

**PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS REGARDING SERVICE
QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

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Abstract

Quality management is an important tool to maintain all sort of standards in educational institution. The major objective of this research was to investigate the perception of secondary school students regarding service quality management. The population of the study was public and private secondary school students from Hafizabad whereas, 300 (Public= 154, Private= 146) respondents were selected as sample of this study through simple random sampling technique. The study was quantitative based on the casual comparative research design therefore, a structured questionnaire was administered to collect the primary data from the respondents through survey method. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was administered to analyze the research questions. The findings of the study showed that both public and private schools have strengths in different areas of service quality. Private schools generally provide higher levels of student satisfaction, particularly in terms of reliability, responsiveness and empathy. The findings highlighted the need for public schools to improve their responsiveness and safety measures to meet students' expectations better. Evaluating service quality in secondary schools through educators' satisfaction carries important implications for strategic planning. The proposed measurement scale can be adapted by other secondary schools to monitor their progress and assess internal service quality for ongoing improvement.

Keywords: Secondary school, service quality, Students' Perception

INTRODUCTION

A nation's ability to grow socially, culturally, politically, and economically is greatly influenced by its educational system. The majority of nations concentrate on creating a solid foundation for their educational system through astute policies and workable programs. A policy is a condensed set of guidelines that have been given permission to define more expansive action parameters. An education policy, is a set of guidelines for actions that must be taken in order to achieve specific objectives. For a nation to have a sustainable educational system, an educational policy is essential (Majoka & Khan, 2017; Sallis, 2012).

Globally, the education system has experienced tremendous change as it has adapted to the demands of a shifting society. Education systems used to be mostly exclusive to affluent classes, but over time, changes have been made with the goal of opening up education to everyone. Secondary education has emerged as a crucial phase in many nations, serving as a link between basic education and further study or career training. Education is essential to the growth of the person and the community (Karataş, 2022). It encourages critical thinking, intellectual progress, and personal development, empowering people to make meaningful contributions to society. Through fostering innovation and producing a skilled labor force, education also contributes to economic prosperity. By passing on beliefs, customs, and information to future generations, it also promotes social cohesiveness and cultural preservation (Jabbar et al., 2019; Standish, 2019).

A good education is essential to the prosperity and satisfaction of students. Being a part of a learning society gets increasingly crucial as global trade grows and technology advances quickly. Getting a job or enrolling in education institution increasingly depends on

completing secondary school satisfactory (Gravemeijer et al., 2017). The workforce needs people with problem-solving abilities, critical and creative thinking, and teamwork skills due to the problems of the twenty-first century. In order to do that, assessments of students must now take into account their 21st-century abilities, which include network collaboration, agility, and adaptability, as well as initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective communication, information access and analysis, information and communication technology literacy, curiosity, and imagination (Husin et al., 2016; Jabbar et al., 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Secondary education is an important stage that includes middle and high school education. Its goal is to give students the information and abilities they need to pursue further education or enter the workforce. Secondary schools come in a variety of forms: public, private, vocational, and specialized. They all provide varied curricula to meet the requirements and goals of their students. A number of new trends are being seen in the education industry, including the usage of technology in the classroom, individualized learning strategies, and a greater focus on STEM education. Nonetheless, this sector has financial difficulties, educational quality differences, and problems with equity and access. Maintaining the status paradigm of prioritizing high quality education for all kids (Mathee & Turpin 2019; Reimers, 2000).

Quality is defined as complying with standards. Many believe that quality should be an assurance of being the greatest in the world of that kind rather than just meeting regulations. It should also maintain its purpose constancy. Fincher explains the evolution of quality perceived in education over time, starting with experience and moving on to skill, style, and ultimately process (Fincher, 2021). Harvey and Green note that excellence is a relative concept in their revolutionary research (Leiber et al., 2020). Quality should be prioritized over quantity in developing nations; those who build and raise the caliber of their educational system through investment receive significant social and economic benefits. The field of service quality management is steadily gaining popularity. Because of the demands of the industry and developments in technology, the academic standards of the institutions must be improved (Senol & Dagli 2017).

