INSTITITUTIONAL SERVICE QUALITY AND ACADEMIC SATISFACTION OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Article history:		Abstract:
Received	December 20th 2023	The study explores the relationship between dimensions of institutional service quality and academic satisfaction in respect of students of Hospitality Management and Tourism, in institutions of higher learning South-South, Nigeria. Survey method was employed for the collection of data, while multiple regression was used for data analysis. The results reveal a positive and significant relationship between the five dimensions of institutional service quality and academic satisfaction of students of Hospitality Management and Tourism in institutions of higher learning South-South, Nigeria. However, the outcome of regression analysis shows that tangibility, reliability and responsiveness are the most positive predictors of academic satisfaction in respect of students of Hospitality Management and Tourism in institutions of higher learning South-South, Nigeria. Based on these findings, the researchers suggest that the management of higher institution of higher learning that offers HMT course in the South-South Nigeria should collaborate with stakeholders such as organised private sector and the government to provide facilities and structure that can help improve and deliver on service quality in our tertiary instructions hence, increase academic satisfaction of students.
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INTRODUCTION

Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) is one of the technical oriented courses being offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The primary aims of integrating the course HTM into the Nigerian tertiary institutions is to impact scientific and technological skills which imbues its graduates with the essence, attributes, self-reliance, and national consciousness (Auchi Polytechnic Prospectus, 2013). The mission of HTM programme is to offer training, skills and knowledge in manpower to manage the multi-faceted structure and diverse scope of the hospitality and tourism sector, thus contributing to sustainable national development (Okoli, 2001). Hospitality and Tourism sector is a key sector for economic development and job creation throughout the world (Jennifer & Thea, 2013). In 2016, the sector directly contributed US$2.3 trillion and 109 million jobs worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). Taking its wider indirect and induced impacts into account, the sector contributed US$7.6 trillion to the global economy and supported 292 million jobs in 2016 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017) thus, equal to 10.2% of the world's GDP, and approximately 1 in 10 of all jobs. The direct contribution of hospitality and tourism sector to employment grew by 1.8% in 2016 meaning almost 2 million net additional jobs were generated directly by the sector, and a total of 6 million new jobs created as a result of total direct, indirect and induced activity (United Nation World Tourism Organisation, 2016). This means that almost 1 in 5 of all new jobs created globally in 2016 was linked to Hospitality and tourism industry (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017).

In the context of Nigeria, the hospitality and tourism industry contributed N1.7billion ($ 5.5 million) put at about 4.8 per cent to the Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016 (Ekwujuru, 2016; Jumia Travel, 2017). The industry

generated 651,000 jobs directly in 2015 put at 1.6% of total employment in the country and another 1.6% in 2016 put at 661,000 (Jumia Travel, 2017). This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services among others excluding commuter services. The above information implies that hospitality and tourism sector in Nigeria continues to thrive despite the challenges faced with its total investment put at over US$3 billion in the past five years (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017). Despite the favourable business outlook of hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria, report has it that skilled human capital needed for sustainable hospitality and tourism businesses in the South-South Nigeria are limited. Higher institutions in the South-South Nigeria had consistently experienced limited student's enrolment into the discipline of HMT yearly compared to other disciplines. Only 1 out of every 10 students currently on the HMT programme in institutions in the South-South Nigeria chooses HTM as the most preferred course in JAMB. This is a negative trend that should be immediately nipped on the board for sustainable hospitality and tourism businesses in Nigeria and more so in the South-South Nigeria. Various factors may be responsible for this negative trend but major among them is poor service quality offered to students by higher institutions offering the HMT course in the South-South Nigeria. Vatta and Bhatara (2013) opined that service quality factors lead to academic satisfaction that enables education institution to attract, retain and also expect prospective students. This implies that satisfied students will probably talk to others about their good academic experience hence, a positive word of mouth. It was reported that there is strong correlation between quality services offered to students and their academic satisfaction (Asaduzzaman et al., 2013; Malik et al., 2010; Sultan & Wong, 2010). Institutional service quality in this context is said to be strongly associated with quality of teaching by the academic staff, conducive learning environment of the institution, relevance of courses offered at various levels of the programme and as well, students support services such as counselling among others (Majeed & Ziadat, 2008; Abu Nabah, 2004). This implies that the question of how students feel about their academic programme and learning experience as a whole should be of importance to stakeholders in the knowledge industry (Talmacean & Domnica, 2013; Lai et al., 2011). In view of this, an attempt to attracting more students to study HTM course in institutions of higher learning in the South-South Nigeria may require understanding predictors of institutional service quality that promotes students' academic satisfaction.

