

Student Satisfaction towards College Canteen Services in Chitwan and Nawalpur Districts of Nepal

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Abstract

Every student experiences hunger and seeks to satisfy it with clean, well-balanced foods. College canteens have been established primarily to meet this need, serving as essential gathering places where students can enjoy delicious and nutritious meals. This study applied a non-experimental descriptive correlational research design to investigate the correlation between student satisfaction and the quality of canteen services in the Chitwan and Nawalpur districts of Nepal. A total of one hundred and three candidates responded to the questionnaires, which were distributed on a completely random basis. The data from these one hundred and three samples were analyzed using statistical tools to measure canteen service quality across parameters such as assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility. Based on dimensions like facilities, features, ambiance, cleanliness, and cost, the satisfaction of students was evaluated. Multiple metrics were employed to enable a multi-dimensional assessment.

The study applied relevant analytical tools like Pearson's correlation and regression analyses to enhance the reliability and precision of insights into the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. The findings indicated that students regarded the level of service at the canteen as moderately satisfactory, with overall student satisfaction. A notable positive correlation was identified between the level of canteen services and student satisfaction, highlighting specific aspects such as tangibility and empathy that strongly influence this association. Therefore, it is suggested by the study that prioritizing the enhancement of service quality by college canteen managers should entail focusing on improving the tangibility and empathy aspects identified as significant indicators of student satisfaction in this study.

Keywords: *cleanness, correlation, quality of services, regression, students' satisfaction*

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Introduction

Providing a diverse range of snacks, beverages, and meals, a canteen ensures that students receive the critical nutrition required to maintain their daily tasks and assignments. Student satisfaction with college canteens is of paramount importance as today's diverse and demanding students have high expectations for their food experiences. The canteen serves as a social hub on college, impacting student's overall satisfaction with their college life and potentially influencing their decision to stay at the institution. The domains of canteen service quality significantly influence student satisfaction (Galabo, 2019), especially tangibility, responsiveness, and empathy. College administrators should monitor and watch the canteen service provider's operations on regular intervals (Pawar, 2024). Factors affecting satisfaction include the variety and quality of food options, speed of service, cleanliness, seating availability, affordability, and flexible hours of operation. Students seek diverse menus, well-trained staff, clean environments and cost-effective choices. To maintain student loyalty and revenue, colleges must actively gather and act on student feedback through survey and other methods to continuously enhance the canteen experience, ultimately contributing to a positive college experience. Furthermore, encouraging a healthy diet has a variety of positive health impacts, including lowering the risk of chronic illnesses and enhancing general well-being (World Health Organization, 2019). Thus, a canteen must actively promote and provide options for a healthy diet to fulfill its role in supporting students' academic pursuits and overall well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The study endeavored to delve into the four pivotal inquiries which are to assess the level of tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy of the services provided by college canteens, to determine how satisfied students are with the college canteens, to determine whether there is a significant correlation between student satisfaction and different canteen service quality

dimensions and to determine which domains of canteen service quality expressively impact students satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

This study examined the substantial connection between service quality levels and student satisfaction within colleges situated in the Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. The research has potential benefits for different stakeholders. College administrators can use the findings to shape policies and improve canteen services for students, potentially incorporating these enhancements into broader college improvement plans. Canteen managers can identify areas for improvement and provide better service to students. Educators can be inspired to offer feedback to enhance affordability, nutrition, facility maintenance, cleanliness, and sanitation. Students can gain practical insights into canteen operations and services. Additionally, this study is a useful starting point for future investigations into customer satisfaction with canteen and restaurant services, particularly the impact of service quality dimensions on overall customer satisfaction levels.

Hypothesis

The formulated hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: There is significant relationship between the domains of canteen service quality and student satisfaction.

H₂: The satisfaction of students is significantly affected by the different aspects of canteen service quality.

These hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05.