Harvey and Green give five distinct but related definitions of quality as opposed to a single definition. There are many different interpretations of what quality is, and because everyone has a different definition of what quality is, there might be confusion. Many researchers have developed frameworks for Strategic Quality Management (SQM), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and the most recent Total Quality Management (TQM) (Witek & Kvernbekk, 2011). The quality of instruction, school infrastructure, administrative support, and the general student experience are all included in the category of service quality in educational institutions. Sustaining high standards and consistently enhancing educational services require effective service quality management, or SQM. It's critical to comprehend how students see the quality of the services they receive because their feedback offers insightful information about areas that need improvement (Sadeh & Garkaz, 2015).

Many studies have suggested tailoring service quality measuring scales to different service environments. Different quality definitions have led to the introduction of a variety of service quality measures in previous studies. The SERVQUAL scale, which was introduced by Parasuraman et al (1985), is one of the most referenced among them. It is thought that service quality notions are still in their infancy and that there is not enough empirical study in this field, despite the continued interest in this topic from academics and practitioners (Ramseook et al., 2013; Jabbar et al., 2020). Customers' perceptions of an organization's service delivery procedures are shaped by their continuous assessments, which determine the quality of the

services provided. One of the most important parts of the Total Quality Management (TQM) system is providing excellent customer service. Specialists in Total Quality Management have delineated several aspects of service quality (Bouranta et al., 2019). Ten determinants of quality of service were proposed by Parasuraman and later reduced to the 5 dimensions of the SERVQUAL model: tangible, empathy, assurance, responsiveness, and tangible (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These characteristics include a range of elements, including consistency, timeliness, staff etiquette and knowledge, individual attention, and physical appearance. The variance among students' pre-engagement anticipations of service performance from learning institutes and their actual impressions of the services they actually received within these institutions is known as service quality in the setting of learning. Menon lists the following five crucial elements of service quality in the field of education (Menon, 2015).

- **Tangibility:** This category includes the physical attributes of a facility, staff, equipment, and communication materials.
- **Reliability:** Consists of the capacity to accurately and consistently provide the services that are promised.
- **Responsiveness:** Shows a readiness to help clients and offer prompt service.
- **Assurance:** Highlights staff members' expertise, politeness, and capacity to inspire confidence and trust.
- **Empathy:** Emphasizes the company's ability to provide each customer with tailored, compassionate care.

The education sector, as a service industry, must incorporate methods from other service sectors to gauge service quality and satisfaction among internal and external stakeholders given the changing nature of education and the growing demand for excellence in education. However, attempts to enhance quality management are hampered by the lack of suitable tools for measuring quality. Additionally, the majority of education research to date has been on higher education or student views, creating a vacuum in our knowledge of service quality in secondary educational environments, especially from the viewpoint of educators (Sfakianaki et al., 2021).

Secondary education establishments need to tackle quality concerns by taking into account elements of service quality that instructors believe are essential, in addition to monitoring teaching quality and undergoing accreditation procedures. In education, the term "service quality" refers to a variety of structural, institutional, and psychological components in addition to pedagogy. It is essential to comprehend how service quality models might be applied in secondary school settings (Hillman & Baydoun, 2019).

Secondary schools are vital settings for learning, social interaction, and personal development. Education is a major factor in determining how people live their lives and how society develops. The significance of service quality management (SQM) in educational institutions has been emphasized more recently due to the substantial influence it can have on students' satisfaction and overall educational experience (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Therefore, improving educational achievements and creating good school environments require an awareness of the relationship between SQM practices and students' satisfaction at the secondary school level (Saori et al., 2023).

Aspects of the educational experience like as facilities, extracurricular activities, administrative responsiveness, teaching quality, and support services are all included in service quality management. All of these factors work together to increase students' contentment and involvement in the classroom (Saori et al., 2023). However, a number of variables, including staff competency, leadership, resources, and school policies, might affect how effective SQM methods are (Bolatan et al., 2022).

It is important to comprehend how satisfied students are with service quality management for a number of reasons. First of all, contented students are more likely to be driven, involved, and successful in their studies, which enhances educational achievements. Second, contented students help create a welcoming and healthy learning environment in their schools by encouraging a sense of community and wellbeing. Lastly, happy students are more likely to promote their school and have a good impact on the opinions of parents and potential students (Burke et al., 2018).

There is still a lack of information in the literature about the effects of service quality management on students' satisfaction, despite its significance in secondary education. Previous studies have primarily concentrated on postsecondary education or broad customer satisfaction models, so overlooking the distinct characteristics of the secondary school setting (Hwang & Choi, 2019).

