

Quality of Graduate School Services and Satisfaction of Students: Basis for a Strategic Plan

Josie D. Fuentes^a, Jean A. Legaspi^b

^a*fuentes@hcdc.edu.ph; jlegaspi@hcdc.edu.ph^b*
Holy Cross of Davao College, Davao City, 8000 Philippines

Abstract

The study investigated the quality of graduate school services and the level of satisfaction of students at a sectarian, higher education institution in Davao City, Philippines. It used a correlational-descriptive research method. There were 137 respondents in this study. The graduate school students answered the adapted and modified research instrument from existing instruments from the open source published journals. The data were collected, tallied, and subjected to statistical analysis using the percentage, frequency, mean, and Pearson R correlation test. The results revealed that most of the respondents belonged to the age group 25–35 years old, females, and taking the Master of Arts in Education program. The results also showed that the quality of graduate school services was very high, while the students' level of satisfaction in terms of personal and professional fulfillment was very satisfactory. Also, there is no significant relationship between the quality of graduate school services when grouped according to the profile. Further, there is no significant relationship among the level of students' satisfaction when grouped according to the profile. Lastly, there is a significant relationship between the quality of graduate school services and high student satisfaction. Considering the findings and the conclusion of the study, it is recommended that the institution maintain its dedication to the long-term improvement of the curriculum and enhance its internet services to graduate students by increasing its internet bandwidth to cater to all stakeholders. Moreover, the institution should adopt and implements the proposed Strategic Plan.

Keywords: quality; graduate school services; higher education; students satisfaction; strategic plan

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions provide a wide range of services and initiatives to improve the academic standards of students studying at the university. At the Graduate Education level, studies are practical and efficient means to enhance education professionals' knowledge, skills, and abilities to participate and contribute to the continued development and advancement of teaching and learning capabilities in the learning environment, administration of curriculum offers, and the provision of student services. However, educational institution's ability to compete well has been largely attributed to their ability to deliver high-quality services. Understanding student satisfaction is significant and critical to graduate education programs as it provides inputs toward developing better instruments to reach the students. The graduate school's service quality is mainly determined by how satisfied and delighted its students are with their experience of the services they receive.

According to Jalal and Murray (2019), strategic planning is one of today's most vital and crucial non-financial tasks. Teaching initiatives that educational institutions will carry out strategic planning is essential for any organization and is the most efficient strategy to achieve its main objectives. As mentioned by Hassanien (2017), a new and innovative model for strategic analysis and planning is now more critical than ever because of the difficulties higher education institutions confront today. This model must enable these institutions to meet their immense challenges and assure viability. Some business-ready strategic models might need to be altered to serve higher education institutions' needs. Jalal and Murray (2019) confirmed that strategic planning is well-researched. However, more research must be done on applying strategic planning within higher education.

In Germany, based on the study of Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018), concern about the quality of services increased in the last quarter of the twentieth century, especially during the seventies and eighties, due to the improved technological and scientific methods of economic, technical, and sociological changes. Also, Agus et al. (2020) discussed their study on the strategic planning model of Islamic Religious Higher Education in Indonesia. They posited that to succeed in the struggle for market share, strategic planning activities must lead to choosing the best institutional goals. Similar situations can be observed in the Philippines regarding the quality of services offered by the graduate education programs of a higher education institution. In 2015, Ibarrientos utilized a quantitative research model by stipulating survey questionnaires for all graduate school students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The study revealed that graduate school students were not delighted with all the student support services and showed a less effective implementation. It was not maximized and have limited services provided to the graduate school students.

In Davao City, however, problems with improving graduate school services still need to be solved in many schools. This has become one of the problems in the country's higher educational institutions. In the local region of Davao, there has yet to be any research conducted on student satisfaction relative to the quality of graduate school services offered by higher education institutions. Most educational institutions still need to reach the required quality of services desired by the top management of such higher education institutions. In other institutions, they have been engaged in national accreditation such as PAASCU and PACUCOA, and international certification like the International Standard Organization (ISO) to ensure that the quality assurance which includes internal and external audits, periodic monitoring and evaluation on every area have been applied and implemented to maintain the quality of services offered.

