

**“ASSESSING SERVICE QUALITY GAPS: EVIDENCE FROM HR CONSULTING SERVICES”**

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**ABSTRACT**

Today, Organizations are outsourcing HR services which are rendered by professional entities that has given rise to immense growth of HR consulting services across globe. *This study attempts to assess the service quality gaps based on the evidence from the HR Consulting Services.* The Researcher has adopted Simple Random Sampling where 34 HR consulting firms that are spread across Bangalore are chosen randomly. Researcher has used nominal scale for categorical variables which are independent variables too and five point rating scale (strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) for attributes attributed to GAPS. Data is analysed adopting *ANOVA* and *Post-hoc tests* to measure the differences and *Chi-square association tests* to ascertain the association between variables under study.

**Key Words:** HR Consulting Services, Service GAPS, ANOVA, Chi-square Association.

**Introduction:**

The fundamental purpose of the HRM is all about choosing right talent to meet the demands of the positions in the firms. This aspect of the HRM has gained importance as it reflects the ability of the firm is usually ascertained on the basis of capabilities of their workforce. The preconceived notion stating that cash flow is the primary pillar of the growth is no more accepted, as the employers have realized that the workforce is the key to the prosperity of the business. Catering to the organization requirements is a huge task and is the principal the conscientiousness of the heads of HR department of an organization. Though, human resource Management performs constitutes; recruitment, selection, development, compensation, maintenance, integration and industrial relations, the study concentrates on the recruitment and selection function of HRM. Ever since the world is integrated, demand for the outsourcing has increased tremendously. Globalised village is highly integrated and interdependent where outsourcing the services is the key solution to business operations. Human resource management functions have immense importance in managing organizations. Firms are outsourcing HR services which are rendered by professional entities has given rise to immense growth of HR consulting services across globe. The scope of the HR consulting services is immeasurable as they are lifeblood of firms.

The statistics related to market intendment for recruitment process outsourcing services has been forecasted to be worth of \$31 billion which constitutes roughly ten percent of total market making smallest number of the other leading industries. It has been reported that during the predicament times, human resource consulting was one of those fatalities within the industry and hence industries tapered the investments on human capital. It is observed, since 2011 there has been rise in the demand for the consultancy services across globe. Countries witnessed growth of 4% to 6% every year which reflected the fact that industry started performing well. As the learning, marketers tried resolving issues related to aging workforce, divergence in labour trends and skill requirements. The human resource consulting basically constitutes other disciplines such as Human capital strategy, compensation, organizational change and development, HR- functions, Talent management, HR analytics, HR-technology and Learning and development.

### ***Literature Review:***

The firms integrating human resource planning and recruitment & selection have gained better competitive advantage says **Bernardin, 2012**. The authors also indicate that integration of recruitment and selection would lead best results as the functions are also combined as they are interdependent. HR planning must focus on finding and accommodating right talent to overcome the hassle free service delivery. **Armstrong, 2014** has defined HRM as strategic, incorporated and consistent loom to the employment, improvement and well-being of individuals. Author is of the opinion that staffing function has 2 key elements that is HR forecast and strategic business planning. One of the earliest definitions coined by **Walker (1980)** says HR grounding is the practice and progression of analysing a firm's human resources needs under the irregular circumstances and promising appropriate and necessary activities to meet demand.

**According to Bulla & Scott (1994)**, HR planning is the process of identifying HR requirements and meeting them on time with apt strategic approach. **Beardwell & Claydon (2004)** defines HR planning as the organizations current and future requirements, developing and implementing plans to meet them. **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2010)** commonly known as CIPD in abbreviation, defined workforce planning as process to ensure right employee at right time so that short and long-term objectives of the department and firm at large are achieved. After HR planning, the emphasize should be on recruitment and selection where recruitment is the formal process of attracting right talent needed to close the positions. **Gamage (2014)** elucidates that recruitment is carried out with an objective to attract qualified applicants where as selection is all about methods to chose the right applicant to fill positions.

