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Abstract

This study examines service quality in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from the perspective of faculty stakeholders using the SERVQUAL framework. While most prior studies emphasize students as primary stakeholders, limited empirical work captures faculty perceptions and expectations, particularly in the Indian management education context. Using a structured questionnaire adapted from SERVQUAL, primary data were collected from 71 faculty members affiliated with MBA institutions under Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), Maharashtra. Perception–expectation gap analysis was employed to assess service quality across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The findings reveal the presence of negative service quality gaps across multiple dimensions, indicating that faculty expectations exceed perceived service delivery in several institutional aspects. The study contributes by positioning faculty as critical internal stakeholders in service quality assessment and offers actionable implications for HEI administrators and policymakers aiming to enhance institutional effectiveness and faculty satisfaction.....

Keywords: Service Quality, Higher Education Institutions, Faculty, SERVQUAL, Stakeholder Perspective**INTRODUCTION**

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in socio-economic development by creating skilled human capital and advancing knowledge creation. In India, the rapid expansion of management education has intensified competition among HEIs, thereby increasing the emphasis on service quality as a strategic differentiator. Traditionally, service quality research in higher education has predominantly focused on students as primary customers. However, HEIs operate as complex service ecosystems involving multiple stakeholders, including faculty, administrators, parents, industry, and regulators.

Faculty members, as internal stakeholders, directly influence academic quality, institutional reputation, and student outcomes. Their perceptions and expectations regarding institutional service quality affect motivation, performance, and long-term commitment. Despite their strategic importance, faculty perspectives remain underexplored in service quality literature, especially within Indian management education. Addressing this gap, the present study assesses service quality of HEIs through the lens of faculty stakeholders using the SERVQUAL model.

2. Literature Review

Service quality has been conceptualized as the comparison between customer expectations and perceptions of actual service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Grönroos (1984) emphasized functional and technical dimensions of service quality, laying the foundation for subsequent measurement models. SERVQUAL, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988, 1991), remains one of the most widely applied instruments for service quality assessment across sectors, including education.

In the higher education context, researchers have adapted SERVQUAL to capture stakeholder-specific perceptions (Đonlagić & Fazlić, 2015; Goumairi et al., 2020). Abbas (2020) proposed HEISQUAL as a modern adaptation, yet SERVQUAL continues to be preferred due to its diagnostic capability through gap analysis. Studies focusing on Indian HEIs have largely concentrated on students, with limited empirical evidence incorporating faculty viewpoints. Existing literature suggests that faculty satisfaction is strongly linked to institutional support systems, infrastructure, administrative responsiveness, and professional development opportunities.

The present study is empirical & examines faculty perceptions and expectations, thereby extending service quality discourse beyond the student-centric approach.

3. Research Gap and Objective

Although extensive research exists on service quality in HEIs, the majority of studies adopt a student-centric lens. Empirical investigations focusing exclusively on faculty as internal stakeholders remain scarce, particularly in the Indian management education context. Furthermore, few studies employ SERVQUAL to capture perception–expectation gaps among faculty members.

Objective of the Study

To examine the perceptions and expectations of faculty regarding service quality of Higher Education Institutions.

4. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The study adopts the SERVQUAL framework comprising five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Service quality is conceptualized as the gap between faculty perceptions and expectations across these dimensions.

H01: There is no significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding tangibility.

H1: There is a significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding tangibility.

H02: There is no significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding reliability.

H2: There is a significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding reliability.

H03: There is no significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding responsiveness.

H3: There is a significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding responsiveness.

H04: There is no significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding assurance.

H4: There is a significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding assurance.

H05: There is no significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding empathy.

H5: There is a significant gap between faculty perceptions and expectations regarding empathy.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and quantitative research design. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL model, with modifications to suit the higher education context. The questionnaire measured both perceptions and expectations of faculty members using a five-point Likert scale.

Sampling Design

The sampling frame consisted of MBA institutions affiliated with Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) in Pune district, Maharashtra. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation from urban and rural institutions. A total of 52 faculty responses were considered for analysis.

6. Data Analysis & Interpretation

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and SERVQUAL gap analysis. Gap scores were computed as the difference between perception and expectation scores for each service quality dimension.

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the SERVQUAL instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 1, all dimensions exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability of the modified SERVQUAL scale for faculty respondents. The overall scale reliability further confirms the robustness of the instrument for assessing service quality in higher education institutions.

