**STUDENT SATISFACTION IN ODL: A DETERMINANT OF QUALITY SERVICE IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION**

**(A Study Case at UPBJJ-UT Makassar)**

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**Abstract**

At its core, academic administration provides university-wide student information and resources to the greatest extent possible. Among the various responsibilities with which the administrative body is charged is registration service. The present study weighs in on the aspects of registration service within open and distance learning (ODL) setting that include registration applications and files, payment transfer to partnering banks, and solutions to registration-related cases. The aim is to measure the degree to which students perceive satisfaction of the quality in administrative support and the effect it exerts on student satisfaction.

100 student respondents of UPBJJ-UT Makassar are sampled and assigned to a questionnaire to obtain data that fits into a multiple linear regression model. Results show the quality of administration service is perceived in a favorable category in view of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Accordingly, students are found to reflect on their university experience with high-level satisfaction. Hypothesis testing is devised to probe into the statistical significance of multiple linear regression with a resulting coefficient of determination at 80 percent, indicating a significant effect of academic administration service on student satisfaction. The regression model also identifies that, among the five dimensions of quality service, assurance represents the greatest influence on student satisfaction. Such findings make it necessary for UPBJJ-UT of Makassar to settle on an integrated approach to incorporating initiatives and policies into programs of continuing and improving the quality aspects of administration service, most notably its assurance, for sustainable student satisfaction.

Keywords: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, and student satisfaction

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Education is a crucial factor in human life. Educational process is an inseparable part of learning because individuals cannot develop their interest, talent and ambition based on their ability without learning. The development of educational world is in an on-going advanced progress that affects how a student transfers his or her knowledge and how he can receive it. Education is becoming a competitive event as plenty of higher education institutions are increasingly providing competitive service to students and potential students. Kotler (2006: 105) claims that “One way to build the competitive position of a firm is to provide better services than its competitors. Good management of service quality in university can attract its students.

Higher education that serves as distance learning system in the implementation of academic and non academic service still prioritizes the sector of service quality as an important factor in sustaining student learning success. The success of Universitas Terbuka (Open University) as one of higher distance education institutions is heavily defined by service quality offered particularly in academic services. Quality service can be identified through the context of user satisfaction, which in this regard refers to student satisfaction. Cravens (Handayani, et al., 2003) states that to achieve high-level satisfaction, it is necessary to have an understanding of what consumer wants in an organization to fulfill consumer needs. This indicates that student satisfaction starts from the understanding of what students want. One of the most important aspects that relates to student needs is good service that can be implemented across all sectors of operational activities, including registration process, learning process, examination and other activities that support their study completion. To achieve this, a well-designed planning, adequate facilities, and supporting human resources are of utmost importance. Academic administration service given to students is designed to open broad access to information. The academic administration service at Universitas Terbuka focuses on areas such as Online Registration, Mobile Registration, Electronic Payment, Electronic Student Identity Card, information delivery via SMS Blast and Online Book Purchase.

With a wide variety of academic services, poor perceptions of service quality remain among the students. These perceptions focus on issues related to timeliness and hospitality. This study aims to measure the rate of student satisfaction with the service quality of academic administration and measure the effect size of the service on student satisfaction at UPBJJ-UT of Makassar.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPHOTESES DEVELOPMENT**

**2.1. The Concept of Service Quality**

The concept of service quality can be identified through consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is a type of behavior that consumers demonstrate in searching, purchasing, using and evaluating a product or a service that is expected to fulfill their needs. Zeithaml et al. (1990) argue that service quality is determined by two aspects, i.e., expected service and perceived service. Expected service and perceived service are defined by dimensions of service quality (commonly known as Servqual), i.e., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible among others.

According to Tjiptono (2007), service quality can be defined as an effort to fulfill consumer need and desire, which leads to the accuracy of delivery to meet consumer expectation. In service business, service providers need to pay attention on individual consumer’s desire, because consumer is an important factor in the criteria of service assessment in terms of the offered quality, service and organizational ability in fulfilling the service.