In the Holy Cross of Davao College, the graduate school department was granted a permit to offer master's degree programs by the Commission on Higher Education in February 1994. Since then, up to the present, there has been no research conducted on the services offered by the department to determine student satisfaction and as the basis for strategic planning. Thus, this is the first research study conducted for the Holy Cross of Davao College graduate school department. There needs to be more clarity between the quality of graduate school services and the student's satisfaction in the various higher education institutions. In some higher education institutions, the focus on offering quality services in graduate school and student satisfaction has yet to be explored much.

Therefore, this study was conducted to assess and evaluate student satisfaction with the different services provided by the Holy Cross of Davao College in Davao City, Philippines, especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction, faculty, facilities and resources, and student services. Also, it evaluates into the students' satisfaction on the personal and professional satisfaction; student support satisfaction; and instruction-based satisfaction. One way that higher education institutions may consider improving the quality of services in the college or university is by taking into consideration how the students' connection and engagement to the school and their willingness and acceptance of all the benefits they receive from all the services offered by the school that may influence their level of satisfaction. Another way to solve the issues is that school administrators should exert efforts and strengthen their academic and support services to their students.

2. Methodology

In this study, the descriptive correlation design was used as the most precise research design to gauge students' satisfaction with the quality of services offered by the graduate school department of the Holy Cross of Davao College. According to Nahed (2018), the descriptive correlational design was appropriate to examine the relationships among variables as they exist in their natural settings. The contexts of Creswell and Creswell (2017) supported that it involves collecting data on two or more variables and analyzing them to determine whether they are related and the nature and strength of the relationship of these variables.

The respondents of the study were 137 graduate school students of a Catholic higher education institution. The chosen respondents are currently enrolled in the academic year 2022-2023. The researchers used purposive quota sampling in selecting the respondents. Purposive quota sampling is where the researchers choose people non-randomly according to some fixed quota (Trochim, 2020). The purposive sampling technique also ensures that a particular population sample's characteristics will be represented (Maxwell, 1997).

The researchers wrote a letter to the Dean of the graduate school asking permission to conduct the study and the list of officially enrolled students were provided by the Registrar's office of the institution. The researchers submitted the requirements to the Research Ethics Committee for ethical review and clearance. Thus, REC approval and Certification were issued, and the data gathering formally started. Frequency and percentage, mean, and Pearson R correlation test was used in the analysis of the data gathered.

3. Results and Discussion

Problem 1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

- 1.1 age;
- 1.2 sex; and
- 1.3 program?

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
24 years old below	23	16.80
25 – 35 years old	90	65.70
36 – 45 years old	22	16.10
46 – 55 years old	2	1.50
Total	137	100.00

Table 1 showed that most respondents were 25–35 years old (90, 65.70%) while individuals from the age group 46-55 years old (2, 1.50%).

Table 1.1

Profile of the Respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Female	99	72.30
Male	38	27.70
Total	137	100.00

Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex. It was shown that most of the respondents were females (99, 72.30%).

Table 1.2

Profile of the Respondents in terms of Program

Program	Frequency	Percent
Doctor of Education (EdD)	18	13.10
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	17	12.40
Master in Management (MM)	9	6.60
Master of Arts in Education (MAED)	93	67.90
Total	137	100.00

Table 1.2 shows the respondents' demographic profile regarding the program to which they belong. It was demonstrated that 67.90% were individuals from the Master of Arts in Education, 13.10% were in the Doctor of Education, 12.40% were in the Doctor of Philosophy, and 6.60% were in the Master in Management. The results mean that most of the respondents belonged to the age group 25 – 35 years old, females, and taking the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program.

Problem 2. What is the level of the quality of graduate school services in the following areas in terms of:

- 2.1 curriculum and instruction;
- 2.2 faculty;
- 2.3 facilities and resources; and
- 2.4 student services?

Table 2

Summary of the Level of Quality of Graduate School Services

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Curriculum and Instruction	3.58	Very High
Faculty	3.69	Very High
Facilities and Resources	3.33	Very High
Student Services	3.41	Very High
Overall Mean	3.50	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Table 2 presents the level of quality of graduate school services. As can be gleaned from Table 2, the indicators “Faculty, and Curriculum and Instruction,” with a mean of 3.69 and 3.58, respectively, were higher than the overall mean of 3.50. The “Facilities and Resources” area came last with a mean of 3.33, lower than the overall mean of 3.50. Generally, the quality of graduate school services was very high from the point of view of the study sample. This means that all provisions or conditions are always observed.

