

# **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF SERVICE QUALITY IN THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT'S RETENTION: A CASE STUDY ON CITY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF AJMAN, (CUCA)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to measure and test the relationship between service quality of the academic institutions and student's retention. In addition to, determine the main elements that effect on service quality of the academic institutions. This paper is focused on the student's retention of City University College in Ajman as a case study. The results showed that the students are satisfied with the services at City University College of Ajman, mean, there is the high quality of teaching, effective academic courses, and the library meets the student's needs. The management also supports and cooperate students there. Moreover, the results showed that students are satisfied with university environment and they will transfer a positive image of their friends with / of, which means the reputation of the university is high. The results showed that all hypothesis have been accepted , in addition to , the study showed there is a positive and high relationship between service quality in the academic institutions and student's retention, which mean that if the services in any academic institution do not meet student's perception and satisfaction, this will affect negatively on the student's retention. Moreover, students will transfer a negative image of the others and may be looking to find another university to study. The study recommends developing innovative tools and strategies in order to deliver high quality of services in all academic institutions in order to retain students there.

**Keywords:** Service Quality, Academic Institutions, Student's Retention, City University College of Ajman

## INTRODUCTION:

Student's retention is very important nowadays, especially in the private institutions, because they are looking mainly for profit, so student's retention is very important and it is the most important asset for those institutions. Without students, the academic institution cannot open and work, so that the academic institutions, especially the private institution are looking for more and more students to increase the profit, students retention is the key. So that, universities and colleges should meet student's perception and satisfaction, in order to retain them.

The education sector in the United Arab Emirates is growing rapidly, especially in the last decade. In UAE there are 67 academic institutions, universities, and colleges. The government spends billions of dirham's on education in UAE, and the number of the students yearly increased. So that, the education sector is the most important sector that the government concerns and develop.

City University College of Ajman, (CUCA) is one of those accreted academic institutions in UAE. It was established in 2012 and located in Ajman. There are 2000 students are studying there. CUCA provides many academic specializations, such as business management, management information systems, general education, law, hospitality management and public relations. In addition to, there are two MAB programs, law and business management programs.

## THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY:

Nowadays the education sector is developed quickly, especially in the United Arab Emirates. There is high competition between academic institution to attract students and retain them. Especially, in UAE there are more than 67 academic institutions. So that, this study will concentrate on the level of service quality in the academic institutions and how can effect on the student's retention. This study aims to identify the most variable which effect on the student's retention, in addition to, investigates and explores how service quality can effect on student's satisfaction and perception. This study will focus on the term service quality, academic institution, and student's retention. In addition to, this study will explore the relationship between leadership and management, academic staff, academic courses, university environment, library services in City University College of Ajman.

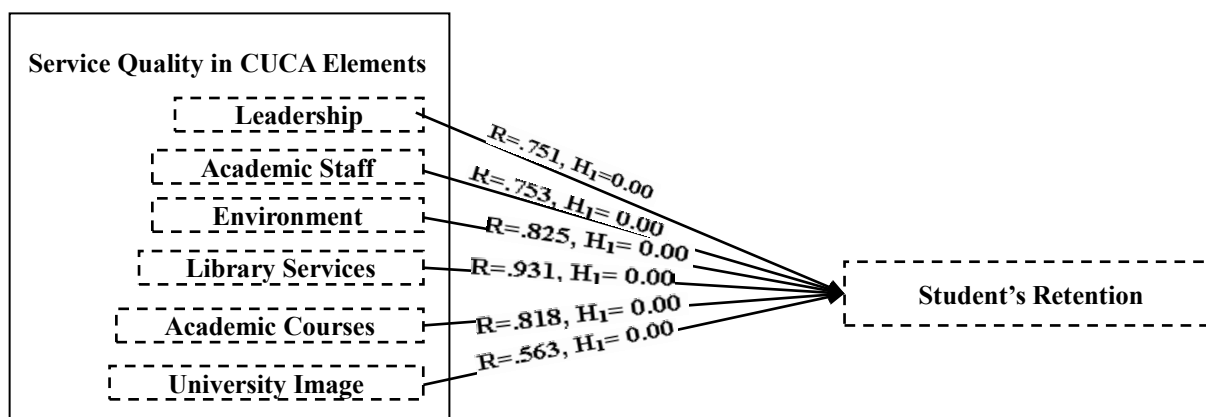
## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study will endeavor to reach its aim through the following research questions:

- 1- How service quality contributes positively to retain students in academic institutions in The United Arab Emirates?
- 2- Does any relationship between management and leadership and student's retention?
- 3- Does any relationship between academic staff and student's retention?
- 4- Does any relationship between academic courses and student's retention?
- 5- Does any relationship between library services and student's retention?
- 6- Does any relationship between university environment and student's retention?

