



Research Article

Assessing Student Satisfaction With the Academic Environment at the University of Rajshahi: A Mixed Approach

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Abstract. This study investigates the level of student satisfaction with the academic environment at the University of Rajshahi, aiming to contribute to a broader understanding of the quality of higher education in Bangladesh. The academic environment encompasses not only classroom experiences but also a range of institutional supports and services that facilitate student learning, development, and well-being. Adopting a mixed-method research design, the study integrates quantitative data from structured surveys with qualitative insights obtained through in-depth interviews and document analysis. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of students across different faculties and academic years. The University of Rajshahi offers several academic and non-academic support mechanisms, including academic advising,

counseling services, mentorship programs, library facilities, and financial aid, which collectively shape the students' academic journey. The research explores how effectively these services are delivered and whether they align with the diverse needs of the student population. Findings from the study are expected to reveal critical insights into institutional strengths and areas requiring improvement, with the aim of informing future policy initiatives and strategies to enhance academic satisfaction and overall educational quality at the university level in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Higher Education, Student Satisfaction, Education Quality, Financial Aid.

INTRODUCTION

Student satisfaction has emerged as a critical measure of quality assurance and institutional effectiveness in higher education. It encompasses students' emotional and cognitive responses to various academic and non-academic dimensions of their university experience. In a competitive and evolving educational landscape, institutions must pay close attention to student satisfaction as it reflects the extent to which students' expectations align with the services delivered. Globally, satisfaction serves as both a performance indicator and a feedback mechanism to drive continuous improvement in service delivery and academic standards. In the context of Bangladesh, where higher education is undergoing significant expansion and reform, understanding student satisfaction is particularly vital. The University of Rajshahi, one of the largest and oldest public universities in the country, plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic and professional futures of thousands of students. Given its diverse student population and the breadth of its academic services, assessing the degree to which students feel supported, valued, and engaged is crucial for enhancing institutional quality. This study aims to evaluate student satisfaction with the academic environment at the University of Rajshahi by focusing on key services such as counseling, academic advising, and financial aid. These services are essential components of a supportive learning ecosystem and are designed to promote academic success and personal development. Using a mixed-method approach—including surveys, interviews, and document analysis—the study investigates whether these services meet students' needs and expectations in terms of accessibility, efficiency, and impact on their overall university experience. By exploring the determinants and outcomes of student satisfaction, the research intends to offer actionable insights that can inform institutional policy, improve service delivery, and contribute to national efforts to elevate the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design, drawing upon both primary and secondary data sources to investigate student satisfaction in public universities. The primary data were collected directly from students of the University of Rajshahi, who served as the core respondents for the study. A structured questionnaire from 50 students was used to gather responses regarding various aspects of their academic and institutional experiences. In addition to primary data,

secondary sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official documents, and credible online resources were consulted to support the conceptual framework and contextual analysis. The research process involved three sequential stages: first, the collection of relevant data from both primary and secondary sources; second, a careful examination and validation of the collected data; and third, the selection and systematic analysis of the most pertinent information to address the research objectives. This mixed-method approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing student satisfaction by triangulating empirical evidence with established theoretical insights.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that reflects the degree to which educational experiences align with students' expectations. It is often understood as an emotional reaction stemming from the evaluation of educational services and academic support (Spreng & Singh, 1993). In higher education, institutions are increasingly being held accountable for student satisfaction as it is tied to performance, funding, and reputation (Abdullah, 2006). Tertiary institutions, especially, must consider how students perceive their academic experiences, as student satisfaction is a critical indicator of institutional effectiveness (Bemowski, 1991). The literature suggests that service quality in higher education is a primary determinant of student satisfaction. O'Neill and Palmer (2004) define service quality in this context as the gap between students' expectations and their perceptions of service delivery. This view is supported by Hill (1995), who argues that students assess service quality based on their interactions with academic and administrative staff. Several studies, such as Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016), have empirically tested this relationship and confirmed that service quality has a strong influence on both satisfaction and loyalty in higher education. Within developing countries, the assessment of higher education quality is often hampered by bureaucratic constraints and limited data transparency (Maringe & Mourad, 2012). However, the need for reliable mechanisms to measure and improve service quality remains critical. Abdullah (2006) compared two service quality measurement models—HEdPERF and SERVPERF—and found both applicable in higher education, with HEdPERF being slightly more robust for academic contexts. Studies in Bangladesh have mirrored these global trends. Asaduzzaman et al. (2013) explored private universities and concluded that dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy all contribute to student satisfaction. Similar findings were reported by Hossain et al. (2019), who emphasized faculty quality and curriculum design as the most influential variables. Das and Haque (2013) also underscored the role of faculty services in shaping student perceptions of institutional quality. Furthermore, student satisfaction has been linked to various institutional factors. Haque et al. (2011) found that infrastructure—such as internet facilities, cafeterias, and recreational spaces—plays a significant role in student retention and satisfaction. Ullah et al. (2019) highlighted that dissatisfaction often stems from poor service delivery and lack of extracurricular activities, which are essential for a holistic educational experience. Demographic factors also appear to influence satisfaction levels. Hossain et al. (2019)

