

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ride.v14i28.1870>

Scientific articles

Evaluación de la calidad en estudios de posgrado desde la apreciación estudiantil

Evaluation of quality in graduate studies from the student's point of view

***Avaliação da qualidade na pós-graduação a partir da valorização dos
alunos***

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Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo evaluar el bienestar percibido en las maestrías ofrecidas por una institución de educación superior privada. Para ello, se empleó un enfoque metodológico cuantitativo con un nivel descriptivo, y se consideraron específicamente los programas de recursos humanos, educación y derecho. Para recopilar los datos, se utilizó un cuestionario que emplea una escala de opinión tipo Likert. La confiabilidad del instrumento se estableció mediante el coeficiente de alfa de Cronbach, el cual arrojó un valor de 0,930. Los resultados revelan que el nivel de satisfacción percibido en los programas de posgrado es alto, aunque también se identificaron discrepancias significativas en cuanto al criterio *calidad* entre las diferentes maestrías.

Palabras clave: evaluación, satisfacción, posgrado, programas.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the wellbeing appreciated in the master's degree programs belonging to a private higher education institution. A quantitative method with a descriptive level was used to carry out the examination. The following programs were considered: human resources, education and law. A questionnaire was applied using an opinion scale (Likert), which reached a reliability figure by means of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.930. The study made it possible to recognize statistically that the degree of satisfaction appreciated among the postgraduate programs is quite satisfactory, but there are discrepancies in some factors of quality appreciated among each of the master's degrees.

Keywords: evaluation, satisfaction, postgraduate, programs.

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é avaliar o bem-estar percebido em cursos de mestrado oferecidos por uma instituição de ensino superior privada. Para isso, utilizou-se uma abordagem metodológica quantitativa com nível descritivo, e foram considerados especificamente programas de recursos humanos, educação e direito. Para a coleta dos dados foi utilizado um questionário que utiliza escala de opinião do tipo Likert. A confiabilidade do instrumento foi estabelecida por meio do coeficiente alfa de Cronbach, que obteve valor de 0,930. Os resultados revelam que o nível de satisfação percebida nos programas de pós-graduação é elevado, embora também tenham sido identificadas discrepâncias significativas no critério de qualidade entre os diferentes mestrados.

Palavras-chave: avaliação, satisfação, pós-graduação, programas.

Reception Date: December 2023

Acceptance Date: March 2024

Introduction

For some time now, customer service has been highlighted as a crucial factor in differentiating yourself from the competition. In fact, the notion of quality constitutes an essential dimension that, when adopted in our daily activity, allows us to continually improve, regardless of the field in which we develop, whether on a personal or business level. This happens because by incorporating quality in each of the activities of an organization, its processes are strengthened and its competitiveness is promoted not only at the local level, but also nationally and internationally.

Today, organizations are experiencing rapid changes, forcing them to constantly compete to attract as many customers as possible. These demands have led companies to not only be satisfied with offering quality products and services, but also to focus on providing exceptional service to their customers to meet all their expectations and achieve their loyalty (Arciniegas and Mejías, 2017; Hernández and Ulibarri, 2015).

In this context, the present research arises, which is within the framework of the postdoctoral program in Business Administration of the CENID AC (Center for Studies and Research for Teaching Development). Specifically, this project was developed in the faculty of a private university located in Iztapalapa, Mexico City (Mexico), with the purpose of evaluating, from the perceptions of the students, the effectiveness of graduate programs in Human Resources, Law and Education.

Quality of service

For Grande (2005) a service can be represented by any work, effort or provision, while for Duque (2005) it consists of actions designed to generate satisfaction in the consumer. For their part, Montoya and Boyero (2013) maintain that a service is composed of a series of experiences resulting from the interaction between the client and the company.

Among the peculiarities of the service, Albrecht (2006) highlights the interrelation of three variables that, when met together, optimize it: workers, tactics and customer-oriented systems. Added to this, Zeithaml *et al.* (2009) point out other key characteristics, such as intangibility, simultaneous production and diversity, while Solórzano and Aceves (2013) highlight the importance of effectiveness as a primary factor for all organizations. In short,

in the current context, where we seek not only to satisfy the needs of customers, but also to surprise them, the main objective of any company, regardless of its sector, is customer satisfaction (Tumino and Poitevin , 2014).

Vázquez (2015) defines excellence in services as the result of a satisfactory interaction between the consumer and the provider, while Arhuis and Campos (2016) highlight that in services, consumers compare the service received with their expectations, which requires participation of the entire organization and outstanding teamwork (Feijo , 2016).

Transcendence of first-class service in business

In the context of globalization, the expectations of achieving excellence in service have generated a change in focus that requires integrating consumer demands and satisfaction. For this reason, Blanco (2009) highlights that providing a quality service implies significant changes for a company, which must start from customer service, since this represents a vital variable for any organization.

In this regard, Lascurain (2012) states that today customers have increasingly higher demands and competition intensifies day by day, which makes service quality the most important element for all businesses. Moreno (2012) highlights that achieving service effectiveness forces business owners to constantly prepare due to the unstable and changing environment in which they operate.