Table 2.1

Level of Quality of Graduate School Services in Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and Instruction	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. I experience flexibility through e-learning/online mode to study at a time convenient to the student.	3.72	Very High
2. I feel confident while using online e-learning content.	3.58	Very High
3. I am provided with the theoretical foundation in my field or discipline in my Core courses.	3.61	Very High
4. Course offerings prepare me to conduct research in my field or discipline.	3.58	Very High
5. At the beginning of the course (online/face-to-face), I have a clear introduction (including overall design, course syllabi, navigation, and faculty information).	3.60	Very High
6. I experience a manageable course workload in the program.	3.48	Very High
7. I am provided with my program's curriculum and a balanced scope of materials needed for overall graduate-level competency in my specialization.	3.56	Very High
8. I experience quality and innovative teaching and instructional methods that the faculty have used in my program.	3.61	Very High
9. I participate in reviewing and evaluating our curriculum program.	3.27	Very High
10. The graduate school program studies comply with the Commission on Higher Education requirements.	3.74	Very High
Overall Mean	3.58	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Table 2.1 shows the quality of graduate school services regarding Curriculum and Instruction. The overall mean was 3.58, with a descriptive level of “Very High.” Also, all items were marked as “Very High” by the respondents. The result shows that item no. 10, “The graduate school program studies comply with the Commission on Higher Education requirements.” has the highest mean of 3.74. While item no. 9, “I participate in the review, revision, and evaluation of our curriculum program,” has the lowest mean of 3.27, which is lower than the overall mean of 3.58.

The result means that the students perceived the quality of graduate school services in Curriculum and Instruction as very high. The outcome suggests that the graduate school's necessary and implemented study program complies with the standards set out by the Commission on Higher Education; the program's development and design are innovative, creative, and forward-thinking to make sure that it responds pro-

actively to new developments and trends in the field and society. It consists of methodically arranged learning experiences that are interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary.; and the syllabi of the various subjects provide an in-depth discussion of its topics in the foundation of general education as well as professional education.

Bueno (2017), examined how graduate school professors were remarkable in achieving the goals and objectives of graduate education programs. He found that faculty members perform their professional duties satisfactorily by demonstrating mastery of subject material, total academic community awareness of social issues, deep concern for the needs of others, and a solid commitment to community uplift and social change. However, in terms of curriculum design, review, and evaluation, there is less participation on the level of the students. The thought of the program of studies must be extensively participated by the stakeholders.

Table 2.2

Level of Quality of Graduate School Services in terms of Faculty

Faculty	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. Faculty expectations for student work are reasonably high.	3.61	Very High
2. The faculty are among the leaders in their field of specialization.	3.73	Very High
3. The faculty are models of academic integrity and professional ethics.	3.74	Very High
4. Faculty members advise on academic matters and mentor graduate students.	3.66	Very High
5. The faculty treat graduate students with respect and collegiality.	3.71	Very High
6. The faculty manage their methodological or ideological disagreements professionally.	3.65	Very High
7. There is a sense of collegiality among faculty and graduate students.	3.66	Very High
8. Faculty members assist graduate students in developing research competence.	3.66	Very High
9. The faculty have a thorough knowledge of the subject content.	3.73	Very High
10. Faculty members respect graduate students regardless of sexual orientation, identity, beliefs or practices, ethnicity, political views, or ideology.	3.73	Very High
Overall Mean	3.69	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

As seen in Table 2.2, all items in the Faculty area were rated as “Very High” by the respondents. The highest item with a mean of 3.74 was “The faculty are models of academic integrity and professional ethics.” Meanwhile, item no. 1, “Faculty expectations for student work are reasonably high.” has the lowest mean of 3.61, which is lower than the overall mean of 3.69.

The result only shows that the students “strongly agree” that the faculty are models of academic integrity and professional ethics. This indicates that graduate students are delighted with several metrics relating to graduate school teachers. Graduate school faculty members are primarily responsible for the academic and professional competence of the program. A competent faculty is one of the indispensable elements of a good graduate school. According to Ali (2011), students are welcome to meet with their course instructor and academic advisor at any time if either is available. Teaching and learning are fundamental aspects of student life, particularly at the graduate level. They are crucial in enhancing educational systems so society can develop scientific results (Gorji et al., 2015). The ability to conduct research at all levels in various graduate-level disciplines requires developing these skills.