## RESEARCH MODEL:

### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES and DEPENDENT VARIABLES



## HYPOTHESIS:

From the importance of the study and research questions, the research set the following hypothesis.

### **H1:**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between level of service quality in the academic institutions and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between level of service quality in the academic institutions and student's retention.

### **H2**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship leadership and management and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship leadership and management and student's retention.

### **H3**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship academic staff and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship academic staff and student's retention.

### **H4**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship academic courses and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship academic courses and student's retention.

### **H5**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship library services and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship library services and student's retention.

### **H6**

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship university environment and student's retention.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship university environment and student's retention.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Juran (1989) defined quality as fitness for purpose of use. Oakland (1999) defined quality as meeting the customer requirements. Feigenbaum, (1993) viewed quality as co-operation of all activities and sections which lead to product a service requires the customer expectations. Consumer behavior is the investigation of individual, groups, or associations and the procedures they use to choose, secure, and discard products, services, experiences, or thoughts to fulfill needs and the impacts that these methods have on the consumer and society Karam, A. A., & Saydam, S. (2015). As per Gaither (1996), viewed service quality as customer satisfaction about a product or service and conformance to his requirements. There are five popular methods for measuring service quality: Complaints measure, Satisfaction measure, SERVQUAL measure, SERVPER measure and user-values service-quality measure. Hemmasi et al (1994) the most widely used and tested service quality survey instrument has been SERVQUAL, Parasuraman et al (1988), devised SERVQUAL, a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions. The scale was based on a concept of 'perceived' quality (the consumers' judgment of the services they had received). Wisniewski & Donnelly (1996) viewed clearly, the SERVQUAL instrument appears to offer considerable potential to the managers and other decision-makers of a public sector organization in the search for rigorous measures of service quality. The instrument offers the potential for assessing not only customer views of current service delivery but also expectations as measured across the five dimensions. Similarly, customer priorities in terms of these dimensions can be established and different customer groups assessed in terms of their differing priorities, offer the manager potentially useful information on such priorities and declares needs and preferences. However, although the gap score for Tangibles is worse than that for Reliability, it is evident from the respondents' weights, that customers attach more importance to Reliability characteristics than to Tangibles. Ways of improving the Reliability dimension of service quality should, therefore, take precedence. Clearly, other quality management tools and techniques can then be brought into play. For example, the application of process mapping may provide a detailed insight into where improvements could be beneficial or where some fundamental system redesign may be appropriate.

Service quality should be everywhere, in organizations, companies, establishments and academic institutions as well. In academic institutions, the level of service quality should be very high. It should meet student's perceptions and satisfaction. In this paper, the researcher set mainly five dimensions to measure the level of service quality in CUCA. The six dimensions are leadership and management, academic staff, academic courses, library services, university environment and university image.

On the other hand, the student's retentions are the results of high service quality. Many studies showed that service quality affects directly on the level of satisfaction of customers. The same in the academic institutions, the universities should meet student's satisfaction and perception.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

### Research Design:

This study aims to explore and investigate the relationship between service quality in the academic institutions and student's retention. The study adopts a quantitative questionnaire research design and primary instruments used in gathering the data is a questionnaire. The statistical method used in this study, collecting numerical data to analyze utilizing statistical methods.

### Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire used in the present research is a self-designed questionnaire, in addition to, the researcher referred to some studies, which are similar to this field. The researcher used structured questionnaire where he presented all questions in the form of multiple-choices and opened questions and asked the subjects to mark the appropriate responses. The questionnaire designed in the English language.

### Pre-Testing the Questionnaire:

The researcher pre-tested the initial questionnaire using randomly a small sample of 37 respondents. The process of pre-testing the questionnaire aimed at identifying and removing any ambiguity in the wording of the questions and to ensure that the questions of the questionnaire suitable and practical. Pre-testing also helps identify items that needed to delete and those that needed to add to the questionnaires. The researcher did not include any of the pre-testing responses in the final sample of the research. In addition to, Cronbach's alpha a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. Technically speaking, Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test; it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency). The result of validity and reliability test of this study as follows:

#### Cronbach's Alpha

Validity and Reliability Test	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.946	37

