

International Students' Satisfaction and Emotional Attachment with University Services Quality

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out the level of satisfaction and emotional attachment of international students with quality services provided by university. The study was quantitative and descriptive in nature. The population of the study was 366 international students studying in one general and one professional public sector HEC recognized university. A sample of 366 international students was selected through census sampling technique. One self-developed instrument Emotional Attachment (EA), and one adapted instrument Students' Satisfaction with University Services Quality (SSUSQ) for data collection were used. Both questionnaires contained items at five points Likert type rating scale. Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability of (SSUSQ) was 0.89 and for (EA) reliability was 0.76. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to find out level of satisfaction and emotional attachment of international students with services delivered by university. Results revealed that there was no significant difference with respect to demographic variable (i.e. gender, university, and program) related to students' satisfaction and emotional attachment with university services quality. The study recommended that all the educational stakeholders and university management may be engaged to enhance the standards and quality of services which were provided by Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Keywords: *International Students, Satisfaction, Emotional Attachment, Services Quality*

Introduction

Globalization in education plays key role in advancement and development of every state. Education is profitable and successful investment that returns in several ways. Educational institutions connect students throughout the world. Universities serve as a nurturing hub to promote globalization and cultural exchange. Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan gives many opportunities to international students in the form of international scholarships.

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The Higher Education Commission, Government of Pakistan has awarded scholarships for undergraduate, Masters, MPhil. and Ph.D. level studies in field of Agricultural, Medical, Engineering, Gender Studies , Social Science, Arts & humanities, Management and Business Education, Veterinary Sciences, and Natural Sciences/Physical Science (HEC, 2019).

Pakistan higher education officials have acknowledged the importance of international students and have taken important steps to attract them. In Pakistan since the foundation of higher education commission, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) started modifications in 2002 providing universities with essential services resources such as ultimate access to digital libraries, best quality internet and vast range of local and international research scholarship programs. These reforms have changed the educational environment of the country while technology has helped in better development of range of teaching and learning tools. Since, education plays vital role in the development of economy and has significant relation between them.

Emotional attachment has been progressed in present era, which is a well-known concept in psychology to measure and evaluated the students emotional attachment to institution. This emotional attachment to brand is new in measuring the excess of customers in higher education institutions (HEI). Presented the uniquely vibrant effects of brand attachment, how HEI marketers can increase its brand attachment for this purpose additional research is needed. Therefore, this study endeavors to carry out a survey on international students' satisfaction and emotional attachment with university services.

Service Quality

Quality of service is difficult to measure due to its non-material nature (Chang, 2009; Parassuraman, Zeithamal, & Berry, 1988). It is crucial to consider all characteristics of the quality of service that justify the position in which a particular industry works (Lagrosen, 2001). Parassuraman, Zeithamal and Berry (1988), who measured the quality of service, have suggested that the "SERVQUAL" is based on five aspects, that they have concrete, reliability, sensitivity, reassurance and empathy (Andam, Montazeri, Feizi, & Mehdizdah, 2015).

For measuring the gap between client's expectations and perception Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed (SERVCUAL) instrument. Expectation as the determinant of the perceived quality service resulted in disconfirmation paradigm (SERVCUAL) and perception paradigm (SERVPERF). Both instruments share same concept but costumers' perception were best measure by SERVPERF which include the same items of SERVQUAL instruments. As Brady and Cronin (2002) and Cronin and Taylor (1992)

found that service quality was best predict by performance measurements than the gap between expectation and perception. They elaborated that perceptions consisted of expectations therefore no need to measure expectations separately.

The researchers have argued that in higher education context SERVPERF instrument is best predictor (Abdullah, 2006). For measuring service quality Abdullah (2006) developed: HEdPERF (Higher education Performance) instrument consists of 41 items, in which 13 items were taken from SERVPERF, and the rest were developed from literature. The HEdPERF instrument consists of five aspects of quality services: (1) Non-academic aspects, (2) Academic aspects, (3) Reputation, (4) Access, and (5) Study Program. Other researchers also found and measure the service quality by using: Non-academic aspects, academic aspects, reputation, and accessibility (Lazibat, Baković, & Dužević, 2014).

