University resources and student complaints in Malaysian higher education institutions

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines the relationship between university resources and student complaint management in Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs). The paper is premised on organisational justice theory (OJT), which conceptualizes complaint handling, satisfaction and fairness among stakeholders in the educational domain.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper adopts a quantitative method using a survey research design. An online survey is administered to 381 students in three selected HEIs in Malaysia. Data are analysed and tested using the SmartPLS 3.0 algorithm to evaluate measurement and structural models.

Findings – Students' experience in the use of online and offline university resources varies across different levels of education. The findings indicate that offline and online resources contribute substantially to students' complaints. This study establishes the significance of an effective complaint-handling mechanism for continuous feedback and improvement in HEIs.

Originality/value – Within the context of policy in HEIs, the originality of this paper lies in its focus on the relationship between resources and student complaints based on the diverse complaint-handling mechanisms in Malaysian HEIs.

Keywords University resources, Complaint, Malaysia, Higher education

Paper type Research paper

Complaints appear to be a normal occurrence among stakeholders in any environment with commercial interests. While higher education services are primarily public, they have taken a commercial dimension in most parts of the world, including Malaysia. In recent years, the Malaysian higher education sector has been considered among the best in Southeast Asia and has attracted increased interest from international students (Zain *et al.*, 2017). However, the Malaysian education sector has faced dissatisfaction among students. Consequently, proposals have been made concerning university resources in Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs): there is a need for the systematic management of complaints through the use of an effective complaint-handling mechanism (Omoola, 2018).

There is scant research on the nature and source of complaints among stakeholders in Malaysian HEIs. Studies reveal that the absence of effective access to complaint mechanisms can radicalize the higher education market as students turn to social media to vent their dissatisfaction (Bolat and O'Sullivan, 2017). As with company customer reviews, the marketized education sector has received narcissistic social media comments from dissatisfied students (Nixon *et al.*, 2018). These social media comments could cause reputational damage to a HEI if not properly handled. This situation underscores the need for an effective complaint-handling mechanism and application of organisational justice theory (OJT) among stakeholders.

In HEIs, any stakeholder can make complaints. However, this study focuses on students' complaints only. The nature and typology of disputes identified are from offline and online resources. Offline and face-to-face services, including accommodation facilities, transportation, classroom, and restaurant and library services are potential sources of complaints. Conversely, online services that are potential sources of complaints include fee payment, course registration, access to learning materials, e-library, and examination results.

According to Etadon (2013), two categories of students' complaints are raised in most developing countries such as Malaysia. The first category is those caused by dissatisfaction with university management, for instance, due to inadequate or inferior accommodation and catering services, intermittent water and electricity supply, academic curriculum problems, and challenges with the teaching and learning environment and examinations. The second category of complaints is those caused by government policy and regulations that affect the students' welfare, for example, students' loan fee structure, political affairs, and economic climate. However, the extent to which all universities effectively or ineffectively manage these complaints and why they benefit from the complaints is not well known, hence the calls for research. Numerous empirical and analytical studies have been conducted to elucidate consumer demands and university resources. For instance, Cochran (2019) highlighted events and programs as some of the university resources crucial to the development of students.

Similarly, Mapunda and Mramba (2018) emphasized the importance of student complaints as a means for universities to make improvements. Their study reported that universities should use comments and complaints as a means of managing and improving their systems and daily operations to enhance the resolution of hidden challenges. Mapunda and Mramba's findings support findings by Hsu and Chen (2020), who reported behavioural responses increase personal safety and security on Canadian campuses.

To conduct this study, the two research questions below were addressed:

RQ1. Do university offline resources influence students' complaints?

RQ2. Do university online resources influence students' complaints?

Research hypothesis

H1. There is a significant negative relationship between the quality of university offline resources and the number of student complaints.

H2. There is a significant negative relationship between the quality of university online resources and the number of student complaints.

Literature review

University resources and student satisfaction

The relationship between university resources and student satisfaction is a critical area of study within HEIs. Understanding how university resources, activities, events, and programmes impact student satisfaction is essential for enhancing the overall educational experience. This section explores existing research on university resources and their influence on student satisfaction, encompassing both online and offline dimensions.

