



Exit Survey for Graduates: An Essential Component in the Improvement of Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract

Kenya's fast growth in the number of higher education institutions has resulted in fierce rivalry. Students are now being asked to provide comments on how happy they are, with all service delivery units present in their respective institutions. A student satisfaction survey questionnaire is used to channel this feedback. One form of these surveys is the exit survey for graduates; which serves the purpose of gathering feedback and insights from individuals who have recently completed their academic studies. It helps institutions evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes, assess the quality of education and student experiences, and make improvements accordingly. Graduate feedback is now being sought by educational institutions worldwide through the utilization of an exit survey for graduates. The goal of this study is to discuss the formulation and

deployment of this survey to determine undergraduate and postgraduate student satisfaction level. The exit survey for graduates is an essential and effective tool that focuses on resource areas where there is a lack of satisfaction but still fundamental. The approach, computation, analysis, and outcome of employing the Likert scale are all discussed in this study. The relevance of overall flexibility in the formulation of single and grouped parameter questions is demonstrated and proved.

Keywords: Higher education institutions, student satisfaction, exit survey for graduates, undergraduate students, postgraduate students, single parameter questions, grouped parameter questions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, higher education institutions are guided by various regulations such as the Universities Act (2012), Universities Rules and Regulations (2014), and the Universities standards and guidelines (2014) provided by the Commission for University Education (CUE). These regulations aim to ensure and regulate the quality of university education, set standards and guidelines, and monitor compliance for global competitiveness in higher education institutions (HEIs). Consequently, students play a crucial role as key stakeholders in any educational institution. In addition to assessing students' progress and placements, one of the key indicators of a college's advancement is the satisfaction level of its students.

In Kenya, HEIs not only focus on imparting the necessary skills and improving graduates' abilities but also place importance on ensuring students' satisfaction with their academic experiences in the institution. This emphasis extends to primary activities such as teaching, learning, evaluation, research, extension activities, and innovation, as well as infrastructure facilities, quality of services, welfare measures for students and staff, and overall satisfaction with the educational experience. A robust, effective, and value-based academic system forms the foundation of any nation's progress. To move in the right direction, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of student diversity, socioeconomic status, expectations, and academic preferences, as these parameters greatly contribute to student satisfaction. Satisfied individuals are more efficient and contribute to the institution's and the nation's overall progress.

Students enrolled in higher education institutions seek quality education and a well-functioning system that includes accessible

facilities, good infrastructure, a high-quality education system, services provided by the institution, and additional inputs such as value addition and employability enhancement courses. As highlighted by Usman (2010), infrastructure facilities are becoming increasingly important as they fulfill students' perception and esteem, equipping them with the necessary essentials and capabilities to become effective learners. HEIs worldwide are increasingly competing for students at national and international levels, striving to improve student satisfaction to attract and retain students. This can only be achieved if all services contributing to the "academic life" are of satisfactory quality.

Student satisfaction can be defined as an attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experiences, services, and facilities provided by the institution. Since students serve as important internal evaluators of an institution's performance, student satisfaction surveys such as exit surveys for graduates are valuable tools that help HEIs improve and make adjustments accordingly within the higher education landscape.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education is considered a crucial tool for a nation's individual, social, and economic development (Mukhtar et al., 2015). The primary objective of higher education institutions is to cultivate well-prepared minds among students (Fortino, 2012). Recognizing students as their customers, institutions are increasingly focused on meeting their expectations and needs (DeShields et al., 2005). To differentiate themselves from competitors and attract students while satisfying current

ones, institutions face intense competition and employ market-oriented strategies.

Numerous research studies have investigated the factors influencing student satisfaction in higher education. Student satisfaction is defined as a short-term attitude resulting from the evaluation of their educational experiences and is influenced by various factors (Elliot and Healy, 2001). GPA has been identified as the most influential factor on student satisfaction (Walker-Marshall and Hudson, 1999).

Two groups of influences on student satisfaction have been identified: personal factors and institutional factors (Appleton-Knapp and Krentler, 2006). Personal factors encompass age, gender, employment, preferred learning style, and student GPA, while institutional factors include instruction quality, instructor feedback promptness, expectation clarity, and teaching style. Other significant determinants of student satisfaction identified in higher education include teaching ability, curriculum flexibility, university status and prestige, independence, faculty care, student growth and development, student-centeredness, campus climate, institutional effectiveness, and social conditions (Douglas et al., 2006; Palacio et al., 2002).

