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Ogendi Mark Rachuonyo & Prof. Peter Kiriri

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Impact of Assurance and Responsiveness Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction in Higher Education Sector: A Case of Universities in Kenya

^{1*} Ogendi Mark Rachuonyo & ² Prof. Peter Kiriri

^{1*}Post Graduate Candidate, United States International University-Africa

Lecturer, School of Hospitality and Tourism, Mount Kenya University

²Lecturer, United States International University-Africa

***E-mail of corresponding author: markrachuonyo@yahoo.com**

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Abstract

Universities are important vehicles in promoting educational goals in many countries all over the world. They supplement service delivery especially where the public universities would not have managed to cater for the academic needs due to overwhelming numbers of students seeking higher education services. The rapid increase of universities and their satellite branches has further led to competition for the best assurance and responsiveness dimensions on customer satisfaction in the education sector. The aim of this study was to investigate the assurance and responsiveness dimensions on customer satisfaction in higher education sector, taking into consideration the challenges faced by private universities in the country such as lack of funding among others.. The unit of the study was the registered students undertaking undergraduate studies in these universities. The target population comprised of undergraduate students in private universities in Kenya. The private universities considered for this study include Mount Kenya University, Catholic University, Strathmore University, Riara University, KCA University, and United States International University. A probabilistic technique was employed in which simple random sampling was used to identify the respondents. This was considered appropriate, as the numbers of students would be randomly obtained in respective universities. A sample of 384 was used and data was collected through structured questionnaires.

Keywords: *Assurance Dimension, Responsiveness Dimension, Customer Satisfaction & Universities in Kenya.*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Customer satisfaction largely depends on the quality of services provided by any organization (Zhou, 2011). Fundamentally, concerns on service quality have increasingly become common due to the fact most consumers (customers) continue to be well informed on their sovereignty and right to receive better and quality services. This is widely enhanced due to availability of information on products and services quality. Irrespective of the sector in question, globally the consumers expect to be served well and have their concerns and needs satisfied to their expectations (Daniel, 2012). This has been seen both in the developed and developing countries, in almost all sectors including the education sector which is seen as the vehicle behind economic and social development.

Universities are important vehicles in promoting educational goals in many countries all over the world. They supplement service delivery especially where the public universities would not have managed to cater for the academic needs due to overwhelming numbers of students seeking higher education services (Uden, 2013). Alternatively, these institutions are seen as forms of investments, in which case the owners of such institutions benefit economically, as well as create more job opportunities not only to the faculty members, but also many other professions. This includes accountants, human resource managers, administrators, planners, medical practitioners, and many other people who are employed in the support staff to help promote service delivery in such institutions. In this regard, the presence of such institutions is not only a positive contribution to a country's education sector, but also to the country's economy in terms of improved gross domestic product (GDP), employment opportunities, and even tax revenues to the government.

In Africa, service delivery in higher education has also been of a great concern to students in many African countries. The increasing competition among higher education institutions to attract highly qualified students toward achieving high academic profiles is forcing them to pay more attention to service quality issues (Pang, 2016). This makes it prudent to examine whether the quality process has produced the enhancement of core outputs especially on the African Continent (Paul, 2014). The higher education sector is one of the fastest growing industries in Kenya with private universities coming up so fast to compete with the public funded institutions (Economic Survey 2012). The high number of student enrolment, reduced government funding heightened expectation of service quality by the students and other stakeholders and emergence of very competitive private institutions and the acquisition of middle level colleges by public universities and changing them to constituent colleges attribute this rapid growth. In Kenya, there is a view that every county must have a university. Service quality is therefore gaining a greater prominence with the main stay remaining high service quality to enhance customer satisfaction (Sarah *et. al.*, 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kenya has experienced a rapid expansion of university education as a spontaneous response to the higher education demand. The increasing large flows of students from high schools has further led to popular demand for higher education. Due to the limited number of higher education sector and their inability to absorb additional students, private universities have emerged and increased in the country to absorb the high numbers. The rapid increase of universities and their satellite branches has further led to competition for the best assurance and responsiveness dimensions on customer satisfaction in the education sector (Gitau, 2015). Consequently, the high competition and resource

constraints have become more intense and therefore addressing specific student needs has become even more demanding in the higher education sector.

The subject of service quality has in the recent past sparked lots of concerns from different quarters in the bid of trying to foster an appropriate system that can align Kenyan youths and learners to the global demands in the professional environments, which are entirely dependent on academic achievements (Rodrigues, 2013). Nevertheless, it is more complex to conceptualize the quality of service as opposed to that of goods. Given the fact education is purely a service provided to the publics; its measurement can only be measured against some indicators that are different from those used in goods. Some of the approaches include the use of SERVQUAL model, which expounds on the five service dimensions (Jayanth, 2015). Ideally, the dimensions can be measured based on the perceptions of the customers who receive the service, and in this case the students (Raphael, 2014). The aim of this study therefore was to investigate the assurance and responsiveness dimensions on customer satisfaction in higher education sector, taking into consideration the challenges faced by private universities in the country such as lack of funding among others.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the impact of assurance and responsiveness dimensions on customer satisfaction in higher education sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Effects of Assurance on Perception of Service Quality

2.1.1 Confidence and Trust

According to a study that was conducted by Ghulam, Khan and Affaq in 2014 on “the impacts of service quality on customer satisfaction in higher education institutions”, it is clearly presented that there is a close relationship between the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model with the satisfaction of students in terms of service delivery. One of the main components of the model is the assurance dimension (Ghulam *et. al.*, 2014). According to the authors’ definition and operationalization of the variables, assurance is deemed to be the “knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to promote confidence and trust” in service delivery (Ghulam et al, 2014). Ideally, service delivery in university education must be based on trust in different aspects such as the application of technological advancements and approaches to enhance education goals and even on the side of faculty members’ skills and abilities to deliver with much dedication and professionalism (Bidgoli, 2010).

2.1.2 Propagating Ethical Standards

In higher education, the main objective of education goals is not only to transmit knowledge, but also to propagate ethical standards which are important in society at large and this can only be possible if the different parties involved in transmitting knowledge can be able to convey trust to the learners as well (Paul, 2014). It is through universities that leaders are prepared and academic researches and further studies enhanced. These efforts should be characterized by ethical practices that are fundamentally founded on grounds of trust. Trust enhances assurance to various stakeholders who have interest in higher education services. In another study by Sarah, Elias and Lydia in 2011 on “comparative analysis of business students’ perceptions of service quality offered in Kenyan universities”, it is revealed that assurance creates confidence in students with regard to their faculty when services are offered professionally (Sarah et al, 2011). As a matter of fact,

confidence from service seekers can be enhanced through many ways such as displaying a professional approach in handling issues, presentation of certifications and other professional documents to parties that might be interested so as to dispel any fears and doubts, and above all acting ethically at all times in discharging duties (Sarah et al, 2011).

Several authors have discussed the unique importance of quality to service firms like universities and have demonstrated its positive relationship with profits, increased market share, return on investment, customer satisfaction, and future purchase intentions (Rust and Oliver, 1994). One obvious conclusion of these studies is that firms with superior quality products outperform those marketing inferior quality products (Caleb and Ibrahim, 2011).

2.1.3 Organisational Success

Service quality can be concisely defined as the personal experience of the customer with the service provider. Service quality is playing an increasingly important role in the present environment where there is no further scope for the companies to differentiate themselves other than the quality of the service provided by them. Delivering superior service quality than the competitors is the key for the success of any organization. Because unlike measuring the quality of goods, the measurement of the quality of services offered by the organizations is difficult due to the three unique features of services viz. intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability. Hence, the only way of measuring the quality of services offered by the service provider is the measurement of the customer's perception of the quality of service they are experiencing from their service providers (Faranak and Behnaz, 2011). Various authors have defined quality differently. Some prominent definitions include 'conformance to requirements, fitness for use, or one that satisfies the customer'. According to production philosophy of Japan, quality has been defined as 'zero defects' in the firm's offerings. Being inherently and essentially intangible, heterogeneous, perishable and entailing simultaneity and inseparability of production and consumption, services require a distinct framework for quality explication and measurement.