The quality of service is generally known for collaboration with the students of administrative staff and teaching staff. Most of the students come out of the motivation if they realize that the staff is not caring and sympathetic. In the view of Hasan, Ilias, Rahman, & Razak (2008), an institution for quality assurance must train its staff through coordination, cooperation, compassion and empathy.

The existing literature reveals that academic quality resources, the quality of teaching, quality of administrative services and students support services quality are continuously functional in higher education (Manzoor, 2013). Tian and Wang (2010) said that satisfaction is a function of the harmony among perceived performance and consumer personal values and the respectable advantages achieved, and that consumer values are structured and influenced by dominant cultural value.

According to Sohail and Shaikh (2004), the physical services of universities include the lighted conference halls, the appearance of building, the model of conference rooms and the cleanliness of the university, as well as the lighting of lectures and study rooms. Research carried out at universities in Vietnam reveals that quality of administrative services is significantly associated to students' satisfaction. This finding shows that the functioning of university, the skills of the administrative staff and the services behavior show important role in enhancing satisfaction of students (LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1997).

Bowlby (1980) is an emotion lead target person and their attachment define as a particular bond between a given objects. The main attention of bonding theorists is the mother -baby relationship and other human-human relationship. Recently, research on

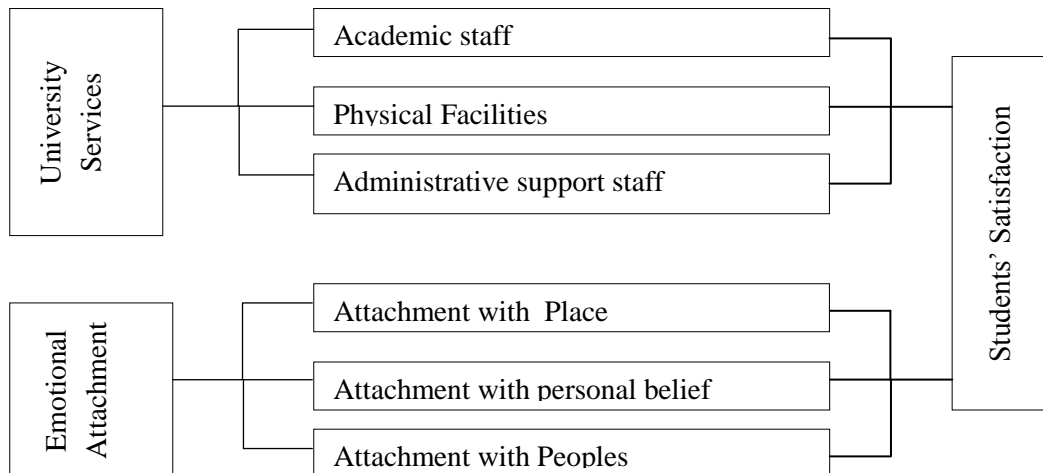
emotional attachment invokes wider spectators such as clients of a specific brand (Patwardhan&Balasubramaniam, 2011).

Some emotional attachments represent psychological emotional bond between individuals and the target. The researchers are highly accepted that consumers' emotional state, expressed in consumer brand agreement and consumer brand identity, can encourage the investment of outlet services (Huang & Cheng, 2016). More powerful a commitment to an object, the greater the closeness to object. When people practice stress in the external atmosphere, they are frequently looking for additional object psychological or physical protection. Power of emotional attachment to an objects can be related with the asset in the object, namely the desire to avoid attention immediately in its own interests to improve relationship (Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, & Arriaga, 1997).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The recommended theoretical causal pattern for this study was presented in Table1. The pattern of the present study explores the structural, of students' satisfaction and emotional attachment with services quality provided by university. (Parassuaraman, Zeithamal, & Berry, 1988). There are infrequent studies that measure the quality of the service.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study (Source, Author)



Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the satisfaction level of international students with university services quality.
2. Determine the international students' level of emotional attachment with university services quality.
3. Determine the difference regarding satisfaction level of international students with university services quality against demographic variables.
4. Determine the difference regarding international students' level of emotional attachment with university services quality against demographic variables.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In the light of above objectives, following research questions and null hypotheses were developed for the study;

Q1. What is the satisfaction level of international students with university services quality?

Q 2 What is the emotional attachment level of international students' with university services quality?