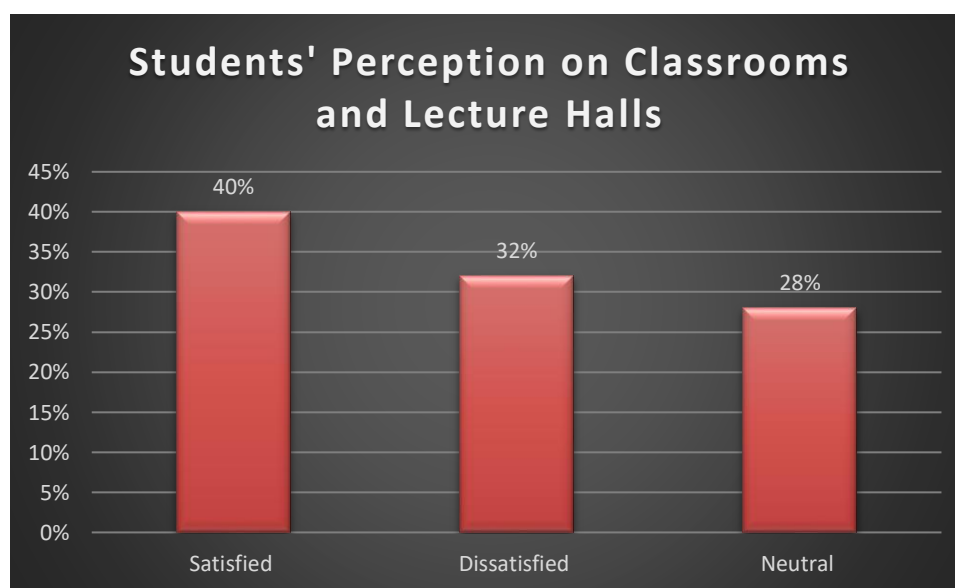
observed that male students, urban residents, and those from middle-income families tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. This suggests that socioeconomic background and location may shape students' expectations and evaluations. Conceptually, student satisfaction has been viewed as a short-term attitude arising from a value judgment of the educational experience (Weerasinghe et al., 2017). Carey et al. (2002) and Mukhtar et al. (2015) define it as a function of perceived quality in relation to academic services and personal support. Spreng and Singh (1993) explain that satisfaction arises when performance meets or exceeds expectations, a view that is echoed by Yussoff and Nayan (2020) in their review of customer satisfaction in educational contexts. Research conducted by Ningsih et al. (2020) determined an index of student satisfaction with the quality of educational services at the University of Warmadewa. Based on the dimensions of service quality, namely physical evidence, reliability, empathy, responsiveness and assurance, students felt 'satisfied'. The overall survey results showed that students rated the quality of educational services at a 'satisfactory' level. However, Hidayatullah et al. (2020) noted that the quality of educational services remains suboptimal due to inadequacies in learning facilities. Institutional strategies for improving satisfaction include enhancing human resource capabilities and investing in infrastructure. Studies by Pasaribu et al. (2020), Rohmah et al. (2020), Santika et al. (2021), and Siswanto and Hidayati (2020) all recommend systematic management of physical and human capital to elevate educational quality. Again, Chowdhury and Parvin (2020) conducted a holistic study on Bangladeshi tertiary institutions and confirmed that institutional support systems, academic quality, and service delivery are all significant drivers of student satisfaction. This aligns with the broader conclusion by Muhammad et al. (2018) that academic services are the most impactful elements influencing satisfaction in higher education. While the existing literature offers substantial insights into the factors affecting student satisfaction in higher education, there is a clear gap in examining these dynamics within a comprehensive framework that integrates academic, administrative, and environmental dimensions in the Bangladesh context. Most prior studies either focus on service quality or isolate single variables like faculty performance or infrastructure. The current study contributes by offering an integrated analysis of student satisfaction at the University of Rajshahi, emphasizing the interplay of institutional services, demographic attributes, and student expectations. By addressing this gap, the study aims to advance the discourse on student-centered quality assurance and inform policy initiatives that promote sustainable improvements in the higher education system of Bangladesh. In the context of the University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh, the assessment of the academic environment involves evaluating the factors that shape students' educational experiences and overall satisfaction. This environment includes the quality and accessibility of academic resources, the effectiveness of teaching and advising, and the availability of support services that contribute to learning and personal development. The assessment looks closely at supportive services, such as counseling, academic advising, and financial aid, which play a crucial role in helping students navigate academic and personal challenges. The academic environment also encompasses learning facilities and resources like libraries, laboratories, and study spaces, which are essential for enabling both

