

## **Business Student Satisfaction: The Role of Academic and Non-Academic Services in Higher Education Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** Scholarly literature widely acknowledges the significance of academic and non-academic services in determining student satisfaction in higher education institutions. However, the opinion of students in determining various aspects of academic and non-academic services has not been considered, especially in developing nations.

**Objectives:** This study aims to examine business students' satisfaction with academic and non-academic services.

**Methods:** 255 business students were purposively selected for this descriptive quantitative study. The reason for adopting purposive sampling in this study is that different people hold different and essential views about the issue and, therefore, must be included in the sample. Using the Higher Education Performance (HedPERFORMANCE) measurement instrument, a 19-item structured survey was developed for self-administration. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 22.0 versions. The variables determining students' satisfaction levels with academic and non-academic services were examined using descriptive statistics. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were used to demonstrate the interrelationship of the three constructs and validate the hypothesis.

**Results:** The study revealed a significant positive relationship between student satisfaction and academic and non-academic services. However, the study results demonstrated a greater significance of academic services for students in higher education institutions.

**Conclusion:** The findings concluded that student satisfaction extends beyond academic services, encompassing non-academic or administrative services. These aspects directly influence how students perceive and assess the educational institution. This indicates that the satisfaction students derive from their educational experience is not solely reliant on academic factors but is equally shaped by the quality of administrative services, contributing significantly to their overall evaluation of the institution.

**Keywords:** Academic services, higher education, non-academic services, student satisfaction

**JEL Classification:** I23; I20; C12; C30; M0

## Introduction

The global expansion of higher education institutions has led to increased attention to critical factors such as student retention, academic reputation, and maintaining high levels of student satisfaction (Jereb et al., 2018; McLeay et al., 2017). Consequently, prioritizing student satisfaction has become the primary goal for these institutions (Amoako et al., 2023; Singh & Jasial, 2020; Sohail & Hasan, 2021). Acknowledging its utmost significance, many higher education institutions are placing greater emphasis on evaluating both academic and non-academic services to enhance student satisfaction (Awale, 2021; Silwal & Baral, 2021). Furthermore, scholars widely agree that exceptional services in all aspects—whether academic programs or peripheral student support—contribute significantly to boosting student satisfaction (Butt & Rehman, 2010; Lapina et al., 2016; Paul & Pradhan, 2019). As a result, examining the relationship between university services (academic and non-academic) and student satisfaction has become a key focus within the education field recently (Bell, 2022; Wong & Chapman, 2023).

Several studies have scrutinized student satisfaction levels within higher education institutions, revealing a divergence in scholarly discussions regarding the factors influencing this satisfaction (Chavan et al., 2014; Chu et al., 2018). While some studies focus on teaching and learning experiences, less attention has been given to administrative and support services (Silva et al., 2017; Tan et al., 2016). Hence, it is crucial to engage in scholarly discussions encompassing both administrative and academic services as determinants of student satisfaction (Abdullahi & Yusoff, 2019; Arif et al., 2013; Hornstein & Law, 2017). Despite highlighting the improvement of university service quality as a priority, few studies consider students' perspectives, especially in developing nations (Bozbay et al., 2020; Osman & Saputra, 2019). In exploring higher education facets, there has been limited attention to both academic and administrative dimensions of student satisfaction (Silva et al., 2017; Tan et al., 2016). Similarly, research on Nepalese higher education institutions regarding student satisfaction with academic and non-academic services is sparse (Baniya, 2016; Thapa, 2022). Prior studies in Nepal stressed the need to understand student perspectives, yet empirical research on academic and non-academic service satisfaction in Nepalese higher education remains limited (Awale, 2021; Silwal & Baral, 2021). Furthermore, the rapid growth of management schools in Nepal demands an investigation into how these institutions maintain service levels that ensure student satisfaction (Baniya, 2016). To address this gap, this study aims to assess student satisfaction by evaluating both academic and non-academic services.

