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# Student Perceptions of Higher Education Institutions' Services and Image in Dipolog and Dapitan cities

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## Abstract

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play an important role in determining the destiny of students and societies. Understanding students' impressions of HEI services and developing effective image-building initiatives are critical for institutions to satisfy the changing needs of their stakeholders. This study sought to evaluate students' perceptions of higher education institution (HEI) services and find effective image-building strategies. A qualitative evaluative study was done with students from public and private higher education institutions in Dipolog and Dapitan. Data collection included written responses via Google Form, with a focus on students' overall perceptions of HEI services and their opinions on image-building. Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data and uncover patterns. The study identified seven important themes in students' perceptions of higher education services: business procedures, academic staff, academic support and non-academic persons, buildings and current technology, student development, information distribution, and financial help and scholarships. In addition, six themes emerged as important for image building: student academic engagement, student non-academic engagement activities, institution promotion, inclusivity and equality, academic and non-academic personnel, and research and innovation. Based on these findings, HEIs should prioritize improving and developing the mentioned service components to increase student happiness and experiences. Furthermore, focusing on the specific aspects of institutional image might help to build a stronger and more positive image.

*Keywords: higher education institution services, image-building, institutional image, student affairs services*

## Introduction

According to the most recent 2022 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking, fifteen (15) universities and colleges in the Philippines are internationally recognized as among the world's top universities in terms of research, teaching, outreach, and stewardship to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This may be the PH universities' and colleges' strategic response to creating and improving relevance and competitiveness in the twenty-first century, as the country's educational institutions must cope in the following areas: leadership, graduate preparedness, technology, faculty readiness, massification, diversification, internationalization, and marketization of higher education (Ramos, 2022; Amanquiton, 2021). Higher education has since become a product of higher education institutions (HEIs), according to Kotler (1985, as cited in Rouf et al., 2016), these institutions should assess service quality, redefine the product, and assess student satisfaction. Abbas (2020) revealed that the HEIs' services that students give

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more priority are teaching quality, facilities, support staff quality, employability links, safety and security, and extra-curricular activities. Moreover, exploring student perceptions and expectations of HEI's services will assist the administration in understanding their service quality performance and determining the relevant service aspects that require improvements and developments (Onditi & Wechuli, 2017; Ada et al., 2017). On the other hand, institutional image (also known as the educational institution image or organizational image of the university) refers to students' perceptions of HEIs (Perez & Torres, 2016). Universities are looking inwardly at their reputation as a result of increased rivalry among higher education institutions throughout the world to determine their position in the international rankings, knowing the institutional image of a higher education institution can help identify its competitiveness and functioning, as well as attract and retain students, and administrative and academic personnel.

Furthermore, the trend of ASEAN integration has prompted the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) to direct Philippine public and private HEIs to strengthen the implementation of integrated and innovative educational programs and services for their students. As a result, HEIs across the country, including those in Dipolog and Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte, are aligning their service practices with internationalization. However, this has remained a struggle because the Philippine educational quality and service system is scored poorly in comparison to other countries. In the Global Competitiveness Index 2017-2018, the country placed 66th out of 137 countries for primary education quality, 74th for higher education quality, and 76th for math and science education quality. In terms of investment and development, appeal criteria, and preparedness factor, the Philippine educational system ranked 113th out of 127 nations in the 2017 Global Innovation Index. The education element, which is a sub-factor of economic performance, was placed 63rd out of 65 countries in the 2020 World Competitiveness Yearbook (World Economic Forum, 2018; Lugtu, 2018; Khidir, 2018; World Ranking Talent, 2018; Canivel, 2020). In addition, according to the Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Development Plan for 2017-2022, the region is experiencing challenges with education quality delivery, including graduation rates, graduate quality, and service quality. Moreover, it is highlighted in the plan the need to assess educational services to know the existing industry needs, putting more quality in producing individuals with skills that correspond to the demands of the region. It was also found that the region lags in producing researchers and knowledge builders. Thus, it is recommended that the HEIs should have education support services and partnerships.

Higher education institutions in Dipolog and Dapitan, while displaying academic quality, have encountered difficulties in gaining broader recognition. These schools have routinely produced high-achieving graduates and numerous board test passers in nursing, engineering, teacher education, and criminology. In terms of accreditation, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has designated only two HEIs as Centers of Development (COD) in Information Technology. Both universities actively sought accreditation from the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU). Despite their competitiveness, these institutions have yet to receive substantial rankings in university and college

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impact assessments, with none reaching the top 100.

