ANALYSIS OF SERVICE QUALITY PERCEPTIONS GAP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND MANAGEMENT OF STATE POLYTECHNIC OF MALANG

Yunia AFIATIN[1], Anik KUSMINTARTI[2], Ludfi DJAJANTO[3], Triesti CANDRAWATI[4]
[1,2,3,4]Accounting Department State Polytechnic of Malang, Malang, Indonesia
Corresponding author: Yunia Afiatin
E-mail: yunia.afiatin@gmail.com

Abstract:

Higher education institutions in Indonesia are facing increasing competition. Service quality is determined by variables such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This research intends to investigate the gap in service quality between students' perceptions and management at the State Polytechnic of Malang. This research uses primary data. Descriptive analysis is used to assess the level of service quality difference between the perceptions of the student and the perceptions of management. The result of this analysis is that the average value perceptions of consumers and students are smaller compared to the average value perceptions of management and service providers, which indicates that consumers remain dissatisfied with the quality of services offered by the institution. The results of this research can be used by management to identify the advantages and disadvantages of service quality and determine strategies that can meet the expectations of consumers and students.

Keywords: Service Quality, Perceptions, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Many service companies try to improve their services to consumers by improving their performance to get a superior market position. Including higher education institutions that provide educational services, both those managed by the state and the private sector. Competition for higher education institutions in Indonesia, especially in Malang, is getting tighter.

Educational institutions are also organizations that have the same systems as other public service institutions. Educational institutions are part of the market, and they also face the challenge of evaluating the outcomes of the education and training services they offer. There is an increasing need to compete to differentiate themselves from their competitors through the quality of education and the reputation of the institution. Therefore, it is important to make changes in the management of education so that educational institutions can compete with similar institutions.

Achieving quality education is the responsibility of all parties. With the current conditions where consumers are increasingly critical of purchasing decisions, it is certainly important for educational institutions to be able to respond to the needs of consumers, especially students who are increasingly numerous and diverse.

Recently, the topic of measuring service quality in higher education has gained considerable attention from researchers (Koni et al., 2013; Sultan & Wong, 2012; Jain, Sinha, & Sahney, 2011; Lee, 2010).

The institution's operational processes and outcomes play a key role in shaping students' and staff's perceptions of service quality. The process refers to the way students and staff, as the main service consumers, are handled during their interactions, whereas the outcome reflects the experience or results for the customers (Cuthbert, 1996). Each day, students and staff have interactions with the institution, which leads to different levels of service. As services, students'

perceptions of their higher education experience are gaining greater significance. With institutions of higher education moving towards a more student-centric approach, students' perceptions of their educational experience have become more significant (Khodayari & Khodayari, 2011; Mahadzirah & Wan, 2003).

Thus, assessing service quality is critical from both the standpoint of consumers as end users and from the service providers' view of customer expectations. By understanding what factors indicate differences in perceptions of service quality from educational institutions, higher education institutions can develop more effective strategies for improving service quality.

Problem Formulation.
1. How is the implementation of service quality in the Accounting Department of Malang State Polytechnic?
2. How high is the level of service quality gap from consumer perceptions (students) and management perceptions (service providers)?
3. What variables determine the difference in perceptions between consumer perceptions (students) and management perceptions (service providers)?

Previous Research. Alves and Vieira (2004), research on service quality and student satisfaction based on experience and factors related to student satisfaction.

Krsmanovic (2014) conducted research using a questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL model, which consists of two subscales: one measuring students' expectations and the other assessing their perceptions of service quality. The model looks at service quality through five attributes: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibility, each with several items. The major finding from the data analysis is a negative service quality value, suggesting that students are dissatisfied with the service provided.

According to Yidana et al. (2023), the average score for students' expectations of university service quality was considerably higher than their actual experiences, indicating a gap between what students anticipated and what they received. The study also highlighted that students' experiences with service quality had a substantial direct impact on their satisfaction, which in turn played a key role in predicting their loyalty.

Theory of Service Quality. Service quality refers to the degree to which a service satisfies or surpasses customer expectations (Jain, Sinha, & De, 2010; Zeithaml et al., 2006; Nitecki & Hernon, 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Boltan & Drew, 1991; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Parasuraman, 2004). The concept of difference refers to the extent and direction of the gap or discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of a service (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Rangkuti (2006) explains that the success of a service industry depends on three aspects, which are management, customers and employees. There is a relationship between management and customers (external marketing), which is how the company sets promises regarding the products/services to be delivered. The relationship between management and employees (internal marketing) is how to make the product/service delivered as promised. Employee relations with customers (Interactive marketing), delivering products/services as promised.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) proposed five dimensions of service quality, which streamline the ten dimensions identified in earlier studies. The five SERVQUAL dimensions are as follows:
1. Tangibility: Refers to the physical aspects such as facilities, equipment, employees, and communication methods.
2. Reliability: The ability to deliver the promised service consistently, accurately, and in a satisfactory manner.

