



DEVELOPING SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: ADAPTATION OF EXISTING FRAMEWORK IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Academic libraries' offerings have been significantly transformed ever since twenty years ago. Nowadays, resources are available in both electronic and print formats; database networks and the role of internet have influenced the functions and services of academic libraries. Quality and quantity of academic library services and resources respectively are considered as important aspects for academic library excel and thus any kind of library has to focus at providing the premier quality of offerings. A quality service is met when users are satisfied with their expectations and needs. Quality and performance assessment of libraries is very important in managing academic libraries and information service as it produces data that can help librarians make decisions and improve services. In the past twenty years, service quality of an academic library was measured in respect to the shelved volume of resources and the trend of its circulation to library users. Such kind of assessment is no longer effective in fulfilling the objectives for positively assessing the library user's needs for resources. Now days SERVQUAL and LibQUAL are considered important approaches used to assess the quality of library collection and services. Academic libraries and particularly in developing countries like Tanzania are further advised to adapt these models to effectively assess the quality of library services.

Keywords: *Academic library, Quality service, SERVQUAL, LibQUAL, Librarians.*

1. Introduction

Academic library is considered as a crucial element which builds up the university academic programmes. As it is a complex structure, it has a role of transforming and reorganization of its construction, management and strives for growth of knowledge and skills and thus satisfies the anticipation and demand of customers. An academic library provides an interactive environment which leads to competence development and attainment of knowledge and skills. The main objective is to add value and motivate for progression, deliver and make specific attitude, knowledge and skills based on the institution programmed pattern of teaching and learning, researching and consultation services (Melo de Carvalho & Dominguez, 2012).

Libraries' services were tremendously transformed in the previous twenty years. Currently, resources are available in both electronic and paper-based layout. Also, networks and the online information databases signify a great portion of the library services. This phenomenon calls attention to library directors to manage other staff members and information in various assistance and technical approaches to end-up with improved quality services. However, library staff must employ managerial tools to efficiently sustain libraries' services. Quality and performance evaluation of libraries is crucial in running academic libraries and provision of services, as it is through evaluation process the library staff can develop information necessary for decision making and improvement of services to meet and satisfy the customers. In the past twenty years, researchers and library staff over the universe have developed performance parameters and methodological approaches for traditional library services (Melo et al., 2011).

In addition, the traditional measurement of quality of library collection is being described in respect to the shelved volumes and trend of its usage statistics. Such kind of assessment is no longer effective in fulfilling the objectives for positively assessing the library user's needs for resources (Sahu, 2007). Now days SERVQUAL and LibQUAL are considered important approaches used to assess the service quality of academic libraries. The SERVQUAL approach was established by Parasuraman, Valarie Zeithaml and Leonard Berry in early 70's and has developed as a mechanism to assess what user's values as imperative (Nitecki & Hernon, 2000). It is from this perspective that all academic libraries and particularly those in developing countries like Tanzania are supposed to adopt the new innovations toward service quality measurement. Specifically, this paper is focused at determining: the library service quality measuring framework applied in Tanzania, role of library staff in promoting quality services, initiatives and challenges of academic libraries in adapting the modern service quality measuring framework.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are regarded as the heart of higher learning institutions. It refers to the libraries dedicated to "tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnic institutions, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology and also research institutes" (Prytherch, 1989 and Akporhonor, 2005). Academic libraries are at the fore line of providing information resource services to their conforming people which encompass of students, instructors, and researchers for the purpose of assisting their teaching and learning, consultations services and research work.

2.2 Service Quality

The idea of service quality in the field of library is referred to the gap between users' anticipations and observations of service presentation and the authenticity of the service rendered. Service quality can reveal on the phenomenon of librarians' capacity to anticipate services from the user's point of view and in the end identify a break-through meeting the user anticipation for service (Sahu, 2007).

