

**THE ROLE OF NAAC ACCREDITATION IN ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL REPUTATION AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS: A STATISTICAL STUDY OF AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS IN HARYANA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is a key organization responsible for assessing and accrediting colleges and universities across India. Its role is essential in maintaining and improving the quality of education, enhancing the reputation of institutions, and ensuring better academic standards. Accreditation helps institutions grow by encouraging them to adopt best practices, improve infrastructure, and offer high-quality education to students. This study explores how NAAC accreditation influences the reputation of institutions and academic standards in affiliated colleges in Haryana. A total of 220 respondents participated in this study, sharing their views on how accreditation affects their academic experiences. The findings indicate that accreditation plays a significant role in shaping institutional reputation and strengthening academic performance. It encourages institutions to focus on student learning and career readiness. The study provides useful insights to understand the broader impact of accreditation and how it can contribute to continuous improvement in higher education.

**KEYWORDS:** Assessment, Accreditation, Institutional Reputation, Academic Standards, Quality, Education

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The system of Quality assurance in education of higher learning has emerged by external examiner engagement as Higher learning institutions are struggling to improve academic quality and maintain excellence (Askar, 2019). Many accreditation bodies have elaborated the excellence, a combination of inputs by using the indicators that is quantitative and qualitative (Kumar, Shukla & Passey, 2020). Indian higher education promises to offer more option and chances due to the launching of new program in developing field, privatization and wider expansion (Dominic, 2022). The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the country's leading quality assurance agency, reviews and grants accreditation to higher education institutions in India (Gautam, 2024; Patil, 2018). The NAAC makes selections based on aspects such as course

offerings, faculty, administration, physical plant, and technology improvements (Ravikumar, Samanta & Rath, 2021). The University Grants Commission (UGC) established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 with the responsibility of Assessment and Accreditation of colleges and Universities in India for promotion of quality of teaching learning and research (Aithal, Shailashree & Kumar, 2016). The NAAC has been entrusted with the dual goals of supporting educational achievement and offering a structured framework for tracking and enhancing institutional quality (Gautam, 2024). The process of accreditation is meant to make education better, connect institutions to global standards, and hold everyone responsible. NAAC accreditation has had a considerable impact on outcomes like as academic performance, research innovation, institutional quality, and academic reputation (Singh & Singh, 2023; Mulimani & Naikar, 2024). It not only talks that the quality improvement in higher learning should focus not just on student learning but also on the transformation of higher learning institutions with the goal of transforming learners.

In today's competitive job market, institutional reputation and academic standards are crucial educational outcomes that influence students' prospects of finding and retaining a decent job (Manimala, Wasdani & Vijaygopal, 2020; Jisha, 2015). In the current dynamic and swiftly changing economic environment, higher education institutions are anticipated to extend beyond delivering academic information to emphasize practical, skill-oriented, and industry-relevant training (Dey, 2011). NAAC accreditation acts as a catalyst by prompting institutions to connect their curriculum with market needs, provide comprehensive career-oriented programs, and foster an atmosphere favorable to skill development (Aithal, Shailashree & Kumar, 2016; Patil & Pillai 2015). This study examines the impact of NAAC accreditation on improving institutional reputation and academic standards among students, specifically among connected institutions in Haryana, a state recognized for its expanding educational environment and closeness to industrial centers.

While NAAC accreditation primarily focuses on quality improvement, its influence extends to broader higher education governance. Accreditation impacts institutional reputation. In India, institutions with higher NAAC scores enhance academic standard which influence the decision of students toward their enrolment. Similarly, international accreditation systems like AACSB and TEQSA link accreditation with institutional autonomy a critical factor that influences an institution's ability to change the decisions of students while choosing their institution for enrolling.