Reliability Analysis of SERVQUAL Dimensions

Table 1: Reliability Analysis- Perception of Faculty

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Reliability	11	0.934
Assurance	08	0.845
Tangibility	11	0.875
Empathy	06	0.945
Responsive-ness	04	0.855

Cronbach's Alpha for all scale items is **above 0.845**. This signifies **high internal consistency** of scale items. The following table presents the Cronbach alpha values examined for internal consistency among the scale items for all stakeholders of expectations.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis- Expectation of Faculty

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Reliability	11	0.956
Assurance	08	0.965
Tangibility	11	0.954
Empathy	06	0.963
Responsive-ness	04	0.932

Cronbach's Alpha for all scale items is **above 0.932**. This signifies **high internal consistency** of scale items.

Table 3 Hypotheses Testing

Dimension	Mean Perception	Mean Expectation	Mean Difference (P-E)	t-value	Df	p-value
Reliability	3.736	4.255	-0.519	-4.274	51	0.0001
Assurance	3.940	4.272	-0.332	-2.948	51	0.0048
Tangibility	3.767	4.253	-0.486	-5.097	51	<0.001
Empathy	3.894	4.282	-0.388	-3.943	51	0.0002
Responsiveness	3.885	4.317	-0.433	-3.985	51	0.0002

The null hypotheses are rejected, and the alternative hypotheses are accepted, because p value is less than 0.05 for all five dimensions. There is a statistically significant gap between faculty expectations and perceptions across all SERVQUAL dimensions.

Largest Service Quality Gap: Reliability

(Mean Difference = -0.519 , $t = -4.27$, $p = 0.0001$)

Smallest Gap (but still significant): Assurance

(Mean Difference = -0.332 , $t = -2.95$, $p = 0.0048$)

Table 4: Perceptions and Expectations of Faculty (Dimension wise)
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation		Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Perceptio n	Expectatio n	Perceptio n	Expectatio n	Perceptio n	Expectatio n	Perceptio n	Expectatio n
Reliability	52	3.736017	4.255252	.7490659	.7176414	-.106	-1.043	-.984	.546
Assurance	52	3.939904	4.271635	.6180944	.8212560	-.245	-1.269	-.217	.816
Tangibility	52	3.767492	4.253500	.6386342	.7106667	-.107	-.812	-.635	-.271
Empathy	52	3.894231	4.282050	.7540908	.7486624	-.616	-.755	.538	-.735
Responsiveness	52	3.884615	4.317308	.7250111	.7510049	-.507	-.978	.776	-.163
Valid N	52								

Table 5: Total Mean Perceptions and Expectations of Faculty
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Perception	52	3.844446	.0782159	.5640228	-.203	.330	.352	.650
Expectation	52	4.273613	.0903531	.6515453	-.904	.330	.117	.650
Valid N (listwise)	52							

Table shows the total mean perception ($N = 52$, $M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.56$) has skewness ($S = -.203$) and kurtosis ($K = .352$) and mean expectation ($N = 52$, $M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.65$) has skewness ($S = -.904$) and kurtosis ($K = .117$). Table shows that, the mean of expectation is greater than perception which signifies the GAP in perception and expectations of faculty members towards service quality provided by HEIs. The GAP is more for reliability (Table 4- difference in mean is higher i.e., 0.52) as compared to the other dimensions of service quality. The difference of mean is lowest for assurance (i.e., 0.33) which indicates that expectations and perception of faculty members related to assurance are nearly equal. The mean value for assurance (i.e., 3.93) is highest among all the dimensions shows that the perception is more favorable for assurance as compared to the other dimensions of service quality.

Table 6 GAP Analysis

FACULTY					
Dimensions	Perception	Mean	Expectations	Mean	GAP
Reliability	PR1	3.52	ER1	4.08	0.56
	PR2	3.65	ER2	4.13	0.48
	PR3	3.67	ER3	4.27	0.6
	PR4	3.69	ER4	4.12	0.43
	PR5	3.73	ER5	4.19	0.46
	PR6	4.04	ER6	4.31	0.27
	PR7	3.75	ER7	4.37	0.62
	PR8	3.77	ER8	4.38	0.61
	PR9	3.54	ER9	4.21	0.67
	PR10	3.85	ER10	4.40	0.55
	PR11	3.88	ER11	4.35	0.47
Assurance	PA1	3.94	EA1	4.33	0.39
	PA2	4.10	EA2	4.29	0.19
	PA3	4.21	EA3	4.25	0.04
	PA4	3.67	EA4	4.31	0.64
	PA5	3.83	EA5	4.25	0.42
	PA6	4.25	EA6	4.33	0.08
	PA7	3.88	EA7	4.23	0.35
	PA8	3.63	EA8	4.19	0.56
Tangibility	PT1	4.06	ET1	4.27	0.21
	PT2	4.12	ET2	4.21	0.09
	PT3	4.12	ET3	4.37	0.25
	PT4	3.96	ET4	4.25	0.29
	PT5	3.37	ET5	4.19	0.82
	PT6	3.75	ET6	4.25	0.5
	PT7	3.19	ET7	4.12	0.93
	PT8	3.96	ET8	4.29	0.33
	PT9	3.65	ET9	4.27	0.62
	PT10	3.90	ET10	4.29	0.39
	PT11	3.37	ET11	4.29	0.92
Empathy	PE1	3.88	EE1	4.40	0.52
	PE2	3.96	EE2	4.25	0.29
	PE3	4.06	EE3	4.33	0.27
	PE4	3.88	EE4	4.27	0.39
	PE5	3.73	EE5	4.19	0.46
	PE6	3.85	EE6	4.25	0.4
Responsiveness	PRS1	4.08	ERS1	4.37	0.29
	PRS2	3.87	ERS2	4.31	0.44
	PRS3	3.79	ERS3	4.31	0.52
	PRS4	3.81	ERS4	3.92	0.11

