Perception of service quality in higher educational institution: A study of selected Universities in north-western region of Nigeria.

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: While the pressing need for building a stronger socio-economic, political, cultural, and industrial development still permeates in most developing nations, scholars have identified the provision of qualitative and accessible tertiary educational system as bedrock for the transformations required to achieve these needs. However, achieving qualitative educational standard extends beyond direct classroom knowledge dissemination but also encompasses other types of on-campus activities. Thus, having knowledge of the service quality on offer by these activities may assist in determining if there is need for improvement, and areas, where such improvement is needed. Having this in mind, this study was conducted to examine the perception of service quality in two Higher Educational Institutions in North-Western Nigeria.

Materials and Methods: From a total population of 429 final year students, 291 students were conveniently selected, through the proportionate stratified sampling technique, to participate in the research. Furthermore, the descriptive survey design was employed to elicit responses from these students, through structured and close ended questionnaire.

Results: after the 180 responses, which were considered usable for analysis were subjected to a one-sample t-test, it was revealed that while the students are of the perception that lecturers, university management, general university environment, and non-teaching staff, meets up with the requirement for service quality, they are however of the view that there is need for improvement in tangibles infrastructures such as hostel infrastructures and teaching/learning-environment infrastructures.

Conclusion: In view of these findings, we conclude by recommending a need to upgrade in these tangible infrastructures and also identify the important areas in need of future research.

Introduction

From the year 2010 up till moment, the Nigeria nation has been exposed to all kinds of socio- political woes and other social vices, which have been reported in some national newspapers and magazines. Among these vices are cases of insecurity in nooks and crannies of the societies, inter-ethnic wars, land disputes, arson, rape, crude oil bunkering, willful vandalisation of oil pipe-lines, Boko-Haram insurgencies, assassination of political opponents, political thuggery, incessant strikes by workers, periodic hike in prices of petroleum products, cultism in educational institutions, examination malpractice, armed robbery, bribery/corruption, and graduate unemployment [1]. It was noted that concerted efforts made by the three tiers of Government to alleviate these economic, socio-political problems have proved abortive. Hence, it has become inevitable to use the highly cherished tertiary education system as an intervention strategy [2].

However, for the system to live up to these expectations, there is need for availability of adequate services-oriented facilities, backed by efficient personnel and a sound problem solving culture which in most cases are presumably inadequate in the universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and other corresponding institutions [3]. In their contention, challenges such as rapid technological, economic, political and socio-cultural transformations, associated with the current phase of globalization calls for a more efficient tertiary educational system whose ability to deliver on key internal services must be such that stands out both at the national and international level. This is due to the fact that the quality of services rendered by these institutions is critical to national competitiveness and development [4]. Based on their argument, it is only quality educational system that can sharpen the minds of the individual and help transform the society economically, socially and politically. Put in another way, an effectively

and efficiently functioning tertiary education system must be such that adopt the concept of quality as a cornerstone across all areas of its operations.

As outlined by the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) section 8 (59) the aim of tertiary education in Nigeria among others are [5]:

• Contribution to national development through high level manpower training.

• Development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and the society.

• Development of the intellectual capabilities of the individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.

• Acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable the individual to be self-reliant and useful member of the society.

• Promotion and encouragement of scholarship and community services.

• Fostering national unity and the promotion of national and international understanding, including interaction.

For the achievement of the above goals, Asiyai identified the concept of quality and quality assurance both in direct classroom knowledge dissemination and other areas of university activities [4]. Thus to achieve these goals, it is imperative to have a deep understanding of what constitutes quality services and how this may be influenced to achieve desirable outcomes in these institutions. Though some few studies have also investigated the perception of service quality in Higher Educational Institutions both in Nigeria and some other African countries [6-9]. In particular, what came to our attention is that most of these studies examined service quality by focusing only on the services rendered by the academics who are involved in direct classroom knowledge dissemination despite the fact that Asiyai have indicated that quality and quality assurance goes beyond direct classroom knowledge dissemination but also encompasses other areas of university activities [4]. In view of this, we are of the opinion that having an insight into the nature of quality associated with these other activities would offer a fruitful ground for both theory and practice. On this basis, the current study aim to contribute to the literature of service quality by making use of this yet to be exploited approach in investigating the perception of service quality among students in selected higher educational institutions, which are located in North-western Nigeria. It will focus on some other quality factors which have not been considered in previous studies, to the best of knowledge of these researchers: the combination of lecturers, university management, general university environment, non-teaching staff, hostel infrastructures, and teaching/learning-environment infrastructures. The study is grounded on the theory of service quality by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry which argue that the customer versus

organizational gaps (differences in customer expectation and organizational offering) constitutes an impediment to quality service delivery (Figure 1) [10,11]. Based on this, it is expected in this study that this impediment can be altered by having an in-depth understanding of student's perception regarding quality service specifications (what is needed) in relation to the extent to which it is being provided by the institutions. In the subsequent sections, the literature review, research methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion are presented.