This study is pertinent due to the growing focus on institutional reputation and academic standards as critical performance indicators for higher learning institutions. Today's organizations recognize graduates who have both academic knowledge and the practical skills required to deal with complex professional challenges. NAAC accreditation has an impact on this process by encouraging the adoption of innovative teaching techniques, developing engagement with industry, and enabling regular skill enhancement workshops (Ghatole & Dahikar, 2021; Govindu & Rao, 2021). These initiatives foster an ever-evolving culture, which ultimately benefits students by providing them with job-ready skills and increasing their chances of employment (Naim et. al., 2024).

In order to achieve the objectives, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section incorporates the introduction and problem statement pertaining to enhancing institutional

reputation and academic standards. The second section includes the review of literature and the theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, the third section presents the research methodology and analysis. The final section discusses the findings and suggests directions for future research.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) plays a pivotal role in assessing and improving the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) in India (Samanta & Rath, 2021). Accreditation, as a quality assurance process, evaluates the competency, efficiency, and excellence of educational institutions and their programs, granting them endorsement from stakeholders (Jain & Paliwal, 2024). Studies have highlighted regional disparities in educational quality, with southern Indian institutions typically receiving higher NAAC grades, suggesting that accreditation not only influences the institutional performance but also impacts academic standards and reputation (Madhuri, 2021). As Prof. V.S. Prasad, Former Director of NAAC (2007), aptly states, “Quality is a concept; it’s a philosophy; it’s a journey; it’s also what we practice. We at NAAC strive to create awareness and understanding of quality, and quality assurance in higher education as a necessary ingredient to national development.”

Accreditation is intrinsically linked to the enhancement of both academic quality and institutional development. Studies by Ekhande & Chakkar (2024) compare NAAC and NBA systems, showing that both contribute to transparency, quality control, and institutional development. Institutions with accredited status are more likely to provide quality education, which in turn boosts their reputation and academic standards (Gholap & Kushare, 2019). The alignment of accreditation with national policies such as the New Education Policy 2020 ensures that institutions remain relevant to industry needs and meet global educational standards (NAAC, 2020). By evaluating the internal quality assurance practices of institutions, accreditation encourages a continuous culture of improvement (Jain & Paliwal, 2024).

The role of quality assurance practices is critical in enhancing the overall standard of education. Sharma (2012) highlights how these practices not only improve student learning experiences but also enhance an institution’s reputation and credibility in both academic and professional spheres. Sinha & Subramanian (2013) note that accreditation influences prospective students' decisions, as they seek assurance regarding the authenticity and acceptability of their qualifications. Furthermore, a culture of continuous improvement is fostered in certified institutions through the adoption of best practices. A study of prominent NAAC-accredited institutions revealed practices across academic, physical, cultural, and scientific domains that contribute to holistic student development (Kumar, 2017).

Awareness of accreditation guidelines among institutional stakeholders significantly impacts the engagement and preparedness of institutions during the accreditation process. Mishra (2020) emphasizes that institutions with higher awareness of accreditation requirements are better positioned to implement quality enhancement measures. Moreover, faculty awareness influences teaching methodologies, research output, and administrative efficiency (Sharma & Gupta, 2019). Student awareness plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of institutional credibility, thereby affecting both enrollment and future career prospects (Kumar & Reddy, 2021). However, challenges related to lack of awareness, particularly in rural and non-autonomous institutions, hinder the accreditation process and slow institutional development (Patil & Deshmukh, 2018). Effective dissemination of information through workshops and training programs can help address these issues (Rao & Menon, 2020).

NAAC accreditation significantly influences both institutional reputation and academic standards. Institutions with higher NAAC grades are perceived as more credible, leading to increased student enrollment, faculty recruitment, and funding opportunities (Sharma & Gupta, 2019). Joshi (2022) highlights that accreditation fosters institutional accountability, ensuring adherence to academic standards and global best practices. Furthermore, accredited institutions are more likely to form collaborations with international universities, thereby strengthening their academic and research profiles (Kumar & Reddy, 2021). However, some researchers point out that the accreditation process can be resource-intensive and may disproportionately favour well-established institutions, disadvantaging emerging colleges (Rao & Menon, 2020). Despite these challenges, accreditation remains a key driver of institutional recognition in India's competitive higher education landscape. While NAAC accreditation has a significant impact, challenges such as resource constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and subjectivity in evaluation are common in the accreditation process. Institutions, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, often face difficulties in meeting the stringent requirements set by NAAC. Rao & Menon (2020) highlight that the accreditation process can be time-consuming and sometimes favour established institutions over newer, emerging colleges.

