



Bookstore Operations Practices: Evidence from a Private Higher Education Institution in the Philippines

Ohlie I. Macatangay¹, Jesus P. Briones^{2*}, Flormando P. Baldovino³,
Lalaine V. Manalo⁴

^{1,2,4}First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities, Philippines

³Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation, Philippines

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Abstract

Bookstore management plays a vital role in ensuring timely and cost-effective supply of educational materials. This study examined bookstore operations practices in a private higher education institution (HEI) in the Philippines. This descriptive-quantitative research used researcher-structured questionnaire distributed in-person to the 133 respondents composed of 66 college and 67 senior high school students of the subject HEI. The data gathered were analyzed with statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, standard deviation, weighted mean, and Spearman rank correlation. Results revealed that the bookstore operations was found well-managed considering its proper inventory management practices and the highly acceptable level of customer service provided to their customers. The efficient management of the bookstore justifies the acceptable customer satisfaction ratings and the non-existence of serious problems related to bookstore operations. The study also revealed a significant relationship between bookstore operations practices in terms of inventory management, and customer satisfaction in terms of value and pricing. However, there was no significant relationship revealed between inventory management and customer satisfaction in terms of inventory and availability. Likewise, no significant relationships were revealed between customer service, and both dimensions of customer satisfaction (inventory and availability, and value and pricing). Based on these findings, proposed guidelines were developed to further enhance bookstore management practices. This study serves as a foundation for policies promoting efficient bookstore operations in HEI and other similar academic settings.

Keywords: *Bookstore Operations Practices; Customer Satisfaction; Customer Service; Higher Education Institution in the Philippines; Inventory Management; Value and Pricing*

INTRODUCTION

Private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines play a vital role in providing quality education to students. An essential aspect to support academic excellence is the efficient management of its auxiliary services, one of which is bookstore operations. This is essential for strengthening academic success by providing students with their academic needs like books and uniforms and contributing to their overall satisfaction and retention. Effective bookstore management is fundamental because it has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, leading to customer loyalty. According to Wu and Tseng (2014), customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are positively related. Consequently, poor bookstore management, characterized by inadequate inventory monitoring and uncompetitive pricing, can undermine customer satisfaction, ultimately eroding customer loyalty and driving customers away.

Studies on bookstore inventory management and customer satisfaction highlight the importance of service quality, pricing, and effective inventory systems. Studies have revealed how

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Corresponding author's email: jpbbriones@firstasia.edu.ph

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reliability, empathy, and company image significantly impact customer satisfaction with bookstores (Rashid et al., 2020; Wulan & Husaeni, 2015). These factors influence customer loyalty, retention, and overall consumer experience. Thus, proper inventory management is crucial for minimizing costs, increasing customer satisfaction, and improving financial performance (Djohan & Stefvy, 2023). Inventory shortages and poor management systems negatively affect customer satisfaction in the bookstore industry. This means that effective inventory management is crucial to preventing stock outs, reducing wait times, and ensuring timely product availability (Guo et al., 2024). These studies emphasized the need for bookstore businesses to focus on inventory management strategies, service quality, and accurate demand forecasting to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain competitiveness in the market.

Despite the contributions of these studies, no comprehensive study has focused on bookstore operations in Philippine HEIs, specifically on inventory management and financial dynamics. Based on the researchers' knowledge, this study is the first of its kind considering that research is necessary to explore aspects such as operations and customer satisfaction of HEI-affiliated bookstore management to determine the effectiveness of operations. This gap was explored in the case of a private HEI in the Philippines.

Serving approximately 7,000 customers, the subject private HEI for several years relies on general institutional policies and fair practices for its bookstore operations. However, during the external audit season, the absence of complete guidelines for direct bookstore operations poses various challenges to the institution's operations, including inventory management, customer service, pricing, and value. For instance, inefficiencies in managing stock levels, tracking inventory, ensuring item availability, and product pricing inconsistencies impact sales, customer retention, and consumers' overall satisfaction. Relative to these concerns, an extensive assessment of the bookstore's operational management practices focusing on inventory management, customer service, inventory availability, and pricing is timely and relevant. Customers' perspectives on how the bookstore operates should be considered to propose comprehensive guidelines for more effective bookstore management.

Therefore, this study investigated the operational management practices of a bookstore in a private HEI in the Philippines. Specifically, this study assessed the HEI's bookstore operations practices in terms of inventory management and customer service. Moreover, this study evaluated customer satisfaction with bookstore operations in terms of inventory and availability, as well as the value and pricing of bookstore items. The study also identified problems encountered in bookstore operations. Then, the study examined the relationship between bookstore operations practices and customer satisfaction. Finally, the study proposed comprehensive guidelines on optimizing bookstore business operations. This study, focusing on a specific context, fills an important gap in local research and provides valuable insights for the efficient management of HEI's auxiliary services like a bookstore which caters to the needs of students and other stakeholders as well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a thorough literature review was conducted on the theory of the study's framework. In particular, bookstore management was examined in terms of its practices, customer satisfaction, and problems encountered in its actual operations.

Stakeholder Theory

This study is guided by the Stakeholder Theory of Robert Edward Freeman (Freeman et al.,

2021). Known as a foundational concept in business ethics and management, this theory emphasizes that organizational success depends on creating value for all primary stakeholders, not just shareholders. It posits that businesses operate within an ecosystem of various stakeholders, each contributing to the firm's sustainability (Gutterman, 2023). The theory has evolved since the 1930s and has gained prominence in corporate social responsibility discussions (Mahajan et al., 2023). Research studies utilizing this theory span multiple disciplines and contexts, with major thematic clusters including sustainability, organizational performance, strategic management, and stakeholder management (Harrison et al., 2015; Mahajan et al., 2023).