Various models and frameworks have been utilized to enhance student satisfaction in higher education. The SERVQUAL model, originally developed for the business environment, is widely employed to measure service quality and customer satisfaction based on five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance (Parasuraman, 1985). However, this model has faced criticism when applied to higher education literature (Elliot and

Shin, 2002). A more comprehensive student satisfaction inventory with 11 dimensions and 116 indicators was developed by Elliot and Shin (2002) to measure satisfaction in the higher education industry.

In the context of higher education literature, models for student satisfaction have evolved from industry-based models to higher education-specific models. Douglas et al. (2006) proposed the "Service Product Bundle" method, considering 12 dimensions to investigate influences on student satisfaction in higher education. Weerasinghe et al. (2017) traced the history of various models derived from both the business and higher education sectors.

Anita and Meghana (2022) designed a survey tailored to the specific needs of a higher education institution, focusing on administrative practices, college infrastructure, teacher quality, and additional campus facilities. In the diverse context of Kenya, with its varying religious, cultural, demographic, and educational backgrounds, it becomes challenging to determine a single parameter for student satisfaction. Hence, there is a need to design surveys that meet the specific needs of higher education institutions while maintaining global standards.

This study takes an innovative approach by designing an exit survey for graduates to analyze student satisfaction. The survey aims to gather feedback on the quality of education, library facilities, ICT infrastructure, student support services (such as accommodation), interaction with non-teaching staff, and overall student experience. It also examines the approach, attitude, and expectations of students in government-sponsored and self-sponsored

courses. The feedback obtained through the questionnaires will assess student satisfaction and experience, leading to enhanced overall personality development and preparation for various career paths. It is noteworthy that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds prioritize better facilities and infrastructure availability on their campuses. Therefore, the feedback form primarily focuses on assessing and evaluating the services provided by various units/departments within the institution.

2.1 Objective

To assess the overall satisfactory level of the graduates with regard to important parameters.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study involved the following steps while ensuring ethical considerations:

1. Development of the Tool:

- Five important dimensions were identified: quality of education, library facilities, ICT infrastructure, and student support services.
- A sample questionnaire was initially prepared, including basic demographic questions such as the student's faculty (e.g., School of Education and Social Sciences, School of Business and Economics, School of Agriculture, Technical Studies and Natural Sciences), enrolled course (e.g., diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate), and gender.
- The remaining questions were designed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (indicating poor satisfaction) to 5 (indicating excellent satisfaction), based on the

recommendations by Norman (2010), Adnan et al. (2016), and Hayan and Mokhles (2013).

- Parameters were developed under each dimension to gather accurate responses.
- The tool was reviewed by experts, and necessary changes were incorporated to finalize the parameters.
- A total of 42 questions were framed for which students were asked to provide responses on the 5-point scale.

3.1 Data Collection

- Ethical considerations were ensured throughout the data collection process.
- Informed consent was obtained from the participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.
- Participants were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.
- Confidentiality of participants' responses was maintained by assigning unique identifiers to the questionnaires instead of using personal identifying information.
- Participants were assured that their responses would be anonymized and reported only in aggregated form to protect their privacy.

3.2 Statistical Analysis

- The collected responses from the filled questionnaires were entered into a statistical package known as

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

- The data was analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques within the SPSS software.
- Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, percentages and measures of dispersion, were calculated to summarize the responses.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The survey was conducted four weeks before the actual graduation date, and efforts were made to create awareness among student groups to encourage a higher response rate. Physical questionnaires were administered to the students, allowing them to participate anonymously to avoid biased responses or any pressure to give a certain response. Demographic questions were excluded from statistical analysis. The distribution of responses for each question was computed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software version 28, and the findings are presented in Table 1.

1. Analyzing the Effectiveness of Lecturers:

- An innovative approach was employed to combine specific parameters and obtain feedback on the academic environment, specifically focusing on inputs from lecturers.
- Responses related to the effectiveness of lecturers were obtained using question 1 to 13 of the questionnaire.
- Figure 1 presents the responses obtained for assessing the effectiveness of lecturers in terms of curriculum transaction, approachability, provision of additional skills and knowledge,

association activities, career guidance, and fairness in examinations.

2. Evaluating the Quality of Library Services:

- The quality and effectiveness of library services were assessed by combining responses from question numbers 14 to 21.
- Figure 2 showcases the obtained responses, offering an analysis of the quality and effectiveness of library services.