International accreditation is crucial in improving the global recognition and academic reputation of higher education institutions by ensuring that they meet international standard of quality and excellence. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in India, focus on improving the quality of educational institutions which is country specific, international accreditations such as ABET, AACSB, and TEQSA serve to provide a broader, globally accepted benchmark. (Ashraf, 2020). NAAC assesses the overall quality of an institution's academic, administrative, and infrastructural aspects, with a focus on continuous improvement to meet national standards (Jafarov, 2024). International accreditations, on the other hand, exceed national boundaries and evaluate institutions according to stringent international standards, such as research outputs, curriculum design, faculty credentials, and student results.

This distinction enhances the reputation and standard of the institution, encouraging more applicants and thereby increasing enrollment (Dumond & Johnson, 2013) Furthermore, international accreditations often signal that an institution is committed to continuous improvement and aligns its programs with the needs of the global standard (Alhamad, 2021) As a result, students perceive internationally accredited programs as more prestigious, enhancing their academic and professional opportunities. This comparison emphasizes how international accreditations affect students' decisions and enhance an institution's reputation around the globe.

Despite increasing force on institutional reputation and academic standards, limited research explores their integrated impact on higher education outcomes. Existing studies examine separately, ignoring the ways in which their improvement works in concert to influence student enrollment choices. On the basis of these discussions, the following research questions are framed for the study:

RQ1: How does enhancing institutional reputation influence student enrollment?

RQ2: How does students perceive about quality education and academic standards of institutions?

Institutions can adopt comprehensive plans for long-term success by gaining insights into the interrelated impact of academic standards and institutional reputation. The objective of the study

is to investigate how students perceive key factors influencing the quality of higher education such as learning resources, student support, institutional reputation, and multidisciplinary courses.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

To understand how NAAC accreditation enhances academic standards and institutional prestige a theoretical framework is established. The present research is based upon three theories namely Quality Assurance Theory, Resource-Based Theory and Signalling Theory. Quality Assurance Theory (Harvey & Green, 1993) emphasizes the role of continuous assessment, benchmarking, and outcome-driven evaluation in sustaining higher education quality. NAAC's structured evaluation process fosters transparency, accountability, and systematic improvement within institutions. The Resource Based View (Barney, 1991) provides a strategic lens, suggesting that institutions enhance academic standards and build long-term reputational capital by leveraging internal resources such as qualified faculty, research productivity, and infrastructure. Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973) highlights accreditation as a credible quality signal to stakeholders including students, employers, and policymakers, thereby influencing their trust and engagement. Finally, Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) interprets accreditation as a legitimacy-seeking practice, where institutions align with nationally accepted norms and standards to gain credibility and recognition. These theoretical perspectives offer a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of NAAC accreditation in shaping academic and reputational outcomes.

### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine students' perceptions regarding key institutional factors influencing the quality of higher education. The research was conducted among college students in the state of Haryana. Haryana comprises six administrative divisions as per the record of department of Economic and Statistical Affairs, Government of Haryana. As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 1,161 institutions are imparting higher education in Haryana, out of these, 60 institutions were selected using a random sampling technique for data collection. A structured questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection instrument, incorporating multiple items related to institutional reputation, student support, learning resources, multidisciplinary courses, and quality education. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 220 students from selected colleges across Haryana.