In context, this theory provides a framework for understanding how bookstore operations characterized by inventory management and customer service factors can be optimized to satisfy customers' diverse expectations regarding inventory and availability, as well as the value and pricing of bookstore items. This implies that adopting a stakeholder-oriented approach to the bookstore operations of a private HEI can enhance both its operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. The bookstore can create value by prioritizing the needs of these stakeholders—ensuring the availability of academic materials, offering affordable pricing, and maintaining a high level of customer service—which will improve satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, a holistic approach characterized by sustainable practices and transparent communication with stakeholders would ensure that the bookstore thrives while contributing to the academic goals and mission of the institution.

Bookstore Operations Practices

Although bookstore operations have been studied extensively in commercial retail contexts, a lack of research focusing on bookstore management within private HEIs. The current literature explores inventory management, pricing, and customer service separately, but no comprehensive framework that integrates these elements to optimize customer satisfaction in HEI-affiliated bookstores exists. Furthermore, although customer satisfaction has been linked to operational efficiency, significant challenges such as inventory discrepancies, pricing transparency, and service quality remain underexplored. This study sought to address these gaps by assessing bookstore operations in terms of inventory management and customer service factors from the customer perspective and by proposing strategic guidelines tailored for bookstores managed by HEIs.

Inventory management and customer service are two of the most critical factors for ensuring efficiency and customer satisfaction. Inventory management involves the systematic ordering, tracking, and maintaining stock levels to meet customer demand while minimizing waste and shortages, which directly affect the store's ability to provide the right products at the right time. Similarly, customer service is a vital aspect that shapes customer experience, focusing on delivering prompt, helpful, and personalized assistance to ensure satisfaction and loyalty.

The first dimension of bookstore operation practices is inventory management. Munyaka and Yadavalli (2022) posited that controlling inventory is critical to operational success and organizational performance. This means that various inventory management practices have been implemented to optimize stock levels and customer satisfaction. It is of high importance for bookstores to analyze customer preferences and sales impact to forecast demand. In connection with this, purchasing decisions will also be improved and controlled. An application of on-time inventory systems will minimize holding costs by ordering items for sale as needed only, thereby reducing overstocking problems. Regular inventory audits and cycle counting account for accurate records and easy identification of item discrepancies. Thus, properly managed inventory records can optimize bookstore operations, reduce costs, and enhance customer experiences.

The second dimension is customer service. It is mission-critical and service-oriented,

extending beyond “service with a smile” or “go the extra mile” albeit being complex and requiring mastery of operations skills (Sheth et al., 2023). To enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, staff training and loyalty programs should be considered, along with fostering strong supplier relationships.

Customer Satisfaction with Bookstore Operations

The satisfaction of customers ultimately leads to loyalty to the product or service (Utami et al., 2023). Customers repeat their orders when satisfied. There are two essential dimensions to customer satisfaction: inventory availability and value pricing. Inventory availability refers to the extent to which a bookstore can meet customer demand for specific titles and genres and expect a diverse selection of books, including new releases and popular titles, from hardcovers and paperbacks to e-books. Studies have indicated that higher inventory availability is positively correlated with customer satisfaction. When customers find the books they want in stock, their overall shopping experience improves, and their loyalty increases (Tella & Ngoaketsi, 2022). However, the absence of clear policies in bookstores often creates challenges in managing inventory.

In contrast, value pricing involves setting prices that reflect the perceived value of the books offered while remaining competitive within the market. Customers assess value not only based on price but also on service quality, the shopping environment, and perks such as loyalty programs or discounts (Bucci et al., 2020). Implementing strategies such as price matching and offering exclusive discounts can enhance perceived value and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, transparency in pricing and providing information about promotions can positively influence customer perceptions of value (Bucci et al., 2020).

These studies suggest that both inventory availability and value pricing are critical factors for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. With an adequate and well-managed inventory, bookstores can meet customer demands, foster positive shopping experiences, repeat visits, and retain customers. Conversely, poor inventory management can lead to customer dissatisfaction and loss of sales opportunities. Value pricing, on the other hand, plays an essential role in shaping customer perceptions of a bookstore’s offerings. When prices reflect the perceived value of the books and are competitive in the market, customers are more likely to feel satisfied with their purchases. Offering services such as price matching, exclusive discounts, and clear promotions can further enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen the bookstore’s relationship with its customers.

Although existing literature underscores the importance of inventory availability and value pricing in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty, there remains a gap in understanding how these factors impact bookstore operations from a customer perspective. The current research primarily focuses on retail bookstores in commercial settings, with limited attention given to bookstores managed by HEIs, which serve a unique demographic with distinct purchasing behaviors and academic needs. Additionally, although studies recognize the role of inventory management in improving customer satisfaction, comprehensive frameworks or best practices tailored to HEI bookstores are lacking. Challenges such as stockouts, demand forecasting, and inefficient restocking processes remain underexplored in the context of academic bookstores.

Similarly, research on value pricing often highlights general pricing strategies but does not provide actionable guidelines for balancing affordability, profitability, and perceived value in HEI bookstores. The role of transparency, promotional strategies, and loyalty programs in shaping customer satisfaction with academic bookstores remains poorly studied.

