Students' Satisfaction with Learning Environment at the College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University in Oman

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Abstract: *Students' satisfaction of the learning institute is a key factor of importance in bringing the student's learning outcome to a better experience and success. A special Royal Degree of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Al Said issued a message to address the shortage of Omani nurses. Purpose: The aim of this study is to identify aspects of educational factors that enhance the over-all students' satisfaction with their study at the College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University. Methods: A self-report questionnaire was used to obtain demographical data and responses to 38 items about the learning environment. Results: Students rated satisfactory the general arrangements for orientation and welcome to all students in the beginning of the academic year (p value of 0.006) and the extent to which the programme develops their knowledge & skills (p value of 0.008) Conclusion: The growing gap between the students' satisfaction and the educational system is a crucial issue facing the educational institution policy-makers to improve nursing education and development.*

Keywords: Students' satisfaction, nursing program, learning resources, learning institution

Introduction

The measurement of student satisfaction of the learning environment can be a significant factor to quality outcome of the educational services offered by the University. The complexity of the learning experiences of the students in a learning institution can forecast the level of student's satisfaction. Determining the student satisfaction will streamline the aspects of learning experiences that contribute to the student learning outcome and success. Wei (2011) documented in her study that service quality is a vital factor that determines the level of student satisfaction. Literature reviews have shown the number of studies conducted on service quality and customer satisfaction in the field of marketing/management, but limited research on service quality in higher education has been recorded (Wei, 2011; Jalali, et al., 2011 ; Hameed, 2011) Few of research studies on service quality in higher education institutions supported that student's satisfaction towards university services is a crucial determinants of institutional survival, excellence as well as success (Wei, 2011) . According to the study of David Edens (2012), students who are satisfied with their college experiences in the University tend to persist to graduate from their specialization. Using the student satisfaction score, the College and University administration can identify the areas for improvements to fit with students' basic physiological human needs to self-actualization. Muhammad et al., (2010) documented in his study that the more the learning environment stimulates the student's ability to groom their skill development, course knowledge and mentality, the higher the level of student satisfaction of the learning environment. The matching of the services with the student's needs can increase the level of satisfaction of the students of their learning environment.

Background

Over the past years, the government of the Sultanate of Oman through a special royal decree of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Al Said has initiated to establish the first college of nursing within the state university. The opening of the college of nursing at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will address the shortage of Omani nurses and increase the number of Omani students of becoming nurses. This effort or initiative is having a positive effect as enrollment in the nursing program is increasing. Recruiting students for nursing profession is a key challenge for the higher education policy– makers at SQU. The performance of an educational system ultimately depend on the quality and opportunities offered by the College of Nursing to the students. Students' success clearly depends on the level of satisfaction about their learning experiences which stimulate them to study diligently, be flexible and be willing to carry out their academic load with good achievement. It is important to understand what drives student to study better, what influences their choice of action and why they persist in an action for success over time. There are many theories to explain satisfaction such as the human needs theory of Abraham Maslow (1975) and goal setting theory (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976). These theories used a set of concepts and constructs in order to link the reasons why people work hard with the outcome of their work and then analyze the needs, values, goals, efforts, rewards and expectations of students in relation to their study. This study is conducted to look into services provided by the College of Nursing and the level of student's satisfaction at SQU which is the oldest state university at the Sultanate of Oman. According to Amina Hameed (2011), earlier studies and models on student satisfaction and retention conclude that academic performance makes a part of student satisfaction. The present study can be postulated as to what extend the services affect student satisfaction at the College of Nursing in SQU and contribute to the body of knowledge on educational service and student satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify aspects of educational factors that enhance the over-all students' satisfaction of their study at the College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman. Determining the educational factors associated with students' satisfaction can provide information for significant action that can be taken to bring impact on students' learning outcome in nursing program. One variable that needs to be explored is the impact of student's GPA on satisfaction of the learning institute and success.

Conceptual Framework

Using Abraham Maslow's human needs theory (1975) as a conceptual framework, this study was conducted to determine student's satisfaction across four areas of learning environment that contribute to student's growth and development. The Maslow's Hierarchy of human needs which demonstrate how a person moves from a fulfillment of basic needs such as physiologic; safety and security, belongingness and affection; and to higher level of needs of self-esteem, self-respect and self- actualization with the ultimate goal of being integrated physio-psycho-social wellbeing (Smeltzer & Bare, 2010). Maslow's human needs theory is a useful organizational framework that can be applied to various nursing models for assessment of strengths, limitation and need for improvement. The framework is widely used in nursing education and practice. The four areas of the learning institute based on Maslow theory which

identifies the contributing factors that lead to student maturation and self-actualization while at the college of nursing in SQU are:

- Physical facilities: the extent to which student are able to meet their basic physiological needs such as availability of restaurants, food quality and price, hygienic practice of the staff, health clinics, prayers space, resting & study space, toilets & other comfortable utilities (Classrooms, computer labs., skill labs, parking).
- Resources: the extent to which student are able to meet their needs for library, Internet access, books and journals, photocopying, printing press, medical supplies and equipment, and other digital resources,
- Nursing Curriculum organization & management: the extent to which the students are able to register courses and managed their timetable of their study plan; to follow through the contents and quality of presentation of the major subjects and availability of faculty in/out of class hours; to manage the rubrics of assessments
- Development of knowledge and skills: the extent to which student are able to learn scientific knowledge and demonstrate skills of communication, interpersonal, decision making & logical judgment, self-reliance, English language

Rationale:

Students' satisfaction of the learning institute is a key factor of importance in bringing the student's learning outcome to a better experience and success. Based on the literature reviews, the following hypotheses were formulated:

HI: There is a positive relationship between the Institutional service and student satisfaction

H2: There is a positive relationship between student's perceived importance on service and student satisfaction.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the student's GPA and student satisfaction of services of the learning institution

H4: There is a significant difference between services and student satisfaction among male and female.

H5: There is a significant difference between service and student satisfaction according to student's age.

H6: There is a significant difference between service and student satisfaction according to student's level of study at the College of Nursing.

Method

Participants

The sample included 67 basic entry BSN students (87%) and RN to BSN bridging students 10 (13%). There were 17 male students (22.08%) and 60 female students (77.92%). Majority of the participants in this study are level 2 (30 students = 38.96%) followed by level 4 (22 students = 28.57%). The ages of the students ranged from 18 years old to 34 years old (M=18.65, SD=2.30). The demographic statistic of this study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Demographic Statistics (N=77)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean (μ)	SD (б)
Age				
<18	20.00	25.97	18.65	2.30

20 – 25	40.00	51.93		
26 – 35	17.00	22.10		
Gender				
Male	17.00	22.08	2.20	0.55
Female	60.00	77.92		
Level of Study				
Level 2 (Year 2)	30.00	38.96	3.50	0.75
Level 3 (Year 3)	17.00	22.17		
Level 4 (Year 4)	22.00	28.57		
Level 5 (Year 5)	8.00	10.30		

Procedures and Measurements

The data were collected from a survey of nursing students from level 2 to level 5 in the nursing program who are currently registered at the College of Nursing during the academic year 2009-2010.The data were collected toward the end of the spring semester and participants in each level in the nursing program were given a self- report questionnaires. The questionnaire was constructed based on Keaveney and Young Model (1997), wherein the students' experiences on his/her connection with faculty, advising staff, the environment and interactions in the classroom are factors that enhanced student's satisfaction with learning environment. The model instrument has been documented its Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7, but in the literature review values above 0.5 are considered to be acceptable (Amina Hameed & Shehla Amjad, 2011). The Keaveney-Young Model and variables were modified to fit the major of specialization in nursing. The self-report questionnaire was constructed on a five point Likert scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very unsatisfied) and to response to its importance from 1 (very important) to 5 (not at all important). The inter-rater reliability of the modified version from 4 experts was 86 % in all 38 items. The self-report questionnaires include the student's demographical data such as age, gender, level in nursing program and GPA. The students are requested to rate their level of perceived importance and satisfaction towards the college services provided in the area of: (1) Physical facilities, (2) Resources (3) Nursing curriculum organization & management, (4) Development of knowledge and skills.

Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by the college & university research committee. An informed verbal consent was taken from each student who participated in the study and adherence to confidentiality of the information was communicated to all participants.

Results

The study hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between the Institutional services and student satisfaction. It was found out that students who are satisfied of the quality of the service of their learning institute persisted to continue their nursing study at Sultan Qaboos University. The results is shown in Table 2.The performance gap wherein the satisfaction mean score is subtracted from the mean score of importance results in a smaller difference which shows that the College of Nursing is doing well in meeting the expectation of the students in their studies. There is a positive relationship between perceived importance on services and student satisfaction. The study found out that all four areas of services perceived by the students as importance were rated as highly satisfactory as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – The overall importance and satisfaction mean rating for each areas of service offered by College of Nursing at SQU.

Initial Service Area	Importance	Satisfaction	GAP
Physical Facilities	2.90	4.60	-1.7
Resources	3.80	4.60	-0.8
Nursing Curriculum	3.40	4.70	-1.3
Development of Knowledge and Skills	3.80	4.60	-0.8

There is a positive relationship between the student's GPA and student satisfaction of service quality of the learning institution as shown in Table 3.The higher the students' GPA , the stronger the level of satisfaction and importance on certain aspects of the learning institution.

Table 3 – Relationship between aspects of learning institution and students' GPA

Aspects of the learning institution	R	P
General arrangements for orientation & welcome (S)	0.296	0.025*
General arrangements for orientation & welcome (I)	0.372	0.006*
The extent to which the nursing program develops their knowledge & skills (I)	0.349	0.008*
The physical environment of the computer labs (I)	0.344	0.013*

**p value=0.05 level of significant*
I= Importance S= Satisfaction

H4: There is a significant difference between service quality and student satisfaction among male and female. The results are illustrated in Table 4. The male students' mean score of all aspects of the learning institution are higher than the female in physical facilities and resources and the female students rated curriculum and development of knowledge and skills as more satisfactory than male.

