

Measuring the Quality of the Educational Services offered to Diploma Students at the Department of Administrative and Financial Sciences at the University College of Applied Sciences

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed at measuring the quality of the educational services that students of the Department of Administrative and Financial Sciences received at the University College of Applied Sciences. It is worth mentioning that the study sample is (215 students), and the researcher used (SERVQUAL) for this purpose. The study results concluded that there is a negative gap between the recognition and the expectation of the overall parameters measured by the model, as the study showed that the administration was able to achieve the equivalent of (93.4%) of the students' expectations, and this refers to the level of quality. It is also worth mentioning that the results of each determiner were different, as a negative gap appeared in some of them and positive in others. Also, the results found out that the quality for the male students was better than the quality for the female ones, as well as the quality from the perspective of the students in the accounting section was better compared to the perspective of their counter peers in the management and offices automation sections. Finally, the study recommended working to improve the perception of the students by providing better services; than they are. It also recommended giving more attention to the students of the management and offices automation – secretaries.

KEYWORDS: SERVQUAL, measuring quality of services, quality of educational services.

INTRODUCTION

Our world lives through a state of competition at all levels of work and production. This results from a number of factors such as the massive development in communication technology which has turned the world into a small village indeed. It is difficult nowadays to limit competition geographically. Also, areas of competition are numerable, whether in costs, speed of accomplishment, appearance and others. However, quality remains to be a main factor, sought by all organizations, due to their awareness of its importance for beneficiaries. The result of better quality is higher satisfaction of needs.

Naturally, these concepts apply to the services sector too, which has become a main production sector in our world. Services have a special type of quality which must be considered. Services sectors are various and include areas such as health, tourism, hotel industry, education and many others.

It is clear that the services sector grows day after day, especially in more developed and prosperous societies. In these societies, demand is increasing for many services that are usually not required to the same extent or quality in less developed societies.

The global economy has witnessed a rapid increase in services activity since the middle of the last century. The services sector's contribution to the total local global GDP has risen from 55% in 1977 to 70% in the year 2007 (Bilal Al Faleh, 2013). Also, Humeid Al Ta'i and others (2007) said that the importance of services to various economies, especially in their GDPs, is much more than the importance of material goods. They indicate that services contribute to 71.6% of the European Union's GDP. They also constitute 84% of the USA's economy and around 73.4% of the Jordanian economy. Al Ta'i et al. (2009) indicated some statistics that published by the Jordanian newspaper in its educational attachment in January 2006 which state that: "the number of CEOs engaged in training courses and primary and higher studies in the area of services marketing

(especially in the fields of banking, insurance, finance, administrative and technical consultations, tourism and travel) in the EU alone until February 2006 reached around 27368.

On the Palestinian level, Bilal Al Faleh- a previous reference- adds that: "the Palestinian economy is characterized in being a services economy. For example, in 2012, the services sector contributed to 57% of the Real GDP and 62% of total employment. At the regional level, data shows that the Gaza economy relies more than the West Bank's economy on services activities, which contributed to 62% of the Gaza Strip GDP, whereas it contributed to 56% of the West Bank's GDP. Also, the services sector employs 77% of Gaza's employees, whereas, it employs 55% of the West Bank's employees. These statistics indicate the size of the services sector and its estimated future.

The size of the services sector is increasing as the production of material goods requires many services. This implies that services production is essential whether in the services sector or in the commodities sector. Many statistics show the sizes of various services sectors.

This study attempts to shed light on the level of quality of the educational service provided to the students of the Administrative and Financial Sciences Department at the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. The quality of educational services has its own concept. (Al Rube'i, 2008) indicates that: "the concept of quality in education relies on all of the traits and properties related to the educational field. It shows the degree of excellence and achievement of required results. It is the interpretation of the students' requirements and expectations into determined characteristics, which are the basis for the provision of the educational service in accordance with their expectations. Universities are service organizations that compete to achieve long-term success by achieving the satisfaction of their students".

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Gaza Strip is witnessing a clear increase in the number of graduate educational institutions in general and intermediate education in particular. This, of course, leads to high competition between these institutions at all levels. The quality of educational services is an important factor in this competition. Institutions in general seek to provide the best possible educational services to be able to serve the society better than the others. This draws a good picture in the mind of the society and enables the competing institution to distinguish itself. Based on this, the Administrative and Financial Sciences Department at UCAS seeks to distinguish itself from other similar departments. It aims to achieve this through providing a high quality educational service to its students. The problem is represented by determining the degree of quality provided now, so as to, improve it or maintain it at a level that suits the department and the college.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Based on the pre-mentioned, the study aims to answer the two following questions:

1. What is the quality level of the educational service provided to the students of the Administrative and Financial Sciences Department from the viewpoint of the students themselves?
2. Are there any differences between the students in their evaluation of the quality attributed to the following demographic parameters: (gender, specialization, educational level)?