Relationship Between Bookstore Operations Practices and Customer Satisfaction

Studies have revealed a strong relationship between bookstore operations practices and customer satisfaction. Quality management practices are positively correlated with customer satisfaction and product quality although customers may hesitate to recommend products to others (Udofia, 2019). These findings underscore the importance of implementing effective operations practices in bookstores to enhance customer satisfaction, which can lead to increased profitability and a competitive advantage in the service sector (Rashid et al., 2020; Udofia, 2019).

Furthermore, creating an appealing store atmosphere, including visuals, arrangement, lighting, music, and aroma, and providing excellent customer service are crucial for enhancing customer experiences and fostering loyalty in bookstores and retail environments (Hans et al., 2023). This strategy can help physical bookstores compete effectively in the digital age.

While the literature clearly indicates that bookstore operations practices are significantly related to inventory management and customer service, the researchers believe that there might be other factors that enhance or deter customer satisfaction. In this study, the subdimensions of customer satisfaction, such as inventory availability, pricing, and value, were explored. In this study, the following null hypothesis was considered:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between bookstore operations practices and customer satisfaction.

Problems Encountered in Bookstore Operation

Bookstores face numerous operational challenges in the digital age. Inadequate inventory management and difficulty in tracking sales and stock levels are common issues (Aldisa & Abdullah, 2022). Stockouts, for example, indicate a lack of inventory planning. An inadequate inventory tracking system is perceived as inefficient, hindering accurate monitoring and control, which results in discrepancies and data accuracy issues. Delivery issues are also frequent and may lead to delays and dissatisfaction. Lastly, inventory reporting is often inaccurate, thereby making it difficult to make informed decisions.

In a study conducted by Li and Shi (2022), they found that physical bookstores in this era of digital transformation are still facing a series of problems, including interior design and readers' multiple requirements. Another problem in bookstore operations is customer service challenges that involve slow resolution of customer complaints, inadequate staff customer service skills, frequent product complaints, unclear return and exchange policies, and a lack of customer feedback mechanisms (Rashid et al., 2020). If these occur consistently, they will affect the quality of service, resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Hence, the implementation of clear policies on complaint handling, staff training, product monitoring and feedback mechanisms is needed to improve customer experience and enhance bookstore operation.

While problems with bookstores in general retail settings were explored in previous studies, limited attention was given to the unique context of bookstores within HEIs. Unlike commercial bookstores, HEI bookstores must balance academic demands, seasonal fluctuations in book purchases, and affordability concerns; however, there is insufficient literature exploring how these factors influence operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to systematically and accurately describe the relationship between bookstore operations practices and customer satisfaction. According to McCombes (2023), this research design is most appropriate for

accurately and systematically describing a population, situation, or phenomenon. The study involved 67 senior high school and 66 college students (133) from a total population of 5,467 (2,961 senior high school students and 2,506 college students) across programs and tracks of the private HEI in the Philippines. The sample size was determined using Raosoft based on a 90% confidence level and a 10% margin of error. According to [Memon et al. \(2020\)](#), this online calculator, which requires inputs for a study's population size, confidence level, and margin of error, is useful for determining a sufficient sample size for social science research like this one. Therefore, the computed sample size is sufficient to appropriately describe the population. The study also employed a simple random sampling technique to select participants. This method ensured that every user of the bookstore, specifically regular clients, had an equal chance of being chosen ([Noor et al., 2022](#)).

The study used a researcher-structured questionnaire that was translated into the Filipino for better understanding. The questionnaire consisted of several parts: Part 1: Demographic Information; Part 2- Bookstore Operations Practices; Part 3- Customer Satisfaction; and Part 4- Problems Encountered on Bookstore Operations. Questionnaire items for Parts 2 to 4 were rated using a four-point Likert scale, where 1-1.74 is Strongly Disagree, 1.75-2.49 is Disagree, 2.5-3.24 is Agree, and 3.25-4 is Strongly Agree. The instrument was validated by two experts with extensive experience in managing a HEI-affiliated bookstore, where their comments and suggestions were considered in finalizing the questionnaire. Then, the final questionnaire was pilot tested on a group of 10 students who were excluded from the mass survey to identify potential issues related to clarity, feasibility, and response consistency of the questionnaire test items. Then, the pilot test results underwent Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing to confirm the internal consistency of the instrument, ensuring that the questionnaire was reliably measured relative to the objectives of the study.

After the questionnaire passed the validation and reliability testing, the researchers administered the final data gathering instrument to the target respondent in-person. The distribution and retrieval questionnaires were complete over 2 days from November 18-19, 2024. To uphold ethical considerations, respondents were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and provided with a clause ensuring that their data would be used solely for research purposes. The collected data were analyzed using statistical methods, including frequency, percentage, standard deviation, weighted mean, and Spearman rank correlation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data obtained from the respondents, a detailed discussion of the tabulated responses, and the literature that supports the study's findings.

Reliability Statistics

To ensure the reliability of the measures used in this study, the researchers evaluated the internal consistency of the questionnaire items for each indicator. The reliability measures are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Indicator				Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Bookstore operations practices				0.721	10
Customer operation	satisfaction	with	bookstore	0.723	10

Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Problems encountered in bookstore operation	0.719	10
Average	0.722	

As can be seen from the table, the computed Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.719 to 0.723. These values confirm the internal reliability of the scales used to measure bookstore operations practices, customer satisfaction, and problems encountered in bookstore operations. According to Frost (2024), a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or greater is sufficient to determine reliability.