Previous studies had examined the relationship between institutional service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction in the context of service sector such as hotels and restaurants (Alexandris, et al., 2002), banking sector (Angur, et al., 1999), health care (Shemwell & Yuvas, 1999), transportation (Shefali, 2010) and sports and Leisure Centres (Howat et al., 2002). Studies on institutional service quality and students' academic satisfaction had being extensively researched in respect of advanced western countries; however, limited study in this context had being conducted in respect of emerging economy like Nigeria and more-so in the hospitality and tourism management discipline. These are the gaps and the main focus of this study, to determine predictors of institutional service quality that predicts academic satisfaction of hospitality and tourism management students in institutions of higher learning in the South-South Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In view of the fact that no single theory has been reported as being able to explain the relationship between the two constructs in the present study (i.e. Institutional service quality, and Academic satisfaction), hence, the researchers reviewed related theories as follows;

SERVQUAL Model
The SERVQUAL model was proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) as a scale that consists of multiple items developed to assess customer perception of institutional service quality in the service and retail businesses. The scale breaks down the notion of service quality into five (5) constructs which comprises of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Peyton, et al., 2003). SERVQUAL model explains service quality as the difference between a service offerings and the customer's perception of the service received (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The SERVQUAL instrument has demonstrated excellent validity and reliability in previous research (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). It is applicable to various industries, for example, the adaptation of the instruments in the professional service industries such as health care (Shemwell & Yuvas, 1999), tourism and hospitality (Shefali, 2010; Alexandris, et al., 2002; Howat et al., 2002). As it applied to the current study, the quality of services offered by the higher institutions of learning in the South-South Nigeria that offers HTM program could be measured by five dimensions of service quality such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, including their 22 corresponding items.

Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory
The expectancy disconfirmation theory is popularly used to explaining how consumers form satisfaction judgments by evaluating actual product / service. The theory broadly classified the process of satisfaction under three groups: Dissatisfaction, Satisfaction, and Extreme Satisfaction. The theory argued that the satisfaction process is the comparison of what was expected with the product or service's performance. This process has traditionally been described as the "confirmation / disconfirmation" process (Vavra, 1997). First, customers would form expectations prior to purchasing a product or service. Second, consumption of or experience with the product or service produces a level of perceived quality that is influenced by expectations (Oliver, 1980). If the perceived performance is less than the customer's

expectation, then customer is dissatisfied. Also, if the perceived performance is exactly equal to the expectation of the customer, customers are satisfied. Customers are said to be extremely satisfied when the perceived performance exceeded the customer's expectation. As it applied to the present study, the theory posits that students of Hospitality and Tourism Management in higher institutions in the South-South Nigeria would form academic expectations about the institutions prior their enrolment into the institution to study HTM. Thereafter, the experiences of the students with the product or services rendered by institutions produces a level of perceived quality that is influenced by expectations. If the perceived performance of the institution is less than the student's academic expectation, then the students are dissatisfied. Also, if the perceived performance of the institution is exactly equal to the expectations of the students, they are satisfied. Students of HTM in higher institutions in the South-South Nigeria are said to be extremely satisfied when the perceived performance of the institution exceeded their expectations. In view of the applicability of these theories to the present study, the researchers adopted these two dimensional theories in the present study.

Empirical Review

Institutional service quality is commonly noted as a critical prerequisite for establishing and sustaining satisfying relationship with valued customers (Spreng & Mckoy, 1996; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). This implies that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction. Relating service quality to student's academic satisfaction, Helgesen and Nesset (2007) indicated that the management of educational institutions should focus on service quality, information, and facilities to increase the satisfaction and loyalty of the students. Adopting the 5 dimensions of service quality (SQ) has indicated in SERVQUAL model, the present study reviewed the relationship between each of the predictors of institutional service quality and academic satisfaction as of the following.

Tangibility and Academic Satisfaction

Tangibles are defined as visible aspect of the service that is employed by businesses to improve customer's satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Several studies that assessed service quality provided in higher institutions includes the influence of tangibles (Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Tangibiles in this context explains the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel in which services are delivered, including commodities that facilitate performance or communication of the services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Parasuraman et al. (1988) describe tangibility as the "solid" dimension used to assess service quality. Santos (2003) refers to tangibles as those elements of a service such as the appearance of physical facilities, tools and equipment, personnel, and communication materials in the knowledge industry. The implication in the above informations shows that tangibles can be measures with elements such as the conducive nature of the classrooms, how well equip is the library, the neatness of the classrooms, visual atractiveness of the departmental buildings, facilities in the classrooms, speed and availability of internet services among others. Ham and Hayduk (2003) examined the relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction in the higher education setting. The results of the study show that there is a significant and positive correlation between tangibility and student's academic satisfaction. Hishamuddin et al. (2008) also examined the relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction in the Malaysian higher institution of learning. The results indicate that there are significant and positive relationships between tangibility and student academic satisfaction. Further establishing the relationship between tangibility and student's academic satisfaction, Cuthbert (1996) found that among the dimensions of service quality (SQ), the score for tangibility is the highest. The author however added that this represents tangibility as a major contributor towards satisfaction of the students as he believes it is the service encounter which is the determinant factor. O'Neill and Palmer (2004) hold the same idea that, tangibility is ranked as the best in term of overall performance score. Based on this reviews, we propose that;

H₁: There is a significant relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in higher institutions in South-South Nigeria.

