Factors Leading to Students' Satisfaction in Higher Learning Institutions in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines factors influencing student satisfaction in Nepalese higher learning institutions, focusing on the student-teacher relationship, faculty preparedness, educational experiences, and institutional services and facilities. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from 412 participants through convenience sampling. Surveys and path analysis were employed to analyze key determinants of student satisfaction. Results indicate that supportive student-teacher relationships positively impact satisfaction, while faculty preparedness does not directly influence course quality perceptions. Educational experiences, including campus climate and extracurricular activities, significantly predict satisfaction. Although the effect of institutional services and facilities is marginally insignificant, their quality still shapes the student experience. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve student satisfaction and educational outcomes. These insights can guide policymakers and university administrators in fostering supportive learning environments through enhanced student-teacher relationships, faculty evaluation, and service improvements.

Keywords: Student satisfaction, Expectancy-value theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Student-teacher relationship, Supportive environments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Student satisfaction in higher learning institutions is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors that collectively shape students' academic experiences and overall perceptions of their educational journey (Wong & Chapman, 2023). Among the primary determinants of student satisfaction are the qualities of teaching and academic support services available within the institution (Weerasinghe et al., 2017). Effective instructors who engage students, provide clear instruction, and offer valuable feedback significantly contribute to students' satisfaction with their courses and academic programs. Likewise, access to academic support services such as tutoring, counseling, and library resources plays a pivotal role in facilitating students' academic success and enhancing their overall satisfaction with the institution.

Furthermore, the physical infrastructure and resources available on campus are critical factors that contribute to students' satisfaction levels. Well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and technological resources not only facilitate learning but also contribute to students' overall sense of comfort and belonging within the institution (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). A conducive campus environment characterized by safety, inclusivity, and a sense of community further enhances students' satisfaction and well-being during their time at the institution (LaMastro, 2001).In addition to academic factors, extracurricular and social activities also play a significant role in shaping students' satisfaction levels (Mishra & Nargundkar, 2015). Opportunities for students to engage in social activities, participate in clubs and organizations, and build relationships with peers contribute to a vibrant campus life and enrich students' overall college experiences. Moreover, administrative responsiveness and the efficiency of administrative services, including registration processes, financial aid assistance, and resolution of student concerns, are essential aspects that influence students' satisfaction with the institution (Siming et al., 2015).

The relevance and alignment of the curriculum with students' interests and career goals also impact their satisfaction with their educational experiences. A curriculum that is engaging, relevant, and prepares students for their future careers enhances their motivation and satisfaction with their academic program (Carson et al., 2007). Additionally, feedback mechanisms and assessment practices that provide students with opportunities for input and evaluation contribute to a positive learning environment and enhance students' satisfaction with their educational experiences (Chaudhry et al., 2024). Lastly, access to career and professional development support, including career counseling, internship opportunities, and job placement services, plays a crucial role in preparing students for the workforce and enhancing their satisfaction with the institution (Mishra & Nargundkar, 2015). By prioritizing these factors and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and responsiveness to students' needs, higher learning institutions can enhance student satisfaction, retention, and overall educational outcomes, thus creating enriching and supportive learning environments for their students (Ahmed et al., 2014).

Nepal's higher education landscape is characterized by a diverse array of institutions aimed at providing academic opportunities to its populace. Primarily categorized into universities, campuses, and educational institutions for medical and paramedical study programs, Nepal's higher education system comprises 11 universities and 4 medical academies, each serving distinct educational needs and objectives. Universities, established by acts of Parliament, hold the authority to confer degrees and are integral to the higher education framework. While governance autonomy is somewhat restricted, universities like Kathmandu University (KU) enjoy greater autonomy in staff selection. Campuses, both constituent and affiliated, extend the reach of universities, offering academic programs and catering to varying student demographics. Educational institutions for medical and paramedical study programs specialize in healthcare education, administering academic programs directly and conferring degrees. Nepal's higher education institutions collectively enroll a significant number of students, with Tribhuvan University (TU) accounting for a substantial portion of enrollments (TU, 2012). The size and distribution of colleges vary widely, reflecting the diverse educational landscape of Nepal. While some colleges boast large student populations, others cater to niche academic programs with smaller cohorts. Geographic accessibility is a key feature of Nepal's higher education system, with colleges and campuses dispersed across the country, ensuring educational opportunities reach remote and rural areas (Department of Education, 2018). As Nepal undergoes a transition to a federal state, its higher education system faces evolving challenges and opportunities (University Grants Commission, 2020). Despite constraints, these institutions remain vital in fostering knowledge and skills among Nepali students, contributing to the nation's intellectual and socio-economic development (Upadhyay, 2018).