It is said that everyone in the globe has a fundamental right to education. The education sector must give kids a better education, much like other departments. Even while educational institutions in the current period are working to raise the caliber of their offerings in order to improve the educational system, it appears that they are falling short of their goals. A better educational system necessitates offering pupils the highest caliber of services (Gorla et al., 2010). Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate how secondary school students perceived secondary level service quality managements. In order to close this gap, the current study especially looks at the connection between secondary school students' satisfaction and service quality management. Through an analysis of the aspects of service quality management and their impact on students' experiences and perceptions, this research seeks to offer significant insights into practical approaches to enhancing educational quality and student welfare (Lavy & Ghanayim, 2020).

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Several theoretical models have served as the foundation for the study of service quality, most notably the SERVQUAL model created in 1985 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry. Five characteristics of service quality are identified by SERVQUAL, namely tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. These metrics are frequently used to assess the quality of services in a variety of industries, including education. Applying these aspects to comprehend how secondary school students view the caliber of services offered by their schools forms the theoretical basis of this study. The suggested study's theoretical framework draws upon various pertinent theories from the domains of education, psychology, and management. This is a theoretical framework that takes into account pertinent theories:

In earlier studies, the SERVQUAL tool showed great validity and reliability. It can be used in a variety of areas, such as the tourism, health care, and professional service sectors where instruments are adapted. (Malodia & Singla 2017). Among the first to use SERVQUAL measurement were Jain and Kettinger. They modified the SERVQUAL measurement tool to work inside the framework of an information system (IS). Since then, SERVQUAL's application has spread throughout a wide range of industries (Kettinger & Lee, 1994; Jain & Wali, 2018). The tool was modified by Ismail et al. to assess how academic staff satisfaction at public higher education institutions is impacted by service quality. The results of their investigation show that academic staff satisfaction is in fact impacted by the aspect of service quality (Najimdeen et al., 2021; Raza et al., 2020).

By integrating these theories, the theoretical framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the variables impacting students' satisfaction with service quality management in secondary schools. It recognizes the multifaceted character of pleasure and takes into account organizational, societal, and individual elements that could influence how students perceive and experience learning environments.

Research Questions

1. Is there any significance difference between public and private secondary school students regarding service quality management?
 - 1.1 Is there a significance difference in tangibility among students of public and private secondary school?
 - 1.2 Is there a significance difference in Reliability among students of public and private secondary school?
 - 1.3 Is there a significance difference in Responsiveness among public and private secondary school students?
 - 1.4 Is there a significance difference in Empathy among public and private secondary school students?
 - 1.5 Is there a significance difference in Assurance among public and private secondary school students?

METHODOLOGY

In the present study Quantitative research based on demographic research design was adopted. The targeted population of this study was secondary school students from district Hafizabad whereas, a total of 300 (Public= 150, Private=150) students were selected as participants through simple random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the responses of secondary school students regarding SQM. This questionnaire was adopted from Parasuraman (1985) with the dimensions of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. In all the previous studies. The questionnaire was based on the perception of secondary school students regarding service quality management in their schools. There were 31 items in all for measuring service perception of perceived service quality. Out of 31, 8 items were of Tangible Infrastructure, 5 were of responsiveness, 9 items were of reliability, 3 questions belonged to empathy and 6 were of assurance. Research data was collected by using questionnaire which was based on five points Likert scale from 1. Strongly disagree (SDA) to 5. Strongly Agree (SA) and survey method was used. Reliability refers to an instrument's ability to produce consistent information over time. It indicates that using the same instrument multiple times should yield the same results. Therefore, it is expected that the instrument will provide consistent outcomes across different instances. Additionally, it reflects the instrument's measurement consistency over a series of applications (Creswell, 2014). In this study, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the data collection instruments and procedures employed to assess secondary school students' perceptions of Service Quality Management (SQM). Ensuring reliability is crucial to guaranteeing that the findings accurately represent the views and opinions of the participants. In this research, Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze the reliability of instrument (Cronbach, 1951). Validity includes the survey content' ability of assessing what is required to be measure in a precise manner. Validity pertains to the amount to which the research accurately processes what it intends to measure (Nunnally 1978). In this study face and content validity was measured by help of seniors and experts. Face validity was conducted to determine whether the questionnaires contained appropriate questions for measurement. After receiving feedback from experts, including the supervisor and senior colleagues, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared, ensuring that the items, objectives, and research hypotheses were appropriate for the study. Additionally, content validity was employed to confirm the validity of the questionnaires. The supervisor, statistical experts, and senior colleagues contributed to validating the content to ensure it covered the subject matter comprehensively. A literature review was carried out to identify key concepts for formulating the items effectively and evaluating them. The collected data was entered in