Literature Review

The importance of tertiary education to national development

Accordingly, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education stated that tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in colleges of education, mono-technics, polytechnics and universities and those institutions offering correspondence courses [5]. In a remark by Dambazau, tertiary education plays a necessary and an increasingly important role in human, social and economic development [12]. Based on the analysis of 47 World Education Indicators (WEI) in Europe by WEI Program, UNESCO institute of statistics and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2002), it was found that better educated people are more likely to be in work and, if economically active, less likely to be unemployed. As observed by them, access to
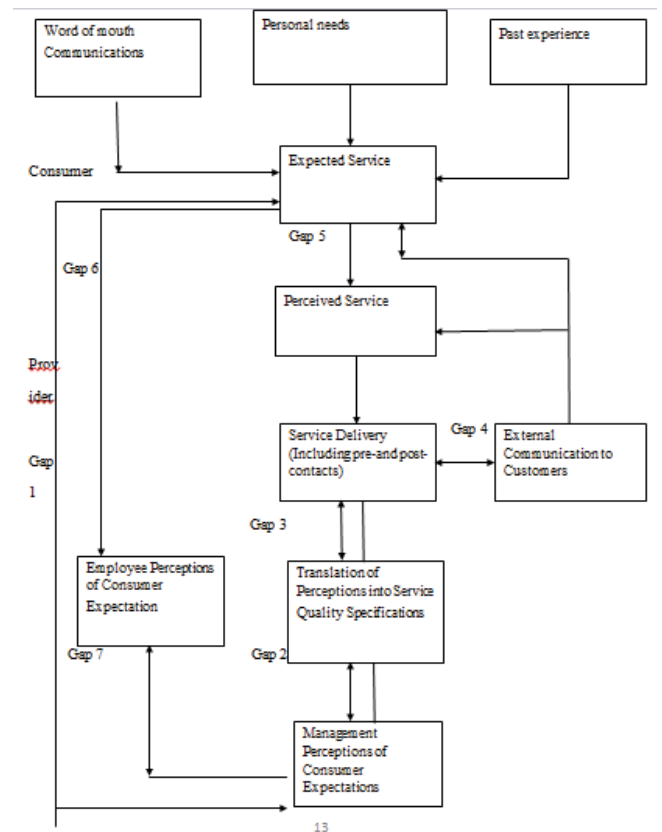
***Figure 1.** The Service Quality Model.*

and completion of tertiary education is a key determinant in the accumulation of human capital, a prerequisite for human rights and civil liberties, good health, clean environment, and personal safety. Similarly, data from 49 countries of the Asia Pacific region has been used to demonstrate the crucial effect of tertiary education on the economic growth of nations. In particular, in was clearly shown that the larger the stock of population with higher education, the higher the prospects of economic growth [13].

According to Gardner and Davies tertiary education assists the improvement of the institutional regime through the training of competent and responsible professionals needed for sound macroeconomic and public sector management [14]. Also, the norms, values, attitudes, and ethics that tertiary institutions impart to students are the foundation of the social capital necessary for constructing healthy civil societies and cohesive culture which in turn act as the very bedrock of good governance and democratic political systems [15].

Tertiary education is the facilitator, the bed rock, the power house and the driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural, healthy and industrial development of a nation as it serves as a key mechanism that is increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital producing industry [16]. While reconciling with this view, Yusuf and Oyetayo noted that those societies characterized by low level of tertiary education rating either in efficiency or effectiveness are often plague by social vices in numerous features: Corruption, bribery, ignorance, conservatism, disease, malnutrition, superstitious beliefs, tribalism, nepotism, political instability, unemployment and economic stagnation [1].

The Concept of Quality

Based on the conceptualization by Du-Brin, quality an attribute of a product/service that is desirable and therefore makes it unique for those seeking the attributes [17]. They identified four major attributes for classifying products/ services with good quality: Conformance to expectation, conformance to requirement, and conformance to excellence, value and loss of avoidance. According to Newman quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs which implies that a quality product/service must be such that is in conformance with the required standard of the users [18]. In highlighting the importance of quality to any functioning organization, Buzzell and Gale noted that an important factor that exercise an effect on operational performance is the quality of products and services offered, in relative to those of competitors [19]. Hence, it is arguable that the global competitiveness of Nigerian Tertiary Educational Institutions would be best evaluated by focusing on the definition of the nature of quality that characterizes its services offering.