Table 4 – The satisfaction mean rating of male & female on four areas of learning institution

Variables	Male	Female
Physical Facilities	4.8	4.0
Resources	4.3	3.6
Curriculum	4.0	4.2
Development and Knowledge Skills	4.5	4.6

There is a significant difference between service quality and student satisfaction according to student's level of study at the College of Nursing as illustrated in Table 5. There is a significant findings of certain aspects of the learning institution rated as importance (assessment; development of knowledge & skills; overall quality of the nursing program and sport and fitness facilities). The other aspects that were rated highly satisfactory are procedures of registration, process of registration, physical environment, cleanliness and helpfulness of the staff in the restaurants, the quality of food & drinks, availability of courses, the opening hours of computer lab and access to the internet.

Table 5 – Satisfaction and importance of aspects of the learning institution by students' study level.

Aspects of Learning Institution		Sum of Squares	df	F	P
ImportanceB					
The Assessment (Exams) Arrangement	Between Groups, Within Groups	5.563, 44.310	4 , 121	3.798	0.600
The Extent to which the program develops your knowledge	Between Groups, Within Groups	6.644, 54.417	4 , 127	3.876	0.005*
The overall quality of nursing program	Between Groups, Within Groups	5.088, 51.712	4 , 120	2.951	0.023*
The sport and fitness facilities	Between Groups, Within Groups	12.685, 149.534	4 , 123	2.609	0.039*
Satisfaction:					
Procedure for registration at the university	Between Groups, Within Groups	14.237, 167,106	4 , 129	2.748	0.031*
Process for registration for lab course	Between Groups, Within Groups	18.309, 190.624	4 , 130	3.122	0.017*
Physical Environment at the University	Between Groups, Within Groups	24.060, 141.819	4 , 128	5.426	0.000*
Cleanliness of university restaurant.	Between Groups, Within Groups	42.195, 179.8664	4 , 127	7.448	0.000*
The helpfulness of the university restaurant staff	Between Groups, Within Groups	35.201, 201,628	4 , 128	5.587	0.000*
The quality of foods and drinks	Between Groups, Within Groups	19.175, 177.847	4 , 129	3.477	0.010*
Availability of courses to make progress towards the degree	Between Groups, Within Groups	13.698, 158.012	4 , 126	2.731	0.032*
Opening hours of the computer lab	Between Groups, Within Groups	24.597, 251.983	4 , 126	3.075	0.019*
Your access to Internet	Between Groups, Within Groups	17.681, 173.131, 190.812	4 , 128 , 130	3.268	0.014*

*p= 0.05 level of significant

There is a significant difference between service quality and student satisfaction according to student's age. The younger students were less satisfied than the older students in all aspects of the learning institution. The results were shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – The satisfaction mean rating of aspects of learning environment

Variables	<18	20 – 25	26 – 35
Physical Facilities	3.0	4.0	4.2

Resources	3.0	4.5	4.8
Curriculum	2.5	4.0	4.5
Development and Knowledge Skills	2.5	4.0	5.0

Likert scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very unsatisfied) and to response to its importance from 1 (very important) to 5 (not at all important).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify aspects of educational factors that enhance the over-all students' satisfaction of their study at the College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman. The study supported that the educational factors that satisfy the nursing students of their learning environment are more related to meeting their basic human needs (physiologic; safety & security, belongingness & affection) and meeting the needs of higher level of maturity and self-actualization as they progress from level 1 to level 5 in their nursing program, The Omani Nursing students rated all aspects of learning institution as to curriculum program, registration and orientation, teaching-learning resources, food and other support services like banking, mosque, transport, post office , books for student's copy and others. A significant level of p value of 0.05 was adopted for statistical analyses of the relationship between aspects of learning institution and students' GPA; gender; age; and student's level in the nursing program. The outcome of this relationship showed significant in two factors: Firstly the general arrangements for orientation and welcome to all students in the beginning of the academic year (p value of 0.006) and the extent to which the programme develops their knowledge & skills (p value of 0.008) which are perceived by the students as importance aspects in their learning institution.

Conclusion:

Keeping the right students in the right place in the nursing program requires identifying and understanding the factors affecting students' satisfaction. Satisfaction at learning environment is widely believed to be a key factor in the performance of students and educational institution as predictors of better learning experience and success. Students that are satisfied will most likely be more motivated, loyal and good performers in their academic achievement. The growing gap between the students' satisfaction and the educational system is a crucial issue facing the educational institution policy-makers to foster a better nursing education and development. And eventually to attract more students into nursing and increase more Omani nurses in the workforce

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