Research on the Countermeasures to Improve the Service Quality of Private Colleges and Universities

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, with the continuous improvement of economic globalization, education internationalization and Chinese higher education popularization and the transformation of independent colleges, the team of private colleges and universities has been further expanded and the development of private education in China has also entered a new normal. As an institution that provides educational services, private colleges and universities have services as their main products. The quality of services involves the fundamental interests of students. Therefore, in addition to continuously improving other hardware facilities, private colleges and universities should also pay attention to the impact of service quality on the construction of themselves and strengthen their own competitive advantages by providing good service quality. Aiming at the problem of improving the service quality of private colleges and universities, this article uses the empirical research method to conduct a questionnaire survey of some private colleges and universities, analyzes statistical research data, and offers advice and suggestions for improving the service quality of private colleges and universities.

Keywords: Private colleges and universities, Service quality, Countermeasure research.

1. INTRODUCTION

As an important factor affecting the construction of colleges and universities, service quality has been recognized by some higher education research scholars in the academic circle. Grönroos (1982) proposed the category of customer perceived service quality, which believes that the service quality of colleges and universities is one of the basic outputs of higher education, and the service quality of colleges and universities refers to the degree to which higher education meets the needs of its customers or service targets, namely students, as a service. The level of service quality depends on the customers (students) and stakeholders' perception of higher education service level, namely, the comparison between customer's service expectations and perceived service quality[1]. Kerlin (2000) in the United States pointed out that students are actually the customers of universities[2]. Providing high-quality services to attract and meet the needs of customers (students) is an inherent requirement for colleges and universities as providers of higher education services. Leblanc & Nguyen (1999) believed that university administrators must constantly strive to provide quality services to students[3].

This paper adopts a combination method of normative and empirical research methods, and on the basis of studying the significance of the service quality of private colleges and universities, analyzes the service quality research data of some private colleges and universities and studies the countermeasures to improve the service quality of them.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDYING THE SERVICE QUALITY OF PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Since the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the "Implementation Plan on Accelerating the Transformation of Independent Colleges" (Jiaofating [2020] No. 2) on May 15, 2020, most independent colleges have completed the transformation. The ranks of private colleges and universities have expanded further, providing

more choices for students, and the competition for enrollment in private colleges and universities has become more intense. Some researches believe that the service quality of private colleges and universities is one of the important factors influencing students' choice decisions. Therefore, it is of practical significance to carry out surveys on the service quality of private colleges and universities.

Annamdevula & Bellamkonda (2016) affirmed the impact of service quality on student satisfaction and loyalty, and divided service quality into six dimensions to analyze: teaching, administrative services, academic facilities, campus infrastructure, support services and internationalization[4]. This article specifically selects the dimension of administrative services as a reference. When students register at the school, the first person they come into contact with is often the staff. The staff is mainly responsible for all aspects of the student's life and needs to be frequently contacted. Therefore, the attitudes and behaviors of these staff will bring important influence to the students. The authors believe that selecting the dimension of administrative services in the article is closer to the original intention of this article to study how to enable students to experience higher quality, higher standards, and higher efficiency services. The feedback from the survey is also more accurate.

3. SURVEY DATA ON THE SERVICE QUALITY OF SOME PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

With reference to the Annamdevula & Bellamkonda (2016) scale, this study designs a simple questionnaire with a total of 6 items[4]. Each item is scored using the Likert 5-point scale. Three private colleges and universities (Zhuhai XX College, Guangdong XX College, Guangzhou XX College) were selected as the research objects in Guangdong. A total of 200 students from different grades and majors were randomly selected to fill out the questionnaire (50 students for each of the first to fourth grades, covering all majors in each grade). A total of 1101 questionnaires were sent out, and 1101 were collected. The process of screening and deleting the collected questionnaires resulted in 142 invalid questionnaires and 959 valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 87%.

