A Study on Importance of Service Quality Dimension for Selection of Educational Institute in India

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Abstract

The main objective of the paper is to study the factors that influence the students' selection criteria for management colleges. The paper considers various factors & the level of involvement influencing students' choice when going for higher studies. The various factors include the five dimensions of SERVQUAL model which are Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Reliability also known as RATER, the extent to which price matters to them.

The survey method has been employed to collect data from the respondents. It has been found that the most important dimension of service quality expectations is Responsiveness, Assurance & Empathy. Price is a crucial element as around 70% of the respondents consider price factor while selecting college of their choice.

The study concludes that college's attitude towards students holds higher value for students, responsiveness, assurance & empathy are most expected by the students.

Keywords: Service Quality, Educational Institution, SERVQUAL

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is key to controlling the quality standard in the service industry. This statement is true for all service marketing, including service marketing for educational services. The abilities and talents of the service providers play a major role in the success of the service sector by meeting or surpassing the expectations of the clientele for the services and/or service providers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992). The different environmental factors that are impacting the expectations of service users and significantly raising consumer expectations must be addressed by the service marketer. The administrative staff and professors in higher education may deliver first-rate services to the students by minimizing their difficulties and offering the finest solutions by using these measuring components to improve service quality. Since students are the ultimate consumers of educational services, it is crucial to regularly assess the sector's health from their point of view. The primary and most significant stakeholder in educational services is the student. The criteria used to assess the state of the higher education services are viewpoints and their respective points of view. Hill, Lomas, and MacGregor (2003) claim that the information and data gathered from the students will aid service providers and other stakeholders in determining the level of educational quality and will also provide them a good chance to close any gaps in that higher education.

2. Literature Review

Various researchers have found out the factors which impacts student's choice for selection of management college.

(Khraim & Al-Afaishat, 2021), As per the survey, students' choice of private universities is influenced by environmental knowledge, university reputation, physical environment, and educational quality. The study reveals that all variables have a considerable impact on students' choice of private universities, with education quality having the greatest impact of the four.

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The findings suggest that by establishing and adopting green marketing-oriented initiatives, universities can achieve their market objectives.

(Sahni & Mohsin, 2017), Past placement records, basic facilities, infrastructure, and experienced professors are all factors to consider while choosing an MBA school, according to their research. Furthermore, the findings revealed that many elements, such as specialization offered, experienced faculty, teaching learning process, word of mouth, ads, and branding, all have a role in students' decision to attend an MBA college. It has also been discovered that good campus life, industry partnerships, university social image, alumni support, teaching learning pedagogy, effective experiential learning, and student-friendly policies are associated with the universities under investigation.

(Tirumalai & Kumari, March 25, 2017) Based on the aforesaid findings, several inferences were drawn. First, it was discovered that university qualities such as faculty quality, academic Programmes, educational facilities such as classrooms, and the institution's location, as well as graduate employability, had a significant impact on how students select a university to attend. Second, universities' marketing methods play a vital role in influencing students' judgments about which university to attend. It is also found that participating in career fairs and advertising are two marketing techniques that are more likely to increase a university's chances of being chosen as a university of choice by potential students.

(Dao & Thorpe, 8 June 2015) In Vietnam, this research was carried out. A total of 1,124 current or recent university students participated in a quantitative survey. Facilities and services, programme, price, offline information, opinions, online information, modes of communication, programme additions, and advertising were the nine primary elements impacting student decisions, in order of importance, according to the factor analysis data. In the Vietnamese context, there are substantial correlations between pricing and facilities, services and curriculum, as well as variances across genders and types of students when it comes to selecting a university.

(Agrey & Lampadan, 2014) This research revealed five characteristics that influence students' final university choice. The importance of factors such as a contemporary campus, current computer laboratories, and well-stocked libraries is reflected in the ranking of learning environment and job prospects. The desire for degree Programmes that lead to solid career prospects after graduation is included in this category. The second most important determinant is student life and activities, indicating that students seek appropriate housing and a diverse range of extracurricular activities. Support systems, both physical (bookstores, guidance and counselling offices) and non-physical (social media) are the third most important component (scholarships, transferability of credits). The fourth and fifth criteria have a lower weighting, although they are still important. A safe and pleasant environment, as well as sporting facilities, were among them. When taken collectively, these factors have the most influence on a student's decision to attend a certain university. Institutions of higher learning that want to expand their reach.

