

Students' Satisfaction at Ethiopian Public Universities a Case Study at Dire Dawa University

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Abstract

Student satisfaction has been tested and proven as one of the factors that glue students to their University. This study examines the level of student satisfaction in Dire Dawa University using a cross-sectional survey research design. The primary data was collected through structured questionnaire from 1364 randomly selected students of five colleges and one Institute of Technology. The study comprised of three major student satisfaction dimensions, namely teaching-learning (variety of programs, alternative departments, library service, bookstore service, computer facilities, laboratory & demonstration facility, internet and classroom), staff-student relation (welcoming staff, time management skill, subject matter knowledge, tutoring support, responsiveness to student's need, evaluation system, academic advising and disciplinary system) and augmented facilities (guidance and counseling, peer counseling & support, placement services, registration assistance, recreation facility, student union service, dining & lounge, dormitory, student health service, intervention in risky behaviors, female student support, support to disabled & handicapped, safety & security, media services). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical and bivariate correlation analysis method. The study revealed that highest satisfaction was due to library service (998, 74.1%), student evaluation system (943, 70.6%) and student placement (879, 68.3%) in teaching-learning, staff-student interaction and augmented facilities respectively. The highest dissatisfaction was due to laboratory and demonstration facility (542, 41.1%), computer laboratory (548, 41.6%) and internet facilities (550, 41%) in teaching-learning. In terms of staff-student interaction and augmented facilities the highest dissatisfaction was reported in tutorial support (491, 36.7%) and lounge services (650, 50%) respectively. The findings indicated a significantly strong positive relationship between teaching-learning and staff-student interaction ($r(770) = 0.653, p = 0.01$), teaching-learning and augmented facilities ($r(678) = 0.663, p = 0.01$), staff-student interaction and augmented facilities ($r(697) = 0.637, p = 0.01$).

Keywords: Student satisfaction, Higher Education, Ethiopia, Dire Dawa University.

1. Introduction

Satisfaction is a well-researched topic in both academic and non-academic (workplace) settings. In academic settings, students' satisfaction data helps colleges and universities make their curriculum quicker to respond to the needs of a changing market demand (Eyck, Tews & Ballester, 2009; Witowski, 2008). Higher education institutions especially universities are like practice grounds where students learn and acquire all necessary skills and abilities that potential employers out there in job market sought. To ensure that this is the case, universities tend to bundle their offerings which includes core services (i.e. knowledge, intellectual abilities, interpersonal skills, and communication skills), actual services (i.e. degrees like undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate through regular teaching and research) and augmented services (i.e. building, transportation/logistics facilities, libraries, labs, computer labs, hostel/boarding facilities, medical, sports, and class room facilities) coupled with administrative support. It can be convincingly argued that student satisfaction with tangible and intangible offering at universities is vital for them to acquire those skills and abilities that can satisfy needs of those next in the chain i.e. employers and society.

In Ethiopia, higher education institutions are under immense pressure since the beginning of government massive expansion in higher education institution in 2006. This massive expansion have changed the educational climate of the country and the government on one side is facilitating the establishment of new higher education institutions, and on the other side working for the enhancement of quality of education. This double edge sword i.e. higher education expansion and ensuring quality of higher education has spurred a drive to improve and enhance service quality standards in the higher education institutions. Therefore, students' satisfaction surveys are important in ascertaining whether Universities are providing quality service in order to fulfill their mission. It is well known that the most important product of educational institutions is qualified graduates. In order to best prepare students so that they are sought after by employers upon graduation, an effective core service, actual and as well augmented service is needed. Students must understand the value of their education and be satisfied with their overall experience in order to promote and support their higher educational institution as a student and as an alumnus. Satisfaction is a relevant measure because many studies have demonstrated that other factors being equal, satisfied individuals are likely to be willing to exert more effort than unsatisfied individuals (Bryant, 2006; Özgüngör, 2010). Thus, satisfied students (with the curriculum) are likely to exert more effort in their educational studies by taking actions such as regularly attending their classes and becoming more involved in their coursework and institution.