Impact on student engagement

Research indicates that university resources significantly influence student engagement. Chao *et al.* (2017) explored students' behavioural responses to university resources, emphasizing the critical role these resources play in shaping educational opportunities and academic performance. The study noted that limitations in accessing academic resources, often arising due to safety concerns, can impede student engagement and hinder their learning experience. This outcome underscores the importance of ensuring adequate and safe access to resources to foster student engagement and satisfaction.

Learning effectiveness and resource provision

Another crucial aspect examined in the literature is the association between university resources and learning effectiveness. For instance, Stermac *et al.* (2018) demonstrated a strong correlation between the availability of resources and learning outcomes, underscoring the pivotal role of resources in facilitating effective learning environments. Hsu and Chen (2020) further corroborated these findings, emphasizing the significance of well-equipped learning environments in promoting student satisfaction and academic success.

Implications for higher education institutions (HEIs)

The findings from various studies have significant implications for HEIs. The findings underscore the necessity of substantial investment in academic and non-academic resources to create an environment that fosters student satisfaction and success. Specifically, HEIs should prioritise the provision of resources that enhance student engagement, support learning objectives, and promote overall well-being, as these are key factors in student satisfaction and success (Kanwar and Sanjeeva, 2022; Nastasić *et al.*, 2019).

While existing research provides valuable insights, there remain avenues for further exploration. For instance, future studies could delve deep into specific types of resources and their differential impacts on student satisfaction. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer insights into how changes in resource provision over time influence student outcomes (Sternglass, 2017). Moreover, an exploration of the role of technological advancements in shaping resource accessibility and satisfaction is warranted in future research endeavours (Hama *et al.*, 2020).

In conclusion, the relationship between university resources and student satisfaction is multifaceted and significant. Academic research has highlighted the crucial role of resources in shaping student engagement, learning effectiveness, and overall satisfaction levels. By understanding and addressing students' needs and preferences regarding resource provision, HEIs can foster environments that promote academic success and holistic development (Muzammil *et al.*, 2021).

Offline university resources

Offline resources are essential for creating settings that are conducive to learning, research, and the overall student experience in HEIs. According to Msosa (2019), comfortable

classrooms, well-stocked labs, and adequate dorm accommodations are critical elements of offline university resources. Moreover, a clean cafeteria and a well-designed campus transportation system are essential facilities that support students' overall growth in an academic environment.

Alsheyadi and Albalushi (2020) argued that managers and leaders in higher education must maintain these offline resources in the best possible shape. The authors contended that improving the general experience and happiness of students critically depends on the efficient administration and upkeep of facilities. Further, Nixon *et al.* (2018) proposed that establishing an easily accessible complaint system is a viable strategy. Such a system allows students to voice their concerns about the state of facilities, enabling prompt interventions and changes.

The idea of the "student-as-customer" has recently gained popularity, drawing attention to the similarities between students and clients in other service sectors. This paradigm emphasizes how crucial student happiness is in determining the calibre of education that HEIs offer. Students demand high-quality instruction and fulfilling university experiences in exchange for their tuition payments, much like consumers expect value for their money in business transactions (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2015).

The implementation of the "student-as-customer" strategy requires educators and administrators at universities to change their perspectives. This change involves considering students as stakeholders in decision-making processes related to resource allocation, curriculum creation, and service provision, taking into account their opinions and preferences (Pack and Peek, 2020). Adopting this perspective can help HEIs improve student happiness, retention, and engagement while creating a learning environment that supports both academic achievement and personal development.

Ahmad *et al.* (2023) highlighted the importance of well-maintained physical infrastructure in universities. Their research indicates that students are more likely to file complaints in institutions where facilities are outdated or poorly maintained. Rahman and Singh (2022) also emphasized the fact that the learning environment, including the availability of study spaces and lab equipment, directly impacts student satisfaction. A positive learning environment correlates with few student complaints.

In summary, offline university resources and services are essential parts of the college experience and have a significant impact on students' satisfaction and overall academic performance. HEIs can fulfil their duty to offer high-quality education and promote student growth by prioritizing the maintenance of and accessibility to these resources.

Online university resources
A recent study by Rathinam *et al.* (2023) explored the impact of robust e-learning platforms on student satisfaction in Malaysian universities. Their findings suggest that efficient and user-friendly online systems reduce the frequency of student complaints. Similarly, research by Udin and Hisham (2022) highlights the role of digital libraries in providing continuous academic support. The availability of comprehensive online resources helps mitigate challenges related to limited physical library access, reducing student grievances.

