Student satisfaction and university reality at the private segment of highest education system

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ABSTRACT

Research background: The quality of higher education has long been a focal point of interest among researchers. Private universities often promote themselves as institutions that more effectively integrate theoretical knowledge with practical business experience. The quality of university education in the fields of economics and management plays a crucial role in shaping future leaders, managers, and owners of emerging entrepreneurial subjects.

Purpose of the article: The objective of this scientific article is to identify key aspects of student satisfaction with the educational process at private universities and to compare their expectations with the actual university environment during the academic year. The analysis focuses on services, infrastructure, staff, and the quality of educational courses.

Methods: Data collection was carried out at three private universities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The questionnaire consisted of 24 closed-ended questions and was completed by 246 students. The data collection took place in September 2025. The assumptions of testing were verified with using Kolmogorov-Smirov test and Levene test. The statistical hypotheses were verified using non-parametric approach – Mann-Whitney test, and IBM SPSS Statistics was employed for data analysis.

Findings & Value added: Differences between students' expectations and their actual experience in evaluating the quality of services provided by the private university are not statistically significant. Approximately 40% of students perceive the university facilities as attractive and well-maintained. Furthermore, seven out of ten surveyed students consider the website design to be clear and up to date. Similarly, the findings confirmed that differences between expectations and real experience in assessing the quality of education provided by academic staff are not statistically significant. Three out of four surveyed students view their instructors as friendly and as experts in their respective fields of study.

INTRODUCTION

Quality of education represents one of the fundamental dimensions of sustainability, as emphasized in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4). Education is not merely a tool for knowledge dissemination, but a strategic driver of social, economic, and environmental progress (Belas et al., 2025). Universities and other higher education institutions play a crucial role in shaping future leaders, professionals, and innovators whose decisions directly influence sustainable development at both national and global levels (Schwerter-Cárcamo et al., 2025).

Ensuring high-quality education involves building transparent evaluation systems, promoting evidence-based teaching methods, and supporting lifelong learning. It also requires alignment of study programs with the rapidly changing needs of the labor market and society (Soegoto et al., 2022). When students acquire competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, and ethical responsibility, they become more capable of addressing complex sustainability challenges (Sarturi & Aragão, 2025). From a sustainability perspective, education quality is also closely linked to inclusiveness and equal access. Private and public universities must promote diversity and reduce social barriers to

education, enabling students from different backgrounds to fully participate in academic and professional life. Additionally, universities are expected to strengthen their collaboration with industry and communities, integrating sustainability principles across curricula and institutional strategies (Slabá, 2025).

Ultimately, high-quality education strengthens resilience, innovation capacity, and social cohesion. It equips individuals with skills necessary to contribute to sustainable economic growth and environmentally responsible behavior (Dzhikiya et al., 2023). Therefore, continuous improvement of educational quality is essential to ensure that higher education remains a catalyst for long-term sustainability and societal well-being (Ershova et al., 2023).

The Czech Republic has established a diverse and continuously evolving higher education system composed of public universities, private higher education institutions, and international branch campuses (Slabá, 2025). This diversified structure reflects the broader European trend of expanding access, increasing competitiveness, and enhancing the quality of educational services. Each segment plays a distinct role in fulfilling the educational needs of domestic and international students while contributing to national socioeconomic development (Asamoah et al., 2024).

Public universities represent the core of the Czech higher education system. Historically well-established and highly respected, these institutions are primarily funded by the state and characterized by strong research capacity, broad academic offerings, and extensive international cooperation. They strive to balance traditional academic values with modernization efforts, such as digitalization, interdisciplinary program development, and stronger ties to industry. Public institutions typically attract the majority of students due to their reputation, affordability, and comprehensive study pathways. Private higher education institutions emerged in response to market demand for greater flexibility, specialization, and practical orientation. Their philosophy is often shaped by entrepreneurial approaches, with a focus on applied fields such as business administration, communication, and technology. Private providers tend to emphasize smaller class sizes, personalized student services, and closer engagement with employers. However, challenges remain in terms of accreditation, research performance, and public perception of quality, which continue to influence their competitive standing within the academic landscape.

