



Analyzing the Factors Influencing the Satisfaction of Students Who Use English as a Second Language (ESL), at a Language Training Center in UAE

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the key factors influencing the happiness and satisfaction of ESL (English as a Second Language) students at a prestigious Language Training Centre in the United Arab Emirates. As English proficiency becomes increasingly essential in a globalised world, non-native speakers often turn to language training institutions for improvement. To remain competitive, these centres must ensure high student satisfaction. Previous research highlights various factors affecting satisfaction, including course content, teaching quality, learning environment, and student support. Building on these findings, the present study surveyed 125 ESL students to identify the most influential variables affecting their satisfaction. Four key factors were selected: customer relationship management, support facilities, academic staff quality, and promotional effectiveness. Using SPSS for data analysis and applying regression analysis, the study assessed the impact of these variables on overall student satisfaction. The results confirmed that all four factors significantly influence ESL students' satisfaction. These insights offer valuable guidance for language centres aiming to enhance their service quality and better meet student expectations.

Keywords: *ESL; Customer Relationship; Students' Satisfaction; SURVQUAL; Strategic Marketing*

Background

The education providers in the UAE are composed of two major fields. They are the government-funded institutions and private educational institutions. The Ministry of Education is the primary governing body for education in the country, including Language Training Centres. It is generally responsible for accrediting institutions to operate legally in the country. Other than that, Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) (Dubai), Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) (Abu Dhabi), Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) (Sharjah) are other entities overseeing educational institutions in their respective Emirates in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and responsible for licensing these institutes and ensuring compliance with the laws and educational regulations of the country.

UAE Federal Decree Law No. 18 of 2020 has created a proper landscape for all the private education providers, including the Language Training Centres, by providing a well-tailored regulatory framework. The education providers and the students are benefitted by this law in many ways. By enhancing the licensing requirements, institutes are focused on higher standards. This leads the institutes to adopt more advanced language training technologies and offer certification in internationally recognised language exams (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL), which creates more opportunities for the students to reach higher standards easier. The providers are motivated to introduce new courses and follow new strategies to be in line with the country's national goals and the diverse job market. These improvements attract more investors and opportunities to partner up with local private universities, foreign universities, and global organisations such as the British Council and Goethe Institute. The significant focus given to student welfare and rights by this law has created a safer, transparent and more progressive educational environment for the students as well. As a result, it opens the path for the Language Training Centres to provide better services and students to enjoy high-quality education. Eventually, from a commercial standpoint, students are the clients that bring in revenue for their enterprise. It makes the needs of the students and their satisfaction play a significant part in the overall organisational structure and management of Language Training Centres (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). According to Nasser, Khoury & Abouché (2008), the main message of the overall quality strategy is to delight the students who are the end consumers.

Statement of the Problem

Even though ESL students' language training programmes contribute to making profits, there are currently some indications that show there is a deficiency in ESL students' satisfaction (Martirosyan, 2015). These indications include evidence of student drop-outs from payment details, insufficient student attendance, late assignment submissions, not attending for the classes even after doing the full payments of the course fee, and a high tendency to attend half sessions (Bergeson & Heuschel, 2005). While several studies have investigated factors influencing ESL students' satisfaction in various educational settings, there remains a notable research gap concerning the specific context of Language Training Centres in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Research Objectives

To explore

1. What are the roles of Customer Relationship Management, Support facilities, Quality of academic staff, and Successful promotions of a Language Training Centre in the UAE?
2. How do these factors impact the language acquisition, learning experience, motivation, satisfaction and retention of the ESL students of that particular Language Training Centre?