Knowing these different conditions, various literature suggests that there has to be further assessment of education services and the image of the higher education institution. Thus to fill this gap, this study aimed to explore students' perceptions of HEIs' services. Moreover, it also sought to identify image-building strategies as perceived by the students who are the major stakeholder of the institution. The significance of this study stems from its ability to help establish competitive educational service quality programs and policies. The research can help the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and individual higher education institutions (HEIs) make informed decisions by offering useful insights into student perceptions and highlighting areas for development. CHED can use these insights to reassess educational systems and better match them with national priorities. HEIs can use the study's recommendations to innovate, improve services, and boost institutional reputations. Furthermore, the study allows students to actively shape the future of higher education by offering input and influencing institutional decisions.

***Objectives***

This study aimed to explore the following:

- Students' perceptions of HEIs' Services as a basis for the recommendation for service improvement and development; and
- Students' perceptions of the institutional image as a basis for image-building strategies of the higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are those that provide tertiary students with higher education. These students are prepared for the workforce by HEIs. Higher education is education at the college or university level, and it is regarded as one of the most important tools for a country's individual, social, and economic development (Mukhtar et al., 2015). The primary goals of higher education are knowledge creation and sharing of information for national development through innovation and creativity (Escotet, 2012). Thus, the main reasons for the existence of higher education institutions are the successful completion and enhancement of students' education. This encouraging trend in higher education demonstrates the significance of educational institutions understanding student satisfaction in a competitive environment (Yusoff et al., 2015). Internationalization and regionalization have had a significant impact on the higher education industry in the twenty-first century. This has increased competition among higher education institutions to adopt market-oriented strategies to differentiate themselves from their competitors in order to attract as many students as possible while meeting the needs and expectations of current students. As a result, studies should be conducted to identify the factors influencing student satisfaction in higher education.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), on the other hand, aims to improve the quality of human resources in the area and create a sense of regional identity while promoting economic development. Regionalization of higher education profiles was high on the agenda because education is another industry that plays a crucial role in the development of its people and society. Due to this incidence, rivalry among educational institutions in Southeast Asia has increased, which is made worse by the rising number of foreign colleges moving into the area. And these many international colleges

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seek to draw in and seize a growing and greater student market (Kiatiwongse and Sciortino, 2018). Every HEI in South-East Asia is now faced with a significant struggle to remain competitive. In the Philippines, HEIs are managed and governed by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED), which is tasked with changing and standardizing the composition of the Governing Boards of state universities and colleges (SUCs) that are chartered. This is done in order to: (a) achieve a more coordinated and integrated system of higher education; (b) make them more effective in the formulation and implementation of higher education policies; (c) provide for more relevant and timely education. To ensure that students are prepared for both domestic and international employment, CHED mandates that SUCs and private educational institutions around the nation follow and completely implement integrated and innovative educational programs.

Higher education institutions offer student-centered extracurricular activities and services in addition to academic instruction with the goal of fostering students' holistic and all-around development for active participation as future leaders and responsible citizens. Given that students are participants and customers in this environment and that customer satisfaction is correlated with the quality of service, higher education institutions must ascertain their requirements and demands (Ada et al., 2017). According to Yusoff et al. (2015), students are more concerned with elements of HEIs' services such as student support services, class numbers, classroom environments, business practices, and relationships with the teaching staff.

The services provided by HEIs play a more significant role in the lives of students because they help them to enhance their educational experiences, prevent them from dropping out, diversify their student life, promote good and logical decision-making in conflict resolution, and encourage them to engage fully in their communities. Additionally, providing services to students is also accountable for fostering an environment where students, teachers, and administration can interact positively, hence fostering an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning (Shasheen et al., 2020; Kumtepe et al. 2018). Simply put, knowing student perception of HEIs' services is an essential instrument for quality improvement in any educational institution (Sison, 2019); as a result, HEIs must have the ability and willingness to engage in assessment and evaluation (Schuh et al., 2020).

Student affairs and services are the programs and services offered by higher education institutions that promote students' academic experiences and overall development. Services related to student welfare, student development, and institutional activities and services are all examples of academic support services. Given that each institution may implement these services differently (CMO No. 9, Series 2013), this is taken into account when arguing that the study's findings are very helpful in informing and improving the services provided to students because they will act as a guide for tracking and evaluating those services.