In addition, the Czech Republic hosts several international branch campuses, which bring global educational models and international academic standards into the domestic context. These campuses foster an English-language environment, multicultural experiences (Diaz Vidal & Pittz, 2019), and enhanced academic mobility. They contribute to the internationalization of the Czech higher education system and support its integration into global academic networks. Nevertheless, regulatory frameworks and long-term sustainability remain important considerations for the successful functioning of such

institutions (Galiakbarova et al., 2025). The coexistence of these three forms of higher education expands student choice and stimulates institutional innovation. At the same time, it creates competitive pressure that motivates strategic improvements in teaching quality, program relevance, and institutional governance. As the Czech Republic continues to adapt to demographic shifts and labor market changes, strengthening collaboration among public, private, and international institutions will be essential in maintaining a resilient and sustainable system of higher education.

The quality of education and students' satisfaction with the provision of education is a hotly debated topic among scientists, but a uniquely formulated questionnaire compares students' expectations before entering university and the university reality during the academic year in private schools.

The scientific article is structured as follows. The introduction reflects current trends in research on student satisfaction with the quality of education at universities. A critical literature search focuses on the analysis and comparison of student satisfaction with expectations and reality between private and public universities. The research methodology is focused on data collection, questionnaire structure, formulation of hypotheses and methods for their evaluation. The results are presented in tables and figures along with an exact evaluation of statistical hypotheses. The discussion compares the findings with studies and reflects the geographical aspects of the research conducted. In the conclusion, the authors focus on the benefits for practice, characterize the limitations and future direction of the researchers' research activities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Quality of education plays a pivotal role in strengthening the business environment and fostering sustainable economic growth. Well-educated graduates equipped with relevant skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial mindset significantly contribute to innovation, productivity, and competitiveness at both the firm and national levels. Higher education institutions are essential actors in cultivating human capital that meets the dynamic demands of global and local markets (Singh & Manohar, 2025).

A system that ensures high standards of teaching, practical learning, and continuous adaptation of curricula to industry needs promotes the creation of a highly skilled workforce. This, in turn, reduces the skill mismatch, encourages business formation, and supports the adoption of advanced technologies (Wisenthige et al., 2025). Moreover, universities that engage in collaboration with enterprises, incubators, and research organizations actively stimulate knowledge transfer and commercialization of new ideas (Lambovska & Todorova, 2023; Angelova-Stanimirova & Lambovska, 2023).

Student satisfaction at private universities

Student satisfaction and motivation are critical determinants of academic success and institutional performance in higher education. In the context of private universities, these factors gain particular significance as private institutions operate in a competitive environment where student enrollment, reputation, and long-term sustainability are closely interlinked (Zhou & Rouse, 2024). Understanding why students choose private universities and what drives their satisfaction provides valuable insights for developing effective educational strategies and enhancing service quality (Stanyer et al., 2025).

One of the primary motives for students to enroll in private higher education institutions is the perception of higher flexibility and stronger practical orientation. Private universities often tailor their programs to the expectations of the labor market, offering applied knowledge, modern curricula, and opportunities for real-world experience through internships, industry partnerships, and project-based learning (Wang, 2024; Grimes & Walters-Sachs, 2023). Students may also value smaller class sizes and more personalized support, which contribute to a positive learning environment and foster closer relationships between students and academic staff (Govender & David, 2023). Furthermore, private institutions frequently emphasize innovative teaching methods and digital learning tools, which enhance student engagement and reflect current technological trends. This dynamic educational setting increases students' confidence in the relevance of their study programs to future employment (Asim et al., 2024). Marketing and communication strategies of private universities also shape student motivations, highlighting premium services, career development support, and international collaboration as major benefits of private education.