STUDY IMPORTANCE

The importance of this study lies in the importance of its results which show the officials the level of quality provided. It also reveals the differences between the various student groups which facilitate a suitable way of dealing with these groups by the administration. This study is also characterized in that all of the questionnaires were distributed by hand to ensure the character of the questioned. This rarely happens in studies. Also, this study is the first part and a basis for a second study building on it. The second study's results shall be shown later. The second study includes a test of the four other gaps which result in the fifth gap, from the viewpoint of the model. The fifth gap is the subject of the researcher's current study. This study is characterized in using the (SERVQUAL) model amended by (Ford). It includes (19) questions and suits the educational services field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Services are a type of product and they have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from other products. Among the most popular characteristics of services among writers are: intangibility, inseparability, inconsistency, perishability and ownership. These properties have their effects and problems when services are to be marketed. Al Ta'I and others (2009) mention that: "field studies proved that directors of service institutions face problems and cases in the field different to a large extent than those faced by directors of manufacturing institutions. Therefore, the quality of services is affected by the nature and characteristics of the services themselves. They are different than other products whether in definition, measurement methods or determinants.

KOTLAR'S DEFINITION: SERVICE DEFINITION

Regarding the definition and nature of services, marketing books include many definitions for services. Most of these definitions imply the idea that a service is a human activity that provides an intangible benefit which is difficult to be owned or possessed. The Kotlar definition is an example:

"A service is any act or performance one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product".

Services have their own marketing combination which is more efficient in achieving services marketing goals than the traditional combination. The sevenfold service combination (7Ps) consists of: the Product, Distribution Place, Price, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Process.

Service quality can be managed through a number of mechanisms such as: the Evaluated Performance Model, Normed Quality Model or the Service Quality Model etc. The researcher has chosen the last model as it is wide-spread and suitable for the subject. Also, some studies recommended using it in quality measurement such as the Ibn Rushoud Abdullah (2008) study and many other studies which used this model and depended on it for the same purpose. This model was developed by (Parasuraman et al, 1985) and defined "SERVQUAL" briefly. It measures the quality of services from the viewpoint of the agent and then determines the sources of the problems of quality so as to be able to assist managers in solving these problems and improving quality.

The model determines the way quality is measured by finding out the difference between the agent's perception and his expectations for the quality of the service (fifth gap). It shows that the agent's expectations are affected by: past experience, personal needs and verbal communication. The model then considers the four gaps that cause the fifth gap. It is worth mentioning that quality, according to this model, is measured through five determinants indicated by the model designers. These are: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

Among the definitions of quality that agree with the applied study instrument is the (Parasuraman, 1988) definition which is: "the difference between the clients' expectations for the service and their realization of its actual performance". Another definition stated by (Hamdan, 2012) is: "the extent that the service quality can reach in meeting the expectations of the beneficiaries or surpassing them".

Due to the importance of the subject of services quality and educational services in particular, researchers and those concerned have carried out many studies which concentrate on studying services quality using the "SERVQUAL" model.

Ford et al (1993) applied this model to carry out a comparison between postgraduate students in New Zealand and the United States. He applied the study to a sample of Business Administration students in the United States and New Zealand. The aim of the study was to carry out a comparison on the basis of the quality determinants indicated by the model. The study showed differences between the two groups. In his study, he removed three questions from the model questionnaire due to their unsuitability for the educational field. Also, OTÁVIO JOSÉ DE OLIVEIRA (2009) applied this model in a study he carried out in Sao Paulo State University titled: "Adaptation and Application of the SERVQUAL scale in Higher Education". The study showed that the promptness determinant had the highest negative gap with a rate of (-0.961). It was followed by empathy, assurance, reliability, assurance and then tangibility. Also, Barakat (2010) applied this model to measure "the gap between perception and expectation of the services provided by the Quds Open University from the viewpoint of its students"- Tulkarem branch). The study showed positive differences for some determinants and negative differences for others.