3. Evaluating the Quality of ICT Services

- The quality and effectiveness of library services were assessed by combining responses from question numbers 22 to 25.

4. Evaluating the Quality of Support services

- The quality of support services were assessed by combining responses from question numbers 26 to 36.

5. Evaluating General Student experience

- The impressions of student services were assessed by combining responses from question numbers 37 to 42.

4.1 Individual Parameter Analysis

- Individual parameters were assessed by analyzing specific questions related to each parameter.
- For instance, question number 26 provided an overall perception and satisfaction level of students in terms of support.

- The responses for this aspect showed that 38% of students were completely satisfied, 40% were mainly satisfied,

15% were just satisfied, 4% were partially satisfied, and 3% were not satisfied at all.

Table 1: Responses obtained from the graduates on 5-point scale

S/No	Questions	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1.	Courses offered were useful to me as I pursued my degree	2%	2%	4%	35%	57%
2.	Courses offered were well taught	1%	2%	5%	41%	51%
3.	Access to the facilities/equipment I needed to complete my degree	2%	2%	8%	42%	46%
4.	Equipment/facilities I used were well maintained	1%	2%	5%	43%	49%
5.	Equipment/facilities I used were safe	2%	1%	6%	38%	53%
6.	Lecture rooms were adequate	3%	2%	7%	40%	48%
7.	Conducive lecture rooms that were well-lit and ventilated	3%	2%	10%	43%	42%
8.	Lecture rooms were clean and well maintained	2%	2%	4%	50%	42%
9.	University environment was conducive for learning	2%	2%	6%	43%	47%
10.	University learning environment was safe	2%	1%	4%	49%	44%
11.	Received the mentoring I needed to successfully complete my degree	1%	2%	8%	42%	47%
12.	Received the mentoring I needed to successfully prepare for my career	1%	1%	8%	41%	49%
13.	Interactions with academic staff at the University were positive	2%	2%	5%	40%	51%
14.	Study materials in my field of study were available in the Library	2%	3%	13%	44%	38%
15.	Study materials available were relevant in my area of study	1%	3%	9%	45%	42%
16.	Study materials available in my area of study contained up-to-date information	1%	1%	11%	47%	40%
17.	E-resource materials were available in my area of study	1%	1%	10%	42%	46%
18.	Access to library materials was easy	1%	1%	7%	43%	48%

19.	Library time opening and closing hours were adequate	2%	1%	8%	44%	45%
20.	Interaction with library staff was cordial	1%	3%	6%	44%	45%
21.	Used to use the Library at least once every week	1%	2%	9%	42%	46%
22.	Adequacy of ICT infrastructure	2%	5%	14%	43%	36%
23.	Accessibility to computer labs	1%	5%	13%	45%	36%
24.	Internet connectivity	4%	3%	16%	42%	35%
25.	Integration of ICT in teaching	1%	2%	13%	44%	40%
26.	Adequacy of recreational facilities inform of games or sport facilities/equipment	3%	4%	15%	40%	38%
27.	Adequacy of accommodation facilities	2%	3%	11%	45%	39%
28.	Maintenance of accommodation facilities	2%	4%	12%	44%	38%
29.	Adequacy of suitable sanitary amenities	2%	3%	14%	44%	37%
30.	Maintenance of sanitary amenities	4%	1%	13%	46%	36%
31.	Adequacy of dining facilities	3%	5%	12%	43%	37%
32.	Maintenance of the dining facilities	3%	2%	11%	44%	40%
33.	Provision of spaces of worship	3%	2%	10%	43%	42%
34.	Provision of services at the Medical Department	1%	5%	15%	40%	39%
35.	Provision of Counselling services	2%	3%	13%	40%	42%
36.	Overall interaction of non-teaching staff with students	1%	3%	9%	39%	48%
37.	Services offered at the University mess were of high quality	7%	5%	15%	35%	38%
38.	Prices charged for meals at the University mess were reasonable	8%	12%	13%	34%	33%
39.	University Student Association represented student matters to the management effectively	5%	4%	16%	41%	34%
40.	University Management was available to students at the time of need	3%	4%	13%	39%	41%
41.	University provided me with an early exposure to career planning and development	3%	2%	12%	42%	41%
42.	Co-curricular activities at the University met my expectations	2%	3%	15%	41%	39%