Student satisfaction is closely associated with overall service quality, including administrative assistance, infrastructure, responsiveness to individual student needs, and transparent academic processes (Souto-Otero et al., 2024). When universities actively listen to student feedback and incorporate it into institutional improvement, they strengthen trust and loyalty (Maulana et al., 2024). This can improve retention rates and generate positive word-of-mouth, which is a key driver of competitiveness in the private education sector. Nevertheless, students' expectations are typically high due to the financial cost of studying at private institutions. If perceived value does not meet these expectations, dissatisfaction may arise. Therefore, continuous enhancement of academic quality, employability outcomes, and support services is essential (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2023).

Differences in the approach to studying at public and private schools

The structure and dynamics of higher education differ significantly between public and private universities, influencing students' learning experiences, study approaches, and academic outcomes (Amin & Mahmood, 2025). These differences are shaped by each institution's funding model, governance principles, market orientation, and strategic priorities. Understanding these distinctions is essential for evaluating the quality and efficiency of higher education systems and for assessing student expectations and satisfaction (Ashour & Kleimann, 2024).

Public universities are typically characterized by their strong research orientation, comprehensive program offerings, and larger student populations (Liang, 2025). Their teaching approach is often grounded in traditional academic values, aimed at developing theoretical knowledge and critical thinking skills (Platz & Holtbrügge, 2016). Students at public universities may experience a higher degree of autonomy, facing more demanding admission criteria and academic requirements. This environment encourages self-directed learning but can also lead to limited individualized support due to the scale of operations and higher student-to-teacher ratios. In contrast, private universities frequently adopt a more student-centered and market-driven approach (Arrazola et al., 2024). They tend to focus on practical skills, employability, and alignment with current industry needs, integrating internships, applied projects, and modern technologies into the curriculum. Private institutions typically offer smaller class sizes and closer interaction between students and instructors, which enhances engagement, motivation, and personalized academic guidance. Administrative processes are often more flexible, supporting student needs such as part-time studies or individualized scheduling.

Assessment methods also differ across the two segments. Public universities may rely more on rigorous examinations and research-based outputs, while private institutions often prioritize continuous assessment, project work, and competency-based evaluation (Wulandari & de Jager, 2018). These choices reflect distinct educational philosophies, academic rigor versus practical applicability. Student expectations further amplify the differences in study approach. Students attending private universities are generally more consumer-oriented due to the financial investment they make, which drives institutions toward higher service quality, efficient communication, and responsive academic support (Photopoulos et al., 2025). Public universities, while typically more accessible financially, may face challenges related to bureaucratic constraints, infrastructure limitations, or slower implementation of innovation (Muneeb et al., 2025; Herrmann & Nagel, 2023).

Despite these differences, both forms of higher education contribute unique strengths to the academic system. Public universities provide strong theoretical foundations and research excellence, whereas private institutions offer adaptability and experiential learning opportunities (Herrmann & Nagel, 2023). The coexistence of both sectors enhances student choice and fosters competition, motivating continuous improvements in teaching quality, institutional management, and student services.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The objective of this scientific article is to identify key aspects of student satisfaction with the educational process at private universities and to compare their expectations with the actual university environment during the academic year.

Data collection

The respondent was defined as a student attending a private college or university. Data collection was carried out at three private universities (Ambis. University – Czech Republic, Pan-European University – Czech Republic, DTI University – Slovak Republic) within two Central European countries – the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Students' attitudes regarding the quality of and satisfaction with private educational institutions were gathered through a questionnaire. Respondents were required to confirm their consent to the use of their responses for scientific purposes.

The total number of students approached was 985. The response rate of the completed questionnaires was 25% (n = 246). The most common issues regarding questionnaire completion were incorrect or incomplete answers (n = 12 questionnaires), respondents did not answer all the questions. A total of 234 questionnaires were included in the statistical evaluation.