Profile of Respondents

Table 2 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, number of years as a client, and student classification.

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Indicator	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
16 years and below	21	16
Over 16 years old	112	84
Gender		
Male	75	56
Female	58	44
Number of Years as Client		
One year and below	54	41
More than one year	79	59
Student Classification		
Senior high school	67	50
College	66	50

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (84%) were over 16 years old and above.

In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents (56%) were male, which indicates that the bookstore may be more popular among males, or the resources and services that the bookstore offers cater more to the needs of males. For the number of years as a client, the majority of the respondents (59%) have been clients for more than a year, which may suggest that the bookstore has succeeded in building long-term relationships with its patrons by using its services over time and in offering the clients' needs. Lastly, in terms of student classification, the results revealed an almost equal number of students who availed bookstore services. This is because the bookstore offers several academic needs that cater to both secondary and tertiary levels.

The profile of respondents indicates that bookstore services are commonly used by young adults and students at the HEI. Young adults and students, according to Hunt (2017), are significant users of bookstore services. These age groups typically find bookstore services essential to their academic needs and other related activities.

Bookstore Operations Practices

The bookstore operations practices were assessed across two dimensions: inventory

management; and customer service. The results of this assessment provided valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improving a bookstore in a private HEI.

Inventory Management

Inventory management is crucial for private HEI bookstores. The availability of items at minimum costs must be ensured to maximize customer satisfaction. Table 3 presents the bookstore operations practices in terms of inventory management.

Table 3. Inventory management

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	Bookstore effectively manages inventory levels.	3.3835	.54664	Strongly Agree
2	Inventory tracking systems are efficient.	3.3008	.61527	Strongly Agree
3	Stockouts are rare in bookstores.	2.7970	.72571	Agree
4	Inventory reports are accurate and current.	3.2030	.59999	Agree
5	Inventory levels are regularly reviewed and adjusted.	3.2406	.59225	Strongly Agree
	General Weighted Mean	3.1849		

The respondents confirmed that the bookstore effectively managed inventory levels, as evidenced by the highest obtained mean (3.3835). This indicates that respondents perceived the bookstore's inventory management practices to be highly effective in maintaining appropriate inventory levels, which likely contributed to its operational efficiency. This positive feedback indicates that the current inventory management system is well-regarded, and functions as intended, which may lead to better customer satisfaction and fewer instances of stockouts or overstocking. [Aldisa and Abdullah \(2022\)](#) highlighted that an inventory system is an essential tool for businesses to manage inventory levels, orders, and sales.

Meanwhile, stockouts are rare in bookstores (2.7970), as agreed upon by respondents. Although respondents generally perceive the bookstore's inventory management to be effective, they also acknowledge that stockouts are infrequent. However, the lower mean score suggests that although stockouts are rare, occasional occurrences may occur and there may be room to minimize them further. Thus, while the bookstore is performing well in inventory management, there could be slight inconsistencies or areas for optimization to ensure accurate stock availability at all times. As stated by [Sampaio and Sampaio \(2015\)](#), stockouts remain a significant problem for retail firms, with stockouts rates in the past 50 years consistently averaging approximately 8%. In consonance, stockouts generate significant profitability and reputation effects ([Larson & Ferrin, 2023](#)). These studies suggest the importance of addressing stockouts because their recurrence may not only lead to immediate lost sales and long-term damages that may affect brand image.

Theoretically, these findings align with stakeholder theory by demonstrating that businesses prioritizing customer satisfaction through efficient resource management are more likely to maintain strong customer relationships and market competitiveness. This study highlights

how strategic inventory management directly influences stakeholder perceptions and operational success. This aligns with [Shukaili et al. \(2023\)](#), who confirmed that a well-designed inventory management strategy enhances overall organizational performance by improving resource allocation, minimizing stockouts, and enhancing supply chain responsiveness. Therefore, while the bookstore's current inventory system appears effective, continuous optimization is essential to ensure long-term customer satisfaction and business sustainability.

Customer Service

Delivering excellent customer service is vital for bookstores to foster customer loyalty, drive sales, and remain competitive. Table 4 presents the bookstore operations practices in terms of customer service.

Table 4. Customer Service

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	Staff are knowledgeable about bookstore items for sale.	3.3985	.54965	Strongly Agree
2	All desired bookstore items were conveniently located and available.	3.1955	.63316	Agree
3	Staff offer expert advice to clients about their bookstore items for sale.	3.3158	.64395	Strongly Agree
4	Customer feedback is handled efficiently and effectively.	3.2406	.61731	Strongly Agree
5	The bookstore has a clear and concise return and exchange policies.	3.2932	.63701	Strongly Agree
General Weighted Mean		3.2887		Strongly Agree

Respondents strongly agreed that the bookstore staff were knowledgeable about the items for sale (3.3985) and recognized the staff's expertise as a key role in customer satisfaction and the overall success of the bookstore operations. Well-informed staff can enhance the shopping experience by providing helpful recommendations and effectively answering customer inquiries, which can lead to increased sales, customer trust, and loyalty. Furthermore, this level of knowledge may improve a store's reputation because customers are more likely to return to a business where they feel confident that the staff can meet their needs. Employee proactivity can signal employee presence, indicating the effect of employees' task competence, which translates to customer satisfaction ([Lucia-Palacios et al. 2020](#); [Söderlund, 2018](#)).

