

Conceptualisation of Student Satisfaction In The Context Of UK Higher Education

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Abstract: *The primary purpose of this study is to provide a conceptual framework for ‘student satisfaction’ in order to understand and conceptualise the key aspects of the term. Satisfaction is a vague construct, and there is currently a lack of consensus on how best to conceptualise the term, which leads to a lack of consensual definitions of customer satisfaction and, ultimately, student satisfaction. Student satisfaction is relatively more complex than customer satisfaction in that dynamic and subjective expectations, which could significantly contribute to student satisfaction, are difficult to capture objectively. Studies have shown that higher education institutions are becoming more aware of the importance of student satisfaction, and a market-oriented and customer-oriented approach is required to manage service quality, the principal determinant of student satisfaction. Yet, with a lack of consensus on its determinants, it is difficult for researchers to develop a valid measure of student satisfaction.*

Therefore, the study's primary objective is to review how the concept of student satisfaction is applied in the existing academic literature in an attempt to contribute to a more robust and informed body of work. Accordingly, the authors have conducted a systematic literature review to critically examine the most relevant, authentic and recent studies that address the primary research questions; namely, what is student satisfaction, and what are the contemporary ways of comprehending and defining the term?

Our systematic review approach answers the research questions by collecting and summarising all the available empirical evidence that fits the authors’ pre-specified eligibility criteria (inclusion and exclusion) of student satisfaction and how it has been defined within the last five decades.

However, there is currently no consensus on the conceptualisation of student satisfaction, primarily because of the difficulty of incorporating dynamic and complex student satisfaction determinants in higher educational settings into a single definition. However, we have attempted to conceptualise the construct.

Key Words: *“Satisfaction”, “Customer Satisfaction”, “Student Satisfaction”, “Service Industry”, “Higher Education UK”*

I. Introduction And Context

The term ‘satisfaction’ is frequently encountered in the academic literature as well as in daily life, yet it is interpreted in a multitude of ways. Patient satisfaction, Job satisfaction, Employee satisfaction, and Customer satisfaction are all familiar terms one frequently encounters. Owing to the ubiquity of the term, especially in the business literature, the importance of ‘satisfaction’ is unquestionable Qureshi et al., 2020).

In the current climate of innovation and creativity, companies have begun to acknowledge that employees are their most valuable asset (Govaerts et al., 2011; Fulmer and Ployhart, 2014; Vomberg et al., 2015; Millar et al., 2017). As a result, satisfied employees become more loyal and play a critical role in companies’ success.

Similarly, health care professionals believe that patient satisfaction depends on safe, effective, timely, efficient and quality, patient-centred healthcare and has far-reaching implications for both the care provider and the patient (Prakash, 2010, Travis and Kennedy 2014). In recent years, patient satisfaction has increasingly been used to rank, compare and rate hospitals (Chen et al., 2019).

Due to policy changes, UK higher education now places a great degree of emphasis on student satisfaction. Ensuring students' satisfaction is an essential and integral part of the higher education system because the success of a higher education institution depends on overall levels of student satisfaction (Marzo, 2013).

Customer satisfaction seems to occur as a mental state or a feeling about a particular experience. In the customer's case, it is the consumption of a product or service (Hunt, 1977; Rust and Oliver, 1994). Thus, businesses strive to serve their customers and clients in the best way possible in order to maximise business objectives. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is a well-recognised concept in marketing (Qureshi et al. 2020). Therefore, marketers strongly believe that monitoring customer satisfaction helps them to manage their businesses more effectively (Farris et al., 2010), and customer satisfaction is crucial to business success (Bolton, 2020). It is therefore vital for businesses to evaluate customer satisfaction and use it as a means to achieve their objectives.

Recent studies have suggested that students in higher education should be regarded as paying customers. In this scenario, HE essentially becomes a service industry and, as such, HEIs should endeavour to satisfy their 'customers', the students (Oldfield and Baron 2000; Elliott & Shin, 2002; Temple, 2011; Tomlinson 2017; Ng and Forbes, 2009; Yong-Sik; Kyun, 2019). Despite being a relatively new concept, thinking of students as customers seem to be gaining increasing acceptance in higher education circles worldwide.

In practice, due in part to increasing competition in higher education, public higher education institutions (PuHEIs) in general and private higher education institutions (PrHEIs) in particular are becoming more customer and service-oriented. In order to be more competitive, many higher education institutions (HEIs) offer not only extensive courses but also unique learning experiences in order to capture a larger share of the market (Curtis et al., 2009; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). As a result, many educational institutions around the world treat their students as customers (Wattjatrakul, 2010; Cuthbert, 2010; Guilbault, 2016; Reza et al., 2021) and have reshaped their thinking and practices accordingly (Reza et al., 2021). Many HEIs believe that this approach leads to greater student satisfaction and, as a result, improved profitability for their institutions (Wattjatrakul, 2014). Therefore, ensuring student satisfaction is now an essential and integral part of the higher education system because the success of a higher education institution depends on it (Marzo, 2013). Any marketing context and framework used to attract and retain business customers also applies to students because student satisfaction is derived from marketing studies (Qureshi et al. 2020). For instance, Tonks & Farr (1995) suggest that students should certainly be seen as customers, a view shared by Hill (1995). Wattjatrakul (2010) is another, more recent, proponent of the 'students as customers' concept, and it is also supported by Royo (2017). Clayson and Haley (2005) state that the 'students as customers' paradigm is becoming increasingly popular, while Guilbault (2016) emphasises treating students as customers. Petruzzellis et al. (2006) also regard students as customers of universities in their work and argue that establishments should adopt a customer-centric approach.

A decade ago, home students in UK higher education did not pay any tuition fees. (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021). However, undergraduate home students pay tuition fees of more than £9,000 a year and start paying this back after completing their studies when they are earning money over a certain threshold. In the tuition-based model, students are the primary source of revenue, forcing institutions to think differently about student satisfaction to guarantee sustainability and success (Kotler and Fox, 1995). Crucially, the introduction and subsequent increase in tuition fees have altered students' expectations of service quality (Rolfe, 2002; Mark, 2013; Bates and Kaye, 2014): students are now treated as 'customers', or significant stakeholders of higher education services (Crawford, 1991; Tonks & Farr, 1995; Hill, 1995; Bay and Daniel, 2001; Petruzzellis et al. 2006; Blackmore, 2009; Gruber et al., 2010; Wattjatrakul, 2010; Mainardes et al., 2013; Royo 2017; Guilbault, 2018; Reza et al., 2021).

