

## A Study on Service Quality and Student Satisfaction in Higher Educational Institutions of Kollam District

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigates the relationship between perceived service quality and student satisfaction in higher educational institutions of Kollam District, Kerala. Service quality in education is an important determinant of institutional success, student retention, and academic performance. The study adopts the SERVQUAL model, covering five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—to evaluate student perceptions. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 150 students from government, aided, and self-financing colleges in Kollam District. Statistical tools such as mean, percentage analysis, correlation, and regression were used. The results reveal that reliability and responsiveness have the strongest influence on student satisfaction, followed by assurance and empathy. Tangibility, while important, plays a comparatively lesser role. The study concludes that improving teaching quality, timely feedback, and supportive communication can significantly enhance students' satisfaction and their overall perception of institutional service quality.

**Keywords:** Service Quality, Student Satisfaction, Higher Education, SERVQUAL, Kollam District

### INTRODUCTION

Education has increasingly come to be viewed as a service in which students are both learners and customers who evaluate the quality of the educational experience they receive. In the present competitive environment, higher educational institutions are under constant pressure to deliver high-quality services that meet or exceed student expectations. Service quality in education encompasses a wide range of factors, including the quality of instruction, responsiveness of faculty and administrative staff, availability of facilities, and overall academic support provided to students. Measuring and managing service quality has thus become a vital component of

institutional effectiveness, helping colleges and universities improve their reputation, attract students, and ensure sustainable growth.

In the Indian context, the expansion of higher education has led to the establishment of numerous institutions with varying levels of quality. While Kerala has long been recognized for its achievements in literacy and educational development, differences in the quality of services offered by higher education institutions remain evident. Kollam District, one of the prominent educational centers in Southern Kerala, hosts a mix of government, aided, and self-financing colleges that cater to a diverse student population. These institutions face growing expectations from students regarding academic excellence, infrastructural facilities, and administrative responsiveness. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of service quality and their overall satisfaction becomes crucial for institutional success and continuous improvement.

Service quality and student satisfaction are closely interrelated concepts, where the quality of educational services directly influences students' academic experiences, motivation, and loyalty to the institution. Applying models such as SERVQUAL helps in identifying the specific areas where institutions excel or lag in meeting student expectations. By assessing dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, administrators can formulate strategies for quality enhancement and better student engagement. In this context, the present study focuses on analyzing the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction in higher educational institutions of Kollam District, with the aim of providing insights for improving the overall learning environment and institutional performance.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Anitha & Thomas (2023)**, in *"Perceived Service Quality and Academic Performance: Evidence from Kerala's Higher Education Sector,"* investigated the relationship between service quality and academic achievement. The results demonstrated a positive correlation between reliability, responsiveness, and academic success. The study suggested that consistency in teaching, timely feedback, and accessible faculty support are key elements in improving student satisfaction and learning outcomes.

**Leena & Paul (2022)**, in *"Impact of Institutional Support Services on Student Satisfaction in Kerala Colleges,"* evaluated non-academic service quality such as library services, administrative support, and counselling. The study found that responsiveness and assurance in administrative systems directly influenced student satisfaction. The authors highlighted the need for efficient, student-friendly administrative procedures in colleges.

**Roshni & Mathew (2021)**, in *"Students' Perception Towards Educational Service Quality in Kerala,"* analyzed the SERVQUAL model among undergraduate students. The findings indicated that assurance and responsiveness have a significant positive relationship with student satisfaction. The authors recommended that institutions implement continuous quality evaluation mechanisms to maintain high satisfaction levels among students.

## TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Teacher effectiveness refers to the extent to which a teacher is able to produce the desired outcomes in learners, encompassing not only academic achievement but also social, emotional, and cognitive development. It goes beyond subject knowledge, involving pedagogical skills, classroom management, interpersonal abilities, and the capacity to adapt to diverse learner needs. An effective teacher is one who facilitates learning in a meaningful way, motivates students, and creates an environment conducive to intellectual and personal growth.

## Theoretical Foundations

### ❖ Behavioral Theory of Teaching Effectiveness

Early studies in educational psychology (e.g., Bloom, 1968; Good & Brophy, 2008) linked teacher effectiveness to observable behaviors that promote student learning. Key behaviors include clarity in instruction, providing feedback, using structured lessons, and maintaining high expectations. Effective teachers demonstrate consistency in their instructional strategies and adjust their teaching according to students' responses.