Rubio *et al.* (2012) highlight the importance of caring for a company's internal staff, and indicate that this conscious approach can be a critical factor in achieving excellence in the provision of services (Reyes, 2014). Therefore, Sánchez and Sánchez (2016) argue that to remain competitive and ensure a long useful life, companies must be able to measure and achieve effectiveness in the provision of services, which constitutes a fundamental evaluation tool. Monroy and Castro (2019) highlight that achieving service excellence allows companies to expand internally, which results in more commercial options for their customers.

Excellence in service in higher education faculties

Due to rapid changes in markets, achieving efficiency in service becomes an essential aspect that all universities must analyze, evaluate and put into practice, since in this way they will be able to offer study programs that fit the requirements. professionals of the people who decide to take them. In this regard, Stake *et al.* (2011) maintain that universities must subject their activities to continuous evaluation to identify their areas of opportunity and thus grow over time.

Paechter *et al.* (2010) explain that in the educational field, research has been carried out on student satisfaction. In this sense, they affirm that students usually value the academic performance they achieve, as well as the relationship that is generated in the classroom between them and the educator. Therefore, Álvarez *et al.* (2015) recommend that to advance the quality of the services offered by universities, it is necessary to apply evaluations in order to achieve effectiveness in their services and remain competitive in the market.

In the case of Mexico, during the mandate of ruler Carlos Salinas, the Program for Educational Modernization was established, executed between 1989 and 1994. According to Olguín (2018), this program had the main objective of updating Mexican education, which summarizes the foundation of pedagogical governance. However, despite efforts to improve the quality of universities, a study by the OECD (2019) indicates that unequal results still persist and strategies must be promoted to increase progress in this area. In accordance with this suggestion, Molina and Rivera (2020) point out that Mexican education must work to increase the quality of universities, which must be an essential issue in public policies. Likewise, maintain a geographical balance in the distribution of universities, provide support from external corporations and promote collaboration between institutions to improve the profiles of graduates.

Previous investigations

Mejías and Martínez (2009) identified six variables related to student satisfaction: personal care, academic topics, affinity, academic offerings, teacher practice, and additional topics. Vivas and Ravenna (2010) mention that effectiveness in the management of instruction and teaching has been widely accepted as a determining factor, while Osorio and Báez (2011) highlight that personal achievement was the variable that most influenced satisfaction. student.

Correia and Miranda (2012) maintain that certainty, professionalism and information were the most influential factors in student satisfaction. On the other hand, Corona (2014) highlights that there are discrepancies between the evidence obtained and students' expectations, which requires the implementation of strategies to satisfy consumer demands.

Alvarado *et al.* (2015) reveal that the training and general progress received from the teaching staff favor student satisfaction, while Andreasen *et al.* (2015) suggest that aspects related to teaching staff and institutional issues contribute to the effectiveness of the service. Cadena *et al.* (2015) mention that factors such as academic organization, infrastructure, university services, teaching and university life impact student satisfaction, and Rubinsztejn *et al.* (2015) conclude that provision, effectiveness, career and teaching are elements that have a positive impact on student satisfaction and, therefore, on customers' recommendation of the university.

For their part, Moreno *et al.* (2016) explain that the assessment of teaching activity, planning and progress of instruction, as well as support resources influence student satisfaction. Therefore, Palominos *et al.* (2016) consider that it is essential to involve them in their teaching process and build a respectable reputation for the university, which will contribute to high satisfaction with the service.

On the other hand, Sandoval *et al.* (2016) conclude that personal achievement is the dimension that most impacts student satisfaction, while Buitrago *et al.* (2017) state that they are support services, comprehensive development, personal dignity, academic aspects and infrastructure. On the other hand, Turpo and Jaimes (2017) find that the effectiveness of university services and the organizational process have a positive impact on the institutional image.

Paredes (2018) indicate that teachers' performance has a positive effect on the

academic taste of students and Surdez *et al.* (2018) suggest that improving facilities and providing effective feedback through teachers will contribute to student satisfaction.

Sarmiento (2019) highlights that the most important dimensions for student satisfaction include the economic context, the teaching process, personal achievements, emotional security, and relevance to the organization. Jiménez *et al.* (2020) find that educational quality obtained a higher rating in terms of satisfaction with services, and Lara *et al.* (2020) indicate that the most important variables are academic ability and performance, as well as the study plan and lines of research.

Methodology

Participants

62 students participated in the research (35 women and 27 men, aged between 20 and 25 years) from different postgraduate programs offered by the institute chosen for this work.

Method

A descriptive technique was used, which includes the use of surveys, exploration of contexts, among others (Zorrilla, 2007). The research approach was quantitative, according to Malhotra (2004), since the data were quantified to apply a statistical analysis.

Instrument

The questionnaire—developed by researchers Gento and Vivas (2003)—was made up of 93 questions distributed into ten sections. Each question was evaluated using an opinion scale (Likert) with a category from 1 to 5, where 1 represents “completely dissatisfied”, 2 “slightly satisfied”, 3 “satisfied”, 4 “quite satisfied” and 5 “very satisfied”. . The reliability of the instrument was 0.93. Table 1 shows the distribution of the questionnaire in its factors and the questions that compose it.

