

Students Satisfaction in the Service Quality of Selected Frontline Offices of Colegio De San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc.: Basis for Continuous Quality Improvement

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Abstract: *This study aimed to determine the students' overall satisfaction and assessment of the five (5) dimensions of service quality such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility using the SERVPERF model during the First Semester School Year 2021 – 2022. This research used a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach to assess and correlate the student-respondents' overall satisfaction with their profile (age, sex, and year level) to their reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility. The researchers gathered the data and analyzed it using the Descriptive Statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Scheffé Test, Independent t-Test, and Pearson r Correlation. This study revealed that age and year level are significant factors in the students' overall satisfaction. The five (5) dimensions of service quality, such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility, have a strong positive relationship with the students' overall satisfaction. The results and findings in this study served as the basis to come up with the proposed intervention policies or strategies to continuously improve the quality of service provided by Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc.*

Keywords: Service Quality, SERVPERF Model, Students' Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc. (CDSGA) is a non-stock, not-for-profit organization that commits itself to give affordable, transformative, psychologically innovative, quality education and caring service that makes a difference toward self-actualization to its students. As highlighted in this mission statement, CDSGA assures its clients that the educational, administrative, and support services provided by teaching and non-teaching personnel are delivered to the students with a caring heart and service quality.

“Quality” is defined as a measure of the extent to which the educational and support services delivered by any educational institution meet their students' expectations that will result in students' satisfaction. Hence, students need accurate and reliable information about the quality of education provided by the specific school to help them choose between the different programs of study. Also, institutions need quality information to help them benchmark and market their educational services. In addition, governments and other funding bodies need the information to assist them with funding, policy development and accountability. For these reasons, quality assurance has become vital in higher education (Coates, 2005). Quality assurance mechanisms, both external and internal, provide data on the school's current performance and help identify areas of success and areas for system and school improvement.

Many conceptual and literature proved that service quality is a good predictor and positively impacts customer satisfaction (Fida, B. A, et al., 2020; Rita et al., 2019; Ismail & Yunan, 2016). Students' satisfaction reflects how they feel about the institution in the school setting. It can be influenced

by several factors such as student-teacher relationships, experiences provided to them, support services, and institution facilities, among others. Thus, providing excellent service to students will benefit the institution by retaining its positive reputation, increasing students' loyalty, boosting trust, attracting positive word of mouth, and students' satisfaction. As cited in the literature of Thomas (2018), if a customer experiences good service, they will tell 2 to 3 people. However, if they experience bad service, they will tell between 8 to 10 people.

The objective of every institution is to serve every client efficiently and effectively it deals business with (Pamatong and Abocejo, 2017). Aiming for excellence does not only mean being exceptional in instruction, research, and extension but also in administrative and support services. Thus, the importance of frontline office personnel, especially in educational service institutions like Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc., is irrefutable. Mengesha (2015) argued that the achievement of any institution depends on the competence of its employees as they are considered the main characters to build the first and lasting impressions of an organization's positive image to its clients.

Several studies attempted to determine the significant factors contributing to service quality and customer satisfaction (Fida, B. A, et al., 2020; Rita et al., 2019; Ismail & Yunan, 2016). Some research correlated customers' satisfaction to the demographic profile (Merritt, 2019; Tabatabaei et al., 2013), customer loyalty (Solem, 2016), and retention (Kopilevych, 2019). In addition, to further understand the service quality, some researchers have employed numerous models such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor,

1992), and the measurement model (Huang et al., 2015; Lu et al. 2009).

Many individuals struggle to cope with abrupt changes in the environment due to the rapidly increasing number of cases of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the way services are delivered by schools and most businesses worldwide. Management is doing its best to survive the onslaught of this pandemic crisis. Some have resorted to implementing flexible work arrangements, employment layoffs, cost-cutting, or worst, business closure. For schools to survive, they must retain their position in the market by continuous marketing to persuade potential customers and by providing service quality to their existing students.

This study endeavored to determine the students' overall satisfaction and their assessment of the five (5) dimensions in the SERVQUAL model such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility provided by selected frontline offices of Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc. The findings of this study can provide feedback from students to improve how the selected frontline offices of Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc. deliver services and lessen the students' complaints during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do student-respondents assess the service quality of selected frontline offices of CDSGA in terms of the five (5) dimensions during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:
 - 1.1. Reliability,
 - 1.2. Empathy,
 - 1.3. Responsiveness,
 - 1.4. Assurance, and
 - 1.5. Tangibility?
2. How do the student-respondents assess their overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA during the COVID-19 pandemic when grouped according to their demographic profile such as:
 - 2.1. Age,
 - 2.2. Sex, and
 - 2.3. Year Level?
3. Are there any significant differences in the assessment of student-respondents on their overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA when grouped according to their demographic profile?
4. Are there any significant relationships between the students' overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA with each of the five (5) dimensions of service quality?
5. Based on the study's findings, what intervention policies or strategies will the researchers propose to continuously

improve the quality of service provided by selected frontline offices of CDSGA?

METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative research since the researchers collected and analyzed numerical data from a sufficient number of participants to arrive at statistically meaningful data. It uses objective measurement in a controlled setting to gather numeric data to answer research questions or test predetermined hypotheses. Although the researchers have very little personal interaction with the respondents, it follows deductive reasoning since the quantitative approach utilizes non-interactive research instruments such as survey questionnaires (Navarro and Santos, 2011).

Moreover, this study utilized the descriptive–correlational research method. The researchers employed a descriptive design to determine the students' assessment of the five (5) dimensions of service quality, such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility, and their overall satisfaction with the services provided by selected frontline offices of Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc.

Further, this study examined the extent of significant differences among the students' demographic profile sub-groups such as age, sex, and year level in terms of their overall satisfaction. It correlated the latter with the five (5) dimensions of service quality.

The respondents of the study were 2nd year to 5th year college students randomly selected from the different Departments of the seven (7) Colleges in Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc. during the First Semester of School Year 2021-2022. There were 970 responses collected from the said college students.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the frontline offices of the institution, such as the Security, Canteen, and Library, were not able to fully perform their functions to serve the students physically as our government limits the face-to-face interaction to minimize the transmission of COVID-19. Hence, this study is limited only to the following frontline offices: the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), Office of Students Affairs and Services (OSAS), Accounting Office, and Registrar's Office.

The researchers used a self-administered survey questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) as the primary source of data. The secondary data sources such as books, journals and articles, previous theses or dissertations, and electronic references were used for cross-referencing.

Some of the parts in the survey questionnaires were adopted from the study by Christine Kerlin (2000) entitled "*Measuring Student Satisfaction with the Service Processes*

of Selected Student Educational Support Services at Everett Community College". Improvements were made to ensure conformity with the design of the study. Moreover, the instrument adopted, likewise, underwent expert and face validation for its reliability and applicability to the local environment.

Pursuant to the ethical standards of conducting this research, the researchers strictly observed and implemented ethical considerations in administering the survey instrument. The researchers gathered the data using Google Form and analyzed it by applying the Descriptive Statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Scheffé Test, Independent t-Test, and Pearson r Correlation through Microsoft Excel Data Analysis Toolpak.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Service Quality of the Selected Frontline Offices

Table 1

Weighted Means on the Service Quality of the Selected Frontline Offices

Variables	VPA A	OSA S	Accounti ng Office	Registrar 's Office
Reliability	4.23	4.27	4.08	4.22
Empathy	4.27	4.27	4.13	4.23
Responsivene ss	4.20	4.21	4.04	4.17
Assurance	4.33	4.33	4.22	4.30
Tangibility	4.24	4.25	4.21	4.23

Table 1 shows that in terms of reliability, the OSAS obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.27, followed by the VPAA Office (4.23), Registrar's Office (4.22), and Accounting Office (4.08). The findings revealed that the students **agree** that the selected frontline offices provide **reliable** services as the employees can perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

In terms of empathy, the VPAA and OSAS obtained the same highest general weighted mean of 4.27, followed by the Registrar's Office (4.23) and Accounting Office (4.13). The result means that the students **agree** that the selected frontline offices of CDSGA provide services with **empathy** as the employees provide care and individual attention to them.

In terms of responsiveness, the OSAS and VPAA obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.21, followed by the VPAA Office (4.20), Registrar's Office (4.17), and Accounting Office (4.04). It can be concluded that the students **agree** that the selected frontline offices are **responsive** as they are willing to help them and provide prompt service.

In terms of assurance, the VPAA and OSAS obtained the same highest general weighted mean of 4.33, followed by the Registrar's Office (4.30) and Accounting Office (4.22). Hence, the students **agree** that the selected frontline offices **assure** them that they are knowledgeable, courteous, and can convey trust, and confidence in providing services.

Lastly, in terms of tangibility, the OSAS obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.25, followed by the VPAA Office (4.24), Registrar's Office (4.23), and Accounting Office (4.21). The findings revealed that the **tangibility** as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials of selected frontline offices is appealing to the students.