### Population and Sampling Methods:

This study is a quantitative study; the researcher used a questionnaire to conduct this study. The researchers showed that there are many different types of samples; Sekaran (2000) showed that there are mainly two types of samples, random samples, and non-random samples. Random samples are simple random sample, systematic sample, and striated sample and cluster sample. On the other hand, the nonrandom samples are accidental sample, purposive sample, chunk sample, volunteer sample and quota sample. In this study, the researcher applied the simple random sample, because the different studies showed that random sample is suitable for the respondents when they are equal. In addition to, the studies showed that random sample is more practical and famous than other types and very easy to apply it. So that, the researcher chose randomly the respondents. Not all the studies determine the exact number or percentage of the sample that should be included in the study. However, most of the studies showed that the number of samples depends on the size of the society. The size of this study is 2000 students; the appropriate number of respondents for this study is 322 according to Sekaran (2003).

### DATA COLLECTION:

The researcher distributed the questionnaire by himself randomly; in addition to, the researcher explained to the respondents the difficult points that they could not understand. The respondents were very nice and very cooperative. The period of distributing and collecting the samples is near one week.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND STATISTICAL TREATMENT:

The researcher coded the data collected through the questionnaires and performed the needed data manipulation and the statistical analysis using a computer statistical package for social science called (SPSS) to screen and analyze collected data.

The researcher tested the research hypothesis using parametric tests (t-tests). In addition to, the statistical tool used in this study is a correlation. The baseline and statistical data presented, analyzed and interpreted. However, for rejecting a research hypothesis, a 95% level of significant is used. The statistical tool used in this study is T-test.

### TREATMENT OF MISSING DATA:

In social science research, most of the data collections are incomplete, so the researcher expected some data to be missing from the received questionnaires because of some the respondents, failure to answer some questions or respond to some statements on the questionnaire. To deal with this problem, the researcher decided to exclude missing data items when performing the analysis.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

As with any questionnaire-based study, this research has some limitations. These limitations serve as indicators for a future research study on the same topic. Some of these limitations relate to the nature of the questionnaire and others related to the data collection process.

The researcher was unable to check the accuracy of collected data where it assumed that respondents were providing accurate data. Hence, data collected in the present research by researcher potential, so the researcher was dependent on the cooperation of the respondents.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

**Table (1): Gender**

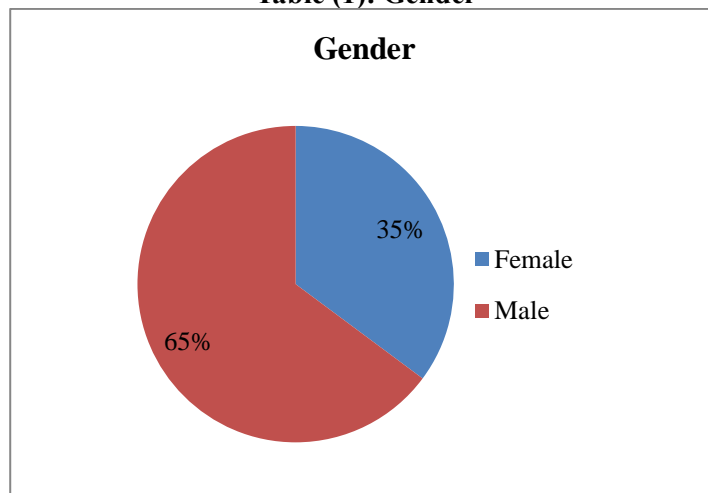
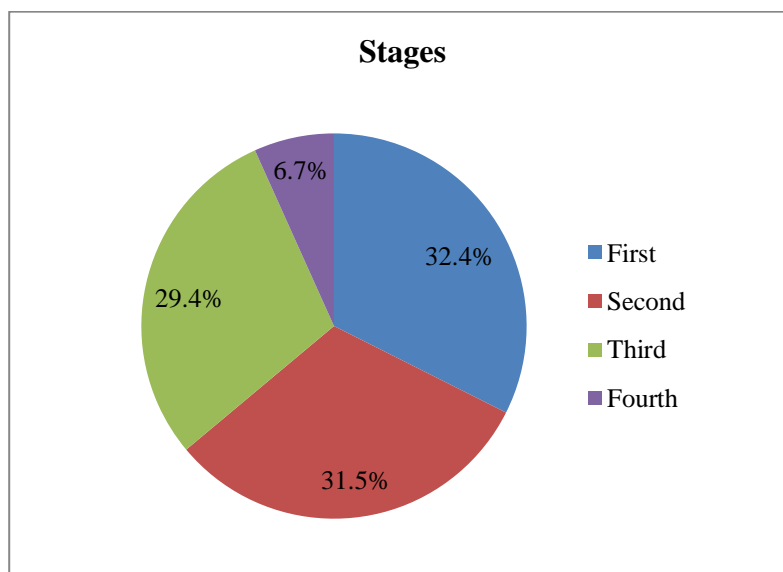


Table (1) showed that 65% of respondents in this study are male and 35% of respondents are female, this shows the majority of students are male and female are not too many.