3.1 Analysis of the Results of the Questionnaire

First, in terms of the accuracy of the services provided by school staff, the data showed that the probability of choosing "strongly agree" was 100%. ("Figure 1")
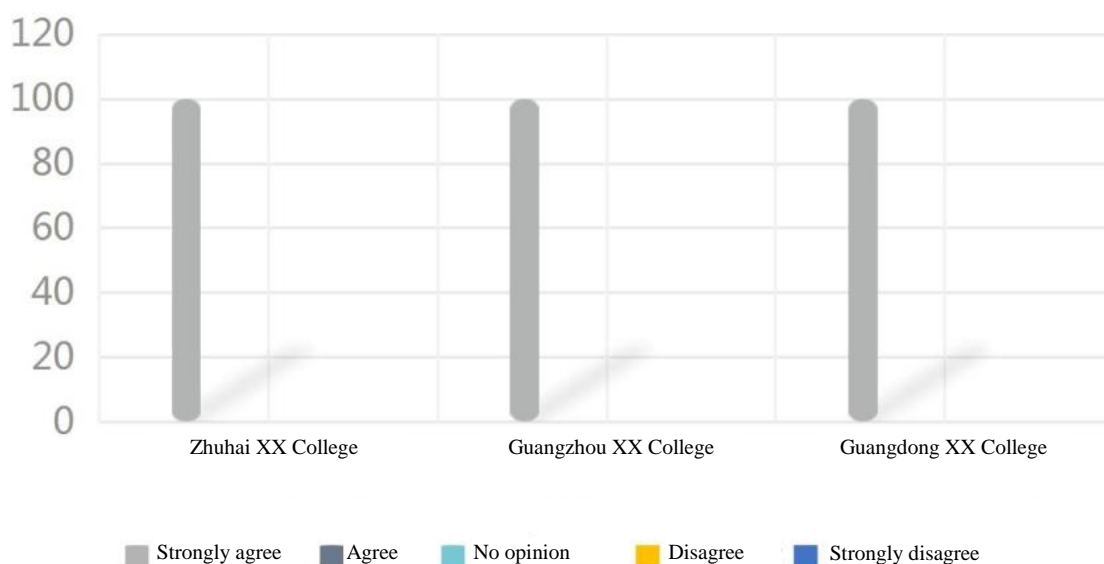

Figure 1 The accuracy of the services provided by school staff.

Second, on the issue of school staff being able to provide help quickly ("Figure 2"), data showed that 93.92% of students from Zhuhai XX College chose "strongly agree", 5.57% chose "agree", and

0.51% chose "no opinion". 94.64% of the students from Guangzhou XX College chose "strongly agree", and 5.36% chose "agree". 88.89% of the

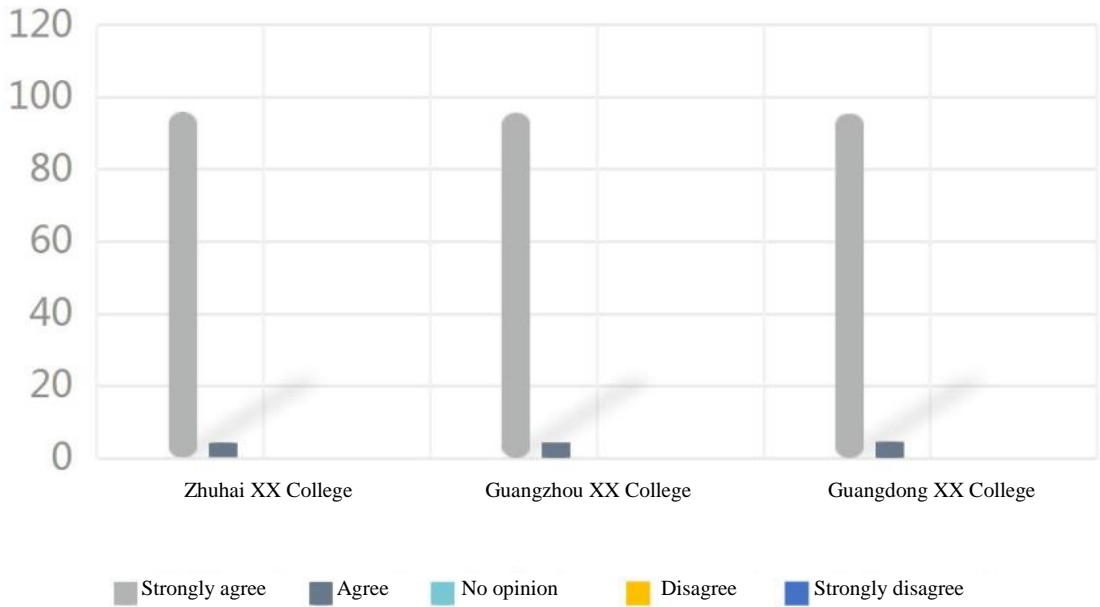students from Guangdong XX College chose "strongly agree", and 11.11% chose "agree".