Table 1. Distribution of factors and questions

DIMENSIONS	QUESTIONS
Taste for compliance with your primary demands	1 to 13
Satisfaction with the assistance provided to students	14 to 26
Joy for your vital protection	27 to 32
Delight for socioeconomic protection	33 to 39
Love for sentimental protection	40 to 47
Happy to join the faculty or group of students	48 to 57
Contentment with the structure of work	58 to 76
Well-being due to progress or own achievement	77 to 82
Taste for the recognition of individual triumph	83 to 87
Indulgence in individual self-realization	88 to 93

Source: Own elaboration based on Gento and Vivas (2003)

To interpret the results of the questionnaire, Gento and Vivas (2003) propose the following assessment (table 2).

Table 2. Degree of appreciation of the instrument

DIMENSION	RATING SCALE				
	1 Totally dissatisfied	2 Not very satisfied	3 Satisfied 26-60	4 Quite satisfied 61 -80	5 Very satisfied
Taste for compliance with your primary demands	13	14-26	17-39	40-52	53-65
Satisfaction with the assistance provided to students	13	14-26	17-39	40-52	53-65
Joy for your vital protection	6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25-30
Delight for socioeconomic protection	7	8-14	15-21	22-28	29-35
Love for sentimental protection	8	9-16	17-24	25-35	33-40
Happy to join the faculty or group of students	10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
Contentment with the structure of work	19	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
Well-being due to progress or own achievement	6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25-30
Taste for the recognition of individual triumph	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
Indulgence in individual self-realization	6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25-30

Source: self made

Table 3 shows the interpretation of the Likert scale for customer satisfaction. Each level has a percentage composition of 20%, agreement established by researchers Gento and Vivas (2003), responsible for the construction and validation of the instrument. This scale allows you to determine the level of satisfaction in each area, which makes it easier to establish the proportion of satisfaction in each of them.

Table 3 . Interpretation of consumer liking

Likert grade	Interpretation	Interval customer satisfaction
1	Totally disgusted	0 -20
2	little displeased	20 - 40
3	At ease	40 - 60
4	Quite comfortable	60 - 80
5	Very comfortable	80 - 100

Source: self made

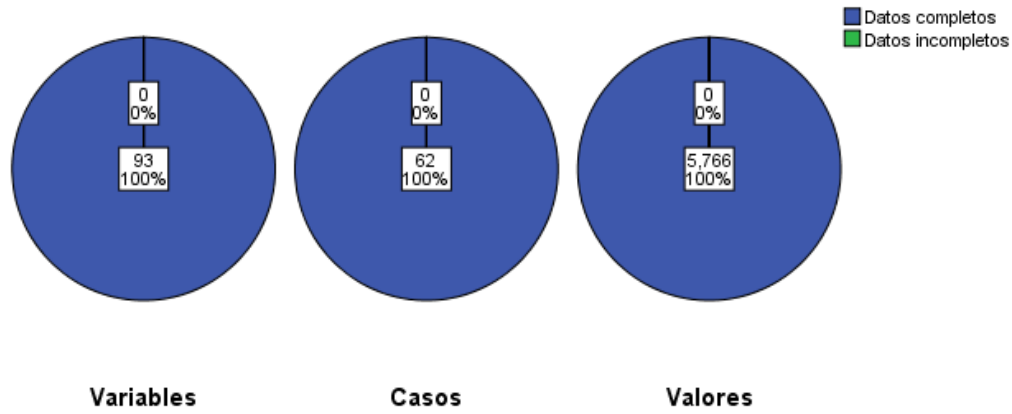
Procedure

Equiprobable random sampling was used to collect the data. The survey was administered through an online form that participants completed. Once this stage was completed, the responses provided by the participants were reviewed and analyzed.

Results

Below are the figures obtained once the instrument was applied. To analyze the information collected, the Statistical program was used. Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Figure 1 shows the information. It is highlighted that no incomplete responses were found during the data analysis.