Ashour and Al Abadlah (2004) also measured the quality of educational services in postgraduate studies: the status of the MBA program at the Islamic University of Gaza. The study aimed at measuring the difference between the perceptions and expectations of students regarding the services provided to them. The (SERVQUAL) model was used. The study concluded

that the university was able to reach the expectations of the students to a degree of (83%). Also, Al Farra and Al Awadi (2012) carried out a study “measuring the quality of services provided by Palestinian universities in light of modern global changes” from the viewpoint of the students. It used the Quds Open University branches in Gaza as a sample for the field study. Among the most important results were the low level of service provided to the students, especially in the tangibility and reliability determinants, whereas, the quality was average in the remaining determinants. Al Rebe’i et al (2010) carried out a study about “the effect of the quality of educational services and quality of supervision on the satisfaction of postgraduate students in private Jordanian universities”. The study was performed at three universities: (Middle East University, Amman Arab University and Jadara University). Among the main study results were the poorness of quality of service provided at all the studied universities regarding all quality determinants determined by the model.

A number of researchers applied the same model to measure other services. For example, Al Sahn Mohammed Farid (1995) used it to judge the level of gaps determined by the model in the banking sector (commercial banks in the city of Alexandria). Also, Kaldebnrg et al (1997) applied it to measure satisfaction in the dental practice. It was used by Baker (1997) to examine the service quality among three stakeholder groups involved in the tourism service (visitors, employees and managers). Xie et al (1998) applied the model to evaluate the services delivered by information searching engines.

Ibn Rushoud Abdullah (2008) applied it to measure the quality of banking services (the status of Al Rajhi Bank) and Abu Abdullah Salih (2010) was interested in determining the dimensions of quality of postal services in Algeria using the same model.

Iyad Al Alloul (2011) carried out a study of the quality of communication services provided by Jawwal Company to around (700000) clients in the Gaza Strip. He relied on the same model. Al Dmour (2012) studied the effect of the quality of health services on the patients’ loyalty in the Jordanian University Hospital (case study) by applying the (SERVQUAL) model.

Some measured the quality of educational services by relying on other models. Hamdan (2012) carried out a study in the Applied Sciences University in Jordan where he measured the quality of educational service and its effect on student satisfaction. He designed a questionnaire consisting of (28) questions for this purpose. Also, Abu Amer (2008) studied the quality of administration and how to improve it in the Palestinian universities (Al Azhar University, Islamic university of Gaza, Al Aqsa University and Al Quds Open University) from the viewpoint of the administrators. The researcher designed a questionnaire consisting of (71) questions divided into seven subjects.

Clearly, most of the previous studies applied the (SERVQUAL) model as a study instrument except for few. Also, the subject of these studies was mostly the quality of educational services, whereas, some were related to mail, communications and banking services etc. but with use of the same instrument. Most of these studies were limited to studying the fifth gap which is to compare between the perception and expectation of clients although the model allows the study of the rest of the gaps. An exception is the Al Sahn study which studied the five gaps. This current study cites or resembles the (Ford) study in the instrument used and resembles the Ashour et al (2007) study in using 19 questions only instead of 22 questions determined by the model. The study overlaps most previous studies in many points, most importantly: the general approach of the study related to the model and its determinants, the use of a questionnaire and sample method and some statistical analysis methods.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied the descriptive analytical method. This method suits the nature of the case as no previous information about this subject is available. To achieve his objective, the researcher relied on the (SERVQUAL) model, widespread in this field. The study aims at measuring the quality of educational service at the Administrative and Financial Sciences Department based on measuring the five quality determinants indicated by the model. It then aims at studying the differences in the students’ viewpoints of the quality and its dimensions according to the demographic parameters.

The study population consists of all the students of the Administrative and Financial Sciences Department at UCAS registered for the second semester of the academic year (2014/2015). Their number is around 824 male and female students. The following table describes the population distribution according to the parameters: gender, specialization and academic level.

Table 1: Distribution of Students of the Department (Study Population) according to Gender, Specialization and Academic Level

Gender		Specialization		Level	
Males	Females	Accounting	Management and Automation of Offices	1st	2nd
568	256	460	364	393	431
824		824		824	

A random sample of (205) male and female students was chosen from this population. The questionnaires were distributed by hand to ensure the full understanding of the questionnaire content and also to ensure a high and actual rate of replies. The rate of error in this sample was (6%) and the rate of confidence was (95%). (215) questionnaires were distributed and (210) questionnaires were returned. 5 questionnaires were rejected due to their lack of suitability for statistical analysis. Therefore, the number of returned questionnaires which were valid for statistical analysis was (205) questionnaires representing (95.3%) of the total number of distributed questionnaires. The sample was divided according to gender, academic level and specialization, as described in the following table (2):

Table (2): Distribution of Sample according to Gender and Academic Level, Gender and Specialization, and Specialization and Academic Level

Gender	Level		Total	Gender	Specialization		Total	Specialization	Level		Total
	1 st	2 nd			Secretariat	Accounting			1 st	2 nd	
Males	47	72	119	Males	25	94	119	Secretariat	13	61	74
Females	28	58	86	Females	49	37	86	Accounting	62	69	131
Total	75	130	205	Total	74	131	205	Total	75	130	205

The researcher used for this purpose the (SERVQUAL) model questionnaire which was altered later by Ford and Joseph (1993) to suit educational services. Three questions were removed from the questionnaire which consisted originally of (22) questions designed to measure the five determinants defined by the model which are: (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy).

