important environmental factors that contribute to the success of the university. Since determining student satisfaction is the key to success, universities must put in place policies that bring confidence and peace of mind to their studies. Moreover, this is also one of the Ministry of Education and Training's (MOET) policies in measuring people's satisfaction with public education service.

All the member universities of Thai Nguyen University (TNU) are currently providing their students with a number of services such as subject registration, tuition fee collection via banks, canteen, vehicle keeping, library, consultation, medical service, etc. In all the services, the university is the service provider and students are the customers as well as beneficiaries. The student satisfaction at member universities TNU is measured in order to objectively assess the quality of support services through quality assessment scales.

However, there have never been any studies on the student's satisfaction of these services before. Therefore, it seems to be difficult for Thai Nguyen University's managers to define the effects of the services in motivating the students. Besides, it can be seen from the fact that the number of students enrolling in Thai Nguyen University has dramatically decreased in the past three years; for example, University of Economics and Business Administration got only 65% of the approved quota in 2017. The other members such as University of Sciences, University of Information Technology and Communications, University of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Education are facing the same problem. One of the reasons is that the service quality is not good enough, which negatively influenced the learner's choice.

As a matter of fact, the author conducted a survey with students randomly chosen at 7 member universities of TNU of the level of satisfaction of the support services available. The results of the study identify factors affecting student satisfaction of support services.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality

In accordance with the ISO 8402, service quality is defined as a collection of properties of an object, making it able to satisfy the stated or potential requirements; or service quality is the customer satisfaction that is

measured by the difference between the expected quality and the achieved quality. If the desired quality is lower than that is obtained, the service quality can be considered as excellent. In contrast, service quality is not good when the quality expectation is higher than that of achievement. If the expectations are exactly the same as the achievement, then the service quality is guaranteed.

Service quality is one of the topics that researchers have been interested in for many years now. In the field of education, researchers often focus on the overall called quality of academic training of educational institutions (DeShiels et al., 2005). However, the perception of the quality of a university is related to the perception of the quality of student support services available to the students. These support services involve academic support, tuition, canteens, dormitories, employment orientation, and support, etc., and are supplied by different departments and centers. Outsiders such as parents and employers also use the services.

Customer satisfaction

There are different views on the evaluation of customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the reaction to the perceived differences between the experiences and expectations (Parasuraman et al, 1988).

According to Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2006), satisfaction is the feeling of a customer generated in the comparison between his perception of a product and his expectations, including three levels: If the perception is the same as the expectations, he may feel satisfied; if the perception is higher than the expectations, he will feel satisfied and interested; and if the perception is under expectations, he may feel dissatisfied.

In addition to this, another common theory to consider customer satisfaction is the theory of "Expectations -Confirmation", which was stated by Oliver in 1980 and used to study customer satisfaction of the quality of services or products of an organization. The theory involves two processes independently influencing customer satisfaction: expectations before purchasing this service and perception after experiencing it. According to this theory, customer satisfaction can be viewed in such a process: (1) First of all, customers formed in their mind the expectations of the factors that constitute the quality of service that providers can bring them before deciding to buy. (2) Then, the purchase and use of services create customers belief in the efficiency of the service they are experiencing. (3) Customer satisfaction results in the comparison between customer expectations before using service and their perception of the service after its use. There will be three cases: Customer expectations are confirmed if the service effectiveness resembles what the customers expect; customers will be dissatisfied if their expectations are not met; customers will be completely satisfied if what they have felt and experienced is better than what they expected before purchasing service.

It can be easily seen, from the analysis of expertise opinions, that customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in the company's development objectives and strategies. Customer satisfaction has become an important goal in improving service quality, maintaining customer loyalty, enhancing the company's competitiveness. Customer satisfaction is a key factor to sustain long-term success in business and suitable business strategies in order to attract and retain customers (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000).

While customer satisfaction has an impact on the development of a company, the satisfaction of students also affects their university's development goals and strategies and can be regarded as a basis for innovative measures so as to improve teaching quality and student supports serving the university's development and promotion

The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction

Although service quality and satisfaction are two different concepts, they are closely related to service research (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Previous studies have shown that service quality is the cause of satisfaction. The reason is that quality is related to the provision of a service, and satisfaction can only be assessed after using that service. If the quality is improved but not based on the needs of the customer, it will never be satisfied with the service. Therefore, when using the service, if customers feel the service is of high quality, they will be satisfied with that service. Conversely, if the customer perceives the service as being of low quality, dissatisfaction will appear.

Domestic researches

In recent years, there have been some studies on student satisfaction and the evaluation of the academic training quality as well as the factors affecting student satisfaction, etc. in Vietnam.