Limitation

The study exclusively focused on gathering input from a specific group of BBA students who are affiliated with Pokhara University in the Chitwan and Nawalpur district, with a particular emphasis on their opinions regarding canteen service quality and satisfaction. It must be noted that above mentioned findings might not provide a comprehensive representation of all the institutions affiliated with Pokhara University and would not fully capture the general perspective

of the BBA undergraduate population linked affiliated with Pokhara University in Chitwan and Nawalpur area. Furthermore, it does not give the whole perspective of all the students in the Chitwan and Nawalpur districts.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Our analysis is rooted in the American theoretical perspective introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988), known as the SERVQUAL scale. The focus of the research revolves around the concept of service quality, its underlying causes, and strategies for service organizations to improve quality. Lai (2004) underscores the implication of the SERVQUAL model in considerate the interplay among service quality and customer satisfaction, where customer potentials play a critical responsibility. This study is built upon previous research exploring satisfaction in service settings, where customer attitudes towards different attributes are considered. Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed a service quality perfect, identifying ten determinants of service quality where service quality elements were categorized into the five SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness and empathy. The conceptual framework of the study is based on these metrics, which are associated in the context of college canteen services. The independent factors are assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility in canteen service quality, and the dependent factor is student satisfaction.

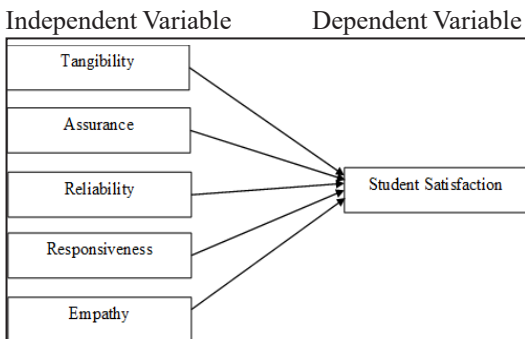


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework is determined and the canteen service quality which includes

measures like tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy is the independent variable. Student satisfaction is the dependent variable, and it is assessed using the services that Pokhara University affiliated college canteens in Chitwan and Nawalpur districts (see Figure 1).

Literature Review

A comprehensive presentation of diverse perspectives from authors, research findings from prior studies, and a range of ideas contributed by researchers concerning canteen service quality and its impact on student satisfaction is intentionally provided in this segment. The selection of literature was carried out with careful consideration to ensure both its meaningful contribution and alignment with the study's objectives. Furthermore, the incorporation of shared viewpoints enhances the discourse within this research, fostering a more comprehensive understanding and insight for the researcher into the current investigation.

Canteen Service Quality

Defining quality can be challenging because it's a subjective concept that varies from person to person (Cerrigione, 2021). How one customer perceives a product or service may differ from another. Quality can be understood through five main lenses: the transcendent view sees it as synonymous with 'innate excellence'; the product-based approach defines it as a precisely measurable variable; user-based definitions consider quality subjective, varying with individual perspective; manufacturing-based definitions view quality as 'conformance to requirements'; and value-based definitions extend quality to include considerations of costs and prices (MIT Sloan Management Review, 1984). Kasper et al. (2006) identified five characteristics of services that serve as determinants of service quality. Firstly, services must be assessed post-purchase, as they cannot be owned like products. Secondly, the intangibility of services poses challenges in evaluating both what is offered and the quality of delivery. Thirdly, services are intertwined with the individuals engaged in their creation and utilization, with customer involvement influencing outcomes. Fourthly,



service quality exhibits variability over time due to heterogeneity. Lastly, the perishable nature of services, being time-sensitive, influences service quality. Jun et al. (2004) studied key elements of online retail service quality were found by the study, which also showed that overall service quality is greatly impacted by the access dimension, but not satisfaction. Nonetheless, customer satisfaction and total service quality are positively correlated.

Tangibility

Tangibility refers to the physical attributes of the service, including facilities, staff presentation, and the overall atmosphere (Alarussi, 2016). According to Marić et al. (2016), tangibility includes physical objects, equipment, appearance of staff, and user presence.