2.1.4 Services and Quality Measurement

As against the goods sector where tangible cues exist to enable consumers to evaluate product quality, quality in the service context is explicated in terms of parameters that largely come under the domain of 'experience' and 'credence' properties and are as such difficult to measure and evaluate. According to Hernon and Whitman (2011), service quality means relating the superiority of the service with the global judgement of a person about it and explicated it as involving evaluations of the outcome (i.e., what the customer actually receives from service) and process of service act (i.e., the manner in which service is delivered).

In line with the propositions put forward by Jayanth (2015), posited and operationalized service quality as a difference between consumer expectations of 'what they want' and their perceptions of 'what they get.' Based on this conceptualization and operationalization, they proposed a service quality measurement scale called 'SERVQUAL'. Quality has become a strategic tool in obtaining efficiency in operations and improved performance in business. This is true for both the goods and services sectors. However, the problem with management of service quality in service firms is that quality is not easily identifiable and measurable due to inherent characteristics of services that make them different from goods. In the past two decades, general interests into service quality in research fields showed a wide research about service quality has taken place in the last two decades manifested centrifugal relation among quality of customer services, performance improvement and organizational competitiveness. This relation clearly showed that the improvement of customer

service would lead in its turn to an improvement in the performance and competitiveness. Certain standards and indicators of customer satisfaction and service quality are used by service units' administrators to value customers' needs by the institution. Service organizations consider service quality as substantial tool to keep their competitiveness in the marketplace. In other words, customers can be attracted by high quality services that banks offer (Jalal *et. al.*, 2011).

2.1.5 Need for Service Quality in Education Sector

As opposed to other sectors, education sector is primarily not for purposes of profit making. However, due to ineptitudes in service provision especially by the government institutions, a business niche was noticed by private investors and consequently attracted to this sector as a form of business venture or investment. Nevertheless, despite these evident opportunities, the obvious truth is that the beneficiaries or the main customers end up in the same job market, irrespective of whether one is trained in private or public institutions, for competition of jobs and other business opportunities. As a result therefore, there emerged a need to establish that private universities and public universities should be committed towards ensuring that their services are within the set standards and government framework in a country, and more importantly in conformance to global standards (Raphael, 2014).

Nevertheless, service quality is a matter of concern especially in the context where the efforts are not able to portray the fruits in society due to the many challenges that are in the society which specifically emanate from the youthful age if people such as corruption and other vices. Education quality is an issue that should be given more weight and concern since it is best suited to handle many of the society problems by ensuring early moulding of individuals before they are integrated to the entire society set-up. Practically for the context of Kenya, indicators of measuring service quality should be applied across the board, both to the private and public institutions of higher learning where leaders and great businesspersons are made (Rodrigues, 2013).

In this vision, the service demands an autonomous framework for measuring and explaining quality. Service quality model developed by (Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1985, 1988) is the most popular model and is widely practiced to measure the quality of service in service sectors. In addition, wide research has taken place on service quality and customer satisfaction. Conversely, there are no recent researches higher institutions of learning in Kenya setting to look into the impact of the performance of service features on customer (students) satisfaction in complete model and specifically on assurance dimension. In this regard, Quality assurance means developing operational controls to ensure that the results match the desired outcomes. Customer service operations are designed to keep customers satisfied while protecting the organization. To make sure customer service achieves these goals in higher education institutions, the person responsible for quality assurance must define the quality functions as they apply to how to serve customers. Once such definitions are in place, it will be easy to define the resources required to fulfill the defined mandate and make sure the customers (students in this case) experience quality service (Rodrigues, 2013).

2.2 The Effects of Responsiveness on Perception of Service Quality

2.2.1 Prompt Responses in Service Delivery

According to Raphael (2014)'s research on the "service quality measurements in tertiary colleges in Kenya, a case study of Zetech College, he emphasizes that among the most important factors in the SERVQUAL model is the responsiveness dimension. He defines responsiveness as "the

willingness to help customers and provide prompt services” (Raphael, 2014). In this case, the most fundamental aspects to ensure that responsiveness is assured in delivery of services in any set-up includes aspects such as; ensuring that services are provided promptly, issues and any other concerns responded quickly, ensuring that there is instant responses which are provided rapidly and immediately (Raphael, 2014). Further, studies indicate that the responsiveness dimension helps to assure the service seekers of the fact that their concerns and needs are catered for at any given time. In this regard, it is of paramount importance that service providers and players in higher education sectors do not only focus on output, but rather on the need to be able to make their services attractive (Raphael, 2014). Many at times, when ethics is spoken of especially in the business world, there are chances of neglecting universities and colleges as business entities. But on reality, most of the private institutions especially on higher education sector are ideally concerned with profit making (output), in the course of their operations (Senakham, 2010). As a result of the profit motive, an emergency of strong competition among private universities across the globe becomes rampant, forcing institutions to concentrate on areas that will attract customers (students) such as infrastructural development, reduction in university fees, provision of scholarships, and many others neglecting service quality especially in the side of the faculty members (Daniel, 2012).

2.2.2 Availability of Facilities to Enhance Quality

Based on this understanding, it is factual to admit that most of the areas concentrated on by the universities are very instrumental in the provision of education services and betterment of the learners’ lives, but ideally, they cannot be of great importance in isolation without inclusivity of other factors such as the quality of services provided. For instance, by attracting many students to an institution, it is also important to increase the number of lecturers in a proportion that can fit the demands. More often, institutions do not mind about how their faculties can be able to provide services to large numbers, without compromising quality (Caleb, Maureen and Ibrahim, 2011). Nevertheless, the truth behind such a scenario is clear that quality is undermined when lecturers are left to handle students in lecture halls, whose numbers are actually overwhelming. The responsiveness and student contact is lost, making the faculty not able to provide services that are quick, prompt, rapid, instant and immediate. In most cases, the ones left to suffer most are the students, who may not be having alternative options in ensuring that service provision is standardized in accordance with the provisions of higher education globally, or even nationally.

2.2.3 The Case in Tertiary Institutions

Essentially, the study by Raphael (2014) established that the role of service quality in tertiary education institutions has received increasing attention during the last two decades. Tertiary education institutions should ensure that all services encounters are managed to enhance students’ perceived service quality. While there is consensus on the importance of service quality, its measurement is a challenge that tertiary education providers who aim to gain a better understanding of the quality issues of students’ experiences face (Sarah *et. al.*, 2011). In fact, the use of the most appropriate measurement tools would help managers to assess service quality provided by their institution, thus having the ability to use the results to better design service delivery. In an effort to increase students’ satisfaction, it is imperative that tertiary education institutions measure the quality of services they provide to be able to improve on them. Students’ perceptions of the quality of services experiences against actual service received should be assessed. In a competitive higher education market place, the quality of services delivered separates an institution from its competitors (Raphael, 2014).

Therefore, the results from service quality measurement can be used to position a tertiary education institution strategically in the market. Zetech College is one of the leading private tertiary education providers in Kenya. There has been an urgent need to measure service quality recently due to increased students complains on service delivery even with the existence of a very nicely articulated customer service charter. The aim of this study was to measure service quality in tertiary education institutions in Kenya. A case study of Zetech College was conducted. The study highlighted the students' expectations about the quality of tertiary education services they are receiving at Zetech College (Raphael, 2014). It also examined the current service quality levels and determined the size and direction of the gap between students' perceived service quality and service expectations. The information from this study is expected to be very useful to all tertiary education providers in Kenya. The study was carried out on the basis that the sampled students were able and willing to make an evaluation and assessment of services received. The study was a case study of Zetech College. The ex-post facto research design was used. Stratified random sampling was used to select one hundred and twenty two (122) students out of five thousand one hundred and twenty four (5124) Zetech college students taking course for seven (7) examination bodies. Descriptive statistics was used for final analysis and results. The researcher found out that there was an 85.5% students' expectations' on service quality, with 62.5% of services offered being below what students expected in terms of service quality. There was negative 2.41/7 deviation in service quality from the students' service quality expectations (Raphael, 2014).