Finding: (Table 4) GAP in perception and expectations of faculty members towards service quality provided by HEMIs is more for **reliability**. (Highest Mean Difference 0.52)

Justification for GAP in Reliability: In reliability, highest gap of 0.67 can be seen for PR9 (Encouragement and financial support is provided to students to develop business acumen), followed by gap of 0.62 for PR7 (Norms, procedures and rules are transparent) and gap of 0.61 for PR8 (Administrative staff keeps records accurately).

Favorable Gaps: The above table 6 shows no favorable gaps for the dimensions of study.

Table 7 Perception–Expectation Gap Scores (Dimension-wise)

Dimension	Perception Mean	Expectation Mean	Gap
Reliability	3.7360	4.2553	-0.5193
Assurance	3.9399	4.2716	-0.3317
Tangibility	3.7675	4.2535	-0.4860
Empathy	3.8942	4.2821	-0.3878
Responsiveness	3.8846	4.3173	-0.4327

Total Mean Gap (Overall Service Quality):

$$3.8444 - 4.2736 = -0.4292$$

This indicates faculty expectations consistently exceed delivered service quality.

7. Discussion

The present study examined faculty members' expectations and perceptions of service quality in Higher Education Institutions using the SERVQUAL framework. The findings clearly indicate that, across all five dimensions, mean expectation scores exceed mean perception scores. This reinforces the central proposition of SERVQUAL that service quality shortfalls emerge when performance does not match stakeholder expectations.

Among the dimensions assessed, Reliability recorded the widest perception–expectation gap, indicating that faculty members believe institutions are not consistently fulfilling commitments, supporting academic processes, or providing adequate systems for professional and student development. Specific items such as transparency in rules, administrative accuracy, and financial or academic support to students display the largest individual gaps, suggesting systemic challenges in institutional governance and administrative processes.

In contrast, Assurance exhibited the smallest gap, implying that faculty generally experience supportive interpersonal interactions, professional competence, and trust in institutional leadership. The higher perception mean for assurance relative to other dimensions suggests that institutions are performing better in areas related to credibility, communication clarity, and professional expertise of academic and administrative staff.

Moderate gaps were observed in Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness. Tangibility-related gaps point to perceived inadequacies in infrastructure, learning resources, and physical or technological facilities, which are foundational to academic functioning. Meanwhile, gaps in Empathy and Responsiveness suggest that although institutions attempt to address faculty needs, expectations regarding supportiveness, individualized attention, and timely action remain insufficiently met.

The findings collectively highlight that faculty expectations remain higher than actual institutional performance levels, underscoring a persistent quality deficit. As internal stakeholders who directly influence teaching–learning processes and institutional climate, unmet expectations among faculty may have downstream implications for motivation, retention, student outcomes, and institutional effectiveness.

This study contributes to the limited literature on internal stakeholder perceptions of service quality in Indian higher education. While prior work has been largely student-centric, the present research emphasizes that maintaining faculty satisfaction and engagement is equally critical for institutional competitiveness and sustainability. The results suggest that HEIs should prioritize strengthening internal systems, administrative reliability, transparency, and resource adequacy, coupled with ongoing professional and academic support mechanisms.

Future research may extend this work by employing longitudinal or comparative designs across universities, or by integrating qualitative insights to better understand the underlying causes of perception–expectation gaps. Nonetheless, the present findings provide empirical evidence that service quality improvement strategies in HEIs must holistically incorporate faculty perspectives rather than focusing exclusively on student experiences.

8. Conclusion

Assessing service quality from the faculty perspective provides valuable insights into institutional effectiveness. The study highlights perceptual gaps that HEIs must address to foster a supportive academic environment. Recognizing faculty as key stakeholders is essential for achieving sustainable service quality improvements in higher education...

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