Table 2.3

Level of Graduate School Services Quality in terms of Facilities and Resources

Facilities and Resources	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. Well-equipped and maintained SPED laboratory.	3.28	Very High
2. Unlimited access to Computer Laboratories	3.24	High
3. Enough books, learning materials, and references in the Graduate School Library	3.23	High
4. Unlimited access to library facilities	3.24	High
5. The research system includes updated catalogs, readers' guides/indices, including a bibliography of theses and dissertations. All the views and dissertations are accessible, available, and adequate.	3.32	Very High
6. Availability of internet connectivity on the school campus.	3.21	High
7. Enough equipment for the classrooms (LCD, table, chairs, whiteboards)	3.32	Very High
8. Conducive classrooms are appropriate for teaching and learning.	3.42	Very High
9. Availability of user-friendly ramps and elevators.	3.50	Very High
10. Attractive and safe campus buildings	3.53	Very High
Overall Mean	3.33	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

As shown in Table 2.3, most items of Facilities and Resources were marked as “Very High” by the respondents. The highest item with a mean of 3.53, labeled “Very High,” was “Attractive and safe campus buildings.” Meanwhile, item no. 6 was “Availability of internet connectivity on the school campus.” the lowest mean of 3.21 was marked as “High,” which was lower than the overall mean of 3.33.

The results imply that the institution's graduate school has adequate physical resources to support its activities. To provide the educational opportunities and experiences necessary to satisfy the institution's needs and programs, planning for the necessary physical facilities, instructional opportunities, and IT resources is essential. The institution has the necessary laboratory facilities. The graduate school laboratory has the equipment to support graduate students' instructional and research needs.

The primary educational resource hub of any institution is its library. The benefits of graduate programs require noticeably more extensive library resources. Today's staff and instructors must monitor, direct, and assist students' learning processes while providing adequate library resources (Budiendra et al., 2012). A further factor is that to stay significant, and libraries nowadays must surpass conventional learning information resources. They must also anticipate information technology requirements and standards for the clientele and their users' needs to perform successfully (Duren, 2012). The library, the essential element of any academic institution, should be given the utmost care to prevent the complete breakdown of the school community (Salman, 2013).

Due to the current competitive challenges in the market, higher educational institutions are paying a lot of attention to understanding and working to increase student happiness (Kara et al., 2016). However, the institution's internet connection speed and bandwidth capacity must be adequate to meet its academic needs and boost operational effectiveness. This was supported by the study of Usman (2010), that infrastructural

facilities are growing in importance because they meet students' expectations, esteem, and needs. Equip them with all the necessary skills and abilities to learn new knowledge.

Table 2.4

Level of Quality of Graduate School Services in terms of Student Services

Student Services	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. Counseling services are available.	3.37	Very High
2. The Medical/Dental Clinic provides good services and support.	3.23	High
3. The policies and criteria for the retention policy for the students are clearly stated and made known. The retention criteria are applied fairly and consistently.	3.39	Very High
4. Graduate students in my program are consulted about issues that concern them.	3.45	Very High
5. Graduate school students are represented during faculty meetings.	3.34	Very High
6. My department or program has a practical, formal procedure for addressing student-faculty disputes.	3.43	Very High
7. Student support, such as academic/research advising, financial aid, registration, etc., is available.	3.47	Very High
8. Administrative staff in the graduate school department are accommodating.	3.50	Very High
9. Existence of an existing operational system for directing and helping graduate students in their thesis work.	3.42	Very High
10. Generally, the morale of graduate students in my program is positive.	3.52	Very High
Overall Mean	3.41	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Table 2.4 presents the quality of graduate school services in terms of Student Services. The overall mean of 3.41 was rated very high by the respondents. Among the provisions of this area, only item no. 2, “The Medical/Dental Clinic provides good services and support.” with a mean of 3.23, was rated high. This means the condition was only satisfactory. The result reveals that the school's student services program reflects the institution's vision-mission goals. They are focused on the students' care, development, and growth. The support services meet student needs and are sufficiently availed by the students. It is equivalent to a state of satisfaction, with the pleasant and positive attitudes that result from everything being in order within the context of the educational setting, with attentive personnel and workers (Tasirin et al., 2015).

Problem 3. What is the level of student satisfaction in terms of:

- 3.1 personal and professional satisfaction;
- 3.2 student support satisfaction; and
- 3.3. instruction-based satisfaction?