Reliability and Academic Satisfaction

Primarily, institutional service quality focuses on how to meet the customers' expectations (Ali & Ahmed, 2016). Because expectations are dynamic, evaluations may also shift over time, from person to person and from culture to culture. Service reliability is therefore a judgment of customers/clients regarding overall performance of the organization and its services (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Reliability therefore explains the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Zeithaml et al., 1990). It is the ability to deliver the desired service dependably, accurately and in consistency (Parasuraman et al., 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1990) hence, explains how well the service are being delivered as promised. In the contet of knowledge industry, reliability means that the university delivers on its promises in respect to quality lectures delivery, service provision, problem resolution, and pricing (Gronroos, 1990). This implies that the contemporary students want to maintain good relations with higher institutions that keeps its promises, particularly promises about the service outcomes and core service attributes. Reliability has been identified as the most important suggesting that students are most concern with the knowledge and courtesy. This suggests that student satisfaction is driven by evaluation of the quality of course work and other curriculum activities and other factors related to the university (Kogovsek & Kogovsek, 2013). The above review implies that reliability in the context of higher education services is measured with items such as academic culture in the department of study, the attitude of the supporting staff in the department, how efficient and fast the results of students were managed, the quality of facilities in the classrooms and laboratories among others. Ham and Hayduk (2003) in their study showed that the dimension of

reliability has the strongest relationship with student's satisfaction. Also research by Hishamuddin et al. (2008) in the Malaysian higher learning institution indicates that there are significant and positive relationships between reliability and student satisfaction (SS). Drawing from the above review, we propose that:

H_2: *There is a significant relationship between reliability and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in Higher institutions in South-South Nigeria.*

Responsiveness and Academic Satisfaction
Responsiveness can be said to be the ability of service providers to carry out services promptly according to the needs of the customers (Zeithaml et al., 1990). It is the willingness to provide prompt service and help customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The index in the above information shows that responsiveness involves how fast the response is given to customers. That is, the ability to respond to customers request on time. As it relates to the knowledge industry, responsiveness is defined as the immediate and efficient respond of an institution's system to the need of the students. This implies how much the system is responsive towards the quality service provided by the institutions in the South-South Nigeria to HTM students. Institutions offering HTM course should be responsive to the evolving needs of their students in providing courses and training programmes that are relevant to the subject matter and as well teaching approaches. Staff of the department should be willing and responds promptly to student's requests. Informative literature about the school and the department should be provided by the department. Lectures are expected to be prompt, effective, interactive and satisfying. However, with the advent and development in technology, course design and delivery are expected to be progressive with the innovative and spontaneous construction of knowledge which should be the product and process of learning. Ham and Hayduk (2003) in their study showed that there is a significant positive correlation between responsiveness and student satisfaction (SS). Hishamuddin et al. (2008) research in the Malaysian higher learning institution indicates that there are significant and positive relationships between responsiveness and student academic satisfaction. Drawing from this review, we propose that:

H_3: *There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in Higher institutions in South-South Nigeria.*

Assurance and Academic Satisfaction
The assurance dimension in SERVQUAL literature refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The inseparability of production and consumption and the co-production of services (Grönroos, 1990) implies that the people providing the service play a significant role and therefore the perceptions of the assurance dimension influences the overall perceived service quality. In the knowledge industry, education is a high involvement service and all contact between lecturers and students is important and complex. As it applied to the current study, the assurance perceived by students of HTM in the South-South Nigeria can enhance their interpersonal relationship with their teachers. The assurance dimension comprises of the following items: courteous and friendly lecturers; courteous and friendly support staff; the ability of the lecturers to inspire trust and confidence in students; the ability of support staff to inspire trust and confidence in students. HTM students should be able trust and have confidence in the services (such as teaching methods, course content, learning enviroment, among others) they are been offered in order to make positive impact on their academic satisfaction and success. In a study by Ham and Hayduk (2003), it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between assurance and students' academic satisfaction. In another research by Hishamuddin et al. (2008), the result indicates that there are significant and positive relationships between the assurance and student satisfaction, as assurance appeared to be the second strongly correlated dimension. Drawing from these reviews, we propose the hypothesis:

H_4: *There is a significant relationship between assurance and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in Higher institutions in South-South Nigeria.*

*Empathy and Academic Satisfaction*
Empathy is defined as the ability to care for customer's attention individually in providing service to customers (Hun et al., 2009). This suggests the need to have better understanding of customer expectations than competitors in providing the required customer service at any time (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Anantha and Abdul Ghani (2012) suggests individualized attention, better understanding of customer's specific needs, enhanced communication between management and customers among others has a positive outcome on customer satisfaction. One of the functions of the knowledge industry is allowing students to freely describe particular emotions associated with sympathy and empathy for others and also help control the feelings that are not good enough (Firdaus, 2006). Hassan et.al. (2008) study showed that low levels of empathy are associated with poor academic satisfaction. Chow et al. (2007) found that students' levels of empathy have positive connections with their academic motivation, thus help increasing their academic performance. As it applied to the present study, empathy therefore is the provision of caring, individualized attention to HTM students by their respective institutions in the south-south Nigeria. It explains the ability to show personal caring and attention to students including how institutions give individualized attention to their students to make them feel extra value and special. That is, treating and attending to each student differently according to their individual needs and emotions. Ham and Hayduk (2003) confirmed that there is a positive correlation between empathy and student satisfaction. Analyzing upon the relationship based on each of the dimension of service quality, the authors reported that empathy have the second most strong correlation with academic satisfaction. Hishamuddin et al. (2008)

indicates that the dimension of empathy is strongly correlated with student satisfaction implying that if students feel they get individualized and quality attention from their institution, it tends to boost academic satisfaction. Drawing from the above literature review, we propose the hypothesis:

H_5: *There is a significant relationship between empathy and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in Higher institutions in South-South Nigeria.*

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The framework of SERQUAL-SAS of HTM students in higher institutions of learning in the South-South, Nigeria is proposed for this study as shown in Figure 1. The SERQUAL-SAS model shows five dimensions of institutional service quality and academic satisfaction as independent and dependent variables respectively. The independent variables include; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The model is expected to explain the relationship between the dimensions of institutional service quality and the dependent variable (i.e. Academic satisfaction) in the context of HTM students in higher institutions of learning in the South-South Nigeria.

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**
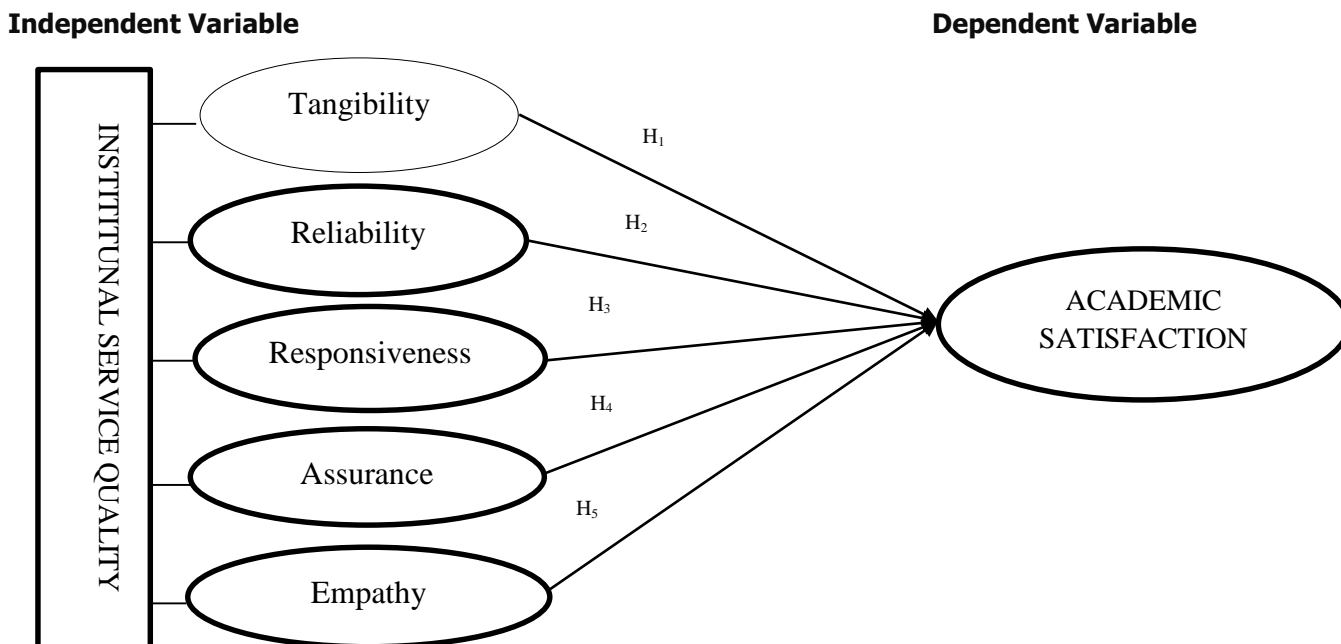
Figure 1: SERQUAL-SAS Model of HTM Students in South-South Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design, hence, the researchers used structured questionnaire to measure the relationship between predictors of institutional service quality and academic satisfaction in respect of students of HTM in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Federal Polytechnic Auchi, Edo State. Both institutions being federal institutions of higher learning are located in the South-South Nigeria. The two institutions were selected for this study because they are the only federal tertiary institutions offering HTM course in the South-South Nigeria. The research population for the study comprised of 100- 400 level degree students of the Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism, University of Port Harcourt who are currently enrolled in the 2023/24 academic session, totalling 594 students. This also includes the registered students of both the National Diploma 1 and 2, and Higher National Diploma 1 and 2 of the Department of Hospitality Management in Federal Polytechnic, Auch in 2023/24 academic session totalling 396 students. This implies that the total population of HTM used for this study from both institutions is 990 students. However, since it is practically impossible for the researchers to sample the entire students of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management in both institutions, the researchers determined the proportion of the sample unit that will constitute the sample. To determine the sample size of the respondents in each level in the department of HMT, University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic Auchi, the researchers aligns with the method of proportional allocation as suggested in Kothari (1990). The concept of propositional allocation suggests that the sizes of samples from different strata are kept propositional to the sizes of the strata. Taro Yamane formula was applied to determine the sample size (n) as shown in Table 1 on the basis of proportional allocation.