Additionally, respondents strongly agreed that staff offer expert advice to clients, that customer feedback is handled efficiently and effectively, and that the bookstore has clear and concise return and exchange policies (3.3158, 3.2406, and 3.2932, respectively), suggesting that the bookstore meets the expectations of clients.

Moreover, respondents stated that the bookstore provides convenient access to the items they desire, with a lower mean score of 3.1955. Given the results, there could be some room for improvement in this area even though the customers are generally satisfied with the availability of the products. The relatively lower rating indicates that there may still be issues with stock

availability. This suggests the need for better inventory management and more efficient restocking practices to ensure that all desired items are readily available to customers.

Overall, these findings underscore the bookstore's strong customer service and staff expertise and highlight opportunities for inventory management improvement. The results reinforce STP by demonstrating that businesses that effectively engage with their customers through knowledgeable staff and efficient policies are more likely to maintain stakeholder trust and loyalty. According to [Cardoso et al. \(2022\)](#), trust and loyalty are important in building an excellent customer relationship. Relative to the managerial implications of the findings for the subject bookstore, the study verified that investing in continuous staff training and optimizing inventory management strategies could further enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency, thereby ensuring the bookstore's long-term success. According to [Srinivasan and George \(2024\)](#), investing in continuous training enhances employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies, ultimately leading to improved customer satisfaction and organizational success. In contrast, [Debala et al. \(2023\)](#) claimed that inventory optimization is important for enhancing operational efficiency.

Customer Satisfaction

The satisfaction of customers with bookstore operations was assessed in terms of inventory, availability, value, and pricing.

Inventory and Availability

Effective inventory management enables businesses to balance supply and demand while ensuring high product availability while enhancing customer satisfaction. Table 5 presents customer satisfaction in terms of inventory and availability.

Table 5. Inventory and Availability

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	Bookstore items were neatly organized and readily accessible to clients.	3.3233	0.64607	Strongly Agree
2	All desired bookstore items were conveniently available.	3.0075	0.63361	Agree
3	Staff always informed clients about the availability of the items.	3.2406	0.66458	Strongly Agree
4	Special orders were fulfilled promptly and efficiently from the bookstore.	3.1203	0.59081	Agree
5	The bookstore inventory was promptly replenished.	3.0902	0.67933	Agree
	General Weighted Mean	3.1564		

Respondents affirmed that the bookstore items were neatly organized and readily accessible to the clients (3.3233). Similarly, the staff informed the clients about the availability of

the items (3.2406). The respondents positively viewed bookstore organization and accessibility. A well-organized bookstore layout and product presentation not only improves customer satisfaction but also contributes to more efficient shopping, potentially increasing sales and fostering customer loyalty. Product visibility from major bookstore paths or effective store layout correlates with increased customer engagement, highlighting the importance of store layout. This was supported by [Grewal and Roggeveen \(2017\)](#) and [Lu and Seo \(2015\)](#), who stated that a well-organized store layout enhances customer satisfaction.

Meanwhile, respondents revealed that all desired bookstore items were conveniently available, that special orders were filled promptly, and that the bookstore inventory was promptly replenished. Despite being organized and accessible, the unavailability of products in bookstores could lead to customer dissatisfaction, potentially impacting their overall experience. This should indicate the need to improve inventory management or ordering processes to meet customer demands. The digitalization of stationery stores, for example, has enabled local businesses to reach a wider customer base, particularly college students, through online platforms that enable them to browse, avail of special discounts, and buy items without visiting physical stores ([Ali et al., 2023](#)).

While the bookstore is likely to meet the basic expectations, there could be occasional issues with resource availability that are necessary for user satisfaction and accessibility. Studies have demonstrated that implementing tailored inventory management systems can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance resource availability ([Al-Momani et al., 2020](#); [Khan & Siddiqui, 2019](#)). However, challenges remain in terms of system adoption and usage. A study on a university inventory system revealed that despite user familiarity, limitations in processes and item tracking were identified ([Odasco & Saong, 2023](#)). Factors such as inventory accuracy, lean inventory, and stock availability positively impact firm efficiency ([Khan & Siddiqui, 2019](#)). These findings highlight the importance of investing in advanced inventory management technologies and providing regular user training to optimize resource management and operations.

Overall, although the bookstore demonstrates strength in organization and accessibility, the findings suggest that improvements in inventory management and digital integration could further enhance operational efficiency. These results reinforce STP by emphasizing the need for businesses to proactively address customer concerns and expectations through well-managed inventory systems. Thus, bookstores should consider leveraging technology-driven solutions and employee training initiatives to ensure consistent product availability and streamlined operations, thereby maintaining a competitive edge in the evolving retail landscape. As pointed out by [Holloway \(2024\)](#), digital technologies significantly enhance inventory visibility by providing real-time tracking and data integration capabilities.

Value and Pricing

Value and pricing are essential components of a bookstore's marketing strategy, influencing customer purchasing decisions and revenue generation. Value refers to the perceived benefits and satisfaction that customers derive from a product or service. Pricing, on the other hand, is the amount customers pay for the items. Table 6 presents customer satisfaction in terms of value and pricing.

