

## **Impact of quality of academic staff on student satisfaction: A case of State Universities in Sri Lanka**

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### **Introduction**

With the global expansion, nowadays the importance of education has increased than earlier. Many people enter to education irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity and even age. Sri Lanka is not an exceptional case in this context. The number of university entrants of the country increases annually sideline to population growth, therefore the demand for postgraduate studies has also gone up since last few years. Resulting state and private sectors are expanding the avenues for education competitively through introducing an array of programs so as to capture the increasing demand in the field. The competition has led many institutions to take an increased interest in student satisfaction as students are the key stakeholders in higher education. Institutions can also be benefited from student satisfaction in several other ways; for example, satisfied students are less likely to drop out, more likely to achieve higher grades and more likely to engage in positive word of mouth. Student satisfaction in higher education is influenced by many different factors in which quality of academic staff is one of the powerful facts that determine student satisfaction in higher education literature (Hill et al., 2003; Douglas et al., 2006).

Teaching is one of the main responsibilities of university academics and it greatly influences overall quality and image of the institute in long run. Research have found that lecturers performance in and outside of class is significant for enhancing students' loyalty and satisfaction (Abdullah, 2006; Banwet & Datta, 2003; Douglas et al., 2006). As universities are in a business of providing higher education, classroom experience will be a primary determinant of student satisfaction (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). According to Hill et al., (2003) teaching quality has a significant effect on student satisfaction. Douglas et al. (2006) found that both internal students and external students have ranked teaching ability of staff and experience of staff on the subject as most important factors of student satisfaction. A study conducted by Garcl and Aracil (2009) in eleven European countries found that teaching quality and teaching/learning materials have higher influence on student satisfaction. Wiers-Jensenn (2003) also reported a significant relationship between quality of teaching and student satisfaction in Norwegian higher education. However, empirical literature on the

underline phenomenon in the Sri Lankan context is very limited and inconclusive. Thus, the objective of the study is to examine the impact of quality of academic staff on student satisfaction in state universities in Sri Lanka.

### **Methodology**

The study is an applied, quantitative type deductive study which aims to examine the impact of quality of university academic staff on student satisfaction at selected state universities in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, student satisfaction works as dependent variable and quality of university academic staff works as the independent variable which is measured on four dimensions: lecturer's knowledge, quality of delivery, support to the learning process and fair evaluation. Undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, and Wayamba University of Sri Lanka were considered as the population of the study. The target population consisted with second and third-year management undergraduates and out of them 10 percent was selected as the sample based on simple random sampling technique. The study used a structured questionnaire that consists two sections. Section one consists of personal data of the respondent and the section two consists of 19 items on Likert type 5 scale to measure the key variables. Questionnaires were distributed among respondents at the respective classrooms at the selected universities. The data were analyzed using SPSS 20 version statistical software. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to ensure the discriminant and convergent validities of the constructs. Face and content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through sound literature review and receiving comments from two subject experts in Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. An exploratory factor analysis was used to test the construct validity of the items included in the questionnaire. According to the factor analysis, the component extracted and KMO values were greater than standard level 0.7 and 0.5 respectively (Hair, 2008). All Cronbach Alpha values of the constructs were greater than the standard level 0.7 indicating that items used are internally consistent. Correlation and regression analyses were used in the data analysis.

### **Results and discussion**

The demographic analysis shows that the majority in the sample was females (73%) and sample fairly consists of both second (46%) and third year (54%) students. Descriptive statistics indicate that academic staff of selected universities has a broader theoretical and practical knowledge in their specialization and quality delivering of lectures and fair evaluation. It implies that the lecturers teach interestingly, using understandable language, prepare well for lectures, allow students to raise questions during sessions and evaluate students fairly on

standardized methods. Further, students seek effective support from the academic staff throughout the learning process. The mean value of student satisfaction was 3.7. It indicates that students of the universities are satisfied with the system.

The association between independent and dependent variable were measured through the correlation analysis. According to the test correlation coefficients of broader knowledge, quality of delivery, support to the learning process and fair evaluation were 0.454, 0.421, 0.395 and 0.354 respectively and those were significant at 0.05 level. It delineates that broader knowledge, quality of delivery, support for learning process and fair evaluation are positively associated with student satisfaction.

The multicollinearity test reveals that there is no multicollinearity issues among the independents variables as estimated the Variance Inflation Factor were ranged from 1.84 to 2.46 which are well below the critical value 10 (Hair, 2008). The problem of heteroscedasticity does not also exist in the data set as Durbin Watson value (1.78) gets closer to critical value 2. The explanatory power (adjusted  $R^2$ ) of the model is 28.6. It reveals that selected variables of the study have sufficient ability to explain the variation of student satisfaction.

**Table 1** Regression result

Variable	Regression Coefficient	T	Sig
Constant	2.771	4.916	.000**
Broader Knowledge	.363	4.539	.000**
Quality of Delivery	.256	2.657	.008**
Support for learning process	.181	2.132	.034**
Fair Evaluation	.067	.882	.378

*Dependent Variable: Student Satisfaction, \*\* Significant at 0.05 level*

According to the regression result in Table 1, the coefficient of broader knowledge, quality of delivery, support for learning process are 0.363, 0.256 and 0.181 respectively and significant at 0.05 level. Accordingly, changes of the aforementioned variable will lead to enhance student satisfaction at selected universities. However, the impact of fair evaluation on student satisfaction is not significant at 0.05 level. Thus, resulting change of student evaluation process does not make any significant impact on the student satisfaction.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study examined the impact of quality of academic staff on student satisfaction under four dimensions collecting data from 408 respondents covering three state universities of Sri Lanka naming Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, and Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. The light of the results indicated that the impact of lecturer's broader knowledge, quality of their delivering process and supportive learning process have significant effect on student satisfaction. These findings are aligned with

previous studies (Elliot & Shin, 2002; Hill et al., 2003; Navarro et al., 2003; Douglas et al. 2006; Garcl & Aracil, 2009; Voss, 2009). However, effect of fair evaluation on student satisfaction is not significant and the reason might be the fact that students feel fear to question about the evaluation process of lecturer during the learning period. Based on the findings study recommends academic staff in regional universities to concentrate their efforts in knowledge acquisition, enhancing lecture delivering quality and providing learning support to enhance student satisfaction. In this process, the required theoretical and practical knowledge about subjects can be taken from continuous reading and research process. Further quality of delivering lectures can be enhanced through teaching subject interestingly using understandable language, advanced preparation and allowing students to raise questions during sessions. Moreover, academic staff can help students in learning process providing quality learning materials, references and especially more personal contact hours for students. These practices of academies would help to keep students more interested and satisfied in the leaning process

**Keywords:** *Academic staff, broader knowledge, quality, satisfaction.*

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