Table 2 Responses obtained for the impressions of the quality of education

S/No	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Courses offered were useful to me as I pursued my degree	2%	2%	4%	35%	57%
2.	Courses offered were well taught	1%	2%	5%	41%	51%
3.	Access to the facilities/equipment I needed to complete my degree	2%	2%	8%	42%	46%
4.	Equipment/facilities I used were well maintained	1%	2%	5%	43%	49%
5.	Equipment/facilities I used were safe	2%	1%	6%	38%	53%
6.	Lecture rooms were adequate	3%	2%	7%	40%	48%
7.	Conducive lecture rooms that were well-lit and ventilated	3%	2%	10%	43%	42%
8.	Lecture rooms were clean and well maintained	2%	2%	4%	50%	42%
9.	University environment was conducive for learning	2%	2%	6%	43%	47%
10.	University learning environment was safe	2%	1%	4%	49%	44%
11.	Received the mentoring I needed to successfully complete my degree	1%	2%	8%	42%	47%
12.	Received the mentoring I needed to successfully prepare for my career	1%	1%	8%	41%	49%
13.	Interactions with academic staff at the University were positive	2%	2%	5%	40%	51%

Table 3 Responses obtained for the impressions of library services

S/No	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Study materials in my field of study were available in the Library	2%	3%	13%	44%	38%
2.	Study materials available were relevant in my area of study	1%	3%	9%	45%	42%

3.	Study materials available in my area of study contained up-to-date information	1%	1%	11%	47%	40%
4.	E-resource materials were available in my area of study	1%	1%	10%	42%	46%
5.	Access to library materials was easy	1%	1%	7%	43%	48%
6.	Library time opening and closing hours were adequate	2%	1%	8%	44%	45%
7.	Interaction with library staff was cordial	1%	3%	6%	44%	45%
8.	Used to use the Library at least once every week	1%	2%	9%	42%	46%

Table 4 Statistical analysis of data obtained

Table no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
Table 1	4.1934	0.8706	20.76%
Table 2	4.333	0.811	18.71%
Table 3	4.281	0.792	18.50%

5.0 RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The analysis of the collected data reveals the following findings (refer to Table 4). It is important to note that the odd Likert scale used in the survey tends to produce results that gravitate towards the middle scale. The table demonstrates a low standard deviation, indicating that the majority of responses are closely clustered around the average. Additionally, the coefficient of variation

provides insight into the variability of the data, with lower values indicating more precise estimates. In this study, all the results exhibit good precision. Furthermore, the overall statistical analysis, as depicted in Table 4, suggests that the institution received positive feedback. Teachers were perceived as highly effective in fulfilling their assigned tasks, leaning towards the very good category. The quality of library services and ICT infrastructure was also rated as good. These observations collectively highlight the institution's commendable performance.