Table 6. Pricing Strategies

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	Competitive pricing was offered by the	3.2331	0.54893	Agree

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
	bookstore.			
2	Sales and discounts were offered regularly.	2.6015	0.71711	Agree
3	The bookstore sells good quality items at an affordable price.	2.8496	0.72296	Agree
4	Bookstore items exceed customer expectations.	3.1278	0.58275	Agree
5	Prices are clearly displayed.	3.0150	0.71758	Agree
	General Weighted Mean	2.9654		

The respondents also claimed that the bookstore offered competitive pricing (3.2331). This implies that customers consider pricing a fundamental factor when making their purchases. Although the highest rating of Strongly Agree regarding pricing was not met, most respondents viewed bookstore pricing as favorable compared to competitors.

Research indicates that pricing is a crucial factor that influences customer satisfaction and purchase decisions. Several studies have found that price significantly affects customer satisfaction (Wulan & Husaeni, 2015) and book buying decisions among students (Sulistyo et al., 2021). Competitive pricing has been shown to significantly positively influence consumer behavior (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Meanwhile, sales and discounts obtained the lowest mean (2.6015). Presumably, these promotions might not be substantial or appealing enough to influence consumer satisfaction or purchase behavior. The bookstore might miss opportunities to leverage more attractive or effective discount strategies. The respondents might be expecting more competitive, impactful discounts that would better drive their interest and loyalty. Research suggests that promotional tools and loyalty programs can significantly impact consumer behavior, but their effectiveness varies. Interestingly, customer satisfaction can increase with price increases, whereas loyalty may decrease with price reductions (Yun & Hanson, 2020). Loyalty programs offering monetary and soft benefits can foster customer relationships. Various promotional tools like coupons, samples, and buy-one-get-one-free offers can influence brand switching and customer loyalty; thus, they must be used effectively (Bijmolt & Verhoef, 2017; Shamout, 2016).

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings reinforce Stakeholder Theory by emphasizing the need for businesses to align their pricing strategies with customer expectations while maintaining financial sustainability. Practically, the results highlight the importance of adopting a more dynamic pricing approach, leveraging customer insights to develop promotional strategies that not only attract price-sensitive consumers but also reinforce perceived value. To strengthen its competitive edge, the bookstore should consider refining its discounting mechanisms, enhancing customer engagement through value-added promotions, and ensuring that its pricing structure continues to reflect the balance between affordability and quality. The strategy of adopting value-based pricing, as emphasized by Tremblay et al. (2024), is a means to determine a fair, evidence-based, and reasonable price for all parties involved rather than a strategy to maximize or achieve the highest price.

Problems Encountered in Bookstore Operations

Bookstore operations are prone to numerous challenges like customer dissatisfaction and compromised competitiveness, which lead to decreased sales. Identifying and addressing these operational challenges is crucial for optimizing performance, enhancing customer experience, and sustaining profitability. The problems encountered in bookstores' operation were assessed in two sub-dimensions: inventory management and customer service. The results of this assessment provided valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within private HEIs.

Inventory Management

Effective inventory management and availability are important for bookstores to ensure timely delivery of products, minimize stock outs and overstocking, and maximize customer satisfaction. According to [Chopra and Meindi \(2019\)](#), optimal inventory levels and product availability can improve bookstores' supply chain efficiency, reduce costs, and drive revenue growth, ultimately enhancing their competitive advantage. Table 7 presents the problems encountered in bookstore operation in terms of inventory management.

Table 7. Inventory Management

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	Stockouts occur frequently.	2.4436	0.77277	Disagree
2	Inventory tracking systems are inefficient.	2.2256	0.70299	Disagree
3	Inventory discrepancies are common.	2.2197	0.73427	Disagree
4	Supplier delivery issues are frequent.	2.5414	0.71256	Agree
5	Inventory reporting is inaccurate.	2.0902	0.75336	Disagree
	General Weighted Mean	2.3041		

The respondents also claimed that supplier delivery issues frequently occur in bookstores (2.5414). This implies that supplier delivery issues are indeed a significant concern for manufacturers, as highlighted by several studies. Delayed deliveries and uncertain supplier capacity can disrupt production schedules and impact customer satisfaction ([Sakhare et al., 2023](#)). Effective supplier performance management can lead to significant improvements in product quality and delivery performance, with one case study reporting a 60% reduction in customer rejections due to supplier issues and minimal production interruptions ([Doshi, 2019](#)).

On the other hand, respondents believe that the bookstore inventory is accurate (2.0902). This suggests that although the overall perception might lean toward accuracy, a significant proportion of respondents still believe that inventory reporting is not particularly problematic or unreliable. The low mean score indicates a stronger consensus among respondents that inventory reporting is relatively accurate. Recent studies have demonstrated various aspects of inventory management and its impact on business efficiency, with small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

generally satisfied with the efficacy, reliability, and accuracy of inventory systems and point-of-sale services (Mariani & Wacas, 2022). Additionally, inventory management has been found to positively impact firm efficiency (Khan & Siddiqui, 2019).

Overall, respondents generally held a favorable view of the bookstore's inventory management practices, as indicated by their disagreement with statements suggesting inefficiencies. However, given the persistent supplier delivery issues, the bookstore must enhance supply chain resilience by fostering stronger supplier partnerships, implementing contingency planning, and leveraging technology to monitor stock levels and supplier performance. From a theoretical standpoint, Stakeholder Theory suggests that optimizing relationships with suppliers and customers is vital to sustaining business operations and maintaining a competitive advantage (Shah & Bookbinder, 2022). On the other hand, from a practical perspective, addressing supplier delivery challenges while sustaining inventory accuracy is critical to ensuring seamless bookstore operations and enhancing overall customer satisfaction. As suggested by Cooper (2024), an organization can optimize supplier collaboration by prioritizing trust-building, fostering innovation, and investing in robust relationship management practices. He further reiterated that this approach not only enhances operational performance and leverages an organization to navigate market uncertainties and achieve sustainable growth in a competitive landscape.