Assurance

Assurance incorporates competency, courtesy, and the capacity to nurture the client's trust and confidence in the service provider (Mawi et al., 2023). Furthermore, Sangpikul (2022) emphasizes that assurance pertains to the knowledge and courtesy of employees, as well as their capacity to foster trust and confidence. These definitions underscore assurance's key elements: employee competence and knowledge, courtesy towards customers, and fostering trust in the service provider's capabilities.

Reliability

Reliability centers on the consistent and dependable delivery of services (Arlen, 2023). It involves accurately fulfilling orders, maintaining accurate records, providing precise quotes, correct billing, and accurately calculating commissions, ensuring that the service lives up to its promises to the customer (Yang & Fang, 2004). In essence, reliability ensures consistent, accurate, and timely delivery of promised services, thereby fostering customer trust and satisfaction.

Responsiveness

Responsive means being prepared to help clients and provide prompt service (Arlen, 2023). To achieve success, businesses must prioritize responsiveness based on the customer's

perspective rather than solely considering the company's viewpoint (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006). A service that is highly responsive shows a readiness to promptly assist customers, addressing their needs and inquiries in a timely manner, thereby improving customer satisfaction.

Empathy

Empathy refers to the provision of considerate and individualized service by the company to its clients (Arlen, 2023). Furthermore, it involves giving individual attention to customers, encompassing qualities such as sensitivity, approachability, and understanding their requirements. The facets of sympathy that contribute to elevated levels of customer satisfaction include offering personalized care and involvement, the capacity to predict a customer's needs, and creating a sense of being special (Harr, 2008).

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction, as defined by Elliott and Shin (2002) was the subjective evaluation of a student's educational outcomes and skills. While challenges exist in establishing a standardized definition, researchers often adapt customer satisfaction theory to clarify this concept. Recognizing students as "customers" in the evolving landscape of higher education, despite potential risks, this perspective acknowledges students as fee-paying individuals with legitimate expectations (Van Ossel, 2003). Elliott and Healy (2001) defined student satisfaction as a short-term feelings resulting from the estimation of educational experiences. Satisfaction refers to the enjoyable sensation experienced by individuals when their needs or desires are fulfilled, manifesting within their cognitive realm. In summary, understanding student satisfaction involves considering their experiences as "customers" and recognizing the impact of service quality, pricing, and food attributes on their overall contentment.

Research Gap

The existing research on canteen services and student satisfaction reveals a notable scarcity of studies conducted in Nepal, particularly in the



Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. An analysis of the existing literature highlights a predominant emphasis on Pearson Correlation and Regression Analyses in most research papers, specifically concerning numerous dimensions of SERVQUAL, including tangible, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. In consideration of these findings, this study targets to enhance the current research by examining deeper understanding into the existing work the research question is set as “what is the level of canteen service quality, using mean ratings as the primary indicator?”.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a non-experimental quantitative approach with the correlational study method. This study was mostly descriptive in nature because its main objectives were to estimate the canteen’s service quality and student’s satisfaction in Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. It also fits into the correlational category because it aimed to investigate whether the quality of the canteen service influenced students’ satisfaction.

Sample and Population

This research focused on BBA colleges affiliated with Pokhara University in Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. The selected colleges were Valley State College, Boston International College, and Oxford College of Engineering and Management. Data collection involved distributing a structured questionnaire to the sample students of above mentioned colleges between June 24, 2023, and July 3, 2024. The questionnaires were delivered to the candidates at random, and one hundred and three (N=103) of them answered them in all. Statistical techniques were then applied to the collected survey data, which is presented in tabular form.