Questionnaire and variables

The questionnaire consisted of 24 closed-ended questions. It was created using Google Forms within the MS Office environment. The title of the questionnaire was formulated as Expectations vs. Personal Experience with the Educational Process at a Private College or University. Respondents were required to answer all questions. The questionnaire was anonymous. Students completed the questionnaire individually during the educational process at the institution.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

- O_1: Identify your mode of study: TA_1 – full-time, TA_2 – part-time, TA_3 – distance learning.
- O_2: Identify your study location: TA_1 – Brno, TA_2 – Prague, TA_3 – Bratislava, TA_4 – distance learning.
- O_3: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding modern equipment.
  O_4: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding attractive and well-maintained premises
- O_5: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding the design of the website.
- O_6: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding feeling safe at school and when communicating with school staff.
- O_7: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding the experience and friendliness of the teachers.
- O_8: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding the individual approach to the student by teachers.

- O_9: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding teachers' knowledge of students' personal problems.
- O_10: Indicate your expectations and reality regarding teachers' knowledge of student needs.

Questions (O_3, O_4, …, O_10) were evaluated according to the 5-point Likert scale: TA_1 – strongly agree, TA_2 – rather agree, TA_3 – neutral, TA_4 – rather disagree, TA_5 – strongly disagree.

Formulation of statistical hypotheses and methods

To achieve the main objective of the article, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

- SH1: There are a statistically significant differences in the structure of respondents' attitudes toward the quality of services provided by the university (SH1_O_3: modern equipment; SH1_O_4: attractive and well-maintained facilities; SH1_O_5: clarity and up-to- dateness of the university's website; SH1_O_6: perceived safety at the university and in communication with its staff) before enrollment and after gaining real experience at the university.
- SH2: There are a statistically significant differences in the structure of respondents' attitudes toward the quality of education provided by academic staff (SH2_O_7: expertise and friendliness of staff; SH2_O_8: individual approach to students; SH2_O_9: awareness of students' personal issues; SH2_O_10: awareness of students' needs) before enrollment and after gaining real experience at the university.

To evaluate the formulated hypotheses, descriptive statistical tools (absolute frequency, relative frequency) were applied. The assumptions for the use of parametric tests were verified through: the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S) for normal distribution, and the Levene test (LEV) for homogeneity of variances. If the p-value (Sig.) exceeds the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the assumption is accepted. If the p-value is lower, a non-parametric alternative—the Mann-Whitney U test—is employed.

Structure of students

The statistical evaluation focused on the following respondent characteristics:

- Form of study: full-time studies – 102 respondents (43.6%), distance learning – 118 respondents (50.4%), combined form – 14 respondents (6.0%);
- Type of university: 112 respondents (47.9%) from Ambis University, 51 respondents (21.8%) from DTI University, and 71 respondents (30.3%) from Pan-European University;
- Study location: 45 respondents (19.2%) in Bratislava, 52 (22.2%) in Ostrava, 21 (9.0%) in Brno, 75 (32.1%) in Prague, and 41 (17.5%) in Dubnica nad Váhom.

RESULTS

Quality of services provided by the university

The tables 1 and 2 present the results of the verification of statistical hypotheses SH1_O_3 and SH1_O4.

The results (Table 1) show that more than 55% of respondents are fully or rather satisfied with the university's equipment. On the other hand, only 40% of respondents consider the university premises to be attractive and well-maintained. The results of the non-parametric testing (Table 2) indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between respondents' expected attitudes and their real experience in the evaluation of statements O_3 and O_4 (O_3: Sig. = 0.120; O_4: Sig. = 0.200). Based on these findings, the statistical hypotheses SH1_O3 and SH1_O4 were rejected.

The following tables (Table 3 and Table 4) present the results of the verification of statistical hypotheses SH1_O_5 and SH1_O6.

The results (Table 3) show that more than 70% of respondents are fully or rather satisfied with the design of the website. Also, around 70% of respondents consider that they feel safe at school and when communicating with school staff. The results of the non-parametric testing (Table 4) indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between respondents' expected attitudes and their real experience in the evaluation of statements O_5 and O_6 (O_5: Sig. = 0.191; O_6: Sig. = 0.370). Based on these findings, the statistical hypotheses SH1_O5 and SH1_O6 were rejected.