2.2.4 Understanding Students Expectations

Knowing what the customer expects is the first and most critical step in delivering quality service. Nejati asserts that being wrong about what customers want can mean losing a customer business when another company hits the target exactly (Nejati, 2013). Being wrong can also mean spending resources, money and time on things that do not matter to customers. Uden (2013) investigated the key factors in guest satisfaction in the hotel industry focusing on complaints and compliments. They found out that there are service quality feature which they labelled "dissatisfies" which earn complaints if presents, but no compliments if absent and "satisfiers" which earn compliment if present but no complaints if absent. They believe that it is vital for organizations to identify elements of service which are potential satisfiers and or dissatisfies. A study by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) suggest that customers do not perceive service quality in un dimensional way but rather they judge service quality on multiple factors relevant to the service context. They have offered the most widely reported set of service quality dimensions that are important in moulding customers, expectations and perceptions of delivered services (Raphael, 2014).

2.2.5 Universities' Management Responsibilities

More often, issues such as complains on service delivery are widely experienced all over the country by students and to some extent other stakeholders such as faculty members, government, parents or guardians, employers and other agencies. It therefore implies that there is a lot that needs to be streamlined in the education sector especially by the management to respective universities in ensuring that the stakeholders are satisfied with their nature of work which should be reflected in the final output (Senakham, 2010).

Firstly, failure to ensure that the teaching staff in is well motivated in delivering teaching in institutions will definitely mean that the students will not get good services and hence will not be satisfied. Secondly, service in education does not only depend on the delivery of lecturers, but rather on many combinations such as quality of libraries, communication equipment's, appropriate

structures and buildings, availability of basic needs such as water in institutions, and the motivation of non-teaching members who either directly or indirectly contribute to the overall service delivery. Finally, the nature of leadership provided in institutions can also motivate other service providers to ensure that they responsibly undertake their duties with an aim of rendering the best services within their abilities. This includes adequate human resources recruited through the appropriate and laid down structures with merit on qualification and suitability to provide instructional services in institutions of higher learning (Hayan and Mokhles, 2011).

In addition to the already mentioned strategies, management has the responsibility of ensuring that its human resources are committed to their duties by establishing performance management strategies that should be used to evaluate performance from time to time. Good and exemplary performance should receive appropriate rewards while poor performers are punished appropriately with the bid of encouraging and discouraging good and worse performances respectively in our Kenyan private institutions of higher learning (Faranak and Behnaz, 2011).

3.0 Research Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive research design. Research design is the plan or structure of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance. The population of interest in this research was the students of Private Universities in Kenya. According to CUE (2016), there are 70 universities with 33 public and 37 private universities. The unit of the study was the registered students undertaking undergraduate studies in these universities. The target population comprised of undergraduate students in private universities in Kenya. The private universities considered for this study include Mount Kenya University, Catholic University, Strathmore University, Riara University, KCA University, and United States International University. A probabilistic technique was employed in which simple random sampling was used to identify the respondents. This was considered appropriate, as the numbers of students would be randomly obtained in respective universities. A sample of 384 was used and data was collected through structured questionnaires. Data was analyzed using SPSS.

4.0 Results and findings

4.1 Assurance Dimension on Service Quality

The first aim of the study was to find out how assurance dimension impacted the students' perception about service quality in their universities. The respondents were asked several questions pertaining assurance dimension, in which case various responses were obtained. The study targeted students to assess assurance dimension because they were better placed to give their honest opinions based on the way they are being handled in the universities. The responses obtained are analysed and presented in the sections below.

4.1.1 University Commitment towards Assuring Students on Service Commitment?

The students were asked to indicate in their opinion how often the universities were committed to assure them on service delivery and commitment especially by the management. They were required to indicate whether very frequently, frequently, rarely, or not all. The responses obtained are represented in figure 1 below. From the findings, the responses indicated that universities are actually involved in assuring students that they will be committed to ensure quality service delivery. However, the findings does not indicate that actually the commitment is effected, hence need to substantiate university management claims with actual service delivery. Those who indicated that universities were very frequently assuring students accounted for 25%, while 42%

said frequently, 21% rarely, and 12% said never at all. This therefore implies that 67% of private universities constantly keep telling their students that they will ensure there is quality service delivery.

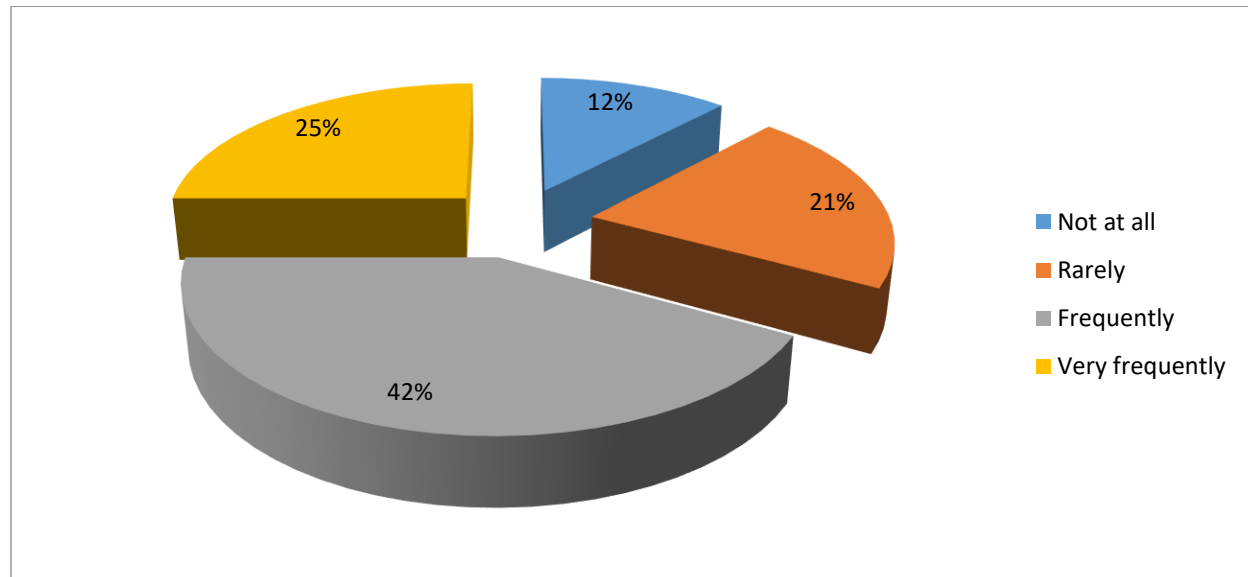


Figure 1: University Commitment to Service Delivery

4.1.2 Perception about the Qualifications of the Faculty Members

Students were asked to give their opinion regarding to the qualifications of the faculty members. This was basically targeting to establish whether the students were for the opinion that the university faculty members were fully qualified to teach them as far as their interactions concerned. The results obtained are presented below.