Duong, T. T. (2010) at Da Nang University studied the factors affecting student satisfaction at Da Nang University of Economics. The study focused on how elements such as classroom, library, lecturers, canteen, website, learning condition, computer lab, the department of academic affairs and the department of student affairs affect student satisfaction. The researcher used the 5-level Likert scale with the sample size of 500 3rd and 4th - year students. The study results showed that among the factors mentioned above, there were eight factors affecting student satisfaction, namely classroom, library, canteen, computer lab, website, learning conditions, the departments of academic affairs and student affairs and the lecturing staff.

Ma, C. T. L. (2011) studied “Factors affecting student satisfaction with physical facilities and equipment at Da Lat University” with a sample size of 800 students. This study also used SERVPERF variables of SERVQUAL. However, the author creatively set a matrix of components of SERVPERF with elements of the university’s resources. The research results indicated that student satisfaction of the physical facilities, administrative staff capacity, lecturing staff capacity and the university’s management between the model and the data is 49.1%

Nguyen, Q. N.; Nguyen, T. B. C. &Pham, N. G. (2012) also studied the factors affecting the level of student satisfaction of the training quality of tourism at universities in Delta region. In this study, the authors used the SERVQUAL model to measure the satisfaction of 294 students of four universities in the Delta region. The results showed that among the factors like the actual learning condition, social knowledge and foreign language skills and the level of lecturers’ interaction, the level of lecturers’ interaction was of the greatest impact on student satisfaction.

Nguyen. V. T.; Hong, B. B. &Nguyen, T. T. V. (2016) conducted a study of 300 students from 11 member faculties at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology on “The impact of student support service quality on the image of the university”. The results showed that universities can create a good image of the university in the eyes of students by improving the quality of student support services. The reason is that good service quality can greatly contribute to the better the student perception of the university’s quality and performance.

The majority of domestic researches on student satisfaction about the physical facilities, quality of education, teacher professionalism, etc. focus on 3rd and 4th-year students with the sample size from 240 to 800 students. The models used are mainly SERVQUAL or SERVPERF.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study is carried out based on theories of customer satisfaction of services, publicly published models of service quality and a number of researches related to this issue. The data of this study is mainly secondary data that is collected from surveys with students at Thai Nguyen University’s member universities.

A quantitative research method is also conducted in order to examine the scale and measure the level of student’s satisfaction of the support service quality at their universities. A variety of quantitative methods are used as descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha Reliability Analysis, Factor Analysis, and Regression Analysis.

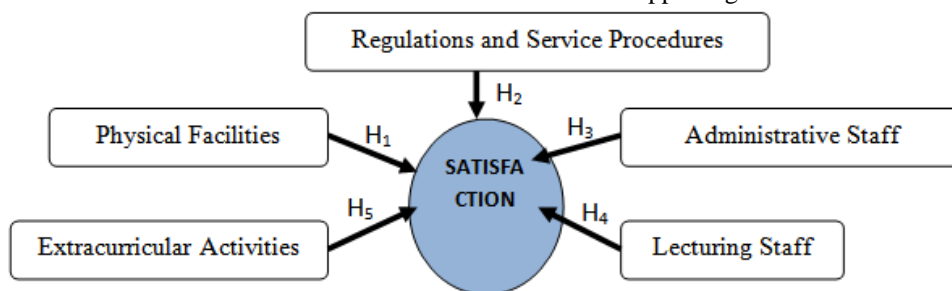
Research scope

This study only covers support services for students enrolled at member universities of Thai Nguyen University. University’s support services normally aim to increase the quality of the university’s training, as well as its image from the students’ perspective. Therefore, these support services are the same as services in nature and the quality also consists of five components such as assurance, sympathy, responsiveness, tangibility and feedback (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Research model

The author used SERVQUAL model and a number of published works to identify factors affecting student satisfaction of support services, thereby proposing 5 influencing factors including physical facilities, regulations and service procedures, administrative staff, lecturing staff and extracurricular activities.

Chart No 1: Model of student satisfaction of supporting services



The author observed 48 variables to identify factors affecting student satisfaction of the quality of support services including 14 variables in the facility group, 14 variables belonging to the regulations and service procedure group, 3 variables belong to the administrative staff group, 8 variables belong to the lecturing staff group and 9 variables of extracurricular activity group.

Research hypotheses:

- H1: Facilities are positively correlated with satisfaction
- H2: Regulations and service procedures are positively correlated with satisfaction
- H3: Administrative Staff are positively correlated with satisfaction
- H4: Lecturing Staff have a positive relationship with satisfaction
- H5: Extracurricular Activities are positively correlated with satisfaction.