According to the sample, the service quality is measured by calculating the difference between perception and expectation for the quality determinants as a whole. Also, each determinant is measured separately according to the following equation:

$$Q = P - E \quad \text{whereas} \quad \begin{array}{l} Q \text{ means (Quality)} \\ P \text{ means (Perceptions)} \\ E \text{ means (Expectations)} \end{array}$$

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY TEST

The results revealed that the instrument has a large degree of internal consistency as the correlation coefficient between each of the questions and the total degree of the determinant that they belong to shows a statistically significant correlation at a moral level of (0.05). This assures the researcher that the questionnaire enjoys internal consistency and that it is fit to be applied to the study sample. For the measurement of the extent of stability, it was measured using the (Cronbach's Alpha) coefficient. The results showed that all of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were above (0.70). Altogether, the measurement questions achieved a coefficient of (92.9%) for the expectation questions and (94.7%) for the perception questions. This implies that the questionnaire enjoys a large degree of stability which encourages the researcher to apply it to the study sample.

STUDY ASSUMPTIONS:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between the students' perceived service and their expectations for this service.
2. There are no statistically significant differences between the students' evaluations of quality based on the demographic parameters determined in the study: (gender, academic level and specialization).

STUDY'S MAIN PARAMETERS

The main study parameters are the following:

- Quality of educational services provided to the department students (subordinate).
- Students' expectations of the five determinants (independent).
- Students' perceptions of the five determinants (independent).
- Demographic parameters (determined in the study).

STUDY DETERMINANTS

Time determinant: 2nd academic semester of the year (2014-2015).

Human determinant: Students of the department of Administrative and financial Sciences at the University College of Applied Sciences.

Place determinant: University College of Applied Sciences- Gaza Strip.

RESULTS

The sample individuals were analyzed according to the following demographic parameters: (gender, academic level, age and specialization).

Table (3): Distribution of Sample According to (Gender, Specialization, Academic Level and Age) Parameters

Gender		Specialization		Level		Age			
Males	Females	Administration and Automation of Offices	Accounting	1st	2nd	Below 21	21-24	24-27	27 or more
119	86	74	131	75	130	145	47	4	9
58%	42%	36.1%	63.9%	36.6%	63.4%	70.7%	22.9%	2%	4.4%
205		205		205		205			

The results showed a logical agreement between the distribution of the study population students (table 1) and the sample individuals (table 3). The ratio of males in the original population is larger than the ratio of females. Also, the number of accounting students is larger than the secretariat ones. The number of students in the second level is also larger than those in the first level. This all applies to the sample distribution also. Therefore, this agreement is a positive indication of the sample's degree of representation of the society.

By analysing the age parameter, it is clear that most of the students are below (24) years of age. The ratio of students below (24) years was (93.6%) and therefore, the age parameter will be dealt with as one section. The researcher expects a weak effect of this parameter on the current study due to the closeness in age of most of the sample individuals.

When analysing data related to the information sources that contributed to forming and developing students' expectations, it was clear that the most important source of the students' information and which through it their expectations were formed was "relatives' advice". Refer to table (4):

Table 4: Obtaining Primary Information about the College

#	Means	No.	%
1	Radio	2	1.0
2	TV	8	3.9
3	Internet	14	6.8
4	College leaflets	23	11.2
5	People's discussions	30	14.6
6	Relative's advice	101	49.3
7	Guides during first visit to the college	27	13.2
	Total	205	100.0

It is clear from the results that officials are required to concentrate on this means. In second place was people's talk, which indicates the institution's prestige and its importance in affecting student expectation. The table also shows the effect of the other means. Therefore, what is the level of concern that the administration should give to each item?

FIRST HYPOTHESIS TEST

"There are no statistically significant differences between the service perceived by the students and their expectations for this service". This can be found out through a test of the total expectation questions and the total perception questions.