This study aimed to add knowledge that may be applied to raise student satisfaction in higher education (HE). The empirical results of this study provide insight into the relationship between academic and non-academic services and student satisfaction. The policymakers and administrators of higher

education in Nepal may use the information from these results to raise the standard of services and increase student satisfaction.

The present research is organized into five sections. In the first section, there is an exploration of the background, objectives, problem statement, motivation for the study, and its significance. The second section conducts a thorough review of pertinent literature, pinpointing gaps for hypothesis formulation. Section three covers methodological aspects, such as the population and sample size, along with the research procedures. Results and discussion are detailed in section four. Likewise, the final section concludes by summarizing the insights gleaned from the study.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Expectation Theory**

The current study is based on the expectation theory, initially formulated by Oliver in 1977 and revised in 1988. This theory highlights how a customer's evaluation of a product or service significantly influences their satisfaction level (Oliver, 1980). It outlines three potential outcomes based on customers' anticipated expectations: positive disconfirmation, zero disconfirmation, and negative disconfirmation (Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1999). Positive disconfirmation occurs when performance exceeds expectations, leading to satisfaction. Zero disconfirmation happens when customers perceive performance as meeting their expectations precisely, resulting in satisfaction. Conversely, negative disconfirmation arises when performance falls below expectations, leading to dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1996). In academic and non-academic services, Expectation theory is reflected in students' beliefs about how their efforts contribute to better performance (effort-performance expectancy). They expect that using these services will improve their academic outcomes. Similarly, they anticipate rewards (performance-reward expectancy) tied to improved performance or active engagement with these services.

### **Student Satisfaction**

Student satisfaction represents the subjective evaluation of whether students feel their expected educational experiences have been met or exceeded (Elliot & Healy, 2001). It is a multidimensional concept as students have diverse expectations about their education (Jereb et al., 2018; Nastasic et al., 2019). Assessing how satisfied students are with the quality of educational services is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of higher education institutions (Butt & Rehman, 2010; Santini et al., 2017). Providing high-quality academic programs and support services is vital for the success of these institutions in today's competitive landscape (Butt & Rehman, 2010; Lapina et al., 2016; McLeay et al., 2017; Paul & Pradhan, 2019).

### **Academic and Non-academic Services and Student Satisfaction**

Numerous previous studies have explored different elements within higher education institutions that impact student satisfaction. For instance, Jereb et al. (2018) surveyed 233 students in Slovenia,

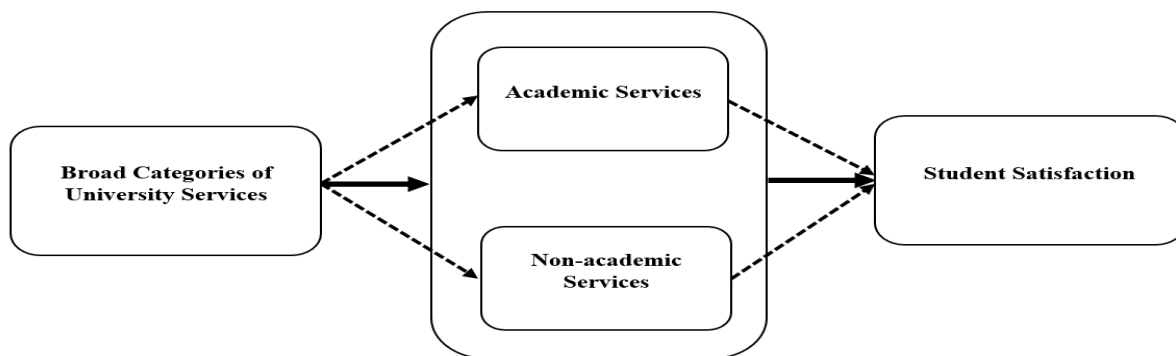
revealing factors like teaching staff, administrative support, program issues, physical environment, and more that influenced satisfaction. Similarly, Nastasic et al. (2019) in Serbia found that academic and non-academic factors like staff quality, curriculum, and resources significantly affected satisfaction. Amoako et al. (2023) studied 400 Ghanaian students, showing a positive link between satisfaction and academic, administrative services, and facilities. Bell (2022) discovered in the UK that respectful interactions and staff approachability were crucial for satisfaction. Sohail and Hasan (2021) in Saudi Arabia identified teaching quality, facilities, and staff interpersonal skills as key determinants. Wong and Chapman (2023) in Singapore also found that academic and non-academic aspects impacted satisfaction. In Nepal, prior studies, such as Dhungana (2019) and Shrestha (2013), highlighted factors like academic environment, faculty attitudes, facilities, and program reputation influencing student satisfaction. These studies emphasized the need for well-maintained classrooms, good library facilities, and qualified faculty to enhance satisfaction. From this literature, two hypotheses were derived:

*H1: Academic services positively influence student satisfaction.*

*H2: Non-academic services positively influence student satisfaction.*

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model adapted from Amoako et al. (2023)*



**Materials and Methods**

**Study Design**

This study is based on a cross-sectional survey of university students and analyzes the role of academic and non-academic services on student satisfaction employing a causal research design.

**Population and Sample**

The study population consisted of business students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in the constituent college of Pokhara University. The use of student participants in this research was motivated by their status as the primary consumers of educational services, as noted by Ng and Forbes (2009). Moreover, the rationale for considering graduates of the business program of the School of Business, Pokhara University lies in the fact that this university has experienced significant growth, currently ranking as the second largest in terms of student enrollment (UGC-Nepal, 2021).

## Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was employed (Etikan et al., 2016). The reason for adopting convenience sampling in this study can be attributed to the fact that this sampling technique focuses on collecting data from that part of the study population readily available to the researcher. The convenience sampling method is cost efficient and ensures that the research is conducted in the shortest possible time (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014). Using Yamane (1967) formula for sample size calculation  $n=N/(1+ne^2)$ , a sample size of 261 was calculated based on the total number of business students in the study setting (750) with 0.05 level of tolerance.

## Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Consideration

The study used a self-report structured questionnaire survey to collect responses from the participants. A total of 750 questionnaires were distributed for the survey. Out of 750 distributed surveys, 261 responses were collected and after the thorough scrutiny of all the responses, 6 responses were excluded from the analysis because of low variance in their responses. Therefore, a total of 255 usable data were analyzed. Ethical considerations were applied to protect the students' anonymity by not making them obliged to disclose their names or other forms of identifying information on the survey. The participants were well explained about the research objectives, time period, and the risks and benefits of the study. The study participants were also explained that their involvement in the study would be voluntary and that the data would be solely accessible to the research team. Following extensive explanations, participants expressed their written approval. The survey took place in August 2022.

## Measures

The survey instrument comprised 19 Likert scale items (1 being 'strongly agree' and 5 being 'strongly disagree'), including eight items each for academic services and non-academic services and three items for student satisfaction using HedPERF (Higher Education Performance) scale (Abdullah, 2006) which also ensures the content validity of the instrument. The rationale for using these scales lies in the completeness of measurement items that can capture the authentic determinants of services within the higher education sector, particularly academic and non-academic services (Abdullah, 2006). Although the original HEdPERF scale consists of 41 measurement items, only 19 items were adapted for the present study. The reason for considering only 19 items stems from the fact that the main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between academic and non-academic services of higher education institutions. Moreover, basic demographic information, including the respondent's gender, age, the program, and level of study, was the emphasis of the questionnaire's first section. The subsequent portions of the survey assessed the significance of different variables expressing the relative relevance of various university features influencing student satisfaction. In addition, a pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted by a group of experts comprising senior faculty members and researchers. Their recommendations helped improve the content and clarity of the questionnaire. To

reduce non—response bias to the barest minimum, the researchers ensured that the survey questionnaire was clear and concise, relevant to the audience, and not too lengthy.