independent and collaborative learning. Faculty engagement and teaching quality are equally important, as effective teaching, mentorship, and accessibility from instructors foster an inclusive and intellectually stimulating atmosphere. Additionally, the academic environment includes extracurricular and developmental opportunities that support a well-rounded education, encouraging personal and professional growth beyond the classroom. The role of administrative support and institutional policies is also central, as efficient procedures, transparency, and effective communication contribute significantly to students' sense of security and satisfaction within the institution. This assessment aims to gauge students' satisfaction with these various aspects of the academic environment, providing insights into both the strengths of the University of Rajshahi and potential areas for improvement to enhance the overall student experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom and Lecture Halls

Figure: 1, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data



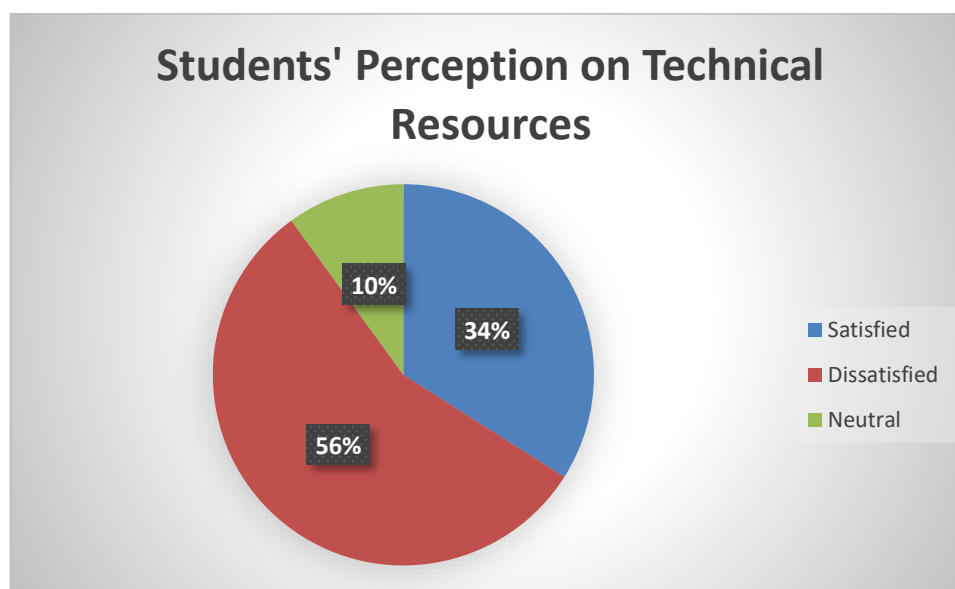
The data gathered on student satisfaction with classrooms and lecture halls at the University of Rajshahi reveals mixed perspectives, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in the physical academic environment. Among the respondents, 40% (20 students) expressed satisfaction with the condition and functionality of classrooms and lecture halls. This group likely perceives these spaces as meeting their basic needs for a conducive learning environment. This satisfaction could stem from factors such as sufficient seating, adequate lighting, ventilation, and access to essential teaching equipment, which together create a comfortable and supportive setting for academic activities. However, 28% of students (14 respondents) reported a neutral stance, suggesting ambivalence or partial satisfaction. This group may feel that while the classrooms and lecture halls are adequate, they could benefit