Table (5) shows a difference between the students' perceptions and expectations amounting to $(5.06-5.42= -0.36)$ when applying the following equation: $(Q= P-E)$. This difference is statistically significant and the total expectations of the students was (77.4%), whereas, the real perception was (72.3%) for the whole of the quality determiners combined. This result proves the invalidity of the first hypothesis and confirms the presence of differences between the students' perceptions and expectations. This implies the need to improve the current level of quality from the point of view of the students.

Table 5: Total Expectation Questions and Total Perception Questions

N	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)			T-test	
	Mean	Std deviation	RII*	Mean	Std deviation	RII*	T value	Sig
205	5.42	.991	77.4	5.06	1.230	72.3	3.448	.001

When comparing perception and expectation to identify the level of quality, the data in table (6) revealed that by noticing the total determinants, the total level of quality was (93.4%). This means that the administration was able to achieve (93.4%) of the students' expectations. This is an excellent percentage. However, there remains more space to meet the expectations of the students totally.

Table 6: Comparing Perception and Expectation (For all Determinants)

N	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)		
	mean	Std .deviation	Basis	Mean	Std .deviation	Comparison
205	5.42	0.991	100.0	5.06	1.230ss	93.4

However, these differences were not to the same extent when measuring the determinants separately or when connecting them to the sample characteristics such as gender and others. The results of the detailed analysis of the data showed a difference in the quality levels of the determinants. There was also a difference in evaluating the various quality sample groups shown by the tests carried out by the researcher. Following are details of some related analyses:

DETAILED TESTS FOR ALL QUALITY DETERMINANTS

TANGIBLES DETERMINANT TEST

Table (7) shows that the differences between expectation and perception were statistically insignificant whether this determinant was separate or combined. This implies that the students had no mentionable objection to the quality of tangible elements and that their perceptions exceeded their expectations for each of the following: "workers appearance and style" and "suitability of venue", whereas, the poorest result was "available capabilities" such as sports fields and green areas.

Table 7: First Determinant: Tangible Elements

#	Questions	Expectation			Perception			T-test	
		mean	Std .deviation	RII*	mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
101	Devices are modern	5.49	1.350	78.4	5.49	1.429	78.4	.000	1.00
102	Available capabilities are suitable and attractive	5.60	1.268	80.0	5.38	1.516	76.9	1.650	.101
103	Workers have good appearance and are dressed smartly	6.00	1.229	85.7	6.10	1.211	87.1	.909	.364
104	The venue is suitable to the nature of provided service	.545	1.438	77.9	5.53	1.480	79.0	.607	.544
100	Total tangible element determinant	5.63	0.968	80.4	5.62	1.061	80.3	.073	.942

*RII: Relative Importance Index)

RELIABILITY DETERMINANT TEST

This was carried out through comparing between the student perception and expectation for all of the reliability determinant questions. The analysis shows that the differences are statistically significant at the total and individual levels of the questions, except question (201). Refer to table (8). In other words, the analysis results prove the low level of quality of this determinant and that the poorest of this determinant's questions is "the college's empathy with the student when a problem arises". The strongest is "accomplishment of services in due time". It can be noted here that this aspect is in need of more concentration to improve the level of perception, which is noticed to be low in all questions. Meanwhile, clear similarity is noticed in the case of perception.

Table 8: Second Determinant: Reliability

#	Question	Expectation			Perception			T-test	
		Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
201	Services are carried out in due time	5.46	1.438	78.0	5.18	1.678	74.0	1.911	.057
202	The college sympathises with the student should a problem arise	5.02	1.960	71.7	4.27	2.151	61.0	3.762	.000
203	Errors are corrected as soon as they are discovered	5.40	1.616	77.1	4.89	1.850	69.9	3.125	.002
204	Services are carried out in due time	5.60	1.368	80.0	5.06	1.769	72.3	3.903	.000
200	Reliability Determinant Total	5.38	1.191	76.9	4.86	1.584	69.4	3.908	.000

*RII: Relative Importance Index)

RESPONSIVENESS DETERMINANT TEST

This is carried out through comparing students' perceptions and expectations for all the responsiveness determinant questions.

Table 9: Third Determinant: Responsiveness

#	Question	Expectation			Perception			T-test	
		Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
301	Obtaining immediate service	5.04	1.755	72.0	4.45	1.926	63.6	3.420	.001
302	Workers are always willing to help students	5.47	1.590	78.1	4.95	1.933	70.7	2.970	.003
303	Workers are not too busy to provide the needs of the students	5.07	1.702	72.4	4.85	1.819	69.3	1.373	.171
300	Responsiveness determinant Total	5.19	1.332	74.1	4.75	1.585	67.9	3.300	.001

*RII: Relative Importance Index

The analysis results showed statistically significant differences in all questions except question (303). Refer to table (9). This indicated the low level of the students' perceptions compared to their expectations. This contributes to the decrease of total quality from the point of view of the students. The highest question for this determinant was: "Workers are not too busy to meet the needs of the students" as there were no statistically significant differences for this question. The lowest question was: "Obtaining immediate service". This requires more concern by the administration to rapidly accomplish tasks requested by the students.