Customer Service

Customer service is the assistance provided by the bookstore to its customers before, during, and after a purchase, ensuring that their needs are met and expectations are exceeded. Its primary goal is to build loyalty, trust, and long-term relationships with clients. Table 8 presents the problems encountered in bookstore operations in terms of customer service.

Table 8. Customer service

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1	The bookstore has a slow process in resolving customer complaints.	2.2180	.79142	Disagree
2	The staff members have inadequate customer service skills.	2.1950	.76335	Disagree
3	Customers often complain about products availed in the bookstore.	2.3083	.79944	Disagree
4	The bookstore has no clear and definite return and exchange policies.	2.1128	.73499	Disagree
5	The bookstore has no clear customer feedback mechanism.	2.2662	.84879	Disagree
General Weighted Mean		2.2602		

The results in the table show similar interpretations of the customer service indicators. The bookstore's lack of clear and definite return and exchange policies obtained the lowest mean (2.1128). The low mean reflects a strong consensus in favor of the clarity and existence of these policies, signaling that the respondents did not find the bookstore's return and exchange process problematic or ambiguous. Recent research on bookstore returns and exchange policies has

highlighted the complexity of designing effective strategies for omni-channel retailing. Studies have shown that buy-online-return-to-store (BORS) policies can attract new customers and reduce in-store inventory but may hurt profitability when resalable returns are high (Yang et al., 2023).

Overall, respondents disagreed with the lapse of the bookstore in terms of customer service. This suggests that users feel that the staff is performing their duties effectively and are meeting expectations regarding assisting consumers. The results indicate confidence in current customer service standards, implying that consumers are satisfied with the type of service they receive. However, the bookstore should continue to monitor customer feedback to ensure that service standards remain high and relevant. According to De Ramos and Briones (2024b), through the customer feedback mechanisms, the organization can tailor its services to the different customer needs, thus improving its service quality. Therefore, effective communication is necessary for this to happen (Laco et al., 2024).

From a practical perspective, although the findings suggest that customer service and return policies are not a major concern for respondents, the bookstore should proactively assess whether its policies remain competitive and relevant in the changing retail landscape. The theoretical implications highlight the role of Stakeholder Theory in guiding customer-centric policies, emphasizing that businesses must continuously engage with customers to maintain satisfaction and trust. Strengthening communication channels and integrating technology-driven feedback systems can enhance service quality (Rane et al., 2023), ensuring that the bookstore remains responsive to customer needs while maintaining operational efficiency.

Relationship Between Bookstore Operations Practices and Customer Satisfaction

The relationships between bookstore operation practices in its two subdimensions (inventory management and customer service) and customer satisfaction in its two subdimensions (inventory and availability and value and pricing) were analyzed using Spearman rank correlation analysis. The researchers developed a null hypothesis that bookstore operations practices are unrelated to customer satisfaction. The statistical analysis results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Relationship Between Bookstore Operations Practices and Customer Satisfaction

Bookstore Operations Practices	Customer Satisfaction Correlation Coefficient	P-value	Conclusion
Inventory Value and Pricing	.205	.018	Significant
Inventory and Availability	.161	.084	Not Significant
Customer Service – Inventory and Availability	.033	.709	Not Significant
Customer Service – Value and Pricing	.045	.606	Not Significant

Table 9 shows that the result of the correlation coefficient using Spearman's rho revealed that bookstore operations practices in terms of inventory management are statistically significantly associated with customer satisfaction in terms of value and pricing. This suggests that a bookstore manages its inventory directly affects how customers perceive the value of the pricing. When inventory management is handled efficiently, it likely contributes to better product availability and

more competitive pricing, which in turn increases customer satisfaction. This statistical significance indicates that the relationship between these two factors is not due to chance, highlighting the importance of effective inventory management in influencing customer perceptions of value. However, based on [Djohan and Stefvy \(2023\)](#), effective inventory management is also strongly associated with customer satisfaction, but it does not address inventory management or value and pricing. In contrast, a study on a bookstore in Indonesia found that service quality, pricing, and store atmosphere all positively affected customer satisfaction, with pricing being the most influential factor ([Matadji & Nurdiansyah, 2016](#)). These findings highlight the importance of various operational practices, including inventory management, value, and pricing, in enhancing customer satisfaction in retail environments, such as bookstores.

The lack of a significant relationship between inventory management and inventory and availability suggests that current bookstore inventory management practices may not effectively ensure timely replenishment or maintenance of the stock level. This inconsistency may be attributed to inefficiencies in supply chain logistics and inadequate forecasting. To address this challenge, as mentioned by [Petropoulos et al. \(2022\)](#), effective forecasting is crucial because it has always been at the forefront of decision-making and planning.

In terms of customer service and inventory and availability, no significant relationship was found, which indicates that the quality of bookstore customer service does not directly impact the effectiveness of inventory management. This suggests that bookstore customer service focuses on post-sales support rather than influencing inventory replenishment or stock level decisions. Enhanced communication between customer service and inventory management teams can bridge this gap and improve overall bookstore operational efficiency. This proposition is in line with [Kalogiannidis et al. \(2023\)](#), who also confirmed that communication improves the strength of relationships among the stakeholders of an organization.