Universities now use marketing strategies that are similar to those used by corporations. However, because they include service-oriented elements, universities' methodological approaches to public image branding differ from those of business companies (Pérez & Torres, 2017). Universities have recently embraced new branding strategies that strengthen their academic status and outline the philosophical underpinnings of the institution. The complexity of the public perception hampers

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academic debates over the new paradigms' applicability, particularly when it comes to university marketing efforts. Del-Castillo-Feito et al. (2019) claim there are similarities and variations between "university reputation" and "university image." While the image is created through communication efforts that be adjusted and handled more quickly and easily, reputation is created by keeping a consistent behavior/image. This supports the assertion that reputation can alter the image, and that reputation will arise from the long-term upkeep of a positive image. This new interest in the image has been motivated by universities' need to stand out from other institutions amid the increased competition among higher education institutions and their emerging desire to make an impact on prospective candidates. Therefore, brand imaging is essential to the institution's overall performance in order to draw in the brightest researchers from around the world and achieve maximum student enrollment. The organizational strategic marketing strategies of the universities have changed as a result of this. The reputation that the image fosters has a significant impact on how the university is seen in the contemporary learning environment. According to Foroudi et al. (2019), a crucial component is a public image, one of its top marketing priorities to create a competitive edge.

Expectations and goals of students have in relation to the services offered by schools. Thus, if expectations are met, it follows that students will be happy and think of how well the institute's overall positive image (Mattah et al., 2018). Higher services are essential to the university's overall reputation. A university's reputation is influenced by the availability of academic resources such as libraries, labs, IT facilities, lectures, and seminar rooms. In higher education institutions, academic library amenities have been found to influence students' success and learning behavior (Scoulas & De Groote, 2019). Numerous studies investigate the relationship between student satisfaction, retention, academic success, and the quality of library services (Einasto, 2016, 2017; Trivedi & Bhatt, 2020). The findings show how important library services are to a student's achievement and reputation.

**Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, a method that tries to understand how or why something happens. Qualitative research frequently incorporates the beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of the individual being studied (AtukpawuTipton et al., 2020). An In-depth understanding of social phenomena in the participant's normal surroundings, such as their home or place of study and employment, is the goal of qualitative research. Qualitative approaches provide non-numerical data such as written responses, interview transcripts, or films in order to identify themes, patterns, and concepts. In addition, it utilized an evaluative research design which gives the researcher the avenue to gather insightful comments from the students that can help hone and enhance their experience of services and build a strong positive image (Fox & Brown, 2020). Evaluative research findings are essential for determining what works and what does not as well as for pinpointing areas that need improvement in HEIs services and in image-building.

In addition, the research instrument utilized was a questionnaire with two questions, one for general opinions of HEI services and the other for institution image-building, with the primary purpose of collecting written replies from students. The questionnaire was delivered using Google forms to fourth-year business and allied or related programs students enrolled in any

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higher education institution in Dipolog and Dapitan cities for the academic year 2021-2022. Snowball sampling and convenience sampling were used to ensure that the questionnaire was given to 4th-year students. Although a vast number of responses were collected, only 159 replies for evaluations of HEI services and 182 responses for image-building were declared valid after comprehensive data cleaning. The research instrument utilized only had two broad questions that questioned, "What is your view of the services the college or university has for its students? ", as well as "How do you view your college or university's reputation?" which is a limitation of the study. Since there were no follow-up questions, students may not be able to provide detailed comments because the questions were too general. Additionally, issue was resolved by carrying out a complete data cleaning to guarantee that the information gathered will be beneficial and able to meet the goals of the study.

For data analysis, the most appropriate tool in treating qualitative data for this study was thematic analysis, a qualitative data analysis technique that helps to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns for a large amount of qualitative data. In this qualitative data analysis technique, researchers code, generate themes, and name themes to help understand the data. Moreover, researchers underwent data reduction and data triangulation to ensure that the analysis of data is reliable and valid. Through data reduction, researchers can carefully and usefully categorize data using data reduction, which increases the validity of evaluation results. Data reduction entails choosing, concentrating, simplifying, and abstracting raw data; transforming and analyzing the compressed data set to identify significant patterns and respond to evaluation questions; and drawing conclusions and creating a logical chain of evidence. In addition, data triangulation is the process of evaluating data from many sources to verify the accuracy of the information and its interpretation, to increase confidence in the findings (AtukpawuTipton et al., 2020). In this study, the researchers compare the present data from multiple findings of similar studies.