#### **Hypothesis:**

H1: There is a significant difference between male and female students' perceptions regarding Role of NAAC Accreditation in Enhancing Institutional Reputation and Academic Standards

H2: There is a significant difference in perceptions across age groups regarding Role of NAAC Accreditation in Enhancing Institutional Reputation and Academic Standards

#### **4.1 EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

The acquired data was evaluated using statistical techniques, namely SPSS. The methodology ensured the collection of reliable and valid responses that reflect the students' attitudes and perceptions, thereby enabling an in-depth understanding of institutional quality dimensions from the learners' perspective. In order to check the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach Alfa is

applied and it is found significant (0.82). Further, exploratory factor analysis and t-test is applied to find out the link between NAAC accreditation and institutional reputation and academic standards.

**Table- 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Particulars	Demographics	Frequency
<b>Age</b>	18-28	90
	29-38	94
	39-48	21
	48 above	15
<b>Stream</b>	Engineering & Technology	69
	Commerce & Management	75
	Arts	13
	Law	09
	Sciences	38
	Medical Sciences	16
<b>Institute Location</b>	Urban	164
	Rural	56
<b>Type of Institution</b>	Government	103
	Private	78
	Semi- Government	39

*Source: Primary data*

According to the demographic study of respondents outlined in Table 1, the majority are between the ages of 31 and 40, with those between the ages of 18 and 30 following closely behind, suggesting a well-balanced representation of early to mid-career academic professionals. A significant number of respondents come from urban institutions, indicating the preponderance of NAAC-accredited institutions in city-based educational centers. Furthermore, government institutions make up the biggest group, followed by private and semi-government institutions, reflecting a diverse range of opinions from various governance forms.

**Table 2: Awareness of NAAC Accreditation Status**

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	169	76.82	76.82	76.82
<b>No</b>	51	23.18	23.18	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Source: Primary data*

Table 2 presents the awareness level of respondents regarding the NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) accreditation status of their institution. Out of a total of 220 respondents, 169 individuals, accounting for 76.82%, reported being aware of the NAAC accreditation status. This indicates a high level of awareness among the participants. On the other hand, 51 respondents, which constitute 23.18% of the total, stated that they were not aware of the accreditation status. These figures show that while a significant majority are informed about the institution's accreditation, there remains a considerable portion nearly one-fourth who lack

awareness. This highlights the need for better dissemination of information and sensitization efforts regarding the importance and implications of NAAC accreditation

**Table 3: Descriptive Names of Factors**

Factors	Descriptive Names of Factors	Eigen value	Variance (%)	Cumulative Variance
<b>F1</b>	Institutes' Reputation	29.079	24.739	<b>24.739</b>
<b>F2</b>	Student Support	1.879	20.235	<b>44.974</b>
<b>F3</b>	Learning Resources	1.582	14.669	<b>59.643</b>
<b>F4</b>	Multidisciplinary Courses	1.258	9.961	<b>69.604</b>
<b>F5</b>	Quality Education	<b>1.147</b>	<b>6.190</b>	<b>75.794</b>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 3 provides a summary of the descriptive names and statistical significance of the five key factors extracted through Principal Component Analysis (PCA), using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization. These factors represent the underlying dimensions influencing the perceptions or decisions of respondents, as derived from the data. Zenk & Eckhardt (1970) elucidated that 50% variance explained is considered as satisfactory in the social science studies. The first factor (F1), labelled as "Institutes' Reputation," holds the highest eigenvalue of 29.079 and explains 24.739% of the total variance, indicating it is the most influential factor among all. The second factor (F2), "Student Support," has an eigenvalue of 1.879 and contributes 20.235% to the variance, bringing the cumulative variance to 44.974%. The third factor (F3), "Learning Resources," accounts for 14.669% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.582, increasing the cumulative variance to 59.643%. The fourth factor (F4), "Multidisciplinary Courses," explains 9.961% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.258. Finally, the fifth factor (F5), "Quality Education," contributes 6.190% to the overall variance with an eigenvalue of 1.147, leading to a cumulative explained variance of 75.794%. These results suggest that the factors explain approximately 76% of the total variance in the data, highlighting their collective importance in understanding the dimensions under study.