Research Instrument

For this analysis, a survey questionnaire focusing on service quality and student satisfaction was applied as the primary method for data collection. The questionnaire, adapted from Galabo (2019) and modified to suit the Nepalese

context, was prepared using SERVQUAL criteria and underwent a pilot test to ensure reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha values were calculated for each domain, yielding satisfactory results that ranged from 0.701 to 0.883. Specifically, the results were as follows: 0.701 for assurance, 0.747 for empathy, .809 for tangibility, 0.831 for reliability, 0.880 for responsiveness, and 0.883 for student satisfaction. These values surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.6, indicating the consistency and reliability of the constructs used. Face validity was ensured through adjustments aligning with the study’s objectives and validation by subject matter experts. The questionnaire underwent further refinement based on valuable feedback from the advisor. Respondents, students from Pokhara University affiliated BBA colleges in Chitwan and Nawalpur districts, expressed their perceptions using a five-point Likert rating scale. All things were considered, the measures employed in this study demonstrated validity and reliability in gathering relevant data on student satisfaction and service quality in the specific context.

Five-point Likert rating scale

A Likert-type scale was employed to collect data regarding the quality of the canteen service. This scale is designed to capture respondents’ levels of satisfaction across a five-point range. The highest level, “Highly Satisfied” (4.20 - 5.00), indicates that respondents find the canteen service to be exceptional. Following this, the “Very Satisfied” range (3.50 - 4.19) signifies that the service is highly pleasing. The middle range, “Moderately Satisfied” (2.60 - 3.49), suggests that the quality of the service is reasonably acceptable. Moving down the scale, “Rarely Satisfied” (1.80 - 2.59) reflects that the service seldom meets satisfaction. Finally, the lowest level, “Not Satisfied” (1.00 - 1.79), indicates that the quality of the canteen service is lacking. This scale provides a nuanced view of customer satisfaction, allowing for detailed analysis of service quality perceptions.

Data Gathering Procedure

Following the necessary ethical approvals, we distributed questionnaire via email and

messenger, with participants urged to provide honest responses for the sake of acquiring valid and reliable data. Prior to disseminating the questionnaire, we clarified the survey’s objective to ensure participant comprehension. To ensure data accuracy, the collected responses underwent recording and classification, facilitated by statistical analysis. After that, the data were compiled and tabulated in preparation for statistical analysis. Using the Jamovi software to assist with the data’s analysis and interpretation in line with the study’s objectives was the final step.

Results and Discussion

Different statistical studies were performed on the gathered data to evaluate different elements. The mean ratings from surveys were calculated to determine the canteen services’ quality and the students’ satisfaction. Student satisfaction and canteen service quality were shown to be significantly correlated, as determined by Pearson’s correlation. Regression analysis was also performed to determine the significant effects of different aspects of canteen service quality on student satisfaction.

The perception of students is calculated using 20 variables of service quality and five SERVQUAL dimensions (see Table 1).

Table 1: Perception of the Student on 20 Variables of Service Quality

Items	Mean	SD	SL
Tangibility			
The canteen staffs in my college are well-dressed and appear neat.	3.08	1.01	MS
The physical appearance of the College canteen is neat and presentable.	3.42	1.08	MS
Our canteen have complete and functional equipment.	3.01	1.00	MS
Our canteen provide comfortable facilities in the college.	3.13	1.16	MS
Our canteen assign good staffs.	3.03	1.08	MS
Assurance			
Staff in my college shows the knowledge of products sold in the canteen.	2.98	0.95	MS

Canteen staffs in my college shows positive behavior towards students.	3.58	1.02	MS
Canteen in my college have the ability to inspire students.	2.84	1.05	MS

Reliability

Canteen in my college shows sincere interest towards students.	3.43	1.03	MS
Canteen in my college keep service accurately.	3.10	1.07	MS
Canteen keep service dependently.	3.14	0.95	MS
Canteen in my college have the attitude to entertain the students.	2.67	1.04	MS
Canteen in my college keep staffs cheerful and kind all the time.	3.17	0.95	MS

Responsiveness

Canteen staff in my college always respond to students’ request.	3.19	1.09	MS
Canteen in my college provide prompt (quick) service.	2.87	1.10	MS
Staff in my college canteen have the heart to willingly serve and help the students.	3.35	0.90	MS
Canteen in my college provide good and quality service.	3.05	0.94	MS
Canteen in my college respond to students’ needs.	3.12	1.06	MS