Research instrument

The main tool for data collection is the questionnaire with the target population of TNU’s students at 7 member universities who are (i) regular students at their first, second, third or fourth year; (ii) using student support services at their university; and (iii) willing to share their thoughts of their satisfaction of the services. The 7 members include University of Agriculture and Forestry (TUAF); University of Education (TNUE); University of Medicine and Pharmacy (TNMP); Information and Communication Technology University (ICTU); University of Science (TNUS); University of Technology (TNUT); University of Economics and Business Administration (TUEBA).

The author uses the Slovin formula to calculate the sample size of 397. The survey information collection was carried out through Google Forms. The questionnaire was sent to 500 respondents; however, there were only 391/500 answered accounted for 78.2%. Among them, 25 answers were not complete then were rejected by the researcher. The remaining were 366/500 accounted for 93.6%. This number was enough to put into analysis in terms of sample size.

Data processing and analysis

After collecting data, the author processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22 (SPSS 22) and Microsoft Excel 2016 for quantitative data analysis and category formations and tabulation. Descriptive and inferential statistics including Cronbach's alpha, EFA, correlation and regression analysis was used.

For a reliable evaluation and analysis, the author used the 5-level Likert scale (from 1 to 5), with 1 being Very dissatisfied and 5 being Very satisfied. Another criteria used to interpret is the satisfaction index (SI) which is calculated as follows:

$$SI = (\text{Number of satisfied persons}) / (\text{Number of persons answered})$$

The value of SI always in the range of 0.0 and 1.0. Table No. 1 summarised the verbal interpretation.

Table No. 1: Verbal Interpretation

Scale	Range	Choice of descrip.	Verbal Interpre.	SI
5	4.20 - 5.00	Strongly Agree	Strongly Satisfied	0.841 – 1.000
4	3.40 – 4.19	Agree	Satisfied	0.680 – 0.840
3	2.60 – 3.39	Neutral	Partly Satisfied	0.521 – 0.680
2	1.80 – 2.59	Disagree	Dissatisfied	0.361 – 0.520
1	1.00 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Dissatisfied	0.200 – 0.360

IV. RESULTS

Results of Cronbach’s Alpha

Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient analysis is used to determine the reliability of the scale in the survey, which is accepted when the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is greater than 0.6.

In this research, the Cronbach’s alpha for the six dimensions of the questionnaire including Physical Facilities, Regular and Procedure on service providing, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Extracurricular activities, and Overall Satisfaction was tested. Table No. 2 shows the Cronbach’s alpha of the six variables.

Table No. 2: Cronbach’s Alpha of the Variables

Item	Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	Physical facilities	0.82
2	Regulations and service procedure	0.87
3	Administrative staff’s capacity and attitude	0.83
4	Lecturer’s capacity and attitude	0.87
5	Extracurricular activities	0.85
6	Overall Satisfaction	0.75

As can be seen from table No 2, all variables have overall Cronbach's Alpha bigger than 0.6. Therefore, this group indicator reliability is acceptable in academic research. Table No. 3 shows the Item-Total Statistics of the Facilities variable.

Table No. 3: Item-Total Statistics of Facilities

Code	Infrastructure	Scal. Mean.	Scal. Varia.	Corre.Item.	Cronb.Alph.
I.1. Learning resource					
1	Diversity books	16.918	8.349	0.648	0.783
2	Convenient E-library	16.9672	8.174	0.666	0.779
3	Libra. for self-study	16.459	10.419	0.351	0.842
I.2. Equipment and Environment					
4	Quiet Learning	16.6831	9.423	0.629	0.788
5	Learning Equip.	17.0984	9.075	0.701	0.773
6	Other equipment	16.694	10.043	0.611	0.796

Results of Cronbach's alpha for Regular on Service procedure variable are shown on table No. 4. As can be seen from table No. 4, Total Correlation of the items are all bigger than 0.3 with the minimum value of 0.434 belong to the Update of document and book list on the website and the maximum value of 0.638 belong to the Regulation and service procedure provided to students. Therefore, the variable with its components is reliable.