H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference regarding satisfaction level of international students with university services quality between gender, university and program.

H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between international students about emotional attachment level with university services quality on the bases of gender, university and program.

Methodology

This study was quantitative in nature and descriptive survey research design was used to conduct the research. A survey design provides numeric information about participant's attitudes, opinions and trends (Creswell, 2009). The study followed positivist philosophical research paradigm because real life experiences of the participants were taken by using questionnaire.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was 366 international students, who were studying in one general and one professional University of district Lahore. There were 102 students in general university and 264 students in professional university (Table 1).

Table 1**Details of Foreign Students Enrolled at the General University and Professional University**

Course	No. of Students in General University	No. of Students in Professional University	Total
Bachelor/BS	13	262	275
Master	02	0	2
D. Pharmacy	58	0	58
M.Phil./MS	06	1	7
Ph.D.	23	1	24
Total	102	264	366

Source 1: Fact Book (2018) of General University

Source 2: Director of Students' Affair (DSA) Professional University

Table 1 shows that in both universities the number of bachelors students was 275 among which 13 students from general university and 262 from professional university while masters students were two in general university. In D. Pharmacy there were 58 students in general university. The total number of scholars were 31 in which seven were MPhil. scholars and 24 were Ph.D. scholars in MPhil. Six scholars' in general university and one was in professional university. Furthermore the access population of the study was all the international students studying in both types of universities. Multistage sampling technique was used in this study. At first stage two universities general and professional were selected through purposive sampling technique in which different programs were offered. At the second stage international 366 students were selected through census technique.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this research study which were Students' Satisfaction with University Services Quality (SSUSQ) questionnaire and Emotional Attachment (EA) questionnaire. The SSUSQ questionnaire was adapted from previous research studies HEDPERF (Higher education Performance) instrument developed by Abdullah (2006), and some of the items were developed by researcher. Emotional Attachment (EA) questionnaire was developed by the researcher. Both questionnaires (SSUSQ) and (EA) were consisted of two sections; section A = demographic, B = statements for SSUSQ and as well for EA. Questionnaires related to (SSUSQ) and (EA) were comprised on five points Likert type scale from strongly agree to strongly. For the assurance of instruments' quality, questionnaires were validated from experts of the relevant field. The (SSUSQ) and (EA) questionnaires were piloted on 20 international students studying in General and Professional university. Here the value of Cronbach's Alpha of (SSUSQ)

established at 0.89 and the value of (EA) established at 0.76 which is acceptable. Researcher collected the data personally from all the sampled participants. After giving the general and basic instructions, participants filled the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze data. In descriptive statistics frequency and mean score were used to find the international students' satisfaction and emotional attachment with university services quality. In inferential statistics, independent sample t-test was used to identify the difference of opinions between genders while analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was used to find the difference of opinions about university services quality and emotional attachment of students from various countries and different programs.

The satisfaction level and emotional attachment level were consisted of three categories; low, moderate/average and high. The given formula was used to generate the levels.

$$\text{“(Class Interval = } \frac{\text{Maximum class} - \text{Minimum class}}{\text{divided by No.of levels}} \text{)”}.$$

The above formula was used in research study “Determinants of Students, Satisfaction with University Portal Services in Jordan” (Amer, 2012). According to Amer (2012) the levels were from 1 to 2.33 consider Low, from 2.34 to 3.66 Median or Average, and from 3.67 to 5 was High.

Table 2
Demographic Information of Participants

Sr. No	Variables	N	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	260	Male	241	92.7
			Female	19	7.3
2.	Age	260	19-21	69	26.5
			22-24	114	43.8
			25-27	59	22.7
			28-31	18	6.9
3.	Program	260	BS(Honors)	241	92.7
			Master	2	0.8
			MPhil/MS	4	1.5
			Ph.D.	13	5.0
4.	University	260	General	80	30.8
			Professional	180	69.2

Table 2 shows demographic information of participants. The total numbers of the participants were 260 among which 241 were males with 92.7% and 19 females with 7.3%. The age of the participants varied between 19-31 years which was categorized in four groups. The age of respondents from 19-21 were 69 with 26.5%, 22-24 were 114 with 43.8%, 25-27 were 59 with 22.7% and from 28-31 were 18 with 6.9%. Respondents from different program were the sample of the study. 114 students from BS (Honors) with 92.7%. Two students of Master program with 0.8 % , four students from MPhil. program with 1.5% and 13 students from Ph.D. with 5% were participated in the study. The students from general university were 80 with 30.8% and 180 students from professional university with 69.2%.