Satisfied students are more likely to be committed and continue their studies (as measured by a higher retention rate) than unsatisfied students, who are likely to be less willing to regularly attend classes, and are more likely to quit their studies (Jamelske, 2009).

In Ethiopia, there are 136 universities of which 38 (28%) are in public sector, whereas 98 (72 %) are in private sector. The total enrolment in the universities is 860,378 of which 747,548(87%) is in public sector, whereas, 112,830 (13%) is in private sector. The total male enrolment in the universities is 565,354 (66%), whereas, the female enrolment is 294,324 (34 %). The total teachers in the universities are 32,734 out of which 30,631 (93%) are in public and 2,103 (7%) are in private sector (MoE, 2017). The question underlying in this study is whether Ethiopian students are satisfied and if so at what level they are satisfied with the academic (core & actual service) and augmented service (infrastructure i.e. building, transportation/logistics facilities, libraries, labs, computer labs, hostel/boarding facilities, medical, sports, and class room facilities) provided by their respective higher education institution. To measure the satisfaction level of university students, this study has been initiated to empirically measure the level of student satisfaction taking Dire Dawa University as a case study.

2. Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction became a popular topic in marketing during the 1980s and is a debated topic during both business expansions and recessions. Most discussions on customer satisfaction involve customer expectation of the service delivery, actual delivery of the customer experience, and expectations that are either exceeded or unmet. If expectations are exceeded, positive disconfirmation results, while a negative disconfirmation results when customer experience is poorer than expected. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) preach that satisfaction is the post-purchase evaluation of products or services taking into consideration the expectations. Researchers are divided over the antecedents of service quality and satisfaction. Whilst some believe service quality leads to satisfaction, others think otherwise (Ting, 2004). The studies of Lee et al. (2000); Gilbert and Veloutsou (2006); Sulieman (2011) and Buttle (1998) suggest service quality leads to customer satisfaction. To achieve a high level of customer satisfaction, most researchers suggest that a high level of service quality should be delivered by the service provider as service quality is normally considered an antecedent of customer satisfaction. As service quality improves, the probability of customer satisfaction increases. Quality was only one of many dimensions on which satisfaction was based; satisfaction was also one potential influence on future quality perceptions (Clemes, 2008).

2.1. Student Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness and joy that individuals obtain when they have fulfilled their human needs and desires. Study by Childers and et al (2014), forwarded that university is an educational as well as a service setting, where the service is often produced and consumed simultaneously. Perceptions formed by students on service performance are the result of the student attitudes which will be expressed either as positive or negative based on how far student expectations on the delivery of the services have been met by the university (Arambewela& Hall, 2008; Keaveney 1999; Boshoff 1997).

Student satisfaction measurement is considered a strategic issue for educational institutions because satisfaction is similar to profit-and-loss accounting in business organizations. If satisfaction is high, then the university is making sizeable profits as a result of having provided students with knowledge, skills and targeted abilities. Student will be pleased with their academic achievement and their university life and will speak positively about the college because satisfaction is the ultimate goal, and the ultimate goal is a reflection of high levels of service quality (Majeed et al., 2008).

2.2. Determinants of Student Satisfaction in Higher Education Institution

Identifying the factors of student satisfaction entails answering questions related to students' satisfaction with educational services, how much students trust those services, and whether current students would advise prospective students to attend the institution.

The broader aspects of the students' satisfaction are adequate to know the degree to which students are satisfied. It is crucial to understand those factors that contribute to satisfaction of students. Literature shows that there are various factors and measurement that are used in students' university survey.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) purport that academic advising plays a role in students' decisions to persist and also affects their chances of graduating. Academic advising is much more than just scheduling courses and registering students for classes. Consequently, students take their relationships with their academic advisors very seriously, as they should. Furthermore, academic advising might possibly be, as Hunter and White (2004) suggest, the only organized and structured attempts in which university faculty or staff have sustained interactions with students.