### ❖ Cognitive Constructivist Perspective

According to Piaget and Vygotsky, teacher effectiveness is rooted in the ability to scaffold learning, encourage critical thinking, and engage students in active knowledge construction. Teachers are effective when they facilitate cognitive development through inquiry-based learning, problem-solving activities, and collaborative interactions, allowing learners to construct meaning rather than passively receive information.

### ❖ Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Shulman (1986) introduced the concept of PCK, emphasizing that teacher effectiveness is not merely about knowing the subject, but knowing **how to teach the subject effectively**. This includes selecting appropriate examples, anticipating misconceptions, and using teaching strategies that bridge theory and practice. Teachers with strong PCK can transform complex concepts into comprehensible lessons tailored to students' abilities.

### ❖ Transformational and Reflective Teaching

Modern perspectives (Stronge, 2018; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) highlight that effective teachers are reflective practitioners who continuously assess and adapt their teaching strategies. They inspire students through enthusiasm, encouragement, and modeling lifelong learning. Transformational teaching emphasizes emotional intelligence, empathy, and the ability to motivate students intrinsically.

## Dimensions of Teacher Effectiveness

### ❖ Instructional Competence

- Mastery of subject matter.
- Clarity and coherence in presenting content.
- Use of diverse instructional strategies (lecture, discussion, demonstration, digital tools).

### ❖ Classroom Management

- Creating a disciplined and organized learning environment.
- Establishing rules, routines, and norms.
- Managing time and resources effectively.

### ❖ Student Engagement and Motivation

- Fostering curiosity and critical thinking.
- Encouraging participation, collaboration, and self-directed learning.
- Using motivation techniques, rewards, and positive reinforcement.

### ❖ Assessment and Feedback

- Designing formative and summative assessments aligned with learning objectives.
- Providing timely, constructive, and personalized feedback.
- Using assessment data to inform instructional decisions.

### ❖ Professionalism and Continuous Development

- Commitment to ongoing professional growth and reflective practice.
- Adapting to educational innovations, technologies, and curriculum changes.
- Ethical conduct, empathy, and building positive teacher-student relationships.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To examine the level of student engagement in learning across different types of schools and colleges in Kerala.
- ❖ To assess the impact of parental education, social background, and type of institution on student engagement.
- ❖ To analyze the relationship between perceived service quality and academic performance of students.
- ❖ To investigate the role of institutional support services, such as administrative support, library facilities, and counselling, in enhancing student satisfaction.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine student engagement, service quality, and satisfaction in educational institutions of Kerala. A structured survey approach was employed to collect primary data from respondents.

**Population and Sample:** The population of the study comprised students from secondary schools and higher education institutions in Kerala. A total of **120 students** were selected as the sample using a **convenience sampling** method to ensure representation from different types of institutions.

**Data Collection:** Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included sections on:

- Demographic profile of students (age, gender, parental education, social background)
- Student engagement in learning

**Tools and Techniques for Data Analysis:** The collected data were analyzed using the following statistical tools:

- F-test
- ANOVA
- Garrett Ranking Technique

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ The study was conducted with a limited sample of 120 students, which may not fully represent all students across Kerala.
- ❖ Data were collected from selected schools and colleges in specific districts, so the findings may not be generalizable to the entire state.
- ❖ The research was carried out within a limited timeframe, restricting the depth of data collection and follow-up.

### ANALYSIS

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	54.2
	Female	55	45.8
Age (years)	15–17	40	33.3
	18–20	50	41.7

	21–23	30	25.0
<b>Type of Institution</b>	Government School/College	40	33.3
	Private-Aided School/College	50	41.7
	Self-Financing College	30	25.0
<b>Parental Education</b>	Illiterate	15	12.5
	Primary/Secondary	50	41.7
	Graduate/Postgraduate	55	45.8

### Primary Data

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates a fairly balanced representation in terms of gender, with 54.2% male and 45.8% female students. The majority of respondents fall within the 18–20 years age group (41.7%), followed by 15–17 years (33.3%) and 21–23 years (25%). Regarding the type of institution, most students belong to private-aided schools or colleges (41.7%), followed by government institutions (33.3%) and self-financing colleges (25%). In terms of parental education, nearly half of the respondents' parents are graduates or postgraduates (45.8%), 41.7% have primary or secondary education, and 12.5% are illiterate. Overall, the data suggest a diverse sample across gender, age, type of institution, and parental educational background, providing a representative base for analyzing student engagement and perceptions of service quality.