In conclusion, the quality of online university resources plays a crucial role in shaping student satisfaction. Efficient e-learning platforms and comprehensive digital libraries can significantly reduce student complaints and enhance the overall educational experience.

Student-as-customer (SAC). Modern organizations, corporations, and institutions are fast embracing the paradigm of stakeholder engagement and participatory design (Vink *et al.*, 2008). The higher education sector appears to be adopting the paradigm through an improved complaint-handling mechanism (Branch, 2002). The relationship between stakeholders in higher education institutions (HEIs) is characterised by several

transactional dimensions and expectations. To meet the needs of students, the higher education sector has evolved from being composed of mere instructional institutions to corporations relying on feedback or complaint mechanisms to improve its service delivery (Sam and Dahles, 2017).

Dearing (1997) explored the phenomenon of SAC in higher education. This phenomenon emerged after the introduction of student tuition fees in England. Further, the implementation of the Dearing Report in September 2012 made higher education highly marketized, making students to be considered as consumers who require value for money and access to complaint mechanisms for services delivered (Woodall *et al.*, 2014). Following the English Dearing Report, several studies have added to the customer relationship discourse in the higher education sector. For example, concerning the extent of student self-perception as consumers, Tomlinson (2017) presented the result of a survey across seven UK HEIs, which showed the increasing identification of consumer-oriented approaches and variation in attitudes and resulting implications for education policymakers.

The SAC postulate characterises education as a private commodity rather than a public good such as a radio station or other public infrastructure which must be accessible and equitable for all. Further, the postulate avers that knowledge is a "non-rivalrous" commodity and not a luxury (Williams, 2016). After considering the legal, economic, and political perspectives of the debate, Hüfner (2003) provided a balanced description of higher education as being neither a public good nor a private commodity but rather a mixed good. Mixed good postulation helps to uphold accessibility and non-exclusivity of education as a public good while as a private commodity, students–consumers have the right to complain under consumer protection laws or an education services ombudsman within their jurisdictions.

From a service marketing perspective, Ng and Forbes (2009) reported that marketisation of higher education services could provide a unique opportunity for policymakers and avail improved learning experience to students–consumers. As a private commodity and for policy purposes, universities require a continuous feedback loop from students, who are their main customers.

Complaint handling. Effective complaint handling addresses students' concerns and enhances satisfaction (Trappey *et al.*, 2010). Leveraging various emotional and physical complaint resolution methods, including apologies, explanations, and economic compensation, can significantly mitigate dissatisfaction (Istanbulluoglu, 2017; Omoola, 2018; Zamora-Ramos *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, integrating social media into complaint-handling processes offers new avenues for engaging with students; nevertheless, traditional channels should complement it to ensure comprehensive support (Sugathan *et al.*, 2018).

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights the multifaceted relationship between university resources and student satisfaction in higher education institutions (HEIs). By understanding the nuances of online and offline resources and embracing the SAC paradigm, institutions can effectively address students' needs and enhance their educational experience. Moreover, prioritising effective complaint-handling mechanisms is essential for fostering a supportive and responsive learning environment.

Methodology
In this study, a quantitative research methodology was adopted to quantify the involvement of students in the use of online and offline university resources in Malaysia (Cooksey (2020). This paper examined the responses of 381 students in Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs), comprising the entire sample population. A survey method was used to obtain data from the sample. The data was based on the participants' perception of resources and complaint-handling in Malaysian HEIs.

Population and sample size

The targeted population of the study consisted of all undergraduate and postgraduate students in three selected HEIs in Malaysia. The total population comprised respondents from University Malaya (UM): 27,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students; University Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM): 11,546 undergraduate and postgraduate students; and IIUM: 17,600 undergraduates and postgraduates. The study population comprised 56,546 students. Using the online Raosoft sample size calculator, a sample size of 381 students was determined based on a population of 55,546, a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and a 50% response rate.

Stratified sampling was used to ensure representative sampling across the universities. This approach involved selecting the sample from across the population stratum. In the process of stratification, the researcher categorised the population based on sections or strata, and each stratum was calculated to extract the proportion ratio representing the sample of each stratum, as shown in Table 1.