(Shah, Nair, & Bennette, 2013) Six domains can be used to group the primary aspects that influence student choice. Students' perceptions, access and opportunity, learning settings, instructor quality, course design, and graduation achievement are all factors to consider. This study confirms that students' perceptions of private for-profit higher education institutions play a significant role in determining whether they choose to study there.

(Ancheh, Krishnan, & Nurtjahja, 2011), According to their findings, institutions should focus on defining criteria for private university students such as "Reputation and Quality of the Institution," as well as

criteria for private college students such as "Recognition and reputation of the Institution." As a result, this study advises both government and private schools to focus on improving their institutions' reputation and quality, as well as other criteria variables, to remain competitive in the education market.

(Uyar, Kuzey, & Güngörmüş, October2011) Their established regression models provide useful insights into the relationships between accounting course performance and the major elements that influence whether accounting is chosen as a career. The first model demonstrated that perceived "difficulty in accounting course," "lack of numerical ability," and "earnings opportunities in other sectors" all have a negative relationship with accounting course success. In addition, the second model revealed that "passion in accounting" and perceived "career chances in accounting" have strong positive relationships with accounting course achievement. The aspect of "social status" that an accounting career provides, on the other hand, has a substantial negative correlation with course success. This could be because choosing accounting as a career path based on social status does not guarantee a student's success.

(Ming, 2010) Location, academic programme, college reputation, educational facilities, cost, financial aid availability, employment prospects, advertising, HEI representatives, and campus visit are some of the institutional elements that influence students' college choice decisions.

(Schimmel, Motley, Racic, Marco, & Eschenfelder, 2010) The digital presence of a university is crucial because it has been discovered that browsing the website first is a forerunner to visiting the campus. In website design, the necessity to improve the shopping tool for better navigation on the initial page, as well as the overall visual appeal, is critical. The most essential components of the website evaluation process, according to respondents, are curriculum, course offerings, location, and accreditation standards. All of these should be shown on the website's first page.

This research is an empirical study, taking the above literature review into consideration.

2.1 SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL model helps bridge the gap in perception between what the company believes it is delivering to customers and what those customers expect, want, or need during customer service.

Although developed before the digital age, the SERVQUAL model is still relevant today. With customers now using the internet to share their thoughts with a vast and captive audience, perception management has never been more important.

The SERVQUAL model considers five dimensions that customers use to evaluate the quality of service they receive from a business.

These dimensions include:

1. Reliability – how consistently does the organization deliver a product or service on time, as described, and without error? For the customer, reliability means the organization respects commitments and honours promises.

2. Responsiveness – how quickly can the organization respond to customer needs? Despite the negative perception it creates, some businesses ignore or evade customer service requests for no apparent reason.

3. Assurance – does the organization inspire trust and confidence in customers with professional service, great communication skills, technical knowledge, and the right attitude?

4. Tangibles – or the visual aesthetic of a company derived from its logo, physical store, or the look and feel of its website. Tangibles also encompass equipment, with hand sanitizing and contactless payment devices influencing the consumers of today. Furthermore, the fourth dimension also includes the physical appearance of customer service staff. How well are they dressed? Do they practice good personal hygiene?

5. Empathy – or the ability for employees to show genuine care and concern during customer service. In other words, are those tasked with providing customer service friendly and approachable? Do they actively listen to consumer needs? Indeed, are they *sensitive* to consumer needs?
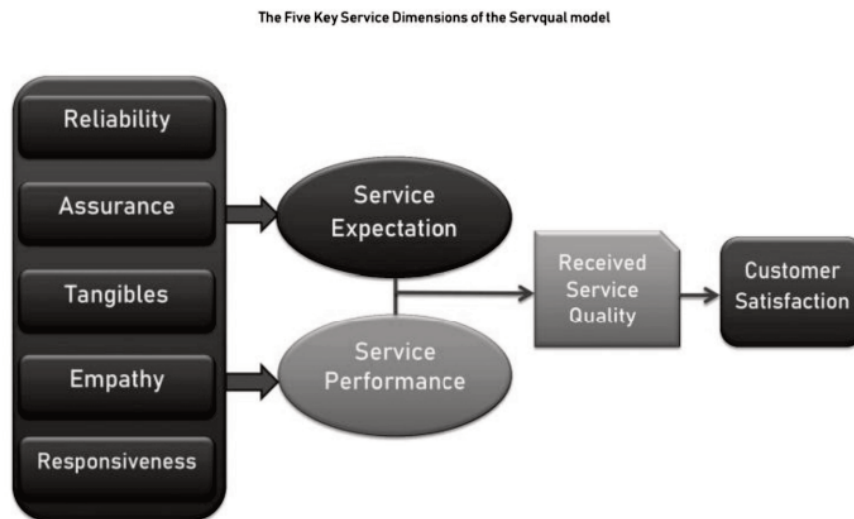

Figure 3.1: The Five Dimensions of SERVQUAL Model.