Literature Review

The literature serves as the foundation for the analysis of factors influencing students learning. The Language Training Centres in the UAE play a significant role in catering to the diverse linguistic needs of the population, which includes residents and expatriates from various countries. These centres serve as hubs for language learning and proficiency enhancement, offering a wide range of programmes and services tailored to meet the demands of learners from different backgrounds and proficiency levels (Brown & Lee, 2025). People are easily prone to gain intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in this diverse cultural and professional society. It could be an intrinsic motivation which leads the students to acquire English as a second language to integrate better into a globalised community or to blend into social spaces where English is often the lingua franca. On the other hand, an extrinsic motivation such as a better job prospect or higher academic achievement drives them to learn English. In the UAE context, a mixture of these factors might influence students' engagement in language learning, particularly given the multicultural nature of the region (Khan, Ahmed & Nawaz, 2011; Gardner, 1985). The UAE's language centres employ various teaching methodologies such as communicative language teaching (CLT) (Nunan, 2003) or task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Echiverri & Lane, 2019), which enables the teachers to address the different learning styles of the students from diverse cultures (Al Hammadi, 2021). Classroom activities focus on developing students' communicative competence through role plays, group discussions and problem-solving tasks (Chiu, 2009)). TBLT emphasises the integration of language skills and meaningful communication as per Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Also, these increase interactions between students and teachers. It was highlighted in the studies that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to effective language learning (Trent, 2013). The studies have suggested that younger learners tend to acquire a second language more easily than older learners, but older students may possess better metacognitive strategies for learning (Singleton, 2014). The demographic data gathered from the particular language centre indicates younger students are following courses in it too, but this may be due to other factors in the UAE, due to its diverse and demanding workforce. ESL education encompasses a wide range of pedagogical approaches aimed at facilitating language acquisition and proficiency development among non-native English speakers. This paper explores the diversity of teaching methods and approaches utilised in ESL instruction and evaluates their implications for student satisfaction (Coelho & Steinhagen).

Factors Influencing ESL Students' Satisfaction in Language Training Centres Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a business strategy, supported by information technology, aimed at enhancing interactions between organisations and customers (Kärnä & Julin, 2015). In the context of educational providers, particularly language centres, CRM functions as a key process to meet student needs through administrative and support services. Efficient CRM systems streamline registration, payment, and scheduling, allowing students to focus on learning. In multicultural environments like the UAE, where expatriates form the majority, CRM must address diverse student needs by tracking progress, offering guidance, providing support, and responding to feedback. Additionally, CRM plays a crucial role in boosting student satisfaction by maintaining contact with former students and assisting them with further education and career opportunities in the UAE's competitive job market, where English proficiency is vital. Overall, CRM serves as a vital tool to understand, manage, and enhance student satisfaction and engagement (Elliott & Healy, 2001).

Training Centre Support Facilities

To maintain a strong reputation in the competitive, tech-savvy UAE market, language centres must uphold modern, high standards. A welcoming, clean, spacious, and accessible environment is essential for student satisfaction. Research by Adnan *et al.* (2016) and Douglas, Douglas & Barnes (2006) highlights a

significant link between student happiness and the quality of amenities provided. Students are more satisfied when offered updated resources such as textbooks, notes, presentations, language software, and online platforms. Access to dedicated spaces like conference rooms, recreational areas, audio-visual labs, clean restrooms, cafeterias, and waiting areas enhances their overall experience. Convenient location with public transport access and sufficient parking also contributes to higher satisfaction, promoting student retention and positive referrals.

Quality of Academic Staff

In the UAE's multicultural and multilingual context, ESL teachers need more than language expertise. They must also adapt teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs. A strong grasp of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural nuances is essential, but equally important are empathy, patience, and approachability to foster positive teacher-student relationships. Creating a supportive environment helps students feel valued and confident. Teachers should adopt student-centred approaches, using interactive methods like group discussions, role plays, and games to engage learners in real-life communication. Incorporating multimedia resources enhances the learning experience. Additionally, punctuality, structured curricula, ongoing student evaluations, and personalised feedback reflect teachers' reliability and commitment. As Fernandes (2021) highlights, the quality and actions of ESL faculty significantly impact student satisfaction in language training centres.

Successful Promotions

Successful promotional strategies aligned with customer relationship management (CRM) can significantly boost the visibility of Language Training Centres in the competitive UAE market. To attract the right students—mainly working professionals and expatriates—centres should utilise a variety of digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, websites, and Instagram. While many studies highlight social media's role in recruitment, few address its value in engaging currently enrolled students. Target audiences prioritise affordability, transparency, flexibility, and personalised course options. Promotional tactics like early bird discounts, group joining offers, and free trial sessions effectively draw interest and build credibility. Moreover, offering tailored courses across different English proficiency levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced—ensures students find suitable options, enhancing satisfaction. Centres that maintain consistent, honest, and beneficial marketing efforts foster trust among students. Positive experiences not only encourage student loyalty but also lead to valuable word-of-mouth referrals. These personal recommendations, rooted in satisfaction and results, can significantly influence prospective students, reinforcing the institution's reputation and student base.