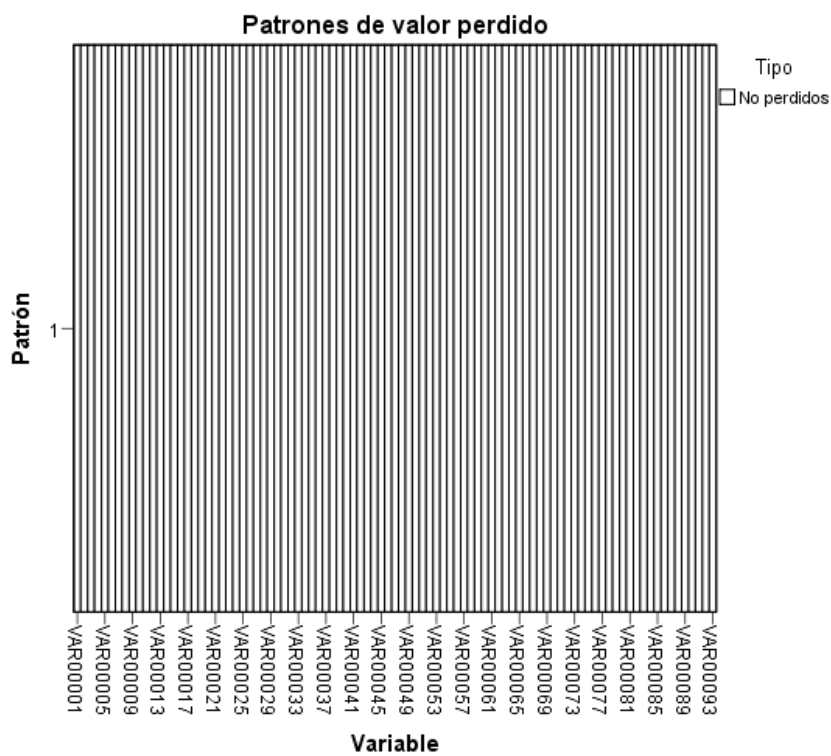
Figure 1 . Summary of missing values



Source: self made

Figure 2 alludes to the missing numbers. It can be seen that, in the study of the figures achieved, no incomplete data was presented.

Figure 2. Summary of missing values



Source: self made

To evaluate the consistency of the responses, Cronbach's alpha indicator was used, as mentioned by Luján and Cardona (2015). Table 4 shows that the result was 0.982. According to Rodríguez and Reguant (2020) and Ponce *et al.* (2021), this reliability of the tool is very acceptable to continue with a statistical analysis.

Table 4. Reliability scheme

Cronbach's alpha	# of elements
.982	93

Source: self made

Table 5 symbolizes the performance of the gender variable corresponding to the group of students from the different postgraduate courses.

Table 5. Results of the gender of the participants by postgraduate degree

Postgraduate	Gender	Number	Total
Human Resources	Male	10	38
	Female	28	
Education	Male	3	9
	Female	6	
Right	Male	5	fifteen
	Female	10	

Source: self made

The table above shows that the Human Resources graduate program has the highest number of students (61.29% of all graduate programs). In second place is the postgraduate degree in Law (with 24.19%), and in last place is the postgraduate degree in Education (14.51%).

Table 6 presents the data on the age variable of the group of students in the different master's degrees.

Table 6. Age variable results

Age Range	MAN	WOMEN
FROM 21 TO 25 YEARS	eleven	twenty
FROM 26 TO 30 YEARS	7	13
FROM 31 TO 35 YEARS	1	7
FROM 36 TO 40 YEARS	1	1
FROM 41 TO 45 YEARS	1	
Total	twenty-one	41

Source: self made

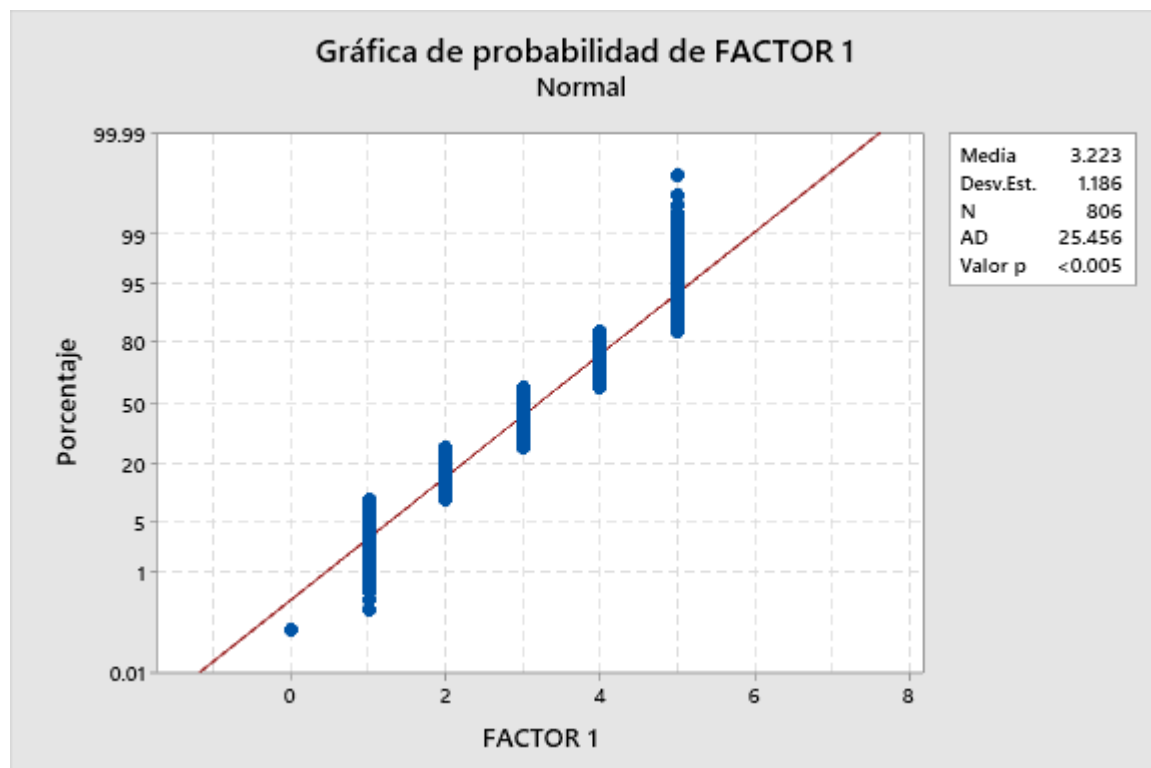
In the previous table, it is observed that the most recurrent age among the students was the interval from 21 to 25 years (50% of those surveyed), followed by the interval from 26 to 30 years (32.25%), from 31 to 35 years (12.90%), from 36 to 40 years (3.22%) and, finally, the interval from 41 to 45 years (1.61%).