The lack of a significant relationship between customer service, value, and pricing suggests that customers' perceived value of products is not influenced by the quality of customer service. This implies that pricing strategies are driven by cost and market demand rather than customer service experience. Effective customer service may develop customer loyalty and satisfaction but does not directly impact customers' perceived value. While [Liang et al. \(2024\)](#) considered perceived value is linked to consumer perceptions of perceived benefits or risks and is closely related to the formation of a strong customer relationship, the findings of the study implied that other service quality dimensions like responsiveness and assurance may be more important in bookstore operations for customers to be more satisfied.

Guidelines for Optimizing Bookstore Operations

The researchers proposed guidelines for optimizing private HEI bookstore operations informed by the assessment of bookstore variables. These recommendations target areas for improvement to enhance customer engagement and bookstore revenue. A roadmap like this one is essential for continuous evaluation and improvement within an organization ([De Ramos & Briones, 2024a](#); [Haerani & Rahman, 2024](#)). As further emphasized by [Aguenza \(2024\)](#) and [Rivera et al. \(2023\)](#), an organization focusing on continuous improvement must support activities that would ensure its quality management system would be more effective and efficient by allocating resources, implementing necessary trainings, and creating processes for compliance monitoring.

Table 10. Guidelines for Optimizing Bookstore Operations

Bookstore Practice	Guidelines for Weak Areas
1. Inventory Management	Inventory stockouts Optimization:

Bookstore Practice	Guidelines for Weak Areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular inventory count, audit, and analyses <p>Technology integration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose to acquire a system or software to ease inventory monitoring <p>Forecasting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze historical sales data for forecasting purposes Conduct customer survey
2. Customer Service	<p>All desired bookstore items included Inventory and availability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear inventory information Select relevant bookstore items Implement first-come, first-serve <p>Feedback and improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training on customer service Consider customer feedback Continuous improvement
Customer Satisfaction	Guidelines for Weak Areas
1. Inventory Optimization and Bookstore Optimization	<p>Availability items were prioritized for inventory replenishment</p> <p>Available for the consignment procedure</p> <p>Supply Chain Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate favorable payment terms and discounts Build strong relationships with students <p>In-bookstore Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular inventory counts and audits Daily transaction reports
2. Value and Pricing	<p>The bookstore sells quality items at affordable prices</p> <p>Value-based pricing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct market research to understand prices and pricing strategies Analyze outside prevailing prices <p>Price Positioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark high prices for unique or high demand items <p>Price Transparency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear price labeling and signage Staff training on pricing and promotion

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the bookstore operations of a private HEI with a focus on inventory management and customer satisfaction. The findings indicate that inventory management of a bookstore is considered well-managed, while its customer service delivery is highly acceptable to its customers. This implies that the bookstore operations are properly managed to meet the needs

of its clients. This is further supported by the acceptable level of customer satisfaction in terms of the needed inventories and in terms of the value and pricing of the items being sold in the bookstore. The efficient management of a bookstore indicates non-existence of problems in terms of inventory management and customer service. Results further revealed that inventory management and customer satisfaction in terms of value and pricing are significantly related, which indicates that inventory management of a bookstore has a direct impact on how customers perceive the value of the bookstore items. This implies that there is an efficient inventory handling as strongly agreed upon by the customers. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between inventory management and customer satisfaction in terms of inventory and availability. In addition, no significant relationships were found in terms of customer service and customer satisfaction in terms of both the dimensions of inventory and availability and value and pricing.

In the overall context of this study, these findings suggest that inventory management, customer service, and pricing strategies may not have a direct or statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction, product availability, or perceived value. This implies that there may be other pertinent factors other than those employed in this study. These results challenge common assumptions in retail management that efficient inventory control and strong customer service lead to higher customer satisfaction. From a theoretical perspective where Stakeholder Theory posits that businesses must effectively manage relationships with key stakeholders to achieve long-term success, the absence of significant relationships in these areas indicates that other factors—such as brand reputation, product quality, customer expectations, or external market conditions—may play a more dominant role in shaping customer perceptions and purchasing behavior.

To further improve the operations of the bookstore, the researchers set some areas for improvement to further enhance its customer engagement and bookstore revenue. To address these issues, the researchers recommend guidelines for enhancing overall bookstore operations practices, including streamlining inventory management, optimizing pricing strategies, and improving customer service. Finally, the results of this study can serve as a basis for other academic institutions to effectively and efficiently manage their auxiliary services (for example, a bookstore) to support the quality of services being provided to students and other stakeholders.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The number of participants was small and focused only on one private HEI, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. The study also relied heavily on students' perceptions that although valuable, it may not provide objective data. Considering these limitations, the present study is still valuable because it presents a comprehensive knowledge structure on the relationship between bookstore operations practices and customer satisfaction in an HEI-affiliated bookstore.

The next generation of research should include a broader, more diversified sample. For example, participants in future research should represent patrons of a bookstore other than students. Likewise, conducting a study involving other HEIs in the country would provide broader insights into bookstore operations practices. Moreover, other dimensions of customer satisfaction can be included in future studies to further verify the results of this study. Finally, to reduce self-report bias, methods other than surveys such as interviews, focus group discussions, and observations can be employed.

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