Though, most previous researches in quality evaluation have traditionally focused on product quality giving little or no attention to service offering. However, recent trend in marketing research is beginning to shift towards quality of service delivery [20]. As a result of the intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability attributes of services which make it difficult for evaluation in terms of quality, Zeithaml have proposed that services evaluation must be done in terms of customer perspective [21]. That is, the extent to which a service meets and or exceeds a customer's expectations. Although, this customer-based perspectives has been highlighted as one, being characterized by notable limitations [20]. They however admitted that it is a way of definition which shares close similarity with the Japanese philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM): A business philosophy embodying the belief that management process must focus on integrating the idea of customer-driven quality throughout an organization [22]. In other words, marketing customer voice has become an expanding part of the quality movement to develop products and services to achieve optimum customer satisfaction [20]. Total quality management TQM as a business strategy is such that focuses first and foremost on consistently satisfying customers and their needs, by delivering superior value to them thereby leaving the competitors behind [20]. The associated benefits of this quality management practice are improved corporate performance, better employee relations, higher productivity, greater customer satisfaction, increased market share and improved profitability [23]. Having this in mind, Paraseraman, Zeithamil, and Berry advocated five major conditions that are universal and fundamental to quality service delivery [10]. Assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangible. This was later expanded upon by Paraseraman to include reliability, responsiveness, competence, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customers, and tangibles. An overview of these dimensions is presented below [11].

Reliability

This has to do with the ability of the organization in meeting up with the expectation of the customers in terms of quality [10]. For instance, when organizations are consistent in making provisions for quality products/services, such gesture would tend to lead to fulfilling the reliability assumption. According to Iddrisu questions that need to be asked by firms willing to assess itself on reliability are: Does the firm perform the service right at the first time? Does the firm honors it promises? Etc. Thus, Higher Educational Institutions that focus on satisfying the reliability assumption should be able to ensure accuracy in billing, proper record keeping and perform designated academic and non-academic services at the designated time [24].

Responsiveness

According to Paraseraman (1988) this deals with the promptness of the service personnel in attending to customer's needs [11]. A firm is known to be responsive when it communicates to its customers how long it would take to get answers or have their problems dealt with [21]. As such, in

relation to a Higher Education Institution environment, when requests such as those for university transcript, cafeteria services, security alerts and medical services among others are treated with utmost responsiveness, such gesture is likely to be interpreted as an exhibition of service quality delivery.

Competence

Here, an emphasis is placed on the capacity for delivering on the type of services advertised. This is to imply that the ability of the organization in hiring efficient and capable personnel in possession of pre-requisite skill and knowledge in addition to the know-how for job performance is a requirement. Hence, management bodies in Higher Educational Institution are likely to make significant contribution to service quality delivery if it employs the use of round peg in round whole policies when hunting for strategic human personnel: class room instructors, secretaries, bursary staff, security staff, registry staff, maintenance staff and faculty officers, dean of faculty and head of department.

Accessibility

According to Paraseraman, this has to do with the extent to which customers have access to important information and those personnel in strategic positions [11]. In the case of a tertiary educational system, some of the important questions that may be used to address the issue of accessibility are (1) are there information that adequately answers common questions on the website? (2) Does the school web site takes care of issues relating to electronic payment of fees, electronic interaction with lecturers, checking of results etc.

Courtesy

This has to do with the nature of politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness that is exhibited by organizational contact personnel. For instance, it is a well-known fact that contact with organizational personnel creates a long lasting impression which actually has direct relationship with the quality of service as perceived by the customer [20]. Thus, it is expected that Higher Educational Institution would likely improve their service quality rating if efforts are made to by the management to concentrate on equipping their front desk staff with potent interpersonal/assertive skills through consistent training and retraining programs.

Communication: this has to do with the effectiveness of service personnel in communicating with customers in languages understandable without extra efforts. This is suffix to say that those organizations that strive in adjusting their language features to suit to the unique requirements of different customer segments patronizing their services may be championing the cause of service quality.

Credibility

As argued by Paraseraman this has to do with the integrity and trustworthiness of the organization [11]. In relation to the Nigerian Higher Educational Institutions environment,

some of the questions that may come to bear are: (1) Are examination results a reflection of student's actual scores? (2) Are classroom instructors fair to all students irrespective of their social, political, ethnic, religious and cultural background?

Security

This has to do with the extent to which customers are free from negative externalities [20]. In any tertiary educational institution environment, issues such as confidentiality of academic, personal records, absence of cultism, environmental hazards, and ability of students to lodge complaint without any form of molestation are important attributes.