Continuing with the analysis, the normality test was carried out to infer on the set of data generated by the graduate students. This type of study follows the recommendations of Flores and Flores (2021), and proposes the following hypotheses:

- Null H0: The data set follows a normal distribution.
- Alternative H1: The data set does not follow a normal distribution.

For this analysis, the Minitab 18 package in its student version was used. Figure 3 shows the result obtained for the first factor.

Figure 3. Normality test



Source: self made

According to Figure 3, a very small p-value is observed, indicating statistical significance. Following the considerations of Arciniegas *et al.* (2021), where a p-value less than 0.05 is interpreted as significant, we can conclude that the data set does not follow a normal distribution.

Table 7 provides a summary of the evidence found in the other nine dimensions.

Table 7. Results of the Normality study.

Factor	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Half	3,029	3,035	2,965	3,325	3,484	3,525	3,695	3,627	3,683
Dev. Its T.	1,252	1,251	1,213	1,254	1,133	1,121	1,072	1,052	1,061
N	806	806	806	806	806	1178	1178	1178	1178
A.D.	25,168	26,927	24,888	29,236	32,004	45,466	53,690	50,894	52,427
P value	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005

Source: self made

Taking into account what was previously described by Arciniegas *et al.* (2021), we proceed to reject the null hypothesis (H_0), which indicates that the data groups do not follow a normal distribution.

Now, to make the comparison between the postgraduate courses taken by Human Resources, Education and Law students, the non-parametric rank comparison test (Kruskal-Wallis) was used, suggested by Ramírez and Polack (2020). The descriptive data are shown in Table 8, along with the contrast statistics presented in Table 9.

Table 8. Quotient figures of the quality seen in postgraduate courses

POSTGRADUATE	FACTORS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Human Resources	3.22	2.96	3.16	2.89	3.47	3.61	3.53	4.01	3.68	3.91
Education	3.79	3.72	3.3	3.24	4.04	3.9	3.88	4.09	3.78	4.2
Right	2.9	2.78	2.81	2.72	3.18	3.13	3.3	3.54	3.37	3.58

Source: self made

Given that the characteristics described by Ramírez and Polack (2020) are met to apply Kruskal-Wallis, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- Ho null : The observed quality of the 10 factors by students between the master's study programs is the same.
- Alternative H1: The observed quality of the 10 factors by students between the master's study programs is not the same (it is different).

Table 9 presents the evidence obtained from factor 1. For the analysis, SPSS software was used.

Table 9. Test statistics ^{a,b}

	FACTOR1
Chi squared	43,377
G1	2
Asymptotic Sig.	,000
to. Kruskal Wallis test	
b. Grouping variable: GROUPS	

Source: self made

Table 9 shows that the level of significance for the quality observed in the master's degrees in Human Resources, Education and Law in the 10 variables is lower than the level proposed by Soto (2020), which is 1% (0.01). . Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H1) must be accepted, which indicates that the perception of quality observed is different in the master's degrees in Human Resources, Education and Law. Therefore, it is concluded that the perceived quality in higher education is unequal. A summary of the findings for the other nine factors is presented in Table 10.

Table 10 . Normality Test Findings

Factor	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Chi squared	51,595	8,024	8,100	28,069	40,828	29,458	12,693	6,932	11,315
gl	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
asymptotic sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