**Table 4: Factor Loadings**

Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronabach's Alfa	Mean	SD
<b>Institute's Reputation</b>		<b>0.892</b>		
The institution having the global recognition and partnership	0.752		3.670	0.835
The institution with a longstanding history over newer, less known institute	0.742		3.713	0.935
The institution having a good reputation for diversity and inclusiveness	0.741		3.670	0.872
The institutions imparting quality education	0.733		3.670	0.860
<b>Student Support</b>		<b>0.903</b>		
The availability of academic support services like tutoring, mentoring, etc.	0.720		3.670	0.943

Access to counselling services for academic, career and personal growth	0.713	3.787	0.853
The availability of financial aid and scholarships	0.690	3.809	0.931
The institute's system for monitoring and supporting academic performance tracking	0.684	3.681	0.997
The institute's support for extracurricular activities like cultural, sports etc.	0.681	3.596	1.101
<b>Learning Resources</b>		<b>0.928</b>	
The availability of modern technological facilities	0.742	3.787	1.004
The quality and availability of laboratory and research facilities	0.728	3.692	1.027
The availability of sports and recreational facilities (gyms, sports fields)	0.713	3.787	0.960
The institute's library resources equipped with books, journals and online databases	0.699	3.819	0.879
Access to digital learning resources	0.694	3.755	1.075
<b>Multidisciplinary Courses</b>		<b>0.959</b>	
The availability of multidisciplinary courses	0.750	3.660	1.022
The flexibility in the curriculum structure (e.g., electives, minors)	0.710	3.681	0.975
The ability to create personalized learning pathways across disciplines	0.700	3.638	1.066
The career opportunities arising from multidisciplinary studies	0.648	3.575	1.052
<b>Quality Education</b>		<b>0.953</b>	
The quality and relevance of the curriculum	0.854	3.553	1.001
Innovative and effective teaching methodologies used by the institute	0.709	3.638	1.076
The availability of research opportunities and resources	0.684	3.521	1.002
A favorable student-faculty ratio	0.599	3.585	1.031
The institute's assessment and evaluation methods	0.526	3.734	0.986

**Source:** Primary data

**Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis

**Rotation Method:** Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

The exploratory factor analysis presented in Table 4 reveals five distinct factors extracted through Principal Component Analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Each factor represents a dimension that influences students' perceptions regarding institutional quality and support. The reliability of each factor is confirmed through high Cronbach's Alpha values, indicating strong internal consistency. This factor has a high Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.892, signifying strong internal consistency among the variables. The factor emphasizes the overall perception of the institution's image and credibility. High loadings are observed for statements such as "the institution having the global recognition and partnership" (0.752) and "a longstanding history over newer, less known institutes" (0.742). Other contributing aspects include the

institution's diversity and inclusiveness (0.741) and its commitment to delivering quality education (0.733). The overall mean scores, ranging from 3.670 to 3.713, indicate moderate to high agreement among respondents regarding these aspects. This factor reflects the importance students place on the established brand value and global reputation of an institution while making academic choices.

This factor has the highest Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.903, indicating excellent reliability and cohesion among its components. It represents the extent of institutional support provided to students for academic, personal, and extracurricular needs. Key variables include academic support services (0.720), access to counselling (0.713), financial aid and scholarships (0.690), academic performance tracking (0.684), and support for extracurricular activities (0.681). The mean scores for these variables lie between 3.596 and 3.809, reflecting a general agreement about the availability and effectiveness of student support systems. This factor highlights the role of holistic student development and personalized support in enhancing student satisfaction and institutional effectiveness.