Table 1: Observation Unit of HMT Students in the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic Auchi, 2023/24 Academic Session

Institution	Level of Programme	Number of Enrolled Students	Sample Size
	100	150	46
University of	200	72	22
Port Harcourt, Rivers State	300	174	53
	400	110	34
	ND1	108	31
Federal Polytechnic	ND2	60	17
Auch, Edo State	HND1	108	31
	HND2	120	35
Total		902	269

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Thus, the sample size for this research is 269 as shown in Table 1. The questionnaire used for this study was adopted from Juliet et al., (2003). The adopted Lodging Quality Index instrument comprises of five (core themes) dimensions of service quality, with 26 corresponding items in part two of the instrument. The third part of the questionnaire highlights customer satisfaction hence, Bello and Bello (2017) customer's satisfaction scale was adopted hence, consists of four measures of customer satisfaction. The researchers conducted a pilot test to determine the extent to which the items in the instrument measures each of the core service quality and academic satisfaction constructs. The instrument was pre-tested with 100 participants comprising of students of HMT in both institutions using SPSS version 23. The reliability test for each of the constructs in the instrument was examined for its Cronbach's Alpha. The outcome of the analysis shows that each of the constructs in the instrument has a Cronbach's Alpha reading > 0.7 as indicated in Table 2. The findings corroborate Hair et al. (2006) and a Nunnally (1967) findings which suggests that a Cronbach's Alpha reading 0.7and above is considered satisfactory.

Table 2: Reliability of Individual Variables

Dimensions of Institutional Service Quality	Cronbach Alpha
Tangibility	.932
Reliability	.909
Repesponsiveness	.954
Asuarance	.886
Empathy	.824
Academic Satisfaction	.975

Source: Author's Computation (2024).

The validity of the scale was done using expert opinon, hence to determine the relationship between the dimensions of institutional service quality and student's academic satisfaction, multiple regressions analysis was used.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS
Results of extent each dimensions of the service quality impacted on HMT students' academic satisfaction in the context of the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic Auchi were analyzed and discussed as follows:

Table 3: Percentage Item Analysis of Tangibility

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The classrooms are conducive for learning	-	16.4	15.5	31.8	36.4
The library atmosphere is serene and well equipped with academic materials	10.2	10.8	27.0	26.0	26.0
Within and outside environment of the classrooms is always neat	-	6.8	19.1	10.0	64.1
The facilities in the classrooms are well maintained	-	12.7	21.8	52.3	13.2
The outdoor surroundings of the departmental building is visually attractive	-	10.5	30.5	44.5	14.5

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5.
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 3 depicted the extent the tangible factor of services offered by the department of hospitality management and tourism impacts on the academic satisfaction of HMT students in the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. The result shows that item with statement "Within and outside environment of the classrooms are always neat" has the highest percentage of 64.1%, followed by the statement "The facilities in the classrooms are well maintained" with 52.3%, followed by the statement" The outdoor surroundings of the departmental building is visually attractive" with 44.5%, followed by the statement "The library atmosphere is serene and well equipped with academic materials, with 39.0%. "The classrooms are conducive for learning" has 36.4%. All of the response to each of the statements falls under the Likert scale (Agree), except for the statement "The library atmosphere is serene and well equipped with academic materials" that falls under the Likert scale (Disagree). This implies that majority of the respondents believe that the tangible component of the services offered by their department in both institutions impacted on their academic satisfaction.