Figure 2 The issue of school staff being able to provide help quickly.

Third, on the question of school staff being polite and helpful, the data showed that the probability of choosing "strongly agree" was 100%. ("Figure 3")
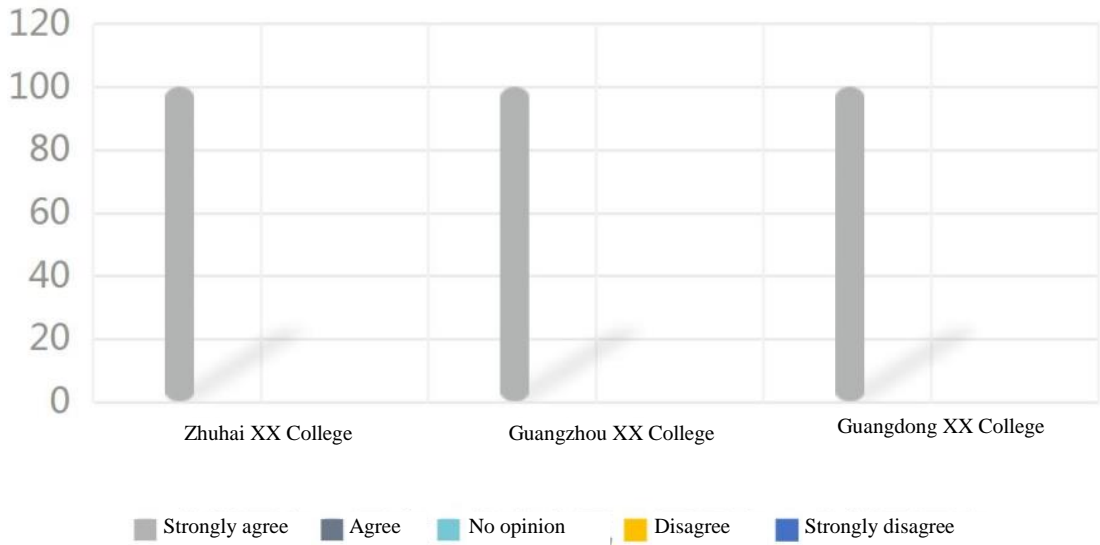

Figure 3 The issue of school staff being polite and helpful.

Fourth, on the issue of the ability of school staff to maintain accurate and searchable records when working, data showed that 94.68% of the students from Zhuhai XX College chose "strongly agree", 4.81% chose "agree", and 0.51% chose "no opinion". 97.32% of the students from Guangzhou XX College chose "strongly agree", and 2.68% chose "agree". 94.95% of the students from Guangdong XX College chose "strongly agree", and 5.05% chose "agree". ("Figure 4")
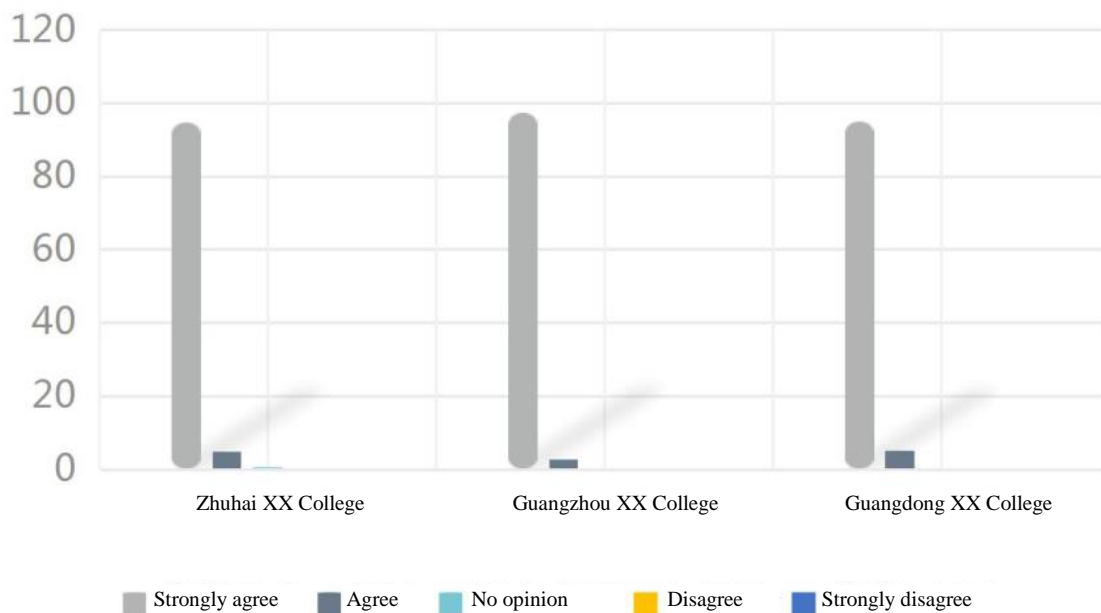
Figure 4 The issue of the ability of school staff to maintain accurate and searchable records when working.