sheets by using Statistically Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, and Factor Loading) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test) were administered to test the research questions proposed in this study.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Descriptive analysis

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>
Tangibility	4.37	.96
Reliability	4.55	.93
Responsiveness	4.53	.94
Empathy	4.25	.98
Assurance	4.26	.98

Overall= M= 4.39, SD= .96

The table 1 summarized the respondents' perceptions of various aspects of service quality management in secondary schools of district Hafizabad. The overall mean suggested that respondents generally had a positive perception with an overall moderately high level of agreement $M= 4.39$, $SD= .96$ while mean value of all the factors were from 4.26 to 4.55 which reflected the moderate satisfied.

Table 2: Factor Loading

Tangibility		Reliability		Responsiveness		Empathy		Assurance	
<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loading</i>
TI1	0.66	Rel1	0.92	Re1	0.66	E1	0.69	As1	0.77
TI2	0.73	Rel2	0.88	Re2	0.73	E2	0.88	As2	0.70
TI3	0.78	Rel3	0.79	Re3	0.78	E3	0.77	As3	0.69
TI4	0.84	Rel4	0.86	Re4	0.84			As4	0.88
TI5	0.79	Rel5	0.78	Re5	0.79			As5	0.77
TI6	0.66	Rel6	0.92					As6	0.69
TI7	0.93	Rel7	0.66						
TI8	0.78	Rel8	0.73						
		Rel9	0.78						

To evaluate the loading of each item, factor loading was applied. The findings showed that the statistical values of the items were greater than threshold value 0.6. It shows that all the items were moderately accepted about service quality management in order to conduct this study. These loadings values suggested that all items contribute to the representation of all the dimension including in this research.

Table 3: Independent sample t test

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Tangibility	Public	4.68	.67	5.19	.00*
	Private	4.16	1.01		
Reliability	Public	4.12	1.01	3.16	.03*
	Private	4.71	.90		
Responsiveness	Public	4.17	.68	4.91	.04*
	Private	4.58	.41		
Empathy	Public	4.05	.71	4.86	.04*
	Private	4.47	.59		
Assurance	Public	4.55	.85	3.03	.05*

Overall	Private	4.08	.98	4.23	.02*
	Public	4.31	.78		
	Private	4.40	.77		

Table 3 presented a comparison between public and private educational institutions regarding various aspects of service quality management. The results showed that public institutions scored significantly higher on the tangibility (Mean = 4.68, SD = .67) compared to private institutions (Mean = 4.16, SD = 1.01), and a p-value of 0.00, indicating a statistically significant difference. Moreover, Public institutions had lower ratings for reliability (Mean = 4.12, SD = 1.01) compared to private institutions (Mean = 4.71, SD = 0.90), and a p-value of 0.03 which indicated a significant difference. For responsiveness public institutions again scored lower, (Mean = 4.17, SD = .68) compared to private institutions (Mean = 4.58, SD = 0.41), with significant differences p-value of 0.04. On the other hand, private institutions performed significantly better in terms of empathy (Mean = 4.47, SD = 0.59) compared to public institutions (Mean = 4.05, SD = .71), and a p-value of 0.04. The appearance of assurance also favored to public institutions (Mean = 4.55, SD = 0.85) as compared to private (Mean = 4.08, SD = 0.98), with a significant difference p = 0.05. Overall, Public institutions had lower ratings for SQM (Mean = 4.31, SD = .78) compared to private institutions (Mean = 4.40, SD = 0.77), and a p-value of 0.02 which indicated a significant difference.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the respondents were agreed about all the factors of SQM. Moreover, there was found a substantial difference between public and private secondary school students about all the dimensions such as; Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurances. Further, both public and private schools have strengths in different areas of service quality, private schools generally provide higher levels of student satisfaction, particularly in terms of reliability, responsiveness and empathy. The findings highlighted the need for public schools to improve their responsiveness and safety measures to meet students' expectations better.

