



**Students' Attitudes Towards the Quality of Higher
Education at the Algerian University:
A Field Study on a Sample of Students from the
Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent
University**

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify students' attitudes towards the quality of higher education at the Algerian university. It is a field study conducted on a sample of students from the Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent University. In addition, it seeks to determine the individual background factors influencing students' attitudes towards the quality of higher education, namely: gender, specialisation, and academic level. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers employed the descriptive-analytical approach. To obtain the necessary data, a questionnaire consisting of 20 items divided into four

dimensions was prepared, and its psychometric properties were verified. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 59 male and female students. The results of the study revealed a high level of the general index of attitudes towards the quality of higher education. Similarly, attitudes towards the quality of teaching staff and the quality of educational programmes were also high, whereas attitudes towards the quality of material resources and university administration were low. The study concluded with a set of recommendations and suggestions.

Keywords: *attitudes, higher education, university, quality.*

Attitudes des étudiants vis-à-vis de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur à l'université algérienne : Une étude de terrain sur un échantillon d'étudiants du département des sciences sociales de l'université d'Ain Temouchent

Résumé :

Cette étude vise à identifier les attitudes des étudiants à l'égard de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur dans l'université algérienne. Il s'agit d'une étude de terrain menée sur un échantillon d'étudiants du département des sciences sociales de l'université d'Ain Temouchent. En outre, elle cherche à déterminer les facteurs individuels qui influencent les attitudes des étudiants à l'égard de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur, à savoir : le sexe, la spécialisation et le niveau académique. Pour atteindre les objectifs de l'étude, les chercheurs ont utilisé une approche descriptive et analytique. Pour obtenir les données nécessaires, un questionnaire composé de 20 éléments répartis en quatre dimensions a été préparé et ses propriétés psychométriques ont été vérifiées. Le questionnaire a été administré à un échantillon de 59 étudiants et étudiantes. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé un niveau élevé de l'indice général des attitudes envers la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur. De même, les attitudes à l'égard de la qualité du personnel enseignant et de la qualité des programmes éducatifs étaient également élevées, tandis que les attitudes à l'égard de la qualité des ressources matérielles et de l'administration de l'université étaient faibles. L'étude se termine par une série de recommandations et de suggestions.

Mots clés : *attitudes, enseignement supérieur, université, qualité.*



Introduction

Higher education is considered one of the most important educational stages that follow secondary education. This type of education aims to provide students with specialised knowledge and advanced skills in specific fields, preparing future professionals by developing and enhancing their competencies and capabilities. Such preparation qualifies them for the labour market or for pursuing postgraduate studies and scientific research. Thus, it is regarded as an investment in human capital to lead society's institutions, whether these institutions are public or private.

Recently, the world has become a small village due to the rapid spread of technology. The higher education sector in Arab countries in general, and Algeria in particular, has faced a range of challenges due to ongoing changes resulting from developments in information and technology. Among these challenges, to name but a few, are: the increase in the number and diversity of students, the expansion into new specialisations, and the move towards a knowledge society. These factors have compelled higher education institutions to address such challenges by improving their administrative methods and educational means in order to achieve their objectives and mission.

Quality has become one of the most important competitive elements that higher education institutions must focus on. They should adhere to international standards that enable them to achieve excellence and graduate cohorts that are aware of their responsibilities and possess quality training through the acquisition of skills that match real-life requirements, while also gaining the trust of society, thus

reducing the need to seek skills at foreign universities (Touil & Tetam, 2019, p. 47). In light of the importance of quality in the higher education sector, this study aims to identify the attitudes of social sciences students at Ain Temouchent University towards the quality of higher education by posing the following question: What are students' attitudes towards the quality of higher education at Ain Temouchent University?

Study Hypotheses:

As the question posed is exploratory, no hypothesis is required.

1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.1. The Concept of Quality in Higher Education:

Various definitions have addressed the concept of quality in higher education, including the following:

Quality in education, in general, is defined as the translation of students' needs and expectations into specific characteristics that form the basis for generalising the educational service and delivering it to students in line with their aspirations (Amira, 2013, p. 55).