In 2011, following the Government's White Paper, 'students at the heart of the system', the (Department for Business, Innovation Skills (BIS)) made student satisfaction a priority for HEIs in the UK. In addition to the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018, its purpose is to ensure that every student has a fulfilling higher education experience that enriches their lives and future career (OfS, 2021). The BIS placed greater power in the hands of 'student-consumers' (Yeo, 2009; Stensaker and Harvey, 2013). As students are now

widely regarded as 'customers' and market principles have encroached on the HE sector, student satisfaction measures have been introduced to ensure value for money for students (Rolfe, 2002).

This strongly suggests that a standard marketing framework could be employed to manage student satisfaction with HEIs in the UK. However, this can only be achieved with a consensus on the conceptualisation of student satisfaction.

Government policy in higher education has evolved from nationalisation to liberalisation, privatisation and marketisation around the world, creating fertile ground for the establishment and expansion of private higher education institutions in most countries (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021). Consequently, the private higher education sector is growing rapidly and needs to develop a competitive advantage in terms of the quality of education, which is a significant contributor to student satisfaction (Ham and Hayduk 2003). Kotler and Clarke (1987) link student satisfaction to customer expectations. In higher education, some expectations may even be formed before the students have entered the higher education establishment, suggesting that it is essential for researchers to determine exactly what students expect before starting college or university (Palacio, Meneses and Perez, 2002).

The worldwide demand for Higher Education (HE) is growing at a phenomenal rate (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021), including the UK. Consequently, HEIs need to have robust quality control mechanisms in place to satisfy students' demands and ensure their institutions remain both competitive and successful on a global scale.

This study attempts to establish an understanding of student satisfaction in higher education in the UK. Various dimensions and aspects of student satisfaction are explored, and a critical evaluation of the academic literature to better understand student satisfaction.

The main focus will be to ensure that the systematic literature review is extensive, comprehensive, thorough and objective. Therefore, this study takes an extensive but comprehensive approach to the literature's various definitions of student satisfaction. Our extensive approach includes general definitions of satisfaction and customer satisfaction and critically discusses the concept of 'student satisfaction'.

The review is guided by two key research questions followed by two research objectives:

Research Questions

1. What is student satisfaction?
2. What are the contemporary ways of comprehending and defining student satisfaction?

Research Objectives

1. To understand the concept of student satisfaction
2. To critically review the contemporary ways of interpreting and defining student satisfaction

II. Methodology

The authors employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to select relevant, authentic, classic and recent studies that answer the research questions outlined above. The research was desk-based, and the systematic approach involved examining empirical and theoretical studies that provided answers to pertinent research questions (Booth, 2001; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003; Sheldon & Chalmers, 1994). This approach was initially developed in the field of medical sciences and later extended to include the social sciences.

Key components of our SLR included: explicit research questions to be addressed; transparency of methods used for searching literature; exhaustive searches, which look for published as well as unpublished literature; clear criteria for assessing the quality of the literature (both quantitative and qualitative); explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature based on the scope of the review and quality assessment; joint reviewing to reduce bias and a clear statement of the findings of the review (Evans & Benefield, 2001).

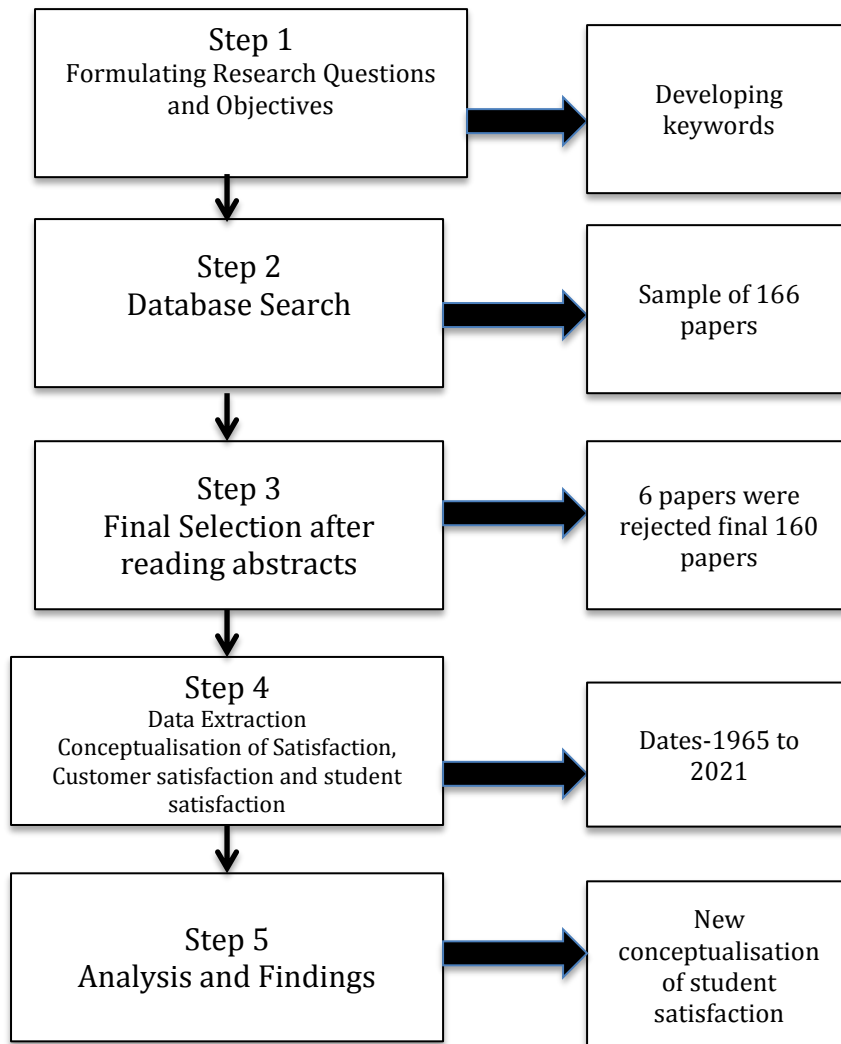
The systematic literature review section consisted of examining existing definitions of satisfaction, customer/consumer satisfaction and student satisfaction.

The research included extensive searches on Google and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using keywords, such as "satisfaction", "customer satisfaction", "student satisfaction", "student satisfaction in higher education", "international student satisfaction in higher education", "customer satisfaction in the service

industry”, “private higher education and student satisfaction” and “satisfaction and dissatisfaction among students.”

The 166 papers were searched and downloaded. All the downloaded papers were then manually checked by reading the abstracts. Six articles were excluded: either doubled items or the papers were irrelevant as the main topic not addressing our research questions in any way. Hence, the complete search resulted in a list of 160 papers.