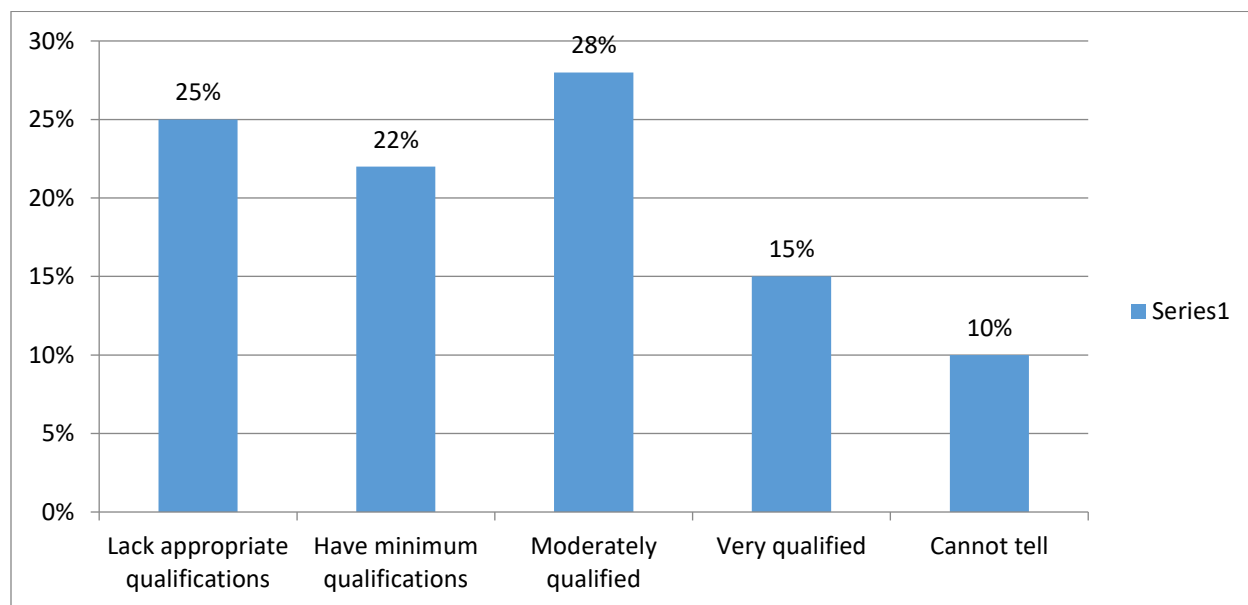


Figure 2: Qualification of Faculty Members

From the figure above, 25% of the respondents thought that the lecturers did not have appropriate qualifications to teach in the universities, 22% said that the faculty had minimum qualifications, 28% said they were moderately qualified, 15% thought they are very qualified, while 10% could not be able to tell. On average, 43% of the respondents cited that the faculty was qualified, while 25% indicated lack of qualification, as 22% were indifferent on qualifications as they said the lecturers had minimum qualifications. Based on these perceptions, the research found out that over 65% of the respondents agreed that the faculty had the minimum requirements to teach in a university.

4.1.3 Education and Goals Achievement?

The respondents were asked whether or not they thought education they were getting from their various universities was helping them to achieve their goals in life. The respondents obtained are represented below.

Table 1: Education and Life Goals

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
Yes	162	54.00	54.00	54.00
Suitable No	138	46.00	46.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

From table 1, 54.0% of the respondents agreed that indeed education is helping them to achieve their goals in life, while 46.0% disputed the fact that education was actually helping them to achieve their goals in life. Some of those who were for the contrary opinion indicated that education was just expensive and the fruits are not immediately paying-off and they also indicated that the system of education is centered on books as opposed to personal growth. Those who accepted that education is important indicated that it was helping them to realize their full potentials, opening them to more opportunities, and enabling them to network with like-minded people.

4.1.4 Faculty Members' Dedication to University's Vision

Students were also asked to give their views concerning the dedication of the faculty members to their respective university vision statements. The responses obtained showed that majority of the faculty members represented by 66% present themselves in ways suggesting that they are not committed to university visions while 34% indicated that they through the faculty members were dedicated to their university visions as shown below in table 2.

Table 2: Faculty Dedication to University Vision

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
No	198	66.00	66.00	66.00
Suitable Yes	102	34.00	34.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

4.1.5 Confidence in the Faculty Members

The respondents were also asked to indicate if they indeed had confidence in the faculty teams in their university. 70% said they did not have confidence in their faculty members while 30% indicated they had confidence in the faculty members and the table below summarizes responses obtained as shown below in table 3.

Table 3: Confidence in Faculty Members

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
Yes	210	70.00	70.00	70.00
Suitable No	90	30.00	30.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

4.1.6 Selecting the Current University of Study

The study also sought to establish from the respondents if they will still make the same university choices or return to study in their current university if given an opportunity to choose. The findings showed that 67% of the respondents were most likely to return to their current universities while 33% would not select their current universities. Those who indicated that they would select their universities again cited some of the reasons as good infrastructural facilities, reputation, and convenience. On the other hand, those who indicated otherwise gave reasons such as lack of satisfaction, poor teaching methodologies, lack of commitment from the university management to take care of their concerns among other reasons. The findings are represented in the table 4.

Table 4: Choosing Current University Again

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
Yes	201	67.00	67.00	67.00
Suitable No	99	33.00	33.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

4.1.7 Professionalism among Faculty Members

The study also sought to determine if the students perceived their faculty teams as professionals while they undertake their duties. The findings indicated that, 27% agreed while 73% said that the faculty carried themselves in very unprofessional while during their operations in universities. The results are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Faculty's Professionalism

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
Yes	81	27.00	27.00	27.00
Suitable No	219	73.00	73.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

4.1.8 Level of Agreement to Statements on Assurance Dimension

Further, the study sought to establish how students would agree to some statements which were basically concerned with the assurance dimensions with regard to quality service delivery. The respondents were required to indicate strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree to various statements. On the statement "my university is committed to satisfy students' needs" 78% strongly disagreed, and 22% disagreed. This therefore implies that despite the fact that universities were found to be giving the students assurance that they are committed to ensure quality services, they actually do not reciprocate it in actions as shown in figure 3;

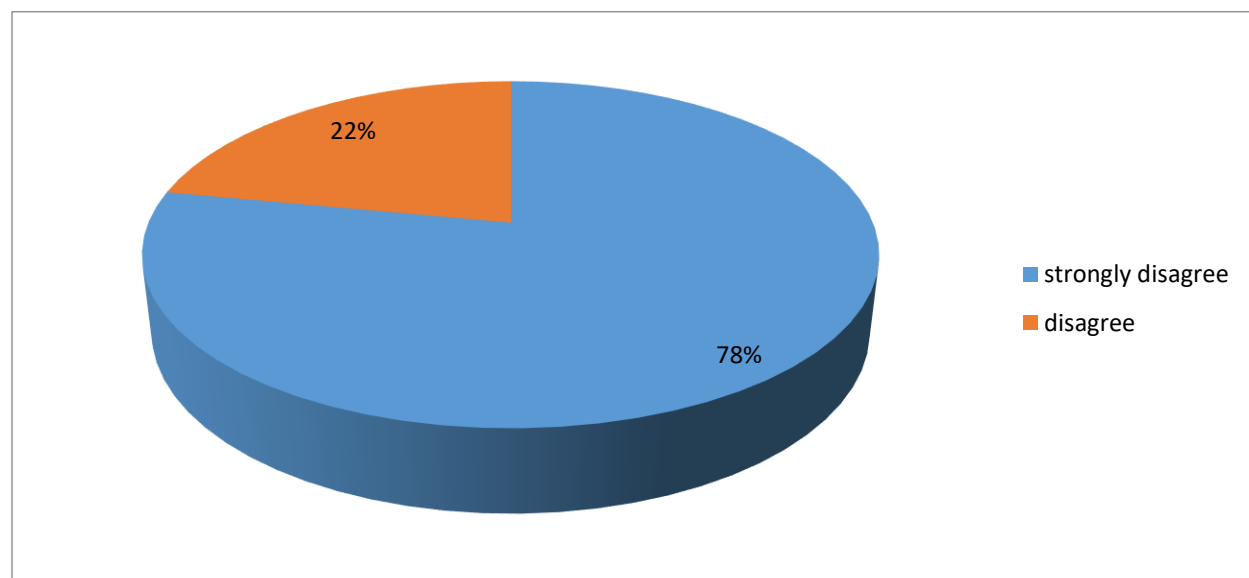


Figure 3: Student Satisfaction

On the statement that "our lecturers conduct themselves with courtesy all the time" 42% strongly disagreed, 31% disagreed, 7% were neutral, and 20% agreed. This therefore implies that there are

some lecturers who are actually courteous though majorities are not, based on the study's findings represented in figure 4.