It is a multidimensional concept that should encompass all functions and activities of education, such as curricula, educational programmes, scientific research, students, buildings, facilities, and tools, the provision of services to the community, internal self-education, and the establishment of internationally recognised quality benchmarking standards (Boulasnam & Chantchan, 2018, p. 51).

The researchers define the quality of higher education as the composite whole that essentially includes: the quality of teaching staff, the quality of educational programmes, the quality of material resources, and the quality of university



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administration, all of which seek to achieve quality educational outcomes.

1.2. Dimensions of Quality in University Education

According to Ben Hamida and Orabi, the dimensions of quality in higher education are as follows:

- **Quality of Faculty Members:** This refers to the academic qualifications of the faculty member, which genuinely contribute to enriching the educational process in line with the scientific and educational philosophy established by society.
- **Quality of Students:** The student is the cornerstone of the educational process, its central focus, and the primary objective of the teaching and learning process.
- **Quality of Educational Programmes and Teaching Methods:** The quality of educational programmes refers to their comprehensiveness, depth, flexibility, and their capacity to address various global challenges and the knowledge revolution, as well as their development in line with general changes.
- **Quality of Buildings and Facilities:** This pertains to the educational building and its equipment, which are key elements in the educational process.
- **Quality of Tools, Methods, and Activities:** This dimension is reflected in the use of modern technologies and devices that can be utilised in educational centres and laboratories, and the development of university libraries.
- **Quality of University Administration, Legislation, and Regulations:** This refers to the quality of

administrative processes undertaken by every manager or leader within the university system.

- **Quality of Funding and Scientific Expenditure:** The funding of education represents a crucial input for any educational system. When sufficient financial resources are available, problems are reduced and become easier to resolve.
- **Quality of University Performance Evaluation:** The evaluation of university performance is indispensable, regardless of how well the planning, organisation, and leadership of staff at various levels and specialisations are conducted. Evaluation ensures the development and quality of both the outputs and inputs of university performance.
- **Quality of the Surrounding Environment:** Higher education institutions are concerned not only with educating individuals but also with preparing them to succeed in the society in which they live (Ben Hamida & Orabi, 2015).

- Classification Criteria for International University Quality Standards

According to Hadidouche and Rabah, there are four central classification systems:

A. The Times Higher Education - QS (THE-QS) British Ranking:

This ranking is issued by a British institution established in 1990, which is a professional educational company. The THE-QS World University Rankings aim to identify universities that achieve international standing through their national performance and local mission within their communities. The THE-QS World University Rankings have



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gained international recognition among educational and research institutions by relying on evaluation criteria that address the structural framework of each university. This ranking is based on the following criteria: research quality, graduate employability, the university's global outlook, and teaching quality.

B. Shanghai Jiao Tong University Ranking (ARWU):

This ranking is published by Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China and is known as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). The first edition was published in 2003 by the university's Institute of Higher Education to identify the position of Chinese universities among world universities in terms of academic performance and scientific research. This ranking relies on objective criteria, making it a reference that world universities compete to be included in, and it is regarded as one of the most important global rankings for universities and higher education institutions. The ARWU examines 2,000 universities worldwide out of approximately 10,000 universities registered with UNESCO that possess the primary qualifications to compete. The ranking relies on the university's scientific output and its attainment of Nobel Prizes, and the classification method is based on four main criteria: quality of education/type of quality, faculty members, research output, and academic achievement relative to the size of the institution.

C. The Spanish Webometrics Ranking of Universities and Institutes (Webometrics CSIC):

This unit operates within the centre in Madrid, Spain, and prepares the Webometrics National Research Ranking. The Webometrics ranking began in 2004 by classifying 16,000 universities. Its primary objective is to encourage academic institutions worldwide to showcase their distinguished scientific activities on the internet. This ranking is not for universities themselves, but rather for their websites. The ranking is conducted in January and July of each year and is based on measuring the performance of universities through their websites according to the following criteria: size, citation of research, and overall impact.