**Results and Discussion**

There were seven (7) themes identified in the area of student perceptions of HEI services.

Business processes in higher education services refer to procedures students undergo in processing bill payments, requests of forms, and claims of forms. Students interact with the various business offices at educational institutions as part of business procedures. Students' impressions of the various educational institutions will be shaped by their interactions, thus it is important to take steps to guarantee that they are content and pleased. Students from both public and private colleges showed a desire for more efficient interactions, especially when requesting personal records. They proposed setting specified quotas or restrictions on daily transactions to help manage workload and increase efficiency. Students also underlined the need of providing timely service during enrollment periods, as well as the implementation of excellent systematic services and work division to speed up the process. Private students particularly requested additional payment windows to meet their financial demands, while public students suggested scheduling more events to create a more engaging campus environment. For instance, a public student said, "*The school should have specific quota of students in processing their transactions that they can only cater in a day*." Both groups emphasized the significance of properly managing student appointments through techniques such as

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priority numbers and digital platforms. This finding is similar to Ada et al. (2017), Yusoff et al. (2015) and Dragan et al. (2014) confirming that in order to improve students' and graduates' satisfaction and to remain competitive universities should manage their business process similar to enterprises.

Academic staff, including professors, teachers, and lecturers, play an important role in transmitting knowledge to pupils. Students in this study stressed the need of well-trained instructors with computer and information literacy skills for efficient content delivery. They also admired instructors who were friendly, empathetic, and adaptable. Both public and private students expressed a desire for academic personnel that are well-trained and skilled in their professions. They also emphasized the necessity of professors being personable and easy to speak with. Furthermore, a public student highlighted the importance of academic consultation services as a useful source of assistance and guidance. These findings are consistent with prior study by Abbas (2020) and Yusoff et al. (2015), which highlight the essential role of academic staff on student satisfaction and success. Wong and Chapman (2022) underline the importance of teaching quality as an essential component of higher education services. Institutions can improve student experiences and outcomes dramatically by investing in academic staff professional development and creating a conducive learning environment.

Non-academic and support personnel, such as those in clinic services, cashiering, registrar services, and security, play an important role in providing necessary services at higher education institutions. Students voiced concern about the need for education and orientation programs for security guards and other non-academic personnel to improve the quality of fundamental services. They also campaigned for greater staffing in the registrar and cashier offices to meet the needs of a growing student population. Both public and private students emphasized the importance of having friendly and helpful non-academic staff. One public student emphasized the need for more personnel in the registrar office, stating, *"There is a lack of personnel in the registrar to accommodate students and make the process hassle-free."* Another student from a private institution highlighted the importance of training and orientation for non-academic staff, saying, *"Briefing and educating all employees, including school guards, is crucial."* These findings are consistent with prior research by Wong and Chapman (2022), Abbas (2020), Shasheen et al. (2020), and Kumtepe et al. (2018), which highlight the importance of well-trained and helpful non-academic staff in providing a positive student experience. Institutions can improve overall service quality and student satisfaction by investing in the professional development of their employees and ensuring proper staffing levels.

Academic facilities and resources include physical assets like classrooms, function halls, libraries, college and administration buildings, among other things, as well as intangible elements like modern equipment and information and technology facilities that are used by service providers (faculty and support personnel). Notably, students expressed that HEIs may have classroom improvements, cleanliness and maintenance of comfort rooms, parking spaces for vehicles, appealing library and study areas, and the availability and use of laboratories, gyms, and function halls. One private student emphasized the need for *"more effective learning spaces such as good facilities,"* while a public student advocated for *"more technologies"* and *"new buildings."* Another public student suggested *"adapting*

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*modern technology"* and *"providing strong internet connections."* This finding supports the claim of Wong and Champan (2022) who highlighted the importance of improving university's facilities as those found to be low in satisfaction as rated by students.

A student's full potential for personal growth, leadership, and social responsibility can be explored, enhanced, and developed through a variety of institutional and/or student-initiated activities, which are referred to as student development services. Students gave more importance to good governance in school, joining different competitions, and providing extra-curricular activities for students to develop their skills and personality. Moreover, Both public and private students expressed a desire for institutions to *"invest in their students"* by providing support and resources, particularly when participating in competitions. They also emphasized the importance of *"good governance"* and *"listening to students' concerns"* to create a positive and responsive environment. Public students specifically advocated for *"more extracurricular activities"* and *"lessening requirements"* to reduce student stress and provide opportunities for personal growth. Private students emphasized the importance of *"best accommodation"* and *"follow up the needs of students"*. As demonstrated in Rode et al.'s (2005) and Sirgy et al.'s (2010) frameworks cited in the study of Wong and Chapman (2022), students' life satisfaction depends from a wide range of academic and non-academic development.