Quality of education provided by teachers

The following tables (Table 5 and Table 6) present the results of the verification of statistical hypotheses SH2_O_7 and SH2_O8.

The results (Table 5) show that more than 78% of respondents are fully or rather satisfied with experience and friendliness of the teachers. On the other hand, only 35% of respondents consider that teachers have an individual approach to the student. The results of the non-parametric testing (Table 6) indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between respondents' expected attitudes and their real experience in the evaluation of statements O_7 and O_8 (O_5: Sig. = 0.184; O_6: Sig. = 0.122). Based on these findings, the statistical hypotheses SH2_O7 and SH2_O8 were rejected.

The following tables (Table 7 and Table 8) present the results of the verification of statistical hypotheses SH2_O_9 and SH2_O10.

The results (Table 7) show that around 35% of respondents are fully or rather satisfied with teachers' knowledge of students' personal problems. Also, around 50% of respondents consider that teachers have knowledge about student needs. The results of the non-parametric testing (Table 8) indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between respondents' expected attitudes and their real experience in the evaluation of

statements O_9 and O_10 (O_9: Sig. = 0.093; O_10: Sig. = 0.214). Based on these findings, the statistical hypotheses SH2_O9 and SH2_O10 were rejected.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to compare students' expectations before enrolling in private universities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia with what they actually experienced. Overall, the differences were not statistically significant, so the institutions mostly deliver what they promise and students more or less get what they expect.

Firstly, the quality of services: students were quite satisfied with the modern equipment, but the appearance and maintenance of the campus were not rated as highly. This difference is interesting: laboratories and classrooms seem functional, but hallways, common rooms and perhaps even lighting seem outdated. Small visible changes (cleanliness, signage, cozier study areas) could quickly improve the perception of this state. First impressions are very important here (Govender & David, 2023). The website was rated very positively, which is in line with the private sector's focus on communication and quick access to information (Photopoulos et al., 2025). Many students also felt safe talking to university staff (Singh & Manohar, 2024). This psychological safety is important, when asking questions and reporting problems. If schools maintain this culture, it supports student retention (Diaz Vidal & Pittz, 2019). Perhaps more surprisingly, almost 30 percent of students don´t feel physically safe on campus. This is a topic that deserves further research in the future to determine exactly why this is the case.

In terms of quality of education, teachers were perceived as friendly and competent. This is a big plus. However, "personalized approach" scored lower, and only about half of students felt that teachers truly understood their needs. These results suggest that there remains a limit to personalization, probably due to workload and time constraints. One item on understanding personal problems was close to significance, which could indicate that there are differences between programs or groups that our sample could not fully capture (Angelova-Stanimirova & Lambovska, 2024). The high intellectual level of teachers working at private schools, together with their personal characteristics, represents a key factor in ensuring the sustainability and growth of students, as well as in maintaining a high-quality and competitive environment within the education sector (Wisenthige et al., 2025).

From a practical perspective, universities should try the "designed personalization." Not necessarily more hours, but smarter management in this area. Shorter consultation times, online bookings, early notifications from LMS (Learning Management System) activities and providing feedback, say mid-semester, can help target support where it is most needed. At the same time, the renovation of university/school spaces could quickly increase overall satisfaction, as technical equipment is already more or less sufficient.

Table 1: Perceptions of respondents on the quality of services provided by the university – part one

TA	O_3				O_4			
	expectations		reality		expectations		reality	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
TA_1	54	23.1%	46	19.7%	42	17.9%	24	10.3%
TA_2	85	36.3%	83	35.5%	52	22.2%	65	27.8%
TA_1+2	139	59.4%	129	55.1%	94	40.2%	89	38.0%
TA_3	85	36.3%	79	33.8%	126	53.8%	125	53.4%
TA_4	8	3.4%	20	8.5%	12	5.1%	18	7.7%
TA_5	2	0.9%	6	2.6%	2	0.9%	2	0.9%