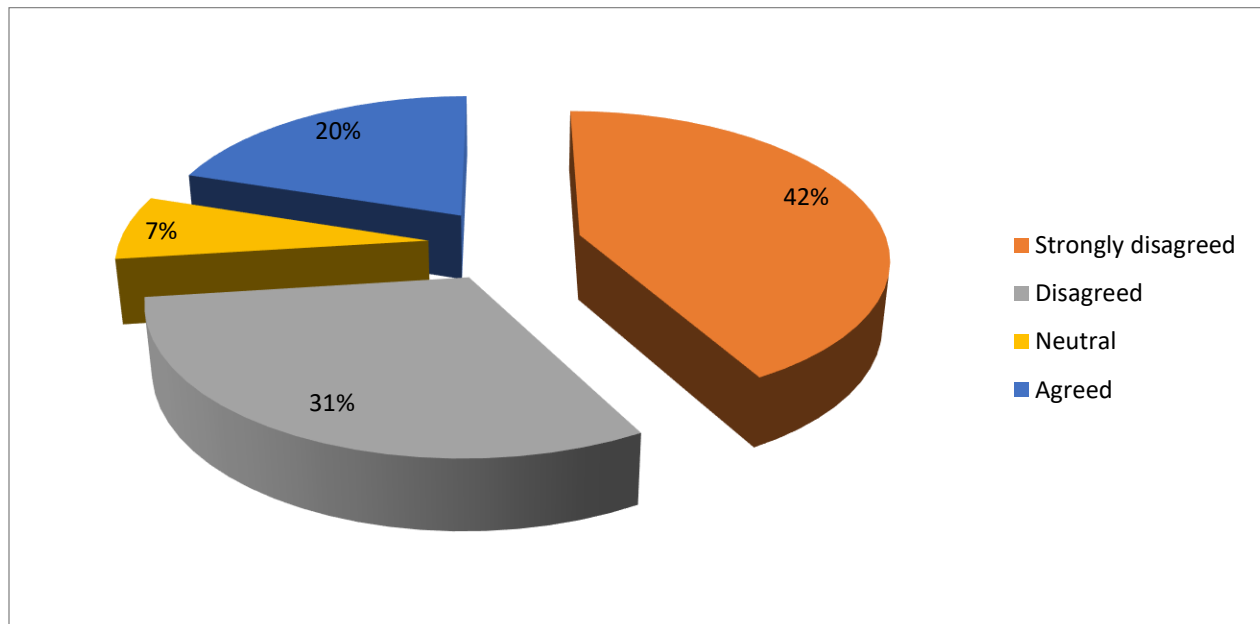


Figure 4: Lecturers' Courtesy

On the statement of “assurance promotes confidence and trust in service delivery”, 69% of the students agreed, 21% strongly agreed, while 10% were neutral as shown below.

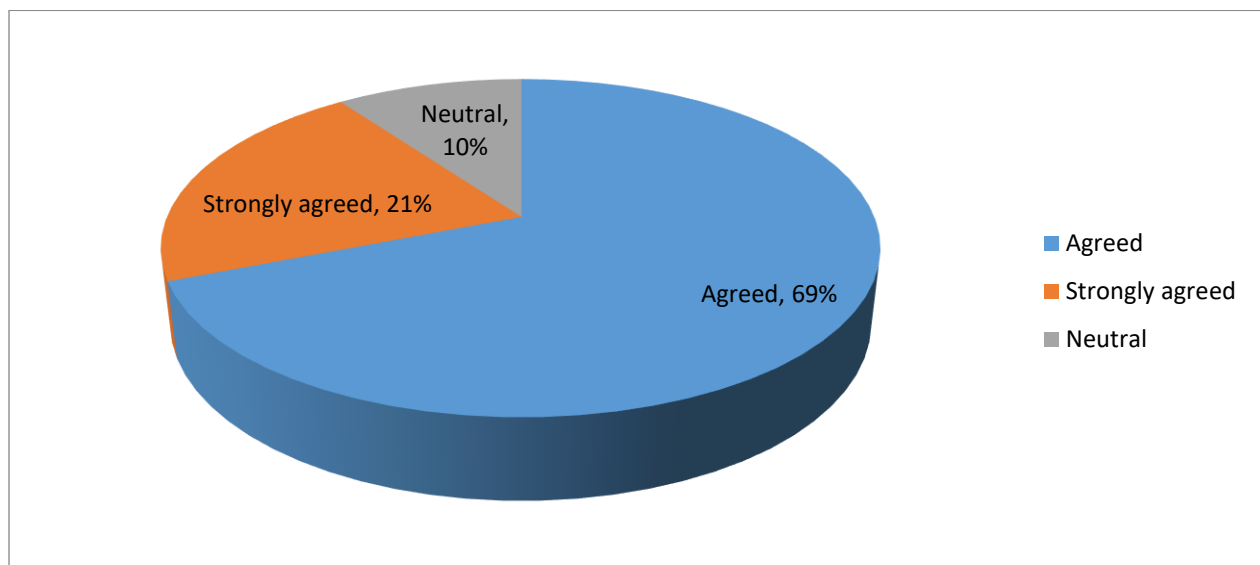


Figure 5: Assurance Promotes Confidence

On the statement that, “I have confidence in my university, the faculty and the services provided in my university”, 71% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 15% disagreed, 10% agreed while 4% were neutral as shown below.

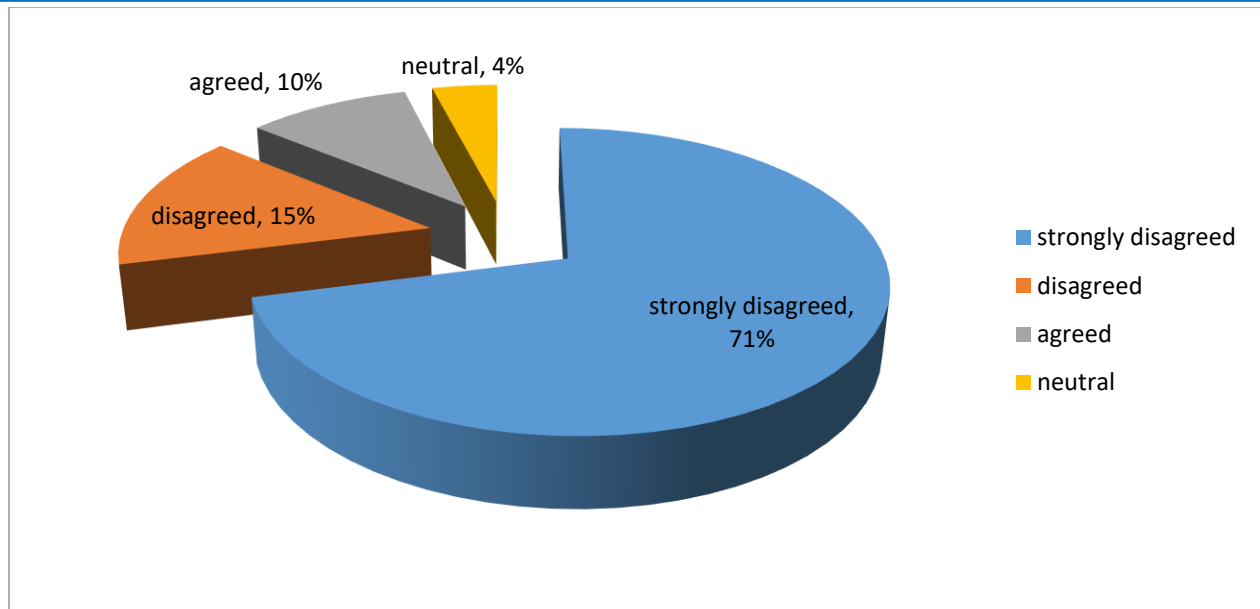


Figure 6: Confidence in my University

On the statement that, “a private university is better than a public university in terms of service delivery” 36% of the respondents strongly agreed, 34% agreed, 1% were neutral, 20% disagreed, while 9% strongly disagreed. This demonstrated that in as much as the students may not have been fully satisfied with the nature of services and assurance to quality, they still preferred their universities as compared to public universities. The results are presented below.

