



**Anekant Education Society's
Anekant Institute of Management
Studies (AIMS), Baramati**



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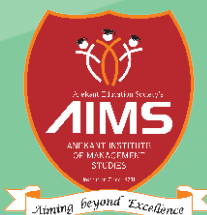
On

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in Higher Education Institutions”
(Online)**

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Anekant Institute of Management Studies (AIMS), Baramati

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About the 11th National Conference

The aim of proposed conference is to enhance the quality of HEI by adopting various innovative practices. The expected outcomes of this conference are as follows:

- i. Participants will be able to realize the importance of NAAC in the quality of HEI
- ii. Participants will be able to discuss the adopted innovative practices about the quality enhancement in the HEI
- iii. Participants will be able to share the ideas about quality sustenance in the HEI
- iv. Participants will be able to share the innovative practices adopted by HEIs to convert challenges into opportunities

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A Study on Students' Unresponsiveness to Satisfaction Surveys in Higher Education Institutions of India

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Abstract: The decreasing “response rates” of students undermine the efficacy of student satisfaction “survey research” at higher education institutions in India. The objective of this qualitative research work was to determine the circumstances that encourage survey involvement. In this empirical study, the researcher revealed three themes. Respondents initially saw surveys as “agents” of “institutional change”. Subsequently, they perceived surveys as omnipresent objects. Lastly, a student's level of trust significantly impacted how likely they were to participate in a survey.

Keywords: Student Satisfaction Survey, Responsiveness, Transformational Education.

INTRODUCTION: A recent study showed that higher education resources are redirected toward transformational education (Savitha, 2015). Transformational education “places the student at the centre of the learning experience” (Abbiss, 2012). Higher education institutions (HEIs) use student satisfaction surveys (SSS) to measure almost every element of the student experience (Malaviya, 2020), and many HEIs use these surveys annually (Rojas, 2018). Online SSS is a popular data collection technique since it is easy and economical (Best & Krueger, 2004). HEIs prefer using e-platforms such as “Survey-Planet” and “Survey-Monkey” to conduct SSS (Bokonda et al., 2020). Internet survey administration is comparatively cost-effective and can be used repeatedly (Sinclair et al., 2012). But this aspect has a demerit; HEIs use a more significant number of SSS, due to which student response rates (SRR) are falling (Fincham, 2008).

For surveys to be generalizable, certain assumptions and statistical principles must be met (Leung, 2015). A high percentage of nonresponse may contradict these assumptions and regulations, leading to inaccuracy (Jeffrey et al., 2022). The issue of low SSR hasn't received enough attention in higher education. The Indian literature on surveys shows that most nonresponse research has focused on the general population (Singh, 2021). Only a few

studies, which were conducted abroad, have explored low rates of response in SSS.

The topic of the present study may lead to an improved “understanding of nonresponse” among learners of Indian HEIs. It can be helpful in the creation of measures to increase response rates for SSS. HEI administrators must investigate who is engaged and why to manage the significant concerns created by growing nonresponse. The current study examines SSS participation characteristics. It answers the burning question about how college students see survey data collection and what influences student survey participation. This study broadens our understanding of nonresponse to SSS by using qualitative methods.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Some people, in general, respond to surveys while others don't, for four reasons. First, “social exchange theory” says a “person's actions are determined by others' reactions” (Cropanzano, 2017). This theory states that factors influencing survey participation are mainly the survey's design and execution. Survey administrators must focus on incentives, lessen apparent “costs”, & build “trust” among the governing “authority” and the prospective “participant” to increase participation.

Psychosocial factors are the second rationale for survey replies. It argues people use implicit compliance standards to complete needed tasks (Labott, 2013). A “potential participant” will be keener to involve if similar people are willing.

Third, the “leverage-salience theory” posits that a “single survey design” feature will have distinct “leverages” for different people. The potential leverage is also activated if the survey respondent highlights the quality (Jans & Levenstein, 2010). According to this line of reasoning, it is feasible to counter survey components associated with a low response rate, such as a long duration and a boring topic, by emphasizing pleasant or helpful survey aspects.