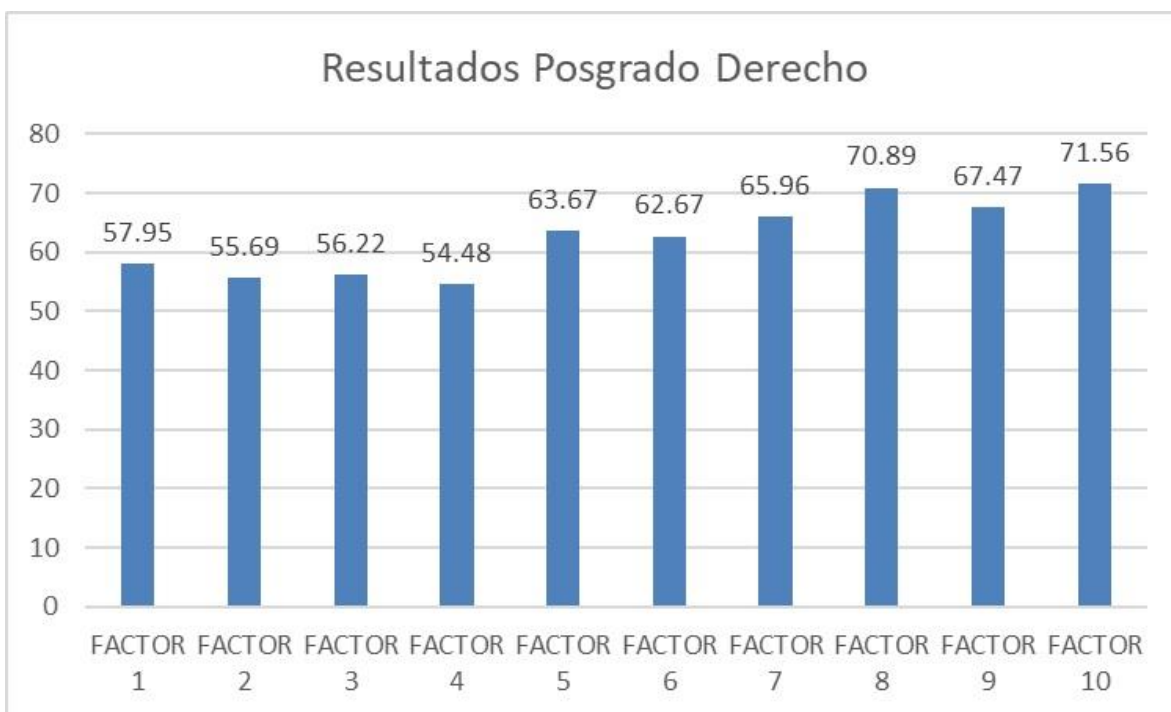
Source: self made

Table 10 shows that the p value in the Next column is lower than the significance level proposed by Soto (2020), which is 1% (0.01). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted, indicating that the perception of perceived quality is different in the master's

degrees in Human Resources, Education and Law.

Below are the findings by master's degree, starting with the master's degree in Law. It is observed that in this the factors with the highest percentage were factors 10 and 8. On the other hand, the factors with the lowest score were 4, 2, 3 and 1. Figure 4 represents these data.

Figure 4. Summary of results of the postgraduate degree in Law

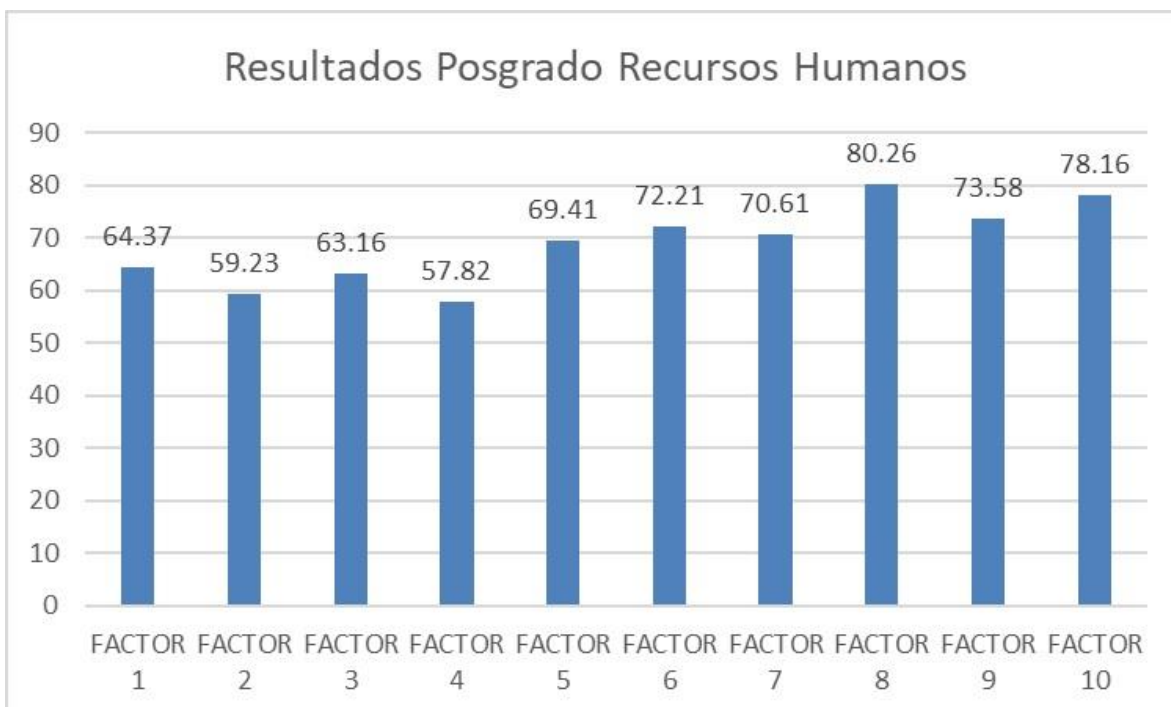


Source: self made

The average proportion in the master's degree in Law was 62.656%. According to the authors' scale, this translates into “quite satisfied.”

Below is the evidence of the master's degree in Human Resources. It is observed that the variables with the highest percentage were factors 10 and 8. On the other hand, the dimensions with the lowest score were factors 4 and 2. Figure 5 represents these data.