Discussion and Recommendations:

The current study investigated service quality management (SQM) in secondary schools, focusing on students' perceptions across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The research explores how these factors differ between public and private institutions. The theoretical framework is based on the SERVQUAL model, which assesses the gap between expectations and perceptions of service quality. The primary contribution of this study is to understand the perception of secondary school students regarding service quality management. Through quantitative analysis, several factors were condensed into five key dimensions of service quality: "tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance" based on 23 statements. A significant body of research has advocated for the adaptation of service quality measurement scales to various service contexts including to assess the service quality in educational systems. Earlier studies have introduced different methods of service quality, reflecting diverse definitions of what quality means. Among these, the SERVQUAL scale, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), is one of the most widely used? As the educational landscape continuously evolves, the demand for excellence in education is increasing.

The literature review highlighted that although the service quality model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) is widely accepted, any measurement of service quality must be contextualized, as no universal set of dimensions and items exists to define service quality

across various industries. Nonetheless, this study supports the 5-factor structure established by Parasuraman et al. (1988). The findings indicated that the SERVQUAL model can be adapted for specific service contexts. The results affirm the relevance of these five dimensions, offering a customized measurement scale for service quality in secondary education that can serve as a basis for discussions around service quality and identifying areas for improvement. The study revealed significant differences between public and private schools in delivering various aspects of SQM. Public schools excel in infrastructural aspects but lag in services directly related to student safety and personal development. Conversely, private schools, with their higher investment in security, responsiveness, and staff qualifications, appear more student-centric. However, the strong institutional culture in public schools indicates a well-established community that may support long-term educational success.

The perception of secondary school students regarding service quality management (SQM) in Pakistan is particularly significant in light of the country's ongoing educational reforms and challenges. The findings reveal that students in Pakistani secondary schools view various dimensions of SQM such as reliability, responsiveness, empathy, school facilities, and assurance-discipline as vital to their educational experience. High ratings in reliability indicate that students prioritize the consistency and dependability of academic services, such as timely class schedules and transparent examination processes, which are critical for their academic success. The emphasis on responsiveness suggests that students expect prompt and effective communication from educators and administrative staff, reflecting their need for a supportive and interactive learning environment. Moreover, the importance placed on empathy highlights students' desire for personalized attention and understanding from teachers, which is essential in fostering a nurturing educational atmosphere. However, the dimensions related to school facilities and overall infrastructure reflect significant concerns, as many Pakistani secondary schools face issues such as inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient access to technology. These challenges can hinder students' learning experiences and impact their perceptions of service quality.

There is a clear need for a service quality management in secondary educational institutions to help organization recognize high-quality standards and pinpoint areas of concern. Efforts to enhance quality management have been hindered by the absence of tools specifically designed for quality measurement. Furthermore, most existing research in education has primarily focused on higher education or student perceptions. Investigations into service quality within secondary education contexts are relatively sparse, and where studies have occurred, limited conclusions have been drawn from the perspectives of educators. It is crucial for secondary schools to address quality matters, not only through endorsement for recognition by legislative bodies or by evaluating education quality but also by considering the facets of service quality that instructors view as essential.

This study emphasizes that secondary institutes must recognize how the diverse anticipated dimensions affect internal service quality, enabling them to design an effective and efficient service delivery process that ultimately enhances service for external consumers (students). It is the management's responsibility to provide the necessary resources to meet the service quality standards for internal consumers regarding school services and infrastructure. Consequently, school organization can utilize this service quality measurement scale to assess the quality of services provided to educators and identify areas needing enhancement. The concept of customer-driven service quality presents a meaningful opportunity for policymakers seeking to develop quality measures in the secondary education sector. Following improvements are recommended:

- Improvement in Public School Security: Public schools should invest in better security infrastructure to match the levels seen in private schools.
- Enhanced Responsiveness in Public Schools: Implement better career counseling, emergency services, and complaint handling in public schools.
- Private School Culture Development: While private schools excel in service delivery, they should work on creating a more cohesive and inclusive institutional culture.
- Regular Feedback Mechanisms: Both public and private schools should establish continuous feedback systems to ensure that they are meeting students' evolving expectations.

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