### Data Analysis Technique

Since a multi-item scale was used to measure each of the constructs, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to examine the construct and convergent validity of the measure (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For this study, SPSS 20.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 22.0 were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, were used to examine respondent characteristics. Mean value analysis was used to evaluate the relative importance of academic and non-academic services. The observed variable factor structure was determined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and hypothesis test was performed using path analysis.

## Result and Discussion

### Respondent's Characteristics

A total of 255 undergraduate and graduate business students at Pokhara University participated in the study. More than half of the female students (56.9%) and the majority of students pursuing Bachelor of Business Administration (47.9%) within the age category of 18-24 (80.4%) were the participants. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the demographic aspects.

**Table 1**

*Demographic features of respondents*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-24	205	80.4
	25-30	48	18.8
	31 and above	2	0.8
Gender	Male	110	43.1
	Female	145	56.9
Current Program of Study	BBA	122	47.9
	BBA-BI	81	31.7
	MBA	52	20.4
Total		255	100

*Source: Based on authors' calculation and field survey, 2023.*

A 19-item five-point Likert scale (1 representing strongly agree and five meaning strongly disagree) was used to assess academic and non-academic services influencing student satisfaction. The first eight items measured the academic services of the business school, the second eight items measured the non-academic/administrative services of the school, and the last three measured the overall level of student satisfaction with academic and non-academic services of the school. The mean value for all the items



is less than three (Awang, 2012), indicating that these services are essential indicators of student satisfaction (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Factors Affecting Student Satisfaction*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Academic Services (F3)</b>		
Teachers have sound knowledge of course content	1.811	0.61897
Teachers provide care and individual attention to solve problems	1.9528	0.70412
Teachers show a positive attitude towards students	1.6929	0.68884
Teachers communicate well in the classroom	1.9764	0.75929
Teachers provide adequate teaching and learning materials in and outside the classroom	2.0315	0.76934
Teachers are highly trained in their respective fields	1.9173	0.71479
Teachers provide constructive academic feedback to the students	1.7165	0.65212
Course structures are of international standard	2.0472	0.76853
<b>Non-Academic Services (F2)</b>		
Administrative staff communicate well with the students	2.0236	0.85247
Administrative staff show a positive work attitude towards students	2.0315	0.86144
Inquiries are dealt with efficiently by the administrative staff	2.008	0.8528
The administrative department keeps updated records of the students	2.035	0.8681
Students are treated equally by the administrative staff	2.051	0.9247
Administrative staff have good knowledge of the academic system	1.972	0.7923
Administrative staff show sincere concern for solving issues of students	2.043	0.8632
Administrative staff maintain the deadline to complete student-related work	1.9685	0.57534
<b>Student Satisfaction (F1)</b>		
I am satisfied with the academic services of my school	2.0039	0.55166
I am satisfied with the non-academic services of my school	2.0197	0.64392
I am satisfied with the overall services of my school	2.0433	0.61767
N= 255, 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly		

*Source: Based on authors' calculation and field survey, 2023.*

## Disagree

### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*

Table 3 depicts the outcome of confirmatory factor analysis with their validity and reliability. Three constructs comprising 19 items, namely academic services(F3), non-academic services (F2), and student satisfaction (F1), were created initially. Only twelve items were loaded after removing seven items (items 1,2,3, and 7 of academic services and items 3,6, and 8 of non-academic services) because the factor loadings for these items were less than the acceptable level of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006). The results also demonstrated that each item has a significant loading. All the indexes are within the

acceptable range (CMIN/DF = 2.556; GFI = 0.923; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.972; RMSEA = 0.078). Furthermore, the findings revealed the construct validity of the model necessary to execute the structural model. The convergent validity is further demonstrated by the average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5, and composite reliability (CR) more than 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 3**