Understanding the customers

This has to do with having a proper knowledge of different type of customers in relation to their respective needs. For instance, organizations exist to take care of customers with diverse background in terms of culture, education, religion, and economic affiliation. Hence the ability of management in Higher Educational Institutions in making provision for services that suit to the specific wants of these customers should constitute a major element of the quality services delivery process.

Tangibles

According to Paraseraman this has to do with the quality of physical infrastructures that are situated in the environment where the service was delivered [10]. It has to do with those tangible objects that aids in the overall services delivery process. Thus, facilities such as classrooms, hostels, sports complex, rest-rooms, administrative buildings, and physical appearance of lecturers are notable tangibles that might aid in the evaluation of services rendered in Higher Educational Institutions.

Tertiary Education and Service Quality

Nkiruka and Olarenwaju noted that service quality is becoming increasingly recognized as a key performance indicator in higher educational institutions while Anim affirmed that it is the main strategy through which universities can increase its market share, and also build a positive perception in customer mind [9,25]. This is even more so as student's choice of university under a highly and uncertain atmosphere is determined by evidence of service quality [26]. Also, those institutions that are ignorant of the bargaining power of students, and thus, fail to put their perception in relation to service quality are putting themselves at a great disadvantage [27]. When students are Dissatisfied with services in higher institutions, they tend to engage in premature termination of studies, switch institution and promote the circulation of negative word of mouth, thereby making it less likely for potential students to seek admission into such institutions [28].

Empirically, Anim examine the determinants of service quality among students in Ghanaian universities [25]. By

making use of the 5 SERQUAL dimension, it was concluded that empathy, responsiveness, assurance and appearance are respectively, the four most important determinants of quality service in these institutions. Surprisingly, it was discovered that a statistical significant and negative relationship exists between the dimension of reliability and overall service quality. Also, Naidoo focused on the South African higher educational institutions by examining the perception of both academic and support staff in regards to the nature of service quality that is being obtained in these institutions [29]. From their finding, it was discovered that while these staff concurred that service quality is below average in these institutions, they also averred that efforts must be made to upgrade in reliability, tangibility, empathy, assurance and responsiveness to students. From a similar study that was conducted by Lodesso [30]. The objective of this study was to evaluate the satisfaction of Ethiopian students with the services on offer in selected Ethiopian universities. From this particular study, it was discovered that majority of the students have a below average satisfaction in all the five dimensions of service quality that were highlighted (empathy, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and tangibles). Hence, it was put forward that efforts should be made to deploy the relevant resources that could aid in the enhancement of all these dimensions. Furthermore, Asim focused on the post graduates students in Maldives higher educational institutions [31]. Their objective was to determine if there is a relationship between student's expectation and perception of service quality in these institutions. From the responses obtained from 72 students, it was concluded that service expectations, in all five dimensions of quality (responsiveness, reliability, empathy, assurance and tangible) indeed has a positive and significant impact on perception. The implication of this finding is that the management of this institution is putting in efforts to ensure that relevant infrastructures are consistently put in place to ensure that service offerings are in line with the requirements imposed by students.

Theoretical Consideration

In a bid to provide a concrete theoretical background for this study, we employ the theory of service quality by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry to argue that the customer versus organizational gaps (differences in customer expectation and organizational offering) constitutes an impediment to quality service delivery in Higher Educational Institutions [10]. Also, it is expected that such impediment can be altered by having an in-depth understanding of these students in terms of their perception regarding quality service specifications (what is needed) in relation to the extent to which it is being provided by the institutions. The main tenet upon which this theory lies is that the intangibility nature of services may make it difficult to understand how consumers perceive services and services quality thereby making it difficult to reconcile between customer's expectation and organizations perception of quality service [20]. The five gaps, which may promote difficulty in this reconciliation,

were originally identified by Parasuraman and later extended to seven by Curry and Luk [10,32,33]. They are highlighted below.

Difference between consumer expectations and management perceptions of consumer expectations

This usually takes place as a result of management's inability in having a clear understanding of customer's expectation and what is perceived as quality service from the perspective of the customers. As reasoned by this theory, a decrease in this gap would tend to lead to an increase in the service quality rendered. Thus, it can be inferred that if tertiary educational institutions strives to maintain better connectivity to their students, while using the acquired knowledge from such connectivity as a framework to guide service quality management programs, it is likely that such gesture would lead to improved service quality.

Difference between management perceptions of consumer expectation and service quality

Here an emphasis is placed on management perceptions of customer's expectations and the translation of these perceptions into service quality. Thus, while the organization may have a clear understanding of what constitute quality from the perspective of the customers, the ability to mobilize the necessary organizational resources that is required for translating this knowledge into reality forms an important point of focus in minimizing this gap and improving service quality. By implying from this proposition, we contend that having knowledge of the basic service requirements of students in tertiary institution would not translate into improved services delivery in the absence of necessary infrastructures both tangibles and intangibles that is required for achieving such feat.