from further enhancements. Neutral responses often indicate that the facilities meet basic requirements but lack features that would significantly enhance the learning experience, such as modern multimedia equipment, ergonomic furniture, or consistent maintenance. In contrast, 32% (16 students) reported dissatisfaction, which points to specific issues within these academic spaces. Dissatisfied students might be encountering problems such as overcrowded rooms, poor maintenance, inadequate seating, insufficient lighting, or issues with temperature control, all of which can negatively impact their comfort and focus. Dissatisfaction in this area is critical for the university to address, as the physical environment plays a fundamental role in student engagement, concentration, and overall academic success.

This distribution of responses illustrates that while a segment of the student population finds the classrooms and lecture halls acceptable, there is a substantial portion with reservations or outright dissatisfaction. Addressing these concerns could involve a range of improvements, such as facility upgrades, regular maintenance, and potentially redesigning spaces to better support diverse teaching and learning needs. Ultimately, this data underscores the importance of a well-maintained and comfortable physical environment as a factor in student satisfaction and academic performance at the University of Rajshahi.

Technical Resources (Computer, Internet, Software)

Figure: 2, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data

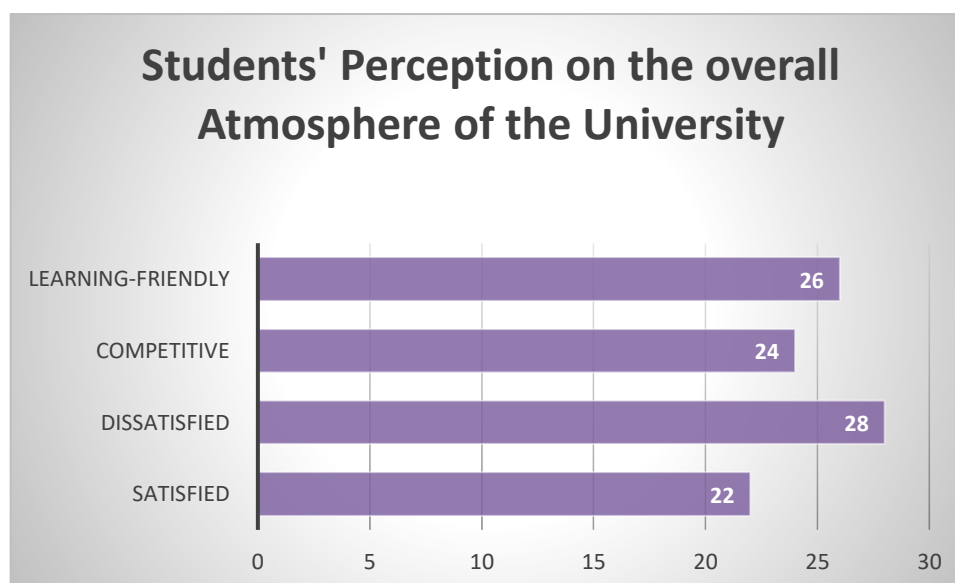


The data on student satisfaction with technical resources—specifically computers, internet access, and software—at the University of Rajshahi suggests significant dissatisfaction among students, with varying levels of contentment and neutrality. Out of the respondents, only 34% (17 students) reported satisfaction with the available technical resources. These students likely feel that the resources meet their essential academic needs, such as providing access to computers, reliable