Empathy

Canteen in my college understand the specific needs of the students.	2.95	1.10	MS
Canteen in my college is approachable and friendly to students.	3.48	0.98	MS

Note: SL: Satisfaction Level, VS: Very Satisfied, MS: Moderately Satisfied, RS= Rarely Satisfied, NS= Not Satisfied

Summary on the Level of Canteen Service Quality

The results provides a comprehensive overview of canteen service quality, evaluating dimensions such as tangibility (mean rating: 3.13), assurance (mean rating: 3.13), reliability (mean rating: 3.10), responsiveness (mean rating: 3.11), and empathy (mean rating: 3.21). These mean ratings indicate moderate levels of satisfaction across the evaluated dimensions, culminating in an overall mean rating of 3.13. While falling within a moderately satisfactory range, the findings suggest potential areas for enhancement in meeting student needs across all service quality aspects. Overall, there is room for improvement to elevate the canteen services to a higher standard of quality (see Table 1).

Table 2: Level of Canteen Service Quality

Dimension	Mean	SD	SL
Tangibility	3.13	1.06	MS
Assurance	3.13	1.00	MS
Reliability	3.10	1.00	MS
Responsiveness	3.11	1.01	MS
Empathy	3.21	1.04	MS
Overall	3.13	1.02	MS

Student Satisfaction

The results presents data regarding student satisfaction levels. It encompasses ten key aspects, each assigned a mean score, standard deviation, and a descriptive satisfaction level. Notably, aspects such as friendly and accommodating personnel, affordability of food, and strategic location received high satisfaction ratings, categorized. In contrast, criteria related to personnel hygiene and prompt customer service received lower ratings, indicating room for improvement. In summary, the canteen received a moderately satisfied rating, averaging a mean score of 3.21. This suggests an overall positive experience, though there may be room for improvement in certain aspects to enhance the dining experience further (see Table 2).

Table 3: Student Satisfaction

Items	Mean	SD	SL
The staff at the canteen is welcoming and accommodating.	3.51	0.91	VS

To maintain cleanliness in the preparation and handling of food, canteen personnel wear gloves and a hairnet	2.24	1.08	RS
The staff members of the canteen provide quick and efficient entertainment to students.	2.72	1.03	MS
The canteen's tools, equipment, and utensils are clean and sanitized.	3.29	1.03	MS
The goods on exhibit in the clean and well-presented canteen and include the necessary nutritive worth.	3.05	1.01	MS
The canteen's food items are reasonably priced for the students.	3.50	0.97	VS
The canteen is kept in good condition.	3.43	0.88	MS
The canteen has excellent management and organization.	3.31	0.99	MS
The canteen has a pleasant, revitalizing atmosphere.	3.37	0.93	MS
All students can easily access and find convenience in the canteen's strategic location.	3.70	0.87	VS
Overall Mean	3.21	0.97	MS

The Correlation between Canteen Service and Student Satisfaction

The results of a correlational study examining the connection between student satisfaction and the quality of canteen services are presented in Table 4. Every aspect of the canteen service was assessed in terms of the extent to which it affected students' satisfaction. The correlational coefficients (r-values) for assurance (0.720), tangibility (0.763), responsiveness (0.794), empathy (0.776), and reliability (0.766) were all found to have p-values less than 0.001. The results show a considerable positive correlation

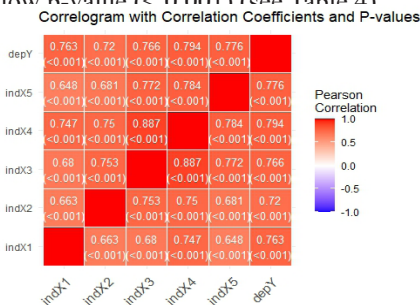
between student satisfactions in several dimensions, including assurance, tangibility, responsiveness, empathy, and reliability, and the canteen service quality. These show a very significant positive correlation.