Note: TA – Type of answer; O_3: modern equipment; O_4: attractive and well-maintained premises.
Source: own results from the research

Table 2: Evaluation of non-parametric tests – verification of hypotheses SH1_O_3 and SH1_O4

TA	Verification of assumptions					
	Test of Normality			Test of Homogeneity of Variance		
	K-S Stat.	df	Sig.	LEV. Stat.	df	Sig.
O_3	0.202	468	0.000	3.367	466	0.067
O_4	0.313	468	0.000	3.778	466	0.064
TA	**Non-parametric test - Mann Whitney Test**					
	GROUPS	n	Mean of Rank		Sum of Ranks	
O_3	Exp.	234	225.28		52716.00	
	Real.	234	243.72		57030.00	
O_4	Exp.	234	227.21		53168.00	
	Real.	234	241.79		53578.00	
O_3	M-W Stat.	25221.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.120	
O_4	M-W Stat.	25673.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.200	

Source: own results from the research

Table 3: Perceptions of respondents on the quality of services provided by the university – part tow

TA	O_5				O_6			
	expectations		reality		expectations		reality	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
TA_1	77	32.9%	68	29.1%	84	35.9%	90	38.5%
TA_2	96	41.0%	97	41.5%	72	30.8%	77	32.9%
TA_1+2	173	73.9%	165	70.5%	156	66.7%	167	71.4%
TA_3	41	17.5%	34	14.5%	68	29.1%	57	24.4%
TA_4	18	7.7%	29	12.4%	8	3.4%	8	3.4%
TA_5	2	0.9%	6	2.6%	2	0.9%	2	0.9%

Note: TA – Type of answer; O_5: design of the website; O_6: feeling safe at school and when communicating with school staff. Source: own results from the research

Table 4: Evaluation of non-parametric tests – verification of hypotheses SH1_O_5 and SH1_O6

TA	Verification of assumptions					
	Test of Normality			Test of Homogeneity of Variance		
	K-S Stat.	df	Sig.	LEV. Stat.	df	Sig.
O_5	0.262	468	0.001	3.720	466	0.059
O_6	0.229	468	0.001	2.458	466	0.275
TA	**Non-parametric test - Mann Whitney Test**					
	GROUPS	n	Mean of Rank		Sum of Ranks	
O_5	Exp.	234	226.77		53064.00	
	Real.	234	242.23		56682.00	
O_6	Exp.	234	239.81		56116.00	
	Real.	234	229.19		53630.00	
O_5	M-W Stat.	25569.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.191	
O_6	M-W Stat.	26135.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.370	

Source: own results from the research

Table 5: Perceptions of respondents on the quality of education provided by teachers – part one

TA	O_7 expectations		O_7 reality		O_8 expectations		O_8 reality	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
TA_1	96	41.0%	97	41.5%	49	20.9%	34	14.5%
TA_2	60	25.6%	87	37.2%	45	19.2%	50	21.4%
TA_1+2	156	66.7%	184	78.6%	94	40.2%	84	35.9%
TA_3	70	29.9%	40	17.1%	114	48.7%	116	49.6%
TA_4	6	2.6%	10	4.3%	24	10.3%	28	12.0%
TA_5	2	0.9%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%	6	2.6%

Note: TA – Type of answer; O_7: experience and friendliness of the teachers; O_8: individual approach to the student by teachers. Source: own results from the research

Table 6: Evaluation of non-parametric tests – verification of hypotheses SH2_O_7 and SH2_08

TA	Verification of assumptions					
	Test of Normality			Test of Homogeneity of Variance		
	K-S Stat.	df	Sig.	LEV. Stat.	df	Sig.
O_7	0.254	468	0.001	2.128	466	0.167
O_8	0.286	468	0.001	2.156	466	0.159
TA	**Non-parametric test - Mann Whitney Test**					
	GROUPS	n	Mean of Rank		Sum of Ranks	
O_7	Exp.	234	242.32		56703.00	
	Real.	234	226.68		53043.00	
O_8	Exp.	234	225.51		52769.00	
	Real.	234	243.49		56977.00	
O_7	M-W Stat.	25548.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.184	
O_8	M-W Stat.	25274.00		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.122	

