

ABSTRACT

Assessing the relationship between service quality as perceived by students and students' overall satisfaction with student support services at universities in Trinidad: An argument for soft skills

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This study is about the relationship between service quality of selected student support services and students' overall satisfaction with these services at universities in Trinidad. It examines three student support services departments, namely career services, health services and sports services. It also attempts to show that soft skills, a service quality dimension, are an important contributing factor to bring about effective and satisfying student support services. The study draws on a customer satisfaction theoretical framework to guide the investigation between the variables. An adaptation of SERVQUAL, a service quality survey designed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) was used to assess student satisfaction with the above-named areas of student support services. The survey was used to collect data from 502 students in the three universities in Trinidad. These were The University of the West Indies, The University of the Southern Caribbean and The University of Trinidad and Tobago. The data were analyzed using analysis of variance, t-test, Pearson's correlation, and multiple stepwise regression. The study shows that soft skills has the strongest correlation to students' overall satisfaction with student support services. It further showed that 'reliability', 'hard' skills, 'responsiveness' and the three service departments under review all have moderate relationships with students' overall satisfaction with student support services. There is no relationship between 'tangibles' and students' overall satisfaction with student services.

Keywords: Deirdre Esther Charles; student satisfaction; student support services; service quality; soft skills; disconfirmation theory; Trinidad.