Higher learning institutions play a vital role in shaping the academic, personal, and professional development of students (Mishra & Nargundkar, 2015). As educational landscapes evolve, the satisfaction of students with their academic experiences becomes increasingly significant. In Nepal, where educational resources and infrastructure may vary, understanding the factors that contribute to student satisfaction is paramount for ensuring the delivery of high-quality education. While numerous studies have examined factors influencing student satisfaction in higher education settings globally, there is a dearth of research specifically focused on Nepal. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the unique contextual factors that impact students' satisfaction in higher learning institutions within the province. By exploring these factors, this study aim to provide actionable insights for educational stakeholders, including administrators, policymakers, faculty members, and support staff, to enhance the overall quality of education and improve student satisfaction levels. Through a combination of quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and data analysis, this research endeavors to uncover the intricacies of student satisfaction dynamics in Nepal's higher learning institutions, thus contributing to the broader discourse on educational quality and student welfare in the region.

The present study aims to explore the factors that impact student satisfaction (SS) within higher learning institutions in Nepal. To achieve this, the following specific objectives have been identified for investigation. Such as:

» To analyze the relationship between student-teacher relationship (STR) and student satisfaction (SS).
» To assess the impact of faculty preparedness (FP) on student satisfaction (SS).
» To examine the association between experience (E) within the educational setting and student satisfaction (SS).
» To evaluate the influence of institution service and facilities (ISF) on student satisfaction (SS).

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the realm of factors contributing to students' contentment in higher education institutions, various theories and frameworks are pertinent. Such as, Expectancy-Value Theory suggests that individuals' motivation is influenced by their expectations of success and the subjective value they attach to a goal (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002; Wigfield et al., 2004). In higher education, student satisfaction may be influenced by expectations related to academic success, career prospects, and the perceived value of the educational experience. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs posits that individuals have a hierarchy of needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to higher-level needs such as self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Student satisfaction in higher education institutions may depend on how well the institution meets their needs for safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory proposes that job satisfaction is influenced by hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) and motivators (e.g., recognition, achievement) (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg et al., 1959). Similarly, in higher education, student satisfaction may be influenced by factors such as campus facilities and academic challenge. Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of social interactions, observational learning, and modeling in shaping behaviors and attitudes (Bandura, 1977). Student satisfaction in higher education can be influenced by interactions with peers, faculty, and staff, as well as perceptions of institutional culture and values. Service Quality Theory suggests that customer satisfaction is shaped by perceptions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In higher education, student satisfaction may be influenced by perceptions of teaching quality, academic support services, and the overall educational experience. These theories provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to student satisfaction in higher education and can guide efforts to improve the quality of education and student experiences.

One critical aspect that researchers have focused on is the quality of the student-teacher relationship (STR) (Opdenakker et al., 2011-2021; Skinner et al., 2009-2021). Studies suggest that a positive student-teacher relationship leads to various desirable outcomes such

as increased student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Opdenakker et al., 2011-2021; Skinner et al., 2009-2021). Students who feel understood and supported by their teachers tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their educational experience (Weimer, 2010; Wilson et al., 2010). Effective communication, individualized support, and teacher commitment are identified as essential components of fostering a positive student-teacher relationship (Opdenakker et al., 2011-2021; Skinner et al., 2009-2021). Based on the reviews, the hypothesis has been formed as such:

Null Hypothesis (H1): There is no significant relationship between student-teacher relationship (STR) and student satisfaction (SS).