### ***Significance of the Study:***

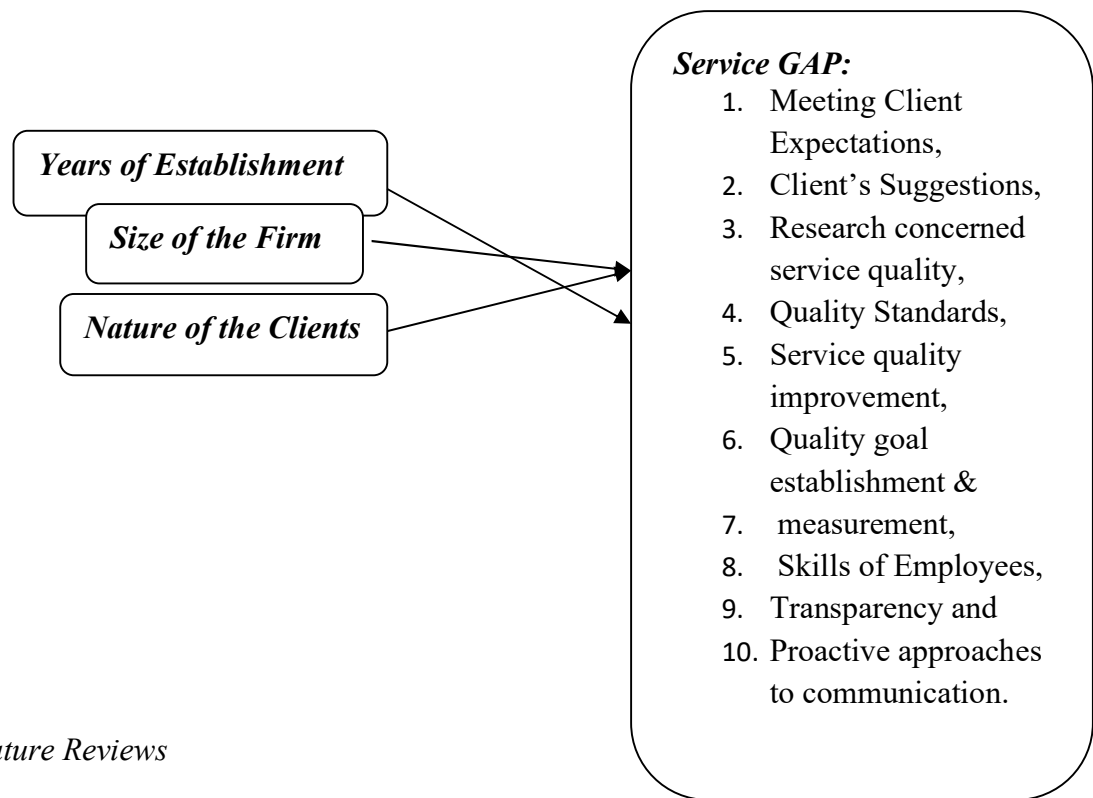
HR Consulting market has evolved over a period of time and has gained momentum last few decades due to the interdependence of business operations across globe. HR consulting services especially recruitment services are the viaduct between the HR resources and business firms. Irrespective of the Industry, firms are in need of skilled resources. Demand and supply of labour market is not just dependent on demand, supply is also equally important. HR consulting firms that are rendering recruitment services are filling the gap.

Current research is significant as it aims ascertaining the service gaps across chosen sectors (IT, ITES, Financial services, Banking, Construction, FMCG, and Retailing) along with assessing the differences between and within the chosen sectors. The responses obtained help HR consulting firms to analyse the service gaps and fabricate their strategies to overcome the gaps to render quality services.

**Conceptual Frame:**

Conceptual frame of the study depicts the relationship between the variables under study. The variables under the study are; Nature of the clients, Size of the Firms, Year of Establishment and Service GAPS. The service GAPS considered for the studies are; Meeting Client Expectations, Client’s Suggestions, Research concerned service quality, Quality Standards, Service quality improvement, Quality goal establishment & measurement, Skills of Employees, Transparency and Proactive approaches to communication. Each variable under the service GAP has set of attributes ascertaining the purpose of the study.