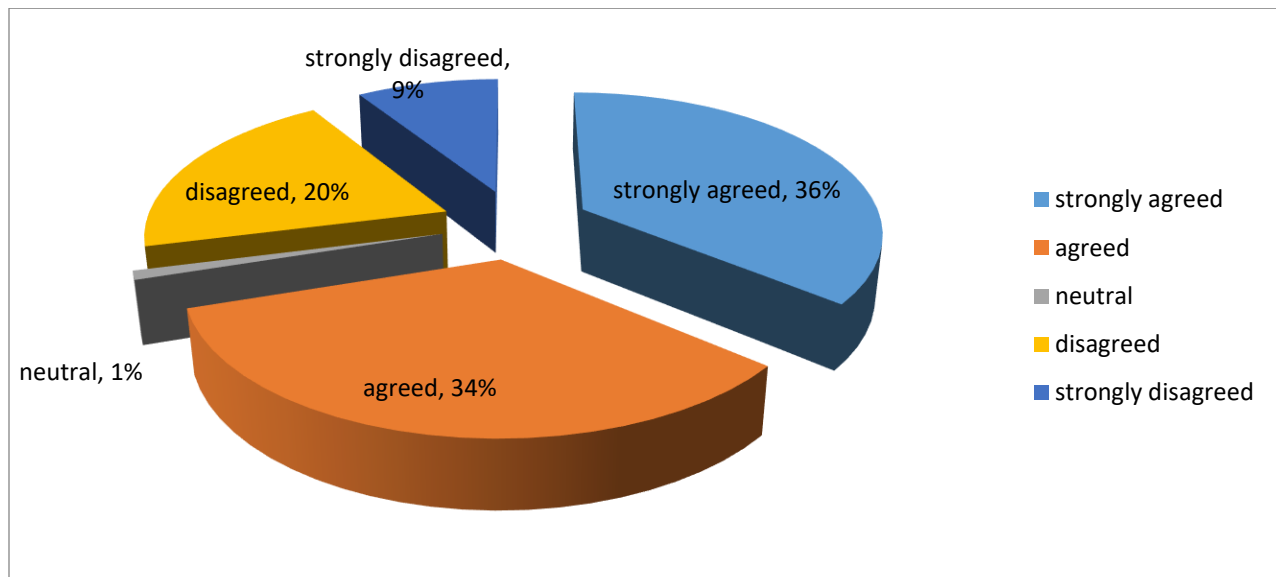


Figure 7: Private University is better than Public University

4.2 Responsiveness Dimension on Quality Service

The study's second objective was to find out how responsiveness dimension affected service quality in private universities. Respondents were asked a series of questions that were meant to evaluate their perceptions as far as responsiveness is concerned. The findings and responses are presented in the sections that follow.

4.2.1 Universities' Willingness to Help Students and Provide them Prompt Services

Students were asked to indicate whether they thought their universities were willing to offer help to students by providing them with prompt services. The responses are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Willingness to Help Students

	Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
Yes	120	40.00	40.00	40.00
Suitable No	180	60.00	60.00	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

From the table, the study's findings is that in overall 40% of the respondents were for the opinion that universities are willing to offer prompt services while 60% were for the contrary opinion.

4.2.2 Level of Agreement to Statements on Responsiveness Dimension

The respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement to a set of statements, concerning how responsiveness affects students' perception on quality service delivery. The students were supposed to indicate strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. The findings on the statement "services are provided promptly in my university" showed that 45% strongly disagreed, 30% disagreed, 10% agreed, 7% strongly agreed, and 3% were neutral as presented below.

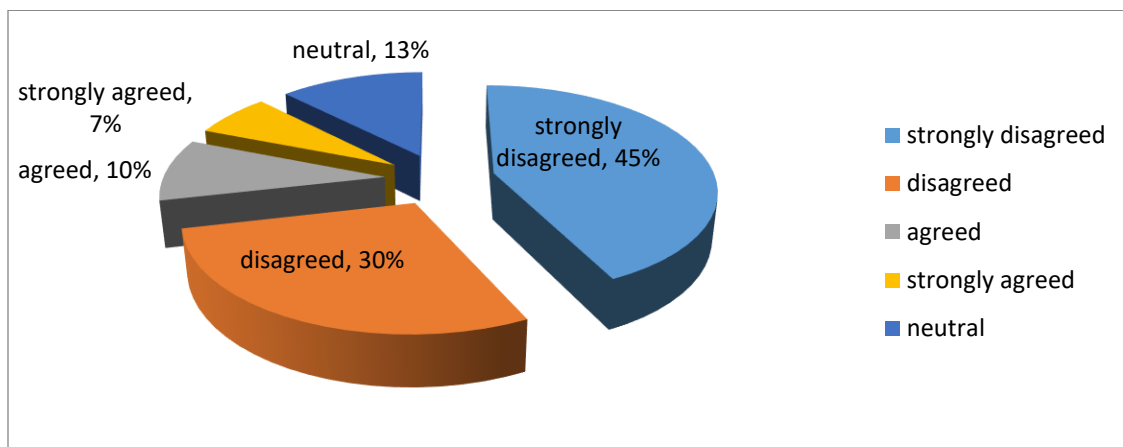


Figure 8: Prompt Services

On the statement that “services are provided rapidly in my university”, the responses obtained indicated that 43% strongly disagreed, 32% disagreed, 10% agreed, 6% strongly agreed, while 14% were neutral as presented below.

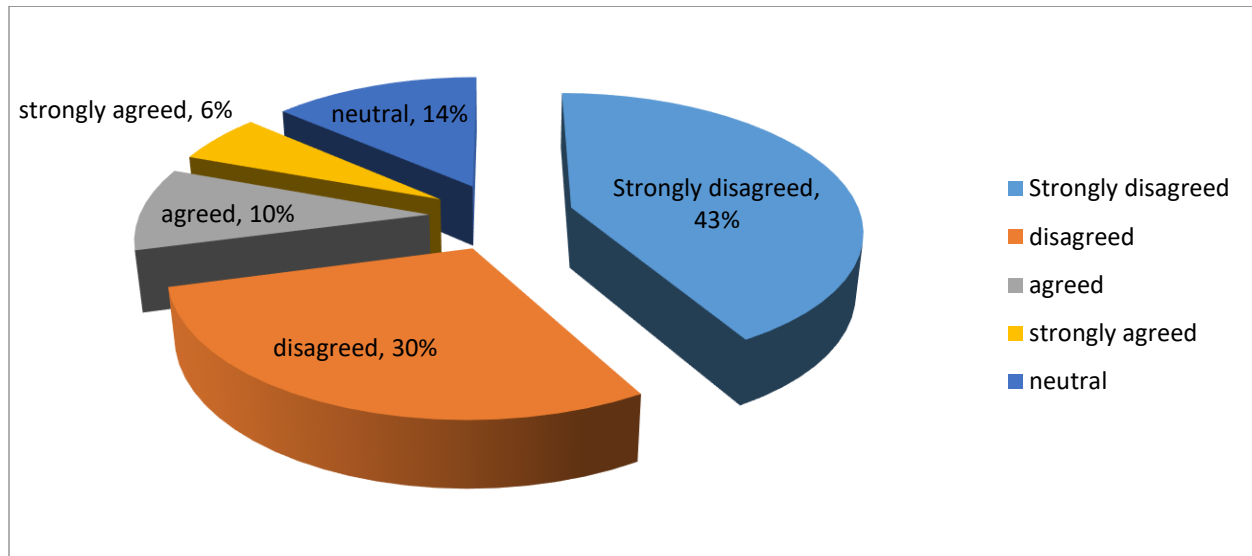


Figure 9: Rapid Services

On the statement that, “responses on issues raised are given instantly as they arise”, the responses obtained indicated that 40% strongly disagreed, 35% disagreed, 7% agreed, 8% strongly agreed, while 10% were neutral as presented below.