Faculty preparedness (FP) also emerges as a significant predictor of student satisfaction. Literature suggests that well-prepared faculty positively influence students' understanding of course material and overall satisfaction with the learning experience (Jackson et al., 2010; Kane et al., 2015). Students perceive prepared instructors as more competent and dedicated, leading to increased satisfaction with the educational process (Ke & Kwak, 2013).Based on the reviews, the hypothesis has been formed as such:

Null Hypothesis (H2): There is no significant relationship between faculty preparedness (FP) and student satisfaction (SS).

Furthermore, academic experiences (E) play a crucial role in shaping student satisfaction. Research indicates that positive academic experiences contribute to students' overall satisfaction and perception of the university (Aldemir & Gülcan, 2004; Butt & Rehman, 2010). These experiences encompass various aspects of the educational journey, including academic support, opportunities for personal growth, and the overall learning environment (Aldemir & Gülcan, 2004; Butt & Rehman, 2010).Based on the reviews, the hypothesis has been formed as such:

Null Hypothesis (H3): There is no significant relationship between experience (E) within the educational setting and student satisfaction (SS).

Additionally, the quality of institution services and facilities (ISF) is closely linked to student satisfaction. Access to well-maintained facilities and support services enhances students' overall university experience and contributes to their satisfaction with academic life (Aldemir & Gülcan, 2004; Butt & Rehman, 2010). Research suggests that students value convenient access to campus resources, including libraries, labs, and student support services, which significantly impact their satisfaction with university life (Aldemir & Gülcan, 2004; Butt & Rehman, 2010). Based on the reviews, the hypothesis has been formed as such:

Null Hypothesis (H4): There is no significant relationship between institution service and facilities (ISF) and student satisfaction (SS).

These hypotheses set the framework for investigating whether there are significant associations between the predictor variables (STR, FP, E, ISF) and student satisfaction (SS) in higher learning institutions. They guide the analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained through the path analysis.
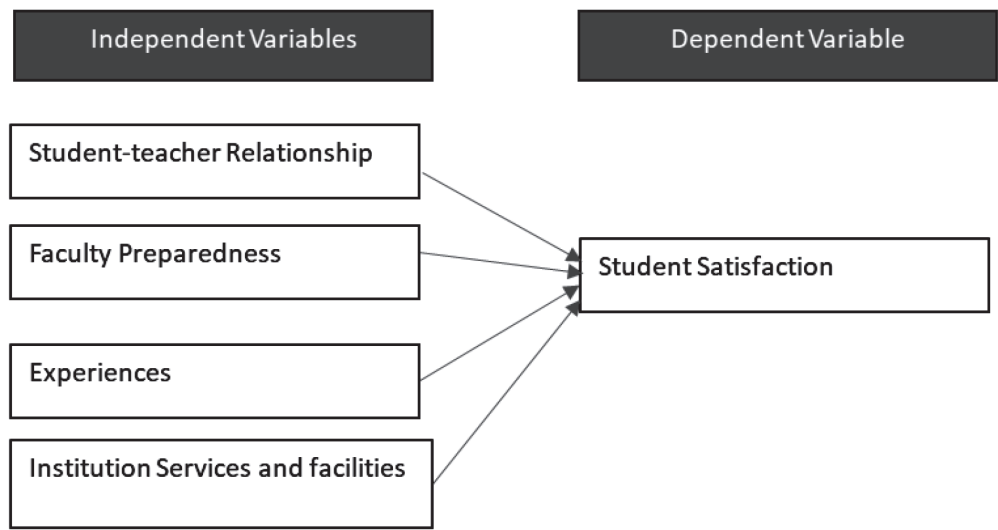

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Adopted from Siming et al., (2015).