**Figure-1: Conceptual Framework**



Source: Literature Reviews

**Scope:**

The scope of the research has to be limited with specifications else would lead to enormous research with no direction which leads to confusion rather than solving the problem. The scope of the current study is limited to-

1. HR Consulting services that are into recruitment only

2. The client’s served are belong to the sectors; IT, ITES, Financial services, Banking, Construction, FMCG, and Retailing
3. HR Consulting firms chosen are distributed across Bangalore.

**Objectives:**

Objective of the study is to assess the service quality GAP of HR Consulting firms. To attain the objective, following secondary objectives are-

1. Assessing the differences in service quality GAPS across year of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients.
2. Ascertaining whether there is an association between service quality GAPS and year of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients.

**Hypothesis:**

**Ho:**There is no significant difference in service quality GAPS across years of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients

**Ho:**There is no significant association between service quality GAPS and year of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients

**Sampling & Test Statistics:**

Researcher has adopted Simple Random Sampling where 34 HR consulting firms that are spread across Bangalore are chosen randomly. Primary data is collected by administering Google forms which are scientifically tested for the reliability. Questionnaire consists of attributes to measure the attitude of the firms with regard to service quality gaps across identified variables. Researcher has used nominal scale for categorical variables which are independent variables too and five point rating scale (strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) for attributes attributed to GAPS. Data is analysed adopting *ANOVA* and *Post-hoc tests* to measure the differences and *Chi-square association tests* to ascertain the association between variables under study.

**Results & Discussion:**

**Ho:**There is no significant difference in service quality GAPS across years of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
No of Years of Establishment	Between Groups	(Combined)	16.549	14	1.182	16.845	.000
		Linear	3.183	1	3.183	45.363	.000
		Term	13.366	13	1.028	14.651	.000

	Within Groups		1.333	19	.070			
	Total		17.882	33				
Size of the Consultancy	Between Groups	(Combined)	5.216	14	.373	10.618	.000	
		Linear Term	Weighted	1.082	1	1.082	30.839	.000
			Deviation	4.134	13	.318	9.062	.000
	Within Groups		.667	19	.035			
	Total		5.882	33				
Nature of the Clients	Between Groups	(Combined)	52.949	14	3.782	1.142	.387	
		Linear Term	Weighted	6.482	1	6.482	1.957	.178
			Deviation	46.467	13	3.574	1.079	.429
	Within Groups		62.933	19	3.312			
	Total		115.882	33				

Source: Primary Data

The results of ANOVA test are presented in the Table-1 where ANOVA is significant for the Years of establishment (F=16.845, p=.000, p<0.05), Size of the Consultancy (F=10.618, p=0.000, p<0.05) and insignificant for Nature of the Clients (F=1.142, p=.387, p>0.05).

Based on the results of test statistics, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted thus indicating that there exists significant difference in Service Gaps w.r.t Years of Establishment and Size of the Consultancy.

As the ANOVA test for the variables is significant, post-hoc tests specifically Tukey- HSD test is performed for multiple comparisons.

**ANOVA Post-hoc Test: Tukey HSD:**

<i>Table-2: Multiple Comparisons of Size of the Firm</i>						
Dependent Variable: GAP						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Size of the Consultancy	(J) Size of the Consultancy	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Large	Medium	-2.32143*	.81674	.021	-4.3316	-.3113
	Small	-2.92500	1.32328	.085	-6.1818	.3318

Medium	Large	2.32143*	.81674	.021	.3113	4.3316
	Small	-.60357	1.1183 7	.852	-3.3561	2.1490
Small	Large	2.92500	1.3232 8	.085	-.3318	6.1818
	Medium	.60357	1.1183 7	.852	-2.1490	3.3561
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

Source: Primary Data

Multiple Comparisons elucidates that significant difference is noticed between large and medium sized firms and insignificant for small sized firms. Similarly, when Medium sized firms are compared, difference is significant for large and insignificant for small. When small sized firms are compared, results are insignificant for both large and medium sized firms (Table-2).