Fifth, on the question that school staff could be visited at any time during office hours, data showed that 88.1% of the students from Zhuhai XX College chose "strongly agree", 9.11% chose "agree", 2.03% chose "no opinion", 0.25% chose "disagree", and 0.51% chose "strongly disagree". In Guangzhou XX College, 93.75% of students chose "strongly agree", 5.36% chose "agree", and 0.89% chose "disagree". In Guangdong XX College, 87.88% of students chose "strongly agree", 11.11% chose "agree", and 1.01% chose "no opinion". ("Figure 5")
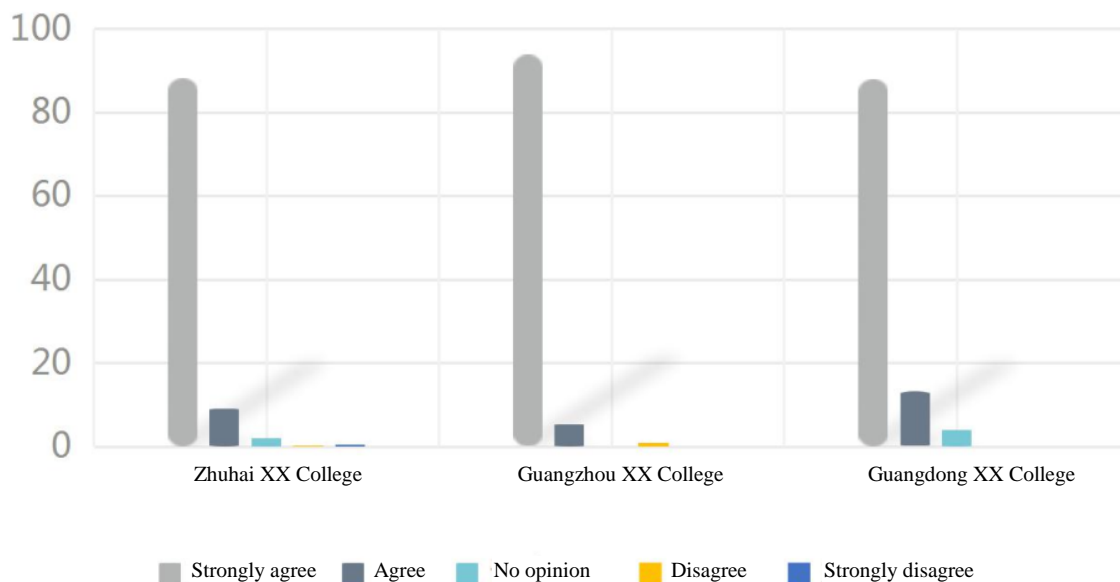

Figure 5 The school staff could be visited at any time during office hours.

Sixth, on the issue that students could get timely notification of school changes, data showed that 92.15% of the students from Zhuhai XX College chose "strongly agree", 6.84% chose "agree",