The fourth reason is that earlier exposure to the survey technique affects future participation (Starr, 2021). Overexposure to the survey technique has been highlighted as one factor for lower response rates.

METHODOLOGY: The researcher purposefully sampled study participants. Purposeful sampling selects those who are regarded to have meaningful research information. This is a qualitative sampling approach (Palinkas et al., 2015). One of the top business schools affiliated with India's leading public university, Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), provided the sample. In this paper, the top business school providing MBA education will hereafter be referred to as the Respondent Organization (R.O.). R.O. is permanently affiliated to SPPU, runs an approved MBA programme by the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) Maharashtra and is recognized to provide technical education by the “All India Technical Council for Education (AICTE) – Government of India”. About 25,000 MBA students have received their postgraduate degrees from this HEI. 240 students were pursuing their

MBA education when this study was carried out in R.O.

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and the Institute Ethics Committee (IEC) of R.O. collaborated to administer the qualitative survey for this study. The participant in the survey provided written consent. These participants of the survey hereafter will be referred to as “respondents.”

Full-time MBA students between 21 and 26 who had resided in R.O.'s accommodation for at least one year were eligible for this research. Residential students are more easily accessible and regularly questioned than commuters, yielding more information (Vasanth et al., 2016). Only students with at least one year of R.O.'s housing experience were included in the sample to guarantee each participant had been exposed to R.O.'s SSS evaluation and research activities. With the recommendation from R.O.'s IQAC, the author recruited students for this research. IQAC had compiled a “list of eligible students” from the HEI databank. The author sent an “invitation to participate”. The e-mail detailed the study, stated participant expectations and asked interested students to contact the author. Eleven students expressed interest through e-mail. The author got each of these eleven possible students with study details. Only eight out of eleven consented to participate. The final sample included 4 girls and 4 boys. These were the last samples for qualitative study.

The respondents belonged to different states and regions of India. Three respondents were from North India, three from South India, one Maharashtrian, and one Rajasthani. Class standing and years in residence vary across the sample. The current study uses pseudonyms (like Respondent 1, Respondent 2, and so on) to protect respondents' replies. Table 1 summarizes each respondent.

Table 1: Respondent Description			
Respondent	Gender	State/Region	Years in Housing
1	Boy	North India	2
2	Girl	North India	2
3	Girl	North India	1

4	Girl	South India	2
5	Girl	South India	2
6	Boy	South India	1
7	Boy	Maharashtra	2
8	Boy	Rajasthan	2
Note: All respondents were provided with anonymity.			
Source: Primary Data			

While sampling, only MBA second-year students who had participated in at least 2 SSS out of the 4 conducted quarterly by R.O. were selected for the study. So, most R.O. students couldn't participate. Further, this research only included students who responded to the invitation e-mail.

As with past research on nonresponse, it's possible that the eight R.O. students who took part in this study had different experiences with SSS than other R.O. students.

Data Collection

This research used face-to-face interviews, consistent with constructivism's methodological principles (Neimeyer et al., 2020). A semi-structured methodology examined students' impressions of the survey process and what impacted their participation. Semi-structured interviews comprise "structured and less-structured questions" (Adams, 2015). This sort of conversation allowed for preset and developing subjects. As a part of the pilot study, three respondents who satisfied the study's inclusion criteria were interviewed to test the interview technique. The respondents offered comments on the process and helped write and revise questions.

Each respondent had a 30-minute interview with the author. The author transcribed each digitally recorded interview. Final protocol interview questions included:

1. Why do R.O. members survey students?
2. How has R.O.'s SSS influenced the student experience?
3. What encourages student participation in R.O.'s SSS?

Data Analysis

The "interview data" were "analyzed" using a "constant comparative approach" (Kolb, 2012). The continual comparative approach analyses data during and between collections. The first step of the analysis, open coding (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019), involves analyzing the initial interview transcript and coding relevant areas. This study's open coding assigned over 100 codes. This was followed by axial coding (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). In "axial coding", the author "grouped codes" that "fit together" into more significant "categories". Each "code" was "compared" and classified into 26 groups. Some codes were classified as "trust" and others as "benefit". In the second stage of the study, more "interview transcripts" were evaluated; categories were compared across transcripts to create a "master list". The "master list" of interview "categories" was considered to discover underlying themes. These answered research questions. The "trust" and "benefit" topics encompassed the two elements already mentioned as well as witnessing "outcomes" and "influence". The study highlighted "three themes": "surveys as agents for institutional change, surveys as ubiquitous artefacts, and trust-promoted participation".