3. Objective of the Study

The purpose of this research study is as follows-

- To understand & analyze the various dimensions of service quality of educational institution with a major focus on expectations.
- To determine which dimension affects students the most while they opt for college of their choice.
- To determine whether price factor matters to students.

4. Research Methodology

A research design can be defined as blueprint for conducting any research. It includes how the information has been obtained and structured to solve and analyze research. Hence, the brief discussion comprises of research design, data collection & data analysis techniques.

To assess the quality of services management in higher education, the researcher used the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman in 1985. It is also true that during the past several years, there has been a significant change in the character of services, particularly higher education, globally. As a result, evaluating service

quality in higher education is crucial for drawing in young people by meeting the daily minimal standards set by the top institutions of higher learning.

4.1 Data Collection

Both primary & secondary sources of data were used.

4.2 Sample size

A total of 104 respondents were surveyed for the purpose of research. The respondents were selected randomly from schools & management colleges.

4.3 Sampling

Students from higher schools & colleges belonging to middle class strata are considered to gather data & analysis of results.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

5.1 Demographic Factors

Table 5.1.1: Age of the Respondents

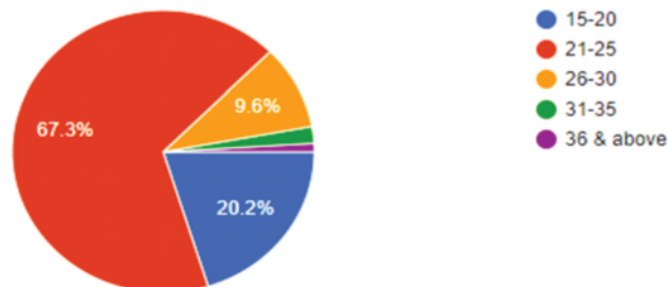| AGE	No. of respondents
15-20	21
21-25	70
26-30	10
31-35	2
36 & above	1

Figure 5.1.1: Age of the Respondents

Interpretation- The total number of respondents is 104, out of which 67.3% of the respondents are aged between 21-25, 20.2% of the respondents are aged between 15-20, 9.6% of the respondents are aged between 26-30, 1.9% of the respondents are aged between 31-35 and 1% only of the respondents are aged 36 & above. The respondents aged between 21-25 show high interest in college selection criteria of their choice.

Table 5.1.2: Gender of the Respondents

GENDER	No. of respondents
Female	48
Male	55
Prefer not to say	1

Gender

104 responses
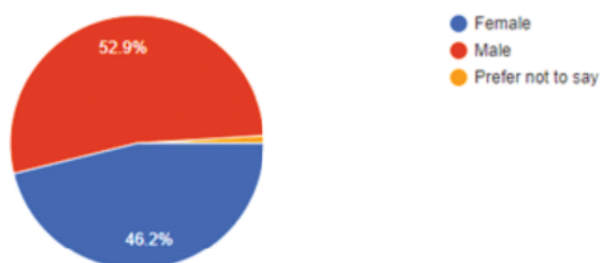
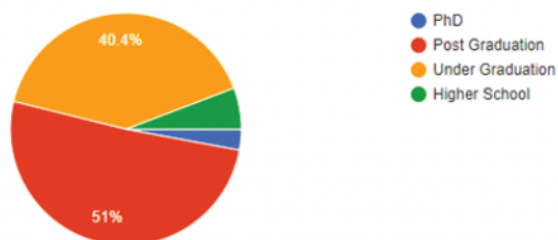
Figure 5.1.2: Gender of the Respondents

Interpretation- Out of a total of 104 respondents, 46.2% respondents are female, 52.9% respondents are male & 1% respondents are nil. Therefore, males have comparatively higher interest in college selection criteria of their choice.