0.25% chose "no opinion", 0.51% chose "disagree", and 0.15% chose "strongly disagree". 94.64% of the students from Guangzhou XX College chose "strongly agree", and 5.36% chose "agree". In Guangdong XX College, 82.83% of students chose "strongly agree", 13.13% chose "agree", and 4.04% chose "no opinion". ("Figure 6")
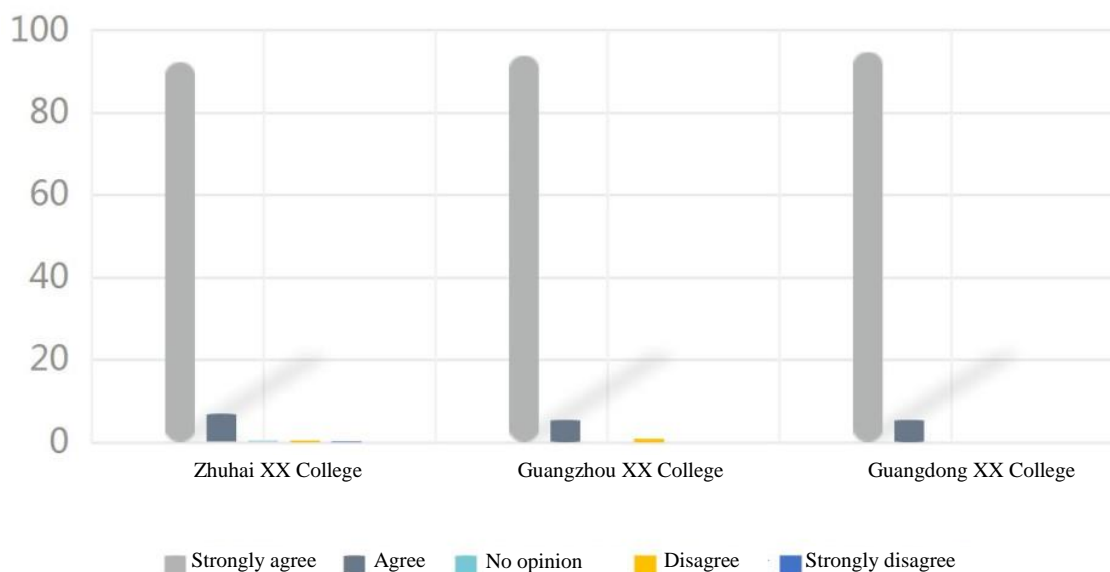

Figure 6 Students could get timely notification of school changes.

3.2 *Analysis of the Basic Data of the Respondents*

3.2.1 *Gender Statistical Analysis*

The results showed that among the 959 valid samples collected, there were 302 males, accounting for 31.5% of the overall sample; 657 females, accounting for 68.5% of the overall sample. The ratio of male to female among the respondents was about 1:2, and the proportion of female was slightly larger. ("Figure 7")
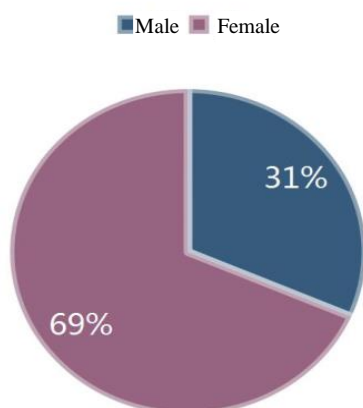

Figure 7 Gender of respondents.

3.2.2 *Grade Statistical Analysis*

The results showed that there were 316 students in the first grade, accounting for 33%; 231 students in the second grade, accounting for 24.1%; 342 students in the third grade, accounting for 35.7%; 70 students in the fourth grade, accounting for 7.3%. In terms of grade distribution, most of the respondents were in the first to third grades. ("Figure 8")
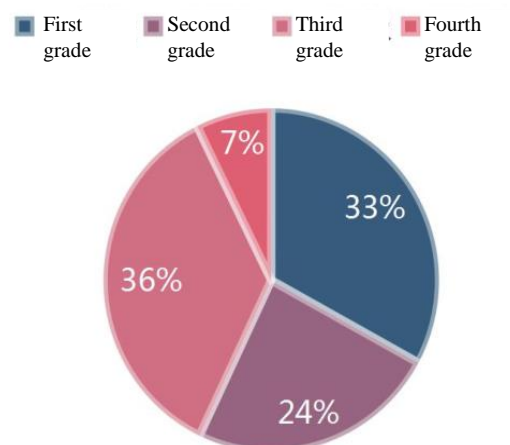

Figure 8 Grade of respondents.