Information dissemination refers to how information is distributed and communicated to the students in the college or university. Information can be communicated in the form of oral, written, and visual forms. Both public and private students highlighted the importance of *"timely information"* and *"clear communication"* through various channels, including emails, student portals, and prospectuses. They also emphasized the need for *"avoiding confusion"* regarding room assignments and schedules. Adholiya, Kaja & Adholiya (2021) agree to these claims stating that the integration of ICT-based resources and services is giving students new levels of academic fulfillment.

In order to create a pool of skilled and competent graduates and technical specialists who will contribute to the nation's high-level labor force, scholarships are awarded as merit-based or talent-based awards to students of high potential and from a variety of backgrounds. Noteworthy, both public and private students expressed a desire for *"more scholarship offerings"* to assist them financially. Public students specifically suggested that institutions *"choose the right students who deserve the scholarship"* by establishing clear criteria and guidelines for eligibility. The first step in boosting the number of college graduates in one nation is having access to financial aid. The society will have more skilled people, which will boost our economy (Harrietta & Harrietta, 2022).

The themes that have been highlighted under "perception of HEIs' services" show a definite area of need that higher education institutions should investigate to provide students with high-quality services. The HEIs services that institutions from both private and public institutions may develop and enhance can be one of the themes mentioned. According to a pertinent review of the literature, the institutions may be evaluated on their structure, corporate governance, autonomy, accountability, system structures, funding and resource allocation, consultation processes, digitalization, admissions

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procedures, student-centered education, internationalization, regional development, continuing education, lifelong learning requirements, research, innovation, and technology transfer, high impact publications, and stakeholder engagement (OECD, 2019; EU, 2017; as cited by Camilleri, 2021). In addition, Teeroovengadum et al. (2016) identified five dimensions—administrative quality, environmental quality, educational quality, facility quality, and transformational quality—for assessing the quality of service. This is also in line with the findings of Abbas (2020), who discovered that students' perceptions of the aspects of HEIs services that are important to them include the profile of the teachers, the curriculum, the infrastructure and facilities, the management and support staff, the employment quality, the safety and security, and the development of student's skills.

There were six (6) themes found in students' perception of the image-building of higher education institutions. Academic institutions build their curriculum and learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in educational activities through student engagement. Participation in educational activities that enhance student thinking, improve self-confidence, and expose students to diversity and inclusion are perhaps some of the benefits of student engagement. In this context, both public and private students emphasized the importance of *"engaging activities"* that foster "*student excitement and enthusiasm*." They also suggested for *"more programs and events*" that represent the institution's name and enhance its reputation. Additionally, students highlighted the need for "*equal opportunities*" for all students to participate in academic activities. One public student emphasized the importance of "*helping students build their confidence and teach them new ways*," while a private student suggested "*reducing the number and not too strict of qualifying exams*" to create a less stressful learning environment. Furthermore, a public student said "*student achievement is an institutional achievement*". Students strive to earn good grades throughout their academic careers to improve their prospects of landing particular employment possibilities (Korfmann et al., 2021)

Organizations, volunteer work, student organizations, and communities can all be used to carry out non-academic activities on campus. Notably, students expressed that they can participate in a variety of non-academic activities outside the campus. These may be because non-academic activities can help support higher academic attainment, enhanced employability, and improved physical and mental health. Both public and private students highlighted the value of *"volunteering"* as a means of personal development and skill-building. They also emphasized the importance of "*clubs and student organizations"* in enhancing their college experience and contributing to the institution's reputation.

One public student noted that *"more clubs and activities are good for students and the reputation of the school,"* and another public student emphasized the importance of "*offering more opportunities to students in a more equal manner*." Hence, non-academic supports assist students in identifying their educational and career goals, comprehending how college might help them accomplish those goals, and developing a commitment to continuing their education despite challenges can enhance the likelihood that they will persist (Mechur, 2011).