internet, and necessary software for their coursework. For these students, the existing infrastructure may offer a sufficient foundation for basic tasks, such as research, assignments, and connecting with online academic resources. However, a notably large segment, 56% (28 students), expressed dissatisfaction, indicating that a majority of students find the current level of technical resources inadequate. This dissatisfaction might be due to several issues, such as limited access to computers, slow or unreliable internet connections, outdated or insufficient software, or even lack of support for troubleshooting technical issues. For students who depend on these resources for research, coursework, and communication with faculty, these deficiencies can create significant barriers to effective learning and productivity, hindering their ability to keep pace with academic demands. The remaining 10% of students (5 respondents) indicated a neutral stance, suggesting ambivalence or minimal reliance on these resources. This group may feel that while the resources are functional, they do not stand out as either particularly helpful or problematic. Neutral responses might also indicate students who use their own devices or internet access, thereby less affected by the quality of university-provided resources. This distribution of responses signals that technical resources are a critical area of concern for students, with the majority experiencing issues that may impede their academic progress. Addressing these issues, such as by improving internet infrastructure, updating computer labs, or providing access to a broader range of essential software, could enhance overall student satisfaction and engagement. In today's digital world, reliable access to technical resources is essential, and improvements in this area could support a more conducive and accessible learning environment at the University of Rajshahi.

The Overall Atmosphere of the University

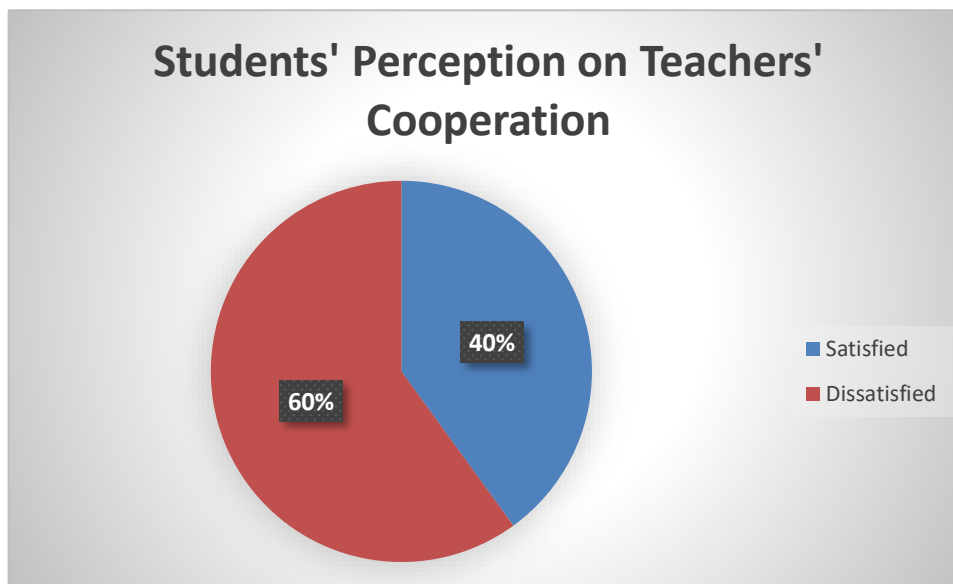
Figure: 3, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data