D. The International Ranking of University and College Websites (4ICUs):

This is a global Australian ranking similar to the Spanish Webometrics ranking. However, it focuses on measuring the popularity of university websites that have received recognition or academic accreditation from international organisations or bodies. This ranking is announced every six months, and all participating colleges and universities are required to update their data monthly. The ranking includes 9,000 colleges and universities across 200 countries, based on the popularity of their websites on the internet. It aims to rank colleges and universities worldwide approximately according to the popularity and public reach of their websites. It does not classify higher education institutions based on the quality of education or the level of services provided. The ranking relies on three objective and independent internet metrics derived from three search engines: Google, internal links from Yahoo, and Alexa traffic ranking (Hamidouche & Rabah, n.d., p. 14).



2. Methodology of the Study

1. Adopted Methodology:

2. In line with the topic of the study, the adopted methodology is the descriptive approach, which involves describing and analysing the phenomenon, and is suitable for the nature of the current study.
3. **Temporal and Spatial Boundaries of the Study:**
4. September 2021, Department of Social Sciences, Ain Temouchent University.

2.1. Study Instrument:

This study relied on a questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose, developed based on the researcher's experience and several previous studies on the subject, such as the study by Boulasnam and Chantchan (2018) on the level of quality of higher education from the perspective of students at Yahia Fares University of Médéa (Algeria), and the study by Sheikh Deeb (2015) on the relationship between the quality of private higher education and student satisfaction: a field study on students of Syrian private universities. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items according to a three-point Likert scale, divided into four dimensions:

- The dimension of teaching staff quality comprises five items.
- The dimension of educational programme quality comprises five items.
- The dimension of material resources quality comprises five items.
- The dimension of university administration quality comprises five items.

- Psychometric Properties of the Adopted Instrument:

The psychometric properties were verified by administering the questionnaire to a sample of 30 male and female students from various specialisations. The results were as follows:

A. Validity:

Validity was confirmed using two methods:

- **Face Validity:** After preparing the questionnaire, its face validity was verified by presenting it to a group of experts, namely faculty members from the Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent and Sidi Bel Abbes Universities, to determine whether the items were well-formulated, clear, and appropriate for measuring the phenomenon. The questionnaire was revised based on their feedback.
- **Construct Validity:** Internal consistency validity was assessed by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between each item and the general index, using the statistical software SPSS. As shown in the following table, the obtained correlation coefficients ranged between 0.630 and 0.848 at a significance level of 0.01. The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1, the more valid the scale is.

Table 1 : *Internal Consistency Validity Results*

Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
Teaching Staff Quality	0.803**	0.01
Educational Programme Quality	0.630**	
Material Resources Quality	0.831**	
University Administration Quality	0.848**	



B. Reliability:

Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each item and the general index of attitudes towards distance education, employing the SPSS statistical software. The reliability was estimated at 0.958, which is considered high.

2.2. Basic Characteristics of the Study Sample:

The instrument was administered by converting it into an electronic questionnaire, which was distributed via links shared in groups dedicated to the Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent University (Algeria). A total of 59 students completed the questionnaire: 46 females and 13 males, with ages ranging from 19 to 40 years. Their academic levels ranged from the second year of the Bachelor’s degree to the third year of the Doctorate, distributed across the following two specialisations: Psychology and Sociology. This is illustrated in the following table.

Table 2: *Basic Characteristics of the Study Sample*

Basic Characteristics of the Study Sample			
Variables		Frequenc y	Percentag e
Gender	Female	46	78,0
	Male	13	22,0
Academic Year	Second Year Bachelor	23	39,0
	Third Year Bachelor	3	5,1
	First Year	20	33,9

	Master		
	Second Year Master	10	16,9
	Doctorate	3	5,1
Specialisation	Specialisation	49	83,1
	Sociology	10	16,9

- Statistical Methods Used:

To achieve the objectives of the study and analyse the collected data, a set of statistical methods was employed using SPSS software, version 20. To determine the length of the cells in the three-point scale: (Maximum value - Minimum value) / Number of options, thus: $3-1/3 = 0.67$, which is the cut-off value.