Table 3

Descriptive Analysis about International Students' Satisfaction level with University Services Quality

Factor	<i>n</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Staff Services	260	14	18	66	45.23	8.985
Physical Facilities Services	260	17	23	83	57.42	10.985
Administration Staff Services	260	10	11	46	31.25	6.565
Overall Students' Satisfaction	260	41	70	193	133.83	22.239

Table 3 showed that total participants were 260, Minimum score was 70 and maximum score was 66. The factor academic staff services consisted of 14 items with mean score 45.23 was equal to 3.23 average level, physical facility services consist of 17 items with mean score 57.42 equal to 3.37 an average level and administration staff services factor consist of 10 items with mean score 31.25 equal to 3.12 an average level of satisfaction. Overall mean satisfaction level score of international students related to university services quality was 133.83, that was equal to 3.26 according to rating scale. The results showed that satisfaction level of students with the university services quality provided by the university was average.

Table 4

Descriptive Analysis about International Students' Emotional Attachment level with University Services Quality

Factor	<i>n</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
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Overall Emotional Attachment	260	33	67	152	108.00	15.151
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Table 4 shows that international students' emotional attachment level related to university services with mean score was 108. Total participants were 260, minimum score was 67 and maximum score was 152. The emotional attachment questionnaire consisted of 33 items. The mean score 108 was equal to 3.27 an average level of attachment according to rating scale from (Strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). The results showed that students had average level of emotionally attached with university services provided by the university.

Table 5

Difference between International Students' Satisfaction Level with University Services Quality on the Bases of Gender and University by using Independent Sample t-test

Variables	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender	Male	241	133.00	22.589	-2.149	258	.036*
	Female	19	144.32	13.691			
University	General	80	137.76	22.298	1.902	258	.444
	Professional	180	132.08	22.049			

*Significant $p < 0.05$

Table 5 shows that there was significant mean difference between male and female international students' with university services quality, mean score for male ($M = 133.00$, $SD = 22.589$) and female ($M = 144.32$, $SD = 13.691$; $t(258) = -2.149$, $p = 0.036$, two-tailed). The value of p is less than 0.005 so the null hypothesis was rejected. The table also shows that there was statistically no significance difference between general and professional university students' with university services quality, general university students' ($M = 137$, $SD = 22.298$) and professional students' ($M = 132.08$, $SD = 22.049$; $t(258) = 1.902$, $p = 0.444$, two-tailed). The p value is greater than 0.05 so the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6

Difference between International Students' Satisfaction Level with University Services Quality in Term of Program Using One-way ANOVA

	<i>Respondent Type</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Overall Students,	Between Group	759.685	3	253.228	.509	.676
	Within Group	127330.869	256	497.386		

satisfaction	Total	128090.554	259
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Insignificant $p > 0.05$

Table 6 shows that one way ANOVA between group was conducted to find the difference between views of students from different program BS(Honor), Master, MPhil, and Ph.D. on multiple dimensions of international students' satisfaction with university services quality. The p value is greater than 0.05 so the null hypotheses was accepted and the result showed no difference between international students from different program regarding satisfaction with university services quality.

Table 7

Difference between International Students' Emotional Attachment Level with University Services Quality on the Bases of Gender and University using Independent Sample t-test

Variables	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender	Male	241	107.46	15.319	-2.727	258	.055
	Female	19	114.84	10.996			
University	General	80	112.55	16.498	3.099	258	0.280
	Professional	180	105.97	14.094			

Not significant > 0.05

Table 7 shows that there was no significant difference between male and female international students' views about emotional attachment with university services quality, mean score for male ($M = 107.46$, $SD = 15.319$) and females ($M = 114.84$, $SD = 10.996$; $t(258) = -2.727$, $p = 0.055$, two-tailed). The table also shows that there was statistically no significance difference between general and professional university international students' views about emotional attachment with university services quality, general university students' ($M = 137$, $SD = 22.298$) and professional students' ($M = 132.08$, $SD = 22.049$; $t(258) = 1.902$, $p = 0.444$, two-tailed). The p value is greater than 0.05 so the null hypothesis was accepted for both variable gender and university.