*Construct Loading and their Validity and Reliability*

Items/Constructs	Loadings	AVE	CR
<b>Academic Services (F3)</b>		0.84544	0.955997
Teachers communicate well in the classroom	0.931***		
Teachers provide adequate teaching and learning materials in and outside the classroom	0.99***		
Teachers are highly trained in their respective fields	0.788***		
Course structures are of international standard	0.956***		
<b>Non-Academic Services (F2)</b>		0.84339	0.963969
Administrative staff communicate well with the students	0.791***		
Administrative staff show a positive work attitude towards students	0.952***		
The administrative department keeps updated records of the students	0.998***		
Students are treated equally by the administrative staff	0.96***		
Administrative staff show sincere concern for solving issues of students	0.876***		
<b>Student Satisfaction (F1)</b>		0.61854	0.824539
I am satisfied with the academic services of my school	0.923***		
I am satisfied with the non-academic services of my school	0.577***		
I am satisfied with the overall services of my school	0.819***		

*Source: Based on authors' calculation and field survey, 2023.*

CMIN/DF=2.556, GFI=0.923, CFI=0.97, TLI=0.972, RMSEA=0.078

*Note: \*\*\* represents significance at a 1 percent level*

### **Discriminant Validity**

One further requirement of appropriate measurement, as proposed by Zheng et al. (2021), is that the used constructs must be discriminant from one another. According to previous research conducted by Cheung et al. (2023) and Fornell & Larcker (1981), it is recommended that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of a construct should exceed the inter-item correlation of that



construct. The findings shown in Table 4 illustrate the outcomes pertaining to the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of constructs and the inter-item correlations. The diagonal elements of the matrix represent the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of the constructs, whereas the off-diagonal elements represent the correlations between different items. The findings indicate that the average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct exceed the inter-item correlations within those constructs, thereby providing evidence for the discriminant validity of the constructs.

**Table 4**

*Discriminant Validity of Student satisfaction and academic and non-academic services*

	<b>Student Satisfaction</b>	<b>Non-academic Services</b>	<b>Academic Services</b>
<b>Student Satisfaction</b>	0.786473		
<b>Non-academic Services</b>	0.324	0.918364	
<b>Academic Services</b>	0.351	0.112	0.919476

*Source: Based on authors' calculation and field survey, 2023.*

Since the results of confirmatory factor analysis show the appropriate fit of a proposed construct with their reliability, construct, and discriminant validity, it is suitable to test the hypothesized relationship by using a structural model. The next section depicts the output of the relationship between academic and non-academic services and student satisfaction to test the nomological validity of the proposed model.

#### ***The Relationship between Academic and Non-academic Services and Student Satisfaction***

Table 5 displays the outcome of the structural model. The management theories now serve as the basis for the structural model specifications. Student satisfaction with their institution or college is theorized to be affected by academic and non-academic services. Using structural or route analysis, the research tests the hypothesized causal link advanced by the theoretical model. Specifically, the following hypotheses are tested using the structural model:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Academic services positively affect student satisfaction.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Non-academic services positively affect student satisfaction.*

According to Table 5, which can be found in the results of the path analysis performed on the data covered in the previous section, the overall fit measures reveal the degree to which the structural model is a good fit for the data. The results of the path model were within the acceptable range (CMIN/DF = 2.566, GFI=0.922, CFI=0.979, TLI=0.972, RMSEA=0.079). CMIN/DF = 2.118, less than the threshold value of 3, indicating a good model fit. It is also worth noting that the RMSEA value of 0.079 is closer to the minimum acceptable value of 0.08. Similarly, the cut-off value of 0.9 is typically

mentioned for the incremental fit indices CFI, GFI, and TLI. Thus, the outcomes point to a mediocre model fit.