In "qualitative research", trustworthiness is "how successfully a study accomplishes its goals" (Lietz et al., 2016). R.O.'s member checks improved the study's reliability. In this study, the IQAC Coordinator of the R.O. was selected as "Member 1". The author sent an e-mail to Member 1. The e-mail was attached with a copy of their "interview transcript, a summary of the results, and directions on how to offer comments on the findings". Five of eight respondents said the results correctly reflected

their views and experiences with R.O.'s SSS. This was validated by Member 1.

This study's reliability was further improved through a "3-step audit trail." An audit trail "describes how data was gathered, classifications were formed, and choices were made" (Golafshani, 2003). In step 1, the author recorded important research choices and actions. He kept all interview transcripts detailing how codes, categories, and topics were created. In step 2 of the audit trail, peer assessment is done. It is done to boost the reliability of the audit trail (Carcary, 2019). In step 3, the author consulted an expert in HEI's survey research to verify the "literature review, data collection, and data analysis".

The author ensured "transferability." Transferability refers to "how well research can be applied elsewhere" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The author wrote about the research site, the participants, and the method used in this paper. This was done to make the study more transferable.

FINDINGS: Founded on the "data analysis", "three themes" connected to the study topics were discovered. First, this study's respondents saw "surveys as agents of institutional change". Subsequently, they regarded them as pervasive in their "educational" surroundings. Respondents' desire to "engage" in SSS opportunities was also influenced by their "confidence" that the SSS would result in genuine change. These concepts are elaborated upon and validated by participant data.

Respondents examined the SSS's relation to education, policy, residential life, administration, and sports. Respondents described institutional SSS as a tool for gathering student feedback to enhance instruction.

Why do the R.O.'s members survey students?

"So they know what to change or enhance," said Respondent 1.

"They strive to improve R.O.'s performance and student services." Respondent 2 echoed Respondent 1's answer: "To get student feedback on how they're serving them and make any required modifications in the future."

Respondent 1's viewpoint was prejudiced by his participation in a student council. Respondent 2's "experience" was impacted by his participation in "student clubs" and his "part-time job" in the library.

Member 1, being IQAC Coordinator, has been actively involved in R.O.'s various kinds of surveys for students. He identified some parts of the survey procedure that few respondents also placed similarly.

"Our [organization's] premise was that our students would respond," he continued. They'll speak out if they're worried. Then we may get their comments and take action. "You must steer [students] in the direction they all want to go, or you'll have issues".

Member 1's frequent usage of "our" showed his ownership and affiliation with R.O. and SSS administrators.

"If you start rocking the boat, you're in trouble," he joked, showing that students felt the institute should be responsive to their demands. This "nautical metaphor" supported the "belief" that institutional SSS can improve student instruction. Furthermore, according to a member, "IQAC members conduct surveys to make things better for us".

Respondent 1 remarked, "I've done so numerous surveys I can't recall which ones." Respondent 4 grinned and stated, "Oh my!" Respondent 4's viewpoint was shaped by student clubs, like Respondent 1. Respondent 3, a student-athlete, remarked, "It's everywhere."

Respondent 3 gets "8–10 survey inquiries every month throughout the year".

Respondents saw SSS as a ubiquitous artifact. They remembered getting survey requests during formal teaching, extracurricular programs, and intercollegiate sports events while eating on campus, in the library, through "institutional e-mail, on social networking sites, and in on-campus housing".

SSS were prevalent, according to all respondents, but they rated their survey exposure differently. Respondent 6 found the survey process engaging and were interested in the survey methodology. He

linked his interest to his market research interests. Respondent 6 indicated he "wouldn't mind having a survey every day throughout the previous semester". Respondent 4 said intellectual curiosity drove her to do surveys, like Respondent 6. "I love seeing what people research," she remarked.