Numerous studies have addressed the issue of service quality and student satisfaction. For example, Fitri et

al. (2008) have observed service quality dimension i.e. tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy as positive contributors towards student satisfaction. Some other authors like Bigne et al. (2003), Ham and Hayduk (2003) and Elliot and Shin (2002) have reported significant relationship between service quality i.e. service reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, tangibility etc and satisfaction in higher education settings. Spreng and Mackoy (1996) reported that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction.

2.2.1. Staff-Student Relationship

Most scholars agree that the relationships between students and faculty are vital to student success in college (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005) and one of the principal aspects of facilitating these relationships includes faculty approachability.

Approachability involves faculty making themselves available and accessible both inside and outside class, especially at key junctures when students need them (Kuh et al., 2005). Many schools and their faculty members attain adequate levels of approachability by keeping regular office hours and promptly answering students' e-mails. However, approachability also means that faculty are easily reached outside of class by doing things such as giving students their home phone and cell numbers, personal email addresses, etc. Furthermore, Kuh et al. (2005) contend that faculty approachability and interaction can consist of many facets, including working with a faculty member on a research project, working with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, program activities, etc.), discussing assignments and grades, and receiving prompt academic feedback on performance. In short, the more contact a student has with a faculty member, the better chance he/she has in persisting until graduation (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

2.2.2. Learning Experiences

One of the most important missions for institutions of higher learning is to provide meaningful learning experiences for their students. These learning experiences are determined by the collective effort of faculty, staff and students. At the same time, students enter higher education with their own expectations of learning experiences. These expectations impact how students respond to their environments and also act as precursors as students make academic decisions, such as choice of major (Pike, 2006). Expectations can also influence how students respond to their academic surroundings and impact their decisions of whether or not to remain in certain fields of study, or college in general (Bosch, Hester, MacEntee, MacKenzie, Morey & Nichols, 2008; Kuh, Gonyea & Williams, 2005; Pike, 2006). Meaningful learning experiences are an essential key to student retention, and it is imperative for institutions of higher learning to create valuable and enriching learning experiences within their academic programs. Enriching learning experiences are also necessary to produce an economically independent enlightened citizenry who possesses civic responsibility. When meaningful learning experiences are missing from the curriculum, students often become disengaged and dissatisfied because they see no relevance in what they are learning. Moreover, students with few chances to participate in meaningful learning experiences are denied the opportunity to integrate and apply the knowledge they have obtained in their classes (Kuh, G. D., Schuh, J., Whitt, E., Andreas, R., Lyons, J., Strange, C., et al. (1991); Kuh et al., 2005; Moxley et al., 2001).

2.2.3. Student Support Services

A number of colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of services and resources intended to promote persistence by providing academic assistance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Both Miller (2005) and Seidman (2005b) contend that if students are admitted to a college, then they should have expectations for that college to provide services that will help them succeed. It is important for institutions of higher learning to implement and maintain various academic resources that promote student success and increase student persistence because these resources are needed by a significant number of students who are not adequately prepared for the academic challenges they will face at the university. Schools that truly desire to increase student persistence should implement and advocate the usage of "responsive, learner-centered support services, such as peer tutoring and special labs for writing and mathematics" (Kuh et al., 2005). Most of the academic support services are tutoring centers which offer academic assistance in a variety of areas, such as speaking, writing, and mathematics. Usually, students are able to schedule appointments with the centers, discuss the academic challenges they experience, and the staff at these centers are able to provide assistance to them. Adelman (1999) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that academic resources such as these produced statistically significant positive impacts on student persistence.