Figure 2: Correlation Matrix

Note: *indX1= Tangibility, indX2= Assurance, indX3= Reliability, indX4= Responsiveness, indX5 = Empathy, depY= Student Satisfaction*

Relationship between Canteen Service Quality Domains and Students’ Satisfaction Model Fit Measures

With a remarkable R-square value of 0.751, the linear regression analysis shows an excellent fit for the model, suggesting that the independent variables are responsible for around 75.1% of the variance in student satisfaction. The overall model is highly statistically significant, supported by a substantial F-statistic (58.4) and a very low p-value (< 0.001) (see Table 4).



predefined significant alpha level (0.05). The findings signify that tangibility and empathy make significant contributions to student satisfaction. This suggests that assurance, reliability, and responsiveness do not significantly influence student satisfaction. Focusing on canteen service quality attributes such as tangibility and empathy

is likely to be a key predictor of higher levels of student satisfaction. In essence, prioritizing these specific aspects of service quality is expected to result in heightened levels of student satisfaction (see Table 5).

Table 5: Model Coefficients for Regression Model

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
indX1	0.521	0.134	3.897	<0.001
indX2	0.365	0.236	1.546	0.125
indX3	0.185	0.206	0.899	0.371
indX4	0.233	0.205	1.132	0.26
indX5	1.078	0.315	3.417	<0.001

Hypothesis Result

Based on the correlational analysis, student satisfaction demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with the dimensions tangibility ($r = 0.763, p < 0.001$), assurance ($r = 0.720, p < 0.001$), reliability ($r = 0.766, p < 0.001$), responsiveness ($r = 0.794, p < 0.001$), and empathy ($r = 0.776, p < 0.001$). The result of the correlation test suggested a significant correlation between the domains of canteen service quality and student satisfaction(see Figure 2).

Moreover, the results of the regression analysis in Table 6 demonstrate that two domains of canteen service quality emerged as significant predictors of student satisfaction: tangibility ($p < 0.001$) and empathy ($p < 0.001$). However, assurance ($p = 0.125$), responsiveness ($p = 0.260$), and reliability ($p = 0.371$) did not appear to have a significant effect on student satisfaction. A noteworthy R-squared value of 0.751 was obtained from the linear regression analysis presented in Table 5, showing an excellent fit for the model and suggesting that the independent factors (canteen service quality dimensions) account for 75% of the variance in student satisfaction. The high statistical significance of the overall model was evident from a small p-value (< 0.001) and a large F-statistic (58.4). Consequently, the hypothesis test shows that there is a strong relationship between the aspects of the quality of the canteen service, particularly tangibility and empathy. It is abundantly evident from the strong model fit



and statistical significance that the aspects of canteen service quality have a major impact on student satisfaction.

The study explored two hypotheses with a significance threshold of 0.05 (see Table 6).

Table 6: Hypothesis Table

Null Hypothesis	Result
H ₁ : There is significant relationship between the domains of canteen service quality and student satisfaction.	Rejected
H ₂ : The satisfaction of students is significantly affected by the various aspects of canteen service quality.	Rejected

Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the quality of canteen services and student satisfaction levels in colleges across Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. Overall, the quality of canteen services was rated as moderately satisfactory by the survey respondents. In line with this assessment, student satisfaction with their college canteens was also found to be moderately positive. A key finding that emerged was the substantial connection established between canteen service quality and student satisfaction - suggesting that efforts to improve college canteen operations could enhance the student experience. Specifically, dimensions such as tangibility and empathy, were identified as impactful service quality domains influencing student satisfaction. In summary, the research indicates room for improvement in canteen service delivery to boost satisfaction levels among the student population across the surveyed colleges in Chitwan and Nawalpur districts. Targeted measures to uplift performance around Tangibility and empathy could be promising starting points to increase service quality and satisfaction over time. Based on the study's findings of moderate satisfaction, it is recommended that the college canteen enhances service quality through collaboration, feedback systems, adherence to hygiene protocols, efficient service, and active patron support for continuous improvement.

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