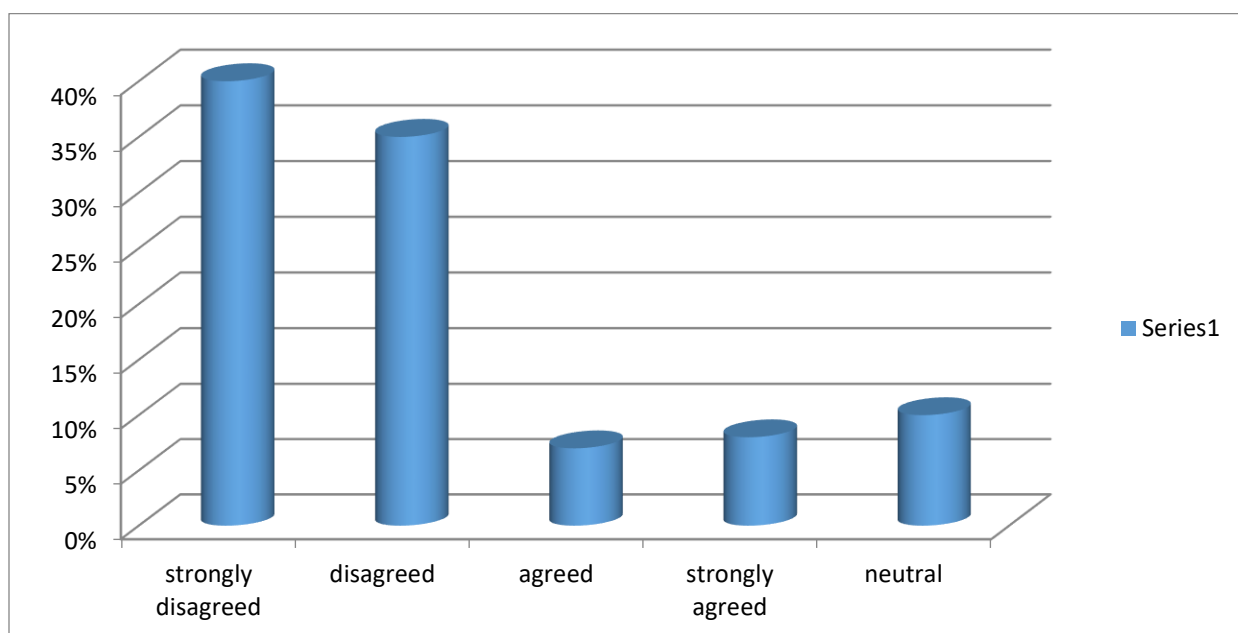


Figure 10: Instant Responses

On the statement that, “the university management solves cases quickly as and when they arise”, the responses obtained indicated that, 50% strongly disagreed, 30% disagreed, 6% agreed, 6% strongly agreed, while 8% were neutral as presented below.

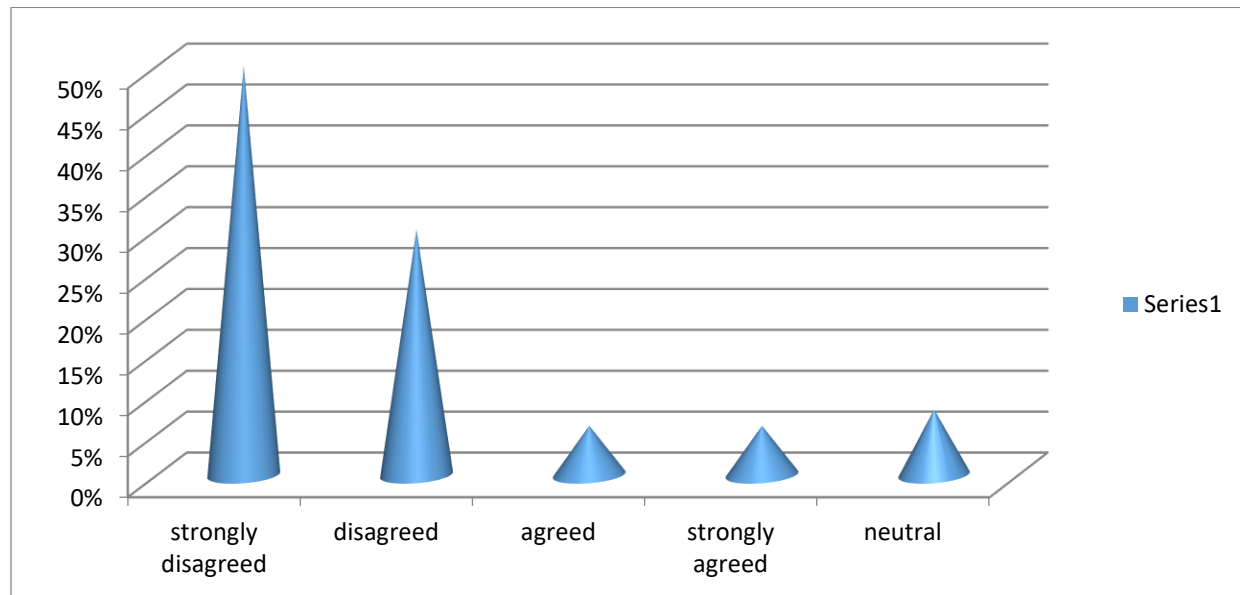


Figure 11: Solving Cases Quickly

On the statement that “the university’s teaching staff, management and supportive staff respond to issues ethically” responses obtained indicated that, 35% strongly disagreed, 35% disagreed, 2% were neutral, 18% agreed, while 10% strongly agreed as presented below.