Difference between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered

In the opinion of Parasuraman this gap is created as a result of the disparity that may exist between the quality standard set by the management and what is actually delivered [10]. Thus organizations could close the service quality gap by focusing on the reconciliation of the difference between what is promised and what is actually delivered [20]. The theoretical implication here is that the quality rating of tertiary educational institutions may likely diminish if in contrary to promises made to students during their matriculation ceremony, they end up spending more than the stipulated number of years that is required for graduation due to incessant strikes in addition to unrest associated with Nigerian Higher Educational System.

Difference between service quality delivery and what is communicated about the service to consumer

As pointed by Parasuraman this gap comes into existence as a result of management inability to properly communicate the quality of their product/services to customers [10]. The

assumption here is that an effective communication in this regard will aid in the facilitation of consumer's feedback, which will consequently help in reducing the quality gap. Thus, Higher Educational Institutions are likely to derive more benefits from service quality management activities if they focus on acquiring relevant services related feedback from the students and making use of such in developing subsequent offerings.

The discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered

This is as a result of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls (gaps) on the part of the service provider [34]. In this case, customer expectations are influenced by the extent of personal needs, word of mouth recommendations and past service experiences. Thus, reducing this gap may require of Higher Educational Institutions to engage in social-psychological, economic and cultural profiling of both existing and potential student markets to identify their core personal needs, in order to use this as a basis of designing services for offering. Also, efforts could be initiated to ensure that the marketing information disseminated regarding services attributes is an actual reflection of what is in offering in order to avoid an overlap that may arise as a result of discrepancies between actual quality and perceived quality.

The discrepancy between customer expectations and employees' perceptions

According to Luk this is as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations by front-line service providers [33]. Thus whenever the customer care officials or other front-desk personnel in tertiary educational system fails in their bid to have clear understanding of what is expected by the students in terms of quality services, such services offering is bound to fail in terms of quality. For instance, training and retraining of these personnel may likely serve as a remedy to this situation.

The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions

According to Shahin this is as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations between managers and service [34]. As such, management of Higher Educational Institutions must be aware of the importance of feedback from front-desk officials while these feedbacks must be incorporated as a framework for the initiation and implementation of operational policies. Below is a figure showing the service quality model by Parasuraman and later extended by Curry and Luk (Figure 1) [10,32,33].

Research Questions

I. What is the perception of students regarding the quality of teaching facilities/learning environment in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions?

II. What is the perception of students regarding the quality of hostel infrastructure in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions?

III. What is the perception of students regarding the quality of general University environment in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions?

IV. What is the perception of students regarding the quality of general University environment in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions?

V. What is the perception of students regarding the quality of university management in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions?

Conceptual Framework

In the conceptual framework for this study, the perception of students concerning overall service quality in higher educational institutions is assumed to be determined by the combination of quality of lecturers, teaching facilities/learning environment, hostel infrastructures, non-teaching staff, general university environment, and the university management (Figure 2).
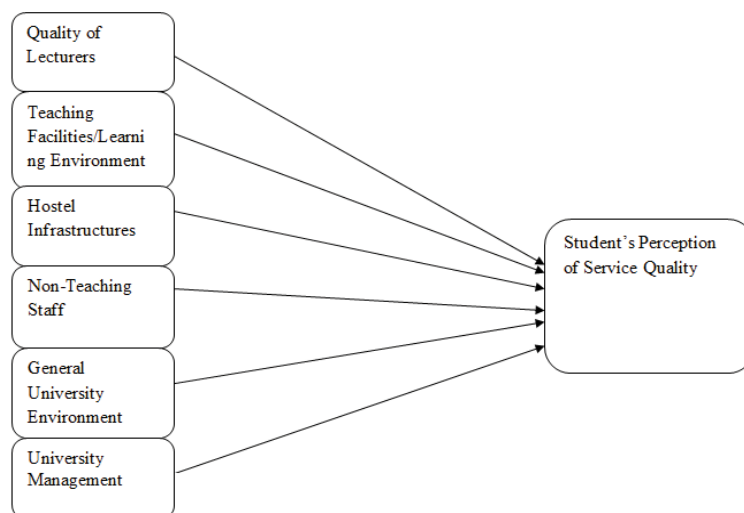
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework showing factors contributing to Service Quality in Nigerian Higher Educational Institutions of Learning.