<b>Table-3: Multiple Comparisons of Nature of Clients</b>						
Dependent Variable: GAP						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Nature of the Clients	(J) Nature of the Clients	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
IT	ITES	-2.17778	.74215	.085	-4.5384	.1828
	FMCG	-1.83333	.87813	.388	-4.6265	.9598
	Retailing	-1.95833	.94607	.397	-4.9675	1.0509
	Financial Services	-1.18333	1.23072	.958	-5.0980	2.7313
	Banking	-1.56667	1.04956	.747	-4.9051	1.7718
	Construction	-1.83333	1.23072	.748	-5.7480	2.0813
ITES	IT	2.17778	.74215	.085	-.1828	4.5384
	FMCG	.34444	.87813	1.000	-2.4487	3.1376
	Retailing	.21944	.94607	1.000	-2.7898	3.2287
	Financial Services	.99444	1.23072	.982	-2.9202	4.9091
	Banking	.61111	1.04956	.997	-2.7273	3.9495
	Construction	.34444	1.23072	1.000	-3.5702	4.2591
FMCG	IT	1.83333	.87813	.388	-.9598	4.6265
	ITES	-.34444	.87813	1.000	-3.1376	2.4487
	Retailing	-.12500	1.05610	1.000	-3.4842	3.2342
	Financial Services	.65000	1.31719	.999	-3.5397	4.8397
	Banking	.26667	1.14974	1.000	-3.3904	3.9237
	Construction	.00000	1.31719	1.000	-4.1897	4.1897

Retailing	IT	1.95833	.94607	.397	-1.0509	4.9675
	ITES	-.21944	.94607	1.000	-3.2287	2.7898
	FMCG	.12500	1.05610	1.000	-3.2342	3.4842
	Financial Services	.77500	1.36342	.997	-3.5617	5.1117
	Banking	.39167	1.20243	1.000	-3.4330	4.2163
	Construction	.12500	1.36342	1.000	-4.2117	4.4617
Financial Services	IT	1.18333	1.23072	.958	-2.7313	5.0980
	ITES	-.99444	1.23072	.982	-4.9091	2.9202
	FMCG	-.65000	1.31719	.999	-4.8397	3.5397
	Retailing	-.77500	1.36342	.997	-5.1117	3.5617
	Banking	-.38333	1.43718	1.000	-4.9547	4.1880
	Construction	-.65000	1.57435	1.000	-5.6576	4.3576
Banking	IT	1.56667	1.04956	.747	-1.7718	4.9051
	ITES	-.61111	1.04956	.997	-3.9495	2.7273
	FMCG	-.26667	1.14974	1.000	-3.9237	3.3904
	Retailing	-.39167	1.20243	1.000	-4.2163	3.4330
	Financial Services	.38333	1.43718	1.000	-4.1880	4.9547
	Construction	-.26667	1.43718	1.000	-4.8380	4.3047
Construction	IT	1.83333	1.23072	.748	-2.0813	5.7480
	ITES	-.34444	1.23072	1.000	-4.2591	3.5702
	FMCG	.00000	1.31719	1.000	-4.1897	4.1897
	Retailing	-.12500	1.36342	1.000	-4.4617	4.2117
	Financial Services	.65000	1.57435	1.000	-4.3576	5.6576
	Banking	.26667	1.43718	1.000	-4.3047	4.8380

Source: Primary Data

Multiple comparisons of Nature of Clients elucidates that there exist no significant differences between and among the groups indicating that service quality aspects don't vary among the different clients (Table-3).

**Ho:** There is no significant association between service quality GAPS and year of establishment, Size of the firm and Nature of the clients

<b>Table-4: Cross tabulation of GAP to No of Years of Establishment</b>							
Mean Value of Variables			No of Years of Establishment				Total
			1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10-15 Years	More than 15 Years	
GAP	1.30	Count	1	0	0	0	1