In practice, Servqual builds on an assumption that consumers compare the performance of service attributes with the ideal standard of service quality. This model analyzes the gap between the expected service and the perceived service (Tjiptono, 2014). In the later phase of development, this model expands and refines its dimensions, and formulates five major dimensions i.e., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible.

**2.2. Consumer Satisfaction**

Satisfaction refers to the extent to which an individual feels the outcome of comparison between the perceived performance and the expected performance of a product or a service. Kotler in Lupiyadi (2008: 192) explains that quality is closely related to user satisfaction. Quality provides a particular impetus for consumers to establish a mutually-beneficial bond with an organization in the long run (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2012). There are at least four methods, according to Kotler and Keller in Tjiptono (2014: 369-370), commonly adopted to measure user satisfaction, i.e., suggestion and complaint system, ghost/ mystery shopping, lost customer analysis and customer satisfaction survey.

The relations between service quality and user satisfaction can create the quality of a service. One of these relations manifests in the idea that satisfaction helps customers to revise their perception of service quality (Cronin and Taylor in Tjiptono, 2014). According to a prior study by Tjiptono (2014), service quality focuses on the aspects of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and emphaty, and measures how these aspects have a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction.

**2.3. Hypothesis Development**

The model of this study refers to theoretical studies and prior researches to formulate the following hypothesis: the service quality of academic administration has a significant effect on student satisfaction.

# 3. METHODS

## 3.1. Research Design

The study is designed as an explanatory research that attempts to test hypotheses by explaining the phenomenon of interest based on scientific observation process. The study deals with one dimension that consists of five indicators, i.e., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible. The dependent variable is student satisfaction.

## 3.2. Participants

Data collection uses a cross-sectional method. The population of the study includes the entire students of online tutoring, and the target population is those who participate in online tutoring at UPBJJ-UT of Makassar in 2018.2. Random sampling is used to collect the information of interest, and questionnaires are distributed online. Data is acquired from 100 respondents.

## 3.3. Instrument

Data collection uses questionnaires as the instrument of the study on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting “highly disagree” and 5 denoting “highly agree”.

**Table 1. Variables and Indicators**

| **Variable** | **Indicator** | **Code** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Quality (X)** | **Tangibles (X1)** |  |
| 1. Equipment  Office equipment is modern. | A11 |
| 2. Physical facilities  Physical facilities at UPBJJ-UT of Makassar look attractive. | A12 |
| 3. Appropriate attire and personal neatness  UPBJJ-UT staffs look neat and clean. | A13 |
| 4. Material completeness  The material is complete, appealing and related to service. | A14 |
| **Reliability (X2)** |  |
| 1. A track record of keeping promise  Staffs and tutors are consistent in keeping promise to solve an issue in a certain period of time. | A21 |
| 2. Genuine attention  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar provides genuine service to students who encounter challenges and issues. | A22 |
| 3. Immediate service  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is dedicated to providing immediate service. | A23 |
| 4. Timely service  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar provides timely service and assistance. | A24 |
| 5. Problem solving  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar solves problems in an effective manner. | A25 |
| **Responsiveness (X3)** |  |
| 1. Responsive service  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar provides responsive service. | A31 |
| 2. Positive Responses  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar responds to student affair positively. | A32 |
| 3. Willingness to assist  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is willing to assist any student. | A33 |
| 4. Response to complaint  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar never neglects students to deal with their complaint and request. | A34 |
| **Assurance (X4)** |  |
| 1. Communication  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar always builds good communication with students. | A41 |
| 2. Credibility  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar has credible abilities in service. | A42 |
| 3. Security  Students feel secured during service. | A43 |
| 4. Competence  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is competent in carrying out student service. | A44 |
| 5. Courtesy  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar always demonstrates politeness in attitudes toward students. | A45 |
| **Empathy (perhatian) (X5)** |  |
| 1. Special attention  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar provides special attention for students. | A51 |
| 2. Understanding and knowledge  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is able to know student needs. | A52 |
| 3. Specific need  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar understands students’ specific needs. | A53 |
| 4. Time Convenience  UPBJJ-UT of Makassar operates at a time convenient for students. | A54 |
| **Student Satisfaction (Y)** | 1. Service procedure  The phases of service given to students are not complicated. | B1 |
| 2. Discipline  Service staff is wiling to provide service and work with time consistency according to the prevailing regulations. | B2 |
| 3. Ability and skill  Service staff has the ability and skill to provide appropriate service to students. | B3 |
| 4. Equitable service  Service staff does not discriminate students in terms of social status. | B4 |
| 5. Cost-affordability  The cost of service is affordable. | B5 |
| 6. Security of service  There is a guarantee of security of the service unit or facility so that students are assured with the potential risks of service implementation. | B6 |