Methods

Research Design

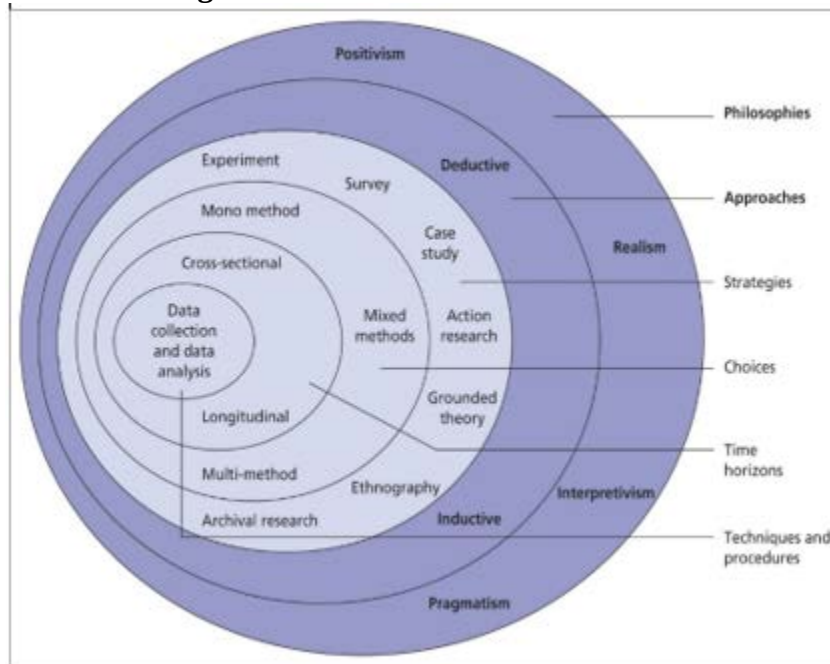


Figure 02: Research Onion
(Source from: Saunders, etc., 2016)

The study design outlines a structured approach to conducting the research, drawing on established methodologies such as case studies, interviews, surveys, or literature reviews, as described by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009). Further emphasises that the design is essentially a blueprint for how the research will be implemented. This study focuses on ESL students and follows a methodical plan using surveys to gather relevant data, ensuring a clear and systematic investigation aligned with the research goals (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The target population consists of 150–200 ESL students enrolled in language training programmes, as they represent the group affected by and relevant to the research outcomes (Lynam *et al.*, 2020). The sampling frame was developed by listing all ESL students and applying a simple random sampling technique, as recommended by Silverman & Patterson (2016). Considering resource limitations within the training centre, the sample size of 150–200 was selected to ensure both feasibility and statistical reliability. Data was collected through a questionnaire containing 20 Likert-scale questions, designed to capture insights from the selected participants during the data-gathering phase.

Data Collection

The author intended to utilise a questionnaire as the primary survey instrument to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was carefully designed to gather quantitative data on various factors influencing ESL student satisfaction in language training centres in the UAE. However, recognizing the nuanced nature of student experiences and the potential limitations of quantitative measures in capturing in-depth insights, the author also carried out qualitative interviews to complement the questionnaire. Conducting interviews with a subset of participants from the sample offers an opportunity to delve deeper into their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards ESL instruction and satisfaction.

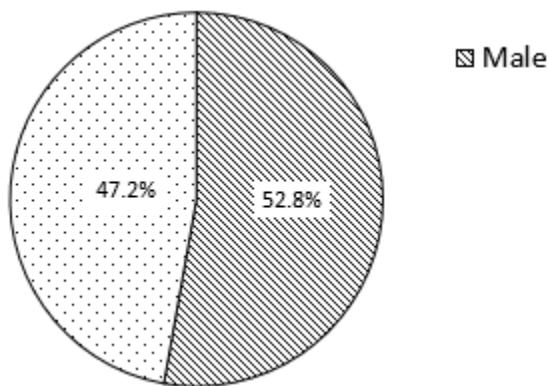
Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Due to the research's survey-based methodology, only the relationships between variables are examined. The four variables were analysed based on the descriptive viewpoint, and the results are presented in the final study report. 100-125 ESL students were chosen for the descriptive data statistics assessment, as it was mentioned above. Age, gender, and the period of study in the institute were assessed by frequency and percentage in descriptive statistics, which is based on analysis of the demographic data.