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the premise that student satisfaction in higher education is influenced by multiple interrelated factors within the academic environment. The framework draws upon established theories and empirical research in the fields of education, psychology, and organizational behavior to conceptualize the key components and relationships contributing to student satisfaction.

The Student-Teacher Relationship domain focuses on the interpersonal dynamics between students and their instructors. It includes factors such as teachers' understanding of individual learning needs, effective communication of course objectives, and demonstration of genuine interest in students' academic progress. A positive student-teacher relationship enhances students' motivation to learn and creates a comfortable environment for seeking guidance and support. Faculty Preparedness pertains to the readiness and commitment of instructors in delivering high-quality education. It involves factors such as thorough preparation for lectures, the impact of teacher preparedness on students' understanding of course material, and the influence of faculty attitudes on the overall learning experience. Experiences encompass students' academic encounters and perceptions of the university environment. This domain includes factors such as the contribution of academic experiences to overall satisfaction, support for psychological needs, the influence of academic quality on

university perception, and the role of diverse academic experiences in fostering learning and personal growth. Institution Services and Facilities refer to the availability and quality of campus resources and support services. This domain encompasses factors such as the impact of campus services and facilities on overall university experience, the convenience and efficiency of academic life, and the reflection of university commitment to student well-being through the provision of quality services and facilities.

3. METHODS

The research employs a positivist deductive approach to systematically investigate factors influencing student satisfaction in Nepalese higher education institutions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A causal-comparative (ex post facto) design is used to explore potential cause-and-effect relationships by comparing groups differing on variables such as satisfaction levels (Cohen et al., 2018). Data were collected via a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and minimizing logistical challenges (Bryman, 2016). The sample size was initially estimated using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977), with an expected 404 respondents at a 5% margin of error (MoE). However, due to an overwhelming response, the final sample size was increased to 412 participants. Therefore, convenience snowball sampling was utilized to recruit 412 participants, a method suitable for hard-to-reach populations (Etikan et al., 2016). While convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is practical for large or resource-constrained studies (Taherdoost, 2016). Data analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS (Field, 2018) and structural equation modeling (SEM) via AMOS to test complex variable relationships (Kline, 2016).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 1
Demographic Information

Categories and their sub-categories		Descriptive Statistics	
		Number	Frequency
Gender	Male	256	62.14
	Female	156	37.86
Field of Study	Science and Technology	69	16.75
	Education	78	18.93
	Agriculture and Forestry	139	33.74
	Engineering	33	8.01
	Humanities	45	10.92
	Management	48	11.65

	Universities	226	54.85
	Colleges	67	16.26
	Technical and Vocational Institutes	34	8.25
Higher Educational Institutions	Medical Colleges	65	15.78
	Teacher Training Institutions	0	0.00
	Open and Distance Learning Institutes	2	0.49
	Private Institutes	10	2.43
	Research Institutes	8	1.94

The demographic information gathered from 412 respondents reveals several key insights into the sample population. Firstly, the gender distribution indicates a higher representation of males, constituting 256 individuals, which is 62.14 percent of the respondents, compared to females at 156 individuals, making up 37.86 percent of the sample. Moving on to the field of study, the data portrays a diverse range of academic interests among the respondents. Agriculture and Forestry emerge as the dominant fields, with a notable 139 respondents specializing in this area, representing 33.74 percent of the total. This is closely followed by Education, with 78 respondents (18.93 percent), and Science and Technology, with 69 respondents (16.75 percent). Furthermore, the breakdown of higher educational institutions sheds light on the educational landscape of the respondents. Universities appear to be the primary choice, with 226 respondents enrolled in such institutions, accounting for 54.85 percent of the sample. Meanwhile, colleges, medical colleges, and technical and vocational institutes also represent significant segments of the sample. Overall, the data underscores the varied demographics and educational pursuits within the surveyed population, reflecting the multifaceted nature of academia and higher education.