Methodology

Data collection

This study was carried out in two higher institutions of learning that are situated in North-Western Nigeria, between September 2017 and July, 2018. The population of the study is 429 students who are in their final year in two higher educational institutions in Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Bayero University, Kano. By making use of the formula for sampling size technique advanced by the work of Zikmund a total of 291 students was calculated and they were subsequently adopted as the sample for the study [22]. Furthermore, the proportionate stratified sampling technique, which assures precision and thoroughness was employed in picking 99 students from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and 192 students from Bayero University, Kano. Finally, these students were conveniently selected to participate in the research as a result of the need to achieve a high response rate, while at the same time ensuring that the research is completed within a reasonable period of time, and within the framework of available resources [22]. Furthermore, a self-developed, self-administered questionnaire, that focused on demographic characteristics: age, marital status, gender and the perception of students on six tertiary educational infrastructural indices (quality of lecturers: 9 items, teaching facilities/learning environment: 5 items, hostel infrastructures: 6 items, non-teaching staff: 6 items, general university environment: 6 items, and university management: 4 items) was employed in eliciting responses from the students after ensuring that they are modified to be in line with what is considered by Paraseraman as universal and fundamental in the measurement of quality service [10].

Concerning the analysis of data, the descriptive statistics which provide descriptive information (mean, median, standard deviation and frequency distribution) on a set of data was utilized to provide information on demographic statistics, and the frequency of response to the six indicators of service quality while the inferential statistics, more specifically, the one sample t-test, which tests the difference between a sample mean and a known or hypothesized value, while also allowing one to specify the level of confidence for the difference was used in determining if the mean scores obtained by respondents in these indicators is such that its significantly higher than the hypothesized value, which is the median of the highest possible score obtainable [35,36]. All items in the questionnaire were provided in a close ended format in which respondents rated their perception on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Results and Discussions

First, out of the total number of one hundred and ninety one (291) questionnaires retrieved, a total of 11 were found to be incomplete thereby rendering them un-usable for statistical analysis. Consequently, these copies were discarded leaving a total number of two hundred and eighty (280) which were included in the analysis. Data analysis revealed that 200 students or 71.4% are between 18 and 25 years old, another 74 or 26.4% are between the ages of 26 and 35 years, 2 or .7% are within the age range of 36 and 45 years, 1 or .4% student was found to be within the age range of 46 and 55 years, while a total of 3 or 1.1% students are 56 years and above. Concerning the gender identity of the students, a total of 155 or 55.4% are males while the remaining 125 or 44.6% are females which indicate that respondents are fairly represented based on gender composition. Furthermore, our analysis revealed that while a total number of 230 students or 82.1% are single, another total number of 46 or 16.4% are married while 4 or 1.4% are separated from their spouse.

Descriptive Statistics

Based on the observation by Zikmund, the descriptive statistics is usually employed to give summary description of scale variables and to identify unusual cases across the variables [22]. The descriptive statistic for the six service quality factors in this study are presented in Table 1 below.

As shown in Table 1 above, the highest average mean score on perception regarding service quality across respondents is 3.4031. This score is being derived from the items that measure the ability of lecturers in the delivery of this quality. Also, it is closely followed by non-teaching staff, university management, overall university environment, teaching/learning facilities, and hostel infrastructures respectively.

One sample T-test of difference

To test for any significant difference between the sample mean scores on perception of service quality, and the test values, which is the median of the highest possible score by respondents in each of the service quality indicators, the one sample t-test was carried out. The results of this test are displayed below in Table 2.

As can be observed in Table 2 above the confidence intervals for all the items measuring the perception of quality service delivery among lecturers are all lying well above the value of zero, and significant at the 95% confidence level which is an indication that the mean scores for students who agree that lecturers offer quality service delivery in the nine key areas of quality indicators are significantly higher than those who disagree with these statement [37]. Put in another way, the students in this study are of the opinion that lecturers are significantly above average in quality service delivery in these institutions (Table 3).

Similarly, with the exception of item (5) that seeks to determine if the toilets attached to classrooms are standard and properly kept, the confidence intervals for the items measuring student's perception of service quality in respect to teaching facilities/learning environment are all lying well above the value of zero, and significant at the 95% confidence. Thus, while students are well above average in the perception that classrooms are well ventilated, spacious, well kept, and

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of service quality indicators.

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Lecturers	280	1	5	3.4031	1.02790	-1.831	0.03855
Teaching Learning Facilities	280	1	5	2.8150	1.22786	0.1362	-0.912
Hostel Infra	280	1	5	2.6762	1.22908	0.1573	-0.8681
Non-Teaching Staff	280	1	5	3.2208	1.05997	-0.3411	-0.5061
University Environment	280	1	5	3.0878	1.1582	-0.2254	-0.8036
University Management	280	1	5	3.1794	1.1060	-0. 382	-0.638
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018							

Table 2. One sample T-test of the perception of service quality delivery among Lecturers.