All 381 students were requested to participate in the study through a questionnaire sent to their emails. However, out of the 381 questionnaires administered, 140 were completed correctly during 4 weeks of data collection, reflecting a response rate of approximately 37.5%.

Data collection procedure

In this study, the researcher developed a self-administered questionnaire consisting of items measuring university resources and complaint handling in Malaysian HEIs. Due to the COVID-19 Movement Control Order, the researchers collected data using Google Forms, which incorporated all the standard survey fields such as text, multiple-choice questions, dropdowns, linear scales, and grids to capture all types of data collection needs. The questionnaire was distributed through the respondents' personal emails.

Missing data, normality, multicollinearity, and outlier calculation

All missing data were removed to avoid compromising the data analysis process. Although many strategies for handling missing data exist, which could be summarised as substitution of means, substitution of cases, and use of complete data, it is advisable to remove the missing data (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

A normality test revealed a skewness of -1.782 and a kurtosis of ±0.408, indicating that the normality assumption was met. Outlier tests revealed no outliers in the data: the computed z-scores in this study ranged from -3.6 to $+2.1$ (range of ±4). Lastly, regarding multicollinearity, the calculated values exceeded Pallant's (2011) recommended values, confirming the absence of multicollinearity, as shown in Table 2.

UM (27,000)	USIM (11,546)	IIUM (17,600)
Total Population = 56,546		
Sample Size = 381		
(UM)	(USIM)	IIUM
183	78	120
Stratified Sample Size = 381		
Source(s): Authors' own work		

Table 1.
Sampling stratification procedure

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T-statistics	Sig.	Collinearity	
	β	Std. error	β			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	−3.930	1.457		−2.697	0.008		
Offline Resources and	0.247	0.048	0.300	5.177	0.000	0.473	2.112
Online Resources >>>>	0.213	0.038	0.268	5.612	0.000	0.695	1.438
Student Complain	0.212	0.038	0.284	5.555	0.000	0.606	1.650
Management							
Source(s): Authors' own work							

Data analysis

An analysis of the data obtained from the respondents is presented in this section. The participants consisted of students from different universities in Malaysia, and the data reflects their perceptions and opinions regarding online resource usage in their respective universities. The data in Table 3 shows the participants' demographic information in terms of frequencies and percentages.

Regarding gender, 61.4% of the respondents ($n = 86$) were male, while 38.1% ($n = 54$) were female. This distribution mitigated gender biases and insensitivity. The findings also indicated the marital status of the respondents: 82.1% ($n = 115$) of the respondents were married, and 18.0% ($n = 25$) were not married.

Regarding university affiliation, 50.0% ($n = 70$) of the respondents were from University Malaya, followed by 42.0% ($n = 45$) from International Islamic University.

Measurement model of university resources and managing students' complaints

The following analysis assesses the measurement model for university resources and the complaint management mechanism. The proposed research model was tested using SmartPLS 3.0 algorithm, which was used to evaluate the measurement and structure of the study. This study employed the threshold set by Hair *et al.* (2017), which constitutes the reflective model.

The measurement model above presents the internal consistency of variables. A measurement model is considered to have achieved acceptable internal consistency reliability if the composite reliability of each concerned construct model surpasses the

Demographic variables	Group	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	86	61.4
	Female	54	38.1
	Total	140	100
Marital Status	Married	115	82.1
	Single	25	18.0
	Total	100	100
Higher Institutions	UM	70	50.0
	USIM	25	18.0
	IIUM	45	42.0
	Total	100	100
Source(s): Authors' own work			

threshold value of 0.6–0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2014a, b). Thus, when the value of the construct is high, the correlation among the construct would be high. The result of the current study demonstrated in Figure 1 shows that various items representing the constructs accomplished satisfactory internal constituency reliability.

Estimation of model Goodness-of-fit (GOF)
Before testing the hypothesis, the fitness of the model was evaluated using a threshold of a maximum of 0.8. Henseler *et al.* (2016) and Hu and Bentler (1999) agreed that the fitness of the model is satisfactory when the value obtained in a study is below 0.08. The value of standardized root mean square residual, calculated with 140 respondents, was 0.037 as shown in Table 4, which is less than the threshold of 0.08. Hence, the proposed model in the study is considered to have achieved the GOF.