Using the marketing concept in higher education, promotion is defined as a process of communication between an institute and a service user (students) with the

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goal of creating a positive attitude toward services, which leads to acceptance of services. In this aspect, both public and private students emphasized the importance of *"actively advertising"* student achievements, such as board exam results and program offerings. They also suggested that institutions should "develop marketing strategies" to create a positive image and establish a strong presence in the eyes of their target audience.

One public student suggested *"more tarpaulins outside about successful students, teachers, and school achievements,"* while a private student emphasized the importance of *"adaptable brand strategy and engagement."* HEIs can show their institution in the best possible light and establish a place in the eyes of the audiences they are thought to serve by developing marketing strategies (Zainudin et al., 2022).

Equality means that everyone should have the same rights and opportunities. Equity is related to equality in that it is concerned with giving everyone the means - frequently varied - to achieve equal and just outcomes. Inclusion implies making everyone feel welcome and respected, whereas diversity entails including and involving people from various backgrounds. Students in this study emphasized the importance of *"equal treatment for everyone"* and *"consistent rules"* to ensure fairness and inclusivity. One public student specifically suggested that institutions "*provide gender sensitivity orientation services*" to all personnel and students to promote understanding and respect for diversity. Today's cultures are having a harder time balancing the urge for community with acceptance of diversity and social inclusion. Higher education institutions need to have inclusive and diverse campuses inculcated in its concepts, guides, and methods (Council of Europe, 2018).

Academic personnel are responsible for teaching and learning delivery, whereas non-academic personnel are responsible for day-to-day business transactions of the college or university. Students from private institutions emphasized the importance of *"quality hiring panels"* in selecting qualified academic staff. They also highlighted the need for *"modern teaching technologies"* to support novice teachers and improve teaching quality. Public students echoed the importance of *"approachable and courteous instructors."*

Both groups of students expressed the desire for *"approachable*" and *"polite"* staff, both academic and non-academic. They also emphasized the need for professional development for all staff members, including "*orientation on topics such as gender equality*." Other non-academic people may also be approachable. Academic and non-academic personnel are also employed in administrative capacities and are involved in professional, community, and student development initiatives (Awang et al., 2021).

Higher education institutions can use research to explore new approaches to improve existing practices and solve challenges. Furthermore, innovation is the institution's ability to conceive of unique and novel ways to improve and produce new practical approaches in teaching, learning, and other services. Public students in this study emphasized the importance of "*investing in research"* to improve the university's *"reputation and progress."* They also suggested for the institution to *"innovate"* and *"adapt to new ideas."* This confirms the finding of Korfmann et al. (2021) and Aithal & Aithal (2019) as they suggested encouraging research and innovation at universities to help students

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excel through their innovative abilities and rebrand the institutions as a result.

For any firm, especially educational institutions, developing a brand image is essential. The reputation of an institution will immediately affect the caliber of its staff and students, which will help it build its reputation in the larger community. A strong foundation for institution-based brand communication with stakeholders, including the message and symbols used to construct and express this identity, is the development of a distinct, value-driven brand identity. It is necessary to manage the institution's brand identity appropriately, especially in the current climate of rapid change (Berndt & Hollebeek, 2019). According to El Alfy & Abukari (2020). The perceived quality of university activities including teaching, accepting diversity, and connections to the industry are known as service quality. The image of universities is also impacted by university infrastructure including classrooms, laboratories, and dorms for students. Therefore, it is crucial for educational leaders, planners, professors, and administrators to comprehend students' perceptions of the university and behavior in order to create and put into practice tactics that increase student happiness, which in turn can enhance the university's image. Alhaza et al. (2021), who address five areas for image building of higher education institutions—academic services, student services, university environment, administrative services, information technology (IT) services, and student characteristics and demographics—support the qualitative findings in this study.

As a result, the following conceptual frameworks were created:

Seven (7) characteristics or aspects of the services provided by HEIs were deemed relevant by students based on the themes that emerged from their responses to the surveys. As a result, it was recommended that education institutions examine these areas by examining the satisfaction and experiences of their students. That allows for the design and execution of a service upgrade. Results show that students' opinions of universities and colleges are influenced by the university's services, and that students' happiness with such services directly influences their opinions. Here is reinforced by research from throughout the world showing how important service quality is to students' satisfaction in higher education institutions (Alhaza et al.,2021).