Path coefficient estimations have high statistical significance. The first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) postulated a positive and statistically significant relationship between student satisfaction and academic services. The results of Standardized Regression Weight (SRW) estimations of 0.322 with a p-value less than 0.0001 show a statistically significant positive association between academic services and student satisfaction. Hence, the first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted. Similarly, the second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) assumes a positive and significant relationship between student satisfaction and non-academic services. The findings of Standardized Regression Weight (SRW) estimations of 0.292 with a p-value less than 0.0001 also accept the hypothesis that the non-academic service experience has a favourable and substantial effect on student satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that both academic and non-academic services were significant in the examination of student satisfaction. However, the results also demonstrated that student satisfaction is mainly determined by academic services. The R-square value of 0.189 suggests that about 18.9% of the variability in student satisfaction may be attributed to both academic and non-academic services.

**Table 5**

*Path Coefficient*

<b>Structural Path</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SRW<sup>a</sup></b>
Student Satisfaction← Academic Services	0.288*** (0.057)	0.322
Student Satisfaction← Non-Academic Services	0.194*** (0.041)	0.292
CMIN/DF= 2.566, GFI=0.922, CFI=0.979, TLI=0.972, RMSEA=0.079, R-square=0.189		

*Source: Based on authors' calculation and field survey, 2023.*

*Note: \*\*\* represents significance at a one percent level.*

The study aimed to assess the satisfaction of business students regarding both academic and non-academic services. The results indicated a positive and significant impact of both types of services on student satisfaction, aligning with findings from Abdullahi & Yusoff (2019), Ali et al. (2022), and Fernandes et al. (2013). Regarding academic services, aspects like teachers' positive attitude, competency, course structure, and provided learning materials significantly influenced satisfaction, similar to Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, and Seebaluck's (2016) findings on Mauritian universities. However, in contrast with this study, administrative services showed a lower perception of satisfaction among students. These results also resonated findings by Butt and Rehman (2010) in Pakistani universities, emphasizing teachers' expertise and courses as influential factors. Similarly, the study results were in line with Wong and Chapman's (2022) findings in private higher education institutions

in Singapore, highlighting factors like courses, curriculum, teaching competency, and administrative support services as determinants of satisfaction. Moreover, the study supported Teeroovengadum et al. (2019) conclusions about Mauritian higher education, linking student satisfaction with technical services but remained silent about support facilities and pedagogy. Furthermore, the research aligned with Annamdevula and Bellamkonda's (2014) validation in Indian universities, emphasizing teaching and administrative factors such as teacher responsiveness, course content, administrative staff behavior, and accessibility as predictors of student satisfaction. Bell's (2022) recent study in the UK also reverberated these findings, focusing on teaching factors like teacher knowledge and style and non-teaching elements such as staff-student interaction. Additionally, the study established a significant positive relationship between academic/non-academic services and student satisfaction, consistent with Brochado's (2009) prior findings. It substantiated the expectation theory by affirming that student satisfaction hinges on their assessment of academic and administrative services, aligning with pre-established criteria. This suggests that satisfaction levels may indeed be determined by students' expectations about the quality of these services.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The results indicated that student satisfaction is not limited to academic services but extends to administrative aspects, shaping students' perception of the entire educational institution. This suggests that their satisfaction is not solely tied to academics but equally influenced by the quality of administrative services, significantly impacting their overall evaluation of the institution. Consequently, higher education institutions should enhance both academic and non-academic services to ensure student satisfaction. These findings also guide administrators in addressing students' diverse needs. By applying expectancy theory principles in educational settings, institutions can create an environment that motivates students by establishing a clear link between effort, expected outcomes, and satisfaction, ultimately enhancing the overall student experience and satisfaction levels.

While this study followed a scientific method, its findings should be considered within certain limitations. Firstly, it solely drew information from one business school at Pokhara University and was limited to a single time frame. As students' perceptions of their schools might change over time, future research should consider collecting longitudinal data to observe the evolution of students' perspectives throughout their academic journey.

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