3. Responsiveness: The willingness of staff to assist customers and provide prompt, attentive service.
4. Assurance: The staff's competence, courtesy, trustworthiness, and their ability to instill confidence and provide a risk-free experience.
5. Empathy: The ability to build good relationships, communicate effectively, provide personal attention, and understand customer needs.

Grönroos (1984) categorizes the five dimensions of service quality into technical quality, which includes tangibility, reliability, and responsiveness, and focuses on the product (service) itself, and Functional quality, which refers to the manner of service delivery and includes assurance and empathy. The average analysis results show that increasing technical quality service decreases the reliance on functional quality service.

According to Rangkuti (2006), service quality is determined by two variables: perceived service and expected service. When perceived service is lower than expected, customers become dissatisfied and may disengage from the service provider. Conversely, if perceived service exceeds expectations, customers are more likely to continue using the provider, signaling satisfaction.

Zeithaml et al. (2006) explain that customer expectations are the reference points or standards that customers bring to a service experience, while customer perceptions reflect their subjective evaluation of the service they receive. The Gap Model contrasts the service qualities customers expect with their actual perceptions of service performance. This model is different from the disconfirmation paradigm found in customer satisfaction studies and the Gap Model in service quality theory. The Gap Model outlines five potential gaps where a mismatch can arise between the anticipated service levels and the perceived quality of service delivery (Koni et al., 2013).

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how students and staff perceive service quality and their corresponding satisfaction levels at a higher education institution. Data will be gathered and analyzed through a survey. The research utilized a sample of 250 respondents from the Accounting Department to gather data on the 25 expectation items. The research data were obtained from a survey administered to undergraduate students, lecturers, and staff members.

A questionnaire consists of variables.: Technical Quality Service (X1), Professionalism and skill (X1.1), Physical Source (X1.2) and Operational System (X1.3). Functional Quality Service (X2): Attitude and behaviour (X2.1), Accessibility and Flexibility (X2.2), Reliability and Credibility (X2.3), and Improvement (X2.4).

Service quality was measured using the SERVQUAL survey, and the assessment was based on the difference between the ratings assigned to the perception statements by students and management, i.e., GAP = SP–MP. Using the five-point Likert scale, an average score was derived for each response in the perception sections of the SERVQUAL survey for both students and management. Descriptive quantitative analysis was applied in this study, using statistical methods to present the collected data as it stands, without attempting to make universally applicable conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of questionnaires was carried out by visiting the object of research, namely the Accounting Department of Malang State Polytechnic. The number of questionnaires filled in and returned, which were divided into 250 questionnaires to students and 50 questionnaires to service providers (teaching staff and education staff). The description of the characteristics of these

respondents is used to explain the results of the research conducted on these 300 respondents. There are two characteristics of student respondents described, including gender and level of study/semester. Among service provider respondents, the characteristics of respondents consisted of gender, latest education and length of service.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the data collected. The alpha value ranges from 0 (indicating no reliability) to 1 (indicating perfect reliability). It was calculated for each subscale or service quality dimension in the survey, with all Cronbach's Alpha values being above 0.7, indicating a good level of reliability.

Service Quality is every effort made by service providers to customers, including a series of activities consisting of the technical quality service dimension (outcome dimension) related to the quality of service output perceived by customers. The list of 12 questions on the Technical Quality Service Variable (X1) consists of indicators of Professionalism and skills (X1.1), Ownership of Physical Resources (X1.2) and Operational Systems (X1.3). While the list of 13 questions on the Functional Quality Service (X2) variable relates to the quality of the service process, which consists of indicators of Attitude and behavior (X2.1), Accessibility and Flexibility (X2.2), Reliability and Trustworthiness (X2.3) and Repair indicators (X2.4).

The statistical results of the implementation of service quality consist of the results of student perceptions and perceptions of service providers. The results of the average calculation show that there are differences in the value of the perceptual responses of students and service providers.

The calculation results on questions 1 to 25 show a negative difference, meaning that the value of consumer perceptions (students) is smaller than the value of management perceptions (service providers). The perception difference value ranges from -0.20 to -0.88. The highest negative difference value is in the dimension of communication between staff and lecturers and students, at -0.88. The lowest difference value is in the dimension of polytechnics having an accurate recording system, at -0.20. The summary of the results from the gap calculation of 25 questionnaire statements is presented in Table 1, which shows that in both the Technical Quality Service variable and the Functional Quality Service variable, all responses have negative differences.

To determine the standard deviation value of the difference in perception between consumers and management, the following formula is used:

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = \frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{n}}{n-1}$$

The result of the calculation using the standard deviation formula above is 0.172. The average value of the difference in perception $= \frac{\sum D}{n} = \frac{14.60}{25} = 0.59$

It can be seen that the tolerance limit of the perception difference is 0.59 ± 0.172. It means the upper limit value of the difference is 0.76, and the lower limit value is 0.39. Based on the calculations, the differences observed in all dimensions of the questionnaire statements exceed both the upper and lower limits.