	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
1.80	Count	1	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
2.40	Count	1	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
2.80	Count	1	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
2.90	Count	2	1	0	0	3
	Expected Count	.5	1.9	.4	.2	3.0
3.20	Count	0	1	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
3.80	Count	0	5	0	0	5
	Expected Count	.9	3.2	.6	.3	5.0
4.10	Count	0	5	0	0	5
	Expected Count	.9	3.2	.6	.3	5.0
4.20	Count	0	3	0	0	3
	Expected Count	.5	1.9	.4	.2	3.0
4.40	Count	0	1	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
4.60	Count	0	5	0	0	5
	Expected Count	.9	3.2	.6	.3	5.0
4.80	Count	0	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
4.90	Count	0	0	2	0	2
	Expected Count	.4	1.3	.2	.1	2.0
5.00	Count	0	0	1	2	3



		Expected Count	.5	1.9	.4	.2	3.0
	12.10	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.2	.6	.1	.1	1.0
Total		Count	6	22	4	2	34
		Expected Count	6.0	22.0	4.0	2.0	34.0

Source: Primary Data

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	80.192 <sup>a</sup>	42	.000
Likelihood Ratio	60.784	42	.030
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.875	1	.015
N of Valid Cases	34		
a. 60 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.			

Source: Primary Data

The results of Chi-square test for association between Service Gaps and Years of establishment are depicted in the Table-4.a. Pearson Chi-Square value 80.192<sup>a</sup> is significant with p=0.000 at significance level 0.05 indicating that null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted stating that there exists association between Service Gaps and Years of Establishment.

Mean Value of Variables		Size of the Consultancy			Total	
		Large	Medium	Small		
GAP	1.30	Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
	1.80	Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
	2.40	Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0

2.80	Count	1	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
2.90	Count	0	3	0	3
	Expected Count	.4	2.5	.2	3.0
3.20	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
3.80	Count	0	5	0	5
	Expected Count	.6	4.1	.3	5.0
4.10	Count	0	5	0	5
	Expected Count	.6	4.1	.3	5.0
4.20	Count	0	3	0	3
	Expected Count	.4	2.5	.2	3.0
4.40	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
4.60	Count	0	5	0	5
	Expected Count	.6	4.1	.3	5.0
4.80	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
4.90	Count	0	2	0	2
	Expected Count	.2	1.6	.1	2.0
5.00	Count	0	1	2	3
	Expected Count	.4	2.5	.2	3.0
12.10	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.1	.8	.1	1.0
Total	Count	4	28	2	34
	Expected Count	4.0	28.0	2.0	34.0

Source: Primary Data

**Table-5.a: Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	55.857 <sup>a</sup>	28	.001
Likelihood Ratio	35.507	28	.156
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.070	1	.014
N of Valid Cases	34		
a. 45 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.			

Source: Primary Data

The results of Chi-square test for association between Service Gaps and size of the consultancy are depicted in the Table-5.a. Pearson Chi-Square value 55.857<sup>a</sup> is significant with p=0.001 at significance level 0.05 indicating that null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted stating that there exists association between Service Gaps and Size of the consultancy.

**Table-6: Cross tabulation of Gap to Nature of the Clients**

Mean Value of Variables		Nature of the Clients							Total	
		IT	ITES	FMC G	Retailing	Financial Services	Banking	Construction		
GAP	1.30	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
	1.80	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
	2.40	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
	2.80	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
	2.90	Count	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
		Expected Count	.8	.8	.4	.4	.2	.3	.2	3.0
	3.20	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
	3.80	Count	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	5

	Expected Count	1.3	1.3	.7	.6	.3	.4	.3	5.0
4.10	Count	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
	Expected Count	1.3	1.3	.7	.6	.3	.4	.3	5.0
4.20	Count	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3
	Expected Count	.8	.8	.4	.4	.2	.3	.2	3.0
4.40	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
4.60	Count	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	5
	Expected Count	1.3	1.3	.7	.6	.3	.4	.3	5.0
4.80	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
4.90	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Expected Count	.5	.5	.3	.2	.1	.2	.1	2.0
5.00	Count	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
	Expected Count	.8	.8	.4	.4	.2	.3	.2	3.0
12.10	Count	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Expected Count	.3	.3	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	1.0
Total	Count	9	9	5	4	2	3	2	34
	Expected Count	9.0	9.0	5.0	4.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	34.0

Source: Primary Data

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	99.003 <sup>a</sup>	84	.126

Likelihood Ratio	84.858	84	.453
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.846	1	.174
N of Valid Cases	34		
a. 105 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.			