While respondents 6 and 4 appreciated receiving questionnaires, other students felt stressed. Respondent 3 called R.O.'s SSS "irritating." "Sometimes you feel besieged," she said of receiving four online requests for the same residential life satisfaction survey. Respondent 3 found R.O.'s survey technique "oppressive" and "invasive," yet she felt obligated to participate as a learning community member. Respondent 5 shared Respondent 3's attitude. She called R.O.'s SSS technique "overbearing," "unnecessary," and "a hassle," but added, "If I were running an occasion, I'd want to know how people felt." Respondent 6 and Respondent 4's evaluations of the survey procedure were impacted by intellectual curiosity, whereas Respondent 3 and Respondent 5 said survey methods were sometimes used unnecessarily. Respondent 3 remarked, smiling, "There are certain things you don't need a survey for." Respondent 5 said, "Sometimes it seems redundant," referring to a survey following a role play in an event.

Respondents 7 and 3 believed regularly polling students was crucial for serving them efficiently, notwithstanding survey fatigue. Respondent 7 called surveys a "necessary evil." Respondent 2 reinforced this assumption. Respondent 2 stated, "It's vital to 'over-interview' students since the institute can't help them without constant feedback." "In general, I think we're over-surveyed." Some study participants felt the "proliferation" of SSS on "campus" demonstrated the institute's promise to refining student education. Those who thought this way gave their SSS experience a higher rating than those who didn't know surveys were necessary for general.

Respondents who thought their participation would influence their educational environment were more inclined to complete institutional questionnaires. Respondent 7's statements show this.

"Investment-like If I give my time for nothing, I'll become a number. Fewer people will volunteer if [institute officials] do not state that [a SSS] has changed anything."

For some respondents, questionnaires weren't performing their stated function, leading to disengagement and skepticism. Respondent 5 said, "SSS is pointless if your answers won't be used. If you thought your comments mattered, you'd fill out SSS".

Respondent 5 stated, "Even if I protest about this, that, and the other thing, I feel better because I protested, but I'm not feeling all that much better because nothing is being done." "Nothing has changed since last year," she remarked.

Respondent 3, who gets 8–10 surveys monthly, was disappointed with most of them. "Spending an hour on a SSS that no one would use seems pointless," she said. When queried about SSS polls, her skepticism became clear:

"We regularly hear badminton and basketball players shout-another e-mail! No way. I don't care. Messages are deleted. What's the point and purpose? ""They ask for your ideas to alter or better things frequently, yet nothing changes."

Respondent 3, Respondent 5, and others' suspicion appear to stem from two contradicting views. SSS were viewed as inefficient, worthless devices and change drivers. For people who couldn't think of tangible benefits, SSS surveys were complex, led to mistrust, and made people less likely to fill them out.

Others in the sample were certain that survey chances would lead to positive change, even if they couldn't name specifics. He couldn't say how his involvement affected his studies at R.O., but he was sure it was valuable. He wouldn't have completed the survey if he didn't believe it. Respondent 1 said he answered almost every survey he sent, saving those he thought "wouldn't matter."

He mentioned a research survey on social programs. He thought this poll was useless since prior polls were never evaluated or implemented. Respondent 4

couldn't identify her engagement's impacts. She trusted the method.

"Why submit the survey if they didn't care what you thought?"

Respondent 2 said his engagement affected his MBA studies. He asserted that his involvement changed teacher engagement in class and course curricula. He also noted how these changes boosted his confidence in SSS.

He said, "I've probably seen small-scale changes at the institute, so I think they happen. I think [my] and other students' opinions are heard. I'm convinced".

Practical results of respondent 6's engagement boosted his confidence. He described how his engagement influenced his MBA studies in an interview. He narrated a poll on new furniture in the library. He remembers making ideas and seeing the library implement them. This and other events transformed his perspective on SSS and inspired him to participate in future polls. I finished a survey, and... after reading its conclusions, I concluded... wow: housing will listen! Meaningful surveys would make me more likely to participate.