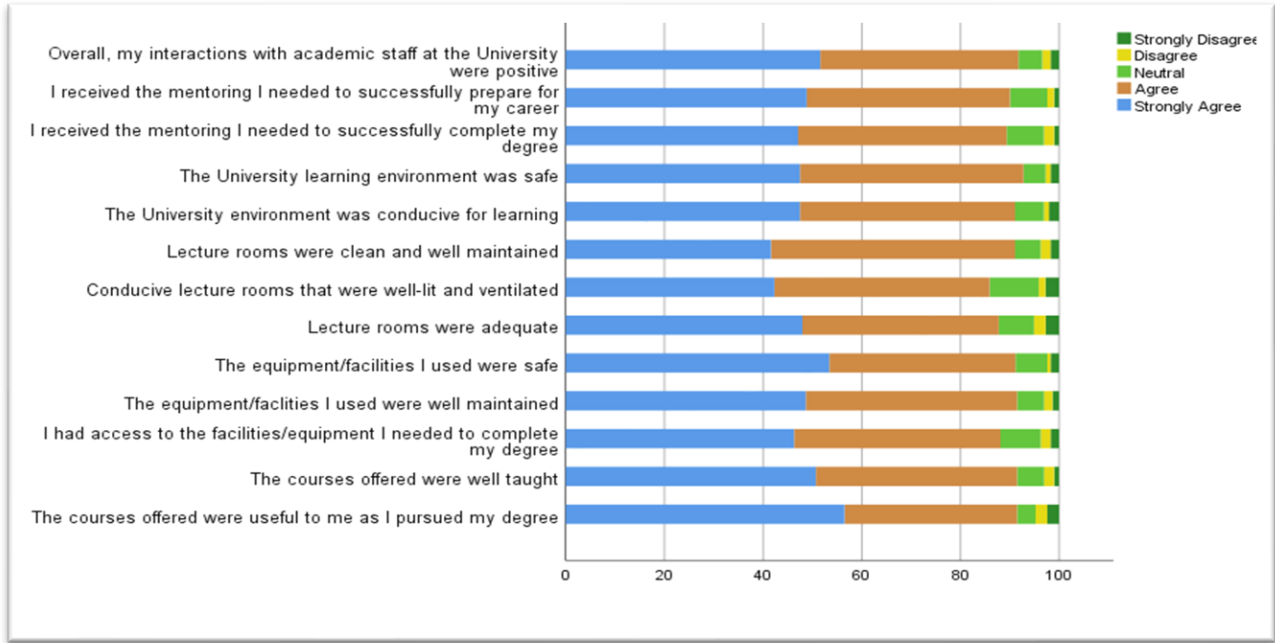


Fig 1: Graphical display of the responses obtained for the impressions of the quality of education

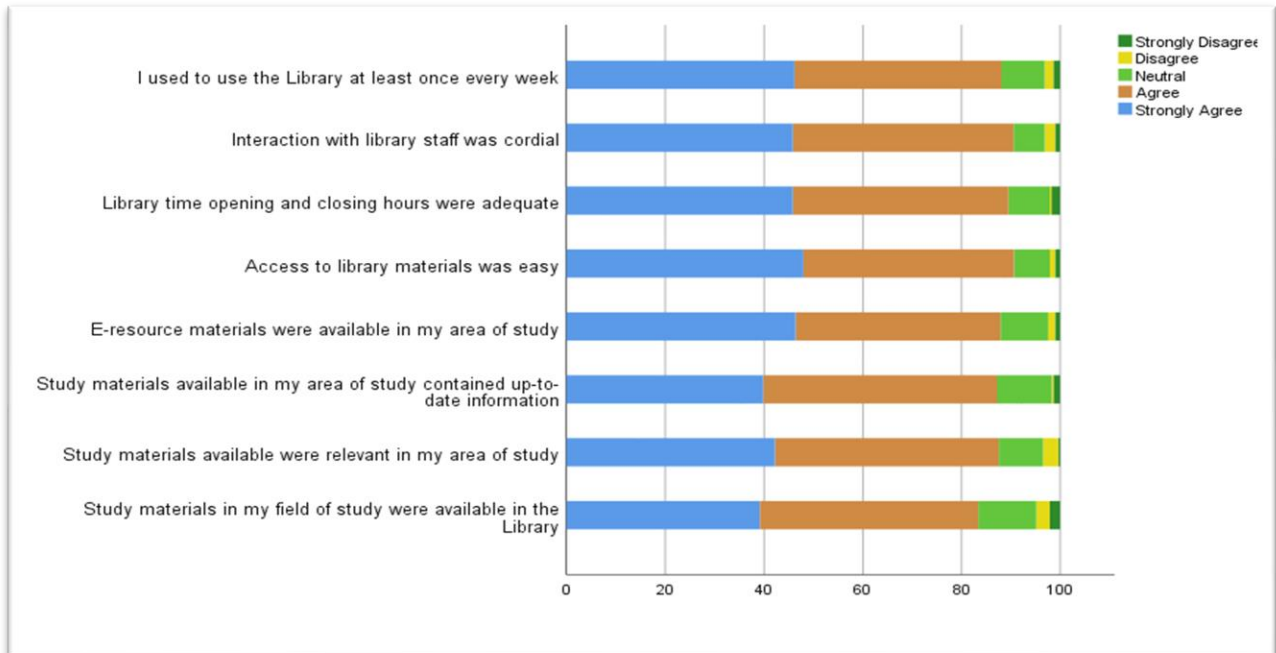


Fig 2: Graphical display of the responses obtained for the impressions of library services