Source: Primary Data

The results of Chi-square test for association between Service Gaps and size of the consultancy are depicted in the Table-6.a. Pearson Chi-Square value 99.003<sup>a</sup> is insignificant with p=0.126 at significance level 0.05 indicating that null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected stating that there exists no association between Service Gaps and Nature of the Clients.

**Findings:**

1. Out of 34 HR consulting firms, 6 of them have been established between 1-5 years, 22 of them between 5-10 years, 4 of them between 10-15 years and 2 of them are established for more than 15 years.
2. Out of 34 Consulting firms, 4 are small sized firms, 28 are medium sized and 2 of them are large sized firms.
3. Out 34 firms, clients served are; IT-9, ITES-9, FMCG-05, Retailing-4, Financial Services -2, Banking-3 and Construction-2.
4. Service Quality Gaps are affected by the factors; Years of Establishment and Size of the firm and remains unaffected by Nature of Different Clients.
5. There exists association between Service Quality Gaps w.r.t Years of Establishment and Size of the firm.
6. The association is insignificant between Service Quality Gaps and Nature of Clients.
7. Multiple comparison of size of the firm and Service Quality Gaps reveals that the significant differences are noticed between the large and medium sized firms indicating that service quality Gaps; Meeting clients expectations, Client’s Suggestions, Research concerned service quality, Quality Standards, Service quality improvement, Quality goal establishment & measurement, Skills of Employees, Transparency and Proactive approaches to communication are different for medium sized and large sized firms.
8. Years of establishment of the firms categorized into 1-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years and more than 15 years have a positive association with service quality Gaps indicating that there is a positive influence of years of establishment in managing the service quality lacunae; Meeting clients expectations, Client’s Suggestions, Research concerned service quality, Quality Standards, Service quality improvement, Quality goal establishment & measurement, Skills of Employees, Transparency and Proactive approaches to communication are different for medium sized and large sized firms.

**Suggestions:**

Consulting firms must realise that their existence in the Industry /Years of Establishment and their Size are major factors affecting Service Gaps with their Clients. Thus indicating that Expertise and No. of Employees working in the consultancy will either increase or decrease the service gaps. Hence, Consulting firms must strive towards increasing the expertise of their Recruiters/Employees and the specialised headcount to cater to the client’s specific requirements. As there is an association between years of establishment; 1-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years and 15 & above years suggests that marketer must capitalise and focus on expanding their services and focus acquiring Talent to cater to the different clients to overcome the services gaps as a difference is noticed across nature of the clients. Similarly, a positive association with regard to size (small, medium and large) of the firm indicates that service gaps; GAPS considered for the studies are; Meeting Client Expectations, Client’s Suggestions, Research concerned service quality, Quality Standards, Service quality improvement, Quality goal establishment & measurement, Skills of Employees, Transparency and Proactive approaches to communication of varied sizes of the firm are proportional to each other. At the same time, differences are also noticed which indicates that consulting firms must identify the service quality between and among the small, medium and large firms to provide tailor made services and strengthen the internal process. The results of analysis elucidates that the gaps; skills of employees (mean values), communication and research concerned with service quality are prominent and suggested to the firms have detailed research to overcome the GAPS.

**Conclusion:**

Researcher aimed at ascertaining whether factors like size of the consultancy, years of establishment and different clients affect the service quality gaps in Bangalore. Researcher has adopted survey method where the data was collected from 34 HR consulting firms by administering the questionnaire. Statistical tools adopted include Chi-square association test and ANOVA to measure the differences. Researcher has concluded that Service Quality Gaps are affected by the factors; Years of Establishment and Size of the firm and remains unaffected by Nature of Different Clients. Apart from the analysing the differences, researcher has also tried to find the association between the selected variables thus concluding that there exists association between Service Quality Gaps w.r.t Years of Establishment and Size of the firm.

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