ASSURANCE DETERMINANT TEST:

This is carried out through comparing students' perceptions and expectations for all assurance determinant questions.

Table 10: Fourth Determinant: Assurance

#	Question	Before			After			T-test	
		Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
401	College workers are trustworthy	5.71	1.331	81.6	5.53	1.595	79.0	1.466	.144
402	Assurance is felt when dealing with the college workers	5.60	1.534	80.0	5.49	1.653	78.4	.719	.473
403	Workers behave politely	5.76	1.376	82.3	5.65	1.435	80.7	.905	.336
404	Workers have the required basic information	5.56	1.413	79.4	5.43	1.519	77.6	.978	.329
400	Assurance determinant total	5.65	1.159	80.7	5.52	1.267	78.9	1.314	.190

*RII: Relative Importance Index)

Results revealed that the differences were statistically insignificant when measured separately or individually. Table (10) shows this. The students feel assured and this determinant's quality is suitable. This contributes to raising the level of quality they receive. The strongest of this determinant's questions was: "feeling assured when dealing with the workers" and the weakest was: "workers are trustworthy". This requires more concern in the assurance aspect which must be perceived by the students and must be at the highest possible levels between the students and the workers in the college. It must be noted

here that the untrustworthiness of workers at the college could be a reality or could be a mere feeling felt by the students as a result of certain actions. This must be taken into consideration.

EMPATHY DETERMINANT TEST

This was carried out through comparing the perceptions of the students with their expectations in all the empathy determinant questions.

Table 11: Fifth Determinant: Empathy

#	Question	Before			After			T-test	
		Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
501	The college gives individual concern to the students	5.16	1.626	73.7	4.63	1.937	66.1	3.007	.003
502	Providing suitable academic hours for the students	5.22	1.677	74.6	4.58	1.966	65.4	3.723	.000
503	Placing the student's interests as top priority of the college	5.29	1.731	75.6	4.35	2.102	62.1	5.304	.000
504	Workers know the students' special needs	5.16	1.588	73.7	4.49	1.944	64.1	4.324	.000
500	Empathy Determinant Total	5.20	1.344	74.3	4.51	1.695	64.4	4.849	.000

**RII: Relative Importance Index)*

Data analysis showed statistically significant differences when measuring questions as a whole or individually. Table (11) shows this. This reflects that the students do not feel the empathy they expected from the workers. This indicates the poor quality of this determinant. The poorest of this determinant's questions was: "placing the student's interest as the college's top priority". The strongest question for this determinant was: "the college's individual interest in each student". This requires from the administration to give more concern to all of this determinant's questions, especially the weak ones.

SUMMARY OF THE MEASUREMENT OF THE MAIN QUALITY DETERMINANTS:

Table (12) shows a summary of the measurement of the main quality determinants. It reveals that the highest quality was for the tangibles elements (99.8%). The weakest determinant was the empathy determinant which recorded (86.7%). The total quality for the determinants as a whole was (93.4%). This indicates that the quality was excellent from the students' point of view while improvement by the administration can be carried out to decrease the gap between perception and expectation as much as possible, especially in weak points.

Table 12: Measurement of Quality for the Five Main Determinants

Sequence	Total determinant	Before			After		
		Mean	Std .deviation	Basis	Mean	Std .deviation	Comparison
100	Total tangibles determinant	5.63	0.968	100.0	5.62	1.061	99.8
200	Total reliability determinant	5.38	1.191	100.0	4.86	1.584	90.3
300	Total responsiveness determinant	5.19	1.332	100.0	4.75	1.585	91.5
400	Total Assurance determinant	5.65	1.159	100.0	5.52	1.267	97.7
500	Total empathy determinant	5.20	1.344	100.0	4.51	1.695	86.7
205	Total determinants	5.42	0.991	100.0	5.06	1.230	93.4

SOME DIRECT QUESTIONS ABOUT QUALITY

When analysing the other measurements included in the questionnaire so as to shed light on quality from a different aspect and to clarify the aspect of the student's feelings towards the services provided to him/her in a comprehensive and direct manner, the results were as shown in table (13):