Table No. 4: Cronbach's Alpha of the 'Regular and Procedure' Variable

Item	Total Correl.	Cronb. Alpha
Regulation and service procedure provided to students	0.64	0.86
Process, procedures for borrowing and returning books, textbooks	0.54	0.86
Borrow length of books, textbooks, and documents	0.60	0.86
Update of the List of new books and documents on the library website	0.43	0.87
Course enroll procedure	0.47	0.87
Timespan (extended) for course enrollment	0.56	0.86
Class schedules and examination schedules are provided in time and stable	0.51	0.86
Process and procedures for applying transcripts, papers related to students	0.52	0.86
The system of forms related to providing documents to students.	0.58	0.86
Regulations on the outfit, and student card.	0.47	0.87
Information about academic regulations is provided promptly via email/website.	0.57	0.86
Procedure of Tuition collection	0.44	0.87
Procedure for applying reassessment	0.60	0.86
Time to announce the test results	0.56	0.86

Reliability analysis of the Administrative variable shown in table No. 5. As can be seen from table No. 5, the variable has its correlation bigger than 0.3. This variable is measured by 3 items and the minimum correlation value is 0.651 while the maximum value is 0.746. This value shows that the variable is reliable.

Table No. 5: Cronbach's Alpha of Administrative Staff variable

Item	Total Correl.	Cronb. Alpha
Official staff are friendly	0.69	0.78
Official staff are helpful and supportive	0.75	0.71
Official staff respect students	0.65	0.81

Table No. 6 illustrates the reliability analysis of the Teaching staff variable. It is clear that all the correlation value of the items are bigger than 0.3. The minimum value is 0.561 and the maximum value is 0.748. Thus, the variable is reliable for use in research.

Table No. 6: Cronbach's Alpha of Teaching Staff variable

Item	Total Correl.	Cronb. Alpha
Lecturer announces the teaching plan and criteria for evaluating academic results	0.636	0.857
Lecturer gives a course guide for students	0.647	0.855
	0.588	0.862

Lecturer guides students on how to read and look up documents	0.561	0.864
Lecturer well uses of teaching aids.	0.651	0.854
Lecturer encourages and guides students in scientific research	0.623	0.858
Lecturer well organises of seminars for academic advisors	0.748	0.843
Academic advisor is good in orientation, advice and support students	0.614	0.859
Academic advisor is enthusiastic, friendly and willing to help student		

The correlation values and Cronbach's alpha of the items for reliability analysis of Extracurricular activities variable are presented in table No. 7. As can be seen from table No. 7, the minimum value is 0.43 and the maximum value is 0.65. All of the values are bigger than 0.3 therefore the variable is reliable for use.

Table No.7: Cronbach's Alpha of Extracurricular activities variable

Item	Total Correl.	Cronb. Alpha
Activity on student guidance on Scientific research, doing graduation thesis	0.428	0.85
Activity on practicing soft skills	0.65	0.829
Activity on opening day, job festival	0.644	0.831
Activity on enterprise visits	0.633	0.83
Activity on seminars	0.611	0.833
Instructing students to contact enterprises for internships.	0.574	0.837
University leaders meet and discuss with students.	0.613	0.833
Activity on music, gymnastics and sports contests.	0.445	0.849
Activity at English club	0.564	0.838

The reliability analysis of the overall satisfaction variable is presented in table No. 8. Similar to the 5 tables above, the minimum correlation value is 0.36 while the maximum value is 0.68 showing that the variable is reliable for scientific research.

Table No. 8: Cronbach's Alpha of Overall Satisfaction variable

Item	Total Correl.	Cronb. Alpha
Physical facilities	0.486	0.721
Regulations, process of implementing student support services	0.682	0.642
Administrative staffs	0.585	0.68
Teaching staff	0.503	0.714
Extracurricular activities	0.361	0.761

In addition to the correlation values, the Cronbach's alpha of all items in 6 variables all bigger than 0.5 showing that the tool is reliable and can be used to further analysis.

Explore Factor Analysis (EFA)

In this research, the EFA analysis is carried out with the 40 components of 5 factors affecting the satisfaction of students. The rotation procedure was carried twice and the KMO value with 0.897 (bigger than 0.5) shows that the EFA analysis is suitable for collected data. The Bartlett's test result with significant level smaller than 0.05 (the sig.= 0.000) shows that the components have relations. Table No. 9 presents the KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Table No. 9: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.897
Approx. Chi-Square	5115.306
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
	300
	Sig.
	0.000

The Eigenvalues value is 1.198 and Cumulative of Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings got 64.09% shows that the five components can explain 64.09% of the total variation in the data.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In general, the analysis results show that physical facilities at institutional members of TNU are partly satisfied with observations FAC1, FAC2 and FAC5 with their values from 3.07 to 3.25 while variables FAC3, FAC4, FAC6 got the mean values from 3.47 to 3.70 equivalent to level 3 labeled partly satisfied. This result shows that the physical facilities at TNU and her members are not met the requirements and students are not satisfied with them. Among the observations, the Library got the highest SI value and System of Equipment got the lowest value.