Table 5.1.3: Highest Qualification of the Respondents

HIGHEST QUALIFICATION	No. of Respondents
PhD	3
Post-Graduation	53
Under Graduation	42
Higher School	6

Highest Qualification

104 responses

Figure 5.1.3: Highest Qualification of the Respondents

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 51% respondents have completed their post-Graduation, 40.4% have completed their Under Graduation, whereas 5.8% respondents are done with Higher school & only 2.9% respondents are PhD holders. Respondents who're PG & UG students show more interest in the survey.

5.2   EXPECTATIONS

Table 5.2.1: Tangibles influencing the Respondents

TANGIBLES	No. of respondents	Mean	Rank
a. good colleges will have modern educational equipment's (PCs, LCDs, beamers etc).	104	3.57	3
b. The buildings & campus will be visually appealing.	104	3.38	4
c. Staff will have professional appearance.	104	3.68	2
d. Study material is accessible & updated (College brochures, handbooks, course content etc.).	104	3.89	1

To what extend do you think these TANGIBLES influence your choice of college.
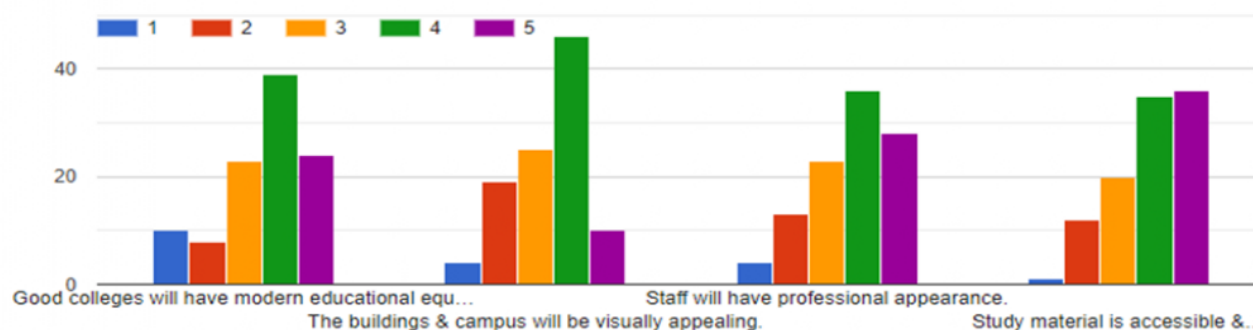
Figure 5.2.1: Tangibles influencing the Respondents

Interpretation - Out of 104 respondents, 63 respondents agree that 'Good colleges will have modern educational equipment's (PCs, LCDs, beamers etc)' whereas 23 respondents are neutral about it. with a mean score of 3.57.

- 56 respondents agree that 'The buildings & campus will be visually appealing.' Whereas 25 respondents are neutral. with a mean score of 3.75.
- 64 respondents expect that 'Staff will have professional appearance.' Whereas 23 respondents have unbiased opinion about it. with a mean score of 3.68.
- 71 respondents agree that 'Study material is accessible & updated (college brochures, handbooks, course content etc.)' whereas 20 respondents have a neutral opinion. with a mean score of 3.89.

- Therefore, the most important tangible is 'Study material is accessible & updated (college brochures, handbooks, course content etc.)' with a mean score of 3.89.

Table 5.2.2: Responsiveness factors influencing the Respondents

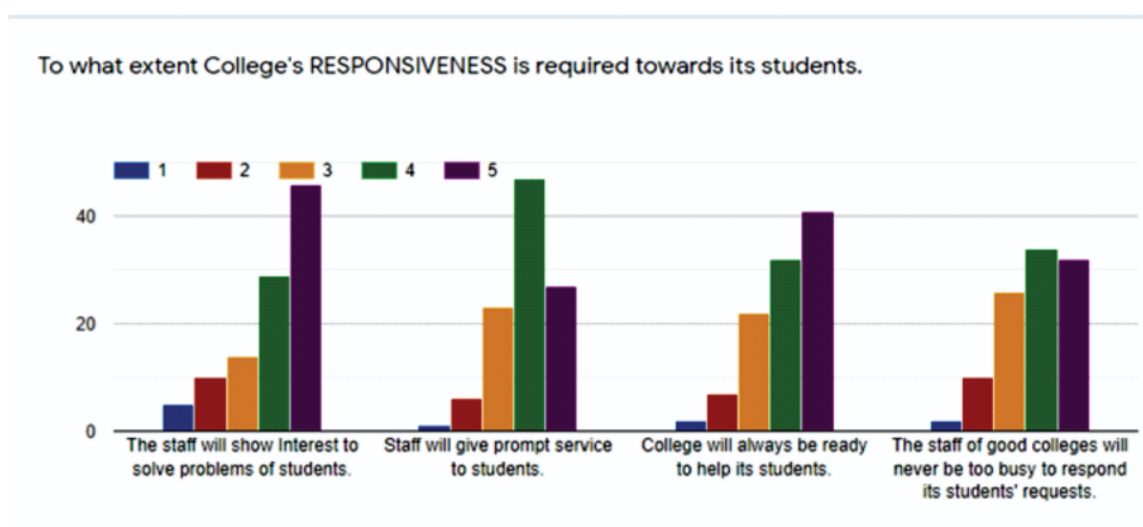| RESPONSIVENESS	No. of respondents	Mean	Rank
a. The staff will show Interest to solve problems of students.	104	3.97	2
b. Staff will give prompt service to students.	104	3.89	3
c. College will always be ready to help its students.	104	3.99	1