Table 2

Normality, Multicollinearity test and Autocorrelation Test

	STR	FP	E	ISF	SS
Mean	2.8754	2.8602	3.8325	3.7698	3.6103
Std. Deviation	0.71423	0.58219	0.65544	0.55473	0.64766
Skewness	-0.128	0.015	-0.504	-0.756	-0.305
Std. Error of Skewness	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120
Kurtosis	-0.295	-0.007	0.477	1.942	0.027
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240
VIF	1.124	1.055	1.332	1.317	
Durbin-Watson			2.007		

Note: SS: Student Satisfaction, STR: Student-teacher Relationship, FP: Faculty Preparedness, E: Experience, ISF: Institution Service and Facilities.

The normality of the data was assessed using established guidelines. For small sample sizes (n < 50), a z-value of ±1.96 is considered indicative of normality, while for medium-sized samples (50 ≤ n < 300), a z-value of ±3.29 is used. In the present case where the sample size exceeds 300 i.e. 412, the determination of normality relies on the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis. Specifically, an absolute skewness value ≤2 or an absolute kurtosis (excess) ≤4 are considered indicative of considerable normality (Hair et al., 2010, in Noordin et al., 2021). Upon analyzing the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that the skewness and kurtosis values for the variables fall below the specified thresholds. Therefore, according to these criteria, the data collected for this study can be considered normally distributed. As the value of VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) of each constructs is less than 10, no issue of multicollinearity has been detected (Shrestha, 2020). Moreover, the Durbin-Watson values of 2.345 show no autocorrelation in the regression models (Uyanto, 2020).

4.2. Inferential Analysis

Table 3

Constructs and Items and their Alpha Score

Constructs and Items	Code	Loading	Cronbach's alpha
Student-Teacher Relationship:	**STR**		**0.892**
1. I feel that my teachers understand my individual learning needs.	STR1	0.682	
2. The personal qualities of my teachers positively influence my learning experience.	STR2	0.873	
3. My teachers effectively communicate course objectives and expectations.	STR3	0.816	
4. The student-teacher relationship enhances my motivation to learn.	STR4	0.759	
5. I feel comfortable approaching my teachers with questions or concerns.	STR5	0.808	
6. My teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in my academic progress.	STR6	0.723	
Faculty Preparedness:	**FP**		**0.786**
1. My teachers demonstrate thorough preparation for their lectures or class sessions.	FP1	0.845	
2. The preparedness of my teachers significantly impacts my understanding of course material.	FP2	0.775	

3. I perceive that my teachers are committed to delivering high-quality education.	FP3	0.807
4. The level of preparation shown by my teachers influences my overall satisfaction with the course.	FP4	
5. The attitude of teachers towards their job of teaching affects my learning experience.	FP5	
Experiences:	**E**	**0.852**
1. My academic experiences contribute positively to my overall satisfaction as a student.	E1	0.669
2. I feel supported in meeting my psychological needs through my academic experiences.	E2	0.788
3. The quality of my academic experiences influences my perception of the university.	E3	0.831
4. The variety of academic experiences enhances my learning and personal growth.	E4	0.841
5. I believe that positive academic experiences contribute to a supportive learning environment.	E5	0.621
Institution Services and Facilities:	**ISF**	**0.903**
1. The availability of campus services and facilities enhances my overall university experience.	ISF1	0.726
2. I find that campus services contribute to a more convenient and efficient academic life.	ISF2	0.851
3. Access to campus facilities positively influences my satisfaction with university life.	ISF3	0.889
4. The quality of campus services and facilities reflects the university's commitment to student well-being.	ISF4	0.796
5. The availability of student support services contributes to a positive learning environment.	ISF5	0.796
6. Campus facilities, such as libraries and labs, support my academic endeavors effectively.	ISF6	
Student Satisfaction	**SS**	**0.916**
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my university experience.	SS1	
2. I feel that my university meets my expectations in terms of academic quality.	SS2	
3. The level of support provided by my university enhances my satisfaction as a student.	SS3	0.743
4. I believe that my university values student feedback and concerns.	SS4	0.879
5. The opportunities for extracurricular activities and involvement contribute to my satisfaction.	SS5	0.845