Source: own results from the research

Table 7: Perceptions of respondents on the quality of education provided by teachers – part two

TA	O_9 expectations		O_9 reality		O_10 expectations		O_10 reality	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
TA_1	36	15.4%	32	13.7%	45	19.2%	33	14.1%
TA_2	53	22.6%	53	22.6%	70	29.9%	79	33.8%
TA_1+2	89	38.0%	85	36.3%	115	49.1%	112	47.9%
TA_3	131	56.0%	112	47.9%	103	44.0%	94	40.2%
TA_4	12	5.1%	25	10.7%	16	6.8%	22	9.4%
TA_5	2	0.9%	12	5.1%	0	0.0%	6	2.6%

Note: Type of answer; O_9: teachers' knowledge of students' personal problems; O_10: teachers' knowledge of student needs. Source: own results from the research

Evaluation of non-parametric tests – verification of hypotheses SH2_O_9 and SH2_010

TA	Verification of assumptions					
	Test of Normality			Test of Homogeneity of Variance		
	K-S Stat.	df	Sig.	LEV. Stat.	df	Sig.
O_9	0.286	468	0.001	1.382	466	0.240
O_10	0.241	468	0.001	2.797	466	0.195
TA	**Non-parametric test - Mann Whitney Test**					
	GROUPS	n	Mean of Rank		Sum of Ranks	
O_9	Exp.	234	224.84		52612.50	
	Real.	234	244.16		57133.50	
O_10	Exp.	234	227.19		53161.50	
	Real.	234	241.81		56584.50	
O_9	M-W Stat.	25117.50		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.093	
O_10	M-W Stat.	25666.50		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.214	

Source: own results from the research

Methodologically, the paired design was appropriate for the research question and non-parametric tests fit the data. However, there are limitations: the sample came from several institutions in two countries and all measures were reported separately. Future work should add behavioral indicators (booking consultation, attendance, progression) and follow students over multiple semesters to see if perceptions change or stabilize. In short, private universities deliver on the basic promises of clear informations, secure communication and competent staff. The next step is to practically extend personalization while improving the look and feel of campuses. If both events come true, the small neutral zones in our results may shift towards consistent positives. In the future, it is also possible to expand the research and compare public universities with private ones, where the informative value of such research may be higher.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this scientific article was to identify key aspects of student satisfaction with the educational process at private universities and to compare their expectations with the actual university environment during the academic year.

The empirical findings on the evaluation of service quality and educational quality at private universities revealed that students' expectations prior to the commencement of their higher education studies were fulfilled in several aspects, and in some cases, students' perceptions even improved compared to their initial expectations. The observed differences between students' expectations and their actual experiences were not statistically significant. Regarding safety in communication with university staff, 71% of students reported a positive experience, which represents an improvement of 5% compared to their expectations.

The empirical research is subject to certain limitations. Its implementation in only two countries (five cities) and on a relatively small sample of respondents (n = 243) indicates clear potential for further application and additional data collection. Statistical hypotheses were verified using non-parametric tests, as the assumptions for the application of parametric methods were not met. Non-parametric techniques, however, have lower explanatory power in comparison with parametric testing.

The analysis of student satisfaction with services provided by private educational institutions is highly important for the top management and owners of private universities. This significance arises from several key reasons: (i) enhancing the university's credibility in the eyes of students and other stakeholders; (ii) maintaining and improving the quality of provided services; (iii) strengthening the image of the educational organization; and (iv) improving the financial performance of the private educational institution.

The researchers aim to extend the unique questionnaire to additional universities within the Central European region (e.g., Poland, Hungary), increase the sample size of respondents, and conduct a follow-up assessment of student attitudes after a longer period of study (i.e., when students have been enrolled at the university for more than two academic semesters).

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