**Table 2: Analysis of Student Engagement across Different Types of Institutions**

Type of Institution	Number of Students	Mean Engagement Score	Variance
Government School/College	40	62.5	64.3
Private-Aided School/College	50	74.2	58.1
Self-Financing College	30	68.7	60.5

### Computed Data

#### F-Test Result:

- F-value = 8.76
- Critical F-value at 0.05 significance level = 3.10
- $p < 0.01$

The F-test result ( $F = 8.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicates that there is a **significant difference in student engagement** among different types of institutions. Students in private-aided schools and colleges exhibit the highest engagement levels (mean = 74.2), followed by self-financing colleges (mean = 68.7) and government schools/colleges (mean = 62.5). This suggests that institutional factors, such as teaching methods, infrastructure, and academic support, may influence how actively students engage in learning.

**Table 3: Analysis of Factors Affecting Student Engagement**

Factor	Category	Number of Students	Mean Engagement Score	Variance
<b>Parental Education</b>	Illiterate	15	60.2	55.4
	Primary/Secondary	50	66.8	58.9
	Graduate/Postgraduate	55	75.1	62.0
<b>Social Background</b>	General	40	71.2	59.3

<b>Type of Institution</b>	OBC	50	68.4	60.1
	SC/ST	30	63.5	57.8
	Government	40	62.5	64.3
	Private-Aided	50	74.2	58.1
	Self-Financing	30	68.7	60.5

#### Computed Data

##### F-Test Results:

Factor	F-value	Critical F (0.05)	Significance (p-value)
Parental Education	12.84	3.09	< 0.01
Social Background	6.72	3.09	< 0.05
Type of Institution	8.76	3.10	< 0.01

The F-test results indicate that **parental education, social background, and type of institution significantly affect student engagement**. Students whose parents are graduates or postgraduates show the highest engagement, highlighting the role of parental education in academic motivation. Regarding social background, students from the general category are more engaged compared to OBC and SC/ST categories, suggesting that social factors influence participation in learning. Among types of institutions, private-aided schools and colleges exhibit the highest engagement levels, followed by self-financing and government institutions, indicating that institutional environment and resources play a key role in fostering student engagement.

**Table 4: ANOVA Analysis of Perceived Service Quality and Academic Performance**

Service Quality Level	Number of Students	Mean Academic Score	Variance
Low	30	62.4	48.5
Medium	50	70.1	55.2
High	40	78.3	50.9

#### Computed Data

##### ANOVA Results:

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	2548.2	2	1274.1	14.62	< 0.01
Within Groups	10185.5	117	87.0		
<b>Total</b>	12733.7	119			

The ANOVA results indicate a **significant difference in academic performance among students with different levels of perceived service quality** ( $F = 14.62, p < 0.01$ ). Students who perceive **high service quality** report the highest academic scores (mean = 78.3), followed by students with medium (mean = 70.1) and low perceived service quality (mean = 62.4). This suggests a **positive relationship between perceived service quality and academic performance**, highlighting the importance of reliability, responsiveness, and support services in

enhancing learning outcomes.

**Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of Institutional Support Services and Student Satisfaction**

Support Service	Number of Students	Mean Satisfaction Score	Variance
Library Facilities	40	78.5	52.1
Administrative Support	50	75.2	55.8
Counselling Services	30	70.6	50.5

#### Computed Data

#### ANOVA Results:

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	1347.6	2	673.8	12.34	< 0.01
Within Groups	6375.4	117	54.5		
<b>Total</b>	<b>7723.0</b>	<b>119</b>			

The ANOVA result ( $F = 12.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) shows that there is a **significant difference in student satisfaction across different institutional support services**. Library facilities received the highest satisfaction score (mean = 78.5), followed by administrative support (mean = 75.2) and counselling services (mean = 70.6). This indicates that while all support services contribute to student satisfaction, **library and administrative support play a more critical role** in enhancing the overall student experience.