Parasuraman et al. (1988) described quality with reference to customers' perspective. Five aspects from which customers can evaluate for quality service are identified as: reliability which signifies the ability of library staff to accomplish the undertaken service both consistently and correctly; responsiveness of librarian towards the readiness to assist clients and to deliver quick service; assurance - which encompasses the understanding and courtesy of librarians as well as their capacity to bear trust and self-confidence; empathy which is incorporated by compassionate and customized care to clients; and tangibles which is reflected from the presence of physical services, working facilities, professional staff and communicé resources.

2.3 Disconfirmation Theory for Library Service Quality Measurement

The disconfirmation theory is the most common and broadly applied model for reviewing customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction up on services offered, disconfirmation of expectations, is originated from the field of marketing. On the field of library, the idea of disconfirmation theory postulates that library customers assess the quality and the expectation based on some cognitive or assessment standards. Customer satisfaction and disconfirmation results from a comparison with the customers' expectations and the service provided, signifying whether it is better than or less than what was anticipated. Generally, the disconfirmation of expectation pattern conceptualizes customer satisfaction and disconfirmation as the following process: disconfirmation is the customer's assessment of a quality of product relative to his or her expectations. When a product quality is greater than expectation, results to positive disconfirmation, customers are satisfied with services and products. When a product quality falls short of expectations, results to negative disconfirmation, customers are dissatisfied (Levy & Shi, 2005).

Yi (1990) advocates that *"a positive disconfirmation means quality performance is better than expected, and a negative disconfirmation means quality performance is worse than expected. The better quality performance is, or the more positive the disconfirmation, the greater the satisfaction. Confirmation occurs when product quality and expectations correspond, resulting in moderate satisfaction or indifference"*.

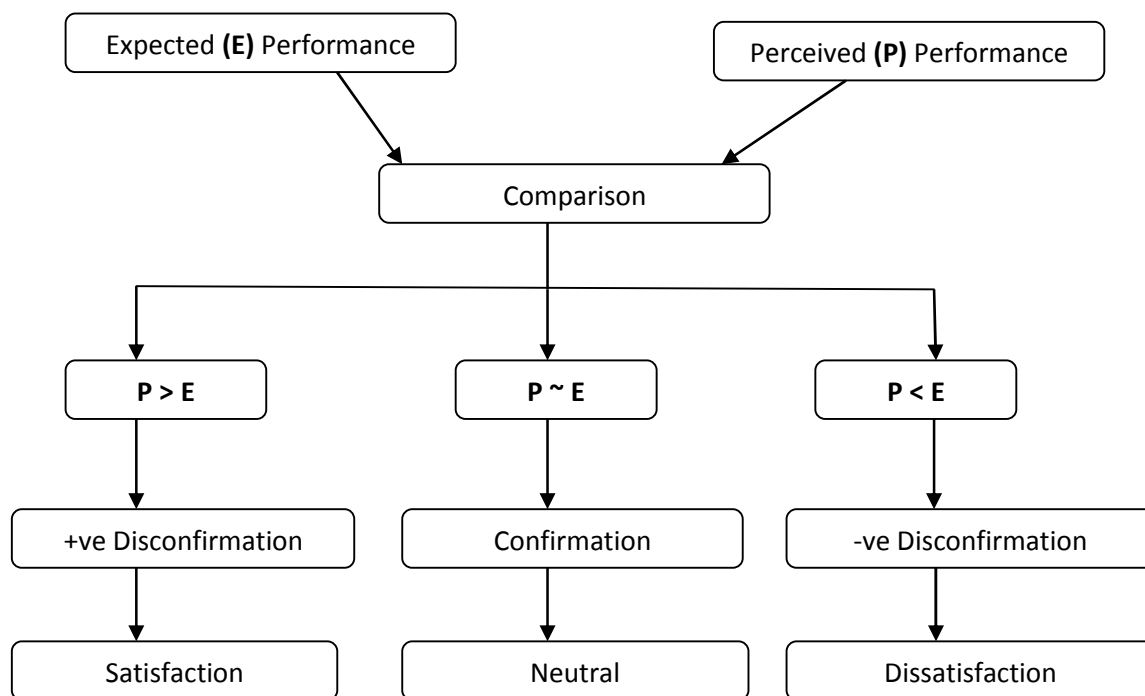


Figure 1. Disconfirmation theory model, Source (Levy & Shi, 2005)