Figure 5. Summary of results of the postgraduate course in Human Resources



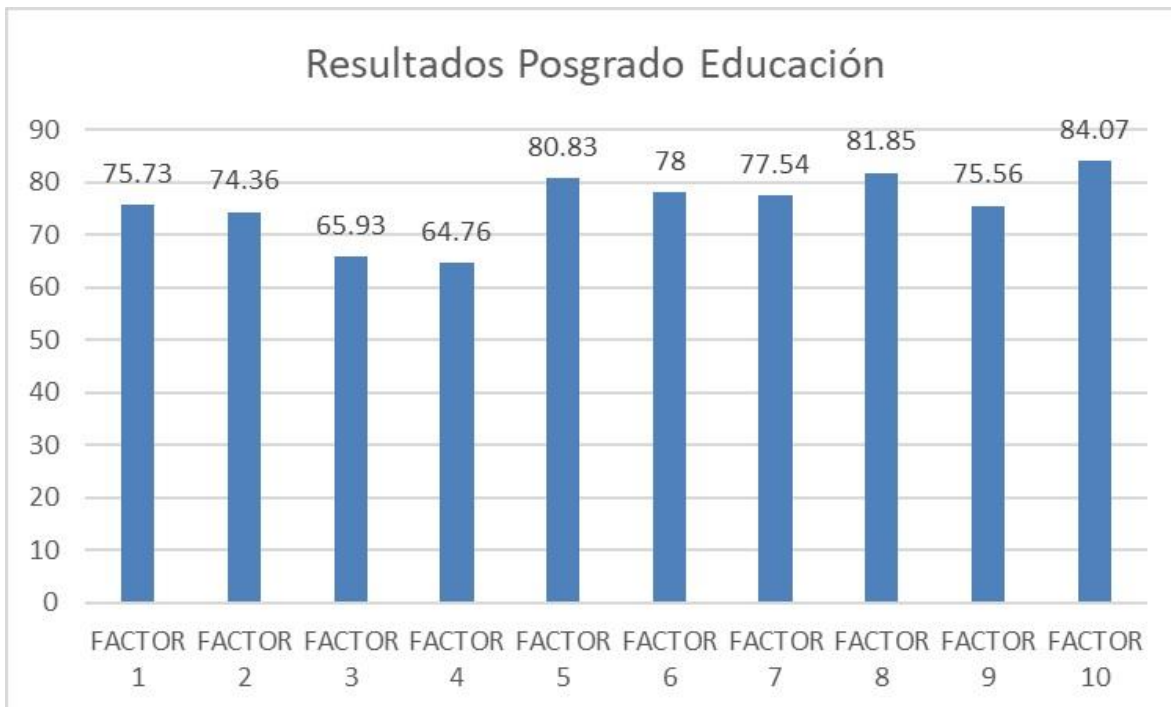
Source: self made

The average proportion in the higher study in Human Resources was 68.881%.

According to the authors' scale, this translates into “quite satisfied.”

The findings of the higher education study are presented below. It is observed that the variables with the highest percentage were factors 10, 8 and 5. Likewise, the dimensions with the lowest score were factors 4 and 3. Figure 5 represents this evidence.

Figure 6. Summary of results of the postgraduate degree in Education

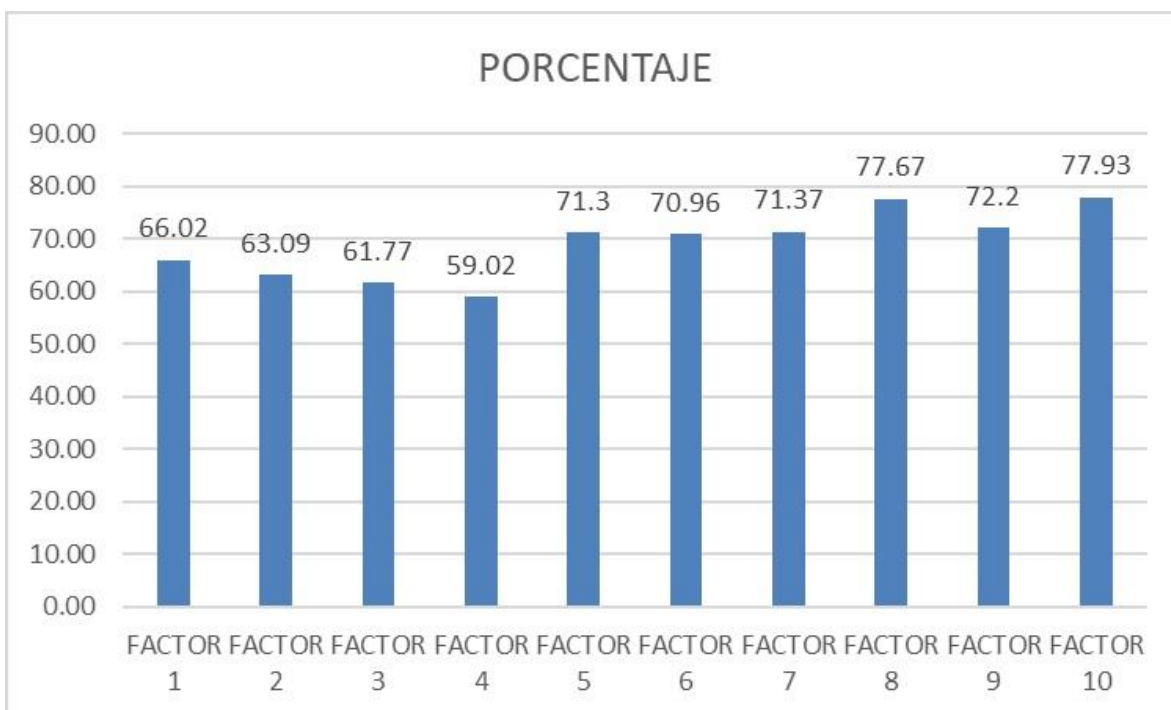


Source: self made

The average proportion in the postgraduate degree in Education was 75.863%. According to the authors' scale, this translates into “quite satisfied.”