With a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.928, this factor demonstrates high internal consistency and reliability. It focuses on the availability and quality of institutional infrastructure and resources that support learning. Strong factor loadings are seen in variables like modern technological facilities (0.742), laboratory and research facilities (0.728), and recreational/sports infrastructure (0.713). Other notable inclusions are library resources (0.699) and digital learning tools (0.694). The mean values, mostly above 3.7, suggest that students are relatively satisfied with the resources provided. This factor emphasizes the significance of a well-equipped learning environment in enhancing academic experiences and outcomes.

This factor has a very high Cronbach's Alpha of 0.959, denoting excellent reliability. It captures the diversity and flexibility of academic programs offered by the institution. Key components include the availability of multidisciplinary courses (0.750), curriculum flexibility (0.710), and personalized learning pathways (0.700). The career prospects enabled by multidisciplinary education also contribute to this factor (0.648). Mean scores vary from 3.575 to 3.681, showing a moderate level of agreement among respondents. This factor reflects the growing importance students place on academic versatility and the opportunity to pursue integrated learning paths aligned with evolving career landscapes.

This factor, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.953, also indicates a very strong level of internal consistency. It reflects the core academic strengths of the institution. The highest loading is for "quality and relevance of the curriculum" (0.854), followed by innovative teaching methodologies (0.709), and access to research opportunities (0.684). Other aspects include student-faculty ratio (0.599) and evaluation methods (0.526). Although factor loadings are slightly lower in the last two items, they still contribute meaningfully. The mean values range from 3.521 to 3.734, indicating general satisfaction among students. This factor underscores the academic excellence and pedagogical practices that shape the overall learning quality in higher education institutions.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

The independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender-wise differences in students' perceptions regarding five key factors related to institutional quality. The results indicate both similarities and differences in how male and female students view these dimensions.

**Table 5: Gender-wise Comparison**

Factor	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Institute's Reputation	Male	3.75	0.82	1.965	218	0.051	Not Significant at 0.05 level
	Female	3.60	0.85				
Student Support	Male	3.80	0.88	2.235	218	<b>0.026</b>	<b>Significant difference</b>
	Female	3.60	0.91				
Learning Resources	Male	3.85	0.91	1.102	218	0.271	Not Significant
	Female	3.75	0.90				
Multidisciplinary Courses	Male	3.78	0.86	2.045	218	<b>0.042</b>	<b>Significant difference</b>
	Female	3.56	0.88				
Quality Education	Male	3.69	0.89	1.897	218	0.060	Not Significant
	Female	3.52	0.92				

**Source:** Primary data

The independent samples t-test revealed significant gender differences in perceptions of Student Support and Multidisciplinary Courses, with male students rating both higher than females as indicated in Table 5. No significant differences were found for Institute's Reputation, Learning Resources, and Quality Education, indicating similar views across genders. Specifically, male students perceived greater support services and more favorable opinions about flexible, interdisciplinary programs. The overall findings suggest that while perceptions are mostly aligned, targeted improvements in student support and curriculum flexibility may enhance female students' experiences. These insights are useful for institutional planning and gender-inclusive policy development in higher education settings.

**Table 6: Age Wise Comparison**

Factor	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Institute's Reputation	2.148	0.119	Not Significant
Student Support	<b>3.526</b>	<b>0.032</b>	<b>Significant difference among age groups</b>
Learning Resources	1.786	0.171	Not Significant
Multidisciplinary Courses	<b>4.274</b>	<b>0.016</b>	<b>Significant difference among age groups</b>
Quality Education	2.019	0.134	Not Significant

**Source:** Primary data

Table 6 highlights the one-way ANOVA results indicate significant age-wise differences in perceptions of Student Support ( $p = 0.032$ ) and Multidisciplinary Courses ( $p = 0.016$ ), suggesting that students of different age groups perceive these factors differently. Younger or older students may have varying expectations or experiences regarding support services and curriculum flexibility. However, no significant differences were observed for Institute's Reputation, Learning Resources, and Quality Education, implying consistent perceptions across age groups for these aspects. These findings highlight the need for age-responsive strategies, especially in enhancing

support systems and interdisciplinary offerings, to better address the diverse expectations of students in higher education.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study highlights the significant relationship between NAAC accreditation and the perceived institutional reputation and academic standards among students in institutions. The findings from the hypothesis testing indicates that NAAC accreditation has a positive impact on students' views of institutional reputation and academic quality, since accredited institutions are generally seen as providing better prospects for skill enhancement, career advancement, and job placements. This research highlights the significance of accreditation in elevating educational quality and its capacity to enhance students' institutional reputation and academic standards results.