The data on students' perceptions of the overall atmosphere at the University of Rajshahi reveals a variety of experiences and attitudes towards the university's social and academic climate, reflecting both positive aspects and areas of concern. Of the respondents, 22% (11 students) expressed satisfaction with the university's overall atmosphere, indicating that they find the environment supportive and conducive to their academic and personal growth. This satisfaction could stem from positive interactions with faculty, a sense of community among peers, and access to opportunities that foster both intellectual and social development. For these students, the university atmosphere likely aligns well with their expectations for a balanced and fulfilling academic experience. On the other hand, 28% of students (14 respondents) reported dissatisfaction with the university atmosphere. This group may feel that certain aspects of the campus climate hinder their ability to thrive or feel comfortable. Potential sources of dissatisfaction could include a lack of supportive services, overly competitive pressures, or an environment that may feel isolating or unwelcoming. For these students, the university's atmosphere may not fully support their academic ambitions or personal well-being, indicating areas where improvement could positively impact student satisfaction. Additionally, 24% of students (12 respondents) described the atmosphere as "competitive." This group likely perceives a strong focus on academic or social competition, which can have both positive and negative effects. While a competitive environment may drive some students to excel and achieve higher standards, it can also create stress, limit collaboration, and increase pressure for those who may feel overwhelmed by constant comparison with their peers. This competitive perception suggests that students may be experiencing challenges in balancing healthy academic motivation with well-being and peer support. Another 26% of students (13 respondents) described the university atmosphere as "learning-friendly," which points to an environment where students feel encouraged to engage in academic pursuits without excessive pressure. A learning-friendly atmosphere typically involves accessible resources, approachable faculty, collaborative opportunities, and a supportive peer culture that allows students to focus on learning and personal growth. This perspective highlights a segment of students who feel that the university provides a space that values learning and facilitates meaningful academic exploration. The data shows a diverse range of experiences regarding the overall atmosphere at the University of Rajshahi. While a portion of students feels satisfied and finds the environment conducive to learning, there is a significant group that perceives a competitive atmosphere, and another that expresses dissatisfaction. These varied perceptions underscore the importance of cultivating a balanced campus climate that supports academic excellence while also fostering a supportive, inclusive, and stress-mitigated environment. Addressing the concerns of dissatisfied students and understanding the nuances of competitiveness could enhance student well-being and contribute to a more cohesive and positive university atmosphere.

Teachers' Cooperation

Figure: 4, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data



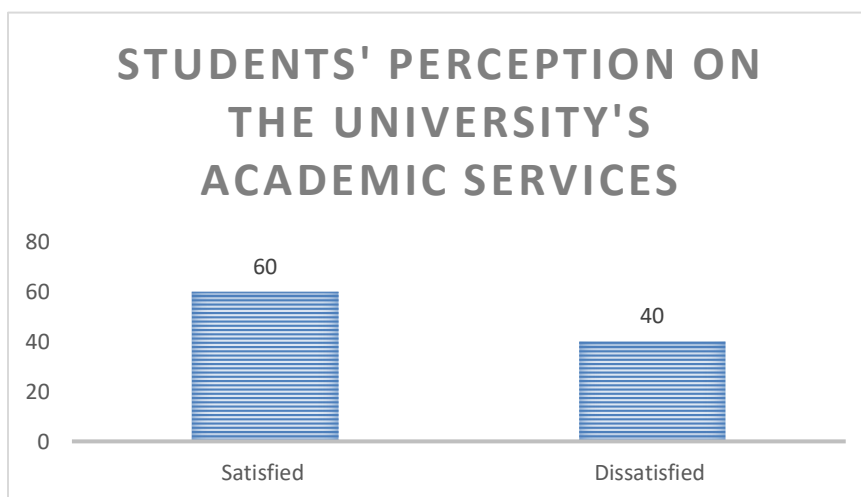
The data on teachers' cooperation at the University of Rajshahi indicates a notable divide in student perceptions, with 40% (20 students) expressing satisfaction and 60% (30 students) expressing dissatisfaction. This distribution reflects both positive experiences with faculty interaction and significant challenges that students face in this area. The 40% of students who reported satisfaction likely feel that faculty members are approachable, responsive, and supportive of their academic goals. These students may experience helpful guidance in their coursework, research, or career planning. For them, teachers may play an active role in mentoring and motivating them, fostering a collaborative and encouraging learning environment. Effective teacher cooperation typically involves clear communication, timely feedback, and a willingness to address student concerns—factors that can significantly enhance a student's academic journey. However, the majority of students, 60%, expressed dissatisfaction, indicating that many students feel unsupported or disconnected in their interactions with faculty. This dissatisfaction could stem from various issues, such as limited availability of faculty for consultations outside of lectures, lack of constructive feedback, or perceived indifference to student needs. In some cases, faculty members may be overburdened with large class sizes or administrative duties, which can limit their capacity to provide individualized support. Additionally, some students may feel that certain teachers are unapproachable, which can lead to reluctance in seeking help or clarification on academic matters.