Table 4: Percentage Item Analysis of Reliability

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
My results are calculated and handled efficiently and promptly by lecturers.	12.7	5.9	30.9	21.8	28.6
Fans, lights, switches and other mechanical and electrical appliances in the classrooms and kitchen works properly	-	-	-	64.1	35.9
The supporting staffs in the department are helpful	-	47.3	6.8	8.2	37.7
Lecturers are always available for lectures at every specified time	-	-	22.7	14.5	62.7
Lecturers are able to accurately answer my questions	16.4	15.5	31.8	36.4	-

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5.
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 4 shows the extent the reliability factor of services offered by the department of hospitality management and tourism impacts on academic satisfaction of HMT students in the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. The result shows that item with statement "Fans, lights, switches and other mechanical and electrical appliances in the classrooms and laboratory works properly" has the highest percentage of 64.1%, followed by the statement "Lecturers are always available for lectures at every specified time" with 62.7%. Item with the statement "The supporting staffs in the department are helpful" has 37.7%. The statement "Lecturers are able to accurately answer my questions" has 36.4% and "My results are calculated and handled efficiently and promptly by lecturers" has 30.9%. All of the response to each of the statements falls under the Likert scale (Agree) except item with the statement "Lecturers are able to accurately answer my questions" which falls on Likert scale (Neutral). The results show that majority of the respondents believe that the reliability attribute of services offered by the department of HMT in both institutions impacted on their academic satisfaction.

Table 5: Percentage Item Analysis of Responsiveness

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Staff of the department are willing and responds promptly to my requests	-	-	5.5	50.9	43.6
Informative literature about the institution were provided by the department	-	-	5.0	51.8	43.2
Lectures are prompt, effective, interactive and satisfying	10	15	10.5	16.8	47.7
Staffs in the department are willing to answer my questions	-	-	5.5	54.5	40.0
Staffs in the department have problem solving zeal	-	-	9.2	34.8	56

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5.
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 5 depicted the extent of responsiveness in the services offered by the department of hospitality management and tourism impacts on the academic satisfaction of HMT students in the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. The result shows that item with the statement "Staffs in the department responded quickly to solve my problems" has the highest percentage of 56.0%, followed by the statement "Staffs in the department are willing to answer my questions" with 54.5%. Item with the statement "Informative literature about the school and the department was provided by the department" has 51.8%, item with the statement "Staff of the department are willing and responds promptly to my requests" has 50.9% and item with the statement "Lectures are prompt, effective, interactive and satisfying" has 47.7%. All of the response to each of the statements falls under the Likert scale (Agree). The results imply that majority of the respondents believe that the extent of responsiveness in the services offered by the department in both institutions impacted on their academic satisfaction.

Table 6: Percentage Item Analysis of Assurance

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Lecturers treat students with respect	-	-	-	41	59
The department is safe and conducive enough for learning	41.8	21.4	6.4	11.8	18.6
Facilities in the department are conveniently located	3.2	50.9	16.4	29.5	-
Students are encouraged to know about local places of interest on and off campus	53.6	0.9	12.7	23.6	9.1
Lecturers are polite when answering my questions	21.8	35.5	15.5	6.4	20.9

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5.
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 6 depicted the extent the assurance attributes in the services offered by the department of hospitality management and tourism impacts on the academic satisfaction of HMT students in the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. The result shows that item with statement "Lecturers treated me with respect." has the highest percentage of 59.0%, followed by the statement "Students are encouraged to know about local places of interest on and off campus" with 53.6%, item with the statement "Facilities in the department are conveniently located" has 50.9%, item with the statement " The department is safe and conducive enough for learning" has 41.8%, and item with the statement "Lecturers are polite when answering my questions" has 35.5%. All of the response to each of the statements falls under the Likert scale (Strongly Disagree and Disagree), except for the statement "Lecturers treat students with respect" with 59.0%, falls under the Likert scale (Strongly Agree). The results show that majority of the respondents believe that the assurance factor in services provided by the department never impacted on their academic satisfaction.