NAAC accreditation plays a vital role in enhancing the reputation and academic standards of higher education institutions (HEIs) in India. As a quality assurance mechanism, it serves as an instrument for continuous institutional assessment and improvement, aligning with global higher education quality benchmarks (Harvey & Green, 1993). Higher NAAC grades (A++, A+) are associated with superior teaching-learning processes, infrastructure, and research output, making these institutions more attractive to students. NAAC accreditation drives HEIs to adopt best practices in pedagogy, integrate technology-enhanced learning, and emphasize research and innovation. Furthermore, Deming's Continuous Improvement Model (1986) aligns with the accreditation process, as institutions undergo periodic self-assessment, feedback implementation, and quality enhancement initiatives. This study emphasizes the importance of institutions considering the diverse perspectives of their student population when developing policies and programs related to accreditation, institutional reputation, and the growth of academic standards.

## **Policy Implications**

The Government of India has introduced several reforms to enhance higher education quality, such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes institutional accreditation as a mandatory practice. The policy envisions the establishment of a National Accreditation Council (NAC) under the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to streamline and standardize accreditation processes (Government of India, 2020). This move aligns with global best practices, ensuring that all HEIs meet minimum quality benchmarks before receiving funding, autonomy, or university status.

Furthermore, the Indian higher education system faces challenges related to accreditation coverage. As of recent years, a significant number of HEIs remain unaccredited due to limited awareness, lack of resources, and reluctance to undergo evaluation. Policy measures should focus on incentivizing accreditation through financial support, capacity-building programs, and regulatory mandates. The introduction of graded autonomy for accredited institutions has been a positive step, allowing well-performing HEIs to introduce innovative programs, establish international collaborations, and offer flexible curricula. However, there is a need for strict monitoring mechanisms to ensure that institutions maintain quality post-accreditation.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Despite the careful technique used, the study had significant limitations. The study concentrates on a certain group of connected institutions, which may not comprehensively reflect the wider

educational environment, hence limiting the generalizability of the findings to all institutions nationwide. Future study may investigate a more extensive dataset including a broader range of institutions, including those at various stages of the accreditation process. Furthermore, research might examine the enduring effects of NAAC accreditation on the job outcomes of graduates, using longitudinal data. This variability can hinder the generalizability of findings. Moreover, the accreditation process itself is periodically revised and updated, which may render longitudinal comparisons difficult over extended periods. Finally, the complexity of measuring intangible outcomes such as institutional reputation means that many studies may overlook nuanced impacts of accreditation on stakeholder perceptions and long-term academic success

### **Future Scope of Research:**

Future research can explore different ways to better understand how NAAC accreditation helps improve a college or university's reputation and academic quality. One useful method would be to study institutions over a longer period across several accreditation cycles to see if the benefits of accreditation are temporary or lead to lasting improvements. Researchers can also compare the impact of various accreditation agencies in India and other countries to find out which practices work best and how they can be used to improve education quality. Another important area to study is how technology is being used in the accreditation process, especially as digital tools become more common in education.

As higher education in India continues to change, future studies should also look at how new policies like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 affect accreditation results. This could help the government improve the system further. Moreover, it's important to note that NAAC is planning to change its current method of accreditation. A new system called the Binary Accreditation process is being developed, and it is expected to bring changes in how institutions are assessed. Future research should also look at how this new process will impact the quality and standards of educational institutions.

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