6. I feel a sense of belonging and community within my university.	SS6	0.876
7. My university effectively addresses the needs and concerns of its student body.	SS7	0.808

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table shows the total number of the items or statements of the dependent and independent variables of the study that are used in factor analysis. Only 24 items were extracted from a total of 29 items through PCA. Due to weak commonalities and cross-loading issues, the remaining items (FP4, FP5, ISF6, SS1, SS2) were dropped from the rotated component matrix. Similarly, KMO and Cronbach's alpha calculations were made to determine whether the extracted elements of each construct had adequate sample sizes and reliable data. The explanatory factor analysis was performed on all these items and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's sphere test was used to test the reliability of the results. The coefficients showed that the indicators of the latent constructs were unrelated and, therefore, suitable to describe the model of the present study (KMO = 0.876; significance of Bartlett's test = 0.000). Afterwards, the confirmatory factor analysis was performed in order to test the goodness of the constructs. The resulting model fit is as per acceptable values. Thus, the worst-performing items were dropped in a second CFA, and this resulted in a better model with largely acceptable fitting measures as shown in Table below. Table number shows that there are no problems with validity here. In this study, all the reliability and validity criteria for the CFA model fit indices are significant.

Table 4

Computation and Analysis of Model Fit Indices for CFA

Model Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Sources	Obtained Value
P-value	≤ 0.05	Bagozzi and Yi (1988)	0.000
CMIN/DF	≤ 3	Hair et al. (2010)	2.37
RMR	≤ 0.05	Hair et al. (2010)	0.045
SRMR	≤ 0.08	Hair et al. (2010)	0.076
GFI	>.90	Hair et al. (2010)	0.816
CFI	>.90	Bentler (1990)	0.854
RMSEA	<.08	Hu and Bentler (1998)	0.058

Table 5

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	STR	FP	E	ISF	SS
STR	0.887	0.571	0.15	0.902	0.755				
FP	0.788	0.554	0.086	0.795	0.293***	0.744			
E	0.836	0.581	0.203	0.942	0.214***	0.128*	0.762		
ISF	0.865	0.617	0.203	0.881	0.178**	0.097	0.451***	0.786	
SS	0.914	0.726	0.15	0.921	0.388***	0.149*	0.214***		0.852

Note: Significance of Correlations: † p < 0.100, * p < 0.050, ** p < 0.010, *** p < 0.001
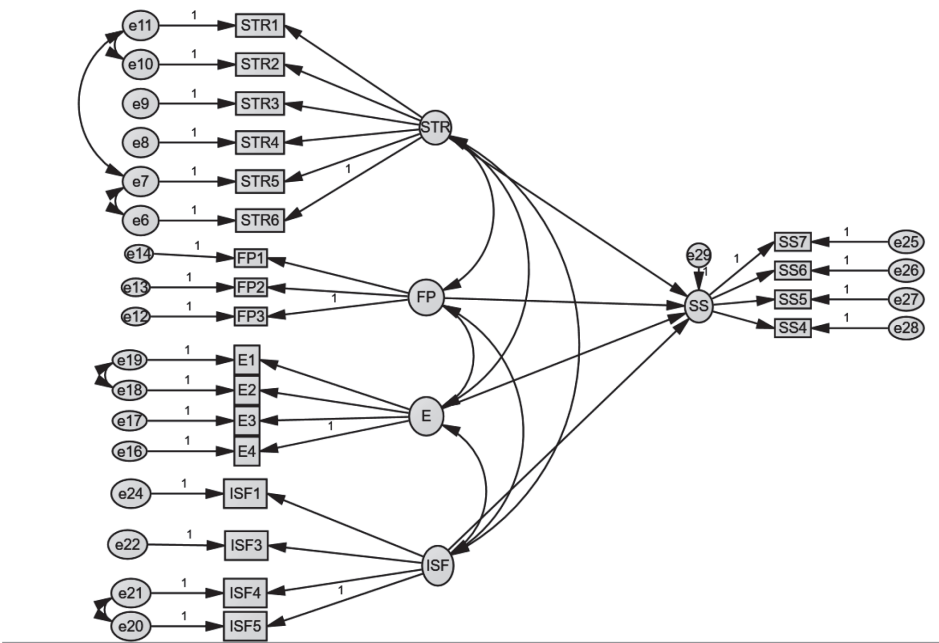