Table 13: Some Separate Measurements

#	paragraph	mean	Std .deviation	RII*
V601	I feel satisfied at the services provided by my college	4.66	1.666	66.6
V602	Quality of services provided by my college	4.83	1.663	69.0
V603	I shall continue my studies in this college should I get an opportunity in the future	4.21	2.316	60.1
V604	I shall advise others to enroll in my college	4.94	1.958	70.6

*RII: Relative Importance Index)

The study results show that the degree of student satisfaction of the services provided by the college was (66.6%) and the quality of services provided as a whole from their point of view was (69%). The study also reveals that the students were prepared to return to study in the college to a degree of (60.1%). When asked whether they are prepared to advise other people to study in the college, the result of their preparedness for this was to a degree of (70.6%). These results show a difference between the students' evaluations of quality through the (SERVQUAL) model and their direct evaluations. This point is worthy of later study through a study conducted especially for this purpose.

SECOND HYPOTHESIS TEST

"There are no statistically significant differences between the students' evaluations of quality attributed to the demographic parameters specified in the study (gender, academic level and specialization)".

This was through comparing the perceptions and expectations of each group of students according to each of the demographic parameters.

The results shown in table (14) indicate statistically significant differences between perception and expectation of females, whereas, there are no differences for males. This implies the presence of differences between the evaluations of quality of males and females. Males realized the level they were expecting from the college, whereas, females did not find what they were expecting from the college on the ground. This means that the perceived level of quality of males was higher

than that of females. This can be interpreted from the researcher’s point of view that female students did not perceive enough interest from the administration as that perceived by male students. The analysis results show that the difference between males’ expectations and perceptions was lower than that of females. Specifically, the females’ perceptions were less than the males’ and the females’ expectations were higher than the males’. This created a noticeable difference between the two sides’ evaluation of quality.

Table 14: Summary of the Sample Results according to Gender

Gender	N	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)			T-test	
		Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	Mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
Males	119	5.35	0.939	76.4	5.14	1.105	73.4	1.611	.110
Females	86	5.51	1.059	78.7	4.95	1.385	70.7	3.390	.001

To recognize the level of quality of both males and females, perception and expectation can be compared on the basis of perception. It is found that the level of quality for males was (96.1%) and (89.8%) for females.

Regarding the result according to the academic level parameter, no statistically significant differences were found for the 1st level students but statistically significant differences were found for the 2nd level students. This implies that 1st level students did not reflect differences between their expectations and perceptions and did not express low quality from their point of views. However, 2nd level students expressed their feelings of low quality through high levels of expectations compared to levels of perception. When contemplating and analysing the nature of the difference between 1st and 2nd level students, it can be said that 2nd level students are more experienced than 1st level ones. This enables them to evaluate more accurately, especially that the large difference between them was in the perception aspect and not the expectation one. Table (15) shows this:

Table 15: Summary of Sample Results according to Academic Level

Academic Level	N	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)			T-test	
		mean	Std .deviation	RII*	mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
1 st	73	5.54	0.855	79.1	5.27	1.166	75.3	1.630	.108
2 nd	129	5.35	1.057	76.4	4.95	1.255	71.7	3.079	.003

To identify the level of quality for 1st and 2nd level students, perception and expectation can be compared on the basis of expectation. We find that the percentages were (95.1%) for 1st level students and (92.5%) for 2nd level students.

When studying results regarding the specialization parameter, statistically significant differences were noticed for the students of the “management and automation of offices” degree (secretariat). However, they were unnoticed for accounting students. Table (16) shows this and proves variety in valuing quality according to specialization.

Table 16: Summary of Results according to Specialization

Specialization	N	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)			T-test	
		mean	Std .deviation	RII*	mean	Std .deviation	RII*	t.value	Sig
Secretariat	74	5.48	1.024	78.3	4.89	1.275	69.9	3.341	.001
Accounting	128	5.38	0.974	76.9	5.16	1.197	73.7	1.752	.082

This can be explained from the point of view of the researcher and according to his experience as follows:

1. Most of the Secretariat students were from the 2nd level. Refer to table (2), whereas, the distribution was pretty even for the accounting students. The academic level analysis showed that the 2nd level students had statistically significant differences which were not present for the 1st level students. Refer to table (15).

2. It is natural that the expectations of the Secretariat students regarding the intangible parameters (reliability, responsiveness and empathy) are higher than the expectations of the accounting students due to the nature of each specialization. These are the parameters which showed statistically significant differences. This is clear from their high expectation means compared to the accounting students, even if to low degrees.
3. The Secretariat students constantly seek high quality levels of laboratory and equipment they use for training. This leads to high levels of differences produced and their expressing of level of perceived quality. The level of quality for students of the Secretariat and accounting specializations can be indicated by comparing perception with expectation on the basis of expectation. The percentage was (89.2%) for secretariat students and (95.9%) for accounting students.