Table 3
Summary of the Level of Students' Satisfaction

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Personal and Professional Satisfaction	3.65	Very High
Student Support Satisfaction	3.52	Very High
Instruction-Based Satisfaction	3.70	Very High
Overall Mean	3.62	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Table 3 presents the level of students' satisfaction. On the overall level of satisfaction, as shown in Table 3, more than half of the respondents ($M = 3.62$) have a very high level of satisfaction. All three indicators were rated very high, with a mean of 3.70 on Instruction-Based Satisfaction, 3.65 on Personal and Professional Satisfaction, and a norm of 3.52 on Student Support Satisfaction, respectively. Among the three indicators, student support satisfaction has the lowest mean of 3.52 compared to the overall standard of 3.62. In this study, the student's overall level of satisfaction was very high. This implies that the provisions of each indicator are very satisfactory. Among the indicators, the least mean result is student support satisfaction. This indicates that the students were moderately satisfied with the institution's support services. The level of satisfaction across variables was presented in tables 3.1 to 3.3.

Table 3.1
Level of Students' Satisfaction in terms of Personal and Professional Satisfaction

Personal and Professional Satisfaction	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. I feel a sense of safety and security in the school.	3.67	Very High
2. I am fulfilled with the school's type of governance, as evidenced by its policies and guidelines.	3.65	Very High
3. I am grateful for my academic and social life in this institution.	3.64	Very High
4. I am satisfied with the support of the department for my professional development.	3.67	Very High
5. I am satisfied with my entire stay and experience in the school.	3.60	Very High
Overall Mean	3.65	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

As shown in Table 3.1, all items were rated very high on the level of satisfaction in terms of Personal and Professional Satisfaction. Item no. 1, "I feel a sense of safety and security in the school." and item no.4 "I am satisfied with the support of the department for my professional development." the highest mean of 3.67 is higher than the overall mean of 3.65. The result showed that the student's level of satisfaction in terms of personal and professional fulfillment is very satisfactory. Providing students with options and some self-determination allows for a more individualized educational experience.

Table 3.2

Level of Students' Satisfaction in Terms of Student Support Satisfaction

Student Support Satisfaction	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.	3.52	Very High
2. The school's support staffs (Registrar, Clinic, Guidance, Student Affairs) were friendly and accommodating towards their stakeholders.	3.58	Very High
3. The school offers a systematic enrollment system.	3.61	Very High
4. The school library is accessible for the needed instructional resources.	3.38	Very High
5. The student service support and designed programs were beneficial in our present work.	3.52	Very High
Overall Mean	3.52	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Based on Table 3.2, the level of student satisfaction in terms of Student Support Satisfaction was rated very high by the respondents. This implies that the conditions are very satisfactory. Among the provisions, item 3, "The school offers a systematic enrollment system." have the highest mean of 3.61, higher than the overall mean of 3.52.

The institution successfully recruits, admits, and places students based on well-defined, trustworthy criteria. Rules and regulations for implementing student admission support a well-formulated and published plan. The level of students the school selects and accepts significantly impacts the caliber of graduates. Educators and non-teaching staff nowadays must follow, direct, and support the student's learning process while providing adequate library resources (Budiendra et al., 2012). As a result, Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa (2013) stressed that libraries in developing nations still make significant investments in purchasing library resources despite their financial limitations. Depreciating library resources has been one of the biggest problems for libraries.

Table 3.3

Level of Students' Satisfaction in Terms of Instruction-Based Satisfaction

Instruction-Based Satisfaction	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The teachers were qualified and competent in their specialization.	3.74	Very High
2. The teaching-learning process of graduate school was practical.	3.68	Very High
3. The teachers demonstrated knowledge and mastery of the content they were responsible for teaching.	3.71	Very High
4. The tests/assessments accurately assess what I have learned in this course, and the grades are consistent with the evaluation criteria.	3.67	Very High
5. Class activities and the instructional delivery strategies stimulated my thought process and led to long-term professional growth.	3.69	Very High
Overall Mean	3.70	Very High

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

Table 3.3 shows the level of student satisfaction in terms of Instruction-Based Satisfaction, and the overall mean is 3.70, rated very high. This means that the provisions are very satisfactory. From the conditions, item no. 1, “The teachers and learning facilitators were qualified and competent in their field of specialization.” has the highest mean of 3.74, higher than the overall mean of 3.70. The results revealed that the respondents are highly satisfied with the instruction-based academic standards of the graduate school department of the institution. The curriculum, teaching-learning process, teaching-learning environment, evaluation of learning outcomes, supervision of the instructional program, and co-curriculum programs are among the elements that affect the achievement of students via fulfillment (Gopal et al., 2021; Wei, 2020; Sockalingam, 2013).