Figure 01: Research Process



III. Systematic Literature Review

This part of the study aimed to explore the contemporary understanding of satisfaction, customer satisfaction and student satisfaction and their determinants and implications for the parties involved in the transaction, i.e. the individual and the product or service provider. First, the research looked into the building blocks of satisfaction and how they relate to customer satisfaction. Finally, it looked at student satisfaction, its parameters and what is at stake for the parties involved.

a. Phylogeny of Student Satisfaction

In order to better understand the phylogeny of student satisfaction, this research uses the concept of student satisfaction, a theoretical construct originally derived from the marketing literature (Qureshi et al. 2020) and previously adapted to higher education studies. In modern marketing literature, higher education researchers coined student satisfaction as a comparable notion to customer satisfaction (Yi 1990). Therefore, It is now thought to be similar to customer satisfaction with services (Appleton-Knapp and Krentler 2006). Thus, it is self-evident that customer satisfaction theories influenced the creation and development of the idea of student

satisfaction. Therefore, any interpretation of student satisfaction must be based on theoretical underpinnings from customer satisfaction literature.

Satisfaction is frequently mentioned in the literature, but its frequency of usage bears no resemblance to how well it is understood or described (Peterson and Wilson 1992; Oliver, 1997). The literature also refers to other standard social and psychological constructs, such as 'fulfilment', 'state of feeling', 'evaluation of an experience', 'relation to expectations', etc. These concepts converge towards a construct that is essentially a feeling experienced when one instantaneously evaluates the consumption experience of a product or service in light of, and against, the expectations associated with that experience before the consumption took place. Early definitions of satisfaction evolved in the areas of job, self, life and patient satisfaction (Oliver, 1980). These definitions considered how needs were fulfilled, pleasure and displeasure experienced, and how actual and ideal consumption experience outcomes compared to one another. For example, satisfaction can be defined as an experience of the fulfilment of expected outcomes (Hon, 2002). A similar definition from Oliver (1997) is satisfaction as a perception of pleasurable fulfilment of service. However, most definitions of satisfaction fail to avoid the concept of consumption: it is claimed that satisfaction results from a favourable comparison between initial customer expectations before purchase with the evaluation of a product or service after consumption. Another similar definition based on Ivashova and Lopatinskaya's (2013) concept of satisfaction relates to customers' perceptions after experiencing a service or using a product that fulfils their initial expectations. The customers' expectations are actually standards set in their minds. For example, Olander (1977) suggested that customer satisfaction is a relative concept and is always judged in relation to a standard. Thus, satisfaction is a function of the relative level of expectations and perceived performance (Kotler and Clarke, 1987). Giese and Cote (2000) offer a more comprehensive definition that includes acquisition and consumption. Satisfaction is a summary, affective and variable intensity response centred on specific aspects of acquisition and/or consumption and takes place at the precise moment when the individual evaluates the objectives (Giese and Cote, 2000).

We have discussed a few definitions of satisfaction so far, but several attempts were made to better understand satisfaction, customer satisfaction and student satisfaction as the literature has been developing. Therefore, we will continue to examine more definitions.

Satisfaction is "an evaluation that the chosen alternative is consistent with prior beliefs concerning that alternative" (Engel and Blackwell, 1982, p 501). Choosing the best available alternative has always been a problem: the right choice among the alternatives leads to satisfaction, whereas the wrong choice leads to dissatisfaction. In the case of satisfaction, the chooser takes the credit, and in the case of dissatisfaction, the chooser takes the blame (Botti and McGill, 2006). Therefore, we can see that evaluation is the key component of satisfaction and comparing alternative options, leading to the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm. Expectation-Disconfirmation theory (EDT) has been examined in the marketing literature for a number of years (e.g. Oliver, 1977, 1980; Santos and Boote, 2003; Diehl and Poynor, 2010) and received the widest acceptance among earlier researchers. Oliver defines satisfaction as "Final psychological state resulting from the disconfirmed expectancy related to initial consumer expectation" (1981, p. 27).

EDT has provided the theoretical basis for many large consumer satisfaction studies and includes four constructs (1) expectations; (2) performance; (3) disconfirmation; and (4) satisfaction (Caruana 2000). Dis/confirmation stems from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance. This conceptualisation is reflected in the definition of satisfaction by Tse and Wilton (1988) as:

"The consumer's response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations (or some norm of performance) and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption (p. 204)".

According to EDT, consumers compare their perception of product or service performance with a certain set of standards (expectations). Confirmation results when the perceived expectations are met, whereas disconfirmation results from a mismatch between perceived performance and standards. The disconfirmed expectations create a state of dissonance or psychological discomfort (Yi, 1990).

When applying EDT, research has shown that a unit of negative disconfirmation has a much greater effect on dissatisfaction than does a unit of positive disconfirmation on satisfaction (Anderson and Sullivan 1993; DeSarbo, Huff, Rolandelli and Choi 1994; Oliver 1999). Therefore, a positive disconfirmation maintains or increases a person's satisfaction, while a negative disconfirmation has the opposite effect (i.e. it leads to dissatisfaction). In a nutshell, confirmation and disconfirmation are expected to determine satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Although many researchers now accept this paradigm, others maintain different viewpoints with

regard to comparing expectations/standards and the interrelation between the critical variables of satisfaction (e.g. Oliver 1980; Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins 1987), suggesting a need to integrate various studies.

Furthermore, the satisfaction construct is “an inherently unstable and temporary mental state” (Reichheld, 1996; p.59) and is an active, dynamic process, with a strong social dimension, which is context-dependent and invariably intertwined with life satisfaction and the quality of life itself (Fournier and Mick, 1999).

We examined both classic and contemporary definitions of satisfaction. For example, Cardozo (1965) argues that the concept of customer satisfaction is an outcome of important marketing activity. Therefore, it holds a central position in the marketing literature.

According to Hunt (1977), satisfaction is a feeling, or an (emotional) evaluation, that the customer experience should at least be as good as expected and suggests that “satisfaction is a consumer’s post-purchase evaluation of the overall service experience (process and outcome). It is an affective (emotional) state of feeling in which the consumer’s needs, desires and expectations during the course of the service experiences have been met or exceeded” (P.459).

Oliver and Richard (1980) attempted to define satisfaction along similar lines but explained it in the form of an equation. Thus, “satisfaction is a post-choice evaluation judgment concerning a specific purchase decision, which can be expressed as: *satisfaction = perception of performance – expectations* (p.482). For Zeithaml et al. (1990), satisfaction is “an overall judgment, perception or attitude on the superiority of service”. Their definition highlights the discrepancy between a customer’s expectations and their actual experience/s of as a customer. Oliver (1981) also links satisfaction with the consumer’s prior feelings of acquiring a product or service.