The significant percentage of dissatisfaction highlights an area for improvement, as teacher-student interactions are fundamental to a positive educational experience. Strengthening teacher cooperation may involve encouraging faculty to engage more actively with students, increasing availability for consultations, or implementing training programs focused on communication and

mentorship skills. By addressing these concerns, the University of Rajshahi can foster a more collaborative and supportive academic environment, which would likely lead to greater student satisfaction and academic success.

The University's Academic Services

Figure: 5, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data

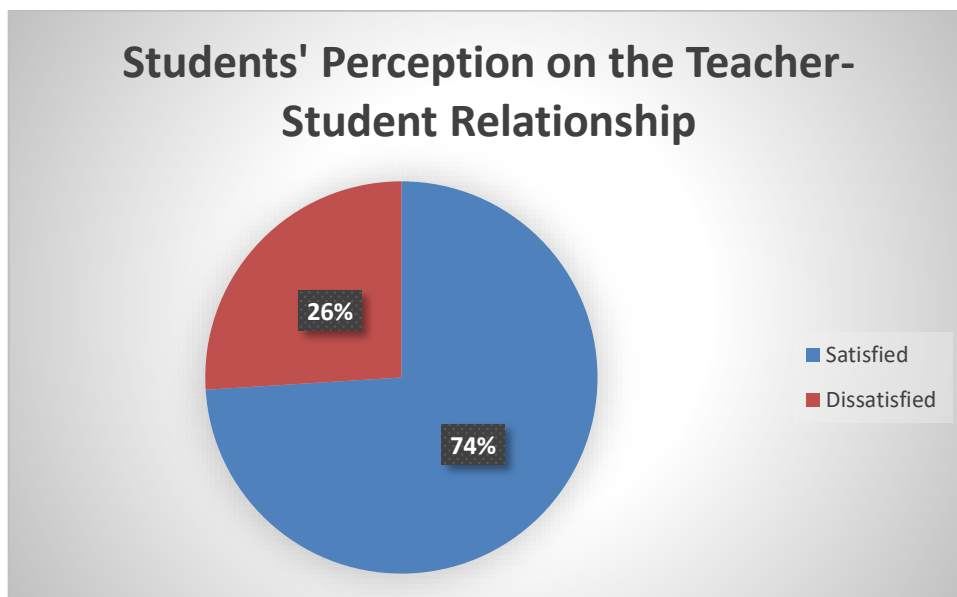


The data regarding satisfaction with the University of Rajshahi's academic services reveals that a majority of students, 60% (30 students), are satisfied, while 40% (20 students) express dissatisfaction. This distribution suggests that while the university's academic services meet the needs of many students, there are still significant areas where improvements could be beneficial. The 60% of students who reported satisfaction likely find the academic services accessible, helpful, and supportive in advancing their academic goals. Academic services may include resources like the library, advising, tutoring, registration assistance, and administrative support for academic matters. Satisfied students likely perceive these services as efficiently managed and responsive to their needs, allowing them to access resources, receive guidance, and address academic concerns promptly. The availability of these resources plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic progression and ensuring that they have the necessary support to succeed. However, the 40% of students who expressed dissatisfaction indicate that there are barriers or challenges in accessing or benefiting from these academic services. Some common issues could include limited availability of resources, such as library materials or access to academic advisors, delays in administrative processes, or lack of responsiveness in addressing student inquiries or requests. Additionally, students may feel dissatisfied if services are inconsistently provided or if staff are not adequately trained to handle specific student needs. In some cases, there may also be a lack of clarity in how to access these services, which can lead to frustration and a sense of being underserved. This division in satisfaction levels highlights the importance of refining academic services to ensure they are both accessible and