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between:

- 4.1 Quality of graduate school services and the Profile?
- 4.2 Students’ satisfaction and the Profile?
- 4.3 Quality of graduate school services and students’ satisfaction?

Table 4

Significance of the Relationship among the Quality of Graduate School Services according to the Profile

Quality of Graduate School Services				
Profile	r	p-value	Decision on Ho @ 0.05 level of significance	Interpretation
Age	0.090	0.297	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.
Sex	0.077	0.370	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.
Program	0.089	0.304	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.

Table 4 compares the relationship results among the quality of graduate school services when grouped according to the profile. The table reflects that there is no significant relationship among the quality of graduate school services when grouped according to the profile. The age, sex, and program exhibited the non-existence of their relationship to the quality of graduate school services, as reflected in the results of the p-value of 0.297, 0.370, and 0.304, respectively. Although the corresponding value of $r = 0.090$ for age, $r = 0.077$ for sex, and $r = 0.089$ for the program, the degree of their relationship is insignificant at a 0.05 significance level. Thus, failing to reject the null hypothesis is the decision.

The finding accepts the hypothesis of the study that there is no significant relationship between the quality of graduate school services when grouped according to age, sex, and program. This would also imply that not all indicators significantly affect the quality of graduate school services. Therefore, it is safe to construe that the students have the same level of satisfaction with the quality of the graduate school services offered by the institution.

Table 5

Significance of the Relationship among the Level of Students' Satisfaction according to the Profile

Profile	Level of Students Satisfaction			
	r	p-value	Decision on Ho @ 0.05 level of significance	Interpretation
Age	0.059	0.496	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.
Sex	0.140	0.102	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.
Program	0.118	0.169	Failed to Reject Ho	There is no significant correlation.

Table 5 compares the results of the relationship among levels of student satisfaction when grouped according to the profile. The table reflects that there is no significant relationship among the level of students' satisfaction when grouped according to the profile. The age, sex, and program exhibited the non-existence of their ties to the level of student's satisfaction, as reflected in the results of the p-value of 0.496, 0.102, and 0.169, respectively. Although the corresponding value of $r = 0.059$ for age, $r = 0.140$ for sex, and $r = 0.118$ for the program, the degree of their relationship is not significant at a 0.05 significance level. Thus, failing to reject the null hypothesis is the decision. The finding accepts the hypothesis of the study that there is no significant relationship between the level of student satisfaction when grouped according to age, sex, and program. Satisfaction was not significantly related to the demographic profiles of the students. This indicates that the provisions and conditions do not significantly affect the students' satisfaction.

Table 6

Significance of the Relationship between the Quality of Graduate School Services and Students' Satisfaction

	Students Satisfaction			
	r	p-value	Decision on Ho @ 0.05 level of significance	Interpretation
Quality of Graduate School Services	0.896	0.000	Reject Ho	There is a significant, very high correlation.

Table 6 presents the comparison between the results of the relationship between the quality of graduate school services and students' satisfaction. The table depicts the significant relationship between the Quality of Graduate School Services and Students' Satisfaction and exhibits their relationship in the results. With an overall p-value of 0.000, the association is significant at a 0.05 significance level. The choice is to reject the null hypothesis. It shows a robust, very high correlation between the two variables.

The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.896$ explains that for every improvement in the quality of graduate school services, there is an equivalent very high level of student satisfaction. Consequently, the overall findings demonstrated a solid correlation, as reflected in the value of $r = 0.896$. It explains that for every unit of quality of graduate school services, there is a reasonably significant, very high level of student satisfaction. Based on the study results, students indicated that they are generally delighted with the quality of the graduate school services of the institution. Participants signified that they believed the school's administration, staff, and academic personnel were prepared to go above and beyond to help and encourage them to be productive students. Students favor educational institutions that offer quality, exceptional service, and exceptional contentment (Tahir et al., 2010).

Problem 5. Based on the result of the study, what strategic plan can be developed to enhance further the quality of services offered by the graduate school department?

The researchers propose this strategic plan to enhance graduate school services' quality for students' satisfaction. Secondly, this is to assert that various indicators of services significantly impact the student's life and learning experiences during their stay in the institution.