The marketing literature also provides two different conceptualisations of the satisfaction construct: "transaction specific satisfaction" and "cumulative satisfaction". Transaction specific satisfaction is a "post-choice evaluative judgment of a specific purchase occasion", while cumulative satisfaction relates to an overall evaluation based on the total consumption experience over time (Jones & Suh, 2000; Shankar et al., 2003; Vilares & Coelho, 2003).

At this point in the discussion, we can summarise the core aspects of the construct of satisfaction as follows:

- It is an evaluation of perceived discrepancy between expectations and actual experience of consumption.
- It is the right choice among alternatives.
- It is a cognitive feeling, judgment or an experience.
- It is post-purchase.
- It is a state of mind measured either at one particular point in time or as part of the overall experience.
- It can be viewed either in the context of a particular transaction or as part of a more prolonged overall experience of consumption.

Despite various commonalities between satisfaction and customer satisfaction, as we will see when we examine the concept of student satisfaction, the construct within a business domain deserves particular attention. This is due to the nature of the relationship and individual as well as shared interests between the parties involved. The business has control over its offering and, arguably, how it affects customer satisfaction. The consequences of any alterations in offerings could have far-reaching consequences on both sides, the consumer and, more importantly, the business with the product or service being offered. Businesses also operate within constraints defined by the environment and have limited resources, which further justifies paying particular attention to customer satisfaction.

Howard and Sheth (1969) were the first to apply the concept of satisfaction to consumer theory, and, since then, many researchers have attempted to define customer satisfaction. Hunt's (1977) contemporaries, such as Day (1977), Hempel (1977) and Miller (1977), also attempted to define customer satisfaction. According to Day (1977), it is a recognition and evaluation of the difference before and after the consumption. Hempel's (1977) emphasis was on the fulfilment of expectations, focusing on expectations and actual results. At the same time, Miller (1977) stated that a significant gap leads to dissatisfaction, whereas a smaller one leads to satisfaction. Oliver (1981) suggested that customer satisfaction assessed the surprise inherent in product acquisition and/or consumption experience, defining it as "the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion

surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about consumption experiences" (p.27).

According to Westbrook and Oliver, satisfaction is "Subsequent evaluative opinion of choice relative to specific purchase" (1991, p. 84). Fornell (1992) considers satisfaction as an overall evaluation after purchase. The former definition focuses on choice, while the latter focuses on post-purchase evaluation. More recently, numerous researchers have attempted to develop a consensual definition of the construct (Giese and Cote, 2000). Customer satisfaction was traditionally conceptualised as a cognitive construct (Westbrook, 1987; Tse 1988), but others argue that customer satisfaction is involved in customers' affective responses (Yi, 1990). Some researchers recommend viewing customer satisfaction as the response to an evaluative process (Giese and Cote, 2000). For example, "Evaluative or cognitive opinion, which analyses whether the product represents a satisfactory or poor result for its end users" (Swan, Trawick, and Carroll 1982, p. 17). Another similar definition is "Impression after the evaluation of use of the product or service" (Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins 1987, p. 305). "[Product satisfaction] is an attitude - like post-consumption evaluative judgment" (Mano and Oliver 1993, p. 454).

Brown and Scot (2009) consider satisfaction as the post consumption experience:

"Economists sometimes make a distinction between 'search goods' and 'experience goods', the difference being that the customer can only judge the quality of experience goods after purchase, as they are consumed. But higher education is actually a 'post-experience good', the effects of which may not be discoverable until well afterwards" (P.5-6)

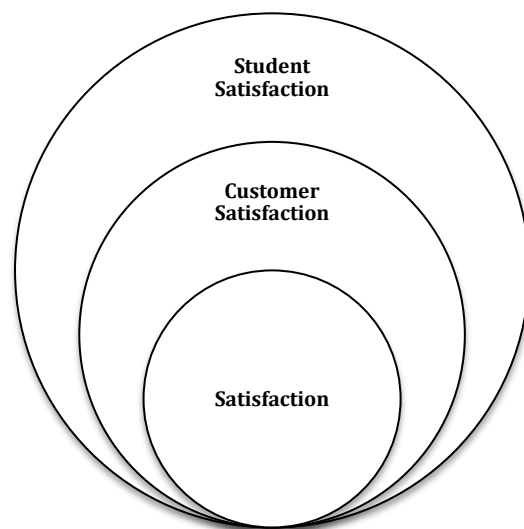
Hunt (1977) suggests that any measure of customer satisfaction should be isolated from the consumption experience itself, as evident in the following definition:

"The evaluation rendered that the [consumption] experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be" Hunt (p.459).

According to these definitions, customer satisfaction is viewed as a summary of emotional and cognitive responses (Rust and Oliver, 1994) that pertain to a particular focus (expectations, product/service, or consumption experience) and occur at a particular time (after consumption, after choice, or accumulative experiences) (Giese and Cote, 2000).

A business that can maintain customer satisfaction benefits from customer retention and, hence, the likelihood of continued revenue stream from the customer. A direct correlation between customer satisfaction and repeat business has not been established, although it is evident that customer satisfaction results in customer retention ("Customer Loyalty" Rai & Srivastav, 2014). Customer satisfaction, therefore, involves the perceived quality of a product or service and the customer's expectations associated with it prior to consumption.

Figure 02: Phylogeny of Student Satisfaction



To sum up the discussion so far, customer satisfaction is generally viewed as a feeling or affect, resulting from one's immediate or prior experience with a product or service. (Yuen, Cheng and Chan, 2019).

Within the context of higher education, student satisfaction is the main focus of this study. Given the growing emphasis on student satisfaction in UK Higher Education, it is now even more important for key stakeholders to be cognizant of the term.

As we mentioned earlier, students are essentially the customers of an institution of higher education, and the institutions are essentially a service industry. We, therefore, propose, albeit with some reservations, that it is justified to attempt to understand student satisfaction within the framework of general marketing practices. We also noted earlier that many researchers now advocate a customer and market-driven approach to higher education in order for colleges and universities to develop more successful relationships with their 'customers' (the students).

We shall now explore the various dimensions of student satisfaction to understand better the construct and how it differs from customer satisfaction.

b. Conceptualising Student Satisfaction

Garcia-Aracil notes a distinct 'absence of a consensus on the definition of satisfaction as a concept' (2009, p.2). Therefore, it is not easy to conceptualise and define the concept. However, student satisfaction appears to reflect a student's assessment of the services provided by an educational institution (Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Groggaard, 2002). In a similar way, Petruzellis et al. (2006) view student satisfaction as resulting from students' assessment of a service based on comparing their perceptions and expectations of service delivery. Both definitions have the commonality of service quality assessment; however, Petruzellis' (2006) description compares perceived expectations with the actual outcome.