Demographic Profile Analysis

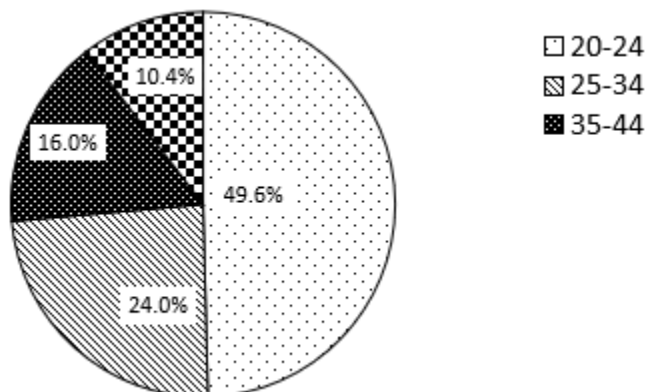
Gender



Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	66	52.8	52.8	52.8
Female	59	47.2	47.2	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

Out of the 125 ESL students surveyed, 66 are male, accounting for 52.8% of the total sample, while 59 are female, representing 47.2%. This balanced gender representation is crucial for the study as it allows for comprehensive insights into the factors influencing satisfaction among both male and female ESL students, reducing gender bias and enhancing the reliability of the findings.

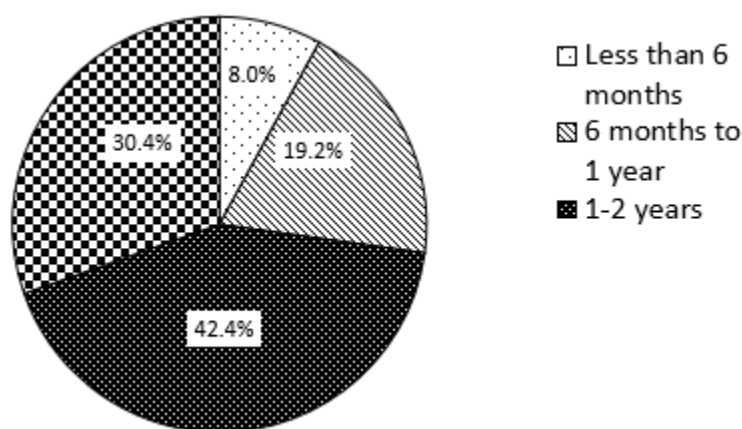
Age



Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-24	62	49.6	49.6	49.6
25-34	30	24.0	24.0	73.6
35-44	20	16.0	16.0	89.6
45-55	13	10.4	10.4	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The largest age group is 20-24 years, comprising 62 students, or 49.6% of the total sample. This is followed by the 25-34 age group, which includes 30 students, representing 24.0%. The 35-44 age group has 20 students, making up 16.0%, and the 45-55 age group includes 13 students, accounting for 10.4% of the sample. This age distribution highlights that nearly half of the students are young adults aged 20-24, suggesting that factors influencing satisfaction might be particularly relevant to this age group, which includes undergraduates, job seekers, and freshers. It is a result of the high demand for English proficiency in higher education and professions in the UAE as well as in the world.