Table 7

Proposed strategic plan based on the standards and criteria of quality assurance: SY 2023–2028

Area	Goal	Initiatives/Strategies
Leadership and Governance	Increase revenue and operating efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of graduate students enrolled by developing in-demand programs in practical and affordable formats. • Increase graduate student enrollment by expanding the school's program offerings.
	Improve the effectiveness of Graduate School communication with stakeholders.	Redesign and upgrade the Graduate School webpage, social media, and publication for improved efficiency and user experience.
Quality Assurance	Continuously enhance excellence in service delivery of education, research, extension, and support services; adhere to legal and regulatory regulations to satisfy its esteemed clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve institutional and program accreditation. • Aim for Institutional Awards from reputable international, national, and regional organizations. • Address/resolve customer complaints on time. • Obtain a higher customer satisfaction rating. • Benchmark with ASEAN University Network and other colleges/universities to maintain regional distinction. • Conduct annual surveys to gauge customer satisfaction, assess how well students are prepared for careers, and enhance professional development and wellness initiatives.
Resource Management	Provide efficient and excellent service to its stakeholders through information, communication, and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade facilities, equipment, and laboratories. • Expand/improve network and internet facility. • Encourage the creation of graduate student-only physical space(s) on campus.
Teaching – Learning	Through timely degree completion, graduate and professional student success can be increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernize pedagogy • Conduct regular evaluations to determine and foresee the needs of graduate students. • Maintain a high standard of academic performance and solidify its standing as a leading institution in the Region.

Area	Goal	Initiatives/Strategies
Student Services	Encourage access and participation in graduate education to support equity, admission, and retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve stakeholder satisfaction with excellent services. • Develop a First-Year Experience for graduate students. • Respond to the needs of students with learning challenges, disabilities, and mental health concerns. Respond appropriately and compassionately to those experiencing distress, and increase awareness and treatment options across campus.
External Relations and Community Engagement	Design, develop, and deliver professional development events for the graduate school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Graduate Student Organization/ Professional Student Committee represented by each program offering. • Foster professional development communities through one-off and semester-oriented series such as graduate students' appreciation weeks, grant writing, three-minute thesis competition (3MT), and other activities.
Research	Position HCDC Graduate Studies as a national leader in graduate student professional development, faculty-student mentoring, holistic review, and community building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transform HCDC into a research-intensive department. • Encourage faculty and students to publish in journals and higher education publications. • Present innovations at regional and national higher education conferences. • Strengthen international research collaboration.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results, it can be concluded that most students are delighted with the quality of services offered by the graduate school department, except those related to the areas of facilities and student services. The profile projects that most respondents are female, in the age bracket of 25–35 years old, and taking the degree of Master of Arts in Education. The graduate school students are delighted concerning various factors such as curriculum and instruction, faculty, and resources. However, the study identified that to make the high results very high or very satisfactory, unlimited access to computer laboratories, enough learning materials, unlimited access to library facilities, availability of internet connectivity on the school campus, and the Medical/Dental Clinic services were areas that require improvement. Further, while the study results are very high, the graduate education department of the institution should continue to strive to offer its final clients the most significant services, the students.

The degree of satisfaction among graduate school students is very satisfactory regarding personal and professional pleasure, student support satisfaction, and instruction-based satisfaction. Lastly, there is no significant relationship between the quality of graduate school services and students' satisfaction when grouped according to the profile. No significant variation was seen regarding satisfaction across sex, age, and program level. However, a substantial relationship exists between the quality of graduate school services and students' satisfaction. Therefore, to raise the quality & standards of higher education in the nation, this scenario calls to the attention of all educational stakeholders, including the school's administration and all other government or non-government stakeholders engaged in education.

For the benefit of the stakeholders, maintain the highest standards in graduate school in all areas. The institution should adopt and implement the proposed Strategic Plan. Users must periodically assess the facilities' sufficiency, availability, quality, currency, and effectiveness to make improvements and increase user happiness. The institution should also enhance its internet services to graduate students by increasing its internet bandwidth to cater to all stakeholders. The graduate school library must regularly purchase books, references, and provide e-library to the students. The Medical/Dental Clinic must give full access and support the graduate school students. Management should conduct customer satisfaction surveys frequently to enhance the services offered to graduate students. To sustain themselves in the future, the institution must concentrate on the standards and criteria relative to quality assurance set by the government agencies, accrediting, and certifying bodies associated with a high-quality education.

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