Social and physical factors of an institution's services may greatly influence the degree of attractiveness and the students' overall satisfaction. Social factors consist of student-faculty member relationships, student administration member relationships and student-student relationships. Then, physical factors represent the class size and the environment, technology used during the lectures, library and computer laboratory, Wi-Fi connections in the campus, cafeteria and all student related service facilities.

One way that educational institutions may consider enhancing service quality in the university is by considering how the students' connection to the university campus and their willingness to benefit from all the services may influence their level of satisfaction.

Generally from the literature, three different constructs i.e. teaching-learning (variety of programs,

alternative departments, library service, bookstore service, computer facilities, laboratory & demonstration facility, internet and classroom), staff-student relationship (Welcoming staff, time management skill, subject matter knowledge, tutoring support, responsiveness to student need, evaluation system, academic advising and disciplinary system), and augmented facilities (Guidance and counseling, peer counseling & support, placement services, registration assistance, recreation facility, student union service, dining & lounge, dormitory, student health service, Intervention in risky behaviors, female student support, support to disabled & handicapped, safety & security, media services) have been used as major variables to measure student satisfaction.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design: The study used cross-sectional design on students of Dire Dawa University from first year students through prospective graduates. The students were from Dire Dawa Institute of Technology, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, College of Business and Economics, College of Law, College of Natural and Computational Sciences and College of Social Sciences and Humanities.

3.2. Sample Design and Technique:

The study respondents' were sampled from five different colleges and one institute. Using 95% confidence level, two percent margin of error and a total of 10,121 students; the final calculated sample size was 1473. The sample size was calculated using a formula stated Cochran (1977):

$$n_0 = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where p and d are proportion of students satisfied and margin of error used respectively. The calculated final sample size was proportionally allocated to each of the departments in the colleges and the institute. Finally using a sample frame constructed using a list obtained from each of the departments and a random sample of students were selected for data collection from each of the respective departments.

3.3. Study Variables: Data were collected on three student satisfaction dimensions namely teaching and learning, staff-student relation and augmented facilities.

Teaching-learning dimension has specific measures such as variety of programs, alternative departments, library service, bookstore service, computer facilities, laboratory & demonstration facility, internet and classroom.

Staff-student relation dimension has further measures like welcoming staff, time management skill, subject matter knowledge, tutoring support, responsiveness to student need, evaluation system, academic advising and disciplinary system).

Finally specific measures such as guidance and counseling, peer counseling & support, placement services, registration assistance, recreation facility, student union service, dining & lounge, dormitory, student health service, intervention in risky behaviors, female student support, support to disabled & handicapped, safety & security, media services fall under augmented facilities dimension.

3.4. Data Collection Method: Primary data was collected from students of all years throughout the colleges and the institute. Data collection was done by three academic staff with close supervision of the researcher. Self-administered questionnaire where most of the questions were based on five-point likert scale were used for quantitative data collection. Furthermore interview method was used to collect qualitative data.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis: The collected data was fed into IBM SPSS 21.0 by an experienced data encoder and following that was intensive data cleaning throughout the specific measure variables within each of the three dimensions. Cronbach-alpha was used to check statistical reliability of items and was found to be more than 0.8. The data on the three dimensions, Teaching-learning, Staff-student interaction and augmented facilities, were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis methods. Furthermore bivariate correlation analysis was done to assess the relationship between each of the student satisfaction dimensions.

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 1473 questionnaires were distributed to the students from the five colleges and the institute of technology out of which a total of 1364 questionnaires were returned indicating 92.6% response rate. The results are organized in to three categories as teaching and learning (variety of programs, alternative departments, library service, bookstore service, computer facilities, laboratory & demonstration facility, internet and classroom), staff-student relation (Welcoming staff, time management skill, subject matter knowledge, tutoring support, responsiveness to student need, evaluation system, academic advising and disciplinary system) and augmented facilities (Guidance and counseling, peer counseling & support, placement services, registration

assistance, recreation facility, student union service, dining & lounge, dormitory, student health service, intervention in risky behaviors, female student support, support to disabled & handicapped, safety & security, media services).