Hypotheses testing. Based on the measurement model of offline resources, online activities, and student complaints, a hypothesis model of the study was proposed. The
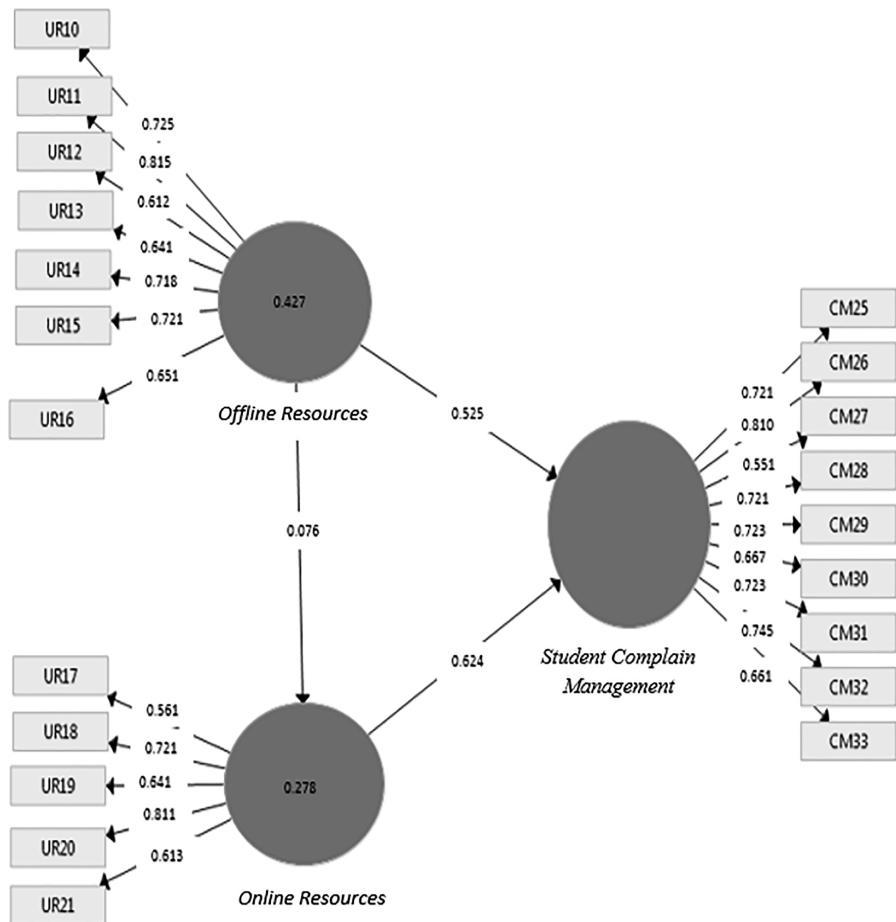

Figure 1.
Measurement model of offline resources, online resources, and student complaint management

Source(s): Authors' own work

proposed hypotheses of this structural modelling were validated using the value of the path coefficient. Hair *et al.* (2014a, b) and Henseler and Sarstedt (2013) established acceptable *t*-values for different significant levels to be $t = 2.57$ ($p < 0.01$), $t = 1.96$ ($p < 0.05$), and $t = 1.65$ ($p < 0.1$). However, this study adopted the rule of thumb of $t = 1.96$ and $p = 0.05$. As shown in Table 5, the path assessment, namely, β, t-value, and p-value, was used to determine the rejection or acceptance of the hypothesis and to determine the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables in the measurement model.

All the proposed hypotheses were supported by the β, t-value, and p-value. A path co-efficient analysis for university resources and students' complaints revealed a t-statistic of 3.477 and a p-value of 0.000**. Similarly, for online e-mails and activities, students' complaints had a t-statistic of 3.660 and a p-value of 0.001* at the $p = 0.05$ significance level as the assumed threshold. Thus, the hypotheses are supported.

Additionally, the study examined the R^2 of the endogenous variable which is a measure of students' complaints as obtained from the SmartPLS algorithm. The findings indicate that offline resources and online activities were able to yield 72.2% of the variances in the students' complaints. This outcome indicates that exogenous variables reported in Figure 2, that is, offline resources and activities, substantially predicted the endogenous variable, that is, students' complaints, as shown in Table 6.