**3.4. Data Analysis**

The result of hypothesis testing is that the service quality of academic administration has a significant effect on student satisfaction with a coefficient of administration of 80%. Among the five factors of service quality, assurance turns out to be the most dominant. The implementation of the result is obtaining student satisfaction with academic service on a sustainable manner by retaining the service quality particularly the aspect of assurance.

The analysis begins with instrument development which is measured using validity and reliability test to avoid errors that may affect the accuracy of data collected. Then, multiple linear regression is run to acquire the result of model testing, the effect between variables and the dominance in variables.

In terms of validity test, an item is a valid measure only to the extent that it scores above 0.40 at a significance level of 95% within a group of items representative of the content of the measurable trait. In terms of reliability test, Cronbach’s alpha, coefficient and item-total correlation are applied to measure whether each variable is reliable. The resulting score of each variable stands above 0.60, which generates reliable variables and indicates internal consistency. To establish the effect between variables, p-value must score ≤ 0,05 to ensure significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable at a confidence level of 95% and a maximum deviation level of 5%.

**4. RESULT**

**4.1. Validity and dan Reliability**

The result of validity and reliability test is given in Table 2.

**Table 2 Validity and Reliability Result**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Indicator | | Validity | Cronbach’s Alpha | Reliable |
| Min | Max |
| x1 | 0.295 | 0.730 | Valid | 0.818 | Reliable |
| x2 | 0.282 | 0.499 | Valid | 0.802 | Reliable |
| x3 | 0.381 | 0.783 | Valid | 0.767 | Reliable |
| x4 | 0.316 | 0.639 | Valid | 0.763 | Reliable |
| x5 | 0.278 | 0.722 | Valid | 0.720 | Reliable |
| Y | 0.335 | 0.614 | Valid | 0.755 | Reliable |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 1 shows that the overall minimum values of validity stand above 0.2, at an alpha above 0.6, indicating an appropriate measurement of the instrument for the study.

**4.2. Frequency of Distribution**

The results of frequency distribution of respondents’ answers regarding tangible, reliability, responsivenss, assurance, emphaty, and student satisfaction are presented in Table 3. dita

**Table 3 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in Terms of Tangibles**

| **x1 \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | |  |
|  |  | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| x1 | x11 | 26 | 59 | 15 | 100 |
| x12 | 42 | 18 | 40 | 100 |
| x13 | 41 | 49 | 10 | 100 |
| x14 | 27 | 63 | 10 | 100 |
|  | Total | 136 | 189 | 75 | 400 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 3 shows that the tangibles of UPBJJ-UT of Makassar service are well perceived by the respondents.

**Table 4 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in Terms of Reliability**

| **x2 \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | |  |
|  |  | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| x2 | x21 | 27 | 24 | 49 | 100 |
| x22 | 56 | 26 | 18 | 100 |
| x23 | 59 | 21 | 20 | 100 |
| x24 | 0 | 45 | 55 | 100 |
| x25 | 0 | 55 | 45 | 100 |
|  | Total | 142 | 171 | 187 | 500 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 4 shows that the service reliability of UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is very well perceived by the respondents.