4.1. Teaching and learning

Results related to teaching and learning mainly fall under the programs currently available in the university and provision of facilities to the teaching and learning. The results presented in Table 1 where respondents reflected on the general teaching-learning indicated that majority of the students 853 (65.8%) and 817 (64.4%) are satisfied by variety of programs and availability of alternative departments respectively.

Table 1. Student Satisfaction by Teaching and Learning in Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia, 2017

	Satisfied n (%)	Indifferent n (%)	Not satisfied n (%)
1 Variety of programs	853(65.8)	237 (18.3)	205 (15.8)
2 Alternative departments	817 (64.4)	230 (18.1)	221 (17.4)

Students experience related to the academic facility provided by the university is presented in Table 2 below. The highest satisfaction of the students is expressed due to the library and classroom services as 998 (74.1%) and 970 (72.8%) respectively whereas close to half of the students, 548 (41.6%), 542 (41.1%), 550 (41%), reported their dissatisfaction with the computer facility, laboratory & demonstration facility and internet facilities respectively.

Table 2. Student Satisfaction with academic facility in Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia, 2017

	Satisfied n (%)	Indifferent n (%)	Not satisfied n (%)
1 Library service	998 (74.1)	154 (11.4)	194 (14.4)
2 Book Store Services	659(49.8)	202 (15.2)	462 (34.9)
3 Computer Facilities	641(48.6)	128 (9.7)	548 (41.6)
4 Laboratory & demonstration facility	646 (49)	130 (9.8)	542 (41.1)
5 Internet service	680 (50.7)	110 (8.2)	550 (41)
6 Classroom	970 (72.8)	171 (12.8)	191 (14.3)

4.2. Staff-student interaction

The results presented in Table 3 below revealed that more than half of the students 854 (64.5%), 787 (59.4%) and 781 (59%) were satisfied with the subject matter knowledge of the staff, disciplinary system and staff responsiveness to their needs respectively. Additionally the highest number of students (943, 70.6%) reported their satisfaction with the evaluation system they are going through.

Table 3. Student Interaction with instructors in Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia, 2017

	Satisfied n (%)	Indifferent n (%)	Not satisfied n (%)
1 Welcoming staffs	736 (55)	199 (14.8)	401 (30)
2 Time management of staff	692 (52.4)	291 (22)	337 (25.5)
3 Subject matter knowledge of Staffs	854 (64.5)	172 (12.9)	298 (22.5)
4 Tutoring support	650 (48.6)	195 (14.5)	491 (36.7)
5 Staff responsiveness to student needs	781 (59)	212 (16)	329 (24.9)
6 Evaluation system used	943 (70.6)	193 (14.4)	199 (14.9)
7 Academic Advising	639 (48)	272 (20.4)	418 (31.4)
8 Disciplinary system of the University	787 (59.4)	211 (15.9)	326 (24.6)

4.3. Augmented Facilities

Students' experience related to the augmented facilities is presented in Table 4 below where more than half of students, 879 (68.3%) & 823 (63.4%), expressed their satisfaction with their placement and registration assistance they receive respectively. In addition 745 (57.5%) students reported that they are satisfied with the university's students' union and the way it's representing their interests. On the contrary nearly half of the students reported their dissatisfaction with guidance and counseling service, student recreation facility, student dining cafeteria and lounge i.e. 595 (45.3%), 617 (48.3), 610 (46.7%) and 650 (50%) respectively.