Results

The study's affirmation of Hypothesis 1 underscores the crucial role offline university resources play in mitigating negative student feedback concerning services provided by higher education institutions (HEIs). This significant finding resonates with prior research by Lala and Priluck (2011), which highlighted the pivotal importance of customer satisfaction in reducing complaints within service-oriented contexts.

Lala and Priluck (2011) work laid the groundwork for understanding the intricate relationship between customer satisfaction and complaint reduction. They found that enhancing customer satisfaction levels is instrumental in mitigating consumer grievances. They specifically emphasised the impact of essential offline resources, such as transportation facilities, classrooms, and dining options, on augmenting student satisfaction levels. These resources are integral components of the university experience, directly influencing students' perceptions of an institution's service quality.

	Estimated model value	Magnitude
SRMR	0.037	Substantial
Source(s): Authors' own work		

Table 4. Goodness of Fit (SRMR PLS 3.0)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct effect	Std. deviation	*t*-statistics	*p*-value	Outcome
H1	Offline Resources » Students' complain Management	0.624	0.055	3.477	0.000**	Supported
H2	Online Resources » Students' complain Management	0.525	0.052	3.660	0.001*	Supported
Source(s): Authors' own work						

Table 5. Hypothesis testing
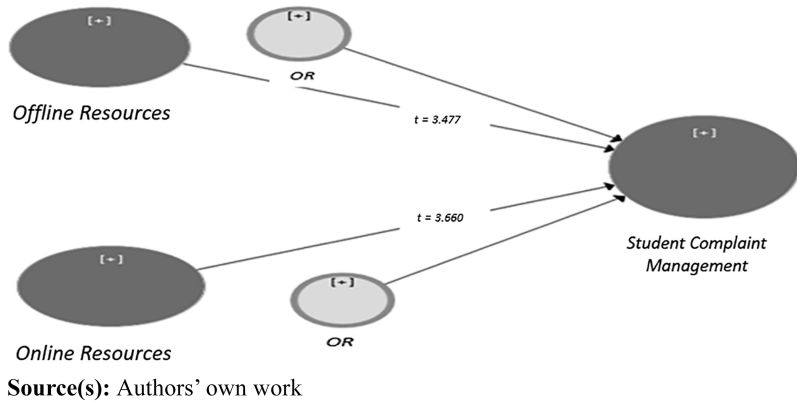
Source(s): Authors' own work

Endogenous variable	Coefficient of determination R^2	Adjusted R square	Magnitude
Students' complain Management	0.722	0.745	Substantial
Source(s): Authors' own work			

By corroborating Lala and Priluck (2011), the current study not only reaffirms the importance of offline resources but also extends the impact of these resources within the realm of higher education. The provision of such resources fosters an environment conducive to positive student experiences, thereby reducing dissatisfaction and subsequent complaints. Furthermore, this outcome underscores the multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction, encompassing not only academic quality but also the accessibility and adequacy of ancillary services.

The alignment of this study with previous research underscores the enduring relevance of customer satisfaction principles within the higher education sector. This alignment emphasises the pivotal role of offline university resources in shaping students' perceptions and experiences, thereby contributing to their overall satisfaction and retention within HEIs. Moreover, this alignment underscores the importance of integrating insights from this study into institutional policies and practices to enhance the quality of service provision and student satisfaction.

Additionally, the current finding resonates with broader trends in higher education, where institutions increasingly rely on digital infrastructure to cater to students' needs. The seamless operation of online platforms directly impacts students' overall experience. Consequently, universities must prioritise the development and maintenance of robust online resources to mitigate potential sources of dissatisfaction among their student bodies.

Moreover, the study highlights the interconnectedness of offline and online resources in shaping students' complaints. It acknowledges that students' experiences are influenced by a combination of physical and digital infrastructure provided by HEIs. This holistic perspective underscores the need for institutions to adopt an integrated approach to resource allocation, ensuring that both online and offline elements complement each other effectively.

In line with Cambra-Fierro and Melero-Polo (2017), there is positive correlation between resources and customer engagement in complaint-handling processes, this study

underscores the importance of comprehensively addressing student grievances. By recognising the role of both offline and online resources in shaping students' experiences and perceptions, HEIs can enhance their understanding of and responses to their needs, ultimately fostering a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, in line with a previous study by Cambra-Fierro and Melero-Polo (2017), which focused on customer engagement and complaint-handling processes, we see a parallel emphasis on the significance of resources in shaping individuals' interactions with organizations. Just as effective complaint-handling processes are vital for maintaining positive customer relationships in a commercial context, the availability and quality of university resources are crucial for ensuring student satisfaction and engagement within HEIs. This alignment underscores the broad relevance of resource management strategies across different organisational domains and highlights the importance of integrating insights from various fields to inform practice and policy (Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019).