Study Period

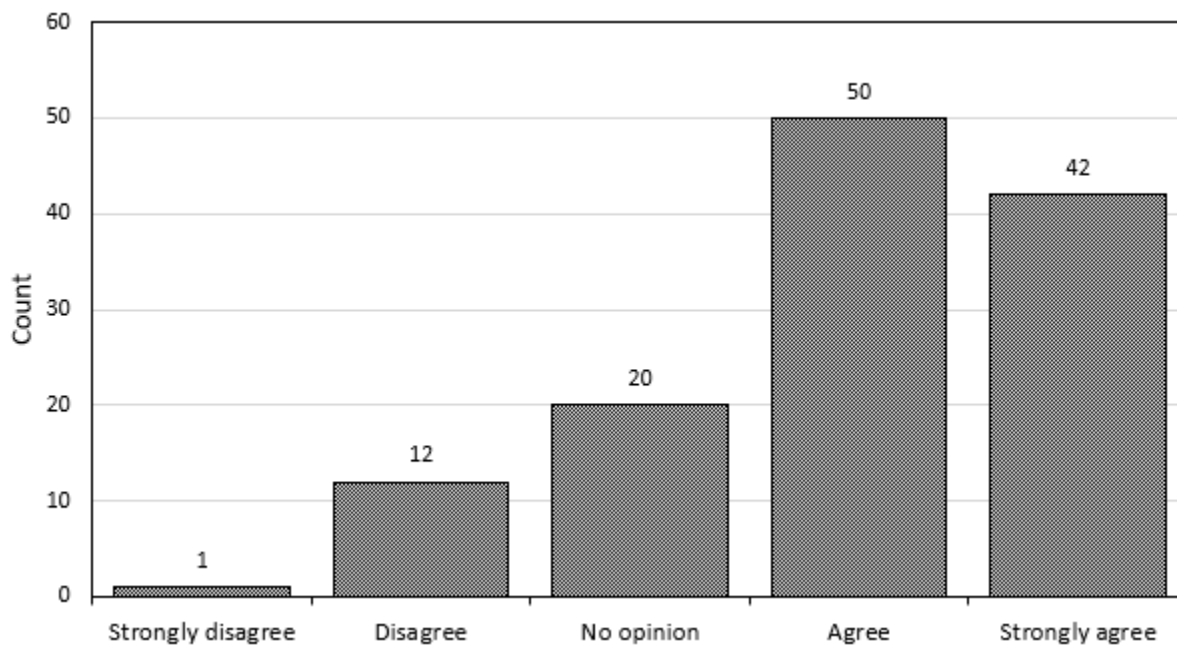


Study period	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 6 months	10	8.0	8.0	8.0
6 months to 1 year	24	19.2	19.2	27.2
1-2 years	53	42.4	42.4	69.6
More than 2 years	38	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The largest group, comprising 53 students, or 42.4% of the sample, has been studying for 1-2 years. This is followed by 38 students, or 30.4%, who have been studying for more than 2 years, indicating a substantial portion of the students are long-term learners. The 6 months to 1 year group includes 24 students, representing 19.2% of the sample, while the smallest group, with 10 students or 8.0%, has been studying for less than 6 months. This distribution indicates that a majority of the students have been engaged in language training for over a year, suggesting that factors influencing satisfaction may be particularly relevant to long-term learners.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