A negative difference means low student satisfaction. Variables determining the difference in teaching and administrative staff include: communication, equipment, teaching and learning process, friendliness to students, responsiveness to student needs, and keeping promises. Moreover, promptness in taking action to find solutions. The difference in perception means that the management still needs to evaluate and improve so that there is a better quality of service to students.

Table 1. Gap Analysis between Student-Management Perception

In variable Reliability and Trustworthiness in question number In variable Reliability and

CHARACTERISTIC	ITEM	MEAN			MEAN		
		S	M	GAP	S	M	GAP
X1: Technical Quality Service Variable	Professionalism and skills	3.57	4.28	-0.71	3.54	4.08	-0.54
	Ownership of Physical Resources	3.46	3.84	-0.38			
	Operational Systems	3.58	4.12	-0.54			
X2: Functional Quality Service Variable	Attitude and behavior	3.49	4.15	-0.66	3.40	4.04	-0.64
	Accessibility and Flexibility	3.31	3.92	-0.61			
	Reliability and Trustworthiness	3.46	4.01	-0.55			
	Repair	3.34	4.08	-0.74			

Trustworthiness in question number 22, Polytechnics have an accurate recording system. While the largest difference value of 0.88 in the variable, the Operational System in question, Teaching and administrative staff communicate well with students.

There are all of the variables that determine the difference in perceptions between consumers/students and perceptions of management/service providers on service quality. The differences are in the statements: Teaching and administrative staff communicate well to students; Polytechnic has modern equipment; The teaching process is up to date and learning is up to date; Teaching and administrative staff are friendly to students; Teaching and administrative staff respond quickly to student needs; Teaching and administrative staff keep promises and If something goes wrong the Polytechnic immediately takes action for a solution. These variables need attention and improvement so that students are satisfied with the quality of Polytechnic services.

The discussion of the results of this study will be presented in three parts. The first section will review the implementation of service quality based on the perceptions of consumers/students and management/service providers. The second section focuses on measuring the level of the gap. The third section explains the variables that determine the differences in perceptions of consumers/students and management/service providers.

The results of student opinions on the implementation of service quality in the Accounting Department have been carried out quite well. At the same time, management opinion is between good enough to good.

In all indicators, there are still differences in perceptions between students and management. Several indicators show differences that are outside the lower limit and the upper limit of tolerance. Teaching and administrative staff communicate well with students, but are outside the upper limit, meaning that there is still a need to improve the communication aspect of the service provider. The Polytechnic statement has an accurate recording system, which is outside the lower limit of tolerance. It means that the recording system needs to be more accurate, reducing recording errors.

The Gap analysis shows a clear and significant difference between students' and management's perceptions. The large number of gaps, present in all dimensions, reflects a

substantial discrepancy between the respondents' views. The difference in perceptions suggests that management needs to review and improve its strategies in order to provide better service quality to students.

The findings of this study align with the research of Jain, Sinha, and Sahney (2011) and Sultan & Wong (2012), which emphasize that service quality is assessed through various dimensions. Key factors to consider include professional skills, operational systems, attitude, accessibility, and reliability. These dimensions can be implemented to monitor and assess how students perceive service quality.

While many studies have utilized Parasuraman's service quality theory, this research chose to adopt Gronroos' (1984) framework. Gronroos' model offers a comprehensive evaluation, focusing on both the quality of the service output (technical quality) and the process by which the service is delivered (functional quality). Customers assess technical quality before and after the service is provided, whereas functional quality evaluates the delivery process itself. This approach allows management to pinpoint specific areas for improvement more effectively.

This research was conducted in the Accounting Department of Malang State Polytechnic. Given that other departments may have distinct academic focuses and service implementation strategies, the findings may differ in such contexts. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized across different departments with varying characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Student satisfaction is a crucial indicator that higher education institutions can use to enhance their service quality. Customer satisfaction is a fundamental element of marketing that has a major impact on the market. An analysis of customer satisfaction can be conducted by examining the differences between consumer/student perceptions and management/service provider perceptions of service quality.

- The implementation of service quality in the Accounting Department of Malang State Polytechnic, it turns out that there are still differences in perceptions between students and management. It means that management still needs to evaluate and improve so that there is better service quality.
- The level of service quality gap between consumers/students and management/service providers shows a negative difference value, meaning that student perceptions are smaller than management's, indicating that students still feel that the quality of service provided by the polytechnic is not in accordance with expectations.
- There are several variables that determine the difference in perceptions between consumers/students and perceptions of management/service providers on service quality. These variables need attention and improvement so that students feel satisfied with the quality of polytechnic services.

Suggestions.

- To increase higher education consumer satisfaction, service providers should always pay attention to consumer/student expectations, not only be satisfied with what has been done, which is usually only seen from what has been done by service providers.
- By improving service quality, institutions not only enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty but also build a stronger reputation in higher education. Therefore, service quality should be a key focus for management to meet the goals of higher education.

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