The concept of student satisfaction seems to have originated in marketing studies (Qureshi et al. 2020). It has been referred to as a dynamic, complex and continually changing construct, primarily because of repeated interactions (Elliott and Shin, 2002) and many influencing factors (Hanssen and Solvoll, 2015).

The focus of student satisfaction was initially confined to one programme of study and institution. For example, Hatcher et al. (1992) and Danielson (1998) refer that student satisfaction as the attraction, pride, or positive feelings students develop towards a programme or an institution.

Brown et al. (1998) developed a similar conceptualisation of student satisfaction in terms of students' evaluation of the quality of the course and other curriculum-related factors. Hon (2002) refers to student satisfaction as an experience of the fulfilment of an expected outcome.

Elliott and Shin's (2002) definition is the most-widely used in the contemporary literature:

[...] the favourability of a student's subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experiences associated with education. Student satisfaction is being shaped continually by repeated experiences in campus life. (p.198)

According to the above definition, satisfaction represents the overall perception and experience of the service. Thus, this holistic perception is often explained by the multidimensionality of service attributes (Duque 2014; Mansori, Vaz, and Ismail 2014).

Borden (1995), in addition to Elliot and Shin (2002), concur that student satisfaction is linked to the association between student priorities and the campus environment. Finally, Telford and Masson (2005) note that satisfaction with higher educational institutions can be a measure of the effectiveness of the providers themselves.

Moreover, Mazzarol (2017) claims that student satisfaction is an attitude that only lasts for a short period of time.

Sweeney and Ingram (2001) define student satisfaction as,

“the perception of enjoyment and accomplishment in the learning environment” (p.57).

However, it is also important to acknowledge the ongoing debate about the relative importance of each experience type leading to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For example, Stukalina defines student satisfaction as:

“An outcome of the expectations and experiences of the subject, study course, or study programme as a requisite element of the integrated educational environment” (2012, p.92).

This definition emphasises that students' evaluations of service derive from several different factors. Indeed, in order to understand and appreciate the complexity of the learning experience, it is vital to understand the myriad of different factors that contribute to student satisfaction. As Bianchi states, both the core (teaching and learning) and peripheral (accommodation, facilities, social life, etc.) services of a university are “directly related to overall service quality and customer satisfaction” (2013, p.397). However, some authors emphasise the purely academic aspects of student satisfaction.

Over the last few decades, numerous studies have endeavoured to establish why some students are more satisfied than others, and efforts have been made to identify the various determinants of student satisfaction. Many factors appear to influence student satisfaction in different categories; the most prominent are personal and institutional factors (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006).

For example, such as gender, temperament, preferred learning style (Stokes 2003), some demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnic origin and level of education (Marzo-Navarro et al. 2005), age, employment (Fredericksen, Shea, Picket 2000, Bordean and Sonea, 2018) and grade point average (Porter and Umbach 2001) and institutional factors cover quality of instructions, promptness of the instructor's feedback, clarity of expectation, teaching style (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). Aldridge and Rowley (1998) split factors into two broad categories: (1) factors associated with teaching and learning and (2) factors associated with the overall student experience. Initially, researchers were solely interested in the former category (Browne et al., 1998; Franklin and Knight, 1995). However, more recently, increasing importance has been placed on the totality of the student experience (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Delaney, 2005; Kuh and Hu, 2001).

This paradigm shift is due to the fact that teaching and learning cannot be separated from all the other services and experiences the student encounters. Moreover, knowing and understanding all the factors that may impact student satisfaction creates a far richer and more valuable resource for future management interventions. Therefore, some authors have attempted to define student satisfaction within this context. For example, according to Parahoo et al., the following six elements can influence student satisfaction when viewing the academic experience as a whole:

- (1) University reputation,
- (2) Faculty academic competence,
- (3) Faculty communications,
- (4) Interactions among students,
- (5) Student interactions with admin and IT staff, and
- (6) Service quality of electronic communications (2013, pp.147-149).

The literature recognises that student satisfaction is a holistic evaluation of one's 'student experience'; it is not confined to academic factors alone, such as 'teaching quality' and 'perceived faculty competence' (Parahoo et al., 2013; Xiao and Wilkins, 2015). This is best encapsulated by Alves and Raposo (2009), who argue that

“the dimensions [of student satisfaction] found practically cover the whole educational product, as well as the way it is provided” (2009, p.204).

Other authors (e.g. Alridge and Rowley, 1998; Athiyaman, 1997; and Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002) agree that perception and measuring student satisfaction links to a set of pointers that comprises a student's life, and this includes two loosely related categories, evaluating teaching and learning and also looking into total student experiences.

Elliot and Shin (2002) attempted to cover these two categories by citing the student satisfaction inventory developed by Noel-Levitz, which identified the following dimensions of perceived importance and satisfaction: effectiveness of academic advice; campus climate; campus life; campus support services; concern for the individual; instructional effectiveness; effectiveness of recruitment and financial aid; effectiveness of registration; campus safety and security; service excellence, and student-centeredness.

Students' evaluations of their (dis)satisfaction with their higher education were once thought to be the result of a careful evaluation of their good and negative experiences as well as a retrospective comparison between their present judgments of service quality and their initial expectations (Baldwin and James, 2000; Vuori, 2013).

The fact that 'student satisfaction' is inextricably tied to other concepts, such as 'the student experience', 'employability,' and 'service quality,' makes it even more difficult to define and conceptualise.

Students' expectations of higher education are frequently linked to achieving a good degree classification – increasingly, an upper second or first – in order to benefit from the so-called 'college premium,' which improves their employability and earnings (Walker and Zhu, 2008, p.695; Mark, 2013).

Students may become more passive due to this economic focus, expecting their HEI to offer them a degree since they paid for it (Rolfe, 2002; Blackmore, 2009; Bates and Kaye, 2014); an exchange has occurred. Molesworth et al. describe this potentially odious effect of the student satisfaction agenda and state that 'the current HE market discourse promotes a mode of existence where students seek to "have a degree" rather than "be learners"'(2009, p.277).

Academic attributes (such as 'teaching quality') are crucial to students' overall satisfaction evaluation. However, the contemporary literature also highlights the importance of social, physical, spiritual and emotional factors (Elliott and Shin, 2002). It is influenced by various characteristics of individual students and institutions (Thomas and Galambos, 2004). Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2002) term this as an overall response not limited to the learning experience of a student. Understanding and measuring student satisfaction is, therefore, a very complex exercise. Due to the dynamic nature of the demographic characteristics of students and technological developments, it is becoming increasingly difficult to understand and evaluate student satisfaction (Couper, 2013). Highly motivated students are more challenging to satisfy due to their higher expectations. It has also been widely reported that millennial students are notoriously harder to teach than previous generations, which only adds to the difficulty in understanding how they view satisfaction (Twenge, 2009).