In general, it can be said that the results proved the presence of statistically significant differences between the evaluations of the students in all the demographic parameters that were studied. This implies that the administration should take into consideration the demographic differences between the students, work on finding mechanisms for exceptional treatment and provide services to all student sectors regarding gender, academic level or specialization.

This result could be a subject of future study to show the differences between students based on demographic parameters.

For further testing and exploration, the sample components were tested in detail to try to identify the effect of each of the eight sample groups on the final result. Table (17) shows that the differences were statistically insignificant except in two groups only (the seventh and the eighth), which were both from the 2nd level and were both also females. This agrees with the results found from table (14) and table (15).

Table 17: Summary of the Sample Results according to Personal Parameters

Group	Before (Expectation)			After (Perception)			T-test	
	Mean	Std Deviation	RII*	Mean	Std Deviation	RII*	.value t	Sig
1 Males- 1 st level- secretariat	4.63	1.116	66.1	5.09	1.538	72.7	0.243	.848
2 Males- 1 st level- accounting	5.50	0.754	78.6	5.09	1.172	72.7	1.898	.064
3 Males- 2 nd level- secretariat	5.33	0.881	76.1	4.96	1.068	70.9	1.221	.235
4 Males- 2 nd level- accounting	5.25	1.106	75.0	5.28	1.062	75.4	0.145	.885
5 Females- 1 st level- secretariat	5.99	0.726	85.6	5.50	1.108	78.6	1.127	.286
6 Females- 1 st level- accounting	5.48	1.104	78.3	5.65	1.147	80.7	0.464	.650
7 Females- 2 nd level- secretariat	5.47	1.141	78.1	4.67	1.402	66.7	3.221	.003
8 Females- 2 nd level- accounting	5.33	1.007	76.1	4.65	1.457	66.4	2.031	.049

CONCLUSION

MAIN RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The study reached a number of results which can be benefited from in improving the level of quality from the point of view of the students of the Department of Administrative and Financial Sciences. This will give the ability to change the behavior of the students and society towards the services provided by the department. These results include:

1. The main source of information for the students which formed their expectations was "relatives' advice" followed by "peoples' talk about the college". Table (4) shows the order according to importance.
2. The results showed a negative gap between the students' perception of the provided services and their expectations from these services. This indicates the low level of quality according to the literature of the applied model. The actual achieved amount was (93.4%) of expectations (quality level).
3. The quality level from the point of view of the "male students" was higher than that of the "female students". The rate was (96.1%) for the males and (89.8%) for the females.
4. The quality level from the point of view of the "1st level" students was higher than that of the "2nd level" ones. The rate was (95.1%) for the 1st level and (92.5%) for the 2nd level.
5. The quality level from the point of view of the "Accounting" students was higher than that of "Administration and Automation of Offices- Secretariat" students. The quality level was (95.9%) for accounting students and (89.2%) for secretariat students.

6. The results revealed that the best parameter from the point of view of the students was the tangibles determinant where their expectations were very close to their perceptions. The quality level of this parameter was (99.8%). The poorest parameter was empathy which had a quality level of around 87%. Table (12) shows the order of the other parameters.
7. The groups that felt the poor quality most were females from the 2nd level specializing in accounting and secretariat (table 17).

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The importance of giving attention to students' families and relatives, especially those who have an effect on decision making such as parents. Also, communication with them is recommended as they are the most effective as shown by the results. Adequate concern should be given to each means according to its level of importance.
2. Increasing concern of and communication with female students to identify the difficulties they face and working on solving their problems.
3. Putting interest into all quality determinants and working on improving them, especially poor ones (reliability and empathy).
4. It is clear that the institution's reputation and student impression about it are positive. However, they are affected when actually receiving the service.
5. The need to put interest in demographic differences (gender, academic level and specialization). In other words, the administration should try to differentiate in providing services to these groups to ensure achieving the highest positive perception.

FUTURE STUDIES

1. Study of the reasons for the differences in quality evaluation between students based on demographic parameters (gender, academic level and specialization).
2. Study of the reasons for difference between quality measurement using (SERVQUAL) and measurement by direct questions.
3. Study of the reason for the gap between perception and expectation of students.
4. Comparison between the perception and expectation instant data collection methods, and expectation data collection method before receiving the service and perception after receiving it.

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