Figure 5.2.2: Responsiveness factors influencing the Respondents

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 75 respondents expect that 'The staff will show Interest to solve problems of students.' And 14 respondents are neutral about it 3.97.

- 74 respondents expect that 'Staff will give prompt service to students.' whereas 23 respondents are neutral about it. with a mean score of 3.89.
- 73 respondents believe that 'College will always be ready to help its students' whereas 22 respondents have unbiased opinion about it. with a mean score of 3.99.
- 66 respondents expect that 'The staff of good colleges will never be too busy to respond its students' requests' whereas 26 respondents have neutral expectations about it. with a mean score of 3.80.
- Therefore, most of the respondents highly expect 'College will always be ready to help its students' and 'The staff will show Interest to solve problems of students.' with a mean score of 3.99 and 3.97, respectively.

Table 5.2.3: Reliability factors influencing the Respondents

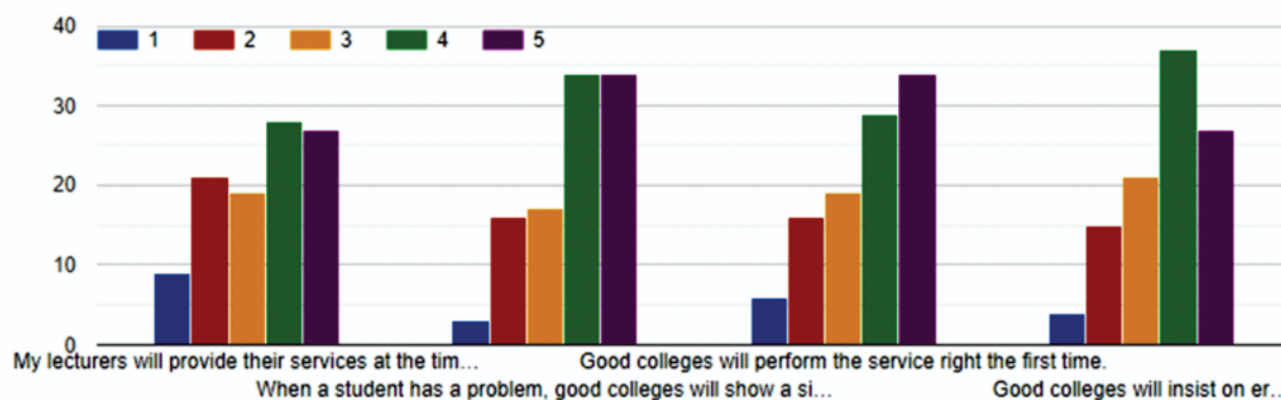| RELIABILITY	No. of respondents	Mean	Rank
a. The staff of good colleges will never be too busy to respond its students' requests.	104	3.41	4
b. When a student has a problem, good colleges will show a sincere interest in solving it.	104	3.76	1
c. good colleges will perform the service right the first time.	104	3.66	2
d. good colleges will insist on error free documentation.	104	3.65	3