Table 7: Percentage Item Analysis of Empathy

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The academic and non-academic staff are cordial	-	39.1	35.5	15.5	10.0
Management of the department takes students' need into consideration while making decisions	-	-	35.5	15.5	49.1
My needs are been attended to with undivided attention and great concern	-	-	50.9	36.4	12.7
Management of the department has the students' best interest at heart	-	5.9	4.5	62.3	27.3
Lecturers try to find out my particular need	20.5	30.5	1.8	16.4	30.9

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5.
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 7 depicted the respondents' feeling on the extent empathy factor of services offered impacts on the academic satisfaction of HMT students in the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. The result shows that item with the statement "Management of the department has the students' best interest at heart" has the highest percentage of 62.3%, followed by the statement "My needs are been attended to with undivided attention and great concern" with 50.9%, item with the statement "Management of the department takes students' need into consideration while making decisions" has 49.1%, and item with the statement "The academic and non-academic staff are cordial" has 35.5% and the statement "Lecturers try to find out my particular need" has 30.5%. All of the response to each of the statements falls under the Likert scale (Agree) except items "My needs are being attended to with undivided attention and great concern and the academic and non-academic staff are cordial" that fall on the Likert scale (Disagree). This shows that majority of the students believe that the factor of empathy of service quality impacted on their academic satisfaction.

Table 8: Correlations of Service Quality Dimensions and Academic satisfaction

Variables	R	P	Level
Student Academic Satisfaction (SAS)	--	--	--
Tangibility (TAN)	0.700**	0 .030	High
Reliability (REL)	0.073**	0 .020	Low
Responsiveness (RESP)	0.317**	0 .010	Low
Assurance (ASR)	0.533**	0 .040	Medium
Empathy (EMP)	0.381**	0 .042	Low

** Correlation is significant at 0.01level (2 tailed).
Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

The data collected was analyzed using Pearson correlation to determine the relationship between each of the five predictors of institutional service quality on the academic satisfaction of HMT students in both the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi. The results as shown in Table 8 depicted that the five dimensions of institutional service quality were found to be; tangibility (TAN) (r = 0.700; p =0.030), reliability (REL) (r = 0.073; p = 0.020) and responsiveness (REP) (r = 0.317; p = 0.010), Assurance (ASR) (r = 0.533; p = 0.040) and Empathy (EMP) (r = 0.381; p = 0.042). This suggests that all the tested variables have a positive and significant relationship with student academic satisfaction (SAS). In terms of the strength of the relationship, the result shown that tangibility has a high and positive relationship (r = 0.700), reliability has a low and positive relationship (r = 0.073), the responsiveness has a low and positive relationship (r = 0.317), empathy has a low and positive relationship (r = 0.381) and the assurance also has a positive and medium relationship (r = 0.533). Therefore, the alternate hypothesis was accepted which states that there is a significant and positive relationship between the dimensions of institutional service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and student academic satisfaction in both the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi. This suggests that when there is any change to any of these factors, academic satisfaction among Hospitality and Tourism management students in both institutions tend to be affected.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.982[a]	.964	.821	.06889

a. Predictors: (Constant), CMS, SRB, TSQ, RSQ

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

From Table 9, it was depicted that the R-square for the model was .964 which implies that the dimensions of institutional service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) explained about 96.4% of the variance in academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management students of the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi. Thus, the remaining 4.6% is due to other factors and residuals. Also, the multiple R = .982 revealed a significant high relationship between independent variables (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) and the dependent variable (academic satisfaction) of the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi.

Table 10: ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.128	4	.032	6.435	.0230[a]
	Residual	.005	1	.005		
	Total	.133	5			

a. Predictors: (Constant), EMP, ASR, REL, REP, TAN

b. Dependent Variable: ACS.

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

From Table 10, the result of the analysis shows that F value was significant (F= 6.435, p=.0230). This shows that the model was valid. Thus, based on the findings it can be concluded that there was a linear relationship between the predictors (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism management students of University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi.

Table 11: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.054	.177	1.06	5.962	.000
	EMP	.057	.203	0.07	.279	.785
	REL	.012	.521	0.15	.023	.205
	TAN	.692	.321	2.15	1.453	.045
	ASR	.591	.241	0.63	-2.451	.032
	REP	.591	.241	0.63	-2.451	.032