**Table 5 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in terms of Responsiveness**

| **x3 \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | |  |
|  |  | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| x3 | x31 | 33 | 67 | 0 | 100 |
| x32 | 38 | 8 | 54 | 100 |
| x33 | 62 | 28 | 10 | 100 |
| x34 | 61 | 31 | 8 | 100 |
|  | Total | 194 | 134 | 72 | 400 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 5 shows that the service responsiveness of UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is moderately perceived by the respondents.

**Table 6 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in terms of Assurance**

| **x4 \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | |  |
|  |  | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| x4 | x41 | 26 | 45 | 29 | 100 |
| x42 | 47 | 22 | 31 | 100 |
| x43 | 49 | 36 | 15 | 100 |
| x44 | 14 | 55 | 31 | 100 |
| x45 | 0 | 80 | 20 | 100 |
|  | Total | 136 | 238 | 126 | 500 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 6 shows that the service assurance of UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is well perceived by the respondents.

**Table 7 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in terms of Empathy**

| **x5 \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | |  |
|  |  | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| x5 | x51 | 32 | 64 | 4 | 100 |
| x52 | 37 | 13 | 50 | 100 |
| x53 | 52 | 38 | 10 | 100 |
| x54 | 53 | 39 | 8 | 100 |
|  | Total | 174 | 154 | 72 | 400 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

Data in Table 7 shows that the empathy of staffs and tutors at UPBJJ-UT of Makassar is moderately perceived by the respondents.

**Table 8 Recapitulation of Students’ Responses to Service Quality in terms of Student Satisfaction**

| **y \* Respondent Answer Crosstabulation** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count | | | | | | |
|  |  | Respondent Answer | | | |  |
|  |  | Low | Moderate | High | Very high | Total |
| y | y11 | 0 | 3 | 35 | 62 | 100 |
| y12 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 73 | 100 |
| y13 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 66 | 100 |
| y14 | 0 | 0 | 41 | 59 | 100 |
| y15 | 0 | 0 | 46 | 54 | 100 |
| y16 | 2 | 6 | 37 | 55 | 100 |
|  | Total | 2 | 9 | 220 | 369 | 600 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

The respondents’ evaluation of student satisfaction in Table 8 generates very high results.

**4.3. Multiple Regression Analysis**

To look at whether independent variables affect dependent variable, a multiple regression test is run and recapitulated as Table 9 below shows.

**Table 9 Multiple Regression Output**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Independent Variable** | **Dependent Variable** | **t** | **Sig t** |
| Tangibles (X1) | Student Satisfaction  (Y) | 9.606 | .000 |
| Reliability (X2) | 14.577 | .000 |
| Responsiveness (X3) | 12.022 | .000 |
| Assurance (X4) | 3.811 | .000 |
| Empathy (X5) | 5.683 | .000 |
| R2 |  |  | .959 |
| Adjusted R2 |  |  | .957 |
| F |  |  | 441.190 |
| Sig F |  |  | .000 |

Source: SPSS Output 2019

The SPSS output in Table 9 can be interpreted as follows:

1. R square of 0.959 or 95.9% is the simultaneous effect size of service quality on student satisfaction. The remaining 4,1% constitutes other factors not included in the model.
2. F count of 441.190 at an alpha of 0.00 (less than 0.05) indicates that the simultaneous effect of service quality is positive and significant in student satisfaction.
3. T count for tangibles is 9.606 at an alpha of 0.000 (less than 0.05), indicating that tangibles have a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, assuming other factors that can increase and decrease service quality are constant.

Tangibles represent an organization’s ability to show its existence to external parties. Appearance (e.g. employee physical appearance), physical infrastructure (e.g. building), equipment and facilities (e.g. technology) and environment are the tangibles of service given by service providers.