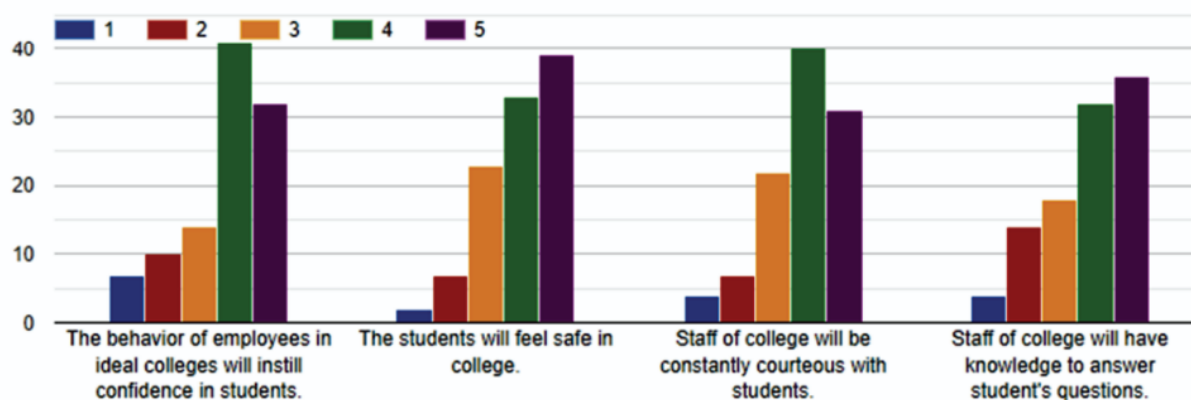Figure 5.2.3: Reliability factors influencing the Respondents

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 55 respondents expect that 'The staff of good colleges will never be too busy to respond its students' requests.' with a mean score of 3.41.

- 68 respondents expect that 'When a student has a problem, good colleges will show a sincere interest in solving it.' with a mean score of 3.76.
- 63 respondents expect that 'Good colleges will perform the service right the first time.' with a mean score of 3.66.
- 64 respondents expect that 'Good colleges will insist on error free documentation.' with a mean score of 3.65.
- Therefore, 'When a student has a problem, good colleges will show a sincere interest in solving it.' is most preferred reason that respondents find in reliability of college.

Table 5.2.4: Assurance factors influencing the Respondents

ASSURANCE FACTORS	No. of respondents	Mean	Rank
a. The behaviour of employees in ideal colleges will instil confidence in students.	104	3.77	4
b. The students will feel safe in college.	104	3.96	1
c. Staff of college will be constantly courteous with students.	104	3.83	2
d. Staff of college will have knowledge to answer student's questions.	104	3.78	3

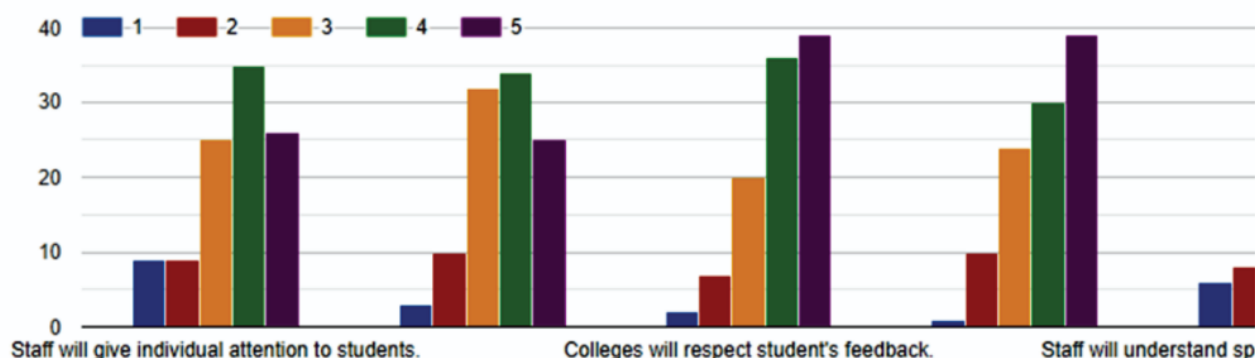**Figure 5.2.4: Assurance factors influencing the Respondents**

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 73 respondents expect that 'The behaviour of employees in ideal colleges will instil confidence in students.' with a mean score of 3.77.

- 72 respondents expect that 'The students will feel safe in college.' with a mean score of 3.96.
- 71 respondents expect that 'Staff of college will be constantly courteous with students.' with a mean score of 3.83.
- 68 respondents expect that 'Staff of college will have knowledge to answer student's questions.' with a mean score of 3.78.
- Therefore, more than 60% of the respondents expect all the components of assurance are important while they select a college.