3.2.3 Statistical Analysis of the Discipline Category

The results showed that in this questionnaire survey, there were 422 people in the discipline category of management, accounting for 44% of the total sample number; 188 people in the discipline category of engineering, accounting for 19.6% of the total sample number; 154 people in economics, accounting for 16.1% of the total sample number; 97 people in art, accounting for 10.1% of the total sample number; 49 people in science, accounting for 5.1% of the total sample number; 17 people in medicine, accounting for 1.8% of the total sample number; 13 people in literature, accounting for 1.4% of the total sample number; 11 people in education, accounting for 1.1% of the total sample number; 3 people in interdiscipline, accounting for 0.3% of the total sample number; 2 people in philosophy and 2 people in history, each accounting for 0.2% of the total sample number; 1 people in military science, accounting for 0.1% of the total sample number; the number of people in law and agriculture was 0, each accounting for 0% of the total sample number. The highest proportion of respondents in the discipline category was management. ("Figure 9")
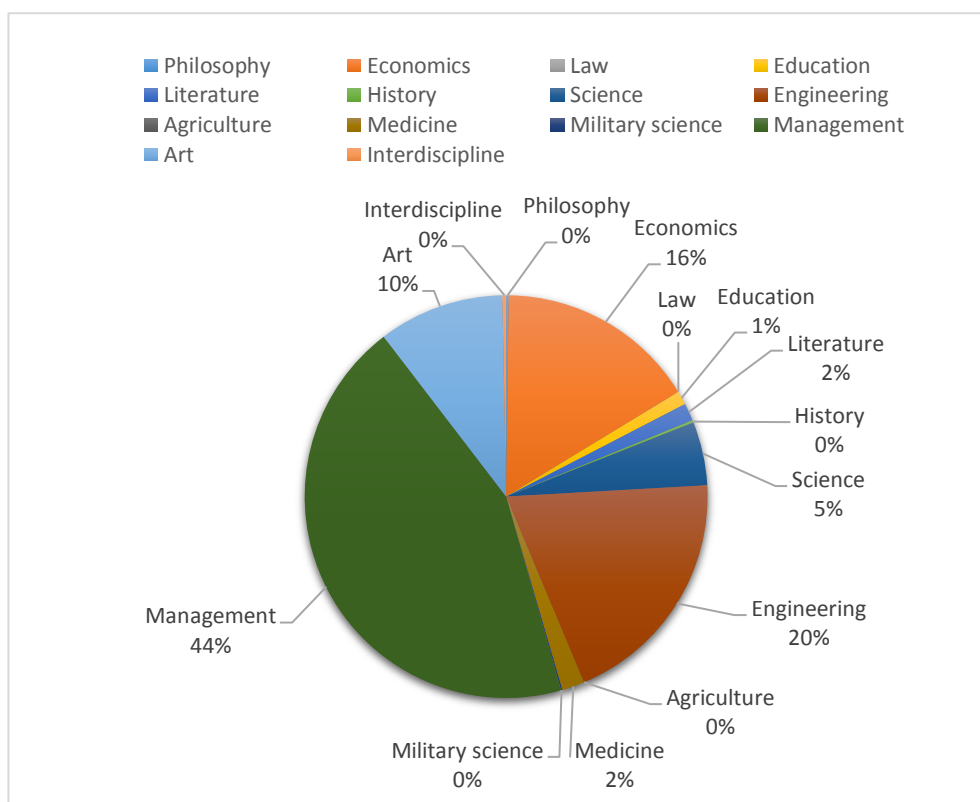

Figure 9 Discipline category of respondents.

3.2.4 Statistical Analysis of Student Cadres

The results showed that there were 571 student cadres, accounting for 59.5% of the total sample number; 388 people didn't serve as student cadres, accounting for 40.5% of the total sample number. ("Figure 10")
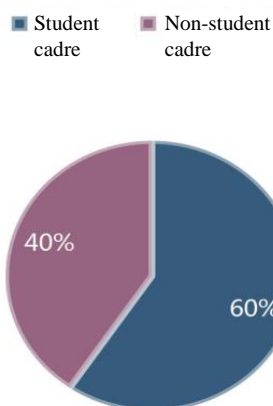
Figure 10   Respondents serving as student cadres.

3.2.5   *Statistical Analysis of Scholarship Recipients*

In this questionnaire survey, 317 people received scholarships, accounting for 33.1% of the total sample number; 642 people didn't receive scholarships, accounting for 66.9% of the total sample number. The scholarship status of the respondents belonged to a normal distribution. ("Figure 11")
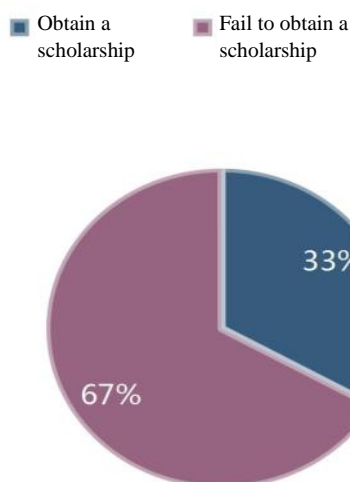

Figure 11   Respondents' scholarship status.