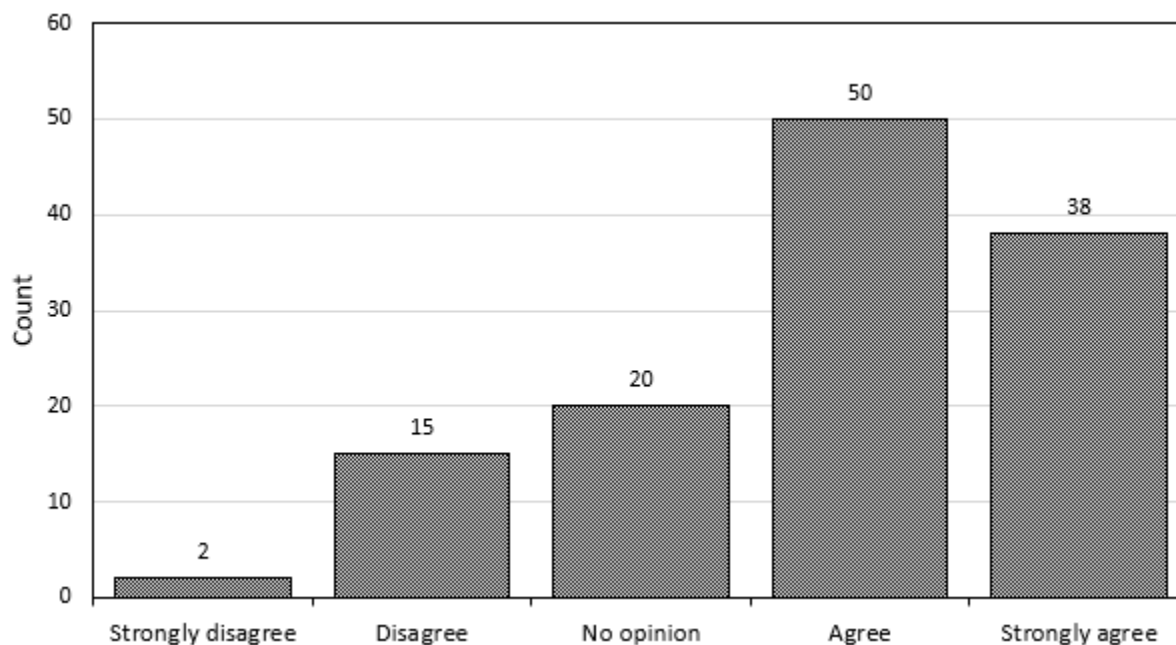
Customer Relations Management



Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	0.8	0.8	0.8
Disagree	12	9.6	9.6	10.4
No opinion	20	16.0	16.0	26.4
Agree	50	40.0	40.0	66.4
Strongly agree	42	33.6	33.6	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

The data on customer relationship management (CRM) reveals a generally positive perception among the 125 surveyed students. The majority, 50 students, or 40.0%, agree that CRM practices positively impact their satisfaction, and an additional 42 students, or 33.6%, strongly agree. Combined, these figures indicate that 73.6% of the students hold a favourable view of CRM. Meanwhile, 20 students, representing 16.0%, have no opinion, suggesting a neutral stance towards CRM. On the less positive side, 12 students or 9.6% disagree, and a single student, making up 0.8%, strongly disagrees with the positive impact of CRM.

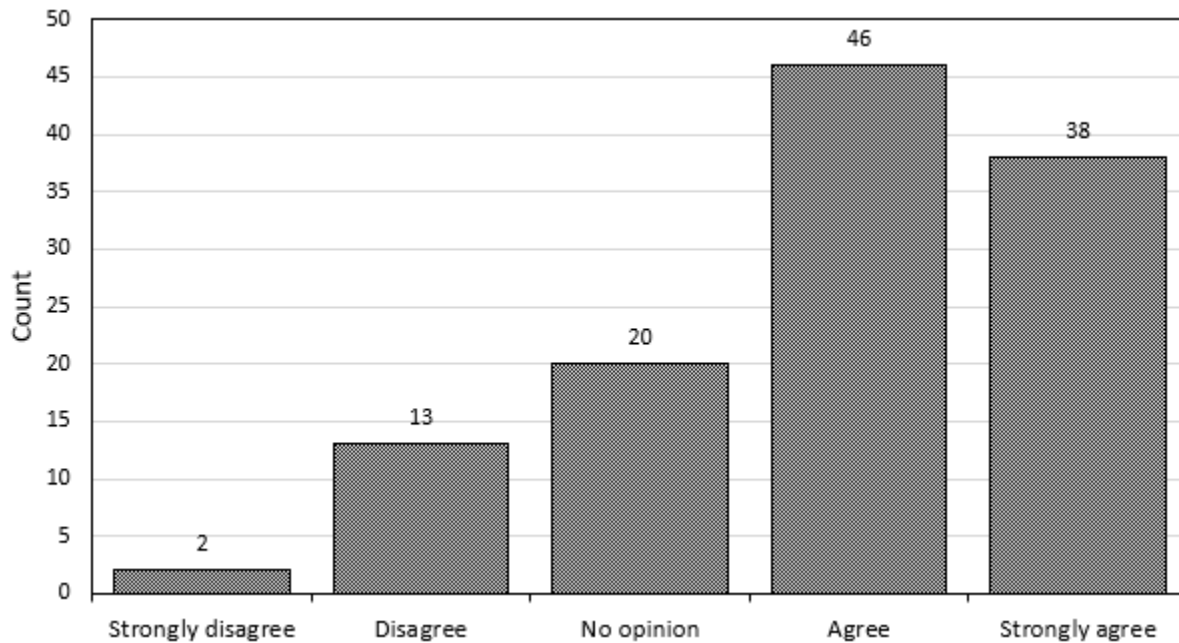
Training Centre Support Facilities



Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
Disagree	15	12.0	12.0	13.6
No opinion	20	16.0	16.0	29.6
Agree	50	40.0	40.0	69.6
Strongly agree	38	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

A significant majority, 50 students or 40.0%, agree that the support facilities positively impact their satisfaction, and an additional 38 students, or 30.4%, strongly agree. This combined total of 70.4% reflects a strong overall approval of the support facilities. Meanwhile, 20 students, representing 16.0%, have no opinion, indicating a neutral stance. On the less favourable side, 15 students or 12.0% disagree, and 2 students, accounting for 1.6%, strongly disagree with the positive impact of the support facilities. Addressing the concerns of the 13.6% who disagree or strongly disagree and understanding the neutral stance of 16.0% could further enhance the overall student satisfaction with the training centre's support facilities.