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	20.019	279	0	1.15357	1.0401	1.267
Item 2	19.732	279	0	1.19643	1.0771	1.3158
Item 3	25.58	279	0	1.45714	1.345	1.5693
Item 4	21.303	279	0	1.45714	1.3225	1.5918
Item 5	6.226	279	0	0.41429	0.2833	0.5453
Item 6	11.358	279	0	0.73929	0.6112	0.8674
Item 7	4.707	279	0	0.32500	0.1891	0.4609
Item 8	15.112	279	0	0.88571	0.7703	1.0011
Item 9	7.226	279	0	0.50000	0.3638	0.6362
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

Table 3. One sample T-test of the perception of service quality for teaching facilities/learning Environment (Test Value =2.5).

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	5.081	279	0	0.40714	0.2494	0.5649
Item 2	12.103	279	0	0.81786	0.6848	0.9509
Item 3	4.773	279	0	0.34286	0.2015	0.4843
Item 4	2.990	279	0.003	0.21786	0.0744	0.3613
Item 5	-2.828	279	0.005	-0.21071	-0.3574	-0.0641
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

Table 4. One sample T-test of the perception of service quality for Hostel infrastructures (Test Value =2.5).

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	-3.198	279	0.002	-23571	-0.3808	-0.0906
Item 2	-2.511	279	0.013	-0.17857	-0.3186	-0.0386
Item 3	-3.077	279	0.002	-0.22500	-0.3690	-0.0810
Item 4	10.965	279	0	0.78571	0.6447	0.9268
Item 5	9.766	279	0	0.76786	0.6131	0.9226
Item 6	1.971	279	0.05	0.14286	0.0002	0.2855
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

well lighted, they are however of the perception that the toilets in the class rooms does not meet the acceptable standard and cleanliness (Table 4).

Based on the output of the analysis displayed in Table 4 above, it is clearly shown that the confidence intervals of items 1, 2, and 3 are lying entirely below 0.0 which is an indication that the mean scores for respondents in these items are significantly below the median of the highest possible score that can be obtained by a respondent. In other words, the respondents are of the view that hostel infrastructures quality attributes such as efficient room ventilation, clean and tidy toilet environment and stable water supply are below average in terms of service quality. Contrastingly, the confidence intervals for items 4, 5, and 6 are well above 0.0, meaning that the average score for these items is significantly higher than the median of the highest possible score for the items. Thus, it may be concluded here, that based on the perception of respondents; there is adequate supply of electricity, adequate and efficient security system, and adequate recreation facilities (Table 5).

Furthermore, as can be observed in Table 5 above, the confidence intervals for all the items measuring the perception

of quality service being rendered by the non-teaching staff of the universities are all lying well above the value of zero, and significant at the 95% confidence level which indicate that the mean scores for students who agree that these staff offer quality service in the 6 areas of quality indices are significantly higher than those who disagree (Table 6).

The one- sample t-test of student's perception of service quality in the general environment of their universities is displayed in Table 6 above. As clearly shown by this table, the confidence intervals for all the 5 items utilized in measuring this construct are above the value of zero, and significant at the 95% confidence level. This is an indication that the mean scores by respondents in each of the items are significantly higher than the median of the highest possible score obtainable (Table 7).

Finally, as can also be observed in Table 7 above, the students in this study are of the opinion that the management of these schools are significantly above average in meeting the criteria of quality regarding issues dealing with formulating and implementing fair policies, responsiveness to students complains, and concern for enforcement of rules and regulations.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the perception of service quality in two major Nigerian higher educational institutions. Six major factors: service delivery by lecturers, teaching facilities/learning environment, hostel infrastructures, service delivery by non-teaching staff, the general university environment, and the delivery of service by university management were highlighted and used as a basis for assessing the perception of students regarding service quality. With the exception of hostel infrastructures, and the toilets in the classrooms, the students are of the perception that the service rendered by these factors meets and surpasses what could be classified as an acceptable level of quality service. This finding is in absolute contrast with the findings by Bose where it was clearly shown by students of selected higher institutions of learning in South-Western Nigeria that the service quality encountered from lecturers significantly falls below expectation [38]. Our finding is also a clear departure from the observation by Anasi, Babarinde, Ekundayo who altogether agreed that Nigerian higher educational institutions are characterized by low quality and low efficiency as a result of lack of sufficient funding from the government [39-41].

In other geographical locations, it also shares similarities with Naidoo, and Lodesso where the perception of service quality among students was found to be significantly below average [29,30]. Nevertheless, our findings share similarity with the work of Diedericks who found that majority of students in South African Universities are of the view that quality services are rendered in all areas of university activities [6].