Table 5.2.5: Empathy factors influencing the Respondents

EMPATHY FACTORS	No. of respondents	Mean	Rank
a. Staff will give individual attention to students.	104	3.57	5
b. Convenient working hours for students.	104	3.65	4
c. Colleges will respect student's feedback.	104	3.99	1
d. Colleges will have their student's best interest at heart.	104	3.92	2
e. Staff will understand specific needs of their students.	104	3.76	3

Figure 5.2.5: Empathy factors influencing the Respondents

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 61 respondents expect that 'Staff will give individual attention to students.' with a mean score of 3.57.

- 59 respondents expect that 'Convenient working hours for students.' with a mean score of 3.65.
- 75 respondents expect that 'Colleges will respect student's feedback.' with a mean score of 3.99.
- 69 respondents expect that 'Colleges will have their student's best interest at heart.' with a mean score of 3.92.
- 68 respondents expect that 'Staff will understand specific needs of their students.' with a mean score of 3.76. Therefore, 'Colleges will respect student's feedback.' and 'Colleges will have their student's best interest at heart.' are the most important empathy factors for respondents.

Table 5.2.6: Price Factor

Factor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Price	26	48	26	3	1

To what extent the fees influence your choice of college.
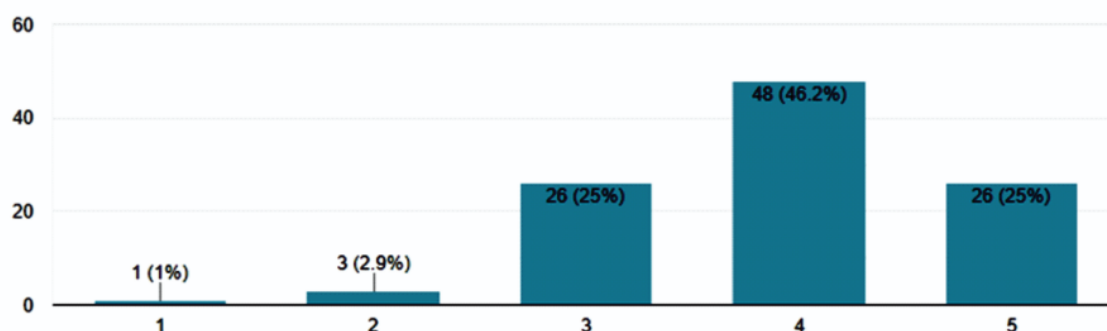
104 responses

Figure 5.2.6: Price Factor

Interpretation- Out of 104 respondents, 74 respondents think price of the college a major factor that influences students' decision for their choice of college with a mean score of 3.91.

Findings

- The most important dimension of Expectations is Responsiveness, Assurance & Empathy with a mean score of 3.91, 3.84 and 3.78 respectively.
- The students believe that responsiveness factors like the staff's interest in solving problems, their prompt responses, college's readiness to help its students.
- Assurance factors like the behavior of employees in ideal colleges instils confidence in students, the safety of students, courteousness of college staff and knowledge of staff to answer students.
- Empathy factors like respect for student's feedback., colleges will have their student's best interest at heart, and Staff will understand specific needs of their students.
- All these dimensions of Servqual model play a crucial role when students opt for studying in management colleges.
- Price is a crucial element as around 70% of the respondents consider price factor while selecting college of their choice.

Limitations

To determine the various factors influencing students' criteria of selection of management & the extent to which the factors impact their decisions a lot of factors were taken into consideration. This research

is based on both primary & secondary data. The number of respondents being 104, the results cannot be generalized. Also, the research uses partial SERVQUAL Model in which only Expectations & relevant dimensions are considered, so, it might not convey that gap between perception & expectations.

More research is required in Indian context with higher levels of analysis including various other evolving factors in Indian education system. Besides this, the research requires wider sampling to gather more inputs.

Conclusion

Higher studies contribute towards shaping students' future. Choosing a management college is strenuous for most of the students. While opting for a management college a student considers plethora of factors. A lot of researchers have presented their views on the same. This research includes expectations of students from a good management college, impact of influencers & EdTech portals, the career choices affecting students' decision.

The study concludes that students hold higher value for responsiveness, assurance & empathy are most expected by the students.

They're more likely to impact students' choices. EdTech portals should also focus on necessary requirements concerning future careers. They can help students align their goals by guiding them through their college selection journey considering above mentioned factors.

This research can be helpful for both Management colleges & EdTech start-ups.

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