Results from data analysis show that Regular and Service procedure is assessed as partly met student requirement. There are only REG10, REG7 and REG6 have mean values and SI in satisfaction level. The REG5 and REG9 observations have their SI of Dissatisfaction and the others got their partly satisfied in terms of SI values.

The results revealed that the official staff at university members are satisfied with students with the mean values from 3.42 to 3.58 and the SI values at partly satisfied level. At TUEBA and TUMP, respondents most satisfied with the administrative, the other institutions have mean values at satisfied but some SI values at dissatisfied.

The analysis shows that teaching staff is the highest evaluated components. The three observations LEC1 to LEC5 and LEC8 are satisfied students with mean values from 3.75 to 4.09. The LEC7 has the lowest mean value of 3.26 at partly satisfied level. The results show that the Academic advisors are not supportive enough to their students. They are "Academic advisor activity in orientation, advice and support students" and "Academic advisor enthusiastic, friendly and willing to help students".

Data Analysis shows that respondents are quite satisfied with Extracurricular Activities. The EXT8 and EXT3 have both mean and SI values at satisfied level. However, observations EXT4, EXT6, and EXT7 have mean values at partly satisfied level and SI values at dissatisfied level.

The analysis of overall satisfaction shows that respondents assessed their teaching staff with the highest mean value at satisfied level and many respondents have satisfied with their lecturers via the SI value at strongly satisfied level. The two observations namely Administrative Staff and Extracurricular Activities have mean values at satisfied level but the SI value of the Official staff at dissatisfied level showing that not many respondents satisfied with the officers. The SI of Extracurricular Activities at partly satisfied level shows that the number of respondents satisfied with the activities is small compared to the others. The two observations Facilities and Regular have mean values at partly satisfied but their SI values at dissatisfied level.

VI. CONCLUSION

Physical facilities are rated by students at satisfied and partly satisfied level. This result shows that facilities met a part of students' study and research needs. Of which students assessed the library learning environment that compatible research and self-study the highest. Facilities at educational institutions are assessed by students as partly meet the student requirements in terms of learning and research. The books and documents in the library at TNU do not meet the requirements of the student. The system of equipment for practice is not properly invested. This is not caught up with the development. The system of facilities for physical education, sports, culture and other equipment to serve the needs at educational institutions is still lacking. The system of learning materials is invested but not adequate. There is a lack of cohesion and sharing of learning resources among the educational institutions of TNU. There is a lack of investment at the library and the system does not meet standards. The implementation of information technology is limited.

The regular and procedure for providing support services at TNU are observed by 14 items. Students evaluate the processes of providing information on regulations, procedures for borrowing books and documents, course enrollment and other regulations at satisfied level. The process of updating information about learning materials on the information technology system has not been highly appreciated. Regulations in course enrollment are inadequate, due to the fact that the infrastructure does not meet the number of accesses, especially during the enrollment period of students, causing the network congestion. The system of forms for students to apply for documents, transcripts is not always available and not easy to use. The re-assessment procedure, test results announcement are not satisfied students.

The administrative staff is assessed by criteria such as friendliness, enthusiasm, and respect. Students are partly satisfied with administrative staff, especially when students dissatisfied when they directly work with the staff. Staff at some educational institutions have not really respect students. The behavior culture of the staff needs to be built, gradually building standards in the communication between staff and students.

Teaching staff is evaluated by students with good results, with career orientation for students, information on teaching activities, and opportunities for students to exchange information during the learning process.

The academic advisors' team does not really support students in the process of learning and research. The process of supporting students to participate in scientific research has not been given adequate attention, especially the support and direction of the teaching staff. Scientific research of students has not been interested in

funding, the amount of student support is not motivated to encourage participation and enthusiasm from the students.

Extracurricular activities initially create an environment for students to study, build career-oriented programs of work, connect students with outside businesses to create opportunities for students. Extracurricular activities for students at TNU have not been given adequate attention, there are not many activities for students to have the opportunity to practice careers, apply the knowledge they learned in extracurricular activities.

The coordination between the institution and the business is unsustainable, has not created practical content for students, so the effectiveness is not high. Although the educational institutions at TNU have established clubs for extracurricular students, the topic of activities does not attract students to participate and does not create a learning environment in the sentence. Club activities and activities are lack sustainability.

Limitations and recommendation

The research analyzes and points out the factors that affect the student satisfaction of support service quality at Thai Nguyen University, which is the basis for further studies and decision making. Although the study has achieved positive results, there are certain limitations. Firstly, the research sample was collected by the non-probability method, so the representation can be limited. Secondly, the review and evaluation of factors in the research model were only done with student perspectives. These restrictions should be accounted for and added in further studies.

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