Table 5. *One sample T-test of the perception of service quality for Non-Teaching staff (Test Value=2.5).*

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	8.251	279	0	0.575	0.4378	0.7122
Item 2	12.305	279	0	0.7	0.588	0.812
Item 3	8.413	279	0	0.55357	0.4241	0.6831
Item 4	11.889	279	0	0.72857	0.6079	0.8492
Item 5	11.996	279	0	0.78571	0.6568	0.9146
Item 6	16.122	279	0	0.98214	0.8622	1.1021
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

Table 6. *One sample T-test of the perception of service quality for University Environment (Test Value=2.5).*

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	10.987	279	0	0.77857	0.6391	0.9181
Item 2	9.136	279	0	0.575	0.4511	0.6989
Item 3	6.433	279	0	0.44643	.3098 .5830	0.583
Item 4	9.295	279	0	0.63929	0.5039	0.7747
Item 5	6.835	279	0	0.50000	0.356	0.644
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

Table 7. *One sample T-test of the perception of service quality for University Management (Test Value=2.5).*

Items	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Item 1	10.951	279	0	0.71786	0.5888	0.8469
Item 2	5.471	279	0	0.38571	0.2469	0.5245
Item 3	21.195	279	0	1.18929	1.0788	1.2997
Item 4	5.885	279	0	0.42500	0.2828	0.5672
Computed From Field Survey Data, 2018						

It is also in consonance with the findings of Asim and Kumar where the service quality among post graduate students in Maldives is found to be fairly satisfactory [31]. Undoubtedly, the findings in this study have shown that the evaluation of the term "quality service" is subjective in nature and depends on the social, cultural, psychological and mental interpretation of individuals who are made to carry out the evaluation. These findings have provided some measure of support for the theory of interpretivism epistemology which argues that it is inappropriate to reduce human activities to mere objectivity and that as social actors; they are likely to attach different interpretation to a phenomenon across different situations [42]. This suggests that it is possible that if some of the factors that are identified to have met and surpassed expectations in this study are presented to individuals in differing cultural/geographical settings, they may be deemed as otherwise by these individuals. In other words, the perceptual evaluation of quality does not occur in a vacuum but must encompass the social, psychological, and cultural dynamism that may aid in defining what is classified as satisfactory by various stakeholders [43-46]. All in all, this study contributes to the literature of service quality by making use of a comprehensive approach, involving all the distinct characteristics of higher educational institutions in assessing the perception of service quality and thus, serves as a consolidation to previous studies.

Conclusion

From the discussion put forward, it is obvious that in most cases, the students in this study are of a significant and positive perception regarding the services that are offered in their respective institutions. Of note in this regard are the demonstrations and appearance put up by the lecturers, the courtesy, competence and reliability of the non-teaching staff, the responsiveness and credibility of the university management, and the tangibles that are obtainable in the general university environment: Recreation/sporting facilities, catering, health and transportation services, and academic library resources. On the contrary, it seems that other tangibles such as hostel facilities and class room facilities are still well below average in meeting up with the requirements of the students in terms of what could be classified as an acceptable level of quality. This is a clear indication that more efforts and deliberations are still needed in these areas.

Recommendations

1. There is need for university management to continue focus in ensuring that lecturers who are capable of meeting the requirements of interpersonal competencies, multi-cultural competencies, intellectual competencies and physical attractiveness are recruited to act as class room facilitators.

2. The university management should continue in placing emphasis on improving the standard of services in its health care facilities, transportation facilities, hospitality and catering facilities and academic library resources.

3. There is need to focus more attention on physical infrastructures such as classrooms and hostels. In this regard, efforts should be made to improve the cleanliness of toilets in classrooms, hostels, and also to reduce the number of students per rooms, in addition to ensuring there is improved adequate supply of water.

4. Overall, it must be noted that what constitutes the term, "quality service" is best conceptualized from the perspective of service users. Hence, university management should engage in a periodic opinion assessment among students with a view to identifying their areas of need, and the required standard for these needs, while also using this as a basis of implementing strategies for developing quality service offering.

5. Lastly, all university employees who are required to have regular interactions with should be made to undergo periodic training and retraining exercise to equip them with the skills required to satisfy the assumption of interpersonal service quality.

Limitations

This study should be considered in light of several important limitations. First, the study would have benefitted from the inclusion of students from universities in other geopolitical regions of the country. This is in view of the potential influence that cultural difference may play in what is classified as an acceptable level of service quality. Second, as only final year undergraduate students were included in this study, it would have also benefitted from the inclusion of students from the junior classes such as those in level 1, 2, 3. Additionally, the convenience sampling method employed in picking the primary sampling units in this study partially limits its generalization, and the hierarchy of evidence associated with its results. Hence, potential researchers are invited to employ a more rigorous sampling technique for the enhancement of more external validity.

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