Table 8

Difference between International Students about Emotional Attachment Level with University Services Quality in Term of Program Using One-way ANOVA

	<i>Respondent Type</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Overall	Between Group	807.511	3	269.170	1.175	.320
Emotional	Within Group	58647.485	256	229.092		
Attachment	Total	59454.996	259			

Insignificant $p > 0.05$

A one-way ANOVA between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the difference between views of students from different program BS(Honor), Master, MPhil, and Ph.D. on multiple dimensions of international students' emotional attachment with university services quality. The p value is greater than 0.05, the result shows that there was no statistically significant difference between international students, from different program about emotional attachment with university services quality.

Discussion

This study included the purpose of investigating the satisfaction and emotional bond of international students with quality services provided by university. The results showed that service quality promotes the satisfaction and emotional bond of international students in more than one dimension. The key to students' satisfaction is the quality of academic staff services, physical facility services and administrative staff services. These are based on personal belief and people. In the study, it was found that international students had an average satisfaction level with the general quality services provided by the university.

Findings of the study showed that students' satisfaction was average with quality of administrative service, the quality of instructional applications, the quality of teaching services, the quality of the library services, the quality of the instructor, the accessibility of text books and internet in library and quality of the university's administrative service. These results are consistent with Bergamo, Giuliani, Camargo, Zambaldi and Ponchio (2012), which show that students' higher education institutions in Brazil and university quality services had a clear impact on satisfaction of students. Mansor, Hasanordin, and Rashid (2012), who conducted research at University in Malaysia, found that there is an important relationship between the quality of academic resources and satisfaction of students.

The result was supported by Price, Matzdorf, Smith and Agahi (2003), who pointed out the importance of infrastructure, showing that facilities have an impact on students' satisfaction. This finding agrees with Tuan (2012), who found that adequate textbooks and applications are important aspects of student satisfaction. The result of this study showed that international students are satisfied with average level of management services delivered by the university. The result coincided with Tuan (2012), which revealed that the quality of administrative services at universities in Vietnam had a constructive relationship with students' satisfaction. However, it was held at a university in Malaysia. The finding also matched with Abbasi, Malik, and Imdadullah (2011) study which shows that students are satisfied with administrative services, academic services,

security services, and physical facility services in Pakistan. The result also agree with the study of Asim and Kumar (2018) which find that among the students of higher level in Maldives is fairly satisfied with service quality. The study is also consonance with the study results of (Adekiya, Bamidele, Paul, & Adamu, 2019) where students satisfaction was average about administrative staff and physical facilities in Nigeria.

This present study has paid to identify international students' satisfaction and emotional attachment with service quality that is delivered in general and professional university by higher educational institutions in Pakistan. This research helps general and professional university to understand that which service quality enhance students' satisfaction and emotional attachment. Thus universities can use this research findings to improve the service quality for students' satisfaction and emotional attachment. The study concludes that quality services contribute to the satisfaction and emotional attachment of international students studying at general and professional universities in Pakistan.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the overall satisfaction of international students with services quality was an average and also average for each sub factors; academic staff services, physical facilities services and administration staff services. Study concluded that all male and female international students from different programs have the same average satisfaction. The study concluded that overall level of emotional attachment of international students with university services is an average. Study also concluded that all male and female international students from different programs have the same average level of emotional attachment. Study concluded international students studying from both general and professional university have same, average level of satisfaction and emotional attachment with university services quality.

1. This study recommended that university may provide best academic staff services and good and standardized facilities (internet facility, health facility, sport facilities, and advanced laboratory).
2. The universities may establish students' friendly administrative staff and enhance the quality of administration departments.
3. This present study recommended that all the educational stakeholders including the university management, all other either government or non-government stakeholders and Ministry of Education may be engaged to increase the standards & quality of HEI's in the country.
4. The study recommended that the university may advance and developed quality education such as teaching and learning facilities, computer laboratories, ICT resources, and library resources (i.e. quality text books) that support students' learning and research.

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