Furthermore, student perceptions of satisfaction vary over time, particularly once they have graduated and moved on to the next stage of their lives. Studies in several countries and numerous industries have found that the biggest regret among recent graduates about their university education is that they did not acquire sufficient soft skills to complement their more technical abilities (Andrews & Higson, 2008). While they may have been satisfied with the level and quality of learning as perceived during the course, they found sources of dissatisfaction they had previously ignored once engaged in professional activities. Therefore, post-graduation studies of satisfaction may provide some of the most illuminating insights into the topic. However, because these take place several years after the participants first entered the university system, they are not reliable guides to, for example, the typical undergraduate conception of satisfaction.

Student satisfaction has also been linked to student productivity and is even believed to have long-term implications for one's life, which adds yet further complexity to the topic. Studies from various countries show that satisfied students will lead more productive lives while still at the undergraduate level (Cotton, Dollard & de Jonge, 2002). Other studies have suggested that students who are satisfied with their undergraduate education are more successful in post-graduate study than their less satisfied peers (Ostergaard & Kristensen, 2005). Additionally, large-scale European studies have shown that satisfied students are better able to enter and compete in the global workplace (Vaastra & De Vries, 2007). As such, satisfaction matters both before *and after* graduation; it affects both current and future quality of life and has an impact at a national level.

Although student satisfaction has been treated under the umbrella of customer satisfaction for both analytical and practical purposes, some authors address several elements of student satisfaction alone. Since it is a complex construct with various antecedents, these are not the same as those found in customer satisfaction models (Elliott and Shin, 2002).

For many students, “the process of studying not only represents [the] acquisition of certain skills and theoretical knowledge; it is also related to personal growth and social development” (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002:p185). By shifting the focus towards the course content, the subject quality will be one of the highest priorities (Scott, 1999). According to Elliott and Shin (2002:198), “a university’s product is more than its academic programme. It is the sum of the student’s academic, social, physical, and even spiritual experiences.”

Furthermore, satisfaction is positively influenced when there is a favourable perception of the quality (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994). Finaly-Neumann (1994) asserts that dominant predictors of instructional satisfaction include clarity of instructional tasks, professor feedback and identity of instructional tasks. Higher education involves the adjustment to new academic and social environments. The demands of these new environments can create stressors that may put a strain on interpersonal relationships, undermine self-esteem and jeopardise academic performance (Khawaja and Dempsey, 2008). Such demands are often more complex for international students, who also have to adapt to a new culture, language and academic and social environment (Mori, 2000).

When reviewing the literature on student satisfaction, some authors also support both social and academic dimensions. For example, Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2002) underline some reasons to be cautious when applying the concept of satisfaction to the realm of higher education. Due to the theoretical discussion, satisfaction is explained in different ways; feelings and emotions are not completely taken into account as variables in the satisfaction process (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). There is a difference between institutions and subject fields concerning the most important student satisfaction factors (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002). They found that these factors are close to teaching and social climate. In other words, students “require experience with the product to determine how satisfied they are with it; and it is based not only on current experience but also all past experience, as well as future or anticipated experiences” (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann,1994:54-55).

Besides academic quality, Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2002) assert that the quality of university support facilities is very important in achieving student satisfaction. Their study examined how overall student satisfaction in Norway could be broken down into smaller component parts, referring to broader aspects of the student learning experience:

1. Quality of teaching (academic and pedagogic).
2. Quality of supervision and feedback from academic staff.
3. Composition, content and relevance of curriculum.
4. Balance between different forms of organised teaching activities and self-tuition.
5. Quality of support facilities.
6. Quality of physical infrastructure
7. Quality and access to leisure activities.
8. Social climate.

Guolla (1999:88) goes further and states that “a student’s satisfaction may be influenced by poor classroom facilities of which an instructor may have limited resources to change”. In this way, the campus environment can be seen as a web of related happenings that influence student satisfaction (Elliott and Shin, 2002). Therefore, it is necessary to enhance “the perceived value by providing services or service attributes not provided by the competition” (Claycomb and Martin, 2001:391). Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2002) found that smaller institutions have more satisfied students than larger institutions, and different environments within the same institution can have different influences on students.

As we mentioned above, the literature on student satisfaction and student perceptions of the academic experience is very complex. Our analysis has revealed two main schools of thought, focusing on the academic and social sides. Regardless of which approach they support, researchers mention the factors that can affect students’ satisfaction with their university or college. Many authors underline the importance of the same factors. For example, Harvey (1995) and Hill (1995) both mention library and accommodation services, course content, quality of teaching , catering services, academic workload, and so on. As we mentioned previously, the construct of student satisfaction is dynamic, complex and continuously changing.. Since the introduction of tuition fees, the student satisfaction theoretical framework has drawn on cost-expectation-satisfaction

assessment and expectations of employability after graduation (Khan and Hemsley-Brown, 2021). Employability after graduation has become a priority for students. Therefore, many students enter HEIs with perceived employability skills (Bordean and Sonea, 2018) and greater expectations about their graduate job; as a result, it has become a strategic direction (Smith et al., 2018). Consequently, the employability factor cannot be ignored in the student satisfaction construct.

Having established the importance of student satisfaction and its benefits to both the organisation and the individual, it is of paramount importance to identify a solid methodology to measure student satisfaction.