effective for all students. By addressing the sources of dissatisfaction—such as expanding resources, improving response times, or increasing staff training—the University of Rajshahi can work towards creating a more supportive and equitable academic environment. Improving these services can contribute to greater overall student satisfaction, enhancing students' academic experiences and helping them to reach their full potential.

Teacher-Students Relationship

Figure: 6, Developed by the Authors Based on the Collected Data



The data on the teacher-student relationship at the University of Rajshahi shows that a strong majority, 74% (37 students), are satisfied with the quality of interactions they have with faculty members, while 26% (13 students) expressed dissatisfaction. This reflects a generally positive teacher-student dynamic, with some areas where students feel their needs are not fully met. The 74% of students who reported satisfaction likely find that their interactions with teachers are supportive, respectful, and conducive to learning. Positive teacher-student relationships often foster an environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance, asking questions, and discussing academic or personal concerns. Satisfied students may view their instructors as approachable and willing to engage beyond the classroom, creating a sense of trust and encouragement that supports their academic success. This type of relationship enhances student motivation and engagement, as they feel valued and understood by their instructors. However, the 26% of students who expressed dissatisfaction suggest that there are challenges or gaps in some teacher-student relationships. This dissatisfaction could be due to factors such as limited availability of teachers outside of lectures, perceived lack of empathy or support, or communication barriers that make it difficult for students to connect with faculty.

Some students may feel their instructors are less approachable or too focused on curriculum delivery, without sufficient attention to individual student needs or challenges. In some cases, large class sizes or faculty workload could also limit teachers' ability to build strong, supportive connections with every student.

Overall, the high level of satisfaction indicates that the University of Rajshahi has built a generally positive teacher-student culture, but addressing the concerns of dissatisfied students could further strengthen this relationship. Encouraging open communication, fostering mentorship programs, or providing training on student engagement strategies could help bridge gaps, ensuring that all students experience the benefits of a supportive and constructive teacher-student relationship. This approach would not only enhance student satisfaction but also contribute to a more inclusive and nurturing academic environment.

CONCLUSION

This study on the academic environment at the University of Rajshahi provides valuable insights into student satisfaction across various dimensions of their educational experience. The findings reveal both strengths and areas for improvement in elements such as classroom facilities, teacher cooperation, technical resources, and overall campus atmosphere. While many students report satisfaction with aspects like academic services and teacher-student relationships, significant levels of dissatisfaction highlight critical issues that need attention, particularly in areas such as technical resources and teacher cooperation. Overall, the study underscores the importance of a supportive, well-equipped academic environment in enhancing student satisfaction and academic success. By addressing specific areas of concern—such as improving technical resources, enhancing classroom infrastructure, and fostering more responsive teacher-student interactions—the University of Rajshahi can further elevate its educational environment to better meet the diverse needs of its students. Continued efforts to refine and adapt to student expectations will be crucial in cultivating a balanced, inclusive, and academically enriching environment that supports students' growth and prepares them for future challenges. This research thus provides a foundation for potential institutional improvements, with the goal of fostering an academic environment that promotes student engagement, well-being, and overall satisfaction.

Limitations

This study, while offering valuable insights into student satisfaction at the University of Rajshahi, is subject to certain limitations. First, the scope is limited to a single public university, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other institutions in Bangladesh. Second, the data primarily rely on self-reported responses from students, which can be influenced by personal biases, momentary sentiments, or social desirability effects. Third, due to time and resource constraints, the sample size may not fully capture the diversity of student experiences across all faculties and departments. Additionally, while the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, the qualitative component is relatively limited and may not fully explore

the depth of student perceptions. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results and applying them to broader policy or academic contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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