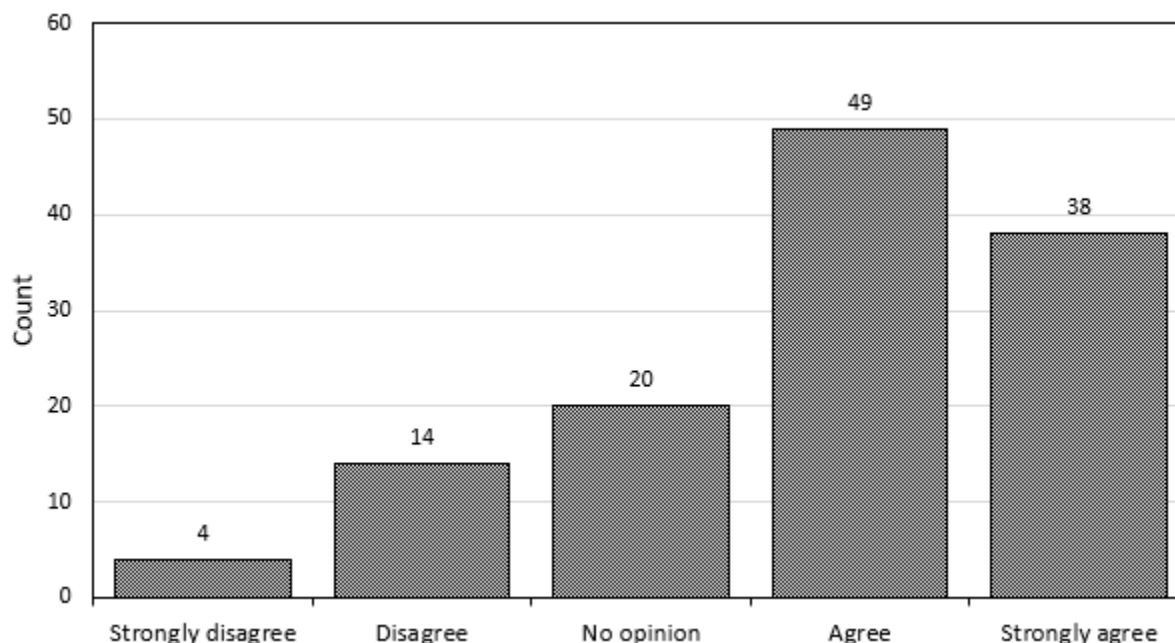
Quality of Academic Staffs



Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
Disagree	13	10.4	10.4	12.0
No opinion	20	16.0	16.0	28.0
Agree	46	36.8	36.8	64.8
Strongly agree	44	35.2	35.2	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

A significant portion of the students (72.0%) hold favourable views regarding the quality of the academic staff, i.e. 46 individuals (36.8%) agree and 44 students (35.2%) strongly agree, that the quality of the academic staff positively impacts their satisfaction. Meanwhile, 20 students, representing 16.0%, have no opinion, suggesting a neutral stance. On the less favourable side, 13 students or 10.4% disagree, and 2 students, accounting for 1.6%, strongly disagree with the quality of the academic staff. Addressing the concerns of the 12.0% who disagree or strongly disagree and understanding the neutral stance of 16.0% could further enhance the overall satisfaction with the academic staff at the training centre.

Effective Promotions



Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	4	3.2	3.2	3.2
Disagree	14	11.2	11.2	14.4
No opinion	20	16.0	16.0	30.4
Agree	49	39.2	39.2	69.6
Strongly agree	38	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

A significant portion, 49 students, or 39.2%, agree that the promotions are effective in contributing to their satisfaction, while 38 students, or 30.4%, strongly agree. Combined, this means that 69.6% of the students view the promotions favourably. Meanwhile, 20 students, representing 16.0%, have no opinion, indicating a neutral stance towards the promotions. On the less favourable side, 14 students or 11.2% disagree, and 4 students, accounting for 3.2%, strongly disagree with the effectiveness of the promotions. Addressing the concerns of the 14.4% who disagree or strongly disagree and understanding the neutral stance of 16.0% could further enhance the effectiveness of promotions and overall student satisfaction at the training centre.