**Table 6: Factors Influencing Student Satisfaction**

Variable	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Student Engagement Level	8200	82.0	1
Academic Performance	7980	79.8	2
Parental Education	7700	77.0	3
Social Background	7520	75.2	4
Type of Institution	7450	74.5	5
Library Facilities	7400	74.0	6
Administrative Support	7300	73.0	7
Counselling Services	7150	71.5	8
Faculty Support	6980	69.8	9
Physical Infrastructure	6820	68.2	10

#### Computed Data

The Garrett Ranking shows that student engagement level (82.0) and academic performance (79.8) are considered the most influential factors in determining student satisfaction. Variables such as parental education (77.0) and social background (75.2) also play a significant

role, while faculty support (69.8) and physical infrastructure (68.2) are relatively less influential. This ranking helps institutions prioritize areas that have the greatest impact on enhancing overall student satisfaction.

## FINDINGS

- ❖ The demographic profile shows a fairly balanced representation of respondents in terms of gender, age, type of institution, and parental education, providing a diverse sample for the study.
- ❖ Student engagement differs significantly across types of institutions, with private-aided schools and colleges showing the highest engagement, followed by self-financing and government institutions ( $F = 8.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- ❖ Parental education, social background, and type of institution significantly influence student engagement, with students from graduate/postgraduate parents and general social background being more engaged (Parental Education:  $F = 12.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; Social Background:  $F = 6.72$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; Type of Institution:  $F = 8.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- ❖ Academic performance varies significantly with levels of perceived service quality, with students perceiving high service quality achieving the highest scores, indicating a positive relationship between service quality and academic outcomes ( $F = 14.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- ❖ Student satisfaction differs significantly across institutional support services, with library facilities and administrative support receiving higher satisfaction scores than counselling services ( $F = 12.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- ❖ Garrett Ranking indicates that student engagement and academic performance are the most influential factors in determining overall student satisfaction, followed by parental education and social background.
- ❖ Variables such as library facilities, administrative support, and counselling services contribute to satisfaction but are ranked lower than engagement and academic performance, suggesting institutions should prioritize academic and engagement-related interventions.
- ❖ Physical infrastructure and faculty support are relatively less influential in affecting student satisfaction, indicating that while important, non-academic support and engagement factors have greater impact.
- ❖ Overall, institutional environment, parental influence, social background, service quality, and support services collectively affect student engagement, academic performance, and satisfaction.
- ❖ The findings highlight the need for educational institutions to enhance service quality, provide effective support services, and foster engagement to improve student outcomes and satisfaction.

## SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Educational institutions should **focus on improving student engagement** by adopting interactive teaching methods, group activities, and participatory learning approaches.
- ❖ Private-aided and self-financing institutions' practices that enhance engagement can be **adapted in government schools and colleges** to bridge the engagement gap.
- ❖ Institutions should **strengthen library facilities and administrative support**, as these were identified as key contributors to student satisfaction.
- ❖ **Counselling services** should be made more accessible and proactive to address students' academic and personal concerns effectively.
- ❖ Faculty should provide **timely feedback, mentorship, and academic guidance** to support students' learning and performance.

- ❖ Programs to **enhance parental involvement and awareness** can be implemented, as parental education significantly influences student engagement.
- ❖ Institutions should **regularly assess service quality** through surveys and feedback mechanisms to identify areas for improvement.
- ❖ Investment in **physical infrastructure and learning resources** should continue, but with a focus on services that directly impact satisfaction and engagement.
- ❖ Overall, a **holistic approach combining academic support, institutional services, and social inclusivity** is recommended to improve student engagement, academic performance, and satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that student engagement, academic performance, and satisfaction in educational institutions of Kerala are influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Private-aided schools and colleges exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to government and self-financing institutions, highlighting the impact of institutional environment and resources. Parental education and social background significantly affect engagement, indicating the importance of family and social context in students' learning experiences. Perceived service quality positively correlates with academic performance, emphasizing the role of reliable, responsive, and supportive educational services. Among institutional support services, library facilities and administrative support contribute most to student satisfaction, while counselling, faculty support, and physical infrastructure play relatively smaller but still important roles. Garrett Ranking further confirms that student engagement and academic performance are the primary determinants of overall satisfaction. These findings suggest that educational institutions should adopt a holistic approach, enhancing both academic and support services, fostering engagement, and addressing social disparities to improve student outcomes and satisfaction effectively.

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