(For a comparative analysis on various types of satisfaction see “Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction and Student Satisfaction overview

Table 01: Overview of Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction and Student Satisfaction

| Satisfaction | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Author(s) | Conceptual Definition |
| Hunt, (1977) | “Satisfaction is a consumer’s post-purchase evaluation of the overall service experience (process and outcome). It is an affective (emotional) state of feeling reaction in which the consumer’s needs, desires and expectations during the course of the service experiences have been met or exceeded” |
| Zeithaml et al. (1990) | Satisfaction as an overall judgment, perception or attitude on the superiority of service. The judgment is based on the discrepancy between expectations and actual experience/s of the customer |
| Oliver (1997) | Satisfaction is a perception of pleasurable fulfilment of a service |
| Oliver (1997) | Satisfaction is a judgment following a consumption experience - it is the consumer’s judgment that a product provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment |
| Giese and Cote (2000) | Satisfaction is a summary, affective and variable intensity response centred on specific aspects of acquisition and/or consumption and which takes place at the precise moment when the individual evaluates the objectives |
| Hon (2002) | Satisfaction can be defined as the fulfilment of expected outcomes |
| Rad, & Yarmohammadian (2006) | A person will be satisfied when he /she achieves the expectations, hence it is a wilful accomplishment, which results in one’s contentment |
| Appleton-Knapp and Krentler, 2006; Alves and Raposo (2009) | Satisfaction results when a customer’s expectations are met (or confirmed), and dissatisfaction may occur when expectations are disconfirmed |
| Kotler & Keller, (2006 and 2012) | Satisfaction refers to the feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing perceived performance in relation to the expectation Kotler and Keller (2012) defined customer satisfaction as the reflection of “a person’s judgement of a product’s perceived performance in relationship to expectations” (p. 32). |
| Ilyas & Arif (2013). | It is a state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that has fulfilled his/her expectations |
| Saif (2014) | Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness obtained when a person fulfilled his or her needs and desires |
| Mukhtar, Anwar, Ahmed, & Baloch. (2015) | It is a function of a relative level of expectation connected with a person’s perception |
| Customer Satisfaction | |
| Howard and Sheth (1969) | Customer satisfaction is a cognitive state, which the consumer experiences between the sacrifice for buying the product or service and rewards. |
| Day (1977) | Customer satisfaction is a reaction to recognise and evaluate the differences before |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | and after consumption. |
| Hempel (1977) | Customer satisfaction reflects the consistency between expected and real results, which depends on the level of fulfilment expected by customers |
| Oliver (1981) | Customer satisfaction is the evaluation of surprising caused by the product acquired and consumptive experiences. Essentially, it is a summarised mindset related to/associated with expected disconfirmation feelings accompanied with previous consumption experiences. |
| Tse (1988) | Customer satisfaction is a kind of evaluation that is the cognitive difference between prior expectations and cognitive performances |
| Yi (1990) | Customer satisfaction is involved in customers' affective responses |
| Halstead, Hartman, and Schmidt (1994) | A transaction specific affective resulting from the customer's comparison of product performance to some pre-purchase standard |
| Kotler (2000) | Person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment, which resulted from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome against his/her expectations |
| Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, & Romanazzi (2006). | Customers will be satisfied when the level of the product or service/s meets their expectation |
| Student Satisfaction | |
| Stone and Thomson (1987) | The concept of customer satisfaction should be modified for use in educational contexts |
| Zeithaml (1988) | Student satisfaction is the result and outcome of an educational system |
| Hatcher et al., (1992) | Student satisfaction is the attraction, pride or positive feelings students develop towards a programme or an institution |
| Elliot and Healy (2001) | Student satisfaction is a short-term attitude that results from the evaluation of their experience with the education services rendered |
| Sweeney and Ingram (2001) | Student satisfaction refers to the perception of enjoyment as well as a sense of accomplishment associated with the learning environment. |
| Elliott, & Shin, (2002) | Student satisfaction as students' disposition by subjective evaluation of educational outcomes and experience. |
| Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Groggaard (2002) | Students' assessments of the services provided by universities and colleges. |
| Carey, Cambiano, & De Vore (2002) | Level of experience during the study period |
| Hon (2002) | Relates student satisfaction to an experience of fulfilment of an expected outcome. |
| Navarro et al., (2005a, b) | View student satisfaction as the final state of the psychological process |
| Telford and Masson (2005) | Satisfaction with higher educational institutions can be a measure of effectiveness of the providers |
| Mai (2005) | Student satisfaction as an overall feeling or associated with the elements of the transaction |
| Petruzzellis et al., (2006) | Student satisfaction as resulting from students' assessment of a service based on comparing their perceptions and expectations of the service delivery. |
| Stukalina (2012) | An outcome of the expectations and experiences of the subject, study course, or study programme as a requisite element of the integrated educational environment (2012, p.92) |
| Mukhtar, Anwar, Ahmed, & Baloch, (2015) | Student satisfaction can be defined as a function of relative level of experiences and perceived performance about educational service |
| Weerasinghe and Fernando (2017) | A short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experience, services and facilities |

IV. Findings and Discussion

A small number of attempts to define student satisfaction can be found in the contemporary literature. However, due to the overwhelming complexity of the subject matter, it is difficult to choose a 'perfect'

definition that incorporates every possible aspect of student satisfaction. Instead, student satisfaction results from a combination of various factors, and these are complex and dynamic; therefore, there is no universal 'all-encompassing' definition.

There is a significant and complex overlap between satisfaction, customer satisfaction and student satisfaction. However, there are some commonalities as well. Although the literature contains various interpretations of the term 'satisfaction', there is some agreement that it relates to the degree to which one's expectations within the context of an experience are justified. For example, it is an instantaneous experience or evaluation of that experience, or it may even be a prolonged experience or feeling. Even when not alluding to business transactions, the literature frequently refers to 'customers' in the interpretation of satisfaction. Therefore, the term 'customer satisfaction' is encountered more frequently in an increasingly interconnected network of global business enterprises and the associated literature. Customer satisfaction seems to be one type of satisfaction: it merely needs a well-defined product or service in the context within which the term is applied. Before engaging in any business transaction, customers have pre-conceived expectations. These expectations are shaped by a whole host of factors, such as personal preferences, past experiences, personality characteristics and perceptions or experiences about competing products and services. Therefore, the products and/or services become the prime focus of the 'satisfaction' experience.

While satisfaction is a feeling or mental state (Hunt 1977, Reichheld, 1996), we have also noticed that customer satisfaction is a cognitive construct (Westbrook, 1987). Similarly, student satisfaction is based on experience (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002). Satisfaction is termed as 'evaluation of an experience', and student satisfaction is also based on an experience of a service (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994). Satisfaction, customer satisfaction and student satisfaction have all been linked to the subject's past experiences (Zeithaml et al. 1990, Oliver 1981, Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994). Student satisfaction, however, is not limited to learning. Instead, it seems that there is much more to student satisfaction than just the core product 'delivered' to students. It is as much about the institute's ranking; the projected and actual utility of the course taken, personal characteristics, dynamic job market pressures and skills demanded as it is about the 'mere product' itself.