2.4 Modern Quality Measurement Framework in Academic Libraries

In the field of library and information science, service quality is being assessed using different models which include: the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model, the Balanced Scorecard Model (BSC), the SERVQUAL Model, the SERVPERF Model, the Library and Information Sector Improvement Model (LISIM), the Rodski Behavioural Research Group framework and the LibQUAL based on the SERVQUAL Model. All these models focus at assessing service quality for development, responsibility, to pay attention on collection and for existence reasons (Arveson, 1998; Marnane, 2004 and Retief, 2005). SERVQUAL and LibQUAL are common mechanisms used for service quality assessment. LibQUAL is a complement of facilities that libraries use to appeal, trace, comprehend, and work upon clients' moods of service quality. The LibQUAL assessment developed from a conceptual model grounded on the SERVQUAL mechanism, a commonly approach for assessing and evaluating service quality at diverse organizations (Green & Kyrillidou, 2011).

The LibQUAL model adopts the SERVQUAL parameters of accountability, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles and three more dimensions of: service affect, resources and means of access (information control) and the library as place. LibQUAL assess the gap between the level of facility a customer expects and the level of facility offered by librarians (*see annex ii*).

LibQUAL was introduced in 2000 as a trial scheme for benchmarking insights of library service quality and one of the exclusive landscapes of the LibQUAL mechanism is that it does not only assess customer insights, it also incarcerations their prospects. Each question require customers to spot three tallies: one for the least standards, the second for the expected level of facility, and the other one for the insight of the service they principally receive. The gap between the least value score and the expected value score is known as the "area of patience". The dimension updates the analysis of client perception. For instance, if the overall gap of all marks is widespread (the lowest mark is very low, and the anticipated mark is very high) this proposes that library customers are more tolerance about the differences in the library's capacity to assess issue pertaining to quality of library services. Meanwhile, if the gap is lower, this shows that there are high prospects for the library to reach the mark. It is vital to be aware of the fact that the "area" can also shift up and down based on how significant the case is to library users (Kyrillidou, 2006).

2.4.1 SERVQUAL Measuring Framework

SERVQUAL is a current mechanism used to assess service quality; its results are valuable for confined forecasting and policy-making. It also distinguishes between service quality and gratification and fosters a way forward for advanced studies. SERVQUAL is an analytical mechanism to determine service quality, well-defined as the difference between customers' insights and prospects of the service offered. SERVQUAL is being used in wider professional continuum; it include; educational, community, governments, and special library collection. However, it is imperative for library staff to understand how well their presentation is by receiving reaction from clients as it is the influence through which libraries can flourish in service presentation. The SERVQUAL comprises of five parameters and each parameter is determined by four (4) to five (5) aspects totaling to 22 aspects determining the prospects of customers regarding the service and also the supposed level of service essentially rendered (Nitecki & Hernon, 2000). The five parameters as according to Nitecki and Hernon (2000) as cited in Parasuraman et al. (1988) are: reliability of services provided, responsiveness which determines the willingness of professional librarians in service provision, assurance which measures knowledge and politeness of the librarians and their capability to express self-confidence, access which measures the skill to secure for information and finding or searching it as and when it is required and empathy which determines the manners, attitude and tactics of librarians towards customers (Thapisa & Gamini, 1999), (*see annex i*).

2.5 Adaptation of Modern Quality Measurement Framework in Tanzania

Simba (2006) adapted the LibQUAL survey to assess the quality service of academic library. The survey involved 213(72.4%) undergraduate students, 20(64.5%) postgraduate students, and 31(68%) academic staff at the University of Iringa. The survey enclosed the following LibQUAL parameters of service: accountability, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, service affect, resources and means of access and the library as place. The survey revealed that the overall rating of the quality of library service offered to customers by the university library is fairly good. The findings revealed that 148(55.5%) respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that services are good. The findings within the groups revealed that undergraduates 135(58.7%) ranked services higher than did academic staff 17(50%) and postgraduate students 6(30%). Based on these findings, it is evident that, the library is not effective in the delivery of quality service to its customers; hence, the need for improvement. Similarly, Msamula (2015) adapted the SERVQUAL model to assess the service quality of academic library at Mzumbe University and it was observed that clients were satisfied by 61% with quality of services offered by the academic library. However, results showed that students were highly satisfied with responsiveness, reliability and tangible parameters than assurance in service offered by academic library at the institution. Moreover, the study was biased as only students were considered for the study and other potential users like the teaching staff, non-teaching