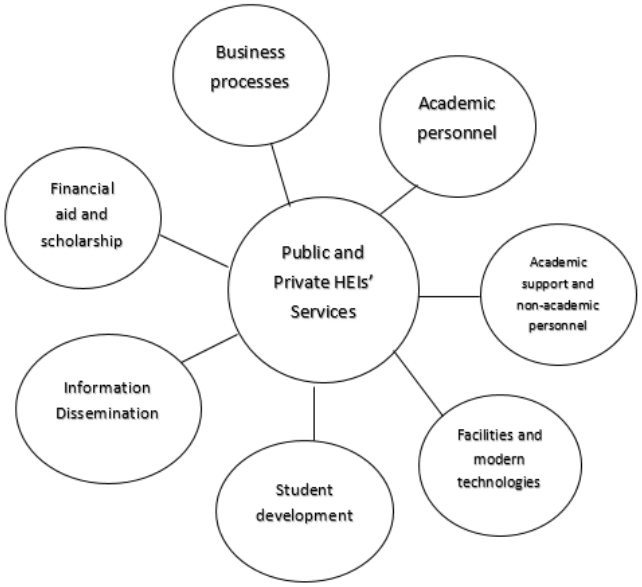

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Figure 1. *Themes for HEIs' Services*

Instead of using objective data to evaluate institutions, students tend to depend on perceived institutional images. As a result, universities and colleges in Dipolog and Dapitan should enhance the elements listed in the framework to draw in more students namely student academic engagement, student non-academic engagement activities, institution promotion, inclusivity and equality, academic and non-academic personnel, and research and innovation. Alhaza et al. (2021) asserted that HEIs may work to streamline their services like administrative responsiveness, student services, and academic services to guarantee that student needs are met and that it is reflected in their satisfaction with the services provided is also in agreement with this.

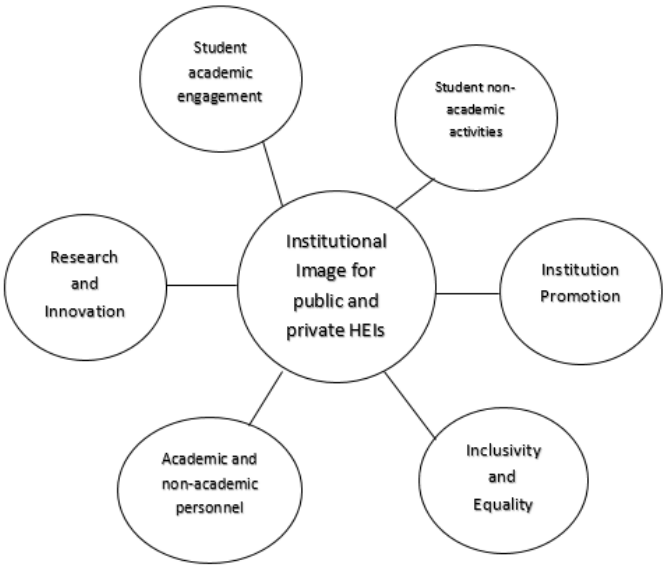


Figure 2. *Themes for Image-building*

## Conclusion

This study emphasizes the need of higher education institutions (HEIs) focusing on specific parts of their services to increase student satisfaction and improve institutional image. According to the findings, seven themes emerged as important to students in the higher education services: business processes, academic staff, academic support and non-academic personnel, facilities and modern technology, student development, information dissemination, and financial aid and scholarships. To improve student satisfaction and experiences, HEIs may review and improve these service components. This includes aligning institutional processes with student needs and expectations, providing efficient and responsive service delivery, and investing in resources to help students develop and succeed.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of institutional image in attracting and maintaining students. Higher education institutions can build a more desirable and competitive environment by focusing on student academic engagement,

student non-academic engagement, institution promotion, inclusion and equality, academic and non-academic people, and research and innovation. With these, HEIs can engage in strategic marketing and communication efforts.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the need of higher education institutions prioritizing student-centered approaches and investing in improving both service quality and institutional image. HEIs can use these findings to inform their decision-making processes, allocate resources effectively, and develop strategies to improve student experiences. Institutions can improve student satisfaction, establish a healthy learning environment, and so contribute to their students' success and well-being.

**Recommendation**

Based on the finding, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Higher education institutions may concentrate on enhancing and developing the specified service aspects because they have an impact on students' general satisfaction and experiences.
2. Higher education institutions may also consider the identified themes for image-building found in this study to strengthen and develop stronger, positive institutional image.

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