Figure 2: Path Analysis via AMOS

Source: Calculation based on Author (2024)

Table 6

Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path			Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	P-value	Interpretation
H1	SS	<---	STR	0.417	0.072	5.792	***	Significant
H2	SS	<---	FP	0.031	0.057	0.541	0.589	Insignificant
H3	SS	<---	E	0.181	0.06	3.043	0.002	Significant

| H4 | SS | <--- | ISF | 0.135 | 0.075 | 1.81 | 0.07 | Insignificant |

*Notes. N = 465; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ***p < 0.10; SS: Student Satisfaction, STR: Student-teacher Relationship, FP: Faculty Preparedness, E: Experience, ISF: Institution Service and Facilities.*

The table presents the results of a path analysis investigating the factors influencing student satisfaction (SS) in higher learning institutions. The study examined four hypotheses (H1 to H4) regarding the relationships between student satisfaction and various predictor variables: student-teacher relationship (STR), faculty preparedness (FP), Experience (E), and institution service and facilities (ISF).

Firstly, the analysis reveals that a positive student-teacher relationship (STR) significantly contributes to higher levels of student satisfaction (SS), as indicated by a statistically significant estimate less than 0.05 (p < 0.05) level of significance. This emphasizes the importance of fostering supportive and engaging interactions between students and faculty members to enhance overall satisfaction within the educational environment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and can be concluded that there is statistical significant relationship between student-teacher relationship (STR) and student satisfaction (SS). In contrast, the relationship between Faculty Preparedness (FP) and student satisfaction (SS) appears to be statistically insignificant (p > 0.05). This suggests that the level of faculty preparedness may not have a substantial impact on students' satisfaction with their educational experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and can be concluded that there is no statistical significant relationship between Faculty Preparedness (FP) and student satisfaction (SS).

Furthermore, the study finds that a positive experience (E) within the educational setting significantly influences student satisfaction (SS), with a statistically significant estimate (p < 0.01). This underscores the significance of creating a conducive and enriching environment that promotes student engagement and well-being. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and can be concluded that there is statistical significant relationship between experience (E) and student satisfaction (SS). However, the relationship between Institution Service and Facilities (ISF) and student satisfaction (SS) is marginally insignificant (p = 0.07). While not statistically significant at the conventional level, it implies that the quality of institutional services and facilities may still have practical implications for student satisfaction. . Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and can be concluded that there is no statistical significant relationship Institution Service and Facilities (ISF) and student satisfaction (SS).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the path analysis underscore the multifaceted nature of student satisfaction within higher learning institutions and shed light on the differential impact of various predictor variables on overall satisfaction levels. The significant positive relationship

observed between the student-teacher relationship (STR) and student satisfaction (SS) aligns with existing research highlighting the pivotal role of interpersonal dynamics between students and faculty members (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2018; Roorda et al., 2018; Zhang & Zhu, 2018). Engaging interactions, effective communication, and supportive guidance from instructors are essential components fostering a conducive learning environment, as emphasized by previous studies (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2018). Positive teacher-student relationships significantly correlate with academic achievement and well-being among students (Roorda et al., 2018). Strong teacher-student connections contribute to better student outcomes, both academically and emotionally (Roorda et al., 2018). These relationships play a pivotal role in fostering a positive learning environment. Additionally, Teacher-student relationships impact not only students but also teachers themselves. When teachers experience positive relationships with their students, it can reduce their emotional exhaustion. Emotional labor (the effort teachers invest in managing emotions) is influenced by the quality of these relationships. Supportive teacher-student interactions can mitigate the emotional toll on educators (Zhang & Zhu, 2018).