staff, researchers and the community around the institution was not involved. Also, one of the SERVQUAL parameter of 'empathy' was ignored of which could have added value to the findings.

Moreover, Mwangoso et al. (2015) used a SERVQUAL survey model to measure the quality of academic library offerings at Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies. The study involved 132 students as library users. The five dimensions for SERVQUAL model were assessed and it was revealed that the quality of services at college was fairly good. Findings from this study show that, the level of quality services satisfaction differ from one group of students to another. However, other library users like the teaching staff were not involved in the study as they could have provided useful information on quality of library services.

2.6 The Role of Librarians for Quality Library Services

In the current 21st century, library staff remains to be benchmarked on a solid formation of specialized discipline. The prosperous experts have established expertise in definite capacities, but shape and preserve a resilient, well-versed thoughtful of the academic library, the institution, and the superior intellectual communicate platform. On similar environment these have remained and mentioned as suggestive role of library staff for quality library facilities and resources; proficiency which demand librarians to be well trained and shows a high domain on their roles, guide people by directing and provision of useful and relevant solution to their problems, trustworthiness by performing all the duties the best way a librarian can do, availability and being helpful also pay attention to the customers, provide a personalized treatment to customers by learning their preference and expectations and show respect to customers (Melo et al., 2011).

2.7 Challenges of adaptation to Quality Service Measurement Models in Tanzania

Generally and from the literature reviewed, it show that researches in the developed nations do not identify funds, professional and sufficient librarians, advanced technologies in information and online data sources as significant constraints. But researches conducted in developing nations and in African context in particular, such as that by Opaleke (2002) in Nigeria show that, these are the collective constraints for many African academic libraries including the Tanzania academic libraries. It is essential to visualize that the quality of service in academic libraries is affected by financial constraints, library collection management policies, design and condition of infrastructures, decision making, quality and level of staffing. Budgetary restraints can be the cause of poor quality services in academic libraries. The library which has inadequate financial support cannot recruit competent and sufficient library staff, deliver sufficient collection, infrastructures and equipment, and cope with the advanced technologies in information. It is evident that in such a library it would be a futile endeavor to assess quality service, recognize areas that need perfection or endeavor to meet customer needs and anticipations.

3. Methodology

This paper aimed at developing service quality measurement framework for academic libraries and adaptation of existing framework in Tanzania through identifying the library service quality measuring framework, role of library staff in promoting quality services, initiatives and challenges of academic libraries in adapting the modern service quality measuring framework. A survey on documentary review of the studies on SERVQUAL and LibQUAL frameworks of measuring quality service in academic libraries in Tanzania was comprehended and the main points summarised to meet the specific objectives of the paper. Moreover, a surveyed literature was crucial at providing recommendation and areas for further research studies.

4. Analysis of the Literature Reviewed

From the few and known studies on quality service measurement in academic libraries in Tanzania, it is obvious that, SERVQUAL and LibQUAL models have been commonly applied to some of the academic libraries. There are cases where some of the model parameters were not comprehended. The SERVQUAL parameters are: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Also, service affect, resource and means of access (information control) and library place as parameters for LibQUAL. Similarly, there had been an exclusion of potential library users such as the teaching staff in the process of measuring quality service of the academic library. However, the results from the revised academic libraries revealed that quality service to these cases were fairly good though the adaptability of these models to most of the public and private owned universities is low.