**Table (2): Academic Year**



In the table (2) the results showed that the majority of respondents are in first year 32.4%, on the other hand, 6.7 % of respondents are in the fourth year, this is logical because the university has been established in 2012 with few numbers of students. Moreover, 31.5% of respondents are in the second year and 29.4 are in the third year.

**Table (3): Correlations**

Correlations								
		Student's retention	Leadership and Management	Academic. Staff	Environment and Facilities	Library Services	Academic Courses	University Image
Student's retention	Pearson Correlation	1	.751**	.753**	.825**	.931**	.818**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
Leadership and Management	Pearson Correlation	.751**	1	.756**	.681**	.707**	.712**	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
Academic. Staff	Pearson Correlation	.753**	.756**	1	.686**	.731**	.763**	.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
Environment and Facilities	Pearson Correlation	.825**	.681**	.686**	1	.700**	.722**	.452**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
Library Services	Pearson Correlation	.931**	.707**	.731**	.700**	1	.822**	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
Academic Courses	Pearson Correlation	.818**	.712**	.763**	.722**	.822**	1	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327
University Image	Pearson Correlation	.563**	.526**	.536**	.452**	.548**	.567**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table (3) tests the correlation between independent variables. In the table (3) the results showed that there is a high correlation between variables. The highest correlation is the one between library services, Environment and Facilities and academic courses are respectively highest value .931, .825, .818. This mean that students found whatever they are looking for in the library and the library meets the satisfaction of the students.

The correlation between Leadership and Academic Staff was, .756, and the leadership is supporting and encouraging the academic staff. Moreover, the correlation between academic staff and academic courses is high, it is .763. On the other hand, the lowest correlation is the one between environment and facilities university image to others. The correlation between university image and other variables are not high. It has indicated as .563, .526, .536, .452, .548, .567, which is a normal correlation.

Finally, the results showed there is a weak correlation between environment and facilities and university image, the correlation is .452. The correlation between Library Services and other variables is the highest one. It is also a high correlation between leadership and management and other variables.

**Table (4): T-Test**

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Leadership and management	327	3.7900	.91584	.05065
Academic. Staff	327	4.1061	.85078	.04705
Environment and Facilities	327	3.7630	.96598	.05342
Library Services	327	3.9635	.95575	.05285
Academic Courses	327	4.0644	.88558	.04897
University Image	327	3.6765	.77596	.04291



It is noted from the table (4) that the level of satisfaction is high; the results showed that the students are highly satisfied with the services at CUCA. The students are satisfied with the leadership and management there in CUCA because the mean value is 3.79. This shows the leadership and management are cooperate and help students and always trying to solve their problems.

The results showed that students are satisfied with the academic staff, academic staff there are qualified and have the experience, the mean value is 4.1. In addition to, the students are highly satisfied with academic courses and study plan, in addition to, they are satisfied with the registration system there, and the mean value is 4. Moreover, the students are highly satisfied with library services, the mean value here is 3.96. In addition to, the environment and facilities there meet the satisfaction of students, the mean value is 3.76., and the student will transfer positively the image of CUCA to their colleagues and others. The mean value is 3.67.

Hence, on the other hand, and the most important that all variables were indicated to the statistical significant which is shows 0.000 Sig. (2-tailed). Therefore, the present study has achieved all alternative hypotheses  $H_1$  for each factor.

**Table (5): One-Sample Test – Hypothesis Testing**

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Leadership	74.833	326	.000	3.79001	3.6904	3.8896
Academic. Staff	87.275	326	.000	4.10612	4.0136	4.1987
Environment and F.	70.443	326	.000	3.76300	3.6579	3.8681
Library Services	74.990	326	.000	3.96346	3.8595	4.0674
Academic Courses	82.992	326	.000	4.06437	3.9680	4.1607
University	85.677	326	.000	3.67645	3.5920	3.7609

Table (5) shows the hypotheses testing; all hypotheses are accepted on the level of the sig. (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). and null hypotheses have been rejected.

The analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between leadership and students' retention. The sig. value is .000, and the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows the important role of leadership and management in the academic institutions. When the management supports and listens to students, this will effect directly on their retention.

There is also a positive relationship between academic staff and students' retention.  $H_1$  is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. The sig. value is .000, it is below .05. If the academic staffs are highly qualified, skillful, delivering high quality of teaching, this will meet student's perception and satisfaction.

Moreover, there is also a positive relationship between environment and facilities and students' retention, the sig. value is .000. The environment in the academic institutions can effect on student's retention.

Moreover, there is also a positive relationship between library services and students' retention, the sig. value is .000. Which mean  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted.

The analysis also shows that there is also a positive relationship between academic courses and students' retention, the sig. value is .000, the same here, Null hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted.

Finally, the analysis shows that there is also a positive relationship between university image and students' retention, the sig. value is .000.

The researcher asked the students (what are the most important services that meet your satisfaction in CUCA), most of the students answered the cooperation of management, the support, and encouragement of the academic staff. Moreover, the students are very satisfied with the fees of the course in CUCA. The students also satisfied with a time of the classes, especially some of the student are working. In addition to, the students can reach the leadership and management easily and talk to them. The student also satisfied with the clean environment in the university.

Factor Analysis is a commonly used data/ variable reduction technique. This multivariate statistical technique is used for three primary reasons:

- Reduce the number of variables, from large to small
- Establish underlying dimensions between measured variables and constructs and
- Provide construct validity evidence

**Table 6: Factor Analysis Testing**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.950
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7728.796
	df	666
	Sig.	.000

According to the above table KAISER-MEYER-OLKIN: measure of sampling adequacy is used to compare the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients in relation to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients. Large KMO values are good because correlations between pairs of variables (i.e., potential factors) can be explained by the other variables. If the KMO is below (0.5), don't do a factor analysis. Therefore, the KMO indicted .950 is excellent for Sampling Adequacy.

Moreover, the BARTLETT'S TEST OF SPHERICITY is used to test the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix (all diagonal terms are one and all off-diagonal terms are zero). The present research archived sig. which was (less than .05) that is indicate the variables to be correlated. In other words, picture a correlation matrix: all items are perfectly correlated with themselves (one), and have some level of correlation with the other items. If they are not correlated with the other items then they cannot be part of the same factor.

Total Variance Explained					
Factor		Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings <sup>a</sup>
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
Dimension	1	16.116	43.558	43.558	13.966
	2	2.101	5.679	49.237	12.842
	3	1.457	3.937	53.174	11.976
	4	1.386	3.745	56.919	10.734
	5	1.260	3.404	60.324	7.282
	6	1.140	3.080	63.404	3.761
	7	.969	2.619	66.023	
	8	.909	2.456	68.480	
	9	.840	2.270	70.749	
	10	.786	2.125	72.874	
	37	.156	.423	100.000	
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.					
a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.					

The Total Variance Explained table is the 'Initial Solution'. While the table has been formatted due to the large table so from the question 11 to 36 has been removed because of unnecessary data. The 'Eigenvalue' is the total variance explained by each factor. Any 'factor' that has an Eigenvalue of less than one does not have enough total variance explained to represent a unique factor, and is therefore disregarded. It has indicated 6 factors down have eigenvalues bigger than 1.0. Furthermore they are eliminated from the rest of the analysis. Hence, in the final analysis 6 out of 37 were eliminated, and extracted as factors.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The main objective of this study to measure the service quality at CUCA and study the relationship between service quality and student's retention. It can be concluded that the level of student's satisfaction in CUCA is very high. The study showed that there is a strong relationship between service quality in CUCA and student's retention. The study showed the importance of service quality in the academic institution and the effect on student's retention.

Based on the results presented, it is obvious that service equality effects positively on student's retention in the academic institutions.

The results indicated that students are satisfied with leadership and management in CUCA, in addition to, they are highly satisfied with academic staff and support. They are also satisfied with library services. The results showed students are satisfied with academic courses and study plan there.

Moreover, universities and academic institutions should concentrate more and more on the quality in order to retain students and meet student's satisfaction, and the education and learning should be delivered effectively and efficiently. In addition to, the private organization always looking to meet customer's satisfaction and perception, the academic institution should also meet student's satisfaction and look for a better strategy of delivering the services such as using new technology in the registration process and the education methods.



Management should also listen to students and understand their needs.

University nowadays should consider the student as a consumer who is receiving the services and they should meet consumer needs and satisfaction.

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