The quotient of the perceptions of the three master's degrees (Law, Human Resources and Education) was 69.133. According to the authors' scale, this is also considered “quite satisfied.” Figure 7 represents these findings.

Figure 7. Summary of results



Source: self made

However, although the data reflect a weighting of “quite satisfied” in all master's degrees, it is important to highlight that there is a difference when weighting the perceived

quality by postgraduate degree.

Discussion

In relation to the results of this study, the responses indicate that in the three master's programs the dimensions that obtained the highest percentage were satisfaction with personal progress or success and satisfaction with personal self-realization. This finding coincides with what was presented by Álvarez *et al.* (2015), Mieleles and Ribadeneira (2016) and Sandoval *et al.* (2016), who also found that the majority of graduate students are satisfied with these dimensions. On the other hand, the dimension that received the least weight among the three postgraduate courses was satisfaction with socioeconomic security, a result that also agrees with the findings of Alemán *et al.* (2019) and Mancilla *et al.* (2019).

On the other hand, the present research used a non-parametric contrast of independent samples by Kruskal and Wallis, that is, the same method used by Peñaranda and Peñaranda (2015) to evaluate the perceived quality among students of the different master's degrees. The general result of the assessment of the three master's degrees was “quite satisfied”, a rating that is similar to the studies by Jácome *et al.* (2017), Garzón *et al.* (2018), Sánchez *et al.* (2018), Vallejo *et al.* (2018), Cabos and D'Angelo (2019) and Alemán (2019).

Although the findings of the three master's degrees obtained a similar result of “quite satisfied”, a difference in scores was found between the three postgraduate degrees. The postgraduate students in Education showed greater school satisfaction, followed by those in the postgraduate course in Human Resources and, finally, those in the postgraduate course in Law. These data of significant differences between groups are similar to the findings of Muñoz *et al.* (2014), González *et al.* (2017), López *et al.* (2019) and Pineda *et al.* (2019).

Conclusion

With respect to the objective established in this study, the following can be concluded: by applying the Kruskal -Wallis test, it was found that the perception of the quality of the postgraduate courses offered by the university is different between the three programs studied. The results obtained are reflected in Table 7 of findings, where the differentiation quotients are offered in the three elements that evaluate the appreciation of the quality of higher education.

In terms of meeting basic requirements, the Education program obtained the highest rating, followed by Human Resources, both classified as “fairly good.” On the other hand, the Law program was placed in the “satisfied” category.

Regarding satisfaction with the services provided to students, once again the Education program had the most favorable result, followed by Human Resources, both in the “fairly good” category. On the other hand, the Law program was placed in the “satisfied” category.

Regarding the enjoyment of vital and socioeconomic security, the Education program showed the highest result, classified as “quite good”, followed by Human Resources. For its part, the Law program was placed in the “satisfied” category.

In liking emotional security, the Education program received the highest rating,

followed by Human Resources and Law, all rated “fairly good.”

In satisfaction with the fit for the institution or group of students, the Education program had the highest result, followed by Human Resources and Law, all in the “fairly good” category.

Regarding the work system and well-being for personal progress, the Education program also obtained the most favorable results, followed by Human Resources and Law, all in the “fairly good” category.

Finally, when it comes to the prestige of personal success and indulgence in personal self-realization, the Education program showed the highest result, followed by Human Resources and Law, all in the “fairly good” category.

Now, although the three master's degrees obtained an average of “fairly good” in their respective evidence, substantial discrepancies are evident in the levels of perceived quality between them, which suggests significant differences in the context of postgraduate studies. These conclusions are supported by the use of non-parametric statistics with a hierarchy range of 1% (0.01).

Future lines of research

These new research topics offer an opportunity to expand and enrich the present study. Firstly, the degree of satisfaction among the teaching staff could be further explored, which would be essential to obtain a complete understanding of the internal dynamics of the educational institution. In this regard, authors such as Vera and Collins (2018) and Villa and Gómez (2018) have highlighted the importance of taking care of employees to promote the growth and competitiveness of an organization.

In addition, research can be carried out that examines the relationship between student satisfaction and academic progress, since authors such as Tomás and Gutiérrez (2019) and Tacca *et al.* (2020) have pointed out a positive and significant relationship between these two variables. Therefore, monitoring and maintaining high levels of student satisfaction not only benefits students, but can also lead to more positive academic progress and improved overall performance.

Thanks

Thank you to my tutor, Dr. María Guadalupe Veytia Bucheli, for her advice and tutoring during my stay and the formation of this study.

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