a. Dependent Variable: SAS

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

In comparing the contribution of each independent variable, Beta values was used. As illustrated in Table 11, the standardized coefficient column shows that; Tangibility (TAN) makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining academic satisfaction with (β=2.15), followed by assurance (ASR) with (β=0.63) and responsiveness (REP) with (β=0.63). Reliability made the fourth relative contribution, (β= 0.15), while Empathy made the least relative contributions (β= 0.07). The outcome of the result indicates that increase in tangibility; assurance; responsiveness; reliability, and empathy increases academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management students of University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management students of the University of Port Harcourt and the Federal Polytechnic Auchi. This result is in conformity with previous literature in the domain of service quality. Ham and Hayduk (2003) examined the relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction in the higher education setting. The authors revealed that the conducive nature of the classrooms, and how well equip is the library impacts on students' academic satistactions. Hishamuddin et al. (2008) also examined the relationship between tangibility and academic satisfaction in the Malaysian higher institution of learning. The results indicate that the neatness of the classrooms, visual atractiveness of the departmental buildings, facilities in the classrooms, and availability of speed internet services among others impacts on students' academic satistactions. The current study also reveales tangibility as the service quality element with the highest prediction of academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management students of the University of Port Harcourt and Federal Polytechnic Auchi. This finding conforms to Cuthbert (1996) who found that among the dimensions of service quality (SQ), the score for tangibility is the highest. This implies that the management of institutions of higher learning in the South-South, Nigeria should focus on the provisions of tangible assets such as well equip is the library, neat classrooms, visually atractive departmental buildings, equipped lecture rooms and availability of internet services among others to impact on academic satisfaction of her HMT students.

Furthermore, the current study found that a positive and significant correlation exists between reliability and student academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in higher institutions in South-South Nigeria. This finding conforms to previous literature hence, Ham and Hayduk (2003) in their study showed that the dimension of reliability has the strongest relationship with student's satisfaction. Also, a research by Hishamuddin et al. (2008) in the Malaysian higher learning institution indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between reliability and student satisfaction. Kogovsek and Kogovsek (2013) opined that reliability has been identified as the most important suggesting that students are most concern with the knowledge and courtesy. Reliability therefore explains the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The implication of this is that the management of institutions of higher learning in the South-South, Nigeria should make consistent effort to deliverying on her promises to prospective and returnSing students in respect to quality lectures delivery, service provision, problem resolution, and pricing. Other areas of focus should include unrelient academic culture, unwaving attitude of both academic and the supporting staff, efficient and fast management of student results among others to impact on academic satisfaction of her HMT students.

In addition, the current study found a positive and significant correlation between responsiveness and student academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in higher institutions in South-South Nigeria. Responsiveness can be said to be the ability of service providers to carry out services promptly according to the needs of the customers (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The finding in this study conforms to previous literature hence, Ham and Hayduk (2003) in their study showed that there is a significant positive correlation between responsiveness and student satisfaction (SS). Hishamuddin et al. (2008) research in the Malaysian higher learning institution indicates that there are significant and positive relationships between responsiveness and student academic satisfaction. The implication of

this is that institutions offering HTM course in South-South, Nigeria should be responsive to the evolving needs of their students in providing courses and training programmes that are relevant to the subject matter and as well teaching approaches. Staff of the department of HMT should be willing and responds promptly to student's requests. Informative literature about the school and the department should be provided by the department. Lectures are expected to be prompt, effective, interactive and satisfying to impact on academic satisfaction of her HMT students.

Once again, the current study found a positive and significant correlation between assurance and student academic satisfaction of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student in higher institutions in South-South Nigeria. The assurance dimension include: courteous and friendly lecturers; courteous and friendly support staff; the ability of the lecturers to inspire trust and confidence in students; the ability of support staff to inspire trust and confidence in students. HTM students should be able trust and have confidence in the services (such as teaching methods, course content, learning enviroment, among others) they are been offered in order to make positive impact on their academic satisfaction and success. In a study by Ham and Hayduk (2003), it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between assurance and students' academic satisfaction. In another research by Hishamuddin et al. (2008), the result indicates that there are significant and positive relationships between the assurance and student satisfaction, as assurance appeared to be the second strongly correlated dimension.

In addition, the current study found a positive and significant correlation between empathy and student academic satisfaction. Empathy is defined as the ability to care for customer's attention individually in providing service to customers (Hun et al., 2009). Empathy therefore is the provision of caring, individualized attention to HTM students by their respective institutions in the south-south Nigeria. It explains the ability to show personal caring and attention to students including how institutions give individualized attention to their students to make them feel extra value and special. That is, treating and attending to each student differently according to their individual needs and emotions. Ham and Hayduk (2003) confirmed that there is a positive correlation between empathy and student satisfaction. Analyzing upon the relationship based on each of the dimension of service quality, the authors reported that empathy have the second most strong correlation with academic satisfaction. Hishamuddin et al. (2008) indicates that the dimension of empathy is strongly correlated with student satisfaction implying that if students feel they get individualized and quality attention from their institution, it tends to boost academic satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to be drawn base on our findings is that the management of higher institution of learning that offers HMT course in the South-South Nigeria should collaborate with stakeholders such as organised private sector and the government to provide facilities and structure that can help improve and deliver on service quality in our tertiary instructions hence, increase academic satisfaction of students. This study contributes to the body of knowledge as it proposed and validates SERQUAL-SAS model capable of explaining predictors of service quality in respect of education institution in emerging country.

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