Table 3: *Determining the Levels of the Study Variable Items*

Classification	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Score	3	2	1
Range	2.34-3	1.67-2.33	1-1.66
Level	High	Medium	Low

3. Results and Discussion

After processing the questionnaires and applying the appropriate statistical methods, the researchers obtained the following results:

3.1. Presentation and Discussion of the Results Related to the Exploratory Question:

What are students' attitudes towards the quality of higher education at Ain Temouchent University?



Table 4: Means, Theoretical Means, Standard Deviations, and Levels

Dimension	Mean	Theoretical Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Teaching Staff Quality	10.29	10	3.414	High
Educational Programme Quality	10.25	10	3.267	High
Material Resources Quality	9.00	10	2.859	Low
University Administration Quality	8.76	10	3.554	Low
Overall Variable	38.31	20	/	High

Table 4 illustrates the attitudes of students in the Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent University (Algeria) towards the variable of higher education quality in all its dimensions. The overall mean value for the variable was 38.31, which is higher than the theoretical mean of 20, indicating a high level of attitude. The mean value for the quality of teaching staff was 10.29, exceeding the theoretical mean of 10. This suggests that most faculty members in the Department of Social Sciences are keen to update their knowledge and diversify their teaching methods to convey information effectively.

Similarly, the mean value for the dimension of educational programme quality was 10.25, which is also

higher than the theoretical mean of 10, indicating a high level of attitude in these two dimensions. This demonstrates that the adopted educational programmes are in line with current changes and help students acquire specific skills, particularly through field internships.

In contrast, the mean values for the dimensions of material resources quality and university administration quality were 9.00 and 8.76, respectively, which are lower than the theoretical mean of 10. This indicates a low level of attitude in these two dimensions, reflecting a lack of and poor quality of material resources at the university. Most classrooms lack appropriate physical conditions and are poorly designed. Regarding the quality of university administration, it reflects poor communication between the administration and students, as student organisations often resort to long strikes, sometimes lasting up to a month, especially during exam periods, to put pressure on the administration.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Boulasnam and Chantchan (2018) regarding the level of higher education quality from the perspective of students at Yahia Fares University of Médéa (Algeria). Their study concluded that the level of higher education quality was moderate, indicating an average and acceptable level of quality at Yahia Fares University of Médéa from the students' viewpoint, except for the dimension of educational process evaluation, which received a low agreement score. This explains why a high level of higher education quality was not achieved at Yahia Fares University of Médéa (Algeria). Similarly, the study by Ben Oum El Saad and Cherifa (2019) on the extent to which quality assurance standards are applied in higher education in Algeria, using



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the Quality Assurance Tent Model at Kasdi Merbah University (Algeria), reached several conclusions, the most significant of which was that some of the standards outlined in the Algerian National Quality Manual are being implemented.

Conclusion:

The present study aimed to identify the attitudes towards the quality of higher education among students of the Department of Social Sciences at Ain Temouchent University (Algeria). To achieve this objective, a review of relevant previous studies was conducted, in addition to the application of an appropriate questionnaire, which was constructed and its psychometric properties verified.

The results indicated a high level of attitude towards the quality of higher education among the students under study in the general index, as well as in the dimensions of teaching staff quality and educational programme quality. Conversely, a low level was observed in the dimensions of material resources quality and university administration quality. The results were discussed in light of previous studies, and this study concluded with a set of recommendations, as follows:

First: Scientific Recommendations

- Conduct studies measuring the attitudes of faculty members towards the quality of higher education at Algerian universities.

- Conduct studies linking the variable of attitudes towards the quality of higher education with the variables of achievement motivation and self-efficacy.
- Conduct studies diagnosing obstacles and problems of quality in higher education at Algerian universities.
- Conduct evaluative studies on the state of higher education quality in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second: Practical Recommendations

- Reconsider the university training programmes for the Department of Social Sciences, particularly the Psychology division.
- Organise regular study days within the department and the university as a whole on ways to establish quality standards.
- Improve the physical conditions at the university.

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