Table 4. Student Satisfaction with augmented facilities in Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia, 2017

	Satisfied n (%)	Indifferent n (%)	Not satisfied n (%)
1 Guidance and counseling service	594 (45.2)	123 (9)	595 (45.3)
2 Peer Counseling and Support Groups	591 (45.3)	150 (11.5)	562 (43.1)
3 Placement services	879 (68.3)	113 (8.7)	294 (22.8)
4 Registration Assistance	823 (63.4)	173 (13.3)	302 (23.2)
5 Students recreation facility	518 (40.5)	142 (11.1)	617 (48.3)
6 Student Union service	745 (57.5)	103 (7.9)	447 (34.5)
7 Student dining cafeteria	592 (45.2)	105 (8)	610 (46.7)
8 Student Lounge	548 (42.1)	101 (7.7)	650 (50)
9 Dormitory Services	548 (42)	146 (11.2)	608 (46.6)
10 Student Health Services	526 (40.4)	152 (11.6)	622 (47.8)
11 Intervention in risky	538 (41.9)	287 (22.4)	458 (35.7)
12 Female students' support	555 (42.9)	353 (27.3)	384 (29.7)
13 Disabled and handicapped student support	539 (41.7)	331 (25.6)	421 (32.6)
14 Safety and Security Services	559 (42.7)	260 (19.8)	490 (37.4)
15 Media Services	597 (47)	122 (9.6)	551 (43.4)

4.4. Relationship between student satisfaction dimensions

The result in Table 5 below presents the bivariate correlation analysis conducted between the three dimensions namely teaching-learning, staff-student relationship and augmented facilities. Accordingly it is revealed that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between teaching learning and staff – student interaction ($r(770) = 0.653$, $p = 0.01$) which indicates that students satisfaction with the teaching-learning is not only limited with programs and related academic facilities but it is also related to what they experience during their interaction with the teachers. This is also supported by Kuan (2017) where he conducted a study on a sample 104 students of city university of Macau using primary data and found that teaching learning and instructor – student interaction are strongly positively correlated.

Table 5. Correlation between dimensions of student satisfaction in Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia, 2017

	Teaching - Learning	Staff - student relationship	Augmented facilities
Teaching – Learning	1		
Staff - student relationship	.653**	1	
Augmented facilities	.663**	.637**	1

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of sig.

The correlation analysis also indicated that there is a significant strong positive relationship between teaching learning and augmented facility provision ($r(678) = 0.663$, $p = 0.01$) which indicates that students satisfaction with the teaching-learning is also strongly related with their satisfaction with various augmented facility services such as guidance and counseling, placement & registration assistance, recreation facility, dormitory, health service, intervention in risky behaviors, safety & security, media services and others. A study conducted by Napitupulu *et al.* (2016) in Indonesia where he used data collected from a sample 89 students found supporting result. It found that teaching learning and augmented facilities are strongly positively correlated ($r(89) = 0.73$).

Additionally the bivariate correlation between staff-student interaction and augmented facilities showed a strong positive relationship ($r(697) = 0.637$, $p = 0.01$) indicating students satisfaction with the various augmented facilities is also related with their satisfaction in their interaction with their teachers which is also supported by Tisome (2009).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Higher education institutions engaged in teaching of students provide various other services that support the successful provision of the teaching and learning and it is all aimed toward satisfying their student. It is clear that the dissatisfaction that could be created due to the supporting services can directly affect the satisfaction due to the core process of teaching-learning. In this regard this study mainly focused on student satisfaction dimensions: teaching-learning, staff-students interaction and augmented facilities. It found that with services related to teaching-learning the highest satisfaction was due to library service and the highest dissatisfaction was due to laboratory and demonstration facility, computer and internet facilities. Additionally the highest satisfaction in staff-student interaction was due to evaluation system used and the highest dissatisfaction was related with tutorial support to the students. In terms of augmented facilities provision the highest satisfaction and

dissatisfaction was reported due to student placement and lounge service respectively. Finally there was strong positive relationship between teaching-learning and staff-student interaction, teaching-learning and augmented facilities, staff-student interaction and augmented facilities provided by the university.

Therefore the university should conduct further study to investigate why students' dissatisfaction in laboratory and demonstration facility, computer and internet facility, tutorial support and lounge service is high before undertaking any corrective measures.

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