This study delves into the intricate dynamics between university resources and students' complaints within the HEI context, shedding light on the interconnectedness and broad implications of these dynamics. Additionally, this research extends present understanding beyond the conventional view of university resources solely as tools for addressing complaints, emphasising their pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes and overall student satisfaction.

Drawing upon the research conducted by Hsu and Chen (2020), which elucidated the profound impact of resources on learning effectiveness, the present study elucidates how investments in both offline and online infrastructure not only alleviate student grievances but also significantly enhance educational outcomes. By aligning with Hsu and Chen's findings, this study validates the notion that the availability and quality of resources, both physical and virtual, significantly influence students' learning experiences and academic achievements.

This research underscores the multifaceted nature of the relationship between university resources and student concerns, suggesting that HEIs should move beyond a reactive approach to complaints and instead adopt a proactive stance by continuously investing in infrastructure and technology. Such investments not only address immediate grievances but also foster an environment conducive to learning, thereby enhancing overall student satisfaction and academic performance.

Moreover, the study's findings highlight the imperative for HEIs to adapt to the evolving needs of students in the digital age. As technology plays an increasingly integral role in education, universities must prioritise investments in both offline and online resources to remain competitive and effectively meet the diverse needs of their student bodies.

In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to the present understanding of the complex interplay between university resources, student complaints, and educational outcomes. By recognising the broad implications of resource allocation, HEIs can effectively cater to student needs, foster a conducive learning environment, and ultimately enhance educational effectiveness in the contemporary higher education landscape.

Implications of the study

The practical and societal implications of this study underscore the importance of resource enhancement and effective complaint-handling mechanisms in HEIs. By addressing these aspects, HEIs can improve student satisfaction, contribute to improved educational outcomes, and enhance their reputation and trust within the community.

Practical implications

This study has implications for operations and resources in HEIs. It emphasises the need to prioritize the enhancement of offline resources such as modern classrooms, reliable transportation, and high-quality dining services to boost student satisfaction and reduce complaints. Concurrently, HEIs should strengthen online infrastructure, ensuring user-friendly online payment systems, seamless course registration, accessible e-libraries, and robust ICT support for learning management systems. Further, implementing an ombudsman system will provide a transparent and impartial complaint-resolution avenue, while robust feedback loops can help promptly identify and address systemic issues (Omoola *et al.*, 2023). Proactive communication about available resources and ongoing improvements will increase transparency, and creating platforms for student engagement, such as town hall meetings and online forums will ensure that HEIs remain attuned to student needs and expectations.

Societal implications

The improvement of both offline and online resources has practical implications and can create a conducive learning environment, leading to enhanced educational outcomes and the production of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, thus benefiting society. Additionally, enhanced online resources increase accessibility for students facing geographical or physical barriers, bridging educational divides and promoting inclusivity. Furthermore, effectively addressing student complaints reduces stress and anxiety, significantly improving student well-being and mental health. Moreover, providing mechanisms for students to voice concerns fosters a sense of agency, resulting in engaged and motivated students who are ready to contribute positively to society. Besides, transparent and effective complaint handling enhances the reputation of HEIs, building trust among students, parents, and the community. Further, institutions that invest in these resources and address student concerns are likely to attract and retain students, ensuring their long-term success in a competitive educational landscape.

Conclusion

This study shows that online and offline resources in HEIs are a substantial source of complaints among students. Thus, an effective complaint-handling mechanism is essential for customer engagement and satisfaction in HEIs. Further, the findings of this research reveal that online and offline university resources contribute to complaints by HEI stakeholders. Thus, this study recommends that HEIs should establish complaint-handling mechanisms such as an ombudsman system to serve as a channel through which effective services can be provided to reclaim and retain students. Moreover, this study recommends that the complaint-handling framework must be made transparent, independent, and impartial to attract stakeholders' trust. Further studies could extend this analysis to include complaints from academic and administrative staff in HEIs.

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