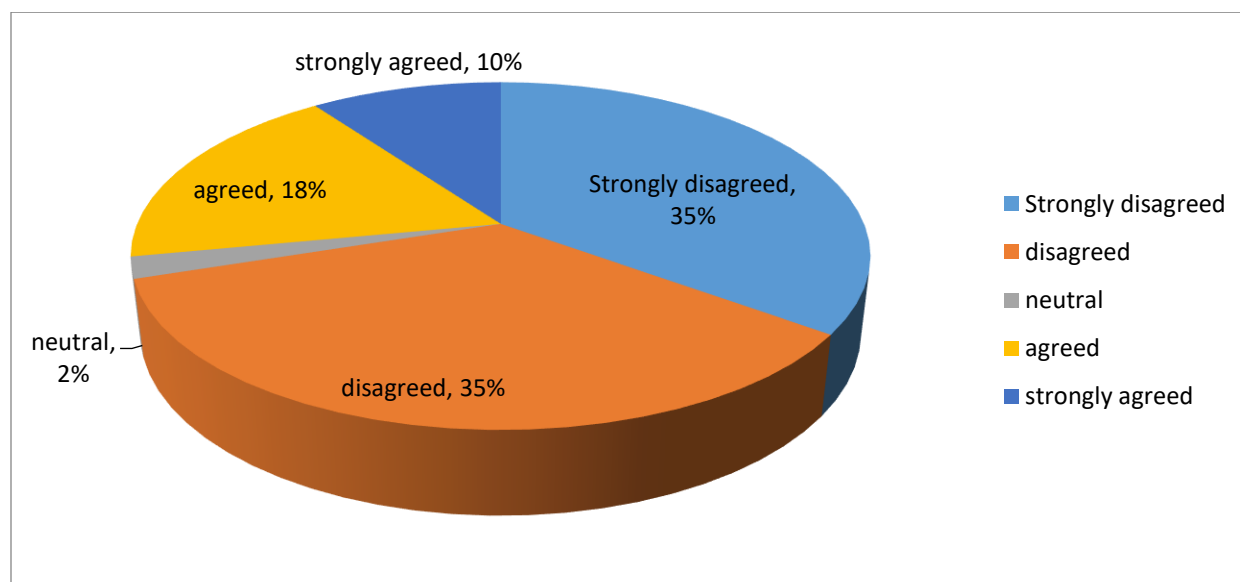


Figure 12: Ethical Responses

4.2.3: University Providing Scholarships to Students

The study also sought to determine whether universities frequently provided scholarships to their students. The respondents were required to indicate whether very frequently, frequently, rarely or not at all. The responses obtained showed that 17% said it is very frequently, 43% said it is frequently, 31% claimed it is rarely, while 9% said never at all as analyzed and presented in figure 4.15 below.

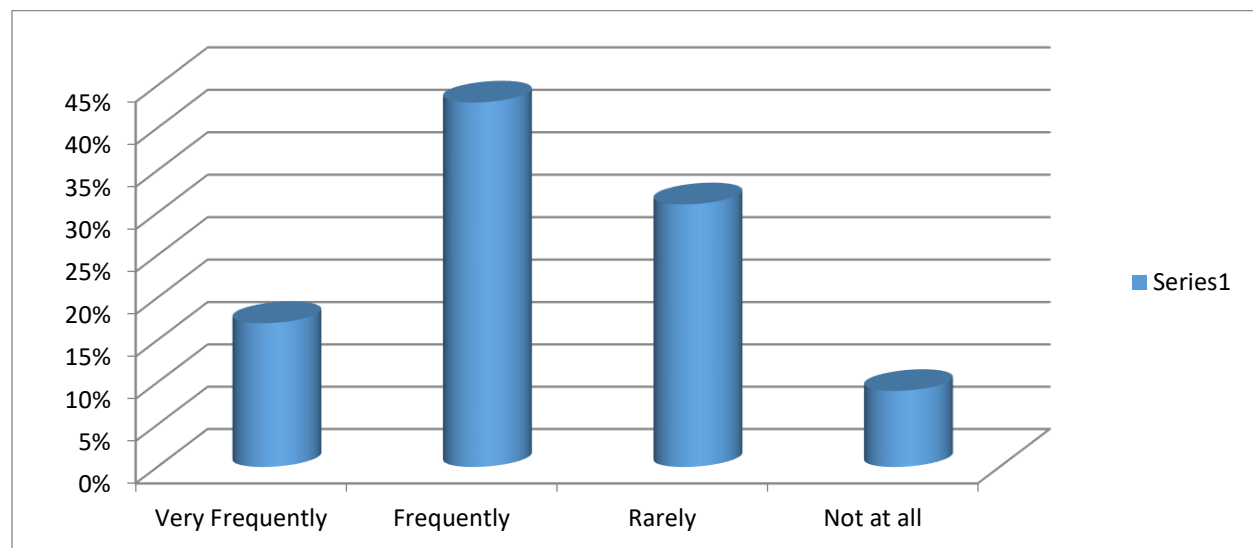


Figure 13: Frequency of Scholarships

4.2.4: Scholarships Merit Criteria

The study also wanted the respondents who admitted that the universities at least offer scholarships to give their views whether the universities were giving scholarships fairly. The results obtained shows that 71% are for the opinion that the scholarships are not fair while only 29% agreed that there is fairness in their various universities while giving scholarships as shown in the table below.

Table 7: Fairness in Scholarships

		Regularity	%	Suitable%	Cumulative %
	Yes	87	29.00	29.00	29.00
Suitable	No	213	71.00	71.00	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

4.2.5: Factors Considered in Determining Scholarships Beneficiaries

Further, the respondents were required to indicate from a set of factors that they thought were used to determine who gets scholarships in their universities. The students were needed to choose from academic performance, financial backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, religion or others. The responses obtained indicated that 23% thought their respective universities used academic

performance, 38% said it was financial/economic backgrounds, 21% indicated ethnic backgrounds, 8% said it was religion, while 10% indicated other considerations. These results show that most private universities base their decisions to give scholarships on financial constraints of the students. However, the results also indicate that even in the private universities ethnicity is still one of the factors considered in giving students scholarships by a margin of 21% of the 300 respondents. This comes third after academic performance which is was claimed to be one of the main pillars by 23% of the students interviewed. The results are presented below.

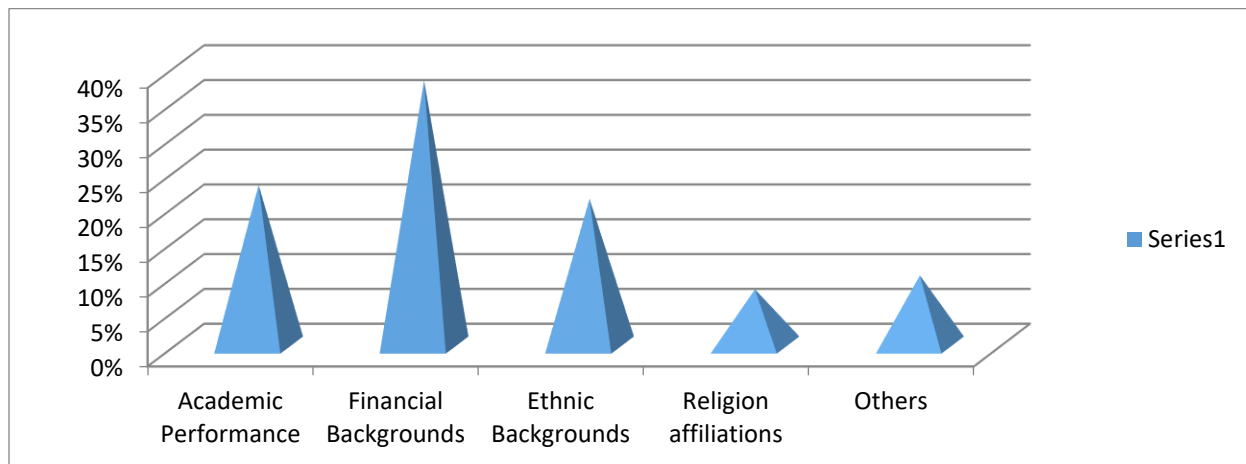


Figure 14: Factors determining scholarship awards

5.0 Conclusions

The result findings indicated that assurance and responsiveness dimensions are closely linked to the level of student satisfaction. The dimensions affect the level of quality due to the perceptions from the customers (students), and as a result affect the satisfaction levels. Responsiveness dimension helps to assure the service seekers of the fact that their concerns and needs are catered for at any given time. It is of paramount importance that service providers and players in higher education sectors do not only focus on output, but rather on the need to be able to make their services attractive.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that the University management to be sensitive on the dimensions that are concerned with quality service delivery; University administration and management should not only promise students on delivery of quality services, but also rather ensure the assurance given is matched with actions. Decisions made by university leaders should be able to give students who are the main customers a sense of satisfaction and enable them to identify with their respective universities.

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