Conversely, the statistically insignificant relationship between faculty preparedness (FP) and student satisfaction (SS) contradicts some previous research suggesting a positive association between faculty preparedness and student perceptions of course quality. This discrepancy warrants further exploration into the specific dimensions of faculty preparedness that may influence student satisfaction, such as pedagogical skills and subject matter expertise.

The significant influence of positive experiences (E) within the educational setting on student satisfaction (SS) echoes the findings of numerous studies highlighting the importance of campus climate, extracurricular opportunities, and supportive relationships in enhancing overall student well-being and engagement (Chaudhry et al., 2024; Carson et al., 2007). Creating an enriching and inclusive environment remains a critical aspect of promoting student satisfaction and retention in higher education institutions.

The marginally insignificant relationship between institution service and facilities (ISF) and student satisfaction (SS) underscores the nuanced nature of institutional support services and their impact on student perceptions (Magolda & Astin, 1993). While the quality of services and facilities may not be directly associated with overall satisfaction levels in this study, it is essential to recognize their potential role in shaping the overall student experience and fostering a sense of belonging and institutional attachment (Chaudhry et al., 2024;Vijayakumaran et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the findings of the path analysis highlight the complex interplay of factors influencing student satisfaction in higher learning institutions. While the student-teacher relationship and positive experiences within the educational environment emerge as significant predictors of satisfaction (Kuh, 2009), the role of faculty preparedness and

institutional services and facilities warrants further investigation to inform targeted interventions aimed at enhancing student satisfaction and overall educational outcomes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from the path analysis illuminate critical aspects of student satisfaction within higher education institutions, emphasizing the nuanced interplay between various predictor variables and overall satisfaction levels. Firstly, the significant positive relationship identified between the student-teacher relationship (STR) and student satisfaction (SS) underscores the pivotal role of supportive interactions between students and faculty members. This highlights the importance of fostering engaging communication and providing supportive guidance to create a conducive learning environment that enhances overall student satisfaction. Conversely, the statistically insignificant relationship observed between faculty preparedness (FP) and student satisfaction (SS) suggests that conventional measures of faculty preparedness may not directly influence student perceptions of course quality. This underscores the need for further investigation into specific dimensions of faculty preparedness, such as pedagogical skills and subject matter expertise, to better understand their impact on student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

Moreover, the significant influence of positive experiences within the educational setting (E) on student satisfaction (SS) underscores the critical role of campus climate, extracurricular opportunities, and supportive relationships in promoting student well-being and engagement. Creating an enriching and inclusive environment remains essential for fostering student satisfaction and retention in higher education institutions. Regarding institution service and facilities (ISF), the marginally insignificant relationship with student satisfaction (SS) highlights the complexity of institutional support services and their impact on student perceptions. While not directly associated with overall satisfaction levels, the quality of services and facilities plays a crucial role in shaping the student experience and fostering a sense of belonging within the institution.

In light of these conclusions, policymakers, university administrators, and researchers must consider several implications for policy, managerial practices, and future research. Institutions should prioritize initiatives aimed at enhancing the student-teacher relationship and fostering inclusive campus environments. Efforts should be made to evaluate and improve faculty preparedness, institutional services, and facilities to meet the diverse needs of students effectively. University administrators and faculty members should collaborate to implement student-centered approaches and promote a positive campus climate conducive to student success and well-being. Additionally, future research endeavors should delve deeper into the dimensions of faculty preparedness and conduct longitudinal studies to understand the dynamics of student satisfaction over time across various cultural contexts and institutional settings.

In conclusion, the insights provided by the path analysis offer valuable guidance for stakeholders aiming to enhance student satisfaction and improve overall educational outcomes in higher learning institutions. By addressing the complexities of student satisfaction and implementing evidence-based strategies, institutions can create supportive environments that promote student success and foster a positive learning experience for all students.

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