5. Conclusion

Academic library play a crucial function in the distinctive and inspiring constraints modelled by higher learning universities as links to a knowledge community. If the goals of an institution library have to be compatible with the planned views and procedures of the leading frames and management of the higher learning universities they belong to, it is also anticipated that these plans integrate a vibrant sympathetic that the quality of the services delivered by the library is critical to their achievement. The advanced development in information technology, wonderful momentum of socio-technical growth and the



transformed demands of customers have all added to the anticipations of a service association. It is obvious that managing skills must adopt these needs on and pressures to academic library and information provision.

6. Recommendation

In view of this paper, the following are the recommendations to the academic library:

- i. The paper has exposed the significance of library quality service assessments to solicit, track and understand customers' expectations and needs and to act upon customers' reflection to develop the quality of library service. Subsequently, it is recommended that the library management employs a regular assessment of the library in order to incorporate the customers' concern and the parent institution in general. With this regard, the library will be in a position to unquestionably comprehend the anticipations and needs of customers, librarians and the parent institution. However, knowing the customers' needs and anticipations only are useless if there is no way forward to implement the results.
- ii. In order for an academic library to function well it demands to have in place a qualified staff who is user focused on. It is suggested that the library has to be dedicated to continuing professional development training. Library staff development training is crucial at promoting the librarians knowledge, skills and abilities essential to effectively implement their duties and in the end meet customers' service quality anticipations. However, the library can be able to address the constraints of access to information, adapt new accountabilities, accommodate changing customer needs, and advanced technological troubles. Moreover, the academic library should arrange for recruitment of more qualified librarians and ICT staff to fill the known unfilled posts.
- iii. The literature reviewed has shown that few academic libraries applied the SERVQUAL and LibQUAL Models to assess the quality of services offered by the respective institutions, and the results have been fairly good despite the identified challenges to adapt to these models. It is further recommended that library managers and other library staff should keep on securing extra funds for managing and assessment of the quality of services frequently and thus during the process of assessment all the potential library users should be involved.

7. Areas for further Research

A further area that needs to be researched on:

- New models of academic library measurement that integrate customer observations of; service quality, library staff, institution mission, goals and objectives, budget, and library collection practices, policies and rules or principles.
- The impact of SERVQUAL and LibQUAL Models at improving quality of library services to satisfy customers with diverse backgrounds and needs.

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ANNEX I

SERVQUAL Dimensions and their Component Items

DIMENSION	S/N	Features of a Library	Expect. Aver.	Percep. Aver.	Differ. Aver.
Tangibles	1	The library has modern equipment			
	2	The library's physical facilities are pleasant			
	3	Material connected to services is at hand			
Reliability	4	When the library promises to do something, it does so			
	5	When user of the library has a problem, the library tries to solve it as Well as possible			
	6	The library performs services right the first time			
	7	The library provides its services at the time it promises to do so			
	8	There are only few errors in the records of the library			
Responsiveness	9	Users of the library are informed exactly when services will be performed			
	10	Employees of the library give prompt service to users			
	11	Employees of the library are always willing to help users			
	12	Employees of the library have never been too busy to respond to user's Request			
Assurance	13	The behaviour of the employees of the library instills confidence in users			
	14	Users feel safe in their transactions with the library			
	15	Employees of the library are friendly courteous with users			
Empathy	16	Employees of the library have enough knowledge to answer users Questions			
	17	Services of the library meet the needs of users			
	18	The library has operating hours convenient to users			
	19	The library has employees who give you personal attention			
	20	The library has users best interest at heart			
Extra Question	21	Employees of the library understand users specific needs			
	22	Most of the services are free for customers			



ANNEX II.

LibQUAL Dimensions and their Component Items	
Dimension	Components
Service Affect	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Employees who instill confidence in users2. Giving users individual attention3. Employees who are consistently courteous4. Readiness to respond to users' questions5. Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions6. Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion7. Employees who understand the needs of their users8. Willingness to help users9. Dependability in handling users' service problems
Resources and means of access	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office2. A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own3. The printed library materials I need for my work4. The electronic information resources I need5. Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information6. Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own7. Making information easily accessible for independent use8. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
Library as Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Library space that inspires study and learning2. Quiet space for individual activities3. A comfortable and inviting location4. A getaway for study, learning or research5. Community space for group learning and group study