Regression Statistics Analysis

Customer Relationship Management

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.764*	0.747	0.741	0.80910

a. Predictors: (Constant), The language training centre provides opportunities for ESL students to collaborate on group projects or activities, The teachers at the language training centre are approachable and responsive to my needs, The language training centre fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment where ESL students feel valued and respected.

The model summary reveals essential insights into the relationship between customer relationship management practices and student satisfaction within the educational context. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.747, indicating that approximately 74.7% of the variance in student satisfaction can be explained by CRM practices included in the model. This suggests a strong relationship between CRM efforts and student satisfaction levels, highlighting the importance of effective CRM strategies in fostering positive student experiences.

Training Centre Support Facilities

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.674*	0.699	0.692	0.63830
a. Predictors: (Constant), the language training centre offers a variety of study areas or spaces for ESL students to work independently or in groups. The training centre provides modern and well-equipped classrooms for ESL classes.				

The Model Summary offers crucial insights into the relationship between training centre support facilities and student satisfaction within an educational context. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.699, indicating that approximately 69.9% of the variance in student satisfaction can be explained by the training centre support facilities included in the model.

Quality of Academic Staffs

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.603*	0.621	0.630	0.65232
b. Predictors: (Constant), the teachers and staffs actively encourage interaction and communication among ESL students during classes. The ESL staff members demonstrate professionalism and courtesy in their interactions with students. ESL staff members at the language training centre are knowledgeable and competent in their field.				

The Model Summary offers valuable insights into the relationship between the quality of academic staff and student satisfaction within an educational context. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.621, indicating that approximately 62.1% of the variance in student satisfaction can be explained by the quality of academic staff included in the model.

Effective Promotions

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.544*	0.591	0.588	0.56652
C. Predictors: (Constant), I am satisfied with the effectiveness of promotions at the language training centre in attracting and retaining students. Promotional materials and advertisements from the language training centre are informative and engaging. The language training centre effectively communicates promotional offers and discounts to ESL students.				

The Model Summary provides crucial insights into the relationship between effective promotions and student satisfaction within an educational context. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.591, indicating that approximately 59.1% of the variance in student satisfaction can be explained by effective promotions included in the model. This suggests a significant and notable relationship between the effectiveness of promotional activities and student satisfaction levels, highlighting the importance of well-executed marketing strategies in shaping students' overall experiences and contentment with the educational institution.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights for the Four Skills Training Institute in the UAE to enhance ESL student satisfaction and overall educational experience. Key factors influencing satisfaction include the quality of academic staff, availability of support facilities, and the effectiveness of promotional strategies. Based on these findings, the institute can improve outcomes by investing in staff professional development, upgrading facilities, and refining marketing efforts to align with student needs. These improvements could lead to higher satisfaction and retention rates among ESL learners. The study also highlights the potential for broader comparative research across other Language Training Centres to explore how contextual factors impact satisfaction. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups in future studies could enrich the understanding of students' personal experiences, offering deeper insights beyond quantitative data. However, the study acknowledges some limitations, including a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, which could affect generalisability and accuracy. Future research should use larger, more representative samples and mixed-method approaches to strengthen findings. Overall, the Four Skills Training Institute is recognized as a reputable provider in the field. It is recommended that the institute further invest in enhancing classroom environments, curriculum design, teaching materials, and integrating evolving technology in language instruction. Advancing promotional strategies through modern platforms can also boost student engagement. These actions not only align with students' evolving expectations but may also inform broader educational policy reforms in the UAE, particularly in curriculum development, teaching methods, and support services. The study offers a geographically focused understanding of ESL student satisfaction, tailored to the cultural and educational context of the UAE, with practical recommendations for institutional growth.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: Researchers ensured informed consent, explained study details and risks, and maintained participant confidentiality by protecting identities and securely storing data from unauthorized access.

Conflicts of Interest: The author proclaims no conflict of interest.

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