Kotler and Keller (2009: 53) claim that “Tangibles represent physical appearance, equipment, employee and communication tools.” Tangibles are one of service quality dimensions that needs close attention in an organization because operational activities in service often depend on customer characteristics in direct interactions with an organization. Tjiptono and Chandra (2005:135) assert that physical facilities, equipment and materials used by the organization, and employee appearance are among the major aspects that attract consumers. In improving customer satisfaction particularly in a service organization, consumers are often influenced by organizational attributes such as employee appearance. The aspects of quality in service are very essential because delivering quality service is one the best ways to create values expected by consumers. Consumer service is the application of a concept that emphasizes consumer needs. Service quality is closely related to consumer satisfaction. Service quality in an organization that addresses consumer needs is an important element to ensure the sustainability and stability of organizational operations (Tjiptono and Chandra, 2005: 115).

1. T count for reliability is 14.577 at an alpha of 0.000 (less than 0.05), indicating that reliability has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, assuming other factors that can increase and decrease service quality are constant.

Reliability refers to the ability to provide service as it is promised in an immediate, accurate, trustworthy and satisfactory manner for consumers. The performance of a service needs to meet consumer expectation. The key aspects that refer to reliable service include timeliness, equal service to all types of consumers without error, sympathy and high accuracy.

Kotler and Keller (2009: 53) state that “Reliability is related to organizational ability to provide service as it is promised in a reliable and accurate manner.” The attributes in reliability dimension include providing service as it is promised, responsibility for customer handling and providing prompt service. Accurate service greatly influences customer satisfaction. An organization that has reliable employees will increase customer satisfaction with the provided service (Kotler and Keller, 2009: 53).

1. T count for responsiveness is 12.022 at an alpha of 0.000 (less than 0.05), indicating that responsiveness has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, assuming other factors that can increase and decrease service quality are constant.

Responsiveness is the ability of employees to assist customers and provide responsive service and clear information delivery. Responsiveness avoids consumers from long queues and waiting time without clear reasons, which may lead to negative perceptions of service quality.

This is in line with the definition of Kotler and Keller (2009: 53) that “Responsiveness is the willingness to provide assistance and service in a prompt manner. In this dimension, an organization must provide service and respond to requests from consumer standpoint not organization standpoint. According to Parasuraman in Tjiptono and Chandra (2005: 134), “Responsiveness is associated with employee ability to assist consumers and respond to their requests, and inform when a service will be available and provide it promptly. When employees promptly respond to consumers, an organization will gain sympathy from consumers.”

1. T count for assurance is 3.811 at an alpha of 0.000 (less than 0.05), indicating that assurance has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, assuming other factors that can increase and decrease service quality are constant.

Assurance is knowledge, courtesy and ability of employees to instill consumers trust. The concept of assurance is associated with communication, credibility, security, competence and courtesy.

The result of the study is in line with the definition by Parasuraman in Tjiptono and Chandra (2005: 134), “Employees are able to instill consumer trust in an organization as it provides a sense of security to consumers.” When building consumer trust that leads to security, an organization can increase consumer satisfaction with the provided service.

1. T count for empathy is 5.683 at an alpha of 0.000 (less than 0.05), indicating that empathy has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, assuming other factors that can increase and decrease service quality are constant.

Empathy is about giving genuine, individual and personal attention to consumers in order to understand what they essentially want. In this sense, an organization is expected to have an understanding and knowledge of consumers and what they specifically need as well as providing operational business time convenient for them.

This result is supported by Parasuraman in Tjiptono and Chandra (2005: 134) who states “An organization understands its consumers and acts based on consumers’ interest, as well as providing personal attention to them and business hours convenient for them.” When consumers are satisfied with the empathetic gestures given by the organization, they can develop loyalty to the organization (Kotler dan Keller 2009: 53).

Based on these results, the hypothesis that proposes a positive and significant effect of service quality on student satisfaction is accepted.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the observable results and discussion, it can be concluded that service quality, which consists of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction. Therefore, to enhance student satisfaction, it is necessary to closely evaluate these aspects to get a good sense of what a service looks like and make strategic plans for improvement where necessary.

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