4.   COUNTERMEASURES PROPOSED

4.1   *Maintaining a High-quality Service Attitude and Enhancing Students' Sense of Belonging to the School*

According to the survey, students at all these three private colleges were 100% likely to agree that the school staff provided accurate and courteous services, showing that the work of each school in this aspect had been fully recognized by the students of the school.

Accurate service and courteous service attitude are the foundation of high-quality service, as well as the first feeling and emotional needs of students to gain respect. When students are in urgent need of help, targeted and accurate services based on students' personality will stabilize their emotions in a timely manner, alleviate their anxiety, and improve their trust in the staff, which can be more conducive for them to confide, solve problems better, and serve students, thereby enhancing students' sense of belonging to the school and improving students' favorability towards the school.

4.2   *Establishing a High-quality Response Mechanism to Enhance Students' Sense of Identity with the School*

According to the survey, a small number of students in these three private colleges didn't choose to "strongly agree" in terms of the ability of school staff to quickly provide help, indicating that the three colleges have varying degrees of deficiencies in this aspect.

It can be seen that the training and requirements to strengthen the staff's work response are becoming more and more important. The staff should understand the situation of the students in time, put themselves in students' position to think, solve students' confusion from the perspective of the students so that they can get help quickly, and provide effective feedback to students' problems in time, which will help improve the service quality and win better evaluation from students.

4.3   *Improving a High-quality Working Record So That Everything Can Be Well Documented*

According to the research, a small number of students at the three private colleges didn't choose "strongly agree" when evaluating the aspect of "the ability of school staff to maintain accurate and searchable records when working", indicating that the three colleges have some shortcomings in this aspect.

Schools should combine the actual work of grassroots management to establish a working record for staff, especially those who provide services to students, so that work records can be true, accurate and available for inspection at any

time. This facilitates the provision of timely and reliable services for students, facilitates retrieval and verification, improves work efficiency and work reliability, and continuously promotes scientific and standardized work.

4.4 Strictly Managing Time with High Quality and Doing a Good Job of Online and Offline Service Platforms

According to the survey, when the students of the three private colleges evaluated the item that "school staff could be visited at any time during office hours", some students even chose "disagree" and "strongly disagree", showing that there are more prominent problems in the work of the three colleges in this aspect.

It is necessary to further strengthen the working time management of the staff, strictly enforce working discipline, and strengthen the supervision of the on-the-job working time, at the same time, the staff should make full use of the office staff's whereabouts card to announce their whereabouts in time, so that students in need can know where the staff they need to contact is, and reduce students' waiting or repeated visits. At the same time, the staff should make full use of modern science and technology to enhance online communication with students and provide services, remotely assist students in solving problems, remove time and space constraints, and provide students with better services.

4.5 Strengthening High-quality Publicity and Interaction to Ensure That the Official Information Is Conveyed

According to the survey, when the students of the three private colleges evaluated the item that "students could get timely notification of school changes", the students more or less felt that they didn't keep abreast of the latest changes in the school.

In today's era of new media or Omnimedia, almost every school has its own "official account". On the one hand, the school should make full use of the new media platform to publish the latest developments of the school in a timely manner. On the other hand, it should also use multiple channels to interact with students. For example, the school can post notices in the canteens, dormitories and other areas where students often go, let the "newest news" enter the classroom through teachers, rush about telling the "good news", and clarify and

resolve the "wrong news" and "bad news" in time, so as to make students truly feel that they are inseparable from the school and continuously enhance their sense of participation and belonging.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, to improve the service quality of private colleges and universities, schools should start from five aspects: work attitude, mechanism, working record, management and publicity. This requires private schools to fully implement their work in place, pay attention to the important impact of service quality on the construction of private colleges and universities, provide students with undifferentiated services, continuously improve service quality, and pursue excellent quality.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Yiheng Wang is responsible for experimental design, Jie Lian analysed data, Yingqi Liu wrote the manuscript, Siding Kong contributed to revising and editing.

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