Customer satisfaction with a given transaction is supposed to vary (Reichheld, 1996), but so too is student satisfaction (Elliott and Shin, 2002). Student satisfaction is influenced by the characteristics of students (Thomas et al., 2004) and includes a social dimension (Fournier and Mick, 1999). In much the same way as customer satisfaction is associated with a specific purchase decision (Oliver and Richard, 1980), student satisfaction is derived from the educational services received from the higher education institution. It has been argued that satisfaction may be a cumulative experience (Jones & Suh 2000), just like student satisfaction, which is the "overall response to learning experience" (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002). However, it seems that levels of student satisfaction are more volatile in both magnitude and over time. This is primarily due to a highly dynamic technological landscape and social changes, influencing past perceptions. We have also noted that some students who were initially highly satisfied with their course experienced lower satisfaction levels at some point later on in life. This low level of satisfaction in practical life could be because they could not benefit from their education in terms of employment and career progression. In overall comparison, "*student satisfaction is more complex and dynamic than customer satisfaction.*"

Customer satisfaction is to somehow static, while student satisfaction is more dynamic. Compared to customer satisfaction, there is more disagreement in the student satisfaction literature that it is a prolonged process, which can yield different outcomes when measured at different points in time. For example, several studies in many countries and industries found that recent graduates' most substantial regret about their university education did not acquire sufficient soft skills to complement their more technical abilities (Andrews & Higson, 2008). While they may have been satisfied at the time with how well they were studying, once they started professional activities, they find sources of dissatisfaction they had previously not thought about it.

Whilst customer satisfaction is a complex process involving cognitive and psychological aspects of the customer (Rust and Oliver, 1994), student satisfaction is arguably even more complex in nature (Khawaja and Dempsey, 2008). Due to a constantly changing socio-economic landscape and the potential time lag between purchase and consumption (i.e. from the time students first gain their qualifications to when those qualifications are actually put to use), their degree of satisfaction can vary enormously depending on when it is measured. Education is a critical dimension of a person's social and economic status, and it seems to have potentially long-lasting and profound social, economic and psychological implications. Given the amount of time and money students invest

in their higher education, expectations are complex, both in magnitude and scope, even more so in the case of higher education institutions where fees are significantly higher.

The literature has an inclination to treat higher education as a service industry and deliver higher education as a service. Furthermore, it has been argued that students are customers and should be treated as such, particularly in private higher education. Finally, it has been argued that standard marketing techniques used in commerce can be applied to manage relations between students and the institutions of higher education that provide these 'services'. However, as we pointed out elsewhere, there are some noticeable differences, particularly between customer satisfaction and student satisfaction. When comparing customer satisfaction with student satisfaction, the scope of input variables that determine student satisfaction, the nature and scope of implications of the degree of satisfaction a student has, and the potential 'environment variables' within which the 'service' is delivered to the student appear to be distinguishing factors. As we noticed in the literature review, the 'delivery' environment, such as facilities offered, educational staff, the location and the social standing of a particular institution, can all significantly affect a student's level of satisfaction. The degree to which a student is satisfied can affect their current success on the course and potentially have lifelong implications in both their professional and personal lives.

Taking all the different dimensions of student satisfaction into account, we propose that student satisfaction is *the short-term pleasure of the academic journey and, in the long run, the pride of securing a job primarily based on the student's academic qualification.*

Suppose we see the synonyms of satisfaction in different dictionaries such as Cambridge, Oxford, Merriam-Webster, and Collins. In that case, we find happiness, pleasure, pride, delight, joy, amusement, and pleasant feeling, are the most common words. Our proposed definition of student satisfaction is based on two parts: the first is related to the academic journey, and the second is associated with the job. In the literature review, we have already seen that a few definitions of student satisfaction are based on the synonym of satisfaction. For example, satisfaction is a perception of pleasurable fulfilment of a service (Oliver, 1997), satisfaction refers to the feeling of pleasure (Kotler and Keller, 2006) satisfaction is a feeling of happiness obtained when a person fulfilled his or her needs and desires (Saif, 2014), student satisfaction is the attraction, pride or positive feelings students develop towards a programme or an institution (Hatcher et al., (1992) and student satisfaction refers to the perception of enjoyment (Sweeney and Ingram (2001). The second part is related to employability/job; one of the primary purposes of higher education among students is to get a good job.

Currently, students' employability occupies an important place on the HE agenda. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are under pressure to enhance the employability of their graduates (Grotkowska et al., 2015). The demand for graduate jobs remains high, especially in the 21st century. Students understand that a degree is a pre-requisite for a graduate job; therefore, employability is one of the most significant factors in choosing a course and HEI (Diamond et al., 2012). Consequently, they prefer a particular course and HEI with the highest employability rate. The employers' expectations from graduate students are to deliver added value by knowledge skills and qualities (Tomlinson, 2008). Students after completing their degree securing a graduate job in a multinational company provide them satisfaction and consider educational investment they made now it is return time. They Students feel pride in a good job, and pride is a fundamental emotion in the context of social behaviour (Elfenbein, 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2007). In addition to that, a sense of pride increases confidence as they realise their performance is valuable to others-employers (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

It seems student satisfaction could be a subjective post-study lifelong perception of positive impacts on the quality of life that depends on a good job.

We also recommend that HEIs need to develop a framework to identify/maximise student satisfaction. For example, HEIs need to identify students' higher education and employability needs and implement a system, which fulfils both of these needs.

V. Conclusions

The academic literature lacks a standard definition of student satisfaction, and students' perception of the educational experience is very complex (Hoang, Ngo and Pham, 2018). Therefore, researchers have conceptualised student satisfaction based on theories borrowed from job satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and economic investment theories. So much of the contemporary literature on student satisfaction is borrowed from other disciplines. Comprehending student satisfaction within the framework of general marketing practice is justified, although we have some reservations. It has been noted elsewhere that research supports a 'market-driven' and 'customer-driven' approach to universities in order to develop a successful student relationship

The focus of this study was to establish an understanding of student satisfaction. Satisfaction, with its origins in psychology, is a vague concept. A review of the existing literature revealed wide variations in the definitions of satisfaction, customer satisfaction and student satisfaction. The literature on satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and student satisfaction has not either explicitly or implicitly established a generally accepted definition of satisfaction, customer satisfaction or student satisfaction. Therefore, this limitation has forced researchers to develop their own, most appropriate methods of measuring satisfaction.

The contemporary literature on "student satisfaction" and students' perception of their educational experience is complex. Views on how best to measure student satisfaction are quite diverse and consider academic as well as non-academic factors. There are some commonalities among these factors, but there is still much disagreement. This is because each author also has their own view regarding students' particular needs in the higher education sector. For example, the National Student Survey (NSS) does not include postgraduate and doctorate level students and only focuses on final year undergraduate students in the UK.

The literature review leads us to ask thought-provoking questions: Why is there no consensus on the definition of student satisfaction, and why does the academic literature not provide a valid definition or measure of student satisfaction?

The definition is important – practical implications, without consensual definition, we cannot develop a framework to maximise student satisfaction.

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