ADEQUACY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

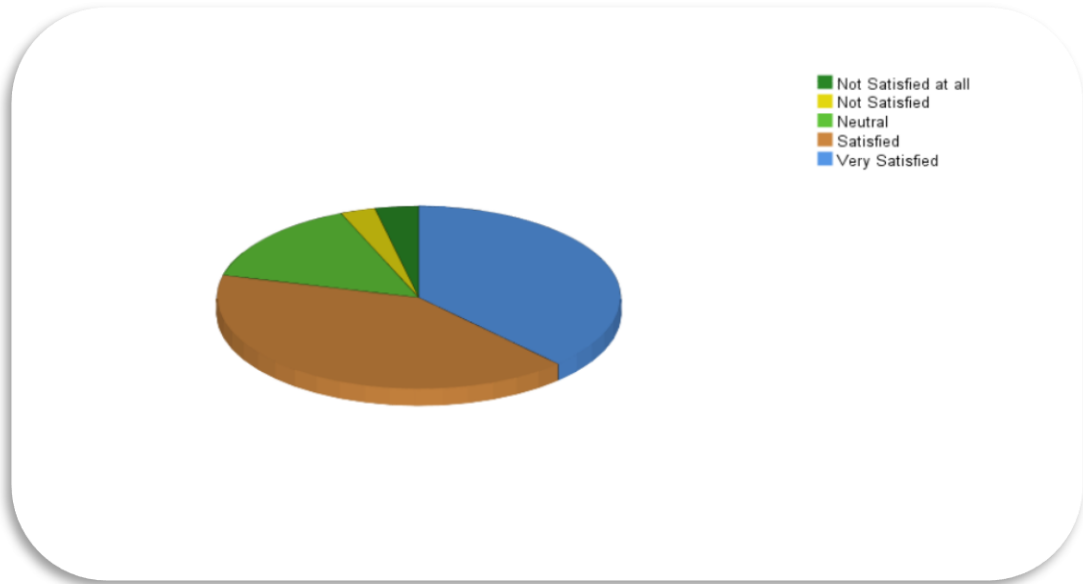


Fig 3: Graphical display of the responses obtained for adequacy of recreational facilities in form of games or sport facilities/equipment

Discussion:

Another crucial outcome of this study is the potential for institutions to enhance student satisfaction in the future by analyzing the responses to individual parameters and implementing necessary reforms and corrective measures. It is the responsibility of the institution to thoroughly analyze and comprehend the feedback received in order to take appropriate action for improvement. For instance, the findings indicate that a larger number of students rated the quality of internet connectivity lower compared to other questions in the ICT infrastructure section. In response, the institution should prioritize efforts to improve the internet bandwidth as a corrective action.

Furthermore, an interesting approach was taken in which students were informed about the objectives and intended learning outcomes associated with various parameters before providing their feedback. This exercise resulted in an improvement in the satisfaction levels of the students. This highlights the importance of communication and transparency in setting expectations and outcomes, ultimately leading to enhanced student satisfaction.

Thus, institutions can utilize the insights gained from this study to identify areas of improvement and take proactive measures to address them. By focusing on specific parameters and involving students in the process, institutions can work towards creating a more satisfying and conducive learning environment. Continuous monitoring and responsiveness to student

feedback are vital for institutions to adapt and enhance their offerings to meet the evolving needs and expectations of students.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The utilization of student satisfaction surveys, such as the exit survey for graduates, serves as an innovative method for gathering valuable feedback on the academic experience, perceptions, and expectations of students in higher education institutions. This study has successfully contributed to understanding students' preferences, likes, dislikes, and their views on the most significant aspects of their educational journey, as well as areas that require improvement.

The developed survey methodology is highly adaptable, allowing for flexibility and customization based on the specific needs of different higher education institutions. It enables various interpretations and analyses, shedding light on multiple parameters and aspects of these institutions. This analysis assists in identifying areas requiring improvement, transforming weaknesses into strengths, and taking appropriate actions to enhance student satisfaction and learning experiences.

By regularly implementing this survey method, institutions can gain valuable insights into the evolving priorities of students, the effectiveness of curriculum delivery, and the factors that significantly contribute to student satisfaction. It also highlights the importance of making students aware of the objectives and intended learning

outcomes, which can aid administrators in prioritizing improvements and allocating resources effectively.

Furthermore, this study underscores the significance of continuous quality assessment and improvement efforts in higher education. The developed method serves as a valuable tool for selecting and evaluating parameters that enhance the overall student experience, leading to higher satisfaction levels. By utilizing this method, institutions can proactively improve facilities, resources, and services to maximize efficiency and meet the evolving needs of their students.

This study presents a reliable, comprehensive, and user-friendly approach for obtaining student feedback and assessing the quality of higher education institutions. It contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance student satisfaction, improve educational experiences, and ultimately achieve higher levels of success in the realm of higher education.

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