Overall Satisfaction with the Services Provided by CDSGA

Table 2

Weighted Means of the Students' Overall Satisfaction

Groups	Sub-Groups	Mean	Interpretation
Age	Below 22 yrs. old	4.17	Satisfied
	23 to 27 yrs. old	4.28	Satisfied
	28 yrs. old & above	4.39	Satisfied
Sex	Male	4.23	Satisfied
	Female	4.18	Satisfied
Year Level	2 nd Year	4.11	Satisfied
	3 rd Year	4.25	Satisfied
	4 th & 5 th Year	4.24	Satisfied

It can be seen in Table 2 that the age group of 28 years old and above obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.39 and followed by the age groups of 23 to 27 years old (4.28) and below 22 years old (4.17). In terms of sex groups, the male group obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.32, followed by the female group (4.18). Lastly, the 3rd year college students obtained the highest general weighted mean of 4.25, followed by the year level groups of 4th and 5th Year (4.24) and 2nd Year (4.11).

It can be interpreted that students are **satisfied** with the overall services provided by Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc., regardless of their age, sex, and year level.

Significant Differences in the Level of Students' Overall Satisfaction According to their Profile

Table 3

Summary of t-Test Results in Overall Satisfaction

Groups	Mean	t-ratio*	Decision	Interpretation
Male	4.23	1.03	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Female	4.18			

*t-Crit = 1.86 at 0.05 level of significance

As shown in Table 3, the computed t-ratio of 1.03 is less than the critical value of 1.86 at a 0.05 level of significance. This finding accepts the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences between the two (2) sex groups. This further shows that students' overall satisfaction is statistically the **same** when grouped according to sex. Therefore, sex is not a factor, so it does not substantially affect students' overall satisfaction.

Table 4
Summary of ANOVA Results in Overall Satisfaction

Groups	Mean	F-ratio*	p-value	Decision
Below 22 yrs. old	4.17	4.00	0.02	Reject Ho
23 to 27 yrs. old	4.28			
28 yrs. old & above	4.39			
2 nd Year	4.11	3.76	0.02	Reject Ho
3 rd Year	4.25			
4 th & 5 th Year	4.24			

*F-crit = 3.01 at 0.05 level of significance

As shown in Table 4, in terms of age groups, the computed F-ratio of 4.00 is greater than the critical value of 3.01 at a 0.05 level of significance. This finding rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there are significant differences in students' overall satisfaction when grouped according to their **age**. This further implies that the students have **different** ratings statistically regarding their overall satisfaction when grouped according to the three (3) subgroups of **age**. Hence, **age** is a **significant factor** that substantially affects students' overall satisfaction.

Moreover, in terms of year level, the computed F-ratio of 3.76 is greater than the critical value of 3.01 at a 0.05 level of significance. This finding also rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there are significant differences in students' overall satisfaction when grouped according to their year level. This further implies that the students have **different** ratings statistically regarding their overall satisfaction when grouped according to the three (3) subgroups of year level. Hence, **year level** is a **significant factor** that substantially affects students' overall satisfaction.

The obtained significant F-ratios in age and year level groups suggest computing the Scheffé test to determine which

pairs of the mean of age and year level groups differ significantly.

Table 5
Summary of Multiple Comparison Results Using Scheffé Test

Groups Compared	Mean	Scheffé Ratio*	Interpretation
Below 22 years old vs. 23 to 27 years old	4.17 4.28	2.43	Not Significant
Below 22 years old vs. 28 years old & above	4.17 4.39	6.32	Significant
23 to 27 years old vs. 28 years old & above	4.28 4.39	1.11	Not Significant
2nd Year vs. 3rd Year	4.11 4.25	6.22	Significant
2 nd Year vs. 4 th and 5 th Year	4.11 4.24	4.72	Not Significant
3 rd Year vs. 4 th and 5 th Year	4.25 4.24	0.07	Not Significant

*Scheffé critical value = 6.01 at 0.05 level of significance

It can be seen from Table 5 that there is a significant difference between the age groups of below 22 years old (4.17) and 28 years old and above (4.39), based on the Scheffé ratio obtained of 6.32, which is greater than the Scheffé test critical value of 6.01 at 0.05 level of significance. The mean results **favored** the age group of **28 years old and above** (4.39).

The given significant findings show that the overall satisfaction of students who belong to the age group of 28 years old and above is more satisfied than the age group below 22 years old.

In terms of year level, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between the year level groups of 2nd Year (4.11) and 3rd Year (4.25), based on the Scheffé ratio obtained of 6.22, which is greater than the Scheffé test critical value of 6.01 at 0.05 level of significance. The mean results **favored** the year level group of **3rd Year** (4.25).