Respondents in this research said that seeing how data has been utilized to improve their educational experiences will boost their involvement in future surveys and promote trust. First respondent: "Before acting, most students want to see change. If students see action, they'll help. "The interview data includes terms showing the respondent's eagerness to learn about SSS data and change. When asked how R.O.'s survey administrators might enhance SSS processes, many respondents said more frequent publication of SSS data would boost response rates. This approach emphasized the importance of openness and participants' confidence in the survey technique.

DISCUSSION: This study's findings complement prior surveys (Menon & Muraleedharan, 2020). Social exchange theory is essential to college students because trust increases engagement. Students are most willing to engage in surveys when (a) the advantages outweigh the expenses and (b) they trust the administrative agency. According to

the interviews, students agree on "what constitutes a "reward" and a "cost" for survey participation". A "reward" is an apparent enhancement in the "educational environment", whereas a "cost" is "time and effort". These youngsters have a consistent definition of "trust." "Trust" is the "belief" that SSS data will provide advantages.

Students who "trust" the institute to "use survey data to achieve" personal and/or communal "advantages" are more likely to participate in SSS despite the "boredom". Following this logic, it becomes clear why students who don't see a "reward" are less likely to participate in SSS. They don't think "answering" SSS will yield future advantages.

All respondents believed that SSS should affect change. This shows that students consider SSS as a way to improve their educational experiences. All participants wanted more "direct interaction" from R.O.'s officials about using survey findings to improve. These statistics may explain decreased SSRs.

Students may withdraw from surveys if institute authorities don't offer documentation. These questions underscore the importance of SSS trust and suggest future research subjects. Students' view of SSS as widespread artefacts underlines the growing concern that "college students are overexposed" to surveys. All study respondents recalled many SSS, suggesting a "high level" of survey "exposure". For the respondents in this study, surveys were a routine part of their institute experience, from instruction to extracurricular events to "campus housing" and "cafeteria services".

"Interview" results don't match students' perceptions of exposure. The interview data demonstrates that overexposure to the survey technique may reduce student participation. Respondent 3 called the SSS "overbearing," "unnecessary," and "a hassle." High survey exposure deterred this respondent and others from participating. Most people who answered the survey said high exposure was based on trust or interest in a survey opportunity.

The “current study” infers that a “high degree” of survey exposure may be reduced by introducing initiatives to improve trust between participants and administrative agencies and emphasizing essential aspects of the SSS request. This finding is compatible with the leverage-prominence theory, which proposes that unpleasant survey components may be alleviated by highlighting favorable ones (Ibhagui et al, 2018). Further research is needed into the leverage-salience hypothesis at postgraduate institutions.

IMPLICATIONS: The findings of the current study may affect higher education policy and practice. Students may need to be educated by HEI survey administrators on how their participation helps their education. Connecting data to institutional practices may help build trust, explain the advantages of involvement, and raise response rates. As SSS survey usage expands, HEIs may want to create institution-wide regulations. The IQAC of HEIs is well-positioned to develop policies. A policy may establish:

1. A SSS approval process.
2. Who may perform SSS on “campus”, and in “what circumstances”?
3. Which “students” can be polled, and how often.
4. The standards for delivering direct feedback to students.

Components may vary from HEI to another, but the goal should be to give administrators greater control over how students are exposed to SSS surveys. Such power may, over time, encourage more student engagement in evaluation and research activities.

CONCLUSION: As accountability demands increase, assessment practitioners of technical institutions and programs in India, like the “National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) or National Board of Accreditation (NBA)”, will continue to find surveys appealing. Declining SSS response rates harm survey research at HEIs. The current study reveals how college students view institutional SSS surveys and what motivates them to participate. Respondents in this

study saw surveys as ubiquitous items meant to affect change. Respondents who felt the R.O. would “use survey data” to better their “educational experience” were “more ready to participate”. These “findings” set the stage for reevaluating how HEI “officials, students, and the campus environment” promote “survey” participation. The data in this study may help improve campus survey administration. Nonresponse needs further research. This study suggests new research possibilities for understanding this phenomenon.

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