The significant findings show that the 3rd Year college students are more satisfied than 2nd Year students.

Significant Relationships between the Students' Overall Satisfaction with Each Dimension of Service Quality

Table 6

Summary of Computed Pearson r Between the Students' Overall Satisfaction and the Service Quality

Service Quality	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p -value	Interpretation
Reliability	0.66	0.00	Strong
Empathy	0.64	0.00	Strong
Responsiveness	0.64	0.00	Strong
Assurance	0.64	0.00	Strong
Tangibility	0.63	0.00	Strong

It can be seen in this Table 6 that the **highest correlation** is observed between **reliability** and students' **overall satisfaction**, $r(968) = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$, this is followed by the empathy, $r(968) = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$, responsiveness, $r(968) = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$, and assurance, $r(968) = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$. The **lowest correlation** is observed between **tangibility** and students' **overall satisfaction**, $r(968) = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$.

This finding rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there are strong significant relationships between the students' overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA and each dimension of service quality such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility.

Moreover, as all the coefficients of correlation (r) are positive, it can be concluded that the higher the responses of the student-respondents in the dimensions of service quality, the higher the responses regarding their overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA.

Proposed Intervention Policies / Strategies to Improve Service Quality

The researchers used the results and findings in problems 1 to 4 to develop proposed intervention policies or strategies to continuously improve the quality of services provided by selected frontline offices of Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, Inc.

The objectives of these intervention policies or strategies are as follows:

1. To make a significant contribution to the school management towards continuous quality improvement in service quality and students' satisfaction.
2. To understand and discover the significant factors that influence students' overall satisfaction.

The following outlines the proposed invention policies or strategies for each significant factor:

Age and Year Level: The employees should always provide quality services regardless of the students' demographic profile.

Reliability: The employees should increase their efforts in providing their services within the timeframes and deadlines promised by managing their time efficiently and effectively and applying the Gabrielian Identity of being "punctual" to meet the students' expectations.

Empathy: The employees should increase their efforts to apply the Gabrielian Attitude of "We Care" as our students seek attention, empathy, and guidance as being part of a caring institution.

Responsiveness: The employees should increase their time and efforts to respond to our students' inquiries, requests, or concerns as part of our Gabrielian Philosophy of commitment and dedication to serving our students.

Assurance: The employees should increase their efforts to show courtesy and confidence in providing quality services to students all the time.

Tangibility: The CDSGA management should increase their efforts to innovate the physical facilities and upgrade the school's equipment and furniture. The materials provided by different frontline offices to give information to our students should be improved.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the foregoing findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. **Relative to F-1:** The student-respondents tended to have a similar perspective on the five (5) dimensions of quality service such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility for the selected frontline offices of CDSGA.
2. **Relative to F-2:** The student-respondents' level of satisfaction generally tended to have a similar perspective when grouped according to age, sex, and year level in the overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA office front liners.
3. **Relative to F-3:** Age and year level are significant factors affecting the responses of student-respondents in the overall satisfaction with the services provided by CDSGA. In favor of the students aged 28 years old & above and in 3rd year college level.
4. **Relative to F-4:** The higher the responses of the student-respondents in the dimensions of service quality such as reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility, the higher the responses regarding their overall satisfaction with the services provided by selected frontline offices in CDSGA.

5. **Relative to F-5:** The proposed intervention policies or strategies will improve the quality of services provided by selected frontline offices of CDSGA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing findings and from conclusions drawn, and within the scope and limitations of the study, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

1. **Relative to F-1:** CDSGA management should continuously conduct a series of webinars among the front-line offices' staff on quality and caring service to improve their rating to a higher level on the five (5) dimensions of quality service as regards reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility.
2. **Relative to F-2:** The CDSGA management should conduct a webinar among the frontline offices in CDSGA focused on continuous improvement in providing service quality to increase students' overall satisfaction.
3. **Relative to F-3:** CDSGA management should conduct hands-on training for the employees assigned in CDSGA frontline offices focused on the significant factors such as age and year level affecting the level of satisfaction with service quality.
4. **Relative to F-4:** The CDSGA management should conduct a regular customer service satisfaction survey to know the student's assessment of the service quality provided to them and address their concerns immediately.
5. **Relative to F-5:** CDSGA management should provide the frontline offices with the proposed intervention policies or strategies to implement and continuously improve the quality of services provided by selected frontline offices.

Other Recommendation

1. A study must be conducted to test the effectiveness of proposed intervention policies or strategies and add more contributive factors.

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